

Patrick's Cookbook

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Chapter I

BASICS



Basic Chicken Thighs (Instant Pot)

Ingredients

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Water | 2 cups |
| Better Than Bouillon - Chicken | 1 Tbsp. |
| Chicken thighs | 3 lbs |
| Dried rosemary | 2 tsp. |
| Bay leaf | 1 |

Directions

Remove skin from **thighs** (if bone-in) — Trim excess fat — Prepare **stock** with **Better Than Bouillon**

1. Combine **water** and **Better Than Bouillon** in a measuring cup, stirring to dissolve completely.
2. Place **chicken thighs** in the Instant Pot. Add prepared **stock**, **dried rosemary**, and **bay leaf**.
3. Seal lid and set valve to sealing position. Cook on *high* pressure for *15 minutes*.
4. Allow natural release for *5 minutes*, then carefully quick release remaining pressure.
5. Remove **chicken** and set aside. Strain **cooking liquid** through fine-mesh strainer, discarding solids. Reserve **broth** for other recipes.
6. Use **chicken** as needed - whole, sliced, or shredded.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Instant Pot (6-quart or larger)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Fine-mesh strainer
- Large measuring cup or bowl (for stock preparation)
- Storage containers for chicken and broth
- Tongs or slotted spoon
- Cutting board and knife (for trimming)

Mise en Place

- Remove skin from bone-in **thighs** if necessary
- Trim excess fat from **thighs**
- Measure **water** and **Better Than Bouillon**
- Have storage containers ready for finished products

Ingredient Tips

- Both bone-in and boneless **thighs** work with this timing
- Bone-in **thighs** produce more flavorful **broth**
- Skin can be removed before or after cooking - before is easier
- **Better Than Bouillon** concentration is intentionally strong to account for chicken moisture release
- Quality **dried rosemary** makes a noticeable difference

Preparation Tips

- Ensure **Better Than Bouillon** is fully dissolved before adding to pot
- Don't overfill Instant Pot - 3 lbs is appropriate for 6-quart model

- If using bone-in **thighs**, arrange with meatier portions toward bottom for even cooking
- *5 minute* natural release prevents vigorous boiling and keeps meat tender
- Strain **broth** while still hot for easier filtering
- For shredding, use two forks while **chicken** is still warm

Make Ahead & Storage

- Cooked **chicken** keeps refrigerated for *3-4 days*
- Reserved **broth** keeps refrigerated for *4-5 days*
- Both **chicken** and **broth** freeze well for up to *3 months*
- Store **chicken** and **broth** separately for maximum flexibility
- Label containers with date and contents
- Cool to room temperature before refrigerating
- Skim fat from **broth** after refrigeration if desired

Serving Suggestions

- Use whole or sliced for grain bowls and salads
- Shred for tacos, enchiladas, casseroles, and sandwiches
- Dice for soups, fried rice, and pasta dishes
- Use reserved **broth** as soup base or for cooking grains
- **Broth** adds depth to sauces and gravies
- Reheat gently to prevent drying - add splash of reserved **broth** if needed

Basic Rice (Rice Maker)

Ingredients

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Long grain white rice | 3 cups |
| Hot water | 3 cups |
| Better Than Bouillon - Chicken | 1 Tbsp. |
| Bay leaf | 1 |
| Butter | 1/2 Tbsp. |

Directions

Wash **rice** thoroughly — Prepare **stock** with **Better Than Bouillon**

1. Wash **rice** thoroughly: Place **rice** in a fine-mesh strainer or bowl. Rinse under cold running water, gently agitating with your fingers, until the water runs clear (typically *3-4 rinses*). Drain well.
2. Combine **hot water** and **Better Than Bouillon** in a measuring cup, stirring to dissolve completely.
3. Transfer washed **rice** to rice maker pot. Add prepared **stock** and **bay leaf**.
4. Cook according to rice maker instructions (long grain white rice setting).
5. Once cooking is complete, let rice rest for *5 minutes* before opening.
6. Open rice maker, remove **bay leaf**, and gently fluff rice with a fork or rice paddle.
7. Add **butter** and gently fold into rice until evenly distributed. Serve immediately.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Rice maker
- Fine-mesh strainer or large bowl
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large measuring cup or bowl (for stock preparation)
- Rice paddle or fork (for fluffing)

Mise en Place

- Measure **rice**
- Measure **hot water** and **Better Than Bouillon**
- Have **bay leaf** ready
- Have **butter** at room temperature for easier incorporation

Ingredient Tips

- Long-grain white rice works best for this method
- Thorough washing removes excess starch and prevents gummy texture
- **Better Than Bouillon** adds depth without overwhelming the rice
- Quality **butter** makes a noticeable difference in final flavor
- **Bay leaf** should be removed before serving

Preparation Tips

- Ensure **Better Than Bouillon** is fully dissolved before adding to rice maker

- Don't skip the washing step - it's essential for proper texture
- Let rice rest after cooking to allow steam to finish the process
- Fluff rice gently to avoid breaking grains
- Add **butter** while rice is still hot for best incorporation
- If rice seems too wet, let it sit with lid open for a few minutes
- If rice seems too dry, add a tablespoon of hot water and fluff again

Make Ahead & Storage

- Cooked **rice** keeps refrigerated for *3-4 days*
- Reheat gently with a splash of water or broth to restore moisture
- Freeze cooked **rice** for up to *2 months*
- Cool to room temperature before refrigerating
- Store in airtight container
- Label container with date

Serving Suggestions

- Serve as side dish with any protein
- Use as base for grain bowls and stir-fries
- Perfect accompaniment to saucy dishes
- Use leftover rice for fried rice (best with day-old rice)
- Add to soups and casseroles
- Reheat gently with additional broth for extra flavor

Chapter 2

APPETIZERS



Cheesy Sausage Balls •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|
| Ground sausage | 16 oz. | Garlic salt | 1 tsp. |
| Cheddar cheese, shredded | 16 oz. | Onion flakes | 1 tsp. |
| Italian cheese blend | 4 oz. | Parsley flakes | 1 tsp. |
| Bisquick | 3 cups | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to $350^{\circ}F$ — Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper

1. Using hands, mix all **ingredients** together thoroughly until well combined.
2. Roll mixture into $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch balls and place 1 inch apart on baking sheet.
3. Bake for *15 minutes*, then turn and continue baking for *8-12 minutes* until cooked through.
4. Let stand for *5 minutes* before eating.
5. Store refrigerated in a sealed container.

Deviled Eggs •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------|----------------|--------|
| Eggs | 10 | Salt | ¼ tsp. |
| Mayonnaise | ½ cup | Sugar | ¼ tsp. |
| Dijon mustard | 1½ tsp. | Garlic powder | ½ tsp. |
| White wine vinegar | 1¼ tsp. | Smoked paprika | ½ tsp. |
| Dried dill weed | ¾ tsp. | | |

Directions

Bring **eggs** to room temperature — Prepare ice bath

1. Cook **eggs** in Instant Pot on high pressure for *5 minutes*. Natural release for *4 minutes*, then transfer to ice bath. Peel **eggs**.
2. Slice **eggs** lengthwise and remove yolks to a mixing bowl.
3. Combine **egg yolks**, **mayonnaise**, **dijon mustard**, **white wine vinegar**, **dried dill weed**, **salt**, **sugar**, and **garlic powder**. Mix until smooth.
4. Transfer filling to a gallon zip bag and snip a small corner off. Pipe filling into **egg whites**.
5. Garnish with **smoked paprika** and serve.

Spam Musubi •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Spam, low salt | 1 (12 oz.) can | Nori sheets | 4 |
| Soy sauce, low salt | 1/4 cup | Kewpie mayonnaise | 1/2 cup |
| Mirin | 1/3 cup | Sriracha sauce | 1 1/2 Tbsp. |
| Brown sugar | 2 Tbsp. | Toasted sesame oil | 1 tsp. |
| Sake | 2 Tbsp. | Neutral oil | 2 Tbsp. |
| Sushi rice, cooked | 3 cups | Toasted sesame seeds | 1 Tbsp. |

Directions

*Using a musubi mold and spam slicer will be helpful — Cook **rice** — Slice **Spam** into 10-12 even pieces — Cut **nori sheets** into thirds*

1. For the sriracha mayo:
 - (a) Combine and mix **Kewpie mayonnaise**, **Sriracha**, and **sesame oil** in *Small Bowl #1*
 - (b) Refrigerate until needed
2. Heat **oil** in a pan over medium heat. Working in batches if needed, fry **Spam** slices for *2-3 minutes* per side until browned and crispy.
3. In *Small Bowl #2*, whisk together **soy sauce**, **mirin**, **brown sugar**, and **sake**.
4. Add sauce mixture to pan with **Spam** and swirl to coat evenly. Simmer for *5 minutes* until liquid is nearly absorbed.
5. Using a musubi mold, layer ingredients as follows:
 - Place a strip of **nori** on work surface
 - Press **rice** (1/4 cup) into mold on center of **nori**
 - Add 1 piece of glazed **Spam**
 - Top with 1 tsp. sriracha mayo (*Small Bowl #1*) and sprinkle with **furikake** (or **toasted sesame seeds**)
6. Slide mold off musubi and fold **nori** ends up and over to seal, using a drop of water to secure.
7. Serve immediately or wrap individually in plastic wrap. Store in refrigerator for up to *5 days*.

Spinach and Artichoke Dip

Ingredients

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Frozen chopped spinach | 10 oz. | Parmesan, grated | 2 oz. |
| Artichoke hearts | 1 (14 oz.) can | Mozzarella, shredded | 1/4 cup |
| Butter | 2 Tbsp. | Salt | 1/4 tsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 2 | Black pepper | 1/4 tsp. |
| Cream cheese, softened | 4 oz. | Red pepper flakes | pinch |
| Mayonnaise | 1/2 cup | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F — Thaw **spinach** and squeeze dry aggressively; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Drain and rough chop **artichoke hearts**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Soften **cream cheese** at room temperature — Shred **mozzarella**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* (topping)

1. Melt **butter** in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add squeezed **spinach**, breaking up clumps. Cook for *5-7 minutes*, stirring occasionally, until **spinach** begins to brown and any remaining moisture evaporates.
2. Add minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*) and cook for *1 minute* until fragrant. Add chopped **artichoke hearts** (*Medium Bowl #2*) and cook for *2-3 minutes* more. Remove from heat and let cool slightly.
3. In *Large Bowl #1*, combine softened **cream cheese**, **mayonnaise**, **Parmesan**, 1/4 tsp. **salt**, 1/4 tsp. **black pepper**, and a pinch of **red pepper flakes** until smooth.
4. Fold in the cooled **spinach** and **artichoke** mixture until evenly distributed.
5. Transfer to a 1-quart baking dish and top with shredded **mozzarella** (*Small Bowl #2*).
6. Bake for *25-30 minutes* until bubbly and golden brown on top.
7. Let rest for *5-10 minutes* before serving.

* * *

Equipment Required

- 1-quart baking dish (ceramic or glass)
- Large skillet or sauté pan
- Large mixing bowl
- Cutting board and sharp knife
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Rubber spatula or wooden spoon
- Kitchen towel or cheesecloth (for squeezing spinach)
- Colander (for draining artichokes)

Mise en Place

- Thaw **frozen spinach** overnight in refrigerator or use microwave defrost
- Remove **cream cheese** from refrigerator at least *1 hour* before starting
- Squeeze **spinach** as dry as possible - this is critical for texture
- Drain **artichoke hearts** thoroughly and chop before cooking
- Have all ingredients measured and ready before starting

Ingredient Tips

- Use artichoke hearts packed in water rather than marinated varieties
- Frozen chopped spinach works better than whole leaf for this recipe
- The key to success is aggressively squeezing the **spinach** - wrap in kitchen towel and twist hard
- Full-fat dairy products yield the best texture and flavor
- Freshly grated **Parmesan** provides better flavor than pre-grated

Preparation Tips

- Don't skip the browning step - caramelized **spinach** adds deep, nutty flavor
- Watch for golden bits forming on the **spinach** - that's where the flavor develops
- Let vegetables cool slightly before mixing with dairy to prevent separation
- Rough chop **artichokes** for better texture - avoid fine chopping
- If top browns too quickly during baking, cover loosely with foil

Make Ahead & Storage

- Can be assembled up to *24 hours* in advance and refrigerated
- If made ahead, bring to room temperature for *30 minutes* before baking
- This recipe reheats exceptionally well without separation
- Leftovers can be refrigerated for up to *4 days*
- Reheat in *325°F* oven until warm, about *15-20 minutes*, or microwave and stir

Serving Suggestions

- Serve with toasted baguette slices, pita chips, or crackers
- Fresh vegetables like bell peppers, carrots, and celery make excellent dippers
- For best texture, allow to cool slightly before serving
- Garnish with additional **Parmesan** or fresh cracked pepper if desired
- Pairs well with a crisp white wine, light beer, or sparkling water

Chapter 3

SOUPS



Bean Soup with Braised Pork Ribs •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Bean mix, dried | 1 lb. | San Marzano tomatoes | 28 oz. |
| Braised pork ribs | 2 lb. | Dry red wine | ½ cup |
| Chicken stock | 6-8 cups | Crystal hot sauce | 1 Tbsp. |
| Bacon fat or Lard | 3 Tbsp. | Bay leaves | 2 |
| Onions, medium | 2 | Fresh thyme sprigs | 4-5 |
| Carrots, medium | 2 | White pepper | 1 tsp. |
| Celery stalks | 4 | Kosher salt | 1-2 tsp. |
| Leeks, medium | 2 | Black pepper | to taste |
| Parsnip, medium | 1 | Dried parsley | 2 Tbsp. |
| Garlic, minced | 2 Tbsp. | Salt | 1 tsp. |
| Tomato paste | 3 Tbsp. | | |

Directions

Make the **Braised Pork Ribs** — Soak **beans** overnight in cold water — Pick 2 lbs. **pork** from **ribs** — Dice **onion**, **carrots**, **celery** to ½ inch; combine in *Medium Bowl #1* — Grate **parsnip**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Clean and slice **leeks** into ½ inch half rounds; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Hand-crush **San Marzano tomatoes** in *Medium Bowl #3*

1. The night before, rinse **beans** thoroughly and place in large bowl. Cover with cold water by 3 inches. Soak for 8-12 hours. Drain before using.
2. Make the **Braised Pork Ribs** according to recipe (*up to 2 days before*). Strain **braising liquid**, removing spent aromatics and herbs. Reserve **rib bones** with any remaining meat attached. Pick 2 lbs. of **meat** from **ribs**, keeping pieces rustic and chunky. Set aside **meat** and **bones** separately.
3. In large Dutch oven or heavy pot (8+ quart), heat 3 Tbsp. **fat or lard** over medium heat. Add diced **onion**, **carrots**, **celery** (*Medium Bowl #1*), **leeks** (*Medium Bowl #2*), and grated **parsnip** (*Small Bowl #1*). Sauté for 10-12 minutes until vegetables are softened and beginning to caramelize.
4. Add minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #2*) and cook for 1-2 minutes until fragrant. Add 3 Tbsp. **tomato paste** and cook, stirring constantly, for 2-3 minutes until paste darkens and becomes fragrant.
5. Deglaze with ½ cup **red wine**, scraping up any browned bits from bottom of pot. Simmer until **wine** reduces by half, about 3-4 minutes.
6. Add soaked and drained **beans**, hand-crushed **tomatoes** with juices (*Medium Bowl #3*), **braising liquid**, 1 Tbsp. **hot sauce**, reserved **rib bones**, 2 **bay leaves**, 4-5 **thyme sprigs**, and 1 tsp. **white pepper**. Add 6 cups **chicken stock**.

7. Bring to boil, then reduce to gentle simmer. Cover and cook for *2-2½ hours*, stirring occasionally, until **beans** are completely tender. Add additional **stock** as needed to maintain thick soup consistency.
8. Remove **rib bones** (they should be clean or nearly so). Add picked **pork** and **dried parsley**. Simmer for *10 minutes* to heat through.
9. Taste and adjust seasoning with **kosher salt**, **black pepper**, and/or **hot sauce**.
10. Remove **bay leaves** and **thyme sprigs**. Let soup rest for *10-15 minutes* before serving—it will thicken as it sits.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Dutch oven or heavy pot (8+ quart capacity)
- Large bowl (for soaking beans)
- Fine mesh strainer or colander
- Medium bowl (for crushing tomatoes)
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Wooden spoon or sturdy spatula
- Ladle
- Storage containers (for leftovers)

Mise en Place

- Soak **beans** the night before—this is essential for even cooking and proper texture
- Strain **braising liquid** ahead of time, removing all aromatics and **peppercorns**
- Pick all **pork** from **bones** before starting; reserve **bones** separately
- Prepare all vegetables before heating pot—this ensures smooth workflow
- Have **stock** or water measured and ready; you'll add it gradually
- Hand-crush **tomatoes** in bowl before starting to cook

Ingredient Tips

- **Beans:** Overnight soaking is crucial for tender, evenly cooked beans; quick-soak methods don't work as well for this recipe
- **Braising liquid:** Already contains significant **salt**, soy sauce, and Worcestershire—taste before adding more **salt**
- **San Marzano tomatoes:** Use certified DOP if possible; hand-crushing gives better texture than pre-crushed varieties
- **Bacon fat:** Rendered bacon fat adds tremendous flavor; substitute with olive oil or butter if needed
- **Leeks:** Clean thoroughly—slice lengthwise and rinse between layers to remove sand

- **Stock:** Homemade or low-sodium **chicken stock** preferred; water works well given the rich **braising liquid**
- **Wine:** Use a dry red you'd drink; avoid "cooking wine" which contains added **salt**

Preparation Tips

- Take time with vegetable sauté—caramelization builds foundational sweetness and depth
- Bloom **tomato paste** until it darkens and smells sweet; this removes raw taste and concentrates flavor
- Don't rush the **wine** reduction—you want to cook off harsh alcohol while preserving acidity
- Keep **rib bones** in during bean cooking—they continue releasing gelatin for body
- Stir occasionally during long simmer to prevent sticking, but don't over-stir or **beans** will break down
- Add liquid gradually—different bean mixes and **braising liquid** concentrations affect absorption
- Test **beans** for doneness by tasting several; they should be completely tender with no chalky center
- Add **pork** near end to prevent it from becoming tough through extended simmering
- **White pepper** blooms throughout cooking for integrated heat; **black pepper** at end for fresh bite
- Let soup rest before serving—flavors meld and consistency thickens naturally

Make Ahead & Storage

- This soup improves significantly overnight as flavors marry; make *1-2 days* ahead if possible
- Store in refrigerator for up to *4 days*; soup will thicken considerably when cold
- To freeze: cool completely, portion into containers, freeze up to *3 months*

- Reheat gently on stovetop, adding water or **stock** to achieve desired consistency
- Taste and re-season after reheating—flavors can mellow

Serving Suggestions

- Serve on baked potatoes
- Top with grated Parmesan, Pecorino Romano, or aged cheddar
- Garnish with fresh parsley, thyme leaves, or chopped **green onions**
- Serve with crusty artisan bread, cornbread, or buttermilk biscuits for sopping
- Serve with simple green salad dressed with vinaigrette to cut richness

Berbere Lamb and Chickpea Stew •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|--|-----------------|
| Dried chickpeas | 2 cups | Chicken broth or lamb stock | 3 cups |
| Kosher salt | 5 Tbsp. | Diced tomatoes | 28 oz. (2 cans) |
| Lamb shoulder/shank* | 3 lbs. | Dried apricots | 1½ cups |
| Black pepper (for lamb) | 1 tsp. | Fresh cilantro | 1 cup |
| Vegetable oil | ¼ cup | Fresh lemon juice | ½ cup |
| Onions, large | 2 | Honey | 3 Tbsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 8-10 | Pomegranate arils (optional) | ½ cup |
| Berbere spice blend | 5 Tbsp. | Tzatziki (optional) | for serving |
| Tomato paste | 6 Tbsp. | Harissa (optional) | for table |

Beef chuck shoulder may substitute for lamb (same method and timing)

Directions

Night Before: Combine 2 cups **chickpeas**, water, and 3 Tbsp. **salt** in a large bowl. Cover and refrigerate overnight (8-12 hours).

Day of Preparation: Preheat oven to 300°F — Drain and rinse soaked 2 cups **chickpeas** — Pat dry **lamb** and cut into 1½" cubes — Season **lamb** with 1 Tbsp. **salt** and 1 tsp. **pepper** — Dice 2 large **onions** and mince 8-10 **garlic** cloves; combine in *Small Bowl #1* (aromatics) — Chop 1½ cups **apricots** into ¼" pieces; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Chop 1 cup **cilantro** — Combine chopped **cilantro**, ½ cup **lemon juice**, and 3 Tbsp. **honey** in *Medium Bowl #2* (finishing)

1. Heat 6-quart enameled dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add 2 Tbsp. **oil**. Working in 3-4 batches to avoid crowding, brown **lamb cubes** on multiple sides until deeply caramelized, about 8-10 minutes per batch, adding more **oil** as needed (up to ¼ cup total). Transfer browned **lamb** to *Large Bowl #1* and set aside.
2. Reduce heat to medium. If pot is dry, add final portion of **oil** (remaining from ¼ cup). Add **onions** and **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*) and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and golden brown, about 8-10 minutes.
3. Add 3 Tbsp. **berbere** to the pot. Stir constantly for 45-60 seconds until spice is darkened and very fragrant. Add 6 Tbsp. **tomato paste** and stir constantly, scraping to prevent scorching, for 2-3 minutes until paste is brick-red and caramelized.
4. Add remaining 2 Tbsp. **berbere** and 1 Tbsp. **salt**; stir to combine. Immediately add 3 cups **chicken broth** and use a wooden spoon to scrape bottom of pot vigorously, releasing all browned bits. Add 28 oz. (2 cans) **diced tomatoes** with their juices. Bring to a simmer.
5. Return browned **lamb** and any accumulated juices (*Large Bowl #1*) to pot. Add drained **chickpeas** and **apricots** (*Medium Bowl #1*). Stir to combine. The liquid should come about ¾ of the way up the solids; add additional **broth** if needed.

6. Bring to a full simmer on stovetop. Cover with tight-fitting lid and transfer to preheated 300°F oven.
7. Braise for *4 hours*, checking at $3\frac{1}{2}$ *hours*. **Lamb** should be pull-apart tender and 2 cups **chickpeas** should be creamy. If liquid level seems low at the $3\frac{1}{2}$ *hour* check, add $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 cup hot **broth**. If stew seems too thin, crack lid slightly for final *30 minutes*.
8. Remove from oven. If sauce needs reducing, place uncovered pot on stovetop over medium heat and simmer for *5-10 minutes* until thickened to coat the back of a spoon. If desired, skim excess fat from surface.
9. Stir in remaining **apricots** (*Medium Bowl #1*) and **cilantro**, **lemon juice**, and **honey** (*Medium Bowl #2*). Taste and adjust seasoning with additional **salt** if needed. Let rest for *10-15 minutes* before serving.
10. Serve over **couscous** or **cooked rice**, topped with **pomegranate arils** and **tzatziki**, with **harissa** on the side.

* * *

Equipment Required

- 6-quart enameled dutch oven with tight-fitting lid
- Large mixing bowl (for soaking chickpeas)
- Small prep bowls (1)
- Medium prep bowls (2)
- Large prep bowl (1)
- Cutting board and sharp knife
- Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Ladle
- Timer

Mise en Place

- Small Bowl #1 — aromatics: diced 2 large **onions**, minced 8-10 **garlic** cloves
- Medium Bowl #1 — chopped **apricots** (1½ cups total, used in two stages)
- Medium Bowl #2 — finishing: 1 cup chopped **cilantro**, ½ cup **lemon juice**, 3 Tbsp. **honey**
- Large Bowl #1 — browned **lamb** (set aside after browning, about 3 lbs., with accumulated juices)
- Soak 2 cups **chickpeas** the night before in salted water (8-12 hours)
- Drain and rinse **chickpeas** before beginning active cooking
- Pat dry and cut **lamb** into uniform 1½" cubes; season with **salt** and **pepper** before browning
- If using whole lamb shoulder, trim excess fat but leave some for flavor
- Prep all aromatics and measure all spices before beginning—once you start browning, the process moves quickly
- Have **broth** ready and warm for easier deglazing
- Allow 45-60 minutes total for prep work on day of cooking

Ingredient Tips

- Lamb shoulder is ideal for braising due to marbling and connective tissue; leg meat is leaner and won't be as tender
- Quality **berbere** blends vary significantly in heat level and complexity; taste yours to gauge intensity before adding
- San Marzano or fire-roasted **diced tomatoes** add extra depth
- Turkish or California **apricots** are ideal; avoid overly sweet or sugared varieties
- Homemade **lamb stock** elevates the dish significantly

Preparation Tips

- Don't rush the browning—deep caramelization is the foundation of flavor
- Work in small batches; crowding the pot steams meat instead of browning it
- The **tomato paste** will threaten to scorch; keep stirring and scraping constantly during step 3
- Vigorous deglazing in step 4 is critical—every bit of fond adds flavor
- Starting the braise at a full simmer on the stovetop ensures immediate cooking when transferred to oven
- If your dutch oven lid doesn't seal tightly, cover pot with foil before adding lid to minimize evaporation
- Check liquid level at 3½ hours; ovens and pots vary, so adjustment may be needed
- **Lamb** texture varies by cut quality; check tenderness and extend cooking if needed
- The stew will continue to thicken as it rests; it should be slightly looser than desired final consistency when removed from oven

Make Ahead & Storage

- This stew benefits from sitting; make up to *3 days* ahead and refrigerate
 - Add finishing ingredients (**cilantro**, **lemon juice**, **honey**) only when reheating
- to serve
- If freezing, slightly undercook (reduce time by *30 minutes*) as reheating continues cooking
 - Leftover stew thickens significantly; thin with **broth** or water when reheating
-

Caldo de Carnitas y Frijoles Negros •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| Carnitas consommé | 2 cups | Ground cumin | 1 tsp. |
| Water | 3 cups | Mexican oregano | 1 tsp. |
| Shredded carnitas meat | 1½ cups | Bay leaves | 2 |
| Black beans | 2 (15 oz.) cans | Kosher salt | 1 tsp. |
| Rotel diced tomatoes | 1 (10 oz.) can | Black pepper | ½ tsp. |
| Yellow onion, medium | 1 | Fresh cilantro | ½ cup |
| Garlic cloves | 4 | Lime juice | 3 Tbsp. |
| Celery stalks | 2 | Lime wedges | for serving |
| Carrots, medium | 2 | | |
| Vegetable oil | 2 Tbsp. | | |

Directions

Dice **onion**, **celery**, and **carrots** into ¼ inch pieces; combine in *Medium Bowl #1* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Drain and rinse **black beans**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Chop **cilantro**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Juice **limes**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Warm **carnitas meat** if refrigerated; set aside in *Medium Bowl #3*

1. Heat 2 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** in a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Add diced **onion**, **celery**, and **carrots** (*Medium Bowl #1*). Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables begin to soften, about *8-10 minutes*.
2. Add minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*), 1 tsp. **cumin**, and 1 tsp. **Mexican oregano**. Cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about *1 minute*.
3. Add **Rotel tomatoes** with their juice and cook for *3-4 minutes*, allowing some liquid to evaporate and flavors to concentrate.
4. Pour in 2 cups **carnitas consommé** and 3 cups **water**. Add 2 **bay leaves**, 1 tsp. **salt**, and ½ tsp. **black pepper**. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for *15 minutes*.
5. Add **black beans** (*Medium Bowl #2*) and **carnitas meat** (1½ cups, *Medium Bowl #3*). Simmer for additional *10-15 minutes* until vegetables are tender and flavors are well integrated.
6. Remove **bay leaves**. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional **salt** and **pepper** as needed.
7. Remove from heat and stir in **lime juice** (3 Tbsp., *Small Bowl #3*) and half of the chopped **cilantro** (¼ cup, *Small Bowl #2*).
8. Serve hot, garnished with remaining **cilantro** and **lime wedges** on the side.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot (6-quart capacity)
- Sharp chef's knife
- Large cutting board
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula
- Can opener
- Colander for draining beans
- Ladle for serving
- Timer

Mise en Place

- Bring **carnitas consommé** to room temperature if refrigerated
- Warm **carnitas meat** slightly if cold from refrigeration
- Dice all vegetables to uniform ¼-inch pieces for even cooking
- Have all spices measured and ready before starting
- Open and drain **black bean** cans just before use

Ingredient Tips

- Use **Mexican oregano** rather than Mediterranean for authentic flavor profile
- **Rotel** provides perfect heat balance - avoid substituting with plain diced tomatoes
- Rinse **black beans** thoroughly to remove excess sodium and starch
- If **carnitas consommé** is very gelatinous, it will thin perfectly when heated
- Fresh **lime juice** is essential - bottled juice lacks the brightness needed

Preparation Tips

- Don't rush the vegetable sautéing - proper softening builds flavor foundation
- Bloom spices in oil for maximum potency before adding liquid
- Add **lime juice** and **cilantro** off heat to preserve bright flavors
- Taste soup before final seasoning - **consommé** saltiness varies
- If soup seems too thick, add water; if too thin, simmer uncovered longer

Make Ahead & Storage

- Soup improves in flavor after *24 hours* in refrigerator
- Store up to *4 days* refrigerated or *3 months* frozen
- Add **lime juice** and fresh **cilantro** only when reheating to serve
- May need additional water when reheating as beans absorb liquid
- Freeze in individual portions for easy weeknight meals

Serving Suggestions

- Garnish with diced white onion, crumbled **queso fresco**, or **Mexican crema**
- Serve with warm corn tortillas or crusty bread
- Add diced **avocado** just before serving for richness
- Accompany with pickled jalapeños for those wanting extra heat
- Makes excellent leftover lunch - flavors continue to develop
- Consider serving with Mexican rice as a more substantial meal

Hungarian Mushroom Soup •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Unsalted butter | 8 Tbsp. | All-purpose flour | 6 Tbsp. |
| Onions, medium | 2 | Sour cream | 1 cup |
| Mushrooms | 2 lbs. | Fresh parsley | ½ cup |
| Chicken broth | 6 cups | Lemon juice | 4 tsp. |
| Soy sauce | 2 Tbsp. | MSG | ¼ tsp. |
| Hungarian hot paprika | 1 tsp. | Salt | 1 tsp. |
| Hungarian sweet paprika | 4 tsp. | Black pepper | ½ tsp. |
| Dried dill weed | 4 tsp. | | |
| Milk | 2 cups | | |

Directions

Chop **onions** (4 cups); set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Slice **mushrooms**; set aside in *Large Bowl #1* — Chop **parsley**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1*

1. Melt 8 Tbsp. **butter** in a large pot (5+ Qt.) over medium heat.
2. Add **onions** (4 cups, *Medium Bowl #1*) and cook, stirring until softened, about 5 *minutes*.
3. Add **mushrooms** (2 lbs., *Large Bowl #1*) and sauté for 5 *more minutes*.
4. Stir in 6 cups **chicken broth**, 2 Tbsp. **soy sauce**, 1 tsp. **hot paprika**, 4 tsp. **sweet paprika**, and 4 tsp. **dried dill weed**.
5. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 15 *minutes*.
6. In *Small Bowl #2*, whisk 2 cups **milk** and 6 Tbsp. **flour** together; stir into soup until blended.
7. Cover and simmer for 15 *more minutes*, stirring occasionally.
8. Add 1 cup **sour cream**, **parsley** (½ cup, *Small Bowl #1*), 4 tsp. **lemon juice**, 1 tsp. **salt**, ¼ tsp. **MSG**, and ½ tsp. **black pepper**.
9. Stir over low heat until warmed through, about 3 to 5 *minutes*.
10. Serve immediately.

Italian Sausage Soup •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--|------------|---|------------|
| Sweet Italian sausage | 1 lb | Tomato sauce, unsalted | 12 oz. can |
| Hot Italian sausage | 1 lb | Diced tomatoes w/basil & garlic | 24 oz. can |
| Onion, large | 1 | Chicken broth | 12-14 cups |
| Garlic bulbs, minced | 2 | Italian herb mix | 1 tsp |
| Carrots, chopped | 3 | Basil | 1 tsp |
| Celery stalks, chopped | 3 | Parsley | 3 Tbsp |
| Russet potatoes, chopped | 3 | Bay leaves | 3 |
| Zucchini, chopped | 1 | Oregano | ½ tsp. |
| Frozen vegetables (stir fry mix) | 1 lb | Sugar | 1 Tbsp |
| Mushrooms, sliced | 12 oz. can | Onion salt | 1 tsp |
| | | MSG (<i>optional</i>) | 1 tsp |

Directions

Chop **onion**, **carrots**, **celery**, **potatoes**, and **zucchini**; combine in *Large Bowl #1* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Drain **mushrooms**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1*

1. Brown 1 lb. **sweet Italian sausage** and 1 lb. **hot Italian sausage** into small chunks. Transfer to *Medium Bowl #2*; set aside.
2. Combine all ingredients in a large stock pot: browned **sausage** (*Medium Bowl #2*), **onion**, **carrots**, **celery**, **potatoes**, and **zucchini** (*Large Bowl #1*), **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*), 1 lb. **frozen vegetables**, **mushrooms** (*Medium Bowl #1*), 12 oz. **tomato sauce**, 24 oz. **diced tomatoes**, 12-14 cups **chicken broth**, 1 tsp. **Italian herb mix**, 1 tsp. **basil**, 3 Tbsp. **parsley**, 3 **bay leaves**, ½ tsp. **oregano**, 1 Tbsp. **sugar**, 1 tsp. **onion salt**, and 1 tsp. **MSG** (*optional*).
3. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer covered for *30 minutes*.
4. Stir occasionally and vigorously to thicken broth.
5. For canning: process at *15 pounds* for *90 minutes*.

Add 1-2 cups of water per quart when reheating.

Tuscan Zuppa Soup •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Italian sausage | 1 lb. | Cannellini beans | 1 (15 oz.) can |
| Onion, medium | 1 | Heavy cream | 1 cup |
| Garlic | 4-6 cloves | Salt | ½ tsp. |
| White wine (optional) | ¼ cup | Pepper | ¼ tsp. |
| Kale | 1 bunch | Red pepper flakes | ¼ tsp. |
| Potatoes, large | 3-4 | MSG (optional) | ¼ tsp. |
| Chicken broth | 8 cups | | |

Directions

Dice **onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Dice **potatoes** into ¼ inch pieces; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Remove stems from **kale** and tear leaves into bite sized pieces; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2*

1. Brown 1 lb. **Italian sausage** over medium heat until fully cooked. Remove and transfer to *Medium Bowl #3*; set aside, retaining drippings in the pot.
2. Sauté **onions** (*Small Bowl #1*) in the same pot until translucent, then add **garlic** (*Small Bowl #2*) and cook for an additional 1 minute.
3. Deglaze the pan with ¼ cup **white wine** (optional).
4. Return **sausage** (*Medium Bowl #3*) to the pot along with 8 cups **chicken broth** and **potatoes** (*Medium Bowl #1*). Bring to a boil, then simmer until potatoes are tender, stirring occasionally, about 10-15 minutes.
5. Stir in **kale** (*Medium Bowl #2*) and **cannellini beans** (do not drain). Simmer until kale is wilted, about 5 minutes.
6. Stir in 1 cup **heavy cream**. Season with ½ tsp. **salt**, ¼ tsp. **pepper**, ¼ tsp. **red pepper flakes**, and ¼ tsp. **MSG** (optional) to taste.

Chapter 4

SIDES



Baked Beans, Better •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|--------|
| Butter | 1 Tbsp. | Worcestershire sauce | 2 tsp. |
| Garlic, minced | 1 Tbsp. | Smoked paprika | ½ tsp. |
| Bush's baked beans | 1 (28 oz.) can | Black pepper | ¼ tsp. |
| Brown sugar | 1 Tbsp. | MSG | pinch |
| Yellow mustard | 2 tsp. | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to $375^{\circ}F$ — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1*

1. In a small pan or skillet, melt 1 Tbsp. **butter**. Add **garlic** (1 Tbsp., *Small Bowl #1*) and sauté for *30-60 seconds* until fragrant. Remove from heat and transfer to *Small Bowl #2*; set aside.
2. In a baking dish, combine **garlic** (*Small Bowl #2*), **baked beans**, 1 Tbsp. **brown sugar**, 2 tsp. **yellow mustard**, 2 tsp. **Worcestershire sauce**, ½ tsp. **smoked paprika**, and ¼ tsp. **black pepper**. Stir thoroughly.
3. Bake at $375^{\circ}F$ uncovered for *30-35 minutes* until edges are bubbling and top is slightly caramelized. The sauce should be thickened, not soupy.
4. Let stand for *5 minutes* before serving.

Berber-Spiced Rice with Vegetables

Ingredients

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Long grain white rice | 3 cups |
| Hot water | 3 cups |
| Better Than Bouillon - Chicken | 1 Tbsp. |
| Bay leaf | 1 |
| Berber-Spice mix | 2 tsp. |
| Dehydrated soup vegetables | 2 Tbsp. |
| Butter | 1/2 Tbsp. |

Directions

Wash **rice** thoroughly — Prepare **stock** with **Better Than Bouillon**

1. Wash **rice** thoroughly: Place **rice** in a fine-mesh strainer or bowl. Rinse under cold running water, gently agitating with your fingers, until the water runs clear (typically 3-4 rinses). Drain well.
2. Combine **hot water** and **Better Than Bouillon** in a measuring cup, stirring to dissolve completely.
3. Transfer washed **rice** to rice maker pot. Add prepared **stock**, **bay leaf**, **Berber-Spice mix**, and **dehydrated soup vegetables**.
4. Cook according to rice maker instructions (long grain white rice setting).
5. Once cooking is complete, let rice rest for 5 minutes before opening.
6. Open rice maker, remove **bay leaf**, and gently fluff rice with a fork or rice paddle.
7. Add **butter** and gently fold into rice until evenly distributed. Serve immediately.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Rice maker
- Fine-mesh strainer or large bowl
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large measuring cup or bowl (for stock preparation)
- Rice paddle or fork (for fluffing)

Mise en Place

- Measure **rice**
- Measure **hot water** and **Better Than Bouillon**
- Have **bay leaf** ready
- Measure **Berbere spice mix**
- Measure **dehydrated soup vegetables**
- Have **butter** at room temperature for easier incorporation

Ingredient Tips

- Long-grain white rice works best for this method
- Thorough washing removes excess starch and prevents gummy texture
- **Better Than Bouillon** adds depth without overwhelming the rice
- Quality **butter** makes a noticeable difference in final flavor
- **Bay leaf** should be removed before serving
- **Berbere spice mix** provides warm, aromatic Ethiopian-inspired flavors
- **Dehydrated soup vegetables** rehydrate during cooking and add texture

Preparation Tips

- Ensure **Better Than Bouillon** is fully dissolved before adding to rice maker
- Don't skip the washing step - it's essential for proper texture

- Let rice rest after cooking to allow steam to finish the process
- Fluff rice gently to avoid breaking grains
- Add **butter** while rice is still hot for best incorporation
- The **Berbere spice mix** will infuse the rice during cooking
- **Dehydrated soup vegetables** will soften and rehydrate during the cooking process
- If rice seems too wet, let it sit with lid open for a few minutes
- If rice seems too dry, add a tablespoon of hot water and fluff again

Make Ahead & Storage

- Cooked **rice** keeps refrigerated for *3-4 days*
- Reheat gently with a splash of water or broth to restore moisture
- Freeze cooked **rice** for up to *2 months*
- Cool to room temperature before refrigerating
- Store in airtight container
- Label container with date

Serving Suggestions

- Serve as side dish with grilled meats or roasted vegetables
- Excellent accompaniment to Ethiopian-inspired dishes
- Pairs well with braised meats and stews
- Use as base for grain bowls with additional vegetables
- Perfect with saucy dishes that benefit from spiced rice
- Use leftover rice for fried rice (best with day-old rice)
- Add to soups and casseroles
- Reheat gently with additional broth for extra flavor

Brussels Sprouts with Balsamic Brown Butter •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Brussels sprouts | 1½ lbs. | Unsalted butter | 6 Tbsp. |
| High-heat oil | 2 Tbsp. | Fresh rosemary sprigs | 2-3 |
| Kosher salt | ¾ tsp. | Balsamic glaze | 3 Tbsp. |
| Black pepper | ½ tsp. | Flaky finishing salt | to taste |

Directions

Preheat air fryer to 400°F — Trim and halve **brussels sprouts**; set aside in *Large Bowl #1*— Have **balsamic glaze** ready for finishing

1. In *Large Bowl #2*, toss halved **brussels sprouts** (*Large Bowl #1*) with 2 Tbsp. **high-heat oil**, ¾ tsp. **kosher salt**, and ½ tsp. **black pepper** until evenly coated.
2. Arrange **brussels sprouts** in a single layer in the air fryer basket, cut side down when possible. Work in batches if necessary to avoid overcrowding.
3. Air fry at 400°F for *12-14 minutes*, shaking the basket halfway through, until outer leaves are charred and crispy and cut surfaces are deeply caramelized with dark brown to black edges.
4. While **brussels sprouts** are cooking, melt **butter** in a small saucepan (preferably light-colored to monitor browning) over medium heat.
5. Continue cooking, swirling occasionally, for *3-5 minutes* after the **butter** foams. Watch carefully as milk solids turn golden brown and develop a nutty aroma. Remove from heat immediately when the solids reach a deep amber color.
6. Add **rosemary sprigs** to the brown **butter** off heat. Let steep for *2-3 minutes* while the **sprouts** finish cooking.
7. Remove **rosemary sprigs** and whisk in **balsamic glaze** until loosely emulsified. The mixture will remain somewhat separated—this is expected.
8. Transfer hot **brussels sprouts** directly from air fryer to a large serving bowl.
9. Immediately drizzle balsamic brown **butter** over the **sprouts** and toss gently to coat evenly. The residual heat will help distribute the sauce.
10. Taste and adjust seasoning. Finish with **flaky salt** to taste. Serve immediately while **sprouts** are still crispy and the **butter** is warm.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Air fryer (basket style preferred)
- Large mixing bowl
- Small saucepan (light-colored interior for monitoring butter)
- Whisk
- Large serving bowl
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Sharp knife and cutting board

Mise en Place

- Trim and halve all **brussels sprouts** before starting
- Measure **balsamic glaze** and have ready
- Have **butter** at room temperature for easier melting
- Strip **rosemary** sprigs if using leaves from a larger bunch
- Start brown **butter** when **sprouts** have 5-6 minutes remaining for optimal temperature synchronization

Ingredient Tips

- Use high-heat oil with smoke point above 400°F: avocado oil (520°F) or refined coconut oil (450°F) are ideal
- Avoid extra virgin olive oil as it will smoke
- Choose **balsamic glaze** with minimal ingredients—ideally just grape must and wine vinegar
- Avoid products with added thickeners or caramel coloring
- European-style **butter** provides richer flavor due to higher butterfat content
- Smaller **sprouts** (1-1½ inch) can be halved; larger ones should be quartered for even cooking

Preparation Tips

- Loose outer leaves will char more aggressively—this is desirable for texture and bitter complexity

