

Witchcraft of Cooking

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Preface

This book stands as a deeply personal compilation of culinary creations, meticulously curated by the authors, showcasing techniques that have captivated our culinary senses. Within these pages, you will embark on a gastronomic journey spanning the globe, with dishes drawing inspiration from the culinary traditions of Germany, Italy, France, Thailand, Pakistan, and beyond. Rather than adhering to a particular thematic constraint, our focus remains steadfastly fixed upon the art of preparation itself. It is imperative to underscore that our recipes are designed to be intuitive, minimizing the need for precise measurements. We endeavor to underscore the art of culinary intuition, where the timing of each cooking step is guided by the senses: taste, aroma, and keen observation of utensil transformations. Our ultimate aspiration is to unveil these subtle markers, fostering a profound comprehension of ingredient fusion and culinary technique in our cherished readers.

Our sources are diverse and eclectic, drawn from the rich tapestry of oral traditions encountered during our travels, as well as the cherished wisdom of home cooks who have entrusted their treasured recipes to us verbally. Additionally, we have drawn inspiration from selected cooking tutorials by Michelin-starred chefs available on YouTube. Importantly, every dish presented herein has undergone meticulous preparation and refinement by the authors, resulting in techniques and ingredient adaptations that may diverge from traditional recipes. This compendium remains a dynamic work-in-progress, with new recipes continuously woven into its fabric. For a comprehensive list of our sources, we have thoughtfully compiled a bibliography at the conclusion of this volume.

It is worth noting that the majority of the dishes showcased herein possess the innate flexibility to be seamlessly transformed into vegetarian or vegan alternatives. However, we deliberately abstain from differentiating these variations within the text, as our primary aim is to illuminate cooking techniques and introduce readers to the cherished culinary traditions of various cultures. In doing so, we forgo the inclusion of specific labels. We trust that you, esteemed reader, will adapt our recipes to align with your dietary preferences or thoughtfully modify them to accommodate allergies. Your understanding in this regard is deeply appreciated. Furthermore, we choose to steer clear of overly precise measurements, as these dishes possess a remarkable tolerance for minor quantity adjust-

ments without compromising taste. In instances where precision is paramount, we will explicitly denote precise measurements and cooking durations. We warmly encourage you, dear reader, to embrace culinary experimentation and craft your unique variations of our dishes, adjusting them to your heart's content.

Should you wish to contribute, offer feedback, provide suggestions, or share critiques pertaining to our recipes, please do not hesitate to contact us at `melodia.luciano@proton.me`. Your engagement is valued and contributes to the ongoing evolution of this culinary tapestry.

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Chapter 1

Sauces

“A sauce adds something, really two things: a taste as well as the opportunity to think about how the thing was made. This is the same kind of pleasure we derive when we look at a painting; the eye is pleased, while the mind explores the esthetic windings of a technique and a willed structure.”

— Raymond Sokolov

Sauces have played a pivotal role in European culinary history, enhancing the flavors of dishes and reflecting the diverse cultures and regions of the continent. This concise overview traces the evolution of sauces in Europe, highlighting key moments and influences.

Ancient Greece and Rome: The origins of Euro-

pean sauces can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome. Both civilizations used sauces to enhance their foods. The Greeks, for example, created a variety of sauces using ingredients like olive oil, vinegar, and herbs. The Romans further developed this tradition, with cookbooks like "Apicius" detailing numerous sauce recipes, including garum, a fermented fish sauce.

Medieval Europe: During the Middle Ages, sauces underwent significant changes. The use of spices from the East, such as black pepper, cinnamon, and cloves, became increasingly popular in European cuisine. Sauces were used to mask the flavors of preserved foods and add complexity to dishes. One notable sauce from this period was "cameline sauce", made with cinnamon, ginger, and cloves, which graced many tables.

Renaissance and the Age of Exploration: The Renaissance marked a period of culinary refinement in Europe. Exploration and trade brought new ingredients, like tomatoes and chili peppers, to the continent. The arrival of tomatoes in the 16th century led to the creation of tomato-based sauces, which eventually became a cornerstone of Italian cuisine.

17th and 18th Centuries: The French played a pivotal role in shaping European sauce culture during the 17th and 18th centuries. Chef François Louis Franquet is credited with popularizing the "mother sauces" – bechamel, velouté, espagnole, and tomato – as foundational elements of French cuisine. These sauces served as

the base for numerous derivative sauces, a concept still central to classical French cooking today.

19th Century: The 19th century witnessed the emergence of *nouvelle cuisine* in France, marked by a shift towards lighter, more refined sauces. Chef Auguste Escoffier played a key role in codifying many classic French sauces, such as *hollandaise* and *béarnaise*. Additionally, mustard and mayonnaise became staples in European kitchens, offering versatility in flavor enhancement.

