

Gentle Cooking



Acknowledgements

I have served most of the dishes in this book to friends over the years, and I thank all of them who have made comments on the tastes and presentations.

I particularly thank my wife María. She long ago suckered me into becoming the chief cook and bottle-washer in the family by showering my cooking with compliments. She has to walk a thin line, however. Too many constructive comments could result in my abdication as chief cook. Her comments have sometimes been helpful, but the nonverbal responses have been more useful. If she does not attack a dish with her customary relish, I try to think of adjustments to make to the dish.

Other friends who have read recipes or viewed preliminary drafts of this book have made helpful comments. I particularly thank Jim Shine, who has prepared some dishes following the recipes in the book and provided useful feedback.

An almost-up-to-date version of this book can be found at

mason.gmu.edu/~jgentle/books/GC.pdf

This version was made on August 23, 2020.

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Although a hardcopy version of this book is available (for \$1,256.38 plus tax and shipping, and with a 4-month production backlog), you may prefer the free PDF version because it has hyperlinks and displays nicely in portrait mode on a tablet in your kitchen.

Preface

This book contains some of my favorite recipes. I have made them all multiple times over the years. But recipes are a dime a dozen. Any issue of a magazine like *Good Housekeeping* will contain 10 or 15 recipes, and a web search for any food item will turn up dozens of recipes for it.

Before I give some recipes, I want to discuss attitudes toward food, techniques of food preparation, and work in the kitchen.

I am not a professional chef. I'm only a person who loves to eat, uh, cook.

I've been cooking for years, but I didn't learn from my mom. My parents and their families ate because they had to. They ate pretty fast. I eat because I want to, and I eat slowly.

I plan trips around good places to eat. I usually book restaurants before I book flights and hotels. My guiding stars are those given by Michelin.

I'm naturally a slow eater, so most meals are multi-hour affairs. It's also been said that I like to talk.

Anyway, this book is not about just the eating, but it's about home preparation of what to eat.

Cooking should be fun. If you don't enjoy it, don't do it. You can always find prepared food that is amazingly cheap, and not too bad.

Occasionally however, you may want to up the ante, and cook for some real discriminating eaters, chefs or just real gourmets. Or maybe just a really good meal for yourself and maybe an intimate friend. (Some of the most

elaborate, and maybe the best – but also the worst – meals I've ever had are ones I've made at home just for myself when my wife was out of town.)

OK. Sometimes cooking may be a little stressful, but I've learned that most people who really appreciate good food are very forgiving of any thing about your cooking that you may think is not your best. And if a failure is just for you and maybe an intimate friend, just drink more wine. Order a pizza, or if you feel in an ethnic mood, order Chinese take-out.

Food preparation can start at various levels, from the garden to the grocery store. Many items grown in the garden can be significantly better than anything you can purchase. The notable example is tomatoes. For fresh tomatoes, I only use what comes from my garden (which means I don't use fresh tomatoes for most of the year). For other things, my garden produce may or may not be better than what I can get elsewhere, so the other things growing in the garden are just there for the fun of growing them, except for the herbs; they are dependable and easy to grow and they are a wonderful convenience in cooking.

Other things, such as doughs, can be fun to make, but the grocery-store products are often just as good. Some cooking sauces, such as chile sauce (page 180) are fun to make, but there are store-bought alternatives that are just as good.

Whatever or however you cook, enjoy it, and try to get better at it.

You get better at cooking by tasting, experimenting and modifying. Head-to-head taste tests are best; try something both ways, or multiple ways, and see which **you** think tastes better.

Don't take my word or anybody else's word; do the taste test.

The Pleasure of Eating

Eating should be a pleasant activity.

There are two kinds of things that make it pleasant.

First and foremost is taste. Everybody knows that.

Each dish must taste good, but in a meal, it is the orchestration of the individual performers that counts.

The other things are everything else that affect the experience.

An important aspect is the appearance of the food and the dish on which it's served. Contrasting colors and overall neatness enhance the visual impact.

Some other things are obvious. The comfort of the seating; the temperature; the company, even if it is a company of one.

Some are more subtle. These involve the elegance in eating. If the dish requires intricate manipulations by the diner, such as difficult knife work around bones or fat or peeling shells or other hand work, it detracts from the dining experience. The cook should do these things in the kitchen.

Old Chefs' Tales

In the French tradition of an autocratic and dogmatic chef (that's "chief" to them), there are many dicta accepted as truth because a respected chef says that's the way it is. I call the dicta "old chefs' tales".

There are many of these, but I'm not going to try to make a list here. One that comes to mind because it came from Julia Child (one of the best, most knowledgeable, most influential, ..., most whatever, cooks ever) is "don't use curly leaf parsley; use flat leaf", because it's "got more flavor", or some other superficially reasonable reason. Try it. (There's actually a lot of variation in the taste of different parsleys, even among ones that look alike. Try some side-by-side. Except in the dead of winter, I usually have a pot with a curly leaf parsley plant and another one with a flat leaf, so I can try them anytime I have trouble remembering what they taste like. I also have a pot with cilantro. It looks a little like parsley, but you'll never confuse it with a parsley.)

Another old chef's dictum is an absolute ban on garlic presses. Try the garlic press and a knife yourself side-by-side. (In some dishes, there may be a slight difference, but in most preparations, there is none. It's OK to use a garlic press. I admit, I usually mince garlic with a knife like the chef says, but it's

just because I like to use knives.) By the way, garlic powder is a good and convenient flavoring.

Notation

Some of the recipes in this book use only vegetable products, so I call them vegetarian. I realize that there are different definitions of “vegetarian”; I don’t get into the distinctions.

Vegetarian Dishes

I have indicated the recipes that are vegetarian by use of the symbol ^v, for example, **Mushroom Puffs^v**. (I don’t use an indicator for some very obvious things like sauces, breads, and desserts.)

For dishes that can be made vegetarian simply by the omission of one or two ingredients, I use the symbol ^{v?}, for example, **Mini Fritatas^{v?}**.

There are several soups and other dishes that would be vegetarian, except for the broth or stock, which is usually chicken broth. Personally, I avoid substitutes, like vegetable broth, but some vegetable broths can be pretty good, especially if you make them yourself. For dishes that are vegetarian except for the broth, I use the symbol ^{v^b}, for example, **Asparagus Soup^{v^b}**.

Units of Measurement

I use American units of measure, and I abbreviate them in standard ways: “c” is “cup”; “tsp” is “teaspoon”; “Tbsp” is “tablespoon”; and “oz” is ounce.

Temperatures are stated in degrees Fahrenheit.

If the thing being measured is a liquid, “ounce” is a “fluid ounce”. If the thing being measured is a solid, “ounce” is somewhat ambiguous; technically, it means a unit of weight, but I generally mean a volume.

Two symbols that I use are “S&P&C”, for “salt, pepper and cayenne powder”, and “AP”, for “all-purpose flour”.

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Before the Recipes

Before describing specific dishes and recipes, in this chapter, I make a few general comments about cooking.

I describe various ingredients and mention variations in the specific types of ingredients, such as different kinds of salt.

I also describe specific techniques, such as for peeling tomatoes, smoking fish, and making simple cheeses.

Grow Your Vegetables, or at least, Some of Them

Many things from the garden taste much better than anything you can get anywhere else, even from your local farmers' market. If you grow tomatoes, eat them fresh; don't make sauce out of them, unless you have a really lot of them or they are not regular tomatoes. If you grow Roma tomatoes, make sauce from them, although tomato sauce from the can is just as good or better. Don't take my word; do the taste test.

We sometimes forget that technology has not only advanced computers and communication, but it has also changed many of the foods we eat, in some cases for the better. One thing that technology has improved is fresh sweet corn. In the 1970's, I would only eat sweet corn during the three or so months when I could get it from my own garden. Because the sugar-to-starch conversion was so rapid, I would get a pot of water boiling before I'd go to the garden to pull off a few ears of corn. Now, however, the varieties

of sweet corn available in the grocery store for most of the year are much better. The corn maintains its sweetness much longer, and I use corn from the grocery store now. Corn on the cob has become a nice quick casual side dish.

Heat a pot of salted water to boiling. *Carefully and thoroughly* clean corn on the cob. Remove as much of the silk as you can. Drop the ears into the boiling water for 6 minutes.

Other things from the garden probably taste about the same (taste test them!). Regardless of the taste differences, there is always a great satisfaction in using something you've grown yourself.

The Kitchen Herb Garden

Herbs are especially easy and rewarding to grow. The more robust aromatics like rosemary, thyme, oregano, and sage are perennials, and even in northern climates will winter over with a little protection. I devote a small part of a permanent flower garden to herbs. I grow rosemary, thyme, oregano (or marjoram, I'm not sure what is the difference; there are several varieties within a single species), sage, and French tarragon. I also have several types of mint growing in various places outside, but I have to watch it; it will take over any space.

Another herb that is essentially a perennial is chives. They are in the allium family (onions, which are annuals, of course), and the reason I call them "essentially" perennials is that they are self-perpetuating. They grow nicely in pots or in a permanent herb garden, and just require dividing and replanting every couple years or so.

The weaker herbs like basil, parsley, and cilantro thrive for their seasons in the sun, and I just grow them in pots on the deck. They can grow inside in pots in the winter, but that is a lot of trouble.

Another nice annual herb is dill. Dill is sometimes called dill weed, and that's the way I grow it, as a weed. Let a dill plant grow and produce little flowers and then seeds, and let those seed fall where they may. Later, possibly even within the same growing season, you'll have little dill weeds. Dill is rather

fragile, so you can't depend on a single plant; it may not last through the season.

I like to have my herbs growing near my kitchen, so rosemary, thyme, oregano, and chives are just outside my front door year around, and the pots of basil, parsley, and cilantro are on my porch.



About the Ingredients

The ingredients called for in this book are generally simple and the names are unambiguous. There are some ingredients that tend to appear repeatedly in my ingredients lists. Some of these are purchased in the grocery store ready to be used. Other ingredients require some preparation, which may add to the overall time required for a given recipe.

Butter

In this book, “butter” is butter without anything added; that is, unsalted butter. Unfortunately, in the grocery store, “pure sweet butter” means pure butter with added salt, and the FDA is OK with that. Actually, although I bitch about it a lot, salted butter, that is, plain “butter” from the grocery store, is not too bad. We use it as table butter, so if I’m ever running low on my cooking butter, I’ll use the salted butter.

I use an Irish butter, unsalted, of course, formed in sticks, because it’s easier to measure from than the more common blocks of Irish butter. (Not all Irish butters are created equal of course. I use Kerry Gold brand.)

For some dishes, clarified butter, salted or unsalted, is better. Any of the

recipes in this book that call for melted butter could be improved (slightly!) by use of clarified butter. Clarified butter is just melted butter from which the little white residue (“milk solids”) has been removed.

To make clarified butter, cut butter into chunks and heat the butter at medium heat until foam develops, and milk solids have settled to bottom. This will take about 5 minutes. Continue heating until foam on top has dissipated, about 5 more minutes. Heating the butter develops a nutty flavor. At this point, carefully pour the clarified liquid butter on top into a small jar, leaving the milk solids behind.

The presence of foam gives some indication of the temperature of the butter. The milk solids will burn shortly after the foam subsides, or even sooner if the heat is too high.

Some Indian cuisines make use of a form of clarified butter, called ghee. It is often used as a cooking oil. To make Indian ghee, proceed as in making clarified butter, except continue heating briefly after the foam has subsided, before decanting the liquid. This must be done carefully so as not to burn the milk solids. The slight extra heating time yields a nuttiness in the flavor.

Clarified butter or ghee will keep for weeks in the refrigerator. They become solid in the refrigerator.

Salt

Salt is a problem when using various prepared ingredients. The salt level in the final product is the real issue. How it gets there is up to the cook. Some things like meats need to be salted early on in the preparation, but if not enough salt has been added in the preparation, the salt level can be corrected right at the end. Salt added prior to cooking or in the early stages draws liquid from the product. Sometimes this serves to concentrate the flavors, and in other cases, such as with eggplants, the salt mitigates unwelcome flavors. Salt permeates most products quickly; it rarely needs a lengthy marriage, except when it’s used as a cure.

I generally use kosher salt in cooking, but common table salt is OK. Kosher

salt is a coarse-grained salt without added iodine. (The word “kosher” to apply to this kind of salt arose from its common use in dry brining fresh meat so as to remove more blood.) Because of a difference in the sizes the grains of commercially available kosher salt and table salt (this difference is not due to intrinsic chemical differences), a teaspoon of kosher salt contains less salt than a teaspoon of table salt. The important thing is to adjust the salt; undersalt until the end, and then adjust. Many of these recipes do not specify the amount of salt; often an item in the ingredients list is just “S&P&C”. That’s “salt and pepper and cayenne powder”, and the amounts of each are the amounts that taste right to you.

There are actually many varieties of salt. Common table salt sometimes has a very small amount of potassium iodide (KI), which helps make the salt flow (“when it rains it pours”) and also helps prevent goiter. Many people claim that they can taste the potassium iodide (it’s bitter), so Morton’s and others now generally use calcium silicate (Ca_2SiO_4) instead of an iodide to make it pour when it rains. Of course some people claim that they can taste the calcium silicate. (I’m not sure what it tastes like.)

Salt is obtained from naturally occurring deposits of sodium chloride. The sodium chloride has trace amounts of other compounds or minerals, and it is these trace “elements” that give different salts different flavors.

Some salt deposits are already in place, mostly underground. (Until recently, a large portion of salt in America came from mines under Detroit.) Other deposits are made regularly in salt beds on tidal flats. “Sea salt” usually means a coarse-grained salt produced on tidal flats. Obviously, wherever in the world the tidal flat is will affect the trace elements, and hence the flavor. Himalayan salt, which has become trendy, is obtained from mines in Pakistan (south of the Himalayan Mountains). There are many different trace minerals in Himalayan salt, some which make it pink in color. Himalayan pink salt is a table or cooking salt, and must not be confused with pink salt, which is used in curing meat.

Olive Oil and Other Cooking Oils

There is a variety of oils that are used for cooking. I use olive oil for most things, but occasionally I'll use corn oil, especially for corn-based breads (tortillas), vegetable oil for its neutral flavor, or peanut oil, especially in stir fries or oriental (east Asian) dishes. Sesame oil also gives a nice hint of the orient.

Some oils supposedly are "healthier" than others. I don't know much about that, but I respect it. If you're concerned, and you think one type of oil is healthier than others, use it.

Oils have a limited shelf life that depends on the storage conditions. In ideal conditions, it can last for over a year. Old oil has a rancid smell. Let your nose be your guide.

Cooking oils can also be reused, but the number of reuses depends on the temperature at which the cooking is done, the amount of residual particles in the oil, how effectively it is strained, the interval of time between uses, and how the oil is kept from one cooking to the next. I rarely use enough oil at one time to think of saving it. The exception is Thanksgiving. I alternate how I cook a turkey at Thanksgiving, and about every four or five years, I deep fry a turkey. That requires $5\frac{1}{2}$ gallons of peanut oil. After the turkey, I'll often use the same oil to cook something else. One year, I decided to extend this process, over a period of about a week. After the turkey, I cooked a goose, then a duck, then 2 chickens, and finally 8 Cornish hens. After that I got rid of the oil (by adding small amounts to my compost pile over a period of two or three months).

In the recipes in this book, where my ingredient list says "olive oil", it means "extra virgin olive oil", but you can substitute whatever oil you want. Just be aware of the possible taste differences.

Nowadays, extra virgin, or EVOO, is the most common kind you'll see in normal-sized containers (24 oz or less) in the grocery store. The price is about the same, except on a per unit price for the bulk containers.

Having said that, I must quickly note that there are differences in olive oils. The differences among different "extra virgin olive oils" are even greater than

the differences between extra virgin olive oil and some olive oil that is not “extra virgin”. Some are much better than others.

Italy, Spain, and the US are big producers of olive oil, although places like Chile and even Mexico are making some good olive oil. Some people prefer one country to another, but I’m not sure that I can distinguish the regions of origin. One type of olives may be more common in one region than in another, but I think there is more variation within a region than among regions.

In addition to their uses in cooking, good olive oils are often used as dressings and just as garnishes.

Bouillons, Broths, and Stocks

A common ingredient in many dishes is a bouillon, broth, or stock. A bouillon is the same as a broth. While there are differences in broth and stock, I will refer to them interchangeably, and I often use them interchangeably in cooking. There is no difference in vegetable broth and vegetable stock (except, possibly, a distinction in commercial prepackaged products). The main difference in meat broths and stocks is the presence of gelatin; a stock has it, a broth does not. A stock is never completely clear, whereas a broth may be clear. (Preparation of the ultimate clear broth, called a consommé, is a touchstone for the competence of a French chef.)

You have a choice: you can make broths and stocks yourself or you can get them at the grocery store. The only one I make myself on a regular basis is chicken stock (page 24), but even it, I often buy at the store. Whenever I use vegetable stock, I always make my own (see page 66).

There are basically three kinds of broths, and stocks available from the store: concentrated and dried cubes (usually called “bouillon”), canned (or often now in paper/plastic boxes), and fresh prepared (at high-end grocery stores). Many of these are entirely acceptable, and actually good.

When using commercial products, you must watch the salt content. Remember, the total salt content of a dish is what is important. Over the years, commercial products, thankfully I say, have tended to have less salt.

Sauces

Béchamel is another common ingredient in the recipes in this book, and you have to (or at least, should) make it yourself. It will add about 3 or 4 minutes to your prep time, plus another 20 minutes or so while it cooks. When I list béchamel in the ingredients, I always give the page in this book (it's page 178) where you can find a description of how to make it, but I think béchamel is one of those things that a home cook should be able to prepare without instructions.

Spices and Herbs

Spices and herbs add spice and flavor to food.

The Spices and Seasoning aisle in the grocery store is replete with choices. The grocery store where I most frequently shop has over one hundred different items in that section.

Many spices are available either as a ground-up powder or in some whole form. In most dishes, only the ground form should be used, because the diner should not be surprised with a whole cardamom pod, or a whole clove in a bite of stew. That does not mean that you should buy spices that have already been ground into a powder. Many spices are best if they are ground just before adding them to the dish; this is particularly true of nutmeg, black pepper, cardamom, and coriander. If possible, buy these spices whole and grind them just before using. A nutmeg grater is good for nutmeg; for the others an electric coffee grinder works well. A good mortar and pestle also works well. For fresh roots like ginger root or horseradish, a box grater, or a zester or a fine grater such as those made by Microplane works well.



There are some herbs and spices that should be chopped instead of ground. These include oregano or marjoram, cilantro, parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme. These are generally best in their fresh forms, chopped finely just before being used. Instead of chopping or cutting with a knife, some herbs, such as basil leaves, retain their fresh flavor better when they're torn. Other spices, such as bay leaves, should be used whole, in which case you should keep count of how many you use and be sure to remove that number before serving the dish.

A common practice in French cooking is to tie some herbs and whole spices in a piece of cheesecloth to make a bouquet garní. Metal infusers also work well for holding whole herbs and spices while cooking.

Most of the spices used in the recipes in this book are common ones and can be purchased in regular grocery stores. In some cases, such as paprika, chili powder, or curry powder, the name of the spice is quite generic, and can refer to a variety of products that share some degree of commonality. You may find some producer whose

There are many mixed spices available. Some, such as McCormick's Chicken & Fish Total Seasoning, are proprietary blends. Others, such as "five spice mixture" or "garum masala", seem to refer to a specific blend. (Neither of those do, however.) I generally prefer to use more basic spices and blend them myself when I use them. (Some "basic spices", such as chili powder and paprika, are blends, however.)

An important thing to remember about spices is that they have finite shelf lives, some longer than others. Salt lasts forever; nutmeg nuts and peppercorns, almost as long. Nutmeg powder lasts only a matter of weeks. (That's why you should grind your own off of a nutmeg nut every time you use it.)

If your life in the kitchen follows a regular schedule, you should incorporate a check of ages and restocking of your spices into your schedule; otherwise, once or twice a year, you should go through your spices and replace ones that are old. I do this on a semi-regular basis, and I make up an order from an online spice retailer.

About the Ingredients.

What Do You Mean, “A 9-Inch Pie Shell?”

Most of the ingredients in the recipes in this book are generic. They are the same here and now as they were there and then. You don’t need to spend much time interpreting “2 c cooked chicken breast, cubed” or “1 lb ground beef”. (Actually, of course, there are big differences in ground beef, ranging from 75% lean to 95% lean, for example. There are also big differences in chicken breasts, ranging from a Perdue fryer to a poulet de Bresse. In some recipes, I may comment on details, but usually I just leave it to your choice.)

Other ingredients, however, depend on what is available in American grocery stores. How about “a 28 oz can of stewed tomatoes” or “one sheet of frozen puff pastry” or “ $2\frac{1}{4}$ tsp yeast”? Who came up with those sizes?

It just happens that these items are standard sizes sold in American grocery stores. Also, 9-inch pie shells are readily available (in the frozen food section), but not 10-inch pie shells. (By the way, the frozen pie shells are just as good and a whole lot more convenient than the pâte brisée that I describe on page 194.) In these recipes, I try to hold use of special here-and-now commercial ingredients to a minimum.

Substitutions

Make substitutions when you must, or just when you want to.

Many of the recipes in this book are the results of substitutions that I made in some other recipes. In some cases, the substitutions were made because I didn’t have the called-for ingredient, and didn’t want to make a special trip to find it. In other cases, I decided that a different ingredient would be better or more interesting.

When they’re in season, I often substitute garlic sprouts from my garden for scallions. I always substitute an onion for a shallot (yellow, white, sweet, or red onion, depending on the flavor I want).

Some standard substitutions are wellknown. Some are OK, and some are not. The use of milk with a little acid (vinegar or lemon juice) in place

of buttermilk, for example, is not OK, despite what you may read on the internet. If you need buttermilk, you really need buttermilk.

On the other hand, for example, there are good substitutes for crème fraîche, and of course, crème fraîche is a lot harder to find than buttermilk. (The best substitute depends on what you're going to do with the crème fraîche; plain sour cream works in some cases, when you're not cooking the dish; otherwise, crema Mexicana works well – and surprisingly is widely available nowadays. Also, for cooking, a 50-50 mixture of sour cream and heavy cream with moderate whipping works well. For a salad topping, Greek yogurt is a good substitute for crème fraîche.)

Tools of the Trade

When it comes to kitchen gadgets and appliances, I'm a minimalist. Not that I don't have a bunch of gadgets and appliances. I have five big Ikea cabinets in my garage full of kitchen stuff like vegetable curly-strip makers, bread makers, and various kinds of slicers and dicers. My really nice food processor has even been relegated to a back corner in one of these cabinets because in most cases, I can do it quicker with a knife. (I admit, however; once in a while, I go out to the garage and bring in my food processor.)

Thirty minutes of browsing Williams Sonoma's web pages will often result in ordering an item that looks absolutely essential. After maybe a week in the kitchen, it is allocated space somewhere on the bottom shelf of an Ikea cabinet in the garage. It's fun, though.

The Stove

I can't tell you what kind of stove to use. You must use whatever is in your kitchen.

But,
if you have a choice, choose gas.

I had an electric stove several years ago, and I had one for a few years in my

current house until I replaced it with a gas range. Cooking a soup or a stew on an electric range is no problem, but when I needed to sauté something or do something that requires heat control, I usually turned the electric unit on full blast, and controlled the heat by moving the pan on and off the unit. (I also often do that with gas. Moving the pan is easier than adjusting the flame. Another time when I control the heat by moving the pan is when the right way is to use a double boiler. I haven't used a double boiler in years.)

One thing that is very important is to calibrate the temperature in your oven. Buy an oven thermometer and use it for a while when you're using your oven. Make note of any differences in your oven settings and the thermometer readings. The differences may be different at different temperatures. (That's an easy sentence to remember.) Write down the oven settings that yield "true" temperatures of say 200°, 250°, and so on up to about 500°. Paste the note on your oven or somewhere convenient, and use those settings for cooking.

Knives

Sharp knives are essential items in the kitchen. You should buy good knives, and keep them sharp. It's a real hassle to take your knives out to be sharpened, so a good investment (about \$50) is an electric knife sharpener. I bring in my knife sharpener and spend 30 minutes or so sharpening my "main knives" every couple of months or so. I don't think too highly of the hand-held sharpeners, and, remember, a "sharpening steel" is not a sharpener; it only helps to hold an edge. (You should use a sharpening steel frequently, however, if for no other reason than that it looks really cool to do it.)

A sharp knife makes all cutting work both easier and better. If you're used to dull knives (and many people are), when you first start using sharp knives, you'll cut yourself a lot, just handling and cleaning the knives. (The old chef's tale that you're more likely to cut yourself with a dull knife is not true.)

A knife should fit your hand and feel good. Although many Japanese knives look cool, I don't like the hand-feel of many of them. Also, Japanese knives are honed at a different angle from American knives, and to preserve the

angle, they must be sharpened differently. I bought some high-quality Global knives a few years. I had them sharpened to the right angle once at great trouble and expense, but then I started sharpening them myself, and now they have the American angle, more-or-less. I still don't like the strange hand-feel, however.

More on the angle: Japanese knives are usually honed to an angle of about 15° or 16° , while American (and European) knives are honed to about 20° . The angle is measured from the plane of the blade (that is the center plane from the perspective of the tip), and so the smaller the angle, the "sharper" the knife; that is, the thinner it is nearer the edge. The thinner edge of course means that it loses its hone more quickly.

You can alter the angle with a knife sharpener. Most electric knife sharpeners for the home kitchen in America give a 20° angle. Recently, electric knife sharpeners with adjustable angles have become available (they cost a lot more). Other sharpeners are now available with a fixed angle of 15° . If you sharpen ordinary American or European knives with a 15° sharpener, the knives will take on that angle. It has become popular for American cooks to sharpen their knives, whether Japanese, European, or American, to the 15° angle.

Often when cutting, onions, say, the cutoff piece tends to stick to the knife. I like a chef's knife with a blade that tends to keep the cutoff piece separate. There is no design that guarantees this, but ridges and holes in the blade help. A sharp knife also helps.

