

# Renegade Rivers takes Rabbit Test on tour

By Hugh Westrup

Can you imagine a fat, pimply-faced, tap dancing teenager with pigtails dressed in pink and white and wearing a *Save the Whales* t-shirt?

Joan Rivers can. "Tha's me, taken to insanity," said the blonde,

Jewish comedienne speaking before a capacity crowd in Curtis I on Monday.

The heavy hooper is but one of an asylum full of crazies let loose in River's new film about male pregnancy, *Rabbit Test*, which she is plugging all over the continent.

Joan Rivers is best known for her appearances in Las Vegas and on well established television programs like the *Tonight Show* and *Hollywood Squares*. But during the past year she's been a renegade in the conglomerate-controlled entertainment industry. Not only is she practically alone in a male-dominated profession, but also one of the few film makers to finance a motion picture without the support of the Hollywood elite. So she raised the money independently which included mortgaging her father's and her own home.

She described her maverick experiences in replies to questions from the students during her visit to York Monday, and while she couldn't help but be funny, there was little of the customary self-depreciation in her humour. She is on the offensive, determined to win over the nation's moviegoers.

*Rabbit Test* was completed for less than \$1 million, a radically inexpensive budget in Hollywood.

"We cut the budget to the bone," she said. "No fancy luncheons or limos. The cast was paid minimum wage and I edited the film in my garage."

"There was a wonderful feeling on the set. Because the cast knew we



Bob Hyman photo

Comedienne-director Joan Rivers (r) with York Film Chairman John Katz

were mortgaged there were no unlearned lines or temperamental outbursts."

What is it like being among the tiny minority of woman directors?

"I thought I would have problems as a female. The first day on the set the crew, which was mostly male, were all watching to see if I knew what I was doing. But I had done a lot of homework beforehand and things went okay after they found out I was prepared."

Rivers decided to make her own film after seeing a string of expensive, studio financed flops like *Nickelodean*, *Lucky Lady*, *At Long Last Love* and *Won Ton Ton* which she described as "the lowest". "I knew I could make better comedies than those."

"Big budget films are fine. But money should also be available for small films by young directors."

She said that like Woody Allen, Monty Python and *Saturday Night Live*, her humour in the film will not

appeal to conservative tastes. "To those who think the *Brady Bunch* is funny and Anita Bryant is tip top, I say 'screw em'."

"I'm shocked at how well *Rabbit Test* is doing in Nashville. That's the place where people think Dolly Parton's hairdo is pretty. It's not really her own hair, you know. She has Jimmy Hoffa hidden in there."

Rivers described *Rabbit Test* as "totally outrageous and insane", a description confirmed by the film clip she brought along. In ten minutes there were enough sight gags to fill several feature films including the aforementioned hooper dancing in church, a granny "flasher" and the seduction of an inflatable, female doll.

In addition to promoting her film, Rivers is making plans for another one to begin shooting in July.

"I've opened Pandora's box. I want to keep making more movies. Maybe in ten years time I'll be able to make a film as good as Annie Hall."

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## The Happy Cooker By Denise Beattie



## Vegetarian Shepherd's Pie

This week I'm going to toss out to you a recipe of my own creation. Pretentious as this may sound, it happened to turn out to be a wonderful blend of flavour, nutrition and heartiness and even light enough so that after two good helpings the evening ahead still looks possible. As it has zealously guarded its place of "tried and true" recipe, I feel I should take advantage of this chance to pass it on to you.

For lack of anything more descriptive I call it Vegetarian Shepherd's Pie, although I'm open to any suggestions for a better name. The basic idea has vegetables, mashed potatoes and cheese layered together and baked. More detailed it sounds like this...

**Gather:** (to serve 4 or 5; add about 1 cup of cooked vegetables and a serving of mashed potatoes for each person you add. Don't worry about leftovers - it keeps very well.), broccoli (these are all fresh and raw), green beans, carrots, celery, green pepper, a medium onion, garlic, one clove, cabbage, cauliflower.

This is a good selection of vegies. You really won't need very much of each one, probably about 4 1/2 to 5 cups when all have been chopped and combined. As you'll be sauteing them make the pieces small (easily bite size; no bigger than an inch for broccoli, cauliflower, etc.) Don't be afraid to add and subtract your own ideas on the varieties included. The ones I've suggested seem to me to have good harmonious flavours and nice colour combinations but they aren't law.

3 cups of mashed potatoes  
2 cups of grated cheese, a soft mellow cheese like brick is preferable  
some lemon juice  
half cup vegetable stock,  
vegetable water or plain water

sliced tomatoes (optional but good)  
bread crumbs  
butter

**Procedure:** Have I lost you yet!? The first step is to fry in oil the onion and garlic. When they are golden add the green beans if you're using them, as they take a bit longer to cook. When they've been in the pan for a few minutes add all the rest of the vegetables and saute until just done; they will also bake so be careful not to overcook them.

In the meantime get your mashed potatoes ready. If it doesn't offend your sensibilities and you can use instant as it greatly cuts your work and will not detract from your finished product.

Now in a deep 2 quart oiled baking dish lay half of your prepared vegetables. Over them pour your stock or water plus some salt and pepper and a fine sprinkling of lemon juice. Next spread half of the mashed potatoes evenly over the vegetables. On the mashed potatoes lay the sliced tomatoes, if you've chosen to use them, and then a little less than half the cheese.

Repeat this whole procedure, minus the stock, using all the rest of your ingredients. Extra cheese can only be better. Sprinkle the top with about a quarter cup dried bread crumbs, dot with butter and bake in a 375 degree oven until hot and bubbly with a nice golden top.

*Voila!* One really nice thing about this dinner is that you make it ahead of time and bake it when you're ready; that alone categorizes it with my "company dinners". Also as I mentioned before, it keeps well and can easily be reheated in the oven. Garlic bread and salad are great accompaniments for a filling and healthy feast. And please, send any proposed names to me, care of *Excalibur*.

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