20th Century: The 20th century saw a fusion of culinary influences from around the world. The British popularized Worcestershire sauce, a complex condiment of Indian origin. Russian dressing, a creamy sauce, was born in the United States. Ketchup, derived from Chinese fermented sauces, gained global popularity.

Contemporary Era: In the 21st century, European sauces continue to evolve, with an emphasis on innovation and sustainability. Traditional sauces are reimaged with modern twists, and health-conscious consumers seek lighter alternatives. Additionally, European chefs draw inspiration from global cuisines, creating fusion sauces that reflect multicultural influences.

Regional Diversity: Europe boasts a rich tapestry of regional sauces. Italy's *pesto*, France's *bordelaise*, Spain's *romesco*, and Germany's *schnitzel* sauce are just a few examples of how sauces reflect the unique flavors and ingredients of specific areas.

In conclusion, sauces have evolved significantly through-

out European culinary history. From their humble origins in ancient Greece and Rome to the refinement of French classical sauces, sauces have always played a vital role in enhancing the flavors of European cuisine. Today, they continue to adapt and thrive, reflecting both tradition and innovation in the diverse kitchens of Europe.

1.1 Mayonnaise

Within these pages, we present to you the timeless recipe for mayonnaise, meticulously refined to elevate the fundamental flavors of egg, mustard, and oil. Here, tradition marries innovation as we introduce the nuanced companionship of citric acid and the subtle bitterness of green tea. To embark on this culinary journey, equip yourself with a capacious bowl and a trusty whisk or, alternatively, consider employing a hand blender for added efficiency. In crafting this delectable mayonnaise, we delve into the realm of culinary alchemy, where the harmonious interplay of ingredients yields a symphony of taste. The intrinsic creaminess of egg, the zesty piquancy of mustard, and the unctuous richness of oil converge to form the backbone of this beloved condiment. As we venture further, we introduce citric acid, lending a bright, citrusy flourish to the mayonnaise's profile. This modest addition elevates the ensemble to new heights, awakening the palate with its invigorating acidity. Furthermore,

we pay homage to the art of subtlety by incorporating bitter nuances derived from green tea. This infusion bestows an intriguing depth to the mayonnaise, a whisper of complexity that dances on the taste buds, creating a captivating contrast to the creamy base.

In terms of culinary implements, a generously sized bowl and a steadfast whisk are your traditional allies in this endeavor. Alternatively, for those inclined toward modern conveniences, a hand blender may be employed to expedite the process. As you embark on this culinary odyssey, rest assured that you are about to embark on a journey that marries tradition and innovation, resulting in a mayonnaise that is a veritable symphony of flavors, where every element plays a harmonious role in the culinary overture.

This recipe makes 2 *servings*. It takes about 10 *minutes* and has an *easy* level of difficulty.

Items

- ❶ A pinch of green tea powder.
- ❷ 1 teaspoon of dijon mustard.
- ❸ 1 teaspoon of medium mustard.
- ❹ 1 egg.
- ❺ 100 ml sunflower oil.
- ❻ Lemon juice or a small lemon.
- ❼ Salt and pepper.

Instruction In the pursuit of crafting the perfect mayonnaise, the journey begins by placing a single egg into our bowl. To this, we add the zestful juice of half a small lemon, alongside the robust notes of Dijon mustard and the medium heat of another mustard variant. As a subtle yet enchanting twist, a mere pinch of finely ground green tea powder, seasoned judiciously with salt and pepper, is gently integrated into the mix. With all elements thoughtfully assembled, we initiate the delicate choreography by commencing the whisking process, all the while introducing a slow drizzle of sunflower oil. Alternatively, the choice of rapeseed oil may be considered, provided it maintains a modest and unobtrusive flavor profile. If, in pursuit of expediency, a handheld immersion blender is enlisted, it should be lowered gently over the egg yolk, akin to a protective canopy, before being set to the highest speed. These meticulous actions persist until the amalgamation of ingredients transforms into a cohesive, velvety paste—an unequivocal testament to the completion of our exquisite mayonnaise.

This mayonnaise, while already a masterpiece in its own right, beckons culinary exploration and personalization. It is a versatile canvas upon which flavor nuances may be deftly painted. For those inclined toward the savory, a clove of garlic imparts a hearty, robust direction, while the inclusion of a chili pepper lends a fiery, piquant note. The addition of a trace of Hoisin sauce or Sriracha sauce, on the other hand, introduces an umami richness

or a gentle spiciness, respectively, providing the discerning palate with a spectrum of tantalizing possibilities.

1.2 Raspberry Chutney

The raspberry chutney serves as a versatile cornerstone for various sauces and can effortlessly transform into a delectable burger condiment when harmoniously blended with mayonnaise (as per reference 1.1). Yet, its culinary prowess extends further, as it graciously lends itself to the role of a standalone accompaniment, ideally paired with rich, dark meat dishes such as those featuring succulent cuts of red meat or venison.

