



The Guest Post Cookbook

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WINNING ENTRY: Hannah Heller

Inherit The Spoon

Inheritthespoon.com

I miss my mom every day. Every day. I wish I could call her, or stop by and see her at her office, or email her a photo from my phone. Little things. Mostly they actually make me smile – I miss her, but I love her, and she would have loved my kids. But then on some days I catch a glimpse of the full scope of the loss – my Uncle Lance, who has lost both his parents, described it once as having the universe kind of opening up over your head, with nothing there to buffer you. You are exposed. And the chasm that yawns above you sometimes feels like it holds the entire world – family history, your own childhood stories, a parent’s unconditional love, a grandmother for your kids.

But then you remember something small – something like [how much your mom loved lemon verbena](#). And it feels real and visceral and you can *hear her voice*, it is in your head of course, but you know just the inflection, just the absolute exact way it would sound when she said *smell this* and smooshed it in her fingers. Or maybe you remember how, that last summer, when she couldn’t really eat anymore but she would still try, she asked you one warm Wednesday evening to go and pick up butternut squash ravioli in brown butter and sage sauce – from that place on College, the ones that were almost more dessert than dinner. And she managed a bite or two and you finished hers, and then threw yours away because you hadn’t been able to resist ordering two full meals, just in case.

You remember those things and then suddenly it is easier, and you can imagine how, if her grandkids had made her a card this Mother’s Day, she would have loved it. You can picture her face lighting up, her laughter, her sparkly green eyes. And you know she would have kept those cards her grandkids made – on her dresser, by her bed, and eventually in a box. You know this because you sorted through years and years of her files and found them – swirled in with receipts and letters, manifestos and prayers. *Card after card after handmade card. I love you mom. Happy Mother’s Day.*

Herbed Shortbreads

These recipes started life as Michael Ruhlman’s most basic cookie ratio in his instructive if dense book, [Ratio: The Simple Codes Behind the Craft of Everyday Cooking](#). The original recipe makes a lovely, not-too-sweet shortbread style cookie. I have made it even less sweet, and then upped the flavor profile with the addition

of herbs. It is a subtle cookie – what he perfectly describes as an “adult cookie” – and like all good shortbread it leans heavily on the butter flavor (use really good butter! Maybe even [make your own](#)). I think most any mom would enjoy a batch, this Sunday or any Sunday really. My mom would have loved them – and I do, too. :)

Lemon Verbena Shortbread

8 tablespoons butter 3 tablespoons sugar 15 or more lemon verbena leaves,
chopped fine 1/2 cup all purpose flour (plus 2 tablespoons if needed) 1/2 cup spelt
flour

Optional: additional sugar for sprinkling

Preheat the oven to 350°F and line two baking sheets with parchment.

In a stand mixer, cream together the butter and sugar until lightened and fluffy. Add the lemon verbena and mix until it is blended in. Add the 1/2 cups of flour and mix well until a dough forms. You should be able to form this into neat balls – if it is very sticky, add another tablespoon or two of flour.

Make small (teaspoons of dough) balls and flatten slightly on the cookie sheets. If you'd like, you can give them a little sugar dusting. Put the cookie sheets in the fridge, and let the shaped dough chill for a few minutes.

Bake for eight to ten minutes or until the bottoms are golden and the edges just barely turning. Cool on racks.

This makes a lot of cookies! 25+. But they are very small, and they will go very quickly ...



Marcus Stout
Golden Moon Tea
Chai Infused Texas Chili

There is something about a nice bowl of red that can make the gloomiest days seem a tad brighter. Now, let me warn you about something You can't just throw around a term like "Texas Chili" lightly. If you make the mistake of adding any non-canon ingredients to a Texas chili you will get some pretty ticked off cowboys correcting you.

What is Texas Chili?

Texas Chili has five crucial ingredients – meat, chili powder, onion, cumin and garlic. Tomatoes and beans are strictly forbidden. The reason why so many Texans get upset about the addition of tomato and beans is those ingredients were not available when chili was invented. Chili was invented by real life Cowboys while they were on the trail. Since space was at a premium, cowboys were usually limited to carrying only dried goods to use as seasoning.

Why I added Chai...

It may seem weird to add Chai to a traditional Texas Chili. I am not going to lie to you, it is a bit unconventional and there will be some people that call shenanigans. But my justification is this, Chai tea is a dried good which has flavors that mix well with Chili. Tea can last for years meaning it is ideal for long trips without refrigeration. And most importantly, I love tea so I think it should go with everything. doesn't that count for something?

Chai Infused Texas Chili

4 pounds of chuck roast, cut into 1/4 inch cubes
1 large onion diced
6 cloves of garlic, crushed
3 cup of brewed Chai(I like my companies chai – Kashmiri Chai)
2 bottles of beer
6 tablespoons Gebhardt's chili powder
1/2 tsp cayenne
1 tablespoon cumin

1/4 cup masa harina (This is a Mexican flour that helps to thicken the chili. If you can't find any you can use flour)
2 chipotles in adobo (optional)

- 1) Open the first beer and take a bit swig. This beer has nothing to do with the chili but how can you make chili without drinking beer?
- 2) Brown the meat in a large pot. Be sure to do it in 2 or 3 batches or the meat will boil instead of sear
- 3) Take the meat out of the pot and add the onions. Cook until they turn clear
- 4) Add in the garlic and cook for a minute. Be sure they do not turn dark brown.
- 5) Add the Chai, beer, chili powder, cayenne, cumin to the pot. If you like it spicy add in the Chipotle's. Be careful though they pack a punch.
- 6) Simmer for 2 hours.
- 7) Scoop out 1 cup of broth and add the masa harina. Mix it well and then reincorporate it back into the pot. Stir until chili is thickened. This is a Mexican flour that helps to thicken the chili. If you can't find any you can use flour.



Leslie Fitzgerald McMurray
Blackberry Peach Cobbler

There are a lot of different ways to express love. Some people write poetry or buy expensive gifts. I cook. I never realized this about myself until one of my friends pointed it out to me and I realized he was totally right. If I love you, I want to feed you.

But I'm not totally altruistic either. For me there are few better ways to relax than to set aside some time in the kitchen. Baking in particular allows me to be creative while, at the same time, be soothed. It's a win-win for all involved.

I can't remember when or how my family first found out about Homestead Farm but I do know that it's held a special place in my heart ever since. My sister and I took her future husband apple picking there when they were first dating, which means we've been going for at least 15 years. When we first started going you had to call to find out what was available for picking; that information was not accessible on the Internet.

Last summer I took my then six-month-old daughter to Homestead to pick blackberries and peaches. C was facing outward in the Bjorn and blissfully stuffing her face with the berries as I dropped them into our basket. I would've remained totally unaware of her antics had one of the other moms not noticed and pointed out the black stains on C's mouth and hands. She was clearly quite proud of herself for getting away with this scheme for as long as she did, and she had a look of pure, unbridled joy on her face. Little did she know it was only going to get better.

I took those berries we'd gathered and made them into a blackberry peach cobbler. I loved the fact that the primary ingredients were ones my daughter and I picked together. I hope that as she grows up, she'll come to know the joy I get from nourishing her.

Here's to this summer's crops of fruit and the cobblers that will spring forth from them!

PS -- I used [this recipe from Epicurious](#).



Maria Bergstrom

Grandma's Goulash

(Which is nothing like proper goulash, but that's what we've always called it)

I'm not sure you're going to want to include this recipe on your blog, because it has "ketchup" as an ingredient. Yep, good old ketchup. And not like a little tablespoon on the side. A whole big dollop of it right in the middle. But here is the thing. This is my best go-to recipe when I'm in a hurry, or don't know what to cook, or need a comfort food dinner that doesn't come in a take-out bag. It's not fancy, won't impress company, and is not in the least bit pretentious. But it's easy, dependable, made from ingredients that are simple to keep on hand, and the longer I thought about it in relation to this posting opportunity, the more I realized how many different events and emotions I associate with this humble dish.

This is what I love about this recipe:

It comes from my grandmother's days as a "lunchroom lady" in 1950s Iowa, but can still be found on my table and the tables of several siblings and cousins from time to time. I love that, when we stayed at my aunt and uncle's house, and I happened to open her refrigerator, I found a container of leftover goulash that exactly matched the one I had at home in my refrigerator at the time.

I made a big batch of this for a friend who was in the early days of her first pregnancy and found that the meaty, tomatoey (is that a word?) flavor minus the cheese of a typical pasta dish was just the thing for her unsettled appetite. (I credit the ketchup, of course).

I sent this recipe, plus all the ingredients minus the onion and ground beef, in a care package to a young friend who was living on his own for the first time and experimenting with cooking for himself. I told him it was just as easy as Hamburger Helper, but way better in the taste department.

My recipe card for this dish (which I rarely consult anymore), is in my brother's handwriting. He wrote out some of our family's favorite recipes and gave them to my (now) husband and I as a gift the Christmas right before we got married. My brother was a cash-poor college student at the time, but that recipe collection was one of my best Christmas gifts ever. So, if you aren't afraid (or ashamed) to try a

little ketchup in your casserole, here is...

Grandma's Goulash

Start water boiling for pasta in a large saucepan. When the water boils, add two handfuls of elbow macaroni (about 1 cup, there is a lot of wiggle room here). Cook until done (al dente, if you know what that means—Grandma probably wouldn't have). Drain and set aside. In a skillet, brown one pound of ground beef or ground turkey with one onion, diced. Drain excess fat. Add one can of tomato paste (9 oz), one can of diced tomatoes (15 oz), $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup ketchup, 1 Tbsp sugar, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir ingredients together, add cooked pasta and stir to combine. Heat through and then let sit, covered, for a few minutes while you set the table or microwave a bag of frozen veggies. Serve with a salad and yummy, crusty bread if you have it.



Liz Whittington Ragany

EmmaEats.com

Hickety Pickety My Paprikash Hen

We're back from our trip to Florida and it is suddenly cold here. I know you probably aren't feeling too sympathetic to my complaint especially since we were warm and basking in the Florida sunshine merely days ago. But now we are cold, have finally seen some snow (which turned to freezing rain and then melted again) and are being treated to a not-so-nice few days forecasted ahead. Emma's take on things here: "Mummy, our garden looks terrible. It really needs some work!" She's right – we don't have the varied red and golden leaves of fall blowing about nor do we have the fresh green growth of spring back there right now.

Seems like a good time to dig out some cozy sweaters and cook up a few comforting dishes for the last hurrahs of winter. Well, that and close our eyes to the dreadful looking garden!

When I was young, my mother would make a few dishes in particular during this type of weather. Like chicken paprikash with fresh dumplings (aka nokedli).

Seasoned with paprika we would bring back from our visits to Hungary. I used to love it then and I still do. As a result, I thought it would be a perfect dish to introduce to Emma. As did my mother – who made it for her when she was about a year old. And to my mother's delight, Emma enthusiastically gobbled it up.

My mother's modern day paprikás csirke (aka chicken paprikash) has a bit of a spin on the traditional by adding mushrooms to it. In fact, when we need a vegan version of the dish, it can be made with mushrooms and vegetable broth rather than with chicken. She also uses lots of paprika (which we have no trouble sourcing here now available in most European delicatessens and grocers) and when it's only for the adults, we add a healthy spoonful of Eros Pista, a hot paprika paste. In our household, we've opted to use olive oil (rather than animal fat) for sauteing the onions and garlic. Also, G and Emma are not fans of sour cream so rather than mix it into the dish, I add a dollop on top of mine and leave theirs dairy-free.

After eating (and subsequently cooking with) paprika for my entire life, I recently learned a few interesting tidbits about this well-known Hungarian spice. The flavour and colour are released only once it has been added to hot fat. You can sprinkle it over dishes as garnish, but this will provide it only with the colour rather than change the flavour much. And an important note, don't burn the paprika when adding it to your cooking. Yes, it can burn easily – permeating your kitchen with a not-so-appetizing smell and releasing a very bitter flavour into your dish.

All that being said, this dish is delicious, very easy to make and ends up with a deep and rich reddish-orange colour. It can be served over homemade dumplings, or rice, potatoes or noodles – your choice based on your taste and time constraints. Either way, it will bring a little sunshine to your wintry/wet/whatever weather-we-are-seeing-these-days table.

Chicken and Mushroom Paprikash (Paprikás Csirke Gombával)

(serves 8)

Chicken and Mushrooms:

1/4 cup whole wheat flour, seasoned with salt, pepper and paprika
12 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 3 or 4 pieces each
4-5 tbsp olive oil
1 medium spanish onion, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 tbsp sweet Hungarian paprika
5-10 cremini or button mushrooms, cleaned and quartered
3-4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
1 cup red wine (like this [Hungarian pinot noir](#))
salt and pepper to taste
sour cream (optional)

hot paprika paste (like [Eros Pista](#)) (optional)

Dumplings (nokedli):

- 12 cups of cold water, well salted
- 4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 large eggs
- 1 1/2-2 cups cold water

Heat 2 tbsp of olive oil in a large pot. Dredge chicken in flour mixture and brown on all sides. Remove chicken to a bowl and set aside.

In the same pot, heat remaining oil and soften onions and garlic, about 7-10 minutes. Add paprika and stir, coating the onions well. If the mixture seems very dry, add 1/4 to 1/2 cup of broth to keep it from sticking. Next, add the mushrooms and chicken to the pot. Pour wine and enough broth to just cover the chicken in the pot. Bring to a boil and then simmer on medium heat, covered but with the lid open slightly, for 45 minutes to an hour or so remembering to stir occasionally. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

When the chicken is tender, in a separate pot, bring the salted water to a boil. In a medium bowl, combine the eggs and flour and slowly add enough water to make a wet, thick lumpy dough. When the water is boiling, divide the batter in half and add it by the teaspoonful to the pot (or instead, use a [spatze maker](#)). Let the dumplings cook until they float to the top of the pot and then wait one more minute. (This is a good time for a taste test, to ensure that they are done). Using a slotted spoon, remove this batch of dumplings from the water and set aside. Repeat with the second batch.

When all the dumplings are cooked and drained, serve the chicken over top of the dumplings with a dollop of sour cream, if desired. Enjoy!



Julie Campagna
Nourishcommunity.com
The Curve

I'm a planner. There are some days when the planning is the only reason I survive the day. And one of the best practices in the Nourish kitchen is to do some planning and prepping ahead of time whenever you can in order to make it that much more possible to sit down and have a meal together. I'm the first to encourage a meal plan, an hour or so of roasting or dicing or freezing on the weekend, or a double batch of this or that to save for later. I'm also a working mom and wife; with that comes many a curve in the road. It's at that curve that we have the opportunity to lean into the change and maybe express a little of that creative side that gets lost in the planning shuffle. I know for some that curve creates stress and anxiety. But perhaps we need to see it as an opportunity to do something different, experiment, or just play in the unknown.

Tonight the road brings me to my kitchen with no plans and not much on hand - some lettuce, garlic, stale bread, lemons and leftover chicken. I'm also looking for a way out of the post - meal clean up and the grill is calling my name. It seems the ideal time to try my hand at a couple tips I've picked up along the way on a recent trip. The result is a restaurant worthy salad that no one would ever know was the product of a barren kitchen. And I'm a little freer for the moment having flexed some unused "muscles" and played in a new space. Tomorrow it's off to the market and back to my planner. Tonight I am here, having a yummy salad and enjoying a meal with the family; the best part of my day, with or without plans.

BBQ Caesar

Place 2 heads of Romaine lettuce washed and still together in a bunch if possible. Drizzle with olive oil. Place on to a hot grill. Watch it closely and flip once. It's done when there's a bit of brown on the leaves and it's wilted.