- Don't be afraid of significantly blackened edges—this char is where the flavor complexity develops
- The charred leaves provide bitter, smoky notes that balance the sweet-tart **balsamic** and rich **butter**
- The transition from perfect brown **butter** to burnt happens in seconds—remove from heat when you smell nuttiness and see amber color
- Residual heat will continue cooking the **butter** briefly after removal from heat
- The **balsamic** and **butter** mixture will remain somewhat separated—don't over-whisk trying to force an emulsion
- Toss **sprouts** gently to avoid knocking off the crispy charred leaves

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Brussels sprouts** can be trimmed and halved up to 24 hours in advance
- Store prepared **sprouts** in an airtight container in the refrigerator
- The brown **butter** sauce must be made fresh and served immediately
- This dish does not reheat well—the crispy texture is lost
- Best enjoyed immediately after preparation

Serving Suggestions

- Serve as a side dish for roasted meats, particularly pork or beef
- Pairs well with rich, fatty main courses that benefit from acidic contrast
- The char's bitterness, **balsamic's** acidity, and brown **butter's** richness create a three-point flavor system
- The char provides textural contrast—crispy, almost chip-like leaves against tender interiors
- Consider garnishing with additional fresh **rosemary** leaves if desired
- For larger batches, cook **sprouts** in multiple air fryer batches and keep finished **sprouts** warm in a 200°F oven while preparing subsequent batches

Dad's Brussels Sprouts •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Brussels sprouts | 1-2 lb. | Dried rosemary | ¼ tsp. |
| Safflower oil | 2 Tbsp. | Black pepper | ¼ tsp. |
| Lawry's garlic salt | 1 tsp. | Parmesan cheese, grated | 2 tsp. |
| Butter | 4 Tbsp. | Lemon powder | ¼ tsp. |
| Garlic powder | ¼ tsp. | (or Lemon juice | 1 Tbsp.) |

Directions

Trim and quarter **Brussels sprouts**

1. Clean **Brussels sprouts** by trimming the stem ends and removing any discolored outer leaves. Cut larger sprouts into quarters and smaller ones in half.
2. In *Large Bowl #2*, toss the prepared **Brussels sprouts** (*Large Bowl #1*) with 2 Tbsp. **oil** and 1 tsp. **garlic salt** until evenly coated.
3. Spread the **Brussels sprouts** in the air fryer basket.
4. Air fry at *400°F* for *15 minutes*, shaking the basket halfway through cooking time, until the sprouts are crispy and slightly blackened.
5. While the sprouts are cooking, prepare the butter sauce: In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, melt 4 Tbsp. **butter**. Add ¼ tsp. **garlic powder**, ¼ tsp. **dried rosemary**, and ¼ tsp. **black pepper**. Cook for *1 minute* until fragrant.
6. Remove butter sauce from heat and whisk in ¼ tsp. **lemon powder** (or 1 Tbsp. **lemon juice**).
7. Transfer the cooked **Brussels sprouts** to a serving bowl, pour the butter sauce over them, and toss to coat evenly.
8. Sprinkle with 2 tsp. grated **Parmesan cheese** and serve immediately.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Air fryer (3-6 quart capacity)
- Large mixing bowl (for tossing sprouts)
- Small saucepan (for butter sauce)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Whisk
- Serving bowl
- Timer

Mise en Place

- Trim and quarter **Brussels sprouts** before preheating the air fryer
- Measure all spices and have them ready by the stovetop
- Have butter at room temperature for faster melting
- If using **lemon juice**, squeeze fresh just before adding to the sauce

Ingredient Tips

- Choose firm, bright green **Brussels sprouts** with tightly packed leaves
- Smaller sprouts tend to be sweeter and cook more evenly
- Use a high smoke-point neutral oil like avocado, canola, or grapeseed
- European-style butter (higher fat content) creates a richer sauce
- Freshly grated **Parmesan** provides better flavor than pre-grated
- Fresh rosemary (1 tsp. finely chopped) can be substituted for dried
- If you don't have **TruLemon**, fresh lemon zest can be used in addition to juice

Preparation Tips

- Size consistency matters - cut larger sprouts into quarters and smaller ones in half for even cooking
- Don't overcrowd the air fryer basket - cook in batches if needed for maximum crispiness
- For extra caramelization, place sprouts cut-side down in the basket
- If sprouts aren't crispy enough after the initial cooking time, air fry for an additional *2-3 minutes*
- Keep the butter sauce warm until ready to toss with the sprouts
- Add the **Parmesan** just before serving for the best texture

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Brussels sprouts** can be trimmed and quartered up to *24 hours* in advance and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator
- Butter sauce can be prepared *1 hour* ahead and kept warm on the lowest heat setting
- Leftover sprouts can be refrigerated for up to *3 days* and reheated in the air fryer at *350°F* for *3-4 minutes*
- Not recommended for freezing as texture will deteriorate

Serving Suggestions

- Serve as a side dish with roasted chicken, steak, or pork chops
- Add crispy bacon bits or toasted pine nuts as a deluxe garnish
- For a vegetarian main course, serve over creamy polenta or risotto
- Pairs well with rich, full-bodied red wines like Cabernet Sauvignon
- For a holiday meal, add dried cranberries for a pop of color and sweetness

Fried Rice •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------------------------|---------|
| Canola oil | 3 Tbsp. | Soy sauce | 3 Tbsp. |
| Sesame oil | 2 Tbsp. | Fish sauce | 2 tsp. |
| Cooked parboiled rice, cold | 6 cups | Hoisin sauce (optional) | 1 tsp. |
| Onion, finely diced | 1/3 cup | Sesame seeds | 1 Tbsp. |
| Carrot, finely grated | 1/3 cup | Scallions, diced | 1/3 cup |
| Garlic, minced | 3 cloves | | |
| Ginger, finely grated | 1 tsp. | | |
| Eggs | 2 | | |
| Frozen peas | 3/4 cup | | |

Directions

1-2 days ahead: Prepare Uncle Ben's parboiled rice, rinse and cook according to rice maker instructions — Finely dice **onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Grate **carrot** and **ginger**; combine in *Small Bowl #2* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Dice **scallions**; set aside in *Small Bowl #4* — Scramble **eggs**; set aside in *Small Bowl #5*

1. In *Small Bowl #6*, combine 3 Tbsp. **soy sauce**, 2 tsp. **fish sauce**, 1 tsp. **hoisin sauce** (optional), and 1 Tbsp. **sesame seeds**
2. Heat large high-walled frying pan or wok on *High*.
3. Add 3 Tbsp. **canola oil** and heat for *30 seconds*.
4. Add 6 cups **rice** to pan and stir thoroughly. Pan should be hot enough that rice makes popping sounds.
5. Stir **rice** every *30 seconds* for about *5 minutes* until moisture is reduced and rice begins to change color.
6. Create an empty circle in center of pan and add **onion** (1/3 cup, *Small Bowl #1*), **carrot** and **ginger** (*Small Bowl #2*), and **garlic** (*Small Bowl #3*).
7. Add 1 Tbsp. **sesame oil** to vegetables in pan.
8. Cook and stir vegetables carefully for *1 minute*, avoiding combining with rice.
9. Stir contents of pan thoroughly.
10. Create an empty circle in center of pan and add scrambled **eggs** (*Small Bowl #5*).
11. Add remaining 1 Tbsp. **sesame oil** to eggs.
12. Cook, stir, and chop eggs carefully for about *1 minute* until set, avoiding combining with rice.

13. Stir contents of pan thoroughly.
 14. Add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup **peas** and stir thoroughly.
 15. Add prepared sauce mixture (*Small Bowl #6*) and stir thoroughly.
 16. Cook for about *1 minute*, stirring frequently.
 17. Add **scallions** ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup, *Small Bowl #4*) and stir thoroughly.
 18. Remove from heat and serve hot.
-

Green Bean Casserole

Ingredients

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|--------|
| Green beans, fresh | 1½ lbs. | Cheddar cheese, shredded | 1 cup |
| Butter | ½ cup | Salt | 1 tsp. |
| Mushrooms, fresh | ½ lb. | Black pepper | 1 tsp. |
| Onion, small | 1 | French-fried onions | 2 cups |
| All-purpose flour | ¼ cup | | |
| Whole milk | 1½ cups | | |
| Sour cream | 1 cup | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F— Trim **green beans**; set aside in *Large Bowl #1* — Slice **mushrooms**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Chop **onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Shred **cheddar cheese**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Grease a 2½ quart baking dish

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add **green beans** (*Large Bowl #1*) and blanch for 5 minutes. Drain and immediately plunge into ice water. Drain again and return to *Large Bowl #1*.
2. In a large skillet, melt ½ cup **butter** over medium heat. Add **mushrooms** (*Medium Bowl #1*) and **onion** (*Small Bowl #1*); cook for 5 minutes, until tender.
3. Stir in ¼ cup **flour** and cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly.
4. Gradually stir in 1½ cups **milk** and cook for 2-3 minutes, until mixture thickens.
5. Stir in 1 cup **sour cream**, **cheese** (1 cup, *Medium Bowl #2*), 1 tsp. **salt**, 1 tsp. **pepper**, and blanched **green beans** (*Large Bowl #1*).
6. Transfer mixture to prepared baking dish. Bake for 25 minutes.
7. Sprinkle evenly with 2 cups **French-fried onions**. Bake for 15 minutes longer, until hot and bubbly.

Holiday Stuffing •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Bread, cubed | 1 lb. (8-10 cups) | Dried rosemary | 1 tsp. |
| Sage breakfast sausage | 1 lb. | Dried thyme | 2 tsp. |
| Butter | 8 Tbsp. | Dried parsley | 1 Tbsp. |
| Onions, medium | 2 | Ground nutmeg | 1/8 tsp. |
| Celery stalks | 4 | Chicken broth | 2-3 cups |
| Garlic cloves | 3 | Eggs | 2 large |
| Dried sage | 2 tsp. | Kosher salt | 1 1/2 tsp. |
| | | Black pepper | 1 tsp. |

Directions

Preheat oven to 250°F for bread, then 350°F for baking — Cut **bread** into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cubes; set aside in *Large Bowl #1* — Dice **onions** and **celery**; combine in *Medium Bowl #1* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Beat **eggs**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Grease a 9 inch \times 13 inch baking dish — Melt 4 Tbsp. **butter** for bread cubes in *Small Bowl #3*, remaining 4 Tbsp. for vegetables in *Small Bowl #4*

1. Toss **bread cubes** (*Large Bowl #1*) with melted **butter** (4 Tbsp., *Small Bowl #3*), then spread on a baking sheet and toast at 250°F for 45-60 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes, until golden and dry. Let cool and return to *Large Bowl #1*.
2. Brown **sausage** over medium heat until cooked through, breaking into small crumbles. Remove with slotted spoon and transfer to *Medium Bowl #2*; set aside.
3. In the same pan, melt remaining 4 Tbsp. **butter** (*Small Bowl #4*). Add **onions** and **celery** (*Medium Bowl #1*), cooking until softened, about 8-10 minutes. Add **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*) and cook for 1 minute more. Transfer to *Medium Bowl #3*; set aside.
4. In *Large Bowl #2*, combine toasted **bread** (*Large Bowl #1*), cooked **sausage** (*Medium Bowl #2*), sautéed vegetables (*Medium Bowl #3*), 2 tsp. **dried sage**, 1 tsp. **dried rosemary**, 2 tsp. **dried thyme**, 1 Tbsp. **dried parsley**, and $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. **ground nutmeg**.
5. Gradually add **chicken broth** (2-3 cups), stirring gently until bread is evenly moist but not soggy. Mix in beaten **eggs** (*Small Bowl #2*), $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **kosher salt**, and 1 tsp. **black pepper**. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed - the mixture should taste slightly saltier than you'd expect, as the flavors will mellow during baking.
6. Transfer to prepared baking dish. Cover with foil and bake at 350°F for 30 minutes.
7. Uncover and bake for additional 15-20 minutes until top is golden brown and crispy.
8. Let rest for 10 minutes before serving.

* * *

Equipment Required

- 9x13 inch baking dish
- Large rimmed baking sheet for toasting bread
- Large skillet or sauté pan
- Large mixing bowl (at least 6-quart capacity)
- Medium bowl for beaten eggs
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Aluminum foil
- Slotted spoon
- Timer

Mise en Place

- Measure and prepare all ingredients before starting
- Bring refrigerated ingredients to room temperature
- Dice vegetables and measure herbs

Ingredient and Preparation Tips

- Choose hearty bread varieties for best texture
- Use high-quality bulk **sage sausage**, or Jimmy Dean

- Fresh herbs can be substituted at triple the quantity
- Cut bread into uniform ½-inch cubes for even toasting
- Add **broth** gradually - absorption varies by bread type
- Test seasoning before adding **eggs**, then fold gently to maintain texture
- European-style butter provides richer flavor

Make Ahead & Storage

- Toast bread up to *3 days* ahead; store in airtight container
- Assemble up to *24 hours* before baking
- Bring refrigerated stuffing to room temperature for *30 minutes*
- Add extra **broth** if needed after refrigeration
- Leftovers keep *3 days*; reheat covered at *350°F* for *20 minutes*

Serving Suggestions

- Serve alongside turkey or chicken
- Can be baked inside poultry or separately
- Garnish with fresh sage and extra gravy
- Transform leftovers into breakfast waffles
- Optional: top with toasted gluten-free breadcrumbs for extra crunch

Italian Sausage Stuffed Mushrooms

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mushrooms, medium | 12 (about 1 lb.) | Parmesan, grated | 4 oz. |
| Gluten-free bread | 3-4 slices | Dried oregano | 1 tsp. |
| Sweet Italian sausage | 1 lb. | Dried thyme | ½ tsp. |
| Shallot, medium | 1 | MSG | ½ tsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 4 | Salt | ¾ tsp. |
| White wine OR chicken broth | ¼ cup | Black pepper | ½ tsp. |
| Cream cheese, softened | 4 oz. | Red pepper flakes | ¼ tsp. (optional) |
| | | Fresh parsley, chopped | 2 Tbsp. |

Directions

Preheat oven to 375°F— Remove **mushroom** stems and finely chop; set aside in *Small Bowl #1*— Clean **mushroom** caps with damp paper towel— Toast **bread** and process into coarse crumbs; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1*— Dice **shallot** and mince **garlic**; combine in *Small Bowl #2*(aromatics)— Soften **cream cheese** at room temperature; combine with 3 oz. grated **parmesan** in *Medium Bowl #2* (dairy)— Reserve 1 oz. **parmesan** for topping in *Small Bowl #3*— Combine 1 tsp. **oregano**, ½ tsp. **thyme**, ½ tsp. **MSG**, ¾ tsp. **salt**, ½ tsp. **black pepper**, and ¼ tsp. **red pepper flakes** in *Small Bowl #4* (seasoning)— Chop **parsley**; set aside in *Small Bowl #5*

1. Place **mushroom caps** gill-side up on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake for 10 minutes to release moisture. Remove and set aside.
2. Toast **gluten-free bread** until golden and crispy. Process in food processor or crush by hand into coarse crumbs (about 1½ cups). Transfer to *Medium Bowl #1*.
3. In a large skillet, brown **Italian sausage** over medium heat, breaking into small crumbles, until fully cooked, about 8-10 minutes. Remove sausage with slotted spoon and transfer to *Medium Bowl #3*; set aside. Reserve 2-3 Tbsp. of rendered fat in the skillet, discarding excess.
4. Add **shallot** and **garlic** (*Small Bowl #2*) to the skillet and sauté over medium heat until softened and fragrant, about 3-4 minutes.
5. Add chopped **mushroom stems** (*Small Bowl #1*). Cook, stirring occasionally, until mushroom liquid has evaporated, about 5-7 minutes.
6. Add **breadcrumbs** (*Medium Bowl #1*) to the skillet and toast, stirring constantly, for 1-2 minutes until golden and fragrant.
7. Add **white wine** or **chicken broth** and cook, stirring, until liquid is nearly evaporated, about 2-3 minutes.

8. Remove skillet from heat. Add cooked **sausage** (*Medium Bowl #3*), **cream cheese** and 3 oz. **parmesan** (*Medium Bowl #2*), and 1 tsp. **oregano**, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **thyme**, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **MSG**, $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. **salt**, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **black pepper**, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. **red pepper flakes** (*Small Bowl #4*). Stir until cream cheese is melted and mixture is well combined. Taste and adjust seasoning—the filling should be well-seasoned.
9. Fill each **mushroom cap** generously with the sausage mixture, mounding slightly. Sprinkle reserved 1 oz. **parmesan** (*Small Bowl #3*) evenly over the tops.
10. Bake for *20-25 minutes* until **mushrooms** are tender and tops are golden brown.
11. Garnish with fresh **parsley** (*Small Bowl #5*) and serve hot.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Rimmed baking sheet
- 12-inch skillet (oven-safe preferred)
- Food processor or rolling pin (for breadcrumbs)
- Slotted spoon
- Small prep bowls (5)
- Medium prep bowls (3)
- Sharp paring knife
- Damp paper towels
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Mixing spoon or spatula

Mise en Place

- Small Bowl #1 — chopped **mushroom stems**
- Small Bowl #2 — aromatics: diced **shallot**, minced **garlic**
- Small Bowl #3 — 1 oz. **parmesan** (topping)
- Small Bowl #4 — seasoning: 1 tsp. **oregano**, ½ tsp. **thyme**, ½ tsp. **MSG**, ¾ tsp. **salt**, ½ tsp. **black pepper**, ¼ tsp. **red pepper flakes**
- Small Bowl #5 — chopped **parsley** (garnish)
- Medium Bowl #1 — **breadcrumbs** (about 1½ cups)
- Medium Bowl #2 — dairy: softened **cream cheese**, 3 oz. grated **parmesan**
- Medium Bowl #3 — cooked **sausage** (set aside after browning, about 2 cups)
- Soften **cream cheese** at room temperature *30 minutes* before cooking

Ingredient Tips

- Choose **mushrooms** with intact caps, 2-2½ inches in diameter
- **Cremini** or **baby bella** mushrooms work well for deeper flavor
- Use quality **Italian sausage** with good fat content (not lean)
- Fresh **parmesan** (Parmigiano-Reggiano) preferred over pre-grated

- **White wine**: dry varieties like Pinot Grigio or Sauvignon Blanc work best
- Any gluten-free **bread** works; day-old bread yields better crumbs

Preparation Tips

- Pre-baking **mushroom** caps prevents watery filling
- Pat **mushroom** caps dry after pre-baking
- Don't overcrowd **sausage**—brown in batches if needed
- Rendered **sausage** fat adds flavor; don't discard all of it
- Toasting **breadcrumbs** in the fat adds richness
- Filling should be generously seasoned—it will mellow when baked
- Mound filling slightly; it will settle during baking

Make Ahead & Storage

- Prep **mushrooms** and make filling up to *24 hours* ahead
- Store filled **mushrooms** covered in refrigerator
- Add extra *5 minutes* baking time if starting from cold
- Leftovers keep *3-4 days* refrigerated
- Reheat at *350°F* for *10-15 minutes*
- Not recommended for freezing (texture suffers)

Serving Suggestions

- Serve immediately while cheese is bubbly
- Excellent as appetizer (serves 4-6) or side dish (serves 3-4)
- Pairs well with roasted meats or grilled steaks
- Drizzle with balsamic glaze for presentation
- Serve alongside arugula salad with lemon vinaigrette
- Can be served room temperature for parties

Lime and Cilantro Rice

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|---------|
| Long-grain white rice | 2 cups | Lime zest | 1 lime |
| Chicken broth | 3 cups | Cilantro, fresh | ½ cup |
| Olive oil | 2 Tbsp. | Butter | 2 Tbsp. |
| Onion, small | 1 | Jalapeño (optional) | 1 Tbsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 3 | | |
| Salt | 1 tsp. | | |
| Lime juice, fresh | ¼ cup | | |

Directions

Rinse **rice** until water runs clear — Finely dice **onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Zest and juice **limes**; set zest in *Small Bowl #3* and juice in *Small Bowl #4* — Finely chop **cilantro**; set aside in *Small Bowl #5* — If using, finely dice **jalapeño**; set aside in *Small Bowl #6*

1. Heat 2 Tbsp. **olive oil** in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Sauté **onion** (*Small Bowl #1*) for 2-3 minutes until translucent.
2. Add **garlic** (*Small Bowl #2*) and optional **jalapeño** (*Small Bowl #6*) and cook for 30 seconds until fragrant.
3. Add rinsed **rice** to the pan and stir to coat with oil. Toast for about 2 minutes, stirring frequently.
4. Transfer rice mixture to rice cooker. Add 3 cups **chicken broth** to appropriate fill line. Stir gently to combine.
5. Close lid and cook on standard white rice setting until cycle is complete.
6. Once done, let rice sit for an additional 5-10 minutes with the lid closed.
7. Open lid and fluff rice with a fork. Add **lime juice** (¼ cup, *Small Bowl #4*), **lime zest** (*Small Bowl #3*), chopped **cilantro** (½ cup, *Small Bowl #5*), and 2 Tbsp. **butter**. Fold gently until well combined and butter is melted.
8. Taste and adjust seasoning, if needed, with salt, lime juice, or cilantro to preference.

Ingredients

Mac and Cheese •

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Elbow macaroni | 1 lb. | Salt | ¼ tsp. |
| Butter | ½ cup (1 stick) | Black pepper | ¼ tsp. |
| All-purpose flour | ½ cup | Sodium citrate (optional) | ½ tsp. |
| Whole milk, warmed | 4 cups | Sharp cheddar | 1 lb. |
| Heavy cream | ½ cup | Gruyere cheese | ½ lb. |
| Smoked paprika | 1 tsp. | Smoked gouda cheese | ¼ lb. |
| Hungarian hot paprika | 1 tsp. | Cooked ham, diced | 1 cup (6 oz.) |
| Garlic powder | ½ tsp. | Parmesan cheese | ½ cup |
| Dry mustard powder | 1 tsp. | Panko breadcrumbs | ½ cup |
| | | Parsley | 1 Tbsp |

Directions

Preheat oven to 375°F — Lightly grease a 9 inch×13 inch baking dish — Shred **sharp cheddar**, **Gruyere**, and **smoked gouda cheeses**; combine in *Large Bowl #1* — Shred **Parmesan cheese**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Chop **ham**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Warm **milk** — Combine **sodium citrate** and 2 Tbsp. water in *Small Bowl #3*

1. **Cook the Macaroni:** Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add the **elbow macaroni** and cook according to package directions until al dente. Drain well and set aside. Do not rinse.
2. **Make the Roux:** In a large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven, melt ½ cup **butter** over medium heat. Whisk in ½ cup **flour**. Cook, stirring constantly, for 2-3 *minutes* until a pale golden roux forms.
3. **Build the Cheese Sauce Base:** Gradually whisk in 4 cups **warmed whole milk**, a little at a time, until smooth. Continue whisking until the sauce thickens about 5-7 *minutes*. Stir in ½ cup **heavy cream**, 1 tsp. **smoked paprika**, 1 tsp. **Hungarian hot paprika**, ½ tsp. **garlic powder**, and 1 tsp. **dry mustard powder**. Season with ¼ tsp. **salt** and ¼ tsp. **black pepper** to taste. Stir in **sodium citrate** (*Small Bowl #3*) thoroughly.
4. **Melt the Cheeses:** Reduce the heat to low. Add the shredded **sharp cheddar**, **Gruyere**, and **smoked gouda cheeses** (*Large Bowl #1*) to the sauce, a handful at a time, stirring constantly until melted and smooth.
5. **Combine Macaroni & Cheese:** Add the cooked macaroni to the cheese sauce and stir gently until fully coated. Fold in the diced **ham** (*Small Bowl #2*).
6. **Assemble & Top:** Transfer the mac and cheese mixture to the prepared baking dish, spreading it evenly. In *Small Bowl #4*, combine the **grated Parmesan cheese** (½ cup, *Small Bowl #1*) and ½ cup **panko breadcrumbs**. Sprinkle this mixture generously over the top.
7. **Bake:** Bake for 20-25 *minutes*, or until the mac and cheese is bubbly around the edges and the topping is golden brown and crispy.
8. **Serve:** Let the mac and cheese stand for 5-10 *minutes* before serving. Garnish with fresh **parsley**.

Mexican Rice •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---|---------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Long grain rice | 2 cups | Mexican spice mix | 1 Tbsp. |
| Lard | 1 Tbsp. | Hot water | 2 cups |
| Better Than Bouillon, chicken | 1 Tbsp. | Ro-Tel tomatoes and chilis | 10 oz. can |
| Caldo de tomate | 1 Tbsp. | | |

Directions

Prepare rice cooker — Combine **hot water**, **Better Than Bouillon**, **caldo de tomate**, and **Mexican spice mix** in *Medium Bowl #1* to create broth

1. Brown 2 cups **rice** in a pan with 1 Tbsp. **lard** until lightly toasted. Transfer to *Medium Bowl #2*; set aside.
2. Add browned **rice** (*Medium Bowl #2*), **Ro-Tel tomatoes**, and prepared **broth** (*Medium Bowl #1*) to rice cooker to appropriate fill line.
3. Cook on standard rice setting. When done, fluff rice with fork before serving.

Mexican Street Corn (Elote-Style) •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Sweet corn | 2 (15 oz.) cans | Fresh cilantro, chopped | ¼ cup |
| Vegetable oil | 2 Tbsp. | Queso fresco, crumbled | 3 Tbsp. |
| Mexican spice mix | 1 Tbsp. | | |
| Mayonnaise | 2 Tbsp. | | |
| Fresh lime | ½ | | |

Directions

Drain **corn**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Chop **cilantro**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Crumble **queso fresco**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Juice ½ **lime**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3*

1. Heat 2 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** in a large skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering.
2. Add drained **corn** (*Medium Bowl #1*) in a single layer. Cook undisturbed for *3-4 minutes* until kernels develop golden-brown caramelization.
3. Stir **corn** and continue cooking *2-3 minutes*, allowing additional browning and caramelization.
4. Sprinkle 1 Tbsp. **Mexican spice mix** over **corn** and stir constantly for *30 seconds* until fragrant and evenly distributed.
5. Remove skillet from heat. Add **lime juice** (*Small Bowl #3*) over **corn**, then add 2 Tbsp. **mayonnaise**, stirring until kernels are evenly coated.
6. Fold in chopped **cilantro** (¼ cup, *Small Bowl #1*) and crumbled **queso fresco** (3 Tbsp., *Small Bowl #2*), gently mixing until **cilantro** wilts and **cheese** begins to soften and melt into the mixture.
7. Transfer to serving bowl and serve immediately while warm.

Serves 4-6 as a side dish

Equipment Required

- Large skillet or sauté pan (12-inch recommended)
- Serving bowl (medium size)
- Measuring spoons and cups
- Sharp knife for chopping cilantro
- Cutting board
- Can opener
- Colander for draining corn
- Wooden spoon or spatula for stirring

Mise en Place

- Drain **corn** thoroughly in colander
- Chop **cilantro** into small pieces
- Crumble **queso fresco** by hand or with fork
- Cut **lime** in half and juice one half
- Measure all ingredients before heating pan

Ingredient Tips

- Fire-roasted **corn** varieties add extra smoky depth
- **Mexican spice mix** should contain chili powder, cumin, and paprika at minimum
- Fresh **lime** juice is essential - bottled juice lacks brightness
- **Queso fresco** can be substituted with cotija or mild feta
- Full-fat **mayonnaise** provides best texture and richness

Preparation Tips

- Don't move **corn** too early - caramelization requires direct contact
- **Spice mix** should sizzle when added - this blooms the aromatics
- Remove from heat before adding **lime** and **mayo** to prevent breaking
- Fold **cilantro** and **cheese** gently to maintain texture
- Serve immediately for best flavor and temperature contrast

Make Ahead & Storage

- Best served fresh and hot from the pan
- Can be reheated gently in skillet over low heat
- Leftovers keep *2 days* refrigerated
- Add fresh **cilantro** and **lime** when reheating
- May need additional **mayonnaise** if mixture seems dry

Serving Suggestions

- Excellent alongside grilled meats or fish
- Perfect for taco nights and Mexican-themed meals
- Serve with additional **lime** wedges and hot sauce
- Can be served as appetizer with tortilla chips
- Pairs well with cold Mexican beer or agua fresca
- Garnish with extra **queso fresco** if desired

Perfect Bacon •

A cold-start technique for consistently crisp, flat bacon every time. Starting in an unheated oven allows the fat to render slowly and evenly while the meat cooks: no curling, no burning, no fuss.

Ingredients

Bacon as needed

Directions

Remove **bacon** from refrigerator *1 hour* before cooking and allow to come to room temperature — **DO NOT** preheat oven. A cool oven is the key to success.

1. Place wire cooling rack(s) on baking sheet(s) and arrange **bacon** strips in single layer, not touching.
2. Place baking sheets with **bacon** on rack(s) in a cold oven.
3. Set oven to *405°F* and start timer for *20 minutes*.
4. Check **bacon** at *20 minutes*. It is done when golden brown and stiff. Bacon will crisp further as it cools. Depending on oven and cut, another *5–10 minutes* may be necessary.
5. Transfer **bacon** to a paper towel-lined plate, (optionally) layering paper towels between strips to absorb excess grease.

Quick Pickled Cucumbers (Oi Muchim)

A refreshing Korean cucumber side dish that perfectly balances crisp texture with spicy, garlicky, and sesame flavors. This quick pickle provides the perfect counterpoint to rich Korean dishes.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|---------|
| English cucumber | 1 large | Toasted sesame oil | 2 tsp. |
| or Regular cucumbers | 2 medium | Sugar | ½ tsp. |
| Kosher salt | 1½ tsp. | Toasted sesame seeds | 1 Tbsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 4 | Black pepper | ¼ tsp. |
| Green onions | 2 | | |
| Gochugaru | 1½ tsp. | | |
| Rice vinegar | 1 Tbsp. | | |

Directions

If using regular cucumbers, peel and halve lengthwise — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Slice **green onions** thinly; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Prepare ice water bath

1. For regular cucumbers: Remove seeds with a spoon, then slice into ⅛ inch half-moons. For English cucumber: Slice into ⅛ inch rounds. Set aside in *Large Bowl #1*.
2. Place cucumber slices (*Large Bowl #1*) in a colander, sprinkle with 1½ tsp. **kosher salt**, and toss gently. Let drain for *30 minutes* (regular) or *20 minutes* (English).
3. Rinse cucumbers briefly under cold water. Plunge into ice water bath for *1 minute*. Drain well and pat thoroughly dry with paper towels. Return to *Large Bowl #1*.
4. In *Medium Bowl #1*, combine minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*), 1½ tsp. **gochugaru**, 1 Tbsp. **rice vinegar**, 2 tsp. **toasted sesame oil**, ½ tsp. **sugar**, and ¼ tsp. **black pepper**.
5. Add dried cucumber slices (*Large Bowl #1*) and sliced **green onions** (*Small Bowl #2*) to the bowl. Toss gently but thoroughly to coat.
6. Sprinkle with 1 Tbsp. **toasted sesame seeds**, toss once more, and let rest for *10 minutes* before serving.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Large colander
- Large mixing bowl
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Paper towels
- Measuring spoons
- Large bowl for ice bath
- Vegetable peeler (if using regular cucumbers)

Mise en Place

- Prepare ice water bath before starting
- Measure all seasonings before beginning
- Have paper towels ready for drying cucumbers
- Toast **sesame seeds** if needed

Ingredient Tips

- English cucumbers are ideal, but regular cucumbers work well when properly prepared
- Fresh **garlic** is essential - do not substitute pre-minced
- **Gochugaru** can be found at Asian markets - no good substitute exists
- Use unseasoned **rice vinegar** for better control of flavors
- Regular table salt can be used, but reduce quantity by half

Preparation Tips

- Slice cucumbers as uniformly as possible for even texture
- Don't skip the ice bath - it ensures maximum crispness
- Pat cucumbers very dry before adding seasonings
- Adjust **gochugaru** amount based on desired heat level
- Test seasoning before final rest period

Make Ahead & Storage

- Best served fresh, within *2 hours* of preparation
- Can be made up to *4 hours* ahead, but texture will soften
- Store leftovers in airtight container for up to *24 hours*
- Do not freeze
- Drain any accumulated liquid before serving leftover portions

Serving Suggestions

- Perfect accompaniment to Korean BBQ or grilled meats
- Serve cold or at room temperature
- Excellent as part of a banchan (Korean side dish) spread
- Can be used as a sandwich or burger topping
- Pairs well with rice dishes and noodles

Roasted Asparagus with Lemon-Garlic Butter Sauce

Ingredients

| | | | |
|------------------|----------|--------------------|---------|
| Asparagus, fresh | 8 oz. | Garlic cloves | 2 |
| Olive oil | 1½ Tbsp. | Dried parsley | 1 tsp. |
| Lemon | 1 | Dried minced onion | ½ tsp. |
| Lemon zest | 1½ tsp. | Chicken broth | 3 Tbsp. |
| Lemon juice | 2 Tbsp. | Cornstarch | 1 Tbsp. |
| Dried thyme | ½ tsp. | Water | 2 Tbsp. |
| Salt | ½ tsp. | | |
| Black pepper | ¼ tsp. | | |
| Butter | 2½ Tbsp. | | |

Roasted Asparagus

Preheat oven to 400°F — Trim woody ends from **asparagus**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Zest and juice **lemon** to yield 1½ tsp. zest and 2 Tbsp. juice; set zest in *Small Bowl #2* and juice in *Small Bowl #3* — Mix 1 Tbsp. **cornstarch** with 2 Tbsp. cold **water** to make slurry in *Small Bowl #4*

1. Place trimmed **asparagus** (*Medium Bowl #1*) on a baking sheet. Drizzle with 1½ Tbsp. **olive oil** and sprinkle with ½ tsp. **dried thyme**, **lemon zest** (1½ tsp., *Small Bowl #2*), ½ tsp. **salt**, and ¼ tsp. **black pepper**. Toss to coat evenly.
2. Arrange **asparagus** in a single layer and roast for *30-40 minutes* until tender-crisp and lightly browned.

Lemon-Garlic Butter Sauce

1. While **asparagus** roasts, melt 2½ Tbsp. **butter** in a small saucepan over medium-low heat.
2. Add minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*), 1 tsp. **dried parsley**, and ½ tsp. **dried minced onion**.
3. Cook for *1-2 minutes* until garlic is fragrant.
4. Add 3 Tbsp. **chicken broth** and **lemon juice** (2 Tbsp., *Small Bowl #3*). Bring to a gentle simmer.
5. While whisking constantly, slowly pour the cornstarch slurry (*Small Bowl #4*) into the simmering sauce.
6. Continue whisking and simmer for *2-3 minutes* until sauce is thickened and no longer cloudy.

7. Season with additional **salt** to taste. Remove from heat.
8. Pour warm sauce over roasted **asparagus** and serve immediately.

Roasted Cauliflower

Ingredients

| | |
|--|---|
| Cauliflower, whole head . . . 1 large (2-3 lbs.) | Lemon juice 2 Tbsp. |
| Olive oil ¼ cup | Salt 1 tsp. |
| Garlic cloves, minced 4 | Black pepper ½ tsp. |
| Fresh thyme leaves 2 Tbsp. | Parmesan cheese, grated ½ cup |
| Fresh rosemary, chopped 1 Tbsp. | Pork rinds, crushed 1 cup |
| Garlic powder ½ tsp. | Gluten-free flour blend 2 Tbsp. |
| Onion powder ½ tsp. | Butter, melted 2 Tbsp. |
| Smoked paprika ¼ tsp. | |
| Lemon zest 1 Tbsp. | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 425°F — Line a baking sheet with parchment paper — Bring a large pot of salted water to boil — Prepare an ice bath — Crush **pork rinds** in food processor or by hand; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Chop **thyme** and **rosemary**; combine in *Small Bowl #2* — Zest and juice **lemon**; set zest in *Small Bowl #3* and juice in *Small Bowl #4*

1. Remove the outer leaves from the **cauliflower** and trim the stem, keeping the head intact. Carefully cut out the core with a small knife, ensuring the head remains whole.
2. Blanch the **cauliflower** by carefully lowering the head into the boiling water, stem-side up. Boil for *3-4 minutes*, then transfer to the ice bath for *1 minute* to stop the cooking process. Drain thoroughly and pat dry with paper towels.
3. In *Small Bowl #5*, mix ¼ cup **olive oil**, minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*), **thyme** and **rosemary** (*Small Bowl #2*), ½ tsp. **garlic powder**, ½ tsp. **onion powder**, ¼ tsp. **smoked paprika**, **lemon zest** (1 Tbsp., *Small Bowl #3*), 1 Tbsp. **lemon juice** (*Small Bowl #4*), 1 tsp. **salt**, and ½ tsp. **pepper**.
4. Place the **cauliflower** stem-side down on the prepared baking sheet. Brush the entire surface generously with the herb oil mixture (*Small Bowl #5*), ensuring it gets between the florets.
5. Roast in the preheated oven for *40 minutes*, brushing with more herb oil mixture (*Small Bowl #5*) halfway through cooking.
6. While roasting, prepare the crust mixture: In *Medium Bowl #2*, combine crushed **pork rinds** (1 cup, *Medium Bowl #1*), grated **Parmesan** (½ cup), 2 Tbsp. **gluten-free flour**, remaining 1 Tbsp. **lemon juice** (*Small Bowl #4*), and 2 Tbsp. melted **butter**. Mix until it forms a coarse, slightly moist mixture.

7. After *40 minutes* of roasting, remove the **cauliflower** and carefully press the crust mixture onto the top and sides of the cauliflower. Return to the oven and roast for an additional *15-20 minutes* until the crust is golden brown and the cauliflower is tender when pierced with a knife.
8. Let rest for *5 minutes* before transferring to a serving platter. Slice into wedges and serve hot.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Large pot (6-8 quart) for blanching
- Large bowl for ice bath
- Rimmed baking sheet
- Parchment paper
- Small mixing bowl for herb oil
- Medium mixing bowl for crust mixture
- Pastry brush or spoon for coating
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Food processor or zip-top bag and rolling pin (for crushing pork rinds)
- Microplane or zester
- Citrus juicer
- Kitchen towel or paper towels
- Serving platter

Mise en Place

- Prepare the **cauliflower** by removing leaves and trimming stem before preheating the oven
- Crush **pork rinds** and store in airtight container until needed
- Prepare herb oil mixture before blanching the cauliflower
- Set up ice bath before bringing water to boil
- Have all ingredients measured and ready before beginning cooking process

Ingredient Tips

- Choose a firm, compact **cauliflower** with tight florets and no brown spots
- For maximum flavor, use freshly grated **Parmesan** rather than pre-grated
- Plain, unflavored **pork rinds** work best as a neutral crispy base
- Verify your **gluten-free flour blend** contains xanthan gum; if not, add ¼ tsp.

