



From
Scratch
Leanne Brown

Text and recipes by
Leanne Brown—
indebted as always
to other cooks whose
recipes have guided me.

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Welcome5

Breakfast6

Morning Quinoa7
Sweet Buckwheat Pancakes8
Savoury Buckwheat Pancakes9

Eggs 10

Omelette 11
Vegetable Scramble..... 12
IDEAS: Eggs 14

Soup 16

Asparagus Soup..... 17
Cold Pea Soup 18
Curried Sweet Potato Soup 19
Spinach-Lemon Soup20
Cauliflower Soup21

Big Salad22

Dressing23
IDEAS: Big Salad24
Roasted Potato Salad26
Fennel Salad.....28
Carrot-Orange Salad29

Savoury Pies and Tarts30

Summery Tomato Tart31
All-Butter Short Crust32
Broccoli-Cheddar Quiche.....34
Asparagus Quiche.....35
Green Chili Cheese Pie36
Veggie Pie37

Sautéed Vegetables38

METHOD: How to Sauté Vegetables39
IDEAS: Sautéed Vegetables40

Pizza	42
Tomato Sauce.....	43
Great Pizza Dough.....	44
Fast Pizza Dough.....	45
METHOD: Pizza in the Oven.....	46
METHOD: Pizza with a Baking Stone.....	46
METHOD: Pizza on the Barbecue.....	48
IDEAS: Pizza.....	50

Pasta	52
Macaroni and Cheese.....	53
Fresh Pasta.....	54
Broad Bean and Goat Cheese Ravioli.....	56
IDEAS: Pasta.....	58

Dinner	60
Asparagus and Corn Risotto.....	61
Chana Masala.....	62
Veggie Burgers.....	64
Chana Dal with Spinach.....	66
Lemongrass Chili-Coconut Stir-Fry.....	68
Black Bean and Goat Cheese Enchiladas.....	70
Tacos.....	72
Green and White Chili.....	74
Black Bean Chili.....	76
Gumbo-inspired Veggie Stew.....	78
Stuffed Roasted Peppers.....	80

Desserts	82
Berry and Caramelized Bread Salad.....	83
Strawberry Cobbler.....	84
Pumpkin Cinnamon Buns.....	86
My Mum's Ekmek.....	88

Drinks	90
Hot Chocolate.....	91
Lemon and Whisky.....	92
White Wine Sangria.....	93

Pantry Items and Flavour-Boosters	94
Dry Rub.....	95
Fridge Pickles.....	96
Flavoured Butter.....	98
Roasted Garlic.....	99
Chorizo Spice Blend.....	100
Basil Pesto.....	101
My Dad's Green Chili Sauce.....	102
Hot Chili Paste.....	103
Ketchup.....	104
Salsa.....	105
METHOD: How to Cook Dried Beans.....	106

Index	107
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Welcome

The structure of this cookbook reflects the way I think people ought to approach home cooking—loosely and confidently, with an intent to answer the basic questions that animate life.

For example, when I make a meal, I am simultaneously trying to answer several questions. What do I, and those I'm feeding, feel hungry for? What do I have on hand or left over from other meals? How can I use healthy produce, unfamiliar ingredients, or fresh food from local farms and businesses? How can I incorporate my favourite flavours?

As I answer these questions, I ensure that I am eating well and nourishing those around me. That I am practical and frugal. That I am conscious that my food choices have consequences for others. That I want to limit waste. And that I want to make the best, most lively food for me and those I love to feed.

These are not small decisions. They have a great deal of weight, yet we make them every day, often without thinking. Cooking regularly makes you more conscious about these decisions. It is empowering to be in control of what you eat and to realize that your food choices have as much power to shape society as they do to quell your hunger.

I want you to be able to answer all these questions for yourself. That is why my recipes are open and adaptable. They are meant to inspire, to remind you that you don't have to follow a recipe exactly or make a sandwich the same way twice. These recipes happen to be vegetarian because I am vegetarian, but they could as easily incorporate meat or anything you enjoy.

This is how I cook and how I believe others should look at food preparation—easy and practical and enhancing each day. Cooking should not be a chore, but something to look forward to. Food should make you feel more alive, more socially connected. I hope this book can help you with that.



