

COCONUT
SNACK CAKE

SMOKED PORK
TENDERLOIN

GRIDDLED
FISH TACOS

ULTIMATE
PATTY MELTS



Cook's Country

SHEET-PAN PIES WITH THREE
KNOCKOUT VARIATIONS

PIZZA PARTY

*
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— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN

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Behind the Scenes
Kitchen crew Carmen Dongo and Morgan Bolling help Bryan Roof prepare for a recipe segment for season 15 of the *Cook's Country* television show, which you can watch on public television starting in September of 2022.

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Executive Editor Scott Kathan

Executive Editor, Creative Content Morgan Bolling

Deputy Food Editor Nicole Konstantinacos

Deputy Editor Megan Ginsberg

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Senior Photo Test Cook Lawman Johnson

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Photo Test Cook Jacqueline Gochenouer

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I HAVE BEEN looking forward to this issue of *Cook's Country* for months.

As you can see, the magazine has changed. Its pages are smaller, but there are more of them, and that means we have more space for telling great stories about the people, places, and techniques behind your favorite dishes. The change in size is one of several ideas we are working on to provide even more creative recipes, kitchen wisdom, and informative product reviews. And, as is always true, I hope our incremental changes—

from the Cook's Close-Up profile on the back page to this new design—inspire and empower you to become your best self in the kitchen.

The opening photo (facing page) provides a peek behind the scenes of our public television show and reveals the passion and dexterity of our talented test cooks, who, along with the show's hosts, work tirelessly to bring you impeccable recipes and all sorts of practical instruction.

Notice, too, the ways our expanded On the Road feature has spread out to give you a greater sense of place as you learn the secrets of regional American cooking alongside Editorial Director Bryan Roof. Before long, you will also cook like a local expert.

After that, make something delicious for someone you love. There are new twists on old

standbys, including Mark Huxsoll's innovative way with short ribs or Matthew Fairman's memorable approach to a diner favorite, the patty melt. And I dare you to resist Jessica Rudolph's pretty Brown Sugar Pavlova with Stone Fruit or Amanda Luchtel's Coconut Snack Cake. Your sweet tooth will thank you.

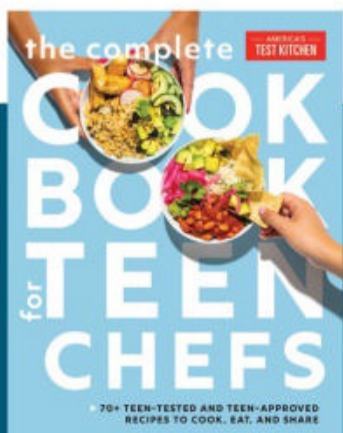
Finally, the slight change in size means we are able to bring you more creative and wide-ranging content for efficient cooking—from our weeknight recipe cards to the standing departments that guide your use of equipment and new ingredients. In between, we now have more opportunity to share our growing enthusiasm for cultural specialties, such as a bright Cambodian chicken salad called neorm sach moan, and buzzworthy, reimagined classics, such as the Palm Springs date shake.

I know which dish I will make first, and I am certain that if you spend a quiet afternoon immersed in the wonderful culinary offerings in this issue, in all of its slightly smaller glory, a new ingredient, cooking method, kitchen tool, or personality will excite you, too.

TONI TIPTON-MARTIN

Editor in Chief

P.S. Due to pandemic-driven supply chain issues, the Dinner Tonight recipe cards in this issue of *Cook's Country* are printed on glossy paper and not the usual cardstock. We will return to printing the Dinner Tonight cards on the heavier cardstock as soon as possible.



TEEN-TESTED AND TEEN-APPROVED RECIPES

The Complete Cookbook for Teen Chefs

We start with fundamental kitchen techniques and move on to more than 70 teen-tested, teen-approved recipes that range from simple breakfasts to family dinners to delicious desserts. Teen chefs can impress classmates with healthy grain bowls and amped-up ramen for lunch and family with hand-pulled noodles and sliders and french fries for dinner. Go to AmericasTestKitchen.com/teenchefs to order your copy today.



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DT = DINNER TONIGHT

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN®

America's Test Kitchen has been teaching home cooks how to be successful in the kitchen since 1993. Our mission is to empower and inspire confidence, community, and creativity in the kitchen. Millions watch our two shows on public television; read our two flagship magazines (*Cook's Country* and *Cook's Illustrated*); and rely on our books, websites, videos, podcasts, and educational products for children. America's Test Kitchen is located in a state-of-the-art Boston facility with 15,000 square feet of test kitchen and studio space. Learn more at AmericasTestKitchen.com.



FIND THE ROOSTER!

We've hidden a tiny version of the rooster above in a photo in the pages of this issue. Tell us where the rooster is hiding, and we'll enter you in a random drawing. The first correct entry drawn will win a copy of *The Complete Cook's Country TV Show Cookbook*, and each of the next five will receive a free one-year subscription to our website. To enter, go to CooksCountry.com/rooster and fill out the submission form. All entries must be received by August 31, 2022. Julia Broxholm of Ann Arbor, Michigan, found the rooster in the April/May 2022 issue on page 21.

WEB EXTRAS

Free for four months online at CooksCountry.com

Couscous Tabbouleh
Kansas City-Style Barbecue Ribs
Peach and Cucumber Salad
Perfect Pesto



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Download the *Cook's Country* app for iPad and start a free trial subscription or purchase a single issue of the magazine. Go to CooksCountry.com/iPad to download our app through the App Store.

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Richard Funk

QUICK BITES:

TEST KITCHEN TIPS, RECS, AND OTHER TIDBITS TO CHEW ON

by the Cook's Country team

GRAB-AND-GO GRILLING KIT

At the test kitchen, where we have 40-plus cooks developing grill recipes, we have a grilling garage stocked with all the equipment we need. Seeing how convenient this is inspired me to make a grilling box for my own backyard. Since I don't have a garage—and am not supplying 40 people—I fill a large storage bin and keep it in my basement alongside my supply of charcoal and a fire extinguisher. When I'm ready to grill, I just grab the whole kit and bring it outside. Here's what's stashed inside.

—Morgan Bolling



DONUT GET THESE PEACHES CONFUSED

Donut peaches are named for their flat doughnut-like appearance (minus the hole). They're smaller and squatter than traditional peaches, leading to some of their many other monikers: flat, Saturn, Sauzee Swirl, Flat Wonderful, Pantao, and UFO. Robert Mueller of Melissa's Produce, a California-based produce company, explained that these peaches tend to be softer and sweeter than standard peaches and that they are better for eating raw rather than cooked as they break down quickly under heat. We suggest trying them in salads or salsas or just snacking on them. Since they're susceptible to frost, donut peaches are typically available only in the summer months, so get them while you can.

—Morgan Bolling



Photo: Kyoko Uchida/Alamy Stock Photo

ATK REVIEWS



SMALL STRAINERS

by Grace Kelly

HAVE YOU EVER whipped out a large strainer to strain a few tablespoons of lemon juice and thought, Maybe this is excessive? While we love our winning fine-mesh strainer (the Rösle Fine

Mesh Strainer), the basket clocks in at nearly 8 inches across, and for some tasks we need something smaller. Enter small strainers, also known as tea strainers, which are about 3 inches wide and can be used for small kitchen tasks such as straining citrus juice, loose-leaf tea, and cocktails or sifting small amounts of cocoa powder or confectioners' sugar for decorating. We wanted to find a strainer that excelled at a variety of tasks and was also durable and easy to clean.

Our winners succeeded at sifting and straining a variety of



The finer the mesh, the more finely the strainer sifted and strained. We preferred baskets made of more tightly woven mesh since they proved most effective at catching even the smallest bits of debris.

ingredients with ease and refinement. Both the Rösle Stainless Steel Fine Mesh Tea Strainer, Wire Handle, 3.2-inch and

DEPUTY EDITOR MEGAN GINSBERG'S TIME-SAVING KITCHEN TOOL

I work with a lot of chefs who have amazing knife skills. Sometimes I'll stand in the test kitchen watching in awe as a head of lettuce turns into perfect shreds in seconds. I like to think I'm pretty good with a chef's knife, but I definitely don't have that kind of speed. One shortcut I take when chopping or mincing fresh herbs is reaching for my Alaskan ulu knife. Similar to a mezzaluna, this tool has a curved blade joined to a handle. It has many uses (such as filleting fish), but I primarily use it for chopping herbs. I like to gather the herb leaves in a pile on my cutting board, rock the ulu back and forth through them a few times, regather them, and rock it through again until the herbs are chopped according to the recipe I'm following. It's quick and easy—and fun.

Try an ulu or mezzaluna next time you make an herb-heavy recipe such as our [Couscous Tabbouleh \(June/July 2020\)](#) or [Peach and Cucumber Salad \(June/July 2022\)](#), which are free for four months at [CooksCountry.com](#).



SUMMERY HERB SAUCES

Taste the greenness in these fresh, ultraflavorful sauces, all of which come together quickly whether you're chopping and mixing by hand, using a mortar and pestle, or blitzing in a food processor. They're all based on fresh green herbs, garlic, and olive oil; feel free to riff on that formula by using different herbs, nuts, and seasonings. —**Scott Kathan**

CHERMOULA

This sauce hails from North Africa and is often used to dress or marinate fish; it's also great on simple grilled meats and vegetables.

CORE INGREDIENTS: Cilantro, parsley, garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, and spices (paprika, cumin, coriander, and cayenne are common)

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE: Warm spices

CHIMICHURRI

If you're eating grilled beef in Argentina, you're eating it with chimichurri, a zesty condiment that's ubiquitous in that country.

CORE INGREDIENTS: Parsley (and sometimes cilantro), garlic, oregano, olive oil, and vinegar

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE: Oregano

PESTO (ALLA GENOVESE)

Dress pasta, top soup, smear on sandwiches or crostini, dollop on pizza—uses for this popular concoction are many.

CORE INGREDIENTS: Basil, garlic, pine nuts, Parmesan cheese, and olive oil

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE: No acid, fragrant basil, pine nuts

SALSA VERDE

Not to be confused with the Latin tomatillo-based salsa of the same name, Italian salsa verde features the heady umami flavor of anchovies; it's typically used to sauce roasted meats.

CORE INGREDIENTS: Parsley, anchovies, capers, garlic, bread (sometimes), lemon juice, and olive oil

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE: Anchovies, capers



Küchenprofi Heavy Duty Fine Mesh Stainless Steel 3-Inch Classic Strainer produced clear lemon juice, evenly dispersed cocoa powder, and separated the fine bran from wheat flour (a test of mesh fineness). The handles and baskets were evenly balanced and featured rectangular stabilizing hooks. And since it's common to whack strainers on a trash can or compost bin to dislodge anything stuck in the mesh (such as lemon



Strainers with handles attached at a slight angle are easier to maneuver than ones with more offset handles, which feel unwieldy.

pulp), we subjected our lineup to this durability test. Both our winners were sturdily made with welded-on handles, and they stood up to a beating.

OUR TOP PICKS

- ✓ **FINE MESH**
Caught the finest of debris and sifted evenly
- ✓ **WIDE, RECTANGULAR HOOKS**
Sat securely on cups and bowls
- ✓ **WELDED HANDLES**
Remained secure even when whacked against a trash can
- ✓ **BALANCED BASKETS AND HANDLES**
Had a nicely weighted hand feel



Co-Winner

Rösle Stainless Steel Fine Mesh Tea Strainer, Wire Handle, 3.2-inch
Model: 95158 Price: \$22.00



Co-Winner

Küchenprofi Heavy Duty Fine Mesh Stainless Steel 3-Inch Classic Strainer
Model: K1109902807
Price: \$15.95

Web subscribers can see the complete results chart at [CooksCountry.com/sept22](#).

San Diego Fish Tacos

These delightfully complex tacos are a family affair at Karina's Cantina. **by Bryan Roof; photos by Steve Klise**



Find our recipe for Pickled Red Onion on page 44.

THE MENU AT Karina's Cantina and its sister restaurants in and around the San Diego, California, area have always centered on seafood: a variety of fresh ceviches and Sinaloa aguachiles served with crisp tostadas and mayonnaise; plump, sweet grilled prawns doused in garlic butter; fish tacos bursting with texture and spice.

"My dad was a perfectionist in every aspect," says co-owner David Contreras Curiel. "And obviously the preparation and the quality of the product is something that he always made sure we had the best of. You pay a little more, but we're in business for the long run, and we're gonna give the best to our consumers. It's something we've always done."

David's parents, the late Don Arnulfo Contreras and his wife María Inés Curiel, opened the original Karina's, which they named after their daughter, in 1981. Except for a brief attempt to make it as a professional singer in his early twenties, David has spent most of his life in the family business. "I was basically born into it," he says. "We worked in the restaurant

since we were kids, me and my siblings. You know, cleaning the parking lot, peeling shrimp. My dad always instilled this work ethic. At the time, maybe we didn't like it—my friends were playing soccer and baseball, and I had to work on the weekends—but I understood it. And I appreciate it now, obviously." He recalls his dad teaching him to make umbrellas with palm

fronds to shade the outdoor patio seating. “Those were our weekends.”

The restaurant’s design has shifted over the years to suit David’s taste and is something he’s particularly proud of. “We show our roots with our colors, our music, and our food, but in a tasteful way,” David says. At the newest Karina’s Cantina in the Gaslamp Quarter, the walls are filled with curated Mexican art and colorful tile work. An imposing portrait of the artist Frida Kahlo hangs above the bar keeping a watchful eye on the dining room. And in the evenings, a DJ booth looming overhead on the second floor lays down the soundtrack for diners. David describes his design as “eclectic modern” and anything but cliché.

There are now seven Karina’s restaurants throughout San Diego County. David and his brother Arnulfo have also expanded their business empire to include a wholesale seafood business; a seafood market, which they are currently building a restaurant inside of; and three non-Mexican dining concepts. “My dad would tell us, ‘You can’t just stick to one thing, because you never know what’s going to happen in life.’”

In the Kitchen

After sampling the menu at the Gaslamp location, I join David in the kitchen for a fish taco demo. In the San Diego taco vernacular, tacos cooked on a flat-top griddle like these are referred to as “grilled,” even though they are essentially sautéed. Most restaurants—Karina’s included—follow this naming convention, likely to differentiate them from the ever-popular Baja-style, deep-fried variety. (According to David, fish



tacos are frequently sautéed when served in Mexican homes.)

At Karina’s they fill the tacos with cod because it’s flavorful and sturdy and goes well with the zarandeado sauce that gets sloshed over the fish as it cooks. However, most any whitefish of similar texture and flavor would work fine. Red snapper is commonly used in Mexico.

The cod is cut into strips just big enough to occupy a standard 6-inch corn tortilla and then seasoned with salt and pepper and dredged lightly in flour. The chef lays down a small pool of oil and butter on the griddle before adding the fish, which he allows to brown on the first side for a couple of minutes. Just before flipping, the chef grabs a squeeze bottle and squirts a healthy dose of a piquant zarandeado sauce on the fish. The sauce—made with a combination of mayonnaise, sour cream, mustard, and a variety of chiles, among many other ingredients—reduces on the fish, imparting its light orange color and complex heat.

The cooked strips of cod are transferred to waiting corn tortillas, where they’re topped with shredded cabbage, diced tomato, cilantro, a final squirt of zarandeado sauce thinned with more mayonnaise, pickled red onions, and thinly sliced avocado.



ON the ROAD

SAN DIEGO,
CALIFORNIA



From top: The exterior of Karina’s Cantina in the Gaslamp Quarter; Bar seating offers a view of the living wall; David Contreras Curiel chatting at lunch.



Left: Francisco Garcia presents fish tacos in the kitchen. Above: In addition to tacos, the aguachiles and ceviches at Karina's are not to be missed.

ON the ROAD

SAN DIEGO FISH TACOS

Serves 4 to 6 Total Time: 1¼ hours

This recipe was inspired by the fish tacos served at Karina's Cantina in San Diego, California. Make sure to prepare all your taco fixings before cooking the fish. Use a mandoline to slice the cabbage as thin as possible. The combination of red and green cabbage is for aesthetic reasons; if preferred, you can use a single variety of cabbage. Other fish, such as snapper, bass, haddock, and halibut, can be substituted for the cod. Other varieties of Mexican hot sauces, such as Cholula or Valentina, can be substituted for the Tapatio.

ZARANDEADO SAUCE

- ⅔ cup mayonnaise
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 1 chipotle chile in adobo sauce
- 1 arbol chile, seeded
- 1 tablespoon Tapatio hot sauce
- 1 tablespoon beer
- 1 tablespoon yellow mustard
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- ¾ teaspoon soy sauce
- ¾ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon Mexican oregano
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt

FISH

- 4 (6- to 8-ounce) cod fillets, each cut lengthwise into 3 pieces
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided

TACOS

- 1½ cups finely shredded red cabbage
- 1½ cups finely shredded green cabbage
- 12 corn tortillas, warmed
- 1 large tomato, chopped fine
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped cilantro leaves and stems
- 1 recipe Pickled Red Onion (page 44)
- 1 avocado, sliced thin

1. FOR THE ZARANDEADO SAUCE: Process all ingredients in blender until smooth, about 20 seconds. Reserve 6 tablespoons sauce for cooking cod. Sauce can be prepared and refrigerated up to 2 days in advance.

