

“Alongside high-quality staples from the market, I also like to make things for the pantry myself.”

SUBCHAPTERS

- A Versatile Brine for Quick Pickles
- Garlic Sautéed Greens to Stock Your Fridge
- A No-Cook Dessert From Your Pantry
- Oat Pancakes for Now and Later

CHAPTER REVIEW

The pantry is not only made of dry goods, cans, and jars. Alice considers ready-to-go items prepared in advance to be a pantry element. Often on a farmer's market day, when there is time, she will make a few preparations to stock the refrigerator with delicious things that can be additions to or the basis of quick meals during the busy week ahead.

Alice's quick pickles start with farmers' market vegetables and a brine of vinegar, water, salt, sugar, herbs, and spices. They can be kept in the refrigerator for a month. Whichever vegetables you choose, cut them into uniform sizes for even pickling. Use champagne vinegar for its neutral flavor and ability to marry into the brine. The spice mixture can be adjusted to your tastes with variations such as adding turmeric for its bright orange color.

Garlic sautéed greens go with almost everything; refrigerator quick pickles will boost a grilled cheese sandwich lunch; pancake batter can last a week in the fridge at the ready for a nutritious breakfast; and whole grains can be made in one large batch and heated up for meals throughout the week. During Alice's time in Italy she became accustomed to having sautéed greens along with most meals. At home, she sautés greens like kale and frisée with olive oil and a few cloves of garlic. If the greens are larger, they can be chopped or even blanched before sautéing. The garlic should be fine-chopped so that it melts into the greens. Alice also likes to make a version she learned from her friend from India with ginger and chiles added to the garlic.

Honey is another versatile pantry staple. Alice is gifted with honey from all over the world and each one has the unique flavor of the flowers of the region, such as an especially aromatic honey from Portugal and a chestnut honey from northern Italy with an almost bitter finish. Top a mild ricotta cheese with an interesting honey and toasted nuts and you have a quick and elegant dessert from your pantry.

Oat pancakes are whole-grain, simple to make, and enticing to children especially if served with a sweetened strawberry compote or other berry or fruit compote or sauce—a great way to use overripe fruit. The pancakes are cooked in a cast-iron pan, which Alice uses to cook just about everything. They are indestructible but take some care. A cast-iron pan will behave like a non-stick pan if it is well-seasoned and cared for. Always place a just cleaned cast-iron pan on the flame to dry and rub in oil to maintain the seasoning.



RECIPES

QUICK PICKLING BRINE

ADAPTED FROM *My Pantry*, PAGE 57

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

Alice uses this brine to pickle little cauliflower florets, sliced carrots, quartered pearl or cipolline onions, halved okra pods, small turnips cut into wedges (with some stem attached), whole green beans, whole chiles, small cubes of celery, fennel, and winter squash—and more. Sometimes she just slices red onions very thin and pours the boiling brine over them. (This also works well for radishes, zucchini, and cucumbers.) By the time they cool they will have cooked just enough and are delicious served with smoked fish and new potatoes or garnishing a smoked salmon toast.

- 1 cup white wine vinegar
- 1½ cups water
- 2½ tablespoons sugar
- ½ bay leaf
- 4 thyme sprigs
- A pinch of dried chile flakes
- ½ teaspoon coriander seeds
- 2 whole cloves
- 4 cloves garlic, halved
- 1 tablespoon sea salt

Combine all the ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add small or chopped vegetables to the brine, cooking each type of vegetable separately and removing them when they are cooked but still a little crisp. Remove the vegetables with a slotted spoon and set them aside to cool to room temperature. Once all the vegetables are cooked and cooled, allow the brine to cool as well. Stir the vegetables together gently, then transfer to jars or other covered containers, cover with the cooled pickle brine, and refrigerate. You can keep this basic brine in your refrigerator and reheat it to make fresh pickles when you are inspired by a trip to the farmers' market. The brine can be used several times for pickling.

VARIATION

- ♦ Feel free to alter the ingredients of the brine. Try using red instead of white vinegar, or adding a bit of saffron, turmeric, another kind of dried chile than chile flakes, or slices of fresh jalapeño.

