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WITH SALTED
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with Pecans
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The Holiday Table

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and festive meals at home and abroad**



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By Lawrence Osborne

Cover photograph by
Marcus Nilsson
Food styling by Chris Lanier



Skiers gather for cocktails at a cabin in Italy's Dolomites after a day on the slopes (see page 56 for story).

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From fresh seafood straight from the sea, to traditional dishes prepared with a Caribbean twist, and an emergent farm-to-table movement, St. Kitts is a culinary traveler's dream.



Featuring diverse dining options and a stunning collection of tourism attractions, St. Kitts beckons with a singular allure from the moment you set foot on shore.

Sweeping views of sparkling turquoise seas and St. Kitts' scenic landscape await around every turn. Rainforested mountain peaks slope down to a coastline dotted with secluded sandy beaches, which range in color from gold to volcanic black. Soft breezes constantly cool the air, which is comfortably warm and relaxing all year round. Here, you'll enjoy returning a warm smile from a genuinely friendly Kittitian saying hello or laughing at the antics of the playful green vervet monkeys, which are more plentiful than people on the island.

The epicurean scene in St. Kitts is just as remarkable as the welcoming people and pristine landscape. Places to dine can be found throughout the island, and vary

as widely as the type of cuisine they serve. Authentic beach bars invite you to dine on a flavorful spiny lobster that's hot off the grill while digging your toes into the sand. Join a group of diners for a farm-fresh meal shared together at a massive outdoor dining table under the stars, or, step into an elegant beach club that serves sushi and boasts an extensive wine cellar. From Indian to Japanese to authentic West Indian fare, there are dining establishments on St. Kitts serving distinctive dishes in settings from casual to elegant.

Aspiring chefs will not want to miss the Island Flavors cooking class held at Nirvana restaurant at Fairview Great House, one of many former sugar plantation homes remaining on the island. The cook will entertain onlookers with tales of the origins of the West Indian dishes as they are being prepared. For connoisseurs of fine spirits, a handful of local distilleries produce spiced and flavored rums from the sugar cane still growing across the island, a remnant of the days when sugar was its main industry. At night, try going "liming" – a Caribbean term that means hanging out and relaxing – at St. Kitts' delightfully authentic beach bars, which offer local food, live bands and beach bonfires.

With so many different dining experiences along with a wealth of activities, St. Kitts is quietly emerging culinary travel destination and earning itself a reputation for being blissfully unlike any other. Discover it before everyone does. We think you'll find that to be quite an appetizing idea.

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GETTING STARTED



Holiday breakfasts call for fun flourishes: A fried egg and chopped liver crown a big latke (right), and sticky buns get a bittersweet accent from caramel sauce made with beer (below). Recipes start on page 16.



Eating Latkes in Your Pajamas

JUST ONE OF THE MANY PLEASURES OF A LEISURELY HOLIDAY BREAKFAST

By Mari Uehara
Photographs by Marcus Nilsson

I'm obsessed with sausage balls," says Annie Pettry, chef-owner of Decca restaurant in Louisville, Kentucky. "No matter where I am on Christmas morning, I'm making them." Hers are juicy pork sausage mixed with cheddar cheese that oozes out and forms a lacy, cracker-like disk at the bottom—just like her mother always made them. "Christmas would be incomplete without them," she says.

And that's the thing about holiday breakfasts: As much as we love the dressy to-do of a festive dinner—the centerpiece roast, the *good* china—our simpler holiday morning traditions can often be the more lasting and beloved

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The crackly ring around the sharp cheddar and pork sausage balls (see page 18 for recipe) is intentional—it provides a crunchy textural contrast to the tender sausage.

ones. Free from the stiffness of a formal sit-down, celebratory morning meals allow for those sometimes messy dishes that even exacting chefs love.

For Noah Bernamoff, co-owner of Mile End Deli and Black Seed Bagels in New York City, Hanukkah breakfast often includes his Dagwood-like loaded latke. “My mom would make what seemed like hundreds of thousands of latkes in advance for the holiday and freeze them,” says Bernamoff. “And I’d make little food mountains with them.” Now, one of his favorite creations is a latke schmearred with chopped liver and topped with a fried duck egg and a tangle of tangy pickled onions.

Christmas morning for Jonathan Brooks, chef-owner of the quirky

breakfast-and-lunch spot Milktooth in Indianapolis, was always a morning-to-afternoon affair. His big family alternated cross-country skiing and sledding with picking at the Pillsbury orange rolls, honey-baked ham, scrambled eggs, and bacon left out on the table. “We did it almost tapas-style,” he says. Now that he has his own wife and kids, he sticks to the same format of a long, lingering breakfast, but makes giant, gooey pecan sticky buns from scratch with a few clever tricks: The caramel is made with coconut milk, beer, coffee, and barley malt syrup. While the kids are tearing into presents, Brooks passes around ginger-absinthe mimosas. Booze while you’re still in your pajamas? Hey, it’s a holiday breakfast; you make the rules. ■

Latkes with Chopped Liver and Pickled Onions

Serves 8; 📷 Page 14

Total: 1 hr. 15 min.

Noah Bernamoff of Mile End Deli and Black Seed Bagels in New York City tops crispy latkes with chopped liver, fried duck eggs, and pickled onions.

For the pickled onions:

- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- ½ cup (3½ oz.) sugar
- ½ tsp. whole black peppercorns
- ¼ tsp. yellow mustard seeds
- 2 whole allspice berries
- 2 whole cloves
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- 1 medium white onion, thinly sliced

For the chopped liver:

- ¼ cup schmaltz or unsalted butter
- 1¼ lbs. cleaned chicken livers
- Kosher salt
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp. quatre-épice (amazon.com)
- 3 hard-boiled eggs, roughly chopped
- 2 scallions, finely chopped

For the latkes:

- 3 russet potatoes (2 lbs.), peeled
- 1 large yellow onion, peeled
- ³/₄ tsp. cream of tartar
- ½ cup matzo meal
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- ³/₄ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 8 fried duck or large chicken eggs
- Finely chopped chives, to garnish

1 Make the pickled onions: In a small saucepan, bring the vinegar, sugar, peppercorns, mustard seeds, allspice, cloves, and bay leaf to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Remove the pan from the heat, let cool, and then pour over the onion in a medium bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

2 Make the chopped liver: In a 12-inch skillet, heat 2 tablespoons schmaltz over medium-high. Add the chicken livers, season with salt, and cook, turning once, until caramelized, 10 to 12 minutes. Transfer the livers to a food processor and return the skillet to the heat. Pour in the remaining 2 tablespoons schmaltz, add the onion, and cook, stirring, until lightly caramelized, 6 to 8 minutes. Scrape the onions and schmaltz into the food processor, along with the quatre-épice, eggs, and scallions, and pulse until the livers are finely chopped. Scrape the chopped liver into a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and keep warm.



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GETTING STARTED



Ginger-Absinthe Mimosa

In a small saucepan, bring $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch piece ginger, peeled and thinly sliced, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer and cook until the syrup reduces to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, about 6 minutes. Remove the syrup from the heat, pour through a fine sieve into a small pitcher, and discard the ginger. Pour $\frac{1}{2}$ cup absinthe, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh orange juice, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh lime juice in the pitcher, stir to combine, and refrigerate until chilled. Pour 3 tablespoons each of the juice mix into 8 chilled coupes or flutes and top with champagne. Garnish each glass with a lemon twist before serving. Serves 8.

3 Make the latkes: Heat the oven to 250° and place a wire rack on a baking sheet. Using the grating blade of a food processor or a box grater, grate the potatoes and onion into a large bowl lined with a kitchen towel. Gather the sides of the towel and squeeze the potatoes and onion to remove as much liquid as possible. Transfer the potatoes and onions to a clean bowl and toss with the cream of tartar. Add the matzo meal, salt, pepper, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the beaten eggs (discard the rest) and mix with your hands until evenly combined.

4 Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Using a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup measure, place 2 mounds of the potato mixture in the skillet and flatten each into a 6-inch-wide, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick latke. Cook the latkes,

turning once, until golden brown and crisp, about 6 minutes. Transfer the latkes to the rack on the baking sheet and keep warm in the oven while you fry the remaining latkes using the remaining 6 tablespoons oil. Place each latke on a serving plate and smear with some of the chopped liver. Top with a fried egg and some pickled onions. Sprinkle with more pepper and chives before serving.

Sage and Coconut Caramel Sticky Buns

Serves 8; 📷 Page 14

Active: 1 hr. 30 min.; Total: 13 hr.

Jonathan Brooks bakes these extreme pecan sticky buns (the recipe comes from his pastry chef, Zoë Taylor) atop a caramel sauce made with coconut milk, ale, coffee, and barley malt syrup—the bitterness of the sauce balances the sweet buns.

For the caramel:

- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups coconut milk
- 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups light ale
- 2 cups (14 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.) packed light brown sugar
- 1 cup brewed coffee
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp. barley malt syrup (amazon.com)
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ vanilla beans, split lengthwise and seeds scraped
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 Tbsp. kosher salt
- 3 sage sprigs

For the dough:

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup whole milk, warmed to 105°
- 1 Tbsp. active dry yeast
- 4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 3 large eggs plus 2 large egg yolks
- 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups (14 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz.) all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (3 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.) sugar
- 3 Tbsp. vital wheat gluten (amazon.com)
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt

For the filling:

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (5 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.) packed light brown sugar
- 10 Tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 3 Tbsp. whiskey
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ vanilla bean, split lengthwise and seeds scraped
- Finely grated zest of 1 orange
- 2 cups pecans, toasted and chopped

1 Make the caramel: In a large saucepan, combine the coconut milk with the ale, brown sugar, coffee, malt syrup, and vanilla bean and seeds, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture reduces to a

dark caramel, about 45 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, whisk in the cream, salt, and sage, and let cool. Remove the sage sprigs from the caramel, rinse in water, and reserve the leaves; discard the stems and vanilla beans.

2 Make the dough: In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook, stir the milk with the yeast and let stand until foamy, about 10 minutes. Stir in the butter and eggs. Then add the flour, sugar, wheat gluten, and salt and mix on low speed until the dough comes together. Increase the speed to medium and knead the dough until smooth and elastic, about 8 minutes. Remove the bowl from the mixer, cover with plastic wrap, and let stand until doubled in size, about 2 hours.

3 Meanwhile, make the filling: In a large bowl, combine the brown sugar with the butter, whiskey, salt, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, vanilla seeds, and orange zest and beat with a wooden spoon until well combined, fluffy, and smooth.

4 Uncover the dough, scrape it onto a floured work surface, and, using a rolling pin, flatten into a 14-inch square. Spread the filling evenly over the dough, leaving a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border along the side farthest from you. Sprinkle the filling with the pecans and, starting with the side of the dough closest to you, roll up the square into a tight log. Trim the ends and cut the log into 8 large rolls. Pour 2 cups of the caramel in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking pan or 12-inch cake pan and arrange the rolls on top of the caramel, spaced evenly apart. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 8 hours or overnight.

5 Heat the oven to 350°. Uncover the rolls and let stand for 30 minutes to come to room temperature. Scatter the reserved sage leaves over the rolls and bake until the rolls are golden brown on top, 40 to 45 minutes. Transfer the pan to a rack, let cool for 5 minutes, and serve the rolls warm with their caramel spooned over top.

Sharp Cheddar and Pork Sausage Balls

Heat the oven to 375°. In a large bowl, mix 1 lb. each pork sausage and grated extra-sharp cheddar with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour, 1 Tbsp. minced sage, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. cayenne, and 1 lightly beaten large egg. Form the meat into 2-inch balls. Arrange the balls 2 inches apart on parchment paper-lined baking sheets and bake until golden brown, about 30 minutes. Transfer balls to a platter and serve warm. Makes 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ dozen (pictured on page 16).



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WOODEN SPOONS AS STOCKING STUFFERS?
WHY NOT? (PLUS SEVEN OTHER PERFECTLY CRAFTED GIFTS)

By Alex Testere Photographs by Matt Taylor-Gross

Carved wooden spoons, hand-thrown micaceous clay pots, and flame-worked glasses with unique imperfections—when it comes to outfitting our kitchens, we’re looking for more than just utility. We want something that speaks to the allure of our favorite room, and all over America, artisans are channeling their creativity into handmade housewares. Some have backgrounds working with food, like pastry chef turned metal worker Ann Ladson; others, like napkin designer Annabel Inganni, draw inspiration from their childhood kitchens. Whatever the medium—glass, fabric, clay—each artisan brings past experience and singular traditions to the workbench. The “Made in America” stamp never looked better.

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For the full recipe, visit WolfGourmet.com/Tenderloin



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GIFT GUIDE



From left: Woodworker Joshua Vogel makes spoons in his upstate New York workshop; flame-worked Malfatti glass.



1 When Felipe Ortega was 17, he apprenticed himself to a 90-year-old blind Apache woman who had been working with clay all her life. He's been making his own **micaceous clay cooking vessels**—the flecks of mica help retain heat—for the past 46 years. Use them anywhere: on an open fire, on a gas or electric range, even in the microwave. *Felipe Ortega; La Madera, NM; from \$100; felipeortega.com*

2 Using light and durable borosilicate glass, which can withstand dramatic temperature fluctuations without cracking, Jill Reynolds and Dan Spitzer make lumpy, wavy, charmingly irregular **flame-worked glassware: pitchers, wine glasses, water glasses**, the works. For their recent Perlina line, they added decorative glass beads. *Malfatti Glass; Beacon, NY; from \$48; malfattiglass.com*



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4,5 Ann Ladson's **metal spice bowls and utensils** are cast in bronze or sterling silver and hammered by hand. Her new collection of seafood forks features tiny silver barnacles affixed to their handles—a reminder of her time as a pastry chef aboard a catamaran. *Ann Ladson; Charleston, SC; from \$50; annladson.com*

6 With indigo they grow themselves, Chinami and Rowland Ricketts dye **hand-woven linens**, like this geometric-patterned table runner. The husband-and-wife duo met in Japan as apprentices under the same dyer before returning to America and buying their farm. *Ricketts Indigo; Bloomington, IN; from \$48; rickettsindigo.com*

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON GIVE THE GIFT OF CULINARY ADVENTURE

3,7,9,11 Nate Mell and Wynn Bauer make their **one-of-a-kind ceramics** in their Philadelphia studio, but the DNA of their collection is global: Many pieces are thrown with clay made from sand and minerals they collect from around the world. The two began by creating custom tableware for local chefs, like Eli Kulp of Fork and Nick Elmi of Laurel. Their commercial line brings this same level of detail to the home table. *Felt + Fat; Philadelphia; from \$18; feltandfat.com*

8,10 Realizing just how many scraps remained after he carved each of his rustic bowls and cutting boards, woodworker Joshua Vogel started using the leftovers to make **wooden serving spoons**. This maple-wood design is just one of many he honed after spending a full year experimenting with styles and techniques. The black spoons are rubbed with a solution of iron flecks in vinegar that oxidizes and tints the wood all the way through. *Blackcreek Mercantile; Kingston, NY; from \$110; blackcreekmt.com*

“We bring clays and sands and minerals—volcanic black sand from Iceland, red Moroccan river clay—home in plastic bags when we travel. A sense of place is very important to our pieces.”

— NATE MELL, FELT + FAT

12 Ian Rogers, a former aerospace equipment designer, creates **hand-forged steel chef knives** with handles made from exotic woods like redwood burl and curly Hawaiian mango. Since these intricate soft woods are much less durable than common hard woods, Rogers drew on his former engineering experience to stabilize the handles, using a special epoxy that ensures their durability. *Haburn Knives; Vancouver, WA; from \$375; haburnknives.com*

13 Former clothing designer Annabel Inganni makes **wrinkle-free cloth napkins** in dozens of colors and patterns. “My mother had a large cloth napkin collection when I was young and I’d always set the table with them,” she says, “and now, with my own linens, I love that I’m able to bring back those old traditions.” In keeping with her fashion-world sensibilities, she releases two collections of the twill napkins each year. She recommends mixing and matching. *Los Angeles; \$40 a pair; wolfum.com*



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A Sweet Taste of Home

NORTH AFRICAN PASTRIES ADAPTED FOR THE HOLIDAY TABLE

By Ben Mims

Date-stuffed *makroud* (above), crunchy fried *deblah* (near right), and tender almond *kaber ellouz* (far right) are a few of chef Ghaya Oliveira's favorite Tunisian holiday sweets. Recipes start on page 28.





Known in Algeria and Morocco as *baghrir* (or “1,000-hole crêpes”), these pleasantly chewy semolina pancakes, served with warmed honey and butter (see page 31 for recipe), are a convivial dessert to share for the holidays.

Growing up in France, while everyone else was having *bûche de Noël* for the holidays, Kamel Saci ate his mother and grandmother’s *basbousa* instead. Drenched in an orange blossom syrup, the semolina cake was a fragrant reminder of the Ramadan and Eid desserts they’d grown up with in Algeria. “They made the cake for the Western holidays because it was fit for a celebration, any celebration,” says Saci, now head baker at Il Buco Alimentari & Vineria in Manhattan. His mother also made *baghrir*, thick but wonderfully light, yeasty crêpes. Cooked only on one side, they’re pockmarked with holes—crannies for capturing melted butter and warm honey. They made a festive holiday treat. “Even now,” says Saci, “I make *basbousa* and *baghrir* around Christmas because we’re with family and we want things that make us feel connected to Algeria.”