2. FOR THE FISH: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle cod with salt and pepper. Place flour in shallow dish. Dredge cod in flour, shaking to remove excess, and transfer to large plate.

3. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add 1 tablespoon butter and cook until foaming subsides. Add 6 pieces cod to skillet and cook, without moving them, for 2 minutes.

4. Drizzle cod with 3 tablespoons reserved sauce and then, using fish spatula, gently flip pieces. Shake skillet gently to distribute sauce and let cod continue to cook until just cooked through, 1 to 2 minutes longer. Remove skillet from heat and, using spatula, transfer cod to prepared wire rack.

5. Transfer cod to oven to keep warm. Wipe out skillet with paper towels and repeat with remaining 1 tablespoon oil, 1 tablespoon butter, 6 pieces cod, and 3 tablespoons reserved sauce.

6. FOR THE TACOS: Combine red and green cabbage in bowl. Build tacos by placing 1 piece of cod in center of each tortilla, followed by cabbage, tomato, cilantro, sauce, pickled onion, and avocado. Serve immediately.

GONE FISHIN'



1. Cut cod fillets lengthwise into 3 pieces, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and dredge in flour.



2. Heat oil and butter in nonstick skillet. Add half of cod to pan and cook for 2 minutes.




3. Drizzle cod with 3 tablespoons sauce and then, using fish spatula, gently flip pieces.



4. Shake skillet gently to distribute sauce and continue to cook cod, 1 to 2 minutes longer.



5. Transfer cod to prepared rack and then keep warm in oven. Repeat with remaining cod.



It's a relatively simple dish, but this stir-fry packs a TON of flavor.

Pad Gra Prow (Holy Basil Stir-Fry)

Make this ultrapopular, ultraflavorful Thai street food in your home kitchen. **by Matthew Fairman**

PAD GRA PROW—a spicy, garlicky stir-fry with an irresistible savory-sweet sauce and fistfuls of peppery, vibrant, aromatic holy basil—is a popular street-food dish in Thailand that's become a staple in home kitchens and restaurants across the country. Once you have the right ingredients, the dish is simple to make and a great candidate for home cooks looking for a meal with maximum flavor in a short amount of time. Most commonly made

with ground or finely minced pork or chicken and served over jasmine rice with a crispy fried egg on top, the recipe offers an intense yet balanced mix of textures and flavors. The sweet soy sauce holds the fiery heat of the Thai chiles (also called prik kee noo or bird's eye chiles) in check, the mild rice and rich egg yolk balance the savory, pleasantly funky fish and oyster sauces, and the whole thing is brightened and elevated with heaps of emerald-green fresh

basil. Plus, if you're making it at home, the entire meal requires relatively few ingredients and comes together quickly.

For guidance on developing our recipe, I reached out to Nuit Regular, executive chef and co-owner of PAI and Kiin in Toronto, Canada, and author of *Kiin: Recipes and Stories from Northern Thailand* (2020), which won an IACP Award in the international category in 2021. Regular grew up eating pad gra prow with holy basil harvested

fresh from her mother's garden. Her restaurants have been recognized by the Thai government for their excellence and authenticity.

Asked to give advice to home cooks making pad gra prow for the first time, Regular focused my attention on the star ingredient: the basil. She emphasized the uniqueness of the holy basil ("gra prow" in Thai), which has a flavor and aroma distinct from the more familiar Italian sweet basil or Thai basil, and stressed its importance

in Thai cuisine: “Holy basil has a much stronger peppery flavor with notes of clove,” and “it releases a really beautiful, intense aroma and flavor when used in cooking.” But Regular, who herself had to forge relationships with local farmers in order to get holy basil for her restaurants, also recognized how difficult it can be to source the herb in North America. Here, her advice is crucial: “If you really can’t find holy basil, you can make the stir-fry with sweet basil or Thai basil, but just don’t call it pad gra prow, which means ‘stir-fried holy basil’ in Thai!”

So don’t be daunted if you’re unable to find holy basil at the market. Regular inspired me to keep looking, and after some searching, I found live holy basil plants at a local nursery near my home in New Orleans and even online sources that would mail me seedlings. I’ve now made this stir-fry with all three types of basil, and though I agree with Regular that holy basil is uniquely delicious, the versions with Thai and sweet basil were excellent—savory, sweet, salty, aromatic—as well.

Making the recipe is as simple as this: Buzz two

chopped shallots, eight garlic cloves, and two (or more, to taste) Thai chiles to a paste in a food processor. Heat your pan (we’ve provided instructions for both a wok and a nonstick skillet) with some oil, and then add the shallot paste and brown it. Crank up the heat, add the ground pork, and

cook for about 5 minutes. Next, add the combination of sauces (see “Awesome Sauces: A Thai Condiment Primer”) and then—handful by handful—the small mountain of basil. That’s it. The flavor payoff for this easy recipe is incredible. I hope you’ll try it out and see.

● PAD GRA PROW (HOLY BASIL STIR-FRY)

Serves 4 Total Time: 30 minutes

If you can’t find holy basil (also called tulsi or gra prow in Thai), you can substitute Italian or Thai basil with delicious results. You can substitute ground chicken, lean ground beef, or crumbled extra-firm tofu for the pork, if desired. Thai chiles (also called prik kee noo or bird’s eye chiles) are very spicy. It’s typical for recipes to call for more than eight chiles for this amount of meat; start with two chiles for an extra-mild version of this dish, four chiles for medium-mild, six for medium, and eight for medium-spicy. If you can’t find Thai chiles, you can use one serrano chile for every two Thai chiles. We recommend turning on your hood vent while stir-frying to help reduce the risk of breathing in aerosolized chiles. Serve with Kai Dao (Crispy Fried Eggs) and Nam Prik Nam Pla (Chile Fish Sauce) (recipes follow).

- 2 shallots, chopped coarse
- 8 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 2–8 Thai chiles, stemmed
- 2 tablespoons Thai fish sauce
- 2 tablespoons Thai thin soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons Thai sweet soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons Thai oyster sauce
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon white pepper
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds 85 percent lean ground pork
- 3 cups fresh holy basil leaves
- Cooked jasmine rice

shallot mixture and cook, stirring frequently, until just beginning to brown, about 2 minutes. Increase heat to high. Add pork and cook, stirring frequently and breaking up meat with wooden spoon, until pork is nearly cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes.

2B. FOR A NONSTICK SKILLET: Heat oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add shallot mixture and cook, stirring frequently, until just beginning to brown, about 3 minutes. Add pork and cook, breaking up meat with wooden spoon, until pork is nearly cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes.

3. Stir in fish sauce mixture and cook, stirring frequently, until liquid is nearly entirely evaporated and pork is darkened and sizzling, 3 to 5 minutes for wok, 5 to 7 minutes for nonstick skillet. Stir in basil, 1 handful at a time, allowing each handful to wilt slightly before adding next. Cook until basil is just wilted, about 1 minute. Serve with rice.

1. Add shallots, garlic, and Thai chiles to food processor and pulse until finely chopped, 10 to 12 pulses, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Transfer shallot mixture to bowl. Combine fish sauce, thin soy sauce, sweet soy sauce, oyster sauce, and white pepper in second bowl.

2A. FOR A WOK: Heat oil in 14-inch wok over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add

What Is Holy Basil? by Nuit Regular

Holy basil has a much more peppery flavor than Italian sweet basil and has notes of clove, so it’s a little bit spicy to taste. It releases an especially beautiful, intense aroma and flavor when used in cooking. Holy basil is also believed to be good for your digestion.

Holy basil and sweet basil are similar in appearance, but there are some key differences. Holy basil has a hairier stem, while sweet basil has a smooth stem. Sweet basil also has plump, shiny leaves with a smooth edge, while holy basil leaves are flatter and a little more matte, with a jagged edge. They may have some similarities visually, but they have different flavor profiles. It’s like if you tried to substitute parsley for cilantro—they may look similar, but the outcome will taste very different.

Some people might mistake Thai basil, which can be easily found in many Asian supermarkets, for holy basil—they are two different varieties of basil that we use in Thai cuisine. Thai basil has a purple stem; smaller, sharper, pointier leaves; and a stronger anise/licorice flavor compared with holy basil, which has larger, more oval-shaped leaves.



HOLY BASIL
Peppery and a little spicy



THAI BASIL
Strong licorice flavor



ITALIAN SWEET BASIL
Sweet licorice flavor



The Kai Dao and Nam Prik Nam Pla make the perfect additions to this dish.

● **KAI DAO (CRISPY FRIED EGGS)**

Serves 4

Total Time: 15 minutes

To take the temperature of the oil, we suggest tilting the wok or skillet slightly so that the oil pools on one side.

- 4 large eggs
- ½ cup vegetable oil for frying

1. Line large plate with paper towels. Crack 1 egg into small bowl.

2A. FOR A WOK: Add oil to 14-inch wok and heat over medium-high heat to 350 degrees. Add egg to oil and cook, gently swirling oil in wok and spooning some oil over egg white to cook it through, until egg is browned around edges and egg white is opaque, 30 to 60 seconds.

2B. FOR A NONSTICK SKILLET: Add oil to 8-inch nonstick skillet and heat over medium-high heat to 350 degrees. Add egg to oil; cover; and cook until egg is browned around edges and egg white is opaque, 30 to 60 seconds.

3. Using thin spatula, transfer egg to prepared plate (tilting egg

to drain off excess grease). Repeat with remaining 3 eggs, adjusting burner, if necessary, to maintain oil temperature between 325 and 350 degrees. Serve.

● **NAM PRIK NAM PLA (CHILE FISH SAUCE)**

Serves 4 to 6 (Makes about ½ cup)

Total Time: 10 minutes

The range for Thai chiles given here is an attempt to tailor this recipe to American tastes. Use one chile for an extra-mild version of this sauce; two chiles for medium-mild; three for medium; and four for medium-spicy. It's typical for recipes to call for more chiles for this amount of sauce, so if you know you like heat, add more to suit your taste. If you can't find Thai chiles, you can substitute serrano chiles. Use one serrano for every two Thai chiles.

- 2 tablespoons Thai fish sauce
- 2 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1–4 Thai chiles, stemmed and sliced thin
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 garlic clove, minced

Combine all ingredients in bowl and stir to dissolve sugar. Serve.

Awesome Sauces

A Thai Condiment Primer

Though similar to versions originating in other countries, Thai thin and sweet soy sauces, fish sauce, and oyster sauce are appreciably different. Each is easy to find online and may be stocked in your local Asian grocery store.

THAI THIN SOY SAUCE

Sometimes called light soy sauce or even simply seasoning sauce, Thai thin soy sauce is lighter both in flavor and color. It contains some sugar, which makes it taste less overtly salty than some soy sauces. We used Healthy Boy brand thin soy sauce in the development of this recipe.



THAI SWEET SOY SAUCE

With the texture and color of molasses and delightful caramelly sweetness, Thai sweet soy sauce is crucial in pad gra prow for balancing the heat of the Thai chiles. We used Healthy Boy brand sweet soy sauce when developing our recipe.



THAI FISH SAUCE

When compared to the popular Vietnamese-style Red Boat fish sauce, the Thai fish sauce was mellow, with a milder funkiness from the fermented fish. Thai fish sauce adds incomparable levels of umami to pad gra prow. We used Healthy Boy brand fish sauce when developing our recipe.



THAI OYSTER SAUCE

Further layering umami into the sauce in our Pad Gra Prow, relatively thick Thai oyster sauce also adds body. Similar to the other Thai sauces we tried, the Thai version is lighter and less salty than the popular Chinese version, Lee Kum Kee. We developed our recipe using Maekrua Oyster Sauce.





Sweet, mild pork tenderloin gets a boost from smoke and bourbon.

Grill-Smoked Bourbon Pork Tenderloin

A faster way to tender, juicy, smoke-kissed pork.

by Lawman Johnson

SUCCULENT, SMOKY PULLED pork, brisket, and ribs often spend hours on the grill; for some of us, part of the reward of preparing those dishes is in the process of relaxing, milling around the grill, and enjoying a favorite beverage while taking in the smells of the meat and fire. But delicious, silky, smoky pork doesn't have to take that long if you don't want it to; in fact, this version is fast enough for a weeknight (as long as you plan ahead for marinating).

For a speedier but arguably just as delicious take on smoked pork, start with the aptly named pork tenderloin, a very tender and relatively quick-cooking cut. Pork tenderloin's lean nature makes it a blank canvas for flavor, and this recipe adds plenty, starting with a flavor-packed precooking soak.

Make a marinade by quickly boiling a mixture of bourbon, soy sauce, brown sugar, garlic, black pepper, and red pepper flakes; the bourbon brings complex smoky flavor, and boiling it helps the sugar dissolve and evaporates out the alcohol. In addition to adding umami, the soy sauce acts as a brine, seasoning the meat and helping it remain juicy when cooked. Let the mixture cool, reserve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup for basting, and then pour the rest over two pork tenderloins in a bag and refrigerate for at least 3 hours or up to one day.

When you're ready to grill, soak some wood chips in water (the soaking helps them smolder and burn longer, creating more smoke) and then drain and wrap them up in a foil packet with slits cut in the top so that the smoke can escape. Light a fire in the grill with hotter and cooler cooking zones, place the wood chip packet on the fire, and position the marinated tenderloins on the cooler side. Let the pork bathe in the smoke and low heat until it reaches 135 degrees, which should take about 20 minutes. Then

brush the tenderloins with the reserved marinade and brown them on the hotter part of the grill. The pork is done when it's nicely browned and the inside registers 140 degrees on a thermometer. That's it.

This simple, three-pronged approach to building flavor—marinate, smoke, and glaze—produces tender, juicy, incredibly flavorful smoked pork with only about 30 minutes of grilling time. Save the low-and-slow cuts for the weekend.

FEELING CHIPPY

Wood chips don't just come in one variety or flavor. Here are our tasting notes on some of the most common types.



FRUIT (APPLE AND CHERRY)

These fruitwoods both produce lightly sweet, mild smoke. Great for seafood and poultry.

HICKORY

A balanced though intense smoke that works with almost any food.

MAPLE

Relatively mild and tasty on pork and poultry; some tasters found it "resin-y" on smoked salmon.

MESQUITE

A strong smoke that works best with stronger-tasting cuts of beef, pork, lamb, and game.

OAK

This nutty and well-balanced smoke is a traditional choice for many pit masters.

SMOKED BOURBON PORK TENDERLOIN

Serves 4 to 6

Total Time: 1½ hours, plus 3 hours marinating

Use a bourbon you'd be happy drinking. This pork is very flavorful after 3 hours of marinating, but if you have the time, we suggest marinating for longer. The longer it sits in the marinade, the more flavorful it will be.

- ½ cup bourbon
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 3 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 (1-pound) pork tenderloins, trimmed
- 1 cup wood chips

1. Combine bourbon, soy sauce, sugar, garlic, pepper, and pepper flakes in medium saucepan. Bring to boil over medium-high heat and boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and let cool completely. Reserve ¼ cup bourbon mixture. (Bourbon mixture can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.)

2. Place pork in 1-gallon zipper-lock bag and add remaining bourbon mixture to bag. Seal bag; turn to distribute marinade; and refrigerate for at least 3 hours or up to 24 hours, flipping occasionally.

3. Just before grilling, soak wood chips in water for 15 minutes, then drain. Using large piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil, wrap soaked chips in 8 by 4-inch foil packet. (Make sure chips do not poke holes in sides or bottom of packet.) Cut 2 evenly spaced 2-inch slits in top of packet.

4A. FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL: Open bottom vent completely. Light large chimney starter mounded with charcoal briquettes (7 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over half of grill. Place wood chip packet on coals. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent completely. Heat grill until hot, about 5 minutes.

4B. FOR A GAS GRILL: Remove cooking grate and place wood chip packet directly on primary burner. Set cooking grate in place; turn all burners to high; cover; and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Leave

primary burner on high and turn off other burner(s). (Adjust primary burner [or, if using 3-burner grill, primary burner and second burner] as needed to maintain grill temperature between 350 and 400 degrees.)

5. Clean and oil cooking grate. Place pork on cooler side of grill as far as possible from heat source, positioning tenderloins parallel with fire (if using charcoal) or burners (if using gas). Cover and cook until pork registers 135 degrees, 15 to 20 minutes, flipping and rotating halfway through cooking. (Re-cover grill after checking for doneness.)

