

*“I usually think of menus in three courses: a salad, a main dish, and a sweet end. I’m also wanting a contrast of [flavors], textures, color, and temperatures on the plates.”*

#### SUBCHAPTERS

Plan Your Cooking  
Pre-Salting and Parboiling  
Alice’s Essential Sauce: Aioli  
Waking Up Nuts and Olives  
A Compote That Lets Fresh Fruit Shine

#### CHAPTER REVIEW

When you’re having people over for a meal, don’t leave things to the last minute. Plan your menu and cooking ahead of time. Alice recommends leaving only one hot menu component to finish the evening of your dinner party. You’ll be able to spend more time with your guests and enjoy yourself.

#### MARKET FRESH DINNER MENU

Roasted almonds with rosemary and sautéed olives  
Grilled chicken or chicken mattone  
Fingerling potatoes with aioli  
Green salad with shaved fennel  
Pear compote with crab apple jelly

Before you start making preparations and cooking, take some time to get organized. Think through the steps for each dish and how long the steps will take. Gather the ingredients and equipment you will need. Make a plan for the sequence of the preparations. If it is helpful, make a prep list to work from and check off the tasks as you go. (That’s what the pros do!) Allow yourself enough time to enjoy the process and the pleasure of organizing your *mise en place*. In this chapter, Alice makes her preparations so that all that remains to finish the dinner will be to cook the chicken, warm the potatoes, toss the salad, and serve.

First, season the chicken breasts so that the salt and flavorings have time to penetrate before cooking later. Alice boils the potatoes so that they are cooked through and only need to be warmed and browned on the grill or in the same pan as the chicken closer to dinnertime.

After cooking the potatoes, Alice makes the aioli. Aioli is used all the time at Chez Panisse and has many variations. Aioli is essentially a mayonnaise with an added garlic flavoring. It is an emulsified sauce that takes practice, but it is an important sauce to learn because it’s so versatile.

Alice has been serving roasted almonds with herbs at Chez Panisse for a very long time. They make for a great bite to have ready when your guests walk in the door. Roasting the almonds and rosemary at a low temperature allows for a greater margin of time to check on the almonds and avoid burning. The olives can be ready in the pan with herbs, citrus rind, and olive oil and warmed just before your guests arrive.

Prepare the fruit compote. It is easy to make and the flavors improve as it sits. For this very simple dessert, Alice uses whatever fruit is in season and sometimes a mix of fruits.

### NOTE

Alice finishes the Grilled Chicken and Fingerling Potatoes in Chapter 14: A Market Fresh Dinner / Finish and Serve.



### RECIPES

#### GRILLED CHICKEN OR CHICKEN MATTONE

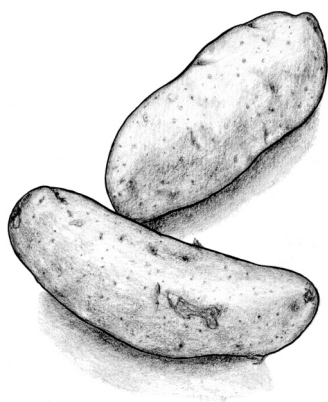
Season 2 chicken breasts (boned, skin on) liberally with salt, pepper, and thyme, and drizzle with olive oil. If dinner is more than a few hours away, put the chicken in the refrigerator and pull it out an hour before you are ready to cook so that it has time to come to room temperature. (Always wash your hands after handling raw chicken.)

### NOTE

Recipes for cooking the chicken on the grill and on the stove top may be found in Chapter 14: A Market Fresh Dinner / Finish and Serve.

#### GREEN SALAD WITH SHAVED FENNEL

Prepare the salad greens; see Chapter 9: Preparing a Beautiful Salad. Prepare a vinaigrette; see Chapter 5: A Well-Stocked Pantry.



#### PARBOILED POTATOES

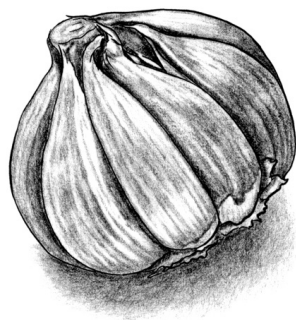
1½ pounds fingerling potatoes or small new potatoes

Start the potatoes in cold, salted water. Starting them cold helps the skins stay intact and holds in moisture so that you don't end up with dry potatoes. Boil the potatoes until they are tender. Test for doneness with a knife—it should slide in easily when the potatoes are done. If smaller potatoes finish before the larger ones, pull them out to cool while the larger potatoes finish cooking.

### AÏOLI / GARLIC MAYONNAISE

ADAPTED FROM *The Art of Simple Food*, PAGE 46

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP



Velvety, luscious, garlicky mayonnaise—what the French call aïoli (pronounced eye-oh-lee)—is another sauce Alice uses all the time: on sandwiches; with vegetables, both raw and cooked; with meat and fish; as the binder for chicken salad and egg salad; and as a base for sauces such as tartar sauce. Most children, even very young ones, love aïoli and will happily use it as a dip for bite after bite of bread, carrots, potatoes, and even vegetables they might otherwise refuse.

