

CELEBRATING OUR 100TH ISSUE



Cook's Country

HOLD ON TO SUMMER

PRESERVED PEACH AND BURRATA SALAD
PAGE 26



BREAKFAST BURRITOS PAGE 21

CHICKEN PARM MEATBALLS PAGE 12

KALBI PAGE 11

LEMON COOKIE BARS PAGE 23

FRESH CORN MUFFINS PAGE 7

CANDIED JALAPEÑOS PAGE 27

PRESERVED PEACHES PAGE 26

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2021
\$7.99 U.S./\$9.99 CANADA

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN



Letter from the EDITOR

HOW DO YOU like to make your cornbread? The Fresh Corn Muffins featured on page 7, created by Deputy Food Editor Morgan Bolling, took me back in time to a cornbread and common-ground experiment I devised that invited friends to whip up their favorite recipe—in a plastic bag.

The idea flowed from a conversation I had a long time ago with my friend, and award-winning Appalachian food writer, Ronni Lundy about whether sugar belonged in the mix. Ronni emphatically believed it did not. I argued that cornbread took on all kinds of new personality traits in the hands of enterprising cooks. My ancestors, for instance, developed a taste for sweet cornbread that we still call cornbread. Ronni called it cake.

I shared my experiment during a workshop for TerraVita Food & Drink Festival's Sustainable Classroom. In addition to the cornbread activity, a diverse panel of women talked about Latinx, Native American, and New Southern cornbread traditions, about recipes as family heirlooms and as markers of identity.

At its simplest, cornbread is a cooked mixture of just two ingredients: cornmeal and water. The addition of eggs, milk, and various foods and seasonings can make the mixture rich and savory or light and sweet. Sharing your recipe for delicious cornbread with people you love comes with a bonus: It preserves your kitchen legacy.

In the minutes before the workshop was set to begin, nervous laughter and chatter could be overheard as guests waited in line in the banquet space of a downtown Chapel Hill, North Carolina, restaurant. Volunteers issued instructions for basic recipe development:

“For this workshop, you are invited to re-create your favorite recipe for cornbread to share with the

group. Inside the room you will see a long banquet table with plastic bags, stickers, and laminated labels with various types of ingredients printed on them.

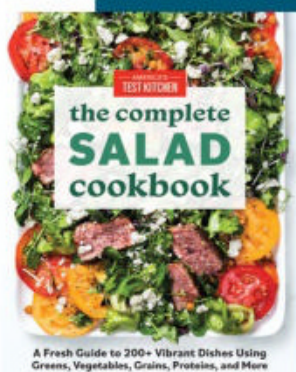
“The first step is to choose a plastic bag as your ‘cooking vessel’ and then select a colored sticker to identify whether your bag/vessel is a cast-iron skillet, a metal or glass baking pan, or a muffin tin. Write the recipe title and baking temperature on your bag.

“Next, assemble your recipe. There is a wide assortment of wet and dry ingredients, leavenings, and add-ins from which you may choose, including optional ingredients such as chiles, corn, cheese, blueberries, chili powder, cinnamon, and various herbs. When you’re done, take your recipe with you and find a seat. Please don’t discuss your recipe with anyone. Above all, be creative and have fun!”

To complete the exercise, the audience members discussed their unique recipes and tasted delicious cornbread, still warm from the oven, made according to cultural recipes from the panelists. It was a wonderful lesson in diversity—one that honored the new creations devised when cooks tinker according to their own tastes and what’s in the pantry while respecting original formulas. And these days, when discussions of recipe origins focus on authenticity, appropriation, and erasure, this activity provides a compassionate place to start the conversation.

TONI TIPTON-MARTIN

Editor in Chief



SAY GOODBYE TO SO-SO SALADS

The Complete Salad Cookbook

A modern guide to preparing healthful, colorful, and fresh salad meals, this book will transform the way you think about greens, fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins. You'll learn to combine ingredients creatively to maximize flavor and get useful building-block recipes for adding heft to any salad. We give you the recipes and tools you need to create satisfying salads all year long. Order your copy at AmericasTestKitchen.com/salads.



Find us on **Facebook**
facebook.com/CooksCountry



Find us on **Instagram**
instagram.com/CooksCountry



Follow us on **Pinterest**
pinterest.com/TestKitchen



Follow us on **Twitter**
twitter.com/TestKitchen

Cook's Country®

Editor in Chief Toni Tipton-Martin
Executive Editor Scott Kathan
Executive Food Editor Bryan Roof
Deputy Food Editor Morgan Bolling
Deputy Editor Megan Ginsberg
Senior Editors Matthew Fairman, Lawman Johnson
Associate Editor Jessica Rudolph
Test Cooks Mark Huxsoll, Amanda Luchtel
Photo Team Manager Alli Berkey
Lead Test Cook, Photo Team Eric Haessler
Test Cooks, Photo Team Hannah Fenton, Jacqueline Gochenouer, Gina McCreddie
Assistant Test Cooks, Photo Team Hisham Hassan, Christa West
Lead Copy Editor Rachel Schowalter
Copy Editors Christine Campbell, April Poole
Managing Editor, Web Mari Levine
Digital Content Producer Danielle Lapierre
Contributing Editor Eva Katz
Senior Science Research Editor Paul Adams

Executive Editors, ATK Reviews Hannah Crowley, Lisa McManus
Deputy Editor, ATK Reviews Kate Shannon
Senior Editor, ATK Reviews Miye Bromberg
Associate Editor, ATK Reviews Carolyn Grillo
Assistant Editors, ATK Reviews Chase Brightwell, Grace Kelly
Assistant Digital Editor, ATK Reviews Sawyer Phillips

Creative Director John Torres
Photography Director Julie Cote
Art Director Maggie Edgar
Associate Art Director Kristen Jones
Art Director, ATK Reviews Marissa Angelone
Senior Staff Photographers Steve Klise, Daniel J. van Ackere
Photographer Kevin White
Photography Producer Meredith Mulcahy

Senior Director, Creative Operations Alice Carpenter
Executive Managing Editor, Editorial Operations Todd Meier
Senior Manager, Publishing Operations Taylor Argenzio
Imaging Manager Lauren Robbins
Production & Imaging Coordinator Amanda Yong
Production & Imaging Specialists Tricia Neumyer, Dennis Noble
Test Kitchen Director Erin McMurrer
Assistant Test Kitchen Director Alexxa Benson
Test Kitchen Manager Meredith Lippard
Test Kitchen Facilities Coordinator Kasjah Scarlett
Test Kitchen Shopping & Receiving Lead Heather Tolmie
Senior Kitchen Assistant Shopper Avery Lowe
Deputy Editor, Culinary Content & Curriculum Christie Morrison

Chief Executive Officer David Nussbaum

Chief Creative Officer Jack Bishop
Hosts & Executive Editors, Television Bridget Lancaster, Julia Collin Davison

Chief Financial Officer Jackie McCauley Ford
Senior Manager, Customer Support Tim Quinn
Customer Support Specialist Mitchell Axelson

Chief Digital Officer Fran Middleton
VP, Marketing Natalie Vinard
Editorial Director, Digital Content Kevin Pang
Director, Audience Acquisition & Partnerships Evan Steiner
Director, Social Media Marketing & Emerging Platforms Kathryn Przybyla
Social Media Managers Charlotte Errity, Sarah Sandler
Social Media Coordinator Norma Tentori

Chief Revenue Officer Sara Domville

Director, Public Relations & Communications Brian Franklin

Senior VP, Human Resources & Organizational Development Colleen Zelina
Human Resources Manager Jason Lynott

Food Stylists Ashley Moore, Elle Simone Scott

Circulation Services PubWorX ProCirc

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.



23



16

FEATURES

4 Bourbon Chicken

Sample this homemade version of a craveable food-court treat.

6 Sweet Fresh Corn Muffins

For a double dose of sweet, summery corn flavor, add fresh corn kernels to corn muffins.

PLUS Do Corn Strippers Work?

8 Baba Ghanoush

This creamy, smoky roasted eggplant dip is easy to make and infinitely customizable.

9 Tomato and Chickpea Salad

We reroute the flavors of romesco sauce into a hearty, refreshing tomato salad.

10 Kalbi

These sweet, savory, charred flanken-style short ribs might be the most irresistible food that comes off your grill this summer.

12 Chicken Parmesan Meatballs

Why choose a favorite? Two beloved dishes come together in this easy entrée.

13 House Salad

Here's a new take on a familiar standard.

14 Grilled Chicken Souvlaki

A bold marinade, intense heat, and an extraordinary sauce made this grilled chicken something we couldn't stop thinking about for years.

15 Barbecue-Spiced Potatoes

The term "barbecue" needn't apply solely to meat.

16 Summery Summer Squash Pasta

Think you don't like summer squash? This recipe—a delicious study in contrasts—will likely change your mind.

18 Okra and Shrimp Stew

This slow-simmered stew of okra, shrimp, sausage, beans, and tomatoes is built upon a potent ham hock broth.

20 Breakfast Burritos

It's never too early for extra-crispy tater tots.

22 Scotcheroos

These old-fashioned cereal-based cookie bars are ready for a comeback.

23 Lemon Cookie Bars

Sugar-cookie chew meets lemon-bar pucker.

IN EVERY ISSUE

2 QUICK BITES

ATK REVIEWS

Vegan Ice Cream

17 GETTING TO KNOW **Berries**

24 COOKING CLASS

Preserved Peaches in Syrup

PLUS Preserved Peach Recipes

27 HOW TO MAKE

Candied Jalapeños

28 COOKING FOR TWO

Panzanella

29 ONE PAN **Chicken**

Breasts with Sweet Potato-Poblano Salad

30 ATK REVIEWS

Best Blenders

Less Than \$100

31 ATK REVIEWS

When to Splurge and When to Save

32 BONUS RECIPE

Cardamom-Brown Sugar Butter

33 COOK'S CLOSE-UP

Bryant Valdez



DT



27

QUICK BITES:

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

by Matthew Fairman and Mark Huxsoll

GET OUT AND GRILL

These are Deputy Food Editor (and barbecue expert/fanatic) Morgan Bolling's all-time favorite Cook's Country grilling recipes.

1 NORTH CAROLINA BARBECUE PORK

"I'm from North Carolina and believe that N.C. barbecue is the pinnacle."

2 CEDAR-PLANKED SALMON

"This was my first grilling recipe for the magazine; it's an easy way to make delicious fish on the grill."

3 GRILLED SWEET POTATO SALAD

"I make this salad all the time—it's a superflavorful side dish."

4 SMOKED CHICKEN WINGS

"I love chicken wings, and adding smoke only makes them better."

5 TENNESSEE PULLED TURKEY SANDWICHES

"I make this every year for Friendsgiving; it reminds me of good people and good times."

These recipes are available for free for four months at [CooksCountry.com/grilling](https://www.cookscountry.com/grilling).

TIMESAIVING TRICK

We love making stir-fries, but they can require a lot of prep work. Since many stir-fry recipes call for equal amounts of garlic and ginger, we've found that we can simply toss peeled garlic cloves and pieces of peeled ginger (we weigh the garlic and ginger to ensure an equal mix) into the food processor, blitz them to a paste, and then freeze the garlic-ginger paste in a plastic ice cube tray. When it's time to stir-fry, we simply toss a frozen cube into the hot wok, where it thaws and starts cooking quickly. **—M.H.**



EASY SQUEEZY

It's a proud and happy day for parents when their kids start making their own lunches, but it often comes with a cost—a messy kitchen. A few parents on staff told me about a clever fix. They spoon jelly into a plastic squeeze bottle and store it in the refrigerator. The kids find the squeeze bottle fun to use, and it's much neater. **—M.H.**

Q: WHAT IS MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE, AND SHOULD I BE WORRIED ABOUT EATING IT?

A: Monosodium glutamate, or MSG, is a naturally occurring salt that packs a savory punch. It is present in many umami-rich foods, such as Parmesan cheese and



Less sodium than salt

tomatoes. It was first produced as a seasoning salt and flavor enhancer in 1908 by Japanese researcher Kikunae Ikeda. Ikeda isolated glutamate in kombu and realized that it gave foods a pleasurable savoriness; he named that flavor "umami." He then synthesized and packaged MSG as a shelf-stable salt. It has since become a widely used flavor enhancer in food items such as bouillon and cold cuts; it is also added to many snack foods.

MSG (Ac'cent is a common brand in American markets) has been the subject of considerable controversy, but it is widely recognized as safe to eat by food regulators, and humans have been consuming it in umami-rich foods such as aged cheese and dashi since long before it was mass-produced. The sodium and glutamate in MSG are indistinguishable by the human body from those already naturally present in many of the foods we eat. MSG contains about a third as much sodium as salt, so keep this in mind if you are trying to limit sodium intake.

THE BOTTOM LINE: No, MSG is not especially bad for you. Like salt or sugar, MSG makes food taste better. But just like salt or sugar, too much can be a bad thing. **—M.F.**

ATK REVIEWS

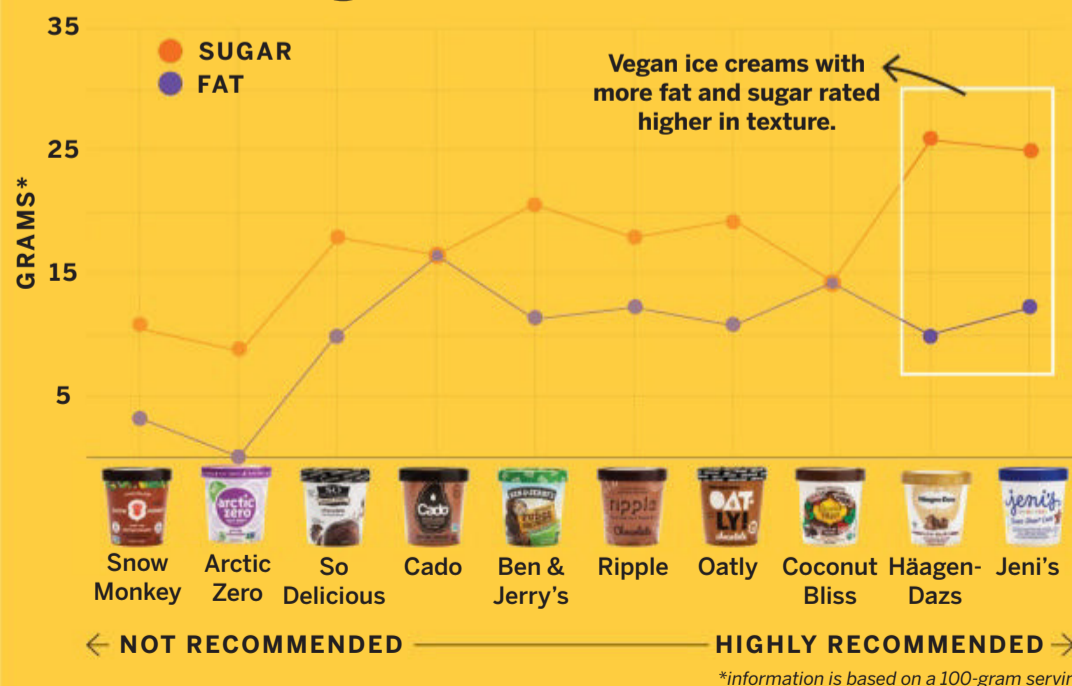
TASTING VEGAN CHOCOLATE ICE CREAM

by Carolyn Grillo

MANY AMERICANS ARE lactose intolerant, and many others choose to limit their intake of animal products, creating a lot of demand for vegan foods. Could we find a vegan chocolate ice cream that was comparable in flavor and texture to dairy ice cream? We rounded up 10 options. (These products contain no dairy, but we'll refer to them as vegan ice creams for simplicity.)

The ice creams in our lineup contained a range of base ingredients, from almond milk to coconut cream to pureed avocado, apple, and banana. Some of those ingredients competed with the flavor of the chocolate. We liked the ice creams that tasted of pure chocolate and those made with neutral bases that complemented their chocolate flavors.

How Sugar and Fat Affect Texture



*information is based on a 100-gram serving

Q: SHOULD I LET STEAKS COME TO ROOM TEMPERATURE BEFORE I GRILL THEM?

A: Some people have theorized that letting steaks warm for a bit outside the refrigerator will result in more-even cooking, since the temperature difference between the start and end of cooking is smaller. But we've repeatedly found that any differences in the finished steaks are negligible.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

For our recipes, you can cook steaks straight from the refrigerator. **—M.F.**



STEAK GRILLING BEST PRACTICES

Salt steaks 1 to 24 hours in advance. With time, the salt will pull juices out of the steak and dissolve in them, and then the salted juices will be reabsorbed, seasoning the interior and helping the steak remain juicy after cooking.

Thoroughly pat steaks dry immediately before grilling for more-efficient browning. It takes heat energy to evaporate the moisture on your steak, and until that liquid is gone, flavorful browning will not occur.

“Overflipping” is not a problem. While many recipes in our archive call for flipping steaks just once, we have since found that flipping frequently (as often as every 2 minutes) helps promote even cooking.

When grilling thick steaks, set up both a hotter and a cooler cooking zone. Indirect heat helps bring the interior up to temperature slowly (and evenly), while direct heat enables flavorful browning.

Rely on an instant-read thermometer (rather than cooking times) to determine doneness.

Plan for carryover cooking. Our recipes call for removing steaks from the grill when they're 5 to 10 degrees below the desired temperature; the temperature of the meat will rise as steaks rest.

Always let your steaks rest (for about 10 minutes) after cooking to allow for the redistribution of juices. Cutting into a steak immediately after grilling it will drain more juices from the steak and dry it out.