Breakfast

Most people want simple, satisfying food for breakfast. All we need to be happy are a few favourite foods, prepared well. We should try to be inspired by that with all our meals!

I hope these basic recipes will inspire you to figure out your own favourite way to start the morning. They are all very adaptable and can be made mainly with common ingredients.



Morning Quinoa

FOR ONE

- 1/3 cup quinoa
- 2/3 cup water
- pinch of salt
- 1/2 cup fruit
- 2 tbs maple syrup (or to taste)

ADDITIONS

- any other syrup
- honey
- jam
- vanilla extract
- cinnamon
- nutmeg
- yogurt

Add the quinoa, water, and salt to a small pot. Place it on medium heat. Let it come to a boil, then turn the heat down to medium-low so that it simmers gently.

Meanwhile, unless you're using small berries, cut up your fruit into bite-sized pieces. If you're using fresh fruit, dump it in at the end with the maple syrup. If it's the winter and you're using frozen fruit, toss it into the pot a couple of minutes before the quinoa is cooked so that it can warm up and mix in nicely.

The quinoa should take about 20 minutes to cook. Keep an eye on it; if it looks like it's getting dry, add some water. The quinoa is cooked when it is translucent, has doubled in size, and an opaque ring is visible around each grain. Mix in maple syrup to your liking, then serve.

This is the basic recipe. Customize it to your tastes by tossing in anything you like or any of the additions I've suggested below the ingredients list.



Sweet Buckwheat Pancakes

FOR TWO

½ cup buckwheat flour
½ cup whole wheat flour
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp nutmeg, freshly grated
¼ tsp salt
1 tbsp brown sugar
1 cup milk
1 tbsp butter, melted
1 egg
1 tsp vanilla extract

ADDITIONS

berries, fresh or frozen

In a medium bowl, whisk the dry ingredients together. In another bowl, whisk together the milk, melted butter, egg, and vanilla.

Add the wet ingredients to the dry and gently stir until the batter is mixed but still lumpy, then leave it to rest for 10 minutes. This will keep the pancakes tender.

Set a non-stick pan on medium heat. Sprinkle a few drops of water on the pan; once they sizzle, it's hot enough.

Add a spoonful of batter to the pan. The pancakes can be any size you like—it makes no difference.

Flip the pancake once the edge starts to bubble. As soon as the second side is golden-brown, remove it from the pan and add the next bit of batter. Repeat!

Serve with syrup or fruit and enjoy.



Savoury Buckwheat Pancakes

FOR TWO

½ cup buckwheat flour
¼ cup whole wheat flour
¼ cup cornmeal
1 tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
¼ cup grated parmesan
½ tsp pepper
2 tbsp green onions, finely sliced
1 cup milk
1 tbsp butter, melted
1 egg

ADDITIONS

herbs
any spice or spice blend
finely chopped onions
roasted garlic
other cheeses
olives
jalapeños
roasted peppers

SUGGESTED TOPPINGS

fried or poached egg
salsa
leftover beans
your favourite savoury sauce

In a medium bowl, whisk the dry ingredients together (including the green onions and parmesan). In another bowl, whisk together the milk, melted butter, and egg.

From this point, follow the same directions as if making the sweet buckwheat pancakes on the previous page.



Eggs

Eggs are so adaptable. They are, of course, fantastic in a multitude of ways for breakfast—but don't forget about them at dinner, either! Omelettes, frittatas, soufflés, and scrambles make great, simple suppers. I also like to add fried or poached eggs to noodle or rice dishes as well as certain types of salads.

With something as simple as an egg dish, the quality of the eggs makes a huge difference, so buy free-range eggs from a local farm whenever possible. The yolks will be bright and flavourful; the eggs will be wonderfully fresh.

Although free-range eggs cost a bit more than regular supermarket eggs, they are still a phenomenal deal for what you get. The flavour is really worth a couple extra dollars per dozen.

Think of eggs the way many think of chicken, as a great canvas for any combination of flavours.



Omelette

FOR TWO

- 4 eggs
- 2 tbsp fresh dill, finely chopped
- salt and pepper
- butter for the pan
- 1 shallot or ½ small red onion, finely diced
- ¼ cup grated cheese

ADDITIONS

- tomato
- green onion
- spinach
- herbs
- arugula
- leftover sautéed vegetables
- bell pepper
- chilies
- corn
- any cooked meat

I make this omelette at least once a week. It's insanely delicious, whether laden with veggies or kept simple. I love it with dill, but it's good with almost any herb, green onions, or finely chopped garlic scapes.