Intriguingly, this recipe holds the capacity for diverse adaptations. One may elect to replace raspberries with an array of alternatives, including blackberries, blueberries, gooseberries, strawberries, or black cherries, each contributing its unique character to the symphony of flavors. For those seeking a seasonal twist, a wintertime rendition incorporating oranges or a summery variation featuring the tangy essence of bitter oranges presents itself as an enticing option, expanding the culinary horizons and inviting the palate on a delightful journey of exploration.

This recipe makes 2 *servings*. It takes about 15 *minutes* and has an *easy* level of difficulty.

Items

- ❶ 300 g of raspberries.
- ❷ 1 onion.

- ❸ 1 tablespoon of brown sugar.
- ❹ 1 tablespoon of rice vinegar.
- ❺ 1 chilli.
- ❻ 2 tablespoons of olive oil.
- ❼ 3 tablespoons of soy sauce.
- ❽ Salt, pepper and cinnamon.

Instruction Commence by selecting a medium-sized pot and placing it over a medium flame. Pour the olive oil into the pot, allowing it to gradually warm within its confines. While the olive oil gently heats, shift your focus to the chili pepper. Aim for meticulous precision as you finely mince it, then incorporate it into the warming oil. A patient interval of five to seven minutes is imperative during this phase, affording the oil ample time to absorb the fiery essence of the chili. It's worth noting that the degree of spiciness can be customized to your personal preferences; nevertheless, Thai chilies are highly recommended for achieving the desired fiery crescendo in the chutney.

Following this, add the finely chopped onions to the pot, allowing them to sauté gently until they reach a state of translucent translucence. Once this transformation is accomplished, introduce the brown sugar to the pan. Gradually increase the heat, fostering the gradual caramelization of the sugar. Await the juncture when the onions are enveloped in a delicate caramel layer, their

complexion evolving into a sumptuous shade of golden brown. Now, it is time to elegantly integrate the raspberries into this flavorful amalgamation. Whether opting for fresh or frozen raspberries, both are suitable choices. However, please bear in mind that the cooking duration may experience a slight variance in the case of frozen berries due to their added water content. Concurrently, introduce the rice vinegar and soy sauce to the ensemble. Permit the chutney to gently simmer over a medium flame.

As a final act of culinary alchemy, pour a glass of tap water into the pot, then reduce the heat. With intermittent stirring, the broth should steadily condense, yielding a luxuriously thick and creamy texture. In the closing moments, delicately season the chutney with a dash of cinnamon, judiciously applied salt, and a pinch of pepper. Exercise restraint with the salt, for the soy sauce already contributes a substantial sodium quotient to the concoction.

Chapter 2

Breads

*“How can a nation be called great if its bread
tastes like kleenex?”*

— Julia Child

2.1 Rustic Bread

Experience the magic of our Homemade Wood-Fired Rustic Bread. Its golden-brown, smoky crust and airy, herb-infused interior create a culinary masterpiece. This versatile bread elevates any meal, from appetizers with olive oil and balsamic vinegar to hearty soups and stews. Become a master baker at home and savor tradition's warmth, one slice at a time.

This recipe makes *4 servings*. It takes about *4 hours* and has an *intermediate* level of difficulty.

Items

- For the bread:
 - ❶ 4 cups all-purpose flour.
 - ❷ $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt.
 - ❸ $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons active dry yeast
 - ❹ 2 cups lukewarm water (around 43°C).
- For the seasoning:
 - ❶ 2 tablespoons olive oil.
 - ❷ 1 tablespoon dried rosemary.
 - ❸ 1 tablespoon dried thyme.
 - ❹ 1 teaspoon garlic powder.
 - ❺ $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon smoked paprika.
 - ❻ $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper.
 - ❼ $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt flakes.

Instruction

1. **Activate the yeast:** In a small bowl, combine the lukewarm water and yeast. Let it sit for about 5-10 minutes until it becomes frothy. This indicates that the yeast is active and ready to use.
2. **Mix the dry ingredients:** In a large mixing bowl, combine the all-purpose flour and salt. Create a well in the center of the flour mixture.
3. **Combine the wet and dry ingredients:** Pour the activated yeast mixture into the well you created in the flour. Stir until a shaggy dough forms.
4. **Knead the dough:** Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and knead it for about 10 minutes until it becomes smooth and elastic. You can add a little more flour if the dough is too sticky.
5. **First rise:** Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover it with a clean kitchen towel or plastic wrap, and let it rise in a warm, draft-free place for about 1-2 hours, or until it has doubled in size.
6. **Preheat the oven:** If you have a pizza stone or baking stone, place it in your oven and preheat it to 230°C. If you don't have a stone, you can use a cast-iron skillet or a heavy baking sheet.
7. **Shape the dough:** Punch down the risen dough and shape it into a round or oval loaf. Place it on a piece of parchment paper.
8. **Season the bread:** In a small bowl, mix together

the olive oil, dried rosemary, dried thyme, garlic powder, smoked paprika, and black pepper. Brush this mixture generously over the surface of the bread. Sprinkle sea salt flakes on top.