Ghaya Oliveira grew up baking sweets with her grandmother in Tunisia. Now the head pastry chef at Daniel in New York, she finds herself returning to traditional Tunisian desserts this time of year. “Our holiday sweets are the tiniest bit of indulgence, made with the best quality ingredients like nuts and flower waters to perfume them with opulence.”

Kaber ellouz, tender marble-sized almond marzipan balls rolled in sugar, share her holiday table with fried desserts like *makroud*, semolina diamonds stuffed with dates, soaked in a bright orange blossom syrup, and covered with toasted sesame seeds, and exquisite pastries called *deblab*, spirals of thin dough fried to a crisp, drenched in lemon syrup, and showered with chopped nuts. “In Tunisia,” Oliveira says, “the holidays are all about giving this small edible gift to someone, a special bite made with care.”

Semolina-Coconut Cake with Orange and Rose Waters (*Basbousa*)

Serves 8 to 10

Active: 1 hr.; Total: 14 hr.

This cake, arguably the most well-known in North Africa and the Middle East, has countless variations. Chef Kamel Saci likes his mother's version here: The semolina cake baked with dried coconut and sweetened condensed milk and then soaked in a fragrant lemony syrup with orange blossom and rose waters added after baking. The candied rose petal garnish is optional (you can simply sprinkle the toasted coconut over the cake), but if you make it, be sure to ask your florist for organic roses, which aren't sprayed with chemicals or pesticides.

- 1 cup (7 oz.) granulated sugar
- Finely grated zest of 2 lemons
- ½ cup fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup orange blossom water, preferably Carlo (see page 83)
- 2 Tbsp. rose water, preferably Carlo (see page 83)
- 1 cup vegetable oil, plus more
- All-purpose flour, for dusting
- 2½ cups (14 ½ oz.) fine semolina
- 1 cup (3 ¼ oz.) desiccated coconut (amazon.com)
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- One 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs, plus 1 egg white
- Petals from 2 organic pink roses
- 1 cup superfine sugar

1 In a medium saucepan, combine the sugar with the lemon zest and juice, the

orange blossom and rose waters, and 2 cups water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook until slightly reduced, about 15 minutes. Remove the syrup from the heat, pour through a fine sieve to remove the zest, and let cool completely.

2 Heat the oven to 375°. Lightly grease and flour a 9-inch springform cake pan and line the bottom with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, whisk the semolina with ¾ cup coconut, the baking powder, and salt until evenly combined. In a large bowl, whisk the sweetened condensed milk with the 1 cup oil, the vanilla, and 2 eggs until smooth. Add the dry ingredients and stir to combine.

3 Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and bake until the cake is golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 30 minutes.



The success of this dense, moist semolina cake depends on soaking it in syrup as soon as it comes out of the oven and then letting it cool completely to infuse with the syrup before serving.



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The holidays are all about giving this gift, a special bite made with care

4 Transfer the cake to a rack, drizzle half the cooled syrup over the cake, and let stand until the syrup is absorbed, 30 minutes. Pour the remaining syrup over the cake and let cool. Transfer the cake to the refrigerator and chill for at least 8 hours.

5 Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk the egg white until frothy. Using a pastry brush, lightly coat the rose petals in egg white and immediately dredge in superfine sugar until well coated. Transfer the rose petals to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and let dry at room temperature for at least 4 hours.

6 When ready to serve, unmold the cake, transfer to a cake stand or plate, and arrange the rose petals over the top in concentric circles. In a small skillet, heat the remaining 5 tablespoons coconut over medium and cook, tossing, until lightly browned and fragrant, about 3 minutes. Transfer the coconut to a bowl and let cool. Sprinkle the toasted coconut over the rose petals and cake before serving.

Sugared Rosewater Marzipan Balls (Kaber Ellouz)

Makes 2½ dozen; 📖 Page 26
Total: 45 min.

These whimsical marzipan balls, colored red, white, and green, are a favorite sweet of chef Ghaya Oliveira during the holidays. A simple homemade almond dough is scented with rose water and dyed before being braided, cut, and rolled.

- 1 cup (7 oz.) sugar, plus more
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp. rose water, preferably Carlo (see page 83)
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 cups (8 oz.) almond flour
- 4 drops red food coloring
- 4 drops green food coloring

1 In a small saucepan, combine the sugar with the salt and 6 tablespoons water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook until slightly reduced, about

10 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the rose water and vanilla.

2 Meanwhile, place the almond flour in a food processor and, with the motor running, slowly drizzle in the hot syrup until the dough gathers into a ball around the blade. Transfer the marzipan to a work surface and cut into 3 equal pieces.

3 Place 2 pieces into 2 separate bowls and color one with the red food coloring and the other with the green food coloring. Knead each marzipan ball in the bowl until the food colorings are evenly incorporated.

4 On a clean work surface, roll the plain dough into a 32-inch-long rope, about ½-inch thick, and repeat with the red and green doughs. Braid the three doughs together, cut the braid into about thirty ¾-inch pieces, and roll each into a ball. Transfer to a serving platter or plate and toss the balls with enough sugar to coat.

Date-Filled Semolina Cookies (Makroud)

Makes 2 dozen; 📖 Page 26
Active: 1 hr.; Total: 2 hr. 30 min.

These crunchy fried sweets, made with a buttery semolina dough surrounding a sweet date-and-orange filling, stand up to soaking in a fragrant honey syrup, which adds moisture and lightens the dense pastry. One of chef Ghaya Oliveira's favorite childhood memories is seeing towering pyramids of the pastries stacked in the display windows of pastry shops in Tunis.

- ¾ tsp. kosher salt
- ⅛ tsp. saffron threads, crushed
- 2¼ cups vegetable oil
- 4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 2½ cups (14½ oz.) fine semolina
- ¾ cup (5¼ oz.) sugar
- ½ cup honey
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp. orange blossom water, preferably Carlo (see page 83)
- 4 oz. pitted dates, preferably deglet noor
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ⅛ tsp. ground cloves
- ⅛ tsp. ground black pepper
- Finely grated zest of ½ orange
- 3 Tbsp. toasted sesame seeds

1 Make the dough: In a large bowl, combine ¼ teaspoon salt with the saffron and

½ cup warm tap water and let stand for 5 minutes to allow the saffron to steep. Add ¼ cup vegetable oil and the butter and stir in the semolina until a smooth dough forms. Knead the dough briefly in the bowl, divide in half, wrap each half in plastic wrap, and let rest at room temperature for 1 hour.

2 Make the honey syrup: In a small saucepan, combine the sugar with the honey, lemon juice, orange blossom water, ¼ teaspoon salt, and 1 cup water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook until slightly reduced, about 20 minutes. Remove the syrup from the heat, pour into a large bowl, and let cool completely.

3 Make the filling: In a small food processor, combine the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt with the dates, olive oil, cinnamon, cloves, pepper, orange zest, and 2 tablespoons water and purée. Divide the filling in half and scrape each half into separate zip-top plastic bags.

4 On a clean work surface, unwrap 1 piece of dough and roll into an even 12-inch rope. Using your thumb, press along the top of the rope to flatten the middle, creating a moat of dough with high sides. Snip the corner of 1 of the plastic bags and pipe the filling into the middle of the moat. Using your fingers, bring the sides of the dough up and over, pinching to enclose the filling. Roll the rope back and forth and elongate into an 18-inch rope. Flatten the rope slightly until ¾ inch thick and, using a paring knife, trim the ends and cut on a diagonal at every inch so you have twelve 1-inch-wide diamonds measuring 3 inches lengthwise. Transfer the diamonds to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and repeat with the remaining dough and filling.

5 In a 12-inch skillet, heat the remaining 2 cups vegetable oil over medium-high until an instant-read thermometer reads 350°. Working in 4 batches, add the diamonds to the oil and fry, flipping once, until golden brown, about 4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, lift the diamonds from the oil and submerge in the honey syrup for 10 seconds. Lift the diamonds from the syrup, transfer to a rack set over a baking sheet, and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Transfer the pastries to a large serving platter and pour any remaining syrup around the pastries on the platter. Store any remaining pastries in an airtight container, covered in the remaining honey syrup, at room temperature for up to 2 days.

Syrup-Soaked Pastries with Hazelnuts, Pistachios, and Pine Nuts (*Deblah*)

Makes about 2 dozen; 📖 Page 26
Active: 1 hr. 30 min.; Total: 2 hr.

Traditionally made from strips of dough left over from making baklava, here these crunchy pastry spirals are formed from a simple pasta-like dough, soaked in a light lemon syrup, and topped with a shower of toasted chopped hazelnuts, pistachios, and pine nuts. Use a hand-crank pasta machine to roll the dough to ensure it gets as thin and even as possible.

- 1½ cups (6¾ oz.) all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 2 cups plus 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup (7 oz.) sugar
- 3 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup each hazelnuts, pistachios, and pine nuts, toasted and finely chopped

1 In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook, combine the flour with 1 tablespoon oil, ½ teaspoon salt, the eggs, and 1 tablespoon water and knead on medium speed until a smooth dough forms, 4 to 6 minutes. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and let rest at room temperature for 30 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, combine the sugar with the remaining ½ teaspoon salt, the lemon juice, and ¾ cup water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook until slightly reduced, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and pour into a bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and keep warm.

3 Heat the oven to 180°. Unwrap the dough and divide into 4 equal pieces. Using a pasta machine or working on a lightly floured work surface, roll 1 piece of dough until ⅛ inch thick. Cut the dough lengthwise into 1-inch-wide, 12-inch-long ribbons.

4 In a 10-inch skillet, heat the remaining 2 cups oil over medium until an instant-read thermometer reads 330°. Attach the end of 1 dough ribbon to the tines of a fork in one hand and hold the other end of the ribbon in your other hand. Place the tines of the fork in the oil, keeping them against the bottom of the skillet, as if stabbing it, and slowly turn the fork clockwise, wrapping the dough around it as it fries and puffs. When you reach the

end of the dough ribbon, let it fall over the spiral against the tines of the fork. Carefully remove the fork and continue frying the dough spiral, flipping once, until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Using tongs, transfer the pastry to a rack set over a rimmed baking sheet and keep warm in the oven while you fry the remaining pastries, steadily maintaining the temperature of the oil.

5 When all the pastries are fried, toss each one in the bowl of warm syrup and arrange on a large serving platter. Sprinkle the pastries with the chopped nuts, drizzle with the remaining syrup, and serve while hot.

1,000-Hole Crêpes (*Baghrir*)

Makes 10 crêpes; 📖 Page 27
Active: 50 min.; Total: 3 hr.

Unlike French crêpes, these chewy, yeasted crêpes are cooked only on one side until bubbles set on the surface, giving them the mottled appearance from which they take their name. Chef Kamel Saci serves these crêpes spread out on a platter with bowls of warm butter and honey for drizzling.

- 1½ cups (8½ oz.) fine semolina
- ¼ cup (1 oz.) all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. active dry yeast
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 4½ tsp. baking powder
- Melted butter and warm honey, for serving

1 In a blender, combine the semolina with the flour, yeast, salt, and 1¾ cups warm tap water and blend on the lowest speed for 6 minutes (the long blending time allows the semolina to become finely ground so it thickens the crêpe batter). Add the baking powder and continue blending for 4 minutes more. Pour the crêpe batter into a medium bowl, cover with a kitchen towel, and let stand at room temperature until foamy, about 2 hours.

2 Heat the oven to 180° and line a baking sheet with a kitchen towel. Heat an 8-inch nonstick skillet over medium for 2 minutes. Whisk the crêpe batter to ensure it is well mixed and pour ⅓ cup of the batter into the skillet. Cook the crêpe, undisturbed, until holes set on the surface and the crêpe has no more wet spots, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer the crêpe to the baking sheet and keep warm in the oven while you cook more crêpes with the remaining batter. When ready to serve, arrange the crêpes on a serving platter and serve hot, drizzled with melted butter and warmed honey.

Reclaim THE Kitchen

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WHAT'S YOUR GO-TO?



We Asked

BEN MIMS, Food Editor, SAVEUR

“Funnily, my go-to meal is something I learned watching TV. Sausage and grapes. You brown some pork sausage, then toss in garlic, chile flakes, and green grapes and let them reduce until sticky and caramelized. One pot, half an hour, and the house smells intoxicating.

Where I’m from in the South, we always give food as a gift, and this dish is perfect for that. Oh, you just had a baby? Someone sick? Here’s some sausage and grapes; it reheats beautifully. I make some cheddar grits and a huge pan of sausage and grapes and it’s so easy, perfect for any occasion.”

LEARN MORE ABOUT BEN'S GO-TO AND GET THE RECIPE AT reclaimthekitchen.com



Becoming Wonka

A HANDFUL OF BEANS, A HAIR DRYER, AND A DREAM:
CHRIS COLIN ON BRINGING THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY HOME

When it's all too much, and humanity is rounding the corner toward irredeemability, I think of the cacao bean. Somewhere between now and a billion years ago, some hairy visionary gazed upon this bitter, homely fruit and foresaw a Snickers.

It's a chilly night in San Francisco and I'm being coached at seeing even further, beyond Mars. My instructor is Todd Masonis, the jovial co-founder of small-batch chocolate factory Dandelion Chocolate and a luminary in the emergent bean-to-bar movement of confectioners who don't just make

treats, but create chocolate itself from scratch. Over the next three hours I will learn how to roast, crack, sort, winnow, and grind humble beans into a superior, post-industrial hunk of chocolate. All my life, chocolate has essentially been an MRE, but it turns out I can make it myself, get involved on the ground floor, understand that ground floor, and tweak it as I please. Imagine learning you could build your own car. It's like that, except edible.

Masonis and I are at the back of Dandelion HQ, and along one wall are burlap sacks marked Belize, Liberia, Madagascar,

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and so on, filled with beans. They are not interchangeable: Instead of using additives and strange, unpronounceable ingredients to alter the flavor of his chocolate, Masonis relies on the distinct taste of the beans—ones from a shady spot in the Caribbean or a nifty farm that does something cool with acidity—to provide variety.

I opt for a kilo from the Dominican Republic bag in the corner—it has traces of peanut and honey and cherry, I'm told. At some point, farmers in the country's Cibao region macheted shiny, football-like pods from a tree, extracted the beans, and then dried them, a process that happens simply on the hot road in some countries. (Notes of asphalt, Masonis cautions.) The beans are then sold to a fermentary, where yeast feasts on sugar in the fruit to create alcohol, and bacteria eats the alcohol to create acid, and the acid penetrates the bean to create its unique flavor, which I shall now coax forth.

Masonis is a recovering techie, having traded the (wildly successful) start-up life for some magic beans and a certainty that chocolate can be improved in this country. A few years ago, a civilian with such designs would've been laughable—as was once true for winemakers, coffee brewers, and microbrew masters, he points out. Today an aspiring chocolate maker needs only an oven, a hair dryer, and a bean grinder called a melanger to blow away sweet-toothed loved ones at holiday time. Okay, a melanger will set you back \$200. But it's great for making Indian idli and dosa batters, which require rice and dal to be crushed just so, as well as nut butters, marzipan, tahini, and anything else that benefits from a smooth grind and a little warmth. And compared with the millions you once needed to be your own Wonka, it practically pays for itself. (Or, you know, you sort of forget about the \$200 after a while.)

Hair-netted and eagle-eyed, Masonis and I pore over a tray of beans, removing any that look uncool—broken, moldy, fungusy. Because a Dandelion chocolate bar comprises only beans and sugar—no extra fat, no emulsifiers that often give chocolate bars their smoothness but cloud the purity of flavor—perfect fruit is key. Check out the braininess, Masonis says, splitting one with a special bean guillotine. Tiny fermentation-formed rivulets carve up the inside. The braininess is good.

Masonis wasn't always like this. As a kid he loved Hershey's, like everyone. But once you experience the good stuff, he says, you realize chocolate can have more flavor complexity than wine or coffee. We knew this once, but that knowledge vanished with industrial uniformity and scale. Now it's being found again.

Ordinary humans can roast their beans in the oven. Humans-turned-chocolate-professionals use a hacked coffee roaster and discuss things like crystal structure while they wait. We set it for 18 minutes but rely on our noses: These unappetizing pellets somehow start smelling like brownies. From

there we need only crack them open, remove the shells, and winnow away any fibrous husks—another use for your hair dryer!—to reveal the pure, shiny bits of bean known as nibs.

After we weigh some variables—and I pretend to understand those variables—Masonis and I agree on a 70-30 chocolate-sugar ratio. (Some beans stand on their own better than others. But really, the ratio is just a pathway to personalized experimentation.) Into the melanger go both ingredients. What looked like clumps of mud five minutes ago now looks encouragingly like peanut butter. It will churn all night and in the morning I'll come fetch a container of actual, actual, actual liquid chocolate, which I'll be able to cool and make into bars, use as a dip, or mix with hot milk for the most sublime hot chocolate in the land.



WHY YOU NEED A MELANGER

A melanger is a spinning drum with granite wheels made for grinding cocoa nibs and sugar into a smooth paste. The word comes from the French “to mix,” and the friction warms the mixture slightly, which helps release the nibs’ nuanced aromas. Dandelion Chocolate’s favorite economical model is the Premier Wonder tabletop wet grinder (\$187; amazon.com).

The thing about grating limes is, don't grate your knuckles,” I tell my six-year-old, Cora. She grates her knuckles. We rummage, find a Band-Aid. Two minutes later she's grating again, and I'm rigging a makeshift double boiler.