You need about four or five knives: a serrated bread knife, a small serrated knife to slice tomatoes and do things like that, a bigger slicing knife for poultry and roasts, and the two workhorses, a paring knife and a chef's knife. There are many variations on each. Get ones that feel comfortable and then get so you can use them well. Make sure the tang (the part of the blade that goes into the handle) goes all the way or almost all the way to the end of the handle. (Visible rivets in the handle indicate this is the case, but many good knives, some Henckels for example, do not have exposed rivets.)



Cool Knives



The Knives I Use



The Knives I Really Use

Pots and Pans

Expensive pots and pans, unfortunately, are generally better than cheap ones. Except for cast iron. The porcelain-covered cast iron pots and pans from the two main French companies are no better than the ones from Lodge (although I generally prefer the bare cast iron ones from Lodge). I have never understood Veblen goods in the kitchen.

Most of my pots and pans are made of three layers, a core of aluminum and a layer of stainless steel on the inside and one on the outside. (The 5-ply versions seem a little unnecessary.) Copper cores are a little better, but probably not worth the extra expense.

You need at least two fry pans (or “skillets”), at least two saucepans (pots with single, long handles), and at least two “pots” or Dutch ovens (“soup pots”). You need at least one or two fry pans that are non-stick (though “non-stick” is a relative term). A variation on a saucepan is a saucier, whose sides curve smoothly into the bottom without corners. It is useful in making sauces or anything than need whisking. A variation on a fry pan or skillet is a sauté pan. It has vertical sides that form a corner with the bottom of the pan. Because of the vertical sides, a sauté pan has more bottom area for sautéing. I generally sauté in a fry pan, however, because I often flip the product I’m sautéing just using the motion of the pan.

Utensils and Appliances

There are many useful kitchen utensils. Spatulas, whisks, timers, thermometers, and so on. The best way to build up an arsenal is just to start cooking with what you've got. Then, if you feel some gadget you don't have would be useful, make a note it, wait a week and if you still think you'd use it, buy one.

There are also lots of useful kitchen appliances. Again, the best way to get ones that would be useful *to you*, is to make note of your *needs* in the normal course of cooking. After you've identified something that you think you need, wait a week and if you still think you'd use it, buy one.

Some utensils and appliances that a lot of home cooks find useful are coffee makers; blenders, both table-top and hand-held immersion blenders; mandolines; food processors; mixers, both table-top and hand-held; and bread makers. I have all of these (and many more!), but I'm generally too lazy to use them (it's the clean-up!). I use my Mr. Coffee coffee maker every day (because I prefer it to the trendy, fancier devices or machines), and I use my blender often, but instead of using the other devices and machines, I usually use a knife or a whisk.

Blenders

Blenders are in a special category. I first bought a blender in the 1960's to make margaritas. I haven't made a margarita in years, but I use my blender often. Actually, my blenders. And not the one I bought to make margaritas. I have a Cuisinart blender that serves most purposes (making crepe dough, for example, page 196). My Vitamix, however, is the workhorse, especially when it comes to soups.

It's good to have two blender jars for each blender.

In the soup recipes in this book, a large portion of them require blending. All the cream soups pass through the blender. For some, like mushroom soup (page 86), there are two versions; one, the cream version, requiring blending, and another, the "broth version", not requiring it.

There is only one thing you need to control on a blender: speed. You need to be able to vary the speed from stopped to fast. The only control dial or buttons that you need is to choose a speed between stopped and fast, and the best designs of blenders only provide only those choices, and the labels clearly relate to the speed. Although many blenders have control buttons for “Soups”, “Sauces”, and so on, there are only three modes of operation, and they just relate to the speed.

The simplest mode of operation is to start at a fixed speed and then to stop.

An important modification of the simple mode is to start at a relatively slow speed, then move to a faster speed, and finally stop.

In another mode of operation, you need to start fast, stop, go fast again, stop, and so on. That's the “pulse” operation, and a special control button for pulse is useful.

An Indoor Smoker

I have two outdoor smokers, one an offset barrel smoker, and the other an easy-to-use electric smoker that sits on the deck.

The smoker I use most often, however, is a rather unusual stove-top smoker. It is made by Cameron, and can readily be found at kitchen supply retailers. Cameron also supplies little containers of sawdust (they call them “chips”; it sounds better) from various kinds of wood, which become the fuel for the smoke. You just pour a little pile of the sawdust on the bottom pan of the smoker, place the drip pan on the sawdust, lay the grill rack on top of that, place the item to be smoked on the rack, close the cover, and place the whole pan over medium heat.



Smoked Salmon

I make smoked salmon often. Fresh salmon (just meaning “not frozen”) is readily available in grocery stores. Although I could say a lot about freshness and the different types of salmon, I won’t. (I’ve caught salmon in Alaska (both sockeye during the run and pink in the open waters) and eaten them within three hours of catching them. They were good. I mostly eat farm-raised Atlantic salmon now, although occasionally I’ll get wild-caught sockeye (red) salmon.)

Select a filet of salmon of whatever type you want, about 7 to 12 inches long, with skin on.

Drizzle with lemon juice and sprinkle with black pepper.

Use alder wood sawdust. Place filet skin side down on grill rack, close smoker, and cook over medium heat for 20 to 25 minutes.

Serve the whole filet with skin on a plate garnished with lemon wedges, capers, and chopped hard-cooked eggs. Use a sharp serrated knife to make the first few $\frac{1}{2}$ inch slices across the filet. (This is for the dining convenience of your guests.)

Tasso

Tasso is an inimitable Cajun cured meat. It is easy to make with a smoker, but it does require a dry cure. The dry cure to use is a mixture of kosher salt, granulated white sugar, and pink salt in the ratio 8:4:1.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ c dry cure: $\frac{1}{2}$ c kosher salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ c sugar, 1 Tbsp pink salt

Pink salt is not the popular Himalayan pink salt; it is nitrite salt, which is mostly sodium chloride (regular salt) with a little sodium nitrite, and it is colored pink to remind you not to ingest too much of it. You can buy it at cooks' supply retailers.

- 1 lb boneless pork shoulder cut cross grain into a slab 1 inch thick
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c dry cure
- 1 Tbsp ground black pepper
- 2 tsp cayenne
- 1 Tbsp dried oregano
- 2 tsp ground allspice

1. Rub dry cure generously over pork, and cure covered in refrigerator for 4 hours (or more).
2. Rinse pork to remove all cure.
3. Rub spices onto pork.
4. Smoke on stovetop 2 to 3 hours at low heat.

Tasso is generally not eaten on its own (although I do). It is used in small chunks in various stews. Any gumbo except a seafood gumbo requires tasso (IMHO).

Techniques

Cooking involves many techniques, flipping a crêpe or an egg, using knives of various types and for different purposes, using a whisk, and so on. Developing skill in these techniques requires practice.

In most cases, doing what feels natural is best. The way to hold a knife is a good example of this. Pick up a knife, and without thinking about using it

or cutting anything, just hold it firmly in your hand. It is likely that your index finger is not extended over the back of the blade, but rather all five of your fingers are wrapped around the handle. That is the correct way to hold a knife most of the time. (Despite what “master chefs” may say, however, sometimes it is appropriate to extend your index finger over the back of the blade, if it feels right. It probably feels right, for example, when you’re slicing a ripe tomato thinly with a small serrated knife.)

Many ingredients in the recipes in this book are to be “chopped”. Unless you’re on TV and no one will see your chopped ingredient, do not cut the ingredient with a with chopping motion, unless the pieces are small ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch or so across). The problem is that the knife blade does not hit the cutting board all the way across, either because the blade is curved (most chef’s knives have a curved cutting edge), or the angle you hold the knife is not exactly parallel to the cutting board. The chopping can be done effectively by a rocking motion of the knife. (That’s why the blades on most chef’s knives have curved cutting edges.) Alternatively, make each cut slow and deliberate, and include a small forward slicing motion when the cut is finished. Also, of course, look at the chopped product, and recut any pieces that are not cut through.

Cooking Methods

Cooking is generally a process in which heat is used to change foods. There are several ways heat is transferred in cooking. Once a product reaches a given temperature throughout, it is “done” to the same degree, no matter how the heat is applied to raise it to that temperature. The method of cooking, however, has a great effect on the taste and texture of the product. The cooking method may also determine whether some of the components of the product are irretrievably lost, as in the water in which it is boiled.

Baking and Roasting

Baking and roasting are methods of cooking by using the ambient heat of an oven. Although baking is always roasting, one word or the other is conventionally used for cooking a given product; bread is baked, while beets are

roasted. As a product is baked or roasted, its internal temperature approaches the temperature of the oven, but generally stays well below the oven temperature. Liquids in the product evaporate, and the heat of evaporation keeps its temperature lower.

The important thing in baking and roasting is to control the temperature of the oven. The controls on the oven should be accurately calibrated.

Because of the evaporation of liquids, sometimes a pan of water in the oven helps in the cooking process.

Root vegetables and other heavy vegetables, such as winter squash, that must be cooked for some time turn out much better if they are roasted rather than boiled. (Try it both ways, and taste the results.)

“Roasting” also refers to a method of cooking on a spit over an open flame.

Boiling, Braising, and Steaming

Boiling, braising, and steaming use water or a stock or their vapors to transfer heat to the product.

The temperature of the liquid is limited by its boiling point.

For many meats, especially beef, a desirable flavor is produced by a high-temperature Maillard reaction, which begins to occur at 310°. For this reason, prior to cooking with a liquid, the meat should be seared either in some oil at a temperature above 300° or by high radiant heat. Searing, however, does not “seal in the juices”, as many cooks believe; it just makes the taste better.

Grilling and Broiling

Grilling and broiling are cooking methods using radiant heat; in grilling, the heat source is usually below the product, and in broiling, it is above the product.

Grilling and broiling heat the surface quickly, so generally the product must be relatively thin, and in most cases must be flipped.

Often the grilling or broiling should begin at a very high temperature to achieve a proper sear.

Sautéing, Pan Frying, Shallow Frying, Deep Frying, and Air Frying

Frying is the most versatile way of cooking because of the fine control of heat and the extent to which the heat is transferred by oil.

The terms used for the various types of frying vary somewhat in their meanings. “Deep frying” almost always refers to a cooking method in which the product is completely submerged in oil, usually in a temperature ranging from about 350° to 400°. The temperature is usually critical, so a good thermometer is a requirement for deep frying. (Deep fried food is my favorite, but I don’t cook that way very often because it’s messy. I have an electric fryer that I use outside on the deck once or twice a year, and I have a big fry pot for turkeys and other poultry that I use occasionally, usually around Thanksgiving.)

In this book, I use “sauté” and “pan fry” essentially synonymously. Both are done in a fry pan, and use only enough oil to coat the pan.

For applying only a small amount of oil, a small pump spray container is convenient. These devices can be purchased from kitchen supply retailers. They can be filled with any kind of oil. I have two, one filled with olive oil, and one with a neutral oil.

“Shallow frying” is done in a fry pan with a larger amount of oil, typically enough to come about halfway up the product. The temperature of the oil is critical, but I just use a speck of cornmeal or flour to get the temperature close to the right level. The product needs to be turned a few times in shallow frying. I make fried chicken and fried fish by shallow frying.

Another method of frying that uses only a small amount of oil is air frying. This method requires a special cooker. Most air fryers are poorly designed and awkward to use. Some toaster-ovens have an air fryer function. These

are more convenient to use. A pump spray container filled with oil is useful for distributing the small amount of oil needed in air frying. Of course, an aerosol cooking oil sprayer can also be used, but I prefer the mechanical pump sprayer.

Standard Preparations

Many ingredients require some kind of preparation prior to incorporation into the recipe. Some preparations are required frequently, for many different recipes. Other ingredients occur less often in the recipes in this book. For some, I describe the steps along with the general description of the recipe. In the following, I describe some standard preparations for use in various recipes.

Peeling Vegetables

Many vegetables can be used with or without their peels. I generally just use a paring knife to peel vegetables.

Some vegetables such as beets and winter squash can be roasted in their skins, and then either the skin can just be slipped off, or the meat of the vegetable can be scooped out of the shell.

If the skin is very thin, such as on a tomato or pepper, peeling is difficult unless the product is treated beforehand.

To peel a tomato:

- With a paring knife, score the skin in a few places, particularly at the bud end.
- Place in boiling water for 45 seconds.
- Remove from water and peel.
- Cut open and remove as many seeds as you can (or want to).

To peel a chile pepper:

- Char the pepper, either over direct flame if you have it, or under an oven broiler.
- Let the pepper cool a little, and then slide the skin off in pieces.
- Cut open and remove as many seeds as you can (or want to).

Chicken

Chicken is one of the most versatile meats, and it is one of the easiest to prepare. Various parts of the chicken can be purchased separately. I usually prefer to start with a whole chicken. That way I get all parts. I think that the dark meat has more flavor, but many people prefer the white meat. (Another thing I like about a whole chicken if giblets are included, is the small cook's reward of fried liver, heart, and kidneys that I make for myself and eat in the kitchen.)

Unless you are roasting the whole chicken or deep frying it, the chicken must first be broken down into the primary parts.

To break down a chicken:

- Lay a whole chicken on its back on a cutting board, and pull a wing outward. Cut through the stretched skin, looking for where the wing bone ball joint connects the body socket (the "shoulder joint"). The ball end is bright white. Push the knife into the area, and move the wing back and forth to locate the actual joint. Push the knife through the ligaments to separate the wing from the main body.

Do not cut any bone.

Repeat for the other wing.

- Lay the chicken on its back and pull a leg outward. Do essentially the same thing at the "hip joint" with the leg as you did at the "shoulder" with the wing.

Do not cut any bone.

Repeat for the other leg.

- Separate the thighs from the drumsticks by first locating the hinge joint by flexing the two parts, and then cutting the tendons holding the joint

together.

Do not cut any bone.

- Lay the chicken on its back, and with kitchen shears or a heavy knife, cut through the ribs and remove the backbone.
- Lay the breast face up on the cutting board and cut straight down on one side of the breast bone, keeping the knife tight against the breastbone. Do the same on the other side of the breastbone to remove the other side of the breast.

At this point, you have 8 pieces. Depending on how you are to use the chicken parts, you may remove the skin and some bones, and you may cut the pieces into smaller ones.

To make chicken stock:

- Remove most visible fat and skin from a chicken carcass or parts of a carcass, such as the backbone and the breastbones that you have after breaking down the chicken as described above. Place in a pot and cover with room-temperature water. The carcass should have some meat left on it; the more the better.
- Simmer the chicken for 2 hours, always keeping below the boil, and skimming foam occasionally.
- Add a mirepoix (page 182) and simmer for 30 minutes more.
- Add 2 cloves garlic, 1 Tbsp parsley, 1 tsp whole black pepper, 1 bay leaf, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp thyme (leaves). Simmer for 30 minutes more.
- Strain through a medium-mesh strainer.
- Add salt to taste, taking into account how you may use the stock.

I usually have some chicken stock in my freezer, but I also have cans of chicken broth, and my rule is if I don't have some stock in my freezer, use the canned broth. I try roughly to salt my homemade stock to the same level as the salt in the canned broth that I use. Vegetable stock can be made in a similar way, without the chicken of course (page 66).

Shrimp

I like the flavor of shrimp, and I have decided that properly frozen shrimp is just about as good as fresh shrimp. (Actually, I'm not sure that I've ever been able to do a head-to-head taste test, but I have always found good shrimp that has been properly frozen to taste good.)

Before purchasing and preparing shrimp, there are two decisions you must make. First, what size shrimp is appropriate, and then what to do with the shells. The diner should **never** be required to peel shrimp, unless you're at the seashore for a casual cookout. The tail-end shell, however, should often be left on. It adds visual appeal, and is useful as a handle when eating boiled shrimp as an hors d'oeuvre. For soups and gumbos, the tail-end shell should be removed.

Shrimp vary in size and they are given restaurant names like "jumbo", "colossal", "peanut", and so on. In the recipes in this book, I indicate the size by "count"; so "21 to 24 count (without heads)" means that the shrimp are of a size that 21 to 25 of them without heads weigh one pound. "Count" is a standard way in the industry to state the size, except, unfortunately, it sometimes refers to a measurement with heads, and sometimes, without.

For some dishes that contain cooked shrimp, the shrimp can be cooked with the other ingredients. Except for grilled or fried shrimp, I usually boil the shrimp separately and then add the shrimp to the dish after the other ingredients in the dish are ready.

To prepare boiled, peeled shrimp:

- Remove shells.
Depending on how the product is to be used, you may or may not remove the tail-end shell.
- Place shrimp shells in lightly salted water. Add seasonings such as Old Bay, Zatarain's, or your own mixture, to your taste.
- Boil shrimp shells for 20 minutes.
- Remove shells from water and bring water to boil.
- Dump shrimp in boiling water, which will cause water to quit boiling;

leave on high heat.

- Exactly 2 minutes after water begins boiling again, remove the shrimp.
- Chill shrimp.

Mise en Place

Cooking is more enjoyable if you're not rushed. The first thing is to look over the ingredients list and get them out of your pantry, refrigerator, or wherever else they may be. Consider substitutions, either necessary or discretionary. Determine what pots, pans, and other utensils will be needed. Lay them all out in an organized fashion. This is called *mise en place*.

Next, look more carefully at the ingredients list and the directions to see if there are any preparatory gotchas. "Soak beans overnight" (wait a minute, I planned to have this dish for lunch); "Marinate overnight"; etc. etc. There are some more subtle gotchas. The ingredient list may include "tomatoes, peeled and seeded", or "chile peppers, peeled and seeded". Another important item is boiled, peeled shrimp. These require some time for preparation.

I sometimes include preparatory steps like soaking beans or peeling tomatoes in the directions for the recipes, but sometimes I don't. The ingredients list, of course, indicates necessary preparations.

After you have your mise en place, you may need to return some of the ingredient to the refrigerator.

Measurements

I use American units of measure, and I abbreviate them in standard ways: "c" is "cup"; "tsp" is "teaspoon"; "Tbsp" is "tablespoon"; and "oz" is ounce.

Temperatures are stated in degrees Fahrenheit.

If the thing being measured is a liquid, "ounce" is a "fluid ounce". If the thing being measured is a solid, "ounce" is somewhat ambiguous; technically,

it means a unit of weight, but I rarely get out the kitchen scales. Just pretend it's a volume measurement, and it will be close enough.

A single $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp measuring spoon is always sufficient; for 1 tsp, use it twice; for 1 Tbsp, use it 6 times; for $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp, eyeball half of it.

It's useful to know a few equivalences:

- 1 tsp = a small pile in the middle of your cupped hand (try it)
- 1 Tbsp = 3 tsp
- 1 oz = 2 Tbsp = 6 tsp
- 1 c = 8 oz = 16 Tbsp = 48 tsp
- 1 pt = 2 c = 16 oz = 32 Tbsp = 96 tsp
- 1 qt = 2 pt = 4 c = 32 oz = 64 Tbsp = 192 tsp
- 1 gal = 4 qt = 8 pt = 16 c = 128 oz = 256 Tbsp = 768 tsp

A lot of things don't need measuring, even if it's important that the amount be approximately correct; you'll be close enough, especially with a little practice.

Some of the recipes in this book list "S&P&C" as an ingredient. That's just salt and pepper and cayenne powder. If you're particular about your salt, use whatever kind you like and however much you want. I usually just use Morton's kosher salt. Pepper here means the common dried black or white pepper (*genus Piper*), and should always be freshly ground. There are also many varieties of black pepper, but I can't tell much difference in them. If you're particular about your pepper, use whatever kind you like and however much you want. I usually use white pepper in white dishes like mashed potatoes. It's black pepper that hasn't turned black yet. Black pepper has more flavor. I like a little picante flavor in my food. Pepper has a type of "hotness", that is different from the hotness of chile peppers. Cayenne is a mildly hot chile, and it is available in dried powder form. I have a shaker of cayenne in my kitchen, and I frequently throw a dash of it in whatever I'm cooking. If you cook regularly, I suggest starting with a single dash in whatever dish you're preparing. If it's too strong, omit it the next time; otherwise, use two dashes. Continue until you find the number of dashes that you and your guests can just taste, but that is not too hot.

Culinary Terms

A lot of our cooking lore and techniques have come from the French, and therefore many names of ingredients, dishes, and methods come from the French language. I don't speak regular French, but I'm semi-fluent in restaurant French. I mix French and English in the names of dishes in this book. Sometimes I say bechamel and sometimes I say béchamel; sometimes I say crêpe and sometimes I say crepe (hear the difference?). I feel free to mix types of words; for example, for me, it's usually beef bourguignon, instead of a unilingual equivalent. I'm also somewhat loose with my Spanish; while I never say "halapino", I occasionally call a tamal a "tamale".

Wines

Rules for the Cook

Although generally rules developed by autocratic chefs (*never* use a garlic press, *always* use flat-leaf parsley, etc.), I would like to offer some rules of my own for the home cook (or the restaurateur).

The first rule has been a mantra of this chapter.

Trust, But Verify (Taste)

Be wary of what chefs say about the right way to do something or the best ingredient to use.

Experimenting is easy and fun. Pick out some new rule about cooking that you've read (for hard-cooked eggs, "steam them", instead of immersing them in water) and do it both the old way and the newly-suggested way.

It's a nice way to spend a Sunday morning.

Trying and tasting is the way to learn for yourself, and get it right.

Be Persnickety about the Ingredients

Not all ingredients are created equal — or perfect. Not all garlic cloves; not all bell peppers; not all

Look at the ingredients as you assemble your mis en place. Garlic is notorious for having little brown spots. I'm not sure whether they affect the product, but I'd prefer to cut them out. Bell peppers, beans, squash; they all may have little blemishes. They're all still good, but I'd prefer to cut out the blemishes.

Make it Edible

The idea is that the diner should not have to do intricate manipulations that the cook in the kitchen could do much more easily.

The next three rules are on this general theme.

Cut Shared Dishes into Serving-Size Portions

This especially applies to appetizers, but it also applies to any passed dishes.

The cook should allow the diner an elegance in dining; do in the kitchen what's harder to do at the table.

Don't Hide Fat, Bones, or Shells under a Sauce or in a Stew

Fat and bones are flavor, so many dishes should include them in the cooking. Likewise, seafood shells add flavor, so if you can, include them in the cooking. That doesn't mean that they have to remain in the finished product, however. Shrimp tail-end shells are OK in some dishes, but not in soups or stew.

The difference is in what is presented to the diner. For a nice prime rib, a big bone and a large portion of attached fat adds succulence to the cut. The diner easily cuts around it.

Bones and fat also add flavor to meat in a stew, or covered in a gravy. This the diner cannot see, or in any event, cannot remove so easily. It should be removed in the kitchen. (That does not mean, however, that the dish is not cooked with the bones and fat. Each dish is different, of course. Sometimes the only way of doing this is to cook the ingredients separately and combine the broth, or to enclose inedible portions in a cheesecloth bag while cooking.)

Don't Stack Food so that It Falls over at First Bite

The presentation should always be appealing, even dazzling.

But the diner wants to eat it.

The cook should think of how the diner will take the first bite, and what the dish will look like after that first bite.

Give Authenticity No Points

We often hear “but that’s not authentic Vietnamese (or whatever).”

Who cares?

The concept of authenticity presupposes a cultural homogeneity that in reality is nonexistent, or that at best, is geographically localized and fleeting in time. There’s no such thing in the big scheme.

When I’m in Vietnam (or wherever), I always eat the native food. I also try to find the best places to eat it. Just like in America where there are good restaurants and not-so-good ones, some restaurants or holes-in-the-wall in Ho Chi Minh City are better than others. Guidebooks can help, but so can locals.

When I’m eating Vietnamese food in America, I do want “authentic” flavors

that I associate with Vietnamese food, but more importantly, I want it to taste good (to me), and I want it to be easy to eat. If they don't make it that way in Hanoi, that's OK. I've probably also eaten a dish by the same name in Hanoi. It wasn't better, necessarily. (Not to say the food in Hanoi is not good. There's actually an interesting residual undercurrent of French cooking in some Hanoi restaurants, but that doesn't necessarily make the food better.)

There are many popular cuisines called "fusion". I like fusion because there's no need to be authentic.

As for eating utensils, chop sticks are fine, but I do not like to use my teeth as a knife. Chop sticks work well on bite-size pieces of food. The cook should prepare the food with that in mind. (I can assure you, however, that my way is not the "authentic" Chinese way, for example. Not in Harbin, not in Kasgar, not in Lhasa, not in Guangzhou; but when I'm in Kashgar, I eat the food of the Uygurs, and if I have to, I eat like the Uygurs. They use chopsticks and, for a knife, their teeth.)

Maybe Ethiopians and Indians, for example, eat with their hands. OK. I prefer chopsticks or a knife and fork, whether I'm eating Ethiopian food or just a stir-fry dish with no pedigree.

Orchestration to Bring it All Together

A meal is usually more than one or two dishes. The cook should think of the sequence of tastes as the various courses are served, and the harmony of tastes within a course. In addition to the tastes, the appearance of the dishes should be considered. Food that looks good will usually taste better.

Just as the cook considers the mise en place before preparation of a dish, the cook and/or host prepares a mise en place for the service.

Tolerate Guests Who Want to "Help"

Guests like to get into the kitchen. Tolerate them.

The Recipes

Yeah, they're mostly stolen. I'd probably cite references and give credit, if I knew who deserved it.

I learned to cook mainly from two sources, Julia Child's Volume I¹ (and later, also Volume II²) and Joy of Cooking.³

I often get recipes from chefs when I have particularly enjoyed a dish.

Over the years, I put a bunch of recipes in spreadsheets. I have a standard format that I use in a spreadsheet for a recipe. I collect the recipes of a common type, say soups, into a workbook. I have a master workbook in which each spreadsheet is a list of dishes of a particular type. Each item in the list is hyperlinked to the spreadsheet in another workbook that contains the recipe for that dish. Yeah, I used to have a lot of time on my hands.

I look at my recipe before cooking a dish, sometimes I even print the recipe. I make notes of additions or modifications, and the recipes change over time.

In writing this book, I have used my own notes. I have also looked at other cookbooks. Being an old academic, I didn't just steal from one source, that's plagiarism; I stole from multiple sources, that's research.

Vegetarian Recipes

I love vegetarians. They all have different reasons (and important reasons!) for being vegetarians. For some, it's just to be different and ergo, special. But any way, except for the evangelists among them, they're OK.