9. **Second rise:** Cover the bread with a kitchen towel and let it rise for an additional 30 minutes while your oven continues to preheat.
10. **Bake:** Carefully transfer the bread (along with the parchment paper) onto the preheated stone or skillet in the oven. Bake for 30-35 minutes or until the bread is golden brown and sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom.
11. **Cool:** Allow the bread to cool on a wire rack for at least 30 minutes before slicing. This will help the interior set properly.

Enjoy your homemade rustic bread with the flavors of a wood-fired oven! It's perfect for serving with olive oil and balsamic vinegar or as a side with soups and stews.

Chapter 3

Pasta

“Everything you see I owe to Spaghetti.”

— Sophia Loren

3.1 Spaghetti Carbonara

Few dishes spark as much controversy as Spaghetti Carbonara. Contrary to prevailing misconceptions, cream is not a constituent element of this dish; in fact, its inclusion is often met with disapproval. Carbonara can be executed with exquisite finesse using alternative pasta varieties, ideally Tagliatelle or Ziti. Nevertheless, we shall adhere to the traditional and most widely recognized version. The true challenge inherent in this culinary masterpiece lies in the intricacies of its preparation.

This recipe makes *2 servings*. It takes about *20 minutes* and has an *intermediate* level of difficulty.

Items

- ❶ 250g of Spaghetti.
- ❷ 60g of Pecorino Romano or Pecorino Sardo.
- ❸ 60g Guanciale or Pancetta.
- ❹ 3 eggs.
- ❺ Salt and black pepper.

Instruction As evidenced, this recipe calls for minimal ingredients. To commence, fill a generously sized pot approximately two-thirds full with water. A culinary dictum suggests that for every 100 grams of pasta, one liter of water is requisite. Proceed to season the water with three tablespoons of table salt, then set it to boil.

While the water steadily reaches its boiling point, turn your attention to crafting the sauce. Begin by meticulously grating the Pecorino cheese into the finest granules possible using a square grater. At this juncture, you have the option to blend 30 grams of Pecorino with 30 grams of Parmesan, or adjust the ratio to your personal preference. It is worth noting, however, that Pecorino carries a notably saltier profile, imparting a spicier nuance to the dish. To form the base for our sauce, place the finely grated cheese into a bowl.

Now, introduce the three raw eggs into the mix. Alternatively, you may opt to use only the yolks at this stage, resulting in a distinct hue and a more robust flavor. By discarding the egg whites, you increase the relative fat content, providing a bolder platform for the Guanciale and Pecorino. Nevertheless, the original recipe adheres to the use of all ingredients. Proceed to vigorously whisk the cheese and eggs together until they amalgamate into a thick, moderately uniform mixture. At this point, generously add freshly ground black pepper to the concoction. The quantity of pepper remains at your discretion, and do not hesitate to be liberal with it. A bountiful peppery presence is imperative. With this, the foundation for our creamy sauce is now complete.

At this point, it's time to introduce your chosen pasta – whether spaghetti, ziti, tagliatelle, or another delightful variety – into the simmering pot. Allow the pasta to cook for the duration specified on the package or, for an

authentic “al dente” texture, reduce the cooking time by one minute. Pasta with a broad surface area is particularly well-suited for this dish.

While the pasta gracefully undergoes its transformation, proceed by slicing the Guanciale into slender, bite-sized strips. Simultaneously, heat a skillet over medium heat, gently introducing more freshly grated pepper to the pan—no additional fats required. Roast the pepper until its aromatic vapors tantalizingly titillate the senses, a sign that it’s ready. Now, add the Guanciale to the pan and allow it to sizzle and crisp to perfection. During this process, a generous amount of flavorful fat will be released from the pork cheeks—this very fat serves as the vessel of taste for our dish and should be cherished. Feel free to taste for doneness, ensuring the Guanciale reaches that ideal crispy texture. Once achieved, turn off the heat entirely.

At this juncture, it’s time to marry the pasta and the Guanciale. Retrieve a ladleful of pasta water and pour it into the pan, savoring the harmonious release of pepper and roasted flavors from the rendered fat. Your pasta should now be cooked to perfection. Gently lift it from the pot and deposit it into the pan, nestling it alongside the Guanciale and pepper. However, it’s imperative to preserve the pasta water—it plays a crucial role in the final steps.