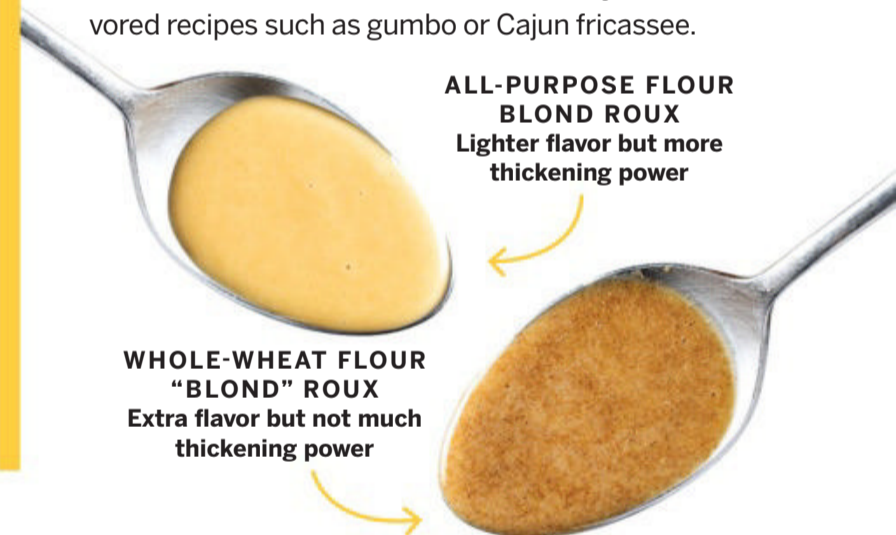
WHOLE-WHEAT ROUX

Roux is typically made with all-purpose flour, but can you use whole-wheat flour instead? It depends on the recipe and the style of roux you're making. All-purpose flour has a significantly higher starch content than whole-wheat flour. Since starch is what gives the roux its thickening power, a roux made with whole-wheat flour won't thicken a sauce as much as one made with all-purpose flour. The presence of the bran in whole-wheat flour will also lend the roux a reddish-brown color, a nutty wheat flavor, and a slightly coarse or grainy texture.

We don't recommend whole-wheat flour for light-colored roux. To demonstrate why, we made two batches of the Mornay sauce in our recipe for croque monsieur sandwiches with the two different types of flour. The Mornay made with whole-wheat flour was browner, grainier, and soupier than the one made with all-purpose flour (which was pale, smooth, and perfectly spreadable).

That said, whole-wheat flour was fine for the chocolate-colored roux in our recipe for Cajun Meatball Fricassee. Darker roux are employed more for their flavor than for thickening. In this case, the bolder flavor of the whole-wheat roux worked just fine in the robust stew, and any graininess was imperceptible. **—M.F.**

THE BOTTOM LINE: Don't use whole-wheat flour for a light roux in any recipe where the finished sauce requires a precise texture and delicately balanced flavor. You can, however, use whole-wheat flour for a dark roux in boldly flavored recipes such as gumbo or Cajun fricassee.



ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR BLOND ROUX
Lighter flavor but more thickening power

WHOLE-WHEAT FLOUR "BLOND" ROUX
Extra flavor but not much thickening power



In lieu of dairy, companies used coconut, almonds, oats, chocolate, fruit, avocados, or legumes as the bases of their ice creams. We liked the products with bases that complemented—rather than competed with—their chocolate flavors.

We also looked at texture. Some of the products were icy and hard, so scooping them was “like driving a wedge into cement.” Others were impressively silky and smooth. We know from years of researching the production of ice cream that

fat and sweeteners both prevent large ice crystals from forming, so without enough of either, ice cream can become icy and hard. The best products we tasted were high in both fat and sugar.

We named two winners: Jeni's Dairy-Free Texas Sheet Cake Non-Dairy Frozen Dessert and Häagen-Dazs Non-Dairy Chocolate Salted Fudge Truffle Frozen Dessert. Made with a base of coconut cream, the product from Jeni's won us over with a “phenomenal” texture “that was very close to dairy ice cream.” Tasters also loved the “rich cocoa flavor” of the Häagen-Dazs dessert. As one taster raved, “It's not just good for vegan ice cream; it's good—period.”



OUR TOP PICKS


JENI'S DAIRY-FREE TEXAS SHEET CAKE NON-DAIRY FROZEN DESSERT

We loved this chocolaty, coconutty, creamy ice cream and would “actually buy this. It's not a compromise.”

HÄAGEN-DAZS NON-DAIRY CHOCOLATE SALTED FUDGE TRUFFLE DESSERT

“It tastes closer to real ice cream than a lot of dairy-free products.”

Web subscribers can see the complete results chart at CooksCountry.com/sept21.



Glossy, saucy,
and a perfect
balance of
sweet and salty.

Bourbon Chicken

Sample this homemade version of a craveable food-court treat.

by Matthew Fairman

BOURBON CHICKEN—tender morsels of dark meat slathered in a sticky, sweet-savory sauce—is a popular offering at Asian- or Cajun-themed fast-casual restaurants all over the nation, especially in mall food courts, where it is famously served as samples. You may know the dish from the ubiquitous American food court franchises Cajun Cafe and China Max, which are owned by the same parent company, Magic Wok Management.

There is a theory that the dish was named after Bourbon Street, but bourbon chicken's origins probably have little to do with the city of New Orleans and even less to do with Cajun cuisine. Rather, bourbon chicken has more in common with teriyaki chicken, sesame chicken, and General Tso's chicken and

was likely created to capitalize on the appeal of those dishes—namely, pieces of boneless chicken saturated with a sweet-savory sauce.

This adaptation was inspired by the exceptional bourbon chicken served at Today's Cajun Seafood in the Faubourg Marigny neighborhood of New Orleans (see “A Crescent City Gem”). There, juicy bite-size pieces of dark meat are bathed in a glossy, unabashedly salty and sweet glaze. The intense umami presence in the soy-based sauce keeps the sugar in check, making the dish irresistible.

To replicate the closely guarded recipe, I started with the chicken, cutting boneless chicken thighs into bite-size pieces. For the sauce, brown sugar added complex sweetness and

subtle notes of molasses that balanced the saltiness of the soy sauce. Toasted sesame oil rounded things out with a rich roasty depth, and minced garlic and grated ginger infused the sauce with their fresh, pungent bite. Adding a shot of bourbon to the sauce imparted aromatic top notes of vanilla and caramel—and justified the dish's name. Velveting the chopped-up chicken thighs (tossing them in a combination of cornstarch and some of the sauce mixture) not only ensured that the chunks of chicken remained ultratender and juicy but also helped thicken the sauce, bestowing it with an attractive glossy sheen. A little cider vinegar stirred in at the end added brightness.

It's savory, sweet, and irresistible.

● BOURBON CHICKEN

Serves 4 Total Time: 40 minutes

Use a good-quality soy sauce—such as Kikkoman Soy Sauce—for this recipe. Serve with rice.

- ½ cup soy sauce
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup water
- 2 tablespoons bourbon
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar

1. Combine soy sauce, sugar, water, bourbon, sesame oil, and pepper in 2-cup liquid measuring cup. Microwave until hot, about 2 minutes. Whisk to dissolve sugar. Toss chicken, cornstarch, and 2 tablespoons soy sauce mixture in bowl until thoroughly combined.
2. Heat vegetable oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add chicken (skillet will be full) and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned and cooked through, about 10 minutes.
3. Stir in garlic, ginger, and remaining soy sauce mixture. Bring to boil and cook until sauce is syrupy and rubber spatula dragged through it leaves wide trail before filling back in, 6 to 8 minutes. Off heat, stir in vinegar. Serve.

Proper Sauce Reduction

Once all the ingredients have been added to the skillet, it's important to reduce the sauce so that it clings to the chicken. You'll know it's done when it's dark and syrupy and a rubber spatula dragged through it leaves a wide trail before filling back in.



Illustration: Sophie Greenspan



A Crescent City Gem

Text by Matthew Fairman; photos by Pableaux Johnson

N EON SIGNS HANGING in the graffiti-tagged windows promise “Po-Boys,” “Jambalaya,” “HOT BOUDIN,” and “Yaka Mein.” One handwritten sign reads, “Now serving Pho.” I’m interested in all of that, but I’m here for the bourbon chicken. Though I haven’t found many restaurants in New Orleans serving bourbon chicken, I am chasing a legend based on a theory that the teriyaki-style dish was named after nearby Bourbon Street, and the version served at Today’s Cajun Seafood is supposed to be very good.

Inside, I’m standing at the back of a line that snakes around the bare dining room (emptied of its chairs and tables by the pandemic), awash in the aroma of fried seafood. I survey the menu, which reads like a beautiful mash-up of cultures: shrimp and sausage gumbo, smothered pork chops, boiled crawfish, General Tso’s chicken, baked spaghetti, bourbon chicken.

I struggle to order. Even though I’m here for one thing, I’m surprised by the vastly different options laid out before me. I shouldn’t be, though. New Orleans is known for its modernized takes on blended cuisines—its culinary influences range from the home

cooking of the descendants of French settlers in rural Louisiana to the foods of enslaved West Africans, Vietnamese refugees, Spanish and Chinese immigrants, and Native Americans. I find myself in a restaurant that somehow serves all these things and none of them at the same time. I’m confused and delighted.

A small-statured woman with smiling eyes finally interrupts my reverie, meeting my indecision with patience. “You get two sides,” says Huong Vu Nguyen (Rose), who with her husband Hao (Howie) owns and operates Today’s Cajun Seafood. “Everyone likes the broccoli and cheese, the shrimp pasta, and the gumbo, but take your time. They’re my recipes; everything is good.” I order way more food than I can possibly eat and learn that Rose was right: Everything on the menu is good.

Howie refers to both himself and Rose as “boat people,” the name given to the nearly 800,000 refugees who fled Vietnam from the period after the war to 1995. In the United States, Howie studied psychology, worked on an offshore oil rig, and then taught ESL (English as a second language) in New Orleans public schools. Rose worked for years in her brother’s restaurant, China Ruby, in St. Bernard Parish.



Following Hurricane Katrina, the couple lived in Houston for a year with their children. They returned to their neighborhood in New Orleans East and joined the rebuilding effort. In 2007, Howie, Rose, and Rose’s brother opened Today’s Cajun Seafood with a diverse menu, building a loyal clientele of regulars. When asked why his restaurant sells bourbon chicken, Howie answered pragmatically, “It’s Bourbon Street. People like it.”

Over the past year, Howie and Rose have been weathering another storm: the pandemic. Like so many other restaurant owners, they closed for a time at the onset of the shutdown. They reopened with some assistance from their landlord, activated by their persevering spirit. As with each of their past hardships, they respond with grace, kindness, warmth, and an uncommon understanding of the power of hospitality. By welcoming every guest as if into their own home and overfilling plates with every kind of comfort food, Howie and Rose are making life a little easier for their community.



Traditions from Vietnam and Louisiana blend effortlessly at Today’s Cajun Seafood (top left). Co-owner Hao Van Nguyen (Howie) and co-owner and chef Huong Vu Nguyen (Rose) (top right) greet guests with heartwarming hospitality and serve up generous portions of comfort food classics (bottom).



This spiced brown sugar butter is a sweet complement to the corn muffins.

Fresh corn kernels provide pops of sweet corn flavor in every bite.

Sweet Fresh Corn Muffins

For a double dose of sweet, summery corn flavor, add fresh corn kernels to corn muffins.

by Morgan Bolling

FRESH SWEET CORN is one of the best things about summer. And since it's so good on its own, I figured it would be even tastier in buttery, golden corn muffins.

Most corn muffin recipes read similarly to cornbread recipes. And like cornbread recipes, they range dramatically in their ratios of cornmeal to flour, and, of course, there is the question of whether sugar should be added to the batter at all. Baking a few of these existing recipes highlighted the fact that muffins made with more flour were typically more tender but were lacking in corn flavor, while those with a higher proportion of cornmeal had more-pronounced corn flavor but tended to be crumbly and were sometimes dry.

To find a middle ground, I employed a technique that we've used before in the test kitchen and microwaved cornmeal with milk until the mixture thickened to a paste-like texture. This

step hydrates and gels the starch in the cornmeal. It sounds scientific, but it's a simple method that produces a muffin with a tender crumb and plenty of cornmeal flavor.

While existing recipes for corn muffins vary as much as cornbread recipes in the amounts of sugar used, I decided to lean on the sweeter side here by including a cup of sugar to enhance the natural sweetness of the corn.

And finally, adding fresh corn to a cornmeal muffin followed the same principles as adding blueberries to a standard muffin. More corn kernels meant more pops of sweetness in each bite, but too much corn weighed down the muffins. Two cups of fresh corn (from three ears) struck the balance, making flavorful but not stodgy muffins.

These muffins baked up spotty brown with nice domes and were as summery as I hoped. To take them over the top, I stirred some cardamom

and brown sugar into softened butter, a flavor combination inspired by Asha Gomez's cardamom cornbread in her book *My Two Souths: Blending the Flavors of India into a Southern Kitchen* (2016). The warm flavor of cardamom and sweet corn made a delicious, distinct pairing. (Find our **Cardamom-Brown Sugar Butter** recipe on page 32.)

Cooked Cornmeal Mush

We microwave cornmeal and milk to bloom the cornmeal's flavor and so that it absorbs some of the milk and softens. This flavorful paste is the base of the muffins' wet ingredients.



FRESH CORN MUFFINS

Makes 12 muffins Total Time: 55 minutes, plus 20 minutes cooling

We developed this recipe using Quaker Yellow Corn Meal. Yellow or white cornmeal can be used. Three medium ears of corn should yield at least 2 cups of corn kernels. If you don't own a microwave, the cornmeal paste can also be made in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Just be sure to whisk it constantly so that the ingredients don't scorch on the bottom of the saucepan. These corn muffins are great on their own or with our **Cardamom-Brown Sugar Butter** (page 32).

- 1½ cups (7½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups (7½ ounces) cornmeal, divided
- 1 cup (7 ounces) sugar
- 1½ teaspoons table salt
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup whole milk
- ½ cup sour cream
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups corn kernels

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Generously spray 12-cup muffin tin, including top, with vegetable oil spray. Whisk flour, 1 cup cornmeal, sugar, salt, baking powder, and baking soda together in large bowl; set aside.
2. Whisk milk and remaining ½ cup

- cornmeal together in medium bowl. Microwave until mixture begins to thicken to paste-like consistency, 1 to 3 minutes, whisking frequently. Whisk sour cream and melted butter into cornmeal paste. Whisk in eggs. Stir cornmeal mixture and corn kernels into flour mixture until just combined.
3. Using greased ⅓-cup dry measuring cup or #12 portion scoop, divide batter equally among prepared muffin cups; evenly distribute any remaining batter among cups (cups will be full).
4. Bake until muffins are golden brown and toothpick inserted in center comes out with few crumbs attached, 20 to 24 minutes. Let muffins cool in muffin tin on wire rack for 5 minutes. Remove muffins from muffin tin and let cool on rack for 15 minutes. Serve warm.

Cornmeal: Modern versus Traditional

Cornmeal has changed significantly over the past two centuries. Before the invention of steel grinding rollers around 1900, cornmeal was stone-ground from corn that ripened and dried in the field, so it had a higher natural sugar content and a sweeter taste. Stone grinding also produced cornmeal with variable-sized grains, so each batch would have some fine, powdery pieces and some larger, grittier pieces.

The steel rollers used today are much faster and produce a consistent grind, but they also heat up the cornmeal as they grind it, causing the meal to lose some flavor. Usually the corn is rapidly mechanically dried instead of field-dried, which further saps flavor. Additionally, the germ, one of the most flavorful parts of a corn kernel, is now typically removed before milling. Manufacturers can sell the corn oil they harvest from the germ; plus, that same oil can turn rancid over time, so degerminated cornmeal is more shelf-stable.

We developed this recipe with Quaker Yellow Corn Meal, which is degerminated, since it's the most widely available product in the United States. But if you feel like upping the ante, you can order Anson Mills Fine Yellow Cornmeal. This cornmeal is more akin to cornmeal from the previous century. Since it is not degerminated, it needs to be refrigerated, but it's incredibly sweet and flavorful.



Cutting Kernels from the Cob

Your chef's knife is the best tool for shearing the kernels from an ear of corn. Here's how we do it: Cut the cobs in half crosswise, and then stand each half on its flat, stable cut side and slice off the kernels using a downward cutting motion.



Do Corn Strippers Work?

by Miye Bromberg

CORN STRIPPERS ARE supposed to make the process of cutting corn off the cob easier, safer, and more failproof than it is when using a knife. But are any capable of actually delivering on that promise? To find out, we bought seven models, priced from about \$7.50 to about \$24.00, and used them to shear kernels from many ears of cooked and raw corn.

Technically speaking, almost all the gadgets were capable of cutting corn off the cob. Alas, few did so well. Most struggled to cut the corn kernels off the cob evenly and consistently. Either they cut so shallowly that they missed half the corn, or they cut too deeply, removing kernels with the hard, fibrous material at their bases still attached. Worse, most were awkward to use and made a mess, spraying corn milk and kernels everywhere as we worked.

We think most people should stick with a chef's knife to cut corn kernels off the cob—it'll do a better job than any of these gadgets. But if you really hate this task, you might like the RSVP International Deluxe Corn Stripper. It usually stripped kernels easily, evenly, and quickly. And because the corn is enclosed in the gadget's tube-shaped body, it actually does keep your counters neat. The downsides? It can't handle narrow or irregularly shaped ears of corn, and it has four parts to clean, as opposed to just your knife.



RSVP International
Deluxe Corn Stripper
Model: SHUCK
Price: \$23.30
Performance: ★★
Neatness: ★★★
Ease of Use: ★★
Safety: ★★★

The corn strippers were all different, but perfection was elusive.



This corn stripper mashed and juiced the corn kernels—and it was hard to use, too.



With many of the models, it was difficult to cut off kernels evenly and consistently.



This ringlike corn stripper also failed to cut corn evenly, and it was tough on our wrists to boot.



Our favorite removed kernels and contained the mess, but we were left with many parts to clean.

Web subscribers can see the complete results chart at [CooksCountry.com/sept21](https://www.cookscountry.com/sept21).

Scooping up this flavorful dip with pita wedges is just one way to enjoy it.



Baba Ghanoush

This creamy, smoky roasted eggplant dip is easy to make and infinitely customizable.

by Matthew Fairman

BABA GHANOUSH (ALSO spelled baba ghanouj)—which originated in the Levantine region (most sources point specifically to Lebanon) and is well-known in the Middle East and Mediterranean—is a deeply flavored dip made from fire-roasted eggplant enriched with tahini and seasoned with lemon and garlic. The bedrock technique for baba ghanoush is cooking the eggplant over an open flame until the skin is charred (it gets discarded) and the interior is meltingly tender. This simple, brilliant approach concentrates the eggplant’s savory flavor, imparts an alluring smokiness, and renders the flesh silky—making it the perfect canvas for a variety of stir-ins.

Before roasting the eggplants, pierce their skins to encourage moisture to

evaporate and to prevent bursting. Then, place them either under the broiler or on the grill. In about 30 minutes, they will be tender and smoky.