I like the challenge of cooking for them. Years ago, we had annual Thanksgiving dinners of about 12 to 16 regulars and semi-regulars, of whom 3 were

¹Julia Child, Louisette Bertholle, and Simone Beck, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1961. (Yes, I have the first edition.)

²Julia Child and Simone Beck, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume II*, Knopf, 1970.

³Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker, *Joy of Cooking*, fifth edition, Bobbs-Merrill, 1964.

vegetarians. Turkey of course was the main dish, but the vegetarians didn't eat turkey. I think that I always had more-than-adequate substitutes, however, and it was fun trying different things.

Many recipes, especially for soups, are "almost vegetarian"; the chicken broth is the only thing that takes them over the edge. (I'm always clear about this in serving a dinner; but some of my vegetarian friends readily make an exception for chicken broth used in a soup.) I'm usually reluctant to modify a recipe just to make it vegetarian, say by using vegetable broth in place of chicken broth. I'll just make a second soup that's vegetarian.

For some dishes, especially little bites, that call for ground beef or minced chicken, a vegetarian product can be made using chopped mushrooms. (Call the chopped mushrooms "duxelles", and it's even better.)

My definition of "vegetarian" is simple.

Although I know it must be fun to make all kinds of distinctions and degrees of vegetarianism, I don't have time for that. I accept the definition that was common with my parents' generation. Defined negatively, if the recipe uses parts of an animal (that is, a member of Kingdom Animalia) that required the death or disfigurement of that animal, it's *not vegetarian*.

Some of the recipes in this book use only vegetable products, so I call them vegetarian, and I have indicated which recipes are vegetarian using a ^v, for example, **Mushroom Puffs^v**. (I don't use an indicator for some very obvious things like sauces, breads, and desserts.)

For dishes that can be made vegetarian simply by the omission of one or two ingredients, I use the symbol ^{v?}, for example, **Mini Fritatas^{v?}**.

There are several soups and other dishes that would be vegetarian, except for the broth or stock, which is usually chicken broth. Personally, I avoid substitutes, like vegetable broth, but some vegetable broths can be pretty good, especially if you make them yourself. For dishes that are vegetarian except for the broth, I use the symbol ^{vb}, for example, **Asparagus Soup^{vb}**.

If your definition is different from mine, you'll just have to look at the ingredients and decide for yourself.

Starters

Starters are also called “entrees” in most places except America; they are the “entry” to the meal. Somehow, for many of us, entree has come to mean the main dish in the meal.

I like to call starters “hors d’oeuvres” (except if I’m trying to write it – I can’t even get enough letters in the right order for my word-completion software to spell it for me). *Hors d’oeuvre* means stuff outside of one’s real work. Cooking is “work”, but “hors d’oeuvre” is play; have some fun, make some small bites you like. (BTW, you can put an “s” on the end of “oeuvre” if you want; most French don’t seem to care, and they certainly can’t hear the difference.)



Quick Bites

These “quick bites” are appetizers or snacks that can be made quickly.

A major consideration is whether the ingredients are pantry items, that is, staple items always available in your kitchen. For example, bruschettas are extremely easy to make, and just require a short oven stay, but if you don’t have good tomatoes, bread, and cheese, don’t make them.

Quesadillas, on the other hand, just require flour tortillas, which are staples in our kitchen. The fillings can be whatever you have to put in them. (Some kind of cheese is a requirement; “*queso*” = “cheese”. Everything else is optional.)

Bruschettas^v

During the summer and early fall when my tomatoes are in, there are three dishes that I eat at least twice a week, BLTs, caprese salad (page 104), and bruschettas. I do not eat these the rest of the year.

Bruschettas require good bread, good tomatoes, fresh basil; other than that, anything goes.

I use a French baguette, fresh chopped tomatoes (from my garden – Burpee F₁ hybrids, “Big Boy” or “Better Boy”, but if you like trendy heirlooms, I guess they’re OK), crumbled Gorgonzola cheese, and some freshly torn basil.

Bruschetta I

1. Slice baguette on a bias into $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick slices.
2. Spread cheese on bread.
3. Spread tomatoes and basil on top of cheese.
4. Cook on a baking sheet in a 350° oven for about 15 minutes.

Bruschetta II

Here's another way I make them. For this one, I also need a garlic clove or two and about a tablespoon of olive oil.

- 1.** Mince some garlic into a small fry pan with a little olive oil, and heat gently.
- 2.** Slice baguette on bias into $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick slices.
- 3.** Brush with garlic olive oil, and toast lightly.
- 4.** Spread tomatoes, cheese, and basil on bread.
- 5.** Cook on a baking sheet in a 350° oven for about 15 minutes.

There are many variations on these dishes. Some people think that a drizzle of balsamic vinegar helps. I'm OK with that.

Unfortunately, bruschettas are seasonal dishes. Don't make them if you can't get good tomatoes. You cannot get good tomatoes in a grocery store, and even most tomatoes from farmer's markets are only marginally acceptable.

*** picture

Chicken Tenders

You can use chicken tenderloin (that's the little piece of the chicken breast that separates easily from the rest of the breast) or just the regular breast. I can't tell much difference.

Cut the meat into strips about 4 inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide.

1. Marinate in buttermilk for about an hour. (You can skip this step if you're in a hurry.)
2. Dredge the tenders in seasoned bread crumbs and grated parmesan.
3. Arrange on a baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil.
4. Bake at 500° for about 12 minutes.

Boiled Shrimp

Prepare boiled 12 to 15 count shrimp (page 25), leaving tail-end shells on.

Serve with red remoulade sauce (page 44), or with commercial seafood sauce.

Preparing the shrimp will take some time, so you may not consider this a “quick bite”.

Flat Bread^v

Flat bread is an easy quick bite. Basically, just prepare the bread as described on page 199.

Cut the bread in serving size portions and top with a rather thick layer of olive tapenade, page 47. (Flat bread can be a little dry.)

Another good topping is duxelles (page 41). With either a tapenade or a duxelles, a thin layer of cream cheese first and then a garnish of parsley or cilantro will improve the flat bread.

Another variation is to top the flat bread with cheese, tomato sauce, and other things like sausages and cook it in the oven for 10 minutes or so, like a pizza.

Fried Cheeses^v

Dump piles of shredded parmesan on a hot dry skillet and cook until they crisp up.

These little airy crisps are surprisingly tasty.

Quesadillas^v

Use store-bought large flour tortillas (or small ones, or corn ones).

1. Prepare some chopped bell peppers, onions, and/or tomatoes, and some shredded cheese (cheddar, Monterey jack, Swiss, whatever).
2. Heat a dry skillet to medium temperature.
3. Lay a tortilla on the skillet, and spoon the other ingredients on one half of the tortilla and fold the other half over it.
4. After a minute or two flip the half-moon tortilla and cook on the other side. (Use two hands to flip it.)
5. Don't let the cheese melt and run out, but when it starts to do that, the quesadillas are ready.

If you started with a large tortilla, cut it into halves or thirds.

In addition to the fillings listed above, you can also include cooked ground beef, or cooked and shredded pork or chicken.

Tapas

Tapas are not a dish; they are an attitude.

They are just small dishes.

Spanish seasoning and spices (paprika and garlic!) help to make the dish a tapa.

Some start out as small items; shrimp, oysters, chicken tenders, and so on.

Others are made by cutting a regular product into smaller portions. A nice rare-cooked steak, for example, can be cut into bite-sized pieces to become a tapa. A quiche (page 111) makes a nice tapa when its cut into small pieces.

Although soups are never used for Spanish tapas, cups of soup are often welcome. I like to set out a few demitasses of light cream soups as starters. Leftovers (or not) of many of the soups described in this book make nice cups. This is especially true of the asparagus soup (page 68, without the garnishes), the carrot vichyssoise (page 78) or the potato/leek vichyssoise (page 95), and the gazpacho (page 84). If you have a small electric hand blender as is used to froth up drinks, the vichyssoises look nice frothed up, chilled in the summer or warmed in the winter.

Any dish can be a tapa dish, so just use your imagination.



Spreads, Sauces, and Dips

Many appetizers require spreads or dips. They can be mixed and matched, although some spreads or dips go better with certain dishes than others.

All of these listed below are simple and quick to make. Some require the blender, and some require a little cooking. Most of the sauces described here are not emulsions, so preparation is simple and the sauces will not “break”.

Duxelles

Duxelles is (yes, the word is singular) basically a sautéed mixture of chopped mushrooms and onions together with various herbs and spices. Duxelles can be used as a topping for flat bread (page 38), as the filling in mushroom puffs (page 51), or as the filling in crêpes farcies et roulées (page 107).

Ingredients

- 8 oz mushrooms, chopped into $\frac{1}{4}$ dice
- 1 c onions, chopped into $\frac{1}{4}$ dice
- 3 Tbsp butter
- S&P&C

Sauté mushrooms and onions together until the mixture is rather dry. (Mushrooms release water at first; continue until water has evaporated.) Season to taste.

Many types of mushrooms work in this dish, and mushrooms of different type also work well in combination. Older mushrooms together with their stems (except for some, stems of shiitakes, for example) can be used.

Green Sauce; Avocado Sauce

This guacamole is the best Mexican dipping sauce you'll ever have.

I concocted it to replicate the green sauce made at the legendary Ninfa's in Houston in the 1980's. I cannot vouch for whether the ingredients are the same, but I thought the taste was similar when I first made it. Unfortunately, I haven't had the green sauce at Ninfa's in years. The original restaurant on Navigation is still there, and I have had some Ninfa's flautas within the past year.

Ingredients

- 5 tomatillos, peeled
- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 tsp lemon juice (or half and half, lemon and lime)
- 2 avocados, chopped into medium dice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c sour cream
- 2 jalepeños, seeded and finely diced
- 2 tsp cilantro, chopped
- S&P&C

1. Puree tomatillos, onion, garlic, and lemon juice in blender.
2. Mix in avocados, sour cream, jalepeños, and cilantro.
3. S&P&C to taste.

Mustard Sauce

1. Combine $\frac{1}{2}$ c dry mustard and $\frac{1}{2}$ c white vinegar in a small bowl and let sit, covered, for 4 hours.
2. Mix $\frac{1}{2}$ c sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cayenne powder with one beaten egg yolk.
3. Combine mustard mixture with sugar mixture and cook over low heat while stirring until the product thickens slightly. (Don't let the eggs coagulate!)

4. Cover and chill.

Honey Mustard Sauce

Mix 3 oz honey with 2 oz Dijon mustard and a dash of cayenne powder.

That's it.

Pesto

Pesto goes well with tomato dishes. Pesto is essentially mashed-up basil leaves in olive oil. It can be made with a mortar and pestle (“pesto” – “pestle”), and I used to do it that way, but for a long time now, my nice marble and pestle have just been decorative items in my kitchen.

Although pesto is easy to make, I make it infrequently, but I make a batch of it. (I usually make a batch at the end of summer to use all remaining leaves on my soon-to-die basil plants.)

I do not recommend increasing the amounts of the ingredients listed below, but it's easy to make three or fours batches while your blender is still messy.

Puree in a blender

- 2 c basil leaves, whole (I usually cut out the midrib, but you don't have to)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic

Add to blender, and chop and mix well

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c grated Parmesan cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c pine nuts
- salt (none, or a large dash, depending on the cheese and your taste)

This pesto can be kept for several months in the freezer. Drop big spoonfuls on a baking sheet to form one-inch balls, and place the sheet in the freezer. After the flattened balls have frozen, store them in freezer bags.

Remoulade Sauce

There are two kinds of remoulade sauce, red and white. Both can be made quickly from standard condiments.

Red Remoulade

Mix thoroughly:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c ketchup
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c spicy mustard
- 1 Tbsp paprika
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp Tabasco
- 1 tsp garlic powder

That's it.

White Remoulade

Mix thoroughly:

- 1 c mayonnaise
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c spicy mustard
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp Tabasco

- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- chopped scallions if desired

That's it.

Satay Sauce

Heat all ingredients in a small saucepan over low heat, stirring until all are combined.

- 6 Tbsp chunky peanut butter
- 3 Tbsp dark soy sauce (tamari)
- 3 Tbsp honey
- 1 inch ginger root, peeled and minced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ orange

This sauce, with a Siamese flavor, can be used in a variety of products, including the eponymous chicken satay, page 49.

Salsa de Tomate Cruda

This is a nice dip for tostadas or as a plate sauce for Mexican dishes, but it also lends an interesting touch to other dishes.

Although similar in uses to the guacamole sauce (page 41), it is very different in taste. For a larger group, a big bowl of each would be appropriate.

- 1 good tomato, with seeds and skin on, chopped finely, or 1 15 oz can diced tomatoes

- $\frac{1}{2}$ large onion, chopped finely
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 Tbsp cilantro, chopped finely
- $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 serrano chiles or jalapeños, seeded and chopped finely
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c cold water

1. Mix all ingredients except the water. Taste for seasoning.
2. Add the water and stir well.

This sauce is best served fresh.

Variation: Salsa de Tomate Verde Cruda

This sauce is similar to the salsa de tomate cruda, and has the same uses.

Its taste is quite different, however, because it is not made from tomatoes; it is made from tomatillos, which Mexicans call “green tomatoes” (“*tomates verdes*”). Tomatillos are related to tomatoes (at least they’re both in the nightshade family – but so are potatoes). Tomatillos grow on vines like tomatoes (somewhat more spindly) and they have a similar structure to tomatoes except that they have a thin, papery husk. As tomatoes, they can be eaten raw or cooked. They are easy to grow from seeds, and some years I grow them in my garden. They are widely available in larger grocery stores and in Hispanic grocery stores.

In the ingredients list for salsa de tomate cruda, substitute for the tomato

- 3 tomatillos, with husks removed, and chopped finely

Prepare in the same way as salsa de tomate cruda; and like it, this sauce is best served fresh.

Tapenade

- 1 c kalamata olives, pitted
- 6 green olives, pitted, with or without stuffing
- 1 Tbsp anchovy paste (you can omit this, but it won't be as good)
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 Tbsp capers
- 3 Tbsp parsley, chopped
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- S&P&C (this depends on the salt in the other ingredients; taste before adding)

Blend all ingredients until relatively smooth.

Use the pulse button on a blender, or else use a food processor, which probably works better.

*** picture on flat bread

Bacon Brie Crescent Wreath

This is decorative appetizer is especially nice for the winter holiday season.

Ingredients

- 1 c bacon bits, cooked
- 8 oz brie, cut into retangular slices
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c cranberry sauce
- 2 8 oz tubes Crescent rolls
- 1 egg, beaten
- ground pepper
- chopped parsley
- pomegranate berries

holly branch w berries, for decoration

1. Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 375°.
2. Arrange crescents in a wreath, with points out.
3. Roll out dough to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick.
4. Spread on cranberry sauce, then bacon, then brie.
5. Sprinkle w pepper.
6. Fold dough over to close the wrapping.
7. Brush with beaten egg.
8. Bake 20 minutes.

Sprinkle with parsley and pomegranate berries.

Lay small holly branches with berries around the wreath..

Chicken Satay

For this dish, you will need bamboo skewers, about 10 inches long. These can be purchased in most grocery stores. (They don't have to be made from bamboo. Any wood skewers or even metal ones will work. You don't have to soak the metal ones(!), but they will be hot to the touch.)

The "curry powder" in the ingredients list is a mixture of various spices, usually including ground coriander, turmeric, cumin, and chili powder. It may also include other spices, but unless you're particular, you can just use something you buy at the grocery store called Curry Powder.

Ingredients

- boneless chicken breast, cut into strips 4 inches long
 - marinade:
 - 2 oz vegetable oil
 - 1 Tbsp garlic
 - 1 Tbsp curry powder
 - 2 Tbsp lemon grass (chopped)
 - 1 tsp red pepper flakes
 - 1 Tbsp honey
 - satay sauce (page 45)
1. Soak bamboo skewers in salt water.
 2. Mix marinade ingredients and puree.
 3. Thread chicken onto bamboo skewers and marinate for 1 hour.
 4. Grill chicken on grill pan on stove, approximately 3 minutes per side. Be careful not to burn the bamboo skewers.

Serve with satay sauce.

Chicken Puffs

These chicken puffs are easy to make and are conveniently eaten with the fingers. I rarely serve them with a dip, but green or avocado sauce (page 41) will give them a Mexican flavor or satay sauce (page 45) will give them a Thai twist.

Ingredients

- 2 c cooked chicken, cubed
- 4 Tbsp butter, 2 Tbsp softened, and 2 Tbsp melted
- 3 oz cream cheese
- 4 Tbsp milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c bread crumbs
- 2 Tbsp chopped red and/or green bell pepper, lightly cooked
- 2 Tbsp chopped onion, lightly cooked
- 1 Tbsp chopped chives
- S&P&C
- 1 pkg puff pastry, rolled out thinly and cut into 4 inch squares

For the puff pastry, you can make your own (page 193), or get store-bought puff pastry (in the frozen food section). Crescent rolls or canned biscuits in the cold food section also work.

1. Blend 3 oz cheese, 2 Tbsp butter, and 4 Tbsp milk with a fork.
2. Add chicken, peppers, onions, and chives, and mix well.
3. Roll out pastry into thin sheet and cut in 3-inch squares.
4. Spoon mixture onto pastry, pull up 4 corners and seal by pressing corners together.
5. Brush with melted butter; dip in bread crumbs.
6. Bake on ungreased cookie sheet 20-25 minutes at 350°.



Variation: Mushroom Puffs^v

A very good vegetarian variation on chicken puffs can be made by replacing the chicken in the list of ingredients by chopped mushrooms.

A variation on that variation can be made by replacing all of the filling with a filling of duxelles (page 41).

Empanadas^{v?}

Empanadas are like puffs; they are easy to make, and the offer infinite variety. The main difference is the packaging; puffs are little packets of puff pastry with some filling placed in the middle, and formed into a little puff by bringing all the corners together. Empanadas are formed by placing the filling onto one side of a circular disk and folding one side of the disk onto the other to form a half moon.

The dough for empanadas is pâte brisée (page 194) or a masa dough (from corn flour). I rarely make my own; rather, I use Goya Tapas para Empanadas (“Dough for Turnover Pastries”), which can now be found in the frozen food section of many larger grocery stores, or in Hispanic grocery stores.

Vegetarian empanadas are made from this recipe by omitting the meats from the filling.

I rarely make my own chile sauce (page 180); rather, I use Old El Paso Enchilada Sauce, readily available in most grocery stores.

Ingredients

- pâte brisée rolled out into a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick sheet and cut into disks of 3 to 4 inch diameter
- filling: be imaginative
 - cooked ground beef or pork, chicken or turkey cut in small dice, or mushrooms
 - lightly cooked corn, bell pepper, cheese, black beans, raisins, sliced green olives, mushrooms, etc.
 - cumin, cayenne, chili powder, oregano, etc.
 - a chile sauce (page 180, or store-bought, such as Old El Paso Enchilada Sauce)
- melted butter

- 1.** Prepare the filling (cook meats and vegetables, and mix with the spices in a large bowl).
- 2.** Lay circular pastry disks onto countertop and spoon some filling onto half of the disk.
- 3.** Form into half-moon shapes.
- 4.** Place on ungreased cookie sheet and brush with melted butter.
- 5.** Bake 20-25 minutes at 350°.

*** picture

Mini Fritatas^{v?}

Mini fritatas are just small fritatas, bite-sized or two-bite-sized.

The ingredients can be varied infinitely. If the bacon is omitted they are vegetarian.

Ingredients

- 4 oz bacon (about 4 slices, medium thick), chopped into small bits
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c onion, fine dice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ lb mushrooms, fine dice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c bell pepper, red or green or mix, fine dice
- $\frac{2}{3}$ c shredded cheese (your choice)
- 1 Tbsp chives, chopped finely
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cayenne
- 3 eggs
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c milk

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
1. Fry bacon, drain, and reserve.
2. Sauté onion 2 minutes; add bell peppers, sauté 2 minutes more; add mushrooms, sauté 2 minutes more.
3. Mix bacon and other cooked ingredients in a large bowl. Mix in chives, cheese, and seasonings.
4. Beat eggs in a small bowl.
5. Stir in milk with eggs and mix.
6. Fold milk and eggs into other ingredients.

7. Spray a mini-muffin tin with non-stick spray. (Silicon mini-muffin pans also work well.) A mini-muffin pan has cups of about an inch in diameter and an inch in depth.
8. Bake at 350° until set (about 35 minutes or so).



Gougères^v

This is a very nice, fluffy appetizer. You can spice it up to your own tastes by adding almost any aromatic, dried, ground spice (cayenne powder, for example).

Ingredients

- $\frac{3}{4}$ c Gruyère, grated
- 1 c pâte à choux (page 195)
- 1 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 egg, beaten

1. Mix cheese and spices with dough.
2. Put mixture in a pastry bag with a medium-size tip.
3. Pipe into 1 inch balls on a lined baking sheet (Silpat or just parchment paper; get at kitchen supply retailer).
4. Brush with beaten egg.
5. Bake at 400° for 25 minutes.

Pâté de Champagne

Champagne doesn't always mean the fine bubbly from the north of France. It basically just means "country", and that is what it means in the name of this pâté. This is a rustic or country pâté.

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp butter
- 1 small onion, minced
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb pork sausage (store-bought, or mix by hand $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb ground pork with 1 tsp ground black pepper and 1 Tbsp chopped dried sage leaves)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb chicken breast
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb pork or beef liver
- 1 c fresh bread crumbs
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c cream cheese
- 2 clove garlic minced
- 2 Tbsp brandy
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground allspice
- 1 Tbsp parsley, chopped
- 1 Tbsp fresh oregano, chopped
- 1 egg, beaten

1. Mix all ingredients and transfer to a blender or food processor and puree. (A blender does not work well on this. This is one time I usually use a food processor.)
2. To check for seasoning, sauté a spoonful and taste; adjust seasonings if necessary.

3. Pack into a well-buttered loaf pan and cover with buttered wax paper, pressing the paper down on the surface.
4. Cover pan with foil, and bake in bain-marie at 350° for 1½ hours.
5. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

This pâté will keep up to a week if refrigerated.

*** picture

Summer Sausage

Summer sausages, that is, cooked meat that can readily be sliced and eaten with the fingers, are surprisingly easy to make.

Some require stuffing in some kind of casing prior to being cooked, but the ones described here require only simple preparation and no special ingredients.

This recipe requires two days: 12 hours of curing after mixing, and then 4 hours of cooking. If you have a smoker, some or all of the cooking can be done in the smoker. It is important to cook the sausages low (225°) and slow (4 hours).

Each list of ingredients below is for a one pound sausage, and I usually make three different one-pound sausages at a time, and so I first mix three pounds of the first three ingredients, and then divide the mixture into thirds.

I then roll them into logs and wrap them in plastic warp to store overnight in the refrigerator before cooking them.

For the curing salt, I use Morton's Tender Quick, which is readily available at most larger grocery stores. It is *not* pink curing salt, which is often used in preparation of sausages.

Ingredients

Cheese/Herbs	Hot and Spicy	Smoky
1 lb ground meat	1 lb ground meat	1 lb ground meat
1 Tbsp curing salt	1 Tbsp curing salt	1 Tbsp curing salt
3 cloves garlic	3 cloves garlic	3 cloves garlic
3 Tbsp red wine	1 Tbsp white wine	2 Tbsp liquid smoke
2 Tbsp mustard seed	2 Tbsp chili powder	2 tsp black pepper
1 Tbsp dried basil	1 Tbsp ground cumin	
1 Tbsp oregano leaves	2 Tbsp crushed red pepper	
1 tsp onion powder	2 tsp cayenne powder	
$\frac{1}{3}$ c grated Parmesan		

1. Mix the ingredients well.
2. Roll out into logs, between one and two inches in diameter, firming the product tightly.
3. Wrap the logs tightly in plastic wrap.
4. Store in a refrigerator overnight. The logs will flatten slightly, especially in the first couple of hours, so after 1 hour, you should rotate each log 90 degrees. (I cure mine in baguette baking pans that hold three logs (or three baguettes). They are available at any baking supply store.)
5. Remove the plastic wrap and bake sausage at 225° for 4 hours. I bake them on the same baguette baking pan set over an oven pan to catch the drippings. (Line the oven pan with aluminum foil for easier clean-up.) You can also lay the sausages on a wire rack, but that will leave indentations in the sausages. The product will look better if you rotate the sausages a couple of times while cooking, especially within the first hour or so.



Photo credits: María Gentle, ROPCB



Tony's Pâté (Chicken Liver Mousse)

For almost 50 years, Tony's has been the best restaurant in Houston. When I lived in Houston in the 1980's it was my favorite restaurant, and as my finances improved during those years, it became my go-to restaurant.

When you would first be seated at Tony's, a plate of chicken-liver mousse would be brought to your table, along with some crackers and garnishments. A bottle of Dom Perignon went very well with this starter.

In 1986, George Fuermann and Tony wrote a cookbook,⁴ and they included the recipe for Tony's chicken liver mousse. I still have my signed cookbook, and I still cook Tony's chicken liver mousse, with only a few modifications. (One modification is for the size of the recipe; Tony tells you how to do it with 4 pounds of chicken livers.)

Ingredients

- 1 lb chicken livers
- $\frac{1}{4}$ lb (one stick) unsalted butter; 4 oz for sautéing, and 4 oz softened butter to add after cooking.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp rosemary (preferably fresh), chopped
- 1 tsp oregano (preferably fresh), chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp thyme
- S&P&C, about $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp each
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c armagnac

1. Sauté onions in 4 oz butter in a sauté pan or a fry pan.
2. Pick over livers and remove any connective tissue. Some packages of liver may contain a few chicken kidneys. (They're those small globular things.)

⁴George Fuermann, with recipes by Tony Vallone, *Tony's, The Cookbook*, Shearer Publishing, 1986.

They are OK to include, but I usually fry them along with the one or two livers that I fry for myself to eat in the kitchen when I make this dish.

