

# Flavors of Life

## Recipes from an Open Minded Kitchen

Cooking (and savoring) is pure joy. From sunny picnics with crispy focaccia to cozy risotto on chilly days, each dish holds its own magic. And it gets even better when you're the magician.

Here, you'll find my favorite recipes—tried, tested, and heartily enjoyed. I didn't invent them, but I've crafted and shared them with love. I hope you'll enjoy the flavors of my life.

### Recipes:

- Focaccia
- Mutter Paneer
- Salmon Hand Rolls
- Smoky Eggplant Spread
- Mushroom Risotto With Peas

## Focaccia

Incredibly versatile soft and crunchy focaccia serves as the perfect accompaniment to any meal.

### Ingredients:

- 7g Active dry yeast
- 780g Bread flour
- 17g Salt
- ¾ Cup Olive Oil
- Water
- Toppings (for example, rosemary, garlic & red pepper flakes)

### Step 1.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk 7g dry yeast with ½ cup warm water. Let sit for five minutes.

### Step 2.

After five minutes add 2 ½ cups of room temperature water, 780g sifted bread flour and 17g salt. Mix to incorporate the water with the flour (about five minutes). Cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a damp, clean kitchen cloth. Let the dough rest for ten minutes.

### Step 3.

After ten minutes, mix / knead until the dough becomes very smooth and elastic (about 15 minutes with a mixer or 30 minutes if mixing by hand). Bread is more about feel than time.

Step 4.

After mixing, pour ¼ cup olive oil into the bowl to cover the entire dough (including the bottom). Cover the bowl again with plastic wrap or towel, let the dough rest for 1 ½ - 2 hours. Dough should roughly double in size. Remember, bread is more about feel than time.

Step 5.

Poke test the dough for readiness. Stick a finger into the dough. It should not immediately close up and instead roughly maintain its form.

Step 6.

Oil a baking sheet tray with ¼ cup olive oil. Before transferring dough to a sheet tray, perform four quarter folds. Then, add dough to the sheet tray and gently stretch it to fill the tray. Cover with plastic wrap and let it rest for 10-15 minutes.

Step 7.

Prepare toppings, mix with ¼ cup olive oil. For example, slice garlic and rosemary and marinate in olive oil with red pepper flakes.

Step 8.

Remove plastic wrap and finish stretching dough into corners of sheet tray. Cover again with plastic wrap, let the dough rest in the refrigerator for 8-12 hours (overnight is great).

Step 9.

After letting the dough rest, prepare for baking. Preheat the oven to 450 F. Remove dough from fridge, dimple the dough as if playing the piano to remove air bubbles. Apply toppings. Sprinkle coarse salt.

Step 10.

After letting the oven preheat for thirty minutes, bake focaccia on the middle rack for 20 minutes. After twenty minutes, move the focaccia to the top rack and bake for another five minutes or until golden.

Step 11.

Remove from the oven, let cool on a wire rack. Enjoy!

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGnMrM9qDtE>



## Mutter Paneer

Quick but luxurious mutter paneer to warm your mind, body and soul.

Ingredients:

- Neutral Oil
- 2-4 Green Cardamoms
- 3 Garlic Cloves (Minced)
- 1 Inch Ginger (Minced)
- 1 Cup Onions (Cubed)
- 1 ½ Cup Tomatoes (Chopped)
- 12 Cashew Nuts
- Salt
- ⅓ Cup Yogurt
- ¼ Teaspoon Cinnamon
- 2 Bay Leaves
- ¼ Teaspoon Turmeric
- ½ Teaspoon Chili Powder
- 1 Teaspoon Garam Masala
- 1 Teaspoon Coriander Powder
- 1 Cup Frozen Green Peas
- 250 Grams Paneer (Cubed)
- 1 Teaspoon Dried Fenugreek Leaves
- Fresh Chopped Cilantro

Step 1.

Heat one tablespoon of oil in a pan. When oil turns hot add green cardamoms, garlic and ginger. Fry for a minute.

Step 2.

Add onions and saute until they turn light gold.

Step 3.

Add tomatoes and ½ teaspoon salt. Saute for two to three minutes then add cashews. Cover and cook until mushy, five to ten minutes.

Step 4.

Turn off heat. Let mixture cool then blend with yogurt to make a smooth puree.

Step 5.

Heat another tablespoon of oil in the same pan. Add cinnamon and bay leaf. Let sizzle in oil for a minute, stir to not burn.

Step 6.

Lower the heat then add turmeric, chili powder, garam masala and coriander powder. Mix well.

Step 7.

Carefully add pureed onion and tomato mixture. Saute until the masala comes together and thickens. Stir frequently to prevent burning.

Step 8.

Next, rinse the frozen peas and add to masala. Add water if necessary. Mix well to form a thick gravy.

Step 9.

Add crushed, dried fenugreek and paneer. Cook until desired texture. Taste, adjust seasonings to your preference.

Step 10.