To temper the pungency of the raw garlic, combine it with the lemon juice and salt and let it sit while the eggplants cool. Whisking in a generous amount of tahini (along with olive oil) ensures that the dip is rich and creamy and not weak, watery, or bitter. To account for the eggplants’ variable size and water content, season the dip to taste with extra lemon juice and salt before serving.

With solid technique and a top-notch version of Baba Ghanoush in hand, we took inspiration from other international eggplant dishes and created our own dip flavored with scallions, cilantro, and cumin.

● BABA GHANOUSH

Serves 4 Total Time: 1¼ hours

If the only eggplants you can find weigh more than 12 ounces, you may need to go a little heavier on the salt and lemon juice when seasoning to taste in step 6. The finished product should be assertive but not overpowering.

- 2 (12-ounce) eggplants
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice, plus extra for seasoning
- 1 garlic clove, minced to paste
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- ¼ cup tahini
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

1. Poke each eggplant about 6 times with paring knife.
- 2A. **FOR THE OVEN:** Adjust oven rack 8 inches from broiler element and heat broiler. Line rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil.
- 2B. **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.
- 2C. **FOR A GAS GRILL:** Turn all burners to high; cover; and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Turn all burners to medium-high.

3. Place eggplants on prepared sheet (or directly on cooking grate) and broil (or grill, covered) for 20 minutes. Remove sheet from oven and flip eggplants (or flip eggplants on grill). Return sheet to oven and broil (or grill, covered) for 10 minutes. (Skin should be charred and have aroma of burning leaves.) Transfer eggplants to plate and let cool completely, about 30 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, combine lemon juice, garlic, and salt in medium bowl and let sit while eggplants cool.
5. Working with 1 eggplant at a time, split lengthwise on 1 side through skin and peel back skin to expose flesh. Using spoon, scoop out eggplant flesh; discard eggplant skin. Chop eggplant flesh fine with chef’s knife and transfer to bowl with lemon juice mixture.
6. Add tahini and 2 tablespoons oil to eggplant mixture and whisk to combine. Let baba ghanoush sit for 20 minutes to allow flavors to blend, stirring occasionally. Season with extra lemon juice and salt to taste. Spread baba ghanoush in shallow bowl and drizzle with remaining 2 tablespoons oil. Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

EGGPLANT DIP WITH SCALLIONS AND CILANTRO

Omit parsley. Stir 2 thinly sliced scallions, 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, and ½ teaspoon ground cumin into eggplant mixture with tahini in step 6.

Night(shade) School



1. Poke whole eggplants, then char under broiler or on grill.



2. Allow eggplants to cool, then split lengthwise and scoop out soft flesh.

Tomato and Chickpea Salad

We reroute the flavors of romesco sauce into a hearty, refreshing tomato salad. **by Mark Huxsoll**

The Appetizing Eggplant

Eggplant purees, dips, salads, and spreads are popular from North Africa to India, and exact recipes for these dishes can be a source of hot debate from cook to cook. Here are just a few iterations to give you an idea of eggplant's popularity and versatility.

MELITZANOSALATA

Greek roasted eggplant salad/dip seasoned with lemon and olive oil

SALAT CHATZILIM

Israeli roasted eggplant dip sometimes made with mayonnaise instead of tahini

KASHKE BADEMJAN

Persian dip of fried mashed eggplant enriched with yogurt (kashk) and seasoned with mint

PATLICAN SALATASI

Turkish salad or dip of charred eggplant

MUTABAL/MOUTABAL

Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern dish often containing the same ingredients as baba ghanoush but sometimes more heavily spiced

BAINGAN BHARTA

Indian dish of charred mashed eggplant seasoned with a common Punjabi profile of chiles and spices

ROMESCO, A CLASSIC sauce that originated in Catalonia, Spain, is a mix of tomatoes, peppers, garlic, onions, almonds, and olive oil all blended (or pounded) together. It makes a great accompaniment to grilled or roasted meats. Since it's prime tomato season, I decided to create a fresh, hearty salad based on the same flavors. Here's how to make it.

Core and chop a pound of ripe tomatoes and transfer them to a bowl. Then chop a green bell pepper and add it to the tomatoes. (Most romescos use red bell peppers, in part because pulverized green peppers turn the sauce a muddy color, but we preferred the vegetal flavor and emerald color of green here.) Follow the peppers with two minced garlic cloves; some sliced shallot; plenty of extra-virgin olive oil; and nutty, sharp sherry vinegar for depth and interest. A little smoked paprika gives the salad complex smoky undertones, and some coarsely chopped mint balances out the intensity of the other players with its fresh and cool flavor.

To get the most crunch and flavor out of the almonds, it's important to toast them well before adding them to the mix. And for heft, stir in a can of drained and rinsed chickpeas. Then let the salad sit for 20 minutes before serving to allow the flavors to meld and to let the chickpeas soak up their share of the flavorful dressing.

A Spanish Flair

Smoked paprika is a powerhouse ingredient, providing smoky complexity wherever you add it (use it judiciously). Our favorite product is **Simply Organic Smoked Paprika**.

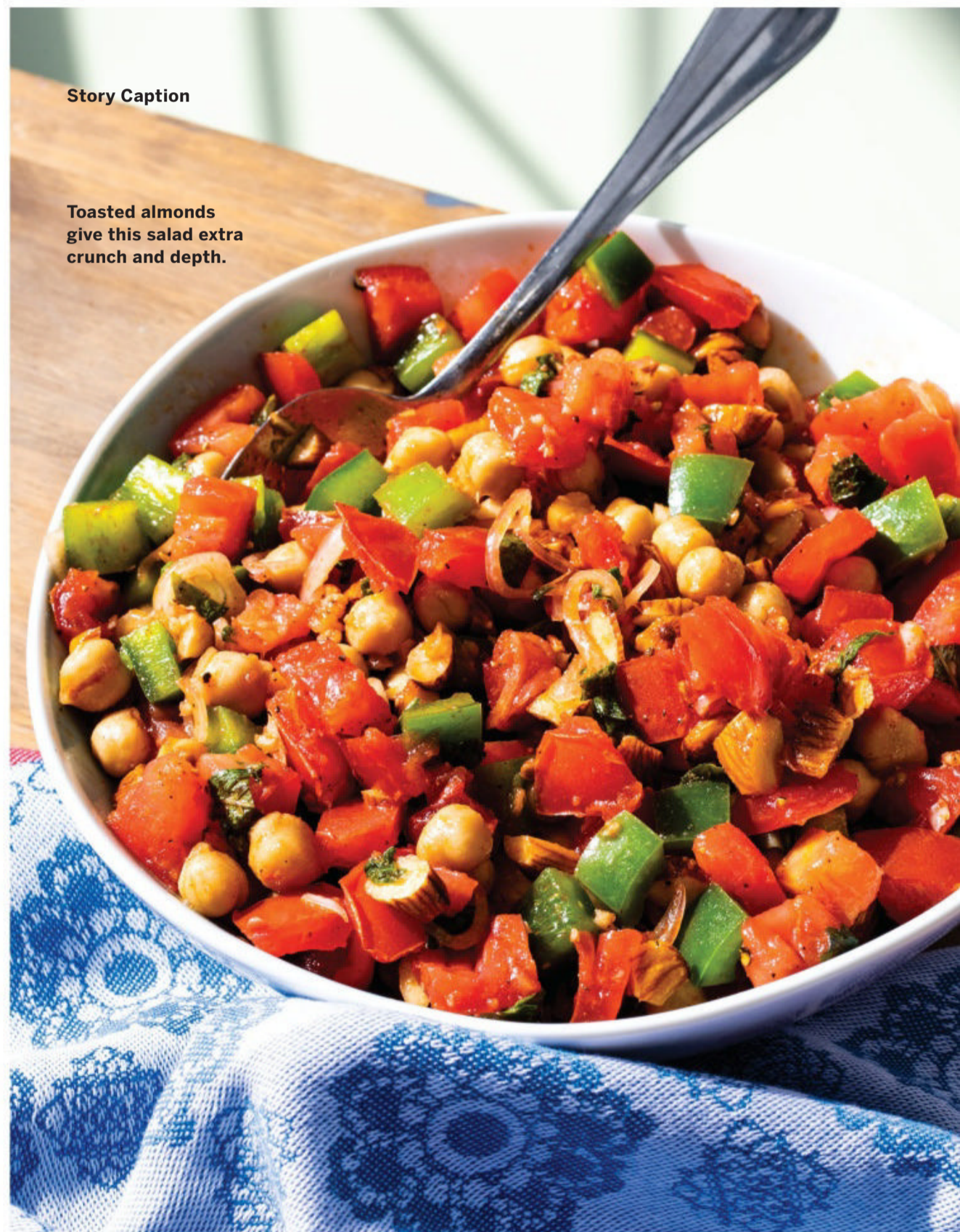
Sherry vinegar has more of a savory punch than most other vinegars: It's nutty, oaky, and rich. Our taste test winner is

Napa Valley Naturals Reserve Sherry Vinegar.



Story Caption

Toasted almonds give this salad extra crunch and depth.



● TOMATO AND CHICKPEA SALAD

Serves 4 Total Time: 35 minutes

This salad is best made with ripe, in-season heirloom tomatoes. If those are not available, opt for ripe tomatoes on the vine that are tender to the touch. Two large shallots, or three medium, should be enough to yield the ½ cup of sliced shallots called for here.

- 1 pound tomatoes, cored and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, rinsed
- 1 green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into ½-inch pieces

- ¾ cup whole almonds, toasted and chopped
- ½ cup thinly sliced shallots
- ⅓ cup coarsely chopped fresh mint
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1½ tablespoons sherry vinegar
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1½ teaspoons table salt
- ¾ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Combine all ingredients in bowl. Let sit for 20 minutes to allow flavors to blend. Serve using slotted spoon.

Kalbi

These sweet, savory, charred flanken-style short ribs might be the most irresistible food that comes off your grill this summer.

by Judiaann Woo



MY MOM IS a great cook, but like many people with her depth of experience, she never measures anything. By the time I came of age and really wanted to learn how to make some of the nostalgic Korean dishes I ate growing up (and now enjoyed at fancy Korean restaurants), I was living in New York City, nearly 3,000 miles away from home.

This is when I enlisted the help of my older sister, Yong Woo, who lives in Portland, Oregon, near my mom. She, like me, grew up baking, so she appreciates the exactness of a leveled measuring cup and the preciseness of a gram of sugar. When she married into a very traditional Korean family, she suddenly found herself needing to know how to make authentic Korean dishes, including the most iconic of them all, beef kalbi (grilled beef short ribs). During her newlywed years, she often cooked with my mom, took notes, and got feedback from well-traveled Koreans to eventually land on what I think is the best kalbi recipe. It's a

crowd-pleaser, and it's certainly better than any version I've had in a restaurant.

I first made a variation of this recipe when I appeared on an episode of *Grill It! with Bobby Flay* on the Food Network back in 2012. At the time, I was working as a pastry chef in fine-dining restaurants, writing for a national food magazine, and half-heartedly pursuing a career in food television. The recipe, which you can still find online, is very good, but it was modified for television. At home—and in this recipe for *Cook's Country*—we puree the solid ingredients for the marinade before combining them with the liquid ingredients, but chopping looks better on camera.

Kalbi marinade gets its characteristic sweetness from sugar and typically some fruit. Asian pear is often used, but finding a very sweet, juicy Asian pear year-round can be a challenge. Canned pineapple serves as a reliable substitute because it's consistently sweet and readily available. Ripe kiwi contributes additional sweetness, but its real function is to tenderize the





chewy meat; the enzymes found in green kiwi have natural tenderizing power. Just be sure not to add too much, or you'll get mushy short ribs.

As for the meat, the word "kalbi" literally means "rib" in Korean. The dish is typically made with beef short ribs cut flanken-style, across the bones, ideally ¼ inch thick. You can find this cut at Asian markets, especially ones that specialize in Korean ingredients. Kalbi is most often made with beef, but it can also be made with pork.

Aside from making sure to marinate the meat for at least 24 hours, my next biggest tip for success is to cook the kalbi for longer than you might think. I often see people sear kalbi quickly on the grill, as they would a thin steak. But short ribs are by nature a tough cut—that's why you often see recipes for braised (English-style) short ribs cooked low and slow in the oven. The last thing you want is rare kalbi. Using thin flaken-style ribs certainly speeds up the cooking time, but you still need

Judiaann Woo and her sister Yong Woo prepare their kalbi marinade in a blender (above); kalbi going from the marinade to the grill at Judiaann's home in Oregon (left); beautifully charred kalbi right off the grill (top left).

to allow the fat to be rendered and the connective tissues to break down to achieve tender results. You'll want to maintain a moderately hot grill and cook the ribs for about 6 minutes per side. The result should be tender meat with nice char resulting from the caramelization of the sugars in the marinade. You'll know when the kalbi are done because the bones will pull away cleanly from the meat with just a little bit of resistance.

Beef kalbi is traditionally served with steamed white rice; some pickled vegetables, including kimchi; and an assortment of Korean side dishes and accompaniments known as banchan. Do like Koreans do and snip each rib into thirds with kitchen scissors, which makes them easier to pick up and eat with chopsticks.

This marinade can easily be doubled; you can use half for this recipe and save the rest for another time. It lasts for several weeks in the refrigerator or even longer in the freezer. This kalbi marinade is delicious on any cut of beef that benefits from a marinade. If you don't want to deal with bones, use it to marinate tri-tip, skirt, or flank steak. It's even great with chicken. It might be called kalbi marinade, but it's our go-to, universal meat marinade at home.

● KALBI (KOREAN GRILLED FLANKEN-STYLE SHORT RIBS)

Serves 4

Total Time: 1 hour 10 minutes, plus 24 hours marinating

We call for clear rice wine here; michiu, cheongju, or mirin can be used. This recipe can easily be doubled to accommodate a larger group (you will need to marinate the ribs in two separate dishes, and you may need more charcoal if using a charcoal grill). We don't typically wash our proteins before cooking, but flanken-style short ribs tend to have a fair amount of bone fragments stuck to them because they are cut with a band saw. Rinsing is necessary to remove those fragments. A small, 8-ounce can of pineapple chunks will yield enough for this recipe. Some grocery stores sell yellow kiwi; the flavor of green kiwi is preferred here. Garnish the kalbi with sliced scallions, if desired.

- ¾ cup packed dark brown sugar
- ⅔ cup soy sauce
- 1 cup coarsely chopped onion
- ½ cup canned pineapple chunks, plus 3 tablespoons juice
- ½ green kiwi, peeled
- 6 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- ¼ cup clear rice wine
- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
- 3 pounds flanken-style beef short ribs, ¼ inch thick, trimmed

1. Combine sugar and soy sauce in small saucepan and cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar is dissolved. Let cool completely off heat.
2. Combine onion, pineapple and juice, kiwi, and garlic in blender and puree until smooth, about 30 seconds.

Transfer onion mixture to 13 by 9-inch baking dish; stir in wine, oil, and soy sauce mixture until combined.

3. Line rimmed baking sheet with triple layer of paper towels. Rinse ribs under cold running water to remove any bone fragments, then transfer to prepared sheet. Pat tops of ribs dry with additional paper towels.

4. Working with a few ribs at a time, transfer ribs to marinade, turn gently to coat, and submerge in marinade. Cover dish with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 24 hours or up to 2 days.

5A. FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL: Open bottom vent completely. Light large chimney starter three-quarters filled with charcoal briquettes (4½ 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.

5B. FOR A GAS GRILL: Turn all burners to high; cover; and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Turn all burners to medium.

6. Clean and oil cooking grate. Grill ribs, uncovered, until evenly browned on first side, about 6 minutes, moving ribs as needed for even cooking and to prevent flare-ups. Flip ribs and continue to grill until evenly browned on second side, about 6 minutes longer. Transfer ribs to platter, tent with aluminum foil, and let rest for 5 minutes. Serve.

Judiaann Woo is a Korean-born, American-made food and marketing professional currently living in Portland, Oregon. Find out what she's been eating or cooking by following her latest adventures on Instagram at @judiaann.

The Right Ribs

This recipe calls for flanken-style beef short ribs (pictured below). Unlike English-style short ribs, these ribs are cut thin across the bones. The thin shape means that the fat is rendered and the connective tissue breaks down more quickly, so the ribs get tender enough to eat (the marinade helps here, too; see below) in a shorter amount of time on the grill.



Fruit in the Marinade

Canned pineapple adds a consistent sweetness to the marinade while fresh kiwi adds a sweet-tart flavor and, more important, contains enzymes that help tenderize the short ribs.



Saucy baked meatballs topped with melty cheese and crunchy bread crumbs? Yes, please!

Chicken Parmesan Meatballs

CHICKEN PARMESAN CAN be time-consuming to make. Traditional recipes call for pounding chicken cutlets, a multistage breading process, frying, and finally baking with cheese and homemade sauce.

Making meatballs is less complex, but it's still a labor of love (and sticky hands).

We love both chicken Parmesan and meatballs and marinara. So

to make things a little easier for the cook—and to eliminate the need to choose between the two—I tinkered with several recipes to capture the best

flavors of both dishes while minimizing the effort.

Starting with the meatballs, I chose a flavorful mixture of Parmesan cheese, dried oregano, garlic powder, salt, and pepper to perk up the flavor of mild ground chicken. At this point, most recipes also call for adding a panade, a seasoned mix of starch and liquid (often bread and milk mashed together). Instead, I stirred in crushed Ritz Crackers and a beaten egg. This paste added enough structure that it allowed me to skip the browning step (which helps meatballs hold together) and still have meatballs that held their shape and remained tender.

As a bonus, the Ritz Crackers gave the meatballs a rich, buttery flavor. As for the sauce, I kept it simple, seasoning crushed tomatoes and tomato sauce

with a generous amount of fresh garlic, dried oregano, and pepper flakes. After a brief simmer, I poured the bright, garlicky tomato sauce over the meatballs and topped the dish with a crown of shredded mozzarella (for its gooey meltability) before baking.

When the saucy meatballs emerged from the oven, sprinkles of savory Parmesan cheese, basil, and crunchy panko bread crumbs imparted that familiar chicken Parmesan vibe.

A Crumb-y Solution

Place flavorful Ritz Crackers in zipper-lock bag (to contain mess) and crush into crumbs with rolling pin.



● CHICKEN PARMESAN MEATBALLS

Serves 4 to 6

Total Time: 1½ hours,
plus 15 minutes cooling

Avoid ground chicken labeled “99 percent fat-free,” as it tends to yield dry meatballs. Serve with crusty bread.

- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 5 garlic cloves, sliced thin
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 2¼ teaspoons dried oregano, divided
- 1½ teaspoons table salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 22 Ritz Crackers
- 5 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (2½ cups), divided
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 2 pounds ground chicken
- 8 ounces whole-milk block mozzarella cheese, shredded (2 cups)
- 1 cup panko bread crumbs
- ¼ cup torn fresh basil

1. Heat 3 tablespoons oil in large saucepan over medium heat until shimmering. Add sliced garlic and cook until lightly browned, about 1 minute. Stir in crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, ¼ teaspoon oregano, ¼ teaspoon salt, and pepper flakes. Bring to simmer; reduce heat to medium-low; and cook until slightly thickened, 10 to 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and cover to keep warm.

2. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Place crackers in large zipper-lock bag, seal bag, and crush fine with rolling pin (you should have about 1 cup crumbs).

3. Combine crumbs, 2 cups Parmesan, egg, garlic powder, pepper, remaining 2 teaspoons oregano, and 1 teaspoon salt in large bowl. Add chicken and mix with your hands until thoroughly combined. Divide mixture into 20 portions (about ¼ cup each). Using your hands, roll each portion into ball, and transfer to 13 by 9-inch baking dish.

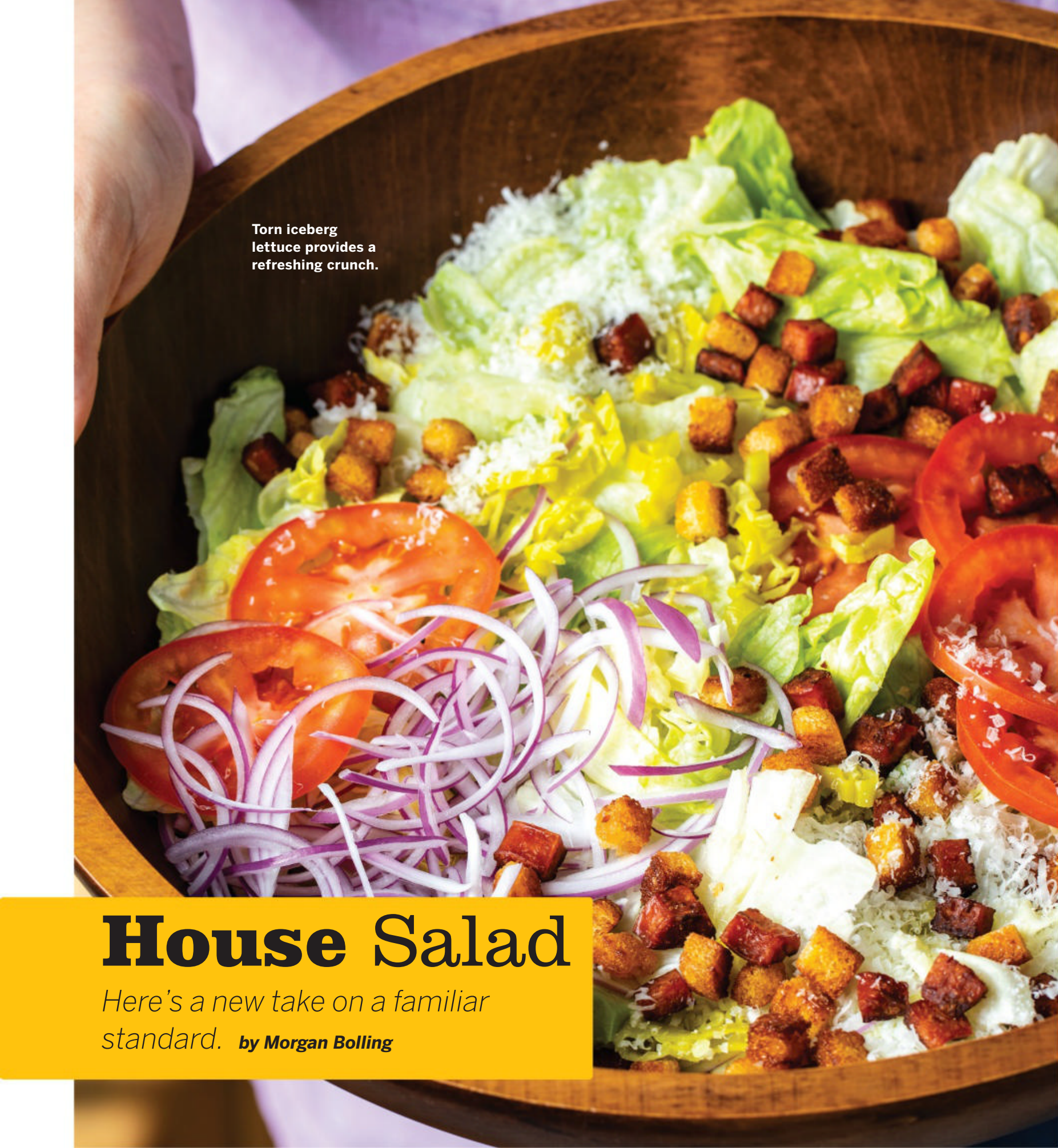
4. Pour sauce over meatballs, then sprinkle with mozzarella. Bake until meatballs register at least 160 degrees and mozzarella is melted and beginning to brown, 40 to 45 minutes. Let cool for 15 minutes.

5. Meanwhile, combine panko, remaining 2 tablespoons oil, and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt in bowl. Microwave until panko is light golden brown, 1 to 3 minutes, stirring every 30 seconds.

6. Sprinkle meatballs with panko mixture, remaining ½ cup Parmesan, and basil. Serve.

Why choose a favorite? Two beloved dishes come together in this easy entrée.

by Lawman Johnson



Torn iceberg lettuce provides a refreshing crunch.

House Salad

Here's a new take on a familiar standard. **by Morgan Bolling**

YOU KNOW THIS restaurant “house salad”: crisp iceberg lettuce, tomatoes, some shredded carrot, sliced red onion, and neon-yellow pickled peppers, all topped with an herby Italian dressing. It’s served, often in a faux wooden bowl, at many a family restaurant, diner, or pizza place. I love it, and I think it deserves to be more than just an afterthought. I wanted to make a simple yet satisfying recipe for a house salad that could play a starring role.

To begin, I whisked together an easy vinaigrette of olive oil, red wine vinegar, garlic, salt, and pepper. A tablespoon of mayonnaise helped emulsify the dressing and gave it creaminess and sheen. Italian seasoning imparted that signature flavor (namely, of dried basil and oregano) associated with Italian dressing. And just a little sugar rounded out the flavor to bring it from sharp to pleasantly tangy.

For the lettuce, I tore half a head of iceberg into large pieces. Please, don’t throw shade on iceberg—its crunch factor is unbeatable, and its clean, mild, refreshing flavor is perfect for pairing with a dressing that has a little oomph. Tearing it gave some textural appeal and, well, felt fun.

For the tomato, I went for a single, meaty plum tomato, sliced. Thinly sliced red onion provided slivers of excitement while pickled pepperoncini added brininess and a twist of heat. (I decided that the carrot wasn’t adding much to the salad, so I left it out.) Grated Parmesan gave the salad a savory backbone. Stopping here, the salad looked and tasted amazing, and it was worthy of prime real estate on the dinner table. That said, a sprinkling of crispy, spicy pepperoni croutons definitely took it to a new level of deliciousness.

Diced—Not Sliced

Because it’s so heavily spiced, pepperoni is typically served sliced thin—a little goes a long way. But for this recipe, we cook hefty cubes of pepperoni with bread cubes in a little oil; some of the pepperoni fat is rendered out and absorbed into the bread for a delicious result. When the crunchy bread and the chewy, spicy pepperoni are tossed with the salad, the contrast in their textures makes for great eating.



HOUSE SALAD WITH PEPPERONI CROUTONS

Serves 4 to 6 Total Time: 40 minutes

We prefer to use a fresh head of lettuce rather than precut bagged lettuce for this recipe. After halving and coring the head of lettuce, the half you use for the salad should weigh approximately 18 ounces and yield about 12 cups of torn pieces. Be sure to buy link pepperoni, not the presliced stuff, for the croutons.

PEPPERONI CROUTONS

- 1½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 slice hearty white sandwich bread, crust removed, cut into ¼-inch dice (about ⅔ cup)
- 2 ounces link pepperoni, cut into ¼-inch dice (about ½ cup)
- ⅛ teaspoon table salt

SALAD

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ¾ teaspoon table salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper, plus extra for serving
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ½ head iceberg lettuce (1¼ pounds), cored and torn into rough 2-inch pieces (about 12 cups)
- 1 plum tomato, cored and sliced thin
- ½ cup thinly sliced red onion, rinsed
- 1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup), plus extra for serving
- 3 tablespoons thinly sliced pepperoncini, plus 4 to 6 whole pepperoncini for garnish

1. FOR THE PEPPERONI CROUTONS: Heat oil in 8-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add bread, pepperoni, and salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until bread is toasted and pepperoni is rust-colored, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer to paper towel-lined plate and let cool for 5 minutes.

2. FOR THE SALAD: Whisk oil, vinegar, mayonnaise, Italian seasoning, garlic, salt, pepper, and sugar together in large salad bowl. Add lettuce, tomato, onion, Parmesan, sliced pepperoncini, and pepperoni croutons and toss to combine. Season with salt to taste.

3. Garnish salad with whole pepperoncini and serve, passing extra Parmesan and extra pepper separately.



There is magic in this delicious stir-together tahini-butter sauce.

Grilled Chicken Souvlaki

A bold marinade, intense heat, and an extraordinary sauce made this grilled chicken something we couldn't stop thinking about for years.

by **Morgan Bolling**

SOUVLAKI IS A dish of marinated meat (or occasionally vegetables) threaded onto skewers or a spit (“souvla” means “spit” in Greek) and cooked over a fire. Back in 2018, our executive food editor, Bryan Roof, had an exemplary version of chicken souvlaki at Johnny’s Restaurant in Homewood, Alabama, that he couldn’t forget. Inspired by his own Greek heritage, the chef there, Timothy Hontzas, marinated boneless, skinless chicken breasts in a bold mixture of lemon juice, olive oil, and his proprietary seasoning blend before threading the meat onto skewers. After getting some good char on the meat, he brushed it with a tahini-butter sauce to cloak the chicken with an extra layer of richness and allure. We decided it was time to pay homage to that dish.

Meat for souvlaki is typically cut into chunks. But at Johnny’s Restaurant, Hontzas cuts the chicken breasts into long, easy-to-thread strips. Taking a cue from this technique, I sliced boneless, skinless chicken breasts into ½-inch-thick strips and marinated them in a potent mixture of oil, thyme, garlic, lemon zest, oregano, and other seasonings. Since chicken breasts are so mild, marinating them for at least 2 hours was necessary to thoroughly season the meat. I threaded the chicken onto 10-inch skewers and headed out to the grill.

Chicken breasts are prone to drying out, and indeed this meat was overcooked by the time it was well browned. Solving this problem was all about adjusting my skewering technique; to create a denser mass of chicken on each skewer that would cook more slowly, I manipulated each strip into an S shape as I threaded it onto the skewer. In addition to providing a safeguard against overcooking, this technique allowed the marinade to get stuck in the crannies of the folded chicken, providing concentrated pops of flavor.

To finish it off, I whipped up a tahini-butter sauce inspired by the one made by Hontzas. The combination of melted butter, creamy tahini, and fresh lemon juice is genius: The sauce is rich, bright, and a little surprising. Now the only decision left to make was whether to eat the deeply flavored chicken directly off the skewer or tucked into a pita with yogurt or tzatziki sauce.

● GRILLED CHICKEN SOUVLAKI

Serves 4

Total Time: 1¼ hours,

plus 2 hours marinating

You can serve the chicken with lemon wedges, pitas, thinly sliced red onion, tomato, cucumber, torn fresh mint, and/or plain yogurt or tzatziki sauce, if desired. We recommend removing the lemon zest with a vegetable peeler. If you use wooden skewers, be sure to soak them in water for 20 minutes before using them.

Three Steps to Top-Notch Souvlaki



1. Slice chicken breasts lengthwise into ½-inch-thick strips.



2. Marinate chicken in mixture of olive oil, garlic, lemon zest, spices, and herbs.



3. Tightly thread marinated strips onto skewers in S shape.

CHICKEN

- 2** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1** tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 3** garlic cloves, minced
- 3** (3-inch) strips lemon zest, chopped
- 2** teaspoons kosher salt
- 1** teaspoon dried oregano
- ½** teaspoon ground coriander
- ¼** teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ¼** teaspoon pepper
- 2** pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed
- 6–8** (10-inch) wooden or metal skewers

Tahini

Tahini, a paste made from toasted sesame seeds, is a core ingredient in hummus and baba ghanoush (page 8).

It's also often thinned with water or lemon juice and drizzled over falafel, kebabs, pilaf, and roasted or raw vegetables in Middle Eastern recipes.



TAHINI-BUTTER SAUCE

- 2 tablespoons tahini
- 1½ tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

1. **FOR THE CHICKEN:** Combine oil, thyme, garlic, lemon zest, salt, oregano, coriander, pepper flakes, and pepper in large bowl.
2. Slice chicken breasts lengthwise into ½-inch-thick strips. Transfer chicken to bowl with oil mixture and toss until chicken is evenly coated. Cover bowl and refrigerate chicken for at least 2 hours or up to 24 hours.
3. Tightly thread chicken strips lengthwise onto skewers in S shape until no more than 1 inch of skewer is exposed on either end, 4 or 5 strips per skewer.
- 4A. **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 half of grill. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent completely. Heat grill until hot, about 5 minutes.
- 4B. **FOR A GAS GRILL:** Turn all burners to high; cover; and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Leave all burners on high.
5. Clean and oil cooking grate. Place kebabs on grill (over coals, if using charcoal) and cook (covered, if using gas) until chicken is lightly charred and registers 160 degrees, 3 to 5 minutes per side. Transfer to serving platter and let rest while preparing tahini-butter sauce.
6. **FOR THE TAHINI-BUTTER SAUCE:** Whisk tahini, lemon juice, salt, pepper, and oregano in bowl until combined. Slowly whisk in melted butter until emulsified.
7. Drizzle tahini-butter sauce over chicken and serve.



You might want to make extra of this spice blend—it tastes amazing on all sorts of meats and vegetables.

Barbecue-Spiced Potatoes

The term “barbecue” needn’t apply solely to meat.

by Morgan Bolling

BEFORE THE LATE 1950s, flavored potato chips weren't really a thing. The first two varieties that saw widespread distribution were sour cream and onion and barbecue. I have nothing against the former, but I love the latter. So I wanted to create a potato side dish inspired by this iconic chip flavor—which, of course, was itself inspired by barbecued meats.

I started by cutting peeled Yukon Gold potatoes into 1-inch chunks and tossing them with the type of simple but potent dry spice mix we'd rub onto chickens or a pork shoulder

before smoking: granulated garlic, cumin, cayenne pepper, coriander, and salt, plus a little smoked paprika for smoky flavor and sugar to mimic the chips' sweetness. Then I roasted the potato pieces on a rimmed baking sheet in a 425-degree oven. But the spices got too toasted—borderline burnt—before the potatoes were cooked through. I switched the order of operations to roast the potatoes before tossing them with the spice mix. This got me closer to the flavor of barbecue chips, but the potatoes weren't crispy enough.

For crispier potatoes, I turned to a previous test kitchen recipe that calls for microwaving potato pieces until they're tender and then aggressively tossing them with kosher salt before roasting. The technique relies on the force of tossing and the abrasiveness of the big crystals of kosher salt to roughen up the edges of the softened spuds—you need to stir with a heavy, strong hand. This resulted in potatoes that had a delightful contrast of creamy interiors encased by crisp edges, ideal for holding on to that smoky, spicy, sweet barbecue rub.

BARBECUE-SPICED POTATOES

Serves 4 to 6 Total Time: 1 hour

Buy large Yukon Gold potatoes to make peeling quicker. We developed this recipe using Diamond Crystal kosher salt. If you use Morton kosher salt, reduce the salt to 2 teaspoons.

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 1¼ teaspoons smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon granulated garlic
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Pour oil into rimmed baking sheet and tilt sheet until surface is evenly coated with oil.
2. Microwave potatoes, covered, in large bowl until they begin to release moisture and surfaces look wet, 5 to 7 minutes. Let cool slightly, then pat potatoes dry with paper towels in bowl.
3. Add salt and toss until potatoes are well coated and exteriors have thin, starchy layer, about 1 minute. Transfer potatoes to prepared sheet and toss to coat in oil. Roast until tender and well browned, about 35 minutes, stirring and redistributing potatoes halfway through roasting.
4. Combine paprika, sugar, cumin, coriander, granulated garlic, pepper, and cayenne in small bowl. Sprinkle potatoes evenly with spice mixture and toss on sheet until well coated. Serve.

Rough 'em Up

Soften the spuds in the microwave, dry them, and then toss them with salt to create a rough surface that will crisp nicely and hold lots of spice.



Summery Summer Squash Pasta

Think you don't like summer squash? This recipe—a delicious study in contrasts—will likely change your mind. **by Amanda Luchtel**

SWEET AND LIGHTLY grassy-tasting summer squash deserves to be celebrated as an emblem of summer produce. Sadly, many recipes minimize its impact by grating it, cooking it down to mush, or drowning it in a lake of cream sauce.

To make sure that summer squash was front and center in this pasta dish, cutting it into the right shape was important—I wanted to cook out the excess moisture but still have the squash retain its structure and identity. Thin half-moons proved to be just the ticket. I started by browning the half-moons in olive oil, which added richness to this mild vegetable. Minced garlic, black pepper, and spicy red pepper flakes provided a welcome punch. Next, I cooked and drained a pound of fettuccine (reserving some of the starchy pasta water; see “Pasta Cooking Water”), and then I returned the noodles to the pot.

After I stirred the squash mixture into the drained pasta, I added some of the pasta cooking water and tossed it all together to help unite the vegetables and pasta. Grated Parmesan added a backbone of nutty flavor and made the dish even more cohesive as it melted. Torn basil offered fresh licorice flavor and aroma, and lemon juice contributed sunshiny brightness.