Two or three small cloves of garlic per egg yolk, pounded with a mortar and pestle, make a fairly pungent garlic mayonnaise—depending on the garlic. The strength of garlic's flavor can vary a lot, depending on freshness, season, and variety. Alice always pounds the garlic in a mortar and pestle and reserves half of it, so she can add it later if the aïoli needs it. (You can always add more garlic, but you can't subtract it.) It's important to pound the garlic to a very smooth purée so the sauce will be garlicky through and through, not just a mayonnaise with bits of garlic in it.

One egg yolk will absorb up to one cup of oil, but you can add less if you don't need that much mayonnaise. Whisk in oil drop by drop at first, adding more as you go. It is much easier to whisk when the bowl is steadied; to help hold it still, set it on top of a coiled dish towel.

Adding a small amount of water to the egg yolk (at room temperature) before you incorporate the oil helps prevent the sauce from separating or "breaking." If mayonnaise does separate, stop adding oil, but don't despair. Just crack a fresh egg, separate the yolk into a new bowl, add a little water as before, and slowly whisk in first the broken sauce and then the rest of the oil.

Make aïoli half an hour ahead of time, to give the flavors a chance to marry. As with anything made with raw eggs, if you're not going to serve mayonnaise within an hour, refrigerate it. Aïoli tastes best the day it's made.

2 or 3 small garlic cloves  
A pinch of salt  
1 egg yolk, room temperature  
½ teaspoon water  
1 cup olive oil

Peel the garlic cloves and the salt. Separate the egg yolk into a mixing bowl, add about half the garlic and the water. Mix well with a whisk. Measure the olive oil into a cup with a pour spout, and slowly dribble the oil into the egg yolk mixture, whisking constantly. As the egg yolk absorbs the oil, the sauce will thicken, lighten in color, and become opaque. This will happen rather quickly. Then you can add the oil a little faster, whisking all the while.

If the sauce is thicker than you like, thin it with a few drops of water. Taste and add more salt and garlic, as desired.

### VARIATIONS

Plain mayonnaise—made the same way as aioli, but without garlic, and finished with a touch of vinegar or lemon juice can be varied in many different ways:

- ♦ Mustard or horseradish mayonnaise is wonderful for sandwiches.
- ♦ An herb mayonnaise with chopped herbs such as parsley, chives, tarragon, and chervil and a little lemon juice goes extremely well with fish and shellfish.
- ♦ To make tartar sauce, add chopped pickles, pickle juice, grated onion, capers, parsley, and a pinch of cayenne.
- ♦ To make a beautiful green mayonnaise, pound watercress or basil in the mortar and pestle and add to the mayonnaise.



## SAUTÉED OLIVES

ADAPTED FROM *Fanny in France*, PAGE 99

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

- 1 cup olives, preferably Luques or Picholine
- 2 to 3 long strips of lemon zest
- ¼ teaspoon fennel seeds
- 2 or 3 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Take the olives out of their brine and rinse. Put the olives into a sauté pan and toss with the lemon zest, fennel seeds, bay leaves, and olive oil. Add a little water and warm the marinated olives gently over low heat for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Spoon into a bowl. Heat them just before serving, and make sure you put another small dish nearby for the pits.



## ROASTED ALMONDS WITH ROSEMARY

ADAPTED FROM *My Pantry*, PAGE 30

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

Roasting a mixture of nuts at a low temperature is a wonderful method. At high temperatures, some kinds of nuts in the mixture may burn, but they won't if roasted with the others at a low temperature. The delightfully crisped rosemary leaves are as satisfying as the roasted nuts themselves.

3 cup almonds

½ cup loosely packed rosemary leaves 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon sea salt

Preheat the oven to 275°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, mix together the nuts and rosemary. Add the oil and salt and toss gently until the nuts and rosemary are evenly coated.

Spread the nuts and rosemary on the baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes. Stir the nuts and return them to the oven for 10 more minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and break a few nuts open. If their centers are golden brown they are done; if the nuts still need more time, stir them and return them to the oven, checking every 5 minutes or so. You want them to roast fully, not burn. I usually find 35 minutes is about right.





### PEAR COMPOTE WITH CRAB APPLE JELLY

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

Any type of jam can be used to sweeten the orange juice which acts like a sauce for the fruit. If the mixture gets too sweet, add a little lemon juice to brighten it up. If the jam is a firmer style like the crab apple jelly Alice uses, warm it up on the stove so that it easily dissolves into the orange juice. The pear and raspberry compote can be served as-is but also benefits from a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

2 to 3 tablespoons crab apple jelly

Juice of 1 orange

2 to 3 ripe pears

1 basket raspberries

Put the jelly into a small saucepan and gently warm to melt. Remove from the heat and squeeze in the juice of an orange. Whisk together. Peel and slice the pears, and put into a pretty bowl along with the raspberries. Pour the jelly sauce over the fruit and gently mix. Let soak 30 minutes. Chill and let macerate until ready to serve.

#### LEARN MORE

♦ To make crab apple jelly, follow the recipe on page 128 of *My Pantry*. You can also use another jelly or fresh fruit sauce or syrup in lieu of the crab apple jelly.