It's a Sunday morning and we are gilding all those chocolate lilies I brought home. Cora and I are low-brow—give us M&Ms—but today, we'll dip dried mango pieces in the melted chocolate, and dried banana, and pretzels, and a basil leaf, and one of Cora's chewable vitamins (science!). We'll sprinkle it with grated lime and roll it in coconut. We'll experiment with chile powder and turbinado sugar, and when that voice rises up—*can't we just eat the chocolate plain?*—we'll squelch it and dunk our ingredients with Cora's novelty training chopsticks, which have a diplodocus on top. Then every-

thing will go on a tray to chill in the refrigerator until it sets.

During my brief apprenticeship at Dandelion, I asked Masonis why chocolate has such a hold on people. On the Monday night I was there, the customers who were streaming in looked not just happy but rabid.

“I think chocolate is romantic for people, and maybe there's an element of childhood nostalgia, too,” he told me. “Also: theobromine”—chocolate's most potent chemical compound.

Hey, whatever works. Some hours after our dipping spree, Cora and I creep to the fridge and slide out our trays. Pasta, salad, pie: These things people make in their homes. Chocolate? Chocolate comes in a wrapper on a shelf. And yet. The confections we've made are delicious and nuanced, sweet but not too sweet—and real, that great hallmark of food. Next time, maybe I'll try fruitier beans, see what less sugar tastes like, maybe roast for an extra minute. For a food with two ingredients, the customization options are entertainingly endless. But for now, on this maiden voyage, even our screwy ones look excellent. And all of this started as joyless little beans.

“When I was in the software world, nobody ever came in and said, ‘I love software!’” Masonis told me. “But chocolate? It just makes people happy.” ■

Homemade Chocolate Bark

We've added chile, pepitas, and crunchy turbinado sugar to this refined chocolate bark, but the options are as infinite as your wildest chocolate fantasies (see "Bark Variations" below)

Makes 3 cups (2 lbs. 14 oz.)
Active: 45 min.; Total: 14 hr.

- 8 cups (2 lbs. 6 oz.) cacao beans**
- 1½ cups (12 oz.) sugar**
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil**
- 1 cup pepitas**
- 1 Tbsp. ancho chile powder**
- 2 Tbsp. turbinado sugar**

1 Heat the oven to 350°. Spread the cacao beans on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and bake, stirring occasionally, until toasted and the beans smell like brownies, about 30 minutes. Transfer the baking sheet to a rack and let cool for 8 hours.

2 Divide the beans between 2 large plastic bags and, using a rolling pin, gently crack the beans into nibs. Pour the nibs into a large bowl and shake gently to allow the lighter husks to float to the top. Remove the husks by hand or blow them off with a hair dryer. Continue shaking and lifting the nibs until the husks float to the top and can be removed.

3 Turn on the melanger (see "Why You Need a Melanger," page 34) and let it run for 10 minutes to warm up. Pour 1 cup of the cracked cocoa nibs into the melanger, cover with the lid, and process until the nibs form a paste, about 15 minutes. Repeat, adding 1 cup of the nibs to the melanger every 15 minutes to form a paste before adding the next cup. Once all the nibs are added, continue processing until the nibs are liquefied, about 45 minutes. Pour the sugar into the liquid, replace the cover, and

process until the sugar dissolves and the chocolate is reliquefied, about 4 hours.

4 Meanwhile, heat the oil in a medium skillet over medium. Add the pepitas and chile powder and cook, stirring, until lightly toasted, about 3 minutes. Pour the pepitas into a bowl and let cool.

5 To temper the chocolate, scrape two-thirds of the liquid chocolate into a large glass bowl and place the bowl over a saucepan of barely simmering water. Using a rubber spatula, stir the chocolate con-

stantly until it is heated to 115°. Remove the bowl from the saucepan and stir in the remaining liquid chocolate until the entire mixture cools to 80°. Return the bowl to the saucepan and, stirring steadily, heat to 88°. Remove the bowl from the saucepan and pour the tempered chocolate onto 2 parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Using an offset spatula, spread the chocolate into a ¼-inch-thick rectangle on each sheet. Sprinkle sheets evenly with the pepitas and turbinado sugar and let cool. Break into shards and store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.



For more information on tempering chocolate, see page 81.

BARK VARIATIONS

Bark can be made from any ingredient combination you can dream up, sprinkled on a sheet of melted chocolate. Experiment with **nuts and seeds** to add crunch and richness, **candied orange peels and other dried fruits** to lend concentrated sweetness, and **spices, coarse sugars, and salts** to enhance aromas and hidden notes of flavor in your chocolate.



TYPES OF BEANS

- Fruity beans from **Madagascar** pair particularly well with peanut butter in desserts.
- **Bolivian** beans, earthy and approachable, are especially well suited to baking in brownies and cakes.
- Nuanced beans from **Venezuela**, with notes of cinnamon and caramel, are best used in standalone bars, where their flavor can shine.

To buy beans from around the world, visit chocolatealchemy.com, where whole beans, raw or roasted, are available by the pound starting at about \$10.



At Lunch with the Ghosts of Bloomsbury

Marcel Boulestin opened his eponymous restaurant, which was frequented by the Bloomsbury Group, in Covent Garden in 1927. A reboot under the same name opened in 2013.

THE REAPPEARANCE OF A LONDON RESTAURANT GIVES A VIRGINIA WOOLF ENTHUSIAST THE CHANCE TO COMMUNE WITH HER LITERARY IDOLS

By Sadie Stein
Photographs by Tom Parker

In 1927, *Vogue* editor Dorothy Todd invited her friend Virginia Woolf to a small lunch. The writer, it was well known, hated noisy, crowded restaurants, and so Todd arranged to throw the luncheon at the private flat of Marcel Boulestin, a French writer and boutique owner. As a parade of tempting dishes appeared before the guests, it was suggested that Boulestin open a small restaurant.

“By the time that the pudding and coffee had arrived,” writes Jans Ondaatje Rolls, in her *Bloomsbury Cookbook*, “finance had been secured.” And the rest, as they invariably say, is history.

Although the restaurant Boulestin became a hit (and the proprietor himself one of the first celebrity chefs), it maintained a level of intimate conviviality that allowed even Virginia Woolf to feel comfortable. As a result, the restaurant was

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Clockwise from bottom left: Virginia Woolf, literary doyenne of the Bloomsbury Group, lived in Gordon Square in the Bloomsbury neighborhood of London, and her literary crowd frequented Maison Bertaux, the U.K.'s oldest pastry and tea shop, where, to this day, the cake and sweets selection remains unrivaled.

one of the clubhouses where the haute-bohemian group of writers, artists, and intellectuals known as the Bloomsbury Group ate, talked, and passed into legend. The restaurant itself was a bastion of the London dining scene until it faded from favor and ultimately died in 1994. But when a historically respectful Boulestin reboot opened a couple of years ago in St James's, a short walk from the original, and included on its menu dishes from the 1927 version, those of us fascinated by this slice of literary history had a chance to taste the past.

As I learned in Rolls' comprehensive study, food was integral to Bloomsbury: cocoa and conversation in the evenings, recipes exchanged in letters, and lusty country banquets that thumbed their

nose at propriety and didn't spare the garlic. All that talking and talking needed fuel. And it had to happen somewhere. And so, I booked a table.

Ever since I first read *To the Lighthouse* as a teenager, I've been a closet fangirl of the worst kind—the sort that wants to be friends with the writer, who feels understood by her, who is comforted by her private letters and fascinated by accounts of her life and circle and reads them with an addict's avidity. I may or may not own a Virginia Woolf finger puppet.

Over the years, I've dutifully visited the shrines of Bloomsbury, well preserved even by English standards. I've been to the Woolfs' East Sussex home, Monk's House. And to nearby Charleston, where her sister Vanessa lived. I've looked at images of Lytton Strachey and John Maynard Keynes and Woolf grouped together at the National Portrait Gallery. And I've walked through Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia, marveling at the riot of historical Blue Plaques in Russell and Bedford and Fitzroy squares. And yet, I've

found that walking in their steps like an Arthur Murray student didn't make me feel any closer to my literary crushes.

Alas, so much of literary fandom can involve ignoring what doesn't fit: not just unsavory facts about a beloved author's personal life or private views, but also the NO FLASH signs and velvet ropes in a historic home, the crowds of fellow fans. Add to all that the fact that those in the legendary Bloomsbury Group wouldn't have wanted me in their homes. Part of their mystique, after all, was their exclusivity. Even if, magically, I somehow came into their orbit, they probably would have had absolutely nothing to do with me, and I wouldn't have been able to hack it if I had been invited to one of their flats in Gordon Square; they would have found me boring and conventional and unlettered, and probably uptight when it came down to it. (Or middle class, if it really, really came down to it.) So, during this particular visit, my plan was to ignore the impulse to conjure them up entirely, just as they would have ignored me. No, this time I'd simply have a bite to eat.

It's late lunchtime. The sun is streaming in through French doors. I'm a little nervous, not least because I don't want my husband to see the gauche teenager

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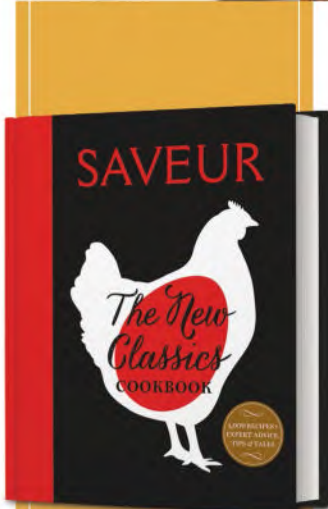
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in me who wants to impress a bunch of ghosts. Also, the restaurateur behind the homage, Joel Kissin, is known for glossy and sceney London hot spots of a decidedly newer vintage. Would it feel like a fawning, naff reenactment? Or, just as bad, a sterile modern restaurant with a few discordant nods to the past?

It is neither. In a word, it is comfortable. Boulestin's airy interior is vaguely 1920s, vaguely period, it's true. But the customers are not there to worship at the altar of Woolfiana, or history of any kind. Rather, they are there to eat: businessmen at lunch, couples in the garden, all generating a pleasant buzz of conversation.

Boulestin is just a few minutes' walk from the eponymous neighborhood where members of the Bloomsbury famously "lived in squares, painted in circles, and loved in triangles." Central London has a number of perfectly preserved, vibrant institutions—you can wash down plump, coarse-grained sausages and a puddle of dark onion gravy with a pint at The Lamb pub, located in a landmarked building, shop for raised pies at Fortnum's as Woolf did, have a cup of tea and an éclair at Maison Berthaux, like the artists of the group did in the afternoons—but Boulestin's menu

is perhaps the most literal, and deliberate, homage to that period.

What is perhaps both notable and reassuring about the dense menu is that there is nothing to distinguish the "historic" dishes from those chef Elliot Spurdle has created himself, like roast mackerel with fennel or house-smoked breast of wood pigeon. There's no "signature dish," no origin stories. If you should happen to order a *jambon persillé* (jellied ham terrine) or an *oeuf en gelée* or a fish soup, yes, you are eating dishes that Virginia Woolf may well have eaten. But is that the point?



Delicate sauternes custard with boozy prunes at the new Boulestin.

The *oeuf en gelée* arrives, a glistening oval of aspic. My spoon unleashes a river of almost shockingly vibrant yolk, sharp with tarragon. That *jambon persillé* is as perfect a rendition as I've ever tasted, poised between tremulous and firm, somehow delicate and subtle and hearty all at once, complemented by a small haystack of mustardy celery remoulade and tart gherkins. When fish soup comes, it is rich with brine and garlicky rouille.

Liver and bacon is served on a layer of confit potatoes and meltingly soft onion. And boudin noir, napped with soft caramelized apple, is like the most divine baby food ever created. By the time the tender sauternes custard and its boozy prunes arrive, my husband and I are weak with delight. And when the warm madeleines show up, beyond words. It is pure pleasure in eating. I find that there are silly tears in my eyes, of relief, and of happiness.

Yes, Virginia Woolf may well have eaten all this, found it, perhaps, as delicious as I do. But it is not just in the flavors that I feel a connection; it is in the simple act of eating something good, with good company, being in that moment happy and well. And, perhaps, appreciating how easy it is to hear each other. ■

Sauternes Custard with Armagnac-Soaked Prunes

Serves 6

Active: 1 hr.; Total: 1 day

At Boulestin, Agen prunes, prized for their caramel notes and soft texture, are infused with brewed tea, cinnamon, and armagnac and then used to top this sumptuous custard. In lieu of vanilla sugar (amazon.com, along with the prunes), you can substitute $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar and 1 tsp. vanilla extract.

- 2 bags English breakfast tea
- 1 orange
- 1 lemon
- 1 cup (8 oz.) granulated sugar
- 1 cup ($7\frac{1}{2}$ oz.) pitted Agen prunes
- 1 cinnamon stick
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup armagnac
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup vanilla sugar
- 9 large egg yolks
- 3 whole large eggs
- $1\frac{2}{3}$ cups sauternes
- $1\frac{2}{3}$ cups heavy cream

1 In a small saucepan, bring $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups water to a boil. Remove from the heat and add the tea bags. Let the tea steep for 2 minutes, and then remove the bags and discard.

Using a vegetable peeler, peel 3 strips of zest from the orange and 2 strips from the lemon; reserve the fruit for another use.

2 Stir the citrus strips into the tea along with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar, the prunes, and the cinnamon and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer and cook the prunes until slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and let the prunes cool in their liquid. Stir in the armagnac and pour the prunes and liquid in a glass jar or plastic container. Seal the container and refrigerate the prunes at least 24 hours, or preferably up to 5 days, before using.

3 Heat the oven to 300° and arrange six 8-oz. ramekins in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. In a small skillet, stir the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar with 5 tablespoons water and bring to a boil. Cook, without stirring, until the sugar turns dark amber,

about 7 minutes, and then remove the skillet from the heat. Quickly pour the caramel evenly into the ramekins and let cool.

4 In a large bowl, whisk the vanilla sugar with the egg yolks and whole eggs until smooth. In a small saucepan, heat the sauternes until warm and pour into the eggs, whisking steadily. Heat the cream in the same manner and pour into the custard and stir until the sugar dissolves. Pour the custard evenly into the ramekins and place the baking dish in the oven. Pour enough boiling water into the baking dish to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins and bake until the custards are set but jiggle slightly in the center, about 30 minutes.

5 Transfer the baking dish to a rack and carefully remove the ramekins from the water bath. Let the custards cool to room temperature and then refrigerate for at least 8 hours or overnight. To serve, run a paring knife around the edge of each ramekin, invert the custard onto a dessert plate, and spoon 3 to 5 prunes and their liquid alongside the custard.



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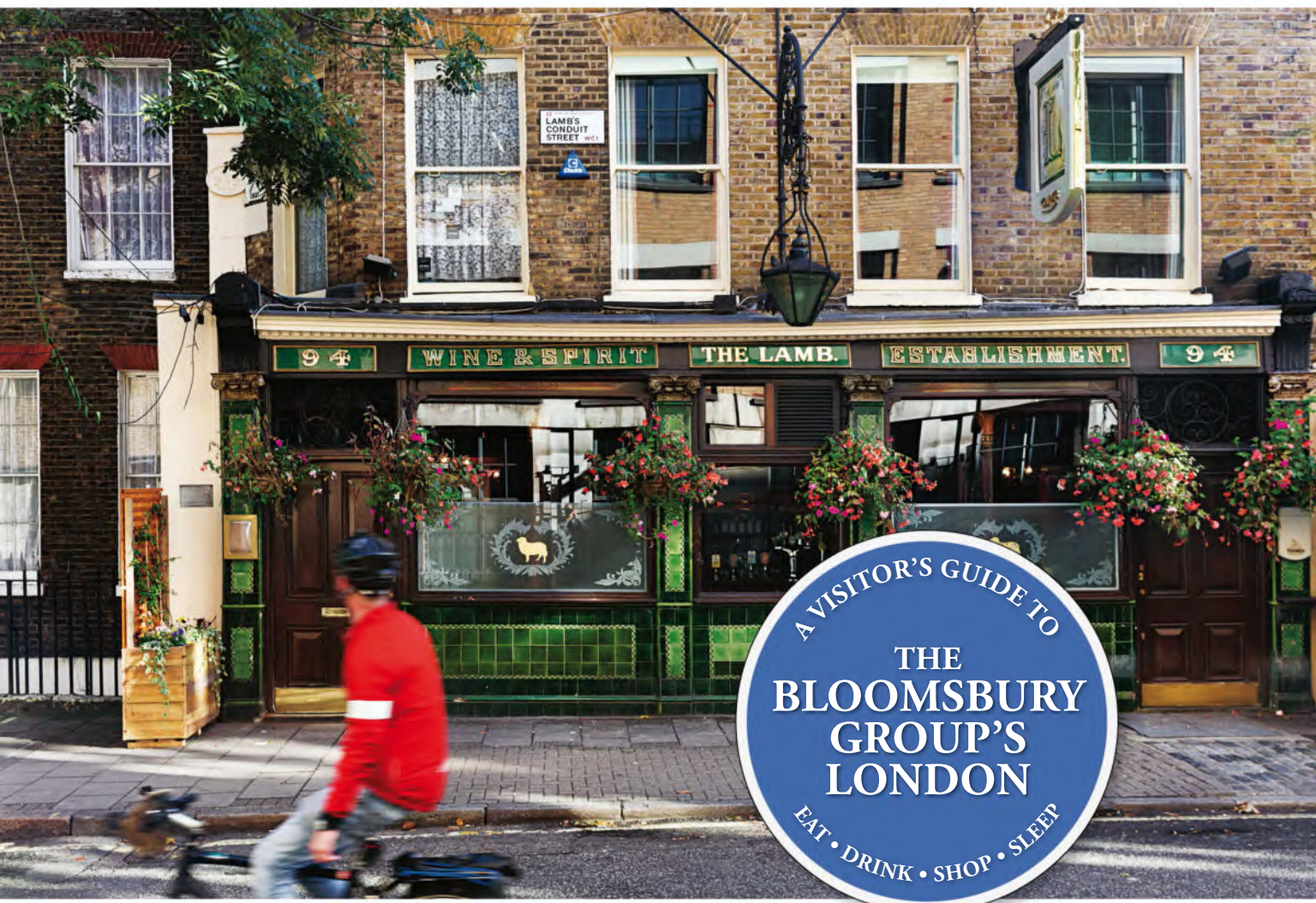
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**WHERE TO STAY****Hazlitt's**

Quirky, funky, and dripping with character, Hazlitt's is made from a row of Georgian townhouses. No two rooms are alike—heck, no two floorboards are alike. But make no mistake, this is very much a modern boutique hotel, with all the amenities that implies. 6 Frith St.; hazlittshotel.com

Hotel Russell

Located in the heart of literary Bloomsbury, Hotel Russell is a dignified Victorian behemoth with comfortable rooms, plenty of history, and a resident bronze dragon. It was one of the first hotels in London said to provide that most modern of amenities, en suite bathrooms. 1-8 Russell Square; hotelrussellondon.co.uk

Morton Hotel

This boutique hotel's finishes—the art on the walls, the

bespoke wallpaper, even the pillowcases—are inspired by the Bloomsbury Group. And, yes, there is a library where you can get a good cup of tea. 2 Woburn Place; mortonhotel.co.uk

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK**Gordon's Wine Bar**

One-hundred-twenty-five years and going strong, London's oldest wine bar is a subterranean warren of dimly lit nooks. Pull up a chair, order a bottle, and settle in for a wholly enjoyable evening. 47 Villiers St.

