

cooking can be god



vegetarian  
improvisational  
peasant  
fusion  
cuisine  
for the twenty-second century

Ankur Shah



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## Preface

Prepare to meet a recipe book unlike any other you've ever read. I don't mean to embark immediately on flights of hyperbole here in this preface to the alchemical stew that awaits, but in this case, I'm simply calling it like it is. Give it a chapter and tell me you're not a convert.

The Bigode restaurant flourished briefly on the Island of Itaparica off the coast of Salvador in the Brazilian state of Bahia between September 2004 and February 2005. As a real honest-to-God attempt at founding a restaurant in which spontaneity and improvisation ruled the day, the Bigode certainly veered between successful orbit and meteoric collision. Imagine attempting to found a flowering vegetarian establishment in the dense overgrowth of the most militantly carnivorous environs imaginable. (Brings to mind the subtle realm mantra "Location, Location, Location...") On top of its, say it, out of place vegetarian aspirations, the Bigode also attempted to usher in a new era of idealistic gift-economy relations by posting no prices for its offerings and accepting donations only in exchange for its love-crafted foodstuffs. You can probably fill in the gory details for yourself. Each weekend, the Bigode opened for business around noon and offered piping hot vittles straight through to nightfall. Most weekends, the clientele consisted of one or two friends of the proprietors and perhaps the occasional hapless local inquiring about beef stew or the like. As has so often been the case with trailblazing artists and explorers, the true genius of the Bigode did not gain wide recognition during its brief passage through space-time.

With this book, the recipes of the Bigode, nearly lost to history's compost bin, are preserved for posterity. The dishes you're about to digest are all, without doubt, miraculous, battle tested and nutritionally complete.

You'll quickly notice upon perusing the ensuing incantations that the author of this work

places much emphasis on experimentation, variation and attention to the moment in which the dish in question arises in universal awareness. I hope you aren't too troubled by this—for it is the way of things, always has been, and it's time we accept the unique demands of the present moment in spite of its seemingly infinite repetition of the motifs of the past. Where most recipe books include helpful quantities like  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup, in this manual you'll often encounter the mysterious cypher XXXX. Some readers might be inclined to feel adrift and listless in the face of such unspecificity. Don't!! There's method to this madness, just as all the swear words to come are perfectly justified depending on context and authorial intention.

Also, dogmas (doctrinas in the much preferable Brazilian Portuguese) won't last long in confrontation with the avant garde recipe-forms to come. If you find yourself preferring rigidity to the tensile give of the finest trees/skyscrapers/suspension bridges, you'd do well to trust, let go and let God. You'll be happy you did.

So, jettison your preconceptions and prepare to confront your kitchen for what may well be the very first time. While the Bigode may never have located its local following in large enough numbers to support its long-term plans, we have preserved before us in the form of this recipe book the beautiful seeds from which all further Bigodes shall spring forth. With a little close attention, some locally available produce and the will to adventure, this guidebook will carry you through to glory.

Also, for those who are interested, Bigode means “moustache.” As in: What's a vegetarian moustache like you doing in this bastion of carnivoresity??

Free your minds, intrepid chefs of the New Time.

Matt Coffman  
Brooklyn, New York  
February 2006



refried feijão vermelho e arroz vermelho  
accompanied willfully by mango salsa and  
the standard brasilian table hot

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## 0.1 red rice

according to the kama sutra, if i recall, there are sixty-four tasks or talents a courtesan must be able to perform with superior skill, and *one* of them is to prepare rice in 40 different ways. the most simple – no matter what your color or size of rice is — is boiling.

- 1 cup of rice
- 2 cups of water

the longer and browner (the more hull each grain has, the more mass, the more density) your rice, the more water you will need. really short white rounded grains (which you shouldn't really be using if you have a choice) will need less. so a really long grain brown rice could take  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups of water, and sushi rice takes just  $1\frac{1}{2}$ .

IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER THOUGH because this method replaces the care of measuring with the care of attention. once you've figured it out for your particular rice you can resume the cruise control you've been c(l/r)utching this whole damn time.

if the rice looks like it might have some teeth-breaking rocks in it, like the organic red rice we bought in brasil, sift through it in a pizzapan to remove any offenders. if it looks web-y, dirt-y, or otherwise like it came directly from the earth, rinse it.

place it with the water to boil on high heat. i add a little bit of fat (oil or butter) and salt. this serves to keep the rice from sticking and to bring out a bit of flavor, but mainly it's a ritual. you can add anything you want — cloves, soy sauce, bacon bits, whatever.

when the water boils, reduce the heat to a simmer and cover. the rice will steam and absorb the water. if you have done the proportions perfectly, after a certain mystical amount of time

- a) all the water will be gone
- b) the rice will be perfectly cooked

most likely this will not be the case. when you check (and don't wait too long because you can't unburn it), you will compare the amount of water left with the amount the rice needs to cook. if it's basically done and there's still water swishing around, all you have to do is pour the water out of the pan and set it back to keep cooking. if the water's almost gone and the rice is still raw, all you have to do is add some water. it helps to add the water in small batches so it can be heated without lowering the temperature of the rice too much.

since you've already ruined the steampressure situation by checking the rice, take a few seconds to stir it against burning or sticking. you'll get a good sense of its moisture as you do this.



know that even after you turn the heat off the rice will continue to cook and absorb a little more water, so if you check it a little later, it's already done and there's a bunch of water, **EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT**. drain the rice well (use a strainer if you have to) and then set it back in the pan with the lid on to finish. don't check it again until you eat to demonstrate your faith.

### 0.1.1 the *pattern* underneath arroz vermelho

- the basic outline for boiling rice is:
  1. heat an empty pan
  2. add some sort of lubricant
  3. add the rice
  4. add the liquid (usually 2:1) with salt
  5. turn down the heat when the water is boiling; cover
  6. let steam to perfection, turn off, fluff.
- in a standard boiled rice you don't necessarily have to add butter or oil (step 2) though it does help with sticking, especially for white rice (more glutinous).
- in between many of these steps you can add spices or other vegetables to cook with your rice. they should be added according to hardness — potatoes at the beginning, greens at the end. spices which require browning can be added between steps 2-3 to roast and release their flavors into the oil.
- remember that you can mix different types of rice together, or even rice with other grains (see chapter six). also, keep your mind open to the notion that liquid is not necessarily synonymous with water: you can use old soup, vegetable stock, the cooking water from beets or potatoes, some milk, coconut milk, tea, coffee etc. alcohol is also popular (like in risotto), and while i've never found much of a taste difference, it looks great on a menu (... accompanied by a georgian wild rice earnestly simmered in a white wine reduction ...)
- soaking the rice for a few hours (or overnight) will greatly reduce the cooking time, because the rice will already have absorbed a significant amount of water. it's another way that a little bit of work (perhaps 30 seconds) the night before can save you ten minutes of cooking while hungry the next day. this is a cornerstone of my argument against the supposed economy of "fast food" — the food is not actually cooked or prepared any faster; *you*, as a narrow alienated individual, have to deal with it less. to compete with that mentality (and compete we should, because who wants to wait an hour for dinner after spending all day working for the man), you must learn a handful of slight and clever tricks to save yourself that precious illusion they call time. all this and more in pamphlet "how and why to fuck the system by cooking your own food (and your neighbors' goddammit)", coming out later on in the kaliyuga.

