

Witchcraft of Cooking

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Preface

This book is a very personal compilation of dishes whose techniques the authors found particularly appealing. It includes dishes from various cuisines around the world, such as German, Italian, French, Thai, or Pakistani cuisine. In this book, we do not limit ourselves to a specific theme, but rather focus on the method of preparation. We specifically emphasize that our dishes can be prepared intuitively, with as little measuring as possible. We aim to highlight the intuition of cooking in this book, so that the timing of a specific cooking step can be determined by tasting, the sense of smell, or simply by observation of changes in the cooking utensil. Our goal is to extract these markers in order to convey an understanding of ingredient combination and processing to the reader.

Our sources include oral traditions from various trips to the respective countries and traditional home cooking that is passed down orally, as well as selected cooking

videos from YouTube featuring Michelin-starred chefs. In particular, all dishes have been cooked and refined multiple times by the authors, so preparation techniques and ingredients may differ from traditional recipes. New recipes are constantly being added to the book. In the bibliography at the end, you will find all our sources listed in alphabetical order.

Most of the dishes presented here can also be transformed into a vegetarian or vegan version. We deliberately refrain from making this distinction as we want to focus on cooking techniques and introduce traditional dishes. Therefore, we also refrain from providing corresponding labels. We hope that you, dear reader, will adapt the dishes to your dietary preferences or consciously modify them to avoid any allergies. We sincerely thank you for your understanding. Furthermore, we would like to avoid providing overly detailed measurements. The dishes are quite forgiving in terms of taste and can tolerate small changes in quantities. If this is not the case, we will explicitly state it and provide an exact cooking time or measurement. Of course, dear reader, you are also encouraged to try your own variations of the dishes and modify them as needed.

If you would like to contribute or provide feedback, suggestions, or criticism regarding the recipes, please email us at melodia.luciano@proton.me.

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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

1.1 Mayonnaise

This is the classic recipe of a mayonnaise, refined in such a way that the basic taste of egg, mustard and oil is supported by citric acid and bitter substances from green

tea. You will need a large bowl and a whisk, or optionally a hand blender.

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 To make the mayonnaise, first add the egg to our bowl. then add the juice of a small lemon half and the Dijon mustard as well as the medium hot mustard. We also add a pinch of green tea powder, salt and pepper.

Then we start whisking the ingredients and slowly add the sunflower oil. It is also possible to use rapeseed oil, but the oil should not have too pronounced taste of its own. If you use a hand-held dusting mixer for beating, it should be sunk over the egg yolk, like a protective dome over it, and then switched on at the highest speed. The operations are carried out until a solid paste is obtained, just the finished mayonnaise.

The mayonnaise can be steered in different directions with flavor nuances, such as a clove of garlic in the hearty spicy direction or a chili pepper towards the spicy one. Adding a bit of *hoisin sauce* or *sriracha sauce* also leads to an omami result or mild spiciness, respectively.

1.2 Raspberry Chutney

The raspberry chutney is a base for sauces and can also be used as a burger sauce when combined with a mayonnaise [1.1]. However, it is also suitable as a stand-alone sauce for dark meat dishes, such as red or venison. Optionally, this recipe can also be done with *blackberries*, *blueberries*, *gooseberries*, *strawberries* or *black cherries*. A winter version with *oranges* or a summer version with *bitter oranges* as a base is also possible.

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.

- ⑦ 3 tablespoons of soy sauce.
- ⑧ Salt, pepper and cinnamon.

Instruction We put on a medium size pot and add the olive oil. The oil should then be heated over medium heat. While the olive oil is heating up, we chop the chili pepper as small as possible and add it to the oil. A stewing time of about five to seven minutes should be allowed so that the oil can absorb the flavors of the chili. Here you can vary the degree of spiciness to your liking, but Thai chilies are best, as the chutney should be fiery at the end.

Then we add the chopped onions and let them become translucent. Once the state is reached, the brown sugar is added. We now increase the heat slightly and let the sugar caramelize. When the onions are covered with the caramel layer and as a result are golden brown, we add the raspberries. You can use fresh or frozen raspberries. Only the cooking time is delayed, because of the additional water in the case of the frozen option.