- Use high-quality cold-pressed **olive oil** for best flavor
- Fresh herbs provide superior flavor, but dried can be substituted (1 tsp. dried thyme, ½ tsp. dried rosemary)
- For extra richness, substitute some of the olive oil with duck fat or schmaltz
- Check that your **Parmesan** is truly gluten-free (some brands use anti-caking agents)

Preparation Tips

- The blanching step is crucial for ensuring the cauliflower cooks evenly
- Thoroughly dry the cauliflower after blanching to ensure proper browning
- Apply herb oil generously between florets for maximum flavor penetration
- If crust browns too quickly, cover loosely with foil
- Test for doneness by inserting a knife into the thickest part - it should enter easily
- For extra browning on the crust, broil for the final *1-2 minutes* (watch carefully)
- Adjust roasting time based on cauliflower size - larger heads may need an additional *10-15 minutes*
- Let the cauliflower rest before cutting to allow juices to redistribute

Make Ahead & Storage

- Herb oil can be prepared up to *24 hours* in advance and refrigerated
- **Pork rind** mixture can be prepared *4 hours* ahead and stored at room temperature
- The entire dish can be blanched and prepared up to the roasting step *4 hours* in advance
- Leftover cauliflower can be refrigerated for up to *3 days*
- Reheat leftovers in a *350°F* oven for *10-15 minutes* until warmed through

Serving Suggestions

- Present whole on a serving platter and carve at the table for dramatic effect
 - Serve alongside **Dad's Brussels Sprouts** for a vegetable-forward meal
 - Pairs beautifully with roasted meats, particularly lamb or beef
 - Drizzle with extra herb oil just before serving for added freshness
 - Garnish with additional fresh herbs and lemon wedges
 - For a complete meal, serve with a gluten-free grain like quinoa or millet
 - Accompany with a crisp white wine such as Pinot Grigio or Sauvignon Blanc
-

Steamed Cabbage (Sweet and Sour) •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Round cabbage | 1 head | Ginger powder | ½ tsp. |
| Rice vinegar | ¾ Tbsp. | Sesame oil | ½ tsp. |
| Sake | 2 Tbsp. | Fresh lime juice | 1 tsp. |
| Mirin | 2 Tbsp. | White pepper | pinch |
| Light soy sauce | 1 tsp. | Candied ginger, minced | 2 pieces |
| Grapeseed oil | 1 Tbsp. | Salt | if needed |

Directions

Remove outer leaves from **cabbage** and cut into 1 inch strips; set aside in *Large Bowl #1* — Discard core — Mince **candied ginger** fine; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Set up steamer

1. Steam **cabbage** strips (*Large Bowl #1*) for 6-8 minutes until tender but with slight bite. Return to *Large Bowl #1*; set aside.
2. While **cabbage** steams, heat 1 Tbsp. **grapeseed oil** in wok or skillet over medium heat. Add ½ tsp. **ginger powder** and bloom for 30 seconds until fragrant.
3. Add 2 Tbsp. **sake**, ¾ Tbsp. **rice vinegar**, and 2 Tbsp. **mirin**. Bring to simmer and reduce by about one-third to concentrate flavors and mellow acidity, about 3-4 minutes.
4. Stir in 1 tsp. **light soy sauce**, pinch **white pepper**, and minced **candied ginger** (*Small Bowl #1*). Cook for another 1-2 minutes to integrate the **candied ginger** flavors.
5. Remove from heat and stir in ½ tsp. **sesame oil** and 1 tsp. **fresh lime juice**.
6. Add steamed **cabbage** (*Large Bowl #1*) to the pan with the sauce. Toss gently for 1 minute to coat evenly.
7. Serve warm or at room temperature.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Steamer setup (bamboo steamer, electric steamer, or large pot with steaming rack)
- Wok or large skillet for sauce
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Measuring spoons and cups
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Serving platter
- Small bowl for mincing candied ginger
- Fine-mesh strainer (optional, for lime juice)

Mise en Place

- Set up steamer and bring water to boil before starting
- Have all sauce ingredients measured and ready
- Mince **candied ginger** finely before cooking begins
- Cut **cabbage** just before steaming to prevent oxidation
- Juice **lime** fresh and strain if desired

Ingredient Tips

- Choose firm, heavy **cabbage** heads with tight, crisp leaves
- **Grapeseed oil** can be substituted with vegetable or canola oil
- Quality **sake** makes a difference - avoid cooking sake if possible
- **Candied ginger** should be soft and pliable, not dried out
- **White pepper** provides clean heat without competing with other flavors
- Use fresh **lime juice** only - bottled lacks the volatile oils needed for palate cleansing

Preparation Tips

- Cut **cabbage** strips uniformly for even cooking
- Watch steaming time carefully - smaller pieces cook faster than wedges
- Don't over-reduce the sauce - it should remain light and bright
- Bloom **ginger powder** carefully to avoid burning
- Add **sesame oil** and **lime juice** off heat to preserve delicate aromatics
- Taste sauce before final seasoning - **candied ginger** adds natural sweetness
- Toss gently to avoid breaking the tender **cabbage** strips

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Cabbage** can be cut up to *2 hours* ahead and stored covered
- Sauce can be made up to *1 day* ahead and gently rewarmed
- Add **lime juice** only when ready to serve for maximum brightness
- Best served fresh, but leftovers keep *2 days* refrigerated
- Reheat gently or serve at room temperature as a cold salad
- Do not freeze - texture will be compromised

Serving Suggestions

- Perfect as palate cleanser alongside spam musubi or other rich dishes
- Serve between every 2-3 pieces of musubi for optimal effect
- Excellent with grilled meats or fried foods
- Can be served warm or at room temperature
- Provide small chopsticks or forks for easy pickup
- Pairs well with steamed rice and other Asian-inspired sides

Suddenly Salad Classic Clone

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|--|----------|
| Rotini | 8 oz. | Sugar | 1/2 tsp. |
| Dried oregano | 1 Tbsp. | Salt | 3/4 tsp. |
| Dried basil | 1 tsp. | Cornstarch | 1/2 tsp. |
| Dried parsley | 1 tsp. | Dried red bell pepper flakes | 1/4 tsp. |
| Garlic powder | 1 tsp. | Vegetable oil | 2 Tbsp. |
| Onion powder | 1 tsp. | Cold water | 3 Tbsp. |
| Parmesan cheese, grated | 2 Tbsp. | | |
| Citric acid/TruLemon powder | 1/2 tsp. | | |

Directions

Combine all seasoning mix ingredients in *Small Bowl #1* — Bring large pot of salted water to boil for **pasta** — Have **oil** and **water** measured and ready

1. In *Small Bowl #1*, whisk together 1 Tbsp. **dried oregano**, 1 tsp. **dried basil**, 1 tsp. **dried parsley**, 1 tsp. **garlic powder**, 1 tsp. **onion powder**, 2 Tbsp. grated **Parmesan cheese**, 1/2 tsp. **citric acid**, 1/2 tsp. **sugar**, 3/4 tsp. **salt**, 1/2 tsp. **cornstarch**, and 1/4 tsp. **dried red bell pepper flakes** until evenly combined. The mixture should appear uniform with no clumps and have a fragrant herby aroma.
2. Cook 8 oz. **tri-color rotini** in boiling salted water according to package directions until al dente, typically *8–10 minutes*. Pasta is done when tender but still slightly firm to the bite with no raw flour taste in the center. Drain thoroughly in colander and rinse briefly under cold water to stop cooking and cool slightly, about *30 seconds*. Drain well and transfer to *Large Bowl #1*.
3. Add 2 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** and 3 Tbsp. **cold water** to prepared seasoning mix (*Small Bowl #1*). Whisk vigorously for *30 seconds* until well blended and slightly emulsified. The dressing should appear uniform with no separated oil and have a pourable but slightly thickened consistency.
4. Pour dressing (*Small Bowl #1*) over cooked **pasta** in *Large Bowl #1* and toss thoroughly with tongs or a large spoon for *1–2 minutes* until every piece is evenly coated. The pasta should appear glossy and lightly coated with no pools of dressing at the bottom of the bowl.
5. Cover bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least *2 hours* or up to *24 hours* to allow flavors to meld. The salad is ready when chilled throughout, with pasta having absorbed the dressing and flavors well integrated.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Large pot (for cooking pasta)
- Colander
- Large bowl (1)
- Small bowl (1)
- Whisk
- Measuring spoons
- Tongs or large spoon
- Plastic wrap

Hints and Notes

Yield

- Serves 4–6 as a side dish
- Equivalent to one standard box mix

Mise en Place

- *Small Bowl #1* — seasoning mix: 1 Tbsp. **oregano**, 1 tsp. **basil**, 1 tsp. **parsley**, 1 tsp. **garlic powder**, 1 tsp. **onion powder**, 2 Tbsp. **Parmesan**, ½ tsp. **citric acid**, ½ tsp. **sugar**, ¾ tsp. **salt**, ½ tsp. **cornstarch**, ¼ tsp. **red bell pepper flakes**; then becomes dressing when 2 Tbsp. **oil** and 3 Tbsp. **water** are added
- *Large Bowl #1* — cooked **pasta** for tossing and chilling (about 4 cups cooked)
- Measure **oil** and **water** before starting; have ready
- No advance prep required beyond measuring ingredients

Ingredient Tips

- **Tri-color rotini**: Use any brand; the spinach and tomato pasta add color but don't significantly affect flavor. Regular rotini works fine if tri-color is unavailable.
- **Citric acid**: Available in the canning or baking section of most grocery stores. Substitute 1 tsp. **TruLemon** powder if citric acid is unavailable—it provides similar tangy flavor.
- **Parmesan**: Use pre-grated or finely grated fresh Parmesan. Avoid coarse-grated cheese which won't incorporate smoothly into the dressing.
- **Dried red bell pepper flakes**: Look for dried red bell pepper in the spice aisle, or substitute a small pinch of paprika (not smoked).

- **Vegetable oil**: Canola, soybean, or sunflower oil work well. Avoid olive oil which has too strong a flavor for this light dressing.
- **Cornstarch**: Helps thicken and bind the dressing; don't omit.

Preparation Tips

- Cook **pasta** al dente—slightly underdone is better than overcooked, as pasta continues to absorb liquid while chilling
- Rinse cooked **pasta** briefly to cool it and wash away excess starch, which helps the dressing coat evenly
- Whisk **dressing** vigorously to create a slight emulsion; this helps the oil and water blend and prevents separation
- Toss **pasta** thoroughly—every piece should be coated. Use tongs or large spoon and toss for at least 1–2 minutes
- The salad tastes best after 2–4 hours of chilling when flavors have had time to develop
- Pasta absorbs dressing as it sits; if the salad seems dry after chilling, add 1–2 Tbsp. **water** and toss before serving
- Taste before serving—you may want to add a small pinch of **salt** or more **citric acid** for extra tang

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Seasoning mix** can be made in advance and stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 months
- Prepared **pasta salad** keeps refrigerated for 3–4 days in an airtight container
- Add a splash of **water** (1–2 Tbsp.) and toss before serving leftovers, as pasta absorbs dressing over time
- Not recommended for freezing—pasta texture suffers
- Best served within 24 hours for optimal texture and flavor

Serving Suggestions

- Serve as a simple side dish with grilled meats, burgers, or sandwiches
- This is a base recipe—add-ins are up to you: cherry tomatoes, bell peppers, red onion, black olives, mozzarella cubes, salami, or pepperoni are all traditional additions
- For a more substantial salad, add diced cooked chicken or canned chickpeas

- Garnish with fresh basil or parsley for color and freshness
 - Serve chilled or at room temperature; flavor is best when not ice-cold
 - Pairs well with barbecue, picnics, potlucks, and casual gatherings
-

Chapter 5

ENTREES



Beef Pot Roast

Beef Pot Roast is a classic comfort food, perfect for a hearty family meal. This recipe combines tender beef with flavorful vegetables and a rich broth, slow-cooked to perfection.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------|---------|
| Beef chuck roast | 3-4 lbs | Red wine | ½ cup |
| Onion, large | 1 | Worcestershire sauce | 2 Tbsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 6 | Tomato paste | 3 Tbsp. |
| Carrots | 4 | Dried thyme | 1 Tbsp. |
| Potatoes, Yukon Gold | 4 | Dried rosemary | 1 Tbsp. |
| Celery stalks | 2 | Bay leaves | 2 |
| Mushrooms | ½ lb. | Onion powder | 1 tsp |
| Beef broth | 1 cup | Garlic powder | 1 tsp |
| | | Salt | 2 tsp |
| | | Black Pepper, ground | 1 tsp |

Directions

Season the **beef roast** generously with 2 tsp. **salt**, 1 tsp. **pepper**, 1 tsp. **onion powder**, and 1 tsp. **garlic powder** — Slice the **onions**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Mince the **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Peel and cut the **carrots** into chunks; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Cut the **potatoes** into chunks; set aside in *Medium Bowl #3* — Chop the **celery**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Slice the **mushrooms**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3*

1. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat and sear the **beef** on all sides until browned. Transfer to *Large Bowl #1*; set aside.
2. Place the sliced **onions** (*Medium Bowl #1*), minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*), **carrots** (*Medium Bowl #2*), **potatoes** (*Medium Bowl #3*), **celery** (*Small Bowl #2*), and **mushrooms** (*Small Bowl #3*) in the crock pot.
3. In *Medium Bowl #4*, whisk together 1 cup **beef broth**, ½ cup **red wine**, 2 Tbsp. **Worcestershire sauce**, 3 Tbsp. **tomato paste**, 1 Tbsp. **dried thyme**, 1 Tbsp. **dried rosemary**, then add **bay leaves**.
4. Pour the mixture (*Medium Bowl #4*) over the vegetables in the crock pot.
5. Place the seared **beef roast** (*Large Bowl #1*) on top of the vegetables.
6. Cover the crock pot and cook on *low heat for 8-10 hours* or on *high heat for 4-6 hours*, until the beef is tender and easily shreds with a fork.
7. Once cooked, remove the **beef** from the crock pot and let it rest for a few minutes before slicing or shredding.
8. Serve the beef pot roast with the vegetables and drizzle with broth.

Boeuf Bourguignon

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Chuck roast | 4 lbs. | Tomato paste | 2 Tbsp. |
| Thick-cut bacon | 8 oz. | Unsalted butter | 6 Tbsp. |
| Cremini mushrooms | 16 oz. | All-purpose flour | 1/3 cup |
| Pearl onions, frozen | 16 oz. | Fresh thyme | 8 sprigs |
| Yellow onions | 2 large | Fresh parsley | 1 bunch |
| Carrots | 4 large | Bay leaves | 2 |
| Celery stalks | 3 | Black peppercorns | 1 Tbsp. |
| Shallots | 2 medium | MSG | 1/4 tsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 8 | Kosher salt | 2 Tbsp. |
| Burgundy wine | 750 ml | Black pepper, ground | 1 Tbsp. |
| Cognac | 1/4 cup | | |
| Beef Better Than Bouillon | 2 Tbsp. | | |
| Water | 2 cups | | |

Directions

Salt **beef** *24 hours* ahead — Bring **beef** to room temperature *2 hours* before cooking — Preheat oven to *300°F* — Cut **beef** into *2 1/2* inch pieces — Dice **bacon** into *1/2* inch lardons; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Prepare mirepoix: dice **onions**, **carrots**, **celery**; combine in *Large Bowl #1* — Mince **shallots**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Crush **garlic** cloves lightly; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Quarter **mushrooms** if large; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Make bouquet garni with **thyme**, **parsley** stems, **bay leaves**, **peppercorns** — Dissolve **Better Than Bouillon** in *hot water*; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2*

1. Start with cold Dutch oven. Add **bacon** (*Small Bowl #1*), turn to medium-low heat, render until crisp (*12-15 minutes*). Remove with slotted spoon and transfer to *Medium Bowl #3*; set aside.
2. Increase heat to medium-high. Working in batches, brown **beef** until deeply caramelized (*4-5 minutes* per side). Transfer to *Large Bowl #2*; set aside.
3. Lower heat to medium. Add half the **wine**, scrape fond. Strain liquid into separate pot, reserve in *Medium Bowl #4*.
4. Return Dutch oven to medium heat. Add 2 Tbsp. **butter**, **onions**, **carrots**, **celery** (*Large Bowl #1*), **shallots** (*Small Bowl #2*), and 1/4 tsp. **MSG**. Cook until onions are translucent (*8-10 minutes*).
5. Add **garlic** (*Small Bowl #3*), cook *1 minute*. Add 2 Tbsp. **tomato paste**, cook until darkened (*2-3 minutes*).
6. Add 1/4 cup **cognac**, reduce until nearly dry. Add 1/3 cup **flour**, cook (*2 minutes*).

7. Return **beef** (*Large Bowl #2*), **bacon** (*Medium Bowl #3*), reserved wine liquid (*Medium Bowl #4*), remaining **wine**, and **bouillon mixture** (*Medium Bowl #2*). Add bouquet garni. Bring to simmer.
8. Cover, transfer to oven. Braise until meat reaches 195°F , about $2\frac{1}{2}$ -3 hours. Check liquid level hourly.
9. Meanwhile, blanch **pearl onions** in boiling water (*1 minute*). Shock in ice bath, peel; set aside in *Small Bowl #4*.
10. In large skillet, sauté **mushrooms** (*Medium Bowl #1*) in 2 Tbsp. **butter** until golden (*8-10 minutes*). Set aside in *Medium Bowl #5*.
11. Brown **pearl onions** (*Small Bowl #4*) in same skillet with remaining 2 Tbsp. **butter** until caramelized (*5-6 minutes*). Set aside in *Small Bowl #4*.
12. When meat is tender, remove from oven. Transfer **beef** pieces to *Large Bowl #2*. Strain sauce into clean pot, pressing solids.
13. Reduce sauce until slightly thickened. Meanwhile, make beurre manié: knead 2 Tbsp. each softened **butter** and **flour** in *Small Bowl #5*.
14. Whisk beurre manié (*Small Bowl #5*) into simmering sauce in small pieces until desired consistency. Return **beef** (*Large Bowl #2*), add **mushrooms** (*Medium Bowl #5*) and **pearl onions** (*Small Bowl #4*).
15. Simmer gently *5 minutes*. Adjust seasoning with **salt** and **pepper**. Rest *20 minutes*.
16. Garnish with chopped **parsley**. Serve with crusty bread or buttered egg noodles.

* * *

Equipment Required

- 7-8 quart enameled cast iron Dutch oven
- 12-inch heavy-bottom skillet
- Fine-mesh strainer
- 2-quart saucepan (for reducing wine)
- Digital instant-read thermometer
- Kitchen twine and cheesecloth (for bouquet garni)
- Large mixing bowls (3-4)
- Heavy cutting board
- Sharp chef's knife
- Kitchen spider or slotted spoon
- Wooden spoons and whisks
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large plate lined with paper towels

Mise en Place

- Season **beef** *24 hours* ahead, store uncovered in refrigerator
- Remove **beef** *2 hours* before cooking
- Open **wine** to breathe *1 hour* before cooking
- Prepare bouquet garni in cheesecloth, tie securely
- Cut all vegetables before beginning
- Have additional hot **stock** ready
- Soften butter for *beurre manié* ahead of time

Ingredient Tips

- Choose well-marbled **chuck roast**, preferably center-cut
- Use young red Burgundy (Pinot Noir) or Côtes du Rhône
- Select slab **bacon** for even lardons
- **Better Than Bouillon** must be "Roasted Beef Base"
- European-style **butter** (82% butterfat) preferred
- Fresh **herbs** only - dried will muddy the sauce
- Choose small **cremini mushrooms** for even cooking

Preparation Tips

- Cut **beef** against grain in equal sizes for even cooking
- Pat **beef** thoroughly dry before browning
- Cold start for **bacon** ensures proper rendering

- Never crowd pan when browning - pieces should not touch
- Dark fond is crucial - but watch carefully to prevent burning
- Skim surface fat during braising every *30 minutes*
- Test several pieces of **meat** for doneness
- Sauce should coat the back of a spoon when finished

Make Ahead & Storage

- Improves if made *1-2 days* ahead
- Cool completely before refrigerating
- Remove solidified fat cap before reheating
- Reheat gently at *300°F* for *30-45 minutes*
- Add hot stock if needed during reheating
- Can freeze up to *3 months* in airtight container
- Thaw completely in refrigerator before reheating

Troubleshooting

- If sauce is too thin: make additional *beurre manié*
- If sauce breaks: whisk in cold **butter** piece by piece
- If meat is tough: continue cooking, check every *15 minutes*
- If fond is too dark: deglaze immediately with **wine**
- If sauce is too acidic: add a pinch of sugar
- If seasoning is flat: add **MSG** in small increments

Serving Suggestions

- Rest *20-30 minutes* before serving
- Traditional: egg noodles or pommes mousseline
- Crusty baguette for sauce
- Serve same **wine** used in cooking
- Garnish with fresh **parsley** and extra **pearl onions**
- Simple green salad with vinaigrette to balance

Chicken Broccoli Rice Casserole •

Rendered and pressure-cooked chicken is diced and combined with al-dente rice, blanched broccoli, and sautéed vegetables (corn caramelized in chicken fat, then onion, garlic, and mushrooms). A spiced roux-based cream sauce enriched with reserved chicken broth binds everything together, and the casserole is baked until bubbly and topped with crispy fried onions for texture. Serves 8–10.

Ingredients

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Chicken thighs, bone-in, skin-on . . . 8 (3 lb.) | Sweet corn, canned 8 oz. |
| Rice, long-grain white 3 cups | Bay leaf 2 |
| Water 6 cups | Thyme, dried 1 tsp. |
| Chicken Better Than Bouillon 4 Tbsp. | Rosemary, dried 1 tsp. |
| Broccoli 1 head | Sweet paprika 1 tsp. |
| Cream cheese 8 oz. | MSG ¼ tsp. |
| Onion, medium 1 | Garlic powder ½ tsp. |
| Garlic cloves 6–8 | Onion powder ½ tsp. |
| Butter 6 ½ Tbsp. | Nutmeg powder pinch |
| Flour 3 Tbsp. | Salt 1 tsp. |
| Milk 2 cups | Black pepper ½ tsp. |
| Mushroom slices, canned 8 oz. | Red pepper, crushed ¼ tsp. |
| | Crispy fried onions ¼ cup |

Directions

Fill a large pot with salted water and start heating for blanching — Prepare **chicken broth**: whisk 4 Tbsp. **Better Than Bouillon** into 6 cups **water** until dissolved; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* (broth) — Chop **broccoli**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Drain **corn** and set aside; dice **onion** and set aside; mince **garlic** and drain **mushrooms**, combine these two in *Small Bowl #1* (garlic and mushrooms for step 5) — Soften **cream cheese** at room temp and cube; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* (cream cheese)

1. Start cooking **rice** al-dente using 3 cups **chicken broth** (*Medium Bowl #1*) and a **bay leaf**. Rice is done when grains are tender but still have a slight bite in the center (not fully soft), and most liquid has been absorbed but rice appears slightly wet. Stop your rice cooker *10 minutes* early, or check rice manually: grains should be separate, not mushy, and have a firm center when bitten. While rice cooks, proceed with steps below.
2. In a deep skillet over medium heat, place **chicken** skin-side down. Render for *6–8 minutes* until skin releases easily from pan and appears golden brown and crispy. Turn chicken and cook *5 minutes* more until second side is lightly browned. Transfer **chicken** to Instant Pot. Pour off all but 2 Tbsp. of rendered fat from skillet and reserve skillet for step 5.
3. Add 3 cups **chicken broth** (*Medium Bowl #1*), 1 tsp. **thyme**, and one **bay leaf** to Instant Pot with **chicken**. Cook on **high pressure** for *15 minutes*, then allow natural release for

10 minutes before manually releasing remaining pressure. Chicken is done when meat is tender and easily pulls away from bones, and internal temperature reaches 165°F on an instant-read thermometer. While chicken pressure cooks, proceed to step 5.

4. Transfer cooked **chicken** to a plate and let rest for *10-15 minutes* until cool enough to handle (meat should feel warm but not hot to the touch). Strain cooked broth through a fine-mesh strainer and reserve in *Medium Bowl #4* (reserved broth); you should have approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ –3 cups of reserved broth. While chicken rests, proceed to step 6 to make the sauce.
5. While chicken pressure cooks (step 3), prepare vegetables using the reserved skillet with 2 Tbsp. rendered fat from step 2. Heat skillet over medium-high heat and add drained **corn**; caramelize for *5 minutes* until kernels appear golden brown with some darker spots and smell sweet and nutty. Reduce heat to medium, add 2 Tbsp. **butter**, and add diced **onion**. Cook until translucent and softened, *5-10 minutes*; onion should appear clear and glossy, edges should be slightly golden, and pieces should feel soft when pressed with a spatula. Add **garlic** and **mushrooms** (*Small Bowl #1*), cooking for another *5 minutes* until garlic is fragrant (aromatic but not browned) and mushrooms are tender and have released their liquid. Remove from heat and transfer to *Large Bowl #1* (final mixture).
6. Preheat oven to 375°F . While chicken cools (requires strained broth from step 4), make the sauce: In a large saucepan, melt 4 Tbsp. **butter** over medium heat until foaming subsides. Add 1 tsp. **rosemary**, 1 tsp. **paprika**, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. **MSG**, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **garlic powder**, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **onion powder**, pinch **nutmeg**, 1 tsp. **salt**, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **black pepper**, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. **red pepper**. Stir constantly for *30 seconds* until spices are fragrant and evenly distributed.
7. Sprinkle 3 Tbsp. **flour** over the butter/spice mixture, whisking to combine until no dry flour remains. Cook, stirring constantly for *2 minutes* until roux smells nutty and toasted (not burnt) and has a smooth, paste-like consistency with no raw flour taste. The spices will color the roux dark, so rely on time, smell, and texture rather than color. If roux begins to smell burnt, reduce heat immediately. If lumps form, continue whisking vigorously until smooth.
8. Gradually whisk in 2 cups of **reserved broth** (*Medium Bowl #4*), then 2 cups **milk**, adding liquid in a steady stream while whisking constantly to prevent lumps. Heat and whisk constantly until sauce reaches a gentle boil and thickens noticeably, about *5-8 minutes*. Sauce is done when it coats the back of a spoon thickly (a line drawn through it with your finger should hold clearly), appears smooth and creamy (not thin or watery), and bubbles gently throughout. If sauce doesn't thicken after *8 minutes*, continue cooking and whisking; it may need an additional *2-3 minutes*.
9. Add cubes of **cream cheese** (*Small Bowl #2*) to the hot sauce and whisk until melted and smooth with no visible chunks remaining. If cream cheese doesn't melt smoothly, remove from heat and continue whisking off heat until smooth. Remove from heat and transfer to *Large Bowl #1* (final mixture).
10. While sauce thickens (step 8), blanch **broccoli**: bring the pot of salted water to a rolling boil if not already boiling. Blanch **broccoli** (*Medium Bowl #2*) for *2 minutes* until bright green and crisp-tender: florets should appear vibrant green (not dull or olive-colored), stems should feel slightly softened when pierced with a knife but still have resistance, and

broccoli should maintain its structure without becoming mushy. Immediately strain in a metal colander, rinsing with cold water to stop cooking. Drain well and transfer to *Large Bowl #1* (final mixture).

11. After sauce is complete, grease a 9 inch × 13 inch baking dish with ½ Tbsp. **butter**. Debone and dice the rested **chicken**, discarding bones and skin. Place diced **chicken** in *Large Bowl #1* (final mixture).
12. Add cooked **rice** to *Large Bowl #1* (final mixture) and mix all components until all ingredients are evenly distributed and coated with sauce. Add ½–1 cup of remaining **reserved broth** (*Medium Bowl #4*) to achieve a creamy, moist consistency (mixture should be cohesive but not soupy). Mixture should appear uniform with no dry spots.
13. Transfer mixture to prepared baking dish, spreading evenly. Bake at 375°F for 20 minutes until edges are bubbly and beginning to brown, and center is hot throughout.
14. Remove from oven and sprinkle liberally with ¼ cup **crispy fried onions**. Return to oven and bake another 10 minutes until top is golden brown, edges are bubbly and slightly crisp, and casserole is hot throughout (internal temperature should reach 165°F if checked). Continue baking in 3 minute increments if center is not hot or top is not golden. Rest 5–10 minutes before serving to allow casserole to set slightly.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Instant Pot or pressure cooker
- Rice cooker (or stovetop method)
- 9 inch × 13 inch baking dish
- Large saucepan (for roux and sauce)
- Deep skillet (12-inch preferred, for rendering chicken and cooking vegetables)
- Large pot (for blanching broccoli)
- Metal colander
- Fine-mesh strainer
- Large prep bowl (1)
- Medium prep bowls (3)
- Small prep bowls (2)
- Instant-read thermometer
- Whisk
- Slotted spoon or tongs
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Cutting board and chef's knife

Yield

- Serves 8-10 as main dish
- Makes one 9 inch × 13 inch casserole

Mise en Place

- *Medium Bowl #1* — **chicken broth**: 6 cups **water** with 4 Tbsp. **Better Than Bouillon** (about 6 cups total, 3 cups used in step 1 for rice, 3 cups used in step 3 for pressure cooking chicken)
- *Medium Bowl #2* — chopped **broccoli** (whole head, about 3-4 cups, blanched in step 10 during sauce thickening, then transferred to Large Bowl)
- Drained **corn** (8 oz., about 1 cup) measured and set aside (not in bowl) for step 5
- Diced **onion** (1 medium, about 1 cup) measured and set aside (not in bowl) for step 5
- *Small Bowl #1* — minced **garlic** (6-8 cloves) and drained **mushrooms** (8 oz., about 1/2 cup) — combined in prep, added together in step 5
- *Small Bowl #2* — cubed **cream cheese** (8 oz., softened at room temperature, about 1 cup, used in step 9)
- *Medium Bowl #4* — reserved **chicken broth** (created in step 4, about 2 1/2-3 cups total: 2 cups used in step 8 for sauce, 1/2-1 cup added to mixture in step 12)

- *Large Bowl #1* — final **mixture**: accumulates finished components as they're completed (cooked **vegetables** from step 5, **sauce** from step 9, blanched **broccoli** from step 10, diced **chicken** from step 11, cooked **rice** and additional **broth** added in step 12; about 14-16 cups total when complete)
- Soften **cream cheese** at room temperature *30 minutes* before cooking
- Prep sequence: broth first, then vegetables (broccoli, corn, onion, garlic/mushrooms), then cream cheese

Ingredient Tips

- Use bone-in, skin-on **chicken thighs** for best flavor; rendering the skin adds richness, and bones contribute to the broth
- **Long-grain white rice** works best; avoid short-grain or sticky rice varieties
- Fresh **broccoli** with tight florets and firm stems is ideal; avoid yellowing or limp broccoli
- Canned **mushrooms** are convenient, but fresh sliced mushrooms can be substituted (sauté until tender before adding to vegetables)
- Quality **Better Than Bouillon** provides depth; adjust amount to taste preference
- Full-fat **cream cheese** provides best texture and flavor
- **Crispy fried onions** add essential texture; don't skip or substitute

Preparation Tips

- Rendering **chicken** skin-side down builds flavor and produces fat for caramelizing vegetables; don't rush this step
- Pressure cooking **chicken** after rendering produces tender meat and rich broth; natural release for *10 minutes* prevents toughening
- Reserve the cooked **chicken broth** carefully—it's used for the sauce and final mixture (approximately 2 1/2-3 cups)
- Cook **rice** al-dente (slightly undercooked) as it will finish in the oven; fully cooked rice will become mushy
- Blanching **broccoli** maintains bright color and crisp-tender texture; don't overcook or it will become mushy in the final bake
- Use reserved chicken fat to caramelize **corn**; the rendered fat adds depth to the vegetables
- Building the **roux** slowly prevents burning; watch for light golden color and nutty aroma

- Whisk **sauce** constantly while adding liquid to prevent lumps; if lumps form, strain before proceeding
- **Cream cheese** should be at room temperature and cubed small for easy melting
- Add ½–1 cup of **reserved broth** to the final mixture for creamy consistency; start with less and add more if needed
- Combine all components while warm for easier mixing and even distribution
- Add **crispy fried onions** near the end to preserve their crunch; they'll burn if added too early
- Rest casserole before serving to allow sauce to set slightly for cleaner slices
- Assemble entire casserole up to *1 day* ahead; cover and refrigerate, then add *5 minutes* to initial bake time
- Leftovers keep *3–4 days* refrigerated, covered tightly
- Reheat individual portions in microwave or reheat entire casserole at *350°F* for *20–25 minutes* until hot throughout
- Freezes well for up to *3 months*; thaw in refrigerator overnight before reheating

Make Ahead & Storage

- Prep **chicken** and **broth** up to *2 days* ahead; store separately in refrigerator
- Cook **rice** up to *1 day* ahead; store covered in refrigerator
- Blanch **broccoli** up to *1 day* ahead; store covered in refrigerator
- Prepare **vegetables** (corn, onion, garlic, mushrooms) up to *1 day* ahead; store covered in refrigerator
- Make **sauce** up to *2 days* ahead; store covered in refrigerator (may need to thin with additional milk when reheating)

Serving Suggestions

- Serve hot from the oven while **crispy fried onions** are still crunchy
- Excellent as a complete meal with a simple green salad
- Pairs well with roasted vegetables or steamed green beans
- Can be served as a side dish for larger gatherings (serves 12–14 as side)
- Leftovers make excellent packed lunches; reheat thoroughly
- Garnish with additional fresh herbs (parsley, chives) if desired

Chilorio Tacos

Ingredients

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Boneless pork shoulder | 3 lbs. | Cider vinegar | ¼ cup |
| Fresh orange juice | 2 cups | Kosher salt | 3 tsp. |
| Dried ancho chiles | 8 medium | Lard | ¼ cup |
| Garlic cloves | 8 | Corn or flour tortillas | 24 |
| Mexican oregano | 2 tsp. | Tomatillo salsa | 1½ cups |
| Black pepper, ground | 1 tsp. | White onion, chopped | 1½ cups |
| Ground cumin | ½ tsp. | Fresh cilantro, chopped | 1½ cups |

Directions

Preheat oven to 325°F— Trim **pork shoulder** of about half the visible fat — Cut **pork** into 1-inch cubes; place in *Large Bowl #1* (pork) — Stem and seed **ancho chiles** — Tear **chiles** into large pieces — Peel and roughly chop **garlic**; place in *Small Bowl #1* (aromatics) — Combine 2 tsp. **oregano**, 1 tsp. **black pepper**, and ½ tsp. **cumin** in *Small Bowl #2* (spices) — Juice fresh **oranges** — Chop **onion** and **cilantro**; combine in *Small Bowl #3* (serving)

1. Heat a dry cast-iron skillet or comal over medium heat. Working in batches, toast **ancho chile** pieces for 15-30 seconds per side until fragrant and slightly darkened. Be vigilant—burned **chiles** turn bitter. Transfer to *Medium Bowl #1*.
2. In a blender, combine **orange juice**, toasted **ancho chiles** (*Medium Bowl #1*), **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*), 2 tsp. **oregano**, 1 tsp. **black pepper**, and ½ tsp. **cumin** (*Small Bowl #2*), ¼ cup **vinegar**, and 3 tsp. **kosher salt**. Blend on high until completely smooth, about 1-2 minutes. Strain through a medium-mesh sieve into *Medium Bowl #2*, pressing solids to extract maximum flavor. Discard solids.
3. Heat a large Dutch oven (at least 6-quart capacity) over medium-high heat. Working in batches to avoid crowding, sear **pork cubes** (*Large Bowl #1*) on at least two sides until deeply golden brown, about 3-4 minutes per side. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2*. The rendered **pork fat** left in the pot will contribute to the final dish—do not discard.
4. Pour the strained **chile mixture** (*Medium Bowl #2*) into the Dutch oven. Return all **pork** (*Large Bowl #2*) to the pot, stirring to coat evenly. The liquid should come about halfway up the **pork**—add water if needed. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat.
5. Cover tightly with lid and transfer to 325°F oven. Braise for 2½-3 hours, checking occasionally, until **pork** is completely tender and easily pulls apart with a fork. Internal temperature should reach 195-205°F. The braising time allows tough shoulder fibers to break down into tender strands.

6. Transfer **pork** to a large bowl using a slotted spoon. Let the **braising liquid** settle for *5 minutes*, then skim excess fat from the surface (reserve this fat—it's flavorful). If more than 1 cup of **braising liquid** remains, return pot to stovetop and reduce over high heat to approximately 1 cup.
7. Using two forks or your fingers, shred the **pork** into coarse pieces. Discard any large pieces of fat or connective tissue.
8. Heat **reserved fat** and/or **lard** in a very large (12-inch) skillet over medium-high heat. When shimmering hot, add the shredded **pork** in a single layer (work in batches if necessary). Let it sear undisturbed for *2-3 minutes*, then stir and continue cooking until the **pork** develops brown, crispy edges, about *3-4 minutes* total.
9. Add 1 cup of the reduced **braising liquid** to the skillet. Cook, stirring frequently, until the liquid reduces to a thick glaze that coats the **pork**, about *5-7 minutes*. The **chilorio** should appear glossy and concentrated, not soupy.
10. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional **salt** if needed—usually about $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. more. The finished **chilorio** should be intensely flavored, with pronounced smoky-sweet notes from the **chiles** and caramelized **pork** edges.
11. Serve immediately with warm **tortillas**, **salsa**, and the **onion-cilantro** mixture. **Chilorio** is traditionally served in flour tortillas, though corn tortillas are equally appropriate.

* * *

Equipment Required

- 6-quart (or larger) Dutch oven with tight-fitting lid
- Cast-iron skillet or comal for toasting chiles
- High-powered blender (at least 500 watts)
- Medium-mesh strainer or china cap
- Large (12-inch) skillet for finishing
- Slotted spoon or spider
- Two forks for shredding
- Large mixing bowl
- Sharp chef's knife
- Cutting board
- Kitchen tongs
- Instant-read thermometer
- Fat separator (optional, for braising liquid)

Mise en Place

- Trim **pork shoulder** the day before and refrigerate overnight—this allows surface moisture to evaporate, promoting better searing
- Bring **pork** to room temperature *30-45 minutes* before cooking
- Toast and blend **chile mixture** up to *24 hours* ahead; refrigerate until needed
- Prepare all garnishes before beginning the finishing step
- Have all equipment and ingredients measured and ready—the finishing stage moves quickly

Ingredient Tips

- **Pork shoulder:** Select well-marbled meat with visible fat striations. Avoid pre-trimmed "lean" cuts—fat equals flavor and moisture. Bone-in shoulder works but requires longer cooking; boneless is easier to cube uniformly

- **Ancho chiles:** Choose pliable, leathery **chiles** that bend without cracking. Avoid brittle, dusty specimens—they're stale and bitter. Fresh **anchos** have a slightly fruity aroma. Store in cool, dark pantry up to *6 months*
- **Mexican oregano:** Distinct from Mediterranean oregano—more citrusy and less minty. If unavailable, substitute half the amount of dried marjoram plus a pinch of dried thyme
- **Orange juice:** Fresh-squeezed is vastly superior. The natural sugars caramelize during reduction, adding depth. Avoid juice with added sugar or preservatives
- **Lard:** Provides authentic flavor and high smoke point. Leaf lard (from kidney region) is highest quality. Vegetable oil works but lacks the richness traditional **chilorio** demands
- **Cumin:** Toast whole seeds in a dry pan, then grind fresh for maximum aromatics. Pre-ground **cumin** loses potency rapidly

Preparation Tips

- **Chile toasting:** Watch constantly—**anchos** toast quickly. You'll smell a pronounced aroma when done. Dark spots are acceptable; black, acrid smoke means burned
- **Searing:** Don't crowd the pot. **Pork** releases moisture initially; give space for evaporation. The fond (browned bits) stuck to the pot adds critical flavor—the **braising liquid** will deglaze it
- **Braising:** Resist the urge to check frequently. Each lid removal drops temperature *25-30°F*, extending cooking time. Check once at *2 hours*, then at *30-minute* intervals
- **Shredding:** Don't over-shred. Coarse chunks hold texture better during the final sear. Aim for rustic, irregular pieces
- **Finishing:** High heat is essential. The **pork** should sizzle audibly. This Mail-lard browning develops the characteristic crispy edges and concentrated flavor

- **Glaze consistency:** The **braising liquid** should coat the back of a spoon. Too thin means insufficient reduction; too thick becomes sticky rather than glossy

Make Ahead & Storage

- Complete through step 7 (braising and shredding) up to *3 days* ahead. Refrigerate **shredded pork** and **braising liquid** separately
- For longer storage, freeze **shredded pork** in **braising liquid** up to *3 months*. Thaw overnight in refrigerator
- Perform the final searing and glazing just before serving for optimal texture
- Leftover finished **chilorio** keeps *5 days* refrigerated. Reheat gently in a skillet with a splash of water to restore glaze
- Do not freeze finished **chilorio**—the crispy texture degrades
- **Chile adobo:** The strained sauce freezes beautifully for *6 months*. Portion into ice cube trays for convenient use in other dishes

Serving Suggestions

- Traditional Sinaloan service: **Flour tortillas**, **arbol-tomatillo salsa**, diced **white onion**, **cilantro**, and **lime** wedges
- Alternative applications: Burritos, *tor-tas* (Mexican sandwiches), quesadillas, tostadas, or served over rice with **re-fried beans**
- Beverage pairing: Mexican lager, hibiscus agua fresca, or a crisp white wine (Albariño or unoaked Chardonnay) to balance the rich fat and chile heat
- Complementary sides: Pickled jalapeños, *curtido* (fermented cabbage slaw), or grilled scallions
- For breakfast: Serve with scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, and warm tortillas
- Garnish finished tacos with crumbled queso fresco or Cotija for salty contrast
- The rendered **pork fat** skimmed from **braising liquid** can be saved and used to fry tortillas for chilaquiles or to enrich **re-fried beans**

Classic Braised Chicken Drumsticks with Pan Sauce

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Chicken drumsticks | 12 (3-4 lbs.) | Canned mushroom slices | 12 oz. |
| Vegetable oil | 2 Tbsp. | Dried thyme | 2 tsp. |
| Butter | 6 Tbsp. | Dried rosemary | 1½ tsp. |
| Onions, large | 2 | Dried sage | 1 tsp. |
| Carrots, large | 3-4 | Bay leaves | 3 |
| Celery stalks | 3-4 | Dijon mustard | 2 Tbsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 10-12 (1 head) | MSG | ½ tsp. |
| Tomato paste | 2 Tbsp. | Lemon, zested | 1 |
| White wine (optional) | ½ cup | All-purpose flour | 3 Tbsp. |
| Chicken stock | 5-6 cups | Kosher salt | 2 tsp. |
| | | Black pepper | 1 tsp. |

Directions

Preheat oven to 275°F — Peel **garlic cloves**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Cut **onions** into 8 wedges each; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Cut **carrots** into 2 inch pieces; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Cut **celery** into 2 inch pieces; set aside in *Medium Bowl #3* — Drain **mushrooms**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #4* — Zest **lemon**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Pat dry **drumsticks** — Season **drumsticks** generously with 2 tsp. **salt** and 1 tsp. **pepper**

1. Heat **vegetable oil** in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Working in batches, sear **drumsticks** until golden brown on all sides, about 3-4 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate and set aside.
2. Reduce heat to medium. Add 4 Tbsp. **butter** to the Dutch oven. Once melted, add **onion** wedges (*Medium Bowl #1*), **carrot** pieces (*Medium Bowl #2*), and **celery** pieces (*Medium Bowl #3*). Sauté until vegetables begin to soften and develop color, about 8-10 minutes. Add **garlic cloves** (*Small Bowl #1*) and cook for 2 minutes more.
3. Add 2 Tbsp. **tomato paste** and cook, stirring constantly, until it darkens and becomes fragrant, about 2-3 minutes.
4. If using **white wine**, add ½ cup now and scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot. Cook until wine is nearly evaporated, about 3-4 minutes. If not using wine, proceed to next step.
5. Add **chicken stock**, **drained mushrooms** (*Medium Bowl #4*), 2 tsp. **dried thyme**, 1½ tsp. **dried rosemary**, 1 tsp. **dried sage**, **bay leaves**, 2 Tbsp. **Dijon mustard**, and ½ tsp. **MSG**. Stir to combine and bring to a simmer.

6. Return **drumsticks** to the pot, nestling them into the liquid (liquid should come halfway up the drumsticks). Cover with lid and transfer to oven. Braise for *1½-2 hours*, until **chicken** is very tender and nearly falling off the bone.
7. Remove pot from oven. Using tongs, carefully transfer **drumsticks** to a plate. Stir **lemon zest** (*Small Bowl #2*) into the braising liquid and taste for seasoning, adjusting **salt** and **pepper** as needed.
8. To thicken sauce, knead together remaining 2 Tbsp. **butter** and 3 Tbsp. **flour** to form a smooth paste (*beurre manié*). Return pot to stovetop over medium heat. Whisk in *beurre manié*, a little at a time, until sauce reaches desired consistency. Simmer for *3-5 minutes* to cook out flour taste.
9. For crispy skin: Pat **drumsticks** dry and air fry at *400°F* for *5-7 minutes* until skin is crispy and caramelized. For freezing: skip this step and proceed directly to storage.
10. Return **drumsticks** to sauce, or transfer to containers for freezing. Serve hot over rice or with crusty bread.