I portioned the pasta into bowls and sprinkled toasted panko bread crumbs (enhanced with lemon zest and Parmesan) over the top for a hearty, crunchy contrast to the silky summer squash and pasta. For an extra flourish, I dolloped each portion with creamy, dairy-sweet ricotta cheese (still cool from the fridge for yet another contrast to the warm pasta). And finally, a sprinkle of extra torn basil reinforced the summery vibe of this light but satisfying supper.

● SUMMER SQUASH PASTA WITH RICOTTA AND LEMON-PARMESAN BREAD CRUMBS *Serves 4 Total Time: 1 hour*

Choose summer squashes no heavier than 8 ounces each; larger squashes have more seeds and can taste watery. We developed this recipe with BelGioioso Ricotta con Latte Whole Milk Ricotta Cheese. Look for that or another good-quality ricotta without stabilizers, or [make your own](#).*

BREAD CRUMBS

- ¼ cup panko bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon table salt
- 1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup)
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest

PASTA

- 1½ pounds summer squash, halved lengthwise and sliced thin crosswise
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 teaspoon table salt, plus salt for cooking pasta
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- ¾ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 pound fettuccine
- 1½ ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (¾ cup)
- ½ cup torn fresh basil, plus extra for sprinkling
- 2½ tablespoons lemon juice
- 8 ounces (1 cup) whole-milk ricotta cheese

1. FOR THE BREAD CRUMBS: Combine panko, oil, and salt in

12-inch nonstick skillet and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until golden brown, 3 to 6 minutes. Transfer to bowl and stir in Parmesan and lemon zest; set aside.

2. FOR THE PASTA: Combine squash, 3 tablespoons oil, and salt in now-empty skillet. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until squash is fully softened and spotty brown, 15 to 20 minutes. Add garlic, pepper flakes, and pepper and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Remove from heat and cover to keep warm.

3. Meanwhile, bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Reserve 2 cups cooking water, then drain pasta and return it to pot.

4. Add squash mixture, 1¼ cups reserved cooking water, Parmesan, basil, lemon juice, and remaining 3 tablespoons oil to pasta and toss to combine. Adjust consistency with remaining reserved cooking water as needed. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

5. Transfer pasta to individual serving bowls. Dollop with ricotta and sprinkle with bread crumbs and extra basil. Serve immediately.

* Our recipe for homemade ricotta is available for free for four months at [CooksCountry.com/ricotta](https://www.cookscountry.com/ricotta).

Pasta Cooking Water

If you want a creamy pasta sauce without the cream, starch is your friend. When the pasta is al dente, reserve 2 cups of the starchy cooking water before draining. Then add 1¼ cups back to the noodles to help create a silky sauce that coats the pasta, adding more as needed.



Chili Cheese Dogs



DINNER TONIGHT

Balsamic-Glazed Steaks with Orzo Salad



DINNER TONIGHT

Grilled Chili-Lime Chicken Sandwiches and Potato Wedges



DINNER TONIGHT

Bucatini all'Amatriciana



DINNER TONIGHT



Balsamic-Glazed Steaks with Orzo Salad

Serves 4 Total Time: 1 hour

One small globe eggplant weighs roughly 12 ounces.

- 12 ounces eggplant, cut into ¾-inch pieces**
- 8 ounces cherry tomatoes, halved**
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into ¾-inch pieces**
- ½ red onion, cut into ¾-inch pieces**
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- 6 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, divided**
- 1¾ teaspoons table salt, divided, plus salt for cooking pasta**
- 1 teaspoon pepper, divided**
- 1 cup orzo**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives**
- 2 (1-pound) strip steaks, 1 inch thick, trimmed and halved crosswise**

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Toss eggplant, tomatoes, bell pepper, onion, ¼ cup oil, 3 tablespoons vinegar, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper together on rimmed baking sheet and spread into even layer. Roast until vegetables are slightly softened and charred in spots, about 25 minutes, stirring halfway through roasting.
2. Meanwhile, bring 2 quarts water to boil in large saucepan. Add orzo, 1 tablespoon oil, and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Drain orzo and transfer to large bowl. Stir in chives and roasted vegetables and any accumulated juices; set aside.
3. Pat steaks dry with paper towels and sprinkle with remaining ¾ teaspoon salt and remaining ½ teaspoon pepper. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add steaks and cook, flipping steaks every 2 minutes, until well browned and meat registers 115 to 120 degrees, 8 to 12 minutes. Transfer steaks to plate. Off heat, add remaining 3 tablespoons vinegar to now-empty skillet. Cook over medium heat until syrupy, about 2 minutes. Off heat, return steaks to skillet and turn to coat with vinegar. Serve steaks with orzo salad.



Chili Cheese Dogs

Serves 4 Total Time: 40 minutes

For the best texture, we recommend using American cheese from the deli counter (not individually wrapped slices).

- 1 pound 85 percent lean ground beef**
- 2 tablespoons chili powder**
- ½ teaspoon table salt**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- ¼ cup tomato paste**
- 1 cup water**
- 8 ounces deli American cheese, chopped coarse**
- ⅓ cup whole milk**
- ¼ cup chopped jarred hot cherry peppers, plus 1 tablespoon brine**
- 8 hot dogs**
- 8 hot dog buns, split**
- ¼ cup finely chopped onion**

1. Combine beef, chili powder, salt, and pepper in 12-inch nonstick skillet. Cook over medium-high heat, breaking up meat with wooden spoon, until beef is no longer pink, about 6 minutes. Stir in tomato paste and cook until paste begins to darken, about 1 minute. Add water and cook until sauce thickens and coats beef, about 4 minutes. Set aside and cover to keep warm.
2. Meanwhile, microwave American cheese, milk, and cherry pepper brine in bowl until cheese is fully melted, about 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cover to keep warm.
3. Split each hot dog lengthwise, stopping short of cutting completely in half, so dogs are hinged on 1 side. Grill dogs over hot fire until well browned, about 2 minutes per side. Grill buns cut side down until toasted, about 1 minute. Stir cheese sauce to recombine. Divide hot dogs, chili, and cheese sauce evenly among buns. Top with cherry peppers and onion. Serve.



Bucatini all'Amatriciana

Serves 4 Total Time: 45 minutes

We call for Pecorino Romano here, but Parmesan can be used, if preferred. You can substitute pancetta for the guanciale; just be sure to buy a 4-ounce hunk and not presliced pancetta.

- 1 pound bucatini**
- ½ teaspoon table salt, plus salt for cooking pasta**
- 4 ounces guanciale**
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- ½ small onion, sliced thin**
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- ¼ cup red wine**
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes, crushed by hand**
- 1 ounce Pecorino Romano cheese, grated (½ cup), plus extra for serving**

1. Bring 4 quarts water to boil in large Dutch oven. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Reserve ½ cup cooking water, then drain pasta and return it to pot.
2. Meanwhile, slice guanciale into ¼-inch-thick strips, then cut each strip crosswise into ¼-inch pieces. Add oil, onion, pepper flakes, and guanciale to large saucepan and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until fat is rendered and guanciale and onion just begin to brown, about 7 minutes. Add wine and cook until reduced by half, about 1 minute. Stir in tomatoes and their juice and salt and bring to simmer. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring frequently, until slightly thickened, about 10 minutes.
3. Add Pecorino, sauce, and ¼ cup reserved cooking water to pasta and toss until sauce looks glossy and evenly coats pasta, 1 to 2 minutes. Adjust consistency with remaining reserved cooking water as needed. Serve, passing extra Pecorino separately.



Grilled Chili-Lime Chicken Sandwiches and Potato Wedges

Serves 4 Total Time: 45 minutes

Add the jalapeño seeds if you like a spicier slaw. Take note: You'll use the mayonnaise mixture in four different places in this recipe.

- 2 large Yukon Gold potatoes (12 ounces each), unpeeled, cut lengthwise into ¾-inch-thick wedges**
- ¾ cup mayonnaise**
- 1½ teaspoons grated lime zest plus 2 tablespoons juice**
- 1½ teaspoons table salt, divided**
- 1 teaspoon chili powder**
- 6 (3- to 5-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed**
- 2 cups (5 ounces) coleslaw mix**
- 1 jalapeño chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced**
- 4 large sandwich rolls, split**
- 1 ripe avocado, halved, pitted, and mashed**

1. Place potatoes in large bowl. Cover and microwave until edges of potatoes are translucent, about 7 minutes, shaking bowl halfway through microwaving; drain well.
2. Combine mayonnaise, lime zest, ¼ teaspoon salt, and chili powder in small bowl. Combine chicken, ¼ cup mayonnaise mixture, and ¾ teaspoon salt in second bowl. Combine coleslaw mix, jalapeño, 2 tablespoons mayonnaise mixture, and lime juice in third bowl. Add 2 tablespoons mayonnaise mixture and remaining ½ teaspoon salt to bowl with potatoes and toss gently to coat. Reserve remaining mayonnaise mixture for serving.
3. Grill chicken and potatoes over hot fire until browned and chicken registers at least 175 degrees and potatoes are tender, 12 to 16 minutes, turning as needed for even browning. Transfer to plate and tent with foil. Grill rolls cut sides down until toasted, about 1 minute. Cut chicken pieces in half crosswise. Spread avocado evenly on cut sides of rolls. Distribute chicken and slaw evenly among roll bottoms, then cap with roll tops. Serve sandwiches with potatoes and reserved mayonnaise mixture.

Fried Catfish with Bacon Green Beans



DINNER TONIGHT

Garlic-Feta Chicken Breasts with Cucumber Salad



DINNER TONIGHT

Corn, Tomato, and Arugula Pizza



DINNER TONIGHT

Kale Salad with Crispy Tofu and Miso-Ginger Dressing



DINNER TONIGHT



Garlic-Feta Chicken Breasts with Cucumber Salad

Serves 4 Total Time: 55 minutes

It is important to buy chicken breasts with the skin still attached and intact; otherwise, the feta mixture will leak out.

- 3 ounces feta cheese, crumbled (¾ cup)**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- 1 garlic clove, minced**
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano**
- 4 (10-ounce) bone-in split chicken breasts, trimmed**
- 1¾ teaspoons table salt, divided**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- ¼ cup plain whole-milk Greek yogurt**
- 1 English cucumber, halved lengthwise and sliced thin crosswise**
- ½ red onion, sliced thin**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh mint**

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Mash feta, 2 tablespoons oil, garlic, and oregano in bowl until coarse paste forms. Reserve ¼ cup feta mixture for salad. Pat chicken dry with paper towels. Use your fingers to gently loosen center portion of skin covering each breast. Using spoon, place 1 tablespoon remaining feta mixture underneath skin over center of each breast. Gently press on skin to spread out feta mixture. Sprinkle chicken with 1½ teaspoons salt and pepper.
2. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add chicken skin side down and cook until golden brown, about 6 minutes. Flip chicken and transfer skillet to oven. Roast until chicken registers 160 degrees, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer chicken to platter.
3. Combine yogurt, reserved ¼ cup feta mixture, and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt in large bowl. Add cucumber, onion, and mint and toss to combine. Serve chicken with salad.



Fried Catfish with Bacon Green Beans

Serves 4 Total Time: 55 minutes

Serve with lemon wedges.

- 6 slices bacon, chopped**
- 1 pound green beans, trimmed**
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can fire-roasted diced tomatoes**
- 1¼ teaspoons table salt, divided**
- ¾ teaspoon pepper, divided**
- ¼ cup buttermilk**
- 1 tablespoon Frank's RedHot Original Cayenne Pepper Sauce**
- 2 (10- to 12-ounce) skinless catfish fillets, cut in half lengthwise**
- 1½ cups fine-grind yellow cornmeal**
- ½ cup vegetable oil for frying**

1. Cook bacon in large saucepan over medium-high heat until crispy, 5 to 7 minutes. Add green beans, tomatoes and their juice, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Cover; reduce heat to medium; and cook, stirring occasionally, until green beans are tender, about 20 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, combine buttermilk, hot sauce, remaining 1 teaspoon salt, and remaining ½ teaspoon pepper in large zipper-lock bag. Add catfish, seal bag, and turn to coat. Add cornmeal to bag, seal bag, and shake to coat.
3. Heat oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add catfish to skillet and fry until cooked through and coating is golden brown and crispy, 6 to 8 minutes, flipping catfish halfway through frying. Transfer catfish to paper towel-lined plate. Serve catfish with green beans.



Kale Salad with Crispy Tofu and Miso-Ginger Dressing

Serves 4 Total Time: 35 minutes

Sprinkle the salad with fresh cilantro leaves before serving. Split the tofu horizontally into thirds and make ½-inch-thick planks before making the remaining cuts to cube it.

- ¼ cup seasoned rice vinegar**
- 3 tablespoons toasted sesame oil**
- 3 tablespoons white miso**
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger**
- 1 pound curly kale, stemmed and chopped coarse**
- 2 carrots, peeled and shredded**
- 14 ounces firm tofu, cut into ½-inch cubes**
- ½ teaspoon table salt**
- ⅓ cup cornstarch**
- ¼ cup vegetable oil for frying**
- 2 avocados, halved, pitted, and cut into ½-inch pieces**
- ½ cup roasted cashews, chopped coarse**

1. Whisk vinegar, sesame oil, miso, and ginger together in large bowl. Add kale and carrots and toss to combine.
2. Press tofu dry between paper towels. Sprinkle with salt. Toss tofu with cornstarch in bowl.
3. Heat vegetable oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add tofu and cook, turning as needed, until crispy and browned on all sides, 10 to 15 minutes, breaking up any pieces that stick together. Transfer to paper towel-lined plate. Divide kale salad among 4 serving bowls; top with avocados, cashews, and tofu. Serve.



Corn, Tomato, and Arugula Pizza

Serves 4 Total Time: 45 minutes

If you can't find crème fraîche, you can substitute ½ cup of sour cream mixed with 1 tablespoon of heavy cream.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- ½ cup crème fraîche**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil**
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- 1 pound store-bought pizza dough**
- 8 ounces fontina cheese, shredded (2 cups)**
- 6 ounces cherry tomatoes, quartered**
- 1 ear corn, kernels cut from cob, or ¾ cup thawed frozen**
- 1 shallot, sliced thin**
- ¼ teaspoon table salt**
- 2 ounces (2 cups) baby arugula**

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 500 degrees. Brush rimmed baking sheet with 1 tablespoon oil. Combine crème fraîche, basil, and pepper flakes in bowl.
2. Roll dough into 16 by 10-inch rectangle, about ¼ inch thick, on lightly floured counter. Transfer dough to prepared sheet and brush edges with 2 teaspoons oil. Spread crème fraîche mixture over dough, leaving ½-inch border, then sprinkle evenly with fontina, tomatoes, corn, shallot, and salt. Bake until cheese is spotty brown and crust is golden, 15 to 20 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking.
3. Let pizza cool for 5 minutes. Toss arugula with remaining 1 teaspoon oil. Top pizza with arugula. Slice and serve.

GETTING TO KNOW

Berries

While all kinds of berries are in season throughout the year in different regions, they always seem sweetest and juiciest during the summer. Here's what you need to know to get cooking with four common varieties of nature's candy.

by Scott Kathan

Raspberries

When you pick a raspberry, the part that's connected to the plant, the torus, stays on the plant—so raspberries are naturally hollow. That makes these red beauties inherently fragile, so it's best to wash them right before you use them to minimize the breakage and spoilage that can occur when the berries sit for an extended period with water inside them.

Blueberries

Because they're so small, there's no need to thaw frozen blueberries when using them in most recipes. Tiny wild blueberries are generally sweeter and more intensely flavored (and more expensive) than the larger berries common in supermarkets, but you can use both kinds interchangeably.

Strawberries

Strawberries, which are botanically related to roses, have grown wild in the United States and Europe for centuries. Generally speaking, the flavor of smaller berries is superior to that of larger berries, because the latter contain a higher proportion of water. Our favorite strawberry-related gadget is the Chef'n StemGem Strawberry Hull Remover (\$8).

Blackberries

Unlike with raspberries, when you pick a blackberry, the torus stays within the berry, giving you a dense, sturdy berry. But like raspberries, each blackberry is composed of little spheres called drupelets. Each drupelet has a seed, and in larger specimens these seeds can be a bit tough, so we recommend buying small or medium blackberries when you can. Loganberries are a cross between raspberries and blackberries.

Washing Berries

When washing berries, being gentle is key. Fill a bowl with cool water, and then gently submerge the berries in the water for about 30 seconds. Using your hands or a slotted spoon, transfer the berries to a rimmed baking sheet or a plate lined with clean dish towels and blot the berries dry. Sturdier berries, such as strawberries, can be spun dry in a salad spinner.



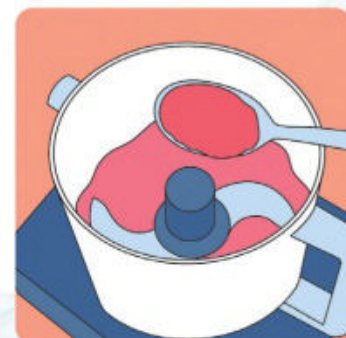
Freezing Berries

Gently wash and dry the berries. Then transfer them to a rimmed baking sheet (or a plate) and freeze them in a single layer. Once frozen, the berries can be bagged or placed in an airtight storage container and frozen for up to three months.



When Good Berries Go Bad

Berries typically don't stay in peak condition for long, so it's best to consume them within a day or two of purchase. If your berries are softening and starting to bruise, do what restaurants do: Use a food processor to buzz them into a puree and use it for sauces, or freeze the puree to have a taste of summer at the ready when you need it.



Okra and Shrimp Stew

This slow-simmered stew of okra, shrimp, sausage, beans, and tomatoes is built upon a potent ham hock broth. by Amethyst Ganaway

The baby lima (aka butter) beans cook up soft and creamy and soak up the rich broth.

Spotlight On: Okra

Finger-shaped okra is the edible seedpod of a plant in the mallow family. At the market, look for relatively small pods, no longer than 3 inches, since bigger pods can be tough. And use them (or freeze them) soon—okra is very perishable. Frozen okra works just as well as fresh in this recipe.



The combination of ham hocks and andouille sausage gives this stew an assertive, smoky flavor.

FOR ME, OKRA and shrimp stew represents home. Its ingredients reflect a wise use of the land and sea, and its cooking methods and simple techniques reveal a cultural wisdom that simmers up both deep flavors and emotions. When I make the thick stew, which is well known in the Carolina Lowcountry, I'm instantly reminded of my childhood home and memories of happily slurping up second helpings. I am also surprised that so few people outside the region know about the long-simmered, complexly flavored mix of vegetables and seafood. Making okra and shrimp stew takes a bit of time, but the investment is worth it. This is a dish that is meant to be shared among family, friends, and community.