Creamy Caesar Dressing

- 1 lemon
- 3/4 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 3/4 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce or 1 tablespoon Anchovy Paste
- 1 garlic clove pressed
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh parmesan cheese, grated
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Juice 2 Tablespoons lemon juice; place in a bowl. Add mustard, Worcestershire sauce or anchovy paste, garlic, salt and black pepper; whisk until blended. Add yogurt; whisk until smooth. While continually whisking, add oil to mayonnaise in a thin, steady stream. Continue whisking until blended; stir in parmesan cheese. Cover; refrigerate until ready to serve. Store dressing covered in refrigerator up to 2 weeks. You can also place all these ingredients in a blender and mix until smooth.

Candied Garlic

Place whole cloves of garlic in a skillet (as many as you think you'll eat!) Barely cover with chardonnay and about 1/2 cup of sugar. Simmer until garlic is soft when pierced with a fork.

Serve the salad on the side or under your leftover chicken and candied garlic.



Andra and Catherine
OurLastSupper.com
Hostess Cupcakes: Never Forget

Which came first, Mother's day or birthdays? Because you can't have a birthday without a mother and you can't have Mother's day without a child. It's really an existential question, no? Celebrating the two together seems prophetic when you have a son turning six and a mother who lives around the corner. I don't mean prophetic in the "what a glorious gift to receive on mother's day" kind of way. I mean it in more of a "killing two birds with one stone" kind of way. Either way, the day ended with cake as all days, single-celebratory or multiple-celebratory, should. I left the choice of cake flavors up to the six-year-old because I knew he would choose correctly: chocolate on chocolate. Someone had to be the adult so I decided to add a layer of marshmallow between the two layers of chocolate cake. When it came together I called everyone in to see the finished product and everyone BUT the six year old said, "It looks just like a Hostess CupCake!" My six year old said, "What's a Hostess CupCake?"

Now I know what true mother's guilt feels like. Did we force Hostess into bankruptcy? Will my grandchildren never know a Twinkie? I feel some responsibility to not stand by and watch an era disappear like dinosaurs and rotary-dial phones. I, for one, will do my part to make sure that my children will be able to pass down the traditions of their past by keeping Hostess CupCakes around, whether from the glorious cellophane wrapper or my own kitchen.

The cake was a buttermilk chocolate cake with a seven-minute frosting layer between the layers of cake and then covered with a layer of chocolate ganache. We have a lot more to say about ganache, but we just met, remember?

Ina Garten's [Beatty's Chocolate Cake](#)

Any Seven-Minute Frosting recipe

Ganache

Equal parts bittersweet chocolate and heavy whipping cream. Heat the cream, add chopped chocolate and stir until mixture reaches desired consistency.



Blair Vigil

Bacon-Wrapped Jalapeno Shrimp

Six years ago, I couldn't cook. Like, burn a grilled cheese, ruin bagged salad - could. not. cook. I was not the girl anyone would call if they had a cooking question.

Six years ago, my husband proposed and we moved in together. Somehow, until this point, I had managed to never let my future husband know how incapable I was in the kitchen. We were both busy and worked a lot which meant we ate out and even for stay-in dates we just ordered takeout. When we moved in together I finally had to either bite the bullet and confess that I had no culinary skills, or, I had to fake it until I made it (literally!). Never the type to go down without a fight, I decided I had to cook something. This something had to be easy to make (read: a child could do this), delicious and nothing short of amazing. I felt a lot of pressure – I mean, what if I really screwed this up and my future husband decided I was not his perfect woman after all? (Six years later I know this was not possible but at the time I was worried!)

A few weeks before my cooking debut we had eaten at a restaurant and there was this shrimp that my fiancé raved about. It seemed more like assembling ingredients than cooking so I decided it would probably be more or less fool-proof. So I set out to make Bacon-wrapped jalapeno-stuffed shrimp. It turned out so good. Crisp salty bacon, creamy melted cheese, spicy jalapeno and perfectly cooked shrimp – all in one bite. This one is a keeper. Not only did it totally impress my husband but it ignited my love for cooking. This one success made me feel like I could cook and so I did – the next night and the next. Six years and two beautiful babies later I am still cooking, only now I am the girl people call with cooking questions.

Bacon-wrapped Jalapeno Stuffed Shrimp

1 pound shrimp peeled and deveined.
Salt and Pepper
8 slices bacon sliced in half
5 tablespoons Cream Cheese
1 medium sized jalapeno cut into slivers (optional)
15 tooth picks

Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees. Cover a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Cook bacon in a sauté pan until it is about half way cooked. Remove from pan with slotted spoon and set aside

Season Shrimp with Salt and Pepper. Cut slices into middle of shrimp that will work as a pocket. Stuff pocket with a jalapeno sliver and ½ tablespoon of cream cheese. Wrap each shrimp with a slice of bacon and secure with a toothpick. Place on prepared baking sheet.

Bake for 7-10 minutes until bacon is crisp and shrimp is cooked through.



Jenny Beck
JennyBeck.net
Weeknight Paella

My mom is a great cook. That is, everything she cooks is great – all 12 or so dishes. Seriously, the woman has been making the same food since before I was born: spaghetti and meatballs (pork ribs in the sauce!), scrambled steak over mashed potatoes, tuna noodle casserole, pesto, chicken and rice with gravy, and so on. A few dishes have rotated in and out over the years, and seasonal vegetables play a huge role, but otherwise her core repertoire remains steadfast, even if the recipes themselves are flexible (the only time she uses an actual recipe is when she's baking). Not only do these dishes make for amazing comfort food, but most of them adapt well to large groups, or even to a nice meal on special occasions. Furthermore, all the ingredients are easy to keep around and don't cost much. I grew up with this food, and have always shared my mom's enthusiasm for home cooking, so you'd think I would have naturally adopted similar kitchen practices.

Not so! Almost everything I cook is something I've never cooked before. My cooking "repertoire" – if you can call it that – is in a constant state of experimentation. If I'm not trying something new that I found on a crazy food blog, then I'm tweaking a recipe or testing a new variation. I have no formula, no routine. As a result, I'm constantly obsessing over ingredients and squeezing in trips to the grocery store. My pantry and refrigerator are overflowing with odd ingredients that I bought for some complicated recipe that I've now lost interest in making. Furthermore, my schedule doesn't really allow for the type of culinary pioneering to which I aspire.

This is not how I envision my relationship with mealtime, and I've found that my manic habits often cause more stress than satisfaction. What I want is a handful of solid recipes that never fail me, a repertoire of meals for which I always have ingredients on hand and that come together without much fuss. I want to cook like my mother, except, you know, in my own way. And I think that's what this mad, Internet-scouring, cookbook-collecting recipe search is really about: I want to cook like my mom without simply trying to replicate her breaded chicken cutlets.

This paella recipe fits the bill. It feeds two hungry adults (with leftovers!), goes easy on pot/pan usage, and is happily consumed by finicky two-year-olds. I make it at home on a regular basis, and also multiply the recipe for company (notice it doesn't use any saffron - adding some easily elevates this dish from "family meal" to

"fancy meal" in no time). Preparation requires about 10 minutes hands-on time, followed by some simmering, at which point I usually throw together a salad or wash some dishes. Heck, if I've remembered to defrost the chicken thighs, this may even qualify as a "30 minute meal." Oh, and don't take the measurements (or even the ingredients) too seriously... it's more of a "use it if you've got it" kind of recipe, and THAT is something I definitely get from my mom.

Weeknight Paella

4 chicken thighs (with bone and skin), cut into thirds
1-2 tablespoons olive oil
salt

1 small onion, finely chopped (about 1/3 cup)
2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed

1 tablespoon paprika
1/4 cup diced chorizo (The dried spanish kind... this has a permanent place in my refrigerator, so I was glad to see [The Chorizo Effect](#) officially documented here on DALS)
2/3 cup rice (preferably a risotto-making variety, but any white rice will do)

1/2 cup white wine

2 cups water
2 cups cut green beans, defrosted if frozen

lemon wedges (optional)
chopped parsley (optional)

While you cut up the chicken, pre-heat a 10-inch skillet or pot over medium-high heat. Generously season the chicken pieces with salt. Add the olive oil to the pan, followed by the chicken pieces skin-side down. While the chick sizzles, prepare the other ingredients. Remove the browned chicken to a plate (feel free to brown the chicken on only one side).

Add the onion and garlic to the pan. Cook for a minute or two, stirring occasionally, until softened.

Stir in the paprika, chorizo, and rice. Stir for another minute to toast the rice.

Add the wine, and when it has mostly evaporated, stir in the water and green beans.

Return the chicken to the pan, skin side up. Bring to a lively simmer for 15-20 minutes, until the liquid is mostly gone (add more water if the pan dries out before the rice is cooked). Cover pan, remove from heat, and let sit for two minutes.

Serve garnished with lemon wedges and parsley, if you like.



Christina Saluke

Chocolate Cake for Two

Believe it or not the chocolate cake pictured here is the “chocolate cake for two” of which I refer. Yes, this decadent confection was consumed, with the exception of one piece that was gifted to my father-in-law, by just my husband, Dan, and me.

It was Dan’s thirtieth birthday. The big 3-0! The birthday of birthdays. A milestone traditionally commemorated with family, friends and excitement. Alas, for Dan, his thirtieth birthday consisted of him, me and a giant chocolate cake.

I had plans- I promise I did. I had plans for a fancy night on the town. Plans to ring in thirty with a bang! Unfortunately, February in Ohio had other plans for me. Plans for a headache, runny nose and all around grossness.

So, disappointingly, I found myself down and out on Dan’s thirtieth birthday. How could this be? I had plans!

I took a sick day from work with hopes that I would perk up and feel better for the evening. Who was I kidding? I was finding it challenging to lift the remote and change the channel.

As I lamented over the realization that all extravagance had long since flown far, far away out the window I deliberated over what I could still possibly do to salvage some slice of excitement to celebrate.

And then it hit me!

I had all the ingredients to make a birthday cake for Dan. So I took to the kitchen, still donning my pink fluffy robe, aptly named Pinky, and got to baking.

As I measured and poured and melted I had visions that Dan would come home to find me laying on the kitchen floor covered in flour and chocolate. I took special and exact care not to breath on anything (the germs would have been cooked out anyways though, right?). Needless to say, at the end of my undertaking I was truly exhausted and Pinky was covered in chocolate. But I didn't care. On the contrary actually, I was proud of my badges of baking. This cake was the only token I had to offer the birthday boy.

When Dan arrived home from work he was exuberant to see his surprise! He didn't seem to mind at all that I had replaced a fancy meal out with sprinkles at home. That night we ate two big pieces of chocolate cake...

We ate that cake for an entire week after. We couldn't eat our dinner fast enough to get to the dessert that we had quickly grown so accustomed to. Each slice seemed better than the last and each night after Dan and I took our first bites we would turn to each other and through muffled frosting-filled mouths say:

"How good is this cake?!"

So, what had started out as a disheartening day turned into a week of smiles, laughs and togetherness. And sometimes that is the best present you can give!

Giant Chocolate Cake

Cake ***Passed on from my mom

1/4 c. butter
1/4 c. shortening
2 c. sugar
1 tsp vanilla
2 eggs
3/4 cup Hershey's Cocoa
1 3/4 c. flour
3/4 tsp baking powder
3/4 tsp baking soda
1/8 tsp salt
1 3/4 c. milk

1. Spray two 9" cake pans with non-stick cooking spray
2. In a large mixing bowl cream together butter, shortening, sugar and vanilla until fluffy
3. Blend in eggs to the cream the mixture
4. In a medium bowl combine cocoa, flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt

5. Add flour mixture to cream mixture alternating with milk
6. Pour into pans evenly. Bake at 350 for 35 minutes.
7. While cakes are baking make frosting
8. After cakes have completely cooled remove them from pans. Put a layer of frosting on the top of one cake. Stack the second cake on top. Spread frosting evenly on entire cake.

Frosting

***From the back of the Hershey's Cocoa container

1 stick butter or margarine

2/3 c. Hershey's Cocoa

3 c. powdered sugar

1/3 c. milk

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1. Melt butter. Stir in cocoa.
2. Alternately add powdered sugar and milk, beating on medium speed to spreading consistency. Add more milk, if needed. Stir in vanilla



Sarah Hewes

Beet Ravioli with Brussels Sprouts

I recently had the pleasure of watching a vegetarian couple roast, mash, and fold beets into a bright pink ravioli at a 'fall harvest' cooking class I attended at [Kelli Petri Catering Company](#). Prior to taking the class (at which my friend Kristyn and I cooked an acorn squash and kale farro with crispy chicken thighs), my only experience with beets took place at the age of 5. My mother had an unexplainable penchant for pickled beets.

I can't remember if we ate beets often or what they accompanied on the plate. But I do remember struggling through my third or so beet when my father uncharacteristically announced that he would not be consuming another beet ever again. Coming from a man who grew up in a poor Irish Catholic neighborhood with five siblings, four of whom were growing boys, declaring that you would not be eating anything placed in front of you on the table was wildly shocking. Even at the age of 5 I already knew that it was unacceptable to refuse the food my mother served. You ate the vegetables. There were consequences for not eating the vegetables. Even my sister, only 2 at the time, looked worried. But somehow my father was allowed to leave his plate partially uneaten and retire to the living room for a rerun of Cheers or whatever middle aged men watched in 1990. And the beets went away. I didn't see another jar cross the threshold of the house and haven't since. I attempted this tactic with steamed spinach and later with seafood to no avail.

So maybe due to the Beet Controversy of '90 my interest was peeked when we walked into the commercial kitchen where the class was held and strolled the room scanning recipes. Each team of 2, six teams total, would cook one recipe consisting prominently of autumn produce. I was immediately drawn to the beets and the chance to roll our own pasta. The raviolis would be served with a brussel sprout and pine nut slaw. Kristyn had never cooked brussel sprouts and was equally intrigued. We set up our BYOB'd bottles of wine and glasses at the station and waited for the others to arrive. After the class was introduced each team was told to pick the recipe they wanted to make. One woman spoke up and said she didn't eat meat and were there any vegetarian recipes? Goodbye beet raviolis.

Kristyn and I cooked a delicious farro dish but I could not wait to get home and try out the beet recipe myself. What did they taste like? Why had my father so

abruptly refused their presents at the dinner table so many years ago? How can something so beautifully pink smell so pungent? So when they arrived in my last [CSA](#) basket of the season I knew immediately what I would create. I cheated a bit and used wonton wrappers to create the raviolis, but I followed the recipe from Kelli Petri otherwise. My brussel sprouts came out slightly burnt due to a phone call distraction. The dish was still quite edible and delicious, but I will be keeping a better eye on the oven next time.

Beet Ravioli with Brussel Sprouts

4 small red beets
1 package wonton wrappers
1/4 cup fresh whole-milk ricotta cheese
4 ounces goat cheese
3/4 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed
2 tablespoons butter
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons pine nuts
Freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 400°F. Wrap beets individually in foil; place on baking sheet. Roast until tender when pierced with knife, about 1 hour. Open foil carefully. Cool. Peel beets; finely grate into medium bowl. Add cheeses and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Spoon 1 teaspoon beet filling onto each wonton wrapper. Dip fingertip into water and dampen edge of 1 round. Fold wrapper over filling to create a triangle, pushing out as much air as possible and pressing edges firmly to seal. Transfer to prepared towels. Repeat.

Preheat oven to 500°F. Slice Brussels sprouts thinly. Spread brussel sprouts out evenly on a cookie sheet and drizzle with 2 tablespoons olive oil. Toss with salt and pepper. Cover with heavy aluminum foil and bake for 10 minutes. Remove foil and continue to roast until tender, 3 to 5 minutes.

Heat butter and oil in a large heavy skillet over medium heat until foam subsides, then cook pine nuts, stirring, until golden, 1 to 2 minutes. Add Brussels sprouts and mix until incorporated.

Cook ravioli in salted boiling water until al dente. Using slotted spoon, remove to bowl. Toss with Brussels sprouts and sprinkle with Parmesan.



Courtney Glantz
Yellow and Green Pasta

When I saw that my go to food blog, Dinner A Love Story, was doing a guest post contest I had two immediate reactions: 1. I have to at least attempt this and 2. Wait. Could I actually attempt this?

