



January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009 was a demonstration to the world what Democracy is all about. We need to distinguish, however, why did the American people elect President Obama. Was it because we are willing to follow his lead and make hard choices in our lives? or we just wanted a change?

In President Obama's inauguration speech, (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99590481>) He stated "Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also *our collective failure to make hard choices* and prepare the nation for a new age.

We need to proceed with cautious optimism and understand WE, the citizens, are responsible for our own lives. The simplest change we can take on immediately is conservation. We can all do our part to conserve water, food, gas, and electricity. MTFF [share our ideas](#) with you this month, and would love to hear from you all as well!.

February brings us Valentines' day. We share the Filet Diane recipe from Morton's steak house as an option to "stay in" rather than going out to dinner. This would have the added benefit of conserving gas!

**Quote of the month:**

Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America — they will be met. **Barack Obama's Inaugural Address. January 2009**

It is fitting that Barack Obama was born in August 1961, the Chinese year of the OX. The OX, "are extremely determined and work tirelessly to get what they want. Step by step and piece by piece, they move steadily toward their goals".

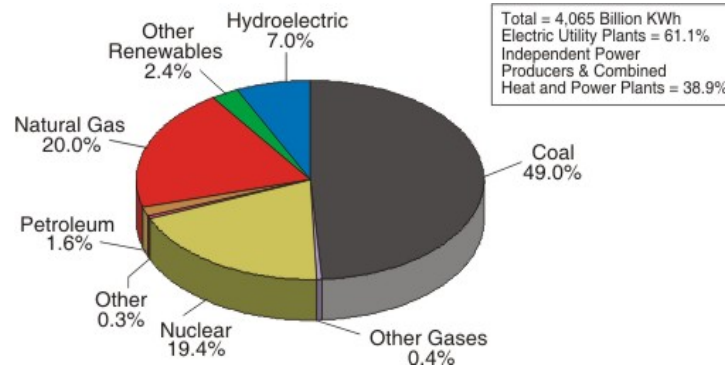


Conservation of food, water, gas, and electricity is no longer a “feel good” option; it has become a NEED to do. Numerous statistics and scientific analysis indicates our rate of consumption is not sustainable in this world of growing population.

We have shared numerous tips on conserving energy in past issues (<http://kai.home.att.net/html/bg00804.html>) this month, we will share additional tips to reduce electricity use and provide incentives to produce renewable electricity.

If your electricity supplier offers off-peak pricing programs (<http://www.env-econ.net/2007/12/peak-electricit.html>), take advantage of them. It may only save you \$5 a month, but the implication is order of magnitude.

When large number of customers uses electricity off peak, the utility companies don't need to produce “peak power”, which usually burns natural gas. In the Washington DC area, Pepco (<http://www.pepco.com/welcome/news/releases/archives/2008/article.aspx?cid=1000>) and Dominion (<http://www.dom.com/customer/efficiency/programs.jsp>) has pilot Smart Metering programs. The Smart Metering program will automatically adjust your electricity consumption based on overall electricity demand. This will allow the utility company to manage demand more efficiently.



Only 2.4% of the Electricity generated in the United States is from renewable sources, such as Wind, Solar, Wave, Biomass, ...etc. China, the world's leading renewable energy producer, ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renewable\\_energy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renewable_energy)) generates over 7% of the country's electricity from renewable sources. Second only to Germany, China invests over \$12 billion USD / year in renewable energy research and deployment ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Energy\\_policy\\_of\\_China#Electricity\\_generation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Energy_policy_of_China#Electricity_generation)).

To encourage R&D and Deployment of renewable energy in the United States, we need to buy electricity generated from renewable sources. Dominion power, offers it customers the option to purchase Green energy ([http://www.dom.com/customer/efficiency/vares\\_greenpower.jsp](http://www.dom.com/customer/efficiency/vares_greenpower.jsp)), we have signed up for it, so should you! Yes, it cost a little more, but you will be DOING your share to encourage renewable electricity production in the United States.