Okra and shrimp stew is a gumbo-style dish, but unlike the more familiar Louisiana-style gumbos, our gumbos in the Lowcountry do not rely upon a deep-brown roux or filé powder for flavor and texture. The dish is known by different names, including okra stew and okra gumbo, which can be confusing: The word "gumbo" is derived from the West African word "gombo," which literally means "okra."

What is important to know is that all these stews are closely related and the names are used interchangeably; bright-green okra, with its sticky, slimy character, serves as a natural thickener; and the stews often start with a flavorful, slow-simmered broth or stock made from a large smoked ham bone. Ham stock is a familiar element in African American cookery. In some Lowcountry kitchens, it is common to see a pot of stock simmering all day on the back burner of the stove, ready for use as a flavorful base for hoppin' John, slow-cooked lima beans, and collard greens as well as in soups, stews, and gumbos.

And while some cooks reserve their soups, stews, and gumbos for when

the weather is cooler, I grew up eating this meal all year round, served with simple white rice.

● OKRA AND SHRIMP STEW

Serves 8 to 10

Total Time: 4 hours 50 minutes

If you can find medium shrimp (41 to 50 per pound), use those and leave them whole. Look for meaty ham hocks. If you buy the test kitchen's preferred brand of andouille sausage, Jacob's World Famous Andouille, which tends to be thicker than other products, halve it lengthwise before slicing it crosswise.

- 4 quarts water**
- 1–1¼ pounds smoked ham hocks**
- 1 onion, quartered**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 12 ounces andouille sausage, sliced ¼ inch thick**
- 1 pound frozen or fresh okra (stemmed and cut crosswise ½ inch thick for fresh)**
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes**
- 1½ cups frozen baby lima (aka butter) beans**
- 4 garlic cloves, minced**
- 2 teaspoons table salt**
- 1 teaspoon pepper**
- 1 teaspoon granulated garlic**
- 1 teaspoon onion powder**
- ½ teaspoon paprika**
- 1 pound large shrimp (26 to 30 per pound), peeled, deveined, and tails removed, cut into thirds**
- Cooked white rice**

- 1.** Combine water, ham hocks, onion, and bay leaf in large Dutch oven and bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover, with lid slightly ajar; and simmer until ham hocks are fork-tender, 2½ to 3 hours.
- 2.** Remove pot from heat and transfer ham hocks to cutting board. Let ham hocks rest until cool enough to handle; discard onion and bay leaf

from broth. Transfer broth to large bowl; measure out 8 cups broth (add enough water to equal 8 cups if necessary; reserve any excess for another use). Remove ham from bones, discard bones, and cut ham into bite-size pieces. (Broth and chopped ham can be refrigerated separately for up to 2 days. If fat solidifies on top of broth after chilling, you can discard fat before proceeding, if preferred.)

3. Heat oil in now-empty pot over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add sausage and cook until lightly browned on both sides, about 5 minutes. Add okra, tomatoes and their juice, beans, minced garlic, salt,

pepper, granulated garlic, onion powder, paprika, 8 cups broth, and ham to pot. Bring to boil over high heat.

4. Reduce heat to medium and cook at strong simmer, uncovered, until reduced by about half and thickened to stew-like consistency, 55 minutes to 1 hour 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to low; stir in shrimp; and cook until shrimp are just cooked through, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve over rice.

Amethyst Ganaway is a chef, recipe developer, and food writer from North Charleston, South Carolina.



The Gullah Influence on Lowcountry Cuisine

While the marshy, coastal area of South Carolina known as the Lowcountry charms tourists, it offers much more than a beach vacation. Its rich history and cuisine are also worth exploring. The Lowcountry is home to the Gullah, or Gullah Geechee, people. Descendants of West Africans who were sought after for their

THE AMERICAN TABLE

rice-farming skills and enslaved on coastal plantations on the mainland and throughout the Sea Islands, the Gullah applied African cooking techniques to ingredients that were accessible to them, namely fresh seafood; wild game; and African foods imported during the slave

trade, including rice, okra, peanuts, and benne (sesame) seeds. Many Gullah dishes, such as Frogmore stew, hoppin' John, and shrimp and grits, are now known outside the Lowcountry and eaten throughout the South and beyond. Chefs such as Alexander Smalls and BJ Dennis, who grew up on Gullah cuisine, have been educating diners and bringing recognition to this style of cooking. Smalls featured Gullah dishes at his first restaurant, Café Beulah, in New York, while Dennis became an ambassador of Gullah culture, hosting pop-ups in the Lowcountry showcasing regional foods and dishes. A testament to the tight-knit Gullah community, the Lowcountry remains defined by Gullah cuisine and traditions, which are celebrated annually at the Original Gullah Festival in Beaufort, South Carolina. —MEGAN GINSBERG

Key Steps to Sublime Stew



1. Simmer ham hocks, onion, and bay leaf in water to create rich broth.



2. When cool enough to handle, chop ham into bite-size pieces.



3. Brown sausage, then add vegetables, ham, and 8 cups reserved broth.



4. Simmer until thickened, then add shrimp at end of cooking.

Breakfast Burritos

It's never too early for extra-crispy tater tots.

by Jessica Rudolph



Smashed and skillet-fried tater tots bring serious crunch.

Browning the rolled burritos helps seal them and adds toasty flavor.

WHO DOESN'T LIKE breakfast burritos? From austere wraps containing only eggs and potatoes to ample fork-and-knife affairs draped in chile sauce and molten cheese, they seem to have universal appeal. When I make breakfast burritos at home, I like them to fall squarely in the middle of this spectrum: a full, hearty meal packed with contrasting flavors and textures but compact and contained enough to be handheld and portable for mornings on the go.

But first, what exactly is a breakfast burrito? Arguably, any burrito eaten for breakfast could be considered a breakfast burrito, though ingredients typically include eggs; potatoes;

cheese; and a breakfast meat such as sausage, bacon, or ham. (You'll find similar ingredients in Texan breakfast tacos, but they're encased in smaller tortillas.)

Which brings us back to my quest for great breakfast burritos at home. While the versatility of the breakfast burrito makes it a great utilitarian tool for repurposing leftovers, I wanted a solid recipe to satisfy my craving for a balanced mix of fluffy eggs; crispy potatoes; creamy cheese; and savory, spicy sausage.

For me, the crispy potatoes were the critical element, and the one that's elusive in restaurant versions: Even the crispiest fried potatoes tend to turn

soggy when wrapped in a steaming-hot tortilla with eggs and gooey cheese.

I decided to start with a favorite potato product: tater tots. The nubby, craggy exterior of these potato morsels takes on a wonderfully crispy texture (and, as a bonus, using a frozen convenience food that did not require peeling and cutting potatoes made the burritos weekday friendly). To up the crunch factor, I shallow-fried the tots in a skillet (after thawing and patting them dry to avoid angry splattering) and pressed them flat for an even crispier exterior. The resulting spuds were almost too crunchy when eaten alone, but once wrapped in their warm tortilla blanket? Perfect.

Chorizo was my meat of choice, its garlic and paprika seasonings imbuing the rest of the burrito with knockout flavor. Scrambled eggs and sharp cheddar cheese rounded out the cast of characters. I steamed a stack of tortillas to keep them tender and pliable throughout the assembly process and then crisped the assembled burritos in a hot skillet right before serving.

The resulting burrito was sublime, but I kept reaching for sour cream and hot sauce to cut the richness. Since I was after portability, I wanted to add a sauce inside the burrito, one potent enough to offset heavy fillings without adding moisture and making a soggy mess. I started with sour cream

for tang and added a hefty dollop of minced chipotle chile in adobo for smoky heat, which I bolstered with cayenne pepper. Minced garlic and lime juice added sharpness and vibrancy. The sauce was bracing—nearly overwhelming—on its own, but a thin layer within the burrito was just the counterbalance I sought.

Happy with my finished product, I developed two variations: one with crispy bacon, pepper Jack, and scallions and a vegetarian option with sautéed poblano chile, frozen corn, and pinto beans. But don't let these recipes limit you—the beauty of these burritos is they work great with whatever meat, vegetables, or cheese you have on hand. I do urge you to try adding the crispy tots at least once, though—if you're anything like me, you'll never go back!

That's a Wrap: Burrito History

A burrito (meaning “little donkey” in Spanish, possibly a nod to the wrap's resemblance to the rolled pack commonly strapped on a donkey's back) consists of a flour tortilla encasing one or more fillings and wrapped tightly in an enclosed cylinder. Originating in the late 19th century in northern Mexico (where wheat is more readily grown than corn and therefore flour tortillas are more prevalent), Mexican burritos are typically smaller than those we see here in the United States, usually with only a single filling or two.

Burritos eventually migrated to the United States, and as they became increasingly popular in the mid- to late 1900s, regional variations emerged: among others, San Francisco has overstuffed Mission-style burritos assembled on a steam table and wrapped in foil (these gained nationwide recognition through the Chipotle restaurant chain); and New Mexican burritos are served with red or green chile sauce, either added to the fillings inside or slathered on top.

After burritos were cemented as a mainstay in American cuisine, breakfast variations were a natural evolution. They first appeared on a menu in 1975 at Tia Sophia's in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where their signature ingredient is potatoes (eggs are an optional addition).

Fill, Roll, and Crisp

Here's how to burrito like a pro.



1. Cook thawed and smashed tater tots in oil until crispy and golden brown.



2. Divide filling among tortillas, then fold sides of tortillas over filling.



3. Fold up bottom and roll tightly.



4. Arrange burritos seam side down in skillet and cook until crisp and golden.

● BREAKFAST BURRITOS WITH CHORIZO AND CRISPY POTATOES

Serves 4 Total Time: 55 minutes

Use fresh Mexican-style chorizo here, not the dry-cured Spanish version. If you are spice averse, omit the cayenne pepper and reduce the chipotle chile to 1 tablespoon. To thaw frozen tater tots, either let them sit in the refrigerator for 24 hours or arrange them on a paper towel-lined plate and microwave them for 1½ minutes. It's important to follow the visual cues when making the eggs, as your skillet's thickness will affect the cooking time. If you're using an electric stovetop, heat a second burner on low and move the skillet to it when it's time to adjust the heat for the eggs. You can serve the burritos right after they're rolled, if you prefer, but we like the crispy texture the tortillas get from browning them in step 5.

CHIPOTLE SOUR CREAM

- ¼ cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons minced canned chipotle chile in adobo sauce
- 2 teaspoons lime juice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¼ teaspoon table salt

BURRITOS

- ¼ cup vegetable oil, divided
- 2 cups frozen tater tots, thawed and patted dry
- 8 ounces Mexican-style chorizo sausage, casings removed
- 8 large eggs, beaten
- 3 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, shredded (¾ cup)
- 4 (10-inch) flour tortillas

1. FOR THE CHIPOTLE SOUR CREAM: Stir all ingredients together in bowl; set aside.

2. FOR THE BURRITOS: Heat 3 tablespoons oil in 12-inch non-stick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add tater tots to skillet and press with spatula or underside of dry measuring cup to flatten slightly. Cook until crispy and deep golden brown, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer tater tots to paper towel-lined plate and set aside. Wipe skillet clean with paper towels.

3. Cook chorizo in now-empty skillet over medium heat, breaking up meat with wooden spoon, until well browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Add eggs and, using heat-resistant rubber spatula, constantly and firmly scrape along bottom and sides of skillet until eggs begin to clump and spatula leaves trail on bottom of skillet, about 2 minutes. Reduce heat to low and add cheddar. Gently but constantly fold eggs until clumped and slightly wet, 30 to 60 seconds. Remove from heat and cover to keep warm.

4. Wrap tortillas in damp dish towel and microwave until warm and pliable, about 1 minute. Arrange tortillas on counter. Spread about 1½ tablespoons chipotle sour cream across bottom third of each tortilla, leaving 1-inch border. Divide tater tots and eggs evenly over chipotle sour cream. Working with 1 burrito at a time, fold sides of tortilla over filling, then fold up bottom of tortilla and roll tightly around filling.

5. Wipe skillet clean with paper towels. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in now-empty skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Arrange burritos in skillet seam side down and cook until crisp and golden, about 1 minute per side. Serve.

BREAKFAST BURRITOS WITH BACON AND CRISPY POTATOES

Substitute 8 slices bacon, cut into ½-inch pieces, for chorizo. In step 3, cook bacon in skillet over medium heat until crispy, 8 to 10 minutes. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons fat from skillet (leaving bacon in skillet) before adding eggs. Substitute pepper Jack for cheddar. Add 2 thinly sliced scallions with pepper Jack.

BREAKFAST BURRITOS WITH POBLANO, BEANS, CORN, AND CRISPY POTATOES

Omit chorizo. In step 3, heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add 1 stemmed, seeded, and chopped poblano chile; ½ cup canned pinto beans, rinsed; ½ cup frozen corn; ¼ cup chopped onion; 1 teaspoon chili powder; and ½ teaspoon table salt and cook until vegetables are softened, 6 to 8 minutes, before adding eggs.



Butter, sugar, corn syrup, peanut butter, and breakfast cereal combine to give the base layer a pleasant chew.

Scotcheroos

These old-fashioned cereal-based cookie bars are ready for a comeback.

by **Amanda Luchtel**

SCOTCHEROOS ARE CHEWY, no-bake bars made with simple pantry items: cereal, chocolate, butterscotch, and peanut butter. The recipe first appeared on the side of the Kellogg's Rice Krispies cereal box in the 1960s, and it has remained popular ever since, especially in the Midwest. The bars pop up at church potlucks, birthday parties, holiday gatherings, and even in regional gas stations.

The name "Scotcheroos" traditionally refers to bars made with Rice Krispies, but depending on the cereal or other ingredients called for in a recipe,

different names might be used, including Special K bars, Oh Henry! bars, K bars, and peanut butter crispy bars.

My version gets its crunch from Special K cereal and chunky peanut butter. A combination of butter and corn syrup keeps the bars chewy and a little gooey; the corn syrup also ensures that the bars are soft (and stay that way once set). The topping of bittersweet chocolate and butterscotch balances the bars' sweetness, providing just enough rich butterscotch flavor without being overwhelming. An optional sprinkle of crunchy flake salt makes the flavors pop.



Parchment Paper Sling

Lay two 8-inch-wide sheets of parchment perpendicular to each other in the pan, with extra hanging over each side. Push the parchment into the corners and up the sides of the pan.

● SCOTCHEROOS

Makes 16 bars

Total Time: 1 hour, plus 2 hours cooling

An equal weight of Rice Krispies cereal can be substituted for the Special K Original cereal and creamy peanut butter can be substituted for the chunky peanut butter, if desired. This recipe can easily be doubled and made in a 13 by 9-inch baking pan.

- ¾ cup (5¼ ounces) sugar**
- ¾ cup light corn syrup**
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 6 pieces**
- ¾ cup chunky peanut butter**
- 4½ cups (5 ounces) Special K Original cereal**
- 1 cup (6 ounces) bittersweet chocolate chips**
- ½ cup (3 ounces) butterscotch chips**
- ½ teaspoon flake sea salt (optional)**

1. Lightly grease 8-inch square baking pan. Make parchment paper sling by folding 2 long sheets of parchment so each is 8 inches wide. Lay sheets of parchment in pan perpendicular to each other, with extra parchment hanging over edges of pan. Push parchment into corners and up sides of pan, smoothing parchment flush to pan. Grease parchment.

2. Bring sugar, corn syrup, and butter to boil in Dutch oven over medium heat, stirring frequently with heat-resistant spatula. Off heat, stir in peanut butter until combined.

3. Gently stir in cereal until fully coated with sugar mixture. Transfer cereal mixture to prepared pan and press firmly into even layer with spatula. Let cool on wire rack for 15 minutes.

4. Microwave chocolate chips and butterscotch chips in bowl at 50 percent power, whisking occasionally, until melted and smooth, 3 to 5 minutes. Let cool for 15 minutes.

5. Using offset spatula, spread chocolate mixture evenly over cereal mixture. Sprinkle with salt, if using. Refrigerate bars until chocolate is firm, about 1 hour.

6. Using parchment overhang, lift bars out of pan and transfer to cutting board. Let bars sit at room temperature for 1 hour. Cut into 16 pieces (3 cuts by 3 cuts). Serve. (Bars can be stored in airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days.)

I LOVE BAR COOKIES for their stir-together simplicity, and I especially appreciate the time I save by not having to shape individual cookies. Plus, bars have crowd-pleasing appeal; invite me to a barbecue, and the odds are good that I'll show up with a pan of brownies or blondies in hand.

For a summertime treat, I wanted a bar cookie full of the tart, floral flavor of lemon. And unlike traditional layered lemon bars (those featuring a crunchy shortbread base topped with a custardy lemon curd), these bars have the chew of my favorite sugar cookie and are just as sturdy and portable.

To start, this recipe borrows techniques from the test kitchen's past sugar-cookie successes. It calls for a combination of vegetable oil and melted butter for optimal chew and a small amount of cream cheese for extra richness. Using both the zest and juice from two lemons delivers a big citrus impact in the dough, and an extra dose of sugar balances the tart lemon while keeping the bars moist. Spread the dough in a 13 by 9-inch baking pan and bake until it's just set; the bars, once cooled, will be perfectly chewy throughout.

Coating the cooled bars with a thin layer of a potent lemony glaze further enunciates the sweet-tart balance. Lastly, a smattering of sunny yellow sprinkles makes these bars look as summery as they taste.

The Glaze

The glaze will feel thick—and that's OK. It should sit atop the bars and not soak in.



Leave the Pith Behind

A lemon's zest is packed with bright, fruity flavor compounds. Just below the yellow zest, however, is the white pith. While the pith is flavorless on its own, grating it with the zest triggers a reaction that produces bitterness. So use a light hand when zesting and harvest only the bright-yellow zest. We like to use a rasp-style grater for this task.



Dessert should be fun, right? These bright bars certainly fit the bill.

Lemon Cookie Bars

Sugar-cookie chew meets lemon-bar pucker. by Jessica Rudolph

LEMON COOKIE BARS

Makes 24 bars Total Time: 1¼ hours, plus 3 hours cooling

Between the bars and the glaze, you will need three lemons for this recipe. A rasp-style grater (our favorite is the Microplane Premium Classic Zester/Grater) makes quick work of zesting the lemons. To ensure that the glaze has the proper consistency, we recommend weighing the confectioners' sugar.