BROCCOLI RABE WITH GARLIC AND HOT PEPPER

ADAPTED FROM *The Art of Simple Food*, PAGE 311

This is one of my favorite greens. It has an assertive flavor that is bitter, nutty, sweet, and green. The stems have a great texture that's both juicy and chewy. It calls out for garlic and strong flavorings—hot pepper, anchovies, and vinegar.

2 bunches of broccoli rabe (about 1¼ pounds)
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 dried cayenne pepper, sliced coarse, or a pinch of dried chile flakes
3 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
Salt

Stem the broccoli rabe, cut off and discard any woody parts of the stems. Cut the rest of the stems into ½-inch-long pieces. Slice the leafy parts into 1-inch ribbons. Wash the greens in cold water and drain. Add 3 tablespoons olive oil to a wide sauté pan over medium heat. When hot, add the pepper or chile flakes and the garlic. Stir once, then quickly toss in the broccoli rabe and season with salt. If all the broccoli rabe won't fit in the pan, wait until some of it is wilted before adding the rest. The residual water from washing the greens should be enough to cook them, but if the pan gets too dry and starts to sizzle, add more water. The toughness of broccoli rabe varies wildly. Cooking it until tender can take anywhere from 4 to 12 minutes. Keep checking for tenderness and seasoning. Just before serving stir in 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil.

VARIATION

♦ Use the same method to cook other leafy greens: kale, rapini, escarole, chard, dandelion, mustard greens, and chicories.



RICOTTA, HONEY, AND HAZELNUT DESSERT

When Alice has honey and hazelnuts on hand, she makes a dessert of ricotta topped with warmed honey and freshly toasted and chopped hazelnuts. Although it is a simple dessert, it uses the absolute best version of each ingredient—the most delicious ricotta, freshly roasted hazelnuts, and a unique honey. It is an opportunity to showcase a special or unusual honey and to appreciate the flavor of the honey—not just use it as a sweetener.

To plate, cut a wedge of your tender ricotta and layer a spoonful of just warmed honey on top. Finish with a sprinkle of toasted chopped hazelnuts.





RICOTTA

FROM *My Pantry*, PAGE 109

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

Ricotta cheese is one of the few cheeses that you make at home that does not need enzymes, only milk, hot water, vinegar and salt. Some recipes for ricotta use lemon juice and some citric acid, but I like to use distilled vinegar. It contributes the least flavor to the cheese and produces a cheese that tastes the most like fresh milk.

4 cups organic whole milk (not ultra-pasteurized)

1½ tablespoons distilled white vinegar

¾ teaspoon sea salt

Heat the milk in a heavy-bottomed nonreactive pot over medium heat until the temperature reaches 190°F. Stir the milk now and then to keep it from scorching. Pour in the vinegar, stir briefly, and bring the temperature back up to 190°F. The milk should coagulate and separate into white curds and lighter colored whey. If this does not happen, add a bit more vinegar, ½ teaspoon at a time. Turn off the heat and let sit undisturbed for 10 minutes.

Place a sieve over a large bowl and line with a few layers of cheesecloth or a single layer of butter muslin. Gently ladle the curds from the pot into the cloth-lined sieve with a slotted spoon. Slowly stir in the salt. Drain for a few minutes, or longer if you prefer a firmer ricotta. Taste a little to judge the texture. Eat right away or refrigerate for up to 4 days.

OAT PANCAKES

FROM *My Pantry*, PAGE 78

MAKES 8 PANCAKES (3 TO 4 INCHES IN DIAMETER)

These pancakes can go savory or sweet. Serve with a poached egg, a dollop of yogurt or cottage cheese, a fruit compote or berry sauce, slices of fruit, or a drizzle of honey.

1 cup rolled oats

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk or almond milk

1 large egg

3 tablespoons ghee, coconut oil, or butter (or a combination), melted

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

1 teaspoon baking soda

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder

Put the oats in a blender or food processor and blend to a fine powder (this shouldn't take more than 20 or 30 seconds). You will have about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup oat flour.

Beat the milk and egg together with a fork in a medium bowl. Stir in the melted butter or oils—Alice likes a mix of ghee and coconut oil, which lends both buttery and coconutty flavor to the pancakes. Add the oat flour, salt, baking soda, and baking powder and stir until just combined. Let the batter sit for 10 minutes to thicken.

Heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Grease lightly with oil or butter and spoon in the batter, about a quarter cup per pancake. Cook the pancakes until a few bubbles on top have broken, then flip them over and cook until golden on both sides.