## 0.1.2 variations on red rice

### *clove or cinnamon pulão*

the first and simplest rice i learned how to make was an indian pulão, which follows the technique outlined above with these variations —

- use long grain basmati rice if you can get it
- the rice is generally soaked and rinsed ahead of time
- one uses *ghee* in step 2
- you throw in a few whole black peppercorns and whole cloves with the rice and water

this can also be made with brown basmati. it has the perfumed aroma of the basmati with added sweet accents of black pepper and clove.

cinnamon perfumed rice is made in a similar way, except that i'll sauté a cinnamon stick (broken into two or three removable pieces) in the butter for a few minutes before adding the rice and water. for an added kick you can add a  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of ground cinnamon to the water as well.

my mom will typically stir in a little butter at the end and if you're ever trying to impress some non-vegans, you should follow her lead.

### *magic yellow rice*

this simplest variation is merely to add  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of turmeric to the water when cooking any white rice. turmeric is a powerful spice, medicine, and dye, and even a tiny amount will dye the entire pot of rice yellow, a boon for those mindful of plating aesthetics.

### *magic purple rice*

another simple variation puts one diced beet into the water with the rice. the cooking beet will turn the entire pot of rice purple!purple, which most people have never even imagined, must less witnessed, in their mortal histories. the sweet beet flavor goes well with the clove/pepper pulão variation above.

### *sweet potato biriyani*

sweet potatoes were always in the market, though never very good. but sometimes you get tired enough to use them. this recipe works equally well with yams, and likely tastes much better.

- 1 large starchy tuber

- 1 carrot
- 2 cups of rice
- 4 cups of water
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 tablespoons of raw peanuts
- cinnamon
- clove
- black pepper
- butter or oil

prepare to boil the rice as suggested above. grind together the spices (or get them ground if you don't have the means of production to do it at home) and sauté them for a minute in the butter. add the rice and stir well with the butter and spices, allowing it to toast lightly before adding the liquid. with the liquid add the sweet potato, chopped into bite-sized chunks, as well as the bay leaves and peanuts. when the rice reaches a boil add the carrot in small diced cubes, simmer down, and cover.

### *fatty coconut rice*

replace half of your cooking water with coconut milk, stir well in the beginning to avoid scorching, and cook normally. adding a bit of mango purée or diced mango will give added sweetness and bring further to mind the Absolute Perfection of the tropical world. a bit of toasted coconut or almond makes an excellent garnish.

for a fatty rice experience without the coconut pricetag, try using milk, half and half, evaporated milk, or condensed milk for some fraction of the cooking liquid.

### *spanish-style fried rice*

there are two types of rice commonly called fried rice. the first one rolls the rice around, still dry, with spices and onions to the point of browning, then dramatically takes down the temperature using the cooking liquid.

- 1 diced onion
- some celery (optional)
- a mix of cayenne pepper, cumin, paprika, and oregano
- 2 cups of rice
- 4 cups of water
- salt

use something closer to a frypan than a pot for this variation. start by heating one tablespoon of oil in the pan and add the rice when hot. continue to flip and stir the

rice, coating it with the oil. when it starts to look a little drier, add the spices and stir together. as the temperature will be hot, they should release their flavors and start to perfume quickly. when the rice begins to brown, add your onion and celery. this will take down the heat a little bit, buying more time for the onions to cook and the spices to develop before the rice wants to burn. when the rice starts to brown yet again, add the cooking liquid. using vegetable stock or chopped tomatoes (maybe from a can, even!) makes an appreciable difference. simmer when it boils and stir occasionally — the tomatoes and red spices should give the familiar orange color.

the cheesily minded should not pass up the opportunity to sprinkle the rice with cheese when it's almost done, and either cover or broil to melt it.

### *chinese-minded fried rice*

this recipe follows the second type of fried rice i have encountered. it's a recycling process of yesterday's dinner into today's lunch, and the only chinese connection i can imagine is that it works best with soy sauce.

- leftover rice
- some cooking oil
- onions
- garlic
- soy sauce
- sesame seeds
- perhaps an egg

heat oil in a pan and chop your onions and garlic. fry them on medium heat until translucent. while they are frying add a little water and soy sauce to the rice container and break up the chunks with your fingers. when the onions are translucent add the rice and turn up the heat, stirring vigorously to separate the rice and mix well with your spices. if you eat eggs, break in an egg or two at the end, throw in a couple shakes of sesame seeds, and continue cooking (back to medium heat) until done.

this is an excellent rice to accept chopped greens (spinach, beet greens, chard) as well, just before you would add the egg.

fluff and garnish with finely chopped green onions before serving.

## 0.2 refried red beans

ajwain/ajmoda is an indian herb that i've seen explained as oregano seed, thyme seed, and celery seed. it's likely something else entirely. i have found that it goes quite well with the excruciatingly popular cooking oil of bahia, dendê. azeite-de-dendê is made from little black olive looking berries clustered around the trunk of a palm tree. it has

a reputation for being fatty and unhealthy, which translates to a spicy heavy flavor, a strong aromatic presence, and a deep red color.

- some tablespoons azeite-de-dendê
- some tablespoons ajwain seeds
- one medium onion, chopped, for each cup of cooked beans
- many cups of cooked red beans (red pinto looking creatures)
- some ground cumin (optional)

pcook the red beans (see explanation below) and drain them. this would of course work with any bean but the whole red thing wouldn't fly as smoothly. heat a saucepan that can take some punishment, to the high side of the fire. when it's hot add enough dendê oil such that it lightly covers the bottom of the pan.

toss in the seeds and let them sizzle and pop. their flavor will fill your kitchen and when it does (but before they blacken) add the chopped onions. fry them vigorously and attentively on high heat until they brown. if they start to stick or otherwise don't seem right before they get to be browning, add some more dendê. when the onions are literally brown you can add the cumin. doing so will make the flavor more familiar and likable — the ajwain can be strong and foreign on its own. remember to brown the cumin, cooking it on high heat until you are shocked by the pungency of its aroma, before you add the beans.

now add even more dendê with the beans and stir everything together. reduce the heat to medium and spend the next few moments of your life BEING the mixing and crushing of those beans. no bean left intact: some a paste and most mere fractions of their harvested selves. this is the well-frying of the beans, where they come face to face with the vermilion specter of dendê, absorb the depth and pungency of the spices, and evolve into the alreadiness they have been awaiting.

salt to taste, serve.

