

The Essence of Mediocrity:

My Recipe Book

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¹<https://miles-woollacott.github.io/index.html>

To everyone.

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Preface

I pride myself as a person who loves to cook passable food. It won't earn me a Michelin star anytime soon, but I rarely give myself food poisoning. Having travelled and moved a lot over my life, I find myself missing certain dishes that aren't readily accessible from wherever I am at any given time. Therefore, I attempt to recreate the magic of these dishes, and provide a book of some of the better recipes I have attempted.

What is in this Book

As can be inferred from the title, this is a book of recipes that are (mostly) tried and true. When I discover a recipe that seems interesting and doable, I make it, and adjust the recipe how I see fit. Note that I have a bit of a sweet tooth, so some people may like a slightly smaller amount of sugar than what I suggest.

I attempt to provide some semblance of a chapter structure, but since it's such a wide variety of recipes, there's only so much I can do. Refer to the table of contents. Note that the dishes within each chapter are sorted alphabetically.

Unfortunately, I don't really have a concept of serving sizes, so I leave it up to the reader to determine how many servings these recipes yield. I hope it's easy enough to ballpark it based on the ingredient measurements.

Recipe Credits

As suggested earlier, most of the recipes found in this book are not original recipes of my own. Alas, I am no Gordon Ramsay. This book is a random compilation of recipes I have gathered from the internet and my family, so while I attempt to provide a source for every recipe, I may not have found the original recipe. If you wrote the recipe and want to be credited for it, then email me at the email provided on my website.

LaTeX

This book was compiled via L^AT_EX. The original template is open source, and originates from here¹.

Future Additions

This is Version 2 of this book. As of now, there aren't many recipes yet, but I'm always workshopping new recipes. As such, I'll update this whenever I have the time for it/feel like it.

New to this Version

I've added in 4 new recipes: the Kringle, muffin tops, cheese sauce, and lava cake. In addition, I have started to add images of the final dishes, if I have made them recently.

¹<https://github.com/amberj/latex-book-template>

1

Breakfast

“There has never been a sadness that can’t be cured by breakfast food.”

– Ron Swanson, *Parks and Recreation*

Some people don’t like breakfast. It’s okay, no one is perfect. For the green flags out there, here’s some recipes that have been deemed “certified bangers.”¹

¹Me.

1.1 Biscuits

These biscuits were the only thing that made Thanksgiving dinners tolerable. So, while biscuits can really be in any chapter of this book, I put them in breakfast because I made this section first. These biscuits originate from this recipe², which I toned down a little because I wanted to wait at least 10 more years before my first cardiac arrest.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Cool	Bake	Total
Time	10min	>30min	20min	>60min

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1 stick butter, cold, cut into slices or grated
- 2 eggs (1 for mixing, 1 for brushing)
- 1 cup buttermilk (3/4 for mixing, 1/4 for brushing)

Procedure

1. Whisk together flour, baking powder, and baking soda.
2. Cut in butter into the mix until the butter is even and pea-sized.
3. Add in the mixing egg and buttermilk until the dough is a sticky mass.
 - If the dough is too dry, add more buttermilk.
4. Cover bowl and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.
5. Preheat oven to 425°F.
6. Flour a surface. Put mix on surface and roll/press mixture until it is 1/2-inch thick.
7. Cut mix and transfer to parchment-lined baking sheet.
8. Bake for 15-18 minutes (or until golden brown).

²<https://magnolia.com/blog/recipe/f7e2d2a0-5997-4c87-958f-19024b248497/jojos-biscuits/>

1.2 Cinnamon Sugar Pancakes

When I was a kid, I used to like to order the pancakes from hotels when I travelled. They tasted incredible, and every other pancake hasn't tasted the same; not necessarily bad, but different. I could never recreate the magic until I discovered this recipe.³ The only problem with this recipe is that there's only a finite amount I can eat in one sitting. Because I would never be able to stop eating this if getting full wasn't a thing.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Make	Cook	Total
Time	5min	15min	20min	40min

Batter:

- 1 egg
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 3/2 cup flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 cup sugar

Cinnamon Sugar:

- 4 tbsp softened butter
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tbsp cinnamon
- 1 tbsp batter

³Source: Jordan Howlett

1.3 Danish Kringle (Almond)

A Sunday breakfast staple, these Danish pastries are highkey hard to find, and when they are find?able, they are \$50. Thankfully, I found this recipe,⁴ and have been able to satisfy my Kringle craving.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Make	Cook	Total
Time	>8hrs	15min	30min	>9hrs

Batter:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- Pinch of salt
- 1/2 cup cold butter, cubed
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 tbsp sugar

Filling:

- 1 egg
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- Pinch of cinnamon
- 1 tbsp almond extract

Glaze:

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 tbsp water
- 1 tsp maple extract (optional)

Procedure

1. Mix flour, sugar, and salt in a medium-sized bowl.
2. Cut butter into the mix until pea-sized.
3. Add sour cream to mixture to form a stick dough. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 8 hours.
4. Preheat oven to 375°F.
5. To make filling, separate the egg yolk, and mix with other ingredients.
6. Divide chilled dough in half. Roll each half into a 10x12 rectangle on lightly floured surface.
7. Along the shorter center of the rectangle, add just enough filling so the edges of the dough can be folded and completely cover the filling.
8. Cut the unfilled pastry into eight horizontal strips. Fold each strip over the filling to form a braid, being careful to completely cover the filling.