3. Add livers and sauté lightly. They should remain pink on the inside.
4. Add all seasonings and cook 5 minutes more.
5. Add armagnac and remove from heat.
6. Let cool, stirring often.
7. Blend in blender until smooth.
8. Put product in a quart-sized glass or metal bowl nestled within a larger bowl filled with ice.
9. Use a whisk to whip the mixture over the ice.
10. After the product has thickened slightly, slowly add the 4 oz of softened butter, while whipping constantly.
11. Lightly coat a glass bowl with olive oil and place the product in the bowl. (I use a 24 oz dome-shaped glass bowl, because this amount fits nicely.)
12. Cover bowl with plastic wrap, pressing the wrap onto the surface of the product, and refrigerate for one or two days.
13. Invert bowl over a plate and unmold. Smooth the surface of the pâté and garnish with some chopped onions, cornichons, grapes, or cherry tomatoes.



Spinach Balls^v

Spinach balls are extremely easy to make, and while you could use fresh spinach (if so, start with about 30 oz) and chop it and cook it (in boiling water or broth), frozen spinach is much easier and it's what I usually use. (I always have frozen spinach in the freezer.)

Ingredients

- 2 10-oz packages frozen chopped spinach
- 2 c coarse bread crumbs
- 2 Tbsp chopped oregano
- 1 Tbsp chopped thyme
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- 5 oz grated parmesan cheese
- 8 Tbsp butter, melted
- 4 small green onions, finely chopped
- 3 eggs, beaten

1. Squeeze the spinach as dry as possible.
2. Mix the bread crumbs and oregano, thyme, and nutmeg.
3. Combine all ingredients and mix well.
4. Shape into 1 inch balls. (Roll between your flattened palms.)
5. Cover and refrigerate until ready to bake
6. Bake on ungreased baking sheet at 350° until golden brown, about 12 minutes.

Serve with honey-mustard sauce (page 43).

Soups

Soups are probably my favorite thing to make (and eat).

Warm, hearty soups with the first nip in the air in the fall; festive, colorful soups in the winter holiday season; bean or root vegetable soups to get to springtime; then fresh vegetable soups (pea soup or a pistou!) going into summer. When the weather is warm, there's nothing like a refreshing gazpacho with a little sangria.

Soups, of course, are rather liquidy; some more so than others. The liquid used can be a meat broth, a vegetable broth, a nut broth, a dairy product, just water, or a combination of these.

The Broths and Stocks

Many of the soups whose recipes are given in this section use a meat broth (chicken broth, in particular). In a given recipe, it may be possible to substitute one liquid for another. This can often yield a vegetarian form of a product that otherwise would not qualify. This is such a standard substitution that I use a special symbol to indicate a recipe in which it can be made easily, thus yielding a vegetarian version. For dishes that are vegetarian except for the broth, I use a dagger, for example, **Asparagus Soup^{vb}**.

Of course many soups are vegetarian without any substitutions, and I denote them in the usual way, for example, **Gazpacho^v**.

The chicken broth or chicken stock that many of these recipes call for can be broth or stock, store-bought or home-made; your choice. (See page 7 for

some comments.) If you substitute a vegetable broth, I highly recommend making your own. It is easy.

To make vegetable stock:

- Roughly chop various root vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, and rutabagas. Vegetables such as turnips and beets can add some interesting variety.
- Put vegetables in a large stock pot, cover with water, and simmer the vegetables for 2 hours, always keeping below the boil, and skimming foam occasionally.
- Add a mirepoix (page 182) and simmer for 30 minutes more.
- Add 2 cloves garlic, 1 Tbsp parsley, 1 tsp whole black pepper, 1 bay leaf, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp thyme (leaves). Simmer for 30 minutes more.
- Strain through a medium-mesh strainer.
- Add salt to taste, taking into account how you may use the stock.

Preparation

A soup is to be eaten with a spoon. (Spanish speakers actually say “drink (*toman*) soup”.) All solid ingredients in the soup should be small bite-size. (Yes, I know “authentic, ethnic” soups contain corn cobs, chicken parts with bones, and so on. When I lived in China briefly, when eating soups, I was adept at switching from my soup spoon to chop sticks and continuing to use my teeth as a knife. That’s part of the enjoyment of living in Shenzhen, but it’s not the way I like to eat at home.)

The diner should be presented with something that can be eaten elegantly.

Soups and Stews

Some heartier soups, such as beet and cabbage soup, could be considered to be stews. Likewise, some stews, such as beet beef stew (page 152), are

essentially hearty soups. To eat a stew, a fork is usually appropriate. But the rule about not having large pieces and bones or fat on the meat still applies.

This chapter features soups.

Most of the recipes in this chapter could be used as appetizers or as first courses. For a dinner party, I usually start with passed plates of hors d'oeuvres, and then I present a soup as the first course at the table.

Seasons of Soups

For me, soups are seasonal. While I like any soup at any time of the year, I tend to prefer hearty soups as winter approaches. During the winter holiday season, I like some colorful soups. The red of a nice borscht provides a festive counterpoint to the green of a broccoli or pea soup. I like lighter soups as we progress into spring and summer.

*** pictures

Asparagus Soup^{vb}

When I was a kid, asparagus came in cans. They were odd-sized cans with a picture of a jolly guy. By the mid 1970's, depending on where you shopped for groceries, you could often find "fresh" asparagus in the produce section, especially in the summer. Now, you can find asparagus any time of the year at almost any grocery store. They mostly come from south of the border.

There is some variation in the taste of asparagus. In general, I think the bigger, fatter ones have a better taste. I grow asparagus in my garden (they're perennials), but I can't say that mine are much better for this soup than good ones from the grocery store. For a side dish or salad, the asparagus needs to be fresh, and my garden ones are better for that.

For this soup, although it probably doesn't matter much, fat fresh asparagus spears are probably best, just on general principles.

White asparagus is popular in some European countries. Asparagus is made white by bunching sand or mulch around the shoot as it emerges and grows. I've done it a few times in my garden. White asparagus does not have the flavor of good asparagus. Do not use white asparagus in this recipe.

Ingredients

- 1 lb asparagus, cut into small pieces – tips reserved
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c onion, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c celery, chopped
- 6 c chicken stock
- 6 oz cooked, chopped spinach (if desired; it's mostly for a brighter green color)
- 2 c béchamel (see page [178](#))
- paprika, hard-cooked egg

1. Simmer asparagus, onion, celery in stock covered 1/2 hour.

2. Add spinach if desired.
3. Blend in blender until smooth.
4. Mix asparagus stock and béchamel; heat gently.
5. Strain with medium-mesh colander or strainer.

Garnish with asparagus tips, paprika, and chopped hard-cooked egg. The asparagus tips and egg will sink, so it's better to serve in relatively shallow soup bowls.



Photo credit: Jim Shine

Variation: Broccoli Soup^{vb}

Substitute broccoli for asparagus. Then it becomes broccoli soup.

Beet and Cabbage Soup

This is a nice, hearty wintertime soup.

Ingredients

- 1 lb beef stew meat (chuck, round, etc.), fat removed, cut in $\frac{3}{4}$ inch cubes
- 6 red beets, peeled and cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ inch dice
- 5 large carrots, cut in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice
- 1 red cabbage, chopped into bite-size pieces
- 2 large onions, cut in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice
- 2 ribs celery, cut in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice
- 3 c chicken broth
- 28 oz can tomatoes, chopped or diced
- juice of 2 lemons
- 1 Tbsp tomato paste
- S&P&C

1. Sauté meat and onions until meat is browned.
2. Add tomatoes, chicken broth to cover, and simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Add red cabbage, beets, carrots, and celery.
4. Simmer for about an hour; add garlic, salt, pepper, and cayenne.

Although this is not exactly a light soup, you may prefer an even heartier version, actually a stew, described on page 152. Borscht (page 71) is lighter and is vegetarian.

Borscht^v

This is a nice, light wintertime soup. I like to serve it on a buffet alongside a green pea soup (page 92) during the Christmas season because of the colors.

Ingredients

- 2 lb beets, peeled, cut in small dice
- 2 large carrots, small dice
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- water to cover (about 6 c)
- 4 Tbsp lemon juice
- nutmeg
- S&P&C
- fresh dill (if available)
- sour cream

1. Bring beets, carrots, garlic to boil in water in soup pot. Simmer for 10 minutes.
2. Puree soup in blender until smooth.
3. Return to heat, and add nutmeg and S&P&C to taste. Simmer for 5 minutes.
4. Stir in lemon juice.

Serve hot or cold with a dollop of sour cream and fresh dill if available.

Black Bean Soup, Cuban Style

I like bean soups of almost any kind. I usually start with dried beans, which require soaking before cooking.

Ingredients

- 1 lb black beans, soaked overnight
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped
- 1 tsp oregano
- 1 bay leaf
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb salt pork, washed and chopped into medium dice
- water to cover (about 6 c)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c vinegar
- 1 tsp sugar
- sofrito
 - 1 c onion, chopped
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ c red bell pepper, chopped
 - 2 cloves garlic, minced
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ c olive oil

1. Put soaked beans, green pepper, onion, oregano, bay leaf, and pork in a soup pot with water.
2. Simmer $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

- 3.** While soup is simmering, mix ingredients for sofrito in a separate saucepan along with the vinegar and sugar, and bring to boil. Simmer sofrito 10 minutes.
- 4.** Use a spoon or spatula to mash some of the beans against the side of the pot. This is to give body to the soup.
- 5.** Add sofrito, vinegar, sugar, and bring to boil.

Serve with rice.

*** picture

Black-Eyed Pea Soup

I have this soup every New Year's Day.

Depending on how much ham and/or sausage you put in, it is more like a stew. Either way, it will bring you health for the rest of the year.

This soup is also called Hoppin' John.

Ingredients

- 1 lb dried black-eyed peas, soaked
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 3 ribs of celery, chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb center cut ham, cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ inch dice
- 4 oz tasso or other spicy preserved meat
- 1 ham hock
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cayenne
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp thyme
- water to cover
- S&P&C

1. Sauté onion, bell pepper, celery in butter in a soup pot.
2. Add ham hock, cayenne, thyme, and garlic, and continue sautéing.

3. Add black-eyed peas and ham and enough water to cover the contents of the pot by about 1 inch. (The amount depends on how thick or thin you want your soup. You can always add more water.).

4. Bring to simmer and add S&P&C to taste. Simmer until peas are al dente (by your judgement). This should take about 30 minutes.

Serve over rice with green onions or serve as soup. Cornbread (page 203) goes well with this soup.

*** picture with cornbread sticks and cabbage soup

Broccoli Cheese Soup^{vb}

This soup is a good way to get kids to eat broccoli.

Ingredients

- 6 Tbsp butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c flour
- 2 c chicken stock or broth
- 3 c half-and-half
- 1 lb broccoli florets, cut small
- 3 carrots, grated or chopped
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 2 c grated cheese
- 1 tsp mustard powder

1. Sauté onions, celery, chopped carrots, broccoli stems, and garlic in butter in a soup pot. sauté until onions are soft.
2. Stir in flour and cook 5 minutes.
3. Add stock, half-and-half, and seasoning, and cook 5 minutes.
4. Add broccoli florets and carrot gratings, and cook until tender.
5. Mix in cheese.

Serve with bread rolls.

Celeriac Soup^{vb}

Celeriac tastes like celery. Duh.

Ingredients

- 1 large celeriac, cut in $\frac{3}{4}$ inch dice
- 1 large potato, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch dice
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 6 c chicken broth
- bouquet garni
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c heavy cream
- nutmeg
- lemon zest
- S&P&C

1. Simmer celeriac, potato, onion, and garni in broth.
2. Puree in blender.
3. Return to heat and add cream
4. Add nutmeg and stir.
5. Garnish with lemon zest

Carrot Vichyssoise^{vb}

This light soup can be served warmed or chilled. I like it warm in winter and cool in summer.

Ingredients

- 4 Tbsp butter
- 3 leeks (mosly just the white parts), cleaned and chopped (Leeks are notoriously difficult to clean; after chopping, soak in cold water.)
- 1 large potato, chopped
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 6 large carrots, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp nutmeg
- 1 large carrot, julienned
- 1 c crème fraîche or sour cream
- 4 c chicken stock
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c heavy cream
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c orange juice
- S&P&C
- mint leaves for garnish

1. Sauté onions, leeks, and carrots in butter in a soup pot. Continue sautéing until onions are soft.
2. Add potato, seasoning, and chicken stock and simmer until potatoes are soft, about 10 minutes.

3. Puree in blender, adding the heavy cream after the mixture is smooth.

4. Poach julienned carrot in orange juice

Serve with crème fraîche, julienned carrots, and mint leaves.

*** picture together wih potato/leek Vichyssoise

Chicken and Coconut Soup

This is based on the classic Thai tom yom soups, of which there are several varieties, with names like tom yom nam sai and tom yom nam khon. (“Yom” is sometimes written “yam”. There’s no difference. It just depends on how Thai is transliterated; the written Thai language does not use the Latin-based alphabet.) Most tom yoms do not contain coconut milk. The term tom yom kathi designates a tom yom in which coconut milk is a primary liquid. Tom yom gai designates a tom yom featuring chicken, like this one.

I don’t worry about the names; “authentic” soups in Bangkok are probably different from “authentic” ones in Ayutthaya. (I’ve had coconut-milk-based chicken lemongrass-flavored soups in both places, but, unfortunately I can’t remember the details of either.)

Ingredients

- 1 lb chicken breasts, cooked, and cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 jalapeño, seeded, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large leek, finely sliced (Leeks are notoriously difficult to clean; after slicing, soak in cold water.)
- 3 c chicken stock
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ c coconut milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c fresh shelled green peas, or frozen peas, thawed
- 2 Tbsp Thai fish sauce (nam pla) or soy sauce
- 1 stalk lemongrass, split
- 2 tsp ginger, minced
- 1 tsp sugar

- 2 Tbsp lime juice
- 4 kaffir lime leaves (if available)
- 4 Tbsp chopped cilantro

1. Wilt jalapeño, garlic, leek in a little oil in a soup pot.
2. Add stock and milk, and bring to boil.
3. Add chicken, fish sauce, lemongrass, ginger, sugar, and lime, and cook until chicken is done.
4. Add peas, cook a little longer.
5. Remove lemon grass and add cilantro.

*** picture with shrimp and coconut soup

Variation: Shrimp and Coconut Soup

The Thai tom yom soups are more likely to use shrimp than chicken.

Use the same ingredients as in the chicken and coconut soup, except replace the 1 lb of chicken.

- 1 lb of shrimp, 21 to 25 count (without heads)
1. Prepare shrimp, removing tail-end shells (page 25).
This soup is meant to be eaten with a spoon. If the shrimp are too large, cut them in half.
 2. Wilt jalapeño, garlic, leek in a little oil in a soup pot.
 3. Add stock, milk, fish sauce, lemongrass, ginger, sugar, and lime, and bring to boil.
 4. When liquid is boiling, add peas and cook at a high simmer for 5 minutes.
 5. Remove lemon grass, add cooked shrimp and cook 1 minute just to bring everything up to temperature.
 6. Add cilantro.

Corn Chowder^v

Ingredients

- 1 lb potatoes (russet, chef's, or Yukon), peeled and cut in 1/2-inch dice
- kernels from 4 ears corn
- 4 scallions, thin slices
- 2 c milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c heavy cream
- 1 large onion, cut in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice
- 1 green and 1 red bell pepper, cut in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice
- 4 ribs celery, cut in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice
- nutmeg
- 2 Tbsp chopped parsley
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cayenne
- S&P&C

1. Simmer potatoes, onion, and peppers in 1 c water, covered for 10 minutes.
2. Stir in corn, scallions, celery, milk, and cream.
3. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes.

Add seasonings and serve.

Gazpacho^v

This soup says “Summertime”. It goes well with a glass of sangría.

There are many variations. The required ingredients are tomatoes, bell peppers, and cucumbers. The main differences involve the consistency of the product. At one extreme, it is very chunky with the four main ingredients fully identifiable in distinct pieces. At the other extreme is a very smooth, pureed soup. You can use canned tomatoes in the pureed version, although almost no chef who makes this version would approve of the use of canned tomatoes.

The tomatoes are the most crucial ingredient, but here my standards are different from my standards for fresh sliced tomatoes (in Caprese Salad, page 104, for example). I do not use good slicing tomatoes in gazpacho. I generally use Roma tomatoes and I will even use ones bought from a grocery store or farmer’s market. Although I am a big fan of canned tomatoes for use in cooking and in sauces, unless you’re making the fully-pureed version, you must use fresh tomatoes for this dish to give it the proper texture.

I have made many versions, but I don’t make it often now (no reason). The version below is one way that I have made it. This version has a fully-pureed matrix.

Serving portions on gazpacho are highly variable. This recipe makes about 8 large servings or 16 small servings.

Ingredients

- Each of the first four ingredients should be divided in half; one half will be pureed. The sizes of the pieces are not important for those that are pureed.
 - 2 lb Roma tomatoes, partially cored and seeded, cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ inch dice
 - 1 medium cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice
 - 1 green bell pepper, seeded, and cut in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice
 - 4 Tbsp red onion, finely chopped

- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp sherry vinegar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c olive oil
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cumin
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- juice of one lime
- S&P&C

1. Divide the first four ingredients in half and mix with all other ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Puree the mixture in a blender until smooth. While blending, if the mixture is too thick, add a little water.
3. Return the pureed mixture to large bowl and mix in the remaining ingredients.
4. Chill in refrigerator for 30 minutes.

The soup is best soon after it is made, but it will keep in the refrigerator for a few days. Chopped cilantro can revive its freshness.

This soup begs for garnishments. Use your imagination.

In the serving tureen, you can throw in some cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered. Some people even like to kick it up with some diced ham.

Some garnishes should only be added to each diner's bowl, as desired. These garnishes include croutons, more sherry vinegar, olive oil, or balsamic vinegar, and chopped cilantro. (I know cilantro is not Spanish, but I give no points for authenticity!)

Mushroom Soup^{vb}

This is one of my favorite soups. Often I will discover some mushrooms growing old in the refrigerator. This is a perfect way to get rid of them.

The mushrooms that I generally use are just button mushrooms (farmed *Agaricus campestris*), but many types of mushrooms will work. Mushrooms of different types also work well in combination.

Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb mushrooms, quartered or halved, depending on their size
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 2 c chicken broth
- 3 Tbsp white wine if desired
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c celery, medium dice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c onion, medium dice
- 2 Tbsp parsley, chopped
- 1 c béchamel (see page 178)
- nutmeg, paprika
- S&P&C

1. Sauté onions in butter; add mushrooms and continue sautéing; add celery and continue sautéing until celery is somewhat soft.
2. Combine with broth and wine if using in a soup pot or pan; add parsley.
3. Simmer for about 20 minutes.
4. Stir béchamel into soup.

This soup has visible pieces of mushrooms in the broth, which is slightly thickened with the béchamel.

Variation: Cream of Mushroom Soup^{vb}

I like mushroom soup as described above, but an interesting variation can be made by making it just as described, and then pureeing the brothy soup in a blender until smooth and then adding cream and continuing blending for a few more seconds.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ c heavy cream



Variation: Mushroom and Brie Soup^{vb}

An interesting touch can be added to either the brothy mushroom soup or the cream of mushroom soup by adding some brie.

- 10 oz brie cheese, with or without rind, cut into small pieces

Place the brie together with about a cup of the mushroom soup (just the broth if using the main recipe above) in a blender and puree.

Add the pureed brie back to the soup and stir until well mixed.

Onion Soup^{vb}

This is the classic French onion soup (more-or-less). Like potage St. Germain in the spring and summer, this is a common dish in the bistros of Paris in the fall and winter.

Any kind of onion can be used in this soup. I like yellow Bermuda onions, but the sweet onions (Vidalia, 1015, etc.) are also good. The soup uses granulated refined sugar, and the sweetness can be adjusted by the amount of sugar.

Ingredients

- 6 large onions, thinly sliced
- 4 Tbsp butter
- 1 tsp sugar
- 3 Tbsp flour
- 2 c beef broth (see page 7)
- 5 c chicken broth
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c white wine
- S&P&C
- 2 Tbsp red onion, finely chopped
- 8 pieces of toasted bread of the size to lie on top of the soup in a bowl
- 2 oz Swiss cheese, sliced
- 8 oz Swiss cheese, grated
- 1 Tbsp olive oil

1. Slowly sauté onions in butter in a soup pot. After about 20 minutes add about a tablespoon of the beef broth and continuing sautéing on very low for a total of 1 hour.
2. Add the flour, and cook for 5 minutes, while stirring the mixture.
3. Add the liquids and simmer for 45 minutes. Add salt, pepper, and cayenne to taste.

This is onion soup, and is good as is. But it's better with some bread and cheese, as follows.

4. Preheat the broiler.
5. Put soup in fire-proof bowls, and stir the sliced cheese and chopped red onion into each bowl.
6. Lay a slice of bread on the soup in each bowl, drizzle a little olive oil on the bread, and top with the grated cheese.
7. Broil for a couple of minutes until the cheese is melted.

*** picture

Pistou^v

This is a refreshing summer soup. It is fairly substantial, however.

Ingredients

- 2 c boiling potatoes, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch dice
- 4 leeks, sliced crosswise (use mostly the white, and be sure to rinse well)
- 2 c carrots, sliced crosswise
- 1 c zucchini squash, sliced
- 1 c yellow summer squash, sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, small dice
- 2 c green beans, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch cut
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c bread crumbs
- 15 oz garbanzo beans (dried beans soaked overnight and cooked; or from a can)
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c kidney beans (dried beans soaked overnight and cooked; or from a can)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp saffron
- sofrito
 - $2\frac{1}{2}$ oz Parmesan, grated
 - 6 oz tomato paste
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ c pine nuts
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ c fresh basil, torn into small pieces
 - 5 cloves garlic

– 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ c olive oil

1. Combine potatoes, carrots, leeks, and salt in 2 qt water, and simmer for 40 minutes.
2. Add squash, red pepper, green beans, kidney beans, garbanzos, and saffron, and simmer for an additional 20 minutes.
3. Prepare sofrito: Mix all ingredients and blend into a smooth paste.
4. Mix 1 c of soup with sofrito, then add mixture back to soup.

*** picture

Green Pea Soup^{vb}

Although this is really a springtime soup, I like to serve it alongside a red beet soup (page 70) during the Christmas season because of the colors.

This is the soup that the French call potage St. Germain, and is a common dish in the bistros of Paris, especially in the spring and summer.

Ingredients

- 3 c shelled green peas
- 1 c Boston lettuce or chard, chopped
- 1 c onion or leeks, chopped
- 1 c celery, chopped
- 4 Tbsp butter (2 Tbsp for sautéing; 2 Tbsp for roux)
- 2 Tbsp flour
- 4 c chicken stock or broth
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp nutmeg
- S&P&C
- mint leaves, paprika for garnish

1. Sauté onions in butter for 5 minutes, add celery and sauté for 4 minutes, and add chard and sauté for 3 minutes.
2. Add $2\frac{1}{2}$ c stock and 2 c peas; cook till peas are tender.
3. Puree mixture until it is smooth.
4. Simmer 1 c peas in remaining $1\frac{1}{2}$ c stock till tender.

5. Use the flour and remaining butter to make a roux and then, while whisking constantly, add 2 Tbsp water and all remaining stock from simmering the peas. (This makes a velouté sauce.)
6. Mix velouté into blended soup, add cooked whole peas, and simmer for 5 minutes.

*** picture

Roasted Pepper Soup^{vb}

This colorful soup has a rich flavor of mild chile peppers.

Ingredients

- 4 red peppers
- 1 medium onion, fine dice
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 9 c chicken stock
- 1 sprig rosemary
- 1 c heavy cream
- 1 tsp paprika
- S&P&C

1. Sauté onion in butter with the rosemary sprig.
2. Peel and seed peppers (page 22).
3. Roast peppers, either in a 450° oven for 15 minutes or in a hot skillet on the stove for 5 minutes.
4. Place peppers and onions together with the stock in a soup pot, and simmer for 30 minutes.
5. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cream and salt, pepper, and cayenne to taste.
6. Puree in blender until smooth.

Swirl cream on top of each service bowl and shake a little paprika on each.

Potato/Leek; Vichyssoise^{vb}

This is the traditional Vichyssoise of France. After the Second World War, it has generally just been called potato/leek soup.

It is often served chilled, but it's good either way.

Ingredients

- 8 large leeks (mostly just the white parts), cleaned and chopped (Leeks are notoriously difficult to clean; after chopping, soak in cold water.)
- 3 Tbsp butter
- 2 or 3 large potatoes, thinly sliced
- 5 c chicken stock
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp nutmeg
- S&P&C

1. Lightly sauté leeks for about 20 minutes.
2. Place leeks, potatoes, and stock in soup pot, and simmer until the potatoes are tender.
3. Add nutmeg and puree in blender until smooth.
4. Season with salt, pepper, and cayenne to taste.

Tortilla Soup

This recipe goes back to Dean Fearing at the Mansion on Turtle Creek in Dallas sometime around 1990. That's really all that I remember (except how much I liked it). I have made it several times over the years and I may or may not have made changes to the recipe. In any event, the recipe as given here will be the best tortilla soup you've ever had.

Ingredients

- 4 corn tortillas cut into long strips
- 3 Tbsp corn oil
- 8 garlic cloves
- 3 c onions, chopped roughly
- 4 c tomato sauce
- 3 anchos, roasted and seeded (anchos are dried poblano chilis)
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ qt chicken stock
- 2 tsp cumin powder
- lemon or lime juice to taste
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- bay leaf
- 1 lb boneless chicken breast meat, cooked and diced
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c shredded cheddar cheese
- tostados (fried tortilla strips 2 inches long)
- fresh cilantro
- avocado, cubed

1. Prepare chicken (boil, fry, or bake).
2. Puree onions in a blender. Depending on the blender, this may not be easy; use the pulse button. Set aside.
3. Puree the anchos together with the tomato sauce in a blender.
4. Sauté tortilla strips in corn oil in soup pot until golden brown, about 5 minutes.
5. Add minced garlic and onion puree, and cook until reduced, about 10 minutes.
6. Add tomato sauce with anchos, chicken stock, and spices; simmer 40 min.
7. Season with lemon or lime juice.
8. Put in serving bowls, and add chicken, avocado, cheese, tostados, and cilantro.