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Equipment Required

- Large Dutch oven (6-7 quart capacity)
- Large plate or rimmed baking sheet
- Tongs
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Whisk
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Microplane or zester
- Small bowl (for beurre manié)
- Ladle
- Air fryer (optional, for finishing)
- Freezer-safe containers (if freezing)

Mise en Place

- Remove **drumsticks** from refrigerator *30 minutes* before cooking for even searing
- Prep all vegetables before starting - large uniform pieces ensure even cooking
- Have **stock** measured and nearby for quick addition
- Separate 2 Tbsp. **butter** for beurre manié from the 4 Tbsp. used for sautéing
- Zest **lemon** before cooking; reserve zest in small bowl

Ingredient Tips

- Choose **drumsticks** of similar size for even cooking
- Whole **garlic cloves** become sweet and tender when braised - they're delicious eaten whole
- Quality **chicken stock** makes a significant difference; low-sodium preferred for seasoning control
- If omitting **wine**, add 1-2 Tbsp. additional **lemon juice** at the end for brightness

- Canned **mushrooms** work well here; if using fresh, add them later to prevent overcooking
- **MSG** amplifies savory notes; omit if preferred without other adjustments

Preparation Tips

- Don't crowd **drumsticks** when searing - work in batches for proper browning
- Fond development is crucial - those browned bits add deep flavor
- Blooming **tomato paste** until it darkens intensifies umami
- Large vegetable pieces stay intact during long braise and provide textural contrast
- Check liquid level during braising - add more **stock** if needed
- Beurre manié should be added gradually while whisking to prevent lumps
- For stovetop braising: use lowest heat setting, check frequently to maintain bare simmer
- Pat **drumsticks** very dry before air frying for maximum crispness

Make Ahead & Storage

- Can be made up to *2 days* ahead and refrigerated
- Flavors improve overnight as they meld
- To freeze: cool completely, portion into freezer-safe containers with sauce, freeze up to *3 months*
- Freeze flat in zip-top bags for space efficiency
- Thaw overnight in refrigerator before reheating
- Reheat gently on stovetop or in *325°F* oven until warmed through, about *25-30 minutes*
- If reheating from frozen, add *15-20 minutes* to heating time
- Air fry for crispy skin after reheating if desired
- Sauce may separate when frozen; whisk while reheating to re-emulsify

Serving Suggestions

- Serve over jasmine rice cooked in **chicken stock** with dried soup vegetables and **bay leaf**
 - Excellent with mashed potatoes, egg noodles, or crusty bread for sopping up sauce
 - Garnish with fresh parsley, thyme, or chives if available
 - Vegetables from the braise are delicious served alongside
 - Pairs well with simple green salad or roasted green beans
 - For a complete meal: add roasted root vegetables or sautéed greens
 - Leftovers make excellent chicken and rice soup - add extra **stock** and shred **chicken**
-

Coq au Riesling

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|---|----------|
| Chicken thighs, bone-in | 2½-3 lbs | Fresh parsley | 2 sprigs |
| Thick-cut bacon | 6 oz | Bay leaves | 2 |
| Riesling wine | 2 cups | Better than Bouillon, chicken | 1½ tsp. |
| Leeks | 4 medium | Water | 1½ cups |
| Cremini mushrooms | 8 oz | Heavy cream | ½ cup |
| Butter | ½ cup | Egg yolk | 1 |
| Garlic head | 1 whole | All-purpose flour | 1 Tbsp |
| Fresh thyme | 2 sprigs | Salt and black pepper | to taste |

Directions

Cut **garlic** head in half horizontally; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Clean **leeks** thoroughly and slice into ½ inch rounds; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Quarter **mushrooms**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Dice **thick-cut bacon** into ¼ inch pieces; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Chop **parsley** for garnish; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Mix **Better than Bouillon** with **hot water** until dissolved; set aside in *Medium Bowl #3*

1. In *Large Bowl #1*, combine **chicken thighs**, halved **garlic head** (*Small Bowl #1*), 1 sprig **thyme**, 1 sprig **parsley**, 1 **bay leaf**, and 1 tsp. **salt**. Pour in 2 cups **Riesling**. Cover and refrigerate for up to 12 hours.
2. When ready to cook, remove **chicken** from marinade and pat dry. Reserve the **wine marinade** in *Medium Bowl #4*.
3. Melt ¼ of the **butter** (2 Tbsp.) in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Cook diced **bacon** (*Small Bowl #2*) until golden. Remove with a slotted spoon and transfer to *Medium Bowl #5*; set aside.
4. Add another ¼ of **butter** (2 Tbsp.), then cook **leeks** (*Medium Bowl #1*) with a pinch of **salt** until soft, about 5 minutes. Remove to *Medium Bowl #5* with bacon.
5. Add another ¼ of **butter** (2 Tbsp.) and cook **mushrooms** (*Medium Bowl #2*) until golden. Remove to *Medium Bowl #5* with bacon and leeks.
6. Melt remaining 2 Tbsp. **butter**. Season **chicken** with **salt** and **pepper**, then brown on all sides until deep golden, about 8-10 minutes. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2*; set aside.
7. Lower heat and stir 1 Tbsp. **flour** into pan drippings. Cook for 2 minutes, then add reserved **wine marinade** (*Medium Bowl #4*) and **bouillon mixture** (*Medium Bowl #3*), scraping bottom of pan.
8. Return **chicken** (*Large Bowl #2*) to pot. Simmer covered for 90 minutes, until meat is very tender. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2*; set aside.

9. Whisk $\frac{1}{2}$ cup **cream** and **egg yolk** in *Small Bowl #4*. Off heat, whisk into sauce. Return to low heat and cook until thickened.
10. Add back **bacon**, **leeks**, **mushrooms** (*Medium Bowl #5*), and **chicken** (*Large Bowl #2*). Warm through gently. Garnish with chopped **parsley** (*Small Bowl #3*).

Dutch Oven Braised Pork Ribs •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------------------------|--------|
| Pork rib rack | 4 lbs. | Dried thyme | 1 tsp. |
| Pork or chicken stock | 3 cups | Dried oregano | ½ tsp. |
| Apple cider | 8-12oz | Kosher salt | 2 tsp. |
| Soy sauce | ¼ cup | Black pepper | 1 tsp. |
| Worcestershire sauce | 2 Tbsp. | Garlic powder | 1 tsp. |
| Brown sugar | 2 Tbsp. | Onion powder | 1 tsp. |
| Tomato paste | 4 Tbsp. | Smoked paprika | ½ tsp. |
| Onion, medium | 1 | Chipotle powder | ¼ tsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 1 bulb | Hot paprika | ¼ tsp. |
| Bay leaves | 2 | MSG | ½ tsp. |
| Black peppercorns | 1 tsp. | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 275°F — Pat dry **pork ribs** — Quarter **onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Smash **garlic cloves**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2*

1. Cut **pork rib rack** into quarters for easier handling.
2. In *Small Bowl #3*, combine 2 tsp. **kosher salt**, 1 tsp. **black pepper**, 1 tsp. **garlic powder**, 1 tsp. **onion powder**, ½ tsp. **smoked paprika**, ¼ tsp. **hot paprika**, ¼ tsp. **chipotle powder**, and ½ tsp. **MSG**. Rub mixture evenly over all surfaces of **rib quarters**.
3. Arrange seasoned **ribs** in Dutch oven (they can overlap slightly), tucking quartered **onion** (*Small Bowl #1*), smashed **garlic** (*Small Bowl #2*), **bay leaves**, **peppercorns**, 1 tsp. **dried thyme**, and ½ tsp. **dried oregano** around and under **ribs**.
4. In *Medium Bowl #1*, whisk together **stock**, **apple cider**, ¼ cup **soy sauce**, 2 Tbsp. **Worcestershire sauce**, 2 Tbsp. **brown sugar**, and 4 Tbsp. **tomato paste** until well combined. Pour over **ribs**.
5. Cover Dutch oven tightly with lid and place in oven. Braise for $4\text{--}4\frac{1}{2}$ hours until **ribs** are fork-tender and meat pulls easily from bone.
6. Remove from oven. Carefully transfer **ribs** from braising liquid as needed for intended use (BBQ finishing or soup preparation). Reserve braising liquid with rendered fat for soup base.

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Equipment Required

- Dutch oven (6-7 quart capacity minimum)
- Small bowl (for dry rub)
- Medium bowl (for braising liquid)
- Whisk
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Tongs or slotted spoon
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Large plate or platter (for finished ribs)

Mise en Place

- Pat **ribs** completely dry with paper towels before seasoning
- Have all liquid ingredients measured and ready to whisk together
- Prepare aromatics (quarter **onion**, smash **garlic**) before starting
- Ensure Dutch oven lid fits tightly to prevent moisture loss

Ingredient Tips

- Use homemade or low-sodium **stock** for better control of final seasoning
- **Apple cider** should be unfiltered for more flavor; apple juice works as substitute
- **MSG** is optional but adds significant umami depth without altering flavor profile
- **Tomato paste** should be whisked thoroughly into liquid to prevent clumping
- Baby back ribs can substitute for spare ribs; reduce cooking time by *30 minutes*

Preparation Tips

- Cut **rack** into quarters through bone for easier handling and better liquid exposure
- Apply dry rub generously but don't let it sit more than *15 minutes* before braising (salt will draw moisture)

- **Ribs** can overlap in Dutch oven but ensure liquid reaches all pieces
- Don't lift lid during first *2½ hours* of cooking to maintain consistent temperature
- Test doneness by inserting fork between bones - meat should offer minimal resistance
- For BBQ finishing: remove **ribs** gently to preserve meat integrity for air frying
- For soup: pull meat directly from bones while warm, return to braising liquid

Make Ahead & Storage

- Entire braise can be completed up to *2 days* ahead and refrigerated in Dutch oven
- Fat will solidify on surface when cold; leave intact to protect meat, or remove if desired before reheating
- Reheat covered at *300°F* for *30-40 minutes* until warmed through
- Braising liquid without **ribs** can be frozen for up to *3 months*
- If freezing liquid, cool completely and skim excess fat before freezing

Usage Notes

- This recipe yields **ribs** suitable for both BBQ finishing and soup preparation
- For BBQ: transfer **ribs** to plate, pat dry, brush with sauce, finish in air fryer at *400°F* for *3-5 minutes*
- For soup: leave **ribs** in liquid, pull meat from bones, proceed with bean soup recipe
- Braising liquid contains rendered fat and collagen - ideal soup base requiring no additional stock
- Taste braising liquid before seasoning soup; it's already well-salted from the braise
- **Bay leaves** and **peppercorns** can be strained out before using liquid for soup

Enchiladas Placeras

Michoacán-Style Market Enchiladas — Traditional plaza-style enchiladas from Morelia, featuring corn tortillas dipped in guajillo chile sauce, lightly fried, filled with cheese and chicken, then topped with fried potatoes, carrots, and fresh garnishes. This is authentic street food at its finest.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Bone-in chicken thighs | 3 lb. | Vegetable oil | 3 Tbsp. |
| White onion, medium | 2 | Yukon gold potatoes | 1 lb. |
| Garlic cloves | 6 (divided) | Carrots | ½ lb. |
| Bay leaf | 1 | Salt | to taste |
| Salt | 1 tsp. | Vegetable oil | 3 Tbsp. |
| Chicken stock | 6 cups | Corn tortillas (GF) | 12 |
| Dried guajillo chiles | 16 | White onion, finely diced | ½ cup |
| Dried ancho chiles | 4 | Queso fresco, crumbled | 8 oz. |
| Chiles de árbol (optional) | 2–4 | Vegetable oil | 1 cup |
| Reserved chicken broth | 4–5 cups | Romaine lettuce or cabbage | 1 small head |
| Ground cumin | 2 tsp. | Mexican crema OR sour cream | ½ cup |
| Mexican oregano | 2 tsp. | Pickled jalapeños | ¼ cup |
| White vinegar | 2 Tbsp. | Queso fresco | ¼ cup |
| Salt | 2 tsp. | | |

Directions

Halve 1 medium **onion** — Peel and dice 1 lb. **potatoes** into ½-inch cubes; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Peel and dice ½ lb. **carrots** into ½-inch cubes; add to *Medium Bowl #1* — Quarter **onions** — Finely dice ½ cup **white onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Crumble 6 oz. **queso fresco** into *Small Bowl #1* with diced onion (filling) — Reserve 2 oz. **queso fresco** in *Small Bowl #2* (topping) — Finely shred **lettuce** or **cabbage**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2*

* * *

1. Place 3 lb. **chicken thighs** in a large pot with a quartered **onion**, 4 **garlic cloves**, 1 **bay leaf**, and 1 tsp. **salt**. Add enough **water** to cover by 1 inch (approximately 6–8 cups). Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a gentle simmer. Skim any foam that rises to the surface.
2. Simmer for *35–40 minutes* until **chicken** is fully cooked and tender. Remove **chicken** to a plate and let cool. Strain the broth through a fine-mesh sieve into a large bowl, discarding solids. Reserve approximately 5 cups of broth (you'll need 4 cups for the sauce).
3. Once **chicken** is cool enough to handle, remove and discard skin and bones. Shred meat with two forks into bite-sized pieces. Set aside in *Large Bowl #1*.
4. Using kitchen scissors, cut open each **guajillo chile**, **ancho chile**, and **chile de árbol** (if using) lengthwise. Shake out and discard most seeds. Remove stems.
5. Heat a dry cast-iron skillet or comal over medium heat. Toast the **chiles** in batches, pressing flat with a spatula, about *10–15 seconds per side* until fragrant and slightly darkened. Do not burn.
6. Transfer toasted **chiles** to a large heatproof bowl. Bring 4 cups of the reserved **chicken broth** to a boil and pour over the **chiles**. Weight **chiles** down with a small plate to keep submerged. Let soak for *15–20 minutes* until completely softened.
7. Working in two batches, transfer half of the softened **chiles** to a blender along with $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of the soaking liquid, half of the remaining **onion** (raw), 1 **garlic clove**, 1 tsp. **cumin**, 1 tsp. **oregano**, $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp. **vinegar**, and 1 tsp. **salt**. Blend on high for *2–3 minutes* until completely smooth. Transfer to a large bowl. Repeat with remaining **chiles** and aromatics. Combine both batches. Add additional soaking liquid or reserved broth if needed to reach a pourable consistency like heavy cream.
8. Strain the sauce through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl, pressing on solids with a spatula to extract maximum liquid. Discard solids.
9. Heat 3 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** in a large skillet or saucepan over medium-high heat until shimmering. Carefully pour in all of the strained sauce (it will sputter and steam). Reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring frequently, for *10–12 minutes* until sauce darkens slightly, thickens to coat the back of a spoon, and loses its raw flavor. Taste and adjust salt. Transfer approximately 2 cups to a wide, shallow bowl for dipping tortillas. Reserve remaining sauce in a separate bowl for drizzling. Keep both warm.
10. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add diced **potatoes** and **carrots** (*Medium Bowl #1*). Boil for *5–8 minutes* until just tender but still firm (a knife should pierce with slight resistance). Drain well and pat dry with paper towels.
11. Heat 3 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the parboiled **potatoes** and **carrots**. Fry, stirring occasionally, for *5–7 minutes* until golden brown on edges. Add 3 Tbsp. of the prepared **guajillo sauce** and toss to coat. Season with **salt** to taste. Remove from heat and keep warm in *Medium Bowl #3*.
12. Heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **vegetable oil** in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the shredded **chicken** (*Large Bowl #1*) in a single layer. Fry without stirring for *3–4 minutes* until bottom is golden and crispy. Flip and fry another *2–3 minutes*. Season lightly with **salt**. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2* and keep warm.

13. Set up assembly station: Wide shallow bowl with warm **guajillo sauce** for dipping, large skillet with $\frac{1}{4}$ inch **vegetable oil** heated to $350^{\circ}F$ (medium heat), stack of **corn tortillas**, bowl with **cheese-onion filling** (*Small Bowl #1*), platter for finished enchiladas.
14. Working one at a time: Dip a **tortilla** completely in the **sauce**, coating both sides (about 2–3 seconds total). Let excess drip off briefly.
15. Immediately place the sauce-coated **tortilla** in the hot oil. Fry for *10–15 seconds per side* — just until the sauce sets and edges firm slightly but tortilla remains pliable. Remove with tongs to a plate.
16. While still hot and pliable, place 2–3 Tbsp. of the **cheese-onion mixture** (*Small Bowl #1*) and a small handful of **fried chicken** (*Large Bowl #2*) down the center of the tortilla. Roll tightly and place seam-side down on serving plate. Repeat with remaining tortillas, adding more oil to skillet as needed between batches.
17. Arrange 3 enchiladas per plate. Spoon **fried potatoes and carrots** (*Medium Bowl #3*) generously over the top of the enchiladas.
18. Optional: Drizzle additional warm **guajillo sauce** over the enchiladas before adding final toppings.
19. Drizzle with **Mexican crema**, scatter shredded **lettuce** or **cabbage** (*Medium Bowl #2*) over the top, and finish with crumbled **queso fresco** (*Small Bowl #2*) and **pickled jalapeños** to taste. Serve immediately.

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Equipment Required

- Large stockpot (for poaching chicken)
- Large cast-iron skillet or comal
- 2–3 large skillets (for vegetables, chicken, and frying tortillas)
- High-powered blender
- Fine-mesh strainer
- Kitchen scissors
- Wide shallow bowl (for dipping tortillas)
- Tongs
- Instant-read thermometer
- Small prep bowls (2)
- Medium prep bowls (3)
- Large prep bowls (2)
- Sharp knife
- Measuring cups and spoons

Mise en Place

- Small Bowl #1 — filling: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely diced **white onion** mixed with 6 oz. crumbled **queso fresco**
- Small Bowl #2 — 2 oz. crumbled **queso fresco** (topping)
- Medium Bowl #1 — raw diced **potatoes** and **carrots** (about 3 cups total)
- Medium Bowl #2 — shredded **lettuce** or **cabbage**
- Medium Bowl #3 — fried **potatoes** and **carrots** with sauce (after step 11)
- Large Bowl #1 — shredded poached **chicken** (after step 3, about 3–4 cups)
- Large Bowl #2 — fried **chicken** (after step 12)

Ingredient Tips

- **Chicken:** Bone-in thighs provide the richest broth; drumsticks also work well
- **Guajillo chiles:** Should be pliable, not brittle; look for glossy, deep red color
- **Ancho chiles:** Add depth and mild fruity notes; darker and wrinkled compared to guajillos
- **Chiles de árbol:** Optional for heat; add 1–2 to sauce if you want spicier enchiladas
- **Corn tortillas:** Certified gluten-free if needed; slightly day-old tortillas absorb less oil
- **Queso fresco:** Look for authentic Mexican queso fresco; feta can substitute in a pinch
- **Mexican oregano:** Has different flavor than Mediterranean oregano; worth seeking out
- **Potatoes:** Yukon gold hold their shape better than russets when fried

Preparation Tips

- Poaching **chicken** with aromatics creates flavorful broth that becomes the sauce base
- Reserve extra **chicken broth** for thinning sauce if needed
- Toast **chiles** briefly — burnt chiles create bitter sauce
- Blending in two batches prevents overloading blender and ensures smooth consistency
- Strain sauce well to remove tough chile skins for smooth texture
- Frying the blended sauce concentrates flavor and cooks out raw taste
- Recipe makes approximately 5–6 cups sauce; use 3 cups for dipping tortillas, reserve remainder for drizzling
- Parboil **potatoes** and **carrots** before frying to ensure they're cooked through
- Adding sauce to fried vegetables colors them and adds flavor
- Frying shredded **chicken** adds texture contrast and caramelized flavor
- Work quickly during tortilla assembly — they must stay hot to roll without breaking
- Keep oil temperature steady at 350°F — too hot burns sauce, too cool makes greasy enchiladas
- Tortilla should be pliable after frying, not crispy
- Assemble enchiladas immediately before serving for best texture
- Drizzling extra sauce over enchiladas before final toppings is optional but traditional

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Chicken** can be poached and shredded *1 day* ahead; store broth and chicken separately
- **Guajillo sauce** can be made *1–2 days* ahead; refrigerate and reheat gently before using
- **Vegetables** can be parboiled *4 hours* ahead; fry just before serving
- Assembly must be done immediately before serving — tortillas become soggy if held
- Leftovers keep *2–3 days* refrigerated but texture will soften
- Reheat individual portions at 350°F for *10–12 minutes*
- Not recommended for freezing — corn tortillas become mealy

Serving Suggestions

- Traditional serving is 3 enchiladas per person as a main course
- Serve immediately while enchiladas are hot and vegetables are crispy
- Provide extra **pickled jalapeños** and **crema** at the table for customization
- Can serve with refried beans on the side, though not traditional
- **Lime wedges** make an excellent garnish for brightness
- Presentation matters: layer components in proper order for visual appeal

Heat Level Options

- Mild: Use only **guajillo** and **ancho chiles** as written (remove all seeds)
- Medium: Add 2–3 **chiles de árbol** to the sauce blend
- Spicy: Add 4–6 **chiles de árbol** and include some seeds when blending
- Very Spicy: Add 8–10 **chiles de árbol** with seeds
- Heat comes from chiles in sauce, not the toppings
- **Chiles de árbol** add clean heat without changing the fundamental flavor profile

French Braised Beef •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|---------|
| Beef chuck shoulder | 4–5 lbs | Black peppercorns | 1 tsp. |
| Burgundy wine | 2 cups | French dip seasoning mix | 2 Tbsp. |
| Beef stock | 2 cups | Kosher salt | 1½ tsp. |
| Onions, large | 2 | Black pepper | ½ tsp. |
| Celery stalks | 3 | Vegetable oil | 2 Tbsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 4 | Pearl onions, peeled | 2 cups |
| Tomato paste | 3 Tbsp. | Cremini mushrooms | 2 cups |
| Fresh thyme | 4–5 sprigs | Fresh parsley, chopped | 2 Tbsp. |
| Dried bay leaves | 2 | | |

Searing and Aromatics

Pat dry **beef chuck** with paper towels — Rough chop **onions** and **celery** into large chunks; combine in *Large Bowl #1* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Prepare **bouquet garni**: bundle **fresh thyme**, **bay leaves**, and **peppercorns** in a disposable teabag — Preheat oven to 275°F

1. Season **beef chuck** generously on all sides with 1½ tsp. **kosher salt** and ½ tsp. **black pepper**.
2. In a Dutch oven, heat 2 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** over medium-high heat until shimmering. Working carefully to avoid splatter, sear the **beef** on all sides until deeply browned, approximately 3–4 minutes per side. The goal is a rich mahogany crust. Remove **beef** and set aside in *Large Bowl #2*.
3. In the same pot, reduce heat to medium. Add rough-chopped **onions** and **celery** (*Large Bowl #1*), stirring occasionally until they begin to soften and caramelize slightly, about 5–7 minutes. Add minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*) and cook for 1 minute until fragrant.
4. Add 3 Tbsp. **tomato paste** and stir constantly for 1–2 minutes, allowing it to caramelize slightly and deepen in color. This develops savory complexity.
5. Deglaze the pot with 2 cups **Burgundy wine**, scraping up all browned fond from the bottom with a wooden spoon. Simmer for 2–3 minutes to allow alcohol to burn off slightly.
6. Return seared **beef** (*Large Bowl #2*) to the pot. Add 2 cups **beef stock** and 2 Tbsp. **French dip seasoning mix**. The liquid should come approximately one-third up the sides of the meat. Add **bouquet garni**.

The Braise

1. Bring braising liquid to a bare simmer on the stovetop, approximately 2–3 minutes.
2. Cover with the lid and transfer to the preheated 275°F oven. Braise for 3 hours, then check the meat for tenderness with a fork. It should yield easily but still hold its shape.

3. After *3 hours*, add peeled **pearl onions** and **cremini mushrooms** directly to the braising liquid, nestling them among the aromatics and meat. Return to oven, covered, for an additional *1.5–2 hours* until **beef** is completely fork-tender and vegetables are yielding but not dissolved.
4. Remove from oven. Using tongs or a slotted spoon, carefully transfer the **beef** to a warm platter, cradling it gently to prevent breaking apart. Distribute **pearl onions** and **mushrooms** around the meat.

Sauce and Service

1. Place the Dutch oven on the stovetop over medium heat. Allow the braising liquid to come to a gentle simmer. Using a skimming ladle, carefully skim the surface fat and impurities, working methodically until the surface is relatively clear. This typically requires *3–5 minutes* of gentle skimming.
2. The sauce should have reduced naturally to approximately one-third of its original volume, yielding a silky, glossy consistency that coats the back of a spoon. If it appears too thin, continue simmering gently until it reaches desired body, approximately *2–3 minutes* more. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional **salt** and **pepper** as needed.
3. Remove and discard **bouquet garni**.
4. Pour sauce over **beef**, **pearl onions**, and **mushrooms**. Garnish generously with fresh **parsley**. Serve immediately with mashed potatoes and supplemental beef stock gravy on the side.

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Equipment Required

- 5–6 quart enameled Dutch oven with self-basting lid
- Large skillet or sauté pan for searing (optional; can use Dutch oven)
- Wooden spoon for stirring and scraping fond
- Tongs or slotted spoon for handling meat
- Skimming ladle with perforations
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Paper towels for patting dry
- Disposable cotton teabags (or cheesecloth bundle)
- Warm platter for resting meat
- Instant-read thermometer (optional but helpful)

Mise en Place

- Ensure **beef chuck** is at room temperature before searing—remove from refrigerator *30–45 minutes* prior
- Peel **pearl onions** and clean **mushrooms** well in advance; store in separate containers
- Rough chop **onions** and **celery** into large, uniform chunks
- Mince **garlic** fresh just before use
- Measure all liquids and seasonings
- Assemble **bouquet garni** in teabag
- Measure **French dip seasoning mix**

Ingredient Tips

- Select a quality Burgundy wine—Pinot Noir or a rustic Côtes du Bourgogne works well. Avoid heavily oaked wines; the braise will concentrate and intensify the flavors
- Chuck shoulder with good marbling ensures richness and tenderness; ask your butcher for a single large roast rather than portioned pieces

- Beef stock should be homemade or high-quality store-bought; weak stock will result in thin, unsatisfying sauce
- French dip seasoning mix varies by brand; look for onion-forward blends without excessive salt
- Pearl onions vary in size; uniformity helps with even cooking
- Cremini mushrooms maintain better texture than button mushrooms; avoid portobello, which can become mushy
- Fresh thyme is essential for the bouquet garni; dried thyme becomes powdery and unpleasant

Preparation Tips

- Pat the **beef** thoroughly dry before searing; moisture prevents proper browning
- Develop a deep mahogany crust during searing—this Maillard reaction creates the foundation of flavor
- Do not skip the fond-scraping step; those browned bits contain concentrated savory compounds
- Allow **tomato paste** to caramelize briefly before deglazing; this concentrates and deepens its umami impact
- The braising liquid should come only one-third up the meat, not submerge it; this creates a humid oven environment without excessive stewing
- Do not stir the braise during cooking; resist the urge to check frequently. The self-basting lid does the work
- Add **pearl onions** and **mushrooms** late to preserve their distinct texture and flavor
- Skim fat methodically and gently; aggressive skimming can cloud the sauce
- Taste the sauce before service; the braising aromatics may have rendered differently than expected, requiring seasoning adjustment

Make Ahead & Storage

- The **beef** can be seared and the braise begun up to *4 hours* ahead; add **pearl onions** and **mushrooms** only when you plan to finish
- Prepare all vegetables and seasonings the morning of service
- Leftover braise keeps refrigerated for up to *4 days*; the flavors actually deepen overnight
- To reheat: gently warm in a *325°F* oven, covered, for *20–30 minutes* until heated through. Add a splash of beef stock if sauce has reduced too much during storage
- The braise does not freeze well due to the delicate texture of the meat and the nature of the sauce emulsion

Serving Suggestions

- Serve over creamy mashed potatoes, allowing them to absorb the silky sauce
- Accompany with supplemental beef stock gravy on the side for guests who prefer additional sauce
- A simple green salad with vinaigrette provides brightness and cuts through the richness
- Crusty bread for soaking up every drop of sauce is essential
- The same Burgundy wine used in the braise pairs beautifully for drinking; continue with it at table
- Garnish generously with fresh **parsley** just before service for color and herbaceous freshness
- Allow guests to rest the platter for *5 minutes* before serving, preserving the meat's internal juices

Hatch Green Chile Chicken Enchiladas

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Chicken breasts | 2 lbs | Heavy cream | 1 cup |
| Hatch green chiles | 2 cups | Chicken broth | 1 cup |
| Onion, diced | 1 medium | All-purpose flour | ¼ cup |
| Garlic cloves, minced | 3 | Butter | ¼ cup |
| Cilantro, chopped | ¼ cup | Vegetable oil | 2 Tbsp. |
| Lime juice | 2 Tbsp. | Ground cumin | 2 tsp. |
| Corn tortillas | 12 (6-inch) | Dried oregano | 1 tsp. |
| Monterey Jack cheese | 1 pound | Salt | 1 tsp. |
| Sour cream | 1 cup | Black pepper | ½ tsp. |

Roasted Hatch Green Chiles

Preheat air fryer to *400°F*

1. Wash and dry the **Hatch green chiles**.
2. Place **chiles** in the air fryer basket in a single layer, leaving space between each chile.
3. Air fry at *400°F* for *5-7 minutes*, then flip and cook for another *5-7 minutes* until the skin is blistered and charred.
4. Remove from the air fryer and place in a bowl covered with plastic wrap to steam for *10-15 minutes*.
5. Once cooled, peel off the skin, remove seeds, and chop the **chiles**.

(Continue with enchilada recipe...)

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Hatch Green Chile Chicken Enchiladas

Preheat oven to 350°F — Grease a 9 inch \times 13 inch baking dish — Shred **Monterey Jack cheese**; set aside in *Large Bowl #1* — Dice **onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Chop **cilantro**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Juice **lime**; set aside in *Small Bowl #4*

1. In a large skillet, heat 2 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** over medium-high heat. Season **chicken breasts** with **salt** and **pepper**, then cook until golden brown and cooked through, about 6-8 minutes per side. Remove from heat, let cool, then shred the **chicken**; set aside in *Large Bowl #2*.
2. In the same skillet, sauté **onion** (*Small Bowl #1*) until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add **garlic** (*Small Bowl #2*) and cook for another 1 minute. Add 1 cup of chopped **roasted Hatch green chiles**, 2 tsp. **cumin**, and 1 tsp. **oregano**. Cook for 2-3 minutes until fragrant.
3. Add shredded **chicken** (*Large Bowl #2*) to the skillet and mix well. Season with **salt** and **pepper** to taste. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2*; set aside.
4. In a saucepan, melt $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **butter** over medium heat. Whisk in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **flour** and cook for 1-2 minutes. Gradually whisk in 1 cup **chicken broth**, 1 cup **heavy cream**, and 1 cup **sour cream**. Bring to a simmer and cook until thickened, about 5 minutes. Stir in remaining 1 cup of **roasted Hatch green chiles**, **lime juice** (*Small Bowl #4*), and **cilantro** (*Small Bowl #3*). Season with **salt** and **pepper** to taste. Transfer to *Medium Bowl #1*; set aside.
5. Warm **corn tortillas** in the microwave or on a griddle until pliable. Dip each **tortilla** in the sauce (*Medium Bowl #1*), then fill with the **chicken** mixture (*Large Bowl #2*) and some **Monterey Jack cheese** (*Large Bowl #1*). Roll up and place seam-side down in the prepared baking dish.
6. Pour the remaining sauce (*Medium Bowl #1*) over the **enchiladas** and sprinkle with remaining **Monterey Jack cheese** (*Large Bowl #1*).
7. Bake for 25-30 minutes, until the **cheese** is melted and bubbly.
8. Garnish with additional **cilantro**, if desired. Serve hot with your favorite sides like **Mexican rice**, **refried beans**, or a fresh salad.

Hong Shao Rou •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Skin-on pork belly | 2 lbs. | Bay leaves | 1 |
| Rock or granulated sugar | 5 Tbsp. | Dried red chilis | 3 |
| Shaoxing wine | 3 Tbsp. | Tangerine | 1 |
| Light soy sauce | 2 Tbsp. | Garlic cloves | 4 |
| Dark soy sauce | 1 Tbsp. | Daikon radish | 1 lb. |
| Ginger, fresh | 1 inch piece | Water or stock | 1-2 cups |
| Green onions | 6 | Jasmine rice | 3 cups |
| Star anise | 2 | Baby bok choy | 2 lbs. |
| Cinnamon stick | 1 | Sesame seeds, toasted | 2 Tbsp. |

Directions

Cook rice — Cut **pork belly** into 1½–2 inch cubes — Measure 5 Tbsp. **granulated sugar** and set aside — Measure 3 Tbsp. **Shaoxing wine** and set aside — Peel and slice **ginger** (1 inch piece) into ½ inch thick slices and smash — Cut **green onions** into 2-inch pieces (white parts) for braising; thinly slice green parts for garnish and set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Smash **garlic** cloves lightly — Peel and slice **daikon radish** into ½ inch thick rounds; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Trim **baby bok choy**: remove any damaged outer leaves, trim the base, and quarter lengthwise through the core; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Toast **sesame seeds** in a dry pan over medium heat until golden and fragrant, approximately 2–3 minutes; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* with sliced green onion tops — Peel **tangerine** and cut the peel into ½ inch wide strips, avoiding the white pith as much as possible — Combine **ginger**, **green onion whites**, **garlic**, 2 Tbsp. **light soy sauce**, 1 Tbsp. **dark soy sauce**, 2 **star anise**, 1 **cinnamon stick**, 1 **bay leaf**, 3 **dried red chilis**, and **tangerine peel** strips in *Small Bowl #1*

1. Heat a heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add **pork belly** cubes (no oil needed; fat will render). Sear until golden on all sides, approximately 5–7 minutes, turning pieces as needed. The fat should render and pool in the pot, and the meat should appear golden brown, not deeply browned. Remove **pork belly** and transfer to *Large Bowl #1*; set aside. Reserve 2 Tbsp. rendered fat in the pot.
2. Reduce heat to low. Add measured **granulated sugar** to the rendered fat in the pot. Stir constantly as the sugar melts and caramelizes. The sugar will transition from clear liquid to golden, then to amber, and finally to deep red-brown, approximately 3–5 minutes. Stop immediately when the caramel reaches deep amber/red-brown color; do not allow it to turn black or smoke. If the caramel darkens too quickly, remove the pot from heat briefly—residual heat will continue cooking. The caramel should appear glossy and deep red-brown, not blackened.
3. Return **pork belly** (*Large Bowl #1*) to the pot with the caramel. Toss to coat each piece evenly with the caramelized sugar. The pork should appear uniformly coated with the glossy caramel.

4. Add measured **Shaoxing wine** and allow it to bubble for *30 seconds*, scraping up any caramelized bits from the bottom of the pot. This deglazes the pot and adds depth of flavor.
5. Add all contents from *Small Bowl #1* (**ginger, green onions, garlic, light soy sauce, dark soy sauce, star anise, cinnamon stick, bay leaf, dried red chilis, tangerine peel**).
6. Add **daikon radish** (*Medium Bowl #1*) to the pot, then add hot **water or stock** to just cover the **pork belly** and **daikon**. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a low simmer. Cover and braise for *1½–2 hours* until the pork is very tender and the **daikon** is tender and translucent. Check at *1 hour*: the pork should be yielding but not falling apart, and the **daikon** should be beginning to soften. The fat should appear gelatinous and translucent, not chewy. Check occasionally and add hot water if needed to maintain coverage of the meat and vegetables.
7. Remove and discard the aromatics: **ginger, green onions, star anise, cinnamon stick, bay leaf, dried red chilis, tangerine peel**, and **garlic** cloves.
8. Uncover the pot and increase heat to medium-high. Reduce the braising liquid until the sauce thickens and becomes glossy, approximately *10–15 minutes*. The sauce is ready when it coats the back of a spoon thickly and the pork has a deep red-brown sheen. The sauce should cling to the meat, not pool or appear runny. Bubbles will become larger and slower as the sauce thickens.
9. While the sauce thickens, bring a large pot of well-salted water to a rolling boil. Add the quartered **baby bok choy** (*Medium Bowl #2*) and blanch until bright green and tender-crisp, approximately *1½–2 minutes*. The stems should be tender but still have a slight crunch, and the leaves should be wilted but not mushy. Drain immediately and keep warm.
10. To serve, assemble in individual bowls: place a layer of blanched **baby bok choy** on the bottom, add a generous portion of steamed rice on top, then arrange the **pork belly** pieces and **daikon** on top of the rice. Spoon the reduced braising sauce over the pork. Garnish with sliced **green onion** tops and toasted **sesame seeds** from *Small Bowl #2*. Serve immediately. The pork should be fork-tender with gelatinous, melt-in-your-mouth fat and a glossy, deep red-brown exterior. The **daikon** should be tender and translucent, having absorbed the rich braising liquid.

* * *

Equipment Required

- 5–6 quart heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven with lid
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula for stirring
- Tongs or slotted spoon for handling pork
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large mixing bowls (2–3)

Mise en Place

- Cut **pork belly** into uniform 1½–2 inch cubes before beginning
- Measure and set aside: **granulated sugar** (5 Tbsp.) and **Shaoxing wine** (3 Tbsp.) — these are needed during time-sensitive steps
- *Small Bowl #1* — all ingredients added together in step 5: **ginger** (1 inch piece, sliced and smashed), **green onions** (2-inch pieces), smashed **garlic** cloves, **light soy sauce** (2 Tbsp.), **dark soy sauce** (1 Tbsp.), **star anise** (2), **cinnamon stick** (1), **bay leaf** (1), **dried red chilis** (3), and **tangerine peel** (strips from 1 tangerine)
- *Medium Bowl #1* — **daikon radish** sliced into ½ inch rounds
- *Medium Bowl #2* — **baby bok choy** trimmed and quartered lengthwise
- *Small Bowl #2* — garnish: thinly sliced **green onion** tops and toasted **sesame seeds**
- Have hot **water** or **stock** ready for braising liquid

Ingredient Tips

- **Skin-on pork belly** is essential for authentic texture—the skin becomes gelatinous during braising
- **Rock sugar (bing tang)** can be substituted for granulated sugar for a glossier finish; crush if using large pieces
- **Shaoxing wine** adds depth and neutralizes gamey flavors; dry sherry can substitute if unavailable

- **Dark soy sauce** provides the characteristic deep color; do not omit
- Fresh aromatics are preferred; dried star anise and bay leaves work but fresh ginger and green onions are essential
- **Dried red chilis** add a subtle heat and depth; adjust quantity to taste preference, or remove seeds for milder heat
- **Fresh tangerine peel** adds a bright, citrusy aroma; use only the colored outer peel, avoiding the bitter white pith
- **Daikon radish** adds a mild, slightly sweet flavor and absorbs the rich braising liquid beautifully
- **Baby bok choy** provides a fresh, crisp contrast to the rich pork; look for firm, bright green heads with no yellowing
- **Sesame seeds** should be toasted until golden and fragrant for best flavor; store-bought toasted sesame seeds can be used for convenience
- Use homemade or high-quality stock if available; water works but stock adds depth

Preparation Tips

- Pat **pork belly** thoroughly dry before searing; moisture prevents proper browning
- Render fat slowly during searing—the goal is golden color, not deep browning
- The sugar caramelization step (*chao tang se*) is critical—this creates the signature glossy, deep red-brown color and complex flavor
- Watch the caramel carefully; it can burn quickly. Remove from heat if it darkens too fast
- The caramel should be deep amber/red-brown, not black. Black caramel will taste bitter
- Coat each piece of pork evenly with caramel before adding liquid
- Braise low and slow—the fat should become gelatinous and translucent, not chewy
- Check liquid level periodically; add hot water if needed to maintain coverage

- Remove aromatics before reducing sauce for cleaner presentation
- Reduce sauce until it coats the meat thickly; it should not be runny
- Blanch **baby bok choy** while the sauce reduces to save time; do not overcook—it should be tender-crisp, not mushy
- The finished dish should have a glossy sheen and deep red-brown color
- If pork is tough: continue braising, checking every *15 minutes* until fork-tender
- If sauce is too thin: continue reducing over medium-high heat until it coats the back of a spoon
- If sauce is too thick: add a splash of hot water and stir to combine
- If color is too light: the caramelization step may have been insufficient; ensure sugar reaches deep amber/red-brown
- If fat is chewy: continue braising until it becomes gelatinous and translucent

Make Ahead & Storage

- The braise can be prepared up to *2 days* ahead; flavors deepen overnight
- Cool completely before refrigerating
- Reheat gently in a covered pot over low heat, adding a splash of water if sauce has reduced too much
- The dish does not freeze well due to the delicate texture of the gelatinous fat
- Leftovers keep refrigerated for up to *4 days*

Troubleshooting

- If caramel burns: start over with fresh sugar; burned caramel cannot be salvaged
- If caramel darkens too quickly: remove from heat immediately and stir; residual heat will continue cooking

Serving Suggestions

- Assemble in individual bowls: **baby bok choy** on the bottom, steamed rice in the middle, and the braised **pork belly** and **daikon** on top
- The layered presentation allows the rice to absorb the rich braising sauce while the bok choy provides a fresh, crisp base
- Garnish with sliced **green onion** tops and toasted **sesame seeds** for color, texture, and flavor
- The dish is rich; moderate portions are recommended
- Serve hot; the gelatinous fat should be warm and yielding, and the bok choy should be bright green and tender-crisp

Jerk Chicken Rasta Pasta

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--|---------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Boneless chicken thighs | 2 lbs. | Green bell pepper | 1 |
| Jerk seasoning | 5 Tbsp. | Green onions | 1 bunch |
| Better Than Bouillon chicken | 1 Tbsp. | Vegetable oil | 2 Tbsp. |
| Water | 1 cup | Heavy cream | ½ cup |
| Onion, small | 1 | Parmesan cheese | ½ cup |
| Garlic cloves | 7 | Cilantro | ¼ cup |
| Fresh thyme sprigs | 2 | Salt | to taste |
| Penne pasta | 16 oz. | Black pepper | to taste |
| Red bell pepper | 1 | | |
| Yellow bell pepper | 1 | | |

Directions

Preheat Instant Pot — Quarter **onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Smash 4 **garlic cloves**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Mince remaining 3 **garlic cloves**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Slice **bell peppers** into strips; combine in *Medium Bowl #1* — Slice **green onions**; set aside in *Small Bowl #4* — Grate **Parmesan cheese**; set aside in *Small Bowl #5* — Chop **cilantro** roughly; set aside in *Small Bowl #6*

1. Coat **chicken thighs** thoroughly with 3 Tbsp. **jerk seasoning**, rubbing it in well.
2. Add **water** and **Better Than Bouillon** to Instant Pot and stir to combine.
3. Place seasoned **chicken** in the broth and add quartered **onion**, 4 smashed **garlic cloves**, and **thyme** sprigs.
4. Seal the Instant Pot and cook on High Pressure for *15 minutes*, followed by a *10-minute* natural release.
5. Remove **chicken** to *Large Bowl #1* and shred using two forks. Reserve ¼ cup of the cooking broth in *Small Bowl #7* and stir 2-3 Tbsp. back into the shredded **chicken** (*Large Bowl #1*) to keep it moist.
6. Cook **pasta** in salted water according to package directions until al dente. Drain and set aside in *Large Bowl #2*.
7. In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, heat 2 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** over medium-high heat. Add **bell peppers** (*Medium Bowl #1*) and half the **green onions** (*Small Bowl #4*), sautéing for *3-4 minutes* until peppers begin to soften but remain crisp.
8. Add minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #3*) and cook for *30 seconds* until fragrant.
9. Sprinkle in remaining 2 Tbsp. **jerk seasoning** and stir to coat vegetables.

10. Pour in the reserved **chicken broth** ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup, *Small Bowl #7*) and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup **heavy cream**. Bring to a simmer.
11. Reduce heat to medium-low and let sauce simmer for *3-4 minutes* until it begins to thicken.
12. Stir in the **Parmesan cheese** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup, *Small Bowl #5*) until melted and sauce is smooth.
13. Add shredded **jerk chicken** (*Large Bowl #1*) and cooked **pasta** (*Large Bowl #2*), tossing to coat evenly with the sauce. Season with **salt** and **black pepper** to taste.
14. Serve immediately, garnished with remaining **green onions** (*Small Bowl #4*) and chopped **cilantro** (*Small Bowl #6*).