6. Brush top and sides of pork with half of reserved bourbon mixture. Flip pork so bottom now faces up and transfer to hotter part of grill. Brush top of pork with remaining reserved bourbon mixture. Cook, uncovered, until pork is lightly charred and registers 140 degrees, 3 to 5 minutes, flipping tenderloins halfway through cooking.

7. Transfer pork to cutting board, tent with aluminum foil, and let rest for 10 minutes. Slice ½ inch thick. Serve.

How to Build Flavor in Mild Pork Tenderloin



MARINATE Combine pork and bourbon mixture in zipper-lock bag. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours.



SMOKE Place pork on cooler side of grill. Cook, covered, until pork registers 135 degrees.



GLAZE Brush top and sides of pork with bourbon mixture. Flip and brush again. Then cook until lightly charred.

Skillet Corn with Mexican Chorizo

This fork-friendly dish, inspired by elote, comes together in a flash.

by **Lawman Johnson**

ELOTE, OR MEXICAN street corn, can be found all over Mexico and the United States. This popular handheld delight is, at its most basic, an ear of grilled or charred corn slathered with crema, sprinkled with crumbly cotija, kicked up with chili powder, and finished with a squeeze of lime (it can also be found

dressed up with garlic, mayo, butter, and more). It's sweet, spicy, and creamy all at once. Here's a fork-friendly version (similar to esquites, street corn in salad form) that doesn't lose sight of what's so appealing about its muse while incorporating some spicy Mexican chorizo, fresh herbs, and pickled shallots.

First, for more substance and deeply savory porky notes, brown the chorizo, breaking it into bite-size crumbles. (Because chorizo is already highly seasoned and spiced, you can skip the chili powder here.) Then add some minced scallion whites and garlic to the rendered pork fat. To these, add five ears' worth of corn kernels (corn is the star

after all), oregano for a slightly peppery freshness, and a modest amount of salt to bring out all the flavors. Sautéing the corn with the chorizo until spotty brown accomplishes two things: The corn picks up color reminiscent of grilling and it absorbs some great porky flavor.

Off the heat, add sliced scallion greens, chopped cilantro, and lime juice for freshness and brightness. And to punch up the flavor even further, stir in some quick pickled shallots. Their sweet-sour balance complements the final touches of salty, crumbly cotija cheese and tangy Mexican crema. Now grab a fork and dive right into this corn and chorizo medley—no napkin needed.



Key Ingredient

Crema is a rich, pourable cultured cream that is a saltier, thinner version of sour cream. You can find it the refrigerated section of your supermarket.

SKILLET CORN WITH MEXICAN CHORIZO

Serves 4 to 6 Total Time: 35 minutes

It's important to use fresh corn here. If you can't find fresh oregano, you can substitute 1½ teaspoons of dried oregano. If you can't find Mexican crema, you can substitute a mixture of ¼ cup of sour cream, 2 teaspoons of lime juice, and ⅛ teaspoon of table salt.

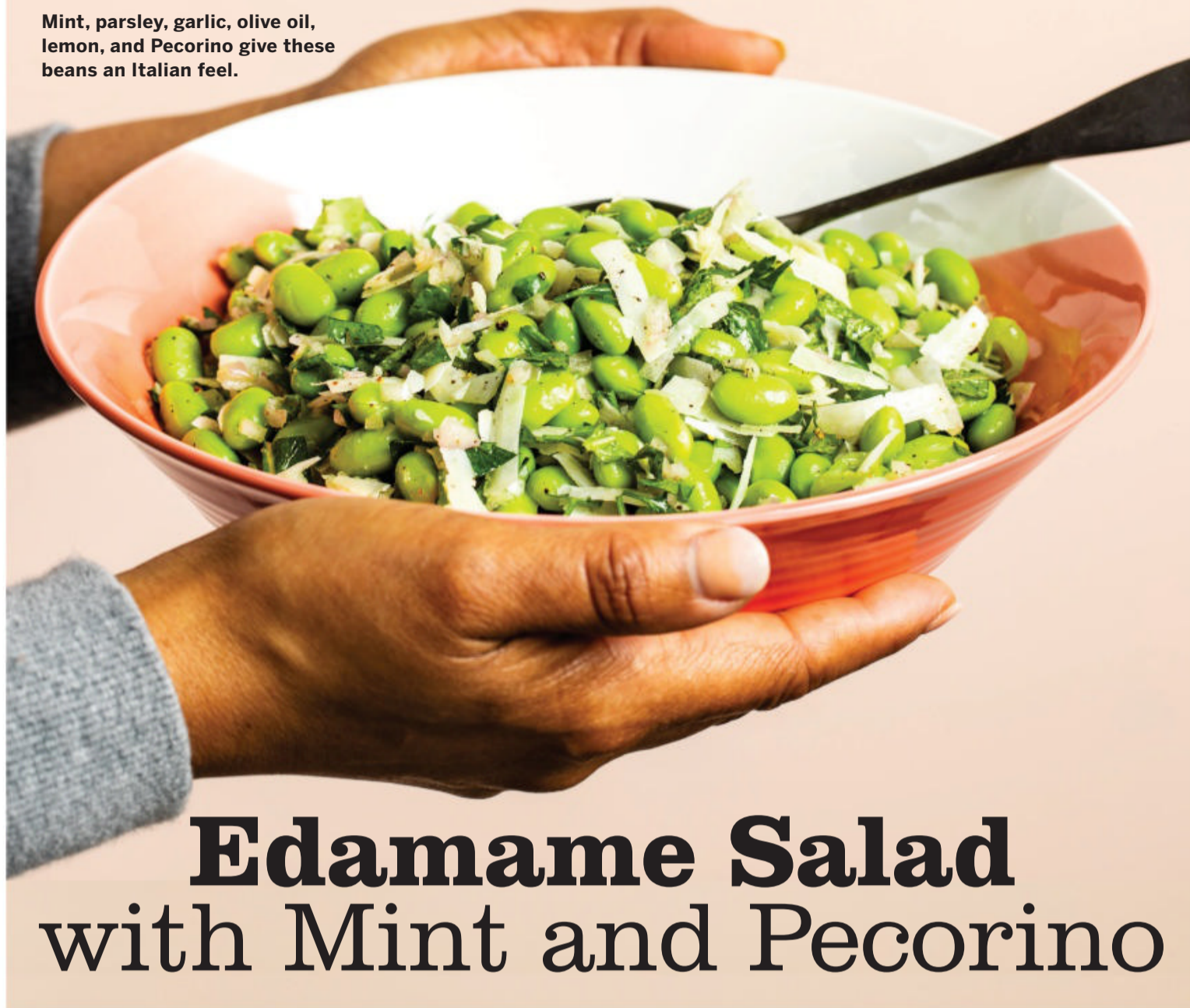
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 shallot, sliced into thin rings
- 8 ounces Mexican-style chorizo sausage, casings removed
- 4 scallions, white parts minced, green parts sliced thin on bias
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 5 ears corn, kernels cut from cobs (3¾ cups)
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh oregano
- ¾ teaspoon table salt
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro leaves and stems
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- ¼ cup Mexican crema
- 2 ounces cotija cheese, crumbled



Moving this street food to a bowl makes room for add-ins, such as scallions and spicy chorizo.

1. Combine vinegar and sugar in small bowl. Microwave until sugar is dissolved and vinegar is steaming, about 45 seconds. Add shallot and stir to combine. Cover with plastic wrap; set aside.
2. Cook chorizo in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, breaking up pieces with wooden spoon, until well browned, 4 to 6 minutes. Add scallion whites and garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.
3. Add corn, oregano, and salt and cook until corn is spotty brown, about 6 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove skillet from heat.
4. Drain shallot and discard liquid. Stir shallot, cilantro, lime juice, and scallion greens into corn mixture. Transfer to shallow bowl, drizzle with crema, and sprinkle with cotija. Serve.

Mint, parsley, garlic, olive oil, lemon, and Pecorino give these beans an Italian feel.



Edamame Salad with Mint and Pecorino

Packed with protein, this salad pops with bold, fresh flavors.

by Amanda Luchtel

EDAMAME ARE YOUNG soybeans, and they shine brightly in this salad. The recipe idea springs from our love of fava beans, particularly when used in Italian fava bean salads. While favas can be expensive and/or hard to find, shelled edamame are a staple in supermarket frozen food sections. So we paired the verdant beans with a garlicky lemon dressing, pungent Pecorino Romano, and refreshing fresh mint and parsley.

Their smooth, slick outer skins can repel dressing and seasonings. Blanching the beans in heavily salted water for 5 minutes ensures that they're seasoned all the way through and softens them a bit. The resulting salad is flavorful and leaves you feeling satisfied.

A Fresh Take

Soybeans destined for tofu, miso, soy sauce, animal feed, and other products are harvested when the beans are mature. Soybeans eaten as edamame are picked when they're young.

Edamame in the pod are a popular snack or appetizer in Japanese cuisine. But you can also buy the shelled beans frozen (sans pods), and they're great in salads (such as this one) or soups or boiled and simply seasoned as a side dish.



Prep Steps



1. Cook edamame in salted boiling water for 5 minutes, drain, and nestle in ice bath.



2. Transfer edamame to paper towel-lined plate and pat dry to control moisture in salad.

● EDAMAME SALAD WITH MINT AND PECORINO

Serves 4 Total Time: 40 minutes

Frozen shelled edamame come in a wide range of package sizes. If you can find only a 10-ounce package, there's no need to buy a second package to make up the extra 2 ounces; just make the recipe with 10 ounces of edamame. You needn't thaw the edamame before boiling.

- 3** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1** small shallot, minced
- 1** tablespoon lemon juice
- 1** garlic clove, minced
- ½** teaspoon table salt, plus salt for blanching edamame
- ½** teaspoon pepper
- 12** ounces (2 cups) frozen shelled edamame
- 1½** ounces Pecorino Romano cheese, shredded (½ cup)
- ⅓** cup coarsely chopped fresh mint
- ¼** cup coarsely chopped fresh parsley

- 1.** Combine oil, shallot, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and pepper in bowl; set aside.
- 2.** Bring 2 quarts water to boil in large saucepan over high heat. Fill large bowl halfway with ice and water. Line large plate with double layer of paper towels.
- 3.** Add edamame and 1 tablespoon salt to boiling water and cook for 5 minutes (water may not return to boil; this is OK). Drain edamame in colander. Nestle colander into ice bath, submerging edamame. Let sit until edamame are chilled, 3 to 5 minutes.
- 4.** Lift colander from ice bath, allowing excess water to drain, and transfer edamame to prepared plate. Pat dry with additional paper towels.
- 5.** Transfer edamame to bowl with dressing and toss to coat. Add Pecorino, mint, and parsley and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

Our browned butter steak sauce makes a good thing—rosy, tender, flavorful short ribs—even better.



Medium-Rare Short Ribs

An innovative method for cooking short ribs results in ribs that eat like luxuriously rich steaks. **by Mark Huxsoll**

THICK, BEEFY English-cut short ribs are great when slowly braised until they're fall-apart tender. But with a bit of care, short ribs shine with a faster cooking method, too. Here we apply a tried-and-true technique for cooking steaks called reverse searing: You cook the ribs relatively gently (for this recipe, for about an hour in a 275-degree oven) before quickly browning them over high heat to create a flavorful crust. The low oven temperature helps ensure that the short ribs are evenly pink throughout, without an overcooked gray band of meat on the top and bottom. Salting the boneless short ribs before cooking seasons them all the way through; it also aids in tenderizing the ribs and helping them hold on to their tasty juices.

If you're used to slow-braising short ribs for hours, you might be wondering how this faster method results in tender meat. When the internal temperature hits 120 to 130 degrees, enzymes that break down the muscle fibers and collagen to reduce chewiness become more activated in the meat, so as long as you get the short ribs into that range, they turn out as tender and juicy as a steak but with bolder, richer flavor.

For a beautifully rosy medium-rare we found that we actually had to bring the internal temperature higher than usual (135 to 140 degrees, versus the typical 125 degrees for a medium-rare steak) to keep these enzymes working long enough to tenderize the short ribs to our liking (don't worry, the interior will still be nicely pink). Anything less, and the meat was a bit chewy. After a brief rest and a final sear, the short ribs emerged juicy, succulent, and tender (see "Resting Is Key"). To dress them up, we developed a luxurious steak sauce with browned butter, minced shallot and garlic, umami-rich Worcestershire and soy sauces, tangy red wine vinegar and Dijon mustard, a little brown sugar, and a generous amount of black pepper.

● SLOW-ROASTED MEDIUM-RARE BEEF SHORT RIBS

Serves 4 Total Time: 1¾ hours, plus 2 hours salting time

Plan ahead: The salted short ribs need to sit for at least 2 hours before cooking. You should have about 1½ pounds of meat after trimming.

SHORT RIBS

- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon pepper
- 2 pounds boneless beef short ribs, 1½ to 2 inches thick, 2 inches wide, and 4 to 5 inches long, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

BROWNED BUTTER STEAK SAUCE

- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons minced shallot
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons pepper

1. FOR THE SHORT RIBS:

Combine salt and pepper in small bowl. Pat short ribs dry and sprinkle all over with salt mixture. Transfer to large plate, cover, and refrigerate at least 2 hours or up to 24 hours.

2. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 275 degrees. Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet. Evenly space short ribs on prepared rack. Roast until meat registers between 135 and 140 degrees, 50 minutes to 1 hour.

Remove from oven and let rest for 10 minutes.

3. FOR THE BROWNED BUTTER STEAK SAUCE:

Meanwhile, melt butter in medium saucepan over medium heat. Cook, whisking frequently, until milk solids in butter are color of milk chocolate and have nutty aroma, 3 to 5 minutes. Add shallot and garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Remove from heat and immediately whisk in Worcestershire, vinegar, mustard, sugar, soy sauce, and pepper; set aside.

4. Heat oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Sear short ribs until well browned on top and bottom, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Transfer to carving board and let rest for 5 minutes.

5. Reheat sauce over medium heat, whisking frequently, until hot, 1 to 2 minutes. Slice short ribs against grain as thin as possible. Serve, passing sauce separately.

● SPICE-CRUSTED SLOW-ROASTED MEDIUM-RARE BEEF SHORT RIBS

Add 1 tablespoon packed brown sugar, 1 teaspoon smoked paprika, 1 teaspoon ground coriander, and ½ teaspoon ground allspice with salt in step 1.

Short Ribs 101

Short ribs are the meaty short ends of ribs and can be cut from anywhere along the rib section of the steer. But most short ribs sold in stores come from the plate or the chuck primal cuts. Wherever they are cut from, short ribs contain a lot of fat, collagen, and connective tissue; have very rich flavor; and can be tough if not cooked properly or long enough.

The boneless short ribs we call for here are English cut. Thinner short ribs cut across the bones are called flanken-style or kalbi-style and are very popular in South America and Korea; they are not thick enough to use here.



ENGLISH-CUT BONELESS SHORT RIBS
Rich, Beefy Flavor

Resting Is Key

In this recipe, we call for cooking the short ribs to the correct doneness, letting them rest, and then searing them before letting them rest a second time. Our science editor, Paul Adams, explains: “Resting allows the temperature of the meat to equalize from center to surface and allows the whole thing to cool down a little. That firms up the meat, which makes it easier to cut through with a knife without squeezing out juices, keeping them in the meat where they belong.”

Great Either Way

Long braising breaks down short ribs' tough connective tissue via moist cooking. Our dry roasting method does similar work faster, for a completely different eating experience: Texturally, it's like the difference between pot roast (below) and steak.



Gear-ly Beloved

This recipe isn't hard to pull off, but it does rely on these essential pieces of equipment to work correctly.



Rimmed Baking Sheet with Rack

Elevating the short ribs on a rack set in a rimmed baking sheet allows the oven's hot air to circulate all around the meat, resulting in even cooking. Without the rack, the meat would be in direct contact with the hot sheet, which would cause it to cook faster on that side.

TEST KITCHEN WINNERS: Nordic Ware Baker's Half Sheet, \$14.97
Checked Chef Cooling Rack, \$12.95

Nonstick Skillet

Searing the short ribs in a nonstick skillet means all the flavorful browning stays on the meat, not in the pan.

TEST KITCHEN WINNER:
OXO Good Grips Non-Stick Pro 12" Open Frypan, \$43



Instant-Read Thermometer

An accurate thermometer makes all the difference here, as this recipe relies on precision to get the best possible results.

TEST KITCHEN WINNER:
ThermoWorks Thermapen ONE, \$105



Quick caramelized onions are perfect here—and so good you'll want to make them for other uses, too.



Ultimate Patty Melts

This old-school favorite combines the best of smashed burgers and grilled cheese sandwiches. **by Matthew Fairman**

STRICTLY DEFINED, a patty melt is a beef patty with softened onions and melted Swiss cheese sandwiched between slices of griddled rye bread. Think about it; it is both a gooey, buttery, crispy grilled cheese and a juicy, beefy

cheeseburger. But this one—with two kinds of cheese; extra-crispy, extra-flavorful seeded rye bread; and a topping of jammy, tangy quick caramelized onions—is something special. And while it's not technically a smashed burger

(the recipe never calls to smush a ball of ground beef into a hot skillet, in part because the patties need to perfectly fit the oval rye bread), our method delivers the same thin, deeply seasoned, seared-on crust. There's so much to like!