### 0.2.1 the *pattern* of refrying beans

the first thing the people need to know, before they take either control, the streets, or the power, is how to cook beans. somewhere in this book there is a section on Equipment and therein lies the answer.

once you have quickly- and safely-cooked beans, and forever evicted the twin scourges of tin cans and excessive flatulence from your hallowed kitchen, you can start getting into the wonderful world of leguminous protein in all its protean variations.

the *frijol refrito* is probably (and justifiably) the most famous of these. a typical refried-bean pattern (USE THIS FOR ANY and EVERY DRIED BEAN) goes something like this

1. pcook your beans
2. while they are cooking
  - (a) chop some sort of onion
  - (b) prepare (usually roast and grind) some sort of spice
  - (c) heat oil in hot pan (medium-high)
  - (d) fry onions until browned
  - (e) release pressure from cooker (it should be done)
  - (f) fry spices until smelly
  - (g) add beans, saving water off to the left
  - (h) cook together with low heat and high energy, mashing until it looks like it came out of a cheap can
  - (i) add last minute touches and salt.

note that:

- indians put a small amount of asafoetida (which tastes horrible) with all beans as a digestive aid.
- most beans go well with garlic, which should be added as the onions show evidence of browning.
- each bean goes well with some spices/herbs and not others. let reckless experimentation be your guiding star.
- final elements often include cilantro, lemon juice, salt, and sugar; important additions for the palate that neither want nor need to be heated.

## 0.2.2 variations on refried beans

### *refried feijão fradinho dip*

use the pattern above.

so for the *feijão fradinho* that are so ubiquitous in bahia, i applied this technique to green onions (excising the root end and the sad looking sections of the top), fenugreek seeds and garlic. to be precise, i threw the garlic in between steps (d) and (f) while i performed (e) with my other hand. it's an advanced maneuver.

fenugreek is an indian plant and you'll have to BUY the hard angular seeds from an ETHNIC store. they are too hard to use raw and turn soft and pleasant (and bitterly toned) when dry roasted, allowing easy grinding. if the last sentence really turned you off, you can use cumin but cumin is such a staple spice with this sort of dish so please for the love of love! for the love of martha try something else. i imagine dill- and pumpkin-seed would both give interesting flavor experiences.

for the final touches, chopped cilantro and lime juice are essential as few other things in this world.

a note on nomenclature: this is a dip, not a plate of beans. why? essentially it comes down to the power structure appropriating language to manipulate those among us who recognize it only on the level of a communication tool and neglect to notice the deep mindwarp-level where it really simmers.

specifically, you've mashed the beans enough to kill any agency or identity in- and for-themselves, so they just default to a mashy hive-mind we call 'dip'. the consistency is thick and starchy enough to balance heftily on a bread or chip, and the spicing a bit too prominent to be a main dish anywhere outside of the indian hypercontinent.

### *standard and delicious black beans*

use plenty of garlic when the onions are browning and add the following spices when the garlic browns:

- lots of ground cumin
- oregano
- chopped rosemary (optional)

brown well until mighty and fragrant. when you add the beans use some of the reserve liquid (and perhaps a chopped tomato) as well to provide a lounge for a couple of bay leaves. simmer down the water for ten minutes, allow the bay leaves to express themselves before removal and mashing begins in earnest.

these are excellent with finely chopped onions and cilantro mixed in at the end, perhaps with a little lemon or lime juice.

### *feijão fradinho á la mostaza*

black eyed peas are all over bahia (famously in acarajé) and frequently showed up at our table.

before adding the onions to your hot oil inject a heaping tablespoon of whole black or yellow mustard seeds. cover the lid in anticipation of savage popping and add the onions only when the music ceases. fry the onions closer to medium than high heat and add the garlic when translucent. add chopped tomato along with the beans, simmer in a little of the cooking liquid (as in the black beans, above), and stir more vigorously when the liquid *vai embora*.

we never had any in bahia but chopped mustard or collard greens would fit perfectly in this dish, in lieu of adding extra cooking liquid at the end.

### *feijão fradinho with fenugreek and urucum*

another black eyed pea dish, this one comes out spicier and drier.

after the onions are brown add chopped garlic and green chile, brown for a minute, and add a toasted ground mixture of fenugreek and urucum. urucum, if you have it, is a red seed used mainly as a colorant in bahia. fenugreek is more commonly used in indian cooking and has an earthy, slightly bitter flavor. both are extremely hard and require soaking or toasting to be able to grind them properly.

continue as in the standard recipe, adding in farinha de mandioca or cornmeal in the end to cook for a few minutes and give a rougher texture.

### *green pinto bean tacos*

i haven't seen them before or since, but green pinto beans refried with cumin and coriander made an excellent taco lunch one hot december day. i'm sure normal pinto beans would do the trick.

a slight unspoken glass of coconut milk gives the beans an added kick of creamy consistency.

serve with freshly ground roasted cumin on top.

## 0.3 mango salsa

- 3 ripe mangos
- 1 good white onion
- 1 bunch cilantro
- 6 malagueta chiles
- juice of 3 limes
- salt

the perfect salsa for a tropical climate, founded on the early 21st century mantra — “the mango is the new tomato”. of course, in the old tropical world, the tomato was once the new mango. but never as good.

chop everything together. ingredients are listed in decreasing order of size. the bigger and sweeter your mangos are, the smaller and hotter your chiles should be. remember that lime juice and salt are your bridges and if something tastes wrong, you needs must build more bridges.

### 0.3.1 fruit salsa as a *pattern*

here the world is your oyster and no direction is advised. a good fruit salsa by my standards is sweet, hot, and sour. so take any fleshy fruit from peaches to papayas, add lime, onion, and chile, and you're on the road to success. some fruits go well with ginger, others with garlic, and many with nothing but pure hot chile peppers.



to experiment, walk around the grocery store or market with a chile in one hand and rub it over every fruit you see before taking a big slobbering bite. by the time you're evicted you should have a good idea of how to proceed.

### 0.3.2 variations on mango salsa

#### *pineapple salsa*

- 1 pineapple peeled and chopped
- 1 bunch of cilantro, stemmed and chopped
- 1 medium white onion, diced
- a small amount of ginger and chile pounded together

#### *pineapple salad*

pineapple is so damn good you don't actually need anything else. cube pineapple and mix it with salt and black pepper for a savory sweet spicy dinner salad salsa.

#### *soy peach / papaya salsa*

this salsa worked really well as a marinade one night when Wagner surprised us with an eel.