Boulestin

What might be called Boulestin 2.0—an imaginative reboot of a London institution with Bloomsbury Group roots—opened in 2013. The decor and the classic French menu nod to the restaurant's storied history, but chef Elliot Spurdle's dishes are vibrant and fresh. 5 St James's St.; boulestin.com

The Lamb

Built in the 1720s, this stunning pub (pictured above) has played host to generations of intellectuals and hungry Londoners, all protected by frosted "snob screens" to protect diners from unwanted eyes. Well-made British classics like Toad in the Hole, fish pie, and a Ploughman's lunch match perfectly with a pint of bitter. 94 Lamb's Conduit St.; youngs.co.uk/pubs/lamb

Maison Bertaux

A Soho institution frequented by the Group, this quirky patisserie was founded in 1871 by French émigrés. It retains a bohemian charm and eccentric jauntiness—and the tempting pastries, from cheesecakes and éclairs to mince pies and marzipan fruits, taste as good as they look. Settle at a table with a slice of cake, a cup of tea, and your favorite book for a perfect afternoon. 8 Greek St.; maisonbertaux.com

SHOPS**Fortnum & Mason**

Fortnum's legendary food hall, where the residents of Gordon Square might well have shopped for imported olive oil, is a feast for the eyes and palate: The piles of candied fruits, tins of foie gras, and raised pies make for a food-lover's dreamscape. 181 Piccadilly; fortnumandmason.com

Hatchards

Mrs. Dalloway herself window-shopped at London's oldest bookseller, and it's still one of the most pleasant spots to browse for a good read. 187 Piccadilly; hatchards.co.uk

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By Bruce
Schoenfeld

Malbec? Isn't that the charmless red on every by-the-glass happy hour menu? The one that tastes like thick, alcoholic water? Yes, actually. That's what can happen when a grape variety gets popular enough for mass-market consumption: It becomes wine's equivalent to supermarket sushi.

But not *this* malbec. Pour a glass of Catena Zapata Adrianna Vineyard Malbec 2010 and notice how the light glints off the deep violet. Hold it close and smell the black currants. Now take a sip. "I don't compare it to malbec from anywhere else," says Laura Catena, the managing director of Argentina's Catena Zapata winery. "It's more like northern Rhône. That elegant, minerally red fruit that's

so sharp—I think of it as an acute angle. I haven't come across it anywhere else."

Malbec is a French import that was once a primary component of Bordeaux, and its descent into pinot grigio-like insipidness rankles nobody more than the Catenas, the first family of Argentine wine. "I once had a group of young dot-commers tell me that they weren't willing to spend more than twenty dollars on a bottle of malbec, even though they'll spend fortunes on California cabernet," says Catena, who works as an emergency-room doctor in San Francisco when she isn't running the winery in Mendoza. "Not only is malbec our national grape, but it has an extraordinary heritage starting in the 12th century. So, yes, it makes me mad."

The Adrianna would be the kind of wine to change the prevailing snobbish opinion, if only there were more of it. It's sourced from a single vineyard (named after Laura's sister) in Mendoza's Gualtallary district, at an elevation of almost a mile high in the Andes. The soil there is full of limestone, chalk, volcanic gravel, and milk-colored rocks the size of softballs, so drainage is extraordinary. That puts depth, flavor, and an ineffable character into the wine.

Alejandro Vigil, the Catena winemaker, wasn't sure how to handle the site when he first started working it more than a decade ago. Over the years, he has settled on a singular strategy. He harvests the 200-odd parcels in the vineyard gradually, over a month and a half. Then he blends together fruit that's barely achieved ripeness with the full-flavored, potent grapes at the other end of the spectrum. "That way, you have many different pictures," he says. "Not just a single snapshot."

And here's a secret: Despite what the label says, it isn't all malbec. The vineyard includes a few acres of viognier, a white grape from France's Rhône Valley that's often fermented together with syrah in *côte-rôtie*. Vigil does that here with malbec, 2 to 5 percent depending on the vintage. Occasionally, a splash of cabernet franc is added, too. What emerges is about 300 cases annually of a special wine. That's not nearly enough to ever show up by the glass at a hotel bar, of course. The Catenas prefer it that way. ■



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UNTIL THE WINTER SUN RISES

IN THE SNOWY WILDS OF WESTERN DENMARK,
AN ENGLISH CHEF MAKES A CHRISTMAS MEAL THAT LASTS
THROUGH THE NIGHT

Story and Recipes by Paul Cunningham
Photographs by Anders Schonemann

At a remote country inn, chef Paul Cunningham hosts a traditional Christmas feast, including roast pork loin with salted caramel potatoes (opposite; see page 52 for recipe).



For a festive winter meal, Paul Cunningham (above right) starts with creamy pumpkin soup (above left). Other dishes include celery root, carrot, and potato gratin (opposite left), and, when hunger strikes again late at night, wiener schnitzel with anchovies and capers (opposite right). Recipes start on page 49.

For four years now I've been the chef at Henne Kirkeby Kro, a little thatched inn on Denmark's wild west coast. I'm well and truly besotted with the place. The inn has been quietly lying along the roadside for more than 200 years, nestled within a sleepy hamlet. Years ago there was a school, a merchant, a cobbler, and a church—today I reside in the old cobbler's cottage.

Life is full-on every year from Palm Sunday, when we throw open the doors, until things get rather bleak and we close in December. But I do fire up the stove for one last meal, a traditional Christmas dinner in honor of my glorious Hennemfolk—my loyal, hardworking, beautiful staff who tread these boards all season. I love them dearly. Donning their Yuletide glad rags, and setting their hair, they relax and unwind. I look after the food.

We start with a once-a-year treat, wonderful sleek Danish eels, smoked over oak, served buttered and warm alongside creamy scrambled eggs from our farm. Clipped chives cut the richness. A little salad follows. Tiny leaves of baby gem, a creamy blue cheese from the island of Bornholm, hot toasted walnuts, celery, and green grapes provide a nostalgic, almost Waldorfesque note. I serve it up against a steaming pot of roasted pumpkin and parmesan soup.

Our garden's finest carrots, winter potatoes, and perfumed celeriac are creamed and glazed with the last of our well-aged Gruyère. It's lush indeed. Then beautiful pork follows, from a farm called Grambogård on the

Danish island of Fyn. Master Erik is my beloved butcher boy there, my meat-pusher for all of my 21 years in Denmark. Weeks before, I bring home pork that I salt and slowly smoke over oak, turning it into our wonderfully intense Henne bacon. Cut thick, pan-fried, and baked crisp over apples and onions, it's called Æbleflæsk, a classic Danish winter favorite.

I roast a pork loin, on the bone, over bay leaves and onions. The crackling, crisp, light, and extremely more-ish, is balanced by sweet-salty butter caramel potatoes and the sharpness of our pickled red currants.

We round off the dinner by demolishing our leftovers from the cheese box and a huge bowl of butter-baked pears with ice-cold cream and lashings of our late summer honey warmed in a copper pan. With loving smiles and groaning full bellies, we dance and wash down the day's gluttony with iced schnapps and cold beers.

And just when they think it is all over, the after-hours hunger pangs begin to set in. There are no takeaway joints around here, no delicious diners or street-food trucks, so I retire once again to the kitchen. I secretly ordered a few little escalopes of veal in order to knock up a few wiener schnitzels if needed. I usually do this as an annual surefire hangover cure on New Year's Day.

My crisp-breaded, butter-fried late-night schnitzels are adorned with sharp, salt-brined anchovies, capers, lemon, and snowflakes of fiery fresh horseradish to spice things up. The party continues until the winter sun rises over our Henne home away from home. ■



Pumpkin Soup with Orange and Parmigiano-Reggiano

Serves 8; 📺 Page 48
Active: 1 hr. 15 min.; Total: 3 hr.

Caramelized roasted pumpkin gets an unorthodox hit of flavor from orange zest and juice, stirred in just before serving to brighten this wintry soup. Paul Cunningham likes to use pumpkins local to Denmark, like hokkaido, but sugar pumpkins work just as well here, as does any buttery squash, like kabocha, butternut, or acorn.

- 1 medium (2½- to 3-lb.) sugar pumpkin or butternut squash, trimmed
- 6 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1 Fresno chile or red jalapeño, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped

- 6 cups vegetable stock
- 1 cup crème fraîche, plus more to garnish
- Finely grated zest and juice of 1 orange
- Parmigiano-Reggiano, for serving

1 Heat the oven to 350°. On a cutting board, halve the pumpkin lengthwise and scoop the seeds into a bowl. Cut the pumpkin halves into 6 wedges each and transfer to a baking sheet. Drizzle the pumpkin with 3 tablespoons olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and bake until tender, about 40 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let the pumpkin cool.

2 Reduce the oven temperature to 300°. Rinse the pumpkin seeds to remove the stringy pulp and lay the seeds on paper towels to dry. Transfer the seeds to a small bowl, toss with 1 tablespoon olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Spread the seeds on a small baking sheet and bake until toasted and crisp, about 1 hour. Transfer the sheet to a rack and let cool.

3 In a large saucepan, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium-high. Add the garlic, onion, and chile

and cook, stirring, until softened, about 6 minutes. Scrape the pumpkin flesh from the skin and add to the onions, discarding the pumpkin skin. Pour in the stock and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the soup is slightly reduced, 35 to 40 minutes.

4 Using an immersion blender or standing blender, purée the soup until very smooth and return to the saucepan over low heat. Stir in the crème fraîche and orange zest and juice and heat until warmed through. Remove the pan from the heat, season with salt and pepper, and ladle into serving bowls. Top each serving with some toasted pumpkin seeds, a generous grating of Parmigiano-Reggiano, and a dollop of crème fraîche.

Celery Root, Carrot, and Potato Gratin

Serves 8
Total: 1 hr. 20 min.

During the holidays, Paul Cunningham likes nothing more than a comforting vegetable gratin, and here he keeps it simple:





Cunningham smokes his own bacon and then bakes it with onions and apples for a traditional Danish Æbleflæsk. Opposite: Smoked eel is paired with creamy scrambled eggs for a starter (top right; see page 52 for recipe); Cunningham uses a pungent local cheese for his fresh gem lettuce and grape salad (bottom left; see page 52 for recipe).

Potatoes, carrots, and celery root are seasoned with thyme and fresh bay leaves and then simmered in cream before getting baked under a layer of bubbling Gruyère and bread crumbs.

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 8 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 4 fresh bay leaves
- 8 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 4 large carrots, peeled and cut crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 4 large russet potatoes, peeled and cut crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced lengthwise
- 1 small celery root, peeled and cut crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 2 Tbsp. thyme leaves
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 5 oz. Gruyère cheese
- 2 cups fresh bread crumbs

1 Heat the oven to 350°. In a large saucepan, heat the cream with the butter and bay leaves over medium-high. Stir in the garlic, carrots, potatoes, onion, and celery root and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook, stirring gently, until tender but not breaking, about 18 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, stir in the thyme, and scrape into a 3-qt. round baking dish. Season the gratin with salt and pepper.

2 Using a box grater, grate the Gruyère into a medium bowl and then toss with the bread crumbs. Sprinkle the cheese and bread crumbs over the vegetables and bake until the topping is golden brown and the gratin is bubbling in the center, about 30 minutes.

Roasted Apples and Bacon with Onions and Thyme (Æbleflæsk)

Serves 8

Active: 45 min.; Total: 1 hr. 30 min.

In a classic Danish treatment, sweet red apples are roasted with onions, caramelized in bacon fat, and served under thick steaks of smoked belly bacon. Use a hearty baking apple, such as Braeburn or Gala, that will stand up to roasting and keep its shape while becoming tender and caramelized.

With groaning full bellies, we wash down the day's gluttony with iced schnapps and beer

- 4 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- One 1-lb. whole piece of slab bacon, cut across the grain into eight 1/2-inch-thick slices
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 large yellow onions, thinly sliced lengthwise
- 1 Tbsp. thyme leaves
- 2 1/2 lbs. (about 6) medium sweet baking apples, cored and cut into 12 wedges each

1 In a 12-inch nonstick skillet, melt the butter over medium-high heat and season the bacon with salt and pepper. Add half the bacon slices to the skillet and cook, turning once, until caramelized on both sides and tender, 8 minutes. Transfer the bacon to a plate and repeat with the remaining 4 slices of bacon.

2 Heat the oven to 400°. Drain off all but 1/4 cup of the rendered fat and return the skillet to medium heat. Add the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until caramelized and soft, about 20 minutes. Stir in the thyme, remove the skillet from the heat, and scrape the onions into a 9-by-13-inch baking dish or small roasting pan.

3 Add the apples to the onions, toss to coat evenly in the fat, and bake, stirring once halfway through, until the apples are just tender and lightly caramelized, about 20 minutes. Using tongs, push the apples and onions to one side of the baking dish and nestle the bacon slices next to them. Continue baking until the apples are very tender and the bacon is warmed through, about 10 more minutes. Transfer the dish to a rack and let cool for 10 minutes before serving.

Blue Cheese, Grape, and Gem Lettuce Salad

Serves 8; 📖 Page 50
Total: 30 min.

Paul Cunningham likes to use whatever lettuces are in season for this salad, preferably some that are tender and buttery like gem lettuce or Bibb to offset the crunchy celery and acidic grapes. If you can find a good Danish blue cheese, like Kornblomst, use it here; otherwise, any good, creamy blue cheese will work well.

- 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/3 cup walnut oil

- 2 Tbsp. crème fraîche
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup walnuts
- 1 lb. baby gem lettuces or Bibb lettuce, torn into large pieces
- 1 head of celery, inner stems and leaves only, stems thinly sliced and leaves left whole
- 1 1/2 cups halved green grapes
Flaky sea salt
- 3 oz. Danish Kornblomst or Stilton blue cheese

1 In a small bowl, whisk the apple cider vinegar with the olive and walnut oils, crème fraîche, and Dijon until smooth and season the vinaigrette with salt and pepper.

2 In a small skillet, heat the walnuts, tossing occasionally, until toasted, about 6 minutes. Arrange the lettuce on a large serving platter, followed by the celery stems and leaves, warm walnuts, and the grapes. Drizzle the salad with the vinaigrette, season lightly with sea salt and pepper, and top with the blue cheese before serving.

Roast Pork Loin with Salted Caramel Potatoes

Serves 8; 📖 Page 46
Active: 45 min.; Total: 2 hr. 30 min.

The centerpiece of Paul Cunningham's holiday dinner is this impressive pork loin roast served with potatoes coated in caramel and tart red currant jelly. He uses a cut of pork called "skin-on pork loin rack," which is a loin of pork with the skin and fat left intact and the rib bones still attached. It is not a common cut of meat in the U.S., so give plenty of time for your butcher to prepare it for you in advance. (You can also use an American-style pork loin roast, which comes with fat on top but no skin; if you do, stand it fat side up the entire cooking time and broil the roast for 3 minutes or until dark golden brown.)

- One 3 1/2- to 4-lb. skin-on pork loin rack or pork loin roast (see note above)
Kosher salt
- 3 large yellow onions, halved
- 4 fresh bay leaves
- 1 bunch thyme
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 lb. baby fingerling potatoes
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 8 Tbsp. unsalted butter

- Flaky sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp. apple cider vinegar
- Red currant jelly, for serving

1 Heat the oven to 350°. Using a very sharp knife, score the skin on the pork roast crosswise every 1/4 inch, being careful to cut just through the skin and not the fat. Season the pork skin with kosher salt and rub into the score marks. Place the onions in a roasting pan and scatter over the bay leaves and thyme. Set a roasting rack over the onions and place the roast in the rack, skin side down.