Pay close attention now, for this is where culinary artistry takes center stage. As the pasta intertwines with

the Guanciale and pepper, it will emit steam, slowly losing its heat. The moment you discern that steam has become a mere whisper or has dissipated entirely, seize a quarter ladle of the reserved pasta water and incorporate it into the cheese mixture. This addition will yield a slightly more fluid cream. This luscious cream is then poured over the warm pasta, and with determination, you must vigorously amalgamate the components until they meld into a harmonious, creamy masterpiece.

3.2 Al'Amatriciana

Pasta all'Amatriciana is a classic Italian dish that originates from the town of Amatrice in the Lazio region. This flavorful and satisfying pasta dish is known for its simple yet robust combination of ingredients. The star of the show is the rich tomato sauce, infused with the smoky and salty flavors of guanciale or pancetta. Tossed with al dente pasta and finished with a generous sprinkle of grated Parmesan or Pecorino cheese, Pasta all'Amatriciana is a true crowd-pleaser. Whether you're looking for a quick weeknight dinner or a dish to impress your guests, this traditional Italian recipe is sure to satisfy your cravings for a hearty and delicious meal.

This recipe makes *2 servings*. It takes about *15 minutes* and has an *easy* level of difficulty.

Items

- ❶ 250g pasta.
- ❷ 150g Guanciale or optional Pancetta.
- ❸ 2 cans of date tomatoes.
- ❹ 50g of Pecorino Romano or optional Pecorino Sardo.
- ❺ Salt and pepper.

Chapter 4

Main Courses

“Cooking requires confident guesswork and improvisation – experimentation and substitution, dealing with failure and uncertainty in a creative way.”

— Paul Theroux

4.1 Coconut Cashew Lentil Stew

In the heart of this culinary symphony, where flavors dance like tropical breezes and fragrances weave a tapestry of exotic allure, lies the enchanting Coconut Cashew Lentil Stew. Let your senses be serenaded by this poetry of taste, where the humble lentil transcends to celestial heights.

This recipe makes *2 servings*. It takes about *35 minutes* and has an *easy* level of difficulty.

Items

- ❶ 1 cup dried red lentils, rinsed and drained.
- ❷ 2 cups vegetable broth.
- ❸ 1 can (14 oz) coconut milk.
- ❹ 1 finely chopped onion and 3 minced garlic cloves.
- ❺ 1 diced red bell and 1 yellow bell pepper.
- ❻ 1 cup raw cashews.
- ❼ 1 peeled and cubed sweet potato.
- ❽ 1 diced zucchini.
- ❾ 1 cup diced tomatoes (canned or fresh).
- ❿ 2 tbsp aromatic curry powder, 1 tsp ground turmeric, salt, and pepper, fresh cilantro and lime wedges for garnish.

Instruction

1. Begin your culinary voyage by heating a drizzle of olive oil in a grand pot over a medium fire. As the

oil whispers and shimmers, add the finely chopped onion and the minced garlic. Sauté them until they weave a fragrant sonnet, their colors melding into translucency.

2. Now, sprinkle in the curry powder and ground turmeric. Let these aromatic spices bloom like tropical blossoms, filling the air with their enticing charm.
3. Introduce the sweet potato, red and yellow bell peppers, and the delicate lentils to this aromatic dance. Stir them in, letting the pot burst with colors and textures.
4. Pour in the diced tomatoes, cashews, and the elixir of vegetable broth. Let them embrace the simmering pot in a tantalizing waltz. Allow the fragrant symphony to serenade your senses for about 20 minutes, until the lentils and sweet potatoes are tender and infused with flavors.
5. Now, add the star of the show, the luscious coconut milk, and the verdant zucchini. Let them twirl in a graceful duet for another 10-15 minutes, until the stew becomes creamy and dreamy.
6. Season your Coconut Cashew Lentil Stew with a pinch of salt and a sprinkle of pepper, adjusting to your taste, and allow the flavors to harmonize.
7. Serve your masterpiece hot, garnished with fresh cilantro leaves, and present lime wedges for a zesty flourish. Each spoonful is a symphony of tropical splendor, where creamy coconut and crunchy

cashews meet in poetic unity.

Embrace this Coconut Cashew Lentil Stew as a journey to paradise, a poetic celebration of flavors that dance upon your palate, where every bite is a verse in the epic tale of culinary delight. Savor it with gratitude, for it is a masterpiece born from the heart of the tropics and the artistry of your kitchen.

4.2 Caribbean Lentil Stew

Picture yourself on a sun-drenched Caribbean beach, surrounded by swaying palm trees and the rhythmic sounds of steel drums. Now, bring that vibrant island experience to your dining table with our Caribbean Lentil Stew recipe. This hearty, flavorful dish is a tropical escape for your taste buds.

This recipe makes *2 servings*. It takes about *30 minutes* and has an *easy* level of difficulty.