LEARN MORE

♦ If you'd like to cook additional staples for your pantry, try the following recipes from *My Pantry*.

CHICKEN STOCK

FROM *My Pantry*, PAGES 100–101

MAKES ABOUT 5 QUARTS



About 4 pounds meaty chicken parts or 1 whole chicken

1 carrot, peeled

1 onion, peeled and halved

1 celery stalk

1 head garlic, halved

1 leek, halved and rinsed

1 teaspoon sea salt

A few black peppercorns

A few parsley sprigs

A few thyme sprigs

1 or 2 bay leaves

Put the chicken in a large pot and add 1½ gallons cold water. Bring to a boil over high heat, then lower the heat so that the broth is barely simmering, with bubbles just breaking the surface. Skim off the foam that rises to the top, but leave some of the fat as it adds lots of flavor to the stock and can be removed later. For a nice clear stock, don't let it boil again, or the fat and the liquid may emulsify, turning the stock cloudy and greasy. After skimming, add the vegetables, salt, peppercorns, and herbs and continue to simmer for 3 to 4 hours (if you're in a hurry, you can use the stock after about an hour, before it is fully cooked). Turn off the heat, let the stock cool a bit, then strain and discard the solids.

Ladle the stock through a fine-mesh sieve into a nonreactive container, or several small containers, for freezing. If using the stock right away, skim off the fat. Otherwise, let the stock cool and refrigerate it with the fat, which will solidify on top and can then be easily removed before you use it. The stock will keep, covered, in the refrigerator for up to one week or for several months in the freezer.

VARIATIONS

- ♦ Save the carcasses of roasted chickens in the freezer and add them to the pot.
- ♦ In summer, add a few fresh tomatoes.

HUMMUS WITH PRESERVED LEMON

FROM *My Pantry*, PAGES 44–45

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup dried chickpeas, soaked overnight
1 onion, halved
1 carrot, peeled and halved
A few garlic cloves, peeled but whole
Sea salt
1 dried chile (optional)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ preserved lemon, rind only, finely chopped
2 tablespoons tahini
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for garnish
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cumin seeds, toasted and ground
A large pinch of cayenne pepper



Drain and rinse the chickpeas thoroughly and put them in a pot with the onion, carrot, all but one of the garlic cloves, some salt, the dried chile (if using), and enough fresh water to cover the chickpeas by an inch or more. Bring to a boil and simmer until the chickpeas are quite tender, 1 to 2 hours. Allow the chickpeas to cool in the cooking liquid. Discard the onion, carrot, and chile (if you used one). Reserving some of the cooking liquid, drain the chickpeas.

Make the hummus with a mortar and pestle, such as a big Japanese suribachi, or use a food processor or blender. If using a mortar and pestle, pound the remaining garlic clove and a pinch of salt into a smooth paste. Add the preserved lemon and pound until the lemon has completely mixed together with the garlic. Add the chickpeas and mash until they are broken up. Finally, add the tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, cumin, and cayenne. Mix together until smooth, adding some of the reserved cooking liquid if necessary. If using a blender or food processor, start to purée about half of the cooked chickpeas with a little of their cooking liquid. Add the garlic and preserved lemon and when almost completely puréed, add the tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, cumin, and cayenne and mix until smooth, adding more cooking liquid if necessary.

Taste for seasoning and add more salt, cumin, or lemon if needed. When ready to serve, garnish with olive oil and a sprinkling of cumin or cayenne.

YOGURT

FROM *My Pantry*, PAGES 112–113

MAKES 6 TO 8 CUPS

6 to 8 cups goat's, sheep's, or cow's milk, raw or pasteurized, organic
1 packet yogurt starter (creamy or tangy)

Warm the milk in a heavy-bottomed nonreactive pot over low heat, stirring often. (If your heat source is uneven, use a double boiler.) When the milk reaches 185°F, remove the pot from the heat and let cool to 112°F. At this point, I whisk the milk frequently to help it cool more quickly.

While the milk is cooling, locate a warm spot for your yogurt to sit for 6 to 12 hours. It should be around 110°F. (Heating the oven to 400°F for 10 minutes, then turning it off should create the proper environment.)

