How to Improvise

It has been brought to my attention by my colleagues at the Improvisation Standards Board, Canberra Region, that all is not well in terms of spontaneous and creative cooking. People generally are not very good at having fun in the kitchen and producing something even vaguely edible at the same time. It is good at having fun in the kitchening. People generally are not very in response to this appalling state of and producing something even spontaneous and creative cook­

Region, that all is not well in terms by my colleagues at the Improvisa­

affairs that the ISB has produced its precisely, will result in the

ly spur-of-the-moment meals. It is to now tum in order to teach you the

manufacture of satisfying and total­

who can throw together a meal at

short notice, you must be well-

sleazebucket ventures out without a

must be to hand—and preferably to

eye

away at the back of a cupboard.

This rule about playing things safe has several sub-rules, according to the Improvisation Standards Board. Don't try to make sweet and sour anything when drunk. Don't get upset if your meal is not tasting as good as you thought it would. Don't be too heavy-handed with dried herbs in an attempt to make some­thing taste like it was made with fresh herbs. Restraint is as important as generosity, and I speak as one who has eaten extra syrupy pears served with barbecued steak and mustard as an unfortunate attempt to replicate a meal the cook had at a restaurant.

Rule Three
Live with someone else who is a good cook, so that no one has to grind out meals when they don't want to. Drudgery is anathema to good food.

Rule Four
Live near a good takeaway; it relieves the tension.

Rule Five
The key to the great door of creativity is Mascarpone cheese. I just dis­covered it the other day and finally understand what was missing in my pathetically inadequate life. Mascarpone cheese is a near liquid, pale and creamy cheese to which I have decided to devote the rest of my life. I defy anyone to stand unmanned in the kitchen with a packet of Mascarpone cheese at his or her disposal. Its uses are myriad, but the following are laid down as legitimate by the Improvisation Standards Board (Fun Guidance Secretariat), and are therefore able to be attempted without fill­ing in Form 195.

* Combine it with melted blue cheese over a low heat to make an instant pasta sauce. Sprinkle with parsley before serving.
* Mix it with eggs and honey and vanilla and pour over sliced apples in a pie flan to make a custard. Cook in oven until set.
* Use as a sandwich spread, ideally with sun-dried tomatoes.
* Use in casseroles along with rice and pre-cooked vegetables.

The secret is now out and you will be able to create heavenly meals in an instant. Your fame as a cook will spread. People will stop preparing meals for you because they think you will sneer at their slapdash ways. Perhaps you will. Armed with Mascarpone cheese you will become an artist of the kitchen and never again reach for those dubious microwave meals. Copies of Recipes for Improvisation and the ISB's new and misleading publication 1001 More Ways to Have Fun in Canberra can be obtained by writing to them. I'll be at home playing with my cheese.

Penelope Cottier.