

Cook's Country



BACKYARD SMOKED BRISKET

Juicy meat, ebony bark, deep Texas flavor. We scored secrets from top pit masters to create a home recipe that's easier than you might think.

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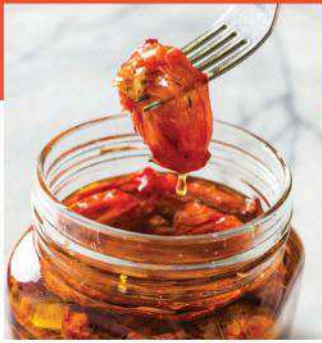
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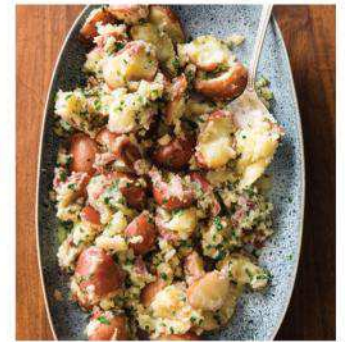
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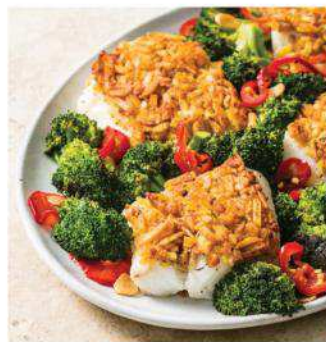
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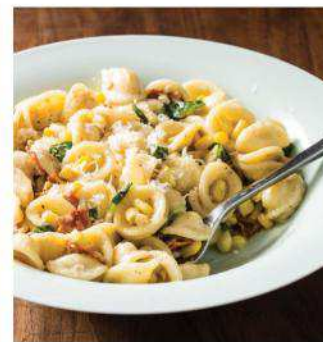
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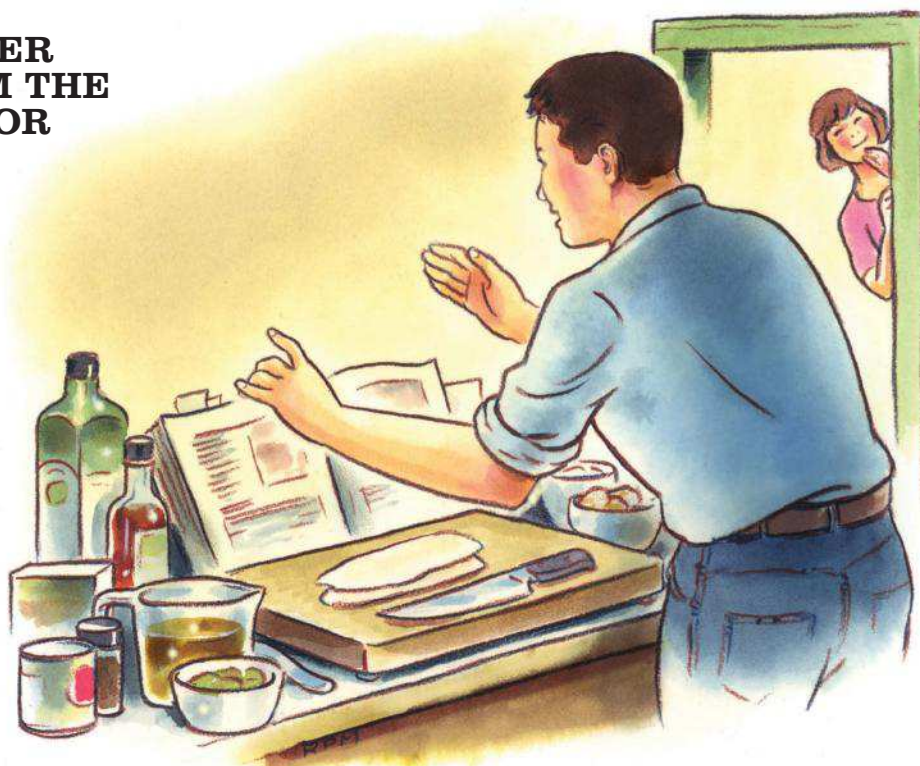


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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



I'VE PLAYED TENNIS since I was a kid. I'm not very good at it, but I stick with it because there are always things to learn—how to read your opponent, how to hold your racket, how to position your body, how to win. But whenever a match is going south on me, I inevitably hear the voice of the teacher who gave me my very first tennis lesson out on the public courts: “Keep your eye on the ball.”

No kidding, right? So obvious. And yet so easy to forget.

There is a similarly simple cooking lesson that I sometimes forget to remember: Set up. (Cooks often use a French term to describe this idea: *mise en place*.)

Setting up means two things. First, reading and understanding your recipe. Second, organizing your work area.

The first part is easy. To read through a recipe is no hardship. Sometimes, to get the full benefit, I will take it a step further and mime out the actions for myself as I read. I stand at an imaginary counter, sprinkle imaginary salt over imaginary steaks, sear them in an imaginary pan, and then slide them into an imaginary oven to finish. I must look absurd doing this (or so I've been told), but the exercise helps me get a sense of how much time things will take, identify possible pitfalls, and generally visualize the process from start to finish.

The second part involves a bit more effort: assembling all the equipment I'll need and then prepping and measuring out my ingredients. This task, which can feel boring compared with the main event (think taping off windows before painting a room), forestalls countless potential problems. Having everything I need at hand means I won't have to search for that bottle of soy sauce at a critical moment or find myself with an unminced clove of garlic just as I need to add it to my skillet. It allows me to keep my focus on the cooking.

These two steps may feel like a bit of extra work, but I promise you, if you do them, they will make your cooking experience faster, easier, and far more rewarding. Just like keeping an eye on the ball makes tennis more fun.

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MULTICOOKER PERFECTION

Cook It Fast or Slow—You Decide

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America's Test Kitchen is a real test kitchen located in Boston. It is the home of more than 60 test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes until we understand exactly how and why they work and eventually arrive at the very best version. We also test kitchen equipment and supermarket ingredients in search of products that offer the best value and performance. You can watch us work by tuning in to *America's Test Kitchen* (AmericasTestKitchen.com) and *Cook's Country from America's Test Kitchen* (CooksCountry.com) on public television, and you can listen to our weekly segments on *The Splendid Table* on public radio. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram.



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by Morgan Bolling

Quick Picks

In your baking recipes, what do you mean by “when a toothpick comes out clean”?

—Maggie Lovering, Fort Collins, Colo.

Given all the variables of a kitchen—oven temperature accuracy, small differences in ingredients (every egg is different, for example), thickness or materials of baking vessels, etc.—we call for a range of baking times in most of our baking recipes. The visual cues we provide when checking doneness, such as “until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean” (for muffins, cupcakes, and some cakes) and “until toothpick inserted in center comes out with few moist crumbs attached” (for brownies and fudgy cakes), are meant to help determine when to remove a baked good from an oven without having to rely solely on specific timing.

To test a cake for doneness with a toothpick, insert the toothpick in the center of the cake. If it comes out with wet batter on it, the cake is underdone. Bake it for a few more minutes before testing it again in a slightly different spot. If the recipe calls for “few moist crumbs attached,” there should be a scattering of wet crumbs on the toothpick. But if the recipe calls for the toothpick to come out “clean,” then there shouldn’t be any crumbs adhering to the toothpick. It’s OK if the toothpick looks a little moist or greasy. It’s always worth checking a few minutes before the time range to avoid overbaking.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Inserting a toothpick into baked goods will help you determine doneness. Here’s a visual guide to help you understand the terminology we use.

CAKE-BAKING CUES
We insert a toothpick in the center of a cake and look for visual cues to determine its doneness.



WET WITH BATTER



A FEW MOIST CRUMBS



PERFECTLY CLEAN

A Mess of Mustards

My neighbor, a Louisiana transplant, recently served Creole mustard at a barbecue; I tried this mustard and loved it. Do you ever call for it in recipes?

—Morris Taylor, Eureka, Calif.

We rarely call for Creole mustard in our recipes, but we, too, are fans of this bold condiment. To see how it compares with other mustards, we held a blind tasting where we sampled the following mustards plain and on hot dogs: Creole, yellow, brown, Dijon, and coarse/whole-grain. Here are our tasting notes on each.

Creole Mustard: This mustard is coarse and grainy, with a texture somewhere between those of whole-grain and spicy brown mustards. It’s “assertively vinegary” in flavor and packs some heat—but not as much as brown mustard or Dijon.

Yellow Mustard: This smooth, mild condiment is made from sweet yellow mustard seeds, which are not particularly spicy. It’s the standard “American-style” mustard we reach for to add zip without overwhelming other ingredients.

Brown Mustard: Made from smaller, hotter brown mustard seeds, brown mustard packs an assertive, spicy punch. It’s thicker and a little more coarse than yellow mustard, but it is still smooth enough to smear on pastrami or rye bread.

Dijon Mustard: Also made from the hotter brown mustard seeds, Dijon mustard packs a wallop of clean, nose-tingling heat. This type of mustard is typically very smooth in texture, making it the ideal choice for salad dressings or creamy sauces.

Coarse/Whole-Grain Mustard: These mustards have been ground just enough to bind the seeds into a paste, giving them a coarse texture so each bite provides pops of mustard seeds. They can vary in flavor but typically pack sharp heat cut with some acidity.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Creole mustard has a vinegary flavor and a coarse texture. It’s most similar to whole-grain or spicy brown mustard. And while it’s not a recipe staple for us, we are fans of its bold, lively flavor.



The Garlic Grind

Sometimes you call for granulated garlic in your recipes and other times garlic powder. Can I just buy and use one?

—Alice Hamed, Strykersville, N.Y.

Both granulated garlic and garlic powder are made by dehydrating peeled garlic cloves before grinding them into a powder. Garlic powder has a finer texture, similar to that of cornstarch, while granulated garlic is often the texture of cornmeal. There are no specific guidelines regarding either product’s grind size, so both products vary from brand to brand.

We tried both garlic products side by side sprinkled on white rice and in batches of our Low-Fat Garlic Croutons and our Chive Sour Cream, which calls for ½ teaspoon of garlic powder.

In sampling the rice, a few tasters picked up on a slight grittiness in the granulated garlic sample due to its larger grain size. But in the other tests, the differences were negligible. Regarding flavor, we didn’t notice any substantial difference between the two products, and we liked the flavor of both.

While garlic powder and granulated garlic are generally interchangeable in recipes, we usually call for granulated garlic, which we prefer because its larger grain size makes it easier to measure, sprinkle, and work with.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Granulated garlic and garlic powder can be used interchangeably in most recipes; we tend to favor granulated garlic in our recipes because it’s easier to work with.

Freezing Peaches

What’s the best way to freeze fresh summer peaches for baking?

—Cassandra Cohen, Northampton, Mass.

To determine the best way to freeze peaches, we tested freezing sliced peaches peeled and unpeeled, as well as freezing the fruit at different stages of ripeness (very ripe and soft, ripe but firm, and underripe). We thawed the peaches and sampled them plain and in our Peach Cobbler for Two. Whether to peel or not before freezing came down to personal preference; the peels were minimally

noticeable in the baked cobbler, and many tasters said they would rather not go through the effort of peeling peaches for baked desserts.

The real difference had to do with ripeness. Peaches that had been frozen when very ripe and soft had great flavor but broke down into mush when thawed. On the flip side, peaches that had been frozen while underripe lacked that signature summery peach flavor but held their shape after freezing and thawing. Our favorites were peaches that were frozen while ripe but firm. While they did not match the texture of

fresh peaches, they were comparable to grocery-store frozen peaches in texture but had much better flavor.

To freeze peaches, slice them into wedges and freeze them in a single layer on a plate or rimmed baking sheet to prevent them from sticking together. Once the peaches are fully frozen, transfer them to a zipper-lock bag and keep them in the freezer for up to two months.

THE BOTTOM LINE: You can freeze peach wedges either peeled or unpeeled. They’ll never taste as good as fresh ripe peaches, but they work well in baked goods and desserts.

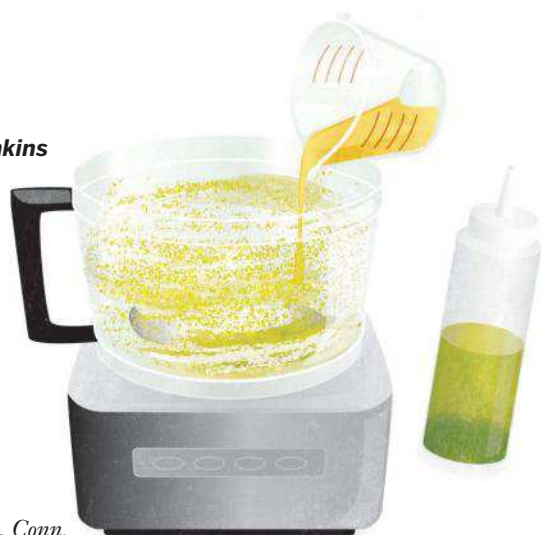
KITCHEN SHORTCUTS

Compiled by *Cecelia Jenkins*

Presto: Pesto Recycle

—*Scott Miraldi, Sandy Hook, Conn.*

When I'm making pesto, a small but significant amount of the mixture always ends up underneath the food processor blade and in the corners of the work-bowl after I've emptied it. Rather than spend time scraping it out with a rubber spatula, I add ½ cup more oil to the processor and give it a quick pulse. The oil splashes up into those hard-to-reach spots and drags out the stubborn bits of pesto so I can easily pour it out of the workbowl; I save this pesto-flavored oil in a squeeze bottle in the refrigerator and use it for vinaigrette, as a dipping oil for breads, and for drizzling over grilled meats.



Avocado Ice

—*Adrienne Mendoza, Washington, D.C.*

I'm a little ashamed to say that my husband calls me the "avocado killer" because I often forget about the avocados I have sitting on the counter and end up having to toss them when they get overripe. But I found a good way to save ripe avocados for another day: I mash them in a bowl with a squeeze of lemon juice, spoon the mash into ice cube trays, and freeze them. I can then pop out a few cubes and add them to my blended green smoothies in the morning or thaw a few cubes to puree into a salad dressing.

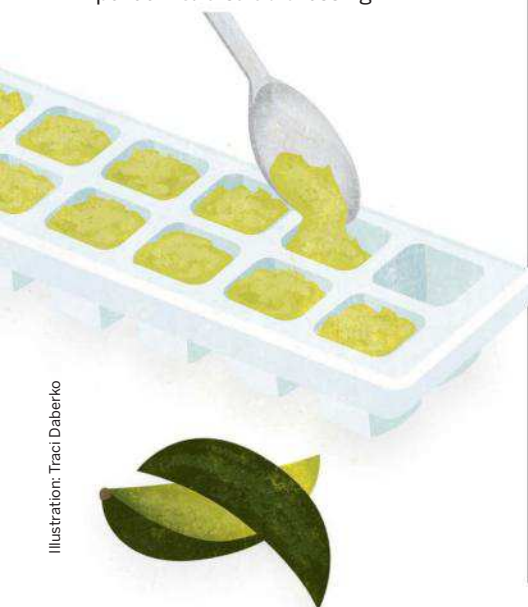


Illustration: Traci Daberko



No Wispy Eggs

—*Precious Jones, Lake Charles, La.*

My family loves poached eggs, but I hate how they often look ragged and uneven. To make perfectly tidy eggs, I follow an egg coddling technique and use 6-ounce ramekins. Just spritz the ramekins with vegetable oil spray, put them in a 12-inch skillet, add water to about halfway up the outside of the ramekins, cover the skillet, and bring the water to a boil. Crack the eggs into the ramekins, reduce the heat so the water is simmering, cover, and cook for 3 to 4 minutes (depending on how runny you like the yolks). You have to handle the hot ramekins carefully, but the eggs come right out—and they're the perfect size for English muffins.

Tasting Cottage Cheese

Go-to snack or handy cooking and baking ingredient? We think both. *by Emily Phares*

COTTAGE CHEESE IS a tasty snack when eaten plain, and it's also a handy ingredient: We use it in baked pastas because it stays creamy, and we add it to pizzas, dips, and desserts, where it contributes moisture and richness. To find the best one for both snacking and cooking, we selected five top-selling, nationally available full-fat cottage cheeses and sampled them plain and in lasagna.

PRODUCT TASTING

Texture proved critical: Our highly rated cottage cheeses were drier and less liquid-y, while our least favorite products were watery. However, we noticed that wetter products had additives such as xanthan gum, guar gum, and locust bean gum—all meant to bind ingredients and reduce wateriness. Our winner and runner-up had no gums at all and the shortest ingredient lists in the lineup.

Dr. Dana Wolle, senior scientist at Chr. Hansen, a Danish company that specializes in developing cultures, enzymes, and probiotics, told us that "the best way to get a thick, rich dairy product with plenty of body is to use a lot of dairy solids," the part of milk that's composed of protein, fat, carbohydrates, and minerals. (The rest of milk, about 87 percent of it, is made up of water.) Stabilizers, which are typically less expensive to add than dairy solids, "can make the product thicker but can't exactly match the texture of dairy fat and protein," Wolle said.

In addition to our tasters' preference for drier, less liquid-y cottage cheese, our favorite products were bold and tangy, while lower-ranked products were milder and dull. Differences were most noticeable when we tasted the cottage cheeses plain and were somewhat muted (but still discernible) when we evaluated them cooked in lasagna. Our favorite, Daisy Regular Cottage Cheese, won over tasters with its "tangy, fresh dairy flavor" and luscious, creamy texture, likely due to an abundance of dairy solids. Its simple ingredients—just cultured milk, cream, and salt—proved to be a winning combination.

RECOMMENDED

Our Favorite

Daisy
4% Milkfat Cottage Cheese
Price: \$3.99 for 24 oz
(\$0.17 per oz)



TASTERS' NOTES

Tasters praised our winner's "fresh," "very creamy" "full-fat flavor," which was balanced by a "nice tangy richness." We also liked its "thick consistency" and "larger curds."

Good Culture
Organic Cottage Cheese
Price: \$5.49 for 16 oz
(\$0.34 per oz)



Our runner-up had a "tart," "bright dairy flavor" and a "milky tang." The "slightly dry" texture meant that it wasn't very liquid-y, which we liked.

Breakstone's
Small Curd 4% Milkfat
Cottage Cheese
Price: \$2.99 for 16 oz
(\$0.19 per oz)



The "small, delicate curds" made for a "creamier" texture. Most tasters liked the "rich" flavor, but a few picked up on a "sour" "off-flavor" when sampling it plain.

Organic Valley
4% Milkfat Cottage Cheese
Price: \$5.69 for 16 oz
(\$0.36 per oz)



This product had a "nice tangy flavor" and "small," "springy" curds, but it was "loose" and "watery." However, it was fine in lasagna.

RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS

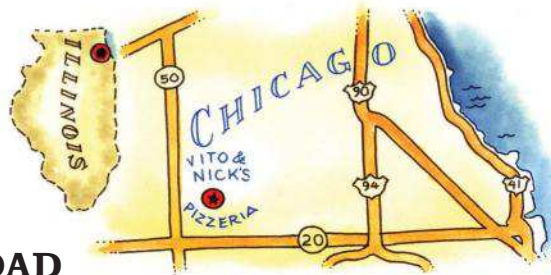
Horizon Organic
Cultured Cottage Cheese
Price: \$4.99 for 16 oz
(\$0.31 per oz)



Although this cheese was fine in lasagna, when we tasted it plain, we found it "soupy," "watery," and a bit "bland" and "dull."

Cook's Country Recipes That Call for Cottage Cheese

Subscribers to our website can access these recipes at CooksCountry.com: Hearty Beef Lasagna, Breakfast Pizza, Broccoli-Cheese Cornbread, Stuffed Shells, and High-Rise Herb Biscuits, among others.



ON THE ROAD



Pride of Chicago's South Side

Text by Bryan Roof; photos by Steve Klise

ROSE GEORGE IS making chop suey when I arrive at Vito & Nick's on the South Side of Chicago. She tells me to wait a second and then turns to shake my hand. She has a vice-like grip. It's 11:00 a.m. on a Wednesday, and the bar is already half-filled with regulars drinking beer; Rose has been there since 2:00 a.m., cooking and "taking care of things," including making chop suey for her employees and some regulars.

In the early 1920s, Rose's grandparents, Vito and Mary Barraco, opened Vito's Tavern. Mary, who was Sicilian, did most of the cooking, and they sold basic fare such as sandwiches, sausages, meatballs, and spaghetti in Chinese takeout containers. In 1945, Vito's son Nick joined the business and they began selling pizza.

Twenty years later, Nick took charge of the business and relocated it to its current location on South Pulaski Road. On opening day, instead of calling it "Nick's Pizzeria" as expected, Nick paid homage to his father by calling the restaurant Vito & Nick's. Rose is now the third-generation owner, but she still adheres to the business philosophy instilled in her by her grandfather. "He used to tell me, 'Remember something, Doll'—he always called me Doll—'you're working for the working-class person. Keep it affordable. And never vary the quality of the product, even when times are bad.'"

The dining room is a dizzying hodgepodge of colors and textures: teal chairs and booths, white-and-blue linoleum floors, avocado-green carpeting on the walls, and blue holiday lights



dangling from the drop ceiling above the bar. But it all works. You can't imagine it any other way.