⁴<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/23971/danish-kringle/>

9. Place each kringle on a tray with parchment paper.
10. Mix egg white with 1 tbsp water. Brush on top of each kringle.
11. Bake in oven for about 30 to 35 minutes. Set aside to cool.
12. While cooling, prepare glaze by mixing ingredients.
13. Top each cooled kringle with glaze.



Figure 1.1: The finished Kringle

1.4 Olympian Chocolate Chip Muffin Tops

The Paris 2024 Olympics had many memorable moments. The Olympian athletes had 18-pack abs (or go to the gym, even), tested the cardboard beds thoroughly, and got addicted to choccy muffins. Well, I officially have something in common with them, because I got addicted to these muffins. I discovered this copycat recipe,⁵ and modified it to lean more heavily into the coffee aspect, and make it a muffin top instead of a muffin, because I don't have a muffin pan.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Cook	Total
Time	35min	5min	40min

Batter:

- 3/8 cup milk
- 2 tbsp water
- 1/6 cup instant coffee
- 1/4 cup cocoa powder
- 1/4 cup chocolate chips
- 1/2 Stick of butter

Topping:

- 1 cups self-rising flour
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 3/8 cup sugar
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 egg, room temperature
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 cup chocolate chips
- Pinch of salt

Procedure

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Add milk, water, and coffee to saucepan, let simmer.
3. Add cocoa powder, most of the chocolate chips, and butter, transfer to bowl and let chill about 15min.
4. In bowl with chocolate, add brown sugar, sugar, oil, eggs, and vanilla. Add 1/6 cup of flour and mix around.
5. Add rest of flour and chocolate, and fold.
6. Bake for 3-5 minutes, or until a knife/toothpick inserted in the center of the muffin is clean.

⁵Source: Jordan Howlett

7. To make topping, put ingredients in a bowl and microwave for 10 seconds. Mix.
8. Pour topping on top of cooked muffin top. Refrigerate to let topping harden.



Figure 1.2: It's not a cookie. I don't care how much it looks like one, it tastes and feels totally different.

1.5 “We Have Maple Bars at Home”

My favorite donut is either the cream-filled donut or the maple bar. So, when I REALLY want a maple bar, and am too lazy to drive over to Dunkin (yet inexplicably have maple extract in my pantry), I know exactly what to turn to get my maple donut fix. Okay, this won’t be a perfect substitute for the actual thing, but it sure reminds me of a maple bar, kind of.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Cook	Total
Time	5min	10min	15min

- 1 can buttermilk biscuit dough
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 3/4 tsp light corn syrup
- Pinch of salt
- 1/4 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp maple extract
- 1.5 tbsp hot water

Procedure

1. Preheat air fryer to 325°F.
2. Cook dough in air fryer for 8 minutes.
3. Mix together other ingredients.
4. Top “donuts” with mix.

2

Sauces

“Sometimes, if you’re lucky, someone comes into your life who’ll take up a place in your heart that no one else can fill, someone who’s tighter than a twin, more with you than your own shadow, who gets deeper under your skin than your own blood and bones.”

– Snoop Dogg

I think he's referring to sauce here. Sauce, the Chewbacca to every dish's Han Solo, sauce makes stuff taste better. What's a pizza without tomato sauce? Chicken vindaloo without the vindaloo is just... chicken. And there's a lot of people out there who don't believe in seasoning chicken, so a sauce really is crucial. I mean seriously, you didn't even add pepper...?

2.1 Bechamel Sauce (with a twist)

Is your chicken drier than my DMs on a Friday evening? Well do I have a classic and simple French sauce for you. However, French cuisine is personally a little bland for me, so I *spiced* it up with a heat component.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Cook	Total
Time	5min	15min	20min

- 1.5 tbsp butter
- 1/8 cup milk
- 1/8 cup flour
- Pinch of salt
- Cayenne pepper

Procedure

1. Melt butter in saucepan.
2. In medium-low heat, add other ingredients.
3. Stir until sauce thickens.

2.2 Cane's Sauce

A staple of Raising Cane's, I honestly haven't been back since making this sauce. In my defense, they don't make milkshakes, and the only thing that made it different from the other 3,000 chicken places was this sauce. I discovered this copycat recipe,¹ and basically lived on this for probably way too long. Of all of the recipes in this book, I've made this the most. Don't forget to sub the slaw for an extra toast.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Total
Time	5min	5min

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tbsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp black pepper
- Pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)

Procedure

1. Mix ingredients.



Figure 2.1: The goated sauce.