2 Pour 3 cups boiling water into the roasting pan, place in the oven, and roast for 30 minutes. Flip the pork roast skin-side-up, brush the skin with the olive oil, and continue roasting until the pork is cooked to 140°, about 1 hour. Heat the broiler and broil the top of the pork roast until the skin is golden brown and crisp, about 4 to 5 minutes. Transfer the pork to a cutting board, tent with foil, and let rest while you make the potatoes.

3 Meanwhile, in a small saucepan of boiling water, cook the potatoes until just tender, about 5 minutes. Drain the potatoes, let them cool, and peel them. In a medium skillet, heat the sugar with 2 tablespoons water over medium-high and cook, swirling the skillet, until the sugar turns into an amber caramel, about 5 minutes. Add the cooked potatoes and butter and cook, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are coated in the caramel and tender-sticky, about 20 minutes. Remove from the heat and season with sea salt and pepper.

4 Pour the pork's pan juices through a fine sieve into a bowl and skim off as much of the fat as possible. Stir in the vinegar and season the sauce with kosher salt and pepper. Serve the sauce and the red currant jelly alongside the pork roast and caramel potatoes.

Creamed Eggs and Smoked Eel with Chives

Serves 8; 📖 Page 50
Total: 30 min.

Creamy, slow-cooked scrambled eggs make a simple but luxurious starter (or breakfast) during the holidays at Paul Cunningham's home, where he serves them with warmed store-bought smoked eel and a generous sprinkling of fresh chives. When cooking the eggs, be sure to stir them

Honey-and-butter-baked pears, served with cold cream (see page 54 for recipe).



slowly and constantly so they create small curds and stay creamy and smooth.

- 8 smoked eel fillets (3 oz. each), skin and bones removed**
- 8 large eggs**
- ½ cup heavy cream**
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- Finely chopped chives, to garnish**
- Lemon wedges, for serving**

1 Heat the oven to 300°. On a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, arrange the eel fillets in a single layer and heat in the oven for 10 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk the eggs with the cream until smooth. In a large nonstick skillet, melt the butter over medium heat, pour in the eggs, and cook, stirring constantly, until scrambled and creamy, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat and season the eggs with salt and pepper. Scrape the eggs onto serving plates and garnish with chives. Transfer two eel fillets to each plate and serve with lemon wedges.

Wiener Schnitzel

Serves 8; 📖 Page 49
Total: 45 min.

For the morning after a big celebration, Paul Cunningham serves this crisp-fried schnitzel as a sort of hangover cure for the previous night's revelry. Simple veal scaloppine are battered and fried and spiked with briny, spicy condiments like anchovies and fresh-grated horseradish just before being served. Feel free to use chicken or pork instead of veal, if you like.

- ½ cup (2 ¼ oz.) all-purpose flour**
- 6 large eggs, lightly beaten**
- 2 cups dried bread crumbs**
- 8 veal scaloppine (3 ½ oz. each), pounded ¼ inch thick**
- Kosher salt**
- Freshly ground white pepper**
- 1 cup clarified butter or ghee**
- Brined anchovies, salt-packed capers, lemon wedges, and freshly grated horseradish, for serving**

1 Place the flour, eggs, and bread crumbs in 3 separate large, shallow bowls or pie dishes. Arrange the veal scaloppine on a cutting board and season both sides of each with salt and white pepper. Coat each scaloppina in flour, shaking off the excess, and then dip completely in the eggs. Drain the scaloppine from the eggs and dredge in bread crumbs, pressing the

veal into the crumbs to adhere. Arrange the breaded scaloppine on a wire rack.

2 In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon clarified butter over medium-high. Add 1 scaloppina and cook, turning once and adding 1 tablespoon more clarified butter, until the veal is golden brown and crisp, about 4 minutes. Transfer the scaloppina to a wire rack set over paper towels to drain and repeat frying the remaining scaloppine with the remaining 14 tablespoons clarified butter.

3 To serve, place each scaloppina on a serving plate and top with a couple anchovies and a sprinkling of capers, with some lemon wedges on the side. Using a Microplane, grate a little fresh horseradish over each scaloppina just before serving.

Honey-and-Butter-Baked Pears with Cold Cream

Serves 8; 📖 Page 53
Total: 1 hr. 15 min.

These sticky caramelized pears get served warm with a glug of fresh chilled cream for dessert at Paul Cunningham's holiday feast. He uses "double cream," a dairy product not available in the U.S. You can use chilled crème fraîche on its own, or thin it slightly with chilled heavy cream to approximate the texture. If you can find organic heavy cream where the fat separates and floats to the top, skim off this fat and use it.

- 8 Anjou pears, peeled, halved, and cored**
- 8 Tbsp. unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes**
- Kosher salt**
- 5 thyme sprigs**
- 2 fresh bay leaves**
- ½ cup honey**
- Chilled crème fraîche or heavy cream, for serving (see note above)**

1 Heat the oven to 400°. On a parchment paper-lined rimmed baking sheet, arrange the pears cut-side-up in a single layer. Top each pear half with butter and season lightly with salt. Scatter the thyme and bay leaves over the pears and drizzle with honey.

2 Bake the pears, turning them every 15 minutes to coat in the butter and honey, until they are tender and caramelized, about 1 hour. Transfer the pears to a warmed dish and serve while hot with a generous pour of chilled cream.



For tips on baking the best holiday cookies, see page 82.



DANISH CHRISTMAS COOKIES

1. Vanilla Wreath Cookies

Heat the oven to 350°. Beat 8 Tbsp. softened unsalted butter with 1 cup (7 oz.) sugar and the seeds of $\frac{1}{2}$ vanilla bean on the medium speed of a hand mixer until fluffy. Add 2 cups (9 oz.) all-purpose flour, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup room temperature whole milk, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt and beat on low speed until just combined. Scrape the dough into a cloth piping bag fitted with a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch star tip and pipe 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pretzel shapes onto baking sheets. Bake until lightly golden on the bottom, about 16 minutes. Makes 4 dozen.

2. Almond Sugar Cookies

Heat the oven to 350°. Beat 3 sticks softened unsalted butter with $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (5 oz.) sugar on medium speed of a hand mixer until fluffy. Add 4 cups (1 lb. 2 oz.) all-purpose flour and 1 tsp. kosher salt and beat on low speed until combined. Scrape the dough onto a floured work surface and flatten with a rolling pin into a 13-by-10 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rectangle. Brush with some egg wash and sprinkle with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped almonds and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar. Cut into 2-by-1 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch rectangles, transfer to baking sheets, and bake until golden on the bottom, about 15 minutes. Makes 3 dozen.

3. Cinnamon Sugar Cookies

Heat the oven to 350°. Beat 2 sticks softened unsalted butter with 10 Tbsp. (4 oz.) sugar and 1 large egg yolk on the medium speed of a hand mixer until fluffy. Add 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups plus 2 Tbsp. (12 oz.) all-purpose flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt, $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. baking soda, and 1 tsp. water and beat on low speed until just combined. Scrape the dough onto a floured work surface, flatten until $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, and cut out cookies using a 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-star or circle cutter. Transfer the cookies to baking sheets, sprinkle with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup turbinado sugar mixed with 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon, and bake until golden on the bottom, about 12 minutes. Makes 8 dozen.

4. Honey and Spice Cookies

Heat the oven to 375°. Beat 12 Tbsp. softened unsalted butter with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (4 oz.) packed muscovado sugar, 2 Tbsp. honey, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon, 1 tsp. ground ginger, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. each ground allspice and ground cloves on the medium speed of a hand mixer until fluffy. Add 2 cups (9 oz.) all-purpose flour, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped hazelnuts, and 1 tsp. kosher salt and beat on low speed until just combined. Scrape the dough onto a floured work surface, flatten until $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, and cut out cookies using a 2-inch-round cutter. Transfer the rounds to baking sheets and bake until golden on the bottom, about 8 minutes. Makes 4 dozen.

5. Citrus Twist Fritters

Beat 6 Tbsp. softened unsalted butter with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.) sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cardamom, and the finely grated zest of 1 lemon and $\frac{1}{2}$ orange on the medium speed of a hand mixer until fluffy. Add 2 cups (9 oz.) all-purpose flour, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lightly beaten eggs (about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$), 2 Tbsp. heavy cream, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt and beat on low speed until combined. Knead until smooth, flatten until $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, and cut into 1-inch-wide strips. Cut strips into 3-inch-long diamonds, then cut a 1-inch slit in the center of each diamond and thread one end through the hole and out the other side, pulling ends apart to form a knot. Working in batches, fry the pastries in vegetable oil at 350° until golden brown and crisp, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 minutes. Drain on paper towels and serve hot. Makes about 4 dozen.

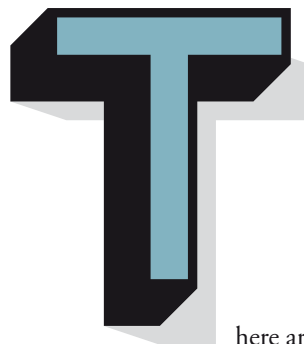




PEAK ITALY

High in the Dolomites, a hearty winter feast shows off the flavors of this enchanted Alpine border region

**By Adam Sachs
Photographs by Tom Parker**



here are a few indigenous words worth adding to your vocabulary before you go to the Dolomites—and really, unless you are anti-awe or Tyrolean-chalet-averse or just constitutionally unresponsive to the self-evident charms of stunning pink-hued sunsets and green pastures fragrant with edelweiss and speck, the ubiquitous local ham, you should positively, definitely, without hesitation go to the Dolomites.

None of these words relate directly to the act of skiing, though skiing is what brings a lot of folks up here where the powdery peaks of Trentino-Alto Adige overlook the Austrian border. The posh enclave of Cortina d'Ampezzo has been a skier's destination since it hosted the Winter Olympics in 1956. Twenty or so miles of twisty roads and a world away are the quieter villages that compose the Alta Badia: Corvara, Colfosco, and San Cassiano. This is the Dolomites unplugged. Here, skiing is simply a means of conveyance from one *rifugio* to another. *Rifugio*, noun: a high-elevation lodge where the food is much better than seems possible on the remote side of a mountain 6,700 feet above sea level and where it's imperative to linger on the terrace sipping icy Aperol spritzes or downing hot Bombardinos—electric yellow, whipped-cream-topped brandy-

Norbert Niederkofler has helmed Hotel Rosa Alpina's Michelin-starred St. Hubertus restaurant since 1996. The chef and his charcuterie plate get a spot of sun outside the Pizzinini cabin.

spiked eggnog shots—while gaping at the craggy cliffs and vistas below and contemplating where to have dinner after a final sunset run.

Word #2: *Stube*. Le Corbusier is said to have called the landscape of the Dolomites “the most beautiful work of architecture ever seen.” Local house builders did Mother Nature one better by adding a *Stube*, the wood-paneled dining room that serves as the warm snugly heart of a typical Tyrolean home. The strong influence of the cozy, rustic aesthetic—hand-carved wooden chairs, taxidermy on the paneled walls, oversized plates of cured meats—is felt in dining rooms across these valleys, including more luxurious later incarnations like the one at St. Hubertus, a Michelin two-star restaurant situated within the Hotel Rosa Alpina, a charming, thoroughly updated 19th century inn. Here the chef, Norbert Niederkofler, practices a form of locavorism he calls “cook the mountain.”

“We use modern techniques,” Niederkofler says, “but really it’s an old-style approach. The idea is to bring people closer to the classic dishes of this region.” Some years ago I enjoyed a plate of one of the best of these classics—*cajinci*, a ravioli filled with sharp *Graukäse* or “gray cheese” made in the Aurina Valley—while the hotel’s owner, Hugo Pizzinini, recalled the heavy dumplings his grandmother made him every day growing up. His grandfather bought the hotel in 1940 and built the town’s first ski lift a decade or so later.

“The real food of this region is butter and cheese, pork and dumplings,” Pizzinini said. “It’s what you eat when you have to walk over a mountain to get home.” Which brings us to our final vocabulary word: The Pizzininis own a *baita*, or small hut, on one of the slopes high above the hotel. The *baita* is like a personal *rifugio* with the rustic warmth of a *Stube* in the sky. So when you’ve had your fill of pampering at the Rosa Alpina spa and elevated eating at St. Hubertus, Pizzinini will send you to the family hut for a night or two of blessed isolation.

“Most locals own a cabin like this. Now they’ve become places for picnics or barbecues, mainly used privately,” Pizzinini said. “Ours was built in 1872 by local farmers. They situated the cabins based

on where they found groups of cattle huddling during thunderstorms. The thinking was that cattle instinctively choose a safe place, so while a lot of trees have fallen around it, the cabin itself has never been hit by lightning in all these years.”

Location, isolation, language: Each factors into the survival of the distinct culture of the Dolomites. Pizzinini, Niederkofler, and their neighbors are Ladins. In addition to Italian, German, and English, they speak Ladin, a distant descendant of Latin. “A century of living under the Austrian Empire, we became Italian after World War I,” Pizzinini said. “But whatever our passports, we have always been Ladino people.”

Cooking the dishes they’ve always cooked is another way of keeping Ladin tradition alive. “Ladin language is protected by laws,” Niederkofler says, “but its habits are protected by locals who want to make sure they are not lost. Foodwise, we started more Austro-Hungarian than German, and now we have lots of influence from Italian cuisine. You can’t really compare it to Austrian cuisine. We have our own style, not just of cooking but of living.”

For Pizzinini, the *baita* is a welcome retreat from the pressures of running the hotel and a nice reminder of time spent with family cooking and relaxing in the mountains. “In August my parents were busy at the hotel, so we kids were sent to the cabins with a babysitter. With no electricity and no hot water, we had the best time. Now I take every opportunity and excuse to get up here. There is a very good energy in these cabins because they are built in a safe place. The views are fantastic and when you close your eyes, you can smell all the flowers all around.” ■



Travel Guide DOLOMITES

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Rosa Alpina

An elegant base for exploring the Alta Badia by foot or on skis. Or you can just stay put and enjoy Norbert Niederkofler’s elevated take on Ladin cuisine at the Michelin two-star St. Hubertus. Book the Pizzinini family’s *baita* for a night of well-cared-for isolation. 20 Strada Micurá de Rù, San Cassiano; rosalpina.it

Hotel La Perla

There’s a lot to like about this glamorous Alta Badia classic, including the platonic ideal of a horseshoe bar (good for *bollito misto* and après-ski drinks), the wood-paneled restaurant Les Stües, and, not least, a loony and wonderfully well-stocked wine cellar complete with trick doors, dry ice, and a Frank Zappa soundtrack. 105 Strada Col Alt, Corvara; hotel-laperla.it

Berghoferin

Great Tyrolean-styled lodge in the northern Dolomites with a classic, intimate *Stube* and views that go on for miles. 54 Oberradein, Redagno; berghoferin.it

WHERE TO EAT

Ütia de Böz

An exemplary *rifugio* with up-close terrace views of the towering Sas de Pütia peak, house-made speck, and stabilizing buttered dumplings. 26 Strada Böz, San Martino; passodelleerbe.it

Pretzhof

Cozy family-run hilltop restaurant with the fresh pork (and telltale smells) of a working farm. 259 Località Tulve, Tulve; pretzhof.com

Rifugi Scotoni

Hike up or ski into this little hut where the cook is busily working three cheeses into gooey-crispy polenta and serving it alongside great grilled pork sausages. 2 Alpe Lagazuoi, San Cassiano; scotoni.it

Aga

The allure of this new restaurant southeast of Cortina d’Ampezzo is that it’s very small (just four tables) and very local (everything is sourced from the owner’s garden or hunted or collected from the surrounding hills). 6 Via Trieste, San Vito di Cadore; agaristorante.it



Braised lamb with polenta (top middle), barley soup and ricotta fritters (middle left), local cheeses (bottom right), and an Aperol spritz (center) are all welcome repast after a day on the slopes outside San Cassiano (middle right), where Norbert Niederkofler (bottom middle) cooks at Hotel Rosa Alpina. Recipes start on page 60.



Braised Leg of Lamb with Graukäse Polenta

Serves 6 to 8; 📖 Page 59

Active: 2 hr. 30 min.; Total: 9 hr.

Chef Norbert Niederkofler braises his leg of lamb for hours and finishes it over a grill. To simplify the process, we put our braised leg under the broiler. The accompanying polenta is flavored with *Graukäse*, a pungent local cheese. Substitute other strong-flavored Alpine cheeses like raclette or Gruyère in its place.

- 12 oz. lamb bones
- 2 celery stalks, roughly chopped
- 2 medium carrots, roughly chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, roughly chopped
- 1 Tbsp. whole juniper berries
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- One 4-lb. bone-in leg of lamb
- 2 Tbsp. kosher salt, plus more
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 10 rosemary sprigs
- 1 bunch thyme
- 3 cups coarse-ground polenta
- 1 cup (4 oz.) grated *Graukäse*, raclette, or Gruyère cheese
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter

1 Heat the oven to 350°. Place the lamb bones on a baking sheet and roast until golden brown, about 30 minutes. Transfer the bones to a large saucepan along with half each of the celery, carrots, and onion; the juniper berries; bay leaves; and 12 cups water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer, and cook until the bones have released their flavor, about 3 hours. Pour the lamb stock through a fine sieve into a bowl and discard the solids.