Tomato Soup^v

A demitasse of this soup this soup makes a refreshing starter. I often make this soup toward the end of a summer when my tomato crop has been particularly abundant. I will also sometimes use tomatoes from a farmer's market, but I do not use tomatoes from the grocery store or from a can. I do not make it in the off-season.

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, coarsely chopped
- 3 lb fresh tomatoes, peeled and seeded (page 22), and coarsely chopped
- S&P&C
- $\frac{1}{4}$ heavy cream
- 1 Tbsp pesto (page 43)

1. Sauté onions in soup pot until tender.
2. Add tomatoes and simmer 25 minutes.
3. Puree in blender.
4. Add cream and pesto, and blend until smooth.

Serve with more pesto if desired.

Winter Squash; Pumpkin

The bacon gives this soup its flavor. For this recipe, applewood-smoked bacon is best, but hickory-smoked bacon is also good (better than maple-smoked or “maple-cured”).

Roasting winter vegetables (or root vegetables) brings out their flavor. An alternative to roasting, which is quicker, is boiling them in a stock, but I recommend roasting.

Also, the vegetables can be roasted in their peeling or rind. I don’t think that this changes the flavor, and I think that it is easier to peel them before roasting.

Ingredients

- winter squash or pumpkin, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1 inch chunks
- 4 oz bacon, cut into small dice
- 1 large onion
- 3 c chicken stock
- 1 c heavy cream
- 4 cloves garlic
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp thyme
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp nutmeg
- S&P&C

1. Arrange vegetable chunks in one layer on a baking pan, and drizzle with olive oil. Bake at 450° until they are somewhat soft (45 minutes, or so).
2. Fry bacon until crisp, and remove and drain.

3. Sauté onion and garlic in bacon fat, and remove and drain.
4. Place vegetables including onion and garlic in a soup pot. Add chicken stock and thyme, sugar, and nutmeg. Simmer for 20 minutes.
5. Puree in blender until smooth, adding the cream during the process.

Serve with a garnish of bacon bits.

Lunches, Salads, and Sides

I have lumped an assortment of recipes in this chapter, including salads, side dishes for a main course, and various small dishes that could also be used as main courses.

Here's one of my favorite luncheon dishes.

Boiled Shrimp Salad

Prepare boiled 12 to 15 count shrimp (page 25), leaving tail-end shells on.

Serve on a bed of lettuce and/or other greens, with red remoulade sauce (page 44), or with commercial seafood sauce.

Beet Salad^v

The star of this salad is roasted beets. Root vegetables and other heavy vegetables, such as winter squash, that must be cooked for some time turn out much better if they are roasted rather than boiled. (Try it both ways, and taste the results.)

Ingredients

- 1 lb red beets
- 1 lb yellow beets
- 4 oz olive oil
- 2 Tbsp coarse sea salt salt
- 6 oz blue cheese
- 4 oz fresh cheese, store-bought or homemade
- 3 bunches watercress
- 2 oranges, juiced and zested

1. Brush beets with 1 oz olive oil and sprinkle with half the salt.
2. Roast beets at 275° for 2 hours.
3. Peel beets and slice into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick disks.
4. Layer beets on plate with alternating colors.
5. Top with watercress and crumbled blue cheese.
6. Drizzle with remaining oil, orange zest and juice, and salt.

Fresh Cheese

A fresh cheese is one that is meant to be eaten within a few days of its being made.

Ingredients

- 1 gal whole milk
- 2 c buttermilk
- 1 tsp citric acid (“sour salt”) dissolved in $\frac{1}{4}$ c water, or 1 c fresh lime juice
- 1 tsp salt

1. Mix milk and buttermilk in pot and heat to warm room temperature.
2. Let sit 3 or 4 hours in a covered pot.
3. Uncover pot and over medium heat stir in acid. (Citric acid in powder form is available in the baking section of grocery stores.)
4. Continue heating, stirring occasionally for about 20 minutes until temperature reaches 195°; turn off heat and let stand 5 minutes.
5. Drain curd: drape large piece of wet cheesecloth in colander.
6. With fine-mesh skimmer ladle curd into colander.
7. Gather curd into cheesecloth and gently press to remove more whey.
8. Unwrap onto plate, break up and work 1 tsp salt into curd.
9. Gather cheese curds into a 1-inch thick disk; cover and refrigerate.

Caprese Salad^v

During the summer and early fall when my tomatoes are in, there are three dishes that I eat at least twice a week, BLTs, bruschettas (page 36), and caprese salad. I never eat fresh sliced tomatoes except from my own garden (which means I do not eat this dish for nine months out of the year).

For one serving:

Ingredients

- a few leaves of iceberg lettuce
- 2 slices of fresh mozzarella
- 2 slices of good tomatoes
- 3 leaves of fresh basil
- 1 tsp good balsamic vinegar
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp good sea salt

Three of the ingredients must be “good”: the tomatoes, the balsamic, and the sea salt. Of course, “good” is in the tongue of the taster, and there may be some subjectivity in what is “good” sea salt; use a kind that *you* like. Balsamic vinegar varies greatly, based to a great extent on how long it is aged. The quality of the taste is strongly positively correlated with the price (unfortunately). You can improve unaged balsamic by reducing it in a saucepan by about half its volume.

The lettuce can be any kind of fresh greens you like; I like the much-maligned iceberg. (I cannot grow it in my garden, however, and I don’t care for the kinds I can grow.)

1. Tear lettuce into sizes that can be eaten easily and form into a bed on the dining plate.
2. Lay two slices of mozzarella on the lettuce bed and lay a tomato slice on each.
3. Tear basil leaves into little strips. (It’s OK to use a knife, but tearing is better.)

4. Present the diner with a small pouring cup of balsamic, and a small container or sea salt with a spoon.

Mozzarella

Good store-bought mozzarella is OK, but you might want to make your own. The only special ingredients are lipase powder and liquid rennet, which are readily available online. (Note that rennet is taken from the stomachs of suckling ruminants; hence, it is not vegetarian. There are substitutes made from plants, called “vegetarian rennets”.)

This recipe uses a microwave. It is far more convenient than an alternative.

Ingredients

- 1 gal whole milk
- 1 tsp citric acid (“sour salt”), dissolved in $\frac{1}{4}$ c water, or 1 c fresh lime juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp lipase powder, dissolved in $\frac{1}{4}$ c water
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp liquid rennet
- 1 tsp salt

1. With milk at about 50°, stir in the citric acid and lipase solution.
2. While heating to 90°, stir in rennet solution. Cover pot and leave undisturbed for 5 minutes, during which time curd should develop. Heat to 105° and stir in salt.
3. Cut the curd. Use a knife that reaches to the bottom of the pot and make crisscross cuts about $\frac{3}{4}$ inches apart.
4. Scoop out curds and press to drain out as much whey as possible.
5. Microwave curds for 40 seconds; drain whey and knead. (The cheese will be hot!) Repeat this three times.
6. Knead and stretch cheese. When it stretches like taffy, it’s done.

Chicken Pot Pie

Crêpes Farcies et Roulées^{v?}

Ingredients

•

1. Mix ***

A vegetarian variation can be made by replacing all of the filling with a filling of duxelles (page 41).

Crabmeat Remick

Ingredients



1. Mix ***

Mac and Cheese^v

This is a nice luncheon dish or a simple side dish. It is quite rich.

Ingredients

- 8 oz dry macaroni
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 2 Tbsp flour
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c heavy cream
- 1 tsp ground white pepper
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cayenne powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp paprika
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c gorgonzola cheese
- 1 c fontina cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c pecorino cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c parmesan cheese
- 1 c fresh bread crumbs

1. Cook pasta 2 minutes less than package directions.
2. Make blond roux with butter and flour. Add cream, but do not cook to thicken. Season cream sauce with pepper, garlic, nutmeg, cayenne, and paprika.
3. Grate cheeses and mix in large bowl.
4. Drain pasta and dump hot pasta onto cheese mixture. Pour cream sauce over pasta and cheese. Cover and let sit 5 minutes.
5. Put pasta, cheese, and cream mixture in a casserole dish. Sprinkle bread crumbs over mixture, and bake, uncovered, at 500° for 7 minutes.

Salad Niçoise

Salads are made many ways in Nice just like anywhere else. Niçoise salads contain various ingredients, including green beans, black olives, tomatoes, small potatoes, hard-cooked eggs, and tuna. I think that a salad that has at least three of those things can be called salad niçoise. They're all included in my version below. Another popular ingredient that I have omitted is anchovies. Add them if you want.

I do not use tomatoes unless I can get them from my own garden (in other words, I omit them about eight months of the year).

I think of this as a summertime salad, but it is good anytime of the year.

There are many ways the tuna can be prepared: seared tuna, tuna confit (page 128), and even canned tuna (some people actually prefer canned tuna for this dish). Use whatever kind you want.

Ingredients

- 6 oz green beans, cooked and cut into bite-size lengths
- 8 oz new potatoes, cooked and cut into bite-size lengths
- 6 hard-cooked eggs, quartered lengthwise
- 10 tomato wedges (if good ones are available; otherwise, omit)
- 8 oz tuna, cut into bite-sized portions
- 3 oz black olives, pitted
- 4 oz vinaigrette (page 187)

This dish is best served “family style” from a large dish on which the ingredients have been arranged in separate but overlapping areas.

A bottle of vinaigrette should be passed.

Quiche^{v?}

Ingredients

•

1. Mix ***

Rice^v

Many menus need a starch, and for me that means either mashed potatoes or rice. It was not always so.

When I was a kid, we ate rice a couple of times a year. Each of us would have a small bowl filled with white small grains. The sugar bowl was then passed around, and I could spoon as much sugar onto the grains in our bowl as my parents would allow. Behind the sugar bowl was passed a 6 oz can of Pet Evaporated Milk, with a hole punched in the top on opposite sides. You poured enough evaporated milk into your bowl so the grains would float. That was rice.

The next time I ate rice was at the school cafeteria in Louisiana where I taught. The rice was mixed with beans. No sugar. That was strange. I didn't like it.

Later, I came to like red beans and rice as one of the great Cajun sides.

Then, for many years, I was unable to get Cajun food, and I didn't eat rice, except occasionally as a side in Mexican meals. It was just that, a side, and I'm not sure why they put it there except as a sop for the extra salsa.

For years, if I ever thought about cooking rice, I didn't know how to start. Do you use "converted" rice or regular rice? Do you need a special rice cooker?

My wife taught me to cook rice, and I can do it now with my eyes closed.

I include my modification of her recipe here — mainly because it's so simple.

If you're uncertain about how to cook rice, try this. All you need to know is 2 to 1, water to rice, and 15 minutes; you can do what you want about the extras (onions and peppers) and the sautéing of the rice.

Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c onions, chopped to medium dice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c mixed red and green bell peppers, chopped to medium dice

- 4 Tbsp butter
- 2 c rice (“plain” rice, but use whatever you’ve got)
- 4 c water
- $\frac{1}{4}$ Tbsp garlic powder
- S&P&C

1. Sauté onions in butter, until almost soft.
2. Add bell peppers, and continue sautéing until onions are soft.
3. Increase heat to high, and add rice.
4. Stir rice, onions, and peppers on high heat for 4 minutes.
5. Add water all at once. Add garlic powder and S&P&C, and give one good stir.
6. Cover and bring to boil.
7. As soon as water is at a roiling boil, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes.

Mashed Potatoes^v

This is the way I make mashed potatoes. The dish may not be healthy, but it's good for you.

Types of Potatoes

There are basically two types of potatoes, “starchy” and “waxy”. This recipe requires starchy potatoes; the recipe for potato salad (page 116) requires waxy potatoes.

Russet potatoes (including Idaho, Maine, and Irish) are starchy. New potatoes (including red and chef's) are waxy. (I'm not sure the origin of the starchy and waxy names, but I doubt that they refer to actual chemical compounds. If you want to pretend to be a scientist, however, you can repeat the elementary school science experiment that shows that salt water is denser than water. Put a starchy potato and a waxy potato in a pot of tap water. The potatoes sink. Now gradually dissolve salt in the water. The waxy potato will float first. I'm not sure what is the point of this, but it does show that the two types of potatoes are different in a fundamental way.)

Starchy potatoes should be used for baked potatoes, French fries, and mashed potatoes.

Waxy potatoes should be used for boiled potatoes, in soups, and in potato salad.

Yukon gold potatoes are somewhere between starchy and waxy. “Heirloom” and “Peruvian” potatoes may be anywhere on the starchy/waxy scale.

Ingredients

- 2 large russet potatoes, peeled, and cut into 1 inch chunks
- 10 cloves of garlic
- 8 Tbsp butter
- S&P&C

1. Put potatoes and garlic in saucepan and cover with cold water.
2. Bring water to boil; reduce heat and simmer until potatoes can easily be poked with a fork, but are still firm.
3. Drain potatoes and garlic and return to saucepan.
4. Cut butter into small sticks and add it to saucepan along with seasonings. Use a potato masher to mash potatoes, garlic, and butter.

The extent of mashing depends on your preference. Some people like mashed potatoes with discernible chunks remaining; others like a very smooth and uniform consistency.

I think a potato masher works better than a ricer, but if you're used to using a ricer (or that's all you have), it should be fine.

Mashing potatoes with butter forms an emulsion. That is why you should not melt the butter before incorporating it into the potatoes. (See page 184 for some comments on emulsions.)

Potato Salad^v

There are many versions of potato salads, some served hot some served cold, and some with chunky potatoes and some with mushy potatoes. There is a variety of things that go in along with the potatoes, even including bacon. The taste of potato salad varies depending on the sauces incorporated into the salad.

Every New Year's Day in Houston during the 1990's, Steve Cabral and I would make this potato salad to go with our black-eyed pea soup and our cabbage soup. The black-eyed peas were for health, the cabbage soup was for wealth, and I think the potato salad was just to help with a hangover.

This recipe is a modified version of Steve's (or maybe not).

Ingredients

- 3 lb new potatoes (see page 114), eyes cut out, scrubbed, and cut into bite-sized chunks
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c red onions, chopped to medium dice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c celery, chopped to medium dice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c mixed red and green bell peppers, chopped to medium dice
- 1 Tbsp butter
- 1 Tbsp capers
- 8 cornichons, cut into lengths of about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c mayonnaise
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c Dijon mustard
- 1 Tbsp juice from the pickles jar
- 3 hard-cooked eggs, cut into medium pieces
- S&P&C

1. Put potatoes in saucepan and cover with cold water.

- 2.** Bring water to boil; reduce heat and simmer until potatoes can be poked with a fork, but are still firm.
- 3.** In a separate pan, lightly sauté onions, celery, and peppers in butter.
- 4.** Drain potatoes and put half of them in a large mixing bowl.
An objective in the mixing of all of the ingredients is not to break up the potatoes and later the eggs by doing too much stirring.
- 5.** Put half of the onions, celery, peppers, capers, and cornichons on top of potatoes, and with a large spoon, fold over once.
- 6.** Put half of the mayonnaise and mustard in bowl along with some S&P&C (to your taste), and fold over once.
- 7.** Add the remaining potatoes, onions, celery, peppers, capers, and cornichons to bowl, and add the eggs.
- 8.** Add the remaining mayonnaise and mustard, and add the pickle juice. Fold over once.
- 9.** Taste, and add S&P&C as desired. Fold over again, two or three times, to mix.
- 10.** Chill in refrigerator. The dish should be served at room temperature or slightly chilled.

Risotto^{v?}

Mantecatura is the stage when the rice is almost done cooking and most of the stock is absorbed.

Take the risotto off the heat.

Next, add the final ingredients: butter, grated parmigiano, parsley, etc.

Ingredients



1. Mix ***

Mantecatura for pasta:

1. Boil pasta in salted water, stirring constantly.
2. Undercook the pasta by 2 minutes
3. Remove pasta; reserve cooking water; do not rinse the pasta (do not rinse off the starch)
4. Combine the sauce ingredients with the pasta, and add a splash of the reserved hot pasta cooking water, and let it all melt together.
5. Toss the pasta and sauce. (This is called spadellare.)

Succotash^{v?}

This is a nice side dish or even a light main dish. Combinations of corn and some kind of bean were staples of some Native American groups. Some form of this dish has been popular during periods of economic stress because the ingredients are inexpensive contribute to a well-rounded diet. (A grain and a legume together often provide all of the essential amino acids.)

A vegetarian version can be prepared by omitting the bacon.

The dish can also be modified in the other direction by adding chopped corned beef. (Cook it separately, and add it near the end of the preparation.)

The okra can also be omitted, but you will miss one of the special flavors of the dish.

Ingredients

- 4 oz bacon, cut into small dice
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- kernels from 4 ears corn
- 10 oz baby lima beans (can use frozen beans, thawed)
- 8 oz okra, cut into 1/3-inch-thick slices (can use frozen okra, thawed)
- 12 oz cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 Tbsp cider vinegar
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and finely chopped
- 1/4 c fresh basil, torn into small pieces
- S&P&C

1. Cook bacon bits in a large skillet over moderate heat until crisp, and drain on paper towels, leaving fat in skillet.
2. Add onion to skillet and cook over moderate heat, stirring, until softened.

3. Add garlic and cook, stirring, 1 minute.
4. Stir in corn, jalapeño, lima beans, okra, and tomatoes and cook until tender.
- 4a. Add any additional cooked meat at this point.
5. Stir in vinegar, basil, salt, pepper, and cayenne, and adjust seasonings.

Serve with bacon bits over the top.

Fish and Seafood

There is an almost infinite variety of fish, seafood, and things that live in or around water. While all fish are similar in some ways, their taste and texture vary greatly. Other things that live in and around the water include crustaceans such as shrimp and prawns, lobsters, crawfish (crayfish), cephalopods such as squids and octopuses, and shellfish such as mussels, clams, and oysters. I will just refer to all these things as “fish and seafood”, although freshwater prawns and crawfish are neither of these.

The most important thing about fish and seafood is that it be fresh and that it not be overcooked. “Fresh” here does not necessarily mean freshly harvested. Most fish and seafood that is quickly frozen immediately after harvesting can be “fresh”. Some fish and seafood, however, are changed by being frozen, and for those, “fresh” means freshly harvested.

Types of Fish

There are many types of both freshwater and saltwater fish. The most important differences involve taste, which is mostly due to fatty oils in the fish, texture, and bone structure.

The taste of fish ranges from mild and delicate for fish such as flounder (sole) and halibut to strong, either “fishy” or “flavorful”, depending on your view, for fish such as mackerel or salmon. Within a given type of fish, the flavor may vary depending on the proximity to the skin or to internal bones. The color of the flesh is an indicator of the taste; lighter the color, generally the milder the taste.

The texture depends primarily on the muscle structure, that is, the size of the “flakes”. The texture determines the methods of cooking that can be used; a firmer texture such as mackerel or salmon has means that the fish may be cooked on a grill (with care), but a flakier texture such as a flounder has means that the fish cannot be grilled, unless given additional support by the skin or by a pan or small-mesh container.

Bone structure affects the pleasure in eating, whether or not bones must be dealt with. Except for occasional amusement, the diner should never have to contend with bones. If the cook can't take care of the bones, find another type of fish.

Methods of Cooking Fish

Fish is cooked in a variety of ways: baked, broiled (or grilled), fried (sautéed, pan fried, shallow fried, or deep-fried), poached, or steamed. It can also be cooked in a stew or soup.

Fish can be cut into serving portions in a variety of ways: whole, fileted with or without the skin, or cut into smaller filets. There are tastes differences in meat near the main backbone and near the skin. The skin also has a different taste, and some people like it. My preference is a skinless, boneless fillet. (I would even filet bream, bluegill, and crappie when I used to catch panfish years ago.)

Steaming is an easy way to prepare fish. I use a bamboo steamer set in a sauté pan with some water. Just lay seasoned fish fillets in the bottom of the steamer, and top them with slices of lemon and onion. Steam for about 6 to 8 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fillets. A whole fish may require longer cooking time.



The way I cook fish most often is to pan fry it. To avoid confusion with shallow frying, which is pan frying with more oil, I will refer to this method of cooking

as sautéing, as in the “sautéed fish with corn, tomato, and avocado” recipe on page 126.

The simplest way to do a simple sauté of fish filets with any type of fry pan is first to prepare a three-tray breading setup. One tray contains a mixture of AP flour, and salt and pepper and maybe cayenne powder. The second tray contains one or more beaten eggs. The third tray contains bread crumbs. I use panko, which is a flakey breadcrumb. First, coat the fish in the flour. This can be done well ahead of the use of the second and third trays.



Put a tablespoon of oil in the frying pan over medium-high heat. For one piece of fish at a time, shake off the excess flour, dip the fish in the eggs to coat it, and finally coat the fish with the breadcrumbs. Lay in the sauté pan. If the fish has skin on, lay the skin side down.

It is important not to overcook the fish, and unless you know the timing perfectly for the method of cooking, the temperature, the type of fish and its thickness, the only way of being sure about the correct doneness is to “flake” the fish with a fork. That means to stick a fork just barely into the fish and pull the flakes apart. If the flakes barely separate the fish is done. (The flakes should not separate easily.)



My best memories of cooking fish are shallow frying in a cast iron fry pan over a Coleman stove in the Northwoods. On our annual week-long fishing trips to Basswood Lake in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, every day for lunch and dinner, we ate nothing but fish, with sides of raw carrots, potatoes, rice, or Hamburger Helper. The fish were walleye, northern pike, or smallmouth bass. I still like to shallow fry fish, coated with nothing but cornmeal, salt, and cayenne powder.

Sautéed Fish with Corn, Tomato, and Avocado

In the off-season, I sometimes make this dish using canned tomatoes. I would never make it with store-bought fresh tomatoes, however.

Ingredients

- 4 fish fillets, 6-8 oz each, boneless and skinless
- kernels from 3 ears corn, lightly sautéed
- 2 lb assorted tomatoes, chopped in a variety of sizes
- 1 avocado, chopped
- 1 red onion, chopped and lightly sautéed
- 3 Tbsp lemon juice
- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- 3 Tbsp melted butter
- 3 Tbsp fresh basil, torn into small pieces
- 3 Tbsp parsley, chopped
- zest of one lemon
- S&P&C
- more parsley and lemon juice

1. Mix corn, tomatoes, basil, onion, and parsley with lemon juice and 2 Tbsp olive oil in a large bowl.
2. Rub both sides of fish with butter, salt, and pepper.
3. Sauté fish in 2 Tbsp oil in pan over medium heat for 6 minutes; turn, and sauté other side for 5 minutes.
4. Warm serving plates, and on each, make a bed of the tomato mixture, and place avocado chunks on top of bed.

5. Put a fillet on top of each bed, and drizzle with lemon juice and sprinkle with parsley.

*** picture

Tuna Confit

There are several varieties of tuna, and within each variety there are various grades. The grades are not regulated in America. Purveyors usually call their top grade “sushi grade”, or “sashimi grade”, and those terms mean whatever they want them to mean. These terms also apply to salmon and other fish.

Tuna is a versatile fish, and can be prepared in a number of ways. For top grade tuna, my favorite way is just to cut 1-inch thick steaks and sear them on both sides. This confit preparation is also a nice way to prepare top grade tuna.

Ingredients

- 4 tuna steaks, 6-8 oz each, boneless and skinless
- confit medium
 - 2 lemons, sliced
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ c sun-dried tomatoes
 - 4 cloves garlic, crushed
 - 4 scallions, both green and white parts, cut thinly
 - 1 rib celery, cut thinly
 - 2 Tbsp (total) parsley, thyme, and rosemary, chopped finely
 - hot pepper flakes
 - zest and juice of lemon
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ salt
 - $1\frac{1}{2}$ olive oil (or more, to cover fish)

1. Put tuna in confit medium, and put in refrigerator, covered, for 24 to 48 hours.

2. Bring to room temperature.

3. Cook in confit medium 1 hour at 225°.

Serve sliced at room temperature with some of confit medium and/or with tapenade (page 47) and/or salsa (page 45).

Creole Fish Cakes

It was only as I was putting these recipes together did I realize that sometimes I call something “Creole”, and sometimes I call something else “Cajun”. I do it without thinking. Many people who live in Louisiana, or at least have been to Louisiana once, will expound on the fine distinctions between the two words.

Except for some subtle nuances that I internalized (and forgot about) long ago, they’re both essentially the same, as far as I’m concerned. I do recognize differences in two cases, however. When there is a strong rural French aspect, I call that “Cajun”, and I call the cuisine of the classic New Orleans restaurants, such as Antoine’s and Arnaud’s, “Creole” (although it was a Cajun, Paul Prudhomme, who elevated Commander’s Palace to a place on the Creole Olympus).

I knew lots of people who were Cajuns, but I never met anyone who claimed to be Creole.

These fish cakes in this recipe are somewhat like crab cakes; in fact, if you substitute crab for the fish, they are very good crab cakes.

Old Bay seasoning can be used in place of the Creole seasonings, and they will taste more like Maryland crab cakes, but of course the taste is fish instead of crab. The taste will vary somewhat depending on the fish used.

Ingredients

- 2 lb fried white fish, broken up
- 2 c béchamel (page 178)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c green bell peppers, fine chopped
- 3 scallions, chopped
- 1 tsp tarragon, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c bread crumbs
- 2 tsp Creole seasonings (Zatarin’s, for example)

- butter for frying
- white remoulade sauce (page 44)

1. Mix $\frac{1}{2}$ c béchamel with peppers, onions and spices and mix remaining $1\frac{1}{2}$ c with fish.

- 2.** Form cakes. (They are fragile; it will help to refrigerate them for an hour.)
- 3.** Mix bread crumbs with Creole seasonings.
- 4.** Coat cakes with breadcrumbs
- 5.** Fry in butter.

Serve with white remoulade sauce.

*** picture

Shrimp Stir Fry

I like stir fry dishes because of the variety of good tastes; they can be made with almost any kind of ingredients. The two most common ones I make are shrimp stir fry, as described here, and chicken stir fry (described on page 144, although the method is almost the same).

Stir fry dishes became popular in eastern and southeastern Asia over one hundred years ago because cooking them required very little fuel, and fuel was a scarce resource (although you wouldn't know it if you walked down some side street in a modern Chinese village and observed the large propane flames heating a stir fry in a hawker stand).