- 1 ripe papaya
- an inch of good ginger
- juice of two or three limes
- 1 tablespoon of honey
- soy sauce to taste
- cheap white wine to thin it out

the papaya should be ripe enough that cubing it leads to a small mess. mince the ginger, mix all the spices together well, and add the papaya gently so as not to purée it.

if you're from nowhere near the tropics, it's still important to look at this and make it your own. really ripe peaches are papayas in disguise and this recipe would be perfect for them, as well as overripe or poached asian pears and especially those overripe persimmon creatures (kaki in various languages) you can get on the cheap during the dying hours of the public market in the *cours salaya*.

## 0.4 standard brasilian table hot

so yes in this particular case 'hot' is a noun. you can (or at least, i could) go into any restaurant in bahia and ask "tem picante" (do you have hot?) to which the baiana

would respond “teeemmmmm” (haaaaaave) or maybe just bring you a little bowl of spicy vinegary salsa. depending on where you are eating you taste more chile or more vinegar. no matter where you are, asking for salsa is no good — they’ll just bring you parsley.

- a cup of malagueta chile peppers

or any of their small spicy brethren. they’re cheapest at the end of a market (get the ones that are going bad and pick through them, singing along to gilberto gil) or at a funny eastern grocery anytime.

- some under-ripe tomato

what we/they have in brasil; your standard supermarket hard-and-flavorless should do the trick

- an onion
- a few cloves of garlic

chop everything together into a small heterogeneous mixture. the peppers should be the smallest pieces and the largest total volume. add a little salt and pepper and cover with vinegar. let sit for a day or two, occasionally shaking. the infusion will of course get stronger and stronger as the days go on.

to use, you can either pour off the vinegar directly for salad dressings and medicinal purposes, or spoon out the mixture with its juices, like in brasil. always cover with vinegar after using to prevent the quick spoilage that is the specter haunting tropical lands.

#### 0.4.1 the picante *pattern*

the simple idea here is that the material world is none other than your personal chalk-board, and you should look at gallon jugs of distilled vinegar in the same way a sculptor looks at driftwood or a child at construction paper. anything that tastes good by itself — and many things that don’t, due to strength or edginess — will make vinegar taste great. and there’s no reason to use flavorless industrial vinegar ever again, not when you have rosemary, garlic, dill, ginger, cucumber, or chile to spare.

the next time you’re leaving the market with a measly two points in your pocket, you may happen to pass a tired farmer trying to reli(e)ve himself of a produce basket whose memebbers have lost their virginal luster.

fear not. hesitate not.

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clear him out, wash them well, add salt and pepper, and cover with vinegar for a whimsical while. you'll have pickled XXXX and tasty vinegar in a few weeks (or months) to validate your most minor of charities.





broiled zucchini steak sandwiches on  
coconut-wheat bread, served with  
passionfruit hummus and fresh vegetables  
while a mediterranean-inspired tomato salad  
chills on the side

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## 1.1 broiled zucchini steaks

- zucchini
- olive oil
- lime juice
- hot chiles (optional)
- freshly ground black peppercorns
- salt

vegetable steaks are simple, hearty, fast, and fulfilling. all you need is a broiler.

move a rack to the top of the oven and preheat the broiler. trim the ends of the zucchini (or whatever summer squash you might have) and slice it lengthwise into steaks slightly smaller than the thickness of your finger. the fatter they are the juicier and rawer they will be in the middle. marinate them in a baking dish or tray with the rest of the ingredients. in brasil, lime juice is easier to find than lemon — the key is to find an acidic taste to balance the oil. you can use vinegar too: balsamic and red wine both work great with squash.

clearly the longer they marinate the better (overnight would be divine) but i'm assuming we're dealing with time pressures and bad attitudes so it's generally good to start baking as soon as the oven is hot enough. it's not a big timecommitment to do a few minor preparations each night before going to bed — soaking beans, marinating vegetables, starting bread — but somehow those rituals have been excised from our cultural rituals and replaced by late night television. oh well.

place your zukes up close to the flame and broil them for a few minutes. the first black spots indicate they're ready to go — pay careful attention and flip them as they get to the level of charring you're comfortable with. the second side won't need as long, might be rather wet, and sometimes if they're thin enough i don't even flip them at all. move them to a plate where they can cool and await the sandwich of their dreams.

### 1.1.1 the lunch vegetable steak *pattern* explicated

the typical lunch/snack food in brasil, served at lanchonetes every twenty meters with tall glasses of freshly squeezed orange juice for less than 1 point, is a variation on the “X-Egg”. X naturally is pronounced “cheese” and the “cheese-egg” is a fried egg and cheese sandwich on old white bread toasted with generous amounts of butter. high quality establishments, like our neighborhood joint ”‘*parade obrigatória* ’” serve it up with lettuce, tomato, and picante.

or those of you planning on traveling to brasil in this plane or the astral one, i may note that the “X-Egg” is something of an emergent property of language and cuisine, and neither the words “Cheese” nor “Egg” are necessarily intelligible on their own.

our complementary option was a vegetable sandwich with optional “X-Egg” on top of it.

as it was a popular paradigm at O Bigode, we came up with a number of variations. the markets usually had either eggplant, butternut squash, or zucchini, and the techniques would also work well with root vegetables. the variations we indulged in were of three types: choice of XXXX vegetable, cooking technique, and preparation.

the broiling zucchini number is fast and easy and works for most other vegetables as well. the fleshy ones provide the best results of course but slices of a large beet or rutabaga work great. starchy root vegetables (potato, yam, manioc) in a sandwich get a little on the chalky side for me and are best enjoyed on their own.

baking the vegetable, as is done in the squash recipe (below) takes a little longer and gives a sweeter softer taste. it's also appropriate if you want to throw a bunch of other flavors in with your main event: the added time helps them break the ice; the lower heat keeps smaller guys from burning as the larger ones finish cooking.

if you don't have an oven you can use a combination of dry roasting and steaming to get a similar effect on the stove top. lightly grease your pan or griddle, place a few steaks on medium heat, and cook until it starts to smoke and blister. flip the steaks, cooking another minute or two, and pour a small amount of water onto the pan. immediately cover as the water steams and it should cook into your steaks.

searing or breading the steak before baking it speeds up the cooking, adds another dimension of flavor, and provides an interesting texture. argentines and brasilians alike are fond of dunking food in egg and dredging it through flour before cooking, and the ubiquitous mandioca used in brasil adds a great crunch.

and yes, of course, eggs are neither considered vegetables nor vegetarian.