Soon Rose and I are watching Kevin Martinez, aka "Bacon" (all the employees have nicknames—Moe 1, Moe 2, Yano, Buddha), make a sausage pizza. He runs a ball of dough twice through a dough sheeter, rendering it a consistent ¼-inch thickness. The sheeter is as old as the restaurant, and Rose is lucky to know a repairman who can fix it when it goes down. He slides the dough onto a semolina-dusted wooden pizza peel, trims it with a pizza cutter by about an inch all the way around, ladles on a generous wash of sauce, and spreads it edge to edge. Next, he sprinkles on a very light dusting of mozzarella—which, he explains, helps the sausage stick—before taking small, dime-size pinches of fresh sausage and mashing them into the dough with his thumb. He follows with a heavy blanket of mozzarella and, finally, a sprinkle of dried oregano. I blink, and the pizza is in the oven.

The oven—a 1965 Blodgett—is a relic, complete with a cobbled-together assortment of tools for the specific cleaning tasks it requires. One tool, referred to as "the Q-tip," is a sawed-off broomstick with a wad of towels wrapped at one end. There's also a garden hoe, and the other half of that broom, its bristles whittled down to almost nothing.

The pizzas at Vito & Nick's are baked until they're dark—dark enough



to have some customers send them back to the kitchen, complaining that they're burnt. It's the way Nick insisted they be baked. According to Rose, Nick used to stand at the counter adjacent to the pizza oven, watching the pizzas come out of the oven. If they weren't well-done enough, he'd yell, "That's canary! Put it back in!"—implying that the cheese had gone only from white to golden (canary), not to the spotty brown he demanded.

After sampling several pizzas that were baked until they were well past canary, I ask Rose, now 70, if she has plans to retire. With a smile and a nod of certainty, she says, "Mmm-hmm, when I'm 6 feet under. Why would I ever want to stop doing something that I have a passion for?"



Weekday regulars gather around the bar on a recent morning at Vito & Nick's. The colorful decor has been amassed over the decades. Pizza cook Kevin "Bacon" Martinez (left) slides a pie into the pizza oven, a stalwart fixture at Vito & Nick's since the 1960s. Rose George (above right) spends most days at the restaurant, managing the employees and chatting with customers, some of whom have been coming in for decades.

Chicago Thin-Crust Pizza

You know Chicago deep-dish pizza. Now meet its slimmer, crunchier sibling.

by Ashley Moore

WHEN MOST PEOPLE hear “Chicago-style pizza,” they think doughy deep-dish. But deep-dish pizza is not the only pie in town. Head to the South Side of Chicago, to restaurants such as Vito & Nick’s (see “Pride of Chicago’s South Side”), and you’ll find locals devouring a different but equally local style of pie.

This style, sometimes called “tavern” pizza (but not at Vito & Nick’s), is built on a thin, crisp crust similar to the cracker style made famous by St. Louis. It features a lightly sweet sauce and dark, spotty-brown cheese reaching all the way to the pie’s charred edge. It’s cut into easy-to-pick-up small squares.

A few experiments with recipes for this style of pie revealed the good news: This dough came together quickly in the food processor (flour, yeast, salt, water, olive oil, and just a bit of sugar for sweetness and browning), and after a 2- to 2½-hour rise, it rolled out easily. The quick food processor prep minimized the development of gluten, making for an extra-crisp crust.

Since this pizza’s success rests on its signature snappy crust, it’s essential to bake it on a pizza stone (see “Super Stone”). I tried other options, such as a rimmed baking sheet, but I found that the crust cooked unevenly. I also found that it’s important to allow the pizza

stone to preheat for a full hour for the best results. A dusting of cornmeal on your pizza peel (or, if you don’t have a peel, a cookie sheet) helps the pie slide in and out of the oven smoothly.

For toppings, I went with a quick, stir-together no-cook tomato sauce with some Italian seasoning and fennel seeds stirred in and, inspired by the sauce at Vito & Nick’s, a bit of sugar added for sweetness. I also added some torn pieces of Italian sausage (see page 6 to make your own) and then covered the pizza with shredded mozzarella cheese, sprinkled all the way to the outer edge.

At Vito & Nick’s, the pizzas are so well-done that there isn’t any white left on the cheese when it comes out of the oven—the whole pie is browned on top—so be sure not to pull it too early. And don’t bite too early either, or you’ll burn the top of your mouth. Oh, the dangers of delicious pizza.

CHICAGO THIN-CRUST PIZZA

Makes two 12-inch pizzas

Using cold water keeps the dough from overheating in the food processor. A pizza peel is the best tool for moving the pizza in and out of the oven, but you can also use a rimless baking sheet.

PIZZA

- 2½ cups (12½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1½ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons cold water
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Cornmeal
- 12 ounces sweet Italian sausage, casings removed
- 12 ounces whole-milk mozzarella cheese, shredded (3 cups)
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano

SAUCE

- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon fennel seeds

1. **FOR THE PIZZA:** Process flour, sugar, yeast, and salt in food processor until combined, about 3 seconds. With processor running, slowly add cold water and oil and process until dough forms sticky ball that clears sides of bowl, 30 to 60 seconds.
2. Transfer dough to lightly oiled counter and knead until smooth, about 1 minute. Shape dough into tight ball and place in greased bowl. Cover bowl



Don't be afraid to let this pizza get nice and dark—the browned cheese is part of the appeal.

with plastic wrap and let dough rise at room temperature until almost doubled in size, 2 to 2½ hours. One hour before baking, adjust oven rack to lowest position, set baking stone on rack, and heat oven to 500 degrees.

3. **FOR THE SAUCE:** Whisk all ingredients together in bowl. (Sauce can be refrigerated for up to 2 days.)

4. Transfer dough to lightly floured counter, divide in half, and gently shape each half into ball. Return 1 dough ball to bowl and cover with plastic. Coat remaining dough ball lightly with flour and gently flatten into 8-inch disk using your fingertips. Using rolling pin, roll dough into 12-inch circle, dusting dough lightly with flour as needed. (If dough springs back during rolling, let rest for 10 minutes before rolling again.)

5. Sprinkle pizza peel with cornmeal. Transfer dough to prepared pizza

peel and carefully stretch to return to 12-inch circle. Using back of spoon or ladle, spread scant ½ cup sauce in thin layer over surface of dough, leaving ⅛-inch border around edge. Pinch 6 ounces sausage into approximate dime-size pieces and evenly distribute over sauce. Sprinkle ½ cups mozzarella evenly over sausage to edge of pie. 6. Carefully slide pizza onto baking stone and bake until cheese is well browned and edges of pizza are crisp and dark, 10 to 14 minutes. Slide pizza peel underneath pizza and remove pizza from oven. Slide pizza onto cutting board and let cool for 5 minutes. Repeat with remaining dough, sauce, sausage, mozzarella, and oregano. Cut pizzas into 2- to 3-inch squares and serve.

Make your own sausage: next page ▶

Super Stone

A baking stone absorbs and radiates lots of heat, which translates into breads and pizzas with beautifully crisp crusts. In a recent testing, we loved our winner’s rectangular shape (which gave us more options for shaping breads and pizzas), high maximum temperature (more than 2,000 degrees), durability, and small raised feet that made it easy to move.



TEST KITCHEN FAVORITE
Old Stone Oven Pizza Baking Stone (\$59.95)

Easy Homemade Italian Sausage

Let's take the mystery out of how the sausage gets made.

by Bryan Roof



Savory sausage patties are great alongside eggs or stuffed into buns for bold burgers.



COARSELY GROUND PORK
Makes the best textured sausage



REGULAR-GRIND PORK
Makes acceptable but slightly dense sausage

Mix It Up

Using a stand mixer to incorporate the seasonings into the pork increases the contact between the salt and the meat and aids in extracting more of the sticky proteins in the meat that help bind the sausage.



THERE'S A GREAT butcher shop near my house that I visit at least once a week. But while their steaks and chops are excellent and I'm crazy about their homemade bacon, I've been disappointed by their Italian sausage. Not enough pungency, not enough spice, not enough personality. I knew I could do better. I set out to create an everyday, all-purpose Italian sausage to crumble up and use on pizza, in pasta sauces, or even for making sausage patties to slide onto burger buns. And it had to be easy.

Italian sausage—pork ground with plenty of fat and mixed with salt and spices—is more of a style than a specific recipe. One family's version can be surprisingly different from another's. Most versions start with coarsely ground pork, which gives the sausage its texture (regular grind can work, but the sausages will be slightly more dense). To get started, I dropped 1½ pounds of ground pork into the bowl of my stand mixer, which I'd use to incorporate all the goodies.

Another common calling card is fennel seeds, which provide little pops of fennel flavor throughout. I lightly toasted mine in a skillet to help jump-start their flavor and then lightly crushed them with a rolling pin to break them down slightly. After a few tests, I landed on 1 tablespoon of fennel seeds for 1½ pounds of ground pork. After adding sugar for sweetness, black and red peppers for spice, and garlic for pungency—plus a healthy sprinkle of salt—I had a balanced lineup of flavors.

I found some recipes that called for adding a bit of wine or vermouth to the mix, but after some testing, I found that it didn't contribute much and that it created problems during cooking—the liquid leached out in the skillet and splattered all over. This might be OK for a sausage that was going into a sauce, but not for an all-purpose sausage.

The final ingredient was time. Allowing the sausage to chill in the refrigerator for an hour (or up to 48 hours) made a big difference in balancing and rounding out the flavors. What's more, the stuff freezes beautifully; in fact, I have sausage patties in my freezer right now, just waiting for a last-minute weeknight supper.

I now had a supereasy sausage to use for Chicago Thin-Crust Pizza (page 5), sausage burger patties, pasta sauce, and a million other things.

EASY SWEET ITALIAN SAUSAGE

Makes about 1½ pounds

Let the toasted fennel seeds cool completely before cracking them in step 1. A rasp-style grater makes quick work of turning the garlic into a paste. If you can't find coarsely ground pork (you may have to ask your butcher), you can substitute finer, more commonly available regular-grind pork, but the texture of the sausage will be denser. The sausage can be formed into patties and frozen: Using your wet hands and working with ½ cup of sausage at a time, form six 4-inch-diameter patties, about ½ inch thick. Transfer the patties to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and place the sheet in the freezer. You can store the frozen patties in a zipper-lock bag for up to one month.

- 1 **tablespoon fennel seeds, toasted**
- 1½ **pounds coarsely ground pork**
- 1½ **teaspoons sugar**
- 1½ **teaspoons salt**
- 1 **large garlic clove, minced to paste**
- ¾ **teaspoon pepper**
- ¼ **teaspoon dried oregano**
- ¼ **teaspoon red pepper flakes**

1. Place fennel seeds in small zipper-lock bag and seal bag. Using rolling pin, roll over seeds 2 or 3 times to coarsely crack.
2. Combine pork, sugar, salt, garlic, pepper, oregano, pepper flakes, and fennel seeds in bowl of stand mixer. Fit mixer with paddle and mix on low speed until mixture is thoroughly combined and looks sticky, 60 to 90 seconds, scraping down bowl as needed. Cover and refrigerate mixture for at least 1 hour to allow flavors to meld before using. (Sausage mixture can be refrigerated for up to 2 days.)

How to Cook Sausage Patties

Heat 1 teaspoon vegetable oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add up to 4 sausage patties and cook until browned on both sides and meat registers 160 degrees, about 4 minutes per side. Alternatively, grill patties over medium-hot fire until lightly charred and meat registers 160 degrees, about 4 minutes per side. If frozen, increase cooking time to 6 minutes per side.

Corn and Bacon Pasta

Can't get enough of sweet summer corn? This easy pasta will help you get your fill.

by **Matthew Fairman**

I LOVE SUMMER corn boiled and buttered, grilled until lightly charred, or simply cut from the cob and tossed fresh into salads. But I desired a new way to turn my favorite side dish into a satisfying, corn-centric main course. And I wanted it to be fast and easy enough to throw together on a sweltering weeknight.

I spent some time in our cookbook library and uncovered a handful of recipes for an approach I'd yet to try: corn and bacon pasta. The promise was a comforting bowl of pasta napped in a creamy, corny sauce and set off with salty, smoky, crunchy bits of bacon. But the promise faded when I prepared and plated up these recipes for my team in the test kitchen. We could see the corn in these dishes; we just couldn't taste much of it.

For my next test, I crisped some bacon in a skillet and then sautéed some corn kernels in a little bit of the bacon drippings. When the kernels were starting to brown, I tossed them—along with the crumbled bacon—with cooked-and-drained spaghetti before adding a fistful of grated Parmesan and a bit of the starchy pasta cooking water, hoping that the melting cheese and the pasta water would bind the sauce.

Fail. The ingredients didn't form a cohesive sauce, and most bites were still devoid of corn and bacon. The dish also lacked freshness. I decided to replace the spaghetti with orecchiette, one of my favorite pastas because its bowl-like shape traps sauce and other small ingredients (such as corn kernels). I also added a bit of cream to the pan after sautéing the corn and simmered it so it thickened into a luscious sauce base. To address the missing freshness, I tossed in ½ cup of fragrant chopped basil, the very essence of summer, at the end.

My tasters and I were happy: Each bite showcased little chewy bowlfuls of sweet corn, crispy bacon, and fresh basil. And the recipe takes only about a half-hour to make. Finally, a new way to bring sweet corn into the center—not the side—of your summer dinner plate.



The orecchiette cradles the corn and bacon for full flavor in every bite.

CORN AND BACON PASTA

Serves 4 to 6

If you can't find fresh ears of corn at your local market, you can substitute 2¼ cups of thawed frozen corn.

- 1 pound orecchiette**
Salt and pepper
- 5 slices bacon, cut crosswise into ½-inch-wide strips**
- 3 ears corn, kernels cut from cobs**
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced thin**
- 1 cup heavy cream**
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh basil**
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese, plus extra for serving**

- 1.** Bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. 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, cook bacon in 12-inch skillet over medium heat until crispy, 7 to 9 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer bacon to paper towel-lined

plate. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons fat from skillet.

3. Heat fat left in skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add corn and 1 teaspoon salt and cook until corn is bright yellow and just beginning to brown, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add cream, ¼ cup basil, and 1 teaspoon pepper and cook until slightly thickened, about 2 minutes.

4. Add sauce, Parmesan, bacon, reserved cooking water, and remaining ¼ cup basil to pot with pasta. Stir until thoroughly combined and creamy, about 30 seconds. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve, passing extra Parmesan separately.

Secret Ingredient: Water

The pasta cooking water is rich in starch that helps bind the sauce together. We like to use a ladle to reserve some of the water right before we drain the pasta.

Do Herb Keepers Really Keep Herbs Fresher Longer?

by **Emily Phares**

HERB KEEPERS ARE designed to extend the life span of herbs. Resembling covered vases, they hold the stems in water while protecting the leaves. To find the best model, we selected five, priced from \$14.86 to \$30.47, and used them in the refrigerator with one bunch each of tender cilantro and hardy thyme. Curious if they would work outside the refrigerator, we also tested them with basil, an herb that is typically stored at room temperature. For comparison, we also stored herbs according to our recommended storage methods.

The herb keepers all performed similarly, and they didn't offer much improvement over our regular storage methods. What set the best models apart was access—how easy it was to add or remove herbs. The main advantage of an herb keeper is its hard shell, which protects herbs from getting squished in the refrigerator. If that's a concern, our winner is a good option.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Cole & Mason
Fresh Herb Keeper
Model: H105159U
Price: \$17.31
Dimensions: 9 x 4.25 x 8.75 in.
(maximum height)



Comments: Our winner's slim, rectangular shape and adjustable height made it easy to add and remove herbs. The vented lid prevented condensation from building up, which helped extend the life of the herbs. Plastic dividers inside the storage chamber helped keep the herbs tidy and easy to access. This model kept herbs fresh the longest.

RECOMMENDED

Norpro Herb Keeper
Model: 811
Price: \$14.86
Dimensions: 3.75-in diameter, 9 in tall



Comments: Overall, this model did a good job of storing herbs and keeping them fresh. Because there were no holes for ventilation, some herbs (particularly cilantro) were a little wetter than those kept in our winner. We sometimes had to wrangle herbs to get them inside the container, and we accidentally closed the lid and squished the herbs a few times.



Subscribers to our website can read the full testing results at CooksCountry.com/sept18.

Green Goddess Chicken

Time to let this goddess spread her wings beyond the salad bowl.

by **Cecelia Jenkins**

WE ALL KNOW green goddess salad dressing, which is made with lots of fresh herbs and rich mayonnaise, as a creamy, tangy complement to sweet butter lettuce or as a dip for crunchy crudités. But I've recently seen recipes that use the intensely flavorful concoction on chicken, fish, and other unexpected items.

Intrigued, I headed into the test kitchen to try out a few existing recipes for green goddess roasted chicken. Though mayonnaise is a main component of the dressing, only one of these recipes called for slathering the herby mayo-based dressing on bone-in chicken pieces before roasting, with poor results: flabby skin and an overpowering mayo flavor. Other recipes called for buttermilk instead. These versions worked better—sort of: The skin was lovely (nicely rendered and not flabby), but the coating tasted sour.

I wanted juicy chicken under beautiful browned skin, plus a tangy, creamy sauce. I wanted both to be packed with bright, herby flavor, and I wanted a method simple enough for a busy weeknight. I started by ditching the mayo (for now) and focusing on the more promising buttermilk.

We often soak chicken in buttermilk (boosted with salt and other ingredients) for deep seasoning and a bit of tangy flavor. But it's a short step from tanginess to sourness, so I knew I'd need to police that. I'd also have to find a way to keep the herbs from introducing too much moisture—which would inhibit browning—to the mix.

I stirred together just $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of buttermilk and some beautiful chopped fresh herbs (chives, parsley, tarragon), along with garlic. I set aside half the mixture for my sauce (I'd get back to that later), spooned the rest into a zipper-lock bag with the chicken parts and a hefty amount of salt, and stuck it in the refrigerator so the chicken could drink up some of that herby flavor.

After a couple of hours, I roasted the chicken parts at high heat (475 degrees).



The appealing green hue comes from a flavorful combination of chives, parsley, and tarragon.

The skin rendered and browned nicely and the meat was superjuicy, but my reserved buttermilk-herb mixture, which I wanted to use as a sauce, was bland and watery. Blending in a couple of anchovies added depth and nuance (without making the mixture taste fishy), but the sauce was still too loose.

Since dividing the buttermilk-herb mixture into a sauce and a marinade wasn't working, I reduced the amount I set aside for the sauce to just a couple of tablespoons (leaving a greater portion for the marinade) and reintroduced mayonnaise into the mix, adding $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to the sauce. This gave it extra richness, flavor, and creaminess.

After experimenting with different cooking vessels, I found that the best results came from a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet. The chicken roasted beautifully in just under 30 minutes and, thanks to the foil lining, I didn't have burnt marinade remnants to clean. I had a fresh weeknight spin on roast chicken with minimal prep and maximum summertime flavor.

GREEN GODDESS ROAST CHICKEN

Serves 4 to 6

Don't spend a lot of time chopping the herbs and garlic. Chop them just enough to measure them, and then let the blender do the bulk of the work.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fresh chives
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fresh parsley
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 1 tablespoon buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 4 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 anchovy fillets, rinsed
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mayonnaise
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt
- 3 pounds bone-in chicken pieces (2 split breasts cut in half crosswise, 2 drumsticks, and 2 thighs), trimmed

1. Process chives, parsley, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup buttermilk, lemon juice, tarragon, garlic, and anchovies in blender until smooth, about 30 seconds, scraping down sides of blender jar as needed.
2. Transfer 2 tablespoons herb mixture to bowl; add mayonnaise and

THE AMERICAN TABLE

In the early 20th century, the best restaurant in any given city was likely to be the town's grandest hotel. Makes sense: At the time, locals were far less likely to go out for dinner than folks visiting town, and wealthy tourists also had a couple of bucks to spend. Such was the case in San Francisco, where in 1923, celebrated stage actor George Arliss (below) stayed at the Palace Hotel while touring with the hit play *The Green Goddess*. Palace chef Philip Roemer created a special salad dressing in honor of Arliss and, rather than discontinue the dressing after the touring company moved on, kept it on the menu. Fate helped give it legs: The play became first a silent movie and then a talkie, so the term "Green Goddess"—and the dressing named for it—stayed on jet-setters' lips for years.



remaining 1 tablespoon buttermilk and stir to combine. Cover and set aside until ready to serve.

3. Combine salt and remaining herb mixture in 1-gallon zipper-lock bag. Add chicken to bag, press out air, seal bag, and turn to coat chicken in marinade. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to 24 hours.

4. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 475 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil. Place chicken, skin side up, on prepared sheet (do not brush off marinade that sticks to chicken). Make sure skin is not bunched up on chicken. Roast until breasts register 160 degrees and drumsticks/thighs register 175 degrees, 25 to 30 minutes.

5. Transfer chicken to platter, tent with foil, and let rest for 10 minutes. Serve chicken with sauce.

Crushed Red Potatoes

The secret to easy and flavorful red potatoes? Crush 'em.

by *Cecelia Jenkins*

BOILED AND BUTTERED red potatoes are a reliable side dish—they're simple and satisfying, and the little spuds look great on the plate. But they can be a bit boring. Adding herbs to the butter can help, sure, but the seasonings and buttery goodness remain on the outsides of the potatoes, leaving the interiors tasting bland. How do you get flavor inside the spuds? By lightly crushing them so the seasonings can soak right in. Easy, right? Well . . .

To be clear, I wasn't looking to wind up for a fully smashed or mashed potato. My goal was to only lightly break the potatoes open so they just split apart; this way the melted butter (and other seasonings) could find their way into the nooks and crannies while the potatoes maintained some texture.