Items

- ❶ 1 cup of dried green or brown lentils, rinsed and drained.
- ❷ 2 cups of vegetable broth.
- ❸ 1 can (14 oz) of coconut milk.
- ❹ 1 onion, finely chopped, 2 cloves of garlic, minced.
- ❺ 1 red bell pepper, 1 yellow bell pepper, 1 jalapeño pepper, diced.
- ❻ 1 sweet potato, peeled and cubed.
- ❼ 1 zucchini, diced.
- ❽ 1 cup of diced tomatoes (canned or fresh).
- ❾ 2 tbsps of Caribbean jerk seasoning, 1 teaspoon of ground cumin, 1 teaspoon of ground coriander, salt and pepper, fresh cilantro for garnish lime wedges for a zesty finish.

Instruction

1. In a large pot, heat some olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and minced garlic, sautéing until fragrant and translucent.
2. Stir in the Caribbean jerk seasoning, ground cumin, and ground coriander. Let the spices bloom for a minute, filling your kitchen with their aromatic essence.
3. Add the diced sweet potato, bell peppers, and jalapeño pepper (if you like it spicy). Sauté for a few minutes until the vegetables start to soften and become vibrant in color.
4. Pour in the diced tomatoes, lentils, and vegetable broth. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil.
5. Reduce the heat to low, cover the pot, and let it simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the lentils and sweet potatoes are tender.
6. Stir in the coconut milk and zucchini, then let it simmer for another 10-15 minutes, allowing the flavors to meld together beautifully.
7. Season your Caribbean Lentil Stew with salt and pepper to taste, adjusting the spice level if desired.
8. Serve your stew hot, garnished with fresh cilantro leaves and a squeeze of lime juice. The vibrant colors and aromatic aroma will transport you straight to the Caribbean.

Each spoonful of this Caribbean Lentil Stew is a journey to paradise, where bold spices and creamy coconut

milk come together in a symphony of flavors. Enjoy this exotic dish with a side of rice or crusty bread to soak up every last drop of this tropical delight. Your taste buds will thank you for this Caribbean escape from the comfort of your own home!

4.3 Grandma's Lentil Stew

This recipe is a simple stew that is particularly affordable to prepare. The stew can be enjoyed as a hot or cold meal, especially during the cold season. Optionally, you can add a knob of ginger, cooked along with the stew, a few cloves of garlic, according to taste, or one to two chili peppers to give it a different flavor profile. However, let's start with the original recipe. In Germany, this is a traditional recipe from the rural bourgeois cuisine and is therefore called Grandma's Lentil Stew.

This recipe makes about *6-8 servings*. It takes about *45 minutes* and has an *easy* level of difficulty.

Items

- ❶ $\frac{1}{4}$ celery.
- ❷ 1 leek.
- ❸ 1 handful of parsley.
- ❹ 2 carrots.
- ❺ 2 slices of bacon.
- ❻ 4 onions.
- ❼ 500g lentils.
- ❽ Salt and black pepper.

Instruction We start by cutting the bacon into large, rough cubes. The two slices should weigh no less than 200g. We then add these cubes to a large pot and place

it on the stove over high heat. It is important to let the bacon roast properly until it becomes crispy. The fat should render, which is responsible for binding the stew and adds flavor. If desired, you can also add some back fat. Additionally, you can optionally add 50g of butter, which gives the stew a nutty flavor. However, make sure to add the butter only when the bacon is already close to being crispy. While the bacon is frying in the pot, we cut the vegetables – celery, carrots, onions, and parsley. When cutting, everything should be diced as small as possible, with a side length of slightly less than half a centimeter. This ensures that the flavors of the different ingredients are well distributed in the stew and mixed with each bite, without any one flavor dominating.

First, we add the onions to the bacon, once a small amount of fat has already rendered. We let them become golden brown. Once the bacon is crispy and the onions are golden brown, we add the lentils. These are also roasted for about five minutes. It is perfectly fine if some sediment forms at the bottom of the pot. This adds flavor through roasting aromas. After the five minutes, we add one liter of water for 500g of lentils. Optionally, you can add two tbsps of vegetable broth to the water. The stew is already taking shape and is now cooked over high heat for 15 minutes. After the 15 minutes, we add the carrots, celery, and half of the parsley, and cook everything for another 10 minutes. Then we add the leek and the second half of the parsley, and cook everything for another 10

minutes. It is advisable to cover the stew with a lid, as it does not need to reduce. The lentils will absorb almost all of the water. If needed, you can add more water or water mixed with broth. Finally, generously season with black pepper and salt to taste.

As a serving suggestion, a hot Bockwurst and some bread garnished with additional parsley go well with the stew. However, it can also be enjoyed without any additional ingredients. Enjoy your meal!