Jenny and Andy are writers - like, real ones. I do this for fun. They have had hefty experience with professional food magazines. I stare lovingly at those magazines while I'm in the check out line trying to distract my son from buying another taffy or throwing a second bag of bbq chips in the cart.

Regardless, I knew this was something I had to try, and hopefully my confidence in the kitchen would outshine any hesitation it has when it comes to my writing. Yes I don't have a book on the way (you guys rock!) but I have planned and made dinner for my family roughly every night of the week for eight years and there is something to be said for that. So, let's do this.

I started to browse through my (painfully unorganized) binder filled with torn and splattered recipes as well as surf my blog. I knew the recipe had to be just right. Family friendly, easy on the eyes, and a true representation of something I created. Finally the recipe hit me: my yellow and green pasta. I ran the photo by my preschooler while he dined over his Trader Joes cereal bar and yogurt smoothie before we hit the road for school. His reaction? 'It looks cool mom.' If I could get a 'cool' from someone who won't touch pasta I'm hoping this photo can appeal to the masses.

I love two things about this recipe. First of all, it is a bit quirky, which I like to think is my style in general from everything to decor to fashion to cooking. Things are thrown together that you wouldn't typically think to throw together, but somehow it ends up working quite well. Secondly, you get to toss everything together in a skillet which pretty much makes my day. Anyone else with me on this one?

The final stamp of approval on this dish would come from my mother. She is the ultimate cook in my eyes and ever since I posted this recipe on my blog back in September she has served this what seems like weekly in her home. Something about that just makes me smile and gives me the confidence I need to send this in. I

really hope you enjoy!

Yellow & Green Pasta
Serves a very hungry 4

Recipe from 'A Life From Scratch'

- 3/4 a box of whole wheat fettucini
- salt & pepper
- 3 TBS olive oil
- 2 leeks, washed, trimmed and cut into thin half moon slices
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup corn, fresh or frozen
- 1 cup peas, fresh or frozen
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- 2 big handfuls of arugula
- 1/2 cup pecorino cheese (or parmesan), plus more for topping

Cook pasta according to package directions.

Warm your olive oil in a large and deep skillet over medium heat. Add the leeks and saute 5ish minutes till tender. Add the garlic, 1/2 tsp salt, 1/4 tsp pepper and saute for 2 more minutes. Add in your peas, corn, wine, and cook a few minutes. Stir in the cream and bring to a bubble.

Add in your freshly cooked pasta, another dash of salt & pepper, pecorino cheese, arugula, and toss with tongs to combine.

Dish out pasta into deep bowls and top with more cheese, of course. Divine.



Lisa Runge

Diary of an Early New Mom

Diaryofanearlynewmom.com

Chickpeas, Toddlers, and the Art of Deconstruction

I don't do much fine dining these days (read: ever), but from what I have gathered watching *Top Chef*, deconstruction is a big thing right now. Why eat a Caesar salad when you can have lettuce wrapped around Dippin' Dots made of Caesar dressing topped with freeze-dried anchovies? (Oh, I know, because Caesar salad tastes good, and freeze dried anchovies are for cats.)

Anyway, I may not charge \$30 a plate for my home cooking, but I do know something about deconstruction. After all, I am the proud parent of a toddler. My dear son [enjoyed baby food](#) for about a month before deciding that he was over the business of being spoon-fed. So, the task fell to me to turn every meal into finger food, from soup to fried rice. I would isolate the components, make sure they were teeny-tiny enough not to be choked on but big enough to be pincer-grasped, and try my hardest to [pretend that I was not making a separate meal for my tiny tyrant](#).

Last night, falafel was on the menu. My little man is now big enough to wield a fork with skill, and has the molars to eat normal-sized pieces of food, but he never quite developed a feel for soft (mushy) foods. When I serve him things in patty form, like black bean burgers and, ahem, falafel, I know I am setting myself up for lots of food-based artwork and very little eating. So, let the deconstruction begin. So far, my son has proved to be a man of diverse tastes, so I wanted to

preserve the flavor of falafel while changing the texture. The end-product, which you can see above, is a chickpea and cucumber salad with lemon-tahini dressing. Like a good children's book, it ended up having both adult *and* toddler appeal. Hmm. Maybe next time I'll just make that.

Chickpea and Cucumber Salad with Lemon-Tahini Dressing

Note: For the actual falafel, I used [this recipe](#). The lemon-tahini dressing served as a topping)

The dressing:

1/3 c. lemon juice

1/2 c. sesame tahini

2 T. soy sauce

1 T. brown sugar

1-2 cloves minced garlic

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Add water, one tablespoon at a time, until you achieve desired consistency.

The salad:

3 c. cooked chickpeas

1 medium cucumber, diced

2 T. parsley

1 T. cumin

1 T. turmeric

Combine all salad ingredients, then top with dressing. You may not need to use all of the dressing. Toss until chickpeas are evenly coated. Garnish with tomato slices. Serve with a side of warm pitas or pita chips.



Laura Stanczak

My Little Plate

Mylittleplate.com

Roasted Cauliflower Enchiladas

For the past couple weeks I have been trying to "work" on collecting my recipes to create some sort of cookbook/recipe book for myself. Okay, I won't lie; I have actually been working on this project not for a couple of weeks but for a couple of years. Okay, fine - it has been like 5 years... but anyhow, as I have been recently looking closer at my recipes I have found myself repeatedly thinking: " Oh wow, I need to make that again, and that and that. Oh I forgot about that recipe..." So, I thought rather than try to be creative and come up with all new recipes to make this week, I should, instead, stick to making our family favorites as well as remake some of those great dishes that I almost forgot about. Almost.

Secondly, I thought, rather than scour the internet and tear down every cookbook off the shelf yet again in search of something new and exotic to make for dinner tonight, I really should spend that energy and effort working on simplifying some of the recipes I already have. And who doesn't want mealtime simplified? I sure do. Right now I am in need of dishes that I can make and clean up ahead of time, so that there aren't 400 dishes to do in the small window of time after dinner and before bath time. At the same time, I do not want to be doing 400 dishes ever, so I am looking to cut out steps (and dishes) and simplify. I also want dinners that provide leftovers so that I am not having to cook and think of something new everyday of the week.

That being said, I felt that Cauliflower Enchiladas, a newer family favorite is the exact recipe in need of a makeover. With quite a few steps to making these enchiladas along with the stress of the rolling up the tortillas without breaking them, paired with the agony of getting the cooked enchiladas out of the casserole dish without, again, breaking them (and yes I have made individual enchiladas in gratin dishes but that makes even more dishes), I felt an enchiladas casserole would be the way to go – all the same flavors but in a different format. So, I cut out a few steps and simplified my old recipe to

create this same hearty and healthy meal. Plus, this casserole is just the type to made ahead of time (to allow all of the flavors to meld, of course) and it created lots of leftovers. Check, check and check.

I made a pot of black beans and a simple green salad for a satisfying dinner that can be repeated through the week.

Roasted Cauliflower Enchilada Casserole

Makes one 13-by-9-inch casserole, Serves 8

An adaptation of my Roasted Cauliflower Enchiladas –same flavors but a different format. The goal here was to simplify this dish by cutting out a couple of steps. I skipped cooking the sauce (it really didn't need it), warming the tortillas and rolling them into enchiladas. This made for easier assembly and serving. The amounts here do not need to be exact, just approximate. The key here is to pace yourself while layering the casserole – don't add all the sauce or cheese at the beginning so that there isn't enough for the top.

2 heads cauliflower, cut into 1 inch pieces

2-3 tablespoons olive oil

1 small white onion

salt

fresh ground pepper

pinch of cumin

15 ounces fresh salsa (mild or spicy)

38 ounces canned tomato sauce (a combo of strained tomatoes, tomato sauce or canned diced tomatoes and their juices)

16-20 corn tortillas

10-12 ounces fresh grated jack cheese

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. On 2 baking sheets, lined with parchment paper, toss the cauliflower with the olive oil, onion and cumin, season with salt and pepper and bake for about 25 minutes, tossing half way through, or until the onions and cauliflower are slightly caramelized. Let the cauliflower cool. Use a fork to slightly mash the cauliflower and onions together. Set aside.

Combine the salsa and the tomato sauce.

To assemble the casserole grease a large (13 by 9 inch) baking dish with oil. Cover the bottom of the dish with a bit of the sauce. Cut one end of the tortillas so that you have a flat edge and layer the tortillas on top of the sauce so that the flat edge of the tortilla meets up to the side of the casserole dish. Cover the sauce completely with tortillas. It is okay if the tortillas overlap, and you can also cut the tortillas to fit in any gaps. Cover the tortillas with another layer of sauce. Place half of the cauliflower mixture on top and 1/3 of the cheese. Add a little more sauce and spread around with the back of the spoon. Repeat this same process: tortillas, sauce, cauliflower, cheese and sauce. Then top with a final layer of the tortillas; cover with the rest of the sauce and the remaining cheese. Press down the tortillas with the back of a spoon. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 1 day. This helps the tortillas soften and the flavors to meld together.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Cover the enchiladas with nonstick foil and bake for 15 minutes if at room temperature or 30 minutes if coming straight from the fridge. Uncover and bake for 15-20 minutes more or until the cheese is melted and the casserole is cooked throughout. Serve warm and top with avocado slices or guacamole.



Kim Rogers and Carlinne Isabella
Cook with 2 Chicks
The Magic of Pounded Chicken

I made this for dinner for my family and it was a big hit. Are you as thrilled as I am? You will be once you read how Carlinne and I discovered this dinner. Our story reminds me why I love to cook. I will let Carlinne tell you how it all began, as it happened in her kitchen!

For many of us, the biggest source of frustration when deciding what's for dinner is trying to come up with a meal that makes everyone happy. Ok. Let's be realistic. Not necessarily HAPPY. A dinner that everyone will *actually* eat. We don't mean eat just the pasta that is supposed to be a side, but eat the part of the meal that was intended as the main course. There is nothing more disappointing than spending time planning dinner only to have ~~Anna~~ somebody in the family not eat the main course. We searched and searched for a way to prepare ANY MEAT that would satisfy the picky eaters in our families. So many times we thought we found the perfect way to prepare chicken, or steak, or pork. We'd prepare it again in the same way (or so we thought) and, with hopeful anticipation, serve dinner. Instead of hearing, "This is so good. Thanks, Mom." It sounded more like, "This isn't the same as last time! It looks different. It tastes different. I guess I only THOUGHT I liked it." Then something happened; we discovered pounded chicken. It's easy *and* versatile and is the most requested dinner in our families.

I discovered pounded chicken by accident. I made chicken one night using a package of thin cut chicken breast and everyone seemed to like it. The next time I wanted to make it my store was out of the thin sliced chicken. I bought regular chicken breast and pounded it thin. Everyone really enjoyed it. I didn't get too excited yet, because this had happened before. I decided to make it again and everybody still enjoyed dinner. It didn't seem to matter how I prepared pounded chicken. The key was pounding the chicken and coating it with a thin layer of flour. I served it plain, with a marinara sauce, or with a pan gravy. It was a hit. Every. Single. Time.

The opportunity to prove pounded chicken was a keeper was when Kim's daughter, Molly, was invited to our house for dinner. Of course, Anna requested pounded chicken. Molly loved it! They request pounded chicken repeatedly and have even made it for dinner for us. They are 11 years old; it's that easy. Discovering a

favorite meal that Molly and Anna not only love to eat, but also love to prepare is another example of how food and cooking connects us to family and friends. Pounded chicken has become a family favorite for BOTH of our families; we hope that happens for your family, too.

Basic Pounded Chicken

Trim any excess fat or skin from 1 ½ pounds **skinless, boneless chicken breast**. Slice each breast horizontally getting two thinner chicken cutlets from each breast half. Arrange chicken on cutting board leaving space between each piece. Cover with parchment paper or cellophane. Pound chicken with a meat mallet or heavy pan to desired thickness. Season both sides of chicken with **salt, lemon pepper, and smoked paprika**. Sprinkle the same seasonings into **flour**. Drag each piece of chicken through seasoned flour to lightly coat. Heat a large pan on medium heat until very hot. Add **olive oil** and cook the chicken on both sides until deeply golden. Make sure you don't overcrowd the pan. Remove chicken from pan and keep warm. Pour ½ cup **dry white wine** into pan and scrape up all the browned bits. You can either put the chicken back in the pan now, or make a sauce in the same pan and then return the chicken to heat through.



Carrie M

Plums in the Icebox

Elvis' Spiced Nectarine Cobbler

I've always loved Elvis. I can remember singing along loudly when "All Shook Up" (which my five-year-old brain misheard as "mulch-in-a-cup") came on the oldies station and I even dressed up as Army-era Elvis for a biography project in my sixth grade English class. In fact, the King's tunes are some of my preferred cooking music. Just try making a stir-fry to "Jailhouse Rock" and you'll see what I mean.

My sister gave me the cookbook *Are You Hungry Tonight: Elvis' Favorite Recipes* for my birthday. While overjoyed to receive a book about two of my all-time favorite topics-- Elvis and cooking-- I wasn't sure the cookbook would have much to offer a healthy-food enthusiast like me. I'm not really one for gravy or sausage spoon bread, although I'll never turn down a good Southern dessert. So, armed with the kitschy charm of the cookbook and my own eating sensibilities, I set out to make my own version of Elvis' favorite Spiced Nectarine Cobbler. The author of the book, Brenda Arlene Butler, writes of the recipe: "Nectarines, freshly picked and juicy, say summertime. Bees buzzing....Close your eyes and imagine Elvis sitting in the porch swing picking out *Forgot to Remember to Forget* on his old gut-string acoustic guitar. What's that wonderful smell? It's something fresh from the oven."

I can't compete with that imagery, but I can offer a recipe that's just the teensiest bit healthier than the original. I just hope I'm not committing some kind of cardinal Elvis fan sin by healthifying this recipe, though: I mean, is it

ok to healthify Elvis? The man known for his love of moon pies and fried peanut-butter-and-banana-sandwiches? All I know is that my version (which is 100% gluten free!) preserves the sweetness of the original while managing just the tiniest nutritional punch. Omega-3s and a bit of protein get in there by way of flaxseeds, almond meal and coconut flour. I did keep in the real sugar and the real butter because, well, I thought the King would approve.

Elvis' Spiced Nectarine Cobbler

Adapted from Are You Hungry Tonight? Elvis' Favorite Recipes

Serves 4-6 people

Total time: about 40 minutes

Total hands on-time: 10-15 minutes

8 nectarines, sliced (skin on)

1/4 cup almond meal

1/4 cup coconut flour

1/4 cup ground flaxseeds

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 cup brown sugar

1/2 tsp cinnamon

1/2 cup butter

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F and butter a 1 1/2 quart baking dish.
2. Slice the nectarines and arrange them in the dish.
3. Combine almond meal, coconut flour, ground flaxseeds, sugar, and cinnamon in a bowl and mix well.
4. Then, using a pastry blender or two knives, cut the butter into the mixture until it resembles coarse crumbs.
5. Carefully spoon mixture on and around sliced nectarines.
6. Bake for 25 minutes or until fruit is just bubbly.



Molly Kincaid

Pie for Breakfast

Going-On-Vacation-Using-Up-Everything-in-the-Fridge

I have a bit of an obsessive nature when it comes to grocery shopping. I get a weekly CSA box, usually with eggs and fresh bread, plus I frequent 3 or 4 groceries on a weekly basis. Because Trader Joe's, Costco, Safeway and the local Co-op offer totally different things, you know? And I just can't bear to buy quinoa at Trader Joe's when I know it's cheaper in bulk somewhere else. And I won't buy fresh produce that doesn't look so hot, often causing me to go out of my way to hit up another store on my way home.