* * *

Equipment Required

- Instant Pot or pressure cooker
- Large pasta pot (6-8 quart)
- Colander
- Large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Sharp chef's knife
- Cutting board
- Box grater or microplane for cheese
- Two forks for shredding chicken
- Medium bowl for shredded chicken
- Small bowl for reserved broth

Mise en Place

- Measure all seasonings and spices before beginning
- Allow heavy cream to come to room temperature
- Prepare all vegetables before starting to cook
- Grate cheese while chicken cooks in Instant Pot
- Have all ingredients within arm's reach before beginning sauce
- Keep pasta water heating while preparing the chicken

Ingredient Tips

- Boneless chicken thighs provide more flavor and moisture than breast meat
- Store-bought jerk seasoning works well, but use a high-quality brand for authentic flavor
- For homemade jerk seasoning, combine allspice, thyme, cayenne, garlic powder, onion powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, brown sugar, and salt
- Freshly grated Parmesan is crucial - pre-shredded cheese often contains anti-caking agents

- For extra heat, add 1-2 teaspoons of minced scotch bonnet or habanero pepper
- Bell peppers can be substituted with poblano for a slightly spicier version

Preparation Tips

- Allow a full natural release if time permits - it keeps the chicken more tender
- Reserve more cooking broth than called for in case the sauce needs thinning
- Don't overcook the pasta - it will continue to absorb liquid in the sauce
- For bell peppers, aim for softened but still slightly crisp for best texture
- If sauce becomes too thick, add a splash of reserved cooking broth
- If sauce is too thin, simmer a few extra minutes before adding pasta
- Keep pasta very al dente as it will continue cooking in the hot sauce

Make Ahead & Storage

- Chicken can be prepared up to *2 days* ahead and refrigerated
- Complete dish keeps well refrigerated for up to *3 days*
- When reheating, add a splash of chicken broth or cream to revive the sauce
- Reheat gently on stovetop over medium-low heat
- Microwave reheating works but may cause pasta to become slightly rubbery
- Freeze portions without pasta, then prepare fresh pasta when reheating
- Garnish with fresh cilantro only just before serving

Serving Suggestions

- Serve with fried plantains for an authentic Caribbean pairing
 - A simple green salad with lime vinaigrette balances the rich pasta
 - Garlic bread made with Caribbean-style butter is an excellent side
 - For a complete meal, add a tropical fruit salad as a refreshing dessert
 - Offer extra jerk seasoning at the table for those who prefer more heat
 - Jamaican Red Stripe beer or a fruity rum punch complement the flavors
 - For a colorful presentation, serve in a large white bowl to highlight the vibrant peppers
-

King Ranch Casserole - Simple •

Shredded rotisserie chicken is combined with a spiced sauce of caramelized corn, sautéed vegetables, cream soups, and Ro-Tel. The mixture is layered with quartered corn tortillas and sharp cheddar cheese, then baked until bubbly and golden.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Rotisserie chicken | 1 (about 3 lbs.) | MSG | 1/2 tsp. |
| Cream of mushroom soup | 10 oz. can | Mexican spice mix | 2 Tbsp. |
| Cream of chicken soup | 10 oz. can | Lard (or bacon fat) | 2 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. |
| Sweet corn, canned | 10 oz. can | Onion | 1 large |
| Black beans, canned | 15 oz. can | Bell pepper | 1 |
| Garlic cloves | 4-6 | Ro-Tel | 10-14 oz. can |
| Onion powder | 1 tsp. | Corn tortillas, medium | 16 |
| | | Sharp cheddar cheese | 16 oz. |

Directions

Preheat oven to 375°F — Drain and rinse **black beans**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Drain **sweet corn**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Combine **Mexican spice mix** and **MSG** in *Small Bowl #1* (spice blend) — Shred **cheese**; set aside in *Large Bowl #3* — Quarter 16 **corn tortillas**; set aside on a plate — Dice **onion** and **bell pepper**; mince **garlic**; combine in *Medium Bowl #3* (aromatics) — Shred **rotisserie chicken** into *Large Bowl #1*, discarding skin and bones — Grease a 3 quart baking dish with 1 tsp. **lard**

1. In a large skillet, melt 2 Tbsp. **lard** over medium heat. Add **sweet corn** (*Medium Bowl #1*) and sauté until well browned, about 4-5 minutes. Corn is done when kernels appear golden brown with darker spots, smell sweet and nutty, and have a slightly crisp texture when tasted.
2. Add **onion**, **bell pepper**, and **garlic** (*Medium Bowl #3*). Sauté over medium heat for 8 minutes until vegetables are softened and translucent: onion should appear clear and glossy, bell pepper should be tender, and garlic should be fragrant without browning. Raise heat to *high* and cook undisturbed for 1 minute, then stir and cook 1 minute more until vegetables have dark caramelized spots on edges and smell sweet and nutty.
3. Reduce heat to *medium-low*. Add undrained **cream of mushroom soup**, undrained **cream of chicken soup**, undrained **Ro-Tel**, and **spice blend** (*Small Bowl #1*). Stir to combine.
4. Bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally, and cook for 3 minutes until well combined and heated through. Sauce is done when it appears uniform in color, bubbles gently throughout, and feels hot when a small amount is tested on the back of a spoon.
5. Pour **vegetable and sauce mixture** from the skillet over the **shredded chicken** (*Large Bowl #1*) and stir to coat evenly.

6. Layer ingredients in the prepared baking dish:
 - First layer: $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **tortilla quarters**, $\frac{1}{2}$ of the **chicken mixture**, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **shredded cheese** (*Large Bowl #3*)
 - Second layer: $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **tortilla quarters**, remaining **chicken mixture**, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **shredded cheese** (*Large Bowl #3*)
 - Final layer: remaining **tortilla quarters**, remaining **shredded cheese** (*Large Bowl #3*)
7. Bake uncovered at $375^{\circ}F$ for *30-35 minutes* until bubbly and cheese is melted. Casserole is done when edges are bubbly and beginning to brown, cheese is fully melted and golden brown on top, and center is hot throughout (internal temperature should reach $165^{\circ}F$ if checked). Continue baking in *3 minute* increments if center is not hot or cheese is not golden.
8. Let stand for *10 minutes* before serving.

* * *

Equipment Required

- 3 quart baking dish
- Large skillet (12-inch preferred)
- Large prep bowls (2)
- Medium prep bowls (3)
- Small prep bowl (1)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Mixing spoon or spatula
- Instant-read thermometer (optional but recommended)
- Cutting board and chef's knife

Yield

- Serves 6-8 as main dish
- Makes one 3 quart casserole

Mise en Place

- *Large Bowl #1* — shredded **rotisserie chicken** (about 3 lbs., discarding skin and bones; about 4-5 cups shredded)
- *Large Bowl #3* — shredded **sharp cheddar cheese** (16 oz., about 4 cups)
- *Medium Bowl #1* — drained **sweet corn** (10 oz. can, about 1 ¼ cups)
- *Medium Bowl #2* — drained and rinsed **black beans** (15 oz. can, about 1 ½ cups; note: not used in this simple version)
- *Medium Bowl #3* — aromatics: diced **onion** (1 large, about 1 ½ cups), diced **bell pepper** (1 pepper, about ¾ cup), minced **garlic** (4-6 cloves)
- *Small Bowl #1* — spice blend: 2 Tbsp. **Mexican spice mix**, ½ tsp. **MSG**
- 16 quartered **corn tortillas** set aside on a plate
- Prep sequence: drain and rinse beans, drain corn, combine spices, shred cheese, quarter tortillas, dice aromatics, shred chicken, grease baking dish

Ingredient Tips

- Use a quality **rotisserie chicken** for best flavor; remove all skin and bones carefully
- **Corn tortillas** should be fresh and pliable; stale tortillas may become too brittle when quartered
- **Sharp cheddar cheese** provides the best flavor; pre-shredded works but freshly shredded melts more evenly

- **Mexican spice mix** can be store-bought or home-made; adjust quantity to taste preference
- **Ro-Tel** adds heat and acidity; use mild or original depending on heat preference
- **Lard** or **bacon fat** adds authentic flavor; butter can be substituted if needed

Preparation Tips

- Caramelizing **corn** properly is key—take time to develop golden brown color and nutty aroma
- Don't rush the vegetable sauté—allowing vegetables to soften before high-heat caramelization prevents burning
- The high-heat finish on vegetables creates dark caramelized spots that add depth of flavor
- Stir **sauce** mixture well to fully incorporate cream soups and Ro-Tel
- Layer **tortillas** evenly to ensure even distribution throughout the casserole
- Don't overbake—cheese should be golden and bubbly, not browned or crispy
- Letting casserole stand before serving allows it to set slightly for cleaner slices
- If casserole appears too dry, the sauce may need more liquid; if too wet, bake longer

Make Ahead & Storage

- Shred **chicken** up to 2 days ahead; store covered in refrigerator
- Prepare **vegetables** (corn, onion, bell pepper, garlic) up to 1 day ahead; store covered in refrigerator
- Make **sauce mixture** up to 1 day ahead; store covered in refrigerator
- Assemble entire casserole up to 1 day ahead; cover and refrigerate, then add 5 minutes to bake time
- Leftovers keep 3-4 days refrigerated, covered tightly
- Reheat individual portions in microwave or reheat entire casserole at 350°F for 20-25 minutes until hot throughout
- Freezes well for up to 3 months; thaw in refrigerator overnight before reheating

Serving Suggestions

- Serve hot from the oven while cheese is still bubbly
- Excellent as a complete meal with a simple green salad
- Pairs well with Mexican rice or refried beans
- Garnish with fresh cilantro, diced tomatoes, or sliced jalapeños if desired
- Serve with sour cream or guacamole on the side
- Leftovers make excellent packed lunches; reheat thoroughly

King Ranch Casserole •

Pressure-cooked chicken thighs are shredded and combined with sautéed vegetables (mushrooms, corn, onion, bell pepper, and garlic) and a creamy roux-based sauce enriched with Ro-Tel tomatoes. The mixture is layered with corn tortillas and sharp cheddar cheese, then baked until bubbly and golden.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Chicken thighs, bone-in | 3 lbs | Onion powder | 1 tsp. |
| Water | 2 cups | White pepper | ¼ tsp. |
| Mexican spice mix | 4 Tbsp. | Ground nutmeg | ⅛ tsp. |
| Caldo de tomate | 1 Tbsp. | MSG | ½ tsp. |
| Better Than Bouillon - Chicken . . . | 1 Tbsp. | Lard (or bacon fat) | 2 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. |
| Butter | 4 Tbsp. | Onion | 1 large |
| Flour | 2 Tbsp. | Bell pepper | 1 |
| Heavy cream | 1½ cups | Ro-Tel | 10-14 oz. can |
| Mushrooms, canned | 8 oz. can | Corn tortillas, medium | 16 |
| Sweet corn, canned | 10 oz. can | Sharp cheddar cheese | 16 oz. |
| Garlic cloves | 4-6 | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 375°F — Bring **chicken thighs** and **heavy cream** to room temperature (30 minutes) — Combine **Mexican spice mix**, **caldo de tomate**, and **bouillon** in *Small Bowl #1* (spice blend) — Combine **onion powder**, **white pepper**, **nutmeg**, and **MSG** in *Small Bowl #2* (sauce spices) — Reserve *Small Bowl #3* for strained cooking broth (1½ cups for cream sauce) — Quarter 16 **corn tortillas**; set aside on a plate — Drain **mushrooms** and **sweet corn** and pat dry with paper towels; combine in *Medium Bowl #1* — Dice **onion** and **bell pepper**; mince **garlic**; combine in *Large Bowl #1* — Shred **cheese**; set aside in *Large Bowl #2* — Reserve *Large Bowl #3* for shredded chicken (after cooking), will become final mixing bowl — Grease a 3 quart baking dish with 1 tsp. **lard**

1. Add **spice blend** (*Small Bowl #1*) to the Instant Pot and heat on *sauté* mode. Toast spices, stirring constantly, until fragrant and slightly darkened, about 1 minute. Spices are done when they smell aromatic and appear slightly darker in color. Add 2 cups **water** and stir until dissolved.
2. Add the **chicken thighs** to the **seasoned broth**, ensuring thighs are fully submerged.
3. Cook on *high* pressure for 14 minutes, then allow for natural release for 5 minutes. Chicken is done when meat is tender and easily pulls away from bones, and internal temperature reaches 165°F on an instant-read thermometer.
4. Transfer **chicken thighs** to a plate and let rest for 5-10 minutes until cool enough to handle. Meanwhile, skim the fat from the **stock** and strain the remaining stock through a fine-mesh sieve and reserve 1½ cups in *Small Bowl #3* for the cream sauce.

5. When chicken is cool, discard skin and bones, shred the meat into bite-sized pieces in *Large Bowl #3*. Shredded chicken should be in uniform pieces, not too fine or chunky. Skim any additional fat from the stock and add the remaining stock to the bowl and stir to combine.
6. In a large skillet, melt 2 Tbsp. **lard** over medium heat. Add **mushrooms** and **sweet corn** (*Medium Bowl #1*) and sauté until well browned, about *5-6 minutes*. Vegetables are done when mushrooms appear golden brown with darker spots, corn kernels are caramelized and golden, and both release a nutty, sweet aroma.
7. Add **onion**, **bell pepper**, and **garlic** (*Large Bowl #1*). Sauté for *8 minutes*. Raise heat to *high* and cook undisturbed for *1 minute*, then stir and cook *1 minute* more until vegetables have dark caramelized spots on edges.
8. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, melt 4 Tbsp. **butter** over medium heat. Sprinkle in 2 Tbsp. **flour** and cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture is smooth and smells nutty, about *2 minutes*. The roux should be pale golden. If roux begins to darken too quickly or smell burnt, reduce heat immediately. If lumps form, continue whisking vigorously until smooth.
9. Gradually whisk in $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups **heavy cream** and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups reserved **cooking broth** (*Small Bowl #3*), adding liquid in a steady stream while whisking constantly to prevent lumps. Add **sauce spices** (*Small Bowl #2*). Simmer, stirring frequently, until thickened to coat the back of a spoon, about *5 minutes*. Sauce is done when it coats the back of a spoon thickly (a line drawn through it with your finger should hold clearly), appears smooth and creamy (not thin or watery), and bubbles gently throughout. If sauce doesn't thicken after *5 minutes*, continue cooking and whisking; it may need an additional *2-3 minutes*. If lumps form, strain sauce through a fine-mesh strainer before proceeding.
10. Reduce skillet heat to *medium*. Add **cream sauce** from the saucepan and undrained **Ro-Tel**. Stir to combine until sauce and tomatoes are evenly distributed throughout the vegetables.
11. Bring to a simmer, reduce heat to *medium-low*, and cook, stirring occasionally, until mixture is well combined and slightly reduced, about *5 minutes*. The mixture should appear uniform with vegetables evenly coated in sauce.
12. Pour **vegetable and sauce mixture** from the skillet over the **shredded chicken** (*Large Bowl #3*) and stir to coat evenly. The mixture should appear uniform with all ingredients well distributed and no dry spots.
13. Layer ingredients in the prepared baking dish:
 - First layer: $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **tortilla quarters**, $\frac{1}{2}$ of the **chicken mixture**, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **shredded cheese** (*Large Bowl #2*)
 - Second layer: $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **tortilla quarters**, remaining **chicken mixture**, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **shredded cheese** (*Large Bowl #2*)
 - Final layer: remaining **tortilla quarters**, remaining **shredded cheese** (*Large Bowl #2*)
14. Bake uncovered for *30-35 minutes* until edges are bubbly and beginning to brown, cheese is fully melted and golden, and casserole is hot throughout. Continue baking in *3 minute* increments if center is not hot or cheese is not golden.

15. Let stand for *10 minutes* before serving.

* * *

Yield

- Serves 6-8 as main dish
- Makes one 3 quart (9 inch × 13 inch) casserole

Equipment Required

- Instant Pot or pressure cooker
- 3 Quart (9x13) inch baking dish
- Large skillet (deep 12-inch preferred)
- Small saucepan for cream sauce
- 3 small prep bowls
- 1 medium prep bowl
- 3 large prep bowls
- 2 Large plates (for tortillas and resting chicken)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Whisk
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Box grater for cheese
- Fine-mesh strainer or sieve
- Can opener
- Paper towels (for drying mushrooms)

Mise en Place

- Bring **chicken thighs** and **cream** to room temperature (30 minutes)
- *Small Bowl #1* — **spice blend**: 4 Tbsp. **Mexican spice mix**, 1 Tbsp. **caldo de tomate**, 1 Tbsp. **bouillon**
- *Small Bowl #2* — **sauce spices**: 1 tsp. **onion powder**, 1/4 tsp. **white pepper**, 1/8 tsp. **nutmeg**, 1/2 tsp. **MSG**
- *Small Bowl #3* — reserved for strained **cooking broth** (1 1/2 cups for cream sauce)
- *Large Plate* — quartered **corn tortillas** (16 tortillas)
- *Medium Bowl #1* — drained and patted dry **canned mushrooms** (8 oz. can) and **sweet corn** (10 oz. can)

- *Large Bowl #1* — diced **onion**, diced **bell pepper**, and minced **garlic**
- *Large Bowl #2* — shredded **cheddar cheese** (16 oz.)
- *Large Bowl #3* — reserved for **shredded chicken** (after cooking), will become final mixing bowl
- Keep **Ro-Tel** undrained
- Cut and prep all vegetables before starting

Ingredient Tips

- Drain **canned mushrooms** thoroughly and pat dry to remove excess moisture before sautéing
- Extra-sharp cheddar adds more depth of flavor
- If **Mexican spice mix** unavailable, combine equal parts ground cumin, chili powder, and paprika
- Authentic **lard** makes a difference - avoid hydrogenated versions

Preparation Tips

- Pat **canned mushrooms** very dry before sautéing to help them brown deeply
- Cook **mushrooms** first in the skillet to develop deep browning without crowding
- Make the cream sauce in a separate small saucepan while vegetables cook in the skillet
- Cook roux until it smells nutty and is pale golden, but watch carefully to avoid burning
- Don't skip charring the vegetables - look for dark caramelized spots on edges for essential depth of flavor
- Let **chicken** rest after pressure cooking - it's too hot to handle immediately
- Use reserved **broth** to adjust chicken mixture consistency if needed
- Warm tortillas slightly before cutting to prevent cracking

Make Ahead & Storage

- Chicken can be cooked and shredded up to *2 days* ahead
- Complete sauce up to *24 hours* in advance
- Assembled casserole can be refrigerated up to *24 hours* before baking
- If made ahead, add *10 minutes* to baking time
- Leftovers keep for *3 days*; reheat covered at *350°F*

Serving Suggestions

- Serve with Mexican rice and refried beans
- Garnish with diced avocado and fresh cilantro
- Offer sour cream and hot sauce on the side
- Can be frozen in individual portions for *2 months*

Korean BBQ Drumsticks •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Gochujang | 1/2 cup | Mirin | 4 Tbsp. |
| Soy sauce | 6 Tbsp. | Chicken broth | 1 cup |
| Honey | 4 Tbsp. | Black pepper | 1/2 tsp. |
| Brown sugar | 6 Tbsp. | Chicken drumsticks | 12–14 |
| Garlic, minced | 8 cloves | Water | 2 Tbsp. |
| Fresh ginger, grated | 2 Tbsp. | Corn starch | 1 Tbsp. |
| Sesame oil | 2 Tbsp. | Sesame seeds | 2 Tbsp. |
| Rice vinegar | 2 Tbsp. | Green onions, sliced | 4 |

Directions

Mince **garlic** and grate **ginger**; have ready for sauce — Slice **green onions**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Pat dry **drumsticks**

1. In *Medium Bowl #1*, combine all sauce ingredients: 1/2 cup **gochujang**, 6 Tbsp. **soy sauce**, 4 Tbsp. **honey**, 6 Tbsp. **brown sugar**, minced **garlic**, grated **ginger**, 2 Tbsp. **sesame oil**, 2 Tbsp. **rice vinegar**, 4 Tbsp. **mirin**, 1 cup **chicken broth**, and 1/2 tsp. **black pepper**. Mix thoroughly.
2. Arrange **drumsticks** in a large Dutch oven. Pour all sauce (*Medium Bowl #1*) over **drumsticks**. Cover with lid and braise in oven at 250°F for 2 hours until **chicken** reaches 165°F internally and is tender.
3. Transfer **drumsticks** to a platter and keep warm. Strain the cooking liquid through a fine-mesh sieve into a saucepan; bring to a simmer over *medium* heat.
4. In *Small Bowl #2*, mix 2 Tbsp. **water** with 1 Tbsp. **corn starch** until smooth. Whisk slurry into the simmering liquid and cook, stirring, for 1–2 minutes until thickened. Sauce is done when it coats the back of a spoon.
5. Brush **drumsticks** with the thickened sauce. Air fry at 400°F for 5 minutes until skin is crispy, in batches as needed.
6. Garnish drumsticks with 2 Tbsp. **sesame seeds** and **green onions** (*Small Bowl #1*). Serve with remaining sauce on the side, **Sweet and Sour Cabbage**, and cooked **white rice**.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Large Dutch oven (5–7 quart), oven-safe with lid
- Medium bowl (for sauce)
- Small bowls (for green onions and slurry)
- Fine-mesh sieve
- Medium saucepan
- Whisk
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Tongs or slotted spoon
- Instant-read thermometer
- Air fryer
- Pastry brush or spoon (for brushing sauce)

Hints and Notes

Yield

- Serves 4–6

Mise en Place

- *Medium Bowl #1:* all sauce ingredients combined (minced **garlic**, grated **ginger**, gochujang through **black pepper**, and 1 cup **chicken broth**)
- *Small Bowl #1:* sliced **green onions** (garnish)
- *Small Bowl #2:* corn starch slurry (2 Tbsp. **water** + 1 Tbsp. **corn starch**) mixed just before thickening
- **Drumsticks** patted dry; no marinating

Ingredient Tips

- **Gochujang** is Korean fermented chili paste; find it in the Asian aisle or refrigerated section
- Low-sodium **soy sauce** and **chicken broth** allow better control of salt
- Use **drumsticks** of similar size for even cooking

Preparation Tips

- Preheat oven to 350°F before placing Dutch oven inside
- Stir slurry in a small bowl until completely smooth before adding to the saucepan to avoid lumps
- If sauce is too thick after adding slurry, thin with a little **chicken broth** or **water**
- Pat **drumsticks** dry before brushing with sauce and air frying for better crispness

Make Ahead & Storage

- Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container for 2–3 days
- Reheat gently on stovetop or in 325°F oven; sauce may need a splash of **water** when reheating

Serving Suggestions

- Serve over steamed rice or with rice noodles
- Pair with **oi muchim** (cucumber salad) or kimchi
- Extra sauce is good drizzled over rice

Tex-Mex Pulled Chicken •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Chicken thighs, | 3-5 lbs | Caldo de tomate | 2 Tbsp. |
| Yellow onion, large | 1 | Bay leaves | 2 |
| Garlic cloves | 4-6 | Limes | 2 |
| Mexican spice blend | 5 Tbsp | Fresh cilantro, chopped | ½ cup |
| Herdez salsa ranchera | 7 oz. can | Kosher salt | 2 tsp. |
| Chicken stock | 2½ cups | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 275°F — Pat **chicken thighs** completely dry — Large dice **onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Chop **cilantro**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Juice **limes** ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup); set aside in *Small Bowl #4*

1. Pat **chicken thighs** completely dry with paper towels. Season skin side lightly with **kosher salt**. Heat dutch oven over medium-high heat with no added fat. Place **thighs** skin-side down and do not move them. Sear for *8-10 minutes* until deeply golden-brown and skin releases easily from the pan. Flip briefly for *1-2 minutes*, then remove **chicken** to *Large Bowl #1*. Pour rendered fat into *Small Bowl #5*, reserving 2 Tbsp. in the pot along with all the fond.
2. Reduce heat to medium. Add diced **onion** (*Small Bowl #1*) to the fond, stirring to coat in fat. Cook *5-7 minutes*, stirring occasionally, until edges start browning—not just translucent, we want some color and caramelization.
3. Add 4-5 Tbsp. **Mexican spice blend** to the **onions**. Cook *45-60 seconds*, stirring constantly, until a toasted fragrance develops. You will smell the distinct shift from raw spice to bloomed aromatic. Add **salsa** to stop the bloom. Scrape all the fond from the bottom of the pot.
4. Add minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #2*) to the tomato mixture and cook for *30 seconds*. Add $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups **chicken stock**, 2 Tbsp. **caldo de tomate**, and 2 **bay leaves**. Stir well and bring to a simmer. Taste the braising liquid—it should be intensely flavored and slightly too salty. If not sufficiently seasoned, add another $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp. **caldo de tomate**.
5. Return **chicken thighs** (*Large Bowl #1*) to the pot skin-side up. Liquid should come halfway up the **chicken**; add more **stock** if needed. Bring to a bare simmer on the stovetop, then cover with a tight-fitting lid. Transfer to the preheated 275°F oven and braise for *2½-3 hours*.
6. Check at *2½ hours*: the meat should pull from the bone with zero resistance. If still slightly firm, continue braising for another *30 minutes*.
7. Remove **chicken** from the pot and let cool for *10 minutes* to make handling easier. Remove skin and bones, etc. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2*.

8. In *Large Bowl #3*, shred the **chicken** (*Large Bowl #2*) into bite-size pieces, maintaining some texture. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the **braising liquid**, 2 Tbsp. **reserved chicken fat** (*Small Bowl #5*), **lime juice** ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup, *Small Bowl #4*), and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup **cilantro** (*Small Bowl #3*). Fold gently to combine. Add more **braising liquid** as needed until moist but not soupy.
9. Serve immediately in tacos, or hold warm. This **chicken** benefits from resting *15-30 minutes* to allow flavors to marry fully.

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Equipment Required

- Dutch oven (5-7 quart capacity, oven-safe to 300°F)
- Tight-fitting lid for dutch oven
- Large plate for holding seared chicken
- Fine mesh strainer
- Medium saucepan (for reduction)
- Small bowl (for reserved fat)
- Cutting board and chef's knife
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula
- Paper towels
- Tongs or fork (for handling chicken)
- Ladle or large spoon (for skimming fat)
- Two forks (for shredding chicken)
- Citrus juicer (optional but helpful)

Mise en Place

- Remove **chicken thighs** from refrigerator *30 minutes* before cooking to take chill off
- Pat **chicken** completely dry—moisture prevents proper searing
- Prepare all vegetables before starting: dice **onion**, mince **garlic**, chop **cilantro**
- Measure **spice blend** and set near stove for quick addition
- Have all liquids measured and ready—braising moves quickly after sear
- Open **salsa** can and have ready to add immediately after spices
- Juice **limes** after **chicken** goes in oven (keeps juice fresh)

Ingredient Tips

- Bone-in, skin-on thighs are essential—boneless will not achieve the same tenderness or gelatin-rich sauce
- Choose thighs of similar size for even cooking

- **Herdez salsa ranchera** is preferred for its roasted pepper depth; substitute with quality jarred salsa if needed
- If your **Mexican spice blend** is older than *6 months*, increase quantity by 1 Tbsp as potency fades
- Use fresh **garlic** only—powdered garlic is already in the spice blend
- **Chicken stock** quality matters; homemade or low-sodium store-bought preferred
- Reserve rendered **chicken fat**—it's gold for finishing and adds authentic richness
- Fresh **Mexican limes** (Key limes) are more authentic but regular Persian limes work well

Preparation Tips

- The sear is critical: don't rush it. Deeply golden skin = maximum fond = concentrated flavor
- Resist moving the **chicken** during searing—let it release naturally when ready
- The fond (brown bits) contains concentrated Maillard compounds; scrape thoroughly
- Brown the **onion** edges—this adds another layer of caramelization
- Bloom spices until fragrant shift occurs, usually *45-60 seconds*—under-blooming leaves raw taste, over-blooming creates bitterness
- Add **salsa** immediately after blooming to halt cooking and prevent burning
- Taste braising liquid before adding **chicken**—should be intensely flavored
- During braise, liquid should barely simmer; vigorous bubbling means oven is too hot
- Skim fat before reduction—too much fat makes sauce greasy rather than rich
- Reduce sauce properly—half volume concentrates flavor exponentially
- Add **lime juice** and **cilantro** only at the end to preserve brightness
- Shred **chicken** to bite-size pieces, not fine threads—texture matters

Make Ahead & Storage

- Can be made up to *3 days* ahead through step 10; refrigerate in sauce
- Flavor actually improves after *24 hours* as spices continue integrating
- If made ahead, add fresh **lime juice** and **cilantro** when reheating
- Reheat gently in covered pot over low heat, stirring occasionally
- Add splash of **stock** if sauce has tightened during refrigeration
- Can be frozen for up to *3 months*; thaw overnight in refrigerator
- After thawing, refresh with additional **lime juice** and **cilantro**
- Leftover rendered **chicken fat** can be refrigerated for *1 week* and used for sautéing vegetables or making rice

Serving Suggestions

- Serve in warm corn or flour tortillas with diced **onion**, **cilantro**, and **lime** wedges
- Excellent with pickled jalapeños, sliced radishes, or quick-pickled red onions
- Top with crumbled queso fresco, cotija, or shredded Monterey Jack
- Pair with Mexican rice, refried beans, or charred street corn
- Makes exceptional enchiladas—use as filling with verde or roja sauce

- Works beautifully in tortas, quesadillas, or burrito bowls
- For tostadas: crisp tortillas, spread refried beans, top with **chicken**, shredded lettuce, Mexican crema
- Leftover **chicken** makes outstanding chilaquiles for breakfast
- Consider crispy skin garnish: remove skin before braising, roast separately until crispy, crumble over tacos
- Traditional accompaniments: salsa verde, salsa roja, pickled carrots and jalapeños, lime wedges, fresh tortilla chips

Flavor Profile Notes

- This recipe achieves depth through layering: seared proteins, bloomed spices, reduced sauce, bright finish
- The **Mexican spice blend** with cinnamon and cloves provides northern Mexican/mole-adjacent complexity
- Gelatin from bones creates luxurious mouthfeel and helps sauce cling to meat
- Reserved **chicken fat** adds authentic richness without greasiness when used judiciously
- The acid-fat-salt-umami balance is critical: **lime** cuts richness, **salt** amplifies everything, bouillon/caldo provide savory depth
- Finishing with fresh **cilantro** and **lime** preserves brightness that would be lost during long braise

Thai Yellow Chicken Curry

This curry builds layers of flavor through careful technique. Chicken thighs are first rendered to develop a deep golden crust and richness. Coconut cream is "cracked"—heated until the fat separates and pools—creating the foundation for blooming the curry paste. The paste is fried in this coconut fat until darkened and fragrant, transforming raw spice notes into toasted complexity. Aromatics follow, then the chicken returns to braise with vegetables in coconut cream enriched with stock and fish sauce. Potatoes break down during the long simmer, naturally thickening the sauce while absorbing flavor. Pineapple is seared to caramelize its sugars before joining the curry, adding brightness and balancing the rich coconut base. The result is a harmonious blend: sweet from pineapple and sugar, salty and umami from fish sauce, sour from lime, all rounded by coconut cream and deepened by bone-in chicken. A fiery chili oil provides optional heat without overwhelming the delicate balance.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Bone-in chicken thighs | 3 lbs | Fish sauce | 3 Tbsp. |
| Coconut cream | 2 (13.5 oz.) cans | Brown or turbinado sugar | 3 Tbsp. |
| Yellow curry paste | 5 Tbsp. | Chicken stock | 2 cups |
| Yukon gold potatoes | 1½ lbs | Neutral oil | 2 Tbsp. + ½ cup |
| Carrots, medium | 3 | Limes | 2 |
| Yellow onion, large | 1 | Fresh cilantro | for garnish |
| Shallots | 3 | Thai basil | for garnish |
| Garlic cloves | 8 | Salt | to taste |
| Fresh ginger | 3 Tbsp. | Dried árbol chilies | 15-20 |
| Lemongrass stalks | 2 | Fresh serrano peppers | 3-4 |
| Canned pineapple slices | 2 cups | | |

Directions

Cut 1½ lbs **potatoes** into 1½" uniform chunks — Peel and roll-cut 3 medium **carrots** into 1" pieces — Combine **potatoes** and **carrots** in *Medium Bowl #1* (vegetables) — Cut 1 large **onion** into 1" wedges — Slice 3 **shallots** — Mince 6 **garlic cloves** — Mince 3 Tbsp. **ginger** — Combine **shallots**, **ginger**, and **garlic** in *Small Bowl #1* (aromatics) — Bruise and cut 2 **lemongrass stalks** into 3" pieces — Drain and pat dry 2 cups **canned pineapple slices** and place in *Large Bowl #1* — Remove stems from 15-20 **árbol chilies** — Slice 3-4 **serrano peppers** thin (seeds in) — Slice 2 **garlic cloves** thin for oil — Zest and juice 2 **limes**

Chili Oil

1. In a small saucepan, combine ½ cup **neutral oil**, 15-20 **dried árbol chilies**, 3-4 sliced **serrano peppers**, and 2 sliced **garlic cloves**. Place over medium-low heat.

2. Heat gently, watching carefully. When **chilies** darken and become fragrant (about *2-3 minutes*), immediately remove from heat.
3. Add pinch of **salt** to the hot oil off-heat. Let steep for at least *20-30 minutes*. Strain or leave **chilies** in for presentation. Set aside.

* * *

Curry

1. Render 3 lbs bone-in **chicken thighs** in dutch oven over medium-high heat for about *3-4 minutes* per side, until deeply golden-brown and skin releases easily from the pan. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2* and set aside.
2. Open 2 (13.5 oz.) cans of **coconut cream** without shaking. Scoop the thick cream from the top of one can into a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot (should yield about $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cup thick cream). Reserve the remaining coconut liquid and the second can in *Medium Bowl #2*.
3. Heat the thick **coconut cream** over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. It will begin to separate and the fat will "crack" (you'll see oil pooling). This takes *3-5 minutes*. When you see clear oil separating, you're ready.
4. Add 5 Tbsp. **yellow curry paste** to the coconut fat. Fry the **paste**, stirring constantly, until it darkens, becomes very fragrant, and the oil takes on the **paste's** color, about *3-4 minutes*. The mixture should smell toasted and complex, not raw.
5. Add 3 sliced **shallots**, 3 Tbsp. minced **ginger**, and 6 minced **garlic cloves** (*Small Bowl #1*) to the **paste** and cook, stirring, for *2 minutes* until **shallots** are softened. Continue cooking for *1 minute* more until fragrant.
6. Add seared **chicken thighs**, remaining **coconut cream** (*Medium Bowl #2*), 2 cups **chicken stock**, 2 bruised **lemongrass stalks**, **potatoes** and **carrots** (*Medium Bowl #1*), and 3 Tbsp. **fish sauce**. Stir to combine.
7. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cover partially and cook for *35-40 minutes*, stirring occasionally, until **chicken** is very tender and **potatoes** have softened and begun to break down slightly, thickening the sauce.
8. Add 1 large **onion** cut into 1" wedges and continue simmering for *10 minutes* until **onions** are tender but still hold their shape.
9. Remove **chicken thighs** to a cutting board. The bones should pull out easily at this point. Discard skin if desired. Shred or chop the meat into bite-sized pieces and return to the curry.
10. While curry continues to simmer, heat a skillet over high heat. Sear **pineapple slices** (*Large Bowl #1*) quickly, about *1-2 minutes* per side, until lightly caramelized. Roughly chop seared **pineapple** and add to curry.
11. Taste the curry broth. Add **brown or turbinado sugar** 1 Tbsp. at a time (up to 3 Tbsp. total), tasting as you go. The curry should be balanced: rich, slightly sweet, savory, with subtle sour notes from the **pineapple**.
12. Simmer for final *5 minutes* to meld flavors. Taste and adjust seasoning with **salt** if needed (**fish sauce** usually provides enough).
13. Remove **lemongrass stalks**. Turn off heat and stir in **juice** and **zest** from 2 **limes**.
14. Ladle curry over steamed jasmine rice. Garnish with fresh **cilantro** and **Thai basil**. Provide **lime wedges** and the **chili oil** on the side. For heat, drizzle *1-2 tsp.* of **chili oil** over individual portions.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot (6-8 quart capacity)
- Small saucepan (for chili oil)
- Large skillet (for searing pineapple)
- Cutting board and sharp knife
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula
- Fine-mesh strainer (optional, for chili oil)
- Vegetable peeler
- Citrus zester or microplane
- Ladle
- Tongs (for removing chicken thighs)

Mise en Place

- Chill **coconut cream** cans overnight or for several hours to ensure proper fat separation
- Cut all vegetables before starting
- Cut **potatoes** into uniform 1½" chunks for consistent cooking
- Prepare **chili oil** while curry simmers or up to several days ahead
- Have all aromatics prepped and ready before beginning to cook
- Bruise **lemongrass** by smashing with the flat of a knife to release oils
- **Small Bowl #1** — aromatics: sliced **shallots**, minced **ginger**, and minced **garlic** (about ½ cup total)
- **Medium Bowl #1** — vegetables: **potatoes** cut into 1½" chunks and roll-cut **carrots** (about 3 cups total)
- **Medium Bowl #2** — reserved **coconut cream** liquid from both cans (about 2 cups)
- **Large Bowl #1** — drained and patted dry **canned pineapple slices** (2 cups)
- **Large Bowl #2** — seared **chicken thighs** (set aside after initial searing)

Ingredient Tips

- Bone-in **chicken thighs** provide superior flavor - the bones contribute gelatin and depth during cooking
- Russet **potatoes** are essential for their high starch content which naturally thickens the curry as they break down
- Cut **potatoes** into uniform 1½" chunks - consistent size ensures even cooking and proper breakdown
- Mae Ploy brand **curry paste** is recommended for consistent results
- **Fish sauce** brands vary in saltiness - Red Boat and Three Crabs are more concentrated than Squid or Tiparos brands
- Drain and thoroughly pat dry **canned pineapple** before searing to ensure proper caramelization
- If **lemongrass** is unavailable, substitute with lemon zest added at the finish
- **Palm sugar** can replace brown sugar for more authentic flavor

Preparation Tips

- The "cracking" of **coconut cream** is critical - don't rush this step. You must see clear oil separating before adding **curry paste**
- Properly blooming the **curry paste** in the fat until darkened and fragrant is what elevates this above takeout quality
- Sear **chicken thighs** for only 3-4 minutes - they will finish cooking during the simmer
- The curry should simmer gently, not boil hard, or the **chicken** will toughen
- After 35-40 minutes, the **chicken** bones will pull out easily - this is the ideal time to debone
- Keep 2-3 bones in the curry during final simmer for additional body and flavor
- Don't skip searing the **pineapple** - the caramelization adds complexity. Rough chopping after searing helps distribute the flavor throughout the curry
- Taste and adjust seasoning multiple times - the balance of sweet, salty, sour is crucial

- Add **lime juice** and zest at the very end to preserve bright citrus notes

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Chili oil** can be made up to *2 weeks* ahead and stored at room temperature
- Curry can be made *1-2 days* ahead and often tastes better as flavors meld
- Store curry in refrigerator for up to *4 days*
- Curry thickens significantly when refrigerated - thin with **stock** or **coconut milk** when reheating
- Freezes well for up to *3 months* - thaw overnight in refrigerator
- Reheat gently over medium-low heat, stirring frequently
- Add fresh **lime juice** and herbs after reheating for brightness

Serving Suggestions

- Serve over steamed jasmine rice (traditional) or sticky rice
- Accompany with Thai cucumber salad for cooling contrast
- **Chili oil** can be drizzled on individual portions for customizable heat
- Garnish generously with fresh **cilantro**, **Thai basil**, and **lime wedges**
- Crispy fried shallots make an excellent textural garnish
- Leftover curry can be used as a filling for savory crepes or over noodles
- For a complete meal, serve with spring rolls or satay as appetizers

Thai Yellow Pork Curry

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Pork shoulder, cubed | 2½ lbs | Fresh pineapple | 1½ cups |
| Coconut cream | 2 (13.5 oz.) cans | Fish sauce | 3-6 Tbsp. |
| Yellow curry paste | 5 Tbsp. | Brown or turbinado sugar | 3 Tbsp. |
| Russet potatoes | 1½ lbs | Chicken stock | 2 cups |
| Carrots, medium | 3 | Neutral oil | 2 Tbsp. |
| Yellow onion, large | 1 | Limes | 2 |
| Shallots | 3 | Fresh cilantro | for garnish |
| Garlic cloves | 6 | Thai basil | for garnish |
| Fresh ginger | 3 Tbsp. | Salt | to taste |
| Lemongrass stalks | 2 | | |

Chili Oil

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| Neutral oil | ½ cup | Garlic cloves | 2 |
| Dried árbol chilies | 15-20 | Salt | pinch |
| Fresh serrano peppers | 3-4 | | |

Directions

Cut **pork shoulder** into 1½" cubes — Cut **potatoes** into 1½-2" chunks — Peel and roll-cut **carrots** into 1" pieces — Cut **onion** into 1" wedges — Slice **shallots** — Mince **garlic** — Mince **ginger** — Bruise and cut **lemongrass** into 3" pieces — Cut **pineapple** into 1" chunks — Remove stems from **árbol chilies** — Slice **serrano peppers** thin (seeds in) — Slice 2 **garlic cloves** thin for oil — Zest and juice **limes**

Prepare the Chili Oil

1. In a small saucepan, combine **neutral oil**, **dried árbol chilies**, and sliced **garlic**. Place over medium-low heat.
2. Heat gently, watching carefully. When **chilies** darken and become fragrant (about 2-3 *minutes*), immediately remove from heat.
3. Add sliced **serrano peppers** and pinch of **salt** to the hot oil off-heat. Let steep for at least 20-30 *minutes*. Strain or leave **chilies** in for presentation. Set aside.

Make the Curry

1. Open both cans of **coconut cream** without shaking. Scoop the thick cream from the top of one can into a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot (should yield about ¾-1 cup thick cream). Reserve the remaining coconut liquid and the second can.