Serve mutter paneer with basmati rice or naan. Enjoy!

Source: <https://www.indianhealthyrecipes.com/matar-paneer-mutter-masala/>



# Salmon Hand Rolls

Fun and tasty, salmon hand rolls are the perfect potluck activity and dinner.

Ingredients:

- Neutral oil
- ½ Teaspoon Garlic (Minced)
- ⅓ Cup Soy Sauce
- ⅓ Cup Mirin
- 1 Tablespoon Sugar
- ¼ Teaspoon Black Pepper
- ½ Teaspoon Ginger (Minced)
- 1 Pound Salmon Filet
- Seaweed Sheets (Cut in Half)
- Cooked Short-Grain Rice
- Wasabi Paste
- 3 Crunchy Cucumbers, Persian or Japanese (Cut into Matchsticks)
- 1-2 Avocados (Thinly Sliced)
- Salt

Step 1.

Heat oven to 425 F. In a saucepan, heat two tablespoons of oil over medium heat. Stir in garlic until fragrant then add soy sauce, mirin, sugar, black pepper and bring to a simmer.

Step 2.

Simmer until sauce has reduced by about ⅓ and has thickened (about 15 minutes). Stir in ginger then remove from the heat.

Step 3.

Salt salmon and coat both sides with half of the sauce. Bake in the oven for five minutes, then baste with sauce. Bake five minutes longer or until cooked then remove from the oven.

Step 4.

Flake the salmon into bite-sized pieces and drizzle with reserved sauce.

Step 5.

To build hand rolls, top seaweed with some rice, add cucumbers, avocado, salmon, and dab of wasabi. Roll into a triangle. Enjoy!

Source: <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1023003-soy-glazed-salmon-hand-rolls>



## Smoky Eggplant Spread

Essentially a delightful eggplant schmear to eat with warm pita triangles, this smoky eggplant spread its pleasant smoky flavor from a deliberate charring of the eggplant skin.

### Ingredients:

- 3 Medium Eggplants
- Salt
- ¼ Cup Tahini Paste
- ¼ Cup Lemon Juice
- 4 Garlic Cloves
- ⅛ Teaspoon Cayenne Pepper
- ½ Teaspoon Toasted Cumin seeds
- 3 Tablespoons Olive Oil
- ½ Teaspoon Paprika
- 1 Tablespoon Finely Chopped Parsley
- 1 Tablespoon Finely Chopped Mint
- Pita Bread for Serving

### Step 1.

Prepare a charcoal grill. Pierce eggplants here and there with a fork. Place into hot coals, allow skins to blister and char, turning with tongs until the entire surface is blackened and eggplants are completely soft. Set aside to cool.

### Step 2.

Halve eggplants lengthwise and carefully scrape away flesh. Discard skin and place flesh into a colander. Salt lightly and leave for ten minutes. Then, squeeze into a ball to remove liquid.

### Step 3.

Blend eggplant, ½ teaspoon salt, tahini, lemon juice, garlic and cayenne to obtain a creamy puree (alternatively, you can simply whisk for a more rustic spread). Taste, adjust seasonings to your preference. Transfer to a shallow serving bowl.

Step 4.

Sprinkle cumin seeds, paprika, parsley, mint and olive oil on top. Serve with warm pita bread. Enjoy!

Source: <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1016709-smoky-eggplant-spread>



## Mushroom Risotto With Peas

If you are ever at a loss for what to make for an impromptu dinner party, especially if there will be vegetarians at the table, consider this luxurious mushroom risotto.

Ingredients:

- 6-7 Cups Vegetable Stock
- Salt
- Pepper
- Olive Oil
- 2 Shallots (Minced)
- 1 Pound Mushrooms (Ripped)
- 2 Garlic Cloves (Minced)
- 2 Teaspoon Thyme or Sage
- 1 ½ Cups Arborio Rice
- ½ Cup Dry White Wine or Sake
- 1 Cup Frozen Peas
- 2 Tablespoons Fresh Chopped Parsley
- ½ Cup Grated Parmesan Cheese

Step 1.

Heat two tablespoons of oil in a pan, add shallots and cook until just tender (about five minutes).

Step 2.

Turn up heat, add mushrooms. Cook, stirring, until they begin to sweat then add garlic and thyme / sage. Season with salt and pepper. Cook until soft.

Step 3.

Add rice and stir until grains begin to crackle. Add wine or sake. Cook until liquid is no longer visible. Stir in enough stock to just cover the rice. Cook, stirring vigorously until stock is just about absorbed. Add another ladle or two of stock and continue cooking. Repeat this process for about 15 minutes, cooking down stock then adding more.

Step 4.

Add peas. Keep adding stock and cooking down for another ten minutes. Rice should be getting tender but still al dente.

Step 5.

Add another ladle or two of stock, stir in parsley and cheese. Remove from heat. Taste, adjust seasonings to your preference. Enjoy!

Source: <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1017022-mushroom-risotto-with-peas>