I can't resist a sale, either. When they have a special on organic canned tomatoes or fresh avocados, I stock up as if I were feeding an army. As you can imagine, I often buy way too much and end up concocting different ways of using things up (I usually make big vats of soup on the weekends, and frequently invite friends over for dinner).

This grocery addiction also poses a problem when I am going on vacation. I would like to be one of those people who leaves only condiments in the fridge when I leave town, but it hardly ever happens.

Since I am going to Oaxaca, Mexico for the summer, I needed to wrangle my bursting-at-the-seams fridge into submission. So, last night I pulled out everything fresh that needed to be used, and it was a fun challenge to try and fit it all into one meal. I had: potatoes, spring onions, swiss chard, a leek, dill, oregano and lemon. I always have two or three kinds of cheeses and usually some half and half for my coffee or some milk. Plus there was a frozen pack of chicken thighs just waiting to tie it all together.

This recipe could easily be made with chicken cutlets, if that's what you have on hand (it would also be lighter). I just love pan-frying chicken this way – it has the same crispy appeal of deep fried chicken or chicken fingers, but is much healthier. The gratin is also quite versatile – substitute sweet potatoes and spinach or kale, for example, or use up any knob of cheese you have lurking in the fridge.

One final note: This was quite rich – it probably would have been nice with a simple green salad, too. But that would have required going to the grocery store, and you know what that can lead to!

Crispy Chicken Thighs with Leek Pan gravy

3-4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs

1 Leek, diced and cleaned well

½ cup plus 1 Tbs. flour

1 Tbs unsalted butter

¼ cup white wine (I used Riesling)

1Tbs Dijon

1 Tbs fresh lemon juice

small handful chopped fresh herbs (I used dill and oregano – but thyme and parsley would work well too)

Season the chicken generously with salt and pepper, allow to sit for 10-15 minutes. Then dredge in ½ cup flour and shake off the excess. Heat a good glug of olive oil in a nonstick pan. When it's hot but not smoking, add the chicken thighs. Cook at medium high heat for 5-7 minutes, until one side is well-browned and crispy, then flip and brown the other side for 5-7 minutes. Take out the thickest thigh and cut into it just a smidge to make sure it's done (juices run clear), then remove all the thighs to your cutting board. Toss the leeks in the pan, stirring to loosen the pan drippings. Cook until leeks are just softened, seasoning a little with salt. Push the leeks over to the side of the pan, and place the butter in the middle of the pan and allow to melt. Sprinkle the remaining 1 tbs. flour onto the butter and whisk until combined, then slowly add the wine, whisking. Toss in the lemon juice, herbs, and Dijon, and continue whisking for a minute or two until the gravy is thickened. Slice the chicken and serve with the gravy.

Potatoes and Swiss Chard Gratin

(adapted from *Saveur*)

5 Tbs butter

3 garlic cloves

5 large waxy potatoes, peeled and sliced to 1/8 inch thickness (with a mandolin is easiest)

2 cups half and half (or whole milk)

freshly grated nutmeg (I used not-fresh!)

1 bunch Swiss chard, chopped

3 large spring onions, chopped

½ cup sharp white cheddar

½ cup grated Parmesan

Preheat oven to 400. Butter a 8x10 baking dish. Crush the garlic and place it in a mortar and pestle. Sprinkle with salt, and grind into a mush. Place 4 tbs of butter, half and half, potatoes and garlic mush into a large pot and bring to a boil, over medium heat, stirring frequently. Season to taste with salt and pepper. After it has been at a low simmer for about 8 minutes, the potatoes should be just soft and the sauce will have thickened. Add pinch of nutmeg and stir. Meanwhile, cook the onions in the remaining tablespoon of butter in another pan. When soft, add the chard and cook until wilted, about five minutes. Season lightly. Spoon the swiss

chard into the potato mixture and stir to combine. Then spoon that mixture into the prepared baking dish. Press the potatoes into an even layer, then top with the cheese. Bake until deeply golden brown, about 20-30 minutes.



Steph

Sweet-Fire Tofu

I used to cook all the time. Simmer for 3 hrs? No problem. Finely chop 12 different vegetables? Let's get started! Dinner at 9:30 on a weeknight? Doesn't everyone eat that late? I rarely cooked the same meal twice.* Life always felt too short to revisit what was great--I wanted find new food to sigh over.

Then I had three babies in two years. We cancelled our farm share because I couldn't keep up with all those vegetables. The twins are now 13 months old and I am just beginning to come out of the fog. I work almost full-time, so the only food worth cooking is food I can make quickly. Otherwise it doesn't get made at all. Which means that when I find a fool-proof recipe that makes my picky eaters say, "More, please" before they're even done, I recycle it again and again.

We are meat-eaters who found a tofu recipe to love. The secret is adding honey to the oil, which lets it brown without sticking. It works best in a cast-iron pan but also does well in stainless steel (I use All-Clad) or non-stick.

It makes a portable snack--hot or cold--or a fast weeknight meal with coconut rice and something green, like Andy's Four-Minute Green Beans. One 14-ounce tub serves 2 adults or 3 kids. Our three-year-old refuses all meat, but she can't get enough of this tofu.

Sweet-Fire Tofu

1 to 2 T olive oil

2 T honey

1/4 t red pepper flakes, more or less depending on how spicy you like it

1 14-oz tub of extra-firm tofu, cut into squares--bigger pieces are faster to turn

Gently press out excess liquid from the tofu and set aside.

Heat the oil, honey and red pepper flakes in a 10-inch pan over medium-high until bubbling. Add tofu to pan and coat with oil. Let brown on one side without disturbing it. Using a spatula and a firm hand, turn all pieces over. (Don't use tongs, they'll tear the tofu.) Let brown again. The pan should dry up a bit, that's what gives the toasty color. If the pan dries completely out, drizzle more honey to

prevent it from burning, or if you want it to taste like candy.

* I also rarely re-read books back then. But now I do it all the time. Current favorites:

The Fourteen Bears in Summer and Winter

Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude

Guji Guji

Dim Sum for Everyone

Five Little Gefiltes

The Tale of Samuel Whiskers, or, The Roly Poly Pudding

The High Street

Potato Joe

The Chicken Thief



Cheryl Beverage Barnes

Picture Perfect Meals

pictureperfectmeals.com

Chicken with Tabbouleh: All it's cracked up to be.

In the early 1970's, my grandparents, in their 60's, entered a somewhat wacky phase of their life. Of course, we *are* talking about the 70's when people did silly things anyway, had way too much hair--facial or otherwise, and paired colors that do not exist in nature for a reason.

But my grandparents' kookiness was expressed through food and pharmacy. And they had a tendency to be a little obsessive about their passion-of-the-week. They would hone in on something like a heat-seeking missile and that became their focus of life for a period. First, it was the newly introduced Wendy's Frosty. They couldn't get enough of the Frosty. They talked about it like it was their first-born grandchild who could solve the energy crisis and save the world. They conducted discussions about the production of this novelty, pondered the magic of that frozen dream machine, and insisted that the employees behind the counter must practice (probably for hours!) in order to achieve that signature swirl. They loved them some Frosty. Until one day when they didn't. We were never sure why they turned on the Frosty, but I guess if you consume enough of something on a daily basis, it can unceremoniously lose its appeal.

Next was magnetic jewelry. I imagine back then, before the great strides of modern medicine for joint therapy had been made, one would try just about anything to lessen the effects of arthritis. They gave testimony that a quick spritz of WD-40 on the knees and elbows provided hours of relief. Don't try this at home.

And, then, there was the Battle of the Bulgur. Remember, we're talking about the 70's--way before research had yet to yield the benefits of whole grains. This foreign item was considered (*gasp!*) "health food," pushed onto unsuspecting people by hippies who didn't bathe and wore socks with sandals. Real earthy-crunchy stuff. I suspect they had read somewhere that bulgur was the new miracle fiber food. At that time in my young life, I was blissfully unaware of the increasing importance of roughage as one ages.

How can I say this delicately? Although both my grandparents were wonderful cooks, the offense was not inherently in the bulgur, but more in their application. They used it as a thickening agent instead of a flavor-enhancer. They put it in everything--and I mean *everything*! It was weird. My mother finally drew the line at scrambled eggs. Instead of "cracked wheat," we were thinking more along the lines of "cracked pots."

Despite my grandparents' fumbled foray with bulgur, they were actually onto something. It wasn't until years later when I rediscovered this Middle Eastern staple. It's not the bland additive from my past. But rather a delicious, and yes, nutritious, grain with a tender and chewy texture that makes a wonderful pilaf and salad.

I learned a lot from my grandparents--about cooking and life and I miss them dearly. Quirks and all. This recipe is dedicated to them.

Chicken with Tabbouleh

Makes 6 to 8 servings

- 1-5.25 ounce package wheat salad mix (Near East)
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 7-ounces Greek feta, crumbled
- 1 cup diced red onion
- 4 scallions, green and white parts, chopped
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh mint
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh dill
- 3 cups cooked, cubed chicken
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/2 cup jarred roasted red peppers, drained and chopped
- 1/4 cup sliced black olives
- 2/3 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup halved (or quartered if large) cherry or grape tomatoes
- kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Follow the directions on the wheat salad box, but substitute chicken stock for water: In a large bowl, combine the wheat salad and contents of the spice pack. Stir in 1 cup of boiling chicken stock. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Fluff the salad with a fork. Fold in the remaining ingredients to the wheat salad and stir to combine. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour. Toss well before serving.

Planning: You can make the tabbouleh one day in advance.

Product Purity: I use Mt. Vikos feta cheese. It's creamy and tangy and comes in block form. Look for the Near East brand in the organic section of the pasta aisle.

Presentation: I like to serve the tabbouleh with flat bread. Your guests can decide if they want to tear off a few pieces to sop up some of the juice from the salad, or make themselves a pita-like sandwich.



Tara Connor

Got it, Ma

gotitma.blogspot.com

Not Quite Like Dad Used to Make

My dad was a great cook. Considering he was born in 1912, you might find that a little surprising. But his mother died when he was about twelve and, as an enterprising lad, he used to earn a bit of spending money by getting his older sisters to pay him to do their share of the cooking.

I was born when he was 58 years old. He was the principal at one of the middle schools in nearby Portland, Maine, a job from which he retired when I was six or seven, right about the time my mom went back to work as an English teacher. Mom got busy correcting papers and creating lesson plans and Dad got busy in the kitchen.

The son of an Irish longshoreman, Dad grew up on simple, inexpensive fare. He made beef stew with a thin, flavorful broth and big wedges of floury-textured potato that I'm still trying to recreate. His macaroni and cheese was legendary. His fried potatoes: indescribable. He baked bread from frozen grocery store dough, always saving a few bits to make cinnamon rolls for my sister and me. He served us English muffin pizzas, grilled cheese sandwiches and Welsh rarebit.

"What's Welsh rarebit?" my husband asked, as I waxed nostalgic one day.

"Well, when Dad made it, it was basically Campbell's Cheddar Cheese Soup over toasted white bread," I said.

"Really?" he asked. "And it was...you know...good?"

"Yes!" I insisted, feathers ruffled. Maybe there was other stuff in it, but I was a kid. It was a meal I liked and nobody was trying to make me eat spinach or liver. I didn't ask a lot of questions.

So I embarked on a sentimental quest to prove the worthiness of an old childhood favorite. We followed the most appealing looking recipe we could find with only moderate success. The grown-ups enjoyed it, but the flavors of sharp cheddar, Worcestershire and mustard in the amounts called for proved too strong for the seven and ten year-old palates at the table.

I wasn't ready to give up. I owed it to Dad to try again. Next time we used less Worcestershire, a light, slightly sweet mustard, and creamy, mild havarti with much greater success. Our ten year-old son declared it "Awesome!" At least that what it sounded like. His mouth was full at the time. The seven year-old saves true enthusiasm for pasta with marinara and chocolate chip cookies. But she gave it a somewhat surprised thumbs-up.

We served it with steamed broccoli and thick slices of toasted whole grain boule. A far cry, perhaps, from the veggie free, white bread meal of my childhood. But it's simple, delicious, and comes together in minutes. I think Dad would have approved.

Welsh Rarebit, On the Mild Side

2 Tablespoons butter

2 Tablespoons flour

1/2 teaspoon mustard*

1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

1/2 cup malty beer**

3/4 cup heavy cream

1 1/2 cups grated havarti cheese

Steamed broccoli

Toasted slices of your favorite bread

Melt butter over low heat in a medium sauce pan. Whisk in flour and cook briefly, stirring constantly for about 2 minutes. Take care not to brown the flour.

Whisk in mustard, Worcestershire sauce and beer until smooth.

Add cream and whisk until well combined. Gradually add the cheese, stirring constantly, until cheese melts and the sauce is very smooth.

Season to taste with salt. Serve immediately over toast and steamed broccoli.

*We used Raye's Winter Garden Mustard, made right here in Maine. It's mild and just a little bit sweet. It is our go-to mustard for salad dressings, sandwiches, and potato salad. It's worth looking for, but if you can't find it where you live, just

choose a mustard that isn't too strong.

**Nothing too hoppy or the sauce will be bitter. We like to use Sam Adams Boston Lager or a local favorite, Gritty's Scottish Ale when it's available. Choose something you like well enough to polish off the rest of the bottle, but not a beer that you love so well that it makes you weep to pour it into a cheese sauce.



Kathryn Kincaid

Bibs and White Tablecloths

Bibsandwhitetablecloths.com

Margaret's new skirt is missing a button, and if you give the hem the gentlest tug, it is likely to slip right down off her hips. Her new sweater has lovely gold sequins, except on the left elbow, where several are missing, mashed or halved. Her new boots fit best with thick socks, and her new, red, sparkly shoes will fit perfectly, hopefully by next September. But the very best thing about these clothes is how they reached us: on an airplane. Seated at the computer in the kitchen, we opened up Google maps and traced the route Margaret's new outfit took, all the way from Seattle to our doorstep in Pennsylvania. These are her favorite clothes ever, thanks to my college friend's daughters whom she's never even met.

Little siblings rarely wear new clothes, but we only got away with dressing Margaret in worn, blue, racecar pajamas for just so long. My sister-in-law, who has two much-older girls, drew the line when baby Margaret showed up in a baseball-themed onesie emblazoned with the ridiculous: "Daddy's Little Slugger." Suddenly, the attic door opened and the cousins' clothes started flowing. Friends with older girls similarly took pity, and it is now hard to shut Margaret's closet door. Since then, it is a rare week when Margaret sports all new clothes, and not just because she can still fit into some of her own baby clothes. She parades around school in Charlie's friend Molly's old threads; the lovely and kind-hearted Molly will stop her in the hallway, do a quick once over, and summarize: "Margaret, those were my shoes and sweater. They look so nice on you!" What could make a little kid feel cooler?

Wearing hand-me-downs means someone has your back, or at least that they gave you the shirt off their own back. It makes you feel cared for, whether you are three, or several decades older. And the hander-downer feels the love just the same as the recipient. I adore seeing my Brooklyn hipster nephew decked out in Charlie's preppy baby duds. His parents would never have selected embroidered seersucker, but if it belonged to Charlie, Dylan will wear it with pride. Margaret's baby clothes (or at least the girly ones) are, as of last week, now being worn by the *second* baby girl of one of my good friends.

This is not just for kids. Hand-me-downs have always been cool, and the reason I know this is that marketers have told me so. Clothiers adopt the language of hand-me-downs to sell brand new clothes: there is a whole genre of clothing that, they

will have you believe, once belonged to an anonymous “boyfriend,” cast-offs from some imaginary Ken doll with perfect taste. The clothes slide off the hanger, intentionally weathered, a bit slouchy, designed to hang off of you and make you feel svelte and teeny, enveloped in the garments of some beefy, generous beau.