BARS

- 2¼ cups (11¼ ounces) all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon table salt
- 2 cups (14 ounces) granulated sugar
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 2 ounces cream cheese, cut into 8 pieces and softened
- 1 large egg plus 1 large yolk
- 5 teaspoons grated lemon zest plus 3 tablespoons juice (2 lemons)
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

GLAZE

- ½ tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup (4 ounces) confectioners' sugar
- 3 tablespoons yellow sprinkles (optional)

1. FOR THE BARS: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Make foil sling for 13 by 9-inch baking pan by folding 2 long sheets of aluminum foil; first sheet should be 13 inches wide and second sheet should be 9 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. Spray foil with vegetable oil spray.

2. Whisk flour, baking soda, and salt together in bowl. Whisk sugar, melted butter, oil, and cream cheese together in second bowl (some lumps of cream cheese will remain but will smooth out later). Add egg and yolk, lemon zest and juice, and vanilla to sugar mixture and whisk until smooth. Add

flour mixture and mix with rubber spatula until just combined.

3. Transfer batter to prepared pan, smoothing top with spatula. Bake until light golden brown and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 33 to 38 minutes. Let bars cool completely in pan on wire rack, about 2 hours.

4. FOR THE GLAZE: Once bars are cooled, whisk lemon juice and cream cheese in bowl until combined. Add sugar and whisk until smooth. Spread glaze evenly over bars. Scatter sprinkles, if using, over top. Let glaze set fully, about 1 hour.

5. Using foil overhang, lift bars out of pan and transfer to cutting board. Cut into 24 pieces and serve. (Bars can be stored in airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days.)

Preserved Peaches in Syrup

Extend your enjoyment of perfect peaches with this simple, timeless technique.

by Amanda Luchtel



● PRESERVED PEACHES IN SYRUP

Serves 12 (Makes 4 pints)

Total Time: 1 hour, plus 24 hours cooling

Yellow peaches are a must here; white peaches, which do not have enough natural acidity, are not a safe substitute in this recipe. In step 4, you can peel firmer peaches with a serrated vegetable peeler. The cinnamon, ginger, and vanilla bean are optional ingredients that can be added in step 5; choose one if you prefer flavored peaches. If using a flavoring, be sure to remove it before jarring the peaches. In step 7, it's important to pack the peaches into the jars while they're hot. We suggest reading this recipe all the way through before beginning. This recipe can easily be doubled; depending on the size of your pots, you may have to cook everything in two batches.

3 pounds ripe but firm yellow freestone peaches

2 cups (14 ounces) sugar

2 cinnamon sticks; 1 (6-inch) piece ginger, peeled and sliced into ¼-inch-thick rounds; or

1 vanilla bean, halved (optional)

1. Set canning rack in canning pot and fill pot with water. Place 4 open 1-pint canning jars on rack in pot, making sure jars are covered by 1 inch water. Cover pot and bring to simmer over high heat. Turn off heat and let jars sit in hot water until needed.

2. Meanwhile, bring 3 quarts water to boil in Dutch oven. Fill large bowl halfway with ice and water. Score small X at base of each peach with paring knife.

3. Lower peaches into boiling water with slotted spoon. Cook until skins loosen at base of peaches, about 1 minute. (Firmer peaches may need up to 3 minutes.) Using slotted spoon, immediately transfer peaches to ice bath and let cool for about 1 minute; discard water in Dutch oven.

4. Starting at X on base of each peach, use paring knife to remove strips of loosened skin. Cut each peach in half through stem and remove pit. Cut each half in half.

5. In now-empty Dutch oven, bring 3 cups water; sugar; and flavoring, if using, to boil over high heat, stirring to dissolve sugar. Add peaches, return to boil, then immediately remove pot from heat. Let peaches sit in syrup for 3 minutes. Discard flavoring, if using.

6. Meanwhile, spread dish towel on counter. Using jar lifter, remove jars from canning pot and drain water back into pot. Place jars upside down on towel to drain briefly.

7. While peaches are hot, use canning funnel and slotted spoon to gently pack peaches into jars. Ladle hot syrup over peaches to cover, leaving 1 inch headspace at tops of jars. Slide wooden skewer along inside of jars, pressing slightly against peaches to remove air bubbles. Add extra syrup as needed.

8. Wipe mouths of jars clean. Place lids on jars, then screw on rings until fingertip-tight; do not overtighten. Using jar lifter, lower jars into water in canning pot, making sure they are covered by at least 1 inch water (add water if necessary). Cover pot and bring to boil over medium-high heat. Once boiling, start timer and cook for 20 minutes.

9. Turn off heat and let jars sit in pot for 5 minutes. Remove jars from pot using jar lifter and let cool at room temperature for 24 hours to seal properly.

10. After 24 hours, check to make sure lids have sealed to jars; they should not be able to be depressed with your finger. Remove jar rings; clean rims with damp cloth; and replace rings, if desired. Jars that did not seal properly can be refrigerated for up to 1 week. Properly sealed jars can be stored at room temperature for up to 1 year.

Top-Rated Canning Gear

In a recent testing of canning pots (which come with metal racks), we crowned the

Roots and Branches Stainless Steel Multi-Use Canner (\$75)

the winner. We loved its grippy silicone handles; its clear lid (so that you can see into the pot); and, most of all, its rugged stainless-steel construction.



Our winning canning jar lifter is the **Ball Secure-Grip Jar Lifter** (\$11). It's spring-loaded, so you can release jars with one hand—brilliant!



1. Sterilize jars

Place canning rack in canning pot, then fill with water. Position 4 empty 1-pint canning jars on rack, cover, and bring to simmer. Turn off heat and keep covered.
Why? Canned foods can harbor harmful bacteria if you don't sterilize the jars.



2. Score peaches

Bring 3 quarts water to boil in Dutch oven. Fill large bowl with ice and water. Use paring knife to score small X at bottom of each peach (opposite stem).
Why? The scored marks will make it easy to peel the blanched and cooled peaches.



3. Blanch and peel peaches

Use slotted spoon to lower peaches into water. Boil for about 1 minute, then transfer to ice bath for another minute to cool. Use paring knife to peel, pit, and quarter peaches.
Why? Blanching and quick-cooling loosens the peach skins for easy peeling.



4. Make syrup

Combine 2 cups granulated sugar; 3 cups water; and flavoring, if using, and bring to boil over high heat, stirring to dissolve sugar.
Why? Canning peaches in a syrup enhances their sweetness and floral, fruity flavor.



5. Cook peaches

Add peach quarters to boiling syrup and return to boil. Turn off heat and let steep for 3 minutes. (Discard flavoring now.)
Why? The short steeping time softens the peaches.



6. Prepare jars

Spread clean dish towel on counter and, using jar lifter, remove jars from pot, draining water back into pot. Place jars upside down on towel to drain.
Why? You need to keep the jars sterile, and you want them hot when you add the peaches to prevent thermal shock.



7. Pack peaches

Divide hot peaches and syrup among sterilized jars, leaving 1 inch headspace in each jar.
Why? The headspace allows for any expansion without the jars compromising their seal. The jars' shoulders help keep the fruit submerged.



8. Run skewer inside jars

Plunge wooden skewer into each jar and run it around perimeter, pressing lightly against peaches to rid jars of air bubbles.
Why? Air bubbles could expand or rise during storage, compromising the seal and safety of the canned fruit.



9. Place lids on jars

Wipe mouths of jars clean, place lids on jars, then screw on rings until just fingertip-tight; do not overtighten.
Why? A small amount of air needs to escape from the jars as they are processed to create a vacuum seal; overtightening would prevent this and compromise the seal.



10. Process jars

Use jar lifter to lower filled, sealed jars into pot. Cover pot, return water to boil, and cook for 20 minutes. Then turn off heat and let jars sit for 5 minutes.
Why? A full 20-minute cooking time is necessary to create a sturdy, safe seal on the jars and to kill any microorganisms that could compromise long-term storage.



11. Cool jars

Use jar lifter to transfer jars to clean dish towel and let cool at room temperature for 24 hours so jars can fully seal.
Why? The seals on the jars will continue to tighten as they sit.



12. Check after 24 hours

After 24 hours, check seals; lids should be concave and tight. Remove jar rings; wipe rims with damp cloth; then replace rings, if desired. Place any jars that didn't seal properly in refrigerator and eat within 1 week. Store rest of jars at room temperature for up to 1 year.
Why? Occasionally some jars won't seal properly, and they will spoil if kept at room temperature.

Turn the page for three standout recipes that feature these summery peaches!

Preserved Peach Recipes

We developed three knockout recipes using our Preserved Peaches in Syrup (page 24) that bring summer to your table all year long.

BAKED BRIE WITH PRESERVED PEACHES AND PECANS

Serves 4 to 6 Total Time: 40 minutes
Serve with sliced baguette or crackers.

- 1 (8-ounce) wheel Brie or Camembert cheese
- 1 pint Preserved Peaches in Syrup (page 24), drained and cut into ½-inch chunks (about 1 cup)
- 1 tablespoon minced shallot
- 2 teaspoons white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup pecans, toasted and chopped coarse

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Place Brie in shallow 1-quart baking dish. Combine peaches, shallot, vinegar, thyme, and pepper in bowl. Spoon peach mixture over Brie. Bake until Brie is melted, about 20 minutes. Sprinkle with pecans and serve.



If you're using our recipe for Preserved Peaches in Syrup, any of the flavor variations will work in these recipes.

PRESERVED PEACH AND BURRATA SALAD

Serves 4 to 6 Total Time: 20 minutes

Burrata is cream-filled fresh mozzarella cheese. Two 4-ounce balls of burrata can be used if you can't find an 8-ounce ball. To crack the pepper, either adjust your pepper mill to the coarse-grind setting or smash a few peppercorns with a rolling pin in a zipper-lock bag. Cider vinegar can be substituted for the white wine vinegar, if desired.

- 1 pint Preserved Peaches in Syrup (page 24), drained and cut into ¾-inch wedges
- 2 teaspoons white wine vinegar
- 1 (8-ounce) ball burrata cheese
- ½ teaspoon flake sea salt
- ½ teaspoon cracked pepper
- 2 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto, torn into bite-size pieces
- 7 fresh basil leaves, torn
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1. Gently toss peaches with vinegar in bowl; set aside. Place burrata in center of large platter and cut into 8 to 10 pieces. Distribute burrata evenly on platter. Distribute peaches among burrata pieces. Sprinkle burrata and peaches with salt and pepper.
2. Distribute prosciutto and basil among peaches and burrata. Drizzle with oil and serve.



Reserve the canning syrup for flavoring whipped cream, iced tea, sparkling water, or cocktails.

PRESERVED PEACH SNACK CAKE

Serves 8 to 10 Total Time: 1 hour

Serve with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream.

- 1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- ½ cup whole milk
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1¼ cups (6¼ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon table salt
- 1 pint Preserved Peaches in Syrup (page 24), drained and cut into ½-inch wedges
- 2 tablespoons sugar

1. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease 8-inch square baking dish.

Whisk condensed milk, whole milk, and melted butter together in large bowl. Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt together in separate bowl. Stir flour mixture into condensed milk mixture until just combined.
2. Pour batter into prepared dish. Arrange peaches in even layer on top of batter. Sprinkle sugar evenly over batter and peaches.
3. Bake until deep golden brown and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, about 45 minutes. Transfer dish to wire rack and let cake cool in dish for 10 minutes. Serve warm.



● CANDIED JALAPEÑOS

Serves 12 (Makes about 1 cup)

Total Time: 20 minutes, plus
5 hours cooling and chilling

If you can't find red jalapeños, you can substitute Fresno chiles or simply use twice the amount of green jalapeños. We recommend that you wear rubber gloves while handling the chiles.

- 4 green jalapeño chiles, stemmed and sliced ¼ inch thick (about 1 cup)
- 4 red jalapeño chiles, stemmed and sliced ¼ inch thick (about 1 cup)
- ¾ cup sugar
- ¼ cup cider vinegar
- ¼ cup water
- 2 teaspoons table salt
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric (optional)

1. Combine all ingredients (including turmeric, if using) in small saucepan and bring to boil over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve sugar. Reduce heat to medium and simmer until jalapeños just soften, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool completely, about 1 hour.
2. Using fork or tongs, transfer jalapeños to 8-ounce jar. Pour syrup over jalapeños to fill jar, leaving ½ inch headspace. Affix jar lid and refrigerate for at least 4 hours before serving. (Candied jalapeños can be refrigerated for up to 1 month.)

Whole coriander seeds add a floral flavor.

Candied Jalapeños

You'll want these jewels of sweet heat on everything you eat.

by **Matthew Fairman**

MAKING CANDY CAN be hard. But making these candied jalapeños is as easy as heating the sliced fresh chiles in a seasoned simple syrup and then letting them cool. Yet for such a seemingly basic recipe with so few ingredients and steps, the end product is extraordinarily versatile.

The key to this recipe's versatility (and its success) lies in the balance of flavors and textures. Ample sweetness—from ¾ cup of granulated sugar—helps keep the potent heat of the chiles in check. Fruity, tart cider vinegar complements the vegetal flavor of the fresh chiles and balances the sugar's sweetness, and a generous amount of salt accentuates all the flavors. Whole coriander seeds contribute vibrant pops of complexity and a welcome textural contrast. Finally, using both red and green jalapeños provides incredible

visual appeal; the emerald-green and ruby-red pepper rings contrast beautifully. And since the green chiles are typically not quite as hot as the ripened red ones, using a combination also makes the finished product a little less incendiary.

Since I first stored them away in my refrigerator door, I've found endless uses for these sweet and fiery peppers. I've pressed them into the melting cheddar atop a burger, stirred them into cream cheese for a bagel, and buried them in Brie on a toasted baguette (they go exceedingly well with cheese). I've tucked them into breakfast tacos; sprinkled them over nachos; and folded them into cornbread batter, guacamole, and potato salad. I've shaken some of the syrup into a margarita, garnishing the finished drink with one of the rings. One day, feeling especially experimental, I brushed the sweet-spicy syrup onto cooling chocolate shortbread cookies. Too far? Make these and decide for yourself. Even if spicy cookies aren't your cup of tea, I'm confident that you'll find plenty of ways to gobble up these jalapeños.

How to Make Sweet-Hot Candied Chiles

Four easy steps to your new favorite ingredient.



1. Stem and slice red and green jalapeños.



2. Combine all ingredients in saucepan.



3. Bring to boil to dissolve sugar, then reduce heat and simmer briefly.



4. Transfer cooled jalapeños to jar and cover with cooled syrup.



A vegetable peeler makes it easy to shave the Parmesan.

Panzanella

Why have bread on the side of your salad when you can have bread right in it?

by Lawman Johnson

I'M NOT TYPICALLY a salad-for-dinner person, but right now, with summer produce at its peak, I'm thinking about making one thing tonight: panzanella.

Italian cooks have long been masters of making great dishes out of humble ingredients, and panzanella—a (typically lettuce-free) salad with fresh vegetables and stale bread infused with a vinaigrette—is a prime example. There are lots of variations out there, but my favorite version bypasses the stale bread (because who wants to be beholden to having stale bread around?) in favor of oven-dried bread cubes that are moistened in the salad so that they are soft and chewy—but the line between pleasantly soft and unappetizingly soggy is very thin.

So I knew I had to get the bread right for my rendition of panzanella for two diners. First off, I chose a baguette, which is chewy and has enough structure to hold up to a bit of moisture. I knew from experience that oven-drying the bread would work, but because I was cooking for only two, toasting the cubed bread right in a 12-inch nonstick skillet was easier and faster. For the vegetables, I wanted to mostly avoid leaving parts of vegetables (such as half a tomato) behind, so I decided on one red bell

pepper, one small yellow summer squash, and cherry tomatoes, plus half an English cucumber.

Some panzanelas feature all raw vegetables, but I wanted to concentrate the flavor of the squash and red pepper by cooking them; the same skillet I used to toast the baguette pieces worked great for this (I found that it was better to toast the bread just before serving). When those vegetables were softened, I transferred them to a bowl and added the halved cherry tomatoes and chopped cucumber. Finally, the vinaigrette: I landed on white wine vinegar fortified with briny capers, minced garlic, and shallot. The dressing infused the vegetables and bread with a sharp, salty tanginess that only got better as the vegetable mixture sat. Chopped basil added freshness, and shaved Parmesan provided richness and was a nice nod to this salad's Italian roots.

Perfectly Browned Croutons

Brown the baguette pieces in oil over medium heat until golden brown and crisp on all sides, as shown here. The browning adds toasty depth to the croutons.

● PANZANELLA FOR TWO

Total Time: 45 minutes

You can substitute grape tomatoes for the cherry tomatoes, if desired.

VINAIGRETTE

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 shallot, minced
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon capers, rinsed
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ teaspoon table salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

SALAD

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 small red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 small yellow summer squash, quartered lengthwise and cut crosswise into 1-inch pieces
- ½ teaspoon table salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ½ English cucumber, quartered lengthwise and cut crosswise into ½-inch pieces
- 4 ounces cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 (6-inch) baguette, cut into 1-inch pieces
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
- 1 ounce Parmesan cheese, shaved with vegetable peeler

1. FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

Whisk all ingredients together in large bowl; set aside.

2. FOR THE SALAD:

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add bell pepper, squash, ¼ teaspoon salt, and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are softened and browned, 7 to 9 minutes. Transfer bell pepper mixture to bowl with vinaigrette; add cucumber and tomatoes and toss to combine. Wipe skillet clean with paper towels.

3. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil in now-empty skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add bread and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt and cook, stirring frequently, until golden brown and crisp on all sides, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let bread cool in skillet for 10 minutes. Transfer bread and basil to bowl with vegetables; toss to combine. Serve, sprinkling individual portions with Parmesan.

Chicken Breasts with Sweet Potatoes and Poblanos

One pan, three main ingredients, and lots of flavor. *by Amanda Luchtel*

ROASTED SWEET POTATOES and chicken breasts make for a fantastic weeknight pairing; the combination is as nutritious as it is delicious. I set out to create a one-pan version of this duo featuring bold southwestern flavors and spices.