Our recipe starts with shaping thin beef patties that are just a shade larger than the slices of rye bread; the burgers will shrink a bit as they cook. A relatively high proportion of fat in the ground beef ensures that the thin patties remain juicy as they brown.

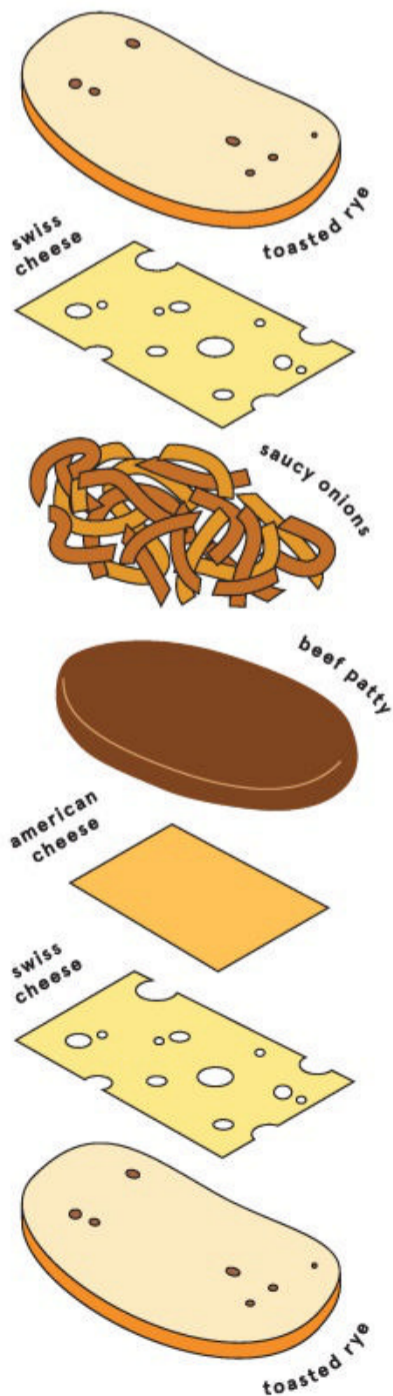
From there, the hot patties go straight onto a piece of lightly toasted rye bread that's topped with two slices of cheese—one

American (for its top-notch meltability) and one Swiss (for its nutty flavor). Here, the details of the technique are important. Toasting the bread before assembling and griddling the sandwich makes it drier and sturdier, resulting in a patty melt with an impossibly crisp, buttery exterior. Creating a barrier of cheese on both sides of the beef and onions provides a further safeguard against sogginess, while placing the hot patty directly on the cheese (and eventually placing another slice of cheese directly on the hot onions) ensures that all the cheese melts to perfection in the time it takes to brown and crisp the bread.

As for the onions, they're quickly caramelized with tangy, sweet-savory additions of ketchup, cider vinegar, brown sugar, and umami-enhancing Worcestershire sauce, and they pick up extra flavor from the browned beef drippings left in the pan after searing the burgers. Adding water before covering the onions and cooking over moderately high heat softens them uniformly and quickly, releasing their sugars for quick caramelization once the liquids evaporate. The resulting onions are glossy and jammy, an unbelievably complex condiment all on their own that takes the already excellent sandwich and ratchets up the flavors and textures to another level.

MAKING THE MELTS

Here's how to layer these mighty griddled sandwiches.



DINER-STYLE PATTY MELTS

Makes 4 sandwiches Total Time: 1¼ hours

We developed this recipe using Pepperidge Farm Jewish Rye Bread. For the best flavor, buy American cheese from the deli counter, not cellophane-wrapped cheese slices. It's helpful to weigh the cheese to account for differences in thickness of deli slices. This recipe can be halved (note that you'll need to decrease the cooking times for the onions).

- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 1½ teaspoons pepper, divided
- ½ cup water
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons packed brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 8 slices seeded rye bread, lightly toasted, divided
- 8 slices deli Swiss cheese (6 ounces), divided
- 4 slices deli American cheese (3 ounces)
- 1 pound 80 percent lean ground beef
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into six 1-tablespoon pieces, divided
- 2 onions, sliced thin (3 cups)

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet; place in oven. Combine 1½ teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper in small bowl; set aside. Combine ½ cup water, ketchup, vinegar, sugar, and Worcestershire sauce in second small bowl; set aside.
2. Lay 4 slices rye toast in single

layer on clean counter. Shingle 1 slice Swiss cheese and 1 slice American cheese on toast (breaking up cheese slices as necessary to keep from hanging over edges of toast). Divide beef into 4 equal portions and, working on flat surface, use your hands to press each portion into very thin oval patty (no more than ¼ inch thick) about ¼ inch larger than slices of rye toast.

3. Heat 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat for 5 minutes. Sprinkle tops of patties with half of salt mixture. Swirl 1 tablespoon butter into hot skillet until melted. Using 2 hands, carefully pick up 2 patties and add to skillet seasoned side down. Sprinkle tops with half of remaining salt mixture. Cook until well browned on both sides, 60 to 90 seconds per side. Transfer patties to 2 cheese-topped slices of toast. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in now-empty skillet. Add remaining 2 patties, seasoned side down, and repeat cooking process, sprinkling with remaining salt mixture.

4. Add onions, 1 cup water, remaining ½ teaspoon salt, and remaining ½ teaspoon pepper to

now-empty skillet and stir to scrape up any browned bits. Cover and cook over medium-high heat until water has evaporated and onions are sizzling, 8 to 10 minutes.

5. Uncover and continue to cook, stirring often, until onions are softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in ketchup mixture and cook until liquid has evaporated and onions are uniformly browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Off heat, divide onions evenly over patties and immediately top with remaining 4 slices Swiss cheese and remaining 4 slices toast. Rinse out skillet, scraping up any stuck-on bits, and wipe clean with paper towels.

6. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in now-empty skillet over medium heat, swirling to coat skillet. Transfer 2 patty melts to skillet. Cover and cook until bottoms are golden brown and crisp, 3 to 5 minutes, moving sandwiches occasionally to ensure even browning.

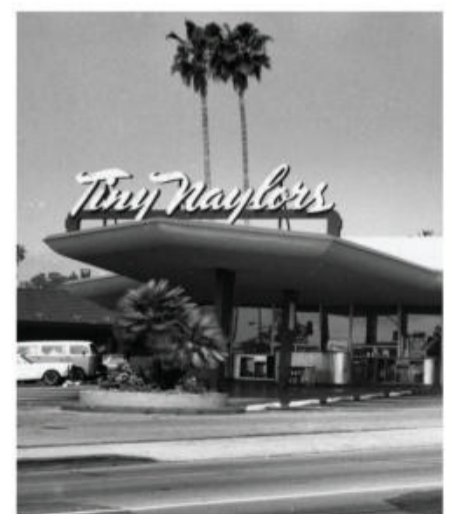
7. Using spatula, carefully flip sandwiches and tilt to distribute butter as it melts. Cover and cook until golden brown and crisp, about 3 minutes, reducing heat to medium-low if toast begins to turn deep brown or browns unevenly. Transfer to wire rack in oven.

8. Repeat with remaining 2 tablespoons butter and remaining 2 patty melts. Slice sandwiches in half and serve.

The patty melt, now an American classic, was popularized (and perhaps created) by the six-foot-four, 300-pound William Wallace "Tiny" Naylor at his iconic 1950s Los Angeles drive-in. Open 24 hours and operating from 1949 to 1980, Tiny Naylor's was a popular destination for movie stars (who could dine in anonymity in their cars) and high school students alike during

The American Table

the Golden Age of Hollywood. The iconic restaurant, with its bright lights and soaring concrete wing, stood on the corner of La Brea and Sunset Boulevard as a textbook example of futurist Googie architecture. These days, you can still find "Tiny's Classic Patty Melt" on the menu at another LA institution, Du-par's, which was owned from 2004 to 2018 by Tiny's son "Biff."



These tasty shakes have just four ingredients—five, if you choose to add rum.



Palm Springs Date Shakes

The taste of California sunshine in a creamy milkshake. **by Morgan Bolling**

THE COACHELLA Valley in Southern California is home to (among other things) the mountains and desert of Palm Springs, the famous Coachella music and arts festival, and the nation's largest collection of date palms. Back in 1904, the U.S. Department of Agriculture set up an experimental station devoted to growing dates in this region since the hot, arid conditions mirrored the climate in the Middle East where these trees thrived. The experiment paid off. In 2020 California produced 49,300 tons of dates, mostly in

this region, at an estimated value of \$114 million.

The bounty of dates in the area means they show up everywhere in the local food scene, including in the now-iconic, ultratasty date milkshake. This thick and creamy concoction is made with ice cream, milk, and dried dates and sometimes includes walnuts or warm spices. The sweet dates give the shake a rich, caramel flavor and a thick, almost sticky, texture.

For a *Cook's Country* version of this So-Cal specialty, we call for steeping dried dates in hot water before blending. This step is to



Date Palms

A single date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*) can produce 200 pounds of fruit per year.

account for the fact that the dried dates you find in supermarkets are often a little past their prime and so dry as to challenge even a good blender when making shakes. We keep our version simple with just dates, vanilla ice cream, milk, and a little salt, which both draws out complexity in the dried fruit and gives a touch of savory-sweet appeal. But you can always experiment with a pinch of cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, or your favorite warm spice.

Or, if the kids aren't around, try our boozy version that's amped up with a glug of golden rum.

● PALMS SPRINGS DATE SHAKES

Serves 2 to 4

Total Time: 30 minutes

We developed this recipe using Medjool dates. You can use any kind of date, but we suggest using the best-quality ones you can find. Place your serving glasses in the freezer before making the shakes.

- 6 ounces pitted dried dates, roughly chopped (about 1 cup)
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup cold whole milk
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon table salt
- 2 cups vanilla ice cream

1. Place dates in heatproof bowl. Cover with boiling water (about 1 cup) and let sit for 10 minutes. Drain dates and let cool completely, at least 15 minutes.
2. Combine milk, salt, and dates in blender. Process until thick paste forms and no chunks of dates remain, about 1 minute, scraping down sides of blender as needed. Add ice cream and process until smooth, about 1 minute. Serve in chilled glasses.

● PALMS SPRINGS DATE SHAKES WITH RUM

Reduce milk to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Add $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces golden rum with milk in step 2. After blending in ice cream, taste and add more rum as desired.

Softer Dates = Easier Blending



Cover dates with boiling water and let sit for 10 minutes to soften. Drain and let cool.



DINNER TONIGHT

Flank Steak with Grilled Guacamole Salad



DINNER TONIGHT

Chicken and Arugula Salad with Cherries and Feta Cheese



DINNER TONIGHT

Rigatoni with Marinated Tomatoes and Burrata



DINNER TONIGHT

Spiced Mahi-Mahi with Mashed Plantains and Pickled Onion

Chicken and Arugula Salad with Cherries and Feta Cheese

Serves 4 Total Time: 45 minutes

Chopped plums can be substituted for the cherries, if desired.

- ¼ teaspoon plus pinch table salt, divided, plus salt for cooking chicken**
- 3 (6- to 8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed**
- 3 ounces rustic bread, cut into 1-inch pieces (about 1½ cups)**
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar**
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley**
- 1 tablespoon minced shallot**
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard**
- 5 ounces (5 cups) baby arugula**
- 8 ounces fresh sweet cherries, pitted and quartered**
- 2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled (½ cup)**

1. Bring 2 cups water to boil in 12-inch skillet over high heat.

Stir in 2 tablespoons salt. Add chicken; reduce heat to medium-low; cover; and simmer until chicken registers 160 degrees, 12 to 15 minutes, flipping chicken halfway through cooking. Transfer chicken to plate and let cool. Discard cooking water.

2. Pulse bread in food processor into large crumbs measuring between ⅛ and ¼ inch, about 10 pulses. Combine crumbs, 2 tablespoons oil, and pinch salt in now-empty skillet. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until crumbs are golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer to plate.

3. Shred chicken into bite-size pieces. Whisk vinegar, parsley, shallot, mustard, and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt together in large bowl. Whisking constantly, drizzle in remaining 6 tablespoons oil. Add chicken and arugula and toss to combine. Season with salt to taste. Transfer salad to serving platter and sprinkle with cherries, feta cheese, and crumbs. Serve.

Flank Steak with Grilled Guacamole Salad

Serves 4 Total Time: 1 hour

Garnish with chopped fresh cilantro.

- 1 (1½-pound) flank steak, trimmed**
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- 5 teaspoons kosher salt, divided**
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin**
- 1½ teaspoons pepper, divided**
- 1 teaspoon grated lime zest, plus 2 limes, halved**
- 1 red onion, sliced into ½-inch-thick rounds**
- 10 ounces cherry tomatoes**
- 2 avocados, halved and pitted**
- 1 jalapeño chile**

1. Pat steak dry with paper towels and rub with 1 tablespoon oil, 1 tablespoon salt, cumin, 1 teaspoon pepper, and lime zest. Push toothpick horizontally through each onion round. Thread tomatoes onto three 12-inch skewers. Brush onion, tomatoes, cut sides of avocados, and jalapeño with 1 tablespoon oil and sprinkle with

1 teaspoon salt and remaining ½ teaspoon pepper.

2. Grill steak, onion, tomatoes, avocados, jalapeño, and lime halves (avocados and limes cut sides down) over hot fire until meat registers 125 degrees and vegetables are charred, 5 to 10 minutes, flipping as needed for even browning. Transfer to platter.

3. Stem and seed jalapeño, then chop fine. Squeeze 2 tablespoons juice from 2 lime halves. Whisk jalapeño, lime juice, remaining ¼ cup oil, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt together in bowl. Remove toothpicks from onion and cut rounds in half. Using spoon, scoop avocado flesh from skin and cut into ¾-inch wedges. Slide tomatoes off skewers and arrange with onion and avocados on platter. Drizzle dressing over vegetables. Slice steak thin on bias against grain. Serve steak with salad and remaining lime halves.

Spiced Mahi-Mahi with Mashed Plantains and Pickled Onion

Serves 4 Total Time: 40 minutes

Garnish with fresh cilantro leaves. We call for green (unripe) plantains here. If your plantains have started to yellow, they will be on the sweeter side.

- 3 green plantains, peeled, halved lengthwise, and cut into 1-inch pieces**
- 4 teaspoons table salt, divided**
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 4 (8-ounce) skinless mahi-mahi fillets, 1 to 1½ inches thick**
- 2 tablespoons jerk seasoning**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 1 recipe Pickled Red Onion (page 44)**

1. Place plantains and 2 teaspoons salt in large saucepan, add water to cover by 1 inch, and bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium and simmer until paring knife can be

easily slipped in and out of plantains, 18 to 22 minutes. Reserve 1 cup cooking liquid, drain plantains, and return to pot. Using potato masher, mash plantains until smooth and no lumps remain. Stir in butter, 1 teaspoon salt, and ¾ cup reserved cooking liquid until fully combined. Cover and keep warm. (Adjust plantain consistency with remaining ¼ cup cooking liquid as necessary before serving).

2. Meanwhile, pat mahi-mahi dry with paper towels and sprinkle with jerk seasoning, pepper, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Heat oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add fish and cook until well browned on both sides and registers 140 degrees, 12 to 14 minutes. Serve mahi-mahi with mashed plantains and pickled onion.

Rigatoni with Marinated Tomatoes and Burrata

Serves 4 Total Time: 50 minutes

The sauce is liquid-y but flavorful; sop up any extra with crusty bread.

- 1½ pounds ripe tomatoes, cored and cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 1½ teaspoons table salt, plus salt for cooking pasta**
- ¼ teaspoon pepper**
- ¼ teaspoon sugar**
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- 3 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 pound rigatoni**
- 8 ounces burrata cheese, room temperature**
- ½ cup fresh basil leaves, torn**

1. Combine tomatoes, salt, pepper, and sugar in bowl. Heat 1 tablespoon oil and garlic in 8-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until garlic just begins to turn golden, 3 to 5 minutes. Pour

hot oil mixture over tomatoes and toss to combine. Let sit for at least 20 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Drain pasta and return it to pot.

3. Drain tomatoes in colander set over bowl. Add tomatoes and ½ cup drained tomato juice to pasta and toss vigorously until liquid is mostly absorbed. Adjust consistency with extra tomato juice as needed. Transfer pasta to serving bowls. Cut burrata into 1-inch pieces, collecting creamy liquid. Sprinkle burrata over pasta and drizzle with creamy liquid. Drizzle with remaining ¼ cup oil. Season with pepper to taste and sprinkle with basil. Serve.