These clothes may feel cool, but only in that they remind you of the real deal. Hand-me-downs are sexy, in a slinking-across-campus-while-the-sun-comes-up sort of way. True “boyfriend jeans” are the ones that, in fact, once belonged to your boyfriend. There was one particular pair that fit me beautifully, faded and worn in all the right places, outlasting by decades my relationship with their original owner. To be honest, I retired them only recently, fearing I had become somewhat, eh, matronly for them. My favorite workout shorts in college bore the logo of a California prep school I have never seen in person, but they were bequeathed by a favorite sorority sister and I wore them until the elastic ripped. I always felt a bit smug in them, anointed by the big kids, something eternally cool. (Ever notice how the youngest kid in the family is the coolest? I say this as the oldest; my younger brother is beyond smooth, having learned from my many gaffes.)

Even Cinderella rocked her mom’s old dress, with a few tweaks. You say vintage; I say hand-me-down. My all-time favorite dress is not my own wedding dress but the chic, a-line mini that my mom wore to her 1968 wedding and that I proudly wore to my rehearsal dinner. And at my husband’s family reunions, my engagement ring goes by its maiden name, “Grandma Hertha’s Ring.” Call me sentimental, but he had me at “Hertha.”

But surely you knew all along where I was going with this: food. When it comes to dinner, we all have some favorite hand-me-downs. Our current go-to is an old recipe from a new friend, who got the recipe, in turn, from her friend who brought her a meal when her first baby, now in kindergarten, was born. Did you follow? As with any good hand-me-down, she tweaked the recipe – itself a modified *coq au vin* – to fit just right, and I have followed suit. It’s a keeper; just as she asks to wear her “Kathryn-and-Whitney sweater” or her “Molly dress”, Margaret asks for this dinner by name:

Juli Stew

Adapted from Epicurious <http://ow.ly/b3ifY>

Serving size: 4 -6 adults, 2 kids

4 bacon slices
2 – 2 ½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs
½ cup all-purpose flour
Kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper
1 large onion, chopped (about 2 cups)
5 garlic cloves, minced
2 14 1/2-ounce cans diced tomatoes (I use Muir Glen fire-roasted)
1 1/2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
3/4 cup dry red wine
1/2 cup chopped fresh basil
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme or 2 sprigs fresh thyme
6 ounces mushrooms, diced (optional, but so good)
2 15-ounce cans cannellini (white kidney beans), drained

1. In a Dutch oven, brown bacon over medium-high heat until crisp. With tongs, remove bacon and drain on paper towel. When bacon has cooled to the touch, crumble.

2. Remove pan from heat while prepping chicken. In a shallow plate, mix flour with about 1 teaspoon salt and 10 grinds of fresh pepper. Dredge chicken thighs lightly in flour, shaking off excess. Return pan to heat and warm for 1 minute. Add chicken pieces, a few at a time without crowding, to rendered bacon fat in pot and brown, about 3 minutes per side. Using tongs, transfer chicken to large bowl. Repeat until done.

NOTE: You could omit Step 2 and instead purchase a rotisserie chicken, shred the meat, and add it along with the tomatoes in step 3. I like the meat cooked in the bacon and then simmered along with the rest of the ingredients, but I, too, have those evenings when it is just not happening. I know several families who likely would not eat if it weren't for the miracle of the rotisserie chicken. I say embrace what works for you.

3. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons bacon fat from pot. Add chopped onion and minced garlic to pot; sauté 4 minutes. Add bacon, stewed tomatoes, chicken broth, red wine, basil and thyme. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to boil, using a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Return chicken and any accumulated juices to pot. Cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer until chicken is cooked through, about 15 minutes.

4. Add cannellini (and mushrooms, if you are using); simmer 10 minutes longer. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

As with any stew, this keeps beautifully for 1-2 days in the fridge and arguably tastes even better on Day Two. Shred the chicken once it's cooked and it will be more like a hearty soup. Finally, this recipe lends itself nicely to riffs. Play with any combo of beans, herbs, spices, liquid and charcuterie (i.e., black beans, chorizo, Dos Equis, cilantro and peppers) in roughly the same proportions.



Betsy Rouleau **Sangria**

Fete. Bash. Celebration. Feast. Soiree. Reception. The thing that comes before Part B. (Par-TAY, anyone?)

I'm a fan of parties. Big ones, little ones. Parties that require streamers and parties that require favors. Parties that require dresses and hats and noisemakers (oh my!). I like going to them, but even more, I like hosting them. The only difference between the ones I attend and the ones I throw is that my ragers don't require streamers, dresses, kegs, matching stemware, bouncers, noisemakers, or even an artfully designed Evite.

That's just not my jam. I like having a few people over, throwing on a decent iTunes playlist, ordering a few pizzas or serving a handful of apps, and hanging. I've been gainfully employed for a few years, and I've worked hard to turn my two-bedroom-one-roommate-attic-apartment into a place that feels like home. And so, there are few things quite as rewarding as having my cousin's family (complete bouncy toddlers), my parents, my college friends (complete with 25 year olds as bouncy as toddlers), my book club, or the entirety of the English department at the high school at which I work...in my living room. Technically, my attic apartment seats five comfortably, but I've got throw pillows and we're not the type to shun the floor. Like I said, streamers and matching stemware ain't my style. My goal is to make people feel relaxed, comfortable, and as at-home in my apartment as I am.

I'm far from being a chef, but I manage—I've got a fabulous pizza place right around the corner, I've got a hummus recipe fit for kings, and I can rock a mean guacamole. It's the beverages that I prioritize. If the straw stirs the drink, then the drink stirs the party. And what better what to stir a party with a fabulous sangria? And the best part? If your glasses don't match, it's alllllll good.

1 Orange 1 Lemon 1 Red Apple* ½ cup Triple Sec 2 bottles red wine (Cabs work for me, but pick your poison) 1-3 cups decent-quality orange juice 1 shot/splash brandy *Any kind of fruit is fine...I just happen to veer towards apples, lemons, and oranges.

The night before your bash/fiesta/soiree, soak a sliced orange, a sliced lemon, and a sliced apple in half a cup of triple sec in the pitcher in which you will make the sangria. A few hours (or a few minutes depending on how busy you are) before the party, mix in the wine, enough orange juice to make the mixture cloudy, and a splash of brandy. Stir well. Let it sit for a few hours (minutes...we're all busy people here) and then serve over ice. Matching stemware not required.



Allison Silver Adelman
Spontaneous Tomato
Japanese Comfort Food

I want to share one of my favorite Japanese dishes with you. No, it's not a Crunchy Dragon Fire or Rainbow Ninja Samurai roll. It's a little less raw and a little less flashy. But you see, Japanese food in Japan is a whole different story.

This is hearty, home-cooked comfort food. It's easy to prepare, and does not have too many ingredients. Have you ever heard of *donburi*, or Japanese rice bowls? Nothing could be simpler than a bowl of warm rice with tasty toppings.

Humble *donburi* rice bowls may be outnumbered by tempura and spicy sushi rolls in the west, but when I moved to Japan, I learned that they grace many tables in Japanese homes and restaurants. Steaming bowls of sticky rice arrive topped with soy sauce-simmered beef (*gyu-don*), deep-fried breaded pork cutlet (*katsu-don*), or slices of red raw tuna (*tekka-don*), garnished with ginger and scallions.

Oyako-don is my favorite of the donburi family. And “family” is an apt way to describe it... The name is especially cute (slash gross): *Oyako* means “mother and child.” You know, the chicken and the egg. On rice.

(As I said, cute slash gross.) Also, easy and delicious.

I no longer live in Japan, and when I miss it the Japansickness usually comes wrapped in memories of umami aromas and steaming white rice. Making *oyako donburi* at home is a good cure for this ailment. The salty-sweet-umami flavors of soy sauce, mirin, and sake, transport me back, and the richness of the chicken, egg, soft sweet onions, and mushrooms merge into one scrumptious savory topping. You might even consider skipping the rice.

Oyako Donburi (Serves 2-3)

- ~ 2 cups cooked Japanese sticky rice
- ~ 1 lb. chicken thighs, cut in small bite-size pieces
- ~ ½ an onion, cut in wedges
- ~ several mushrooms, thickly sliced
- ~ 2-3 eggs (1 egg per person)

- ~ 2-3 Tbsp. soy sauce
- ~ 1-2 Tbsp. cooking sake
- ~ 1 Tbsp. white vinegar
- ~ 1-2 tsp. mirin (a Japanese rice-based sweet cooking sauce, also called Aji-Mirin)
- ~ 1 tsp. sugar
- ~ pinch of salt, to taste

Add soy sauce, sake, vinegar, mirin, sugar, and salt to a deep frying pan with a tightly-fitting lid. Heat the onions in the sauce, stirring occasionally. Once the onions start getting soft, add the chicken, stir to coat, then add the mushrooms. Cover with the lid and keep at a low simmer, stirring occasionally for 5-10 more minutes. You can modify the amounts of the sauce ingredients to taste.

When the chicken seems nearly cooked enough, briefly stir it one last time, then carefully crack the eggs on top, and allow them to cook without stirring. (To have more control over the eggs and keep them from breaking apart or splashing, I like to crack them into a small bowl, one at a time, and then gently pour each one on top of the simmering chicken, onions, and mushroom mixture.) Or, if you don't like soft-ish egg yolks, whisk the eggs instead, and pour the beaten egg over the chicken so that it fully cooks around the other ingredients.

When the eggs are cooked to your taste, use a wide, shallow serving spoon to carefully ladle one egg (and the chicken, onions, and mushrooms attached to it) onto the top of each bowl of rice. Serve warm with spoons and chopsticks.



Amanda Christensen-Boushey
Dinners in the Four-One-Five
Fried Quinoa with Kale and Blistered Peanuts

My grandmother always made fried rice with the leftover white rice and it has always been one of my favorite ways to use up leftover rice. As a kid, I loved it so much that there were times when I would cut back on my rice consumption at dinner the night before so I could guarantee that we'd have fried rice for dinner the next night. Needless to say, I've never met a fried rice dish that I didn't like.

About two months ago I went out to dinner with a group of friends at Eos in San Francisco's Cole Valley. I had scanned the menu online ahead of time and the Fried Quinoa with Peanuts immediately caught my eye. We shared our dishes family-style but I went back for seconds and then thirds of the fried quinoa. I loved it so much that I stole the menu (Hey, the waiter said they were going out of business the very next week!) to recreate the dish at home.

Fortunately, fried rice for dinner is an easy sell with our kids, but lately I've been trying to add new grains into our diet without turning our meals into something that tastes like it came from the forest floor. I knew the added element of quinoa and kale would raise some eyebrows and it might cause a revolt at the table. But why not just serve it without saying a word about the new additions? It had the same exact taste as our favorite Fried Rice with Shrimp but it looked a little different. I was lucky that night because they were hungry and everyone ate their portions without a complaint – this is not always the case, believe me.

This recipe is best made with quinoa that has been cooked and cooled ahead of time. But if you don't have time for that then you could cook the quinoa according to the package directions and spread it out in a thin layer on a cookie sheet to cool off quickly.

Fried Quinoa and Shrimp with Blistered Peanuts

1/2 cup shelled peanuts (I used Trader Joe's Roasted and Unsalted peanuts)
2 Tbls. vegetable oil, divided
1 Tsp. sesame oil
2 large eggs, whisked
1 bunch of kale, tough stems removed and chopped into bite-size pieces
1 medium onion, diced
2 garlic cloves, minced
3 1/2 cups quinoa, cooked and cooled
1 pound shrimp, deveined and tails removed
3 Tbls. rice vinegar
3 Tbls. soy sauce

In a large skillet, heat 1 Tbls. vegetable oil over medium heat and add the peanuts, moving them around to coat with oil and fry till blistered and lightly browned. Reserving the oil in the skillet, remove the peanuts with a slotted spoon onto a plate. Add the whisked eggs to the skillet with some salt and pepper and cook until set like a pancake – about two minutes on one side, then flip the eggs over and let it cook through for another minute. Remove the eggs from the skillet and let cool on a cutting board. When cool enough to handle, roll the egg up and slice thinly crosswise.

In same skillet, heat remaining 1 Tbls. vegetable oil and 1 Tsp. sesame oil over medium-high heat. Add kale, onion, and garlic and stir, seasoning with salt and pepper (the skillet will be very full). Stir frequently until the kale and onion soften, about 5 minutes. Push the kale mixture to the side of the skillet and add in the shrimp, cooking through for three minutes. Add in the cooked quinoa, sliced eggs, rice vinegar and soy sauce to the pan. Stir ingredients together till combined and warmed through. Divide into bowls and serve with blistered peanuts on top.



Melissa Jerves

Myhomebaked.com

Mote Pillo

My father came to the United States from Ecuador in the '60s. We didn't speak Spanish at home, and I've only visited Ecuador twice in my life. My Spanish is of the "understand more than I speak" variety. My children have an even more tenuous connection, two of them so pale and blue-eyed one would never suspect they have distant ancestors from Spain. But our dinner table often features a typical Ecuadorian dish of hominy, eggs and cheese, *mote pillo*. It's one meaningful tie to a heritage that seems distant to an assimilated second generation American like me. If my pantry has couscous, quinoa, jasmine rice, and three kinds of pasta, it's no stretch to include a couple cans of hominy. It's globalization.

I made *mote pillo* when I was in law school and living alone. One skillet provided two or three meals, which I would eat at my hand-me-down kitchen table in front of my hand-me-down black and white tv. I made *mote* and shared it with my best friend, who in turn made garlicky stir-fried broccoli learned from her Taiwanese mother. My first baby eagerly ate *mote pillo* as soon as he mastered his pincer grasp. Now I have to double the recipe and add a salad to stretch it into dinner for five, but it's ideal for nights when we're squeezing in dinner between piano lessons and karate, or when we come home *starving* from church on Saturday night. It takes maybe 20 minutes to make, and we usually have all the ingredients on hand.

I'm going to stick my neck out here and declare *mote* the Next Big Culinary Thing. I thought it pleasantly obscure, but a quick Google search returned a surprising number of hits. I also learned (less surprisingly) that my recipe is not quite authentic, though it has the advantage of easily-sourced ingredients, no matter what pocket of middle America you find yourself in. If you want authentic, [this version](#) seems like a good place to start. It calls for achiote, but we usually add bacon and chopped tomato instead.

Mote Pillo

A few slices of bacon, ham or a leftover pork chop, diced

1 onion, diced
1/2 tsp. ground cumin
1 medium tomato, diced
1 28-oz. can of hominy
2 eggs, beaten
1/2 cup of grated cheese (cheddar, jack, feta, queso fresco...anything that will melt)

In a large nonstick skillet over medium high heat, cook the bacon until it is almost crispy. Add the onions and sauté until they are soft. Add the tomato and cumin, and after a minute or two, stir in the drained hominy. Turn the heat to medium low and stir occasionally the hominy is heated through. Stir in the beaten eggs, mixing thoroughly until the eggs are scrambled. Finally, stir in the cheese until it melts. Season with salt and pepper, and cilantro or chives if you have them.

Serve with a green salad if you're having it for dinner, but obviously this makes a great breakfast, too.



Erin Flaherty

The Life & Times of Erin

Lifeandtimeserin.blogspot.com

Working in an elementary school you live and die by summer vacation and snow days. Snow days are little pieces of heaven, a totally unexpected bonus just when you think you might be ready to pull your hair out because one more of your little friends spilled glue, or better yet has become the class barber.

I'm Erin. I'm a wannabe food blogger. In real life I'm an Elementary School Counselor. I can think of no better food to enjoy on a blustery snow day than a warm, just as heavenly, cinnamon roll. Doesn't a made from scratch cinnamon roll with homemade cream cheese frosting on a snow day just seem like it's right out of the movies? I decided I could not go this winter without making this dream come true. So this past January I searched high and low for the perfect recipe. I excitedly made these snow day cinnamon rolls in hopes I would get my teacher equivalent of a bonus. I put them in the freezer and I anxiously awaited to be able to wake up on a snowy morning and sit on my couch, watch daytime television, sip coffee, and eat them. Sounds magical, right? Yeah. Too bad my dream never came true. I waited all through January and most of the way through February, and finally ended up eating them on a 55 degree February morning. President's Day. A day I knew we had off since August.