### 1.1.2 variations on broiled zucchini steaks

#### *milanesa de berenjena with rosemary hummus and a gentle flower of baked garlic*

slice your eggplant lengthwise as you did the squash, thinner than a finger in depth. many prefer the eggplant peeled but i'll leave it on if it's organic. nutrients and pesticides alike congregate in the *piel*, which often has a totally different (and usually more bitter) taste than the vegetable inside. if you don't believe me try eating just the peel of a grape and see what you think.

heat a pan on medium-high heat and prepare it with a little oil. if you happen to have any rosemary-infused oil lying around, use that. loosely beat together a couple of eggs (and maybe some water to thin) in a shallow plate and assemble the following in another one:

- 1 cup *farinha de mandioca* (or perhaps flour or cornmeal or any grainy grain product)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp freshly ground toasted cumin (or whatever cumin you have)

- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp cayenne pepper (if you're up for it)

now take each steak, wet both sides in the egg-mixture, drip it over to the flour plate, dredge it, and toss it into your pan or grill. it will take a few minutes to cook each side — the batter will stick to the eggplant and brown — so the bigger the pan the faster this task will be.

as each steak finishes, move it to a greased baking sheet and bake as you would the zucchini above or squash below. while you're waiting for the eggplant to cook, take

1. an entire head of garlic and
2. cut off the tops (where they join together) and
3. rub with olive oil and
4. wrap in foil.

now put that present in the preheating oven while you're waiting for the steaks to finish. time it so that as the last eggplant finishes the oven is the right temperature for baking the tray. at this point the garlic should be half-way through its baking therapy and you can pull it out in a few minutes when the milanesas are cured.

as with the zucchini, you may need to fold or cut an individual steak to fit the sandwich, though some like the aesthetic of the hanging vegetable. butter the bread with rosemary *hummus* (see below) and place the entire baked flower on your lover or customer's plate. it's good for them.

### *squash sandwich with carrot mayonnaise and a tray of roasted vegetables*

take onions and *tranches* of butternut squash and bake them in the oven with olive oil and black pepper and rosemary (if you brought it from argentina). when huenu and muticia handed you that bundle like a sword a season and climate ago, they knew, yes they must have known, but how could they have known where it would go and who it would be — that their commonplace mother of herbs would be *the* exotic touch in a land whose very name instills throes of exotic longing way down there in patagonia?

when they (the steaks, not your wistful longing — there is a word for that in portuguese — for lovers or lovers-who-should-have-been. at the time it may have made some difference but now the looks and the longing have settled together in a sweet smiling sorrow that helps with the illusion that yes you have lived) start to caramelize you can take them out. i like to leave the peel of the squash on but many humans are not used to such behavior. any other vegetables you throw in with the broilers can be put on the side. this is the steak of your sandwich

to doll up the orange meaty sweetness of the squash (or pumpkin or whatever is in the family at your local franchise organic farm store), i like to throw in a few cloves and ginger and sunflower oil instead of the above. the key magic ingredient to this — which being from a decidedly temperate fruit has neither right nor basis in an ostensibly



brasilian cookbook – is quince. the perfume of the baking quince does a damn fine job of impregnating the squash. and you can use the baked fruit afterwards for any number of sweet or savory treats.

for condiments i would butter the bread with a version of carrot mayonnaise (see chapter five), and use thin slices of tomato and cucumber on top. alternatively, you could place the steak on a layer of torn spinach leaves (or other non-tasteless green, like mizuna, endive, or arugula)

and of course in traditional brasilian style, don't be afraid to toss an oily fried egg on top before closing that sandwich.

## 1.2 coconut sandwich loaves

- water
- flour: half whole wheat and half white
- coconut milk
- oil
- sugar
- salt
- yeast

if you know how to make bread, just make bread with coconut milk instead of butter or oil or milk or whatever you add to The Sponge to soften the dough. if you don't, know that:

1. bread is easy. bread is easy. bread is easy.
2. it was probably a product of laziness and sloppiness by some ancient man who couldn't follow his woman's instructions, which is to say, it's available to all of us and should be an integral part of our lives. if you eat gluten and all of that.
3. to make bread you need flour and water. that's all. to make tasty bread you also need salt. that's all. to make tasty bread and not have a live ETERNAL BREAD CREATURE living in your house day and night, you'll need to buy some domestic yeast.
4. there are exactly as many ways to make bread as there are names for the unnamable. don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

on the eve of each day we opened the restaurant, i would mix my yeasties in warm water with a few cups of flour. it formed a stringy paste somewhere between what you would use to flier a city and what your girlfriend's father might cook you for an awkward breakfast. then i would go to sleep or walk on the beach or listen to dj panozzo or have a few brasilian beers or whatever it was and in the morning the paste would have evolved into the beginnings of bread. this first, overnight, rise was considered so important to

french bakers (back in the day, when people cared about themselves and the world that touched them) that selling bread that had NOT risen at least eight hours was a crime.

you will see bubbles of carbon dioxide throughout, feel powerful strands of gluten resisting your stirs, and smell the characteristic *cheiro* of yeasty living. this paste is called The Sponge. add half a can of coconut milk to The Sponge. at this point you may wonder, how much bread am i making anyways? well, you can always control that by the amount of liquid you initially add: XXXX cups makes XXXX loaves of bread.

after beating the *leite de coco* well into The Sponge, begin to add your flours. mix in each cup thoroughly and smoothly until you can no longer use a utensil. continue to add flour, cup by cup, until you have a smooth and slightly sticky ball, by Kneading together the dough with the raw animal power of your hands.

the goal of the Kneading is to lengthen and to harmonize the stringy tendons of the dough (called gluten) until you have a smooth rubbery live ball. a popular technique is to push into the dough (and away from your body) with the palm of your hand, stretching out the mass only to pick up the end and fold it back to where you started. as you begin to push again, turn the dough (or the entire bowl) ninety degree so your next push is perpendicular. if you continue in this fashion for 10 or 15 minutes your dough should be smooth, uniform, and symmetrically developed.

it is extremely important, across cultures and epochs, only to mix the dough with one hand. the ancients too understood that one must always keep a hand clean and dry to turn the bowl, answer the phone, etc. so much so that in argentina the expression for “getting caught red-handed” is “getting caught with your hands in the dough”.

at this point the yeast need to frolic, yet again. protect the yeast by oiling the bowl (to prevent sticking) and covering with a damp cloth (to prevent drying). let them play until the bread has doubled in volume; the carbon-dioxide has filled the cubby-holes of the gluten lattice we constructed kneadingly. when the bread is large and incharge, uncover and take a deep whiff. making bread is a meditation and eventually we on this planet, together, will come to understand that the making is, itself, the true reward. press down upon the bread using your fist with a pressure correspondent to your mood. the spell is broken, the carbon-dioxide escapes, and you are left with the deflated doughy mess.