2. Heat the thick **coconut cream** over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. It will begin to separate and the fat will "crack" (you'll see oil pooling). This takes *3-5 minutes*. When you see clear oil separating, you're ready.
3. Add the **curry paste** to the coconut fat. Fry the **paste**, stirring constantly, until it darkens, becomes very fragrant, and the oil takes on the **paste's** color, about *3-4 minutes*. The mixture should smell toasted and complex, not raw.
4. Add sliced **shallots** to the **paste** and cook for *2 minutes* until softened. Add minced **ginger** and cook for *1 minute*. Add minced **garlic** and cook for *30 seconds*.
5. Add **pork cubes** and stir to coat completely with the **curry paste** mixture. Let the **pork** sear slightly in the **paste**, stirring occasionally, for about *5 minutes*. You want some browning on the meat.
6. Add the remaining **coconut cream** (from both cans), **chicken stock**, bruised **lemongrass stalks**, **potatoes**, **carrots**, and *3 Tbsp.* **fish sauce**. Stir to combine.
7. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cover partially and cook for *75-90 minutes*, stirring occasionally, until **pork** is very tender and **potatoes** have softened and begun to break down slightly, thickening the sauce.
8. Add **onion** wedges and continue simmering for *10 minutes* until **onions** are tender but still hold their shape.
9. While **onions** cook, heat a skillet over high heat. Sear **pineapple** chunks quickly, about *1-2 minutes* per side, until lightly caramelized. Add seared **pineapple** to curry.
10. Taste the curry broth. Add additional **fish sauce** *1 Tbsp.* at a time, up to *3* more Tbsp., tasting between additions. Add **brown sugar** *1 Tbsp.* at a time, tasting as you go. The curry should be balanced: rich, slightly sweet, savory, with subtle sour notes from the **pineapple**.
11. Simmer for final *5 minutes* to meld flavors. Taste and adjust seasoning with **salt** if needed (**fish sauce** usually provides enough).
12. Remove **lemongrass stalks**. Turn off heat and stir in **lime juice** and **lime zest**.
13. Ladle curry over steamed jasmine rice. Garnish with fresh **cilantro** and **Thai basil** if available. Provide **lime wedges** and the **chili oil** on the side. For heat, drizzle *1-2 tsp.* of **chili oil** over individual portions.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot (6-8 quart capacity)
- Small saucepan (for chili oil)
- Large skillet (for searing pineapple)
- Cutting board and sharp knife
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula
- Fine-mesh strainer (optional, for chili oil)
- Vegetable peeler
- Citrus zester or microplane
- Ladle

Mise en Place

- Chill **coconut cream** cans overnight or for several hours to ensure proper fat separation
- Cut all vegetables and **pork** before starting
- Prepare **chili oil** while curry simmers or up to several days ahead
- Have all aromatics prepped and ready before beginning to cook
- Bruise **lemongrass** by smashing with the flat of a knife to release oils

Ingredient Tips

- **Pork shoulder** (Boston butt) is essential - the intramuscular fat creates silky richness as it breaks down
- Use russet or Yukon gold **potatoes** for their starch content which naturally thickens the curry
- Mae Ploy brand **curry paste** is recommended for consistent results
- **Fish sauce** brands vary in saltiness - Red Boat and Three Crabs are more concentrated than Squid or Tiparos brands
- Fresh **pineapple** is strongly preferred over canned for better texture and less sweetness
- If **lemongrass** is unavailable, substitute with lemon zest added at the finish
- **Palm sugar** can replace brown sugar for more authentic flavor

Preparation Tips

- The "cracking" of **coconut cream** is critical - don't rush this step. You must see clear oil separating before adding **curry paste**
- Properly blooming the **curry paste** in the fat until darkened and fragrant is what elevates this above takeout quality
- Cut **potatoes** larger than you think - they will break down and smaller pieces will disintegrate
- Don't skip searing the **pineapple** - the caramelization adds complexity
- The curry should simmer gently, not boil hard, or the **pork** will toughen
- Taste and adjust seasoning multiple times - the balance of sweet, salty, sour is crucial
- Add **lime juice** and zest at the very end to preserve bright citrus notes

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Chili oil** can be made up to *2 weeks* ahead and stored at room temperature
- Curry can be made *1-2 days* ahead and often tastes better as flavors meld
- Store curry in refrigerator for up to *4 days*
- Curry thickens significantly when refrigerated - thin with **stock** or **coconut milk** when reheating
- Freezes well for up to *3 months* - thaw overnight in refrigerator
- Reheat gently over medium-low heat, stirring frequently
- Add fresh **lime juice** and herbs after reheating for brightness

Serving Suggestions

- Serve over steamed jasmine rice (traditional) or sticky rice
 - Accompany with Thai cucumber salad for cooling contrast
 - **Chili oil** can be drizzled on individual portions for customizable heat
 - Garnish generously with fresh **cilantro**, **Thai basil**, and **lime wedges**
 - Crispy fried shallots make an excellent textural garnish
 - Pairs well with a crisp Riesling or light lager beer
 - Leftover curry can be used as a filling for savory crepes or over noodles
 - For a complete meal, serve with spring rolls or satay as appetizers
-

Verde Chicken Enchiladas

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--|---------|--|------------|
| Chicken thighs, bone-in | 3 lb. | Fresh cilantro, chopped | 1/2 cup |
| Mexican spice blend | 5 Tbsp. | Lime juice | 2 Tbsp. |
| Water | 3 cups | Ground cumin | 1 tsp. |
| Better Than Bouillon, chicken | 1 Tbsp. | Mexican oregano | 1 tsp. |
| Tomatillos, canned | 28 oz. | Salt (divided) | 1 1/2 tsp. |
| Jalapeños, medium | 2 | Black pepper | 1/2 tsp. |
| White onions, medium (divided) | 3 | Vegetable oil (divided) | 3 Tbsp. |
| Red bell pepper | 1 | Corn tortillas (6-inch) | 14–16 |
| Bay leaf | 1 | Monterey Jack cheese, shredded | 16 oz. |
| Tangerine or mandarin | 1 | Queso fresco, crumbled | 4 oz. |
| Garlic cloves (divided) | 10 | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F — Grease a 9 inch×13 inch baking dish — Drain **tomatillos**, reserving 1 cup liquid; set **tomatillos** and reserved **tomatillo liquid** aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Finely chop 1 **white onion** and 1 **red bell pepper**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #3* — Halve **jalapeños** lengthwise and remove seeds and ribs — Quarter 1 **white onion** — Peel 4 **garlic cloves** — Combine **jalapeños**, quartered **onion**, and **garlic cloves** in *Medium Bowl #2* (roasting aromatics) — Chop **cilantro**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Juice **lime**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Crumble **queso fresco**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Combine 1 tsp. **cumin** and 1 tsp. **oregano** in *Small Bowl #4* (sauce spices) — Shred **Monterey Jack cheese**; set aside in *Large Bowl #1*

1. Prepare **chicken broth**: Combine 3 cups **water** and 1 Tbsp. **Better Than Bouillon** in a measuring cup, stirring until dissolved.
2. Heat a large frying pan over *medium-high* heat until hot. Place 2 1/2 lb. **chicken thighs** skin-side down in the dry pan (no oil). Cook for 6–8 *minutes* until skin is crisp and releases easily from the pan. Flip **chicken** and cook for 5 *minutes* on the other side until lightly browned. Transfer **chicken** to a plate and set aside.
3. Reduce heat to *medium* and sauté finely chopped **onion** and **bell pepper** (*Medium Bowl #3*) in the rendered **chicken fat** for 5–7 *minutes* until softened and beginning to brown. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2* and set aside.
4. Rough chop 1 **white onion** and place in Instant Pot. Smash 6 **garlic cloves** and add to the pot. Add 1 **bay leaf**, 5 Tbsp. **Mexican spice blend**, the juice of 1 **tangerine or mandarin**, and 3 cups prepared **chicken broth**. Stir to combine. Place **chicken thighs** from the pan on top. Seal Instant Pot and cook on *high* pressure for 15 *minutes*, then wait 10 *minutes* before manually releasing remaining pressure.

5. While **chicken** cooks, roast the aromatics: Arrange **jalapeños**, quartered **onion**, and **garlic cloves** (*Medium Bowl #2*) on a rimmed baking sheet, placing **jalapeños** cut-side down. Drizzle with 1 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** and toss to coat. Roast at 400°F for 15-20 minutes until **jalapeños** are blistered and slightly charred, **onion** is softened and browned at edges, and **garlic** is golden and tender. **Jalapeños** are done when skin is blistered and peppers feel soft when pressed. Remove from oven and let cool slightly.
6. When Instant Pot is ready, wait 10 minutes, then manually release remaining pressure. Transfer **chicken** to a plate and let rest for 5-10 minutes until cool enough to handle. Strain the **broth** through a fine-mesh sieve and reserve 1 cup in *Large Bowl #2* for the filling, and the remainder in *Medium Bowl #2* for the verde sauce.
7. Discard skin and bones from **chicken**, then shred into bite-sized pieces; set aside in *Large Bowl #2*.
8. Add the reserved 1 cup **chicken broth** to the shredded **chicken** and sautéed **onion** and **bell pepper** in *Large Bowl #2*. Combine well. Set aside.
9. Transfer roasted **jalapeños**, **onion**, and **garlic** to a blender. Add **tomatillos** and 1 cup reserved **tomatillo liquid** (*Medium Bowl #1*), 1 tsp. **cumin** and 1 tsp. **oregano** (*Small Bowl #4*), 1 tsp. **salt**, and ½ tsp. **black pepper**. Blend on high for 1-2 minutes until completely smooth.
10. Heat 2 Tbsp. **vegetable oil** in a large saucepan over medium-high heat until shimmering. Carefully pour in the blended **sauce** (it will sputter). Stir in remaining reserved **chicken broth** (*Medium Bowl #2*). Reduce heat to medium and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 20 minutes until sauce darkens slightly, loses its raw flavor, and reaches the desired consistency. The sauce is ready when it coats the back of a spoon without running off immediately, is thick enough to cling to the tortillas when dipping, but still pourable for spreading over the enchiladas. Remove from heat and stir in **cilantro** (*Small Bowl #1*) and **lime juice** (*Small Bowl #2*). Taste and adjust **salt** (add remaining ½ tsp. if needed).
11. Transfer approximately 2 cups of warm **sauce** to a wide, shallow bowl or pie pan for dipping tortillas; keep remaining sauce warm in the saucepan.
12. Warm **corn tortillas** in the microwave wrapped in a damp paper towel for 1 minute, or heat briefly on a griddle until pliable. Working one at a time, dip each **tortilla** completely in the warm **sauce** from the bowl, coating both sides (about 2-3 seconds total). Let excess drip off briefly.
13. Place sauce-coated **tortilla** on a plate. Spoon 2-3 Tbsp. **filling** (*Large Bowl #2*) down the center, then sprinkle with 1 Tbsp. **Monterey Jack cheese** (*Large Bowl #1*). Roll tightly and place seam-side down in the prepared baking dish. Repeat with remaining **tortillas**, arranging them snugly in the pan.
14. Pour only enough warm **sauce** from the saucepan to cover the **enchiladas** fully and evenly; reserve the remainder in the saucepan for serving. Sprinkle remaining **Monterey Jack cheese** (*Large Bowl #1*) evenly over the top, then scatter **queso fresco** (*Small Bowl #3*) over the cheese.

15. **Reduce oven temperature** to *375°F*. Bake for *25-30 minutes* until cheese is melted and bubbly, sauce is bubbling around edges, and enchiladas are heated through. Enchiladas are done when cheese is golden brown in spots, sauce is actively bubbling, and center of pan feels hot when tested with a knife. Continue baking in *2 minute* increments if needed.
16. Let rest for *5 minutes* before serving. Pour reserved warm sauce over individual servings. Garnish with additional cilantro if desired. Serve hot.

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Yield

- Serves 4-6 as main course
- Makes 12-14 enchiladas in a 9 inch×13 inch baking dish

Equipment Required

- Instant Pot (6-quart or larger)
- Large frying pan (12-inch or larger)
- Rimmed baking sheet
- Large saucepan (3-4 quart)
- High-powered blender
- Fine-mesh strainer
- 9 inch×13 inch baking dish
- Wide shallow bowl (for dipping tortillas)
- Small prep bowls (4)
- Medium prep bowls (3)
- Large prep bowls (2)
- Tongs or slotted spoon
- Measuring cups and spoons

Mise en Place

- Small Bowl #1 — chopped **cilantro** (½ cup)
- Small Bowl #2 — **lime juice** (2 Tbsp.)
- Small Bowl #3 — crumbled **queso fresco** (4 oz.)
- Small Bowl #4 — sauce spices: 1 tsp. **cumin**, 1 tsp. **oregano**
- Medium Bowl #1 — drained **tomatillos** and reserved **tomatillo liquid** (1 cup)
- Medium Bowl #2 — **jalapeños**, quartered **onion**, and **garlic cloves** for roasting (used in step 5), then reserved **chicken broth** for verde sauce (remainder after 1 cup reserved for filling, after step 6)
- Medium Bowl #3 — finely chopped **white onion** and **red bell pepper** (used in step 3)
- Large Bowl #1 — shredded **Monterey Jack cheese** (16 oz.)
- Large Bowl #2 — sautéed **onion** and **red bell pepper** (after step 3), then reserved **chicken broth** for filling (1 cup, after step 6), then shredded **chicken** (after step 7), then **filling** (after step 8)
- Prepare **chicken broth** with Better Than Bouillon before starting
- Roast aromatics while **chicken** cooks in Instant Pot

Ingredient Tips

- **Chicken:** Bone-in thighs provide richer broth and more flavor; boneless work but reduce broth amount
- **Mexican spice blend:** Your prepared blend adds depth; adjust amount based on heat preference
- **Tomatillos, canned:** Look for firm tomatillos in water (not heavy brine); 28 oz. is standard can size
- **Jalapeños:** 2 medium jalapeños with seeds removed yields mild-medium heat; add seeds for more heat
- **Monterey Jack:** Melts beautifully and provides creamy texture; can substitute with Colby Jack
- **Queso fresco:** Adds texture contrast and mild saltiness; feta can substitute but is saltier
- **Corn tortillas:** Slightly day-old tortillas absorb sauce better; warm thoroughly before dipping
- **Cilantro:** Add at the end to preserve bright, fresh flavor
- **Lime juice:** Fresh is essential for brightness; bottled lacks complexity

Preparation Tips

- Roasting **jalapeños**, **onion**, and **garlic** creates depth and mellows raw flavors; blistered skin on peppers indicates proper roasting
- Blending sauce until completely smooth ensures even texture; no chunks should remain
- Frying the blended sauce concentrates flavor and cooks out raw taste; sauce darkens and thickens as it reduces
- Simmering with **chicken broth** integrates flavors and adds body; sauce should coat a spoon without being too thick
- Adding **cilantro** and **lime juice** at the end preserves brightness; adding too early causes them to lose vibrancy
- Dipping **tortillas** in warm sauce makes them pliable and prevents cracking during rolling
- Don't overfill **enchiladas**—2-3 Tbsp. **chicken** per tortilla prevents bursting
- Note: There may be leftover **filling** depending on tortilla size and filling amount used; reserve for another use or serve alongside **enchiladas**
- Arranging **enchiladas** snugly in the pan prevents them from unrolling during baking
- Sauce should cover **enchiladas** completely but not pool excessively; adjust amount if needed

- Resting after baking allows sauce to set slightly and makes cutting easier
- Recipe makes approximately 4-5 cups sauce; use 2 cups for dipping, remainder for topping

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Chicken** can be cooked and shredded *1 day* ahead; store separately from broth
- **Verde sauce** can be made *1-2 days* ahead; refrigerate and reheat gently before using
- Add **cilantro** and **lime juice** to sauce just before using if made ahead
- Assembled **enchiladas** can be refrigerated *4 hours* before baking; add *5 minutes* to baking time
- Leftovers keep *3-4 days* refrigerated; reheat individual portions at *350°F* for *10-15 minutes*
- Sauce can be frozen for *3 months*; thaw and reheat gently, adding fresh **cilantro** and **lime juice**
- **Enchiladas** don't freeze well—corn tortillas become mealy when frozen and thawed

Serving Suggestions

- Serve immediately while **cheese** is bubbly and **enchiladas** are hot
- Traditional serving is 2-3 **enchiladas** per person as a main course

- Pair with **Mexican rice** and **refried beans** for a complete meal
- Garnish with additional **cilantro**, **lime wedges**, and **diced white onion**
- **Sour cream** or **Mexican crema** adds richness and cools heat
- **Avocado** slices or **guacamole** complement the tangy sauce
- **Pickled jalapeños** add heat and acidity
- Serve with a crisp green salad with lime vinaigrette for contrast

Heat Level Options

- Mild: Use 2 **jalapeños** with all seeds and ribs removed (as written)
- Medium: Use 2 **jalapeños** with seeds from 1 pepper included
- Medium-Hot: Use 2 **jalapeños** with all seeds included, or add 1 **serrano pepper**
- Hot: Use 3 **jalapeños** with seeds, or substitute 2 **serrano peppers**
- Heat comes primarily from **jalapeños**; roasting mellows heat slightly
- Taste sauce after blending and add more heat if desired before simmering

Chapter 6

BREADS AND PASTRIES



Flapjacks with Fruit and Nuts

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Rolled oats | 3 cups | Light brown sugar, packed | ½ cup |
| Nuts, chopped | 1 cup | Mexican vanilla | 1 tsp. |
| Dried fruit, chopped | 1 cup | Ground cinnamon | 1½ tsp. |
| Unsalted butter | ¾ cup | Ground cardamom | ½ tsp. |
| Light corn syrup | ⅔ cup | Ground nutmeg | ¼ tsp. |
| Unsulphured molasses | 2 Tbsp. | Fine sea salt | ½ tsp. |

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F — Grease and line a 9 inch×9 inch baking pan with parchment paper (leaving overhang for easy removal) — Toast **nuts** at 350°F for 8-10 minutes until fragrant, cool, rub in towel to remove skins if applicable, then finely chop; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Finely chop **dried fruit**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Place chopped **fruit** (*Small Bowl #2*) in warm water, soak 10 minutes, drain thoroughly, and pat dry with paper towels; return to *Small Bowl #2*

1. In *Large Bowl #1*, combine **oats**, chopped **nuts** (*Small Bowl #1*), 1½ tsp. **cinnamon**, ½ tsp. **cardamom**, ¼ tsp. **nutmeg**, and ½ tsp. **salt**. Mix well and set aside.
2. In a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, combine ¾ cup **butter**, ⅔ cup **corn syrup**, 2 Tbsp. **molasses**, and ½ cup **brown sugar**. Stir constantly until **butter** is melted and **sugar** is dissolved, about 3-4 minutes. Do not allow mixture to boil.
3. Remove from heat and stir in 1 tsp. **vanilla**.
4. Pour the **butter** mixture over the **oat** mixture (*Large Bowl #1*) and stir thoroughly until all **oats** are evenly coated and mixture is well combined.
5. Add the drained, chopped **fruit** (*Small Bowl #2*) and fold in gently but thoroughly to distribute evenly throughout.
6. Transfer mixture to prepared baking pan. Press down very firmly and evenly with the back of a spatula or measuring cup to compact the mixture — this is critical for achieving cohesive bars.
7. Bake for 30 minutes until golden brown throughout. The edges will be slightly darker and the center should be set but still give slightly when pressed.
8. Remove from oven and allow to cool in pan for 10 minutes. Using a sharp knife, cut into bars while still warm (12 or 16 bars depending on desired size).
9. Allow bars to cool completely in the pan, at least 2 hours, before removing. The bars will firm up significantly as they cool.

10. Once completely cool, use parchment overhang to lift from pan. Separate bars along pre-cut lines and store in an airtight container.

* * *

Fruit and Nut Pairings

- **Cherry + Hazelnut** — Classic pairing with deep, complementary flavors
- **Apricot + Almond** — Mediterranean combination, honeyed and nutty
- **Cranberry + Pecan** — Tart-sweet with buttery richness
- **Fig + Walnut** — Sophisticated, earthy sweetness
- **Blueberry + Macadamia** — Subtle berry with rich, creamy nuts
- **Raisin + Cashew** — Traditional, mild pairing

Equipment Required

- 9x9 inch baking pan
- Parchment paper
- Large mixing bowl (at least 4-quart capacity)
- Medium saucepan (2-3 quart)
- Small bowl (for soaking fruit)
- Rimmed baking sheet (for toasting nuts)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Rubber spatula or wooden spoon
- Measuring cup or flat-bottomed glass (for pressing)
- Kitchen towel (for removing nut skins)
- Paper towels (for drying fruit)

Mise en Place

- Toast and chop **nuts** first, as they need time to cool
- Soak **dried fruit** while preparing other ingredients
- Measure all spices and have them ready before starting
- Cut parchment paper to fit pan with overhang on two sides
- Have all ingredients at room temperature for easier mixing

Ingredient Tips

- Use certified gluten-free **oats** if needed; regular rolled oats work well otherwise
- For **nuts**: toast until fragrant to intensify flavor; hazelnuts and almonds benefit from skin removal
- For **dried fruit**: choose unsweetened or lightly sweetened varieties; tart cherries, unsulphured apricots, and less-sweetened cranberries provide best flavor balance
- Light **corn syrup** (Karo) combined with **molasses** approximates British golden syrup
- European-style **butter** with higher fat content yields richer flavor

Preparation Tips

- Chop **nuts** and **fruit** finely for even distribution and cohesive texture
- Don't skip soaking the **fruit** — this prevents hard, dry bits in final bars
- Press mixture very firmly into pan; inadequate pressing results in crumbly bars
- Watch carefully during final *5 minutes* of baking to prevent over-browning
- Cut while warm but allow complete cooling for clean cuts and proper texture
- If bars seem too soft after cooling, they may need *5 minutes* more baking time next batch

Make Ahead & Storage

- Flapjacks keep at room temperature in airtight container for up to *1 week*
- Layer bars between parchment paper to prevent sticking
- Freeze for up to *3 months*; thaw at room temperature for *30 minutes*
- Texture firms slightly during storage; this is normal
- Do not refrigerate as this can make bars overly hard

Serving Suggestions

- Serve as breakfast bars, snacks, or with afternoon tea
- Pair with coffee, tea, or cold milk
- For dessert, serve warm with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream
- Pack individually in parchment paper for portable snacks
- Drizzle with melted chocolate for special occasions

Gluten-Free Linzer Cookies

Shortbread-style gluten-free cookies made with almond flour and a 1:1 GF blend are rolled, cut into rounds with a window, chilled, then baked until pale golden. Filled with raspberry preserves and dusted with powdered sugar. Makes approximately 18–24 assembled cookies; serves 8–12 as dessert.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Butter, cool | 12 Tbsp. (170g) | BRM 1:1 G.F. flour | 1 cup (150g) |
| Powdered sugar | $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (80g) | Blanched almond flour | 1 cup (96g) |
| Egg yolks, large | 2 | Cornstarch | 2 Tbsp. (15g) |
| Mexican vanilla | 1 tsp. | Fine salt | $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. |
| Lemon zest | 1 Tbsp. | Ground cinnamon | $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. |
| | | Raspberry preserves | $\frac{3}{4}$ cup |

Directions

Zest **lemon** — Measure and whisk together 1 cup **GF flour**, 1 cup **almond flour**, 2 Tbsp. **cornstarch**, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. **salt**, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **cinnamon** in *Medium Bowl #1* (dry ingredients) — Separate **eggs**, reserving yolks; combine 2 **egg yolks**, 1 tsp. **vanilla**, and 1 Tbsp. **lemon zest** in *Small Bowl #1* (wet ingredients) — Cut 12 Tbsp. **butter** into 1-inch cubes — Measure $\frac{3}{4}$ cup **raspberry preserves** into *Small Bowl #2* (filling) — Place **powdered sugar** for dusting in *Small Bowl #3*

1. Ensure **butter** is cool but pliable ($60\text{--}65^{\circ}\text{F}$): it should hold a fingerprint when pressed but not squish through. In a large bowl, beat 12 Tbsp. **butter** and $\frac{2}{3}$ cup **powdered sugar** with a hand mixer on medium speed until smooth and slightly fluffy with no visible sugar granules, about 2–3 minutes. Scrape bowl.
2. Add 2 **egg yolks**, 1 tsp. **vanilla**, and 1 Tbsp. **lemon zest** (*Small Bowl #1*). Beat on medium-low speed until smooth and uniform with no streaks, about 30 seconds. Scrape bowl.
3. Add dry ingredients (*Medium Bowl #1*) all at once. Mix on low speed until dough appears crumbly but holds together when pressed, with no dry flour patches, about 45 seconds–1 minute. The mixture should look like coarse, moist sand that clumps when squeezed. Do not overmix.
4. Turn dough onto a work surface. Gently press together into a cohesive mass—dough should feel slightly tacky but not sticky. Divide in half. Pat each half into a flat disc about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap.
5. Refrigerate for a minimum of 4 hours, preferably *overnight*. This extended rest is critical: it allows the GF starches to fully hydrate, eliminating grittiness and ensuring the dough rolls without cracking.
6. When ready to bake, remove one disc from the refrigerator. Let rest at room temperature for 5–8 minutes until pliable but still cool to the touch. Preheat oven to 325°F . Line two baking sheets with parchment.

7. Roll dough between two sheets of parchment paper to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thickness. Dough should feel firm but pliable. If dough cracks at edges, let it warm slightly at room temperature for 2–3 minutes; if it becomes sticky or soft, return to refrigerator for 10 minutes until firm again.
8. Using a 2-inch fluted cutter, cut rounds from dough. Transfer half the rounds (bottoms) to prepared baking sheet, spacing them about 1 inch apart. Using a small cutter ($\frac{3}{4}$ inch), cut a window in the center of remaining rounds (tops). The window should be centered and cleanly cut—if edges tear, the dough may need to chill longer. Transfer tops to second baking sheet. Gather scraps, re-roll once, and cut additional cookies.
9. Place baking sheets in freezer for 15–20 minutes. This prevents spreading and maintains sharp edges.
10. Bake cookies directly from freezer at 325°F for 10–12 minutes (tops may need 1 minute less). Cookies are done when edges turn pale golden and feel firm, while centers appear slightly underdone but will set upon cooling. Continue baking in 1 minute increments if edges are not yet golden.
11. Cool on baking sheet for 5 minutes, then transfer to wire rack to cool completely, at least 30 minutes. Repeat with second disc of dough.
12. To assemble: Place tops on a sheet of parchment. Using a fine-mesh sieve, dust generously with **powdered sugar** (*Small Bowl #3*) until evenly coated. Spread approximately 1 tsp. **raspberry preserves** ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup, *Small Bowl #2*) on the flat side of each bottom cookie, leaving a $\frac{1}{8}$ inch border. Gently place a sugared top on each bottom, pressing lightly until cookies adhere and preserves are just visible through the window.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Hand mixer
- Large bowl for mixing
- Two rimmed baking sheets
- Parchment paper
- Rolling pin
- 2-inch fluted round cookie cutter
- 3/4 inch round or decorative mini cutter
- Fine-mesh sieve for dusting
- Wire cooling rack
- Plastic wrap
- Offset spatula (for transferring)
- Digital scale (highly recommended)

Ingredient Tips

- Use Bob's Red Mill 1:1 in the blue bag, it contains xanthan gum; do not add additional xanthan
- Superfine blanched **almond flour** prevents grittiness; if yours is coarse, pulse briefly in food processor
- European-style **butter** (82%+ fat) produces a richer, more tender cookie
- For **preserves**, choose a quality brand (Bonne Maman) with visible fruit pieces; if too loose, simmer with 1 Tbsp. lemon juice until thickened
- Fresh **lemon zest** is essential, dried zest lacks the volatile oils that brighten the flavor

Hints and Notes

Yield

- Makes approximately 18–24 assembled cookies (depending on re-rolling)
- Serves 8–12 as dessert

Mise en Place

- Remove **butter** from refrigerator 15–20 minutes before mixing, target 60–65°F
- Zest **lemon** before juicing (zest keeps better on whole fruit)
- *Medium Bowl #1* — dry ingredients (1 cup **GF flour**, 1 cup **almond flour**, 2 Tbsp. **cornstarch**, 1/4 tsp. **salt**, 1/2 tsp. **cinnamon**) (about 2 cups)
- *Small Bowl #1* — wet ingredients (2 **egg yolks**, 1 tsp. **vanilla**, 1 Tbsp. **lemon zest**)
- *Small Bowl #2* — **raspberry preserves** (3/4 cup) for assembly
- *Small Bowl #3* — **powdered sugar** for dusting
- Separate **eggs** while cold (easier separation), then let yolks come to room temperature
- Clear freezer space for chilling cut cookies

Preparation Tips

- The overnight rest is not optional for GF, shorter chilling produces gritty cookies
- Roll between parchment to avoid adding excess flour, which toughens the dough
- Work quickly once dough warms; return to refrigerator as needed
- Re-roll scraps only once, overworked dough spreads and toughens
- Freeze cut cookies before baking to prevent spreading and preserve fluted edges
- Bake one sheet at a time in center of oven for even browning
- Cookies will feel soft when removed, do not overbake; they firm as they cool

Make Ahead & Storage

- Dough can be refrigerated up to *3 days* or frozen up to *2 months*
- Thaw frozen dough overnight in refrigerator before rolling
- Unfilled baked cookies keep *5 days* in airtight container at room temperature
- Assemble cookies *1–2 days* before serving for best texture, jam softens cookies into ideal tenderness
- Filled cookies keep *5–7 days* in airtight container; texture improves on day two
- Do not refrigerate filled cookies, condensation softens the powdered sugar

Serving Suggestions

- Dust with additional **powdered sugar** just before serving if needed
- Present on a tiered stand or arranged on parchment-lined box for gifting
- Pairs beautifully with strong coffee, Earl Grey tea, or dessert wine

- For variation, fill with apricot preserves (traditional Austrian) or lemon curd
- Store tops and bottoms separately if making ahead; assemble day of serving for crispest texture

Troubleshooting

- *Cookies spread too much:* Dough was too warm; freeze longer before baking, or chill between batches
- *Cookies crack when rolling:* Dough is too cold; let rest at room temperature a few more minutes
- *Gritty texture:* Insufficient resting time; always chill minimum *4 hours*, preferably overnight
- *Cookies too hard:* Overbaked; reduce time by *1–2 minutes*; edges should be barely golden
- *Dough too sticky:* Kitchen too warm; work in shorter sessions, returning dough to refrigerator frequently
- *Jam leaks out sides:* Too much filling; use scant teaspoon and leave border

Holiday Spice Cake

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------|-----------------|-------------|
| All-purpose flour | 1½ cups | Salt | ½ tsp. |
| Sugar | 1 cup | Vegetable oil | ⅔ cup |
| Light brown sugar | ¼ cup | Applesauce | ⅓ cup |
| Baking powder | 1 tsp. | Eggs | 2 |
| Cocoa powder | 1 Tbsp. | Mexican Vanilla | 1 tsp. |
| Ground cinnamon | 1 Tbsp. | Powdered sugar | for dusting |
| Ground ginger | 2 tsp. | | |
| Ground nutmeg | ½ tsp. | | |
| Ground allspice | ¼ tsp. | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F

1. In *Medium Bowl #1*, whisk together 1 cup **sugar**, ¼ cup **brown sugar**, 1½ cups **flour**, 1 tsp. **baking powder**, ½ tsp. **salt**, 1 Tbsp. **cocoa powder**, 1 Tbsp. **cinnamon**, 2 tsp. **ginger**, ½ tsp. **nutmeg**, and ¼ tsp. **allspice**.
2. In *Large Bowl #1*, beat ⅔ cup **vegetable oil**, ⅓ cup **applesauce**, **eggs**, and 1 tsp. **vanilla extract** until well combined.
3. Add dry ingredients (*Medium Bowl #1*) to wet ingredients (*Large Bowl #1*) and stir until just blended.
4. Pour batter into a buttered and floured 9 inch×5 inch loaf pan, smoothing the top with a spatula.
5. Bake until golden and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, about 40-45 minutes.
6. Cool in pan for 10 minutes, then unmold onto a wire rack to cool completely.
7. Dust with **powdered sugar** before serving.

Injera Bread

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
| Teff flour, whole grain | 2 cups | Baking powder | ¼ tsp. |
| Water, filtered/bottled | 3 cups | Vegetable oil | 1 tsp. |
| Active dry yeast | ¼ tsp. | | |
| Salt | ½ tsp. | | |

Directions

Measure **teff flour** — Dissolve **yeast** in ¼ cup warm **water** (105-110°F)

Day 1 (Morning)

1. In a large non-reactive bowl, dissolve **active dry yeast** in ¼ cup warm **water** (105-110°F). Let stand 5 minutes until foamy. (*Water must be chlorine-free to allow fermentation*)
2. Add **teff flour** and 2¼ cups room temperature **water** to yeast mixture. Whisk vigorously until completely smooth with no lumps. The batter should be thin, similar to crepe batter, and coat a spoon in a thin layer.
3. Cover bowl loosely with clean kitchen towel or cheesecloth (do not seal—fermentation produces CO₂ that must escape). Place in warm location (68-75°F) away from direct sunlight.

Days 2-3 (Fermentation)

4. Monitor fermentation progress *twice daily*. Healthy fermentation indicators:
 - Surface bubbling and active foaming
 - Pleasant sour aroma (lactic fermentation, similar to yogurt)
 - Thin layer of clear liquid (hooch) on surface—stir this back in
 - Batter will thin slightly as enzymatic activity breaks down starches
5. Check for contamination signs (see detailed notes on page 2). If contamination is suspected, discard and restart.
6. Batter is ready when it shows active bubbling, smells pleasantly sour, and has fermented for 48-72 hours. In cooler environments, full fermentation may require 3 days.

Cooking Day

7. Thin batter with remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup **water** if needed—it should pour easily in a thin stream and coat a spoon lightly. Gently stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **salt** and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. **baking powder** just before cooking (do not overmix).
8. Heat a 10-12 inch non-stick skillet over medium heat until a drop of **water** dances on the surface. Very lightly oil the pan with **vegetable oil** for the first **injera** only.
9. Pour approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ cup **batter** into the pan in a rapid spiral motion from outside edge to center, tilting pan to ensure even coverage. The entire pour should take *3-4 seconds*—speed is critical for uniform thickness.
10. Immediately cover with a tight-fitting lid. Cook for *60-90 seconds* without lifting lid. Surface should be completely dry with numerous small holes (aynet) covering the entire surface. Bottom should be lightly set but not browned.
11. Remove **injera** without flipping (it cooks on one side only) and place on clean kitchen towel to cool. Do not stack while hot.
12. Repeat with remaining **batter**, adjusting heat as needed. No additional oil should be necessary after the first **injera**.
13. Once cooled to room temperature, stack **injera** between layers of parchment paper or clean towels. Use immediately or store.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Large non-reactive bowl (glass, ceramic, or stainless steel—minimum 3-quart capacity)
- Clean kitchen towel or cheesecloth for covering
- Wire whisk
- 10-12 inch non-stick skillet with tight-fitting lid (essential for steam)
- Ladle or measuring cup (½ cup capacity)
- Clean kitchen towels for cooling and storage
- Instant-read thermometer (for water temperature)
- Parchment paper for stacking

Mise en Place

- Prepare chlorine-free **water** at least *24 hours* in advance if using tap water (let stand uncovered to allow chlorine to evaporate)
- Ensure fermentation location maintains *68-75°F*—cooler temperatures slow fermentation significantly
- Use room temperature ingredients for initial mixing
- Have **salt** and **baking powder** measured and ready to add on cooking day
- Test skillet with water drop before beginning to cook

Ingredient Tips

- **Teff flour:** Use 100% whole grain teff for authentic flavor and texture. Brown teff produces more robust flavor; white teff creates milder, lighter-colored **injera**. Store **teff flour** in refrigerator or freezer to prevent rancidity.
- Chlorine in tap water inhibits fermentation—use filtered water or let tap water stand uncovered for *24 hours*
- **Yeast** acts as fermentation starter to ensure reliable results; traditional methods rely solely on wild yeasts but are less predictable

- **Baking powder** added on cooking day provides additional lift and insurance for hole formation

Fermentation Monitoring

- **Healthy fermentation:** Pleasant sour smell (lactic acid, yogurt-like), active bubbling, thin clear liquid on top, batter thins over time
- **CONTAMINATION SIGNS—DISCARD IF OBSERVED:**
 - Pink, orange, or red discoloration (bacterial contamination)
 - Fuzzy growth on surface (mold—white, green, black, or gray)
 - Putrid, rotten, or ammonia-like smell (spoilage bacteria)
 - Slimy or ropy texture when stirred (certain bacteria produce polysaccharides)
 - Complete separation with clear **water** on top and thick paste on bottom (failed fermentation)
- Stir batter *once daily* to redistribute microorganisms and prevent surface drying
- Temperature critical: below *65°F* fermentation is very slow; above *80°F* increases contamination risk
- If fermentation seems sluggish after *48 hours*, move to warmer location or extend fermentation time

Preparation Tips

- Batter consistency is critical—too thick produces dense **injera** without holes; too thin creates fragile bread that tears
- Pour rapidly in continuous spiral motion—hesitation creates uneven thickness and poor hole distribution
- **Lid must fit tightly**—steam trapped under lid creates the characteristic holes. Without steam, surface remains flat
- First **injera** is often imperfect as pan temperature stabilizes—consider it a test piece

- Do not flip or cook second side—**injera** has distinct top (holey) and bottom (smooth) surfaces
- If holes fail to form: batter may need more fermentation time, **baking powder** may be old, or lid may not seal properly
- Adjust heat between batches—pan should be hot enough for immediate bubbling but not so hot that bottom burns before top sets
- Stack only when completely cool to prevent steaming and sogginess

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Batter** can be refrigerated after fermentation for up to *24 hours*—bring to room temperature before cooking
 - Cooked **injera** stores at room temperature for *2-3 days* wrapped in clean towel, then placed in plastic bag
 - Refrigerate for up to *1 week*—layer with parchment paper and store in airtight container
 - Freeze for up to *3 months*—layer with parchment, wrap tightly, and thaw at room temperature
- Best served at room temperature or slightly warm
 - **Injera** becomes more pliable and easier to tear after *24 hours* as starches retrograde

Serving Suggestions

- Traditionally used as both plate and utensil—tear pieces with right hand to scoop stews and sauces
- Pairs excellently with Ethiopian wot (spiced stews), Moroccan tagines, or any rich, sauce-based dish
- The sour notes complement fatty meats (lamb, beef) and cut through richness of cream-based sauces
- Spongy texture absorbs sauces while maintaining structural integrity for scooping
- Serve at room temperature—cold **injera** is less pliable
- For traditional presentation, line large platter with **injera**, arrange stews on top, and serve additional **injera** rolled on the side
- Leftover **injera** can be torn and mixed with scrambled eggs for Ethiopian firfir breakfast dish

Leta's Fruit Crunch •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------------------|---------|
| Frozen mixed berries | 4 cups | Salt | 1 tsp. |
| Brown sugar | ¼ cup | Cinnamon | 1 tsp. |
| All-purpose flour (130g) | 1 cup | Eggs | 2 large |
| Sugar | 1 cup | Butter | 4 Tbsp. |

Directions

Preheat oven to 375°F — Lightly beat **eggs**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Melt **butter**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Grease 8 inch×8 inch glass baking dish

1. Mix **frozen berries** with ¼ cup **brown sugar** and spread in a baking dish.
2. In *Medium Bowl #1*, combine 1 cup **flour**, 1 cup **sugar**, 1 tsp. **salt**, and 1 tsp. **cinnamon**.
3. Using a whisk, gradually add beaten **egg** (*Small Bowl #1*) to the flour mixture, a small amount at a time with a spoon.

IMPORTANT: Use a chopping motion with the whisk (not stirring) to incorporate each addition of egg until the mixture reaches a clumpy wet sand consistency. Be patient and methodical, and do not use all of the egg.

4. Sprinkle the crumble mixture evenly over the **fruit**.
5. Pour melted **butter** (*Small Bowl #2*) over the top.
6. Bake for 60-75 minutes until golden brown and bubbly.

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Equipment Required

- 8 inch×8 inch glass baking dish
- Large mixing bowl
- Small bowl for beaten egg
- Whisk
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Small saucepan or microwave-safe bowl for melting butter
- Rubber spatula

Mise en Place

- Keep **fruit** frozen until ready to use
- Beat **eggs** before starting
- Measure all ingredients before beginning
- Have whisk ready for proper mixing technique

Ingredient Tips

- Use frozen mixed berries straight from freezer
- If **fruit** has excess ice crystals, do not thaw, simply break up any large clumps
- Large **eggs** should be at room temperature for better incorporation
- Standard salted or unsalted butter works well

Preparation Tips

- The chopping motion with the whisk is crucial - do not stir
- Add **egg** very gradually, small amounts at a time
- The mixture should resemble wet sand before topping the fruit
- Spread topping evenly but do not pack it down
- Pour **butter** evenly over the entire surface

Make Ahead & Storage

- Best served warm from the oven
- Can be assembled and refrigerated for up to *24 hours* before baking
- Leftovers keep well covered at room temperature for *2 days* or refrigerated for *7 days*
- Reheat individual portions in microwave for *30 seconds*

Serving Suggestions

- Serve warm with vanilla ice cream
- Allow to cool for *10 minutes* before serving

Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---|---------|
| Butter, softened | 1 cup (2 sticks) | Ground cinnamon | 1½ tsp. |
| Brown sugar, firmly packed | 1 cup | Salt | ½ tsp. |
| Granulated sugar | ½ cup | Old-fashioned or quick-cooking oats | 3 cups |
| Eggs, large | 2 | Semisweet chocolate chips | 1½ cups |
| Mexican vanilla | 1½ tsp. | | |
| All-purpose flour | 1½ cups | | |
| Baking soda | 1 tsp. | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F — Bring **butter** and **eggs** to room temperature — Line baking sheets with parchment or leave ungreased — Combine 1½ cups **flour**, 1 tsp. **baking soda**, 1½ tsp. **cinnamon**, and ½ tsp. **salt** in *Medium Bowl #1* (dry ingredients) — Combine 3 cups **oats** and 1½ cups **semisweet chocolate chips** in *Large Bowl #1*

1. In a large bowl, beat 1 cup **butter**, 1 cup **brown sugar**, and ½ cup **granulated sugar** on medium speed until creamy and no visible sugar granules remain, about 2–3 *minutes*. Scrape bowl.
2. Add 2 **eggs** and 1½ tsp. **Mexican vanilla**. Beat well until smooth and fully incorporated, about 1 *minute*. Scrape bowl.
3. Add dry ingredients (*Medium Bowl #1*). Mix on low speed until no dry flour remains and dough is uniform, about 30–45 *seconds*. Do not overmix.
4. Add **oats** and **semisweet chocolate chips** (*Large Bowl #1*). Stir by hand or on low speed until evenly distributed; dough will be thick and chunky.
5. Drop dough by rounded tablespoonfuls onto ungreased or parchment-lined baking sheets, spacing about 2 *inches* apart. Keep portion size consistent for even baking.
6. Bake at 350°F for 8–10 *minutes* until edges are light golden brown and centers still look soft and slightly underdone. Cookies are done when edges feel set and golden and centers appear moist but not raw; they will set further as they cool. Continue baking in 1 *minute* increments if edges are not yet golden.
7. Cool on baking sheet for 1 *minute*, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Repeat with remaining dough.

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Equipment Required

- Large mixing bowl
- Hand mixer or stand mixer
- Baking sheets (2 recommended)
- Parchment paper (optional)
- Tablespoon measure or $1\frac{1}{2}$ –2 Tbsp. cookie scoop
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Rubber spatula
- Wire cooling rack
- Medium Bowl (dry ingredients)
- Large Bowl (oats and chocolate chips)

Hints and Notes

Yield

- Makes about 4 dozen cookies (depending on scoop size)

Mise en Place

- *Medium Bowl #1* — dry ingredients: $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups **flour**, 1 tsp. **baking soda**, $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **cinnamon**, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **salt**
- *Large Bowl #1* — 3 cups **oats**, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups **semisweet chocolate chips**
- Bring **butter** and **eggs** to room temperature 1 hour before mixing for easier creaming and smoother dough

Ingredient Tips

- **Mexican vanilla** adds warmth and depth; pure vanilla extract can substitute at 1 tsp.

- **Old-fashioned oats** give more texture; **quick-cooking oats** yield a slightly softer, more uniform cookie.
- Use **semisweet chocolate chips** (not milk) for balance with the sweet dough; 2 cups for a chunkier cookie if preferred.

Preparation Tips

- Room-temperature **butter** creams properly; cold butter will leave a grainy or stiff dough.
- Don't overbake: cookies are done when edges are golden and centers still look soft; they firm up on the rack.
- If baking two sheets at once, rotate positions halfway through for even browning.
- Dropped cookies spread; 2 inch spacing prevents merging.

Make Ahead & Storage

- Dough can be covered and refrigerated up to 3 days; let sit 10–15 minutes at room temperature before scooping if very firm.
- Portioned dough balls freeze well on a tray, then in a bag, for 2–3 months; bake from frozen, adding 1–2 minutes to bake time.
- Baked cookies keep in an airtight container at room temperature for 4–5 days, or freeze up to 3 months.