Was this a greedy move...assuming I would get snow days, trying to make my dream snow day happen? Was it all a perfect recipe for the mildest winter in years? Probably. That's my luck. But I'll tell you what...I'll do it again next winter cause

they were THAT good. And I loved how well they froze in anticipation of that perfect snow day. Next time...I'll have a firmer understanding of why the milk and butter mixture has to be a certain temperature before adding the yeast. Just one of the many lessons learned in wannabe food blogging. Maybe I'll even make them for that first day in June when you finally feel the freedom of summer. A fabulous treat before heading to the pool to read a grown up book and enjoy an adult beverage, trying not to think about September.

RECIPE: (Adapted from [epicurious.com](http://ow.ly/b3kky) - <http://ow.ly/b3kky>)

Dough:

1 cup skim milk
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 1/2 cups all purpose flour
1/2 cup sugar
1 large egg
2 1/4 teaspoons rapid-rise yeast (1 envelope)
1 teaspoon salt
Nonstick spray

Filling:

3/4 cup (packed) golden brown sugar
2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature

Glaze:

4 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
1 cup powdered sugar
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

For dough:

Combine milk and butter in glass measuring cup. Microwave on high until butter melts and mixture is just warmed to 120°F to 130°F, 30 to 45 seconds. Pour into large mixing bowl. Add 1 cup flour, sugar, egg, yeast, and salt. Beat on low speed 3 minutes, stopping occasionally to scrape down sides of bowl. Add 2 1/2 cups flour. Beat on low until flour is absorbed and dough is sticky, scraping down sides of bowl. If dough is very sticky, add more flour until dough begins to form ball and pulls away from sides of bowl. Turn dough out onto lightly floured work surface. Knead until smooth and elastic, adding more flour if sticky. Form into ball. Lightly oil large bowl with nonstick spray. Transfer dough to bowl, turning to coat. Cover bowl with plastic wrap, then kitchen towel. Let dough rise in warm draft-free area until

doubled in volume, about 2 hours.

For filling:

Mix brown sugar and cinnamon in medium bowl. Punch down dough. Transfer to floured work surface. Roll out to 15x11-inch rectangle. Spread butter over dough, leaving 1/2-inch border. Sprinkle cinnamon sugar evenly over butter. Starting at 1 long side, roll dough into log, pinching gently to keep it rolled up. With seam side down, cut dough crosswise with thin sharp knife into 18 equal slices (each about 1/2 to 3/4 inch wide). Spray two 9-inch square glass baking dishes with nonstick spray. Divide rolls between baking dishes, arranging cut side up (there will be almost no space between rolls). Cover baking dishes with plastic wrap, then kitchen towel. Let dough rise in warm draft-free area until almost doubled in volume, 40 to 45 minutes. Position rack in center of oven and preheat to 375°F. Bake rolls until tops are golden, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and invert immediately onto rack. Cool 10 minutes. Turn rolls right side up.

For glaze:

Combine cream cheese, powdered sugar, butter, and vanilla in medium bowl. Using electric mixer, beat until smooth. Spread glaze on rolls. Serve warm.



Ronda Jones
S'mores Trifle

Do you have memories associated with food? Do you have a restaurant you won't eat at because it made you sick? Or a food that always brings a smile to your face because of a great day when you ate it? For me the food that always makes me smile is s'mores. They are my favorite with countless good memories associated with s'mores for me. Such as campfires at retreats, backyard BBQ's roasting over the charcoal grill, my mom making a s'mores cake for my birthday that just would not stay together because of marshmallow expansion. I love them because they taste wonderful and because of all the fun memories that go with it. So when I had some leftover chocolate cake and some marshmallows sitting around I had to try S'mores trifle. Now the secret to this is toasting your marshmallows, I did mine under the broiler (watch carefully, as you don't want to scrape burnt marshmallow off your pan for days.) Believe me this will have you reminiscing about your favorite memory about a s'more.

S'mores Trifle

Recipe adapted from [the sugarturntable](#)

1/2 a bag of Marshmallows
Chocolate Cake (box or homemade your choice)
Chocolate Syrup
Cool Whip
Graham crackers
Crumbled graham crackers (as fine or chunky as you like)

Cut some pieces of cake and layer on top of graham cracker
Put a layer of cool whip
Some toasted marshmallows, (you could toast them under the broiler or with a kitchen torch if you have one, either way keep an eye on them so they don't burn)
Layer of Chocolate Syrup
Repeat layers as many times as you would like. (I did three.)

Top with toasted marshmallows, some graham cracker crumbs and chocolate sauce.



Alison Holland
Veggie Pilaf

Four years ago as my husband and I were nearing our first wedding anniversary and preparing to become parents, I added a mix of frozen vegetables to a box of Pasta Roni. A little taken aback, I think my husband wrote it off as a pregnancy craving. We weren't exactly adventurous in the kitchen. We *thought* we cooked, but to us cooking was a box of Pasta Roni with a fried chicken breast on the side. Growing up in rural Minnesota, that was cutting edge. A more typical meal was meat (venison stake, meat loaf, or the like) and potatoes (russet, boiled or baked).

My veggie infused Pasta Roni wasn't a pregnancy craving, but my first run in with "mommy guilt." I'd just had a pie and ice cream date with an old friend from high school who was an experienced mother. She casually mentioned it as a staple meal at her house. Then it hit me. We didn't eat vegetables. (At least not on a regular basis.) I was depriving my baby of vitamins and minerals in eutero and was destined to continue into her childhood unless I started *today*.

As soon as I got home, I dug through the freezer and, to my relief, found a bag of mixed vegetables (corn, carrots, and green beans) and threw into the boiling pot of Past Roni. My new recipe added to the mix about once a week or so was enough to shake the mommy guilt for awhile. Fortunately, over time, we've added a few more recipes to our repertoire, began keeping a stocked pantry, and are proud to say we developed this baked fish and rice pilaf recipe on the fly. I'm even more proud to say the mommy guilt, at least in the way of vegetables at dinner, as gone the way of date nights now that we're parents of two under four. But that's another story.

Bell Pepper and Black Bean Rice Pilaf

3 tablespoons of butter
6 chives, chopped
1/2 red bell pepper, seeded, chopped
1/2 green bell pepper, seeded, chopped
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon chili powder

2 cups vegetable broth
1 cup Jasmine rice
15-oz. can black beans, drained, rinsed

Melt butter in heavy large pot over medium heat. Add chives, bell peppers and sauté until tender, about 10 minutes. Add cumin and chili powder, then stir. Pour in vegetable broth and rice. Bring to boil stirring occasionally. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer about 10 minutes. Add black beans, stir, and cook for 3 to 5 more minutes, until rice is tender and broth is absorbed.

Baked White Fish with Cumin Butter

4 tablespoons of butter
6 chives, chopped
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon chili powder
fresh ground black pepper and salt to taste

Cream above ingredients.

1 tablespoon of olive oil
4, 4-oz. fillets of white fish

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat baking pan with olive oil. Place fillets on pan and cover with half of the butter. Bake about 6 minutes, flip fillets and top with remaining butter mixture. Serve on a bed of rice.



Robin Chase

17 Bites

17bites.wordpress.com

A Message From My Waffle Iron:

WI: Oh! Hey! Hey there...Long time no see!

Me: What? Oh, hey. What do you mean, long time no see? I just saw you last week. Remember..pumpkin waffles?

WI: Oh, yeah, yeah, I know. Yeah. That's was great. It's just that, I started to think that, you know, maybe it could be like old times.

Me: Old times?

WI: Yeah. Remember back when you made that impulse buy on Amazon and bought me and and we had this intense love affair for a good, oh, four weeks or so. Chocolate chip waffles. Blueberry waffles. Every sunday brunch, all hot and steamy.

Me: Um. Yeah, I guess.

WI: It's just that, well, that was like TWO YEARS ago and then I just sat here. Next to that mini slow cooker you bought. Why did you buy that anyway?

Me: Huh?

WI: Nevermind. But seriously, can we, like, hang out again? I miss you.

Me: Uh, yeah. Sure. I'm kind of seeing someone else, but if that's cool with you...was thinking about trying out these new blueberry waffles.

WI: SOMEONE ELSE???

ME: *It's been two years.*

WI: Well, OK. I'll take what I can get. Just no flax this time. I want the good stuff.

Me: Sorry. I'm on a health kick now. There may be flax involved. Still interested?

WI: Flax.. OK. I guess I can deal with that. It'll be worth it. Meet you on the countertop. Sunday morning. 9:00.

Me: It's a date.

Blueberry-Lemon Waffles

Oil spray

1 cup whole wheat pastry flour

1 cup almond flour

2 T ground flaxseed

1 T baking powder

1 t cinnamon

1/4 t salt

1 cup skim milk (or soy/almond milk)

1/2 pint blueberries

2 eggs

1 T lemon zest

1/4 cup chopped walnuts

maple syrup

Heat your waffle iron. Mix flours, flax, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Add the rest of the ingredients and combine. Pour a ladle full of batter onto your waffle iron and cook. Enjoy with maple syrup.



Monica Strawbridge

Space & Thyme

spaceandthyme.wordpress.com

Several years ago, a friend volunteered to keep my oldest daughter while I went to an appointment. When I came back, we debriefed on what they'd done, whether she'd eaten, etc. My friend said to me, "I gave her a Pop Tart and she said, 'what's that?'. What are you doing to this kid? She's never had a pop tart? She's five!" I felt a little exposed, having been a wee bit controlling with my daughters diet. Yes, I was one of those mothers.

As the years have gone by, I've realized that I need to loosen up a bit. Don't get me wrong, I'm not endorsing **Ramen noodles** and blue Gatorade every night at the dinner table or anything; not by a long shot. I'm just not as uptight about their diets anymore. I've come to believe that if I want to steer my kids away from possibly harmful decisions, it's helpful to be able to steer them toward something better. I can't just go around saying "no, that's bad" to everything they see. I need to show them, and let them experience, what's actually good.

So, when my kids are wanting "food" like, say, pop tarts, instead of instilling them with some false sense of pride over how we don't eat that kind of stuff, I can take a more positive route, get them in the kitchen with me, and try to show them what a Pop Tart was meant to be in the first place. I can aim for a filled pastry's original goodness, of which, a God-knows-how-old Pop Tart, is merely a shadow. Then my kids would know that pastries aren't something you eat every morning, but are treats (because they'd see the enormous amount of butter involved)! They would know that real food isn't instantaneous; there's a process to walk through. They'd know that pastries are best warm, and that the warmth is fleeting, so they should enjoy it. They might even notice that good pastry is light and flaky and makes a delicate breaking sound when they bite into it. Or, maybe, since they are kids, and not an over-thinking, slightly obsessive mother, they would just eat our homemade pastry and know that they like this better than a pop tart, that this is good. And that would be enough.

Homemade Pop Tarts

Adapted from King Arthur Flour

Pastry: 2 cups (8 ½ ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour 1 tablespoon sugar 1
teaspoon salt 1 cup (2 quarter-pound sticks, 8 ounces) unsalted butter, cut into pats,
1 large egg, 2 tablespoons (1 ounce) milk

Cinnamon Filling: ½ cup (3 ¾ ounces) brown sugar 1 to 1 ½ teaspoons ground
cinnamon, to taste 4 teaspoons unbleached all-purpose flour 1 large egg, to brush on
pastry before filling

Jam Filling: ¾ cup jam 1 tablespoon cornstarch mixed with one tablespoon water

Make the dough. Whisk together the flour, sugar, and salt. Working quickly with your finger tips (or a pastry blender or food processor) blend the butter into the mixture until there are pea-sized clumps of butter still visible, and if you squeeze some dough, it holds together. Mix the egg and milk in a small bowl and then add it to the dough, only mixing until everything is cohesive. You should still be able to see bits of butter in the dough.

Divide the dough in half and shape each half into a smooth 3" x 5 rectangle. Roll the dough out immediately or wrap in plastic and refrigerate for up to 2 days.

Make the cinnamon filling: Whisk together the sugar, cinnamon, and flour.

Make the jam filling: Mix the jam with the cornstarch/water in a small saucepan. Bring the mixture to a boil, and simmer, stirring, for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat, and set aside to cool. Use one tablespoon per pastry.

Assemble the tarts: If the dough has been thoroughly chilled, remove it from the refrigerator and allow it to soften and become workable, about 15 to 30 minutes. Place one of the pieces on a lightly floured work surface, and roll it into a rectangle about 1/8" thick. You should have around a 9"x 12" rectangle to work with. Trim the edges where it is over 9"x12". (*if you want a snack for the kitchen helpers place the scraps on a baking sheet, sprinkle them with cinnamon-sugar and bake at 350 for 12-15 minutes.)

Roll the second piece of dough just as you did the first. With a well floured knife, score both pieces of dough into thirds lengthwise and widthwise; you'll see nine 3" x 4" rectangles.

Beat the egg, and brush it over the entire surface of the first piece of dough. Place a heaping tablespoon of filling into the center of each marked rectangle. Place the second sheet of dough, scored side up, on top of the first and press firmly around each pocket of filling, sealing the dough well on all sides. Cut the dough, along the scored lines, to make nine tarts. Press the cut edges with a fork, to seal.

Carefully, place the tarts on a lightly greased or parchment-lined baking sheet (I like parchment). Prick the top of each tart with a fork; this is to make sure steam can escape, or the tarts will become better pillows than pastries. Refrigerate the tart, on the cookie sheet, for 30 minutes, while you preheat your oven to 350°F.

Remove the tarts from the fridge, and bake for 25 to 35 minutes, until they're a light, golden brown. Remove tarts from the oven, and allow to cool on the pan.

Yield: 9 tarts.



Wendy Schiffer

The Good Enough Gourmet

Goodenoughgourmet.wordpress.com

Birthday Dinner — Jambalaya and Cake

My husband sometimes says that he married me because of my “special lasagna” and my jambalaya. Unfortunately for him, I pulled a bait-and-switch and never made them again after we got married. Well, almost never. So I thought it would be a nice surprise to make him jambalaya for his birthday. Our daughter made the cake, a sweet ending for a sweet birthday meal.

Jambalaya (I liberally adapted this from two different recipes, so I’m calling it my own)

- 4 andouille or other spicy sausage (pre-cooked or uncooked)
- 2 chicken thighs (optional – I skipped them; this was Good Enough Jambalaya)
- 3-4 bay leaves
- 1 T. cajun seasoning
- 1 t. dry mustard
- 1/2 t. cumin
- 1/2 t. thyme
- red pepper flakes
- salt
- hot sauce (Tabasco or a similar kind)
- 1 onion
- 3 stalks celery
- 1 red pepper
- 2 cups uncooked white rice
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1 carton (32 oz) chicken broth
- 1 bag pre-cooked frozen medium shrimp

1) If you’re using precooked sausage, dice it and then brown it in some olive oil, in a large Dutch oven. If you’re using uncooked sausage, brown the sausage links in some olive oil (in the Dutch oven) and remove when fully cooked. Dice the sausage and save for later.

(If you're using precooked sausage, you can leave it in the pan.)

2) If you're using the chicken thighs, brown them in the Dutch oven and remove them when cooked. Dice and save for later.

3) Chop the onion, celery, and red pepper while the sausage is cooking. (Good Enough tip: if I'm chopping several vegetables, I chop the onion last so my knife and board are not all onion-y when I'm chopping the other veggies, leading to extra tears.) Add the vegetables to the Dutch oven and saute a few minutes until they soften.

4) Add the spices, hot sauce (to taste) and salt, stir, and let cook for a few minutes. A word about the Cajun seasoning: normally I wouldn't ask you to buy a seasoning blend that you only use for one dish. I'm sure you could look up what's in Cajun seasoning and make your own blend. But it's easier to just buy it — it's not hard to find.