Crack the eggs in a bowl. Add the dill, salt, and pepper, then beat it all with a fork. Dice the onion finely.

Put a big saucepan on medium-high heat. Melt a small blob of butter in the pan (or just use oil). Once the butter is sizzling, add the onion and sauté for about two minutes, until it's translucent and smells great.

Add the egg to the hot pan and swirl it around to coat the surface evenly. If the centre of the omelette cooks more quickly than the edge, use a spatula to pull any raw egg into the middle. Then stop touching it.

After about 30 seconds, toss the cheese on top along with anything else you feel like adding. Once none of the egg remains translucent, fold the omelette in half with your spatula, then lift it out of the pan.

If I'm serving two people, I usually cut one large omelette in half rather than making two omelettes. Two eggs is enough for most people!

Vegetable Scramble

FOR ONE WITH A GOOD APPETITE

2 tsp butter or olive oil
1 small potato, diced
2-3 tbsp onion, finely diced
1 clove garlic, finely diced
¼ red pepper, diced
3-4 cherry tomatoes, roughly chopped
2 eggs
salt and pepper
2 handfuls baby spinach

ADDITIONS
bean sprouts
herbs
peas

SERVE IT
in a wrap
on top of toast
on top of rice
with a salad

Feel free to omit any of the listed vegetables or add more. This is really just vegetables held together by soft scrambled eggs.

Prepare all of your vegetables. Crack the eggs into a bowl.

Put a pan on medium-high heat, then add the oil or butter. Once it's sizzling, add the potato and turn the heat up a bit. Stir-fry the potato until you can easily impale it with a fork—probably around three to five minutes.

Add the onion. Stir-fry for another two minutes or until the onion becomes a bit brown. Add the garlic and red pepper and stir-fry for another minute. Then add the tomato and stir-fry until its juice cooks off—about one more minute.

Take the pan off the heat and add the eggs to the pan, then stir. The residual heat will cook the egg quite a bit as you stir. Add salt and pepper to taste. If the egg is not fully cooked, put the pan back on very low heat and slowly cook the eggs, stirring frequently. This method keeps the eggs tender and creamy.

To finish, toss the spinach into the pan and stir until it wilts, or add it just before serving so that the spinach stays raw.





IDEAS

Eggs

SPICY VEGETABLE OMELETTE: Add spice oil, cayenne, or your favourite chili powder to an omelette. Sweet vegetables like tomato or bell pepper are a nice offset for the heat.

EGGS POACHED IN TOMATO SAUCE: Crack an egg into gently boiling tomato sauce (page 43). Once the white is no longer translucent, remove and serve with extra sauce.



GREEN SAUCE OVER POACHED EGGS: Crack an egg into gently boiling water. Let it cook for two to three minutes, then remove. Dress with green chili sauce (page 102).

CURRIED VEGETABLE SCRAMBLE: Start with a vegetable scramble, but use sweet potato instead of regular potato. Add curry powder or the spices for chana dal (page 67).



OMELETTE WITH TOMATO AND GARLIC SCAPES: Garlic scapes are the edible shoots of garlic, with a light taste and a peppery note. Look for them at a farmers' market.

ASIAN VEGETABLE SCRAMBLE: Add sesame oil, soy sauce, and green onions to the vegetable scramble recipe. Use some kind of choy or gai lan in place of the other vegetables.



HUEVOS RANCHEROS: Serve a poached or fried egg over beans and a tortilla. Garnish with salsa (page 105), cheese, cilantro, green onions, avocado, or diced tomato.

SCRAMBLED EGG WRAP: For a good hand-held breakfast (or lunch, or dinner), wrap a vegetable scramble in a flour tortilla. Add cheese and fresh greens to finish it off.



Soup

Vegetable soup is a superb place to try cooking without a recipe, using whatever you have in your fridge and pantry. Once you have the basic formula down, you'll be able to make any kind that strikes your fancy.

Be brave! Soup is comforting and delicious; even if your first couple of tries at developing your own soups are only so-so, you can make them shine with a little pesto, flavoured oil, a bit of cheese, or a squeeze of lemon.