DINNER TONIGHT

*Family-Size Spinach and Herb Cream Cheese Omelet
with Home Fries*



DINNER TONIGHT

Grilled Italian Sausages and Balsamic Radicchio



DINNER TONIGHT

Pork Chops with Creamy Corn and Lima Beans



DINNER TONIGHT

Red Curry Shrimp with Coconut Rice and Cucumber Relish

Grilled Italian Sausages and Balsamic Radicchio

Serves 4 Total Time: 1 hour

For a spicier kick, use hot Italian sausage.

- 2 heads radicchio (10 ounces each), quartered through core**
- 1 (12-inch) baguette, cut on bias into 4-inch-long, 1-inch thick slices**
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- 1 teaspoon table salt, divided**
- 1 teaspoon pepper, divided**
- 1½ pounds sweet Italian sage, pricked all over with paring knife**
- 2 tablespoons honey**
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**
- 3 ounces blue cheese, crumbled (¾ cup)**
- ½ cup walnuts, toasted and chopped**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley**

1. Arrange radicchio and bread on rimmed baking sheet. Brush all over with ¼ cup oil and sprinkle all over with ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper.

2. Grill sausages over medium-hot fire until browned and meat registers 165 degrees, about 10 minutes, turning every 2 to 3 minutes. After 5 minutes, add radicchio to grill and cook, turning every 1 to 2 minutes, until edges are browned and wilted but centers are still slightly firm, about 5 minutes. Transfer sausages and radicchio to sheet. Arrange bread slices on grill and cook, uncovered, until golden brown and lightly charred, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Transfer to sheet.

3. Whisk honey, vinegar, remaining ¼ cup oil, remaining ½ teaspoon salt, and remaining ½ teaspoon pepper together in large bowl. Trim radicchio cores and discard. Slice radicchio leaves 1 inch thick. Add radicchio leaves, blue cheese, and walnuts to vinaigrette and toss to combine. Transfer radicchio mixture to serving platter and sprinkle with parsley. Slice sausages on bias 1 inch thick. Serve sausages with radicchio salad and bread.

Family-Size Spinach and Herb

Cream Cheese Omelet with Home Fries

Serves 4 Total Time: 55 minutes

Serve with fresh fruit.

- 2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, unpeeled, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided**
- 1¼ teaspoons plus ⅛ teaspoon table salt, divided**
- 1 teaspoon pepper, divided**
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika**
- 6 ounces (6 cups) baby spinach, chopped coarse**
- 2 garlic cloves, minced**
- 3 ounces cream cheese, softened**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives**
- 8 large eggs**

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 475 degrees. Toss potatoes with melted butter, 1 teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon pepper, and paprika on rimmed baking sheet. Roast until potatoes are tender and

browned, 25 to 28 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, melt 1 tablespoon butter in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add spinach and garlic and cook until wilted and skillet is dry, about 4 minutes. Stir in cream cheese, dill, chives, ⅛ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Transfer spinach mixture to bowl and cover to keep warm.

3. Whisk eggs, remaining ¼ teaspoon salt, and remaining ¼ teaspoon pepper together in bowl. Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in now-empty skillet over medium heat. Add eggs and cook, stirring, until mixture is thickened, about 2 minutes. Spread eggs to even layer and cook until bottom of omelet is just set but top is still runny, about 1 minute. Cover skillet; reduce heat to low; and cook until top of omelet begins to set but is still moist, 4 to 5 minutes. Spread spinach mixture evenly over eggs and fold omelet in half. Cut into wedges and serve with potatoes.

Red Curry Shrimp with Coconut Rice and Cucumber Relish

Serves 4 Total Time: 50 minutes

The relish is inspired by Victor Sodsook's recipe in *True Thai* (1995).

- 1½ cups jasmine rice, rinsed thoroughly**
- 1½ cups water**
- 1¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons canned coconut milk, divided**
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon sugar, divided**
- 2¼ teaspoons table salt, divided**
- ¼ cup distilled white vinegar**
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- 1 English cucumber, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- ½ cup salted dry-roasted peanuts, chopped coarse**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro**
- 2 tablespoons red curry paste**
- 1½ pounds jumbo shrimp (16 to 20 per pound), peeled, deveined, and tails removed**

1. Combine rice, water, 1 cup coconut milk, 1 tablespoon sugar, and ¾ teaspoon salt in large saucepan. Bring to boil over high heat. Reduce

heat to low to maintain bare simmer. Cover and cook until liquid is absorbed, about 20 minutes. Remove saucepan from heat and let sit, covered, for 10 minutes. Mix rice gently but thoroughly with rubber spatula.

2. Meanwhile, whisk vinegar, pepper flakes, 1 tablespoon sugar, and 1 teaspoon salt in bowl until sugar is dissolved. Add cucumber, peanuts, and cilantro and toss to combine. Let stand until ready to serve, tossing occasionally.

3. Cook curry paste, 1 tablespoon coconut milk, remaining 1 teaspoon sugar, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until mixture is dry, about 3 minutes. Add shrimp and cook, stirring occasionally, until shrimp are opaque throughout, 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in remaining 5 tablespoons coconut milk. Bring to simmer, then remove from heat. Serve shrimp with coconut rice and cucumber relish.

Pork Chops with Creamy Corn and Lima Beans

Serves 4 Total Time: 45 minutes

If using fresh corn, you can scrape the cobs with the back of a knife and add the creamy pulp to the skillet with the kernels for even more sweet corn flavor.

- 4 (8- to 10-ounce) bone-in pork rib chops, ¾ to 1 inch thick, trimmed**
- 1½ teaspoons table salt, divided**
- 1½ teaspoons pepper, divided**
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika**
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper**
- 4 slices bacon, chopped**
- 4 ears corn, kernels cut from cobs, or 3 cups frozen**
- 1½ cups frozen baby lima beans**
- 4 scallions, white and green parts separated and sliced thin**
- ½ cup heavy cream**
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice**

1. Pat pork dry with paper towels and sprinkle with 1 teaspoon salt,

1 teaspoon pepper, paprika, and cayenne. Cook bacon in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until crispy, 5 to 7 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer bacon to plate, leaving fat in skillet.

2. Add chops to fat left in skillet and cook over medium-high heat until well browned and meat registers 140 degrees, about 6 minutes per side. Transfer to platter and tent with foil.

3. Add corn, lima beans, scallion whites, remaining ½ teaspoon salt, and remaining ½ teaspoon pepper to fat left in skillet and cook until vegetables are softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Add cream and cook until slightly thickened, about 2 minutes. Off heat, stir in lemon juice, scallion greens, and bacon. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Return pork chops to skillet and serve.

Grilled Potato Wedges

If you're not already grilling your potatoes, this is the recipe to get you started.

by Matthew Fairman

GRILLING IS A good method for cooking potatoes—but it takes a little finesse. Here, the high, direct heat of the grill imparts summery, smoky flavor and depth and a touch of tasty char to garlicky potato wedges. And with a time-saving trick, this simple, failproof recipe comes together quickly and easily.

The challenge with grilling potatoes is that it's hard to cook them evenly; they are likely to burn and dry out before they become tender. Turning to the microwave is the best—and easiest—solution for parcooking potatoes for grilling. Methods such as boiling or steaming take longer and introduce moisture that can limit the delicious browning you want from the grill. Microwaving the potatoes quickly softens the spuds without introducing extra water. And as a bonus, you can season the potatoes from the outset.

Simply cut the potatoes into wedges; toss them with olive oil, salt, pepper, and granulated garlic (fresh garlic burns on the grill); pop them into the microwave until they're almost tender; and you're ready to heat your grill.

Using Yukon Golds, which are dense and relatively low in starch, and cooking them over a hot fire yields grilled wedges with lightly charred, crispy edges and creamy interiors. A luscious lemon-dill mayo offers a rich counterpoint to the smoky potatoes.



Undeniably dippable, these grilled potatoes are crisp on the outside and tender and fluffy within.

● GRILLED POTATO WEDGES WITH LEMON-DILL MAYO

Serves 4 Total Time: 1¼ hours

Look for large Yukon Gold potatoes that are at least 3 inches in diameter and weigh 8 to 12 ounces each.

LEMON-DILL MAYONNAISE

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup chopped fresh dill
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest plus 1 tablespoon juice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt

POTATOES

- 2 pounds large Yukon Gold potatoes, unpeeled
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1½ teaspoons granulated garlic
- ½ teaspoon pepper

1. FOR THE LEMON-DILL MAYONNAISE: Combine all ingredients in bowl; set aside.

2. FOR THE POTATOES:

Cut each potato lengthwise into 8 wedges, about ¾ inch thick. Toss potatoes with oil, salt, granulated garlic, and pepper in large microwave-safe bowl. Microwave, covered, until potatoes are nearly tender, 9 to 12 minutes, stirring every 3 minutes. (Potatoes should range in doneness from nearly completely tender to raw in spots.) Uncover and set aside while heating grill.

3A. FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL:

Open bottom vent completely. Light large chimney starter filled with charcoal briquettes (6 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over grill. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent completely. Heat grill until hot, about 5 minutes.

3B. FOR A GAS GRILL:

Turn all burners to high; cover; and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Leave all burners on high.

4. Clean and oil cooking grate. Place potatoes on grill, cut side

down, perpendicular to grate bars. Grill (covered if using gas) until well browned on all sides with some spots of char, 9 to 12 minutes (3 to 4 minutes on each cut side and on skin side). Transfer potatoes to serving platter and season with salt to taste. Serve with lemon-dill mayonnaise.

Microwaving Is Key



Microwaving the potatoes before grilling gives them a jump-start without introducing excess water that would inhibit browning.

GINGER

Ginger is a powerhouse ingredient used in both sweet and savory applications. No matter how you're using it, here's what you need to know. **by Megan Ginsberg**

WHAT IS GINGER?

Ginger, often mistakenly referred to as a root, is actually a rhizome, an underground stem that stores food and produces roots and buds. It is part of the Zingiberaceae family, which also includes turmeric, cardamom, and galangal (a close cousin to ginger). Ginger is known for its spicy, fiery bite and floral pungency and is used in cooking and baking, either fresh, dried and ground, crystallized, or pickled. Because these different preparations of ginger can range in spiciness and strength of flavor, we sometimes call for more than one type in our recipes.

Ground Ginger

Ground ginger is made by peeling and drying ginger and then grinding it to a powder. It is used to add warm, spicy flavor to baked goods and savory dishes. Ground ginger is actually more pungent than fresh ginger. Our favorite ground ginger is Spice Islands Ground Ginger. Our tasting panel described it as "a little earthy," "spicy, toasty, and fragrant."



Pickled Ginger

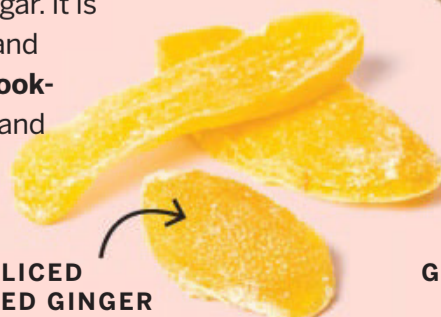
A popular accompaniment to sushi, where it is used as a palate cleanser, pickled ginger is made by slicing peeled ginger paper-thin and submerging it in a vinegar-based brine. Our recipe is available for free for four months at [CooksCountry.com/pickledginger](https://www.cookscountry.com/pickledginger).



Crystallized Ginger

A candied form of ginger, crystallized ginger (sold sliced or in bits) has a milder flavor and less heat than fresh and has a pleasing chewy texture. It is made by boiling peeled young ginger in water and sugar and then sprinkling it with coarse sugar. It is a nice addition to baked goods and desserts, such as our **Hermit Cookies** (October/November 2008) and our **Ginger Ice Cream with Chocolate Sauce** (April/May 2005). And it is also delicious simply eaten on its own.

SLICED CANDIED GINGER
Sweet and spicy



CANDIED GINGER BITS
Perfect for baked goods



PREPARING FRESH GINGER

PEELING



Paring knives and peelers remove too much of ginger's flesh. A curved spoon is much easier to maneuver around the root.

- To quickly peel knob of ginger, hold it firmly against cutting board and use edge of teaspoon to scrape away thin, brown skin.

SLICING



Ginger should be sliced against the grain because it has long fibers running through it lengthwise that can be chewy and stringy. Cutting against the grain breaks down the long fibers.

- To slice ginger, cut ginger crosswise (against grain) into thin rounds.

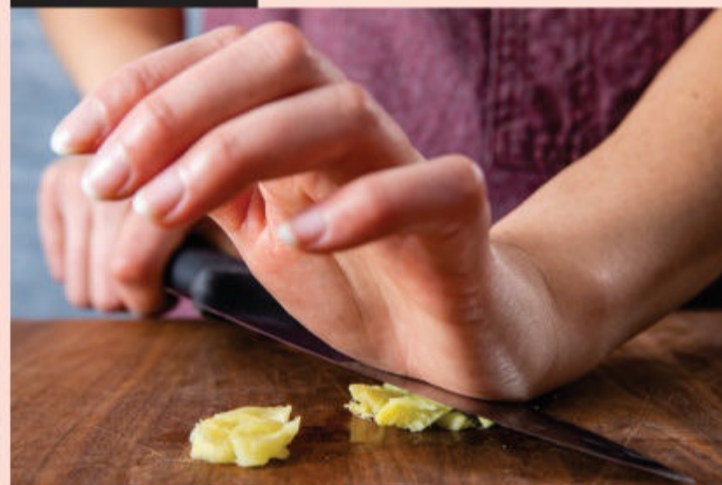
GRATING



Ginger has a fibrous texture when minced or coarsely grated. To shorten the fibers so that they are less noticeable, grate the ginger to a fine pulp. Tip: Freeze the ginger before grating it to make it easier to grate.

- To grate ginger, peel small section of large piece of ginger and then grate peeled portion using fine or rasp-style grater, using unpeeled ginger as handle.

SMASHING



Smashing ginger releases flavorful oils. This technique works best when you want to impart the flavor of ginger to a liquid, such as broth.

- To smash ginger, slice into rounds and then, using heel of your hand, carefully apply pressure to flat side of chef's knife to smash each piece.

STORING FRESH GINGER

A nub of ginger can be wrapped in plastic wrap and stored in the refrigerator for a few days or in the freezer for prolonged storage. Once ginger begins to shrivel and dry out, its flavor will be less pungent, so it's best to buy small pieces and use it while it's fresh.

Understanding Blue Ginger

Sometimes, during refrigerator storage, ginger will take on a blue-gray color; this is because it becomes less acidic over time, which causes some of its anthocyanin pigments to discolor. While its flavor may be slightly milder, blue ginger is safe to use and eat, and it's unlikely that you'll pick up on its milder flavor once it's incorporated into a recipe.



Neorm Sach Moan

For a fresh, herb-packed chicken salad, we turned to a chef who has made it her personal mission to bring Cambodian food to America.

by Morgan Bolling



Pungent fish sauce and a spicy Thai chile liven up this cool, crisp cabbage-based salad.

ASIP OF SOUP was the catalyst for Nite Yun to decide to start her own restaurant. It was 2013, and Yun was working as a nurse in San Francisco.



**Nyum Bai chef-owner,
Nite Yun**

But as a Cambodian native, she wasn't excited about the quality and availability of Cambodian food in the city and longed for food closer to the bright, complex cuisine she grew up eating in her native country.

Yun began traveling back and forth to Cambodia. And one day, while enjoying a bowl of kuy teav phnom penh (a pork soup), something clicked, and Yun decided to take matters into her own hands—literally—and open her own restaurant. Not long after, good fortune struck at a street fair when she met a representative from La Cocina, a Bay-area food incubator program that helps people start food businesses. Yun applied and got accepted into the program and eventually started a pop-up selling Cambodian food based on her mother's recipes, which she transcribed over long-distance calls to her mom back in Cambodia.

Yun shared with me her disappointment at how many people in the West associate Cambodia with violence and genocide. She wants to show a different side of the country; Yun strives to highlight the culture, music, and resilient character of the Cambodian people, all through the context of delicious food. Her Oakland-based restaurant, Nyum Bai, opened in 2018 and soon Yun was recognized on *Time Magazine's* "100 Next" list and named one of *Food & Wine's* Best New Chefs in 2019.

At the restaurant, Yun imports tablecloths from Cambodia and plays a loop of 13 Cambodian rock songs during service—the ambiance is strong. One of the things I ate at her restaurant was neorm sach moan, a cabbage salad

with shreds of chicken and a bold dressing made with rice vinegar and fish sauce. The salad has been on the menu since Nyum Bai opened. Yun explained

how the dish is the perfect bridge for Americans wanting to try Cambodian food. "It's a good representation; it's not Americanized, yet it's approachable. Cambodian food is new to a lot of folks. I don't want to introduce a recipe that's too complex." The salad is simple, but it's layered and nuanced with heat from the chiles, umami from the fish sauce, and plenty of herbal notes from handfuls of fresh mint, cilantro, and Thai basil.