We can add the rice vinegar and soy sauce at the same time and let the chutney boil down over medium heat.

Lastly, we add a glass of tap water and reduce the heat. Stirring occasionally, we reduce the broth until we get a thick, creamy consistency. At last we taste with a little cinnamon, salt and pepper. We should save on the salt, because the soy sauce contains enough sodium.

Chapter 2

Pasta

“Everything you see I owe to Spaghetti.”

— Sophia Loren

2.1 Spaghetti Carbonara

There is hardly a more controversial dish than *Spaghetti carbonara*. Contrary to many opinions, cream is not a component of this dish. It is even frowned upon. The carbonara can be made very well with other pasta, ideally even with Tagliatelle or Ziti. However, we will stick to the most popular variant. The challenge with this dish is the process of 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 we can see, we do not need many ingredients. First, we fill a large pot two-thirds with water. It is said that for every 100g of pasta, one liter of water is needed. We salt the water with three tablespoons of table salt and bring it to a boil. While the water is boiling, we prepare the sauce. To do this, we grate the Pecorino as finely as possible on the square grater. At this point, you can also mix 30g Pecorino with 30g Parmesan, or a ratio of your choice. Just keep in mind that the Pecorino is much saltier and gives the dish a much spicier note.

To create the cream, we put the grated cheese in a bowl. Now we add the three raw eggs. You can also use only the yolk at this point. The result is a different color of the sauce and a much more intense flavor. If you discard the egg whites, the relative fat content is much higher and you have a stronger flavor carrier for the Guanciale and Pecorino. However, the original

recipe calls for the use of all the ingredients. The cheese is then whisked with the eggs until a thick, fairly homogeneous mass is obtained. Here is now added abundant black pepper, freshly ground. Subsequently, the mixture is whisked again. The amount of pepper I leave to you, but feel free to overdo it. It must be generous. Now the base for the cream is ready.

We now add the spaghetti, ziti, tagliatelle, or other form of pasta to the pot and cook it for the same amount of time as indicated on the package, or one minute shorter to get the pasta really *al dente*. Pasta with a large surface is particularly suitable.

We cut the Guanciale into thin short strips. Next, we heat a skillet over medium heat and add to the pan, without the addition of any fats, again freshly grated pepper. We roast the pepper until the respiratory tract is irritated by the rising steam. Then we add the Guanciale. We let it roast until the Guanciale becomes crispy. A large amount of fat will come out of the pork cheeks, this fat is the flavor carrier for the dish and should not be discarded. Feel free to taste here to see if the Guanciale is crispy enough. If it is, turn off the heat completely. Now we take a ladle of pasta water and add it to the pan to release the adhering pepper and roasted flavors from the fat. The pasta should be cooked, now. We skim it and put the finished cooked pasta in the pan with the Guanciale and pepper. However, the pasta water should be saved! At this point it is necessary to watch carefully.

The pasta will steam, but slowly cool from this point on. As soon as there is only a little steam, or even no steam at all, take a quarter of a ladle of pasta water and add it to the cheese to obtain a slightly thinner cream. We then add this cream to the warm pasta and mix vigorously.

The result is the classic carbonara cream, thus we are ready to serve.

2.2 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 3

Main Courses

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

— Paul Theroux

3.1 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 tablespoons 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!

3.2 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 tablespoons unsalted butter,
plus extra for greasing the dish.
- ❷ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese.

- ③ 1 cup milk.
- ④ 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour.
- ⑤ $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt.
- ⑥ $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black and cayenne pepper.
- ⑦ $\frac{1}{4}$ 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 un-

til 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.

3.3 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.
- ❻ 1 garlic head.
- ❼ 6 chili peppers.
- ❽ Olive oil.
- ❾ A bunch of cilantro.
- ❿ 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 tablespoon 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 another 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 4

Desserts

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

— Terri Guillemets

4.1 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 yield-

ing 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.

- ③ 300g sugar.
- ④ 300g butter.
- ⑤ 400ml milk (3,5% fat).
- ⑥ 1 shot spiritus.
- ⑦ 100g yeast.
- ⑧ Lemon and vanilla oil.
- ⑨ 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, un-

til 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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