smitten kitchen This is the bouldered and dramatic intersection of two of my favorite things: cinnamon baked apples and a thick crumb cake. I don’t know how they make crumb cake where you are, but here in New York, and where I grew up in New Jersey, crumb cake isn’t a genteel cinnamon-ribboned or finely streusel-ed coffee cake, but a hefty square that’s 50% crumb topping and 50% a golden, sour cream-enriched cake and I wouldn’t want it any other way. Thanks to brown sugar and cinnamon, the crumb topping is always a dark stripe, and a snow-cap of powdered sugar isn’t optional. Fruit is, but this is too good with fresh apples to skip them. For such a loud and attention-demanding cake (I’m still talking about cake, I think?), no delicate slice or dice of apples will do so I use here a full pound of thick wedges snugged so tightly they barely fit in their confines, an all-too-accurate New York real estate story. Squeezing your crumbs in small handfuls before breaking them over the apples created more boulder-like pieces. Baking this cake for almost an hour at a slightly lower temperature gives the apples enough time to get tender, their juices bubbling. Your kitchen will smell, at minimum, like a blissful epiphany of apples, brown sugar, and cinnamon, and at peak melodrama, the absolutely best decision we’ve made yet in October. I’m back! I’ve missed you. I never intended to take such a long break, or any at all, but I was pulled under by a vacation (too short), a manuscript deadline for my next book (too quick), and then the two-week photoshoot for it (100 recipes in 10 days, oh and btw, I’m the photographer) and when I emerged, because I only like sparkly new things, I didn’t want to share any of the recipes I already readied but new ones that had piqued my interest while I was buried. One of the things that’s different about SK, sometimes for the better but occasionally for the worse, is that there’s no editorial or recipe development staff and just one me, and life gets busy. But my central dedication to this space — which turns 15 this fall! — remains unchanged. Good luck ever getting rid of me for good. ;)