4.4 Cheese Soufflé

Our Cheese Soufflé is a classic French dish that offers a delightful experience for your taste buds. It has a golden, puffed exterior with a delicate crispness and a creamy interior. The flavors of Gruyère or Swiss cheese, balanced with Parmesan, create a rich and nutty taste. With the addition of black pepper and nutmeg, each spoonful is a symphony of flavors. The soufflé's lightness comes from perfectly whisked egg whites, resulting in a melt-in-your-mouth texture. Whether enjoyed as an appetizer or for brunch, our Cheese Soufflé is a culinary masterpiece that will leave you wanting more. Get ready to be enchanted by the magic of this timeless dish as it reaches new levels of deliciousness.

This recipe makes about *2 servings*. It takes about *50 minutes* and has an *intermediate* level of difficulty.

Items

- ❶ 4 tbsps unsalted butter,
plus extra for greasing the dish.
- ❷ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese.
- ❸ 1 cup milk.
- ❹ 4 tbsps all-purpose flour.
- ❺ $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt.
- ❻ $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black and cayenne pepper.
- ❼ $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon nutmegpepper.

- ⑧ 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups grated Gruyère or Swiss cheese.
- ⑨ 4 large eggs, separated.
- ⑩ Pinch of cream of tartar.

Instruction Preheat your oven to 190°C. Butter a 2-quart soufflé dish and coat it with grated Parmesan cheese, tapping out any excess.

In a medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Stir in the flour and cook for about 2 minutes, until the mixture turns slightly golden. Gradually whisk in the milk and continue cooking, whisking constantly, until the mixture thickens and comes to a boil. Remove from heat. Stir in the salt, black pepper, cayenne pepper, nutmeg, and grated Gruyère or Swiss cheese. Mix until the cheese is melted and the mixture is smooth.

In a separate bowl, beat the egg yolks until smooth. Gradually whisk in a small amount of the cheese mixture to temper the yolks, then pour the tempered yolks into the saucepan with the remaining cheese mixture. Stir until well combined.

In a clean mixing bowl, beat the egg whites and cream of tartar with an electric mixer on medium speed until stiff peaks form. Gently fold about one-third of the beaten egg whites into the cheese mixture to lighten it. Then, carefully fold in the remaining egg whites until no streaks remain. Pour the mixture into the prepared soufflé dish, smoothing the top with a spatula. Run your

thumb around the inside edge of the dish to create a small groove, which will help the soufflé rise evenly. Place the soufflé dish on a baking sheet and bake in the preheated oven for about 25–30 minutes, or until the soufflé is puffed, golden brown, and set in the center.

Serve immediately, as soufflés tend to deflate quickly. Enjoy the light and fluffy cheese soufflé! You can customize this recipe by adding other ingredients like cooked vegetables, ham, or herbs to the cheese mixture before folding in the egg whites.

4.5 Tomato Soup

Indulge in the ultimate comfort food – a steaming bowl of tomato soup bursting with the rich flavors of ripe tomatoes. This velvety soup is a symphony of tangy sweetness and savory goodness. Imagine the mouthwatering aroma of fresh tomatoes simmering with aromatic herbs and spices. Each spoonful offers a delightful balance of flavors, with the natural sweetness of tomatoes enhanced by garlic and onions. The tanginess is complemented by a touch of acidity, creating a zesty kick. The soup reaches new heights with a swirl of creamy goodness, adding a luxurious velvety texture. The creaminess perfectly balances the acidity, creating a harmonious marriage of flavors. Whether enjoyed as a comforting meal or an elegant starter, tomato soup is a timeless classic that never fails to satisfy. So, grab a spoon and let the flavors transport you to a world of culinary delight.

This recipe makes about *6-8 servings*. It takes about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours and has an *easy* level of difficulty.

Items

- ❶ 2kg vine tomatoes.
- ❷ 1 can of peeled or chopped tomatoes.
- ❸ 1 can of coconut milk.
- ❹ 4 onions.
- ❺ 50g ginger.

- ⑥ 1 garlic head.
- ⑦ 6 chili peppers.
- ⑧ Olive oil.
- ⑨ A bunch of cilantro.
- ⑩ Cinnamon, honey, salt and pepper.

Instruction First, we preheat the oven to 200°C. Then, we halve the tomatoes, cut a small piece off the garlic head to expose the cloves, and quarter the onions. Next, we place the tomatoes, onions, garlic, ginger, and chilies on a baking sheet. Drizzle generously with olive oil and sprinkle with a pinch of salt. The vegetables are then roasted in the oven for about 30 minutes. The chilies should become black, developing a sweet aroma, while the garlic and ginger become soft and the tomatoes develop a slightly blackened crust on top, which will later add roasted flavors.