The key to a successful sheet-pan dinner is getting the cooking times for all the ingredients on the same schedule. I started with the chicken, choosing bone-in, skin-on breasts because I love the flavor and moisture that the skin and bone add to the tender breast meat. To give the chicken some southwestern character, I seasoned it with a mixture of chili powder for kick, cumin for warmth, dried oregano for herbal depth, and salt and pepper.

On to the sweet potatoes. I started by peeling and cutting them into sizable half-moons so that they wouldn't cook too quickly, and then I tossed them with sliced poblano chiles, olive oil, and salt. I tested roasting the vegetables spread in an even layer on a rimmed baking sheet with the chicken sitting on top, but the potatoes under the chicken cooked up soggy and too soft, and the chiles around the perimeter of the sheet were overcooked. Arranging the poblanos in the middle of the sheet; putting the chicken on top of them; and positioning the sweet potatoes around the perimeter (where it's hotter), uncovered by the chicken, ensured that everything cooked at a similar rate and that the potatoes were browned and tender.

Positioning the spiced chicken atop the poblanos had another benefit: The savory chicken juices released during cooking carried some of the seasoning down into the chiles below. Roasting at a high temperature ensured rendered fat and flavorful chicken skin; when the chicken was done, I returned the vegetables to the oven for a few more minutes so that they could pick up a little more color.

For a boost in flavor, I whipped up a bright cilantro-lime dressing to

toss with the roasted vegetables. And I brushed the chicken with warmed honey to give it a nice sheen and a touch of sweetness. To crown the dish, I sprinkled a little cotija cheese and some crunchy pepitas on top.

● ONE-PAN ROASTED CHICKEN BREASTS WITH SWEET POTATO-POBLANO SALAD

Serves 4 Total Time: 1¼ hours

Look for poblano chiles that are about 4 ounces each. If your chili powder is salt-free, increase the amount of salt on the chicken in step 2 to 2 teaspoons and decrease the amount of chili powder to 1½ teaspoons. You can substitute feta cheese for the cotija cheese, if desired.

CHICKEN AND VEGETABLES

- 4 sweet potatoes (8 to 10 ounces each), peeled, halved lengthwise, and sliced crosswise ¾ inch thick
- 2 poblano chiles, stemmed, halved lengthwise, seeded, and cut crosswise into ½-inch-wide strips
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1¾ teaspoons table salt, divided
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 4 (10- to 12-ounce) bone-in split chicken breasts, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 ounces cotija cheese, crumbled (½ cup)
- 2 tablespoons roasted, salted pepitas

DRESSING

- ⅓ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1½ teaspoons grated lime zest plus 2 tablespoons juice
- ½ teaspoon table salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

1. FOR THE CHICKEN AND VEGETABLES: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 475 degrees. Spray rimmed baking sheet with



vegetable oil spray. Toss potatoes, poblanos, oil, and ¾ teaspoon salt together on prepared sheet. Arrange sweet potatoes around perimeter of sheet and poblanos in center of sheet in even layer.

2. Combine chili powder, oregano, cumin, pepper, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt in bowl. Pat chicken dry with paper towels and place over poblanos on sheet. Sprinkle chicken all over with spice mixture. Roast, skin side up, until chicken registers 160 degrees, 35 to 40 minutes.

3. FOR THE DRESSING: While

chicken and vegetables are roasting, whisk all ingredients together in bowl.

4. Remove sheet from oven; transfer chicken to large platter. Return vegetables to oven and continue to roast until potatoes are browned on bottom, 5 to 7 minutes longer. Let vegetables cool on sheet for 5 minutes.

5. Toss vegetables with dressing and juices on sheet; transfer to platter with chicken. Microwave honey until warm and loose in texture, about 15 seconds. Brush skin side of chicken with honey. Sprinkle vegetables with cotija and pepitas. Serve.

Three Steps to One Great Dinner



1. Arrange the sweet potatoes around the perimeter of the baking sheet for maximum browning, and place the poblanos in the center to prevent burning.



2. Arrange the chicken breasts over the poblanos and sprinkle the spice mixture over the chicken. This allows for any lost spice mixture to flavor the vegetables.



3. When the chicken is done, transfer it to a platter and let it rest; meanwhile, return the vegetables to the oven to continue browning.

Best Blenders Less Than \$100

Could we get great performance on a budget?

by Lisa McManus

IF YOU HAVE a great blender, it's easy to whip up smoothies, shakes, frozen drinks, sauces, dips, and dressings and even grind nut butters from scratch. Setting a cap of \$100 for each, we bought seven blenders and put them to the test, making smoothies, crushing ice, emulsifying mayonnaise, and grinding almonds into nut butter. We measured noise levels and stain and odor retention and rated the blenders' performance, handling, and cleanup.

A few models had the winning combination of powerful motors, sharp blades, and a jar that kept ingredients moving; the rest just kept getting stuck. Our winner, by NutriBullet, easily blended everything but mayo. It was simple to use and clean, and its lightweight jar has a generous 8-cup capacity.



Web subscribers can see the full testing results and complete chart at [CooksCountry.com/sept21](https://www.cookscountry.com/sept21).

Our Testing Results: A Tale of Tragedy and Triumph



We used each model to blend raw kale, frozen pineapple, and orange juice smoothies. Our favorites gave us uniformly blended, thick, creamy smoothies with no chunks.



Most models emulsified egg and oil into smooth mayo (left), but one gave us a puddle (right).

Some lower-ranked models failed to turn toasted whole almonds into creamy nut butter.

The Secrets to a Good Blender

Why did some of our blenders blend up a storm while others choked? Several factors: first, sheer power. Our two highest-rated blenders had high peak wattages, of 1,300 and 1,200 watts; the two lowest-rated models had peak wattages of just 746 and 700 watts. Bigger jars helped—our top blenders were nearly twice as roomy as lower-ranked models, so foods moved more freely. All jars were lined with vertical ribs, but they were bigger in top models, helping direct spinning food down to the blades. Those blades were bigger, too, with wider wingspans, and there were more of them. All these details added up to blending success.



HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

NutriBullet Full Size Blender
Model: ZNBF30400Z
Price: \$99.99
Blending and Ice Crushing: ★★★
Mayonnaise: ★
Almond Butter: ★★★
Noise Level: ★
Cleaning and Handling: ★★★
Controls and Operation: ★★★

RECOMMENDED

Black + Decker Quiet Blender with Cyclone Glass Jar
Model: BL1400DG-P
Price: \$59.99
Blending and Ice Crushing: ★★
Mayonnaise: ★★
Almond Butter: ★★★
Noise Level: ★
Cleaning and Handling: ★★★
Controls and Operation: ★★½

KEY Good ★★★ Fair ★★ Poor ★

Get Your Blend On: Which Blender (or Blenders) Is Right for You?

HIGH-END



Our Winner:
Vitamix 5200

Best For: Everything! Heavy-duty blending, smoothies, frozen drinks, milkshakes, raw foods, nuts, grains, and more.

MIDPRICED



Our Winner:
Breville Fresh & Furious

Best For: Smoothies, dips, mayonnaise, frozen drinks, milkshakes, nut butters. A serious blender at a moderate price.

INEXPENSIVE



Our Winner:
NutriBullet Full Size Blender

Best For: Smoothies, frozen drinks, milkshakes, nut butters, dips; low speed is too fast to emulsify mayonnaise.

COOKING



Our Winner:
Instant Ace Plus Cooking and Beverage Blender

Best For: Smoothies; dips; frozen drinks; milkshakes; nut butters; hot soups; oat, nut, soy, and rice milks.

PERSONAL



Our Winner:
Ninja Nutri Ninja Pro

Best For: Single servings of smoothies, milkshakes, salad dressings. Small batches right in a travel cup.

PORTABLE



Our Winner:
PopBabies Personal Portable Blender

Best For: Single servings of smoothies and protein drinks when on the go. Small, battery-powered blender.

IMMERSION



Our Winner:
Braun Multiquick 5 Hand Blender

Best For: Pureeing soups right in the cooking pot, mixing salad dressings, whipping cream.

When to Splurge and When to Save

When grocery shopping, it pays to be strategic. From price and packaging to potential time savings while cooking, here's what to consider at the supermarket. **by Kate Shannon**

Splurge on Top Quality

1 ORANGE JUICE, GRAPEFRUIT JUICE, AND LEMONADE

To ensure year-round availability, many manufacturers store their juices in tanks for months and then add synthesized flavor or aroma compounds before bottling. **Natalie's**, the manufacturer of our favorite orange juice, grapefruit juice, and lemonade, juices its citrus within 24 hours of shipping. The juices and lemonade taste superfresh, practically like homemade. The bottles cost about \$2 more on average than others on the shelf, but their flavor is significantly better.

2 MAPLE SYRUP

Instead of buying pancake syrup (which is really just dolled-up corn syrup), we splurge on real maple syrup. Beyond that, which type of real maple syrup you buy doesn't matter. Because few producers have the resources for national distribution, most sell their syrup to large manufacturers that blend the syrups and sell them under a brand name. We typically buy the least expensive bottle of real maple syrup available.

3 PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO AND PECORINO ROMANO

Parmigiano-Reggiano (upwards of \$20 per pound) is made in Italy with raw milk from cows that have grazed on flavorful wild grasses. Aged for at least 12 months and often for more than two years, it's also firm and craggy. Parmesan (about \$11 per pound) is generally made in America with pasteurized milk and aged for at least 10 months, so it's milder and softer. The assertive flavor and crystalline crunch of Parmigiano-Reggiano means that a little goes a long way. Real Pecorino Romano is also considerably sharper, more flavorful, and firmer than domestic Romano.



Save Big Bucks

4 VANILLA

Imitation vanilla contains vanillin (the main flavor compound in vanilla beans) that's synthesized in a lab. Surprisingly, the simple, pure vanilla flavor of an imitation brand beat out the real extracts in our tasting. **Baker's Imitation Vanilla Flavor** costs \$0.12 an ounce, compared with \$3.25 an ounce or more for the real stuff.

5 BALSAMIC VINEGAR

You could easily spend \$30 for a bottle of balsamic vinegar that has been aged for several years, but if you're using it mostly to make vinaigrette, you shouldn't. Expensive balsamic vinegars are thicker, so they make sticky, gloppy vinaigrettes. Supermarket options, such as our winner, from **Bertolli**, cost \$3 or \$4 per bottle and are better suited for making salad dressings and soups.

Instant Aged Balsamic Vinegar

KITCHEN HACK

Makes about 1/4 cup

Traditionally produced balsamic vinegar is aged for at least 12 years, making it gorgeously intense—and expensive, at \$60 an ounce. Here's a hack that will give your supermarket vinegar some of the qualities of the high-end stuff.

1/3 cup balsamic vinegar

1 tablespoon sugar

1 tablespoon port

Combine vinegar, sugar, and port in small saucepan. Bring to simmer over medium-low heat and cook until reduced by half and syrupy, about 5 minutes. Let cool completely before using. Cooled vinegar can be stored indefinitely in airtight container.

When Packaging Matters

GARLIC SUBSTITUTES

Many cooks dread peeling and preparing garlic cloves by hand. We found two convenience products that taste almost indistinguishable from fresh garlic. **Spice World Fresh Peeled Organic Garlic** (\$0.77 per ounce) can be sliced, minced, or smashed. Each frozen cube of **Dorot Gardens Crushed Garlic** (\$1.07 per ounce) equals a minced clove, so there's no need to mince or measure anything by hand.



TOMATO PASTE

Any differences in the flavor of packaged tomato pastes can easily be corrected with a pinch of salt or sugar. The biggest consideration is whether to buy cans or tubes. Canned paste generally costs less than \$0.25 per ounce, but it spoils quickly once opened, so any leftovers must be frozen in small portions. Tubes of tomato paste cost about \$0.71 per ounce, but they can be refrigerated for several months once opened and used as needed.



CHICKEN AND BEEF BROTHS

Liquid broths are easy to use, but the cartons are bulky, and leftovers must be quickly used or frozen. Broth concentrates, which reconstitute quickly in water, come in small jars and keep indefinitely in the refrigerator. They're also cheaper. Our favorite broth concentrates, **Better Than Bouillon Chicken Base** and **Better Than Bouillon Roasted Beef Base**, cost \$0.02 per ounce reconstituted, while liquid broths generally cost between \$0.08 and \$0.17 per ounce.



Cardamom-Brown Sugar Butter



This butter is delicious on our Fresh Corn Muffins (page 7), cornbread, French toast, pancakes, or dinner rolls.

● CARDAMOM-BROWN SUGAR BUTTER

Serves 12 (Makes about $\frac{2}{3}$ cup)

Total Time: 16 minutes

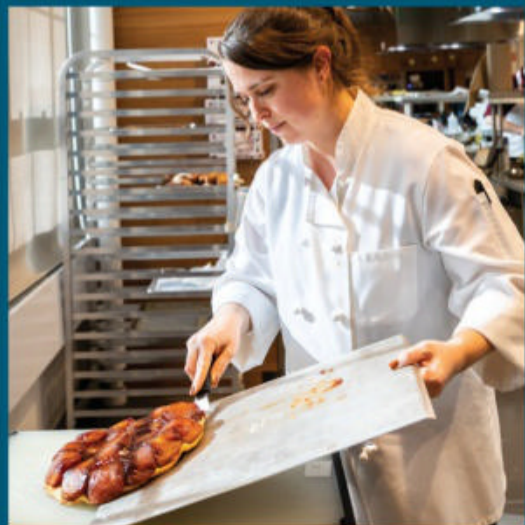
This recipe is inspired by Asha Gomez's cardamom cornbread in her book *My Two Souths: Blending the Flavors of India into a Southern Kitchen* (2016). Serve with our Fresh Corn Muffins (page 7).

- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup packed (1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces) light brown sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground cardamom
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon table salt

Using fork, mash all ingredients in bowl until fully combined.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

Add interest to your Thanksgiving menu with **Rodney Scott's Holiday Turkey**, **Browned Butter Mashed Potatoes**, and **Apple Tarte Tatin**. With cooler temperatures around the corner, take comfort with our **Woodman's-Style Clam Chowder** and **Cheddar-Crusted Grilled Cheese**. And, if sweets are your thing, try our **Basic Cinnamon Coffee Cake**. All this and more coming in our October/November issue. Join us!



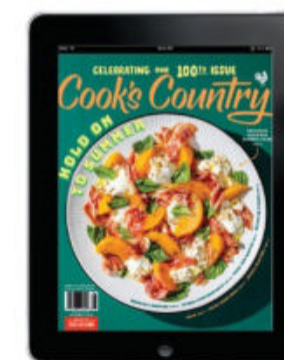
FIND THE ROOSTER!

A tiny version of this rooster has been hidden in a photo in the pages of this issue. Write to us with its location, 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, visit CooksCountry.com/rooster by August 31, 2021, or write to Rooster AS21, Cook's Country, 21 Drydock Avenue, Suite 210E, Boston, MA 02210. Include your name and address. Sarah Ditkoff of Attleboro Falls, Massachusetts, found the rooster in the April/May 2021 issue on page 15.

WEB EXTRAS

Free for four months online at CooksCountry.com

Cedar-Planked Salmon
Grilled Sweet Potato Salad
Homemade Creamy Ricotta Cheese
North Carolina Barbecue Pork
Smoked Chicken Wings
Tennessee Pulled Turkey Sandwiches



READ US ON IPAD

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.

RECIPE INDEX

MAIN DISHES

- Balsamic-Glazed Steaks with Orzo Salad **DT**
- Bourbon Chicken **4**
- Bucatini all'Amatriciana **DT**
- Chicken Parmesan Meatballs **12**
- Chili Cheese Dogs **DT**
- Corn, Tomato, and Arugula Pizza **DT**
- Fried Catfish with Bacon Green Beans **DT**
- Garlic-Feta Chicken Breasts with Cucumber Salad **DT**
- Grilled Chicken Souvlaki **14**
- Grilled Chili-Lime Chicken Sandwiches and Potato Wedges **DT**
- Kalbi (Korean Grilled Flanken-Style Short Ribs) **11**
- Okra and Shrimp Stew **19**
- One-Pan Roasted Chicken Breasts with Sweet Potato-Poblano Salad **29**
- Summer Squash Pasta with Ricotta and Lemon-Parmesan Bread Crumbs **16**

SIDE DISH

- Barbecue-Spiced Potatoes **15**

SALADS

- House Salad with Pepperoni Croutons **13**
- Kale Salad with Crispy Tofu and Miso-Ginger Dressing **DT**
- Panzanella for Two **28**
- Preserved Peach and Burrata Salad **26**
- Tomato and Chickpea Salad **9**

APPETIZERS

- Baba Ghanoush **8**
- Eggplant Dip with Scallions and Cilantro **8**
- Baked Brie with Preserved Peaches and Pecans **26**

BREAKFAST

- Breakfast Burritos with Chorizo and Crispy Potatoes **21**
- with Bacon and Crispy Potatoes **21**
- with Poblano, Beans, Corn, and Crispy Potatoes **21**
- Fresh Corn Muffins **7**

DESSERTS

- Lemon Cookie Bars **23**
- Preserved Peaches in Syrup **24**
- Preserved Peach Snack Cake **26**
- Scotcheroos **22**

CONDIMENTS

- Candied Jalapeños **27**
- Cardamom-Brown Sugar Butter **32**
- Instant Aged Balsamic Vinegar **31**

DT=Dinner Tonight

COOK'S CLOSE-UP



BRYANT VALDEZ

Baker

La Segunda
Central Bakery,
Ybor City, Florida

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



21 Breakfast Burritos



8 Baba Ghanoush



28 Panzanella for Two



14 Grilled Chicken Souvlaki



23 Lemon Cookie Bars



7 Fresh Corn Muffins



4 Bourbon Chicken



27 Candied Jalapeños



16 Summer Squash Pasta with Ricotta



12 Chicken Parmesan Meatballs



19 Okra and Shrimp Stew



22 Scotcheroos



9 Tomato and Chickpea Salad



11 Kalbi (Korean Grilled Short Ribs)



26 Preserved Peach Snack Cake



DT Corn, Tomato, and Arugula Pizza



26 Baked Brie with Preserved Peaches



DT Fried Catfish with Bacon Green Beans



13 House Salad with Pepperoni Croutons



29 One-Pan Roasted Chicken Breasts



DT Bucatini all'Amatriciana



DT Grilled Chili-Lime Chicken Sandwiches



15 Barbecue-Spiced Potatoes



DT Chili Cheese Dogs



DT Kale Salad with Crispy Tofu