Stir fries in eastern Asia and in oriental restaurants and homes in America are usually made in woks, but they can be made in any type of frying pan. A pan with a rounded bottom, like a wok, works best because the cooking is concentrated in a small area so that very little oil is needed. The cooking is usually done by stirring the product around in and out of the center area. I usually use tongs to stir with, because I also use them to lift pieces around. I also like a pan with a single long handle so that in addition to stirring, I can also flip the product. (Woks usually have two ring handles on opposite sides.)

Ingredients

- 1 lb shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp sesame oil
- 1 c broccoli florets
- 1 c red bell pepper, cut into $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch long narrow strips
- 8 oz snow peas
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp grated fresh ginger
- sauce
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ c soy sauce (low sodium!)

- 1 Tbsp cornstarch
- juice of 1 lime
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp red pepper flakes
- S&P&C
- cooked rice

Use a wok or a large frying pan with a rounded bottom (if you have one; otherwise, use any frying pan).

1. Prepare shrimp. For larger shrimp, 12 to 15 count, you may choose to leave tail-end shells on; for smaller (21 count and up) remove tail-end shells.
2. Prepare sauce: Mix soy sauce, cornstarch, lime juice, and brown sugar, and blend with a whisk or fork until smooth.
3. Heat the wok with the oil on a burner at high heat.
4. Place shrimp in wok and cook through; 5 to 7 minutes, depending on size.
5. Remove shrimp from wok, and add sesame oil to olive oil remaining in pan.
6. Add broccoli, bell pepper, and snow peas, and continue stirring and cooking, until vegetables are soft. Add garlic and ginger and cook 1 minute more.
7. Add sauce to vegetables in pan and stir to coat.
8. Add shrimp to wok and mix with vegetables and sauce. No further cooking is required.

Serve with rice.



Shrimp with Mushrooms

This was one of my favorite dishes at Tony's in Houston back in the 1980's. The sauce of sautéed tomato paste, cream, sherry, tarragon, and basil has a very good flavor that goes well with other seafood or fish.

For this dish, use about 5 shrimp per serving. The recipe below serves 6.

Ingredients

- 30 large shrimp, peeled and deveined, with tail-end shells left on
- 6 Tbsp butter
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 8 oz mushrooms, sliced
- 1 Tbsp tomato paste
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c sherry
- 1 Tbsp dried tarragon
- 3 Tbsp fresh basil, torn into small pieces
- 4 Tbsp brandy
- S&P&C
- cooked rice

1. Butterfly shrimp by splitting it from just before the tail-end shell toward the head. In butterflying the shrimp, you may determine that the previous deveining step was done imperfectly. Remove whatever "vein" you may encounter, and ignore whatever you're comfortable with. (Actually, it's not a vein.)
2. Sauté shrimp in fry pan with butter and garlic until they begin to turn red.
3. Remove shrimp and add mushrooms to pan. sauté mushrooms 5 minutes.

4. Remove mushrooms and add tomato paste to pan. sauté tomato paste 3 minutes.
5. Add cream, sherry, and tarragon. Stir to mix paste with cream and simmer until sauce is reduced slightly.
6. Return shrimp and mushrooms to pan and check seasoning; add S&P&C to taste.
7. Sprinkle basil over shrimp and mushrooms.
8. Pour brandy into a measuring cup. Light a long-stemmed match. (Keep match away from brandy.) Pour brandy into pan, let heat for a few seconds, and then ignite spirits. Do not pour brandy from the bottle.

The amount of brandy is not sufficient to make an impressive flame, but if you get a nice flame, let diners ooh and aah; and then, either way, serve over a rice bed on each plate.



Seafood Gumbo

I learned to cook Cajun food on weekend hunting and fishing trips around camps on the bayous of Avoyelles Parish in the 1960's. The other men wouldn't let me cook (they were all Cajuns and mostly slightly older than I was), but when I got back home in Bunkie, I would try to replicate their dishes. I probably missed some of the finer points of the preparations because if there were any disagreements about the details, the other men would all resort to French, which I didn't understand.

The main dishes were usually stews featuring squirrel or rabbit in the fall or fried fish in the spring. A favorite dish was a gumbo, either seafood or chicken and sausage (see the recipe on page [146](#)), for which we would bring ingredients from home.

Cajun food, as all American cuisine, has improved over the years. The following recipe is similar to what we used to make, except for when the seafood is added. Cajun cooks, like the great Justin Wilson, cooked a gumbo with everything in it for about 2 hours. This overcooks the seafood, so I recommend adding the seafood to the gumbo only toward the end of the cooking.

In addition to the ingredients listed below, you can include crawfish tails and whole crabs broken in half.

Ingredients

- 1 c oil (vegetable oil, bacon drippings, or a combination)
- 2 c AP
- 2 c onion, chopped into medium dice
- 1 c bell pepper, chopped into medium dice
- 1 c celery, chopped into medium dice
- 8 c water or fish stock
- 2 c white wine
- 4 cloves garlic, minced

- 1 tsp Tabasco sauce
- 2 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 lb firm-fleshed fish, cut into 1 inch bites
- 1 lb boiled shrimp without tail-end shells (page 25)
- cooked rice

1. Make a dark roux (see page 179): put the oil into a heavy pot over medium heat and stir in the flour. Cook for about 45 minutes.
2. Add onions, bell peppers, and celery (the “holy trinity” mirepoix) and cook, stirring frequently until the vegetables are tender.
3. Add 1 c water or stock, and cook while stirring until the vegetable mixture has thickened slightly.
4. Stir in garlic, wine, and remainder of water or stock, then add Tabasco, Worcestershire, and salt.
5. Bring to boil, while stirring occasionally.
6. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 1 hour.
7. Add fish and any other seafood, and simmer, covered, for 1 hour.
8. Add shrimp and serve.

Serve over rice in bowls, with passed filé bottle.

Paella

Paellas are rice dishes that include various meats and seafood. The dishes originated in the Valencia region of Spain, and so one version is sometimes called paella Valenciana. Many cooks from that region have attempted to codify the recipe, and are protective of the names “paella” and “paella Valenciana”. Because of the regional defenses, I generally avoid use of the term paella Valenciana (but recall my views on “authenticity”, page 30). Paella Valenciana generally does not include chorizo, for example. OK, but I like chorizo.

Some people are very particular about the type of rice they use; I’m not. If it matters to you, choose one you like. The Spanish tend to use a short-grained rice, in particular, bomba rice.

My version given below is a rather complicated dish, but I think you’ll find it’s worth the trouble. The meat and seafood items are cooked separately; but they are also cooked in the rice, so the shrimp, in particular, should be undercooked before adding it to the rice.

The name paella comes from the word for fry pan, and nowadays, the popular method of preparation involves use of a special circular fry pan with two looped handles on opposite sides, called a paraellera.

Instead of a paraellera (I have one), I use a sauté pan over a hot burner, and I move the pan around over the burner so that the heat is concentrated on one spot at a time near the circumference of the pan. I move the pan so that the hot spot traverses the circumference in a counterclockwise direction, just so that I can keep up with the progress of the cooking.

My sauté pan is $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches deep. The ingredients list below fills the pan perfectly. The amounts can be adjusted for other size pans. The only ratio that is important is the ratio of liquid to rice; it should be about $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 (by volume).

Ingredients

- 1 c white wine

- 1 lb mussels, cleaned
- 1 lb chicken breasts, skinless, cut into bite-size cubes
- 1 lb pork tenderloin, cut into bite-size cubes
- 1 lb shrimp, with all shells removed, including tail-end shell
- 2 medium onions, medium dice
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded, medium dice
- 15 oz can tomatoes, chopped
- 4 Tbsp parsley, chopped
- 4 c chicken stock
- 8 saffron stamens, soaked in small amount of water
- 2 c rice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb Spanish chorizo, cut in small bite-size pieces (Spanish chorizo is cured; Mexican chorizo is not)
- 10 stuffed green olives, sliced
- 1 Tbsp paprika
- 1 c small lima beans (frozen is OK)
- 1 c green beans cut into 1-inch lengths (frozen is OK)
- 1 c green peas (frozen is OK)
- S&P&C

1. Steam mussels in wine; reserve mussels and liquid.

Use large sauté pan or paraellera for all the remaining steps.

2. Season chicken; sauté in olive oil; reserve.

3. Season pork; sauté in olive oil; reserve.

4. Lightly sauté shrimp in olive oil; reserve.

5. Wilt onions in olive oil; add garlic; add red pepper; add tomatoes and parsley; cook until thickened.

6. Add chicken stock, saffron water, mussels liquid; bring to boil.
7. Add rice; stir once.
8. Add chicken, pork, shrimp, chorizo, limas, beans, and peas.
9. Stir once, and check seasoning.
10. Cook by moving pan around the flame.
11. Cook until rice is done. The Spaniards like it dry; I like it moist.

Arrange mussels and olives over top and serve. In a slight variation, the shrimp are fully cooked separately and arranged over the top with the mussels and olives.

*** picture

Meats and Stews

There are of course many ways to prepare meats. An important consideration for the cook is how the dish is to be presented and how it is to be eaten. If a steak or a large piece of unsauced meat is presented to the diner, the meat may be attached to a bone, and there may be parts that are consist entirely of fat. The diner will probably eat it with a fork and a sharp knife.

If the meat is covered in a sauce, and bones or inedible parts should be clearly visible, so that the diner can easily distinguish what is to be cut around. The diner should have a knife with the appropriate degree of sharpness for the nature of the dish.

The ingredients in a stew are generally quite mixed up, and there is enough liquid in the stew to make the use of a knife difficult. A fork should be the only utensil the diner need to eat a stew, except possibly, a spoon to savor some of the very liquid portions. The cook, therefore, should ensure that no pieces in the stew are too large for one bite, and that the stew contains nothing that is inedible.

The exclusion of inedibles and the restrictions on the sizes of items in the dish have little to do with how the dish is actually cooked. Bones, shells, corn cobs, lemon grass, and many other things that cannot be eaten, have flavors that should be captured, and hence, should be included during the cooking process. The diner should not have to contend with them, however.

Spices, in general, should be in powder form or in small chopped pieces. That presents a problem, however, as ground or chopped spices lose their flavors, or, worse, take on different flavors because the components do not dissipate their flavors uniformly.

Chicken with Onions, Tomatoes, and Okra

When I worked in India in the 1980's, I mostly ate vegetarian because all of my colleagues were vegetarian, and their wives were great cooks. (Yes, they were all men, and their wives did not "work"; they were all homely – in India, "homely" means being a good homemaker, and, in particular, being a good cook.)

Often, after work, I would ride on the back of my friend Karmeshu's motorscooter as we absorbed the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of Delhi. Karmeshu was vegetarian, but some of the dhabas where we ate were non-veg. One I remember fondly was Moti Mahal. Moti Mahal was best known for their tandooris, but to me their extravagant use of butter was their defining characteristic. Even back then Moti Mahal was famous, but it was little more than a dhaba in Old Delhi. Later, it broke out into New Delhi, and since it has even franchised establishments in some foreign countries, mostly in the Middle East.

I had a dish similar to this one at the restaurant at the Claridges hotel in New Delhi. I think it was called *murgh masalla*. (That name only means "chicken with spices".) I tried to recreate the flavors in this recipe. The ghee used as the cooking oil is important.

Ingredients

- 2 lb chicken breasts, skinless, boneless, and cut into bite-size cubes
- 6 Tbsp ghee
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 inches of ginger root, minced (about 1 tsp)
- 28 oz can stewed, crushed tomatoes
- 8 oz okra, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rounds (frozen is OK)
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground cloves

- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp cayenne powder
- 1 tsp green cardamom, ground
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp black pepper, ground
- 1 tsp coriander, ground
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp cilantro, chopped

1. Prepare ghee (page 4). 8 Tbsp butter should make a little more than 6 Tbsp ghee.
2. Prepare spices. Cardamom, black pepper and coriander should be freshly ground. Cumin is best if it is ground from cumin seeds that have been roasted in a pan. Any and all of these spices can be ground together.
3. Sauté chicken in 2 Tbsp ghee in a Dutch oven until slightly browned on all sides; remove chicken.
4. Add remaining ghee with onions and cook 20 minutes until soft.
5. Add garlic and ginger and cook for 5 minutes.
6. Add remaining spices except cilantro and cook for 1 minute.
7. Add tomatoes, okra, and chicken and cook until chicken is done, about 45 minutes.
8. Add chopped cilantro and check salt.

Stir Fry

Stir fry dishes are simple and quick to prepare. They can be made with almost any kind of ingredients. The two most common ones I make are chicken stir fry, as described here, and shrimp stir fry (described on page 132, although the method is almost the same).

I think a reason stir fries are popular with southeastern Asian dishes is that the pieces are mostly bite-size and easy to eat with chop sticks.

Stir fries can have a distinctly oriental flavor, a middle eastern flavor, a southwestern flavor, or just a middle-American flavor, depending on the spices, and if or how the meat is marinated.

I usually use tongs to stir with, because I also use them to lift pieces around. I also like a pan with a single long handle so that in addition to stirring, I can also flip the product. (Woks usually have two ring handles on either side.)

Ingredients

- 1 large chicken breast, cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wide strips, and then cut into $1\frac{3}{4}$ -inch long pieces
- 1 c marinade for southeastern Asian flavors (page 185)
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 medium-size onion, cut into slices (bulb end to root end), and then cut into $1\frac{3}{4}$ -inch long pieces
- 1 c (or more) of at least three vegetables cut into small bite sizes
Good choices: bell pepper, red and green; squash, (yellow and green); broccoli florets; baby corn; green beans, snow peas; and sugar snap peas.
- S&P&C

Use a wok or a large frying pan with a rounded bottom (if you have one; otherwise, any frying pan).

1. Marinate cut-up chicken 3 hours.

2. Heat the pan with the oil on a burner at high heat.
3. Drain chicken from marinade and place it in pan. Cook chicken while moving it around until it is browned on all sides.
4. Add onions and continue stirring and cooking.
5. Add other vegetables and continue stirring and cooking.

Serve with rice.



Mise en Place for Stir Fried Chicken



Chicken and Sausage Gumbo

This is my favorite gumbo. Sometime in the 1980's I watched Paul Prudhomme make this version (or at least one very similar to it) in a park near Opelousas, with help from his wife, Kay. I vary the ingredients somewhat every time I make it. Tasso may be hard to get, so you can omit it if you must. I never leave out the okra, but you can if you want. Filé is often used by diners individually to thicken a gumbo, and if you omit the okra, which is also a thickener, you may want to provide filé when serving.

Ingredients

- whole chicken, cut up (page 23)
- salt, garlic powder, cayenne
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c AP flour
- 1 c onions, chopped
- 1 c bell peppers, chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c celery, chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 7 c chicken stock
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb andouille, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rounds
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb okra, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rounds (frozen is OK)
- 5 oz tasso cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice (page 17)

1. Cut up chicken and rub on salt, garlic powder, and cayenne. Let stand 30 minutes.
2. Put $\frac{3}{4}$ c flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt, 1 tsp garlic powder, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cayenne in a plastic bag large enough to hold the chicken.
3. Add chicken and shake. Remove chicken, but reserve $\frac{1}{2}$ c of the flour and spices.

4. Heat $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch oil in cast iron skillet; fry chicken (5 to 8 min per side).
5. Use $\frac{1}{2}$ c of the same oil and the $\frac{1}{2}$ c reserved flour to make a roux in the skillet.
6. Add onions, bell pepper, celery (the “holy trinity” mirepoix), and garlic to roux and cook until vegetables are tender.
7. Fry the andouille.
8. In large pot, heat chicken stock and add roux mixture by spoonfulls.
9. Add okra, tasso and andouille, and simmer for 45 minutes.
10. Bone chicken and cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ inch dice. Add chicken to gumbo and adjust the seasoning.

Serve over rice in bowl with filé if desired. Potato salad goes well with this.

Beef Bourguignon

I think this was the first dish that I ever cooked using Julia Child's book. It was in the late 60's and we didn't have a reliable television, but the book was a delight. I've cooked it many times over the years, and varied it only slightly from Julia's version.

Ingredients

•

1. Mix ***

Beef Stew Nicaraguan Style: Caldo de Res

The ingredients in this dish vary. It must have beef, tomatoes, cabbage, yucca, corn, some kind of mild chile, and some kind of summer squash; otherwise, anything goes.

The main difference in my version and the “authentic” version is in the preparation. As the dish is typically made in Central America, bones and fats are left on the beef, the corn is left on the cobs (broken into 3-inch lengths), and the cabbage and roots are left in large pieces. To eat it, you must pick up the corn with your fingers, you must cut the vegetable chunks with your spoon (you may not be provided with a knife), you must eat around the meat bones somehow, and unless you like beef fat, you have to identify it in the stew and avoid it. (See my comments on page 29.)

The reasons people cook meat on the bone with some fat, or leave corn on the cob in a stew is to get the flavor from the bones, fat, and corn cobs. That flavor is important. In my version below, I get the flavor, but offer the diner a more refined experience.

Ingredients

- 3 lb beef shank, neck, etc. w bone
- 2 lb stew beef, cut into bites
- 1 onion, diced
- 4 c beef stock
- 32 oz can stewed tomatoes
- 1 head cabbage, a few large leaves and the rest cut into bite-size chunks
- yucca, bite-size chunks
- 10 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 orange
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced

- 10 ears baby corn
- 4 ears corn, cobs, plus kernels cut from cobs
- 4 baking potatoes, cut in bite-size chunks
- chayote, yellow or green squash, pumpkin, etc., chunks
- 6 carrots, chunks
- quequisque (same as malanga, pinkish), or taro (white) root; bite-size chunks
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c cilantro, chopped
- for garnish: lime, chopped onions, cilantro, and hierbabuena (yerba buena; there's variation in the meaning of this term all over Mexico and Central America; I just use whichever kind of mint I have)
- S&P&C

1. In large pot, brown beef on bones.
2. Add beef stock, orange peels, orange sections, big cabbage leaves, corn cobs, and garlic; simmer 1 hour.
3. Remove orange peels, cabbage leaves, and corn cobs from pot.
4. Remove beef from pot. Cut beef from bones, cut off any fatty pieces, and reserve the cleaned beef.
5. Season the stew beef and sauté in a separate pan until brown. Add onions, and sauté 5 minutes longer.
6. Add all beef, tomatoes, yucca, quequisque, malanga, or taro, carrots, and bell pepper to pot, and simmer for 30 minutes.
7. Add corn kernels, baby corn, potatoes, cabbage, squash, and cilantro to pot, and simmer for 30 minutes.

Garnish, and serve with rice and/or hot corn tortillas.

Beet Beef Stew

For this dish, as for most stews, canned tomatoes are as good as tomatoes from my garden, and better than fresh tomatoes from the grocery store. Tomatoes that go into a can are of a variety that tastes good after cooking, and they are picked at the optimal time in their growth.

Ingredients

- 2½ lb beef stew
- ½ lb bacon, slices cut into 1 inch pieces
- 10 c water
- 1 large carrot, chopped
- 1 celery rib, chopped
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 5 cloves chopped garlic, chopped parsley, bay leaf, black pepper
- 8 medium-sized beets, roasted, cubed large
- 1 medium-sized beet, grated raw, soak in water
- 2 c cabbage, shredded
- 2 leeks, sliced
- 1 c navy beans, cooked
- 15 oz can stewed tomatoes
- 3 potatoes, cubed very large
- 1 Tbsp tomato paste
- 3 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 4 Tbsp sugar
- 2 Tbsp flour (for roux)
- 2 Tbsp butter (for roux)
- 1 lb Kielbasa or similar sausage

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c sour cream

1. Roast beets at 400° for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

Also, if necessary, cook navy beans.

While the beets are roasting, proceed to the next steps.

2. Sauté beef and bacon in Dutch oven or large pot.

3. Add 10 c water, bring to boil, and skim.

4. Add carrot, celery, onion, garlic, parsley, bay leaf, and pepper.

5. Simmer for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

6. Remove meat to side dish, discard vegetables, and strain soup.

7. Add to strained soup: cooked beets, cabbage, potatoes, tomatoes, tomato paste, vinegar, sugar, cooked beef, and cooked bacon.

8. Bring to boil and simmer for 45 minutes; add sausage and beans.

9. Simmer for 20 minutes.

10. Prepare roux. (Heat flour and butter in small saucepan for 7 minutes.)

11. Add roux to stew and serve with a dollop of sour cream.

Beef Wellington

This preparation of individual beef Wellingtons is very rich – hence, very good.

Ingredients

- tournedos, 6 to 8 oz; one per serving
- liver mousse (fois gras if you've got it; otherwise, Tony's pâté, page 62, works well)
- duxelles (page 41)
- puff pastry dough (page 193, but Pepperidge Farm frozen dough also works well)
- egg wash

1. Brown tournedos 2 minutes on each side.
2. Roll out dough and cut in pieces large enough to wrap over tournedos with plenty of room to spare.
3. Place 2 Tbsp duxelles in center of each square of dough, and spread it so that it is about the size of a tournedo.
4. Place 4 Tbsp liver mousse on each duxelles bed.
5. Place a tournedo on top of each mousse/duxelles bed.
6. Wrap the dough over the top, and seal with egg wash Put sealed side down in baking pan.
7. Cut a small hole on top of each packet. Make pastry strips from left-over dough and add decorative pastry swirls on top around the vent hole (optional!).
8. Cook in baking pan at high temperature on top of stove for 2 minutes..
9. Bake at 425° for 15 to 20 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving.

Serve with wine/mushroom sauce (page 185).

*** picture

Chili

There are many kinds of chilis, each of which has ardent eaters.

The word comes from the word for capsicum peppers, which I generally spell as “chile”. The spellings are used interchangeably, so you can spell it however you want. The only chile in chili arrives in the powder form, in which case I generally spell it as “chili”. Chili powder is a mixture of dried mild chiles ground into a powder. It is basically whatever McCormick’s puts in a jar and calls Chili Powder. Generically, paprika and cayenne powder, which many of these recipes call for, are also chili powders.

Almost all chilis are based on beef, except, of course, “vegetarian chilis”. The differences come from how the beef is cut (ground or diced), whether or not tomatoes are used, and whether or not beans are used. “Cincinnati chili” brings new dimensions, which have led to names like “three-way chili”, “four-way chili”, and so on. Cincinnati chili always includes spaghetti(!), and may include various other ingredients. “Chili con carne” (“chile with meat”) usually contains beans, and the beef is usually ground instead of in dice.

There are several different names used for various kinds of chili, but nothing is official. Chilis are often named from the region in which they are thought to originate, or in which they are widely served. “Texas chili” is almost universally used to refer to a chili with neither beans nor tomatoes.

The first recipe given here is a Texas chili, which I call “chili del Gentle”.

Ingredients

- 3 lb lean beef, cut in small dice
- 3 c onions, coarsely chopped
- 8 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp bacon fat
- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 6 Tbsp flour

- 8 Tbsp chili powder
- 4 Tbsp cumin powder
- 2 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp cayenne powder
- 2 Tbsp hot pepper flakes
- 4 c beef broth
- 1 c red wine
- S&P&C
- for garnish: red onion, grated cheddar, jalapeño.

Use a soup pot and a skillet or sauté pan.

1. Sauté onion in bacon fat in a soup pot until fully wilted; add garlic and sauté a little longer.
2. Sauté beef in vegetable oil in sauté pan.
3. Add the sautéed beef to the pot, and stir in the flour.
4. Cook on medium heat 5 minutes, while stirring to coat onions and beef with the flour.
5. Stir in chili powder, cumin, basil, broth, and wine.
6. Simmer covered, $1\frac{1}{2}$ hour.
7. Correct seasonings, S&P&C and more cayenne.

Garnish, if desired, with raw chopped red onions, grated cheddar, and finely diced jalapeños.

Variation: Chili con Carne

If you're used to eating chili at fast-food establishments, this recipe will be more familiar than the preceding one.

Ingredients

- 3 lb lean beef, ground
- 3 c onions, coarsely chopped
- 8 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 bell pepper, diced
- 28 oz can tomatoes, chopped, w juice
- 28 oz can beans (red kidney, pinto, black)
- 6 Tbsp chili powder
- 4 c beef broth
- 1 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- S&P&C
- for garnish: red onion, grated cheddar, jalapeño.

Use a soup pot and a skillet or sauté pan.

1. Sauté onion in vegetable oil in a soup pot until fully wilted; add garlic and sauté a little longer.
2. Sauté beef in vegetable oil in sauté pan.
3. Add the sautéed beef to the pot, and add the bell pepper.
4. Stir in tomatoes, beans, chili powder, vinegar, and broth.
5. Simmer covered, $1\frac{1}{2}$ hour.
6. Correct seasonings, S&P&C

Garnish, if desired, with raw chopped red onions, grated cheddar, and finely diced jalapeños.

Variation: Vegetarian Chili*

A very good vegetarian chili can be made using the previous resipe, but just omitting the ground beef and the steps involving it.

*** pictures

Variation: Cincinnati Chili

I think Cincinnati chili is probably for people who don't like chili. I like real chili, but I also like Cincinnati chili.

Ingredients

- 2 lb lean ground beef
- 2 c onions, coarsely chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 c crushed tomatoes (from can)
- 2 Tbsp chili powder
- 1 Tbsp cocoa powder
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cloves
- 1 Tbsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp cayenne powder
- 2 c brewed coffee
- cooked spaghetti

1. Boil ground beef for 4 minutes, stirring it to separate it in pot. Drain the beef, and reserve.
2. Sauté onions in pot until wilted; add garlic, sauté 4 minutes longer; add tomatoes, and cook 5 minutes
3. Stir in boiled beef, chili powder, cumin, cocoa, cinnamon, ginger, cayenne, cloves, and coffee.
4. Simmer for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hour.

Check seasoning and serve over spaghetti.

Add additional ingredients as desired, lightly stirring each into the meat sauce.

3-way: 2 c grated cheddar

4-way: 2 c chopped onions

5-way: 2 c cooked kidney beans

*** pictures

Enchiladas: Beef

These are very good Tex-Mex enchiladas. I first started cooking this dish, or at least, an early version of it, when I lived in Iowa in the 1970's. You couldn't get good Tex-Mex food in Ames in the 70's. When I first moved to Iowa, enchiladas and tamales were the quintessential Tex-Mex dishes. When I returned to Texas, fajitas had become the most popular dish. I still cook enchiladas for a Tex-Mex fix.

