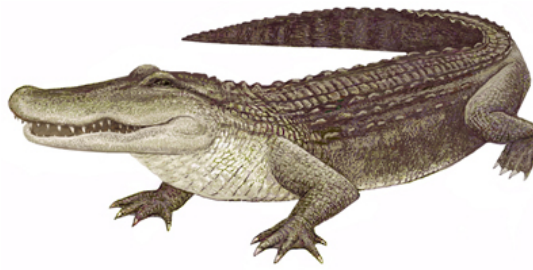


Florida Food Fare

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Alligator

History: Alligators were numerous in Florida well into the 20th century. As a result of unregulated and unrestricted harvest, the Florida alligator population had noticeably decreased by the early 1940's. Because of the commercial value of alligator hides, even with hunting restrictions in the late 1950's and 60's, illegal poaching resulted in further decrease in alligator populations, though they remained abundant in some remote inaccessible areas. In 1967 the Florida alligator was classified as endangered. Federal and international regulations imposed during the 1970's and 80's helped control trade of alligator hides and illegal hunting of alligators was checked. The Florida alligator responded immediately to protection and was reclassified as threatened in 1977 because of its similarity in appearance to the American Crocodile. Today, through strict laws, alligators may be harvested during very limited, controlled hunts and are raised in captivity for the production of meat and skins.

Description: The American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) has an elongated, armored, lizard-like body with a muscular flat tail. Its long, rounded snout with nostrils at the end, enables it to breathe while most of the body is submerged. It has four very short legs with five toes on the front feet and four toes on the rear. The average adult size is 8.2 feet for females and 11.2 feet for males. They can reach a weight of more than a half a ton. Adults are dark on top with pale undersides. The young are black with yellowish crossbars.

Habitat: Alligators live in all Florida counties but are most common in the major river drainage basins and large lakes in the central and southern portion of the state. They can also be found in marshes, swamps drainage canals and ditches. A few even venture into salt water. Early operators of Florida's unique wildlife attractions discovered that the alligator would successfully breed and thrive in

1 can tomatoes	1/4 cup parsley, minced
1 pound alligator meat, cut in thin strips	Cayenne pepper to taste

Sauté onions, garlic and celery in butter until soft. Add tomatoes and simmer for 20 minutes in covered pan. Add alligator meat and let cook over low heat until tender, about 1 hour. Add salt, pepper, parsley and cayenne pepper. If gravy is too thick, add a little hot water. Serve over cooked rice. Garnish with green onion.

Gator Sauce Piquant

2 pounds alligator meat, cubed	2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
2 cups chopped onions	1/4 teaspoon basil
1/4 cup cooking oil	1 bay leaf
1/2 cup chopped bell pepper	6-ounce can sliced mushrooms
1/2 cup chopped celery	1/4 cup chopped shallots
16 ounces can tomato sauce	1/4 cup chopped parsley
16 ounces can tomatoes	Salt and pepper to taste
1/4 teaspoon oregano	

Optional: Alligator may be marinated in wine 1 hour before adding sauce.
Sauté onions in oil until a golden brown, stirring often. Add bell pepper and celery and sauté until tender. Add tomatoes and tomato sauce, oregano, Worcestershire sauce, basil and bay leaf. simmer for 10 minutes, then add mushrooms and drained alligator meat. Cover and simmer for 40 minutes. Add shallots and parsley and cook uncovered for 10 minutes. Serve over rice.