Knead again for a few minutes, oil gently and, cut the dough swiftly and surely into as many loaves as you want (remember, they will grow) and place in loaf pans to make sandwich bread. preheat the oven as your bread rises one final time. know that you are preparing for the wholesale slaughter of these creatures, for whom you have cared so deeply and so handily. and yet, somehow, this is not only okay, but as it should be.

when the oven is hot (say 350 F) enter the bread and do something else. be nearby and check them when you smell them, or be somewhere else and come back in 30-40 minutes. a few minutes after they look done, verify. remove from the pans and tap the bottom — a hollow sound indicates the flour has absorbed the excess water and the cooking is complete. turn off the oven and let the bread proudly rest on top of your stove. do not attempt to cut and eat them immediately as they will fall apart and burn

your mouth.

### 1.2.1 a gentle pattern to breadmaking

there exist as many variations on bread as attempts to pronounce the unspeakable.

#### *accepted ingredients*

- flour

i would prefer to use finely ground unbleached organic whole wheat flour for one hundred percent of my baking needs. unfortunately, this bread often doesn't rise (most of the whole wheat flour you get isn't finely ground enough) to most people's satisfaction. and we've grown up in a white society in oh-so-many ways and maybe it's not even desirable to totally turn our back on the wonderbread fantasia of our collective past. so generally at O Bigode we used half/half whole wheat and white flour, trucking the whole wheat flour back from the store in Salvador and getting the ultra-refined/bleached/processed white flour from the *mercadinho* in Aratuba. in anglo-amerika, most co-ops have unrefined, unbleached, white flour which, while lacking the bran and germ of the wheat, doesn't include the chlorine and whatever other spooky chemicals people get to taste in their wedding cakes.

- water

any water that's healthy to drink is healthy for bread, and i would even use water that's not. you can boil water to stab out the impurities and use it for The Sponge as it cools down to warm. a popular measure for how hot is just right is the temperature your wrist can handle comfortably, without focusing your attention on trying to bend the Matrix.

remember that the amount of fluid in the bread (water + any fats or specialties you use) essentially controls the volume of bread you're making. the texture of the dough should be at least slightly sticky, and perhaps even wet. wetter doughs are difficult to work with and provide a moister final loaf.

- salt

salt, endorsed by french medieval bakers and neighborhood fatties alike, brings out the flavor of the bread and retards the rising time. it will kill the yeast if allowed to contact them directly (in the case of dry, packaged yeast), so make sure to mix them in solution. coarser salts tend to have more flavor and mineral nutrition — sea salt is nice, mountain salt is nicer.

- yeast

yeast are small fungi that are everywhere and alive. think of them as microscopic everpresent friends from the mushroom kingdom, sent to earth's airs to help humanity in nutrition and inebriation. we evolved together. the same yeast that works with us to make bread works with us to make alcohol. historically, humans picked up on the alcohol first, began cultivating grain (millet) to get more of it, and ended up with extra grain for less exciting culinary pursuits.

in the modern world it might help to think of yeast as alchemical machines transmuting simple sugars to carbon dioxide and alcohol. in baking bread we're mainly concerned with the rising power of the carbon dioxide; in making wine we're mainly concerned with the liberating power of the alcohol.

yeast are like volcanoes in many ways. as far as i have noticed, they exist among three main states of awareness — death, dormancy, and reproduction. they do not survive well in hot temperatures (hence canning and pasteurization) and are made sleepy by cold temperatures (so you can store them in the fridge). at room temperature and slightly above they are happy and active, reproducing early and often, giving off carbon dioxide and alcohol to their fungal hearts' content.

as with most things that are or were alive (like celery or chicken) one can choose to buy them (usually dead) or to care for them constantly and kill them ourselves. yeast are easier and cheaper to care for than chickens and if you're going to make bread on a regular basis it might behoove you to do so. all a yeast colony needs to live is sugar. this can be processed sugar, raw sugar, fruit sugar, or the sugar in flour.

### *how do i create and care for a yeast colony (already in progress)?*

generally, selfishly, called a starter. that which starts your bread also, somehow, ends their blockparty. so be sure to give thanks.

mix a little yeast with warm water and flour and let it sit outside (temperate or tropical zones, dry skies) for a few hours. it should bubble and thicken. it is alive. store in your refrigerator to control population growth and take out a couple spoons each time you make bread. remember the words of meister eckhart "that which we take in through contemplation we must give out through love" — so be sure to

- a) replace the colony you use with more yeast-food (some sugar, some flour)
- b) share your holy bread with lovers and strangers alike. (some mornings this will be easy)

### *what if i don't have any yeast to start with?*

you don't need to have yeast. the yeast have you. the sour smell of your garbage. the "rotting" pear at the bottom of your fruit bowl. the sediment in your microbrew. there are many more yeast than there are humans and they live in most places we do. to entice/trap some from the air simply leave some sugar/honey with water on the table for a day or two. cover with a cheesecloth or clean t-shirt to screen out flies and small

children — the pores will be enough for invisible flying mushrooms to enter and to feast. when it starts to bubble, add some more sugar and flour to the mixture and, voila, you have your very own conspiratorial fungal colony.

### *what about other ingredients?*

bread and beer purity laws, famous in france and germany, are the coy straitjackets of poetic form. like haikus and sonnets, they impose artificial limits in whose obedience we express ourselves and through whose transgression we taste novelty and freedom.

fats make your bread softer and spongier and should be used if you're trying to appeal to non-french or non-ascetics. traditional amerikan breads use milk, butter, or oil to soften their bread so it lasts longer before hardening and is easier to chew. because i was in brasil and i'm not particularly fond of milk anyhow i used mainly coconut milk for the fatty dimension. coconut palms are to brasil what cows are to india. and though the bread never tasted strongly of coconut, i felt good knowing it was there.

sugars quicken the rising time as they provide more food and easier access to the yeast. some of the sugar (from the flour and the sweetener) will not be metabolized and this residue serves to sweeten the bread. if you want your bread to taste store-bought, be sure to add lots of fat, salt, and sugar, as those are the stalwart roots of contemporary gastronomy.

eggs are amazing and there's whole books about them so all i can say is that if you're not opposed to it and you're using wheat flour, the egg will really help in the rising action of the bread. really, really help. beat it in to The Sponge with whatever else you're adding.

goodies and knickknacks. you can add anything you damn well please to bread during the final rise. sesame seeds, nuts, fried onions, bacon bits, cranberries, cinnamon, garlic, whatever. after you've punched down the bread and before you separate it into loaves (or after if you want some variety), take a handful of whatever you want to mix in and lay on your floured surface. knead the bread into and around your pile and eventually you will see little specks of pumpkin seeds or nutella or nori showing up all over your bread.