Serving Suggestions

- Best at room temperature with cold milk or coffee
- Sturdy enough for lunch boxes and cookie tins
- Crumble over vanilla ice cream or use for ice cream sandwiches

Peanut Butter Cookies •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--|---------|---------------------------|--------|
| Peanut butter (creamy) | 1¼ cups | Baking soda | 1 tsp. |
| Eggs, large | 2 | Mexican vanilla | 1 tsp. |
| Sugar | 1 cup | Salt | 1 tsp. |
| Granulated sugar (for rolling) | ¼ cup | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F — Bring **peanut butter** and **eggs** to room temperature — Line baking sheets with parchment paper — Place **rolling sugar** in shallow dish

1. Mix the dough in a large bowl:
 - (a) Stir room temperature **peanut butter** and **sugar** vigorously with a sturdy spatula or wooden spoon until smooth and no visible sugar granules remain, about *3–5 minutes*. Scrape bowl as needed. (Or use a hand mixer or stand mixer on medium for about *1–2 minutes*.)
 - (b) Add **eggs** one at a time, mixing well after each until fully incorporated.
 - (c) Add **Mexican vanilla** and mix until combined.
 - (d) Add **baking soda** and **salt** and stir until just combined; dough should be smooth and uniform.
2. Cover bowl and chill dough for *15 minutes* to make it easier to handle.
3. Using a $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch cookie scoop or rounded tablespoon, portion dough into balls.
4. Roll each ball in **granulated sugar** until completely coated.
5. Place sugared balls on prepared baking sheets, spacing 2 inches apart.
6. Press each cookie with a fork twice, creating a crisscross pattern on top. If fork sticks to dough, dip it in the **rolling sugar** between cookies.
7. Bake for *12–13 minutes* until edges are lightly golden but centers still appear soft. If baking two sheets at once, rotate their positions halfway through baking.
8. Let cookies cool on baking sheet for *5 minutes* before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

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Equipment Required

- Large mixing bowl
- Sturdy spatula or wooden spoon
- 1¾ inch cookie scoop or tablespoon measure
- Baking sheets
- Parchment paper
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Fork for creating pattern
- Shallow dish for rolling sugar
- Wire cooling rack
- Rubber spatula
- Hand mixer or stand mixer (optional)

Mise en Place

- Remove **peanut butter** and **eggs** from refrigerator *1 hour* before starting
- Line baking sheets with parchment
- Measure all ingredients before beginning
- Set up sugar rolling station

Ingredient Tips

- Use commercial creamy peanut butter (like JIF or Skippy) rather than natural style
- Room temperature **peanut butter** creates a smoother dough

- For extra crunch, use coarse sugar for rolling
- Mexican vanilla adds depth, but pure vanilla extract can substitute

Preparation Tips

- Don't skip the *15 minute* chill time - it makes the dough easier to handle
- Keep cookie size consistent for even baking
- Press fork just deep enough to create pattern without flattening cookies too much
- Cookies will appear slightly underbaked when done but will set as they cool

Make Ahead & Storage

- Dough can be chilled up to *24 hours*
- Baked cookies keep in airtight container for *5 days*
- Freeze baked cookies up to *3 months*
- Freeze portioned dough balls up to *3 months* - roll in sugar after thawing

Serving Suggestions

- Best served at room temperature
- Excellent with cold milk or hot coffee
- Crumble over vanilla ice cream
- Pack in lunch boxes or cookie tins
- Use as base for ice cream sandwiches

Pumpkin Pie

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------|
| Frozen Pie Crusts | 2 | Milk | ½ cup |
| Cream Cheese | 8 oz. | Butter, melted | ¼ cup |
| Canned Pumpkin | 2 cups | Vanilla extract | 1 tsp. |
| Sugar | 1 cup | Cinnamon, ground | ½ tsp. |
| Salt | ¼ tsp. | Ginger, ground | ½ tsp. |
| Eggs (1 whole plus 2 yolks) | 3 eggs | Whipped Cream | 1 cup |
| Heavy cream | ½ cup | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F — Thaw **pie crusts** about *15 minutes* at room temperature — Lightly beat **eggs**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1*

Pie Crusts

1. Fit a piece of aluminum foil to cover the inside of the shell completely. Fill the shell to the edges with dried beans.
2. Bake the **pie crusts** at 350°F for *10 minutes*, then remove the beans and foil and bake for another *5-10 minutes* until dried and beginning to color. Keep warm.

Filling

1. In *Large Bowl #1*, beat the **cream cheese** with a hand mixer.
2. Add the **pumpkin**, then beat until combined.
3. Add 1 cup **sugar** and ¼ tsp. **salt**, then beat until combined.
4. Add the **eggs** (*Small Bowl #1*), ½ cup **milk**, ½ cup **cream**, and ¼ cup melted **butter**, then beat until combined.
5. Add 1 tsp. **vanilla**, ½ tsp. **cinnamon**, and ½ tsp. **ginger**, then beat until combined.
6. Pour the filling into the pie crusts and loosely wrap the edges with aluminum foil to prevent burning.
7. Bake for *40 minutes* at 350°F
8. Remove foil from edges and bake for *10 minutes*, or until the center is set.
9. Cool on a wire rack until room temperature. Slice and serve topped with **whipped cream**.

Raspberry Swirl Lemon Bars •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Fresh raspberries | 1½ cups | Meyer lemons | 3 |
| Granulated sugar | 1 cup | Mexican vanilla extract | ½ tsp. |
| Gluten-free flour | 1 cup | Eggs | 3 |
| Almond flour, finely ground | 2 Tbsp. | Egg yolk | 1 |
| Cornstarch | 3 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. | TrueLemon powder | 2 tsp. |
| Powdered sugar | ⅓ cup | Salt | ¾ tsp. |
| Kerrygold butter | 14 Tbsp. | Powdered sugar | for dusting |
| | | Flaky salt | for sprinkling |

Raspberry Reduction

Zest all 3 **Meyer lemons**; set aside zest from 1 lemon in *Small Bowl #1* (for crust) and zest from 2 lemons in *Small Bowl #2* (for curd) — Juice all 3 **lemons** to yield ½ cup + 2 tsp. juice; reserve 2 tsp. for reduction and ½ cup in *Small Bowl #3* (for curd)

1. Combine 1½ cups **fresh raspberries**, ¼ cup **granulated sugar**, 2 tsp. **lemon juice**, and ¼ tsp. **salt** in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, crushing **berries** with a wooden spoon as they soften. Cook for 3-4 *minutes* until berries have broken down completely; berries should be fully soft and pulpy with no whole berries remaining, and the mixture should be bubbling gently throughout.
2. Press mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into *Small Bowl #4*, using a silicone spatula to extract all liquid and leave seeds behind. Discard seeds. You should have about ¾ cup strained raspberry liquid.
3. Return strained liquid to the saucepan. Mix 1 tsp. **cornstarch** with 1 tsp. cold water in a small cup until smooth. Whisk cornstarch slurry into **raspberry liquid**.
4. Simmer over medium-low heat, stirring frequently, until mixture is reduced by half and has thickened to a honey-like consistency, about 8-10 *minutes*. The reduction should coat the back of a spoon thickly and mound slightly when dripped. It will thicken further as it cools.
5. Transfer to *Small Bowl #5* and let cool to room temperature, about 30 *minutes*. Stir occasionally to prevent skin formation. The reduction is ready when the bowl feels cool to the touch (not warm) and the reduction has thickened to a honey-like consistency that flows slowly. Once cooled, transfer to a piping bag or squeeze bottle with a small round tip. Set aside until ready to use.

Shortbread Crust

Preheat oven to 350°F — Line 8 inch×8 inch pan with parchment paper, leaving overhang — Bring 8 Tbsp. **butter** to room temperature

1. In *Medium Bowl #1*, whisk together 1 cup **gluten free flour**, 2 Tbsp. **almond flour**, 2 Tbsp. **cornstarch**, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup **powdered sugar**, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. **salt**. Add 8 Tbsp. softened **butter**, **lemon zest** (*Small Bowl #1*), and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **vanilla extract**. Mix with a fork or your hands until mixture forms clumps and holds together when pressed.
2. Press dough evenly into prepared pan, creating a uniform $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick layer. Use the bottom of a measuring cup to compact and smooth the surface. Dock the crust all over with a fork.
3. Bake at 350°F for 22-28 minutes until crust is done: edges are medium golden brown, center is light golden and appears dry/matte (not sticky or soft), and surface feels firm when gently pressed. The crust should be fully set throughout. Remove from oven and reduce temperature to 325°F .

Lemon Curd

Cut 6 Tbsp. **butter** into tablespoon pieces; set aside in *Small Bowl #6*

1. While crust bakes, whisk together $\frac{2}{3}$ cup **granulated sugar** and 1 tsp. **cornstarch** in a medium saucepan. Add **eggs** and **egg yolk**, whisking until smooth.
2. Add **lemon juice** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup, *Small Bowl #3*), **lemon zest** (*Small Bowl #2*), 2 tsp. **TrueLemon powder**, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. **salt**. Whisk to combine.
3. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula or wooden spoon, scraping the bottom and sides of the pan. Cook until mixture thickens noticeably and reaches 170°F , about 8-10 minutes. The curd is done when it reaches 170°F on an instant-read thermometer, or when it coats the back of a spoon thickly and leaves a clear trail when you draw your finger through it (the trail should not immediately fill in). The mixture should have the consistency of thick pudding and should not look watery or thin.
4. Remove from heat and immediately stir in 6 Tbsp. **butter** (*Small Bowl #6*), one piece at a time, until fully incorporated and smooth.
5. Strain the hot curd through a fine-mesh sieve into *Small Bowl #7* to remove **zest** bits and any cooked egg pieces.

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Assembly and Baking

1. Pour strained curd onto the hot pre-baked crust, spreading gently to edges if needed.
2. Immediately pipe **raspberry reduction** (*Small Bowl #5*) in desired pattern on the surface of the **lemon curd**. Optionally drag a toothpick through the lines to create a marbled effect.
3. Bake at 325°F for *15-18 minutes* until filling is set: edges should be firm and pull slightly away from the pan sides, center should jiggle slightly when gently shaken (like a creamy custard, not liquid), and surface should appear matte (not shiny) with no wet spots. The **raspberry reduction** will set into the curd, creating a beautiful burgundy accent. If center still looks wet or sloshes, continue baking in *2 minute* increments.

Finishing

1. Cool completely in the pan on a wire rack for *1 hour* (pan should feel cool to the touch, not warm), then refrigerate for at least *3 hours* or overnight (filling should be firm throughout when ready to cut).
2. Use parchment overhang to lift bars from pan. Cut into 16 squares using a sharp knife, wiping blade clean between cuts.
3. Just before serving, dust moderately with **powdered sugar** and sprinkle lightly with **flaky sea salt**.

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Yield

- Makes 16 squares (8x8 inch pan)
- Serves 8-12 as dessert

Equipment Required

- 8x8 inch baking pan
- Parchment paper
- Small saucepan (1-quart capacity, for raspberry reduction)
- Medium saucepan (2-quart capacity, for lemon curd)
- Medium mixing bowl (for crust)
- Fine-mesh sieve or strainer (for straining raspberries and lemon curd)
- Piping bag or squeeze bottle with small round tip
- Silicone spatula or wooden spoon
- Whisk
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Microplane or fine grater (for zest)
- Citrus juicer or reamer (for juicing lemons)
- Fork (for docking crust)
- Instant-read thermometer (optional but helpful)
- Toothpick (optional, for swirling)
- Sharp knife for cutting
- Wire cooling rack

Mise en Place

- *Small Bowl #1* — lemon zest from 1 lemon (for crust)
- *Small Bowl #2* — lemon zest from 2 lemons (for curd)
- *Small Bowl #3* — lemon juice ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup from 3 lemons, for curd)
- *Small Bowl #4* — strained raspberry liquid (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
- *Small Bowl #5* — cooled raspberry reduction in piping bag (ready to pipe)

- *Small Bowl #6* — 6 Tbsp. butter cut into pieces (for curd)
- *Small Bowl #7* — strained lemon curd (ready to pour)
- *Medium Bowl #1* — crust dry ingredients mixed with butter
- Zest all **Meyer lemons** before juicing (zest 1 for crust, zest 2 for curd, then juice all 3 for $\frac{1}{2}$ cup + 2 tsp.)
- Reserve 2 tsp. **lemon juice** for raspberry reduction; remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup goes in *Small Bowl #3*
- Make **raspberry reduction** first; allow 30 minutes to cool to room temperature
- Bring 8 Tbsp. **butter** to room temperature for crust (1 hour)
- Line pan with parchment before starting
- Have all ingredients measured and ready
- Set up fine-mesh sieve over bowl for straining lemon curd
- Prepare piping bag or squeeze bottle with small round tip for raspberry reduction

Ingredient Tips

- Fresh **raspberries** should be ripe but not mushy; frozen raspberries work in a pinch but yield slightly more liquid
- Bob's Red Mill 1:1 G.F. flour works best; other blends may need adjustment
- **Almond flour** should be finely ground (blanched almond flour, not almond meal)
- European-style **butter** (Kerrygold, Plugrá) has higher fat content and richer flavor
- Use fresh **Meyer lemons**; zest before juicing, and 3 lemons yield about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup juice
- **TrueLemon powder** significantly amplifies lemon brightness without added liquid
- Fresh **lemon zest** is essential for aromatic oils and complexity
- Use the finest grater for **zest** to avoid bitter white pith

Preparation Tips

- Strain **raspberry** seeds thoroughly; any seeds in the reduction will clog piping tip
- Test reduction consistency when cool—it should be thick like honey but still flow smoothly through piping tip
- If reduction is too thick after cooling, warm slightly and thin with 1 tsp. water at a time
- Press crust very firmly and evenly; uneven thickness causes uneven baking
- Dock crust thoroughly to prevent bubbling during baking
- Don't underbake the crust; it's done when edges are medium golden brown, center is light golden and appears dry/matte (not sticky), and surface feels firm when gently pressed. Fully baked crust is essential for structural integrity and prevents sogginess from the filling
- Stir curd constantly to prevent curdling; use silicone spatula to scrape sides
- Watch for 170°F on thermometer or coat-the-spoon consistency
- Strain while curd is hot for easiest flow through sieve
- Pour curd onto hot crust immediately after straining
- Pipe **raspberry reduction** immediately after pouring lemon curd, before it begins to set
- Use thin, elegant lines or loops—less is more for visual impact
- The **raspberry** will deepen to burgundy during baking; this is normal and beautiful
- The filling will continue to set as it cools; slight jiggle is correct

- Clean knife between cuts for neat edges
- Add **powdered sugar** and **salt** just before serving to prevent dissolving

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Raspberry reduction** can be made up to *3 days* ahead; store covered in refrigerator and bring to room temperature before using
- Bars must cool completely and chill at least *3 hours* before cutting
- Best made a day ahead; flavors meld and texture improves overnight
- Store covered in refrigerator for up to *5 days*; bring to cool room temperature before serving for best texture (*15-20 minutes*)
- Can be frozen unfrosted for up to *2 months*; thaw in refrigerator overnight
- For meal prep, cut and store individually wrapped in refrigerator

Serving Suggestions

- Serve as elegant finger food dessert at room temperature
- Pair with hot tea, coffee, or sparkling wine
- Garnish individual servings with fresh mint, candied lemon peel, or fresh raspberries
- Serve alongside fresh berries or whipped cream for plated dessert
- The **flaky salt** provides crucial sweet-savory contrast

Chapter 7

BREAKFAST



Breakfast Burritos

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Breakfast sausage | 16-24 oz. | Salt | 1 tsp. |
| Bell pepper | 1 | Black pepper | ½ tsp. |
| Onion | 1 | Ground mustard | ¼ tsp. |
| Green chiles | 1 (6 oz.) can | MSG | ¼ tsp. |
| Eggs | 12 | Cooking oil (or spray) | 1 tsp. |
| Milk | 1½ cups | Frozen tater tots | 30 oz. |
| Sour cream | ¾ cup | Tortillas, burrito size | 12-16 |
| | | Shredded cheese | 3-4 cups |

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F — Dice **bell pepper** and **onion**; combine in *Small Bowl #1* (aromatics) — Drain **green chiles**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Shred **cheese**; set aside in *Large Bowl #1*

1. Cook the **breakfast sausage**, **bell pepper** and **onion** (*Small Bowl #1*), and **green chiles** (*Small Bowl #2*) over medium heat, crumbling the sausage until cooked through, about 10-12 minutes. Drain grease and transfer to *Large Bowl #2*; set aside.
2. Whisk together the **eggs**, **milk**, **sour cream**, 1 tsp. **salt**, ½ tsp. **black pepper**, ¼ tsp. **ground mustard**, and ¼ tsp. **MSG** in *Large Bowl #3* until smooth.
3. Lightly grease a 9 inch×13 inch baking pan with **oil** or cooking spray. Place the **tater tots** in the bottom of the pan.
4. Sprinkle the cooked **sausage** mixture (*Large Bowl #2*) over the **tater tots** in the prepared pan. Pour the **egg** mixture (*Large Bowl #3*) evenly over the top.
5. Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes covered, then 30-45 minutes uncovered until set.
6. If freezing, let the casserole cool to room temperature. Scoop about ½ cup of the casserole onto each **tortilla**, sprinkle with **cheese** (*Large Bowl #1*), fold the sides, and roll up into a burrito.
7. To freeze, wrap burritos in parchment paper or plastic wrap, and place in a freezer bag. Reheat in the microwave or oven as desired.

Breakfast Burritos (Easy Mode)

These Easy Breakfast Burritos are perfect for busy mornings, combining classic breakfast flavors in a convenient handheld meal. They can be prepped quickly and are freezable for grab-and-go breakfasts, requiring just two minutes in the microwave to reheat.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Vegetable oil | 3 Tbsp. | Black pepper | 1/2 tsp. |
| Hash brown potatoes | 4 cups | Salt | 1/2 tsp. |
| Breakfast sausage | 1 lb. | Cheddar and/or Jack cheese | 2 cups |
| Eggs | 8 | Flour tortillas | 12 |
| Chopped green chiles | 1 can | | |

Directions

Preheat large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat — Shred **cheese**; set aside in *Large Bowl #1* — Beat **eggs** with **green chiles**, 1/2 tsp. **salt**, and 1/2 tsp. **black pepper**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1*

1. Heat 2 Tbsp. **oil** in a nonstick skillet. Add **hash browns**, press down lightly, and cook without moving for *7 minutes*. Drizzle with remaining 1 Tbsp. **oil**, turn, and cook until browned and hot. Transfer to *Large Bowl #2* and set aside.
2. Cook **sausage** in the skillet until browned, breaking into crumbles, about *8-10 minutes*. Stir in **egg** mixture (*Medium Bowl #1*) and cook until scrambled, about *5-7 minutes*. Transfer to *Large Bowl #3* and set aside.
3. To assemble burritos, spoon a line of **hash browns** (*Large Bowl #2*) down the center of each **tortilla**. Top with **cheese** (*Large Bowl #1*) and **egg** mixture (*Large Bowl #3*).
4. Roll up each **tortilla** tightly to secure the filling. Serve immediately, or follow freezing instructions.
5. To freeze, wrap each burrito in foil and store in a freezer bag for up to *1 month*. To reheat, wrap in a damp paper towel and microwave until heated through.

Breakfast Casserole

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--|-----------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Bacon and/or breakfast sausage | 1 lb. | Black pepper | 1/2 tsp. |
| Onion, medium | 1 | White pepper | 1/4 tsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 3–4 | Ground mustard | 1/2 tsp. |
| Mushrooms, canned sliced | 8 oz. can | Thyme, dried | 1 tsp. |
| Frozen hash browns, shredded | 20 oz. | Smoked paprika | 1/2 tsp. |
| Butter or reserved fat | 2 Tbsp. | Cheddar cheese, shredded | 2 cups |
| Eggs, large | 12 | Smoked Gouda, shredded | 1 cup |
| Salt | 1 tsp. | Cherry tomatoes | 3/4–1 cup |
| | | Green onion | 2–3 stalks |

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F — Thaw **hash browns**; squeeze dry and set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Dice **onion** and mince **garlic**; combine in *Small Bowl #1* (aromatics) — Drain **mushrooms**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Shred **cheddar** and **smoked Gouda**; combine in *Large Bowl #1* — Halve **cherry tomatoes**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Slice **green onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #4*

1. In a 10–12 inch deep cast-iron skillet over medium heat, cook **bacon** and/or **sausage** until done: **bacon** is crisp and rendered, **sausage** has no pink remaining and is crumbled and browned. Transfer to *Medium Bowl #2* and crumble; set aside. Pour off all but 2 Tbsp. fat from skillet (or add **butter** if using only lean sausage). Reserve skillet.
2. In the same skillet over medium heat, sauté **onion** and **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*) until **onion** is translucent and softened, *about 5–6 minutes*. Add drained **mushrooms** (*Small Bowl #2*) and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender and any liquid has evaporated, *about 4–5 minutes*. Aromatics are done when **onion** is golden at the edges and **mushrooms** are lightly browned. Transfer to *Medium Bowl #3*; set aside. Wipe skillet if needed and add 1–2 Tbsp. **butter** or reserved fat.
3. Spread **hash browns** (*Medium Bowl #1*) in an even layer in the skillet and press down firmly. Cook over medium heat without stirring for *6–8 minutes* until bottom is golden brown and releases easily from the pan. Bottom is done when edges are crisp and the layer holds together when lifted with a spatula. Flip the hash brown layer in one piece (or in two halves if easier) and cook the second side for *5–7 minutes* until golden and crisp. Continue cooking in *1–2 minute* increments if the center is still pale or soft.
4. While the second side of the **hash browns** browns, in *Large Bowl #2* beat **eggs** with 1 tsp. **salt**, 1/2 tsp. **black pepper**, 1/4 tsp. **white pepper**, 1/2 tsp. **ground mustard**, 1 tsp. **thyme**, and 1/2 tsp. **smoked paprika** until well combined. Stir in cooked **bacon/sausage** (*Medium Bowl #2*), sautéed **aromatics** (*Medium Bowl #3*), and 1 1/2 cups of the **cheddar and Gouda** (*Large Bowl #1*).

5. Pour the **egg mixture** (*Large Bowl #2*) evenly over the **hash browns** in the skillet. Sprinkle the remaining $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups **cheddar and Gouda** (*Large Bowl #1*) over the top and scatter **cherry tomatoes** (*Small Bowl #3*), cut-side up, over the cheese.
6. Bake at $350^{\circ}F$ for *25–35 minutes* until the center is set: no runny egg when a knife is inserted near the center, top is lightly golden, and the casserole jiggles only slightly when gently shaken. Continue baking in *3–5 minute* increments if the center is still wet.
7. Let rest *5 minutes*, then sprinkle **green onion** (*Small Bowl #4*) over the top. Serve from the skillet.

* * *

Equipment Required

- 10–12 inch deep cast-iron skillet (oven-safe)
- Medium prep bowls (3)
- Small prep bowls (4)
- Large prep bowls (2)
- Whisk
- Spatula (for flipping hash browns)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Cutting board and chef's knife

Hints and Notes

Yield

- Serves 6–8 as main breakfast
- Makes one 10–12 inch skillet casserole

Mise en Place

- *Medium Bowl #1* — thawed, squeezed-dry **hash browns** (20 oz.)
- *Small Bowl #1* — aromatics: diced **onion** (1 medium), minced **garlic** (3–4 cloves)
- *Small Bowl #2* — drained **mushrooms** (8 oz. can)
- *Large Bowl #1* — shredded **cheddar** (2 cups) and **smoked Gouda** (1 cup) combined; 1½ cups go into egg mixture, 1½ cups for topping
- *Small Bowl #3* — halved **cherry tomatoes** (¾–1 cup)
- *Small Bowl #4* — sliced **green onion** (2–3 stalks, for finish)
- *Medium Bowl #2* — cooked, crumbled **bacon/sausage** (created in step 1)
- *Medium Bowl #3* — sautéed **onion, garlic, and mushrooms** (created in step 2)
- *Large Bowl #2* — **egg mixture**: beaten eggs with spices, meat, aromatics, and half the cheese (built in step 4)
- Thaw **hash browns** in refrigerator overnight or under cold running water; squeeze very dry to avoid a soggy crust

Ingredient Tips

- Use any combination of **bacon** and **sausage** totaling 1 lb.; thick-cut **bacon** gives the best texture

- **Smoked Gouda** pairs well with the **smoked paprika**; sharp **cheddar** adds tang
- Frozen **shredded hash browns** are easiest; squeeze out all excess moisture after thawing
- **White pepper** adds warmth without speckling; omit if you don't have it
- **Cherry tomatoes** can be omitted or reduced if you prefer less moisture on top

Preparation Tips

- Flipping the **hash brown** layer in one piece is easier when the bottom is fully golden and releases cleanly; use a large spatula or flip in two halves
- After the meat, leave 2 Tbsp. fat for the aromatics; after sautéing, if the pan is dry, add the full 1–2 Tbsp. **butter** or reserved fat so **hash browns** brown and release cleanly
- **Ground mustard** and **thyme** make the eggs taste much richer; don't skip them
- The casserole is done when the center no longer flows and the top is lightly golden; overcooking will dry out the eggs
- Rest 5 minutes before slicing so the egg layer sets for cleaner portions
- Best served hot; the hash brown layer is crispiest right out of the oven

Make Ahead & Storage

- Cook **bacon/sausage** and sauté **aromatics** up to 1 day ahead; store covered in refrigerator
- Assemble and bake the same day for best texture
- Leftovers keep 3–4 days refrigerated, covered
- Reheat portions in a skillet or microwave, or reheat the whole casserole at 350°F for 15–20 minutes until hot
- Freezes adequately for 2–3 months; thaw in refrigerator before reheating (**hash browns** may soften)

Serving Suggestions

- Serve hot from the skillet with **green onion** on top; season with salt and pepper at the table if desired
- Hot sauce, sour cream, or avocado on the side
- Pair with fruit salad or simple greens
- Excellent for brunch or weekend breakfast

Cheesy Bacon Hash Brown Casserole

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Frozen hash browns, thawed | 30 oz. | Sliced mushrooms | 8 oz. can |
| Cream of chicken soup | 10.5 oz. can | Sun-dried tomatoes | 1/2 cup |
| Sour cream | 1 3/4 cups | Garlic powder | 1 tsp. |
| Butter, melted | 1/2 cup | Onion powder | 1 tsp. |
| Onion, diced | 3/4 cup | Black pepper | 1/2 tsp. |
| Sharp cheddar cheese | 2 cups | Cayenne pepper (optional) | 1/4 tsp. |
| Gruyère cheese | 1 cup | Potato chips, crushed | 2 cups |
| Bacon, cooked and crumbled | 1 lb. | | |

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F — Grease a 9 inch×13 inch baking dish — Thaw and pat dry **hash browns**; set aside in *Large Bowl #1* — Dice **onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Shred **cheddar** and **Gruyère cheese**; combine in *Large Bowl #2* — Cook and crumble **bacon**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Drain and chop **mushrooms**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Crush **potato chips**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2*

1. Rehydrate **sun-dried tomatoes** in hot water for *10 minutes*, then drain and chop; set aside in *Small Bowl #3*.
2. In *Large Bowl #3*, mix **hash browns** (*Large Bowl #1*), **cream of chicken soup**, **sour cream**, melted **butter**, diced **onion** (*Small Bowl #1*), 1 1/2 cups **cheddar and Gruyère cheese** (*Large Bowl #2*), 3/4 of the crumbled **bacon** (*Medium Bowl #1*), chopped **mushrooms** (*Small Bowl #2*), chopped **sun-dried tomatoes** (*Small Bowl #3*), 1 tsp. **garlic powder**, 1 tsp. **onion powder**, 1/2 tsp. **black pepper**, and 1/4 tsp. **cayenne pepper** (if using).
3. Spread the mixture evenly in the prepared baking dish.
4. Top with remaining 1/2 cup **cheddar and Gruyère cheese** (*Large Bowl #2*) and crushed **potato chips** (*Medium Bowl #2*).
5. Bake for *50-55 minutes* until golden brown and bubbly.
6. Remove from oven and sprinkle remaining 1/4 of **bacon** (*Medium Bowl #1*) on top.
7. Let cool for *5-10 minutes* before serving.

Chapter 8

SAUCES



Candied Lemon Peel

Elegant candied citrus ribbons with concentrated lemon flavor and tender-chewy texture. Perfect as garnish for desserts, folded into baked goods, or enjoyed on their own. Using a dehydrator ensures consistent results and extended shelf life up to 6 months.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lemons, large | 3 | Superfine sugar | $\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ cup |
| Granulated sugar | $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups | Kosher salt | $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. |
| Water | $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups | | |

Yields approximately $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups candied peel. Meyer lemons work beautifully and candy faster due to thinner, sweeter peel. Use leftover peels from zested/juiced lemons for zero waste.

Directions

Cut **lemons** into quarters lengthwise — Remove flesh and white pith (reserve for other use); set peels aside in *Large Bowl #1* — Slice peel into $\frac{1}{8}$ inch strips — Prepare dehydrator with lined trays

1. Quarter **lemons** lengthwise. Use a spoon or small knife to scoop out all flesh and juice (reserve for another use). Use a paring knife to carefully remove most of the white pith from the inside of the peel, leaving a thin layer attached to the yellow zest. This reduces bitterness while maintaining structure. Cut peels into $\frac{1}{8}$ inch \times 2 inch strips. Transfer to *Large Bowl #1*.
2. Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. Add **lemon peel** strips (*Large Bowl #1*) and boil for 2 minutes. Drain completely in a colander. This is the first blanch.
3. Return peels to the pot with fresh cold water. Bring to a boil again and cook for 2 minutes. Drain completely. This is the second blanch.
4. Repeat the blanching process one more time with fresh cold water—bring to boil, cook 2 minutes, drain completely. This third blanch removes most of the bitterness from the pith while softening the peel. The strips should be tender but not falling apart. Transfer drained peels to *Medium Bowl #1*.
5. In a large, wide saucepan or deep skillet, combine $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups **granulated sugar**, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups **water**, and $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. **kosher salt**. Stir over medium heat until sugar dissolves completely, about 2–3 minutes.
6. Add blanched **lemon peels** (*Medium Bowl #1*) to the simple syrup. The peels should be mostly submerged. Bring to a gentle simmer, then reduce heat to maintain a bare simmer—small bubbles breaking the surface occasionally, not a rolling boil.

7. Simmer gently, stirring occasionally, for *40–50 minutes*. The peels will gradually become translucent and glossy, taking on a jewel-like appearance. The syrup will thicken slightly but should not caramelize. Monitor heat carefully—if syrup begins to color or thicken rapidly, reduce heat and add 2–3 Tbsp. water. The peels are ready when they're completely translucent, tender but still intact, and the syrup has reduced by about one-third.
8. Remove from heat. Allow peels to cool in the syrup for *10 minutes*. This helps them absorb more sugar and develop better texture.
9. Using a slotted spoon or spider, transfer **lemon peels** to a wire cooling rack set over a baking sheet. Let drain for *5 minutes*, allowing excess syrup to drip off. Reserve the syrup in *Medium Bowl #2*—it's excellent in cocktails, tea, or drizzled over desserts.
10. While peels are still warm and slightly tacky, transfer to a shallow bowl. Add $\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ cup **superfine sugar** and toss gently but thoroughly to coat all surfaces. The slight tackiness helps the sugar adhere. For less sweet peels, skip this step or use less sugar.
11. Line dehydrator trays with non-stick sheets, silicone mats, or parchment paper (if your dehydrator allows). Arrange sugar-coated **lemon peels** in a single layer with space between strips—they should not touch or overlap.
12. Set dehydrator to *135°F*. Dehydrate for *5–7 hours*, checking progress every hour after the 4-hour mark. For **tender-chewy peels** (ideal for garnish and eating): Remove when peels are pliable and slightly tacky but no longer wet, about *5–6 hours*. They should bend without breaking and have some give when squeezed. For **crisp-candied peels** (ideal for chopping into baked goods): Continue dehydrating until completely dry and brittle, about *6–7 hours*. They should snap cleanly when bent.
13. Remove trays from dehydrator and let peels cool completely on the trays, about *20 minutes*. As they cool, they'll firm up slightly and the sugar coating will set.
14. Transfer cooled peels to an airtight container, layering with parchment paper between layers to prevent sticking. Store at room temperature in a cool, dry place for up to *4–6 months*.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Food dehydrator with temperature control
- Non-stick dehydrator sheets, silicone mats, or parchment paper
- Large pot (4-quart capacity) for blanching
- Large, wide saucepan or deep skillet (3-4 quart capacity) for candying
- Colander for draining
- Wire cooling rack
- Rimmed baking sheet (for catching drips)
- Slotted spoon or spider
- Sharp paring knife
- Sharp chef's knife for slicing
- Cutting board
- Measuring cups
- Shallow bowl for sugar coating
- Large prep bowl (for cut peels)
- Medium prep bowl (for blanched peels)
- Airtight storage container
- Parchment paper for layering

Mise en Place

- *Large Bowl #1* — raw **lemon peel** strips (about 2–2½ cups)
- *Medium Bowl #1* — triple-blanched **lemon peels** (ready for simmering)
- *Medium Bowl #2* — reserved lemon-infused simple syrup (about 1–1¼ cups)
- Prepare dehydrator location with access to power; process takes 5–7 hours
- Set up draining station: wire rack over rimmed baking sheet
- This recipe requires active time for prep and monitoring, plus 5–7 hours unattended dehydrator time
- Work in batches if your dehydrator has limited tray space

Ingredient Tips

- Choose **lemons** with thick, unblemished skin—more peel means higher yield
- **Meyer lemons** have thinner, sweeter peel with less pith—they candy faster and are less bitter
- Eureka or Lisbon **lemons** (standard supermarket) have thicker pith—remove more white pith when prepping
- Organic **lemons** are ideal if eating the peel, but wash all lemons thoroughly regardless
- Use leftover peels from recipes requiring only zest or juice—zero waste approach
- **Superfine sugar** (also called caster sugar) adheres better than granulated; make your own by pulsing granulated sugar in a food processor for 30 seconds
- The reserved lemon-infused simple **syrup** keeps refrigerated for 2 weeks—use in cocktails, lemonade, iced tea, or drizzle over cakes and pound cake
- **Salt** in the syrup enhances lemon flavor and helps preserve the peels

Preparation Tips

- Leave a thin layer of white **pith** attached—complete removal makes peels fragile; too much pith makes them bitter
- Cut strips uniformly for even candying and dehydrating
- Don't skip the triple blanch—it's essential for removing bitterness while maintaining structure
- Use fresh cold water for each blanch to maximize bitterness removal
- Keep syrup at a bare simmer, not a rolling boil—high heat can toughen peels or caramelize the syrup
- Stir occasionally during simmering to ensure even coverage and prevent sticking
- Watch for translucency as your doneness indicator—peels should look jewel-like and glossy
- If syrup reduces too quickly or begins to color, add water 2–3 Tbsp. at a time

- Toss in sugar while peels are still warm—the tackiness helps coating adhere
- For less-sweet peels, skip the sugar coating or use only 2–3 Tbsp.
- Space peels on dehydrator trays—touching peels will stick together
- Check progress after 4 hours, then every hour—dehydration time varies by humidity, dehydrator model, and peel thickness
- **Meyer lemon** peels dehydrate faster (4–5 hours) than standard lemons (5–7 hours)
- Don't over-dehydrate for garnish use—tender-chewy is the goal
- Let cool completely before storing—warm peels create condensation and reduce shelf life

Make Ahead & Storage

- Properly dehydrated **candied lemon peels** store at room temperature for *4–6 months*
- Store in airtight container with tight-fitting lid
- Layer with parchment paper to prevent sticking
- Keep in cool, dry place away from direct sunlight and heat
- If peels become sticky during storage (humid climate), re-toss in fresh **superfine sugar**
- For extra-long storage, refrigerate in airtight container for up to *1 year*
- Can be frozen for up to *18 months*—freeze in single layer on tray, then transfer to freezer bag
- The blanched peels (before candying) can be frozen for up to *3 months*—candy from frozen when ready
- Reserved lemon-infused **syrup** keeps refrigerated for *2 weeks*; freeze in ice cube trays for longer storage
- Make large batches when lemons are in season (winter/spring) for year-round supply

Serving Suggestions

- **As dessert garnish:** Place small curls on lemon bars, tarts, cakes, panna cotta, or ice cream
- **For teatime:** Serve alongside shortbread, scones, or petit fours
- **In baking:** Chop crisp-candied peels and fold into scone dough, muffin batter, or cookie dough
- **For gifting:** Package in clear cellophane bags or small glass jars with ribbon—makes elegant homemade gifts
- **In cocktails:** Use as edible stirrer or muddle into drinks for bright citrus flavor
- **With chocolate:** Dip one end in melted dark chocolate and let set on parchment—classic French confection
- **For charcuterie:** Add to cheese boards with soft cheeses, marcona almonds, and dark chocolate
- **As snack:** Enjoy tender-chewy peels on their own as a refined sweet treat
- **In granola or trail mix:** Chop and add for bright citrus notes
- **For ice cream:** Fold chopped peels into softened vanilla ice cream and refreeze
- Pair with other candied citrus—orange and grapefruit peels use identical method

Italian Sausage & San Marzano Tomato Sauce •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Italian sausage | 1 lb. | San Marzano tomatoes, whole . . . | 24 oz. can |
| Yellow onion, large | 1 | Tomato paste | 3 Tbsp. |
| Carrots, medium | 2 | Italian seasoning | 2-3 Tbsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 8 | Brown sugar | ¼ cup |
| Zucchini, medium | 1 | Chicken stock | as needed |
| Mushrooms, sliced | 8 oz. can | Lemon juice | 3 Tbsp. |
| Red wine | 8 oz. | | |
| Prego chunky garden style sauce . . | 24 oz. jar | | |

Directions

Dice **onion**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Dice **carrots** fine; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Quarter **zucchini** lengthwise and slice into ¼ inch pieces; set aside in *Medium Bowl #3* — Drain **mushrooms**; set aside in *Medium Bowl #4* — Crush **San Marzano tomatoes** by hand; set aside in *Large Bowl #1* — Open **red wine** to breathe

1. In a large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven, brown **Italian sausage** over medium-high heat, breaking into bite-sized pieces. Cook until well-browned and cooked through, about *8-10 minutes*. Remove **sausage** with slotted spoon and set aside, leaving rendered fat in pot.
2. Reduce heat to medium and add diced **onion** (*Medium Bowl #1*) to the rendered fat. Cook until translucent and softened, about *5 minutes*.
3. Add diced **carrots** (*Medium Bowl #2*) and cook for additional *5 minutes*, stirring occasionally.
4. Add minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*), sliced **zucchini** (*Medium Bowl #3*), and drained **mushrooms** (*Medium Bowl #4*). Cook for *2-3 minutes* until **garlic** is fragrant.
5. Pour in 8 oz. **red wine** to deglaze, scraping up any browned bits from bottom of pot. Cook until wine reduces by half, about *3-4 minutes*.
6. Stir in 3 Tbsp. **tomato paste** and cook for *1-2 minutes* until it darkens slightly and becomes fragrant.
7. Add 24 oz. **Prego sauce**, hand-crushed **San Marzano tomatoes** with their juices (*Large Bowl #1*), 2-3 Tbsp. **Italian seasoning**, and ¼ cup **brown sugar**. Return browned **sausage** to pot and stir to combine.
8. Bring to a gentle simmer, then reduce heat to low. Simmer uncovered for *2 hours*, stirring occasionally and scraping bottom to prevent sticking. Sauce should reduce and concentrate significantly.

9. During final *30 minutes*, add **lemon juice**, and **chicken stock** as needed if sauce becomes too thick. Taste and adjust with additional **brown sugar** or **Italian seasoning** as needed.
10. Serve immediately over pasta or cool completely before storing.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Large heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven (6-8 quart capacity)
- Sharp chef's knife and cutting board
- Large wooden spoon or spatula
- Slotted spoon for removing sausage
- Can opener
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large bowl for crushed tomatoes
- Ladle for serving
- Timer for monitoring cook time

Mise en Place

- Complete all vegetable prep before starting
- Open and crush **San Marzano tomatoes** by hand in bowl
- Have **wine** open and measured
- Pre-measure **Italian seasoning** and **brown sugar**
- Keep **chicken stock** nearby for final adjustments
- Reserve **lemon juice** for finishing

Ingredient Tips

- Use high-quality bulk **Italian sausage** from butcher for best flavor
- San Marzano DOP tomatoes provide superior sweetness and acidity
- Crushing tomatoes by hand creates better texture than machine processing
- Use dry red wine you'd drink - **Merlot**, **Chianti**, or **Côtes du Rhône** work well
- **Italian seasoning** should be basil and thyme heavy with oregano and touch of rosemary
- Fresh **lemon juice** is essential for proper acid balance

Preparation Tips

- Don't skip browning the **sausage** - the fond creates essential flavor base
- Maintain gentle simmer throughout long cook to prevent scorching
- Stir occasionally and scrape bottom to prevent sticking
- Sauce should reduce by about one-third during *2 hour* cook
- Taste and adjust seasoning progressively, not just at end
- Final consistency should coat pasta without being too thick
- Add **lemon juice** off heat to preserve brightness

Make Ahead & Storage

- Sauce improves with overnight rest - flavors meld beautifully
- Refrigerate up to *5 days* or freeze up to *3 months*
- Reheat gently, adding **chicken stock** if needed to restore consistency
- Can double recipe easily for batch cooking
- Freeze in portion-sized containers for quick weeknight meals
- Add fresh **lemon juice** when reheating for brightness

Serving Suggestions

- Serve over **spaghetti**, **rigatoni**, or **penne** pasta
- Reserve pasta water to adjust sauce consistency if needed
- Garnish with fresh **basil**, **Parmesan**, and cracked pepper
- Pairs excellently with garlic bread and Caesar salad
- Makes enough sauce for *1½ pounds* of pasta
- Also excellent as base for lasagna or baked ziti
- Serve with robust red wine like **Chianti** or **Sangiovese**

Mayonnaise

A classic cold emulsion of egg yolk and neutral oil, stabilized with mustard and brightened with acid. Made by hand with a whisk, the mayo develops into a thick, glossy, versatile condiment with fresh, bright flavor. Yields about 1¼ cups.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---------|----------------------------|--------|
| Large egg yolk | 1 | Granulated sugar | ¼ tsp. |
| Dijon mustard | 1 tsp. | Neutral oil | 1 cup |
| Fresh lemon juice | 1 Tbsp. | | |
| White wine vinegar | 1 tsp. | | |
| Fine sea salt | ¼ tsp. | | |

Neutral oil: canola, vegetable, or grapeseed oil. For richer flavor, use half neutral oil and half light olive oil.