For my first test, I covered 2 pounds of golf ball-size red potatoes with cold water (we've found that potatoes cook more evenly when started in cold water) and added plenty of salt for deep seasoning. I brought the water up to a boil and then backed the heat down to cook the potatoes through gently. It took about 20 minutes of simmering until they were completely tender.

Then came the fun part: I transferred the drained potatoes to a serving platter and lightly crushed each steaming spud with the back of a wooden spoon—an act that, much like popping bubble wrap, was strangely satisfying. I poured on some seasoned melted butter and sprinkled some chopped parsley and chives over top. It was a solid first attempt at what I had in mind, but the butter and seasonings didn't penetrate or coat the potatoes quite as well as I'd hoped.

For the next batch, I tried returning the drained potatoes to the warm pot and stirring with a firm hand to break them up before adding the melted butter and herbs. But this method beat up the delicate potatoes too much, bringing them too close to mashed or smashed territory. It was better, I found, to drain the cooked potatoes and leave them in the colander while preparing a flavorful butter in the pot. I cooked a minced clove of garlic in melted butter until just golden and fragrant and then pulled the pot off the heat and added the minced herbs, plenty of salt and pepper, and finally the still-steaming cooked potatoes. Next, I lightly pressed each potato with

the back of my spoon (a spatula offers similar control and feel, if you prefer) just until it broke apart and then gently stirred to ensure that all the buttery, garlicky, herby goodness worked its way into every bite.

It's time to say goodbye to boring, underseasoned spuds.

CRUSHED RED POTATOES WITH GARLIC AND HERBS

Serves 4 to 6

Be sure to use small red potatoes measuring 1 to 2 inches in diameter, and use a gentle hand when crushing them.

- 2 pounds small red potatoes, unpeeled**
- Salt and pepper**
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 1 garlic clove, minced**
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh chives**
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley**

1. Place potatoes and 2 tablespoons salt in Dutch oven and cover with water by 1 inch. Bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-high and simmer until paring knife slips easily in and out of potatoes, about 20 minutes. (Potatoes should be very tender.) Drain potatoes in colander.

2. In now-empty pot, melt butter over medium heat. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Off heat, stir in chives, parsley, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper.

3. Add potatoes to pot. Press each potato with back of spoon or spatula to lightly crush (do not mash; potatoes should still have texture). Stir to coat potatoes with butter mixture (potatoes will break up slightly; this is OK). Transfer to platter. Serve.

CRUSHED RED POTATOES WITH GARLIC AND SMOKED PAPRIKA

Substitute extra-virgin olive oil for butter and heat until shimmering. Sprinkle 1 teaspoon smoked paprika over crushed potatoes on platter before serving.

CRUSHED RED POTATOES WITH OREGANO AND CAPERS

Substitute 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano, 1 tablespoon rinsed capers, and 1 tablespoon lemon juice for chives and parsley. Decrease salt in step 2 to ¼ teaspoon.



Lightly crushing the potatoes allows the butter and herbs into the nooks and crannies.

Getting the Texture Just Right



1. Press on the cooked potatoes with a wooden spoon until they crack open and are lightly crushed.



2. Stir gently to further break down the crushed potatoes and distribute the seasoned butter mixture.

Sweet and Tangy Pearl Onions

Stuck for side dish ideas? These brightly flavored little onions go well with just about everything.

by **Alli Berkey**

CIPOLLINE IN AGRODOLCE is a traditional, country-style Italian side dish featuring small, flat cipollini onions that are braised and bathed in a brightly sweet and sour vinegar-and-sugar glaze (in Italian, *agro* means “sour” and *dolce* means “sweet”). These saucy little onions provide a pop of flavor when served alongside any number of main dishes: a holiday roast, weeknight chicken, or baked fish. They’re even good on their own. I wanted to create a simple recipe for them so home cooks could enjoy them whenever the craving hit.

But there was one catch: Disk-shaped cipollini onions can be hard to find and are a pain to peel. As an alternative, I wanted to use readily available, prepeeled frozen pearl onions. I gathered several existing recipes and found that their ingredients varied greatly. Some recipes called for red or white wine vinegar, others balsamic. Brown and white sugars were both in play, as were butter and olive oil. Other components included chicken or beef stock, pancetta, fresh herbs, and wine. I wanted to minimize the ingredient list while still delivering a big payout of flavor.

Thinking that a relatively quick skillet braise would be just the ticket here, I added 4 cups of frozen pearl onions to my 12-inch nonstick skillet along with about ½ cup of water and a good knob of butter, which would add richness and sheen. I covered the skillet and let the water bubble away until the skillet was almost dry, which took about 10 minutes. At this point, the onions were mostly tender but still pale. I uncovered the skillet and let the onions brown in the flavorful butter, which took about 5 minutes with frequent stirring.

Now for the sweet-and-sour glaze. I tested white and red wine vinegars against balsamic, and we liked the balsamic for its inherent sweetness and rich, distinctive flavor. After playing with ratios, I landed on ½ cup vinegar to just 2 tablespoons granulated sugar (which we preferred to brown sugar for its cleaner flavor). To further deepen the sweetness, I added a little sugar to the water in the braising step, too.

To finish the dish, I swirled in a bit of extra butter at the end (to enrich the sauce and give it a nice sheen) and scattered fresh and fragrant chopped basil over the glazy onions.



Butter, sugar, and vinegar are the backbone of our glaze. Pepper flakes and basil dress it up.

SWEET AND TANGY PEARL ONIONS

Serves 4

These onions are great as a stand-alone side dish, but they can also be served as a flavorful condiment for beef or pork roasts. Do not thaw the onions before cooking them. You will need about 32 ounces of frozen pearl onions to equal 4 cups.

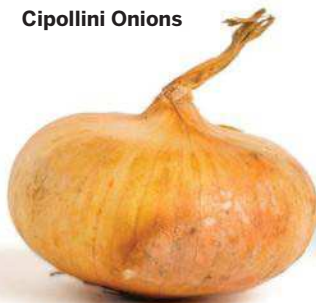
- 4 cups frozen pearl onions
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon water
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2½ tablespoons sugar
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- ⅓ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

1. Combine onions, ½ cup water, 1 tablespoon butter, 1½ teaspoons sugar, salt, and pepper flakes in 12-inch nonstick skillet. Bring to boil over medium-high heat; cover and cook until water is nearly evaporated, about 10 minutes, stirring halfway through cooking.
2. Uncover skillet and reduce heat to medium. Cook, stirring frequently, until onions are deeply browned, about 5 minutes.
3. Reduce heat to medium-low. Stir in vinegar, remaining 1 tablespoon water, and remaining 2 tablespoons sugar and continue to cook until liquid has thickened and completely coats onions, about 3 minutes longer. Off heat, stir in remaining 2 tablespoons butter. Sprinkle with basil and serve.

A World of Small Onions

You can buy several varieties of small onions at most markets. Traditional recipes for *cipolline in agrodolce* call for small cipollini onions (far left). In our recipe, we call for frozen pearl onions (far right). Here's a rundown of the four commonly available types.

Cipollini Onions



Sweet, disk-shaped cipollini onions are laborious to peel but great in braises.

Boiling Onions



These onions, which aren't so easy to peel, are harvested small and cooked whole.

Fresh Pearl Onions



Fresh pearl onions are tedious to peel for two reasons: their odd shape and their small size.

Frozen Pearl Onions



These small, sweet, mild onions are already peeled, so they are easy to work with.

Grilled Chicken Skewers

No amount of peanut sauce can save chalky, overcooked chicken. Here's the right way to make satay. *by Jeremy Sauer*

MOST OF THE Thai, Japanese, and Chinese restaurants in my family's rotation have a variation of chicken skewers on the menu. And I'm thankful for that because my kids love them; they stay happily occupied dunking their skewered meat into a dipping sauce while my wife and I busy ourselves with the rest of the menu. But every time I reach over and steal a skewer, I'm reminded that I'm not a fan of the bland, chalky chicken strips most restaurants serve.

It's easy to see chicken satay's potential: deeply seasoned, lightly charred, juicy chicken with a spicy-sweet peanut sauce. I set out to create a homemade version that lived up to this promise.

I started with the chicken. Nearly every version uses boneless, skinless chicken breasts cut into strips; marinated; and slid onto bamboo skewers before grilling. The problem is that the lean breast meat often dries out on the grill. I needed a marinade to add moisture (and flavor) to the chicken. Pretty much every satay marinade includes a few essentials—fish sauce, sugar, garlic, and scallions. My tasters loved the complexity provided by curry powder. Through several more tests, we settled on the rest of the marinade ingredients: Sriracha hot sauce, creamy coconut milk, and fragrant, cooling cilantro.



Our recipe delivers nicely charred, juicy chicken with a spicy-sweet peanut dipping sauce.

Lime juice, a common addition, was a no-no, as the acid “cooked” the delicate breast meat, making it mealy.

The chicken had great flavor, but it was drying out a bit on the grill. I tried cooking it over a weaker fire, but that meant less flavorful charring. The answer turned out to be in the skewering; I found that it was best to bunch up the strips of chicken so that the chicken was like an S and the skewer like the line running through a dollar sign. In this configuration, a good portion of the meat was protected from the direct heat of the grill while the outside parts got nice and charred. Problem solved.

For the peanut sauce, I went with the basics—peanut butter, sugar, lime juice, fish sauce, and garlic, plus cilantro and scallions. A solid squirt of Sriracha sauce turned up the heat, and a bit more curry powder echoed the spice in the satay. Pretty solid recipe—literally. One of my tasters commented that although it tasted great, this was more of a peanut spread than a peanut sauce. Thinning it with some of the leftover coconut milk fixed the problem.

This satay was ready to move off the kids' menu and onto the adults' plates.

GRILLED CHICKEN SATAY

Serves 4

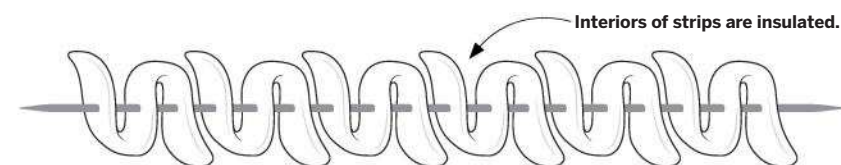
Either dark or light brown sugar will work in this recipe. The number of skewers you use may vary depending on how tightly you pack the chicken.

PEANUT SAUCE

- 1/3 cup peanut butter
- 1/3 cup coconut milk
- 3 tablespoons lime juice (2 limes)
- 2 scallions, sliced thin
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon Sriracha sauce
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon curry powder

Unique Skewering Technique

You need a hot fire to get good char, but thin pieces of chicken breast can easily dry out over the intense heat. We solved this problem with a unique skewering method that helps insulate the interiors of the chicken strips while still exposing the exteriors to plenty of flavor-building heat and char. First, we slice boneless chicken breasts into thin strips on the bias. Then, we thread each piece onto the skewers in an S shape so that the interior portions of each strip are protected from direct heat and stay juicy.



SKEWERING FOR MOIST CHICKEN
Meat nearest to skewer is protected and stays juicy.

SATAY

- 1/3 cup coconut milk
- 4 scallions, sliced thin
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 3 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 tablespoons Sriracha sauce
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon curry powder
- 4 (6- to 8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed
- 6–8 (10-inch) wooden skewers, soaked in water for at least 30 minutes

1. FOR THE PEANUT SAUCE:

Process all ingredients in food processor until smooth, about 1 minute. Transfer to serving bowl and set aside. (Sauce can be refrigerated for up to 3 days. Let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before serving.)

2. FOR THE SATAY: In clean, dry workbowl, process coconut milk, scallions, sugar, cilantro, fish sauce, Sriracha, garlic, and curry powder to coarse puree, about 30 seconds. Transfer marinade to bowl.

3. Working with 1 chicken breast at a time, place breast on cutting board with tapered end facing edge of counter. Slice breast lengthwise diagonally on bias into 1/4-inch-thick strips. Transfer chicken to bowl with marinade. Cover bowl and refrigerate chicken for at least 1 hour or up to 12 hours.

4. Thread chicken strips tightly onto skewers, using 5 to 6 strips per skewer and leaving no more than 3/4 inch of skewer exposed on either end.

5A. 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.

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

6. Clean and oil cooking grate. Arrange skewers on grill (over coals if using charcoal) and cook (covered if using gas) until chicken is charred around edges and just cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes per side. Transfer to platter. Serve with peanut sauce.

Peach Caprese Salad

This fresh take on an old standard should become a summertime classic in its own right.

by **Katie Leaird**

MANY OF US are familiar with Caprese salad, the Italian salad of fresh mozzarella cheese, ripe tomatoes, and basil leaves dressed simply with olive oil and balsamic vinegar. The green, white, and red platter not only represents the colors of Italy's flag but also highlights three of the iconic flavors of the country's cuisine. While each ingredient is delicious on its own, the simple and complete harmony of their union has made this salad omnipresent on Italian American menus throughout the United States.

But what are we, Americans, if not innovators? To give this salad a new twist, I dared to highlight a different seasonal fruit in place of tomatoes: peaches. I know they have fundamental differences, but peaches and tomatoes are both sweet, supple, and bursting with flavorful juiciness when perfectly ripe. So how hard could it be to swap one in for the other?

In my first attempt at a peach Caprese, I did just that. I alternated slices of peach and fresh mozzarella around a platter, sprinkled torn basil leaves over top, and drizzled the salad with olive oil and balsamic vinegar. It didn't taste bad, but it was strange and confused. The dark color and intense flavor of the balsamic muddled the fresh fruit instead of pleasantly accenting its acidity (as it does so nicely with tomatoes). In addition, while peaches are juicy, they aren't usually as moisture-packed as fresh tomatoes, and thus the resulting salad felt dry and disjointed.

Balsamic was out, so I tested other vinegars and lemon juice. In the end, lemon juice won: It had just the right

amount of lively acid without upstaging the peaches or the mozzarella. I found that it was best to whisk together the lemon juice and extra-virgin olive oil (along with a little salt and pepper) to ensure even coverage.

I wanted to stick with creamy fresh mozzarella for this salad to uphold the familiar Caprese identity. While the ratio of one mozzarella round to one thick tomato slice feels just right, this ratio did not translate well in my peach salad. The peach wedges were dwarfed by the large slices of mozzarella. Halving the slices of cheese to form half-moons that were about the same size as the peach wedges evened things out.

Tasters loved the look and the flavor of this new Caprese, but I worried that it wasn't cohesive enough, so I tossed the peach slices with the vinaigrette before assembling the salad. This thin but thorough coating of acid, oil, salt, and pepper deeply seasoned the peaches and tied the salad together.

PEACH CAPRESE SALAD

Serves 6

Be sure to use ripe peaches. We like using 4-ounce balls of fresh mozzarella in this recipe.

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1½ tablespoons lemon juice**
- Salt and pepper**
- 1 pound ripe peaches, quartered and pitted, each quarter cut into 4 slices**
- 12 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, halved and sliced ¼ inch thick**
- 6 large fresh basil leaves, torn into small pieces**

- 1.** Whisk oil, lemon juice, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ⅛ teaspoon pepper together in large bowl. Add peaches and gently toss to coat.
- 2.** Shingle peaches and mozzarella on serving platter. Drizzle any remaining dressing from bowl over top. Sprinkle with basil. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.



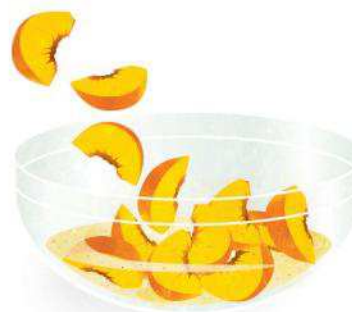
A lemony dressing highlights the best flavors in both the peaches and the creamy cheese.

Peach Preparation

To prepare the peaches for this salad, halve and then quarter them, remove the pits, and slice each quarter into four equal-size wedges (16 wedges total). To deeply season the peach wedges, we toss them in the dressing before assembling the salad.



1. Cut each peach into 16 wedges.



2. Toss peach wedges in dressing before composing salad.

Faster Ripening

Like bananas, avocados, apples, pears, and melons, peaches are climacteric fruits, which means they continue to ripen once picked. To speed up ripening, you can place a climacteric fruit in a paper bag with a piece of ripe fruit, which will produce ethylene gas that will hasten the ripening.

Crispy Vegetable Fritters

Shred vegetables, mix into batter, fry—could crispy fritters really be that easy?

by Cecelia Jenkins

TIRED ZUCCHINI. THAT unused half red bell pepper. The bag of carrots that has been in the refrigerator for months. Thankfully, there's hope for those leftovers: vegetable fritters. They transform imperfect produce into something that's tender, crisp, delicious, and fun to eat.

I learned a lot by making a few existing recipes. Some vegetables, such as zucchini, were best shredded; others, such as onions and bell peppers, needed to be sliced to hold their shape. Fritters also need a batter to bind them, usually some combination of water, eggs, and either flour or cornstarch. And finally, fritters fried in different amounts of oil came out with completely different textures.

To give my recipe a solid foundation, I'd need a carefully measured amount of grated and/or chopped vegetables. I settled on 3 cups—packed for consistency—of prepared vegetables to make 12 fritters. Now on to the batter.

Flour mixed with water made the fritters too tender and cakey. Superabsorbent cornstarch created fritters that looked good but were chewy on the inside. But equal parts cornstarch and flour, mixed with just enough water to form a smooth batter, made fritters that were crispy yet tender. An egg wasn't necessary—it made the fritters too heavy—but I did find that replacing the tap water with seltzer created the lightest fritters. A dash of baking powder helped leaven the batter to lighten them even further.

As for the frying, I tested three methods: deep frying, shallow frying, and sautéing in just a few tablespoons of oil. The sauté method failed miserably—my fritters emerged from the skillet steamy and soggy. But I was happy to learn that the shallow-fried fritters were just as good as the deep-fried ones. Just 1½ cups of oil, carefully maintained between 300 and 325 degrees, did the trick. Turning off the heat between batches helped prevent the oil from overheating.

After testing pretty much every summer vegetable, I settled on the combination of red bell pepper, carrot, zucchini, and onion, with cilantro, scallions, and garlic to heighten and brighten the flavors. As a final flourish, I came up with a simple horseradish sauce that makes these crispy, flavorful fritters even more irresistible.

CRISPY VEGETABLE FRITTERS

Makes 12 fritters; serves 4 to 6

You can use tap water instead of seltzer, but the fritters won't be as light. Shred the zucchini and carrot on the large shredding disk of a food processor or the large holes of a box grater. Do not add corn; it pops in the hot oil. We season the batter just before frying because the salt causes the vegetables to shed water that thins the batter. Hold cooked fritters on a wire rack in a 200-degree oven.

SAUCE

- ⅓ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon prepared horseradish, drained
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Salt and pepper

FRITTERS

- ½ cup (2½ ounces) plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (2 ounces) plus 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¾ cup seltzer
- 1 cup thinly sliced red bell pepper
- 1 cup shredded zucchini
- ½ cup shredded carrot
- ½ cup thinly sliced onion
- ½ cup fresh cilantro leaves
- 2 scallions, cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1½ cups vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper

- 1. FOR THE SAUCE:** Whisk mayonnaise, horseradish, and lemon juice together in bowl and season with salt and pepper to taste; set aside.
- 2. FOR THE FRITTERS:** Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet and line half of rack with triple layer of paper towels. Whisk flour, cornstarch, and baking powder together in large bowl. Add seltzer and whisk until smooth, thick batter forms. Add bell pepper, zucchini, carrot, onion, cilantro, scallions, and garlic to batter and stir until vegetables are evenly coated.
- 3.** Add oil to 12-inch nonstick skillet until it measures about ¼ inch deep and heat over medium-high heat to 350 degrees. Stir ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper into vegetable batter.
- 4.** Using ¼-cup dry measuring cup, place 1 portion of vegetable batter in skillet; immediately spread to 4-inch diameter with spoon so top sits slightly below surface of oil. Repeat 3 times, so

you have 4 fritters in skillet. Make sure vegetables do not mound in centers of fritters. Adjust burner, if necessary, to maintain oil temperature between 300 and 325 degrees.

5. Cook on first side until deep golden brown on bottom, 2 to 4 minutes. Using 2 spatulas, flip and continue to cook until golden brown on second side, 2 to 4 minutes longer, moving fritters around skillet as needed for even browning.

6. When second side of fritters is golden brown, turn off burner so oil doesn't overheat. Transfer fritters to paper towel-lined side of prepared rack to drain for about 15 seconds per side, then move to unlined side of rack and season with salt.

7. Return oil to 350 degrees and repeat with remaining vegetable batter in 2 batches, stirring to recombine batter as needed. Serve with sauce.

Press for Success

After portioning the batter into the hot oil, use the back of a spoon to press each fritter flat into a 4-inch circle; the tops of the fritters should sit below the surface of the oil.



Texas-Style Smoked Brisket



You slice both the flat and point against the grain, but those grains run at different angles.

Buy the Right Brisket

A full brisket is from the lower chest of the cow and ranges from 8 to 20 pounds in size. It's made up of both the "point" and "flat" cuts. While the flat alone is easier to find (it's what you're likely to find packaged in the meat case), special-ordering a full brisket from the butcher counter is well worth it. A full brisket allows you to offer diners both lean slices from the flat portion and "moist" (or "fatty") slices from the point.

The ideal brisket will have an even, ½-inch-thick fat cap. If you can't get a whole brisket in the 10- to 12-pound range, it's better to buy a slightly larger brisket and trim it down to size (smaller briskets are more prone to drying out on the grill).