Meanwhile, we can prepare a large soup pot and add the canned tomatoes and coconut milk. We then add a generous amount of pepper, a teaspoon of salt, a teaspoon of cinnamon, and a tbsp of honey. Additionally, we pour in half a liter of tap water and bring everything to a boil. Cook everything on medium heat, ensuring it comes to a boil before reducing the heat to a minimum. After 30 minutes, remove the vegetables from the oven. Peel the ginger and separate the garlic cloves from the head. Add all the vegetables to the pot and pour in an-

other half liter of tap water. Use an immersion blender to carefully puree everything into a creamy, homogeneous liquid. Finely chop the cilantro and add half to the pot. Bring everything to a boil until the desired consistency is reached, reducing the soup slightly. Season with salt and generously add pepper, as tomatoes can handle it well. I recommend serving with roasted garlic bread made with potato bread, as it pairs perfectly. Garnish each plate with a pinch of fresh cilantro, which can be mixed into the soup when eating.

Chapter 5

Desserts

“Desserts are the fairy tales of the kitchen – a happily-ever-after to supper.”

— Terri Guillemets

5.1 Grandma's Polish Doughnuts

Experience the enchanting realm of Grandma's Polish doughnuts, a cherished recipe passed down through generations, bringing joy and sweetness to countless family gatherings. Known as "pączki" in Polish, these delectable treats are a sensory delight. Picture sinking your teeth into a soft, pillowy doughnut, its golden exterior yielding to a melt-in-your-mouth interior. The irresistible aroma of freshly fried dough fills the air, tempting your senses. Each bite is pure bliss, generously filled with homemade fruit preserves or velvety custard. Grandma's secret recipe ensures a perfect balance of sweetness, with a delicate sugar dusting that adds a satisfying crunch to the tender dough. Whether you choose classic raspberry, tangy apricot, or rich vanilla custard, the flavors are simply divine. Preparing these doughnuts is a labor of love, carefully mixing ingredients to allow the dough to rise and achieve its signature lightness. Shaping each doughnut into plump, round morsels is a delightful anticipation. With a gentle sizzle, they are fried to golden perfection, creating a crispy shell that encases the heavenly filling. The first bite transports you to a world of sweet nostalgia, evoking cherished moments spent with loved ones at family gatherings. These Polish doughnuts are more than a treat; they symbolize love, tradition,

and the joy of sharing something truly special. So gather your loved ones, don your apron, and embark on a culinary adventure with Grandma's Polish doughnuts.

This recipe makes *15 servings*. It takes about $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours and has an *intermediate* level of difficulty.

Items

- ❶ 8 egg yolks.
- ❷ 1kg of flower.
- ❸ 300g sugar.
- ❹ 300g butter.
- ❺ 400ml milk (3,5% fat).
- ❻ 1 shot spiritus.
- ❼ 100g yeast.
- ❽ Lemon and vanilla oil.
- ❾ Salt and plum jam.

Instruction First, we heat a small pot over medium heat and add the entire milk. We take a tablespoon of sugar and sweeten the warm milk with it. Additionally, we add two tablespoons of flour to the milk to form the nutritional base for the yeast. Now, we turn off the heat. The milk should be lukewarm and by no means boiling. In this lukewarm milk, we dissolve the entire yeast while stirring briefly, preferably with our hands, as is traditionally customary. We let the milk sit for 30 minutes at room temperature to allow the yeast to grow.

Next, we need a large bowl into which we add the remaining flour, the egg yolk, the sugar, and a tablespoon of citrus oil as well as vanilla oil. Finally, we add the milk mixture with the yeast and carefully knead everything into a dough. The resulting dough is then enriched with fat. We continue kneading and after 2-3 minutes of kneading, we add a tablespoon of butter until the butter is fully incorporated. Lastly, we add the spirit and knead the dough carefully again, for at least five minutes, until it reaches a core temperature of about 30°C. We let this dough rise for at least 2 hours. After the time has elapsed, we can prepare a work surface.

We dust the work surface with flour and shape the matured and risen dough, which we had covered with a damp cloth to allow it to rise (this is just an option, but I like to do it this way, and so does Grandma), into our doughnuts. Each doughnut should be about the size of a tennis ball. At the same time, we can heat a large pot with hot oil for frying, achieving the tastiest results with neutral-tasting oil such as canola or sunflower oil. Once the oil is hot enough to immediately start bubbling when dough is added, we are ready to fry the doughnuts. Using a thumb, we press them down and then fill them with plum jam, about a heaping teaspoon, but be careful not to overdo it, or the filling will spill out! Traditional fillings for Polish doughnuts are blackberry or plum jam, but depending on the season, cherries or strawberries can also be used. In Bavaria, they would use rosehip! The

doughnuts need to be sealed back into a ball shape and then fried in the oil until golden brown. For decoration, regular sugar, not powdered sugar, is used. Simply roll the finished doughnut in a plate full of sugar before draining. Place them in a draining dish, and after about a minute, the doughnuts are ready to be enjoyed.

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