Directions

Bring **egg yolk** to room temperature — Measure **lemon juice** and **vinegar**; divide **lemon juice** in half — Have **oil** ready in a vessel with a pour spout

1. In a medium bowl, combine 1 **egg yolk** (room temperature), 1 tsp. **Dijon mustard**, half the **lemon juice** (½ Tbsp.), ¼ tsp. **salt**, and ¼ tsp. **sugar**. Whisk vigorously for *30 seconds* until mixture is smooth, slightly thickened, and lightened in color. The **mustard** and **egg yolk** should be fully integrated with no streaks.
2. Begin adding **oil** extremely slowly—literally drop by drop. Add 3-4 drops of **oil**, then whisk vigorously for *5-10 seconds* until fully incorporated. Repeat this process, adding a few drops at a time and whisking thoroughly between each addition. This is the critical emulsion-building phase. Continue for the first ¼ cup of **oil**, about *3-5 minutes*. The mixture will begin to thicken noticeably and turn pale yellow, indicating the emulsion has formed successfully.
3. Once the emulsion has formed and the mixture appears thick and glossy (after about ¼ cup **oil**), you can add **oil** more quickly. Pour **oil** in a thin, steady stream (about the thickness of a pencil lead) while whisking constantly and vigorously. Move the whisk in rapid circular motions, ensuring the **oil** is incorporated as it's added. The mayonnaise will continue to thicken and become very pale, creamy, and glossy. If the mixture becomes extremely thick and difficult to whisk (like stiff frosting), pause and whisk in 1 tsp. water or **lemon juice** to thin slightly, then continue adding **oil**.
4. Once all **oil** is incorporated, add remaining ½ Tbsp. **lemon juice** and 1 tsp. **white wine vinegar**. Whisk thoroughly until the acid is fully integrated. The mayonnaise should be thick, glossy, and hold soft peaks when the whisk is lifted. It should have a smooth, creamy texture with no visible oil separation.

5. Taste and adjust seasoning. The mayonnaise should be well-balanced: mildly tangy from the acid, subtly sweet, and properly salted. Add more **salt**, **lemon juice**, or **sugar** as needed. Remember that flavors will be slightly muted when cold, so season assertively.
6. Transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for at least *30 minutes* before using to allow flavors to meld and texture to firm slightly. The mayonnaise is ready when it's cold throughout, very thick, and spreadable.

If Emulsion Breaks: If the mayonnaise suddenly becomes thin, greasy, and separated (oil pools on top), the emulsion has broken. To fix: In a clean bowl, add 1 tsp. cold water or fresh **lemon juice**. Whisk briefly. Slowly whisk in the broken mayonnaise, treating it like the **oil**—start with drops, then increase to a thin stream as the emulsion reforms. The fresh liquid provides new surface area for re-emulsification. Alternatively, use 1 fresh **egg yolk** instead of water for even more reliable results.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Medium bowl (stable and wide)
- Whisk (balloon whisk preferred)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Small vessel with pour spout for oil (liquid measuring cup or small pitcher)
- Rubber spatula
- Airtight container for storage
- Optional: damp kitchen towel (to stabilize bowl while whisking)

Yield

- Makes about 1¼ cups mayonnaise
- Approximately 10 servings (2 Tbsp. each)

Mise en Place

- Bring **egg yolk** to room temperature (30–60 minutes on counter, or place whole egg in warm water for 5 minutes)—room temperature eggs emulsify more easily
- Measure ½ Tbsp. **lemon juice** in *Small Bowl #1* (for initial mixture)
- Measure remaining ½ Tbsp. **lemon juice** and 1 tsp. **vinegar** in *Small Bowl #2* (for finishing)
- Measure 1 cup **oil** into vessel with pour spout—have ready
- Set damp towel under bowl to prevent spinning while whisking
- Have clean bowl and extra **lemon juice** ready in case emulsion breaks

Ingredient Tips

- **Egg yolk** must be fresh and room temperature for best emulsification
- **Dijon mustard** acts as an emulsifier and adds subtle flavor—do not omit
- **Neutral oils** (canola, vegetable, grapeseed) create classic Hellmann’s-style flavor

- Light or pure **olive oil** can replace half the neutral oil for richer flavor; avoid extra virgin olive oil (too assertive and can taste bitter)
- **White wine vinegar** is milder than distilled white vinegar; both work
- **Lemon juice** must be fresh-squeezed—bottled juice has off-flavors
- **Sugar** is optional but mimics commercial mayo sweetness
- Fine **sea salt** or table salt dissolves easily; kosher salt works but may not dissolve completely

Preparation Tips

- Room temperature ingredients are critical—cold **egg yolks** won’t emulsify properly and cold **oil** is harder to incorporate
- The drop-by-drop phase for the first ¼ cup **oil** is essential—rushing this step causes the emulsion to break
- Vigorous, constant whisking creates the mechanical action needed to break **oil** into tiny droplets
- Once emulsion forms (mixture thickens noticeably), you can add **oil** faster, but never in a flood—thin stream only
- If mixture gets too thick before all **oil** is added, thin with water or **lemon juice**—this provides more liquid phase for the remaining **oil**
- A damp towel under the bowl prevents it from spinning while you whisk
- Adding acid in two stages (some at start, rest at finish) helps stabilize emulsion and provides final flavor adjustment
- If **arm** gets tired during whisking, take brief breaks—the partially formed emulsion will hold for 30–60 seconds

Make Ahead & Storage

- Homemade mayonnaise contains raw **egg**—refrigerate immediately
- Store in airtight container in refrigerator for *3-5 days*
- Bring to room temperature *10 minutes* before using for best spreadability and flavor
- If mayonnaise separates slightly during storage, whisk vigorously to re-emulsify
- Do not freeze—emulsion breaks and texture degrades
- Flavor is best within *48 hours* of making
- Commercial mayonnaise lasts months due to preservatives and pasteurized eggs; homemade has shorter shelf life

Serving Suggestions

- Use as base for sandwich spreads, potato salad, egg salad, tuna salad, and coleslaw
- Transform into aioli: add 2-4 cloves crushed **garlic** with **egg yolk**, use half **olive oil**
- Make tartar sauce: add chopped pickles, capers, fresh dill, and **lemon juice**
- Create remoulade: add Dijon, capers, cornichons, herbs, and paprika
- Make spicy mayo: whisk in sriracha, sambal oelek, or chipotle in adobo
- Make herb mayo: blend with fresh basil, tarragon, or chives
- Serve with french fries, roasted vegetables, grilled fish, or sandwiches
- Use as binder for crab cakes or as spread for burgers

Thai Peanut Sauce (Easy)

Ingredients

| | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|-----------------|----------|
| Garlic cloves | 2 | Turbinado sugar | ½ cup |
| Lime | 1 | Tamarind paste | 2 Tbsp. |
| Creamy peanut butter | ¾ cup | Water | ½ cup |
| Thai red curry paste | 2-4 Tbsp. | Salt | to taste |
| Coconut milk | 13.5 oz. can | | |

Directions

Mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Juice **lime**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2*

1. In a medium saucepan, whisk together **coconut milk**, ¾ cup **peanut butter**, 2-4 Tbsp. **curry paste**, ½ cup **turbinado sugar**, 2 Tbsp. **tamarind paste**, ½ cup **water**, minced **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*), and **lime juice** (*Small Bowl #2*).
2. Heat over medium-low heat, whisking constantly until smooth and well combined, about 5 minutes.
3. Taste and adjust seasoning with **salt**, additional **curry paste** for heat, or **turbinado sugar** for sweetness.
4. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Reheat gently before serving, adding water if needed to thin.

Makes approximately 2½ cups

Note: Adjust **curry paste** amount based on desired spice level.

Serve as a dipping sauce for spring rolls, satay, or toss with noodles and vegetables.

Thai Peanut Sauce (Nam Jim Thua)

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|---------|
| Coconut cream | 1 cup | Garlic cloves, minced | 3 |
| Thai red curry paste | 2 Tbsp. | Fresh lime juice | 2 Tbsp. |
| Natural peanut butter | 1 cup | Roasted peanuts, crushed | ¼ cup |
| Palm sugar (or brown sugar) | ⅓ cup | Salt | ½ tsp. |
| Fish sauce | 2 Tbsp. | Water | ¼-½ cup |
| Tamarind paste | 1 Tbsp. | | |
| Fresh ginger, minced | 1 Tbsp. | | |

Directions

Mince **ginger** and **garlic**; combine in *Small Bowl #1* — Crush **roasted peanuts**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Juice **lime**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Chop **palm sugar** if using block form; set aside in *Small Bowl #4*

1. In a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat, cook **coconut cream** until it begins to separate and the oil rises to the surface, about *3-4 minutes*.
2. Add **Thai red curry paste** to the separated coconut cream and fry until fragrant and the oil turns slightly red, about *2 minutes*.
3. Reduce heat to medium-low. Add **peanut butter** and stir constantly until well combined and smooth, about *2 minutes*.
4. Add **palm sugar**, **fish sauce**, and **tamarind paste**. Stir until sugar dissolves completely, about *2 minutes*.
5. Add minced **ginger** and **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*). Cook for *1 minute* until fragrant.
6. Add ¼ cup **water** and simmer for *3-4 minutes*, stirring occasionally. Add more **water** if needed to reach desired consistency (up to ½ cup total).
7. Remove from heat and stir in **lime juice** (2 Tbsp., *Small Bowl #3*), **crushed peanuts** (¼ cup, *Small Bowl #2*), and ½ tsp. **salt**. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.
8. Let cool for *10 minutes* before serving. Sauce will thicken as it cools.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Heavy-bottomed saucepan (2-quart)
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Microplane or fine grater (for ginger)
- Garlic press (optional)
- Mortar and pestle (or food processor for peanuts)
- Fine-mesh strainer (optional)
- Glass storage container with lid
- Citrus juicer
- Sharp knife and cutting board

Mise en Place

- Have all ingredients measured and ready before starting
- Bring **peanut butter** to room temperature
- Mince aromatics just before cooking
- Crush **peanuts** ahead of time
- If using block **palm sugar**, chop finely

Ingredient Tips

- Use natural, unsweetened **peanut butter** for best results
- Coconut cream, not milk, provides proper thickness
- Mae Ploy or Maesri **curry paste** recommended
- Palm sugar preferred, but brown sugar works well
- Fresh **lime juice** only - never bottled
- Use Thai fish sauce (Nam Pla) for authentic flavor

Preparation Tips

- Watch coconut cream carefully - it should separate but not burn
- Stir constantly when adding **peanut butter** to prevent sticking
- Sauce will thicken significantly as it cools
- For extra smooth sauce, strain through fine-mesh strainer
- Add **water** gradually to control consistency
- Reserve some **crushed peanuts** for garnish

Make Ahead & Storage

- Keeps refrigerated for up to *1 week*
- Bring to room temperature before serving
- Reheat gently over low heat, stirring frequently
- Add warm water to thin if needed after refrigeration
- Freeze for up to *3 months*

Serving Suggestions

- Perfect for chicken satay or grilled meats
- Serve with fresh spring rolls
- Use as a dip for raw vegetables
- Thin with coconut milk for salad dressing
- Drizzle over grilled chicken or shrimp
- Garnish with extra **crushed peanuts** and cilantro

Tzatziki (Cucumber-Yogurt Salad)

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|---------|
| English cucumber | 1 | Fresh dill, chopped | 2 Tbsp. |
| Full-fat goat milk yogurt | 3 cups | Fresh mint, chopped | 2 Tbsp. |
| Garlic cloves | 5 | Kosher salt | 1½ tsp. |
| Red wine vinegar | 1½-2 Tbsp. | Red pepper flakes | ¼ tsp. |
| Extra virgin olive oil | 3-4 Tbsp. | | |

Full-fat Greek yogurt (cow's milk) may substitute for goat milk yogurt

Directions

Grate **cucumber** on large holes of box grater; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Very finely mince **garlic**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Chop **dill** and **mint**; combine in *Small Bowl #2*

1. Grate **cucumber** on the large holes of a box grater. Transfer to a fine-mesh strainer set over a bowl. Toss with 1 tsp. **kosher salt** and let drain for *30-40 minutes*, stirring 2-3 times to encourage drainage.
2. After draining, gather **cucumber** (*Medium Bowl #1*) in a clean kitchen towel (or multiple layers of cheesecloth) and squeeze aggressively to extract maximum liquid. Wring and twist until you cannot extract any more. You should remove ¾-1 cup liquid. The **cucumber** should feel almost dry when finished. Return to *Medium Bowl #1*; set aside.
3. Grate or very finely mince **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*). For more even distribution and less harsh bite, grate on a microplane. For stronger garlic punch with some texture, mince very fine with a knife. Optionally, crush **garlic** with a pinch of **salt** and **pepper** to create a paste.
4. In *Medium Bowl #2*, add 3 cups **goat milk yogurt** and prepared **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*). Begin adding **olive oil** gradually, 1 tablespoon at a time, while stirring vigorously. Alternate with small additions of **red wine vinegar** (1½-2 Tbsp.). This slow incorporation prevents the oil from pooling on top and creates a smooth, emulsified texture. Add ½ tsp. **kosher salt** and mix thoroughly.
5. Add thoroughly drained **cucumber** (*Medium Bowl #1*), chopped **dill** and **mint** (2 Tbsp. each, *Small Bowl #2*) to **yogurt** mixture (*Medium Bowl #2*). Fold together until evenly combined. The mixture should be very thick.
6. Taste and adjust aggressively. The tzatziki should be punchy with **garlic**, tangy with **vinegar**, and well-salted. Remember that flavors will meld and mellow slightly during rest time. Add more **salt**, **vinegar**, or **garlic** as needed.
7. Cover and refrigerate for at least *2-3 hours*, preferably overnight. This allows the **garlic** to permeate, herbs to hydrate, and flavors to marry. The mixture will thicken slightly as it chills.

8. About *30 minutes* before serving, remove from refrigerator and let sit at cool room temperature—this improves flavor expression and makes the texture more scoopable.
9. Before serving, stir well and taste again. Adjust final seasoning if needed. Transfer to serving bowl, create a shallow well in the center with the back of a spoon, and drizzle with **olive oil**. Sprinkle with **red pepper flakes** and garnish with fresh **dill** leaves.

* * *

Equipment Required

- Box grater with large holes
- Fine-mesh strainer
- Medium bowl (for straining)
- Clean kitchen towel or multiple layers of cheesecloth
- Medium mixing bowl
- Whisk or sturdy spoon
- Microplane or garlic press (optional)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Cutting board and sharp knife
- Serving bowl
- Rubber spatula

Mise en Place

- Begin **cucumber** draining *30-40 minutes* before assembly
- Allow *2-3 hours* minimum for resting before serving (overnight is ideal)
- Remove from refrigerator *30 minutes* before service
- All ingredients should be ready before beginning—once assembly starts, it moves quickly
- Prepare serving **cucumbers** during rest time

Ingredient Tips

- English (hothouse) **cucumbers** have fewer seeds and less water than standard cucumbers
- **Goat milk yogurt** provides authentic tangy flavor; traditional Greek tzatziki uses sheep or goat milk
- Full-fat yogurt is essential—low-fat versions are too thin and tangy
- If using cow's milk **Greek yogurt**, choose Fage Total 5% or similar thick, strained yogurt
- **Red wine vinegar** is traditional in Greece; lemon juice is an American adaptation

- Fresh **garlic** is critical; pre-minced or powdered won't provide the same punch
- Use young, fresh **dill** and **mint**—older herbs can be bitter
- **Dill** is the primary herb; **mint** is secondary or optional
- High-quality, fruity **extra virgin olive oil** makes a significant difference
- **Aleppo pepper** provides mild heat and fruity notes; substitute with mild red pepper flakes if unavailable
- For serving **cucumbers**, Persian varieties provide best crunch and minimal seeds

Preparation Tips

- Aggressive **cucumber** squeezing is the single most critical step—insufficient draining yields watery tzatziki
- Salt the grated **cucumber** generously to draw out moisture through osmosis
- Grating **garlic** on microplane creates smoother distribution; mincing creates pockets of stronger flavor
- Crushing **garlic** with **salt** into a paste mellows the bite slightly
- Slow incorporation of **olive oil** is essential—add gradually while stirring to prevent separation
- Alternate **oil** and **vinegar** additions for proper emulsification
- The mixture should taste quite assertive when first made—flavors mellow significantly during rest
- Overnight resting allows **garlic** to fully infuse and creates more unified flavor
- Bringing to cool room temperature before serving is essential—cold dulls flavor perception

Make Ahead & Storage

- Optimal make-ahead time is overnight in refrigerator
- Can be made up to *2 days* ahead; **garlic** intensifies over time
- Traditional Greek cooks make tzatziki in the morning to serve at lunch or dinner
- Store covered in refrigerator
- If making more than *1 day* ahead, reserve some **olive oil** and fresh **dill** for refreshing before serving
- Drain any accumulated liquid before serving if made well ahead
- **Garlic** acts as a preservative—tzatziki keeps up to *1-2 weeks* refrigerated
- Does not freeze well—**yogurt** separates and texture degrades
- Flavor becomes more garlicky over time; some prefer this aged flavor

Serving Suggestions

- Serve alongside rich, spiced stews and grilled meats for cooling contrast
- Essential accompaniment to souvlaki, gyros, and all grilled meats
- Excellent with warm flatbread, pita, or crusty bread
- Traditional pairing with fried foods like fried potatoes, zucchini fritters, or eggplant
- Persian or English **cucumber** spears make ideal dippers
- Can be used as a sauce for grilled vegetables or fish
- Garnish serving bowl with additional fresh **dill**, **olive oil**, and **Aleppo pepper**
- Pairs well with other mezze-style dishes
- Drizzle with **olive oil** and top with an olive for traditional presentation

Chapter 9

SEASONINGS



Berbere Spice Blend

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Sweet paprika | 1/3 cup | Ground cardamom | 1 1/2 tsp. |
| Cayenne pepper | 2 1/2 Tbsp. | Ground cinnamon | 1 Tbsp. |
| Fenugreek seeds | 3 Tbsp. | Ground ginger | 2 tsp. |
| Coriander seeds | 2 Tbsp. | Ground turmeric | 1 1/2 tsp. |
| Cumin seeds | 1 1/2 Tbsp. | Ground cloves | 1/2 tsp. |
| Black peppercorns | 2 tsp. | Dried thyme | 1/2 tsp. |
| Allspice berries | 1 tsp. | | |

Directions

Yield: approximately 1 cup

1. Toast **fenugreek seeds** in a dry skillet over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, for *2-3 minutes* until fragrant and darkened one shade. Remove immediately when nutty, maple-like aroma develops. Transfer to a plate to cool.
2. Toast **coriander seeds** in the same skillet over medium heat, stirring frequently, for *3-4 minutes* until fragrant and slightly darker. Transfer to cool.
3. Toast **cumin seeds**, **black peppercorns**, and **allspice berries** together over medium heat, stirring constantly, for *2-3 minutes* until **cumin** becomes fragrant and darkens slightly. Transfer to cool.
4. Let all toasted spices cool for *5 minutes*. Grind each group separately in a spice grinder or mortar and pestle to a fine powder. **Fenugreek** is particularly hard—grind until no large pieces remain.
5. In a medium bowl, combine all ground toasted spices with **sweet paprika**, **cayenne pepper**, **ground cardamom**, **ground cinnamon**, **ground ginger**, **ground turmeric**, **ground cloves**, and **dried thyme**.
6. Whisk thoroughly for *2-3 minutes* to ensure even distribution of all spices. Optionally sift for ultra-fine texture.
7. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dark place. Peak flavor within *2-3 months*, still good for *6 months*. Flavor mellows and marries over the first week.

Usage Notes

For stews and braises, use 2-3 Tbsp. per pound of meat. Bloom **berbere** in oil or butter over medium heat for *1-2 minutes* before adding liquids to fully develop aromatic compounds. The spices require fat and time to release their complete flavor complexity.

Jamaican Jerk Seasoning

Ingredients

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|---------|
| Ground allspice | 3 Tbsp. | Black pepper, ground | 2 tsp. |
| Dark brown sugar | 2 Tbsp. | Cinnamon, ground | 1 tsp. |
| Scotch bonnet powder | 1½ Tbsp. | Nutmeg, ground | 1 tsp. |
| Onion powder | 2 Tbsp. | Cloves, ground | ½ tsp. |
| Garlic powder | 2 Tbsp. | Coriander, ground | 1 tsp. |
| Thyme, dried | 2 Tbsp. | TruLime powder | 2 tsp. |
| Ginger, ground | 1 Tbsp. | Kosher salt | 1 Tbsp. |
| Green onion, dried | 1 Tbsp. | | |

Directions

Gather all spices and powders — Have measuring spoons ready — Prepare airtight container for storage

1. Measure all ingredients accurately and add to a large mixing bowl: **ground allspice, brown sugar, scotch bonnet powder, onion powder, garlic powder, dried thyme, ground ginger, dried green onion, ground black pepper, ground cinnamon, ground nutmeg, ground cloves, ground coriander, TruLime powder, and kosher salt.**
2. Whisk thoroughly until all ingredients are well incorporated and the mixture appears uniform in color with no visible clumps.
3. Transfer to an airtight container or glass jar with a tight-fitting lid.
4. Allow flavors to marry for at least *24 hours* before using for best results.
5. Store in a cool, dark place for up to *6 months*.

Masala Chai Concentrate

A richly spiced chai concentrate sweetened with condensed milk, designed for effortless preparation. Makes about 6–6½ cups concentrate (12 servings of 8 oz chai when diluted 1:1 with hot water or milk). Stores refrigerated up to 2 weeks.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|---------|
| Water | 5 cups | Star anise | 3 whole |
| Green cardamom pods | 20 | Black tea, loose leaf | 5 Tbsp. |
| Fresh ginger root | 3-inch knob | Sweetened condensed milk | 21 oz. |
| Cinnamon sticks | 2 (3-inch) | Granulated sugar | ⅓ cup |
| Black peppercorns | 12 | | |
| Whole cloves | 6 | | |
| Fennel seeds | 1½ tsp. | | |

Directions

Crush **cardamom pods**; slice **ginger** into thin rounds; break **cinnamon sticks** into smaller pieces — Combine **cardamom**, **ginger**, **cinnamon pieces**, **peppercorns**, **cloves**, **fennel seeds**, and **star anise** in *Medium Bowl #1* (toast) — Measure **black tea** and set aside — Have **condensed milk** and **sugar** ready in *Medium Bowl #2*

1. In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan or Dutch oven, add **cardamom**, **ginger**, and **whole spices** (*Medium Bowl #1*). Toast over *medium heat* for *2–3 minutes*, stirring frequently, until fragrant and spices begin to release their oils. Do not allow spices to burn. If spices smoke or smell acrid, remove from heat immediately and let cool before discarding; toast a fresh batch.
2. Add 5 cups **water** to the toasted spices. Increase heat to high and bring to a rolling boil. Once boiling, reduce heat to *medium-low* and maintain a steady simmer for *20 minutes*, stirring occasionally. The liquid should reduce by approximately ¾ cup due to evaporation, concentrating the spice flavors.
3. Remove saucepan from heat. Immediately add 5 Tbsp. **black tea** to the hot spiced water. Stir gently to submerge all tea leaves, cover with lid, and steep for exactly *5 minutes*. Do not steep longer to avoid bitterness.
4. While tea steeps, prepare a fine-mesh strainer or cheesecloth-lined strainer over a large heat-proof bowl or measuring cup. After *5 minutes*, strain the concentrate through the prepared strainer, pressing firmly on the solids with the back of a spoon to extract maximum liquid. Discard solids. You should have approximately 4 to 4¼ cups of strained tea concentrate.
5. Return the strained tea concentrate to the saucepan (wiped clean if needed). Place over *medium heat* and add ⅓ cup **sugar** (from *Medium Bowl #2*). Stir continuously until sugar is completely dissolved, about *2 minutes*.

6. Reduce heat to *medium-low*. Gradually add 21 oz. **condensed milk** (*Medium Bowl #2*) in a steady stream while stirring constantly to prevent scorching. Continue stirring until the condensed milk is fully integrated into the tea base, creating a smooth, uniform concentrate.
7. Once integrated, increase heat slightly to bring the mixture just to the edge of a simmer—small bubbles should appear around the edges but mixture should not reach a full boil. Maintain this gentle simmer for *2-3 minutes*, stirring constantly, until the concentrate is smooth and creamy with no separation. If the mixture separates, remove from heat and whisk vigorously; if it does not recombine, use as-is and stir well before each serving.
8. Remove from heat and allow concentrate to cool to room temperature, approximately *45 minutes to 1 hour* (saucepan should feel cool to the touch, not warm). Stir occasionally during cooling to prevent skin formation.
9. Once cooled, transfer concentrate to clean glass bottles or jars using a funnel. Seal tightly and refrigerate immediately. The concentrate will thicken slightly as it cools.
10. To serve: Mix 4 oz. ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) **chai concentrate** with 4 oz. ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) hot water or steamed milk. Stir well and serve immediately. Adjust ratio to taste—use more concentrate for stronger chai, more liquid for milder flavor.

* * *

Yield

- About 6–6½ cups concentrate; 12 servings of 8 oz chai (4 oz concentrate, 1:1 dilution)

Equipment Required

- Large heavy-bottomed saucepan or 4-quart Dutch oven
- Fine-mesh strainer or cheesecloth
- Large heat-proof bowl or 8-cup measuring cup
- Wooden spoon or heat-resistant silicone spatula
- Medium prep bowls (2)
- Funnel
- Glass bottles or jars with tight-fitting lids (6–8 cups total capacity)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Mortar and pestle or heavy knife for crushing cardamom

Mise en Place

- Medium Bowl #1 — toast: crushed **cardamom pods** (20), sliced **ginger** (3-inch knob), broken **cinnamon sticks**, 12 **peppercorns**, 6 **cloves**, 1½ tsp. **fennel seeds**, 3 **star anise**
- Medium Bowl #2 — 21 oz. **condensed milk** (1½ standard 14-oz. cans) and ⅓ cup **sugar**
- Have 5 cups **water** and 5 Tbsp. **black tea** measured and ready

Ingredient Tips

- **Green cardamom pods:** Use fresh, plump pods that feel slightly heavy. Avoid pre-ground cardamom as it loses potency quickly. Crush pods just enough to crack them open and expose seeds.
- **Fresh ginger:** Choose firm, unwrinkled ginger with tight skin. No need to peel if thoroughly washed. Slicing into thin rounds maximizes surface area for extraction.
- **Black tea:** Assam CTC (Crush-Tear-Curl) is ideal for authentic flavor and proper strength. Darjeeling works but is more delicate. English Breakfast is acceptable. Avoid Earl Grey (bergamot conflicts with spices).
- **Tea bags alternative:** Use 14–16 standard black tea bags if loose leaf unavailable. Remove after steeping to prevent over-extraction.

- **Star anise:** Use whole star anise, not broken pieces or ground. Contributes subtle licorice notes without overpowering.
- **Fennel seeds:** Adds sweet, slightly anise-like complexity. Use whole seeds, not ground.
- **Condensed milk:** Sweetened condensed milk only (not evaporated milk). Brand matters less than freshness—check expiration date.
- **Spice quality:** Whole spices from bulk bins or specialty stores are fresher than jarred supermarket spices. Store whole spices in airtight containers away from light.

Preparation Tips

- **Toasting spices:** Watch carefully and stir constantly. Spices can burn quickly, which creates bitter flavors. They should smell fragrant and warm, not smoky.
- **Simmering time:** The 20-minute simmer is critical for full spice extraction. Rushing this step produces weak, one-dimensional flavor.
- **Tea steeping:** Set a timer for exactly 5 minutes. Over-steeped tea becomes astringent and bitter, especially when concentrated.
- **Straining thoroughly:** Press firmly on solids to extract every drop of flavored liquid. The yield difference between casual straining and thorough pressing is significant.
- **Emulsification technique:** Adding **condensed milk** gradually while stirring prevents separation. The gentle simmer at the end ensures stable emulsion.
- **Avoiding boiling after milk addition:** Full boiling can cause **condensed milk** proteins to separate or scorch. Keep at gentle simmer only.
- **Cooling before bottling:** Hot concentrate transferred directly to bottles can crack glass and creates condensation that promotes spoilage.

Make Ahead & Storage

- Concentrate stores refrigerated for up to 2 weeks in clean, airtight glass containers
- Always use clean utensils when portioning concentrate to prevent contamination
- Concentrate will thicken when cold—this is normal; shake or stir before using
- Check for signs of spoilage before using: off smell, separation that doesn't resolve with stirring, mold, or sour taste

- For extended storage, freeze concentrate in ice cube trays (*2 oz. portions*), then transfer cubes to freezer bags. Frozen concentrate keeps *3 months*. Thaw cubes in refrigerator overnight.
- Label bottles with preparation date for easy tracking
- Spices can be toasted and stored separately in airtight container for *1 week* if you want to streamline future batches

Serving Suggestions

- **Classic chai latte:** Mix 4 oz. concentrate with 4 oz. steamed whole milk or oat milk
- **Simple hot chai:** Mix 4 oz. concentrate with 4 oz. hot water (the **condensed milk** already provides creaminess)
- **Iced chai:** Mix 4 oz. concentrate with 4 oz. cold milk over ice; stir well
- **Stronger chai:** Use 5 oz. concentrate with 3 oz. liquid
- **Milder chai:** Use 3 oz. concentrate with 5 oz. liquid
- **Dirty chai:** Add 1-2 shots espresso to prepared chai for coffee-chai hybrid
- Garnish with ground cinnamon, freshly grated nutmeg, or star anise for presentation
- Pair with biscotti, shortbread, or traditional Indian snacks like samosas or pakoras
- For special occasions, top with frothed milk and dust with cardamom-cinnamon blend
- Concentrate also works as flavoring for baked goods, ice cream base, or overnight oats

Mexican Spice Blend •

*This Mexican Spice Blend is inspired by Tex-Mex and northern Mexican cuisine. It combines smoky, spicy, and earthy notes to create a versatile seasoning mix. **Makes 1 cup.***

Ingredients

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Black pepper, ground | 1 tsp. |
| Cayenne pepper | 1/4 tsp. |
| Chili powder | 4 tsp. |
| Chipotle powder | 1 tsp. |
| Cinnamon, ground | 1 tsp. |
| Cloves, ground | 1/2 tsp. |
| Coriander, ground | 2 Tbsp |
| Cumin, ground | 4 Tbsp |
| Garlic powder | 2 tsp |
| Mexican oregano | 2 tsp |
| Onion powder | 2 tsp |
| Paprika, smoked | 2 Tbsp |

Chapter 10

SNACKS



Canned Cherries with Light Syrup

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Cherries | 10 lb. | Vinegar | ½ cup |
| Bottled lemon juice | 2½ cups | Canning jars/lids/bands (quart) | 7 |
| Sugar | 5 cups | | |
| Water | 25 cups | | |

Instructions

1. **Prepare the equipment:** Sterilize 7 quart jars and an equal number of lids and bands in boiling water. Check the pressure canner for proper operation, including the seal and vent.
2. **Prepare the cherries:** Wash and pit **10 lb. cherries**. Prepare a solution with 2½ cups **bottled lemon juice** and 10+ cups **water**. Soak the cherries for *10 minutes* to help preserve their color and flavor.
3. **Prepare the syrup:** Combine 5 cups **sugar** with 10 cups **water** in a large saucepan. Heat at medium-high until the **sugar** is completely dissolved, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking.
4. **Pack the jars:** Evenly distribute the prepared **cherries** into the sterilized jars. Pour the **hot syrup** over the **cherries**, ensuring each jar is filled while leaving approximately 1 inch of headspace. Use a non-metallic spatula to gently stir inside the jars to remove any trapped air bubbles.
5. **Place lids:** Wet a clean lint-free cloth with ½ cup **vinegar** to clean and dry the jar rims. Apply lids and rings, then tighten lightly with fingertips. (Always use new lids!)
6. **Process in canner:** Place the filled jars on the rack inside the pressure canner. Add **water** as per the canner's instructions, usually around 2-3 inches. Secure the lid and heat until steam flows freely from the vent. Continue to vent for *10 minutes*, then close the vent and attach the pressure regulator weight. Process the jars at *10-15 pounds of pressure* (adjusted for altitude) for *10 minutes*.
7. **Cool down and store:** Turn off the heat and let the pressure canner **cool naturally** until the pressure gauge reads zero. Carefully remove the jars using a jar lifter and place them on a towel or cooling rack, avoiding drafty areas. After 12-24 hours, check that each jar is sealed by pressing the center of the lid; it should not flex up or down. Label the jars with the canning date and store in a cool, dark place.

Kettle Corn

This recipe is for a 3 quart stir-type popcorn maker.

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Popcorn | 1/3 cup | Mexican vanilla | 1/4 tsp. |
| Coconut oil | 2 Tbsp. | Butter | 1/2 Tbsp. |
| Turbinado sugar | 3 Tbsp. | Salt | 1/4-1/2 tsp. |

Directions

1. Add **coconut oil** and 1/4 tsp. **vanilla** to popcorn maker plate.
2. Sprinkle in 1/3 cup **popcorn** and 3 Tbsp. **turbinado sugar**.
3. Thinly slice 1/2 Tbsp. **butter** and place on dripping shelf.
4. Turn on popcorn maker.
5. Two or three times during popping, gently shake the popcorn maker side to side to dislodge stuck kernels. **TAKE CARE!**
6. When the pops slow to every 3 seconds, quickly turn off power and transfer popcorn to a large bowl.
7. Salt to taste with 1/4-1/2 tsp. **salt**.

Peanut Butter Chocolate Oat Bars

Ingredients

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------|--|-----------------|
| Rolled oats | 1½ cups | Mexican vanilla | ¾ tsp. |
| 1:1 GF flour | ¼ cup | Creamy peanut butter | 1 cup + 1 Tbsp. |
| Salted butter | 11 Tbsp. | Powdered sugar | 1¾ cups |
| Brown sugar | ¼ cup | Semi-sweet chocolate chips | ¾ cup |
| Honey | 1 Tbsp. | Dark chocolate chips (60–70%) | ¼ cup |
| Fine salt | ¼ tsp. | Honey roasted peanuts, chopped | ⅓ cup |
| Ground cinnamon | ¼ tsp. | | |

Oat Crust

Preheat oven to 325°F — Line 8-inch×8-inch pan with parchment paper, leaving overhang on two sides — Bring 6 Tbsp. **butter** to room temperature for filling

1. In *Medium Bowl #1*, whisk together 1½ cups **rolled oats**, ¼ cup **GF flour**, ¼ cup **brown sugar**, ¼ tsp. **salt**, and ¼ tsp. **cinnamon**. Add 5 Tbsp. melted **butter**, 1 Tbsp. **honey**, and ¼ tsp. **Mexican vanilla**. Stir until evenly combined and mixture holds together when pressed.
2. Press mixture firmly and evenly into the prepared pan, using the bottom of a measuring cup or glass to compact into a uniform layer.
3. Bake at 325°F for 12–15 minutes until edges are lightly golden and crust is fragrant. Remove from oven and let cool completely in pan, about 30 minutes.

Peanut Butter Filling

1. In *Medium Bowl #2*, combine 1 cup **peanut butter** and 6 Tbsp. softened **butter**. Beat with a spatula or hand mixer until smooth and creamy.
2. Add 1¾ cups **powdered sugar** and ½ tsp. **Mexican vanilla**. Mix until fully incorporated and smooth, scraping down sides as needed.
3. Spread filling evenly over the cooled **oat crust**, using an offset spatula or the back of a spoon to create a smooth, level layer.
4. Refrigerate for 30 minutes until filling is firm to the touch.

Chocolate Topping

1. In *Medium Bowl #3*, combine ¾ cup **semi-sweet chocolate chips**, ¼ cup **dark chocolate chips**, and 1 Tbsp. **peanut butter**.

2. Microwave *Medium Bowl #3* in *30-second* intervals, stirring after each, until chocolate is melted and smooth. Alternatively, melt in a double boiler over barely simmering water.
3. Pour melted **chocolate** over the chilled **peanut butter** layer, spreading evenly to the edges with an offset spatula.
4. Immediately sprinkle **honey roasted peanuts** (*Small Bowl #2*) evenly over the **chocolate**, pressing gently so they adhere.
5. Refrigerate for at least *1 hour* until chocolate is fully set.

Cutting and Serving

1. Use parchment overhang to lift bars from pan onto a cutting board.
2. Let stand at room temperature for *5 minutes* before cutting—this prevents chocolate from cracking.
3. Using a sharp knife, cut into 16 squares (4×4 grid), wiping blade clean between cuts for neat edges.

* * *

Equipment Required

- 8×8-inch baking pan
- Parchment paper
- Medium mixing bowls (3)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Flat-bottomed measuring cup or glass (for pressing crust)
- Offset spatula or butter knife
- Rubber spatula
- Sharp knife for cutting
- Cutting board

Mise en Place

- *Medium Bowl #1* — **oat** crust mixture: 1½ cups **oats**, ¼ cup **GF flour**, 5 Tbsp. melted **butter**, ¼ cup **brown sugar**, 1 Tbsp. **honey**, ¼ tsp. **salt**, ¼ tsp. **cinnamon**, ¼ tsp. **Mexican vanilla**
- *Medium Bowl #2* — **peanut butter** filling: 1 cup **peanut butter**, 6 Tbsp. softened **butter**, 1¾ cups **powdered sugar**, ½ tsp. **Mexican vanilla**
- *Medium Bowl #3* — **chocolate** topping: ¾ cup **semi-sweet chips**, ¼ cup **dark chips**, 1 Tbsp. **peanut butter**
- *Small Bowl #2* — ⅓ cup chopped **honey roasted peanuts**
- Bring 6 Tbsp. **butter** to room temperature for filling while crust bakes and cools
- Line pan with parchment before starting

Ingredient Tips

- Use **old fashioned rolled oats**—quick oats become pasty; steel-cut won't bind
- **1:1 GF flour** (Bob's Red Mill or King Arthur Measure for Measure) provides structure; regular all-purpose flour works equally well if gluten is not a concern
- Standard creamy **peanut butter** (Jif, Skippy) works best; natural peanut butter with oil separation may not set properly
- Salted **butter** throughout adds flavor depth; no additional finishing salt needed
- **Semi-sweet** and **dark chocolate** blend provides richness without excessive sweetness
- **Honey roasted peanuts** add sweetness, salt, and textural contrast—chop coarsely for visible pieces

- Sift **powdered sugar** if lumpy for smoothest filling

Preparation Tips

- Press **oat** crust firmly and evenly—the **honey** and **flour** help it hold together, but loose spots will still crumble
- Cool crust completely before adding filling; warm crust will melt the filling unevenly
- **Peanut butter** filling should be thick but spreadable—if too stiff, let butter soften more
- Chill filling until firm before adding **chocolate**; soft filling causes chocolate to sink
- Don't overheat **chocolate**—stir frequently and remove as soon as smooth
- Add 1 Tbsp. **peanut butter** to chocolate for authentic Reese's flavor and easier cutting
- Press **peanuts** gently into chocolate before it sets
- Let bars temper at room temperature before cutting to prevent chocolate cracking
- Wipe knife between cuts for clean edges

Make Ahead & Storage

- Store covered in refrigerator for up to 1 week
- Bars are best served slightly chilled or at cool room temperature
- For room temperature serving, let stand 10–15 minutes after removing from refrigerator
- Can be frozen in airtight container for up to 2 months
- Thaw frozen bars in refrigerator overnight
- Layer bars between parchment when stacking for storage

Serving Suggestions

- Serve as a rich dessert or sweet snack
- Pairs well with cold milk, coffee, or vanilla ice cream
- Cut into smaller pieces (5×5 grid = 25 pieces) for party bites
- Excellent for potlucks, bake sales, and gift giving
- Store at room temperature for softer texture, refrigerate for firmer, snappier chocolate

Rice Krispies Treats •

Ingredients

Salted butter (Kerrygold) 6 Tbsp
Small marshmallows 16 oz bag
Mexican vanilla extract 1 tsp
Rice Krispies cereal 6 cups

Directions

Use a large pot — Line a 9 inch×9 inch baking dish with parchment paper

1. In the pot, melt 6 Tbsp. **butter** over *medium-low* heat.
2. Add all but 1 cup of **marshmallows** to the melted **butter**.
3. Reduce heat to *low* and stir continuously until **marshmallows** are completely melted.
4. Remove from heat, add 1 tsp. **vanilla extract** and stir to combine.
5. Add 6 cups **Rice Krispies cereal** and remaining 1 cup **marshmallows**, stirring until well combined.
6. Pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish, spreading it evenly.
7. Allow to cool for *1 hour* before cutting into squares.
8. Store at room temperature away from light and heat.

Note: These treats taste best after 2 days.

Sweet and Saltines •

Ingredients

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Saltine crackers | 2-3 sleeves | Lindt milk chocolate bars | 8 oz |
| Kerrygold butter | 2 sticks (1 cup) | Crushed nuts or pretzels | ¼ cup |
| Light brown sugar | 1 cup | Cooking spray | as needed |

Directions

Preheat oven to 425°F — Line a large cookie sheet with foil and **cooking spray** — Prepare a second large cookie sheet with crushed ice — Crush **nuts** and/or **pretzels**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Break apart **chocolate bars** into 1 inch pieces; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Have a candy thermometer ready

1. Arrange **saltine crackers** in a single layer, salt side down, on the prepared sheet.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine 2 sticks (1 cup) **butter** and 1 cup **brown sugar**.
3. Heat the mixture over medium heat, stirring constantly until the **butter** is completely melted and the **sugar** is dissolved.
4. Once the mixture starts to bubble, stop stirring and let it cook undisturbed. Cook until it reaches 285°F (soft-crack stage) on a candy thermometer, about *3-5 minutes*. Watch for visual cues: the caramel should be a deep golden brown color and have a smooth, glossy appearance. You may see wisps of smoke starting to form.
5. Immediately remove from heat and pour evenly over the arranged **crackers**. Work quickly as the caramel will start to set.
6. Bake for *3-5 minutes* until the caramel is bubbly all over. Watch carefully.
7. Remove from oven and quickly arrange **chocolate** (*Medium Bowl #1*) over the top.
8. Wait about *1 minute*, then spread the melted **chocolate** evenly.
9. Sprinkle crushed **nuts** and/or **pretzels** ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup, *Small Bowl #1*) over the melted **chocolate**.
10. To cool quickly, place the hot cookie sheet with the crackers on top of the ice-filled sheet. For faster setting, place in the freezer if possible.
11. Once cold but not frozen, break into pieces.
12. Store in an airtight container.

Appendix A

REVISIONS

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Breakfast Casserole | February 14, 2026 |
| Gluten-Free Linzer Cookies | February 14, 2026 |
| Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies | February 14, 2026 |
| Peanut Butter Cookies • | February 14, 2026 |
| Korean BBQ Drumsticks • | February 13, 2026 |
| Mayonnaise | February 4, 2026 |
| Suddenly Salad Classic Clone | February 4, 2026 |
| Chicken Broccoli Rice Casserole • | January 30, 2026 |
| Masala Chai Concentrate | January 30, 2026 |
| Verde Chicken Enchiladas | January 27, 2026 |
| Hong Shao Rou • | January 22, 2026 |
| Steamed Cabbage (Sweet and Sour) • | January 20, 2026 |
| King Ranch Casserole - Simple • | January 18, 2026 |
| King Ranch Casserole • | January 18, 2026 |
| Raspberry Swirl Lemon Bars • | January 18, 2026 |
| Enchiladas Placeras | January 13, 2026 |
| Thai Yellow Chicken Curry | January 13, 2026 |
| Chilorio Tacos | January 10, 2026 |
| Peanut Butter Chocolate Oat Bars | January 10, 2026 |
| Thai Yellow Pork Curry | January 9, 2026 |