1 Pretty much any soup starts by sautéing some onion. Any kind will do, from Spanish onions to leeks. Add any other nice, long-cooking vegetables. The standards are carrot, celery, bell pepper, or chilies. I always add garlic as well. At the same time, add any tougher spices, seeds, or a bay leaf. You can either cook the onion and vegetables for a while, carefully caramelizing them, or just cook until the onions are translucent.

2 Add a main vegetable or combination of vegetables, like with my cauliflower soup or something like potato and pickle. If you're planning to keep the soup chunky, make sure the vegetables are chopped up uniformly. Either way, sauté the main vegetables a bit just to get everything mixed up before you add the broth.

3 Add your broth and let the vegetables cook until everything is tender. Some vegetables gain flavour if you cook them for a long time, but spring and summer vegetables tend to be tastiest when they are only just cooked through.

4 If you want to purée the soup, use an immersion blender while it's still in the pot, or let it cool and use a conventional blender. For a chunky soup, add any noodles or pre-cooked proteins like tofu after the vegetables are cooked.

5 Taste the soup, then season with salt, pepper, chili flakes, or other spices. Lastly, add any ingredients that don't require cooking, like dairy or peanut butter. Finish with any garnishes, cheese, or oils once it's in the bowl.



Asparagus Soup

FOR FOUR

- 2 tsp butter or olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 2 carrots or ½ bell pepper or chile pepper of choice, diced
- 1 tsp chili flakes
- 4 garlic cloves, finely diced
- 4 cups vegetable broth or chicken broth
- 1 big bunch of asparagus, roughly chopped (if using older asparagus, remove the tough end bits and discard)
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- salt and pepper

Chop all your vegetables.

Put a pot on medium heat. Add your butter or oil and leave it to heat up for a minute. Add your onions, celery, and carrot or bell pepper and let them cook for about five minutes, or until the onions are translucent and everything is just tender. Add the chili flakes and garlic, then stir. Try to get everything lightly cooked but not quite brown.

Next, add the broth. Bring the soup to a boil. Add the asparagus. Cook for about five minutes, then check to see when the asparagus is tender by jabbing a fork into a piece. If the fork goes through easily, it is fully cooked.

At this point, take the soup off the heat and purée it with an immersion blender or food processor. Add the lemon juice and zest as well as a bit of salt and pepper. Taste it, then add any further salt and pepper it might need.



Cold Pea Soup

FOR FOUR

1 tsp butter or olive oil
½ onion, diced
1 garlic clove, finely diced
2 cups vegetable broth
3 cups frozen peas (the best quality you can find)
1 tsp fresh mint, finely chopped
salt and pepper
squeeze of lemon
small chunk of parmesan, shaved

You can of course prepare this soup from fresh peas if you're able to get them—they're just rare in these parts! And honestly, frozen peas are just great for this purpose.

Melt the butter in a pot on medium heat. Add the onion and sauté it until it is just translucent. Add the garlic and cook for another minute or so, then add the broth and let it just come to a boil. Toss in the frozen peas and cook for about two minutes. Once the peas are tender, immediately take the pot off the heat. Add the mint, salt, and pepper. Taste, then adjust the salt and pepper if needed.

Blend the soup with an immersion blender or food processor. Try to get it as smooth as possible.

Chill in the fridge for a few hours unless you prefer to eat it hot. When serving, sprinkle some lemon juice and parmesan on top.

Curried Sweet Potato Soup

FOR FOUR

2 tsp butter or olive oil
1 small onion, diced
2-3 garlic cloves, diced
½ jalapeño, finely diced
1 centimetre ginger, grated
1 large sweet potato, peeled and diced
2-3 cups vegetable broth
salt and pepper
cilantro, chopped
green onions, chopped
sour cream

SPICES

1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp turmeric
1 tsp coriander
1 tsp smoked paprika
or 1 tbsp of your favourite curry powder or paste

VARIATIONS

add a can of coconut milk, but use that much less broth
add 2 tbsp peanut butter

Prepare your vegetables.