### *and if i live in a world with time constraints?*

there are those of us yet uncomfortable with manipulating space-time, and it often happens that we decide we want bread in a couple of hours, not across the long night of our future. hell, there's no guarantee that either you or the sun will be here eight minutes from now, much less tomorrow.

so yes, you can make bread without letting it rise overnight. you can mix yeast and water in one bowl and flour and salt in another one. when both are uniform add the flour to the water and knead together until smooth. oil it well and let it rise in a warm place (maybe a preheated oven to very very low). let it double in size, punch it down, preheat the oven and let it rise again. when the oven is hot you can bake it.

or if you're really in a hurry, forget about the second rise, don't punch it down, and throw it (carefully) directly into the oven. you will notice the difference in the texture of the bread, but if you're hungry or craving in a profound way, you probably won't care.

## 1.2.2 variations on sandwich bread

### *cheddar / black pepper bread*

1. make The Sponge
2. add butter and a cup of milk or yogurt, mix well
3. add a few tablespoons of freshly grated black pepper.
4. make The Knead
5. let rest, rise, and deflate
6. Knead in a cup of grated cheddar cheese and some whole peppercorns
7. form and bake

### *cranberry / walnut bread*

1. make The Sponge
2. add 1 cup of orange juice, a few tablespoons of maple syrup, mix well
3. make The Knead, keeping it on the moister side
4. let rest, rise, and deflate
5. Knead in a cup of chopped walnuts and craisins
6. form and bake

### *savory breakfast bread*

for eating with eggs, fried eggs.

1. make The Sponge
2. add olive oil, chopped sautéed garlic and/or scallions, raw minced chives, freshly ground black pepper
3. make The Knead
4. let rest, rise, and deflate
5. Knead with a little more olive oil
6. form and bake

## 1.3 brasilian hummus

- a lot of cooked chickpeas
- a few healthy dollops of *tahini*
- juice of a couple of passionfruits
- lime
- olive oil
- garlic
- roasted cumin seeds
- sal

our brasilian hummus was very similar to the traditional middle eastern variety. the only ingredients in the lebanese hummus we used to get were (in order of appearance)

- chick peas
- tahini
- lemon juice
- olive oil
- salt

to this i like to add freshly ground roasted cumin seeds and roasted garlic. since both are used extensively in bahian cuisine, they fit with the motif and appellation. the real new world twist however comes in the acid addition — limes instead of lemons (so much easier to find) and the alienheavenly bite of *maracujá*.

you'll probably never come across it unless you're buying food to make this recipe (why?) or find yourself between henry's tropics. but if you do, know that a good way to get the juice is to blend the pulp, seeds and all, with just enough (clean) water, and then strain through a tea or (more commonly available) juice strainer. the black bits will stay behind and you can use the (slightly) watered down suco de maracujá as your lemon juice.

the key takeaway of this particular slide is not “my food is so much cooler because it's tropical” or even that the taste walks you over to the sublime (already in progress) but that anywhere you go (more accurately, anywhere i've been) you can find the means to produce the flavor sense combinations that simple good food requires. hummus is about a creamy beany experience punctuated with yelps of citric acid. you can get that acidity from vinegar (ouch), raw mangos, sour oranges, gooseberries, grapefruit or even some types of jawbreakers.

### 1.3.1 varying the hummus *pattern*

as many intrepid cooks over the years have noticed, there are many types of beans and all of them seem to fit pretty well in the mortar, blender, robot, etc.

the basic technique i've evolved into using follows:

1. have your cooked beans ready to go. hopefully you pressure cooked and didn't hurt anybody (see chapter zero).
2. if you're using a blender or robot, blend the beans with a little bit of the cooking liquid in the machine. they should blend smoothly but not too watery.
3. when they've blended to just the right consistency, transfer to the mixing/serving dish and casually rinse the blender. since you didn't use any fiery spices or oils, it should easily rinse clear. this is important because blenders and robots can be a pain to clean if oily or left to crustify. also, with this technique you can quickly make three or four different "hummus" or "bean pâtés" in parallel.
4. add whatever spices, oils, vinegars, herbs, or vegetables you want and mix well.

some thoughts regarding flavor combination and proportion:

1. most hummus-type creations follow the model of bean / fat / acid / spices. beans are starchy and basic and will dry out (as well as ferment quicker) without the oily and acidic elements.
2. you often don't need very much oil, there's a wide variety of happy middle ground, and putting too much will make it taste disgusting. recipes will always call for olive oil and you don't have to use it. mostly people who cook real, good, food in the world can't afford olive and they do without. it's fine.
3. beans are large. don't be afraid to use strong spices in healthy amounts. garlic goes well with most beans. it's nice to use a fresh herb and dry spice in combination.

all of these spreads are good with any kind of bread product, though each has its traditional ally — hummus with pita, black beans with tortillas, canellini with toasted baguette slices.

### 1.3.2 variations on brasilian hummus

#### *rosemary hummus*

- chick peas (see chapter zero)
- tahini
- oil olive
- lemon juice



- garlic
- rosemary

this hummus variant uses an infused oil to incorporate the sweet strong flavor of rosemary into the dish. while the chickpeas are still cooking, place a couple cups of olive oil (or whatever oil you plan to use) on low heat at the back of the stove and drop in a few branches of rosemary. the oil will slowly heat and absorb the essence of rosemary. let them cook together for about an hour, remove the rosemary, and make the hummus as you normally would.

to give the garlic a subtler flavor add it to the infusing rosemary for the last 10-15 minutes of cooking, then remove and chop or blend as you would normally.

the herbal infusion can also be done without heating — simply cover a few branches of rosemary with olive oil in a bottle or jar and leave in the sun for a week or two. you can do this with any and every herb you find and build up an incredible collectors edition set of beautiful thriftstore bottles each with a colored infused oil or vinegar. you'll be the talk of the town.

before serving, garnish with a mixture of finely diced onion, tomato, and cooked rosemary leaves.

### *split pea pâté*

- one or two finely chopped onions
- caraway
- cooked split peas (see chapter one)
- some vegetable oil
- fresh parsley
- lemon juice
- sal

this follows the typical model except the onions it incorporates are fried separately to give a deep taste and crispy texture. lay a pan on high heat, add enough oil to thinly cover its bottom, and add the onions when hot. you'll have to be attentive and stir constantly to fry well without burning. two onions will likely give you much more fried onion than you need but everyone loves fried onions so don't sweat it. when the onions are fully brown, turn off the heat, give a final couple of stirs, and incorporate into the pâté. if you prefer some spice, add cayenne pepper to the frying onions: late in the game but a few minutes before the end so their essence can mingle and develop.

the caraway seeds, toasted and ground, provide an earthy flavor that the beans desperately lack. if it ends up tasting like nothing, it's because there are too many peas for the onions and caraway. if you don't have caraway, use cumin, fenugreek, or even dill.

the parsley is finely chopped and gets folded in at the end with the salt and lemon juice.