When the milk has cooled to 112°F, sprinkle the starter over the milk and let it sit for 2 minutes. Stir gently to dissolve. When the cultured milk has cooled slightly, to about 110°F, cover the pot with a lid, and wrap in a thick towel to insulate it. Place in the oven or other warm spot for 6 to 12 hours, or until the yogurt is thick and creamy. The longer it sits, the tangier it will be. The yogurt can be refrigerated and enjoyed for many days, and it can also be strained to make labneh.

WHOLE-WHEAT FLATBREADS

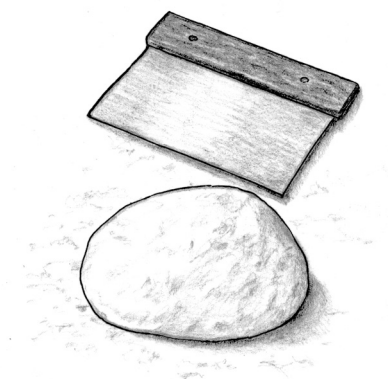
FROM *My Pantry*, PAGE 79

MAKES 16 FLATBREADS

You may have to experiment with different whole-wheat flours before you find one that works well; the one that works best for me is ground very fine and has relatively little bran in it.

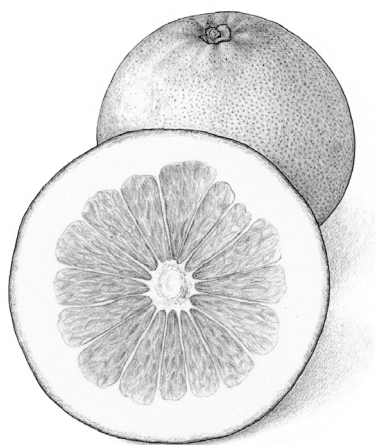
2 cups whole-wheat flour
1 teaspoon sea salt
½ teaspoon baking powder
¾ cup warm water, or more
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, and baking powder. Stir in the water and oil. Knead briefly to form a soft, moist dough. If the dough is too dry, add a little more water. Cover with a kitchen towel and let rest for 30 minutes.



Divide the dough into 16 balls. On a lightly floured work surface, use a rolling pin to roll each ball into a 6-by-3-inch oval. Heat a 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Cook two flatbreads at a time until they start to brown on the bottom, about 2 minutes. Flip and cook until browned in spots on the other side, about 2 minutes more. Wrap the flatbreads in a clean kitchen towel while still warm to let the breads moisten from the steam.

Just before serving, use tongs to hold each flatbread briefly over an open flame, turning until lightly charred on both sides. Serve warm.



CANDIED CITRUS PEEL

FROM *My Pantry*, PAGES 124–125

MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS

4 oranges or Seville oranges, 8 lemons or tangerines, or 3 grapefruits
4½ to 5 cups sugar

Wash the citrus fruit well and cut in half. If using grapefruit, cut into quarters. Juice the fruit and either drink it or reserve it for another use (such as a citrus granita). Put the peels in a medium saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil over low heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Drain the peels, return them to the saucepan, cover again with cold water, bring to a boil and simmer 10 more minutes. At this point, if candying oranges or lemons, test the peel with the point of a knife. If it is tender, then drain and let cool. If it is not yet tender, drain and repeat the process of covering with cold water and bringing to a boil. If you are using grapefruit or Seville oranges, which have more bitter peels, blanch a minimum of 3 times.

Once the peel has cooled, scrape out most of the white part of the peel with a spoon and discard. Slice the peel into long ¼-inch-wide strips, return them to the saucepan, and add 4 cups of sugar for oranges and lemons or 4½ cups for grapefruits. Add 2 cups water and heat the mixture over low heat, stirring often to dissolve the sugar. Allow the peel to cook slowly in the sugar syrup. Have a candy thermometer ready. When the peel is translucent and the bubbles in the syrup start rising smaller and faster, turn up the heat slightly, and cook the syrup to the thread stage, 230° to 234°F.

Turn off the heat and let the peel sit in the syrup for 30 minutes. Set a wire rack on a baking sheet. With a slotted spoon, carefully scoop out the strips of peel and arrange the strips on the rack, not touching one another, to dry overnight. The next day, toss the strips of candied peel with the remaining sugar in a large bowl, separating any strips that stick together. Stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, candied peel will keep for months.