It's another recipe she learned from her mother. Yun recalled, "We grew up in a really bad neighborhood. So I just hung out in the kitchen . . . I remember helping my mom shave a bunch of cabbage and picking a bunch of basil . . . Poaching the chicken was one of my favorite parts. I would be able to pick off the skin and sneak a bite." She explained that in Cambodia this salad is traditionally served for birthday parties or other celebrations and not as an everyday meal.

The recipe is delicious and easy to make. This poaching method cooks the chicken very gently. We opt to use boneless, skinless chicken breasts for convenience, but since chicken breasts are prone to drying out, we instruct bringing the water to just a simmer, not a boil, to prevent overcooking the chicken. And speaking of the chicken, it's meant to be a component of the salad here, but it doesn't dominate; it won't seem like a lot of chicken, because it's not.

At her restaurant, Yun uses a mandoline to do much of the work of shredding the cabbage and other produce quickly and

uniformly. She changes the vegetables she uses seasonally; when I was there, the salad featured thinly sliced Persian cucumbers and mizuna (see "Bitter Is Better"). After stirring together the dressing, shredding the vegetables and poached chicken, and tossing it all together, all there is to do is put it on a platter and enjoy this lively, refreshing salad. And if you want to take a cue from Yun on the ambiance front, you can put on some Cambodian pop or rock music from the 1960s while you eat.

Bitter Is Better

Mizuna is a Japanese mustard green you can often find at Asian markets, specialty produce stores, or farmers' markets. It has the peppiness of arugula and a little bitterness like frisée. It adds a really nice complexity here, but if you can't find it, 2 cups of baby arugula works well.




● NEORM SACH MOAN (CHICKEN SALAD WITH CABBAGE AND FISH SAUCE)

Serves 4 Total Time: 1 hour

This recipe is adapted from a dish by Nite Yun, owner and chef of Nyum Bai, a Cambodian restaurant in Oakland, California. You can substitute Italian basil for Thai basil. If you can't find Persian cucumber, use 1 cup of thinly sliced English cucumber. A mandoline makes quick work of evenly shredding the cabbage and slicing the radishes and cucumber.

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| <p>1 (6- to 8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breast, trimmed</p> <p>¼ teaspoon table salt, plus salt for poaching chicken</p> <p>6 tablespoons fish sauce</p> <p>¼ cup sugar</p> <p>¼ cup unseasoned rice vinegar</p> <p>1 Thai chile, minced</p> <p>1 garlic clove, minced</p> <p>4 cups shredded green cabbage</p> <p>2 ounces (2 cups) baby mizuna or baby arugula, chopped coarse</p> <p>1 cup shredded red cabbage</p> <p>1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and sliced thin</p> <p>1 Persian cucumber, halved crosswise and sliced thin lengthwise</p> <p>4 radishes, trimmed and sliced thin</p> <p>¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus 2 tablespoons leaves</p> <p>¼ cup chopped fresh Thai basil</p> <p>¼ cup chopped fresh mint</p> <p>¼ cup salted dry-roasted peanuts, chopped</p> | <p>1. Combine chicken, 4 cups water, and 2 teaspoons salt in large saucepan. Cook over medium heat until water just begins to simmer, about 10 minutes. Cover pot; reduce heat to low; and gently simmer until chicken registers 160 degrees, 12 to 17 minutes.</p> <p>2. Transfer chicken to plate or cutting board and let cool for 15 minutes. Shred into thin, bite-size strips.</p> <p>3. Whisk fish sauce, sugar, vinegar, Thai chile, garlic, and salt in large bowl until sugar is dissolved. Add green cabbage, mizuna, red cabbage, bell pepper, cucumber, radishes, chopped cilantro, Thai basil, mint, and shredded chicken and toss thoroughly to combine. Top with cilantro leaves and peanuts. Serve.</p> |
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We stick to one layer of cake but infuse it with multiple layers of coconut flavor.

Coconut Snack Cake

With three forms of coconut, this everyday cake boasts big flavor that will keep you coming back to snack.

by Amanda Luchtel

THE BEAUTY OF a snack cake is that it is a quick, no-fuss treat that can simply be stirred together and baked. That's probably why so many popular layer cakes have been adapted to this format—you can keep the flavor of the layer cake but simplify the amount of work required. We zeroed in on coconut layer cake. In snack-cake form, this Southern favorite can be fun, quick, and just as tasty as the layer cake. To make sure that the coconut flavor

was not only front-and-center but also balanced, we relied on the right combination of sweetened shredded coconut, cream of coconut, and coconut extract (see “Coconut Three Ways” for more information).

With just a little whisking and stirring and a quick turn in the oven, you can be nibbling on this snack cake in no time. Start by combining flour, baking powder, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Then whisk the cream of coconut,

whole milk, a couple eggs, melted butter, vanilla extract, and coconut extract in a second large bowl. To finish the batter, whisk the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and then stir in crispy toasted coconut. Transfer the batter to a foil-lined and greased 8-inch square baking pan and pop it into a 325-degree oven. You'll know the cake is done when a toothpick inserted in the cake comes out clean and your whole kitchen smells sweet and coconuty.

COCONUT SNACK CAKE

Serves 9 Total Time: 1¼ hours, plus 1½ hours cooling

We tested this recipe using Coco López brand cream of coconut, which is often found in the soda and drink-mix aisle of the grocery store. Make sure to shake or stir it well before using, because it separates as it stands. To toast the coconut, spread it on a rimmed baking sheet and bake in a 325-degree oven, stirring often, until golden brown, about 15 minutes.

COCONUT CAKE

- 1½ cups (7½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon table salt
- 1¼ cups cream of coconut
- ½ cup whole milk
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon coconut extract
- ¾ cup (2¼ ounces) sweetened shredded coconut, toasted, divided

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

- 8 ounces cream cheese, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 cup (4 ounces) confectioners' sugar
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- ¼ teaspoon coconut extract
- ⅛ teaspoon table salt

1. FOR THE COCONUT CAKE: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Make foil sling for 8-inch square baking pan by folding 2 long sheets of aluminum foil so each is 8 inches wide. Lay sheets of foil in pan perpendicular to each other, with extra foil hanging over

edges of pan. Push foil into corners and up sides of pan, smoothing foil flush to pan. Grease foil.

2. Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt together in large bowl; set aside. Whisk cream of coconut, milk, eggs, melted butter, vanilla, and coconut extract together in second large bowl. Whisk coconut mixture into flour mixture until fully combined. Gently stir in ½ cup toasted coconut until evenly distributed.

3. Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake until toothpick inserted in center of cake comes out clean, 30 to 40 minutes. Transfer pan to wire rack and let cake cool completely in pan on wire rack, about 1½ hours. Using foil overhang, lift coconut cake out of pan and transfer to cutting board; discard foil.

4. FOR THE CREAM CHEESE FROSTING: Process all ingredients in food processor until smooth, about 30 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl with rubber spatula as needed.

5. Spread frosting evenly over surface of cake. Sprinkle frosting evenly with remaining ¼ cup toasted coconut. Serve. (Frosted cake can be covered with plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 2 days.)

The American Table

“You and Betty Crocker Can Bake Someone Happy!”

In the 1970s and '80s, General Mills' Betty Crocker Snackin' Cake box mixes were popular with busy parents and kids who loved to help in the kitchen. The box touted that you could “mix, bake, and serve in the same pan,” saving on time and cleanup. And inside every snackin' cake was a special “snack” such as nuts, bananas, chocolate chips, raisins, or coconut.



Coconut Three Ways

For the right balance of coconut flavor, we turned to three key ingredients.

SWEETENED SHREDDED COCONUT

To make this light, fluffy, sweet product, coconut meat is boiled, grated, and then partially dried before being soaked in a liquid sugar solution and dried again. The pieces are soft and chewy (they help give coconut macaroons their signature texture). We prefer to toast the sweetened coconut for a more nutty flavor in and atop our snack cake.



CREAM OF COCONUT

Not to be confused with coconut cream—the heavy, rich layer of cream that rises to the top of coconut milk after it sits for a while—cream of coconut is a heavily sweetened, emulsified product used in desserts and cocktail mixes. You still need to whisk it up or vigorously shake it to reincorporate. Cream of coconut provides enough sweetness for this snack cake that no additional sugar is needed.



COCONUT EXTRACT

Coconut extract provides bold coconut flavor, but if you use too much of it, your treats could taste like a day at the beach—a little goes a long way. Use coconut extract to boost coconut flavor in baked goods, as we do here, or add some to whipped cream or anywhere you want a coconut burst.



To dress up this simple snack cake, you just need a simple frosting. Thirty seconds in the food processor is all it takes to turn cream cheese, confectioners' sugar, butter, coconut extract, and salt into a spreadable topping. Slather it over the cake and sprinkle extra toasted coconut on top. Keep the frosted cake in the refrigerator and steal a sliver every time you go in the kitchen. After all, snack cakes are meant for snacking.

A swirl of whipped cream and a mound of sweet fruit are the perfect toppings for our crisp, light pavlova.



Brown Sugar Pavlova with Stone Fruit

This dessert is as airy as a ballerina's tutu, but it tastes way better. **by Jessica Rudolph**

WITH ITS ELEGANT meringue, pillowy whipped cream, and juicy ripe fruit, pavlova is a surefire crowd-pleaser. The stately, swooped base—crackly crisp on the outside and marshmallowy soft within—suits a special celebration, yet fresh fruit and cream are as easygoing as a backyard barbecue. And it's so light and refreshing that there's always room for it, even after the heaviest of meals.

Pavlova is especially popular in Australia and New Zealand, and

both lay claim to its creation in the 1920s. It's named after the late ballerina Anna Pavlova, a nod to either her billowy tutu or weightless dance style.

The dessert is adaptable to whichever fruits are in season. For this version, stone fruits adorn the top. The fruit is macerated for just half an hour, so you'll want the ripest, sweetest fruit you can find. A dollop of sour cream mixed into the whipped-cream topping adds a balanced tang. And for the meringue, a portion of the white

sugar is swapped out for brown for an intriguing caramelly depth.

If the mention of meringue gives you pause, don't worry! You'll simply whip six egg whites with a little salt to soft peaks and then slowly add the sugars and cornstarch (a traditional ingredient added to compensate for the brown sugar's extra moisture). Whip it all on high speed until stiff, glossy peaks form and the sugar has dissolved. Then mix in vanilla and vinegar (to keep the inside tender), pile the meringue into a fluffy round, and bake it until the outside is firm. After that, turn off the oven, but leave the meringue inside to help dry out the soft interior.

The meringue can be made ahead, so all you'll need to do before serving is toss the fruit with brown sugar and salt, whip some cream, and put it all together. Once you start portioning it, the shell will delicately crack, the whipped cream will start to slump, and the fruit will threaten to tumble off. It's a beautiful mess that begs to be eaten.

STONE FRUIT PRIMER

Stone fruits, so named because they feature juicy flesh surrounding a pit, or stone, are abundant in late summer. We use a variety for our pavlova topping.

PEACHES

Peaches can either be freestone, meaning the flesh doesn't cling to the pit, or clingstone, meaning it does. Yellow peaches have red-orange skin and golden flesh; white peaches have rosy yellow skin and lighter flesh. Select heavy, fragrant, slightly soft fruit.



NECTARINES

Similar to peaches but usually smaller and firmer and with smooth (not fuzzy) skin, nectarines can also be freestone or clingstone and yellow or white. For the sake of variety, we suggest using peaches or nectarines here but not both.



PLUMS

Juicy plums range in color from black to red to yellow. Select those that feel soft when gently squeezed.



APRICOTS

Fresh apricots have a sweet-tart flavor that makes them perfect for both snacking and baking. Look for ones that are dark orange, or even red, with a firm texture.



CHERRIES

Fresh cherries are typically available only mid-May through August. Sweet Bing cherries, which are reddish black, are the most common variety. Look for those with matte skin. You might also find Lambert or Rainier cherries.



● BROWN SUGAR PAVLOVA WITH STONE FRUIT

Serves 8

Total Time: 2¼ hours, plus 1¾ hours cooling

Open the oven door as infrequently as possible while the meringue is inside. Do not worry if the meringue cracks; it is part of the dessert's charm. The inside of the meringue will remain soft. Additional peaches, nectarines, plums, and/or apricots can be used in place of the cherries. Avoid making pavlova on humid days or the meringue shell may turn out sticky.

MERINGUE

- 1 cup (7 ounces) granulated sugar
- ½ cup packed (3½ ounces) light brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 6 large egg whites
- Pinch table salt
- 2 teaspoons distilled white vinegar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

TOPPING

- 1½ pounds ripe peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots, or a combination, halved, pitted, and cut into ½-inch wedges
- 8 ounces fresh sweet cherries, pitted and halved
- 2 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
- Pinch table salt

WHIPPED CREAM

- 1 cup heavy cream, chilled
- ½ cup sour cream, chilled
- 2 tablespoons packed light brown sugar

1. FOR THE MERINGUE:

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 275 degrees. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. Whisk granulated sugar, brown sugar, and cornstarch together in bowl.

2. Using stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment, whip egg whites and salt on medium speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to medium-high and whip until soft peaks form, about 1 minute. With mixer running, slowly add sugar mixture until fully incorporated, about 90 seconds. Stop

mixer and scrape down bowl with spatula. Whip on high speed until very thick stiff peaks form and sugar is fully dissolved (meringue should feel smooth, not gritty, when rubbed between your fingers), 4 to 6 minutes. Add vinegar and vanilla and whip until combined, about 10 seconds.

3. Pile meringue in center of prepared sheet. Spread and smooth meringue with back of spoon or spatula from center outward, building 9-inch disk that is slightly taller around edges.

4. Bake meringue until exterior is dry and crisp, about 1½ hours. Turn off oven, prop door open with wooden spoon, and let meringue cool in oven for 1½ hours. Remove from oven and let cool completely before topping, about 15 minutes. (Cooled meringue can be wrapped tightly in plastic wrap and stored at room temperature for up to 3 days.)

5. **FOR THE TOPPING:** Toss all ingredients together in large bowl. Set aside for 30 minutes, tossing occasionally.

6. FOR THE WHIPPED

CREAM: Using stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment, whip heavy cream, sour cream, and brown sugar together on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to high and whip until soft peaks form, about 1 minute.

7. Carefully peel meringue away from parchment and place on large serving platter. Spread whipped cream over meringue. Spoon fruit over whipped cream. Cut into wedges and serve.

How to Whip Up Pavlova



1. Whip egg whites and salt in stand mixer until foamy.



2. Increase speed to medium-high and whip until soft peaks form.



3. With mixer running, slowly add sugar mixture.



4. Whip on high speed until stiff and glossy and sugar is dissolved.



5. Add vanilla and vinegar and whip to combine.



6. Pile meringue on parchment-lined sheet and spread into 9-inch disk.

Cherry-Picked Cherry Pitter

You can pit cherries by hand—or try some tricks such as setting a cherry atop a wine bottle and pushing the pit through with a straw—but it's hard to beat a cherry pitter when it comes to speed. Our testing winner, the **Leifheit Cherry Pitter "Cherry-mat"** (\$31.67), is incredibly fast and effective. Plus, it has a large collection bin for the pits and a spout that sends cherries right into a waiting bowl.





Mafaldine, a ribbon-shaped pasta, has lots of curly edges to catch the sauce.

Summer Vegetable Pasta

A traditional French stew provides inspiration for a vegetable-laden summer pasta.

by Lawman Johnson

RATATOUILLE, a Provençal dish of stewed vegetables (you might know it from the movie of the same name), is one of those delicious summer meals that always pleases. A quick jaunt out to the garden or a spin through the farmers' market or grocery store produce section will turn up the main components: eggplant, zucchini, bell peppers, tomatoes, onions, and garlic. Cook those down with some seasonings, and you've got a lovely summer dinner. Or you can take it a step further and use this iconic combo to inspire a summery pasta dish.

It's easy—but not quite as simple as just spooning the stewed vegetables over pasta. First, cook the onion, garlic, eggplant, and zucchini until they melt into a luscious sauce (bell peppers stay more intact

and their skins can be distracting, so we leave them out). To round out the quick-cooking sauce, opt for canned crushed tomatoes; they contribute long-cooked flavor and body right out of the can. For seasonings, toss in oregano and red pepper flakes for herbal and spicy notes, respectively.

While the sauce is cooking, boil some pasta. Then stir the finished sauce into the cooked pasta and add some chopped kalamata olives and capers for more layers of flavor. Introduce a little pasta water to help the sauce cling to the noodles and some chopped basil to reinforce the summer vibe.

A bowl of this pasta, topped with freshly grated ricotta salata, a drizzle of olive oil, and even more basil, plus a glass of chilled rosé, is hard to beat on a warm evening.