2 Reduce the oven temperature to 300°. In a roasting pan over two burners, heat the olive oil over medium-high. Season the lamb all over with salt and pepper, add to the pan, and cook, turning, until browned on all sides, 16 to 18 minutes. Transfer the lamb to a platter and add the remaining celery, carrots, and onion to the pan along with the rosemary and thyme. Cook the vegetables, stirring, until browned and soft, about 6 minutes. Return the lamb to the pan along with the lamb stock and bring to a boil. Cover the roasting pan with foil and place the lamb in the oven. Braise the lamb until very tender, about 3 hours.

3 In a large saucepan, bring 8 cups water to a boil. While whisking, slowly pour the polenta and the 2 tablespoons salt into the water and reduce the heat to maintain a simmer. Cook, stirring steadily, until the polenta is tender and smooth, about 1 hour.

Remove the polenta from the heat and stir in the cheese and butter. Season with pepper and keep warm until ready to serve.

4 Transfer the lamb to a cutting board and pour the pan juices through a fine sieve into a bowl. Skim and discard the fat and pour the juices into a small saucepan. Bring the juices to a boil and cook until the sauce reduces to 1 cup, about 15 minutes. Heat the broiler. Transfer the lamb to a foil-lined baking sheet and broil, turning, until browned and crisp on all sides, about 8 minutes. Transfer the lamb to a large dish and serve with the polenta and sauce.

Pearl Barley Soup with Moscato d'Asti

Serves 4 to 6; 📖 Page 59

Total: 1 hr. 30 min.

A splash of moscato d'Asti, a northern Italian dessert wine, adds a wonderful brightness to this simple barley and vegetable soup. Opt for a slightly more dry moscato, if possible, to avoid making the dish too sweet.

- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 8 oz. smoked cooked ham, cut into ¼-inch cubes
- 2 small carrots, finely chopped
- 2 small yellow onions, finely chopped
- 1 medium leek, halved crosswise and thinly sliced
- 1 medium parsnip, finely chopped
- ½ small celery root, finely chopped
- 1 cup pearl barley
- 4 cups chicken stock
- 2 large russet potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 Tbsp. heavy cream
- Moscato d'Asti, for serving
- Finely chopped chives, to garnish

1 In a large saucepan, heat the oil over medium-high. Add the ham and cook, stirring, until golden brown, about 6 minutes. Stir in the carrots, onions, leek, parsnip, and celery root and cook, stirring, until slightly softened, about 8 minutes. Add the barley and cook, stirring, until lightly toasted, about 2 minutes. Stir in the stock and 4 cups water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the barley is half-cooked, about 35 minutes.

2 Add the potatoes to the soup and cook until tender, about 25 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and season with salt and pepper. Stir in the cream and ladle the soup into serving bowls. Add a splash of moscato to each bowl and sprinkle with chives before serving.

Ricotta, Potato, and Scallion Fritters

Makes 2 dozen; 📖 Page 59

Active: 45 min.; Total: 1 hr. 15 min.

In northern Italy, these cheese-and-potato-filled fritters are served alongside the pearl barley soup with moscato d'Asti (see recipe at left). Fried crisp and served hot, they're the ideal vessel to dunk into the warm soup. Assemble the fritters up to a day in advance, then fry off just before serving.

- 2¼ cups plus 1 Tbsp. (9 oz.) rye flour
- 2 cups (9 oz.) all-purpose flour, plus more
- 2 Tbsp. melted unsalted butter
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 large russet potato, peeled and boiled until tender
- ¾ cup ricotta
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped scallions
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Vegetable oil, for frying

1 In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook, combine the rye and all-purpose flours with the butter, 1 teaspoon salt, the eggs, and ¾ cup lukewarm water. Knead on medium speed until the dough comes together and is smooth, about 6 minutes. Scrape the dough onto a lightly floured work surface and shape into a ball. Halve the dough and shape each half into a disk. Wrap each disk in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, grate the cooked potato on the large holes of a box grater and reserve 1 cup; discard the rest. Place the potato in a medium bowl, mix with the ricotta and scallions, and season with salt and pepper.

3 On a floured work surface, roll each dough disk into a ⅛-inch-thick circle. Drop 1-tablespoon-sized dollops of the ricotta-potato filling evenly spaced over 1 dough circle. Using a pastry brush, lightly brush the dough with water around each dollop of filling. Drape the second dough circle over the first and gently press the dough between the mounds of filling to adhere. Position a 3-inch-round fluted cutter over 1 mound of filling and stamp out the round. Repeat, stamping out all the rounds.

4 Pour enough oil into a 6-qt. saucepan to come 2 inches up the side, attach a deep-fry thermometer, and heat to 350°. Working in batches, add the rounds to the oil and fry, turning occasionally, until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, lift the fritters from the oil and drain on paper towels. Season the fritters with salt and serve while hot.

Kaiserschmarrn, a popular Austrian pancake dish, derives its name from *Kaiser* (emperor) and *Schmarrn*, which can be variously translated as a mess, nonsense, or fluff, presumably referring to the presentation, and not the kaiser.

Brown Butter Skillet Cake with Berry Compote (*Kaiserschmarrn*)

Serves 4

Total: 45 min.

At Hotel Rosa Alpina, chef Norbert Niederkofler serves this Central European dessert—essentially torn pieces of pancake—with berry compote and a dusting of confectioners' sugar.

- 1½ cups fresh or frozen lingonberries or cranberries**
- 6 Tbsp. sugar**
- 3 Tbsp. white wine**
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice**
- ³/₄ tsp. kosher salt**
- 1 cup whole milk**
- 1 cup (4 oz.) "00" pasta flour**
- 4 large eggs, separated**
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise and seeds scraped**
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter**
- Confectioners' sugar; toasted, flaked almonds; and 1 mint sprig, to garnish**

1 In a small saucepan, heat 1 cup lingonberries, 3 tablespoons sugar, the white wine, lemon juice, and ¹/₄ teaspoon salt over medium and cook, stirring, until the berries burst and the sauce thickens, about 8 minutes. Purée the sauce in a blender, scrape into the saucepan, and return to medium heat. Stir in the remaining ¹/₂ cup lingonberries and cook, stirring, until softened, about 5 minutes. Remove the sauce from the heat.

2 In a large bowl, whisk the milk, flour, egg yolks, and vanilla seeds until just combined. In a separate bowl, whisk the egg whites until frothy, pour in the remaining 3 tablespoons sugar and ¹/₂ teaspoon salt, and whisk until soft peaks form. Scrape the egg whites into the batter and fold until combined.

3 In a 12-inch nonstick skillet, heat the butter over medium and cook until it begins to brown, about 3 minutes. Pour the batter into the skillet and cook, undisturbed, until set on the bottom, 5 to 6 minutes. Flip the pancake and cook until set, about 5 minutes. Slide the pancake onto a cutting board and tear into large pieces. Transfer the pieces to a serving plate and dust with confectioners' sugar. Sprinkle with almonds, garnish with the mint sprig, and serve warm with the lingonberry compote spooned over top.



Ukrainian

PEERLESS PELMENI, A NEARLY BEETLESS BORSCHT,
AND OTHER SOUP WISDOM FROM MY MOTHER'S KITCHEN

Story and Recipes by Olia Hercules Food Photographs by Justin Walker



Soul Food

Vibrant, lemony sorrel is one of Olia's favorite greens; it grows wild throughout her native Ukraine, and brings a pleasant tartness and crunch to this chilled yogurt soup (opposite, see page 66 for recipe).



The best tomatoes I've ever tried—even better than the ones you get in Italy—are grown in the summertime in Ukraine, where I was born. We use them for our borscht, which has a rosier hue than the dark red beetroot borschts of Russia. It was an important part of the big lunch we ate every day.

My mother and grandmother raised me on soups—my mum says she couldn't live without having some kind of rich broth daily—and now, as a chef in London, I'm fascinated by how creative those two were with their recipes back then. Fresh produce wasn't available in the winter, so we'd preserve what we could, fermenting fresh tomatoes into a fizzy pulp, or packing jars full of fresh herbs and salt to be used as seasoning in hearty soups. Today, you can buy fresh produce all year long, but it's comforting to use those old techniques and keep those traditions going—the flavors are simply more vibrant.

These four soups represent some of my family's traditions. *Frikadelki* are turkey meatballs. My dad hated the ones served in Soviet canteens, but my mum's were amazing; she'd use quality meat and our preserved herbs, which you couldn't get anywhere else. My *pelmeni* are one of my favorite foods. These Siberian dumplings were made for me by my grandmother, who left Siberia for Uzbekistan before settling in Ukraine, bringing her daughter and her dumpling recipe with her. The duck borscht shows off the fizzy tomato purée, and the yogurt soup is filled with fresh sorrel, my favorite green, which can be hard to find, even in London. I've modernized the presentation of the recipes a bit, but the ingredients remain the same, a taste of the seasons of old Ukraine.

Olia Hercules' cookbook Mamushka: Recipes from Ukraine & Eastern Europe (Weldon Owen) was released in October.

Frikadelki in Broth with Fermented Herbs

Serves 6 to 8; 📷 Page 65
Active: 55 min.; Total: 6 days

This simple broth, flavored with onions and potatoes, is a childhood favorite of chef Olia Hercules. Her mother made the *frikadelki*, turkey or beef meatballs, with high-quality turkey meat and seasoned the soup with a mix of fermented mixed herbs like basil, dill, and parsley, which add crunch and brightness to the soup. Rubbed with salt and left to ferment for five days, the herbs' stems become quite potent, so use them here as a seasoning, like salt, to enhance the broth's flavor, but not overwhelm it.

- 1/2 cup roughly chopped basil leaves and stems
- 1/2 cup roughly chopped dill leaves and stems
- 1/2 cup roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves and stems
- 1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more
- 2 small yellow onions
- 1 lb. ground turkey
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 small carrot
- 1 lb. Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 bay leaf

1 Make the fermented herbs: In a medium bowl, toss the basil with the dill, parsley, and the 1 1/2 teaspoons salt until evenly combined. Cover the herbs with a square of cheesecloth and weight with a plate small enough to fit over the herbs but not touch the sides of the bowl. Place a heavy can or weight on the plate and refrigerate the herbs. After 24 hours, remove the weights and rinse and wring out the cheesecloth. Replace the cheesecloth and weights over the herbs and repeat once a day for 4 more days. After the fifth day, remove the weights, discard the cheesecloth, and scrape the herbs into a small jar. Seal the jar and refrigerate the herbs until ready to use, or up to 2 weeks.

2 Make the meatballs and broth: Using the large holes of a box grater, grate 1 onion into a large bowl and add 1 tablespoon of the fermented herbs and the turkey meat. Season the meat with salt and pepper and, using your hands, mix until evenly combined. Using a tablespoon measure, portion the meat into about 3 dozen 1/2-oz. meatballs.

3 In a large saucepan, heat the butter over medium. Finely chop the remaining

onion and finely grate the carrot. Add both to the pan and cook, stirring, until softened, 5 minutes. Add the potatoes, bay leaf, and 8 cups water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook for 5 minutes. Add the meatballs and cook until the meatballs and potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes. Ladle the meatballs, vegetables, and broth into soup bowls and serve with the fermented herbs on the side, using them as a seasoning instead of salt.

Duck Borscht with Fermented Tomato Sauce

Serves 8 to 10; 📷 Page 65
Active: 1 hr.; Total: 7 days

Though borscht is typically thought of as a beet soup, Olia Hercules' take includes whole duck in a fragrant broth with red pepper, beet greens, and cabbage. A fizzy, fermented tomato sauce, which Hercules uses as a substitute for fresh tomatoes in winter, gets stirred in at the end, brightening and lightening up the meat-rich stew. Use the fizzy tomatoes during the winter almost anywhere you'd use fresh: stirred into soups, in salsa, or as a condiment for roasted meats.

- 3 vine-ripe tomatoes, halved
- 2 1/2 Tbsp. kosher salt, plus more
- 8 oz. cherry or grape tomatoes
- 3 medium carrots
- 2 small yellow onions
- One** 4-lb. whole duck, trimmed of excess fat and cut into 8 pieces
- 1 tsp. whole allspice, crushed
- 1 bay leaf
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into 1/4-inch dice
- 2 cups roughly chopped beet leaves or Swiss chard
- 1 small beet, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch dice
- 1/2 small white cabbage, cored and thinly shredded
- 1 cup roughly chopped dill

1 Make the fermented tomato sauce: Using a box grater, grate the vine-ripe tomatoes into a medium bowl, discarding the skins, and stir in the cherry tomatoes. Cover the tomatoes with a square of cheesecloth and weight with a plate small enough to fit over the tomatoes but not touch the sides of the bowl. Place a heavy can or weight on the plate and let the tomatoes stand at room temperature. After 24 hours, remove the weights and rinse and wring out the cheesecloth. Replace the cheesecloth and weights

over the tomatoes and repeat once a day for 4 more days. After the fifth day, remove the weights and discard the cheesecloth. Mash the cherry tomatoes into the sauce with a potato masher and scrape the tomatoes into a bottle or jar. Seal the jar and refrigerate the tomatoes until ready to use, or up to 2 weeks.

2 Roughly chop 2 carrots, halve 1 onion, and place both in a large saucepan along with the duck pieces, allspice, bay leaf, and 10 cups water. Season with salt and pepper, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook, skimming the foam from the surface occasionally, until the duck meat is falling off the bone, about 2 hours. Remove the pan from the heat, transfer the duck meat and bones to a bowl, and pour the stock through a fine strainer into a large bowl, discarding the solids. Let the stock and meat cool completely and then refrigerate both separately until chilled, at least 4 hours or overnight.

3 Remove the congealed duck fat from the surface of the chilled stock, place the fat in a large saucepan, and heat over medium. Cut the remaining carrot and onion into 1/4-inch dice, add to the pan, and cook, stirring, until soft and lightly caramelized, about 10 minutes. Add the bell pepper and cook, stirring, until soft, 5 minutes more. Pour the chilled stock into the pan along with the beet leaves, beet,





Clockwise from left:
Duck borscht with fizzy
fermented tomatoes; chicken
broth with Siberian *pelmeni*
dumplings; turkey *frikadelki* in
broth with salt-fermented herbs.
Recipes start on page 64.

My mother and grandmother raised me on soups—I'm fascinated by how creative those two were with their recipes

and cabbage, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook, stirring, until the beet is just tender, about 10 minutes.

4 Shred the duck meat from the bones, stir into the soup along with the dill, and cook until warmed through, about 3 minutes more. Remove the soup from the heat and ladle into individual serving bowls. Serve the fermented tomato sauce on the side to stir into individual bowls of the borscht.

Pelmeni Dumplings in Chicken Broth

Serves 6 to 8; 📷 Page 65
Active: 50 min.; Total: 3 hr.

These traditional Siberian half-moon dumplings, called *pelmeni*, are packed with garlic and ground pork and were the favorite food of Olia Hercules' Russian grandmother. Here they are the stars of this soup, served in a simple chicken broth flavored with carrots and whole black peppercorns. Shred and stir the cooked chicken into the soup, if you like, or save it for another use and enjoy the *pelmeni* and broth on their own.

- 1** tsp. kosher salt, plus more
- 1** large egg, lightly beaten
- 2 2/3** cups (12 1/4 oz.) all-purpose flour
- 2** small yellow onions
- 3 1/2** oz. ground pork
- 1 1/2** Tbsp. minced flat-leaf parsley leaves, stems reserved, plus whole parsley leaves, to garnish
- 1** garlic clove, finely grated
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- One** 3-lb. whole chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 1** tsp. whole black peppercorns
- 1** bay leaf
- 1** medium carrot, roughly chopped

1 In a large bowl, stir the salt with the egg and 2/3 cup lukewarm water until smooth. Stir in the flour until a stiff dough forms. Transfer the dough to a clean work surface and knead briefly until smooth. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and let rest for 30 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, finely chop 1 onion and place in a medium bowl along with the pork, minced parsley, and garlic. Season with salt and pepper and, using your



Olia adds handfuls of fresh herbs to lighten mutton broth simmered over a campfire.

hands, mix the pork with the aromatics until the filling is evenly combined.

3 Unwrap the dough and place on a lightly floured work surface. Using a rolling pin, flatten the dough until 1/8 inch thick. Using a 3-inch round cutter, stamp out circles of dough. Place 2 teaspoons pork filling in the center of each circle, brush the edge of the circles with water, and fold the circles in half to create half-moon dumplings. Transfer the dumplings to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and refrigerate until ready to use.

4 Halve the remaining onion and place in a large saucepan along with the parsley stems, chicken, peppercorns, bay leaf, and carrot and cover with 12 cups water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to maintain a simmer, and cook until the chicken is tender and the broth is reduced, about 1 1/2 hours. Transfer the chicken to a plate and let cool. Once cool, remove and discard the skin and bones and shred the meat into bite-size pieces.

5 Meanwhile, pour the broth through a fine strainer into a bowl and discard the solids. Pour the broth back into the saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer, add the dumplings, and cook until they are tender, about 3 minutes. Stir in the shredded chicken and season

with salt. Ladle the broth, dumplings, and chicken into serving bowls and garnish with whole parsley leaves.

Cold Yogurt and Herb Soup with Chickpeas

Serves 6 to 8; 📷 Page 62
Active: 40 min.; Total: 5 hr.