Put a pot on medium heat and add the butter or oil. Once it's hot, add the onion. Let it cook, stirring occasionally, until it's translucent. Add the garlic and cook for another minute. If using raw spices instead of curry powder, add the cumin seeds and cook for another minute. Add the jalapeño, ginger, and other spices, then stir. Add the sweet potato, then stir until everything is coated and mingled. Add enough broth to cover the vegetables. Bring it to a boil and turn the heat down until the soup is just simmering.

Let the soup cook until the sweet potato is tender, about 20 minutes. Taste the broth. Season it with salt, pepper, and any other spice you think it needs more of. Once seasoned to your liking, take the soup off the heat and purée it with an immersion blender or food processor.

Serve with freshly chopped cilantro or green onions as well as a dollop of sour cream.



Spinach-Lemon Soup

FOR FOUR

Cauliflower Soup

FOR FOUR

- 1 tbsp butter or olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2-3 garlic cloves, finely diced
- 1 tsp chili flakes
- 12 cups fresh spinach
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- salt and pepper

ADDITIONS

- cream cheese
- goat cheese
- sour cream
- lemon-infused olive oil

I make this soup whenever I've bought too much spinach and it is about to go off. It has amazingly deep flavour.

Put a pot on medium heat. Add the butter or olive oil and wait until it just starts to sizzle. Add the onion and cook for three to four minutes. Add the garlic and chili flakes, stirring occasionally for another minute. Throw in half of your spinach and a teaspoon of water, then put a lid on the pot. Stir it frequently, encouraging it to wilt. Once there is room in the pot, add the rest of the spinach. Once it has all cooked down, add the vegetable broth and the lemon zest. Let it come to a boil and turn down the heat. Cook for another two minutes, then taste it and add an aggressive amount of salt and pepper. This is such a simple soup that it needs to be well seasoned.

Blitz the soup with an immersion blender or a regular blender to make a beautiful green purée. Try to make the soup as smooth as possible. If the spinach still tastes at all raw, put it back on the heat and boil for few more minutes until the soup is silky smooth.

Just before you finish, squeeze in the lemon juice and stir one last time. Serve the soup with any or none of the suggested additions.

- 2 tsp butter or olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- ½ bell pepper, diced
- ½ jalapeño, finely diced
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 dash oregano
- 1 cauliflower, roughly chopped
- 3-4 cups vegetable broth
- salt and pepper
- 2 tbsp cream (optional)
- cheddar, grated
- green onions, chopped

ADDITIONS

- white beans

Prepare your vegetables. Add some oil or butter to a large pot on medium heat. Once the oil is hot, add the onion. Let the onion fry until translucent. Add the bell pepper and jalapeño, then let everything cook until it starts to brown. Add the cumin and oregano. Add a bit of broth to get the sticky vegetables off the bottom of the pan, then add the cauliflower. Stir it all together and let it cook for about a minute with the lid on. Lastly, add the rest of your broth and cook for about 10 minutes, or until the cauliflower is soft.

With an immersion blender, blitz the soup until creamy (don't worry about getting every last piece). Taste it, then add salt and pepper and the cream. If you like your soup a little thinner, add a bit more broth.

Sprinkle cheddar and green onions on top before serving, preferably alongside a sliced and toasted baguette.



Big Salad

The big salad is more of a concept than a recipe. Simply follow the basics on pages 24 and 25 and you'll have a happy salad every time. This is usually what I reach for when I don't know what to eat but I want something healthy and satisfying.

There are plenty of great salads that break the rules, but they are usually better as a complement to a meal rather than a dinner in themselves.

Dressing

FOR AS MANY AS YOU NEED

VINAIGRETTE

2 parts olive oil
1 part vinegar or
lemon juice
squirt of dijon
mustard
salt and pepper

YOGURT

2 parts yogurt
1 part olive oil
squirt of lemon
salt and pepper

ADDITIONS

onion, finely diced
garlic, finely diced
chili pepper, finely
diced
poppy seeds
herbs, finely
chopped
juice squeezed from
grated ginger
dried spices
miso paste
soy sauce
honey
maple syrup
smoked paprika
any leftover sauce

Making your own salad dressing is as simple as can be. Decide whether you want a vinaigrette or a yogurt-based dressing, then mix together the appropriate ingredients. Adjust each element until the dressing is delicious.