● SUMMER VEGETABLE PASTA

Serves 4 to 6 Total Time: 1¼ hours

Avoid overly large eggplants and choose ones that are firm and seem heavy for their size; they should have glossy, vibrant skin without blemishes, bruises, or indentations. We like how the curved edges of mafaldine catch the sauce here, but you can substitute 1 pound of spaghetti or linguine.

- 1 pound eggplant, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 1 large zucchini (about 12 ounces), quartered lengthwise and cut crosswise into ½-inch pieces**
- 1 onion, chopped**
- 4 garlic cloves, minced**
- 2¾ teaspoons table salt, plus salt for cooking pasta**
- ¾ teaspoon pepper**
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- 1 cup canned crushed tomatoes**
- 1 pound mafaldine**
- ½ cup chopped fresh basil, divided**
- ¼ cup kalamata olives, chopped**
- 2 tablespoons capers, drained and chopped**
- Grated ricotta salata or Parmesan cheese**

1. Combine eggplant, zucchini, onion, garlic, salt, and pepper in large bowl. Heat oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add vegetable mixture (skillet will be

full); cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until eggplant has released its moisture, 14 to 16 minutes.

2. Uncover and add oregano and pepper flakes. Continue to cook, uncovered, stirring often, until eggplant is mostly broken down, about 10 minutes longer. Stir in tomatoes and cook until slightly thickened, about 3 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until al dente. Reserve 1 cup cooking water, then drain pasta and return it to pot.

4. Add ¼ cup basil, olives, capers, eggplant mixture, and ½ cup reserved cooking water to pasta and toss to combine. Adjust consistency with remaining ½ cup cooking water as needed. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Transfer to serving dish, top with remaining ¼ cup basil, and drizzle with extra oil as desired. Serve immediately with ricotta salata.

Charred Cherry Tomato Salad

Sweetness and a kiss of char bring intrigue to this tasty salad at any time of the year.

by Amanda Luchtel

THIS QUICK, WARM tomato salad tastes like summer, but since it uses cherry tomatoes and is cooked on the stovetop, you can enjoy its combination of freshness and depth even in the colder months. Our recipe is inspired by one in acclaimed British chef April Bloomfield's *A Girl and Her Pig* (2012) in which she chars and skins red bell peppers and then tears them up and tosses the pieces with garlic and vinegar before adding slow-roasted tomatoes. This recipe shortens the cooking by quickly blistering the tomatoes in a cast-iron skillet, and it enriches the vegetables with fresh mozzarella. It's delicious.

To get started, whisk together an assertive dressing of garlic, olive oil, red wine vinegar, anchovies, thyme, lemon juice, pepper flakes, and salt plus a dash of smoked paprika to amplify the charred flavor of the tomatoes and peppers. Then, preheat a cast-iron skillet and drop in the cherry tomatoes. When the tomatoes are lightly blistered—a few will burst—tumble them into the dressing. Then brown the peppers in the hot skillet and toss them with the tomatoes; let the vegetables sit in the dressing at room temperature

Growing Tomatoes?

Consider what plants are in proximity. According to *Farmers' Almanac*, "Basil and tomatoes were made to go together, not only in sauces but in the garden, too. This herb helps tomatoes produce greater yields and it repels both flies and mosquitoes."

for at least 30 minutes so that the flavors can meld. Layer on torn pieces of creamy, rich fresh mozzarella (the jagged edges hold more dressing) and torn fresh basil leaves. Beautiful to look at and beautiful to eat.

● CHARRED CHERRY TOMATOES WITH BELL PEPPER AND MOZZARELLA

Serves 4 Total Time: 45 minutes, plus 30 minutes cooling

One pint of cherry tomatoes weighs about 12 ounces. Serve with warmed or grilled crusty bread.

- 1 garlic clove, peeled
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil, divided, plus extra for drizzling
- 5 teaspoons red wine vinegar
- 3 anchovy fillets, minced
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes, plus extra for seasoning
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 pound cherry tomatoes
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut lengthwise into thin strips
- 8 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, torn into bite-size pieces
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh basil leaves, torn into 1-inch pieces

1. Mince garlic with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt to form smooth paste. Transfer to large bowl. Add 2 tablespoons oil, vinegar, anchovies, thyme, lemon juice, pepper flakes, paprika, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt. Whisk to combine.
2. Heat 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat for 10 minutes.



The blistered tomatoes and red bell pepper slices add depth and complexity to this simple salad.

Smoke and Sizzle, Inside on the Stove



1. Heat cast-iron skillet over medium heat for 10 minutes.



2. Toss in oiled, salted tomatoes. Cook until lightly charred.

Toss tomatoes with 2 teaspoons oil and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt in medium bowl. Add tomatoes to skillet and cook until lightly charred on 1 side, about 4 minutes. Stir and continue to cook 2 minutes longer. (Some tomatoes will start to burst.)

3. Meanwhile, toss bell pepper with remaining 2 teaspoons oil and remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt.
4. Transfer tomatoes to vinegar mixture. Add bell pepper to now-empty skillet set over medium heat. Cook until spotty brown on 1 side, about 4 minutes. Stir and continue to cook 2 minutes longer. Transfer bell pepper to tomato mixture and toss gently to combine. Let sit for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours to allow flavors to meld.
5. Gently toss mozzarella and basil with tomato mixture until combined. Season with salt and pepper flakes to taste. Transfer to platter. Serve drizzled with oil.

Chicken and Rice with Coconut-Ginger Sauce

A potent sweet-and-savory sauce enhances this classic dinner combo. *by Mark Huxsoll*



● ONE-POT CHICKEN AND RICE WITH COCONUT-GINGER SAUCE

Serves 4 Total Time: 1¼ hours

Be sure to rinse the rice before cooking it to remove excess starch.

COCONUT-GINGER SAUCE

- ⅓ cup canned coconut milk
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon sriracha
- 1 tablespoon lime juice

CHICKEN, VEGETABLES, AND RICE

- 8 (5- to 7-ounce) bone-in chicken thighs, trimmed
- 2 teaspoons table salt, divided
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into 1½-inch pieces
- 1 red onion, cut into 1½-inch pieces
- 1½ cups long-grain white rice, rinsed
- ¾ cup water
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 4 scallions, sliced thin

1. FOR THE COCONUT-GINGER SAUCE: Combine coconut milk, sugar, fish sauce, ginger, garlic, and sriracha in bowl. Set aside.

2. FOR THE CHICKEN, VEGETABLES, AND RICE: Adjust oven rack to middle position and

heat oven to 350 degrees. Pat chicken dry with paper towels and sprinkle all over with 1 teaspoon salt. Heat oil in large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add half of chicken, skin side down, and cook until skin is well-browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer to plate skin side up. Repeat with remaining chicken.

3. Pour off all but 1 tablespoon fat from pot and heat over medium heat until shimmering. Add bell pepper and onion and cook until vegetables are spotty brown, about 3 minutes. Stir in rice, water, ¾ cup coconut-ginger sauce, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt, scraping up any browned bits, and bring to boil. Nestle chicken into rice mixture skin side up. Cover; transfer to oven; and bake until chicken registers at least 185 degrees, about 25 minutes.

4. Transfer pot to wire rack and let stand, covered, for 15 minutes. Transfer chicken to serving platter. Fluff rice with fork, stir in cilantro and scallions, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir lime juice into remaining coconut-ginger sauce and serve with chicken and rice.

THIS ONE-POT RECIPE features simple ingredients (chicken, rice, bell pepper, and onion) seasoned with a stir-together coconut-ginger sauce inspired by Malaysian flavors. It's an easy, satisfying weeknight dinner.

MAKE THE SAUCE

A pungent sauce ensures that this dish packs a punch. Combine coconut milk and brown sugar for a little sweetness, fish sauce for salinity and deep umami, grated ginger for some spicy heat, minced garlic for a fresh bite, and sriracha for a subtle kick.

BROWN THE CHICKEN

Bone-in chicken thighs offer skin for browning and are less apt to dry out when baked with the rice. Cook the chicken thighs skin side down until the skin is nicely browned to build flavor.

SAUTÉ THE VEGETABLES

Red bell pepper and red onion work well with the flavor profile of the sauce and round out the dish. Sauté them in the rendered chicken fat until spotty brown, and leave them in the pot.

BAKE THE RICE

To prevent mushy rice, we use a ratio of rice to cooking liquid that takes into account the juices that are released from the chicken as it cooks. We add both water and sauce and bake the chicken and rice in the oven, covered. Baking for 25 minutes, followed by a brief rest, gives enough time for the liquid to absorb, the rice to become tender, and the chicken to cook through.

FINISH THE DISH

Fluff chopped cilantro and sliced scallions into the rice for some fresh notes, and stir a little lime juice into the remaining sauce to perk it up before serving.

Green Olive Tapenade

Processing the olives in stages creates the rustic texture we sought.

by Amanda Luchtel

TAPENADE IS A popular Mediterranean spread whose name comes from “tapeno,” the Provençal word for caper. For centuries, tapenade was made with equal parts black olives and capers—plus oil-packed tuna, anchovies, mustard, and a few other ingredients. Over time, tapenade has transitioned to become a spread of mostly pureed olives with a few other additions.

For a twist on the age-old puree, we swapped in green olives. We tried several varieties of green olives and found Castelvetranos to have the most rounded flavor (see “Finding the Right Green Olives”), so we started with those. And then we adapted some of the other ingredients to hit all the right notes: bold, tangy, and not overly briny or salty.

Traditionally tapenade was made using a mortar and pestle, giving it a welcome, varied texture—creamy with some bits of olive. This tapenade is made in two stages in the food processor to achieve that same texture: First, the bulk of the olives are pulsed into a paste, and then the remaining olives are gently pulsed in, leaving heartier olive pieces.

Olive oil, capers, fresh parsley, anchovies, garlic, lemon zest and juice, and fresh thyme are processed with the first batch of olives to build flavor in the tapenade. The resulting mix is pungent, zesty, and slightly briny, with clear olive notes and discernible olive pieces. It makes a perfect spread for crostini or a nice addition to sandwiches.

Finding the Right Green Olives

We liked Castelvetrano olives best in our tapenade, but here's the rundown on all the olives we tried.

CASTELVETRANO

Most rounded flavor and texture; seek out bright-green ones without color additives

FAVORITE



MANZANILLA

Briny, bold flavor; make sure to use unstuffed olives for this recipe



PICHOLINE AND CERIGNOLA

Toothsome, buttery, deep flavor; difficult to find, pricey, and aren't often pitted



CANNED GREEN OLIVES

Plain and watery tasting; best to avoid here



The olives' briny flavor is set off with capers, anchovies, garlic, lemon, and fresh thyme and parsley.

GREEN OLIVE TAPENADE

Serves 6 (Makes about 1½ cups) Total Time: 15 minutes

If you cannot find Castelvetrano olives, you can substitute rinsed, unstuffed Manzanilla olives and omit the lemon juice. Use tapenade as a sandwich spread or spread it on small toasts for a quick appetizer.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 cups pitted Castelvetrano olives, divided 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for serving 2 tablespoons capers, rinsed 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh parsley 3 anchovy fillets 2 garlic cloves, chopped 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest plus 2 teaspoons juice 1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pulse ¾ cups olives, oil, capers, parsley, anchovies, garlic, lemon zest and juice, thyme, and pepper flakes in food processor until olives are finely minced and mixture begins to look like chunky paste, 10 to 12 pulses, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. 2. Add remaining ¼ cup olives and pulse until coarsely chopped, about 6 pulses. Transfer to bowl. Serve, drizzled with extra olive oil. (Tapenade can be covered directly with plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 3 days.) |
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Sheet-Pan Pizza

You're just a few hours away from a crowd-pleasing pie with lacy edges and a crispy, airy, focaccia-like crust. **by Matthew Fairman**



● PEPPERONI SHEET-PAN PIZZA

Serves 4 to 6 Total Time: 1¼ hours, plus 1 hour 20 minutes rising

If you don't own a pizza steel, you can use a pizza stone or an overturned heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet. We developed this recipe using our winning rimmed baking sheet, the Nordic Ware Baker's Half Sheet. We prefer to buy link pepperoni and slice it thin rather than using presliced pepperoni. Avoid preshredded cheese; it contains added starch, which gives the melted cheese a drier, chewier texture.

DOUGH

- 3 cups (15 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1⅓ cups water
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

SAUCE

- 1¼ cups canned crushed tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 anchovy fillets, minced
- 1½ teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes, plus extra for sprinkling
- ½ teaspoon table salt

PIZZA

- 1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup), plus extra for sprinkling
- 12 ounces whole-milk block mozzarella cheese, shredded (3 cups)
- 4 ounces thinly sliced pepperoni

1. FOR THE DOUGH: Whisk flour, yeast, and sugar together in bowl of stand mixer. Fit mixer with dough hook. Mix flour mixture on low speed while slowly adding water until dough forms and no dry flour remains, 2 to 4 minutes, scraping down bowl as needed. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and let stand for 10 minutes.

2. Add salt and mix on medium speed until dough forms satiny, sticky ball that clears sides of bowl, 6 to 8 minutes. Lightly spray rimmed baking sheet with vegetable oil spray. Rub bottom and sides of pan with olive oil. Using dough scraper or your greased hands, transfer dough to oiled sheet and turn to coat. With your greased hands, stretch dough into rough 12 by 8-inch rectangle of even thickness. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in warm place until puffed and nearly doubled in size, about 1 hour.

3. Meanwhile, adjust oven rack to lowest position, place pizza steel on rack, and heat oven to 500 degrees.

4. **FOR THE SAUCE:** Combine all ingredients in bowl. (Sauce can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.)

5. Using your greased hands, gently stretch dough to corners of sheet, pressing lightly with your fingertips to deflate dough and carefully lifting corners and edges of dough to pull toward edges of sheet. (It's OK if dough shrinks back slightly from corners of sheet at this point.) Cover loosely with plastic and let rise in warm place until slightly puffed, about 20 minutes.

6. Using your greased hands, press dough all the way to edges and corners of sheet. Using your fingertips, pinch edges of dough against sides of sheet to form small lip.

7. **FOR THE PIZZA:** Using bottom of ½-cup dry measuring cup or large spoon, spread sauce into thin layer over surface of dough, leaving ½-inch border. Sprinkle Parmesan evenly over sauce. Sprinkle mozzarella over entire surface of dough, making sure some cheese sits on edges of dough against sheet. Top pizza with pepperoni.

8. Bake until cheese is bubbly and well browned, about 15 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking. Run knife around edge of sheet to loosen pizza and transfer pizza to wire rack. Let cool

for 5 minutes. Slice and serve, sprinkled with extra Parmesan and pepper flakes as desired.

● CAPRESE SHEET-PAN PIZZA

We recommend making our recipe for Perfect Pesto (free for four months at [CooksCountry.com/pesto](https://www.cooks.com/pesto)), but you can also use store-bought pesto here.

While dough is rising in step 2, toss 10 ounces assorted colored cherry tomatoes, sliced ¼ inch thick; ½ teaspoon table salt; ½ teaspoon sugar; and 1 minced garlic clove together in bowl. Transfer to colander set over bowl. Omit sauce in step 4 and spread 1¼ cups pesto over surface of dough in step 7 instead. Omit Parmesan and pepperoni. Substitute 10 ounces fresh mozzarella, sliced into ¼-inch-thick rounds, for shredded whole-milk mozzarella. Sprinkle pizza with drained tomatoes, ½ teaspoon pepper, and ¼ teaspoon table salt. Before serving, top baked pizza with ½ cup shaved Parmesan, ⅓ cup torn fresh basil leaves, and 2 tablespoons balsamic glaze (optional).

● SHEET-PAN PIZZA WITH 'NDUJA, RICOTTA, AND CHERRY PEPPERS

While dough is rising in step 2, pulse ½ cup room-temperature 'nduja with ½ cup whole-milk ricotta cheese in food processor until smooth, about 15 pulses; set aside at room temperature. Substitute additional ¼ cup room-temperature 'nduja for olive oil and anchovies in sauce in step 4, using fork to mash 'nduja into sauce until uniform. Substitute Pecorino Romano for Parmesan. Omit pepperoni. Before serving, drop rough 2-teaspoon-size dollops of 'nduja-ricotta mixture evenly over baked pizza and smear lightly with back of spoon. Garnish with ⅓ cup shredded fresh basil and ⅓ cup thinly sliced jarred hot cherry peppers.

Key Equipment

BAKING STEEL

We tried baking this pizza on an overturned baking sheet, a baking stone, and our favorite baking steel. The steel produced the best results, creating the strongest oven spring, the crispiest crust, and the best browning. This steel is tough to lift since it's flat and has no handholds, but it is durable and will last forever. It's also easy to clean—just keep it dry and oil it lightly after washing. (Note that the baking sheet will hang over the edges of the steel.)