Ingredients

- 12 medium corn tortillas
- 4 c red chile sauce (page [180](#))
- 1 c corn oil (for frying)
- 1 lb ground beef
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c onions, cut in medium dice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c green bell peppers, cut in medium dice
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 jalapeño, seeded, chopped finely
- 1 Tbsp chili powder
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c shredded Cheddar cheese
- for garnish: sour cream, green onions, cilantro, etc.

To make enchiladas, I use medium, white corn tortillas ($5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter). I first fry them in a 9-inch skillet with about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch corn oil (about 1 cup) until they just begin to become crisp. I then dip them briefly in a heated chile sauce. I use a pair of tongs for the oil and a different pair for the sauce. I prepare all of the tortillas first. With two 9-inch skillets, this is an assembly-line process.

- 1.** Fry tortillas in oil (until barely crisp) and dip into pan of hot chile sauce (one at a time). As finished, lay on a sheet pan; don't stack, but some overlap is OK.
- 2.** Sauté beef in 1 Tbsp of the corn oil until browned; add onions and sauté 5 minutes more; add bell peppers, minced garlic, jalapeño, and spices, and sauté 5 minutes more.
- 3.** Fill tortillas, roll, and place seam side down in an ungreased baking dish.
- 4.** Sprinkle with cheese, and top with remaining sauce.
- 5.** Cook at 350° for 15 to 20 minutes.

Garnish and serve.

*** picture

Enchiladas: Chicken with Almonds

I started cooking this dish (or something similar) in Iowa. It evolved from the beef enchiladas on page 162. Some steps in the preparation are the same as the beef enchiladas, but the flavors are quite different.

While thoroughly Mexican in taste, these enchiladas are unique. I have never seen any like them anywhere in Mexico (or Texas).

Ingredients

- 12 medium corn tortillas
- 4 c red chile sauce (page 180)
- 1 c corn oil (for frying)
- 2 c cooked chicken (or turkey), diced (this is a good use of leftovers)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c ripe olives, chopped
- 1 c slivered almonds
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c shredded Cheddar cheese
- for garnish: sour cream, green onions, cilantro, etc.

Some steps in this preparation are the same as for the Tex-Mex beef enchiladas.

1. Fry tortillas in oil (until barely crisp) and dip into pan of hot chile sauce (one at a time). As finished, lay on a sheet pan; don't stack, but some overlap is OK.
2. Combine chicken, olives, almonds, and some sauce to make the filling.
3. Fill tortillas, roll, and place seam side down in an ungreased baking dish.
4. Sprinkle with cheese, and top with remaining sauce.
5. Cook at 350° for 15 to 20 minutes.

Garnish and serve.

Desserts

Desserts are an important part of the meal for many people. Personally, I'd prefer to use my calorie allotment on appetizers. Consequently, I often forget the dessert until the meal is almost finished. For that reason, I generally prefer quick, simple desserts.

The two flamed dishes described in this chapter (bananas Foster and crêpes Suzette) are simple and quick (if for the crêpes Suzette, the crêpes are already made) – but impressive. Don't do the bread pudding soufflé, however, unless you've thought of it ahead of time.

Before describing some specific desserts, we will consider some sauces for the desserts.

Sauces for Desserts

Many desserts need a sauce. Some sauces are specific to certain dishes; for example, crème anglaise and Grand Marnier soufflé, or whiskey sauce and a New Orleans bread pudding. Other dessert sauces can be used almost anywhere you just want something sweet.

Caramel

This versatile sauce is simple, yet delicious (if you like sweet, gooey stuff).

Ingredients

- 4 oz corn syrup (dark Karo, for example)
- $\frac{2}{3}$ c sugar
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 1 c heavy cream

1. Heat the cream to boiling, and set aside.
2. Put corn syrup in a saucepan and heat, while stirring occasionally until it has turned a golden brown color. (This is the caramel.)
3. Stir in the butter over low heat.
4. Stir in the hot cream, and remove from heat.

Crème Anglaise

Crème anglaise is the traditional sauce for Grand Marnier soufflé.

The amounts listed below make about 1 cup.

Ingredients

- 3 egg yolks
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c hot milk
- 1 Tbsp melted butter
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp dark rum

1. Whisk egg yolks and sugar over heat until the mixture is smooth. (Until it makes a “medium ribbon”, that is, it flows slowly over the back of a spoon, in a ribbon about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide. Just be careful not to let the eggs coagulate.)

2. Add milk and continue whisking over low heat 1 minute.
3. Add butter and continue whisking over low heat 1 minute.
4. Add vanilla and rum, and continue whisking over low heat 1 minute.

Pastry Cream

Pastry cream is a simple and versatile dessert sauce. Make some pâte à choux (page 195), and all you have to do for delicious cream puffs is pipe out some pâte à choux, bake them, cut the tops off, spoon some pastry cream on, and put the tops back on (page 171).

Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
- 2 c whole milk
- 4 large egg yolks
- 2 Tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

1. Whisk together sugar, cornstarch, and salt in a medium saucepan.
2. Whisk together milk and egg yolks; add to saucepan along with butter; and bring to a boil over medium heat.
3. Let boil 1 minute, continually whisking; then remove from heat and stir in vanilla.
4. Strain pastry cream through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl.
5. Cover with plastic wrap, pressing it directly onto surface of cream to prevent skin from forming.

6. Refrigerate at least 2 hours.
7. Just before using, whisk until smooth.

Sabayon

Sabayon is a sauce made by heating egg yolks to just below the point at which they coagulate. Without sugar, it is the base of the savory Hollandaise sauce (page 184). With sugar, it is the base of crème anglaise and whiskey sauce.

Sabayon dessert sauces have sugar and possibly wine and cream. The wine is usually a sweet wine; Marsala is a good choice. If cream is to be used, it should be added at low heat after the sabayon is already developed.

Begin heating and whisking the yolk with only a very small amount of liquid. If the recipe calls for a liquid, add it as the yolks thicken. While a standard way is to heat over a water bath or in a double boiler, I do it on medium-high heat and I move the pan on and off the heat to control the cooking. The thickening process is highly non-linear in time. You must watch it very carefully and keep it off heat in the latter stages.

Whiskey Sauce

Whiskey sauce is the traditional sauce for New Orleans bread puddings.

The amounts listed below make about 1 cup.

Ingredients

- 3 egg yolks
- 1 c sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c milk
- 1 Tbsp cornstarch

- $\frac{1}{4}$ c cold water
- 3 Tbsp good whiskey (or whisky; if it's Scotch, it's "whisky"; if it's Irish, it's "whiskey"; nobody else has rules, although Americans tend to spell it with the "e".)

1. Whisk egg yolks and sugar over heat until the mixture is smooth. (Until it makes a "medium ribbon", that is, it flows slowly over the back of a spoon, in a ribbon about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide. Just be careful not to let the eggs coagulate.)
2. Add sugar, vanilla, and milk, and continue whisking over low heat 1 minute.
3. Off heat in a small bowl, blend cornstarch in 1/4 c water.
4. Add cornstarch slurry and continue whisking over low heat 1 minute.
5. Add whiskey and whisk until smooth.

Bananas Foster

We rarely eat desserts at my house, and so when we have a dinner party, I often forget the dessert until the meal is almost finished.

If you have bananas, you can make this dessert even after the main meal is finished, and bananas Foster will always impress.

All you need for six servings are

- 6 bananas, peeled, cut in half, and each half split lengthwise
- 4 Tbsp butter
- 5 Tbsp brown sugar (light or dark)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp ground nutmeg
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c dark rum

- 2 Tbsp brandy
1. Melt the butter in a large sauté pan on medium heat, and stir in the brown sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg.
 2. Place bananas, flat side down, in the mixture.
 3. Cook slowly, spooning the mixture over the bananas until the bananas are softened. The length of time depends on the ripeness of the bananas, anywhere from 1 minute to 4 minutes.
 4. Mix rum and brandy in a measuring cup. Light a long-stemmed match. (Keep match away from rum/brandy mixture.) Pour rum/brandy mixture into pan, let heat for a few seconds, and then ignite spirits. Do not pour rum or brandy from the bottle.

Serve with vanilla ice cream, if you have it.

Bread Pudding Soufflé

Bread pudding is good, with a strong Creole tradition. If you stop with step 5, you will have a good bread pudding, especially if you add the whiskey sauce.

Bread pudding soufflé is a notch up.

It is a staple at Commander's Palace in New Orleans.

To make individual soufflés, you need ramekins that hold about 5 oz. For individual soufflés, the rise will be less.

- 1 egg
- 1 c milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cinnamon

- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp vanilla extract
- 2 Tbsp raisins, soaked
- 2 Tbsp pecans, chopped
- 4 oz stale bread
- butter for loaf pan and soufflé dishes
- 3 egg whites for soufflé

1. Soak raisins in hot water; drain.
2. Whisk all liquids/spices.
3. Fold in bread.
4. Put in buttered loaf pan.
5. Put butter on top; bake in bain marie 45 min at 350°.
6. Remove; chill; beat egg whites and fold in.
7. Put into buttered soufflé dishes and bake 14 min at 400°.

Serve with whiskey sauce (page 168). Break the soufflé with a spoon and drizzle in a tablespoon of the sauce.

Cream Puffs

Cream puffs require pâte à choux, and the first step is similar to the preparation of gougeres (page 56).

Ingredients

- 1 c pâte à choux (page 195)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c pastry cream (page 167)

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Put dough in a pastry bag with a medium-size tip, and put pastry cream in a separate pastry bag with a medium-size tip.
3. Pipe pâte à choux dough into 1 inch balls on a lined baking sheet (Silpat or just parchment paper; get at kitchen supply retailer).
4. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes.
5. Remove puffs from oven, and cut off the top of each.
6. Into each topless puff, pipe as much pastry cream as will fit comfortably, and replace top. (This is a little messy, but make it look the best you can.)
4. Bake at 400° for 10 minutes.

Crêpes Suzette

This dish is simple if you have the crêpes. Make 2 crêpes per serving ahead of time; see page 196. For these crêpes, use a larger amount of sugar in the pâte.

For 4 servings, you need

- 8 crêpes
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c cognac
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c Grand Marnier
- orange butter
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ c orange juice (juice of one orange)
 - zest of one orange
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ c sugar
 - 12 Tbsp butter

This dish is best prepared in a large sauté pan. If more than 4 servings are to be prepared, use two sauté pans, or make in batches. You will flame each separately.

1. Make orange butter by thoroughly mixing ingredients in a large sauté pan over moderate heat.
2. Cook orange butter 4 or 5 minutes, until it thickens slightly.
3. Put a crêpe in pan, good side down, and swish around.
4. Using two forks, fold into the crêpe once into a half disk and fold a second time into a quarter disk.
5. Repeat for each of the crêpes.
5. Add cognac and Grand Marnier and ignite (use long match).

Serve immediately. You may also sprinkle with confectioner's sugar.

Pears Poached in Wine

This is a simple dessert, except that preparation of the pears requires some care.

Ingredients

- 8 pears (Anjou, winter to spring; Bartlett, summer; bosc, fall), medium ripe, whole, peeled, bottom cut flat, and cored with stems on
- 3 c zinfandel (other red wine is OK)
- 2 c cranberry juice
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ c sugar
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp ground cloves

- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp whole black peppercorns (in an infuser or a sachet; otherwise you'll be unable to remove all of them before service)
- lemon zest

1. Simmer everything, turning pears occasionally, until pears are tender but not soft. A large sauté pan works best for this.
2. Carefully remove pears to a platter – get peppercorns off of them.
3. Strain liquid mixture and reduce quickly to about $1\frac{1}{2}$ c.
4. Cover and chill pears and syrup separately. (Keeps up to 2 days.)

To serve, place on individual plates and spoon syrup over pears. Either garnish with mint sprigs or dust with confectioner's sugar (or both).

Grand Marnier Soufflé

The ingredients for a soufflé are simple: eqq yolks, sugar, Grand Marnier, egg whites, and cream of tartar (not really necessary). The basic ratio is 1 egg yolk to 4 tsp sugar to 1 Tbsp Grand Marnier to a dash of cream of tartar to 1+ egg white (yes, whites from more eggs than supply the yolks). The ratios do not scale linearly, but approximations are OK (after all, how big is an egg yolk?).

Here are two representative recipes:

2 persons: 4 egg yolks, 6 Tbsp sugar, 4 Tbsp Grand Marnier, 5 egg whites
Individual 4 inch soufflé dishes work well for two people.

6 persons: 8 egg yolks, $\frac{2}{3}$ c sugar, $\frac{2}{3}$ tsp cream of tartar, $\frac{1}{2}$ c Grand Marnier, 10 egg whites.

An 8 inch soufflé dish works well for this recipe.

Desserts can be a real pain for the home cook to prepare while the guests are enjoying the food. This is especially true for soufflés. (These are the desserts that you have to order well before the end of the meal in a fancy

restaurant.) The first steps in very elegant dish (through the ice-bath step) can be prepared an hour or so ahead of time.

- 1.** Whisk egg yolks and sugar over heat until the mixture is smooth. (Until it makes a “broad ribbon”, that is, it flows slowly over the back of a spoon, in a ribbon about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide. Just be careful not to let the eggs coagulate.)
- 2.** Add Grand Marnier and remove from heat.
- 3.** Place ice cubes in a large bowl, push the saucepan into the ice bath and continue whisking to arrest the cooking.
- 4.** Add cream of tartar and beat until foamy.
- 5.** Beat egg whites until stiff. (I do this in a copper bowl with a whisk, but you can use an electric mixer.)
- 6.** Fold yolks and whites into buttered soufflé dish.
- 7.** (Optional) Cut a piece of aluminum foil or parchment paper long enough to wrap around the soufflé dish and wide enough to stand 3 inches above the dish. Butter one side of the foil or paper and wrap around the dish with the buttered side inward. If you use parchment paper, you’ll have to secure it by tying a string around it; foil should stand by itself.
- 8.** Bake at 400° for 10 to 15 minutes, depending on size of dish.

Serve with crème anglaise (page 166). Break the soufflé with a spoon and drizzle in the sauce.

Sauces

Some sauces are used primarily during the cooking process, that is, they are incorporated into the dish being prepared. The most prominent sauces of this type are béchamel and velouté.

Other sauces are served on the plate with the product itself. A common example of this type is Hollandaise. And of course, there are the salad dressings, page 186. For other sauces served on the dish, see page 41 in the appetizers chapter, or page 165 in the desserts chapter.

Serving a sauce on a dish is sometimes made easier by putting the sauce in a plastic squeeze bottle.

It is sometimes useful to think of sauces in terms of a mother sauce and then variations on that basic sauce. How many basic sauces we want to start with depends on the taxonomy that makes sense to you, but the French authorities usually identify five: béchamel, espagnole, Hollandaise, tomato, and velouté. Sauce mornay, for example, is béchamel with cheese added to it.

This group of five goes back to Auguste Escoffier in the 1800's, but other taxonomies are just as logical. Looking at it another way, for example, you could say sabayon (egg yolks with a little water and lemon juice) is a mother sauce, and Hollandaise is just that basic sauce with butter added to it.

The basic requirements for making any of the sauces is just a good saucepan, a whisk, and a measuring spoon.

While any saucepan will suffice, a saucier pan, which is a saucepan with sides that curve smoothly into the bottom, is best for making sauces. I have two sauciers of different sizes.

Your whisk should be long enough that it will not fall into your saucepan when you stand it in the pan to take a rest. You probably need two or three whisks, of different sizes.

If you use non-stick pans (I never do for making sauces), then your whisk must be plastic or have a plastic coating.

Many sauces require extensive whisking.

Sauces for Cooking

A cooking sauce forms the matrix of many dishes. The sauces described here are the most common ones I use in cooking. There are two important cooking sauces that are not described here, and they are on separate ends of the spectrum of difficulty of preparation. Preparation of espagnole and its derivative sauces is very time-consuming, and they are not important ingredients in any of the recipes in this book, so I've omitted espagnole. Tomato sauce is easy to prepare, but most of the time I use (and recommend) store-bought canned tomato sauce. Canned tomato sauce is made from the right kind of tomatoes, harvested at the right time.

Béchamel

Béchamel is probably the most versatile of the sauces. It is used as a thickener in many soups and it is used as a moistener in many baked goods.

Béchamel is very similar to velouté (page 183), which uses chicken broth in place of milk.

There are many slight differences in both the ingredients and the preparation of different versions of béchamel. My version is very simple, but I rarely use exactly the same proportions of ingredients.

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp butter
- 3 Tbsp flour (AP)
- 2 c milk
- salt and ground white pepper
- a dash of clove, allspice, nutmeg, and cayenne powder

Preparation is simple.

1. Incorporate the butter and flour in the saucepan, and cook the flour at medium heat for 4 or 5 minutes.
2. While the saucepan is still on medium heat, add the milk slowly with constant whisking. There are different ideas about the temperature of the milk. I just use it cold. The important thing is the constant whisking.
3. When all of the milk has been incorporated, add the seasonings and increase the heat until the mixture almost boils.
4. Reduce the heat to just below a visible simmer and cook for 20 minutes, whisking occasionally.

Cajun Roux

Ask a Cajun how to make a dish, and the answer usually begins with “First, you make a roux.”

There are various kinds of roux, depending on the thickness and the darkness. The thickness depends on the ratio of flour to oil; medium thickness is obtained with 2:1, flour to oil. The darkness depends on how long the roux is cooked.

Cajun cooks would typically spend 30 minutes to 1 hour preparing a roux, but now most cooks spend much less time, some even using a microwave.

A heavy pan is best (I use a cast-iron skillet). The usual way is to add the oil to the pan first and begin stirring the flour in after the oil has heated a little. Paul Prudhomme adds the flour first and begins cooking it in the dry pan before adding the oil.

Roux is cooked on medium heat, with constant stirring. The main thing is not to burn the flour, and the way to prevent this is by constant stirring. You do not control this by adjusting the heat; the heat remains at medium. The scorching process is nonlinear, and it is after the roux has turned a medium brown that the risk of burning becomes greatest. If black specks appear in the roux, it is burned. Discard it and start over.

Ingredients

- 1 part oil (vegetable oil, bacon drippings, or a combination)
- from 1 to 3 parts AP

Chile Sauce

There are many versions of chile sauce. The main differences arise from the types of chiles (peppers) used, which also may determine the color (“red” and “green” being the main colors), and from additives such as tomatoes. Chile sauces can range from mild to hot (*picante*), just as chile peppers can be hot or not-so-hot, even within the same variety and even ones grown on the same plant.

What are commonly called chile peppers are almost all in the same genus, *Capsicum*, hence, chiles are also called capsicums. Probably the most common capsicum species is *annuum*, and such very different chiles as bell peppers, jalapeños, and poblanos are all *annuum*s. All capsicums originated in the Western Hemisphere, but they are grown all over the world now. Some have even adopted the names of the homelands in which they are especially cherished, such as Hungarian peppers, Thai chilis (usually spelled with an “i”), or NuMex peppers (of course, New Mexico is in the Western Hemisphere).

Many chiles are eaten both fresh and preserved. Chiles generally go by different names if they are fresh and if they are preserved. Chiles with a rather thin meat are often dried to preserve them. Poblano, which is the common chile of chiles rellenos, when dried, are called anchos; and chilacas, which are rarely used fresh, when dried, are called pasillas. Bell peppers, with a relatively thick meat, are rarely preserved; but jalapeños, also with a relatively thick meat, are often smoked and preserved in an adobo sauce, and in that state are called chipotles.

Chile sauces can be made from either fresh or preserved chiles. In either case, seeds, stems, and any pithy material are removed.

The version given here is a mild red chile sauce using dried chiles.

Ingredients

- 12 whole anchos or pasillas
- 3 c water
- 4 Tbsp tomato sauce
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cayenne powder
- S&P

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Toast dried chiles on a baking sheet at 400° for 3 minutes.
3. Let chiles cool to the touch and tear open and remove seeds, stems, and any pithy material.
4. Rinse and soak chiles in hot water for 1 hour.

5. Put chiles in blender and puree. Reserve water. (Pureeing may or may not be easy, depending on your blender; add some of the water to help with the process.)
6. Add remaining water, tomato sauce, garlic, vegetable oil, oregano, cumin, and cayenne. Blend until smooth.
7. Put sauce in saucepan and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

There are also some canned versions that are very good. (I usually use Old El Paso Enchilada Sauce, which is readily available in most grocery stores.)

Mirepoix

A mirepoix is not actually a sauce, but it is used similarly to sauces, so I have included a description here.

The most common mirepoix is a mixture of chopped onions, celery, and carrots, usually in the ratio 2:1:1. Mirepoix can also include bell peppers (the Cajun mirepoix, called the “holy trinity”, substitutes chopped bell peppers for the carrots), scallions, leeks, and celeriac or other root vegetables. Minced garlic is often included in a mirepoix. In Italian cuisine, mirepoix is cooked further in olive oil until it is thick sauce, called a sofrito, similar to some sofritos described below.

A mirepoix may be added to the dish being prepared at different times, depending on the dish. It may be made as the first item in the dish, by sautéing the vegetables in a little oil. It may be added to a roux in the early stages of the preparation of the dish.

Mirepoix give flavor to stocks, and in the preparation of some stocks, after the flavor has been extracted, the mirepoix is discarded.

In Mediterranean and Hispanic cuisine, a mixture of aromatic vegetables and/or spices and/or an oil is called a sofrito. A sofrito is similar to a mirepoix, and there is even more variation in sofritos than in mirepoix.

Velouté

Velouté is very similar to béchamel (page 178), and is just as versatile. As béchamel, velouté is used as a thickener in many soups and it is used as a moistener in many baked dishes.

While there are many slight differences in both the ingredients and the preparation of velouté, my version is quite simple. It differs from my version of béchamel in the relative amounts of flour. You can use a little more flour for a slightly thicker sauce.

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp butter
- 2 Tbsp flour (AP)
- 2 c chicken broth (store-bought is OK; but in that case, check the salt)
- salt, ground white pepper, and cayenne

Preparation is simple. I use the same steps as for béchamel.

1. Incorporate the butter and flour in the saucepan, and cook the flour at medium heat for 4 or 5 minutes.
2. While the saucepan is still on medium heat, add the chicken broth slowly with constant whisking.
3. When all of the chicken broth has been incorporated, add the seasonings and increase the heat until the mixture almost boils.
4. Reduce the heat to just below a visible simmer and cook for 20 minutes, whisking occasionally.

Plating Sauces

About Emulsions

*** emulsifying agent

Many sauces described here are emulsions or within a matrix that is an emulsion. The main thing in preparing an emulsion is proper whisking, which usually means *constant whisking*.

surfactants

Hollandaise

Ingredients

•

Béarnaise

Ingredients

•

Bordelaise

Ingredients

•

Gorgonzola Cream Sauce

Ingredients

-

Mushroom and Wine Sauce

Ingredients

-

Marinades

*** discuss

*** reuse as dipping sauces

Marinade for Southeastern Asian Flavors

For 1 cup, mix

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c olive oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c soy sauce (low sodium!)

- 2 Tbsp Balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp grated fresh ginger
- 1 tsp Tabasco sauce

Marinade for BBQ

For 4 cups, mix

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 c ketchup
- 1 Tbsp mustard (“yellow mustard” is fine)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c cider vinegar
- 1 tsp Tabasco sauce
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp chili powder
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c water

*** reuse as BBQ sauce; add vinegar and cook

Salad Dressings

There is an amazing variety of ready-made salad dressings available in any grocery store. Many are quite good and they last for a long time. We usually have two or three bottles in the refrigerator.

Salad dressings are easy to make. I’m not sure that home-made ones are any better than store-bought ones, but making them may give you a certain amount of satisfaction. When I make them, it’s usually because I just don’t have the right kind in the refrigerator.

The vinaigrette is the classic French dressing. The gorgonzola cream sauce described above is a very good creamy salad dressing. The blue cheese vinaigrette described below is a lighter blue cheese dressing.

Vinaigrette

A vinaigrette is an emulsion of vinegar and oil, along with some seasonings. The most critical aspect of a vinaigrette dressing sauce is the ratio of oil to vinegar. Because our taste preferences vary, and because vinegars differ in their piquancy, the basic rule is 2 to 1 or 3 to 1, oil to vinegar.

Dijon mustard makes a good emulsifying agent.

If you include dried herbs, do so sparingly, as their tastes can predominate in an unpleasant way.

Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c vinegar (your choice: red wine, champagne, cider, even balsamic)
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 clove garlic, minced (If you want a less strident garlic flavor, you can sauté the garlic briefly.)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground pepper
- 2 tsp crushed dried herbs such as tarragon or oregano if desired
- 1 c good olive oil

1. Mix vinegar, mustard, and seasonings in a small bowl.
2. Slowly whisk in the olive oil.

Blue Cheese Vinaigrette

This vinaigrette is an emulsion of vinegar and oil, but mustard is not used as an agent. The cheese, added after the whisking will help hold the emulsion.

Because of the cheese, no extra salt is added; rather, some sugar is added to mitigate the salt. (Some cheeses is saltier than others, of course.)

Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c vinegar (your choice: red wine, champagne, cider)
- 1 clove garlic, minced (If you want a less strident garlic flavor, you can sauté the garlic briefly.)
- 1 tsp ground pepper
- 2 tsp crushed dried herbs such as tarragon or oregano if desired
- 1 c good olive oil
- 12 oz blue cheese, crumbled (your choice; gorgonzola works well)

1. Put vinegar and seasonings in a small bowl.
2. Slowly whisk in the olive oil.
3. Slowly stir in the blue cheese crumbles.

Doughs, Breads, and Crackers

Breads and crackers are relatively easy to make and are nice things to have to accompany starters or main courses. Some breads and crackers are good by themselves. Other breads become an integral part of a dish, such as crêpes farcies et roulées (crepes stuffed and rolled up).

The lists of ingredients in the following recipes make varying amounts. They just happen to correspond to the amounts of the various products that I tend to make. For flour, most recipes below call for “AP”, that’s “unbleached all purpose”, which usually comes in 4 lb, 5 lb, or 10 lb bags. Some recipes call for “cake”; that’s cake flour, low-gluten flour, which usually comes in boxes. Bread flour is similar to AP, except it has higher levels of gluten. Corn flour is the same as cornmeal for our purposes. Do not use self-rising flours.