5) Add the uncooked rice and stir for a few minutes. If you set aside the sausage and chicken, add them back in now. Add the broth and the tomatoes. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat to a simmer. Cook for about 25 minutes uncovered, stirring frequently. Since it was my husband's birthday and I was going to do the dishes myself (he's usually the dishwasher), you better believe I stirred frequently so I wouldn't have to deal with stuff stuck to the bottom of the pan. (Note: near the end, I added a little extra water because my liquid got absorbed before the rice was fully cooked.)

6) In the last few minutes, add the shrimp (defrosted by rinsing under water and sitting in the colander while the jambalaya was cooking).



Carrie Weingart

Flexibility

I have one simple requirement when it comes to a good recipe: flexibility. More often than I should admit on a well-read blog, I have been certain I have an ingredient on hand only to be reminded, when I am elbow-deep in dinner preparation, that I used said ingredient last night. I meal plan. I sit at the kitchen counter making my weekly grocery list while checking the cabinets and refrigerator. But inevitably I miscalculate or get distracted by a screaming toddler or just plain forget something. I don't know how it happens so often but it does. Which is why I rely heavily on flexible recipes. And the king of flexible recipes is meatloaf.

There are few dishes that represent classic Americana better than meatloaf. It has been a staple at the family dinner table for generations. And for good reason. It's freaking delicious. It seems like everyone has a family recipe (including Andy, which Jenny has included in her [book](#)). I have been evolving mine for years. It began as my mother's very traditional meatloaf (ground meat, onions, eggs, bread crumbs and ketchup). At my husband's request, I incorporated a few elements from my mother-in-law's recipe, which included seltzer or water (when you forget to buy seltzer) to keep the meat light and barbecue sauce for a little sweetness. In a "sneaky chef" move I started adding vegetables once I had children. What came to be is a moist, slightly sweet, kinda savory meatloaf that is the most flexible recipe I have ever met.

Use the recipe below as a guideline. Feel free to add or swap vegetables to suit your family's tastes. You can use different meats too (in case you forget to buy more ground turkey). I made too much once and turned the extra into meatballs. I baked them then froze them for an easy dinner our babysitter can give the kids. The only requirement is to make sure the mixture is moist and you cook until the meat reaches the proper temperature based on the meat you use.

3 tbsp olive oil
2 zucchinis grated

2 carrots grated
1/2 yellow onion grated
2 cloves garlic
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 eggs, lightly beaten
2 pounds ground meat (I have used a turkey and beef combo, or all beef, but beef and veal or pork would be delicious too)
handful of chopped fresh parsley if you have it
1 cup bread crumbs (fresh, prepared Italian or panko - doesn't matter)
1/2 cup grated parmesan or romano
1 cup ketchup and/or barbecue sauce divided (I do a half cup of ketchup mixed into the meat and 1/2 cup of barbecue spread on top)
few dashes of Worcestershire sauce
splash of seltzer or water

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Heat oil in a large sauté pan over high heat. Add vegetables and garlic. Season with salt and pepper, to taste, and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Whisk together the eggs and parsley. Add the meat, bread crumbs, cheese, 1/2 cup of the ketchup/barbecue sauce, Worcestershire sauce, seltzer or water and the cooled vegetables. Mix with your hands (if you can bare it) until just combined.

Mold into a meatloaf on a baking sheet lined with parchment or foil. Top with remaining half cup of ketchup/barbecue sauce. Bake until desired temperature is reached based on the type of meat you use. Let rest for 10 minutes before slicing.



KT Buck

The Veggie Recycler

I had a grand plan about this blog writing contest. It involved recipe searching and testing, a photo shoot of some kind and a cute kid themed narrative to tie it all together. And yet...Here I am with chili. Not award winning chili or Phoebe's favorite chicken chili, but something that could only be described as "the fridge is empty and I must use up all of these wilting veggies" chili. I decided to skip the whole blog contest, after all, I am not a writer, a chef, or an expert of any kind. And then I considered what made me fall in love with DALS in the first place: yummy, quick and, most importantly, real food, cooked by real people (people who, I am certain in an Internet-age kind of way, would be our friends if only there weren't 3,000 miles between us).

And so I humbly present my version of a weeknight dinner, served after a full day of work and school on a lowly Wednesday night. I did most of the veggie chopping in the morning during the brief window between my husband leaving with the kids and me leaving for work (even with pre-planning, I haven't mastered chopping with 3 small kids underfoot). After work, I dumped the Tupperware of chopped veggies into the pot, added tomatoes, broth and beans and let it simmer for just long enough to build a really cool train-track.

It features several DALS hallmarks: it has a clever name (we called it 3 bean chili and spent half of dinner arguing whether kidney beans were red or brown); it is "personalize-able" by adding individual toppings such as cheese, sour cream, avocado, or chips (inspired by the Cobb salad which we serve salad bar style); it is healthy; and it is endlessly adjustable depending on what you have in the house. Chili was served with strawberries – an unconventional, but popular side-dish for the under 5 set.

In the end the baby loved the shredded cheese, had a few beans and gnawed on a strawberry; my 2 year old ate the cheese and strawberries and not one bite of chili; and my 4 year old inhaled the chili and berries but left the cheese. In my house, this is a win; I hope you enjoy it too.

3-Bean Chili (aka, the Veggie Recycler)

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion (we actually had leeks, so I used leeks), diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
2-3 cups chopped veggies: zucchini, colorful bell peppers, corn (fresh or frozen), whatever else you have in your fridge
~½ t black pepper
~½ t salt
~1 T chili powder (I use a palm-full)
~1 t cumin (I use a small palm full)
1 (16 oz) can black beans*, drained and rinsed
1 (16 oz) can pinto beans*, drained and rinsed
1 (16 oz) can black beans*, drained and rinsed
1 (26oz) can tomatoes (I used crushed, but puree or chunks also work based on your preference and availability)
~2 cups stock (we used chicken stock, veg stock would also work fine) – add to achieve your desired consistency
Toppings to taste: Cheese, Onion, Avocado, Sour Cream, Chips, Chipotle Tabasco (we use a lot of this, the recipe is mild to accommodate small taste buds, but it wakes up nicely with some additions!).

*choose any beans you like, more of some, less of others. Meat is also good – ½ - 1lb of ground anything would be good to sauté with the onions.

Heat oil in large stockpot over medium heat. Add onion, cook until soft (~2mins), add garlic until fragrant. Add other veg and sauté until soft – another 5 mins or so – with occasional stirring. Stir in remaining ingredients and bring to a low boil. Reduce heat and simmer until veggies are tender, about 20 more minutes. Serve with toppings.



Stephanie Thompson
Twice Cooked, Half Baked
Twicecookedhalfbaked.com
Japanese at Home

One of the things that my kids like most is Japanese food. Strange, probably, but true. I am fortunate enough to have kids with good palates. But that comes with a price. Literally.

They are constantly begging me to take them out for sushi. They don't really eat the sushi other than the California roll, but they use that term for all things Japanese. Like the use of the word Kleenex for all tissue-like substances.

Since we are on a **SERIOUS** budget these days, I refuse to even discuss the matter. However, after driving past their favorite Japanese restaurant one day, my middle child said, "I wish we could make our own Wabi Sabi (name of said restaurant) food." To which I exclaimed "We can!"

So we then embarked on making the meal of our dreams. I have made gyoza many times and I also make miso soup pretty regularly, so those were of no concern to me. But the sushi? That was another matter. I figured that is why we paid the big bucks to eat at the sushi restaurant. Sushi making was like being a neurosurgeon or something. Right?

Luckily for us, it wasn't. Once we got the details down, we managed to make several overly-large, yet delicious, rolls. It was like manna from heaven. Now I can put their whining to rest.

At least about the sushi :)

This is the recipe that we used: [California Roll](#), sort of. Did I mention that I have a bit of a hard time following the rules? The gyoza were made from fresh wrappers that I buy from our neighborhood Asian market and filled with ground pork, diced green onions and a couple of tablespoons of finely chopped kimchi. Sure, that is Korean, but I like it. It adds just the right amount of spice. The miso is easy, but I'll save that recipe for another day.



Kim Lacroix
Mediterranean Tourte

This is a recipe that my friend Josée gave me. We loved it so much it became a part of our regular rotation. Actually, I should mention that we didn't even have something called a "regular rotation" until we met Josée.

When we moved into our current apartment in Ottawa, Canada, I had just started skydiving. My (now) husband bought me a tandem jump (a jump where you're strapped onto an instructor who does all the work of controlling the freefall and opening the parachute for you), and the following weekend I signed up for a course that would allow me to jump on my own.

But this isn't a post about skydiving. It's a post about Josée and the recipe she gave me.

See, when we moved into our apartment in a big old house, we noticed that one of our neighbours' cars had a skydiving sticker on it. Turns out Josée and her boyfriend are skydiving coaches, with more than 800 jumps each! My husband and I, being new to the sport, were ecstatic. We quickly became friends with them, they coached us while skydiving, and we even attempted to break a Canadian skydiving record with them last summer. We became such good friends, in fact, that we asked Josée to marry us in the fall of 2010. No, really! (In the province of Quebec, Canada, anyone can "stand in" for a Justice of the Peace and perform a civil ceremony, after doing a bit of paperwork.)

Back to food. See, Josée is not only a great skydiver, she's an amazing cook. And she taught me to make weekly meal plans and to freeze my leftovers into single-

serving portions. I haven't had to pack a lunch for years. I just grab a frozen meal and go.

This "Mediterranean *Tourte*" is one of the first recipes she gave me. Don't ask why it's called that. I don't know! But I do know that it's easy to make and freezes well. We always make two at a time. Sometimes we make a vegetarian version that my husband complains about, but I think it's just as good. It's basically just a layered pie with eggs. Does that make it a quiche? No, I guess not. But anyway, here's the recipe.

Mediterranean Tourte

1 pie crust (enough for top and bottom crusts)
½ lb of deli-sliced black forest ham (replace with slices of roasted sweet potato for a vegetarian version)
1 cup of frozen (or fresh) chopped spinach
½ medium-sized onion, chopped
1 clove of garlic, chopped
1 cup of grated mozzarella
3 carrots, thinly-sliced
1 red pepper, chopped (Josée doesn't like red pepper, so she omits it. I love it.)
3 eggs, beaten

Cook the onions and garlic in butter or oil until they're soft. Add the drained, chopped spinach and mix together.

Roll out your dough and transfer it to your pie plate. Keep half the dough for the top crust.

Place the ham (or pre-baked sweet potato slices) in the bottom of your pie. Then layer on top the grated cheese, then the spinach mix, then the carrot slices and finally the chopped red pepper. Pour the beaten eggs slowly over the pie, reserving a tablespoon or two of the eggs to brush on top of the pie crust.

Cover the pie with the other half of your pie dough. Seal the edges together and brush with egg. Cut out some holes for the steam to escape.

Bake at 400°F for 45 minutes or until a knife inserted in the centre comes out clean and the crust is golden.



Karen Guillemin

Salmon and Barley Cakes

The golden hulless barley from our [local bean and grain CSA](#) has a nutty flavor and enough virtuous, whole grain appeal to justify a rich and cheesy accompaniment. Growing up, one of my mother's weeknight pantry meals was Julia Child's salmon gratin (from [Mastering the Art of French Cooking, volume 1](#)). It consists of a creamy roux, laced with white vermouth, into which you fold canned salmon and sautéed mushrooms, followed by a heavy sprinkling of gruyere cheese. My mother always served her salmon gratin with white rice, but my sister later made the improvement of using nutty brown rice. Julie Powell's Julie/Julia Project (no longer on line) derided this dish as grey and sludgy, but I feel that she entirely missed the point. Here's a dish that transforms a lowly tin of salmon into exquisite haute cuisine. It may not be pretty, but it tastes delicious.

Unfortunately, when I made this salmon gratin for my kids, they, like Julie Powell, could not get past the sludginess. This got me thinking about how I could repackage it, and my golden barley offered the inspiration. Barley, I realized, could provide the same nuttiness of brown rice, and also a sticky heft to bind together the salmon into a fish cake. To recreate the decadent cream and mushroom flavor of the original dish, I made a sautéed mushroom, vermouth-infused, creme fraiche garnish. And to keep the dish from being too rich, I served the cakes on a bed of lemony greens. Biting into one of these Julia-inspired cakes brought back a flood of childhood memories, but with a satisfying crunch that appealed to all members of the family.

Salmon and Barley Cakes a la Julia
Makes 12 small cakes

for the salmon and barley cakes

1 cup barley (best is golden hulless, or use pearled barley)

2 cups water

1 medium shallot

1 Tbsp butter
1 egg
2 ounces of gruyere cheese, grated
4 sprigs fresh oregano
6 ounce can of skinless, boneless salmon
salt and pepper
1 cup panko (divided use)
olive oil for frying

for the mushroom cream and garnish

8 ounces cremini mushroom
1 Tbsp butter
salt and pepper
¼ cup white vermouth
¼ cup crème fraîche
salad greens
fresh lemon juice

1. The evening before, heat a skillet over medium heat. Toast the barley in the dry skillet, stirring, for a few minutes until it starts to give off a toasted fragrance. Transfer to a bowl and add cold water to cover and let the barley soak. The next day, remove any loose hulls that have floated to the top and drain off the water. Add 2 cups fresh water and a generous pinch of salt, bring the barley to a simmer, and cook, covered, for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Check the barley for doneness. It will probably still need another 5 to 10 minutes to cook, but if it is still quite watery, you can remove the lid at this point and finish cooking while letting more of the liquid evaporate. When the barley is tender but still has a firm bite, turn it off. You will have more than you need for this recipe, so save some for salads or a side dish or freeze for another batch of salmon cakes. Measure out one cup of cooked barley for this recipe and transfer to a large bowl and allow it to cool.

2. Peel and chop the shallot in a small dice. Heat a skillet over medium heat, melt 1 Tbsp of butter, and sauté the shallots, with a pinch of salt, until very soft, but do not let them brown. Add these to the bowl with the barley.

3. Clean and slice the mushrooms. In the same pan that you cooked the shallots, melt another Tbsp of butter and now sauté the mushrooms over medium heat, with a pinch of salt and plenty of freshly ground black pepper. Let the mushrooms release their own juices and keep cooking them until the liquid cooks down. Now add the white vermouth and cook the mushrooms until this has cooked down. Turn off the mushrooms and let them cool. When the mushrooms have cooled, put them in a food processor with the crème fraîche and pulse a few times to create a textured paste. Reserve the mushroom cream for serving.

4. Now your barley should be cooled down enough to mix in an egg. Then mix in the grated gruyere cheese, oregano leaves, salt and freshly ground pepper. Break the salmon into flakes with a fork and gently mix this into the batter, along with the juices. Now use your hands to gently mix in about ½ cup panko, or more if the batter feels too moist. Form the batter into 12 patties, about two inches wide. Don't be tempted to make them larger because they will be too fragile to handle. Gently roll the cakes in more panko and place them on a parchment paper or silpat covered cookie sheet and chill them in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes and up to a day. This will help them firm up and make frying them more manageable.

5. Heat a skillet over medium high heat. Add about 4 Tbsp of olive oil to generously cover the bottom of the pan. When the oil is shimmering, place half of the cakes into the pan. Now leave them alone for a good 5-8 minutes until they are nicely browned (don't be tempted to flip them too soon). Flip and cook until the second side is nicely browned as well. Keep the first batch of salmon cakes warm in a 200 degree oven while you cook the next batch. Or you could use two skillets and cook them all at once.

6. While the salmon bakes are cooking, toss the salad greens with lemon juice and a small pinch of salt, and arrange on plates. When the salmon cakes are done cooking, place on the bed of greens and top each cake with a large dollop of the mushroom cream.

Note: these cakes, along with the mushroom cream topping, can be prepared ahead of time on a Sunday afternoon (after a Saturday night barley soak), and then chilled for a day in the refrigerator, ready to fry up for a quick Monday night supper.