Our Favorite: The Original Baking Steel (\$99)



RIMMED BAKING SHEET

Using a solid rimmed baking sheet for this pizza is vital, since thinner sheets can warp, causing burning or uneven browning. Also, we scaled our dough to fit a standard half-sheet pan size (interior measures 16½ by 11½ inches), such as that of our favorite rimmed baking sheet. Using smaller or larger sheets will result in thicker or thinner pizzas and alter the baking time.

Our Favorite: Nordic Ware Baker's Half Sheet (\$15)



PIZZA WHEEL

During testing, our favorite pizza wheel, a 4-inch model from OXO, did it all—it was comfortable to hold and allowed for a powerful grip. Its tall blade was sharp and visible for precise, straight cuts, and it rolled right over stacked toppings and towering crusts with ease. With a sheet pan pizza like this one, it makes cutting much easier than using a chef's knife.

Our Favorite: Oxo Good Grips 4" Pizza Wheel (\$13)



Ingredient Spotlight

INSTANT YEAST

This dough depends on yeast, a living organism, to rise. Yeast can be found as fresh, active dry, or instant (also called rapid rise). We prefer instant yeast because it's faster and more productive than active dry and has a longer shelf life than fresh. Instant yeast can also be added directly to the other ingredients without being proofed first.



'NDUJA

'Nduja is a rich, soft, and spreadable southern Italian fermented pork salume that gets a spicy kick from Calabrian chiles. For our Sheet-Pan Pizza with 'Nduja, Ricotta, and Cherry Peppers, we stir 'nduja into the pizza sauce to add a complex savory richness, and we whip it with creamy ricotta cheese to mellow its heat and saltiness before smearing it on the baked pizza.



FLIP TO NEXT PAGE FOR PIZZA STEPS →

HOW TO MAKE PEPPERONI SHEET-PAN PIZZA



1. Mix and rest dough Combine flour, yeast, and sugar in stand mixer; add water; and mix until no dry flour remains. Let dough rest for 10 minutes, then add salt and knead.

Why? Resting the dough before adding the salt, a process called autolyse, allows the flour to fully hydrate, strengthens gluten bonds, and makes the dough easier to shape.



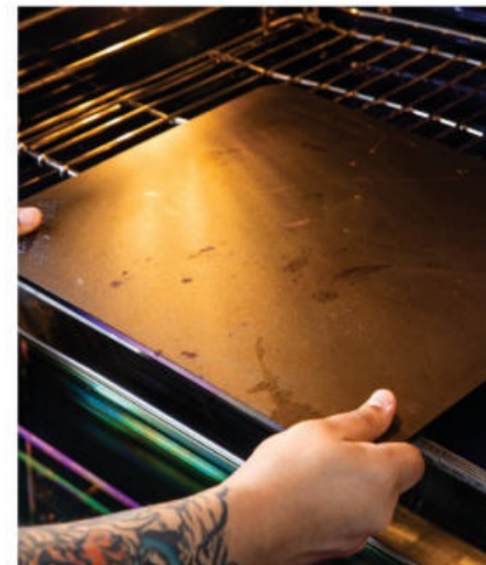
2. Oil baking sheet Lightly coat rimmed baking sheet with vegetable oil spray and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil.

Why? Oil spray ensures that the dough won't stick because it contains an emulsifier called lecithin, which bonds the oil to the sheet so that it creates an even layer between the food and the sheet. Olive oil adds richness and flavor to the crust and helps brown and crisp it as it bakes.



3. Let rise Transfer dough to sheet; gently stretch it into uniformly thick rectangle; cover with plastic; and let rise at room temperature until it has nearly doubled in size, about 1 hour.

Why? Starting with a uniform rectangle makes stretching the dough easier and ensures a uniformly thin pizza. The rest allows the yeast to create carbon dioxide, which causes the dough to rise.



4. Preheat baking steel While dough is rising, adjust oven rack to lowest position, place steel on rack, and heat oven to 500 degrees.

Why? Thoroughly heating the oven with the rack positioned closest to the heating element allows the heavy steel to become uniformly hot, so it can transfer the heat to the rimmed sheet, making for a crispy, well-browned crust.



5. Make sauce Combine canned crushed tomatoes, olive oil, garlic, anchovies, oregano, sugar, pepper flakes, and salt in bowl.

Why? Making the sauce while the dough rises gives the flavors time to meld. Generous amounts of olive oil, minced garlic, and minced anchovy fillets create a rich, boldly flavored stir-together sauce.



6. Stretch and let rise Using your greased hands, gently stretch dough to corners of sheet, pressing lightly to deflate and pulling toward edges. Cover with plastic and let sit for 20 minutes.

Why? Greasing your hands makes the dough easy to handle, and being gentle ensures that you don't rip it. The waiting period allows the gluten to relax, preventing the dough from shrinking during the final stretch.



7. Stretch and top Stretch dough to edges of sheet and pinch with your fingertips to form lip. Top with sauce, Parmesan, and mozzarella, making sure some mozzarella sits on edges of dough against sheet. Top pizza with pepperoni.

Why? The mozzarella in contact with the hot sheet melts and browns quickly, creating a cheesy crust with lacy, crispy edges.



8. Bake and cool Bake until cheese is bubbly and well browned, about 15 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking. Loosen pizza with knife, transfer to wire rack, and let cool for 5 minutes before slicing.

Why? Generous browning on the cheese creates flavor, and rotating accounts for hot spots. Letting the pizza rest on a rack prevents the crust from getting soggy and lets the pizza set up for neat slicing.

Salmon with Sweet Potatoes and Asparagus

Spicy harissa and a cooling yogurt sauce bring balance to this weeknight dinner.

by Lawman Johnson

● SALMON WITH SWEET POTATOES, ASPARAGUS, AND YOGURT SAUCE FOR TWO

Total Time: 1 hour

Do not use pencil-thin asparagus spears here; they will overcook.

YOGURT SAUCE

- ½ cup plain whole-milk yogurt
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon table salt
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro

SALMON AND VEGETABLES

- 12 ounces sweet potatoes, unpeeled, cut into 1-inch wedges
- 4 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- ¾ teaspoon plus ⅛ teaspoon table salt, divided
- ¾ teaspoon pepper, divided
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed
- 2 (6- to 8-ounce) skinless center-cut salmon fillets, 1 to 1½ inches thick
- 2 tablespoons harissa

1. FOR THE YOGURT SAUCE:

Whisk yogurt, lemon juice, cumin, sugar, and salt in bowl until thoroughly combined. Stir in cilantro. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

2. FOR THE SALMON AND VEGETABLES:

Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Toss potatoes, 1 tablespoon oil, ¼ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon pepper, and cumin together in large bowl. Arrange potatoes skin side down in single layer on half of rimmed baking sheet. Roast until potatoes begin to soften, about 25 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, toss asparagus with remaining 1 teaspoon oil and ⅛ teaspoon salt in now-empty bowl. Pat salmon dry with paper towels. Sprinkle salmon with remaining ½ teaspoon salt and remaining ½ teaspoon pepper.

4. Remove sheet from oven. Place salmon fillets skinned side down on empty side of sheet, spaced evenly apart. Brush tops of fillets with harissa. Arrange asparagus in middle of sheet between salmon and potatoes. Roast until centers of fillets register 125 degrees (for medium-rare), 8 to 10 minutes.

5. Serve salmon, sweet potatoes, and asparagus with yogurt sauce.

Each salmon fillet wears a bold topping of harissa.

WANT TO MAKE an impressive meal for two that's quick to prepare and easy to clean up after? This tasty scaled-down dinner fits the bill. And as a bonus, it's light and fresh, with its combination of weeknight-friendly but elegant salmon, lightly spiced sweet potatoes, and roasted asparagus.

With a boost in the flavor department from harissa, a spicy, aromatic chile paste that's used throughout North Africa and parts of the Middle East, salmon embraces the starring role. Brushing the harissa on top of each salmon fillet provides deep flavor and a kick of garlicky heat. Sweet potatoes, tossed in oil and seasoned with fragrant cumin,

salt, and pepper, hit the baking sheet first for a head start. The harissa-brushed salmon and some well-seasoned asparagus spears go on the sheet next. Then everything roasts together until the salmon reaches 125 degrees (for medium-rare), the sweet potatoes are tender and nicely browned, and the asparagus is crisp-tender.

A cooling sauce made with plain whole-milk yogurt, lemon juice, cumin, a little sugar, salt, and some fresh cilantro complements the harissa-spiced salmon and ties the components of the dish together. With this simple recipe on hand, perfectly cooked fish and tender roasted vegetables for two are just one pan—and 1 hour—away.

Could a Fish Stick Knock Our Socks Off?

We set out to find a golden, crunchy fish stick that would be a delicious weeknight dinner hit for kids and adults alike. **by Grace Kelly**

OPINIONS ABOUT FISH sticks vary. For some, dunking a fish stick in ketchup is the ultimate taste of nostalgia. For others, the sight of them brings back memories of subpar school lunches. We happen to love them (so does Queen Elizabeth II—just sayin’), and we think that fish sticks are more than just a retro food item.

Gussy them up a bit, and they can be a proper, modern meal. Nestle a few in a warm tortilla and top them with salsa and a creamy, crunchy slaw for a busy weeknight take on a fish taco,



Fish stick preparation varied and differences were stark. Our favorite sticks (far left) came out of the package with a rich golden crust color, while others were pale and wan.

or tuck them into a soft roll with a smear of mustard and some mushy peas for a British-inspired bite.

We set out to find a fish stick with the perfect balance of crunchy coating and flaky, mild, and sweet fish—in other words, a fish stick we’d be excited to eat

(and that might even please our fish-skeptical friends). To do so, we tasted six nationally available products made from either whole fish fillets or

minced fish. Five are made with pollock, and one is made with a blend of cod, pollock, haddock, sole, and whiting. Two of the products were whole fish fillets cut into “stick” shapes. The other four were made of minced fish. To mince fish for fish sticks, the skin and bones are mechanically removed, which breaks up the flesh in the process. The minced fish is then squished together into large blocks, frozen, and cut into the familiar fish “stick” shape before being breaded and par-fried. Surprisingly, we didn’t have a strong preference for sticks made with whole fillets over those made with minced fish. Instead, fish flavor mattered more. In general, tasters preferred fish sticks made from wild-caught Alaska or Atlantic pollock, fish



SHOPPING TIP
Look for fish sticks with short ingredient lists. Our favorites have a noticeable lack of additives, making for a less-processed-tasting stick.

from two different species that are both sustainable, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Alaska pollock is an abundant northern Pacific fish that is similar in flavor and texture to cod. Atlantic pollock is found on the Eastern seaboard and has a slightly firmer and oilier flesh. Both have a mild, sweet flavor that tasters found reminiscent of “classic fish sticks from childhood.” Tasters also liked fish sticks with crunchy, buttery coating as opposed to ones with “gummy” or “bland” coating.

Our two favorite fish sticks were both made by Gorton’s and had a mild, sweet fish flavor and crunchy breading and were all-around delicious. Gorton’s Crunchy Breaded Fish Sticks are made with whole Alaska pollock fillets, while Gorton’s Original Crunchy Breaded Fish Sticks are made from minced Alaska pollock. Both had very few additives and preservatives. Even our fish stick-skeptical friends were fans.

Things You Can Do with Fish Sticks

- Wrap fish sticks in a warm tortilla and top with creamy coleslaw—and a dash of hot sauce!—for a quick weeknight fish taco
- Tuck them into a soft roll with a smear of mustard and some minty mushy peas for a British-inspired fish finger roll
- Go beyond ketchup: Dunk fish sticks in tartar sauce, sticky barbecue sauce, or honey mustard

The Two Winners: Both Made by Gorton’s

Our winners had a mild, sweet fish flavor and crunchy breading and were delicious. Both had very few additives and preservatives.



Gorton’s Crunchy Breaded Fish Sticks
Price: \$10.39 for 19 oz

Gorton’s Original Crunchy Breaded Fish Sticks
Price: \$10.99 for 24.5 oz

Web subscribers can see the full tasting results and complete chart at CooksCountry.com/sept22.

The Best Smokers Under \$500

Getting serious about barbecue? These entry-level smokers are your best bets. **by Miye Bromberg**



Tasters unanimously preferred the flavor of these Kansas City–Style Barbecue Ribs cooked on charcoal smokers. For the recipe, go to [CooksCountry.com/kcbbqribs](https://www.cookscountry.com/kcbbqribs).

YOU CAN SMOKE food really well on a charcoal or propane grill. But if you love barbecue and make it often, you might want to invest in a dedicated smoker. Most good smokers can maintain lower temperatures than a grill—from 225 to 250 degrees, the temperature range barbecue experts recommend for turning tough cuts of meat tender without drying them out. (On grills, smoking temperatures range from 275 to 325 degrees.) In addition, most smokers allow you to maintain temperature more consistently and precisely than you can on a grill. Many also have larger fuel capacities (unlimited with electric models), so you won't have to worry as much about running out of heat during long cooks.

Smokers are generally categorized by the type of fuel they use: charcoal, gas, or electricity. Each type has different advantages and disadvantages. To learn which type of smoker best fits your needs, read on.

Web subscribers can see the full testing results and complete chart at [CooksCountry.com/sept22](https://www.cookscountry.com/sept22).

Look For the Ring

In an electric smoker, wood smolders instead of burning outright, so ribs and pulled pork (right) have less complex flavor and no coveted pink smoke ring.



CHARCOAL SMOKER



ELECTRIC SMOKER

Charcoal Smokers

GREAT BARBECUE, A LITTLE WORK

PROS

- Makes more—and more complex—smoke than gas or electricity does. As a result, it produces the best-tasting barbecue, rich and woody, with extra charred and caramelized notes
- Simple; durable; and easy to assemble, maintain, and clean

CONS

- Messy and fussier to use, requiring more hands-on attention to maintain low heat

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED



Best Overall Charcoal Option
Weber Smokey Mountain Cooker Smoker 22"
Model: 731001
Price: \$459.00

Best No-Frills Charcoal Option
18.5" Classic Pit Barrel Cooker
Model: 18.5" Classic Pit Barrel Cooker
Price: \$349.99



Gas Smokers

GOOD BARBECUE, CONVENIENT

PROS

- Produces moist, lightly smoky barbecue
- Easier to use, less messy than charcoal
- Propane tanks provide plenty of fuel

CONS

- Smoke flavor isn't as complex/intense
- Can be harder to assemble
- May need to replenish wood chips/chunks periodically

RECOMMENDED

Easiest to Use

Masterbuilt MPS 340/G ThermoTemp XL Propane Smoker
Model: MPS 340/G
Price: \$399.99



Electric Smokers

MEDIOCRE BARBECUE, EASY TO USE

PROS

- Easiest to use
- Unlimited fuel from electrical outlet; no need to replenish

CONS

- Makes wan-tasting barbecue with no smoke ring

RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS

For Cooks with Limited Space

Bradley Smoker Original 4 Rack Electric Smoker
Model: BS611
Price: \$429.00





Pickled Red Onion

by Bryan Roof

● PICKLED RED ONION

Serves 6 to 8 (Makes about 1½ cups)
Total Time: 15 minutes,
plus 30 minutes cooling

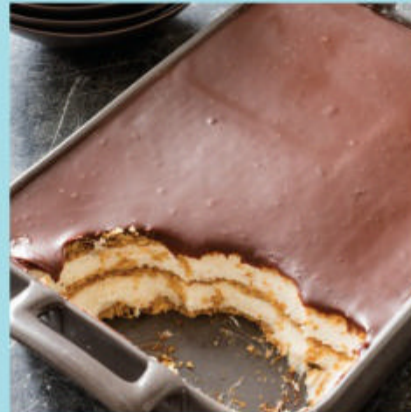
Use a baseball-size onion for this recipe. Cider vinegar or red wine vinegar can be substituted for the distilled white vinegar.

- 1 red onion, halved and sliced thin
- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

Place onion in medium bowl. Bring vinegar, sugar, and salt to simmer in small saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar dissolves. Pour vinegar mixture over onion, pressing onion below surface of liquid. Let onion cool completely, about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. (Pickled onion can be refrigerated for up to 1 week.)

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

Celebrate Rosh Hashanah (or any day) with our **Instant Pot Brisket with Tzimmes**. Take Thanksgiving dinner to the next level with our **Deep-Fried Turkey**—we'll take the fear out of frying. And with your oven freed up, you can make our **Smashed Roasted Potatoes with Pancetta and Sage**. For something light, bright, and creamy, try our **Endive Salad with Oranges and Blue Cheese**. And end any meal on a sweet note with our **Cranberry-Ginger Apple Tart**.



Cook's Close-Up

PHOTO BY STEVE KLISE

*A simple portrait of an American cook.
Are you ready for your close-up?*



RICHARD FUNK

Owner and pit master at
Desert Oak Barbecue,
El Paso, Texas

Read our full
On the Road article
from El Paso at
[CooksCountry.com/OTRelpaso](https://www.cookscountry.com/OTRelpaso).