Chef Olia Hercules uses rice and chickpeas to add body to this naturally light chilled yogurt soup, teeming with chopped herbs like spinach, sorrel, cilantro, mint, and dill. You can certainly serve it hot, if you prefer, which is half the fun of making soups; you can make or serve them in any way that you like, says Hercules. "It's all about using what's fresh and getting the most flavor out of it."

- 1 1/2** cups plain, full-fat yogurt (not Greek-style)
- 1** large egg, lightly beaten
- 1/2** cup long-grain white rice
- One** 15-oz. can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2** cups finely chopped baby spinach leaves
- 3/4** cup finely chopped cilantro leaves, plus whole leaves, to garnish
- 3/4** cup finely chopped mint leaves, plus whole leaves, to garnish
- 3/4** cup finely chopped sorrel leaves or swiss chard stems, plus whole sorrel leaves, to garnish
- 1/2** cup finely chopped dill, plus whole leaves, to garnish
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

1 In a medium saucepan, whisk the yogurt and egg with 4 cups water until smooth, then stir in the rice. While stirring constantly, bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Add the chickpeas and cook, stirring, until the rice and chickpeas are tender, about 15 minutes. Stir in the spinach, cilantro, mint, sorrel, and dill and season with salt and pepper.

2 Transfer the soup to a large bowl and let cool completely. Transfer the soup to the refrigerator and chill for at least 4 hours. To serve, ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with more herbs.



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A Return to Siem Reap





Top row, from left: Monks on the outskirts of Siem Reap; locals slurping noodles at a casual market stall; the glitzy Raffles hotel. Bottom row, from left: The region's produce on display at the Old Market; The Sugar Palm's crispy calamari and prawns (see page 78 for recipe); Cuisine Wat Damnak, which specializes in French-inflected Khmer dishes.



Novelist **LAWRENCE OSBORNE** goes back to Cambodia to explore modern takes on Southeast Asia's oldest cuisine

Photographs by Christopher Wise





combines elements from both in the kitchen: the liberal use of wildflowers and herbs, galangal and ginger, lemongrass and mint, tropical fruits and palm sugar, nuts, coconut cream, noodles, chiles, fresh green pepper, and lime. It's less spicy than Thai, as subtly herbal as Vietnamese—and there is a trace of the departed French in its pastries and breads.

Modern Cambodian dishes are descended (or so it's claimed) from those eaten in the early days of the Khmer Empire, the great Angkorian kingdom of the 9th to 15th centuries, making them probably the oldest in all of Southeast Asia. It's fitting, then, to take your morning soup in the shadow of Prasat Sour Prat towers that have been abandoned for 600 years. The *num banh chok* might be as old.

But in the 1970s the country was destroyed by the

Khmer Rouge, and all links to the past, culinary and otherwise, were severed. The recovery has been slow. Only now have generations with little firsthand experience of those events—and older people who remember them all too well but want to reach back into an even more distant past—taken over the nation's gradual cultural rebirth. This quiet revival can be seen and felt in Khmer restaurants, and Siem Reap has emerged as the center of contemporary Khmer cuisine. Many of the Khmer young go to Phnom Penh to make their careers, and once there, often want to eat Western food. In Siem Reap, young Khmer chefs have more leeway to experiment—to revisit and reinterpret the classic, powerful Khmer dishes that have been around for centuries, some from the royal family's tables; to *(continued on page 74)*



Green Curry and Taro Stem Soup with Bacon

Serves 4
Total: 1 hr. 30 min.

Known as *kdat* in Cambodia, taro stem, which grows out of the fibrous taro root like celery grows out of celery root, is a crisp, watery vegetable often used in soups to add brightness and crunch. In this version (pictured above) from Embassy restaurant, its clean taste is buttressed by a rich green curry broth, a crumbling of smoky bacon, and a shot of umami from a traditional Cambodian fish paste called *prahok*, usually sold as “mud fish sauce” in Asian grocery stores. If you can’t find taro stems, water spinach or Swiss chard stems make a fine substitute.

- 2 oz. slab bacon, cut into 1/4-inch lardons
- 1/4 cup finely chopped cilantro stems and leaves
- 1 Tbsp. *prahok* (Cambodian

- fermented fish paste; amazon.com)
- 6 kaffir lime leaves, thinly shredded
- 4 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
- 3 small shallots, roughly chopped
- 2 serrano chiles, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- 2 lemongrass stalks, inner cores thinly sliced
- 1 1/2 inches galangal, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 Tbsp. long-grain white rice
- Kosher salt
- Two 12-inch-long taro stems or 4 oz. water spinach or Swiss chard stems, peeled, halved lengthwise and cut into 3-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup cooked white rice
- 1 Tbsp. finely grated palm sugar or light brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp. fish sauce
- 1/2 cup 1/2-inch cubed white sweet potato
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 4 cups chicken stock
- 1 cup unsweetened coconut milk
- Thinly sliced long beans, mung bean sprouts, and thinly shredded

basil leaves, for serving
Whole Vietnamese mint and sawtooth herb leaves, to garnish

1 In a small skillet, heat the bacon over medium and cook, stirring, until browned and crisp and its fat renders, about 6 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to paper towels to cool and discard the fat. Meanwhile, in a food processor, combine the cilantro with the fish paste, kaffir lime leaves, garlic, shallots, chiles, lemongrass, and galangal and purée into a lightly chunky curry paste.

2 Meanwhile, in a small skillet, heat the uncooked rice over medium and cook, tossing occasionally, until lightly toasted, about 14 minutes. Transfer the rice to a spice grinder, let cool, and then process until finely ground. In a pot of boiling salted water, cook the taro stems until tender, about 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, drain the stems and let cool. Squeeze the stems to drain all their water and transfer to a bowl along with the ground toasted rice, cooked rice, palm sugar, and fish sauce and stir until evenly combined. Add the sweet potato to the boiling water and cook until tender, about 5 minutes; drain.

3 In a large saucepan, heat the oil over medium. Scrape the curry paste into the pan and cook, stirring, until fragrant and beginning to brown, about 6 minutes. Stir in the chicken stock and coconut milk and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer and cook, stirring, until reduced slightly, about 10 minutes. Transfer soup to a blender and purée until smooth. Pour the soup through a fine sieve back into the saucepan and keep warm.

4 To serve, divide the rice mixture among 4 serving bowls, mounding it in the center. Ladle the soup around and then top with the bacon, sweet potatoes, long beans, bean sprouts, and basil, and, if using, garnish with the Vietnamese mint and sawtooth herb leaves.

Chicken and Green Mango Salad

Serves 8; Page 75
Total: 30 min.

In this Southeast Asian twist on chicken salad, cooked chicken breast is shredded and tossed with pounded green mango, roasted peanuts, and loads of fresh herbs. In Cambodia, it is served with thin slices of pineapple, cucumber, water lily stems, and whole leaves of basil and mint, but we’ve found it’s also great with any other raw vegetables and herbs you have on hand.

(recipe continued on page 75)

In Siem Reap, young chefs have leeway to experiment, to revisit and reinterpret the powerful ceremonial dishes that have been around for centuries

Sok Kimsan (left) and Pol Kimsan trained under Michelin-starred chefs and now helm the popular fine-dining restaurant Embassy. There, they showcase their skills in a set menu that is making waves in a culinary scene dominated by men.

Embassy
Pol Kimsan
Executive Chef



(continued from page 71) use the vibrant local ingredients as inspiration; to explore their own heritage.

New Zealander Bruce Dunnet and his Khmer wife, Kethana, opened The Sugar Palm in 2006 in Siem Reap. Kethana grew up in the capital in the '60s. Her father was a high-ranking official in the Forestry Department, which marked him for death when the Khmer Rouge swept into the city in 1975. Her six brothers and two sisters also disappeared without a trace. It's a common trauma among Khmers of her age. She herself went to school in New Zealand in 1968 and didn't come back until 1995. It saved her life.

I met her at the restaurant's first-floor bar to eat while she reminisced about the prewar era.

"We had the best music in Asia," she told me. "The best urban lifestyle. You can't imagine it."

On the table was a version of *prahok*, the pungent condiment made from fermented fish, similar to ancient Roman garum. I was shown how to ladle it onto rounds of green tomato and cucumber and then a mound of rice, the pungency of the fermented fish—it has a wild whiff of ripe Camembert—toned down by palm sugar, chiles, and fresh coconut. A little while later, a tangy fish salad, *pleah tray*, arrived, the mint, peanuts, palm sugar, and acidic lime making each bite fresh and crunchy.

"Do you know Ros Sereysothea?" she continued. "A great singer of the prewar. When I opened this place I wanted to go back to that time in some way—my mother's kitchen fifty years ago. It was all forgotten. Those flavors even, gone."

I did know Ros Sereysothea (her version of "Venus" is a '60s Southeast Asian pop classic), but those flavors were indeed lost on me. I told her I didn't know how a proper *amok* should be made—a quintessential Cambodian dish of fish steamed with coconut and egg inside a banana leaf. One was duly brought. How often this staple dish is botched in tourist restaurants, its steaming technique slightly off, rendering it too dry. *Amok* as it used to be and ought to be? You have to know how to tap the leaf and judge how the custard-like insides wobble. Kethana's, reputed to be the best in Siem Reap, was as delicate as a Robuchon pudding, with the perfect balance of galangal and turmeric.

"Thai food is balanced too," Kethana allowed, "but our balances are of a different kind. Gentler, less heat."

Siem Reap is still recognizably French, with its long, wide boulevards, flowering trees, open parks, and peeling villas rising above their defensive walls. It feels leisured and proud of its provincialism because at its edge is one of the greatest archaeological sites in the world. Laid out by engineers to feel vaguely rational and spacious, the city has a sluggish, half-hearted but charming river running through it, with a few desultory bridges flung across. In the surrounding countryside, you'll encounter extreme poverty—in the city, flush with tourism money, it's more grand.

One night, I found myself at Raffles, Siem Reap's loftiest colonial hotel, for the "Royal Dynasty" set menu. I usually expect the worst from hotel food, and wasn't the word "royal" supposed to set off alarm bells? But here it was surprise after surprise. The *chien sach chien*, grilled lamb chops, were marinated in a ginger sauce, slightly tart and sweet at the same time. I had never had Cambodian lamb before—it's hard to source in a region with no sheep—and yet these chops felt right at home in their sauce.

But it was across the city's eponymous river at Embassy that I ate a dish that exemplified perhaps more than any other the new Khmer cooking that had attracted me to the city this time around: a bowl of green curry soup, made with crunchy, bamboo-like taro stems known as *kdat*.

Top left: The home cooking school run by Kethana Dunnet, co-owner of The Sugar Palm. Opposite page: Whether it's *num banh chok* (top left), an ancient soup served in a small village; or the refined food of chef Ke Ratana (top right) of Chanrey Tree restaurant—like his pounded chicken and mango salad (middle right, see page 72 for recipe)—Cambodian dishes are built on lush produce and a rich culinary history. A refined version of fish *amok* curry (bottom left, see page 75 for recipe), from The Sugar Palm restaurant, in the city's bustling center (middle left).



(recipe continued from page 72)

- 3 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- 2 shallots, unpeeled
- 1/4 cup small dried shrimp
- 1 large (14 oz.) green mango, peeled and shredded
- 3/4 cup finely chopped roasted peanuts
- 2 Tbsp. packed finely grated palm sugar or light brown sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 8 oz. cooked chicken breast, shredded
- 2 Tbsp. fish sauce
- 2 Tbsp. roughly chopped caraway leaf
- 2 Tbsp. roughly chopped saw leaf herb
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. roughly chopped basil
- 1 Tbsp. fresh lime juice
- Pineapple, cucumber, and water lily slices, for serving
- Mint and basil leaves, for serving



1 Heat a small skillet over high heat. Place the garlic and shallots in the skillet and cook, turning, until charred on all sides, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer the garlic and shallots to a cutting board and let cool. Peel and discard the skins and then roughly chop the garlic and shallots.

2 With a mortar and pestle, pound the dried shrimp until finely ground. Add the chopped garlic and shallots along with the mango, peanuts, sugar, and salt and pound until well combined. Stir in chicken, fish sauce, caraway leaf, saw leaf, basil, and lime juice until evenly mixed. Transfer the salad onto a plate and serve with pineapple, cucumber, water lily, and mint and basil leaves.

Fish Baked in Curry Custard (Amok)

Serves 4
Active: 20 min.; Total: 1 hr. 15 min.

In Cambodia's traditional fish preparation, delicate white fish is poached in a banana leaf (via steaming, or baking in a water bath, as we do here) in an intoxicating coconut milk and curry custard until spoon-tender. The banana leaf is optional but the Khmer curry paste essential: It gives the custard its signature color and flavor.

- Vegetable oil, for greasing
- 1 lb. skinless sea bass, cod, red snapper, or haddock cut into 16 equal pieces
- 2 cups coconut milk
- 6 Tbsp. Khmer yellow curry paste (see page 83 for recipe)
- 3 Tbsp. red chile-garlic paste, such as Kum-Lee brand

(recipe continued on page 78)



Embassy was opened last year by Pol and Sok Kimsan, two young female chefs who carry the same last name (though the so-called “Kimsan twins” are not even sisters). Their restaurant is located in a white English-farmhouse-inspired building completely at odds with the typical aesthetic of Siem Reap eateries. No bamboo, no antiques, no view of Angkor Wat at dawn. I was alone there with two Japanese businessmen at a neighboring table who seemed extremely surprised at what they were eating.

“*Oishii*,” they kept crying, leaning back and staring at each other.

Sok Kimsan came by to explain this soup, a bright green concoction with a no doubt untraditional ingredient sprinkled on top: bacon.

“It’s Khmer, as you can taste, but just given a slightly different twist,” she said. The crisp cubes of *kdut* itself were nimble and delicate, with a citric tang and sour edge, one of the best things I had eaten in Cambodia to date. As I scraped the bowl, I thought back to the lone Cambodian restaurant I used to eat at in Fort Greene in Brooklyn and shuddered. What *was* that stewed dish packed with canned pineapples and coconut cream?

I was inspired by Noma and the idea of foraging, because that’s what we did when I was young,” said Pola Siv, the young owner of tiny Mie Café, which is set in a renovated house on a small backstreet far from the tourist hordes of Pub Street.

“In rural Cambodia, foraging is normal. We use a lot of wild herbs and plants, but only old people know how to forage properly. During the war that was how they survived.” In lieu of foraging, Siv has a garden in front of the restaurant.

Siv was too poor to go to cooking school, so he left Cambodia to work as a barman, waiter, and beachboy in Bahrain and then the Cayman Islands to save up the money to send himself to the Culinary Arts Academy of Switzerland. Returning to Siem Reap after eight years, he finally set up his own restaurant.

He gave me a tuna tartare with mango, then a fresh carpaccio of snakehead fish bundled up with grapefruit and hazelnut oil and served with a poached egg fried in tempura batter. The latter dish was deliciously astringent, the herbs crunchy against the tender river fish. After that, ravioli stuffed with Khmer herbs.

I had heard that he cooked with red-ant eggs, popular in the Khmer countryside but a rarity in the city. I opted instead for the mango *sombai*, the fruit spread over a fried rice cake with a coconut sorbet. Just six or seven years ago, this kind of inventive, experimental food—traditionally,

rice cakes are steamed and tacky, not crisp—was unimaginable in Siem Reap, or really anywhere in Cambodia.

Cuisine Wat Damnak, one of my final stops, is perhaps the most famous of the new Khmer restaurants. It’s in a neighborhood dominated by Wat Damnak itself, an ancient temple compound, quieter than the more touristy parts of town, with streets of ragged palms and family-run shops. The restaurant is owned, surprisingly, by a Frenchman, Joannès Rivière, a transplant from the town of Roanne in the Loire who cooked for years in the United States but grew up with Asian-inflected food at home—his grandfather was a diplomat in Japan, and Joannès’ father enjoyed the cuisine. His dishes are celebrated today in Cambodia for their intelligent attention to Khmer tradition (remarkable in a foreigner) and seasonality. He serves pork, snakehead fish, herbs, flowers, and crudités all together with a generous helping of *prahok*, and beef shank curry and holy basil with eggplant and morning glory, each of which could have been lifted out of a royal cookbook from many centuries ago.

His fish comes from nearby Tonle Sap Lake—70 percent of the protein consumed in Cambodia comes from the lake, making it the nutritional and ecological heart of the country—and in my favorite presentation, it’s paired with soy milk skin, sesame, and aged salted lime.

“My father was a vegetable supplier for three-star Michelin restaurants in France,” Rivière told me. “So I know how good the produce in Cambodia is. The fish from the Tonle Sap Lake is among the greatest freshwater fish in the entire world.”

Rivière’s inspiration, though, has never been just the ingredients. A few years ago, he met the Australian chef David Thompson, who revived a certain kind of “royal” Thai cuisine at his revered Bangkok and London restaurants, Nahm. Thompson searched the cookbooks of the Thai royal family for inspiration, since the royal kitchens had become veritable archives of old recipes that the wider commercial restaurant culture could not always afford to maintain. In those venerable cookbooks you can easily find the most elaborate and complex versions of dishes that ordinary people make in very different, more simple ways now. Thompson encouraged Rivière to try the same with Khmer cuisine.