¹<https://www.allrecipes.com/copycat-raising-canies-sauce-recipe-8304219>

2.3 Cheese Sauce

Want some quick and easy homemade mac and cheese? Same. While the number of ingredients at first may look intimidating, this sauce is very easily adjustable to your individual preferences/ingredient availability. The only core ingredients absolutely needed are the milk, flour, and cheese.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Cook	Total
Time	5min	5min	10min

- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/4 cup flour
- 3/4 cup cheese, shredded or sliced (wash off preservatives if necessary)
- 2 tbsp salt
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp minced garlic
- 1 tbsp chopped onions
- 1 tbsp ground pepper
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- Pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)
- 2 tbsp marinara sauce (optional)
- Oregano

Procedure

1. Melt butter in a saucepan over low heat. Add in oil.
2. Whisk in milk and seasonings (except oregano).
3. Slowly, whisk in a small amount of flour at a time.
4. Add in cheese and onions (and marinara, if applicable), and whisk together until cheese melts.
5. Add sauce to main dish. Top with oregano.



Figure 2.2: A fancy and expensive pasta dish with the cheese sauce.

2.4 Polynesian Sauce

Chick-Fil-A is a mad sus company, but they make some decent Polynesian sauce. Thanks to this copycat recipe,² I don't have to sacrifice my morals by visiting a Chick-Fil-A.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Total
Time	5min	5min

- 1/2 cup Catalina salad dressing
- 3 tbsp honey
- 1/2 tbsp apple cider vinegar

Procedure

1. Mix ingredients.

²<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/283063/copycat-polynesian-sauce/>

3

Casseroles

“Google ‘broccoli casserole’ and make the first recipe you find. I guarantee it will be disappointing.”

– Christopher Kimball

On that note, we turn to casseroles. Okay, these casseroles are bangers, or else I wouldn't put them here.

3.1 Corn Casserole

This is a recipe that my mom used to make all the time. And still does, when I visit. It is very similar to cornbread, but it's a casserole, not a bread.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Make	Cook	Total
Time	5min	10min	55min	70min

- 2 cans whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 8oz package corn muffin mix (Jiffy recommended)
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/2 stick butter, melted
- 3/2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded

Procedure

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. In a large bowl, stir the muffin mix, sour cream, and butter. Pour into a greased 9x13 casserole dish.
3. Bake for 45 minutes, or until golden brown.
4. Top with cheddar, and bake for 10 more minutes, or until cheese is melted.

3.2 Onion Casserole

Yet another recipe my mom likes to make, and I like to eat. A little on the sweeter side, and enough onions where once you're done chopping them, people will make you think you've seen the beginning of *Up* 20 times.

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Make	Cook	Total
Time	5min	15min	75min	95min

- 3/4 cup uncooked basmati rice
- 5 cups water
- 1/4 cup butter
- 3 pounds sweet onions, chopped
- 1 cup half-and-half cream
- 3/2 tsp salt
- 2 cups shredded Swiss cheese
- Cayenne pepper (optional)

Procedure

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter a 2-quart baking dish.
2. Bring water to a boil, and sprinkle in rice. Simmer for about 5 minutes, then drain. Rice should NOT be fully cooked.
3. Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat, and cook and stir the onions until translucent but not brown, about 8 minutes. Add in the rice, cream, and 7/4 cups cheese (and cayenne).
4. Transfer to a baking dish, and sprinkle on the rest of the cheese.
5. Bake uncovered for one hour (or until lightly brown).

4

Dessert

“There is one word that describes people that don’t like me: Irrelevant.

– Unknown (Likely desserts though)

Easy. Dessert is the most important meal of the day, it’s scientifically proven.¹ Therefore, we have to honor this crucial part of our lives with some more certified bangers.

¹Source: I made it up.

4.1 Chocolate Lava Cake

Chocolate. Lava. Two of the best food items in the world, merged together as one. I thought lava cakes would be impossible to make, being all fine-diney and whatever, but after finding this recipe,² I was like “okay we Gucci.”

Ingredients and Time

	Prep	Make	Cook	Total
Time	5min	5min	15min	25min

- 1 stick butter
- 2 ounces bittersweet chocolate
- 2 ounces semi-sweet chocolate
- 1 1/4 cups powdered sugar
- 2 whole eggs
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour

Procedure

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Grease 4 ramekins (or custard cups).
2. Melt the butter in a microwave with the chocolates. Whisk until the chocolates are melted in.
3. Stir in the sugar, eggs, egg yolks, vanilla, and flour. Divide evenly among the ramekins.
4. Bake for about 12 minutes, or until the sides are firm (and the centers are soft). Cool for 1 minute, then invert ramekins onto plates.

²<https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/chocolate-lava-cakes-2312421>

About the Author

MILES WOOLLACOTT is a struggling graduate student working towards a Ph.D. in Statistics at North Carolina State University. Originally from California, he graduated from the University of Virginia in 2023 with a B.S. in Statistics, and a B.A. in Computer Science. Recent accomplishments include touching grass for the first time.