*black bean dip*

black beans are generally acknowledged to be “the” favorite bean, so of course there are many ways to enjoy them. if you have leftover black bean soup or refried black beans, pounding or blending them into a dip is the natural next step in the evolution of your (you and the beans’) relationship. unflavored black beans work as well but would benefit from the treatment given to the canellini beans, below.

- black beans (see chapter zero)
- some cooking oil
- garlic
- hot chiles
- ground roasted cumin
- raw chopped onion
- salt

it’s generally more appealing with some whole beans intact, so i generally mash the pâté by hand instead of using the robot. the garlic and chile should be diced (or ground) together and mixed in from the beginning, so they have the most time to disperse. i add the onion last so it retains both shape and pungency. it’s nice to serve a little chopped tomato and fragrant ground roasted cumin on top.

*white canellini bean spread aux herbes fraîches*

this spread differs from most others in that it requires a minor “refrying” of the beans to get the right consistency and flavor.

- garlic
- rosemary, lavender, oregano
- canellini beans (see chapter zero)
- salt
- black pepper
- olive oil

heat a couple of tablespoons of olive oil in a pan and sauté the garlic on medium heat. chop the herbs — use only what you have, every incarnation will be different and somehow equally part of the majesty of The Creation. when the garlic begins to brown and strongly flirt with fragrance, add the beans and herbs. stir and mash in a sweeping rounded motion until you have a white spread punctuated with bits of green and brown. some of the beans should be intact and provide a textural experience.

salt and pepper to taste; the final product should be creamy with a balance of olive oil, garlic, and rosemary.

## 1.4 a mediterranean salad, à la tropicale

the standard amerikan idea of “salad” involves lettuce, whereas i’ve found the typical other-world idea of “salad” involves any kind of random vegetable — often even cooked. culture from bulgaria to lebanon knows a salad heavily based on tomatoes, cucumbers, and some sort of feta cheese. feta cheese and good olives are available to the 1% of the brasilian population who know about their existence, dare to enter the upper-class supermarkets, and have the financial huskies to pull that sleigh. most of the time that wasn’t our scene but in the final analysis, good olives are good olives.

- a couple of ripe red tomatoes, sliced radially into wedges and then again in half
- one cucumber, peeled, seeded, and roughly diced
- olives and their juice
- crumbled feta cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$  a white onion, roughly but thinly sliced
- olive oil
- lemon juice
- salt
- freshly ground black pepper

i would cut the onion first and let it sit the lemon juice (we generally used lime) for as long as possible, to en-suave its sharp edges. failing lemon juice, wine vinegar works well. then i’d chop everything else and mix together. the olive oil is generally a strong presence, though not sickly dominant. as with most salads without crisp greens, this benefits from a few hours of togetherly marination.

### 1.4.1 Variations on longing for the mediterranean pattern

each micro-clime will have its own variations of course, but most seem to be based in tomato, cucumber, or both. the presence or absence of the local feta-type cheese is an important distinction, as well as the types of olives. fresh herbs, such as sage or thyme, add a nice dimension, as does minced garlic (either alone or with some olives, creating a partial *tapenade* vibe).

some cultures prefer to base the salad on chopped fragrant herbs such as parsley, cilantro, or mint. you can add equal parts of all three, finely or roughly chopped, to the standard version for a powerful and stimulating dish.

this whole school of salad can also be made with a cooled cooked grain as a primary ingredient. bulgur and couscous are used often in the middle east to provide starch, and texture. simply cook the grain as directed (see chapter six), cool, and mix in to the salad.

if you have easy access to it (like a tree in your back yard), avocado and coconut make great tropical additions to this salad family. i would toss avocado with a little lemon

juice and add it at the end to avoid crumbling. fresh or dried coconut should be grated and toasted (very very carefully) and sprinkled on top.

## 1.4.2 variations on a mediterranean salad

### *lebanese fresh zaatar*

- tomatoes
- cucumber
- olives
- onion
- lots of lemon juice
- lots of olive oil

and for the spices, equal quantities of:

- fresh thyme leaves
- sesame seeds
- ground sumac

### *couscous salad*

- a couple cups of loose couscous, cooked in some coconut milk (see chapter six)
- diced cucumber or slightly underripe mango
- minced onion and garlic
- lime juice
- a pinch of cinnamon
- a handful of raisins
- carefully toasted pinenuts

### *tabbouleh*

- a couple cups of cooked bulgur (see chapter six)
- finely chopped parsley and cilantro
- diced tomato and cucumber
- minced onion and garlic
- lemon juice
- olive oil
- salt
- freshly ground black pepper

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*serve yourself*

in brasil and argentina, salad often meant a few distinct piles of vegetables on different parts of a large plate, include boiled potato and cauliflower, huge slices of underripe tomatoes, a small dish of olives, and some tasteless lettuce. let that be your inspiration.

the plus side of the à la carte salad? it's a culinary structure designed to empower each diner to take control of her own gastronomic experience — we can all make our own mixture from the large-cut vegetables on a centralized plate. white wine vinegar, olive oil, and salt and in ready reach for each person to dress their own

refrain from mixing together:

- large tomato slices
- cucumber rounds
- diced sweet peppers
- onions in half moons
- a pile of crumbled feta

and a few doves, parsley- and olive-branches to decorate.



# Glossary

**à la tropicale** (fr) tropical style. 29

**arroz vermelho** (pt) red rice. 3

**aux herbes fraîches** (fr) with the fresh herbes. 28

**berenjena** (es) eggplant. 17

**cheiro** (pt) lusty fragrance. 20

**cours salaya** (fr) the market street in old nice, france. 11

**farinha de mandioca** (pt) ground boiled dried cassava, a condiment and staple of brasilian cookery. 17

**feijão fradinho** (pt) black-eyed peas. 8, 9

**frijol refrito** (es) commonly translated as “refried bean”. accurately translated as “well-fried bean”. 7

**ghee** (hi) clarified butter. 4

**hummus** (ar) chick-pea spread. 17, 18, 25–27

**leite de coco** (pt) coconut milk. 20

**maracujá** (pt) passionfruit. 25

**mercadinho** (pt) cute little corner market. 21

**milanesa** (ar) thin slice of animal or vegetable, battered and fried. 17

**mostaza** (es) mustard. 9

**parade obrigatória** (pt) obligatory stop. 16

**piel** (fr) peel. 17

**tahini** (ar) sesame-seed paste. 25

**tapenade** (fr) olive spread. 29

**tranches** (fr) slices. 18

**vai embora** (pt) goes away. 9

**zaatar** (ar) thyme. 30