The challenge: a whole, hulking 12-pound brisket cooked to juicy tenderness completely on a backyard charcoal grill. Could it be done?

by Morgan Bolling

SETTLE IN AND get comfortable. Like drinking 18-year-old single-malt Scotch, smoking a whole brisket is a task best taken slow. But if you're willing to invest a bit of time, attention, and patience—and take a bold leap of faith—truly sublime eating is well within reach.

As any Texan worth their spurs will tell you, a properly smoked brisket holds irresistible appeal—ultrabeefy, tender, and juicy inside, with a dark, peppery, smoky crust (or "bark"). Legendary Texas barbecue joints don't even offer sauce; instead they season the meat sparingly and confidently with salt, pepper, and smoke.

Why cook a whole brisket? Most home cooks use just half a brisket, either the lean flat cut or the fatter point cut, because whole briskets are so large and take so long to cook. But a whole brisket feeds a crowd, looks and tastes incredible, and, for those who love a grilling challenge, is the crowning achievement of backyard barbecue mastery.

Texas brisket is traditionally smoked in commercial smokers that can handle hundreds of pounds of meat at once. Brisket is just about the least tender cut on the steer; it's laden with tough collagen and needs long,

low, moist cooking to break down that collagen and become tender. Commercial smokers have fireboxes set away from the smoking chamber so the meat is never too close to the fire; this indirect cooking allows the meat to retain moisture while it slowly tenderizes and soaks up smoke flavor over the half-day cooking time. I set out to defy convention and smoke an entire brisket to Texas-level tenderness using just a regular charcoal grill.

But there were some challenges. Since charcoal grills are much smaller than commercial smokers, the brisket has to be closer to the fire on a grill, putting it in danger of cooking too hot and drying out or of becoming a victim of sooty flare-ups. Plus, refueling the grill with more charcoal means opening the grill lid, a step that makes it hard to maintain a steady temperature inside the grill.

I started at the butcher counter, ordering several 12-pound full briskets. I tried a handful of techniques from different experts that promised smoker-quality brisket using a charcoal grill. But at best these recipes and methods gave me mediocre brisket—and at worst, bone-dry, stringy meat. Seeing my frustration, a coworker sent me a link to a website that described something from the competitive barbecue circuit called the "charcoal snake." The what?

A charcoal snake is a C-shaped array of briquettes that slowly burns from one end to the other (see below). With wood chips or chunks on top, it is supposed to provide hours of low, slow, smoky heat without the need to open the grill or refuel. It sounded a little ridiculous, but I figured it was worth a shot.

(continued on page 16)

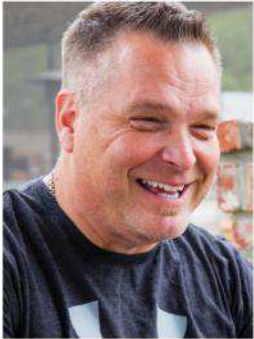
1. Build the Snake



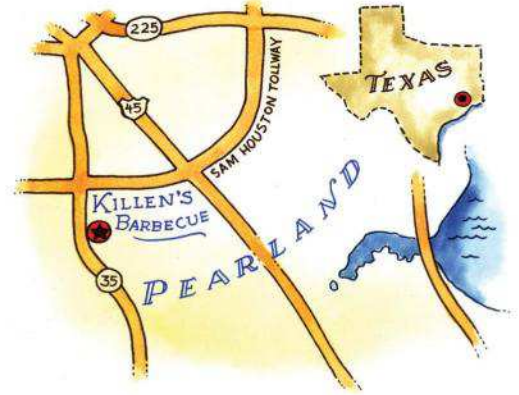
A charcoal snake is a carefully arranged formation of briquettes that provides low, indirect heat to the center of the grill for about 6 hours. To build it, count out two piles of 58 briquettes. Arrange one pile of briquettes, side by side, on the outside of the bottom grate to form a C shape along the perimeter of the grill; there should be about 8 inches between the ends of the snake (as seen at 12 o'clock in the image at left). Arrange the second pile of briquettes on top of the first layer. Evenly space the wood chunks on top of the second layer. A disposable pan of water fits neatly in the middle.



ON THE ROAD



“Cook for people what you love, and everything else will come out fine”



Text by Bryan Roof;
photos by Steve Klise

I ARRIVE AT KILLEN'S Barbecue in Pearland, Texas, a short time before the doors open for lunch. Already, a line has formed below the massive oak out front. Following the trail of smoke, I wind my way around the back of the restaurant. Ronnie Killen has yet to arrive today, so I meet up with pit master Manny Torres. He's the guy feeding the pits that churn out the stellar barbecue Killen's has become famous for. "When people come up to me and tell me the food was amazing, it makes it all worth it. No matter how dirty I get," says Torres. However, he is quick to give Killen credit for the food; he and Killen have

worked together for more than 12 years, and there's a deep mutual respect.

As we walk over to the pits, Killen shows up and begins describing how he prepares his brisket: He cooks it at 225 degrees for 16 hours over a combination of smoking oak, pecan, and hickory wood. Hickory, he says, is too strong, and if you're not careful to add it sparingly, it can impart a bitter or acrid flavor to the food.

Before the brisket hits the cooker, he seasons the meat with salt and pepper and then coats it with yellow mustard to make the spice rub stick—later, I'll taste the mild tanginess of the mustard beneath the bark. Finally, he applies a liberal dusting of their house rub, which includes chipotle, white and brown sugars, cumin, and black pepper.

I ask about the black pepper. Killen prefers it to cayenne for its up-front burn; he even tests the quality of the Tellicherry peppercorns he uses by plac-

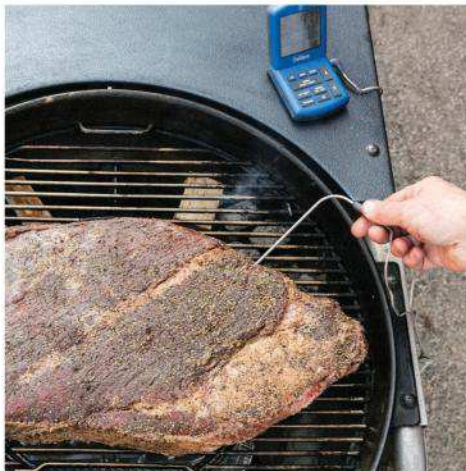
ing them on a sheet of white paper for a few moments to see if they leave behind their oil, an indicator of freshness. He likens the peppercorns to grapes and the wine they produce: Every plant is different, every batch is different. Killen has a love of his craft and can speak endlessly about grinds of pepper or meat cuts or woodsmoke, drawing you in with his passion. "My Grandma told me, 'Cook for people what you love, and everything else will come out fine.'"

As a kid, Killen worked in a watermelon patch. On days they sold their haul of picked melons, they were rewarded with barbecue, which they ate

at picnic tables like the ones now installed on the outdoor patio at Killen's. He got into cooking because he hated doing the dishes, and if he cooked, that meant he didn't have to wash them. By the time he was in high school, he was cooking for his whole family. He learned to cook barbecue from his godfather, who also taught him to be meticulous and care for his food. I ask how those lessons impacted him as a cook. He responds, "We just buy the best product and try not to screw it up."

As Antonio Perez (top left) shows, creating perfect slices of brisket takes skill and experience. Killen's during the lunch rush (top center). Manny Torres (top right) tends the pits. Killen's owner Ronnie Killen (middle left) has been passionate about barbecue since childhood.

2. Use a Probe Thermometer



Frequently opening the grill lid to check the brisket's temperature releases valuable heat and smoke. Instead, insert a temperature probe into the meat so you can monitor its temperature with the lid closed.

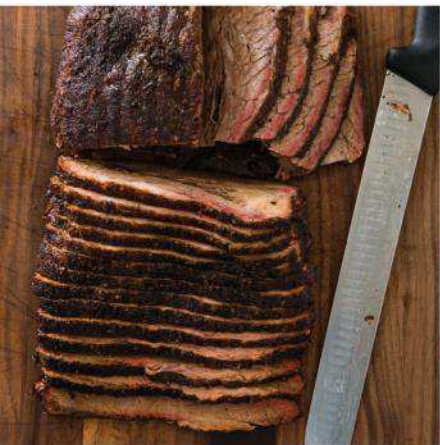
The Stall: The internal temperature of the brisket often "stalls" between 150 and 170 degrees; this is caused by the evaporation of moisture from the meat. If your brisket stalls, just be patient and keep the fire burning steadily; it should push through on its own.

3. Double-Wrap the Brisket



Wrapping barbecue in aluminum foil or butcher paper toward the end of cooking is meant to limit evaporation of moisture, speed up the last bit of cooking, and stop smoke absorption. Naysayers contend that wrapping a brisket traps steam that can wash away the flavorful bark—but through a series of tests we found that tightly wrapping in two layers of foil for the last few hours of cooking makes for juicier meat and, if you wait to wrap until the meat registers 170 degrees, there is no damage to the tasty bark.

Finish the brisket: next page ▶



Slicing 101

A full brisket is made up of two overlapping muscles—the fatty, thicker point cut (left in photo) and the leaner, thinner flat cut—that are separated by a line of fat. Both cuts need to be sliced against the grain to be tender, but their grains run perpendicular to each other in the whole brisket. We start by slicing the flat cut ¼ inch thick (about the thickness of a pencil). When the slices show a line of fat running through the middle, we know we've reached the point, so we rotate our slicing angle 90 degrees and cut the point into slightly thicker ⅜-inch slices. The extra fat in the point makes it easier to bite through more-substantial pieces.

(continued from page 14)

I carefully laid out the ring of charcoal, lit one end, threw on a big brisket (fat side up, per tradition), inserted a temperature probe in the meat, covered the grill, and waited until the inside of the brisket hit 200 degrees, which took about 8 hours. This brisket had a nice bark and was pretty moist (if a tad tough), and it gave me hope that this method would work.

Over several weeks, I honed my process and learned some valuable lessons. Wood chunks are preferable to chips because they burn more slowly and thus produce more constant smoke. Placing a disposable aluminum pan filled with water in the center of the snake helps moderate the grill temperature. Precisely configuring the briquettes and wood chunks into a snake provides about 5½ hours of slow, gentle heat (meaning I had to refuel only once). Rubbing the raw brisket with plenty of salt and pepper and refrigerating it for 12 to 24 hours before grilling ensures deep seasoning. Wrapping the brisket in foil once it reaches 170 degrees helps keep it juicy and speeds the last bit of cooking (see “Double-Wrap the Brisket” on page 15). And cooking the meat to an internal temperature of 205 degrees is best; any lower and the meat will be

chewy, any higher and it can get too soft and begin to dry out.

I was making progress, but I wanted my brisket to be more tender. We know that the sweet spot for collagen to break down without overcooking the meat is between 180 and 200 degrees. I found that if I pulled the wrapped brisket from the grill at 205 degrees and let it rest, still tightly wrapped in foil, in a cooler (or a turned-off oven) for 2 hours, it stayed in this temperature range longer and emerged very moist and tender.

One last problem: The bottom of the brisket was coming out a bit dry. I reached out to Andy Husbands and Chris Hart, two nationally renowned barbecue experts. They suggested cooking the brisket fat side down. It was untraditional, but this way the fat would sit against the cooking grate and act as a protective barrier against the direct heat of the fire. It worked great, making for a brisket that was moist all the way through. And with the water pan below the grate, flare-ups weren't an issue.

After smoking 497 pounds of beef, I sliced up one last brisket. My tasters confirmed that I had finally achieved my goal: a gloriously tender brisket with deep smoke flavor and rich bark, all on a backyard charcoal grill. Texas, we've got news for you.

TEXAS BARBECUE BRISKET

Serves 12 to 15

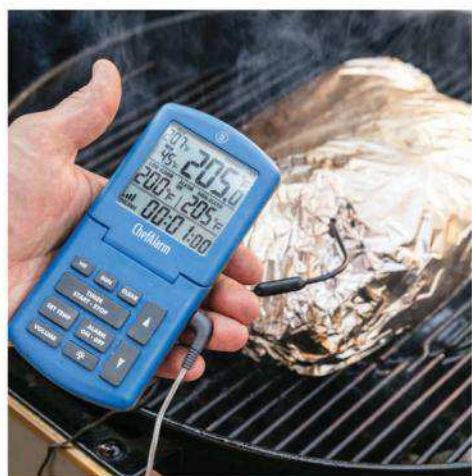
We developed this recipe using a 22-inch Weber Kettle charcoal grill. Plan ahead: The brisket must be seasoned at least 12 hours before cooking. We call for a whole beef brisket here, with both the flat and point cuts intact; you may need to special-order this cut. We recommend reading the entire recipe before starting.

- 1 (10- to 12-pound) whole beef brisket, untrimmed**
- ¼ cup kosher salt**
- ¼ cup pepper**
- 5 (3-inch) wood chunks**
- 1 (13 by 9-inch) disposable aluminum pan**

- 1.** With brisket positioned point side up, use sharp knife to trim fat cap to ½- to ¼-inch thickness. Remove excess fat from deep pocket where flat and point are attached. Trim and discard short edge of flat if less than 1 inch thick. Flip brisket and remove any large deposits of fat from underside.
- 2.** Combine salt and pepper in bowl. Place brisket on rimmed baking sheet and sprinkle all over with salt mixture. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 12 to 24 hours.
- 3.** Open bottom vent completely. Set up charcoal snake: Arrange 58 briquettes, 2 briquettes wide, around perimeter of grill, overlapping slightly so briquettes are touching, leaving 8-inch gap between ends of snake. Place second layer of 58 briquettes, also 2 briquettes wide, on top of first. (Completed snake should be 2 briquettes wide by 2 briquettes high.)
- 4.** Starting 4 inches from 1 end of snake, evenly space wood chunks on top of snake. Place disposable pan in center of grill. Fill disposable pan with 6 cups water. Light chimney starter filled with 10 briquettes (pile briquettes on 1 side of chimney). When

- coals are partially covered with ash, pour over 1 end of snake. (Make sure lit coals touch only 1 end of snake.)
- 5.** Set cooking grate in place. Clean and oil cooking grate. Place brisket, fat side down, directly over water pan, with point end facing gap in snake. Insert temperature probe into side of upper third of point. Cover grill, open lid vent completely, and position lid vent over gap in snake. Cook, undisturbed and without lifting lid, until meat registers 170 degrees, 4 to 5 hours.
- 6.** Place 2 large sheets of aluminum foil on rimmed baking sheet. Remove temperature probe from brisket. Using oven mitts, lift brisket and transfer to center of foil, fat side down. Wrap brisket tightly with first layer of foil, minimizing air pockets between foil and brisket. Rotate brisket 90 degrees and wrap with second layer of foil. (Use additional foil, if necessary, to completely wrap brisket.) Make small mark on foil with marker to keep track of fat/point side. Foil wrap should be airtight.
- 7.** Remove cooking grate. Starting at still-unlit end of snake, pour 3 quarts unlit briquettes about halfway around perimeter of grill over gap and spent coals. Replace cooking grate. Return foil-wrapped brisket to grill over water pan, fat side down, with point end facing where gap in snake used to be. Reinsert temperature probe into point. Cover grill and continue to cook until meat registers 205 degrees, 1 to 2 hours longer.
- 8.** Remove temperature probe. Transfer foil-wrapped brisket to cooler, point side up. Close cooler and let rest for at least 2 hours or up to 3 hours. Transfer brisket to carving board, unwrap, and position fat side up. Slice flat against grain ¼ inch thick, stopping once you reach base of point. Rotate point 90 degrees and slice point against grain (perpendicular to first cut) ⅜ inch thick. Serve.

Almost There: the Last Two Steps Before Slicing . . .



4. Pull It at the Right Time

When the wrapped brisket hits 205 degrees, it's time to remove it from the grill. But it's not ready to eat yet; the hulking mass of meat needs to rest for 2 to 3 hours so that the juices, which are pulled to the center of the brisket during cooking, can redistribute throughout the meat.



5. Insulate and Rest

Most recipes instruct you to let the brisket rest at room temperature on the counter before serving. Not ours. For maximum tenderness, we found it best to let the wrapped meat rest in an insulated environment (a cooler or a turned-off oven works well) for 2 to 3 hours so it spends more time between 180 and 200 degrees—the sweet spot for breaking down tough collagen. This results in the moistest, juiciest brisket possible.

French Onion Hamburger Steaks with Potatoes and Gravy



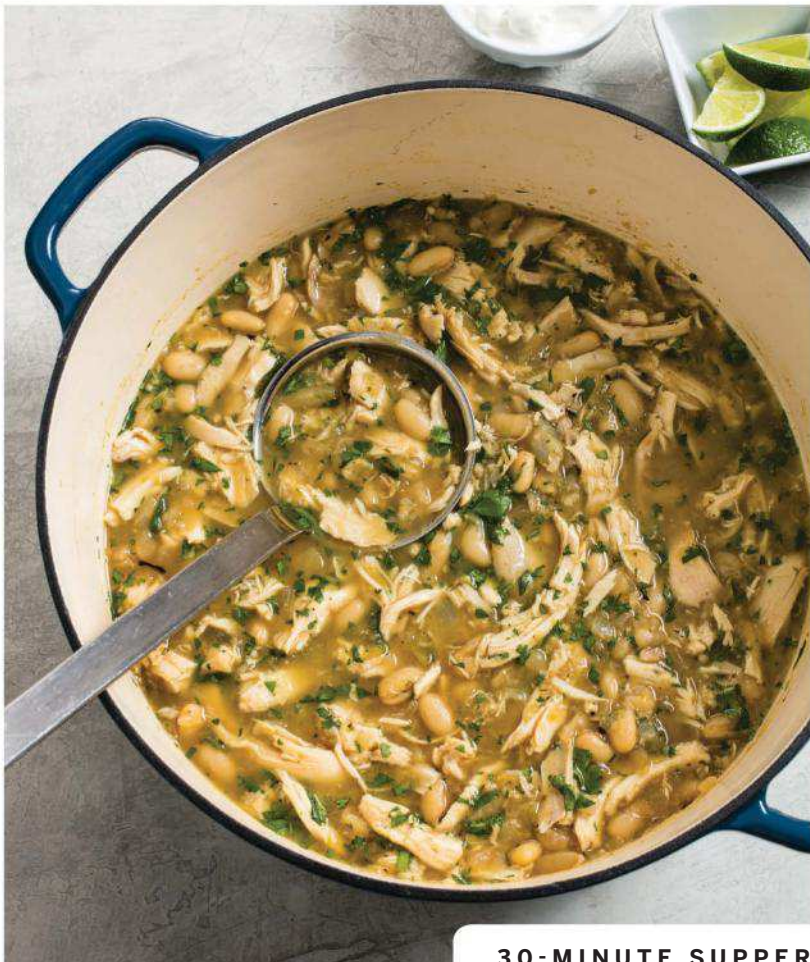
30-MINUTE SUPPER

Prosciutto, Apple, and Goat Cheese Salad with Fig Vinaigrette



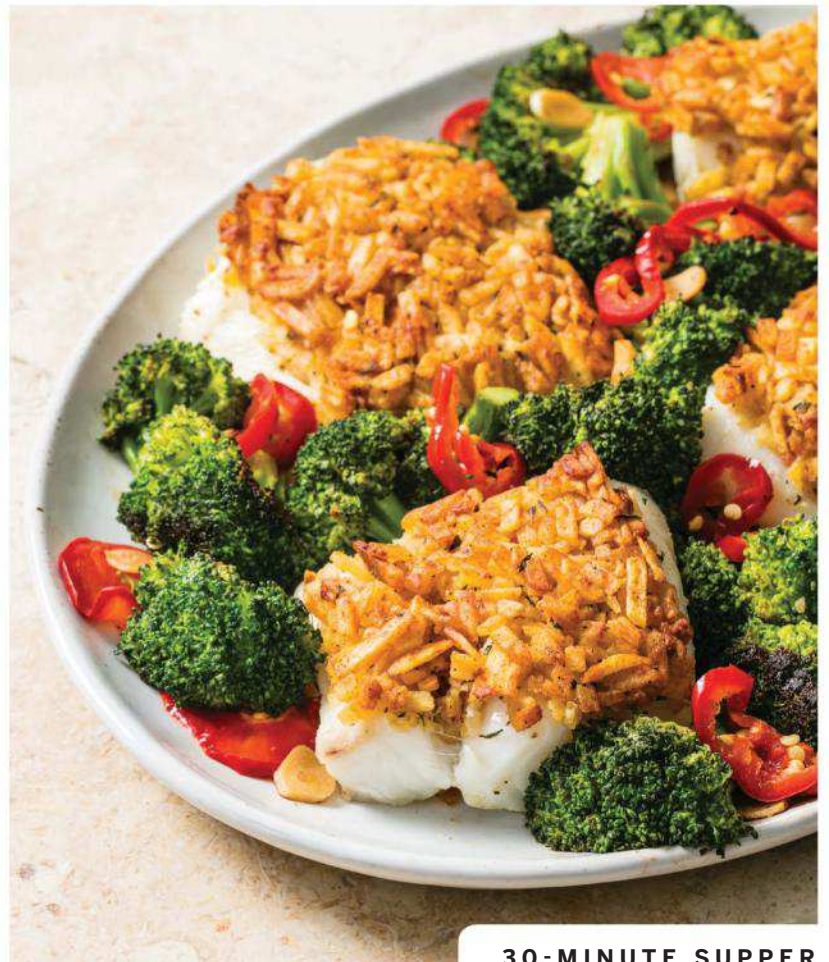
30-MINUTE SUPPER

Quick Green Chicken Chili



30-MINUTE SUPPER

Crunchy Cod with Spicy Broccoli



30-MINUTE SUPPER

Prosciutto, Apple, and Goat Cheese Salad with Fig Vinaigrette Serves 4



WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: With a bright fig dressing and the classic combo of pork and apples, this filling salad gets dinner on the table in no time.