“It seemed to me then that one could use the traditional cuisine as a jumping-off point to create something fresh and modern without diluting it or making it into the dreaded *fusion*,” he told me. “It could be authentic and contemporary at the same time.” ■

The slow, sensual pace of life, the hovering presence of the past, the vast skies filled with terrifying and beautiful clouds, and, of course, the food—it all draws me back to Cambodia

The unpaved road to Siem Reap, where locals bike past everything from crowded markets to upscale modern hotels and tourists flock to the renowned Angkor Wat temples.

Travel Guide **SIEM REAP**

WHERE TO EAT

Chanrey Tree

Book ahead, as this restaurant has gained a following in recent years and is often packed. Specialties include seafood with Kampot pepper, a native plant, and braised frog legs. *Pokombor Avenue by Wat Preah Prom Rath; chanreytree.com*

Cuisine Wat Damnak

Owned by French-born Joannès Rivière, this elegant, intimate restaurant serves light, sophisticated French-inflected Khmer cuisine. Don't miss the excellent fish from nearby Tonle Sap Lake. *Wat Damnak Market Street; cuisinewatdamnak.com*

Embassy

Two female chefs run the innovative kitchen of this restaurant set in a mall. Make sure to order a bowl of the *kdat* soup, served with crispy bacon. *Street 27; restaurant-siemreap.com/html/embassy.php*

Mie Café

In a renovated Khmer house, Mie Café, with its own herb garden in front, has an endearing simplicity in both decor and cuisine. For \$24, enjoy its four-course set menu, which changes depending on available produce and seasonality. *0085, Phum Treng Khu Slorgram; miecafe-siemreap.com*

The Sugar Palm

Traditionally home-cooked Khmer dishes, like fish *amok* and coconut soup, shine at this restaurant. Dine outside if you can. *Taphul Road; thesugarpalm.com*

WHERE TO STAY

Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor

This is the grande dame of Cambodian colonial-era hotels, with a sweeping pool set with frangipani, a bar with dry martini flights, and an upscale restaurant. *1 Vithej Charles de Gaulle, Khum Svay Dang Kum; raffles.com/siem-reap*

The Angkor Village Resort

A lovely garden oasis with a snaking pool that weaves through standalone cottages, this resort is located right next to the temples. The restaurant serves exquisite handmade *pains au chocolat* and will pack food for temple-goers. *Phum Traeng; angkorvillageresort.asia*





In Cambodian cuisine the use of hardy leaves, like banana or lotus, is common. Sometimes they serve as a vessel in which to steam food. After it's cooked, this beef curry is wrapped in a lotus leaf simply for aesthetics.

(recipe continued from page 75)

- 2 Tbsp. fish sauce
- 1 Tbsp. finely grated palm sugar or light brown sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 3 large eggs
- Thinly shredded kaffir lime leaves and julienned red chiles, to garnish (optional)

1 Heat the oven to 325°. Grease four 8-oz. heatproof bowls or ramekins with oil and divide the fish evenly among the bowls, with each containing 4 pieces. In a large bowl, whisk the coconut milk with the curry paste, chile-garlic paste, fish sauce, palm sugar, salt, and eggs until smooth.

2 Divide the custard evenly among the bowls and place in a large roasting pan. Place the pan in the oven and pour enough boiling water into the pan to come halfway up the sides of bowls. Bake until the custards are set but jiggle slightly in the center and the fish is cooked, about 50 minutes.

3 Lift the bowls from the water bath and transfer each to a small plate. Serve the custards garnished with the kaffir lime leaves and chile, if using.

Crispy Calamari and Prawns with Pepper-Lime Sauce

Serves 8; 📖 Page 68
Total: 30 min.

A bright dipping sauce made of lime juice, shallot, and basil called *toek* enlivens fried calamari and prawns at The Sugar Palm, but it's just as good with grilled meats or vegetables. Wondra, a very finely milled flour, is used here to get a thin, crispy coat-

ing on the prawns. If using all-purpose flour instead, the final dish will be heavier.

- Vegetable oil, for frying
- 1 cup fine flour, such as Wondra
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more
- Kosher salt
- 8 oz. cleaned calamari bodies and tentacles, bodies cut into ½-inch-thick rings
- 8 oz. medium head-on and shell-on prawns
- 12 basil leaves
- 4 kaffir lime leaves
- 2 chiles de árbol, stemmed and seeded
- 1 lemongrass stalk, inner core thinly shredded lengthwise
- 2 inches galangal, peeled and finely julienned
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 1 Tbsp. finely grated palm sugar or light brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp. minced shallot
- 2 tsp. minced garlic

1 Pour enough oil to come 2 inches up the side of 6-qt. saucepan and heat over medium to 350°. In a medium bowl, whisk the flour with the sugar and season with pepper and salt. Add the calamari bodies and tentacles and prawns and toss until evenly coated. Lift the calamari from the flour, shake off the excess, and place in the oil along with 4 basil leaves, 2 kaffir lime leaves, 1 chile, and half each of the shredded lemongrass and galangal.

2 Deep-fry the calamari until golden brown and cooked through, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, lift the calamari, leaves, and chile from the oil and transfer to paper towels to drain. Repeat with the

prawns, 4 basil leaves, and the remaining kaffir lime leaves, chile, and shredded lemongrass and galangal.

3 Finely mince the remaining 4 basil leaves and place in a small bowl, along with the 1 teaspoon pepper, the lime juice, palm sugar, shallot, and garlic. Season with salt and stir to combine. Serve the dipping sauce alongside the fried calamari, prawns, and herbs while hot.

Curried Beef Stew with Fried Shallots and Peanuts

Serves 6 to 8
Total: 1 hr. 30 min.

This simple beef curry gets its wallop of flavor from *kroeuung*, a catchall word encompassing a large variety of herb and spice pastes that form the basis for many Cambodian dishes. At Malis restaurant in Phnom Penh, the cooks wrap each serving of curry and rice in a beautifully folded lotus leaf, but feel free to skip that step, as it's only for presentation.

- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 cup Khmer yellow curry paste (see page 83 for recipe)
- 2 lbs. boneless beef chuck, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 3 cups unsweetened coconut milk
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Cooked white rice, for serving
- Lotus leaves, for serving (optional)
- ¼ cup roughly chopped roasted peanuts

1 In a small saucepan, bring the oil and shallot to a simmer over medium heat, and cook, stirring, until the shallot is golden brown and crisp, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, lift the shallot from the oil and drain on paper towels. Reserve 2 tablespoons of the oil and discard the rest.

2 In a large saucepan, heat the reserved oil over medium. Add the curry paste and cook, stirring, until fragrant and beginning to caramelize, about 2 minutes. Stir in the beef and coconut milk and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally to keep anything from burning on the bottom of the pan, until the beef is tender and the sauce has reduced and thickened, about 1 hour and 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and season the curry with salt and pepper. Serve the curry over cooked rice in a lotus leaf, if you like, or in a large bowl. Garnish with the fried shallot and peanuts.



Grilled Lamb Chops with Ginger Sauce

Serves 8

Active: 35 min.; Total: 2 hr. 45 min.

A fragrant mix of oyster sauce, cilantro, and ginger pulls double duty here as both a marinade and dipping sauce for these lamb rib chops sourced from Australia. Use the marinade on beef or chicken, if you like.

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped scallions, plus more, julienned, to garnish
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable oil
- 3 Tbsp. minced shallot
- 3 Tbsp. oyster sauce
- 2 Tbsp. light soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp. minced cilantro
- 2 Tbsp. minced garlic
- 2 Tbsp. minced ginger
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- 8 lamb rib chops, cut $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Steamed bok choy, for serving
- Julienned red and yellow bell peppers, to garnish

1 In a large bowl, combine the finely chopped scallions with the oil, shallot, oyster sauce, soy sauce, cilantro, garlic, ginger, and sugar. Add the lamb chops, toss to coat, and cover with plastic. Marinate the lamb at room temperature for 2 hours or refrigerate overnight.

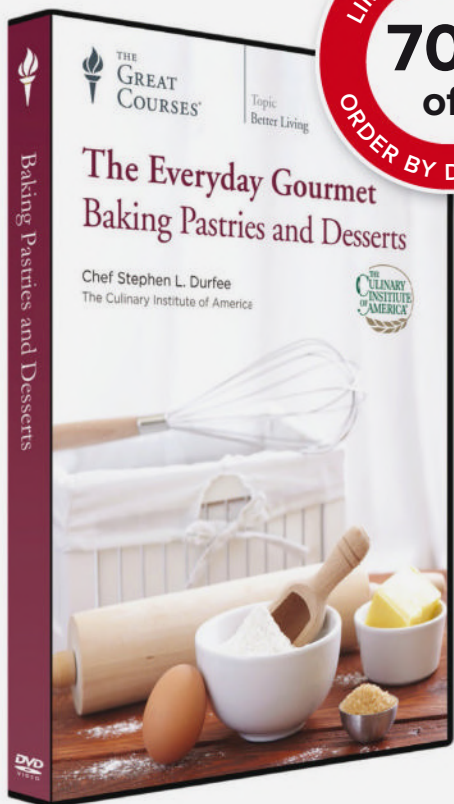
2 Light a grill or heat a cast-iron grill over high. Remove the lamb from the bowl and brush away any marinade clinging to it. Season the lamb with salt and pepper, place on the grill, and cook, turning once, until lightly charred and cooked to medium, about 6 minutes. Transfer the lamb chops to a serving platter, tent with foil, and let rest for 10 minutes.

3 In a medium nonstick skillet, bring the marinade to a boil and cook, stirring, until reduced and thickened, about 10 minutes. Serve the lamb chops over the bok choy and garnish with the julienned scallions and bell peppers. Serve the sauce alongside.

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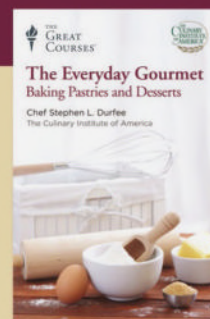
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• FROM THE SAVEUR •

TEST KITCHEN

Making chocolate awesome, baking tips for ace Christmas cookies, and the curry paste you want in your fridge



How (and Why) to Temper Chocolate

Avoid a crumbly, chalky mess and get the professional, glossy finish you're looking for

Tempering is the art of heating and cooling cocoa butter to align its various fats and create chocolate that is shiny and smooth. If that sounds fussy and time-consuming, it is. But the results are worth it. Some home cooks sidestep the process and simply add vegetable shortening or oil to melted chocolate to give it gloss. But this work-around is short-lived: The chocolate will inevitably turn gray and streaky, a phenomenon known as “blooming.” Yes, tempering requires patience and precision, but the payoff is that characteristic “snap” that store-bought chocolate makes when you

break it into pieces—no crumbling here! Start by heating two-thirds of your chocolate in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water until the chocolate reaches 115° (it will look only half-melted at this point), then remove the bowl from the pan and stir in the remaining chocolate until the entire mixture cools to 80°. Now, return the bowl to the pan and heat the chocolate again until it reaches 88°. Once it's ready, you'll want to pour the chocolate directly into molds, or dip and coat any treats, from extravagant truffles to simple buttered and toasted baguette slices with a little sea salt sprinkled on top. —Katherine Harris

Simple Cookies Are Hard

FOUR TOOLS FOR GETTING THEM RIGHT

Although chef Paul Cunningham knows his way around a kitchen (check out his epic Christmas feast for friends on page 46), when it comes to baking cookies, he defers to his mother-in-law, Kitty Læby, who's been making her Danish Christmas cookies for more than 50 years. Her simple but sublime *kager*—some flavored minimally with butter and sugar, others with spices and nuts—are all about precision.



Use a Kitchen Scale

Professional bakers always weigh their ingredients to ensure that baked goods turn out precisely as intended each time. To help

nudge home bakers into this practice, we at *SAVEUR* have begun including weight measurements for dry ingredients like flour and sugar in our recipes. Use the OXO Good Grips 11-lb. scale (\$50; williams-sonoma.com) to ensure success.

Get Uniform Dough with Rolling Pin Bands

When it comes to rolling the dough for sugar cookie cutouts and shortbreads, an even thickness is paramount so that all the cookies will bake at the same rate and reach that



golden color on the bottom at the same time. We like to use Evendough rolling pin bands (\$8; amazon.com), rubber bands in varying thicknesses that slide onto the ends of your rolling pin. They keep the pin at a steady height to produce an even dough.

Pipe with a Cookie Press

Læby uses an antique *kagesprøjte*, or cookie gun, to pipe out her crunchy, delicate *vaniljekranse*, vanilla wreath cookies. You can use a cloth piping bag fitted with a star tip to achieve similar results, but a



cookie gun makes the job go much faster. We like a more modern gadget like the Kuhn Rikon Clear Cookie Press (\$20; kuhnrikonshop.com) for its ease of handling.

Control the Heat with a Great Oven

Many directions for baking cookies and cakes will advise you to rotate your baking pan or sheet halfway through cooking, a directive that attempts to correct uneven heating in ovens. In the *SAVEUR* test kitchen, we bake breads, cookies, cakes, and pies in our trusted Wolf oven (\$4,300; subzero-wolf.com), no rotating necessary.



Traditional Danish Christmas cookies cap off Paul Cunningham's holiday meal (see page 55 for recipes).





Our Favorite Rose Water

A subtle, floral flavor that's perfect for desserts and more

I got to know the rose and orange blossom waters made by Carlo, a Glendale, California-based company, when I worked as a pastry chef in San Francisco, imbuing rose essence into strawberries, almonds, and ice cream. Many of the North African holiday dessert recipes (see page 26) from Kamel Saci and Ghaya Oliveira call for perfumed flower waters, so I gave Garo Kurkjian, Carlo's general manager, a ring, to try to understand why his brand stands head and shoulders above the rest. He told me that while the processes for making all flower waters are generally indistinguishable—flower petals are mixed with water and distilled in vats before the flowers' fragrant oils are removed from the water, then added back in, to taste—Carlo's is unique. While other producers further concentrate their rose water to create a stronger-smelling product, Carlo adds back only some of the pure, originally extracted oil, or "aroma," until the balance is right. The final product is a lightly floral eau-de-vie, so delicate it can be sipped neat. The difference in quality is apparent at first sniff: Carlo's reminded me of fresh flowers in the cool spring air, not the wallop of potpourri that other flower waters pack. Use it to flavor ice cream, pastry doughs, fruit salads, or cocktails. (\$5.50; markethallfoods.com) —Ben Mims

An Easy-to-Make Cambodian Pantry Staple

Kroeung is an umbrella Khmer term that refers to a family of spice and herb pastes. One of the most common is the bright yellow curry paste used as the base of classic dishes like *amok* and beef curry with fried shallots and peanuts (see pages 75 and 78 for recipes). This all-purpose building block of flavor has been used in stews and with vegetables and meats for centuries. —Jake Cohen



Yellow Khmer Curry Paste (*Kroeung*)

Makes 1¼ cups
Total: 25 min.

- 6 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1½ Tbsp. prahok (see note on page 72)
- 18 kaffir limes leaves, stems removed and sliced into very thin ribbons
- 12 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
- 8 shallots, roughly chopped
- 6 lemongrass stalks, inner cores only, roughly chopped
- One 4-inch piece fresh galangal, peeled and thinly sliced
- One 4-inch piece fresh turmeric, peeled and thinly sliced

1 In a wok or large skillet, heat the oil over medium. In a large bowl, mix the prahok with the kaffir lime leaves, garlic, shallots, lemongrass, galangal, and turmeric. Scrape the aromatics into the wok and cook, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon, until the ingredients are soft and beginning to lightly brown, about 14 minutes.

2 Scrape the ingredients into a food processor and let cool completely. Process the ingredients into a lightly chunky paste, stopping the machine to scrape down the sides of the food processor as you go, and then scrape the curry paste into a container.

3 Seal the container and store the curry paste in the refrigerator for up to 1 month.



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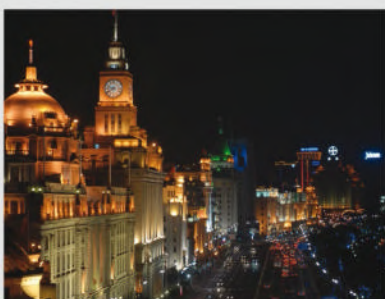
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Jeju Island, South Korea, May 7, 2010

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPH BY JEN JUDGE



The morning I went out with the *haenyeo*, the “sea women” of Jeju Island, the misty sky was light gray and the sea dark and steely. Hundreds of years ago, women in these sea villages took up diving for abalone, sea urchin, and conch as a means of making a living. Today the tradition is almost extinct, and the remaining *haenyeo*, most of them in their 50s or 60s, have become minor celebrities. When I first tried to introduce myself to them, they ignored me, and remained stone-faced as I took portraits of their walk out to the ocean. I followed them into the water in full scuba diving gear, but after one hour of shivering in the frigid waters I was done, nearly hypothermic. I went back to the hut to take a hot shower and make myself some tea. I watched them bob up and put their catch in the nets and disappear beneath the surface again and again. Hours later, they swam back to the shore and pulled their hauls out of the water. Still in their wetsuits, they began methodically cleaning and prepping the seafood, talking among themselves. Out of nowhere, one of the women scooped out a sea urchin lobe and pressed it into my mouth. It was creamy and rich like ones I’ve had in restaurants, but there was a little seawater mixed in, adding a briny snap to the bite. My face must have been a mixture of surprise and delight; the *haenyeo* burst into laughter. This continued, the women cleaning the seafood and occasionally feeding me—a slice of chewy abalone, conch, or more sea urchin, giggling each time. Finally, it was time to leave, so I pointed at the door and tried to express my gratitude in fumbling gestures. They smiled and went back to their work.

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