AP, bread, and cake flours are made from wheat, which contains gluten. There are various substitutions that are gluten-free, but I cannot comment knowledgeably on them.

Although AP, bread, and cake flours are all wheat flours, there is a variety marketed in America called “wheat flour”. It is slightly darker than AP or bread flour (it’s processed less) and it has more flavor. Some recipes below call for wheat flour.

Chefs often say that in pastries and doughs, precise measurements are necessary. You can safely ignore that old chef’s tale – however, you must get your dough just right. Try to start with it at least at wet as you need it, and then use more or less bench flour as you work it. As you’re working it, it’s easier to make it drier than it is to make it wetter. The relative portions of dry and wet, however, depend on ambient humidity and maybe other stuff I

don't understand.

Doughs

Everything begins with the dough. It's usually best to mix the dry ingredients and wet ingredients separately and then combine them. I usually first mix the combined dry and wet ingredients in a bowl using a fork, then when they have partially come together, I dump them on a board or countertop. You need to have a container of flour ("bench flour") handy to dust surfaces and your hands.

For any dough, there are only a few things to know:

- * type and amount of flour or meal;
- * type and amount of liquids, fats, and binders;
- * leavening agent (if any);
- * seasonings;
- * resting time;

and how to put it all together.

Resting time may serve two purposes. One is just to let the dough "come together". For breads that use yeast as a leavening agent, the resting time, which may consist of two separate periods, allows the yeast to work on the carbohydrates.

Leaveners

Doughs make lighter breads if some gas is incorporated into the dough before and during the cooking process. The gas may be carbon dioxide or ordinary air.

Leaveners are agents that induce carbon dioxide gas into doughs. There are basically two types: living organisms that feed on carbohydrates and produce carbon dioxide, and chemicals that react to produce carbon dioxide.

The most common organism used as a leavening agent is a yeast called baker's yeast (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, which is the same species used in top-fermented or true beer). This yeast occurs in abundance naturally, with minor differences among the wild varieties. Baker's yeast is available commercially in several different forms, but with uniform characteristics. The most common commercial form is called "active dry yeast", which is a coarse powder of granules of live yeast cells encapsulated within a jacket of dry, dead cells and a growth medium. The yeast cells in active dry yeast will remain alive at room temperature for over a year. They become active when immersed in water.

Yeast consume carbohydrates and produce carbon dioxide.

Yeast can be supplemented with various lactobacilli, which are rod-shaped bacteria that consume carbohydrates and produce carbon dioxide. Doughs using both yeasts and lactobacilli as leavening agents are called sourdoughs. Normally the leavening agents for sourdough are not put into suspended animation, so the agents are preserved in a "starter", which is dough containing active yeasts and bacteria. Each time a bread is to be made, a small amount of the starter is incorporated into the fresh flour. The yeasts and bacteria in the starter are consuming the carbohydrates in the starter, so the flour must be refreshed from time to time. The rate of consumption is slowed by storage of the starter in the refrigerator.

Both yeasts and bacteria produce other chemicals in addition to carbon dioxide, in particular, acetic acid and lactic acid (hence, the name lactobacilli), and these by-products lend interesting flavors to the bread made from the doughs. Because of the variation among the varieties of yeast and the species of bacteria, there are variations in the flavors of the breads produced.

The most common chemical used in baking soda and baking powder. Baking soda is sodium bicarbonate, NaHCO_3 , and when this alkaline is combined with an acid, it produces carbon dioxide. In baking, there are many possible sources of an acid for this reaction, including buttermilk, lemon juice, cream of tartar, and vinegar. Baking powder is baking soda mixed with a dry acid

such as calcium acid phosphate or cream of tartar. A base-acid reaction occurs when the baking powder is placed in a liquid.

The use of live organisms to leaven bread requires some time for the organisms to produce carbon dioxide. (Sourdough requires longer than breads made from more yeast.) Breads made from baking soda and/or baking powder do not require this time to develop, and hence are called “quick breads”.

Interestingly, an alkaline balance aids the Maillard reaction in the surface protein, so a little extra baking soda will yield bread with a darker and perhaps more tasty crust.

Instead of carbon dioxide, other gases, such as water vapor and ordinary air, can also be used to produce a rise in doughs when they are cooked. A very liquidy dough, such as used for popovers or Yorkshire pudding (page 207), will produce steam during cooking, and this steam causes the bread to rise.

Ordinary air is incorporated into dough in the kneading process, and this air leavens the bread as the dough is cooked.

Kneading

*** punching down

*** rolling out

Puff Pastry

Puff pastry dough is what you use for *en croûte* dishes like beef Wellington or any of the vol-au-vent dishes.

Puff pastry is similar to brisée, but lighter. The cake flour gives it the puff (there's no leavening).

Store-bought puff pastry is pretty good. It's in the frozen food section.

The list of ingredients makes a lot of dough, but it's a lot of trouble, so you may as well make a lot.

- * **flour:** $2\frac{3}{4}$ c AP and $\frac{3}{4}$ c cake
- * **liquids and binders:** 10 oz ice water and 30 oz frozen butter
- * **leavening:** none
- * **seasoning:** 2 tsp salt
- * **resting:** 6 hours, chilled

1. Mix the flour and salt and water.
2. Cut the butter into small chunks, work into the dough. A pastry cutter is the best way to mix the butter into the dough, but a food processor also works. Use the pulse switch. Work the dough as little as possible and keep it very cold.
3. Fully incorporate the ingredients, but do not make the dough smooth. Visible chunks of butter, about the size of peas, should remain.
4. Before resting, form dough into a ball or a sheet.

This dough will keep in the refrigerator for several days, or you can freeze it.

Pâte Brisée

This is the dough to use in pies, sweet or savory. It has more structural integrity than a puff pastry.

Store-bought pâte brisée is pretty good. It's called "pie crust", or something similar, and is found in the frozen food section.

- * **flour:** $1\frac{1}{4}$ c AP
- * **liquids and binders:** 3+ Tbsp ice water, and $\frac{1}{4}$ c shortening and $\frac{1}{2}$ c butter, both frozen
- * **leavening:** none
- * **seasoning:** $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp sugar
- * **resting:** 2 hours, chilled

1. Mix the flour, seasonings, and water.
2. Cut the shortening and butter into small chunks, work into the dough. A pastry cutter is the best way to mix the butter into the dough, but a food processor also works. Use the pulse switch. Work the dough as little as possible and keep it very cold.
3. Fully incorporate the ingredients, but do not make the dough smooth. Visible chunks of shortening and butter, about the size of peas, should remain.
4. Before resting, form dough into a ball or a sheet.

This dough will keep in the refrigerator for several days, or you can freeze it.

Pâte à Choux

This is a rather unusual dough. You make it in boiling water.

It is the dough for savory gougères or for sweet cream puffs and other desserts.

- * **flour:** 7 oz AP (use a cup, and then use a little more water)
- * **liquids and binders:** 1 c water, 4 beaten eggs, and 7 Tbsp melted butter
- * **leavening:** none
- * **seasoning:** 1 tsp salt, pepper, nutmeg, and 3 to 8 tsp sugar (depending on how the dough will be used)
- * **resting:** none

1. Bring water to boil, add seasonings and butter.
2. Off heat, add flour, and beat with a slotted wooden spoon.
3. Reheat.
4. Off heat add beaten eggs slowly, beating with the slotted wooden spoon.

Pâte à choux is the dough to use in making savory gougères (page 56) or sweet cream puffs (page 171). In both cases, and also for almost any other product, a pastry bag is used to pipe the pâte à choux into little mounds on a baking sheet.

Pâte à Crêpes

Crêpes are simple to make. This liquidy dough keeps in a blender jar in the refrigerator for about a week. When you need a few crêpes, just heat up a nonstick pan, and pour some dough in. It takes less than a minute per side.

Crêpes are the pancakes for any of the crêpes farcies et roulées dishes (page 107). They're also the pancakes for desserts like crêpes Suzettes (page 172) or various gâteaux de crêpes.

* **flour:** 2 c AP

* **liquids and binders:** 1 c cold water, 1 c cold milk, 4 beaten eggs, and 4 Tbsp melted butter

* **leavening:** none

* **seasoning:** $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt and 1 to 5 tsp sugar (depending on what you'll make with it)

* **resting:** 1 hour, chilled

Use a blender with a capacity of at least a quart.

1. Add the ingredients to the blender in this order: milk, water, eggs, salt, sugar, flour, butter.

2. Blend for 1 minute, use a spatula to scrape blender jar, and blend for another 15 seconds.

Leave in blender jar and store in the refrigerator.

Making Crêpes

To make crêpes, you need a small non-stick pan, about 9 inches in diameter, and some oil to put in pan. I use a pump spray container that I fill with olive oil (they're sold in kitchen supply retailers), or you can use an aerosol oil spray, or just a $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon measurer.

You make one crêpe at a time. To get the dough mixture into the pan, you can just pour it from the blender jar (that's what I do), or you can use a ladle to measure the right amount and pour it into the pan. It's best to have a ladle that holds just the right amount (only about an ounce). You can determine this in advance by using water or oil. You want an amount that just forms a thin layer in your pan.

Heat the pan very hot and put some oil in it. The pan should just be hot enough that a little dough in it begins to brown immediately.

Use your most adroit hand (even if it is your gauche hand) to lift the pan from the stove and hold it at an angle, use your other hand to pour the right amount of dough into the pan to coat the surface evenly and thinly, as you move the pan to around to let the dough spread out.

Return the pan to the high heat of the stove. Leave on high heat until the bottom side is cooked, about 45 seconds. If your pan has a good non-stick surface, this will be at the point when the crêpe first separates from the pan. (You can jerk the pan and the crêpe will slide around.) For most pans, however, this release occurs several seconds after you should have flipped the crêpe, so it's best to run a fork around the edge of the crêpe, lifting it to check the doneness. This motion with the fork also causes the crêpe to separate from the pan.

When the crêpe has released from the pan, flip it and cook the other side, about 45 seconds on high. The two sides will be different in appearance. The side first cooked is the good side (the "public side", in Julia's words).

Turn out the crêpe onto a sheet pan, with the good side on the bottom.



Photo credits: María Gentle, ROPCB

Flat Breads

There is a tremendous variety of flat breads. There is variety in the flour, in the leavening, in their thickness, and in how they are used. The two bread doughs described in the previous section, for pizzas and for crêpes, illustrate two extremes, both using AP flour. The pizza dough makes a flat bread about a quarter of an inch thick, while the liquidy pâte à crêpes makes a very thin and flexible bread. The pizza dough can be baked and eaten as an ordinary bread or it can be topped with tomato sauce, cheese, and other toppings and cooked to become a pizza. The pâte à crêpes is always used to make crêpes, but the crêpes can be used in a variety of ways from savory to sweet dishes.

The flour used in making flat breads can be made from wheat, corn, rice, or other grains. Flat breads include American breakfast pancakes ("flapjacks") made from wheat or buckwheat flour, Chinese pancakes (as used with Peking duck) made from rice flour, and tortillas made from wheat or corn flour.

Some flat breads are leavened with yeast, some with baking powder and/or soda, and some use no leavening agent.

Some flat breads are filled, such as pupusas of Central America, arepas of South America, and cheese-filled naans of India.

Flat breads are very simple to make; there's very little kneading and no resting time required.

Flat breads are versatile; they can be given many different flavors, and can be used as appetizers or as sheets to spread with a tapenade. They can be used as an accompaniment to other products, including soups and main courses.

When you make a batch of basic dough, it is easy to make breads that taste very different depending on what herbs or spices you put in each ball of dough.

The surface proteins in a bread can undergo the high-temperature Maillard reaction, and this adds a nice extra flavor to flat breads.

Simple Flat Bread

I call this “simple flat bread” because it is, and because I don’t know what else to call it. With a tapenade, this flat bread makes a “quick bite” appetizer as described on page 38.

The yogurt gives the bread a softness. Various herbs can be incorporated.

The Dough

- * **flour:** 2 c AP or bread flour, plus bench flour
- * **liquids and binders:** 1 c Greek yogurt and 1 Tbsp olive oil
- * **leavening:** 2 tsp baking powder and 1 tsp baking soda
- * **seasoning:** 1 tsp salt
 - chopped fresh rosemary, oregano, red pepper flakes, and/or other herbs
- * **resting:** none

1. Mix the dry ingredients, then add yogurt and oil.
2. Knead until smooth and divide into four or five pieces.
3. Add herbs as desired to one piece at a time and roll out into a sheet as thin as possible, about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch.
4. Fry in a lightly oiled skillet; 2 minutes on a side until fully cooked, probably twice per side.

Focaccio

Focaccio is a lighter flat bread; it is also somewhat less “flat”.

The Dough

- * **flour:** $3\frac{1}{2}$ c AP

- * **liquids and binders:** $1\frac{1}{3}$ c water and $1\frac{1}{4}$ c olive oil
- * **leavening:** $2\frac{1}{4}$ tsp yeast
- * **seasoning:** 2 tsp salt and 2 tsp sugar
 - chopped fresh rosemary, oregano, red pepper flakes, and/or other herbs, if desired
- * **resting:** 1+ hour, warm

It's best to "proof" the yeast by mixing it with about half the water first, although you don't have to.

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Dump all ingredients except the chopped herbs, into a large bowl and stir them around with a fork.
3. After the dough has come together, dump it on a board or countertop with some bench flour. Knead the dough for 4 or 5 minutes.
4. Put the dough in a large bowl, cover with a damp cloth, then set in a warm place for about an hour and a half. The dough should approximately double in size.
5. Add the herbs to the risen dough, and knead for 3 or 4 minutes.
- 6a. Go back to step 4. and repeat, if you feel like it. (I usually don't.)
- 6b. Form the dough into a sheet about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, lay on baking sheet and bake 15 minutes at 450°.

Naan

There are many interesting breads made in India, and like the country, they abound in variety. Certain Indian breads, the "restaurant" ones, are cooked in a tandoor, which is a clay oven, actually a pit, and most homes do not have a tandoor. Most Indian breads are flat breads and are cooked in a pan on the stove.

Naan (or “nan” – the Indian languages are not written with Latin characters) is the most common Indian restaurant bread in the West, and it frequently is embellished with garlic, sunflower seeds, or various other seeds and spices.

For homemade naan, it is better to fry it than to cook it in the oven.

The Dough

* **flour:** $2\frac{1}{4}$ c bread flour

* **liquids and binders:** $\frac{1}{2}$ c water, $\frac{1}{2}$ c yogurt (plain), and 1 Tbsp vegetable oil

* **leavening:** $2\frac{1}{4}$ tsp yeast

* **seasoning:** $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt and 1 tsp sugar
chopped onions and minced garlic if desired (not “traditional”)

* **resting:** 1+ hour, warm

4 Tbsp melted butter for brushing

1. Mix yeast with sugar and warm water, stir well, and let stand for 10 minutes.

2. Spread flour on a working surface and make a well in the middle. Add the yeast mixture, yogurt, oil, and salt. Stir everything around with a fork.

3. After the dough has come together, knead the dough for 7 or 10 minutes, until it is smooth.

4. Put the dough in a large bowl, cover with a damp cloth, then set in a warm place for about an hour. The dough should approximately double in size.

5. Knead the risen dough for 3 or 4 minutes, and if desired, knead in onions and garlic.

6. Roll out into a sheet as thin as possible, about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Separate it into 4 to 8 portions. Shape them as desired. (Round is the simplest shape.)

7. Fry in a hot skillet; 2 minutes on a side until fully cooked, probably twice per side. A cast iron skillet or flattop griddle is best for this.

8. Remove bread and brush both sides with melted butter while still warm.

Chapati or Roti

Indian “village breads” are not cooked in a tandoor, and most do not use leavening agents.

Chapati, which is very simple to make, is the bread of most Indian households, whether in the villages or cities. This bread is so common that “roti”, which generically means “bread”, means “chapati”.

The Dough

- * **flour:** 2 c wheat flour and 1 c AP
 - * **liquids and binders:** 1 c water, warm
 - * **leavening:** none
 - * **seasoning:** $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
 - other herbs and spices if desired (not “traditional”)
 - * **resting:** none
- 4 Tbsp melted butter for brushing

Chapati is a flat bread, and the preparation is similar to that of the simple flat bread described on page [199](#). The skillet is a little hotter for chapati than for the other flat bread. A cast iron skillet or flattop griddle is best for this.

1. Mix salt and flour; add water and stir together in a bowl..
2. Knead until smooth and divide into four or five pieces.
3. Add herbs, if desired, to one piece at a time and roll out into a sheet as thin as possible, about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch.
4. Fry in a hot skillet; 2 minutes on a side until fully cooked, probably twice per side.
5. Remove bread and brush both sides with melted butter while still warm.

Breads

Corn Bread

Corn bread is a particularly good accompaniment for certain dishes; especially bean soups and stews.

I mix corn meal and AP flour in an approximate 2 to 1 ratio, but you can use all corn meal for a more old-fashioned flavor. Corn bread made only from corn meal tends to be crumbly, and the AP flour gives the product more structural integrity.

The amounts given for the dough are for a bread sticks pan that makes 7 sticks. My is cast iron, made by Lodge. The amounts can be increased proportionately. The cooking time needs to be increased if the amounts are increased slightly (not proportionately!).

The Dough

- * **flour:** $\frac{1}{2}$ c cornmeal and $\frac{1}{4}$ c AP
- * **liquids and binders:** $\frac{2}{3}$ c milk (or buttermilk) and 1 egg, beaten
- * **leavening:** 2 tsp baking powder
- * **seasoning:** 2 tsp sugar, $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cayenne powder
- * **resting:** none

You can also add corn kernels and/or finely diced chile peppers to your taste. Too many additions will make the corn bread more crumbly.

1. Preheat oven to 450°, with pan in the oven.
2. Mix ingredients in large bowl.
3. Spray pan with oil and pour in the mixture.
4. Bake 20 minutes.

Spoon Bread; Polenta

Spoon bread is a corn bread with no gluten; that is, it is a very soft corn bread that can be eaten as a side with a spoon.

As with corn bread, you can also add corn kernels and/or finely diced chile peppers. These additions make the bread more crumbly, but that's OK with spoon bread.

You can also add shredded cheese, either to the dough before cooking, or afterwards by sprinkling it on top of the bread.

The Dough

- * **flour:** 1 c cornmeal
- * **liquids and binders:** 3 c half&half and 3 egg yolks
- * **leavening:** 3 egg whites (in all, 3 eggs, separated)
- * **seasoning:** 1 tsp salt
- * **resting:** none

Mix all ingredients in a large bowl, pour into a shallow baking pan, and bake at 400° for 25 minutes. Spoon bread can be served on the plate as a side dish.

The recipe given here makes a slightly wet product. More liquid, especially just water, yields a product with less structural integrity. It is polenta, and as with spoon bread polenta is highly versatile. More structural integrity can be given to polenta by letting it cool and reheating it, even by frying.

Continuing in this vein of “this is almost like that”, grits are essentially the same as polenta with a very fundamental difference. The cornmeal used in grits has been nixtamalized; that is, the dried corn kernels have been treated with a lye solution. Supposedly this makes the corn more digestible and maybe better tasting. I think there's very little difference. The practice of nixtamalization goes back to several different American Indian groups before the arrival of the Europeans.

Grits can be prepared just like polenta, and they offer all of the possible variations.

Buttermilk Biscuits

Cake flour is the secret to light, fluffy biscuits. It's low in gluten. In the old days, regular flour made in the South was lower in gluten than flour from the North. That's why Southern biscuits were better.

The Dough

- * **flour:** 2 c cake
- * **liquids and binders:** $\frac{3}{4}$ c buttermilk and $\frac{1}{2}$ c shortening
- * **leavening:** 2 tsp baking powder and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda
- * **seasoning:** $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- * **resting:** none

1. Preheat oven to 425°.
2. Mix dry ingredients and shortening into a meal.
3. Add buttermilk, stir until it forms a dough and roll into a rectangle $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick.
4. Cut the dough into squares and spread onto a lightly greased baking sheet.
5. Brush tops with milk and bake for 12 to 15 minutes.

Soda Bread

I observe many holidays, and I celebrate them by eating.

For most of the holidays I observe, there are certain foods that I associate with the holiday. I don't know whether these are "authentic" and/or "traditional" foods of the culture most closely connected with the holiday (and I don't care). I usually prepare these foods on or near the holiday.

For St. Patrick's Day (March 17) I usually think of the Irish people, and I think of soda bread as a bread of the Irish.

For this bread, I use a "loaf pan" – that's a rectangular pan about 9 inches long, 5 inches wide, and 3 inches deep.

The Dough

* **flour:** 1 c AP and $\frac{2}{3}$ c cake flour

* **liquids and binders:** $\frac{2}{3}$ c buttermilk, 4 Tbsp butter, and 1 egg, beaten

* **leavening:** 1 tsp baking powder and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda

* **seasoning:** $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt and 2 Tbsp sugar
chopped raisins and caraway seeds, as desired

* **resting:** none

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. Mix dry ingredients; mix wet ingredients; fold dry and wet together in a large bowl.
3. Grease loaf pan (softened butter, or cooking spray) and fill with dough.
4. Cut an \times or some cross hatches on the top of the dough. (A knife does not make a nice clean cut on the dough, but don't worry: this really doesn't do anything.)
5. Bake at 350° for 50 minutes.

Baguette

The Dough

- * **flour:** 2 c bread flour
- * **liquids and binders:** 2 c water and 3 Tbsp vegetable oil
- * **leavening:** $2\frac{1}{4}$ tsp yeast
- * **seasoning:** $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt and 1 Tbsp sugar
- * **resting:** 3 hours, warm

Popovers

Popovers are easy to make and they are impressive when served.

To make them, you need a special popover or cupcake form, or a muffin pan with deep cups. I have trays each of which consists of 6 popover cups arranged in a 2 by 3 rectangle and connected by a wire frame. Each cup holds about 4 oz. These are available at kitchen supply retailers.

The amounts listed below are sufficient for 6 popover cups.

The Dough

- * **flour:** 1 c AP
- * **liquids and binders:** $1\frac{1}{4}$ c milk, 2 eggs, beaten, and 1 Tbsp butter
- * **leavening:** none
- * **seasoning:** $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt and grated cheese for dusting
- * **resting:** none

The batter will be liquidy and can be poured into the cups.

1. Preheat oven to 450°. Set racks with plenty of room between them because the popovers will rise.
2. Mix dry ingredients; mix wet ingredients; fold dry and wet together in a large bowl.
3. Grease popover cups (softened butter, or cooking spray) and fill to within $\frac{5}{8}$ inch of tops.
4. Bake at 450° for 15 minutes.
5. Reduce heat and bake at 350° for 25 minutes. Do not open oven or disturb the popovers while they are baking.



Instead of popovers in individual cups, this same dough can be poured into one large dish. In this form, it is usually called Yorkshire pudding. Yorkshire pudding is a traditional accompaniment for roast beef, especially prime rib. Yorkshire pudding also usually includes some of the beef drippings, either directly in the batter or in the bottom of the dish it's cooked in.

Variation: Savory Spiced Popovers

Popovers can be enhanced by adding various spices to the batter.

A good variation is made by adding 1½ tsp ground cumin, 1 tsp paprika (smoked if desired), and ½ tsp black pepper to the batter before pouring into the popover cups.

Cook in the same way as regular popovers.

Variation: Bacon and Cheese Popovers

A more substantial variation is made by blending $\frac{1}{4}$ c bacon bits (bacon cut into small pieces and crisply-cooked) and $\frac{1}{2}$ c finely shredded cheese (of your choice) into the batter before pouring into the popover cups.

For this preparation, reduce the amount of salt listed in the ingredients.

Popovers with bacon and cheese additives will not rise as much as ones without non-granular additives.

Cook in the same way as regular popovers.

Variation: Sweet Cocoa Popovers

Sweet cocoa popovers make a nice dessert of accompaniment to other desserts.

To make sweet cocoa popovers, blend $\frac{1}{4}$ c unsweetened cocoa powder and 3 Tbsp sugar into the batter before pouring into the popover cups.

Cook in the same way as regular popovers.

Crackers

Crackers make a nice accompaniment to other snacks, salads, or soups.

Homemade crackers are easy to make and they can be made with infinite variety.

Ingredients

- 3 c AP flour, or a mix of AP and whole grain flours
- 1 c water
- 4 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

2 tsp sugar

2 tsp salt

3 tsp herbs: chopped rosemary, oregano, basil, etc.

- 1.** In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, and salt (not herbs).
- 2.** Add the oil and water to the mixture and stir until a soft, sticky dough is formed. If necessary, add more water.
- 3.** Divide the dough into two halves and set one half aside. Sprinkle work surface with flour and set the other half on top.
- 4.** Roll the dough into a rectangle roughly $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick or thinner if you can.
- 5.** Brush the surface of the dough very lightly with water and sprinkle herbs evenly over the surface of the dough.
- 6.** Using a pizza cutter or a sharp knife, cut the dough into individual crackers of whatever shape desired.
- 7.** Transfer the crackers to a baking sheet using a metal dough scraper or spatula. Prick each cracker with a fork several times.
- 8.** Bake the crackers at 450° for 12 to 15 minutes, until the edges are brown.
- 9.** Transfer the baked crackers to a wire rack to cool completely.

The crackers will crisp further as they cool.

Store the crackers in an airtight container for 3 to 5 days.

If they become old and less-than-crispy, put them on a baking sheet in a 350° oven for a few minutes.

Chocolate Chip Cookies

Chocolate chip cookies are a good quick sweet snack. The walnuts in this recipe can be omitted.

Ingredients

3 c AP flour
1 tsp baking powder and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
1 c butter, softened
1 c sugar
1 c brown sugar
1 Tbsp vanilla extract
2 eggs, beaten
2 c semisweet chocolate chips
1 c English walnuts, chopped

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350°.
- 2.** In a small bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
- 3.** In a small bowl, cream together the butter, white sugar, brown sugar, and vanilla until smooth.
- 3.** Beat in the eggs one at a time.
- 4.** Stir in flour mixture, chocolate chips, and nuts.
- 5.** Drop by large spoonfuls onto ungreased sheet pan.
- 6.** Bake for about 12 minutes at 350°, or until edges are nicely browned.

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