These steps will cost more upfront in terms of comfort and dollars; however, as with any investment, there are costs to bear. Heat our houses to 68 rather than 75F in the winter will make us less comfortable; paying \$10~\$20 more per month to use Renewable Electricity will leave us less money for fun. These are the tough choices President Obama's have told us we have to make. “Each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet”. OUR problems, WE have to solve it together. We are willing to pay a little more for electricity and put on more cloth in the winter. How about you?

Check with your local utilities and see if they offer smart metering, off-peak pricing, as well as option to purchase Renewable Electricity.



## Beef Filet Diane

**Source:** Morton's Steak house

**Serving Size:** 4

**Prep Time:** ~30 min

**Cooking Time:** ~60 min



**Note:**

### Directions for Steak:

- Salt the meat all over (use Crystal Salt)
- Heat a skillet over a burner over high heat
- Pour in a thin film of oil
- When the oil's simmering, and soft of waving a little (before it starts giving off smoke)
- Sear both sides of the steak, **1 min per side**.
- Place the entire skillet into the oven for **5 to 7 min**, depending on the steak's thickness and desired doneness. Use instant read thermometer so you'll know when it's ready.
- Once it out of the oven, let it **rest for 3 min** before serving

### Directions:

**Bring the Steaks to room temperature**

#### Mushroom Sauce

- In a saucepan over medium heat, melt 2 tbs of butter
- Add the garlic and cook, stirring frequently, for **2~3 minutes**, or until softened.
- Add the wine and Cognac, raise the heat to medium high and simmer, uncovered, for **8 ~ 10 min**, or until most of the liquid has evaporated
- Add the demi-glace, mustard, Worcestershire sauce, and tomato paste. Bring to a simmer over medium heat

#### Start on the Spinach Mash Potatoes

- Add the cream, return to a boil and reduce the sauce, whisking often for about **15 min**, or until the sauce thickens to a creamy consistency and deepens in color

#### Heat Oven to 450F for the Steak

- In a large sauté pan, melt the remaining butter over medium-high heat
- Add the mushrooms and sauté for about **5 min**, or until the mushrooms begin to soften
- Stir the sauce into the mushrooms and heat over low heat until gently simmering.

#### Cook the Steak

- Let the sauce simmer and reduce over low heat for **12 to 15 min**, when it's slightly thickened.
- Cover and keep warm over very low heat until ready to serve

### Ingredient List

- 8 tbs unsalted butter
- 2 tbs finely chopped garlic
- ¼ cup dry red wine
- ¼ cup Cognac
- 8 ozs of store bought veal/Beef demi-glace
- 1 tsp of Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp tomato paste
- 2/3 cup heavy cream
- 10 ounces white or cremini mushrooms, stemmed and sliced about ¼" thick
- Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, for garnish
- 4 10-ounce filets mignons, each about 2-1/2 inches thick
- Grape seed or Canola Oil



# Spinach Mashed Potatoes

**Source:** Celeste

**Serving Size:** 4

**Prep Time:** min

**Cooking Time:** min



**Note:**

## Directions:

- Bring large pot of salted water to boil.
- Add baby spinach and cook **1 minute**.
- Drain well. Squeeze out as much water as possible from spinach.
- Set spinach aside.
- Cook potatoes in large pot of boiling salted water until very tender, about **30 minutes**.
- Drain well. Return potatoes to pot and mash until almost smooth.
- Set pot over low heat, add butter and stir until melted.
- Gradually add milk, mashing until smooth. Add cheese and reserved spinach and stir until cheese melts.
- Thin with more milk if desired. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

## Ingredient List

- 8 ~ 16 ozs, bagged fresh baby spinach
- 2 lbs white skinned potatoes, peeled and cut into 2 inch pieces
- 1/4 cup butter (1/2 stick)
- 1/2 cups (or more) warm whole milk
- 4 oz grated gruyere cheese