



Guerrilla Gourmet

In the beginning...

Manifold Stew

based on an anecdote of my mother's childhood

Jeffery Morehouse

In the pre-dawn hours they would come. I never knew exactly when. Suddenly a hand on my shoulder and the rush of adrenaline, time to go on one of our weekend beach camping trips. With each trip we would leave earlier and earlier. My parents would herd us silently down the stairs to the truck, which was always packed and ready to go.

Once in the truck the excitement peaked. Father wouldn't even start the engine. The headlights could wait, too. We just rolled down the slight incline of the driveway toward the street holding our breath. Would we make it this time?

As we eased down the road, inching away from home, the backfire of the truck's engine coughed and hissed. Only it wasn't our truck's engine. Mother sighed. Father cursed. The uninvited neighbors were following us to our secret beach getaway yet again. The McCrackens were ants at our picnic.

I drifted back to sleep and awoke about the time we rolled into camp. Mother, the Depression-era daughter of immigrants, saw no greater shame than not having enough food prepared. Even before we arrived at the parking lot, she had the campfire going. However reluctantly, she felt compelled to offer a meal to the McCrackens. Time and time again, and this you may find most surprising, the stealth neighbors politely declined. They were already halfway through their can of stew, yet there was no fire to be found in their camp. How could this be? Out of sheer curiosity or deep-seated masochistic pleasure, Father finally asked.

Gourmets, please be seated before reading on. The secret was not in the salt or the pepper or some McCracken-family spices. It was in the manifold — the exhaust manifold of their old truck's engine engaged in a slow dance with that can of Dinty Moore's beef stew and a long road ahead made for the perfect meal.

Manifold Stew

1 can Dinty Moore's Beef Stew (*Splurge and get the family-size, avoiding the mini-packs at all costs. If you must go that route you might as well invest in the canned Hormel's Vienna Sausages.*)

1 truck or car (*No SUVs, please.*)

1 1/4" – 1/2" rope

2-4 hours of open road (*For every 2 ounces of stew drive 15 minutes*)

— Using the rope attach the stew to the vehicle's manifold. That's the part where the exhaust flows out of the engine block. Don't be shy — wrap it up good. **Warning: Do not preheat the engine.**

— Drive, drive, drive. *If you must make stops along the way please try to limit them to less than 15 minutes.*

— When you have arrived, detach the can from the manifold carefully. *Sheepskin seat covers ideally serve as potholders for this step.*

— Open and eat. *Forgot your can opener? Don't fret. Just use your oil spout.*

— Feeds 4-6.

willingness of its cooks to make much of little and little of much. Follow us as we journey across this land in search of good eats.

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