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1/4 cup cider vinegar**
- 3 tablespoons fig preserves**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- 10 ounces (10 cups) mesclun**
- 1 apple, cored, halved, and sliced thin**
- 1/2 cup blanched hazelnuts, toasted and chopped coarse**
- 6 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto, torn into bite-size pieces**
- 4 ounces goat cheese, crumbled (1 cup)**

- Whisk oil, vinegar, preserves, salt, and pepper together in bowl.
- Toss mesclun, apple, hazelnuts, and 6 tablespoons vinaigrette together in large bowl. Divide salad evenly among 4 dinner plates. Top each salad with 1 1/2 ounces prosciutto and 1/4 cup goat cheese. Serve, passing remaining vinaigrette separately.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: We prefer sweet, crisp apples such as Fuji, Gala, or Pink Lady for this salad.

French Onion Hamburger Steaks with Potatoes and Gravy Serves 4



WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: The dried onions and savory flavor of Lipton Onion Soup and Dip Mix make a great match for simple ground beef.

- 1 1/2 pounds small Yukon Gold potatoes, unpeeled, halved**
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted, plus 3 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper**
- 1 1/2 pounds 85 percent lean ground beef**
- 1/2 cup panko bread crumbs**
- 2 tablespoons Lipton Onion Soup and Dip Mix**
- 8 ounces cremini mushrooms, trimmed and sliced thin**
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour**
- 1 cup beef broth**
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh chives**

- Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Toss potatoes, melted butter, salt, and pepper together on rimmed baking sheet and flip potatoes cut side down. Roast until potatoes are tender and well browned, about 30 minutes.
- Meanwhile, combine beef, panko, and soup mix in bowl. Form mixture into four 4-inch-diameter patties, about 1/2 inch thick. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Cook patties until well browned and meat registers 130 degrees, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer to platter and tent with foil.
- Add mushrooms to now-empty skillet and cook over medium-high heat until well browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in flour and cook for 1 minute. Stir in broth, bring to boil, and cook until thickened, about 1 minute. Off heat, stir in remaining 2 tablespoons butter. Spoon sauce over steaks and sprinkle with chives. Serve potatoes with steaks.

Crunchy Cod with Spicy Broccoli

Serves 4



WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Potato sticks, melted butter, thyme, and Dijon form an easy, flavorful, crunchy crust for this quick roasted cod.

- 1 1/2 cups potato sticks**
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus 1 tablespoon unsalted butter**
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard**
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme**
- Salt and pepper**
- 4 (6-ounce) skinless cod fillets, 1 inch thick**
- 1 pound broccoli florets, cut into 2-inch pieces**
- 3 tablespoons water**
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced thin**
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced jarred hot cherry peppers, plus 1 tablespoon brine**

- Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Using fork, lightly crush potato sticks with melted butter, mustard, thyme, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper in bowl.
- Spray rimmed baking sheet with vegetable oil spray. Pat fillets dry with paper towels, season with salt and pepper, and transfer to prepared sheet. Divide potato mixture evenly among tops of fillets, pressing down gently to adhere. Bake fillets until topping is golden brown and fish registers 140 degrees, 8 to 12 minutes.
- Meanwhile, bring broccoli, water, garlic, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon pepper, and remaining 1 tablespoon butter to boil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Cover and cook until liquid has evaporated and broccoli is just tender, about 4 minutes. Uncover and continue to cook, stirring often, until well browned, about 4 minutes longer. Off heat, stir in cherry peppers and brine. Serve broccoli with fish.

Quick Green Chicken Chili

Serves 4



WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Using ready-made supermarket products such as rotisserie chicken and jarred green salsa makes this bold, delicious green chili quick and simple.

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 1 onion, chopped fine**
- 3/4 teaspoon pepper**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 3 garlic cloves, minced**
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin**
- 4 cups chicken broth**
- 2 (15-ounce) cans cannellini beans, rinsed**
- 1 cup jarred green salsa**
- 1 (2 1/2-pound) rotisserie chicken, skin and bones discarded, meat shredded into bite-size pieces (3 cups)**
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro**

- Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion, pepper, and salt and cook until softened, about 4 minutes. Stir in garlic and cumin and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.
- Increase heat to medium-high. Stir in broth, beans, and salsa and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until flavors have melded, about 10 minutes.
- Using back of wooden spoon, mash some beans against side of pot until chili is slightly thickened. Stir in chicken and cilantro and cook until warmed through, about 2 minutes. Serve.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: Serve the chili with lime wedges and sour cream.

Grilled Chicken and Scallions with Romesco



30-MINUTE SUPPER

Chorizo and Potato Quesadillas



30-MINUTE SUPPER

Linguine with Chickpeas and Zucchini



30-MINUTE SUPPER

Grilled Steak Sandwiches



30-MINUTE SUPPER

Chorizo and Potato Quesadillas *Serves 4*



WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Weighing down the quesadillas with a saucepan evens out the cooking and promotes crispy tortillas.

- 12 ounces fresh Mexican-style chorizo sausage, casings removed**
- 2 cups frozen diced hash brown potatoes**
- 1 onion, chopped fine**
- 1 poblano chile, stemmed, seeded, and chopped fine**
- 8 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, shredded (2 cups)**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro**
- 4 (10-inch) flour tortillas**
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil**

1. Cook chorizo, potatoes, onion, and poblano in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until chorizo is cooked through and potatoes are tender, 10 to 12 minutes, breaking up chorizo with wooden spoon. Transfer to bowl and let cool slightly, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir Monterey Jack and cilantro into chorizo mixture. Spread 1 cup chorizo mixture over half of each tortilla, leaving ½-inch border. Fold tortillas over filling and press firmly so quesadillas stay folded.
3. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Place 2 folded quesadillas in skillet, weigh down with large saucepan, and cook until browned and cheese has melted, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer to cutting board. Repeat with remaining 1 tablespoon oil and remaining 2 quesadillas. Cut into wedges and serve.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: We developed this recipe using Ore-Ida Diced Hash Brown Potatoes. Make sure to use fresh Mexican-style chorizo, not the hard Spanish cured sausage of the same name. Serve quesadillas with sour cream and pico de gallo.

Grilled Chicken and Scallions with Romesco *Serves 4*



WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Topping grilled chicken and charred scallions with a simple yet flavorful food-processor romesco sauce takes this weeknight dinner to the next level.

- 13 scallions, trimmed**
- ¾ cup jarred roasted red peppers, patted dry**
- ½ cup almonds, toasted**
- ½ cup fresh parsley leaves**
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar**
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and smashed**
- Salt and pepper**
- 4 (6- to 8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed**

1. Pulse 1 scallion, red peppers, almonds, parsley, ¼ cup oil, vinegar, garlic, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper in food processor until finely chopped, about 12 pulses. Set aside romesco.
2. Pat chicken dry with paper towels. Rub chicken with 1 tablespoon oil and season with salt and pepper. Toss remaining 12 scallions with remaining 1 tablespoon oil and season with salt and pepper.
3. Grill chicken and scallions over hot fire until chicken registers 160 degrees, about 6 minutes per side, and scallions are lightly charred, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer chicken and scallions to platter, tent with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes. Serve with romesco.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: Two bunches of scallions should be sufficient for this recipe.

Grilled Steak Sandwiches



Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Packing tons of beefy flavor and taking only about 5 minutes to grill to doneness, skirt steak pairs perfectly with a bold blue cheese spread on these quick steak sandwiches.

- ¾ cup mayonnaise**
- 3 ounces blue cheese, crumbled (¾ cup)**
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard**
- Salt and pepper**
- 1 (1-pound) skirt steak, cut crosswise into 4 equal pieces and trimmed**
- 4 ciabatta sandwich rolls, halved lengthwise**
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 ounces (2 cups) baby arugula**
- 1 small red onion, halved and sliced thin**

1. Process mayonnaise, blue cheese, vinegar, mustard, and ¼ teaspoon pepper in food processor until smooth, about 30 seconds. Set aside blue cheese sauce.
2. Pat steak dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Brush cut sides of rolls with oil. Grill steak over hot fire until meat registers 125 degrees (for medium-rare), 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer steak to carving board and tent with foil. Grill rolls, cut side down, until lightly toasted, 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Slice steak thin against grain. Spread blue cheese sauce on rolls. Divide steak, arugula, and onion evenly among rolls. Serve.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: We prefer these sandwiches on ciabatta, but any sub rolls can be substituted.

Linguine with Chickpeas and Zucchini



Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Softened zucchini and mashed chickpeas make for a creamy and flavorful pasta sauce.

- 1 pound linguine**
- Salt and pepper**
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for serving**
- 4 garlic cloves, sliced thin**
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- 2 zucchini, shredded and patted dry**
- 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, rinsed**
- 2 ounces Pecorino Romano cheese, grated (1 cup)**
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley**
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice, plus lemon wedges for serving**

1. Bring 4 quarts water to boil in Dutch oven. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until al dente. Reserve ½ cup cooking water, then drain pasta.
2. Heat oil, garlic, pepper flakes, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper in now-empty pot over medium heat until garlic is lightly browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Add zucchini and chickpeas and cook until zucchini is wilted and most of its excess moisture has cooked off, about 6 minutes. Using potato masher, lightly mash chickpeas.
3. Off heat, stir in ½ cup Pecorino, parsley, lemon juice, pasta, and reserved cooking water. Serve, passing lemon wedges, extra oil, and remaining ½ cup Pecorino separately.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: Use medium zucchini and shred them on the large holes of a box grater.

Corn

Along with wheat and rice, corn is one of the world's staple grains. But did you know there are two main types? We eat sweet corn like a vegetable, but field corn requires processing. Here's what you need to know about corn.

by **Scott Kathan**

Sweet Corn

It used to be that you had to eat corn within a few days of picking for it to taste sweet. That's because the sugars in corn start converting to starch as soon as the ear is picked. But most corn you buy today has been bred to hold on to its sweetness longer.

When shopping for corn, look for firm, plump ears that feel heavy for their size. The husk should be a deep green, and the silk should be dry.



Cutting Kernels off the Cob

Shuck corn, slice cobs in half, stand up halves, and cut down to remove kernels.



Cobs: Hidden Flavor

Running the back of your knife down stripped cobs releases the flavorful "corn milk." After they're milked, you can simmer stripped cobs in water to make flavorful corn stock that you can use when making corn chowder.

Illustration: Jay Layman

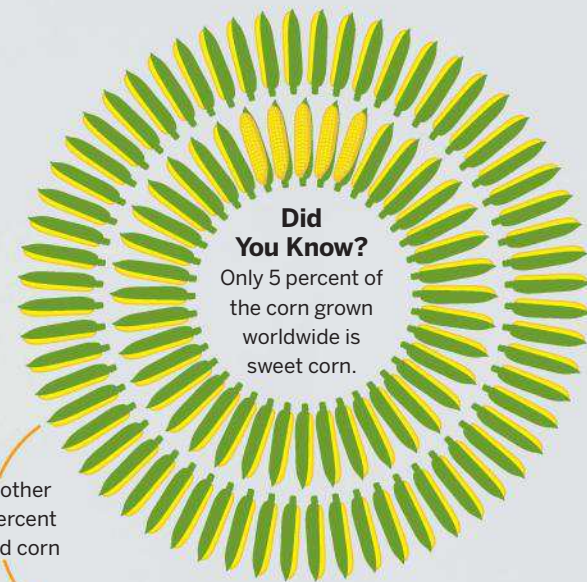
Better than boiling:
Cook corn off heat.

Foolproof Cooking

To avoid overcooking, bring water to a boil, add salt, drop in the shucked corn, cover, turn off the heat, and let the corn sit until just crisp-tender, 10 to 15 minutes.

Shuck just before cooking to preserve corn's moisture.

Stripped cobs: treasure, not trash



Did You Know?

Only 5 percent of the corn grown worldwide is sweet corn.

The other 95 percent is field corn

Field Corn

Field corn is a high-starch, low-sugar corn used for making cornmeal and myriad culinary and industrial products; it's also used for animal feed. When heated with an alkaline solution, it becomes "nixtamalized" and is the basis for hominy, masa harina, and corn tortillas.



FIELD CORN

Unless you're a farmer, you probably don't see this variety, which is also called dent corn or flint corn.

Cornmeal, Grits, and Polenta

These products are all dried field corn ground to different sizes. We prefer a medium grind of cornmeal for making prepared polenta (Italian-style cornmeal porridge) and finely ground cornmeal for most baked goods. Grits have the coarsest grind and should not be substituted for cornmeal in most recipes.

Cornstarch

When using this thickener, first mix it with a small amount of liquid to create a slurry, and then mix it into the dish you wish to thicken. We also use cornstarch to coat small pieces of meat for stir-fries; this process, called velveting, creates a silky texture on the outside of the meat.

Corn Syrup

Corn syrup is made from cornstarch. It's about half as sweet as sugar, is very thick, and doesn't crystallize. We use it in glazes, cakes, pies, and other sweet baked goods. Note that corn syrup is not the same as much-sweeter high-fructose corn syrup, which undergoes additional processing and is used in the production of soda, candy, and other processed foods.

Other Products

Popcorn, plastics, cosmetics, bourbon, breakfast cereal, chips and snack foods, chemical solvents, animal feed, insulation, pharmaceutical products, soaps . . . and the list goes on.

Easy Egg Rolls

Crispy, savory, homemade fried egg rolls are well within your grasp—if you know a few simple tricks.

by **Matthew Fairman**

CRUNCHY, PIPING-HOT CHINESE restaurant egg rolls, with dipping sauces at the ready, check off a bunch of the boxes that trigger the pleasure sensors in our brains: crispy, salty, sweet, savory, spicy, and meaty. But home versions seldom satisfy in a similar way. If I'm going to do the work of cooking the filling, wrapping the rolls, and frying them, I want the egg rolls to be great. And in making my own egg rolls, I also wanted to minimize the prep and mess and avoid hard-to-find ingredients.

After preparing and tasting five seemingly promising recipes, I realized I had my work cut out for me. To prep the filling alone, I had to mince fresh pork, thinly slice a mound of cabbage, and laboriously cut carrots and mushrooms into matchsticks. I also had to find dark soy sauce, black vinegar, and Chinese rice wine. And that's just the start. I still had to cook and chill the filling ingredients, wrap and seal the rolls, and do the deep frying. I wanted tasty results with a lot less work.

In an effort to reduce the amount of prep work, I tried using bagged coleslaw mix—shredded cabbage and carrots—in place of the hand-chopped cabbage and carrot, and it worked great. Chopped shiitake mushrooms added a deep savory flavor to the vegetable mix. For the meat, I opted for ground pork, letting the supermarket grinder do the work for me. As for seasoning the filling, I knew from stir-fry recipes I'd developed in the past that I could create a delicious, savory, and balanced sauce without hard-to-find ingredients. I started with a mix of garlic, ginger, soy sauce, and sugar. Using a measured $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of filling per egg roll ensured that the rolls weren't overstuffed and wouldn't rupture in the oil (see "Roll 'em Up").

Already, these egg rolls were better than takeout versions . . . but did they have to be deep-fried? I tried a move I hadn't seen in any other recipes: shallow-frying the egg rolls in just $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (or so) of 325-degree oil in a skillet (not a big Dutch oven). Using



We like to serve these crispy egg rolls with duck sauce, spicy Chinese mustard, and our simple Soy-Vinegar Dipping Sauce.

less oil made the cooking easier and the cleanup faster. With a single flip halfway through the roughly 6-minute cooking time, the egg rolls came out nicely crispy and perfectly cooked.

But the filling still needed something. My tasters remarked that it tasted a little too "flat" and "heavy." So in my next test I cooked the vegetables a little less (until just wilted), preserving their fresh flavor and crunch, and added a tablespoon of distilled white vinegar to brighten it all up. I also stirred in

a bit of potent toasted sesame oil for depth and a hint of nutty sweetness.

Feeling confident while I waited for this batch of egg rolls to cool, I filled a couple of small serving bowls with duck sauce and Chinese hot mustard and set them out for my tasters. I knew I had landed on a good recipe when one of my colleagues stopped eating just long enough to exclaim that this was the best egg roll she'd ever had. The rest of them, still chowing down, nodded in agreement.

Coleslaw Mix

To save ourselves—and you—the effort of chopping or shredding the cabbage and carrots called for in the egg roll filling, we instead reached for bagged coleslaw mix. If possible, buy a mix that contains just green (not red) cabbage and carrots. Note that you will need 7 ounces of the mix; check the weight on the package so you know you'll have enough.

Roll 'em Up



1. Place and shape filling

Place a lightly packed $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of filling on the lower half of the wrapper. Use your fingers to shape the filling into a cylinder.



2. Moisten wrapper edge

Dip your fingertips in water, and then moisten the entire border of the wrapper with a thin film of water.



3. Fold up bottom, then fold in sides

Bring the bottom point of the wrapper over the filling and press down on the other side to seal. Then fold in the sides.



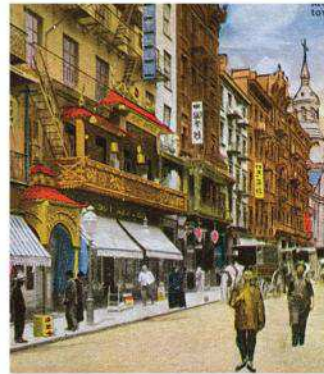
4. Roll into cylinder

Roll into a log shape and press the edges to seal. Cover the egg roll with a moist paper towel while shaping the rest.

The American-style egg roll is essentially unknown in China. Its origins are murky, but its first surge in popularity came in 1930s New York City, and

THE AMERICAN TABLE

no restaurant served more than Chinatown's Port Arthur Chinese Restaurant, founded by Chinese immigrant Chu Gam Fai in 1897 and named for his hometown, the Chinese port city now known as Dalian. Famous for its banquet-style dining and lavish decor, Port Arthur was the first Chinese restaurant in New York to obtain a liquor license, making it a fashionable dining destination for hard-partying New Yorkers. The restaurant finally closed in 1974.



Port Arthur Chinese Restaurant, New York City, c. 1908

EASY EGG ROLLS

Makes 8 egg rolls

This recipe can easily be doubled: Extend the cooking time of the pork mixture to about 5 minutes in step 1 and fry the egg rolls in two batches. We like to serve the egg rolls with duck sauce, Chinese hot mustard, and Soy-Vinegar Dipping Sauce (recipe follows).

- 8 ounces ground pork
- 6 scallions, white and green parts separated and sliced thin
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
- 3 cups (7 ounces) coleslaw mix
- 4 ounces shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and chopped
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- 8 egg roll wrappers
- 2 cups vegetable oil

1. Cook pork in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until no longer pink, about 5 minutes, breaking up meat with spoon. Add scallion whites, garlic, and ginger and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add coleslaw mix, mushrooms, soy sauce, sugar, and vinegar and cook until cabbage is just softened, about 3 minutes.
2. Off heat, stir in sesame oil and scallion greens. Transfer pork mixture to large plate, spread into even layer, and refrigerate until cool enough to handle, about 5 minutes. Wipe skillet clean with paper towels.
3. Fill small bowl with water. Working with 1 egg roll wrapper at a time, orient wrappers on counter so 1 corner points toward edge of counter. Place lightly packed $\frac{1}{3}$ cup filling on lower half of

wrapper and mold it with your fingers into neat cylindrical shape. Using your fingertips, moisten entire border of wrapper with thin film of water.

4. Fold bottom corner of wrapper up and over filling and press it down on other side of filling. Fold both side corners of wrapper in over filling and press gently to seal. Roll filling up over itself until wrapper is fully sealed. Leave egg roll seam side down on counter and cover with damp paper towel while shaping remaining egg rolls.
5. Line large plate with triple layer of paper towels. Heat vegetable oil in now-empty skillet over medium heat to 325 degrees. Using tongs, place all egg rolls in skillet, seam side down, and cook until golden brown, 2 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer to prepared plate and let cool slightly, about 5 minutes. Serve.

TO MAKE AHEAD: At end of step 4, transfer egg rolls to parchment paper-lined plate, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for up to 24 hours. Alternatively, freeze egg rolls on plate, then transfer to zipper-lock bag and freeze for up to 1 month. Do not thaw before cooking; increase cooking time by about 1 minute per side.

SOY-VINEGAR DIPPING SAUCE

Makes about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

For the best results, be sure to use a good-quality soy sauce.

- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon water
- 2 teaspoons distilled white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar

Whisk all ingredients in bowl until sugar is dissolved.



Fry Bread Tacos

One surprising trick kept these dough rounds in shape.

by **Alli Berkey**

RECIPES FOR FRY bread differ from family to family and region to region, but the basic ingredients—flour, fat, leavening, and liquid—remain constant. These puffy 6-inch rounds of deep-fried bread with lightly crisp, golden edges and a soft and slightly elastic texture share characteristics with beignets, sopapillas, and state-fair fried dough, though fry bread's story is singular and remarkable (see “The American Table”).

You'll sometimes find fry bread served sweetened with a drizzle of honey or a dusting of sugar; other times it's folded over savory fillings like a taco. The latter was the direction I knew I wanted to go in. First step was getting the bread right.

