

# The chef

Last week my wife had gone to work and I sat on my porch and tried to think of something I could do to make her happy. I decided to cook dinner and have it all ready the minute she walked in the door. This idea was unique and daring, because I had never attempted the art of cooking. But wouldn't my wife be pleased when she came home from work and found her supper ready?

I put a huge pot on the stove and added a little olive oil to the bottom of the pot. I cut up onions and garlic and celery and started slowly simmering those ingredients. The kitchen was already filling with a delicious fragrance and I thought... hell... there's nothing to cooking at all.

My wife would be home in less than two hours so there was no time to waste. I cut thin strips of beef and added those to the pot. While the pot slowly bubbled I went into the dining room and cleared the table. I put on a fine linen tablecloth and set out our finest china and silver. I placed, as a centerpiece, our eighteenth century candleabra.

I was becoming excited. There are so few ways that a husband can show

his wife how much he cares. I often feel ashamed because I sit on my duff constantly and watch my wife do a thousand household chores. And she does those chores after she has put in eight hard hours at the office. Wouldn't she be surprised when she walked into the house and smelled an aroma unbelievably beautiful? Wouldn't her heart melt when she saw how magnificently I had decorated the dining room table? And wouldn't she be emotionally overcome at the realization of what I had done and how much I cared for her?

She would be home now in less than an hour. I must hurry. I added a jigger of wine to the pot, salt and pepper, and a cup of carefully diced potatoes.

I ran into the bathroom and took a shower. I shaved and put on a small dab of that after-shave that drives my wife crazy. I got out the craziest, prettiest shirt I owned and then slipped into my blue leisure suit. I put on my black boots, combed my hair, and I was ready. When my wife got home I would light the candles, fill her goblet with wine, and serve her food. I would sit there scrubbed and im-

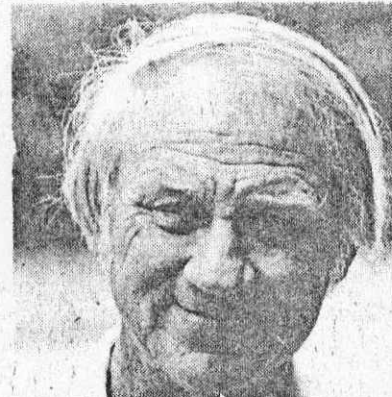
maculately dressed and she would love me with all her heart.

I went back into the kitchen and added tomato sauce and large chunks of lobster.

She would be home in ten minutes. I thought I would have time to drink a beer and smoke a cigarette but then I noticed the trash and garbage on the sink counter. It looked so unsightly that I knew I would have to gather up that mess and dispose of it. There wasn't much time. I got a pan and started scooping up all that ugly debris. The potato peelings, the cellophane, the cigarette butts and the soiled paper towels. I got them all gathered up in my pan and whirled around to throw them in the trash bag. But in whirling around I tripped over the end of the stove and the pan I was holding went flying in the air.

As the vile ingredients of that pan went soaring into the air I stood in absolute horror and I almost fainted when that trash dropped lazily and accurately into the huge pot my dinner was cooking in.

I heard my wife's car pull into the driveway. I thought about confessing to my wife, and apologizing. But when



by Amos Arthur Holmes

I thought of all that lovely beef that would be wasted, all that beautiful lobster... I just couldn't do it. I reached into the pot and pulled out the soiled paper towels. I extracted the potato peels and the cellophane. And just as my wife walked in the door I was removing the last of the cigarette butts.

"Amos," cried my wife, "You've cooked dinner."

"It was nothing," I replied.

My wife sat at the dining room table. I lit the candles, filled her wine goblet, and served her food.

She took a spoonful of that food, raised it to her lips, and tasted it.

"Honey," she smiled, "this is delicious."

"Thank you," I said.