Rachel Scherr

Scherrhailey.blogspot.com

Wedgwood R&D

Eat What's Here Month

When we decided to move from Maryland to Seattle, I was so eager, I started packing a year in advance. One of the things I decided early on was that I was [not going to ship food across the country](#). Why move it when we could eat it? And what's it there for, if not to be eaten? For several weeks, I planned our weekly menus around what was already in the house, with an eye to actually consuming *all* of it. We did pretty well. And I liked doing it: It was frugal, it honored the food, and it was an interesting challenge.

So even though now we live in the perfect place and never want to move again, I have established April as Eat What's Here month. The goal is to clean out the pantry and freezer of all those things that have been there for who knows how long. Okay, yes, things like dry beans last forever, but not *forever*. And what about all that other stuff? This year a bunch of stale bread ends from the freezer became bread pudding, made with rice milk from a forgotten carton and the tail end of some milk powder I found in the bottom of a drawer. A half gallon bag of sliced farmer's market peaches, languishing in the back of the freezer with a smaller quantity of half-dehydrated tart pluots, became the filling for these [granola-fruit sandwich bars](#). I even worked some random smokehouse almonds into the crust. Past successes have included tomato soup with dumplings made from leftover matzo ball soup mix; canned chili with cornbread, using up the last bit of cornmeal in the freezer; frozen chicken shiu mai, with veggies, served over sticky rice with bottled teriyaki sauce; canned soups with baked potatoes; canned baked beans with croquettes made from grits; and lentils and rice with caramelized onions (which is much more flavorful than it sounds).

This year I rose to a new level of challenge in that I not only had accumulated the usual whatever of my own, but had also inherited the contents of someone else's pantry. (Guess what? They moved to Texas, and didn't want to take the food with them.) I did not know what to do with these unidentified dried peppers. I tasted one and it was pretty sweet.

Facebook to the rescue! My now-Texan friend said: "Ancho peppers. Toast, seed, hydrate, then blend into a paste with spices, garlic and broth. Then you'll know what to do." I realized that I was about to *make my own mole*. That deep, pungent, sweet, smoky sauce was soon to be mine. And I became very excited. Because one of my passions, one of my *things*, is to make things from scratch that we normally think of as prepared foods. (Sometime I hope to tell you about the Marshmallow Madness.) Soon I was toasting the peppers, and my house smelled amazing.

The mole is extraordinary. And I have a lot. Would anyone like some? Because now I have something new in my freezer, and it won't last forever.

Ancho Chile Sauce adapted from [The Splendid Table](#)

6 dried ancho chiles
5 garlic cloves, peels on
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon dried basil
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 1/2 cups chicken broth
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 1/2 teaspoons vegetable oil or rendered bacon fat
2 medium onions, chopped medium fine
One 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes or pureed plum tomatoes
One 1-ounce chunk smoked ham, cut into pieces
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
1 to 2 teaspoons sugar
Kosher salt

Toast the whole dried chiles in the oven for a few minutes. Stay nearby so that you can snatch them out of the oven as their smell becomes intoxicating. They will be all puffed up! Wow! Cool them, open them up, and discard the stems and seeds. Cover the pieces with boiling water and let soak for 20 minutes, or until softened.

Meanwhile, put the garlic cloves in a small heavy pan and toast for about 15 minutes. Shake occasionally. They are ready when the skins have blackened in spots and the garlic has softened. Peel the cloves and combine in a blender with the cinnamon, basil, oregano, cumin seeds, broth, and vinegar. Drain the ancho chiles and add to the blender. Blend at high speed until smooth.

Saute the onions until golden brown. Add the ancho chile mixture and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes and ham, partially cover, and simmer until the sauce is very thick, about 25 minutes. Add the chocolate and simmer until the sauce is even thicker and has reduced to about 4 cups. Discard the ham (or not) and add the sugar and salt to taste. I'll say it again: Wow.



Merie Kirby

Simple Good and Tasty

simplegoodandtasty.com

I've learned that when you have to go around a room and introduce yourself by name and an interesting fact about yourself, it helps to be able to say, very casually, "I make *paneer*." If you go on to explain that *paneer* is an Indian cheese, and you make it to use in some of your favorite curries, you will quickly see the room divide into two camps. One camp thinks you are crazy. The other wants to come to dinner.

In summer of 2008, at our neighborhood farmers' market, a man was beginning a cooking demonstration to promote his new cookbook, and the scent of sautéing garlic, ginger, and onion filled the air. My daughter, Cora, then two-years-old, was done with the market, having exhausted the thrill of buying her own carrot and tasting the cabbage leaves. We left, but I noted the book's title.

The man was [Raghavan Iyer](#), and the book was [660 Curries](#). I found the book at the library and made a couple of curries. We were hooked. We bought our own copy. "Curry Night" made regular appearances in our menu plan, especially on days when we had lots of produce fresh from the [farmers' market](#), or when our late summer CSA box was full to bursting. Cooking from this book became an interesting fusion of local and global; while I might be able to use local, organic, fresh onions, potatoes, cabbage, and garlic, plus chiles out of my own or a friend's backyard, it is more difficult to find a local source for tamarind paste, cardamom seeds, basmati, or cow peas.

Is it better to use organic California basmati-like rice, which is organic and arguably more local than India or Pakistan? Or is it more desirable to choose authenticity and go with the true basmati rice from the other side of the globe? Can I at least purchase my globally-sourced products from small, local, independent shops? How does buying online fit into this equation? What if you move to the northern part of North Dakota, it's January, the [Siberian Express](#) is about to hit, and you really crave curry, or your go-to comfort food is chicken mole?

Frankly, I end up choosing differently each time, and sometimes the pressures of

time and convenience have their way with me, leading to choices that I later second-guess. But, in our house, we try to make regret an impetus to make changes, not just a comfy mudbath to wallow in. And so over time I have become more adept at managing time and convenience, and at finding ways to make my preferred choice more convenient to my routine. I am lucky that currently, although I live in a location with reduced options, I do have one small, local, independent source for many of my global ingredients.

Well, there is one other option – to forgo global cuisine in favor of what is only available to me right here, right now. Perhaps I am being selfish in wanting to have my curries, tacos, pad thai, risotto, and Yorkshire pudding, too. (Okay, it is actually very easy to make [Yorkshire pudding](#) only from local, organic ingredients.) But my love of American folk music does not keep me from playing my [Manu Chao](#) CD, and if you're passionate about food, you're passionate about *exploring* food. [Jake Shimabokuru](#) believes that ukulele music can help bring about happiness and world peace (I'm not going to argue with him) -- and I believe that a familiarity with the world's foods could also play a role.

This is why many of my favorite cookbooks feature recipes from India, Mexico, France, Italy, and, the newest addition, Thailand. It is why my perennial [New Year's resolution](#) is to make, on average, one new recipe a week. Granted, this is sometimes complicated by having a preschooler in the house. Sometimes a new recipe immediately wins us over. *Mutter paneer*, that perfect blend of cheese, peas, tomato sauce, cilantro, and spices, so delicious and so quick, is one of these.

The day before we have friends over for curry night, I make the paneer, performing my favorite magic trick with only whole milk and vinegar. The milk takes forever to boil; the final twenty minutes are excruciating as I second-guess when it is *really* boiling, and not just foaming or at a very high simmer. Misjudging the boil means not as much cheese. When the milk is at a good boil, I pour in a quarter cup of vinegar. Almost immediately curds begin to rise to the surface. It is a ridiculously exciting moment. After a few minutes, I pour the curds and whey into a colander lined with cheesecloth, eager to see if it was a good batch. In the morning, I take my lovely white cake of paneer from the fridge, slice it into cubes, and fry it in canola until lightly browned.

I check my bottle of *bin bhuna hua* garam masala, the particular spice blend for this dish, to see if I need to make more or not. An old coffee grinder has found a new life as my spice grinder, and collecting the coriander, cardamom seeds, cloves, bay leaves, and other ingredients gives me the kind of giddiness that my daughter gets from playing dress-up.

When our friends arrive, we open a bottle of wine and I start the mutter paneer and the chicken curry – *murghi jardaloo* – I am making to go with it. Thirty minutes later we are sitting at the table with plates of rice, curries, chutney, pickle, and raita. (Cora, who has yet to fully discover her ethnic appetite, sticks with her Mama’s homemade chicken noodle soup, with a side of paneer.) For the next couple of hours, the combination of good food and good friends creates much happiness; another wonderful magic trick.



Janet Elsbach

A Raisin and a Porpoise

rasinporpoise.blogspot.com

Good Housekeeping

I just had a romp through the women's magazines while I waited for my daughter at the pediatric dentist. I am resolved to be slimmer, make better use of my closet space, and get totally invested in date night. Also I am all about quinoa. Well, my children would tell you that is nothing new. Like the lamented chickpea, it is one of those foods that they reflexively express dislike for and claim is in constant rotation, even though they eat it pretty happily. But everyone else in the universe seems to be about quinoa now, so my quiet devotion to it no longer has to be a source of shame for the family.

It looks to me from a scientific survey of the mainstream blog and magazine universes that this is the Age of Quinoa 'n' Cheese. Here it is, baked with chunks of ham. There it is, bright orange with conveniently pre-shredded colby. If it means more people eating quinoa, there probably isn't much to object to in the trend.

Also, they happen to be on to something. What suspect food is not improved with bakey crispy cheese on top? And when I saw the quinoa muffins (and wee little muffinettes) moving in herds across the Great Housewifely Plains, I decided to get a little of that women's mag action here at home.

"Don't think I am fooled by the whole muffin thing," said the Chief Quinoa Skeptic.

Fooled in what way?

"I can see that these are made of quinoa," the CQS responded, but by then she had eaten it. And then she ate another. I really wasn't trying to fool anyone, I swear. But I will say I enjoyed the reduced grumbling. These come across like something between a nice, not-at-all dry muffin and an amusingly portable frittata. We ate them hot, with a big messy salad, for dinner, but they are likely suspects for flinging into a lunch box, too, or onto a brunch table.

Like a frittata or quiche or omelette, they are kind of a blank canvas. I am not sure there is any limitation on what you could add here, so this is a non-recipe recipe. Go hog wild. Suggestions below, but feel free to ignore them.

Convincing quinoa flingers
makes 12

2 1/2 cups of cooked quinoa
1 1/2 cups of coarsely grated cheddar, divided
1 c coarsely grated zucchini (about one 7" zuke)
3-4 eggs
a generous sprinkling of chopped fresh herbs, like chives or basil
salt & pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 350. Lightly spray or brush a 12-cup muffin tin with olive oil.

Combine the quinoa, 1 cup of the cheddar, the zucchini, herbs and 3 of the eggs in a medium bowl and mix well. If it seems dry, add the remaining egg. You want a nice thick batter, not soupy but not a dry, clumpy situation. Add a fat pinch of salt and a few twists of pepper. Divide among the muffin cups and sprinkle the tops with the remaining cheese. Bake about 20 minutes, until nicely golden brown, and cool on a rack to ensure cheesy crispiness on the bottoms (they will sog a bit if left to cool in the pan).

Variations on that theme:

Replace the zucchini with shredded baby spinach, or finely chopped, cooked greens like chard or kale. Replace all or part of the cheddar with some crumbled feta. This batch disappeared in the blink of an eye.

Add some cubed & roasted sweet potatoes, drained black beans and a handful of chopped cilantro.

Roasted or sautéed red onion would be tasty with smoked cheddar or gouda, and a fat pinch of cumin and maybe some leftover roasted squash if you had some around.

Use mozzarella, or a smoky scamorza, and some chopped roasted or dried tomatoes, and a handful of chopped fresh basil.

Pig out: crumbled bacon, slivers of ham, cooked sausage....oh, you get the idea.



Erinn Johnson
Clear Pink
clearpink.blogspot.com

I have been making a lot of soup lately. Three out of four of the kids like soup, and Number Three will eat it.

I saw a recipe for a carrot soup on Rasing Foodies and thought I would give it a try using all of our carrots from the farm. I have been making my own stocks lately, so I used that as well. I changed her recipe a bit, but I have a new hit on my hands. Number Three LOVED it. It really came out great. I served it with a dollop of sour cream and sprinkled with bacon and good crusty bread, perfect on a cold fall night.

CARROT SOUP

1/2 pound of bacon, diced
1/4 stick unsalted butter
2 onions, sliced
3 sprig thyme
2 pounds organic carrots, peeled and sliced
6 cups chicken stock

In a large stock pot cook the bacon until crisp. Remove bacon with a slotted spoon and reserve for serving. Drain bacon fat leaving about three tablespoons in the pot.

Add butter to the pot and melt the butter over medium-low heat. When butter has melted add the onion and thyme. Continue cooking on medium-low heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Be sure to scrap up all of the brown bits from the bacon.

Add the carrots and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Pour in the stock and turn the heat to high. Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat, add the salt, and simmer for 30-45 minutes.

Puree the soup in a blender or food processor or a stick blender (if you do not have one, you should invest in one, they are great) and return to pot. You may need to do this in several batches and be careful, as hot liquids will expand in the blender.

Heat until warmed through.

Serve topped with sour cream and bacon.



Gretchen Wright
The Wright Place
thewrightstufforus.blogspot.com
Chicken...Cooked in an Oven

I've been married for seventeen years to a man with whom I have very little in common when it comes to music, books, organizational tendencies, and FOOD. Basically, the glue holding this whole thing together is that we both enjoy Ben & Jerry's ice cream...but then again NOT the same flavors.

I eat with a sense of adventure. My Man eats with a sense of aversion. I'm always up for something new, something different. My Man would be thrilled if I served spaghetti, baked ziti, grilled chicken, mashed potatoes, corn, and pizza on a weekly basis.

I frequently check out 4 or 5 cookbooks at a time from our well stocked local library. At home, I shelve those babies behind the kids' library books. Nothing terrifies my Man more than the sight of a new cookbook.

When I discover a recipe I think will work for dinner, my husband and I perform a sort of verbal dinner dance in which my man asks the age old question, "What's for dinner?"

I answer as vaguely as possible, "Chicken with other stuff."

"What *kind* of chicken?"

"Chicken cooked in the oven."

"Is there anything in it that I don't like?"

I am always tempted to lie through my teeth but I have learned, whether I come clean or not, my man is rarely fooled. There is a *chance*, I reason, that he has never sampled, let's say pimentos, so answering that last question with "I'm not sure," would technically be honest, but would definitely raise suspicion.

When he samples the new dish, one of two things will happen: my man will like it and continue eating, or he won't like it and will move on to the applesauce or the mashed potatoes hoping to get enough nourishment to last him until breakfast.

In either case, he will make *no comment*!! A wise woman would know or at least *learn* to leave well enough alone. A wise woman I've *never* claimed to be, "Well, how do you *like* it?"

Option 1: "It's OK."

Translation: "I don't hate it. It isn't making me sick at this moment."

Option 2: "How much onion did the recipe call for?"

Translation: "I forgot to ask if it had onion in it again, will I ever learn? Please don't fix this again, ever."

Option 3: "*This* is a DO OVER."

Translation: "I will happily eat this again. In fact, I'll probably request this meal next Tuesday and every Tuesday thereafter."

Recently, I found success with a recipe from Robin Miller's Quick Fix Meals called, Roasted Chicken with Smokey Apricot Sauce.

With a short ingredient list and big flavor, this recipe was a hit with the cook and the eaters alike!

Here's what you'll need:

5 chicken breasts, pounded to uniform thickness
salt and pepper to taste
1 teaspoon liquid smoke
1 18 ounce jar apricot preserves
2 Tablespoons soy sauce

Here's what to do:

Preheat the oven to 400°. Cut the chicken breasts into kid friendly sizes (approximately 3 pieces per breast) and salt and pepper on both sides. Place the chicken pieces in a baking pan. Combine the liquid smoke, the apricot preserves, and the soy sauce. Mix well and pour over the chicken. Bake for 30-35 minutes.