The handful of existing recipes I tried were very similar: Combine the ingredients, divide and shape the dough, fry the dough in oil. But the details—What kind of flour? How much leavening? How hot the oil?—diverged and resulted in totally different end products. I wanted breads that were tough enough to fold into tacos without tearing but tender enough to bite through with ease.

After auditioning several flours (bread, cake, and all-purpose), I found that all-purpose gave the dough just the right structure both before and after cooking. As for the fat, traditional lard created a beautiful flavor, but I chose butter, which is no less delicious and much easier to find.

For liquid, I chose water and, following cues from a couple of recipes I uncovered, added a bit of nonfat dry milk powder. The powder contributed just enough milky sweetness and boosted browning, too. And while many recipes lean on baking powder for leavening, I chose yeast for its unmistakable flavor and a chewier (in a good way) result.

After an initial rise of 30 minutes to 1 hour, the dough was easy to punch down and shape into rounds (this step also helped create the structure inside). I let them sit for another 20 minutes, heated 2 quarts of vegetable oil in my Dutch oven, and slipped two rounds into the oil to fry. And before my eyes, they ballooned up dramatically, creating big, fat, unevenly browned globes. Not what I was after.

A simple trick helped: Cutting a small slit in the center of each round before frying kept the puffing in check, keeping the rounds relatively flat and helping them brown more evenly. Some cooks call this the “belly button” technique.

After just 3 minutes in the oil, the rounds had transformed into fry breads, golden brown and ready to be filled and folded. I kept the filling simple, using ground beef for a base and adding chili powder, garlic, cumin, and oregano for character. A bit of salsa stirred into the mix gave it a lively fresh edge. I topped each round with a generous spoonful of filling and settled in for lunch.

FRY BREAD TACOS

Makes 8 tacos

Once rolled, the dough rounds can be transferred to rimmed baking sheets, covered, and refrigerated for up to 24 hours. Let the rounds come to room temperature and rise until slightly puffy before frying, about 1½ hours. Use a Dutch oven that holds 6 quarts or more.

FRY BREAD

- 2 cups (10 ounces) all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup (¾ ounce) nonfat dry milk powder
- 2¼ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup warm water (110 degrees)
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 quarts vegetable oil

TACO MEAT

- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped fine
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1½ pounds 90 percent lean ground beef
- Salt and pepper
- 1 cup jarred mild salsa, plus extra for serving

Shredded Monterey Jack cheese
Shredded iceberg lettuce
Sour cream

1. **FOR THE FRY BREAD:** Whisk flour, milk powder, yeast, and salt together in bowl of stand mixer. Fit mixer with dough hook. With mixer running on low speed, slowly add warm water and melted butter until dough comes together, about 1 minute, scraping down bowl as needed. Increase speed to medium and continue to mix until dough is smooth and clears sides of bowl, about 5 minutes longer.
2. Transfer dough to lightly greased



Load 'em up, fold 'em over, and enjoy these savory beef tacos.

bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature until doubled in size, 30 minutes to 1 hour.

3. Grease 2 rimmed baking sheets with vegetable oil spray. Turn out dough onto unfloured counter and pat down to deflate. Divide dough into 8 equal pieces. Working with 1 piece of dough at a time, roll dough into 6-inch rounds, about ⅛ inch thick. Transfer dough rounds to prepared sheets (4 rounds per sheet). Restretch dough if it shrinks during transfer. Cover dough rounds with plastic and let sit at room temperature until slightly puffy, about 20 minutes. Using paring knife, cut 1-inch slit through center of each dough round.

4. Add oil to large Dutch oven until it measures about 1½ inches deep and heat over medium-high heat to 375 degrees. Line large platter with triple layer of paper towels. Using your hands and working with 2 dough rounds at a time, gently lift and place dough rounds into hot oil. Fry until puffy and golden brown, about 1½ minutes per side. Adjust burner, if

necessary, to maintain oil temperature between 350 and 375 degrees.

5. Using tongs or spider, lift fry breads out of oil, allowing excess oil to drip off briefly before transferring to prepared platter. Return oil to 375 degrees and repeat with remaining dough rounds in 3 batches. (Do not stack fry breads on platter.)

6. **FOR THE TACO MEAT:** Heat oil in 12-inch skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook until softened and beginning to brown, about 4 minutes. Stir in chili powder, garlic, cumin, and oregano and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.

7. Add beef, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Increase heat to medium-high and cook until beef is no longer pink, about 5 minutes, breaking up meat with spoon. Stir in salsa and cook, stirring often, until slightly thickened, about 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Top each fry bread with ½ cup taco meat, followed by Monterey Jack, lettuce, sour cream, and extra salsa to taste. Serve.

THE AMERICAN TABLE

Jan Iron, a member of the Navajo Nation in Shiprock, New Mexico, has been making fry bread since she was 4 years old, but she still thinks of the simple dough as a work in progress. Some batches are just better than others. "We always say a prayer for it to be delicious and soft," she says.

Beginning in 1864, nearly 10,000 Navajos were forced to relocate, traveling 300 miles across the desert on foot and leaving behind cornfields, orchards, and flocks of sheep. Thousands died. After enduring three years of internment, they were allowed to return to their lands and given rations of unfamiliar commodity ingredients, including processed white flour and lard. Fry bread was born from this experience.

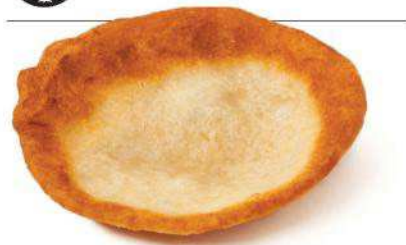
These bleak origins fuel a contemporary controversy. "Fry bread has become traditional, but we know it's not ancient," says Jamie Folsom, a Colorado State University instructor and member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. "[It's] kind of a twisted thing."

But Iron keeps working on her recipe. "People [say] that it came from oppression. But we still enjoy it once in a while."

—KRISTEN BROWNING-BLAS



To read more about fry bread, go to [CooksCountry.com/frybread](https://www.cookscountry.com/frybread).



Bowled Over

To keep the dough from forming a concave bowl in the bubbling oil, which leaves the center uncooked (above), cut a slit in the dough before frying it (below).



Roasted Tomatoes

Roasting tomatoes intensifies their flavor. But does it have to take so long? *by Alli Berkey*

A BOUNTY OF ripe summer tomatoes is one of summer's most precious gifts . . . until you realize they'll go bad if you don't figure out a way to use them.

There are, of course, a thousand tomato recipes. I wanted to steer away from projects that required all-day simmering or canning. I had my mind on oven-drying the tomatoes into slightly chewy, savory-sweet morsels with deep, concentrated tomato flavor (oven-dried tomatoes are sweeter, much less chewy, and fresher-tasting than their sun-dried cousins). The test kitchen has a few recipes, but they all take several hours. I even found a few recipes that take 12 hours. Wasn't there a quicker way?

I hoped that both my choice of tomatoes and my prepping method could work to shorten the time the tomatoes needed to spend in the oven. Plum tomatoes are meatier, denser, and less liquid-filled than their globe cousins, so I started with them. I quartered 2 pounds of the tomatoes and used a paring knife to scoop out (and discard) the wettest part, the jelly and seeds, so they would dry out faster. I placed the tomatoes on a baking sheet, drizzled on some olive oil, sprinkled them with salt and pepper, and roasted them for about an hour at 350 degrees—a good 100 degrees hotter than called for in most other recipes.

The good news? The tomatoes dried out to a great consistency in a fraction of the time. The bad? They didn't taste like much. Adding garlic, thyme, and oregano helped accentuate the tomatoes' naturally rich, savory flavor. To keep the garlic from burning on the baking sheet, I placed the slices directly on top of the quartered tomatoes. But it was another "secret" ingredient—OK, it was just plain white sugar—that took them over the top; the sugar helped the tomatoes brown and caramelize and called out their own natural sweetness. A pinch of red pepper flakes added just a touch of heat.

My tomatoes were done in about an hour—a great step forward in the evolution of oven-dried tomatoes. Piled into a jar and covered with more olive oil, these were tomatoes I could enjoy for months to come.



Capture the flavor of summer in a jar with this faster version of oven-roasted tomatoes.

QUICKER ROASTED TOMATOES

Makes about 2 cups

This recipe can easily be doubled. To do so, adjust the oven racks to the upper-middle and lower-middle positions, divide the tomatoes evenly between two parchment paper-lined rimmed baking sheets, and rotate and switch the sheets halfway through baking. Plum tomatoes work best for this recipe. Other tomato varieties will work, but they may be slightly softer after roasting.

- 2 pounds plum tomatoes, cored
- 4 garlic cloves, sliced thin
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1½ teaspoons sugar
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ⅛ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Quarter tomatoes lengthwise. Working with 1 tomato quarter at a time, position tomatoes seed side up on cutting board.

Using paring knife, cut interior pulp and seeds from tomatoes and discard. Transfer tomatoes to large bowl. Add garlic, oil, sugar, salt, oregano, thyme, and pepper flakes and toss to thoroughly combine.

2. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Arrange tomatoes, skin side down, in even layer on prepared sheet. Place any garlic that has fallen onto sheet on top of tomatoes.

3. Bake until tomatoes are shriveled, dry, and dark around edges, 1 hour to 1 hour 10 minutes. Let cool completely on sheet, about 15 minutes. Serve. (Tomatoes can be refrigerated for up to 5 days. For longer storage, place tomatoes in jar, cover with extra-virgin olive oil, and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.)

A Few of Our Favorite Uses:

On sandwiches, paninis, or burgers. In salads. On tacos or pizzas. In pastas. Chopped and added to mayonnaise or salad dressings. On BLTs. Or plain, eaten with our fingers.

Virginia Peanut Pie

One bite and you'll go nuts for this Old Dominion pie. *by Katie Leaird*



IF YOU'RE LUCKY enough to visit Wakefield, Virginia, you can order a slice of "World Famous Peanut Pie" at the bustling Virginia Diner. Sounds great. I had just one question: What the heck is peanut pie?

The simplest answer is that peanut pie is like a pecan pie made with—you guessed it—peanuts. According to Virginia food writers, this pie should be a celebration of contrasting flavors and textures: sweet and salty, crunchy and creamy. I pored over cookbooks to find a handful of promising recipes to make. The pies were all built using a similar formula: A mixture of sweet syrup (Lyle's Golden Syrup, maple, or corn syrup) mixed with brown sugar, eggs, butter, flavorings (vanilla, cayenne, cinnamon), salt, and peanuts was cooked in a saucepan and then poured into a prebaked pie shell and baked.

While we generally liked these initial pies, some were too busy with added flavors and spices, were too sweet, or had nuts that didn't feel integrated with the filling.

First, I decided that using corn syrup was the way to proceed since Lyle's can be hard to find and maple syrup competed with the peanuts. Second, my tasters thought that vanilla and plenty of salt were all the seasoning this pie needed. Finally, we all agreed that something called "peanut pie" ought to pack a ton of peanut flavor, so I used a full 2 cups of nuts, twice the amount called for in some recipes. Crushing the peanuts made the filling more cohesive and easier to eat. The pie tasted great, but I hoped to make the process easier.

Tidy Peanut Crushing

A zipper-lock bag keeps the peanuts contained while you're crushing them (we like to use a rolling pin).



Never heard of peanut pie? Think pecan pie but with savory, salty peanuts.

As for the filling, did I have to cook it on the stovetop before baking the pie? I hoped I could just stir together all the ingredients and bake—after all, many pecan pie fillings aren't precooked. Sure enough, the uncooked filling turned out great in the baked pie, not noticeably different from the cooked version.

As for the crust, could I cut out the parbaking step? We often parbake a crust before adding a liquid filling to prevent it from becoming soggy. But because I'd packed this filling chock-full of crushed peanuts, it was thicker than most. I poured the peanut mixture into a raw crust and baked it until browned. The risk was happily rewarded with a crisp, layered crust.

I love serving this pie as a special summertime treat, but who's to say that, come holiday-time, it won't end up on my family's table?

VIRGINIA PEANUT PIE

Serves 8 to 10

Salted dry-roasted, cocktail, or honey-roasted peanuts can be used in this recipe. Do not use Spanish red skin peanuts. Inspect the peanut packaging to be sure the ingredient list includes only peanuts, salt, and oil (plus sweetener if using honey-roasted peanuts). You can use light or dark brown sugar in the filling. Crush the peanuts in a zipper-lock bag using a rolling pin or meat pounder; you want peanut pieces, not dust.

CRUST

- 1¾ cups (8¾ ounces) all-purpose flour**
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar**
- ¾ teaspoon salt**
- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces and chilled**
- ½ cup ice water**

FILLING

- ¾ cup light corn syrup**
- ¾ cup packed (5¼ ounces) brown sugar**
- 3 large eggs**
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted**
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 2 cups salted dry-roasted peanuts, crushed**

1. FOR THE CRUST: Process flour, sugar, and salt in food processor until combined, about 3 seconds. Scatter butter over top and pulse until mixture resembles coarse crumbs, about 10 pulses. Transfer to bowl. Sprinkle ice water over mixture. Using rubber spatula, stir and press dough until it sticks together.

2. Turn out dough onto lightly floured counter, form into 6-inch disk, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 1 hour. Let chilled dough sit on counter to soften slightly, about 10 minutes, before rolling. (Wrapped dough can be refrigerated for up to 2 days or frozen for up to 1 month. If frozen, let dough thaw completely on counter before rolling.)

3. Adjust oven rack to lowest position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Roll dough into 12-inch circle on lightly floured counter. Loosely roll dough around rolling pin and gently unroll it onto 9-inch pie plate, letting excess dough hang over edge. Ease dough into plate by gently lifting edge of dough with your hand while pressing into plate bottom with your other hand.

4. Trim overhang to ½ inch beyond lip of plate. Tuck overhang under itself; folded edge should be flush with edge of plate. Crimp dough evenly around edge of plate using your fingers. Push protruding crimped edge so it slightly hangs over edge of plate. Wrap dough-lined plate loosely in plastic and freeze until dough is firm, about 15 minutes.

5. FOR THE FILLING: Whisk corn syrup, sugar, eggs, melted butter, vanilla, and salt in large bowl until fully combined. Stir in peanuts until incorporated.

6. Place chilled pie shell on rimmed baking sheet. Pour filling into shell. Bake until filling is puffed and set but still jiggles slightly when pie is shaken, 1 hour 5 minutes to 1 hour 10 minutes. Transfer pie to wire rack and let cool completely, at least 4 hours or overnight. Serve.

Blueberry Cornbread

Our goal: to create a fruit-filled cornbread to excite, not confuse, our cornbread-loving souls. **by Morgan Bolling**

MY SISTER AND I used to beg our mother to take us to our local market when we were young—not because we thought the young man working the fish counter was cute (although that didn't hurt) and not even for the floor-to-ceiling bulk candy bins. We were after the market's signature blueberry cornbread. A far cry from savory, dense, and crumbly cornbread, this was fluffy and sweet, rich with butter, and loaded with juicy blueberries. My mom would buy it for dessert, but my sister and I would eat it any time of day.

When I started developing a recipe inspired by this cornbread, I discovered that our small North Carolina grocer wasn't alone in making it. I uncovered blueberry cornbread recipes from a variety of sources all over the country. I baked a half-dozen versions for my colleagues to try, and we were surprised that the cornbreads ran the gamut from a dry, salty version with a pitiful sprinkling of blueberries to something akin to a sweet, vanilla-flavored blueberry quick bread.

Our favorite from this initial round had a moderate sweetness, so I used it as a jumping-off point. This cornbread was made using the standard procedure: stirring the dry ingredients (flour, cornmeal, baking powder, salt, and a modest amount of sugar) into a mixture of melted butter, eggs, and milk. Then the blueberries were folded in and the batter was poured into a round cake pan and baked.

Comparing Cornmeals

Cornmeal's grind size varies from product to product. We developed this recipe using Quaker Yellow Corn Meal. If using our taste test winner, Arrowhead Mills Organic Yellow Cornmeal, you'll need to adjust the volume (see recipe note).



Right off the bat, my tasting team clamored for more berries, so I doubled the amount to a full 2 cups. We also thought the cornbread, which contained equal parts cornmeal and flour, was a bit too dense. In the end, we determined that 1 cup cornmeal to 1½ cups flour made for the best texture: tender, not too cakey, and sturdy enough to keep all the blueberries from sinking. And while the cup of cornmeal was enough to deliver sweet corn flavor, I sprinkled a bit more cornmeal into the greased cake pan before pouring in the batter for an additional burst of cornmeal flavor and crunch.

The cornbread was delicious, but I found two simple ways to make it even better. First, I sprinkled the batter with a tablespoon of sugar before baking. The sugar melted in the oven, turning the top lightly sweet, crunchy, and golden. As a final flourish, I made a stir-together honey butter that, when slathered on the still-warm, blueberry-laden wedges, made this delicious cornbread even more irresistible.

BLUEBERRY CORNBREAD

Serves 8

We developed this recipe using commonly available Quaker Yellow Corn Meal. If you're using our favorite cornmeal, Arrowhead Mills Organic Yellow Cornmeal, you will need to use 1¼ cups to yield 5 ounces for the batter. If you use a dark-colored cake pan, reduce the baking time in step 3 to 35 to 40 minutes. You can use frozen blueberries; if doing so, leave the berries in the freezer until the last possible moment and toss them with 2 tablespoons of all-purpose flour before stirring them into the batter. Then, increase the baking time to 45 to 50 minutes.

- 1½ **tablespoons cornmeal, plus 1 cup (5 ounces)**
- 1½ **cups (7½ ounces) all-purpose flour**
- ¾ **cup (5¼ ounces) plus 1 tablespoon sugar**
- 2 **teaspoons baking powder**
- ¾ **teaspoon salt**
- 1 **cup whole milk**
- 12 **tablespoons unsalted butter, melted**
- 2 **large eggs**
- 10 **ounces (2 cups) blueberries**

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Grease bottom and sides of light-colored



This lightly sweet, bright cornbread is best served warm from the oven.

9-inch round cake pan, then dust pan with 1½ tablespoons cornmeal.

2. Whisk flour, ¾ cup sugar, baking powder, salt, and remaining 1 cup cornmeal together in large bowl. Whisk milk, melted butter, and eggs together in second bowl (butter may form clumps; this is OK). Stir milk mixture into flour mixture until just combined. Stir in blueberries until just incorporated. Transfer batter to prepared pan and smooth top with rubber spatula. Sprinkle remaining 1 tablespoon sugar over top.

3. Bake until golden brown and paring knife inserted in center comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes. Let cornbread cool in pan on wire rack for 20 minutes. Run paring knife between cornbread

and side of pan. Remove cornbread from pan and let cool on rack for 20 minutes. Serve warm.

HONEY BUTTER

Makes about ⅓ cup

This honey butter also tastes great on roasted root vegetables, boiled corn, pork chops, pancakes, muffins, biscuits, and dinner rolls.

- 4 **tablespoons unsalted butter, softened**
- 2 **tablespoons honey**
- ¼ **teaspoon salt**
- Pinch cayenne pepper**

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

Grilled Salmon

Set your fears aside: If you stick to our method, your grilled salmon will release easily and cleanly from the cooking grate. *by Katie Leaird*



GRILLED SALMON FILLETS

Serves 4

To ensure uniform pieces of fish, we prefer to purchase a whole center-cut salmon fillet, trim it, and cut it into four equal pieces. We use a clean rag to apply oil to the grill because it's sturdier than paper towels. Serve with lemon wedges, if desired.

SAUCE

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- Pinch cayenne pepper

SALMON

- 1 (2- to 2¼-pound) center-cut, skin-on salmon fillet, about 1½ inches thick
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- Vegetable oil

- 1. FOR THE SAUCE:** Whisk all ingredients together in bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate while preparing fish.
- 2. FOR THE SALMON:** Trim away and discard thinner bottom 1 inch of salmon to make salmon more consistent thickness. Cut salmon crosswise into 4 equal fillets. Dry fillets thoroughly with paper towels and refrigerate while preparing grill. Combine salt and pepper in bowl; set aside.
- 3A. FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL:** Open bottom vent completely. Light large chimney starter filled with charcoal briquettes

(6 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over grill. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent completely. Heat grill until hot, about 5 minutes.

3B. FOR A GAS GRILL: Turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Leave all burners on high.

4. Use grill brush to scrape cooking grate clean. Fold rag into compact wad. Holding rag with tongs, dip in oil, then wipe grate. Dip rag in oil again and wipe grate for second time. Cover grill and heat to 500 degrees, about 5 minutes longer. Uncover and wipe grate twice more with oiled rag.

5. Using pastry brush, brush flesh and skin sides of fillets with thin coat of oil. Sprinkle flesh side all over with salt mixture. Place fillets on grill, flesh side down, perpendicular to grate bars, about 3 inches apart on all sides. Cover grill (reduce heat to medium if using gas) and cook, without moving fillets, until flesh side is well marked and releases easily from grill, 4 to 5 minutes.

6. Using fish spatula, gently push each fillet to roll it over onto skin side. (If fillets don't lift cleanly off grill, cover and continue to cook 1 minute longer, at which point they should release.) Continue to cook, covered, until centers of fillets are opaque and register 130 degrees, 4 to 5 minutes longer. Using tongs to stabilize fillets, slide spatula under fillets and transfer to platter. (If skin sticks to grill, slide spatula between fillet and skin and lift fillet away from skin.) Serve with sauce.

Step by Step



1. Make sauce

Whisk all the sauce ingredients together in a bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate.

Why? Making the sauce first lets the sauce flavors meld. It also lets you focus on the fire with no distractions when it's time to cook.



2. Trim and cut fillets

Trim the thinner bottom 1 inch of the salmon and save it for another use. Cut the salmon crosswise into four equal fillets.

Why? Buying one large piece of salmon and cutting it yourself allows you to make equal-size pieces that will cook evenly.



3. Dry fillets

Dry the fillets thoroughly with paper towels and refrigerate them while preparing the grill.

Why? You want to remove as much moisture as possible from the surface of the fish so that it will brown, not steam, when it hits the grill.



4. Ready charcoal or gas grill

Prepare and arrange the briquettes for a charcoal grill or turn the burners to high for a gas grill and preheat the grill thoroughly.

Why? Properly heating a grill takes time. The hotter the grill, the less likely the fish is to stick.



5. Clean and oil grate

Scrape the cooking grate clean with a sturdy grill brush. Hold a wadded rag with tongs, dip it in oil, and wipe the grate. Repeat.

Why? Both cleaning the grate of debris and thoroughly oiling it will help prevent the fish from sticking to it.

Shopping for Salmon

Farmed versus Wild Salmon

Many markets carry both Atlantic and Pacific salmon, and this recipe works equally well with a large skin-on fillet of either. These terms refer to the species of salmon, not necessarily to the ocean from which they were caught.

Atlantic salmon did originate in the Atlantic Ocean. But nowadays most Atlantic salmon sold in the United States is raised on farms around the world, including in Norway, Scotland, Chile, and Canada. Similarly, Pacific salmon—which includes sockeye, coho, and Chinook (also called king)—originated in the North Pacific Ocean. Most Pacific salmon sold in this country is wild-caught in the American Northwest, British Columbia, and Alaska and has a more assertive flavor and a lower fat content than farmed Atlantic salmon.

When shopping, look for bright flesh that's shiny but not sticky and is displayed on ice in a way that allows liquid to drain—fish sitting in a puddle is apt to be mushy.



FARMED SALMON
More orange, usually fattier



WILD SALMON
Redder in color, leaner

Quick-Thawing Frozen Fish

Sometimes buying frozen fish is your best option at the market (and keep in mind that much of the “fresh” fish displayed in the case was likely frozen and thawed at the store). You can thaw frozen fish by simply putting it in the refrigerator for a day or so (it is unsafe to thaw frozen fish or meat at room temperature because it creates an environment where bacteria can thrive), but we found a faster way.

Seal the frozen fish (this works best with fillets) in a zipper-lock bag, making sure to press out all the air, and then submerge the bag in 140-degree water for no longer than 10 minutes. At that point, the fillets should be mostly thawed and ready to cook; this process is safe because it's fast enough that bacteria don't have time to grow.

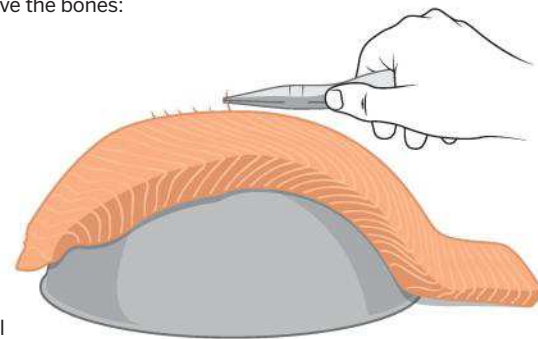
Test Kitchen Tips for Grilling Fish

Removing Salmon Pin Bones

When a fish is filleted, the flesh is removed from the main skeleton. But the small, flexible pin bones are not a part of that mainframe and thus must be removed separately. A lot of the salmon sold in markets already has these bones removed, but it's always a good idea to check. Here's how we remove the bones:

1. Drape the fillet over an inverted bowl to help any pin bones protrude. Then run your finger along the length of the fillet to locate any pin bone ends.

2. Use tweezers or clean needle-nose pliers to grab the tip of the bone. Pull slowly and firmly at a slight angle in the direction the bone is naturally pointing to avoid tearing the flesh. Repeat until all the pin bones are removed.



Oil Both Sides of Fish:

The oil promotes browning and helps further prevent sticking.

Preheat Thoroughly:

High heat is your friend when grilling fish, as it forms a flavorful crust on the exterior of the fish that easily releases from the cooking grate.

Clean and Oil; Then Oil Again:

Scrubbing the hot grate with a grill brush removes residue that could cause sticking. Oiling the hot grate helps it form a barrier that discourages sticking.

Place Fish Perpendicular to Grate:

While developing this recipe, we found that placing the rectangular salmon fillets on the grill perpendicular to the bars of the grate (so that there were more bars under each piece) made it easier to roll the fillets over when it was time to flip them. This makes it less likely that the fillets will break or tear.



Turn by Rolling: When you turn fillets by gently rolling them, you never lift them entirely off the grate; thus, you reduce the risk of the fillets breaking or tearing.



6. Heat grill and oil grate again
Cover the grill and heat it to 500 degrees. Open the lid and wipe the grate twice more with an oiled rag.

Why? By reheating the grill and repeating the greasing procedure, we turn the grate into an almost-nonstick cooking surface.



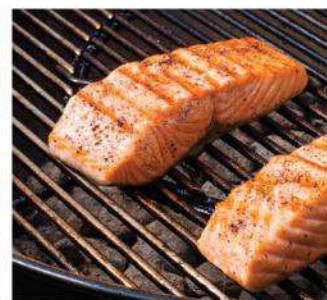
7. Oil and season fillets
Using a pastry brush, brush the flesh and skin sides of the fish with a thin coat of oil. Sprinkle the flesh sides all over with salt and pepper.

Why? The oil helps the seasoning adhere and provides added insurance against sticking.



8. Place fillets on grill and cover
Place the fillets on the grill, flesh side down. Cover and cook until the fish is well marked and releases easily.

Why? Starting the fillets flesh side down while the grill is fully greased and hot ensures the easiest release from the grate.



9. Flip and finish cooking
Using a fish spatula, gently push each fillet to roll it over onto the skin side. Continue to cook, covered, until the centers of the fillets register 130 degrees.

Why? Rolling (not flipping) is the most gentle way of turning over the fillets.



10. Transfer to platter
Using tongs to stabilize the flesh side of the fillets, slide a spatula under the fillets and transfer them to a platter.

Why? Grilling the fillets on the skin side last means that if they stick, you can sacrifice the skin on the grill to cleanly remove them.

Pork Tenderloin and Panzanella Salad

We wanted to sit on the porch after this summery supper, not scrub a bunch of pots.

by **Cecelia Jenkins**

I THINK CROUTONS are the best part of any salad, so *panzanella* is right up my alley. Rather than being relegated to a supporting role, lightly toasted cubes of bread take the spotlight, soaking up the dressing and softening (but not sogging) into flavorful little bites. Though panzanella is often made with raw vegetables, I love mixing fresh vegetables with grilled or roasted ones for a more complex dish. I wanted to build a meal, including quick-cooking pork tenderloin, around this favorite side dish.

I knew I could very easily roast vegetables and toast bread on a rimmed baking sheet. I chopped up some farm-stand favorites (summer squash, red onions, and bell pepper) and tossed them with some extra-virgin olive oil, salt, and pepper. I did the same with some chunks of baguette and spread out the lot on the sheet. I then placed two pork tenderloins on top of the vegetables and slid the whole thing into the oven.

After about 20 minutes in a 450-degree oven, the pork was done. The vegetables had softened, and most of the bread was nicely toasted.

Most, but not all. The bread that had been trapped under the pork was soggy and gummy. I attempted a rescue by removing the cooked pork tenderloins, giving the bread-vegetable mixture a stir, and returning it to the oven to dry out while the pork rested. But even with the extra oven time, the bread remained too squishy—and the vegetables overcooked.

For my next round, I placed the pork directly on the sheet, arranged the bread-vegetable mixture around it, and stirred the mixture halfway through roasting. When the pork was done, the bread was more evenly toasted. I transferred the pork to a cutting board to rest and set the sheet of bread and vegetables aside while I moved on to the dressing, a simple vinaigrette.

Balsamic vinegar gave the dressing its lovely signature flavor; when I tossed it with the roasted vegetables

plus fresh additions of cherry tomatoes and chopped cucumber, it made an excellent salad. But the pork now seemed dull.

This got me thinking: Could I also use the balsamic as a base for a glaze for the exterior of the pork without adding too much extra work? After experimenting with different ingredients, I landed on a thick mixture of equal parts balsamic vinegar, brown sugar, and whole-grain mustard. I added 1 teaspoon of cornstarch to thicken it further so it didn't slip off when applied or in the heat of the oven. It created a beautiful sweet-sharp coating.

With a cooking method this simple, why not add just a little kick? I stirred a bit of garlic, a few capers, and some of the caper brine into the dressing. After slicing the pork and layering it on top of my salad, I finished with a final sprinkling of fresh basil. Simple scrub-free summer supper? Success.

ONE-PAN PORK TENDERLOIN AND PANZANELLA SALAD

Serves 4 to 6

Sourdough bread can be used in place of the baguette. Reese Non Pareil Capers are our taste test winner.

- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard
- 1 tablespoon packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 2 (1-pound) pork tenderloins, trimmed
- Salt and pepper
- 1 (12-inch) baguette, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red onion, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into ½-inch-wide strips
- 1 yellow summer squash, quartered lengthwise and cut into 1-inch pieces
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon capers, rinsed, plus 1 tablespoon brine
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ seedless English cucumber, quartered lengthwise and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 6 ounces cherry tomatoes, halved
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh basil

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Whisk 1 tablespoon vinegar, 1 tablespoon mustard, sugar, and cornstarch in bowl until no lumps of cornstarch remain.



This panzanella is elevated by the addition of roasted vegetables.

2. Pat tenderloins dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Place tenderloins in center of rimmed baking sheet (it's OK if they are touching) and brush tops and sides with all of vinegar mixture.

3. Toss baguette, onion, bell pepper, squash, ¼ cup oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper in large bowl until baguette and vegetables are well coated with oil. Distribute vegetable mixture around tenderloins on sheet. Roast until pork registers 140 degrees, about 20 minutes, stirring vegetable mixture halfway through roasting.

4. Meanwhile, whisk capers and brine, garlic, ⅛ teaspoon salt, ⅛ teaspoon pepper, remaining 2 tablespoons vinegar, remaining 1 tablespoon mustard, and remaining ¼ cup oil together in now-empty bowl.

5. Transfer tenderloins to carving board, tent with aluminum foil, and let rest for 10 minutes. While tenderloins rest, add cucumber, tomatoes, 6 tablespoons basil, and vegetable mixture to bowl with caper dressing and toss to combine.

6. Transfer salad to serving platter. Slice tenderloins ½ inch thick and arrange over salad. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons basil. Serve.

Roasting Setup

We place the raw pork tenderloins in the center of the rimmed baking sheet and brush them with seasoned vinegar. Then we scatter the bread cubes, onion, bell pepper, and squash around them and roast until everything is done. While the meat rests after cooking, we augment the roasted vegetables with fresh tomatoes, cucumber, and a lively vinaigrette.



PERFECTLY POSITIONED
This setup ensures everything cooks evenly.

Barbecue Baked Beans

Summery baked beans without having to turn on the oven? Yes, please.

by **Matthew Fairman**

A PROPER RECIPE for barbecue baked beans should offer up creamy beans draped in a glossy sauce bursting with complex barbecue flavors: vinegar, tomato, molasses, brown sugar, smoked pork, and a touch of heat. Low-cost, low-maintenance, and high-reward, it's the kind of dish that ought to be a perfect fit for the slow cooker, where, once you load it all in, the beans can sit unattended, deepening in flavor until ready to serve.

But so many versions of barbecue baked beans (especially the canned ones) are one-dimensionally sweet. I was willing to put in a bit more work for barbecue beans that would pay out with deep, rich, smoky flavor.

For my recipe, I decided on a combination of half pinto beans and half navy beans. Both are traditional choices, and each brings its own unique character, with pintos having a stronger earthy flavor and fluffier interiors and navy beans being more sweet, mild, and dense. Plus, the dish just looks better with two types of beans.

Dried beans seemed a perfect fit for the low, long cooking of the slow cooker. But cooking all the beans through evenly required too much liquid and left the finished beans soupy. When I tried cutting back on the amount of liquid, some of the beans swelled and rose above the surface, turning out tough and chewy where they were exposed to the air. I tried using canned beans instead and was pleasantly surprised when my tasters liked their soft texture and even creaminess more than the texture of the beans cooked from dried. Plus, they had to cook only long enough to let the flavors of the dish come together, so they were done in half the time.

Now, I just needed to fine-tune the barbecue flavors. I had begun with a classic barbecue sauce base (ketchup, brown sugar, molasses, mustard, cider vinegar, and chili powder) simply stirred together with beans. This version of the sauce tasted a bit sour from the vinegar and ketchup, and it was missing the salty, savory punch of smoked pork. Tasters also complained that the dry spices tasted raw.

To add a baseline of sweetness, depth, and meaty flavor, I chopped up an onion and six slices of bacon and got them going in a skillet. When the onions were beginning to brown and the bacon was starting to render but

was still soft, with a nice meaty chew, I poured in my sauce ingredients and brought it all to a boil for a few moments to cook off the raw flavor of the chili powder. I emptied the skillet into the slow cooker along with my beans, hit the “on” button, and forgot about it until the mouthwatering smells of barbecue and bacon lured me back to the kitchen several hours later. Unable to resist, I snuck a spoonful. The beans were everything I'd hoped they'd be: sweet, smoky, spicy, and a great guest at any backyard gathering.

SLOW-COOKER BARBECUE BEANS

Serves 4 to 6

Do not use blackstrap molasses in this recipe; its assertive bitterness will overpower the other ingredients' flavors.

- 1 cup chicken broth
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup ketchup
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup packed brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup molasses
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce, plus extra for serving
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 6 slices bacon, cut crosswise into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 (15-ounce) cans pinto beans, rinsed
- 2 (15-ounce) cans navy beans, rinsed

1. Whisk broth, ketchup, sugar, molasses, mustard, vinegar, hot sauce, chili powder, salt, and cayenne in bowl until combined; set aside barbecue sauce.

2. Cook bacon, onion, and garlic in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until onion is softened and beginning to brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Add barbecue sauce and bring to boil. Transfer sauce mixture and beans to slow cooker and stir to combine. Cook until flavors have married, about 4 hours on high or 6 hours on low. Serve, passing extra hot sauce separately.

SLOW-COOKER BARBECUE FRANKS AND BEANS

Add 8 hot dogs, cut into 1-inch lengths, to slow cooker along with barbecue sauce mixture and beans.



These meaty, tangy, and pleasantly sweet beans can be a meal unto themselves.

Which Slow Cooker Should You Buy?

A bad slow cooker can run hotter than expected, drying out the food or turning it mushy. A slow cooker that cooks too slowly can leave you waiting, stomach grumbling, for dinner. Poorly designed handles and lids are problematic, too. And what if operating your machine is so confusing that you have to pore over the manual each time you use it?



KITCHENAID 6-QUART SLOW COOKER WITH SOLID GLASS LID (\$83.99)

Thankfully, we've sorted through the options to find the best slow cooker for home kitchens. Our testing winner, the KitchenAid 6-Quart Slow Cooker with Solid Glass Lid (\$83.99), has a straightforward control panel that's intuitive to use. It features a roomy stoneware crock with stay-cool handles. And its thick insulation and built-in temperature sensor ensure that food cooks in the expected time frame—nice and slow, but not too slow.

Roast Chicken and Stuffing

Why should holidays have all the fun? We wanted festive flavors in an everyday dinner for two.

by *Alli Berkey*

THANKSGIVING IS MY favorite holiday, and the stuffing—crisp-moist, herby, buttery—is by far my favorite part of the big meal. But where is it written that stuffing lovers can enjoy this classic side dish only when it accompanies a giant roast turkey? I set out to develop a recipe for roast chicken breasts and stuffing that would satisfy two hungry diners any time of the year.

The test kitchen has plenty of experience cooking chicken, so I had plenty of knowledge to draw on for that part of the recipe. I started with bone-in, skin-on breasts because I wanted plenty of tender white meat but also because I wanted the flavorful crisped skin. I showered the chicken pieces with salt and pepper, seared them to golden on both sides in a skillet, and set the skillet in a 375-degree oven so the breasts could cook through. I positioned them skin side up in the skillet so the skin became crispy and savory. Easy, juicy, and delicious.

Bone Begone

We chose bone-in breasts here because the bone helps keep the meat from drying out while cooking. To remove the bone while keeping the skin intact, follow the steps below.



1. With skin side facing up, slide knife between bone and meat to remove meat.



2. Holding skin in place, slice meat ½ inch thick before serving.



Our potently herby, moist stuffing offers pleasantly crunchy bits around the outside.

As the chicken was roasting, I got started on the stuffing. In another skillet I cooked some chopped onion and celery in butter. When the vegetables were soft, I added more butter, a good pinch of poultry seasoning, and about 4 cups of bread cubes (through testing I found that supermarket Italian bread had the best combination of flavor and texture) and cooked it all over medium

heat, stirring often, until the bread was starting to crisp and brown. Off the heat, I poured in a bit of chicken broth so it could soak into and flavor the toasted bread. I then popped the skillet into the oven next to the chicken so the stuffing could bake and crust up even further around the edges—this contrast in textures is part of stuffing's appeal.

This version was pretty good, but the stuffing needed a savory boost. Losing the dried herb mix in favor of deeply fragrant chopped fresh sage and thyme was a big step in the right direction, but I still wanted more from my stuffing.

As I looked at the two empty pans on the stove, it hit me: Cook the chicken and stuffing together. For my next test, after browning the chicken breasts, I transferred them to a plate. Then I started the stuffing in the flavorful chicken drippings in that same skillet. When the bread cubes were browned and the stuffing was ready for the oven, I piled the seared-but-not-cooked-through breasts on top, where their juices could drip into the stuffing as they roasted in tandem. As a bonus, I had one fewer pan to wash.

I confidently called my colleagues to come taste this latest version. “There’s something missing,” my editor said. My spirits dropped. “What?” “Cranberry sauce,” he said, smiling. Now you, too, can enjoy the best flavors of Thanksgiving any time of year.

SKILLET-ROASTED CHICKEN AND STUFFING FOR TWO

The fresh herbs make a big flavor difference in this recipe; do not use dried herbs. You can find Italian bread in the bakery section of your supermarket.

- 2 (10- to 12-ounce) bone-in split chicken breasts, trimmed**
- Salt and pepper**
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus 1 tablespoon unsalted butter**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh sage**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme**
- 1 onion, chopped fine**
- 1 celery rib, chopped fine**
- 5 ounces Italian bread, cut into ½-inch cubes (4 cups)**
- ½ cup chicken broth**

- 1.** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Pat chicken dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Combine melted butter, sage, thyme, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper in bowl.
- 2.** Melt remaining 1 tablespoon butter in 12-inch oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken, skin side down, and cook until browned on both sides, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer chicken to plate, skin side up.
- 3.** Reduce heat to medium. Add onion and celery to now-empty skillet and cook until softened, about 4 minutes. Stir in bread and 2 tablespoons melted butter mixture. Cook, stirring often, until bread begins to brown, about 4 minutes. Off heat, stir in broth.
- 4.** Place chicken, skin side up, on top of stuffing. Using pastry brush, brush skin with remaining 1 tablespoon melted butter mixture. Transfer skillet to oven and roast until chicken registers 160 degrees and stuffing has browned, 25 to 30 minutes, rotating skillet half-way through roasting. Transfer chicken to carving board, tent with aluminum foil, and let rest for 5 minutes. Stir stuffing to combine. Carve chicken from bones and slice ½ inch thick. Serve stuffing with chicken.

Crispy Rice Cereal Treats

Making these treats isn't rocket science. But the details matter.

by Ashley Moore

MY LOVE FOR crispy rice cereal treats runs deep. I began making them for an after-school snack when I was in the fifth grade, and I've been smitten ever since. These no-bake treats are simple, sweet, and reliably fast and easy to make. And they're a great blank canvas for all kinds of add-ins.

There is, of course, a recipe on the back of the cereal box (and about a thousand more on the internet), but I wanted to raise the bar. I set out to create the best-ever crispy rice cereal treats. I wanted them to have the right amounts of crunch and chew without being too sweet or heavy and to be perfectly pull-apart soft. And, as a bonus, I wanted to come up with a handful of fun, flavor-packed variations.

After weeks of testing, I landed on the following formula for 12 generous treats: one stick of butter, two 10-ounce packages of large marshmallows, a bit of vanilla, some salt, and 10 cups of cereal. Process-wise, there was no need to reinvent the wheel: Just melt the butter, stir in the marshmallows until creamy, and then (off the heat) stir in the cereal, spread into a pan, and let it cool.

On to the variations. I wanted them to be interesting but to stay true to the simple nature of these treats. The first one features chunks of Snickers bars and M&M's Minis both inside and on top. The second variation is flavored with chocolaty Nutella spread and crunchy bits of toasted hazelnuts. A third version has contrasting bits of crumbled bacon throughout plus a drizzle of caramel sauce and a sprinkling of salt on top. And finally, my favorite variation, peanut butter and honey, is satisfying and simple: Creamy peanut butter is stirred into the treats, which are finished with a drizzle of sticky-sweet honey.

CRISPY RICE CEREAL TREATS

Makes 12 bars

Do not use mini marshmallows here. For the best results, weigh the cereal.

- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 (10-ounce) packages large marshmallows
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 10 cups (10 ounces) crisped rice cereal

1. Spray rubber spatula and 13 by 9-inch baking pan with vegetable oil spray. Melt butter in Dutch oven over medium heat. Add marshmallows, vanilla, and salt and cook, stirring often with prepared spatula, until marshmallows are just melted, about 3 minutes (some marshmallows may not be fully melted; this is OK). Off heat, stir in cereal until fully combined.
2. Transfer cereal mixture to prepared pan. Using your damp hands, press cereal mixture into even layer. Let sit for 1 hour to set. Run knife around edge of pan to loosen treats, then turn out onto cutting board. Flip treats right side up and cut into 12 equal-size bars. Serve.

CANDY BAR CRISPY RICE CEREAL TREATS

Combine two 2-ounce Snickers bars, chopped, and ½ cup M&M's Minis in bowl. Add 1 cup candy mixture to Dutch oven with cereal in step 1. Sprinkle remaining heaping ¼ cup candy mixture over cereal mixture in pan before pressing into even layer.

NUTELLA AND HAZELNUT CRISPY RICE CEREAL TREATS

Add ½ cup Nutella and ¼ teaspoon instant espresso powder to Dutch oven with marshmallows in step 1. Sprinkle ½ cup hazelnuts, toasted, skinned, and chopped, over cereal mixture in pan before pressing into even layer.

BACON AND SALTED CARAMEL CRISPY RICE CEREAL TREATS

Cook 6 slices bacon in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until crispy, 7 to 9 minutes. Transfer bacon to paper towel-lined plate, let sit until cool enough to handle, then crumble. Add two-thirds of bacon to Dutch oven with cereal in step 1. Sprinkle remaining one-third of bacon over cereal mixture in pan before pressing into even layer. After pressing, drizzle with ¼ cup caramel sauce, then sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon salt.

PEANUT BUTTER AND HONEY CRISPY RICE CEREAL TREATS

Add ¼ cup creamy peanut butter to Dutch oven with marshmallows in step 1. After pressing into even layer, drizzle with 2 tablespoons honey.



These light, sweet confections are soft enough to easily pull apart.



CANDY BAR CRISPY RICE CEREAL TREATS



NUTELLA AND HAZELNUT CRISPY RICE CEREAL TREATS



PEANUT BUTTER AND HONEY CRISPY RICE CEREAL TREATS



BACON AND SALTED CARAMEL CRISPY RICE CEREAL TREATS

Large Coolers

Do you really need to spend almost \$400 to get a cooler that works?

by Lauren Savoie

7 Coolers 9 Tests

- Pack with 32 pounds of ice and measure and track melting rate
- Load with ice packs and 36 cold cans of soda and track soda temperatures
- Pack full with groceries to assess usable space
- Carry or wheel packed coolers across asphalt, concrete, grass, and gravel
- Haul packed coolers up stairs
- Lift packed coolers into and out of SUV
- Drop packed coolers from SUV gate
- Operate all latches, handles, and lids a minimum of 100 times
- Saw in half to measure and assess insulation

A Note About Food Safety

When it comes to keeping food at a safe temperature in your cooler, there are many factors at play, including the ambient temperature and how the cooler is packed. That's why a digital thermometer comes in handy. Not only can you use it to ensure that foods are cooked properly but you can also use it to make sure the food in your cooler remains safely cold enough to prevent spoilage or illness.

A \$25.00 COOLER was once the norm, but in recent years premium products have entered the market. Sleek, certified bear-proof, and “virtually indestructible,” Yeti coolers in particular have gained a cultlike status among outdoor enthusiasts. But do less expensive options work just as well?

To find out, we selected seven products, priced from \$19.99 to \$379.99, from five top-selling cooler manufacturers, including a Yeti and a comparable model from Pelican. We chose a mix of models with wheels and without and opted for those with capacities of about 50 quarts—a size that we think should be sufficient for a weekend's worth of supplies for four people.

We ran the coolers through a battery of tests to gauge cold retention, ease of use, portability, and durability. Functionality issues came up first. One cooler's lid didn't stay open and repeatedly flopped onto our hands as we loaded it. Another lacked a drain, so we had to unload everything and strain the ice to get rid of excess water. And the high-end coolers were just plain heavy. While every other product weighed between 7 and 12 pounds when empty, the Yeti weighed in at 26 pounds and the Pelican at 38 pounds. Though the Pelican has wheels, lugging it up and down stairs or in and out of the car was still a two-person job.

All that heft, however, made these two coolers less likely to tumble over and more durable when they did. Thanks to sturdier locking latches, these coolers' lids never opened during testing; the lighter coolers all spilled open (and several were damaged by the end of testing). The Yeti and Pelican models proved very durable.

Our two high-end coolers also stood out for their superior cold retention. Most of the coolers allowed sodas and ice packs to reach 50 degrees in two days and ice to melt completely in four days. Soda in both the Yeti and the Pelican was still 49 degrees after four days; ice melted fully after 10 and eight days, respectively.

To figure out what set these two coolers apart, we sawed each cooler in half and examined its insulation. The top four coolers had insulated lids; the rest were hollow. The highly ranked coolers also had thicker insulation all around. The Pelican actually had the thickest insulation, so why did the Yeti retain cold better?

We excavated insulation from each cooler and calculated its density. We found that the Yeti's insulation was less dense than the Pelican's. Though it seems counterintuitive, our science editor confirmed that less-dense insulation is preferable because air is a poor conductor of heat, especially when it's



A Peek Inside

Sometimes you just need to break out the power tools and saw some stuff in half to get a closer look. What did we find out when we looked inside these coolers? Thicker but also less-dense insulation means better cold retention.

immobile. The pockets in the less-dense insulation trap air, preventing it from moving, thus creating an extra barrier between the contents of the cooler and the heat outside.

The rugged and pricey Yeti Tundra 50 (\$379.99) lived up to the hype and is our overall winner. But for more casual cooling needs—a beach day or a barbecue—we recommend the Coleman 50 QT Xtreme Wheeled Cooler (\$45.99). Our Web subscribers can read the full article at CooksCountry.com/sept18.

RECOMMENDED	RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS	NOT RECOMMENDED
<p>Our Favorite</p> <p>Yeti Tundra 50 Model: YT50 Price: \$379.99 Weight: 26 lb Thickness of Insulation: 1.4 to 2.3 in Density of Insulation: 35 mg/cu cm Insulated Lid: Yes Wheels: No</p>  <p>Cooling ★★★ Portability ★ Ease of Use ★★★ Durability ★★★</p> <p>Comments: Ice lasted 10 days, and soda stayed at 50° for five days. But it's costly and heavy.</p>	<p>Igloo Marine Ultra 48 Model: 44681 Price: \$64.99 Weight: 8 lb Thickness of Insulation: 0.5 to 1 in Density of Insulation: 34 mg/cu cm Insulated Lid: Yes Wheels: No</p>  <p>Cooling ★1/2 Portability ★★ Ease of Use ★★★ Durability ★★</p> <p>Comments: A simple cooler that performed decently. Good for a party but maybe not for a weekend.</p>	<p>Rubbermaid 48 QT Cooler Model: FG2A1502MODRD Price: \$19.99 Weight: 8 lb Thickness of Insulation: 0.7 to 1.3 in Density of Insulation: 21 mg/cu cm Insulated Lid: No Wheels: No</p>  <p>Cooling ★1/2 Portability ★★ Ease of Use ★ Durability ★★</p> <p>Comments: Mediocre cooling and no drain are a bad combo: Emptying the water was a hassle.</p>
<p>Best Buy</p> <p>Coleman 50 QT Xtreme Wheeled Cooler Model: 3000005153 Price: \$45.99 Weight: 12 lb Thickness of Insulation: 0.7 to 1.6 in Density of Insulation: 43 mg/cu cm Insulated Lid: Yes Wheels: Yes</p>  <p>Cooling ★★1/2 Portability ★★★ Ease of Use ★★1/2 Durability ★1/2</p> <p>Comments: Though not as durable as the Yeti, this inexpensive wheeled model performed well.</p>	<p>Rubbermaid 45 QT Wheeled Cooler Model: FG2A9102MODBL Price: \$24.97 Weight: 11 lb Thickness of Insulation: 0.7 to 3 in Density of Insulation: 36 mg/cu cm Insulated Lid: No Wheels: Yes</p>  <p>Cooling ★1/2 Portability ★★★ Ease of Use ★1/2 Durability ★★</p> <p>Comments: This narrow, deep cooler was awkward to pack. The split lid doors were not insulated, and they flew open during testing.</p>	<p>Coleman 48 QT Performance Cooler Model: 3000000152 Price: \$24.99 Weight: 7 lb Thickness of Insulation: 0.7 to 1 in Density of Insulation: 43 mg/cu cm Insulated Lid: No Wheels: No</p>  <p>Cooling ★1/2 Portability ★★ Ease of Use ★ Durability ★</p> <p>Comments: This cooler didn't excel at anything and lacked durability.</p>
<p>Pelican Elite 45QW Wheeled Cooler Model: 45QW Price: \$379.95 Weight: 38 lb Thickness of Insulation: 2 to 3 in Density of Insulation: 40 mg/cu cm Insulated Lid: Yes Wheels: Yes</p>  <p>Cooling ★★★ Portability ★1/2 Ease of Use ★★ Durability ★★★</p> <p>Comments: Great marks for cold retention but too heavy.</p>		

KEY Good ★★★ Fair ★★ Poor ★

Potato Chips

We held a potato chip battle royale to find the best products on the market. *by Kate Shannon*

POTATO CHIPS ELICIT strong opinions—which variety is best? A few years ago we concluded that it was thick, salty kettle-cooked chips, but recently we decided to resurvey the options. We identified nine top-selling, nationally available potato chips and purchased each in its simplest salted flavor. Our lineup included four “regular” chips and five thick “kettle-style” chips. Tasters sampled the chips plain, and to gauge sturdiness in a practical application, we dragged the chips through creamy French onion dip and ate them.

All the chips contain just potatoes, oil, and salt, yet there were noticeable flavor and texture differences. To find out more about the role of processing, we spoke with Molly Mancini, innovation manager for Utz, a Pennsylvania-based company that makes potato chips in various styles under several brand names.

Making regular potato chips is a nonstop automated process called a “continuous fry.”

Raw potatoes are placed on conveyor belts and quickly washed, peeled, sliced, fried, and packaged. Kettle chips are made similarly, with one big difference: They’re batch-fried in big vats. Because they’re not propelled through the oil, they must be agitated with a rake-like device or an automatic stirrer to ensure that they cook evenly and don’t clump.

When we looked at our tasting results, we saw a clear pattern. Again and again, tasters described kettle chips as “crunchy” and regular chips as “crispy.” Some experts argue that these terms refer to the same textural quality, but there’s also research suggesting that they are two distinct eating experiences.

Why do kettle chips seem crunchier? We measured and averaged a 25-chip sample from each bag and found the kettle chips to be about 50 percent thicker than regular chips: 1.56 millimeters versus 1.07 millimeters. These measurements don’t include chips that fold as a result of stirring. (Kettle-style chips are more likely than regular chips

to fold during frying, which makes them seem even crunchier.)

The frying process also contributes to the crunch distinction between regular and kettle chips. As Harold McGee explains in *On Food and Cooking* (2004), sliced potatoes undergo chemical changes when they are fried. Regular chips are fried at a high, consistent temperature for just 3 to 4 minutes, so the starches and moisture in the potatoes don’t have time to interact. According to McGee, the chips are “delicately crisp and fine-grained” as a

result. Kettle chips require 8 to 10 minutes in the fryer. In that time, the moisture and starch granules combine. The starch begins to dissolve and forms a sticky gel that glues the potato’s cell walls together. This gives kettle chips their characteristic crunch.

Our winner, the only chip fried in 100 percent peanut oil, tasted especially rich and “potato-y.” Most others used a blend of sunflower, safflower, and/or canola oils.

Fat and salt didn’t play a major role in our rankings. Chips ranged from 7 to 10 grams of fat and from 90 to 180 milligrams of sodium per serving, and there were no strong trends. Though we generally preferred chips with at least 120 milligrams of sodium, there were exceptions. Mancini explained that this could be due to the size of the salt granules, as coarse salt “creates a different type of crunch” than fine salt, “which melts right away.”

Our favorite was a kettle chip, Utz Kettle Classics, Original, which tasters praised for its “beautiful crunch and great salt balance.” But a “traditional” regular chip, Herr’s Crisp ‘N Tasty Potato Chips, was close on its heels. If you want to make everyone happy—or inspire a heated debate—we recommend buying both.

Reduced Fat, Full Flavor

Utz, the maker of our winning chip, also offers a reduced-fat version with 40 percent less fat. In a blind side-by-side tasting, tasters found the reduced-fat chips to be “nice and crunchy” with “satisfying” salty, potato-y flavor. While tasters noted that the reduced-fat chips were “drier” and less greasy than our winning chip, they didn’t find them to be “too health food-y.” Some tasters preferred them.



Our Web subscribers can read the full article at CooksCountry.com/sept18.



REGULAR CHIP: Thin and crispy



KETTLE-STYLE: Thick and crunchy

RECOMMENDED

Our Favorite

Utz Kettle Classics, Original Best Kettle-Style Potato Chip
Price: \$3.79 for 8-oz bag (\$0.47 per oz)
Style: Kettle
Oil: Peanut
Average Thickness: 1.47 mm



TASTERS' NOTES

Our new favorite kettle chip took the top spot overall, due in large part to its “nicely thick and crunchy” texture. The chips were “supercrunchy” and, in the words of one taster, “perfect.” Unlike other products in the lineup, they’re fried in peanut oil.

Herr’s Crisp ‘N Tasty Potato Chips Best Regular Potato Chip

Price: \$2.99 for 9.5-oz bag (\$0.31 per oz)
Style: Regular
Oil: Corn, cottonseed, soybean, and/or sunflower
Average Thickness: 1.06 mm



These “very thin,” “crisp” chips were our favorite made in the regular style. Tasters raved that they were “delicate” but not too weak or flimsy. Even in French onion dip, they held up. These “classic,” “traditional” potato chips had tasters asking for “more, please!”

Lay’s Kettle Cooked, Original

Price: \$3.49 for 8-oz bag (\$0.44 per oz)
Style: Kettle
Oil: Sunflower, corn, and/or canola
Average Thickness: 1.59 mm



These had “a thick, homemade kind of crunch” and a particularly “dense” structure. The ratio of folded and curled chips was especially high; we counted 16 in our randomized sample of 25 chips. But they were lower in sodium, and our tasters missed that extra salt.

Lay’s Classic

Price: \$4.29 for 10-oz bag (\$0.43 per oz)
Style: Regular
Oil: Sunflower, corn, and/or canola
Average Thickness: 1.08 mm



These familiar chips were “very thin” and “light” but still satisfyingly crisp. Even when dragged through thick dip, most didn’t crack or crumble. (Only one chip broke.) They were fairly high in sodium but didn’t taste overly salty.

Cape Cod Kettle Cooked Potato Chips, Original

Price: \$3.79 for 8-oz bag (\$0.47 per oz)
Style: Kettle
Oil: Canola, safflower, and/or sunflower
Average Thickness: 1.31 mm



These kettle chips were “perfectly balanced: thick and crunchy but not too hard.” We counted a lot of folded chips (8 out of 25), which “added to the crunch” and reminded us of good homemade chips. They also tasted nicely salty.

Wise Golden Original Potato Chips

Price: \$3.99 for 9-oz bag (\$0.44 per oz)
Style: Regular
Oil: Corn, cottonseed, sunflower, soybean, and/or canola
Average Thickness: 1.13 mm



These regular chips were particularly light and delicate, which gave them an “all-American,” “standard cookout snack” feel. Some tasters wanted a bit more heft, even from a regular chip. They had “great potato flavor” and plenty of salt.

RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS

Utz Original Potato Chips
Price: \$4.29 for 9.5-oz bag (\$0.45 per oz) **Style:** Regular

Great-tasting but too “delicate” and “insubstantial” in texture; they broke in the dip.



Kettle Brand Potato Chips, Sea Salt
Price: \$3.99 for 8.5-oz bag (\$0.47 per oz) **Style:** Kettle

“Very crunchy” but “somewhat greasy.” Some tasters picked up on an oily flavor.



NOT RECOMMENDED

Boulder Canyon Sea Salt Potato Chips
Price: \$3.05 for 5-oz bag (\$0.61 per oz) **Style:** Kettle

These “supercrunchy” kettle chips were “hard,” “oily,” and “tasted low in salt.”



No-Churn Orange Ice Cream



This recipe came from a close friend of my New England grandmother. The idea for this simple dessert is creative, the method practical, and the result delightful.

—TUCKER SHAW
Editor in chief

NO-CHURN ORANGE ICE CREAM

Makes about 1 quart

Use a rasp-style grater to zest the citrus.

1¹/₃ cups heavy cream

1 cup sweetened condensed milk

½ cup evaporated milk

¼ cup light corn syrup

2 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon grated orange zest plus ½ cup juice

1 teaspoon grated lemon zest plus 3 tablespoons juice

1. Process cream in blender until stiff peaks form, 30 to 45 seconds, scraping down sides of blender jar as needed. Add condensed milk, evaporated milk, corn syrup, sugar, orange zest and juice, and lemon zest and juice. Process until thoroughly combined, 30 to 45 seconds.
2. Pour cream mixture into airtight 1-quart container. Cover and freeze until firm, at least 6 hours. Serve.

We're looking for recipes that you treasure—the ones that have been handed down in your family for a generation or more, that always come out for the holidays, and that have earned a place at your table and in your heart through many years of meals. Send us the recipes that spell home to you. Visit CooksCountry.com/recipe_submission (or write to Heirloom Recipes, Cook's Country, 21 Drydock Avenue, Suite 210E, Boston, MA 02210) and tell us a little about the recipe. Include your name and mailing address. If we print your recipe, you'll receive a free one-year subscription to Cook's Country.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

With the holidays right around the corner, we travel to Louisiana to unravel the secrets of **Cajun Rice Dressing** and to Chicago to find the best way to cook ultraporky **Carnitas**. We'll share secrets to weeknight favorites such as **Sliders**, **Pasta Fagioli**, and **Brandy Chicken and Onions** and present holiday fare like **Roasted Turkey Breast**, **Roasted Pear Salad**, and an amazing **Make-Ahead Pumpkin Pie**. Join us!



We're thrilled to count you as a reader of *Cook's Country* magazine, and we'd like to invite you to join us, along with thousands of fellow readers and fans, in our special members-only Facebook group. There, you can share cooking tips and ideas with other members, show off your kitchen creations, and interact with editors and test cooks from *Cook's Country*, *Cook's Illustrated*, and *America's Test Kitchen*. It's a safe, supportive, and superactive place to connect with other home cooks. To request membership, please visit CooksCountry.com/group.

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FIND THE ROOSTER!

Horrors! Our rooster flew the coop! We hide a tiny version of our rooster in every issue of *Cook's Country* magazine, but he went missing in the June/July 2018 issue. Never fear—we've tracked him down, and he is back, hiding somewhere in this issue. Write to us with the hidden rooster's location and we'll enter you in a random drawing. To make up for the chaos he caused in the June/July 2018 issue, we'll award prizes to the first TWO correct entries drawn at random. The first two entries drawn will each win our Best Buy cooler. Each of the next five will receive a free one-year subscription to *Cook's Country*. To enter, visit CooksCountry.com/rooster by September 30, 2018, or write to Rooster AS18, Cook's Country, 21 Drydock Avenue, Suite 210E, Boston, MA 02210. Include your name and address. Libby Zimbleman of Mt. Laurel, N.J., found the rooster in the April/May 2018 issue on page 21 and won our favorite multicooker.

WEB EXTRAS

Available online for Web subscribers at CooksCountry.com/sept18

- Tasting Cottage Cheese
- Tasting Potato Chips
- Testing Large Coolers
- Testing Herb Keepers



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. All issues are enhanced with full-color Cooking Mode slide shows that provide step-by-step instructions for completing recipes, plus expanded reviews and ratings. Go to CooksCountry.com/iPad to download our app through iTunes.

RC = Recipe Card

Fruits of the Forest Cake

In the height of summer, it's hard to pick just one berry to feature in a cake. Taking a hint from a favorite Italian dessert called *frutti di bosco*, we used blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries in this pastry cream–stuffed showstopper.

by Katie Leaird

TO MAKE THIS CAKE, YOU WILL NEED:

- 3 cups vanilla buttercream frosting*
- 2 tablespoons grated lemon zest (2 lemons)
- 3 (8-inch) yellow layer cake rounds*
- 3 cups pastry cream*
- 6 ounces (1¼ cups) blueberries
- 8¾ ounces (1¾ cups) raspberries
- 8¾ ounces (1¾ cups) blackberries
- 1 teaspoon confectioners' sugar

FOR THE FROSTING: Combine buttercream and lemon zest in bowl.

TO ASSEMBLE: Place 1 cake layer on cake turntable. Spread 1 cup pastry cream evenly over top. Repeat with remaining 2 cake layers and remaining 2 cups pastry cream. Spread frosting in even layer around sides of cake. While spinning cake turntable, run spatula horizontally from bottom to top of side of cake to create textured stripes. Arrange blueberries in single row around base of cake. Alternate raspberries and blackberries around top edge of cake. Scatter remaining berries over top of cake. Sift sugar evenly over berries. Serve.



*The full recipe, including the recipes for the buttercream, cake layers, and pastry cream, is available for free for four months at [CooksCountry.com/fruitsforestcake](https://www.cookscountry.com/fruitsforestcake).