Obviously, there are many options for pre-made dressing, but I really encourage you to make your own. Sometimes, I just put lemon juice or spiced oil on my salad and call it a day.

Try adding some leftover sauce or a new herb to a regular yogurt or vinaigrette. These are just a few suggestions, but do experiment! Dressings are not difficult; if you're only making a small amount, a failed experiment is no big deal.





IDEAS

Big Salad

GREENS: Start your big salad with any leafy green or a combination of your favourites. Try lettuce, spinach, radicchio, cabbage, dandelion leaves, and/or herbs.

OTHER VEGETABLES AND FRUITS: Add any other vegetables or fruits you have on hand. Instead of chopping fibrous vegetables like carrot and fennel, grate or peel them.



GREENS: Chop or tear your greens into bite-sized pieces. Don't use only herbs—the flavour will be too strong—but a few herbs among other greens gives a nice bite.

OTHER VEGETABLES AND FRUITS: Try tomato, cucumber, corn, dates, carrot, berries, orange slices, olives, fennel, avocado, radishes—anything you can make bite-sized.

PROTEIN: The savoury taste of protein is a nice contrast with bitter greens. Incorporating proteins is a great way to use up leftovers without eating the same meal twice.

CRUNCH: Ingredients that are crunchy and maybe a little salty will turn your salad from merely edible to thoroughly delightful. Add them after your dressing.



PROTEIN: Protein gives your salad body and makes it feel like a real meal. Try hard-boiled eggs, chickpeas, beans, cheese, pressed tofu, edamame, or leftover cooked meat.

CRUNCH: The crunch of lettuce on its own usually isn't enough to satisfy me. Try croutons, chunks of day-old bread, tortilla chips, nuts, seeds, crackers, or bacon.



Turn the oven to 400 F.

Chop your potatoes into bite-sized chunks, although you can leave new potatoes whole if they're particularly small. Put the potatoes in a pot of cold water and bring to a boil on medium-high heat. After boiling for five to eight minutes, test the potatoes with a fork. Once they're a bit soft but not yet cooked through, pull the pot off the heat and drain. You are not cooking the potatoes fully, just par-boiling them. Roasting will then turn them crispy on the outside and fluffy on the inside.

Dump your potatoes into a roasting pan (or cookie sheet or casserole dish—whatever you have handy). Throw in the garlic cloves, skin and all. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper, then mix it all up with your hands to coat everything with oil.

Put the roasting pan in the oven for 20 minutes, then check to see how the potatoes are doing. If they are crispy on the outside and fluffy inside, you're done. They might need a few more minutes if you've cut them into larger chunks. Just keep an eye on them and use your judgment. Potatoes don't suffer much from overcooking, so err on the side of roasting them longer!

While the potatoes cook, prepare the dressing. Chop the dill and green onions into small pieces. I haven't specified measurements for them because you should adjust the dressing to suit your taste. I usually don't like all that much dressing, but I put a lot of herbs and onions in mine. Your preferences are probably different! Anyway, dump the dill and onion into a bowl with the olive oil, lemon juice, mustard, salt, and pepper, then mix it up. Taste it and adjust as you like.

When the potatoes are cool enough to touch but still quite warm, transfer them to the bowl with the dressing. Pick out the garlic cloves and discard their skin. The cloves themselves should be roasted and brown. You can leave them whole, squeeze them into the bowl, or chop them up. Whichever way you go, mix the potatoes, garlic, and dressing with your hands. Put the salad in the fridge to cool for a couple of hours.

This version of potato salad is a popular change from the overly mayonaisse favourite. The deliciousness of summer potatoes is shown off much better with a light dressing and herbs. Take this to a barbecue, and I promise your friends will be pleased!

Roasted Potato Salad

FOR SIX TO EIGHT

- 1 kg waxy potatoes (Yukon gold or new potatoes are my favourites)
- 2-3 garlic cloves
- olive oil
- salt and pepper

DRESSING

- fresh dill, chopped
- green onions or chives, chopped
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tbsp dijon mustard
- salt and pepper

ADDITIONS

- snap peas
- green beans, chopped and blanched
- olives
- cherry tomatoes, halved
- lemon zest





Fennel Salad

FOR FOUR

- 1 fennel bulb, sliced as thin as possible
- ¼ cup of parsley, basil, dill or other favourite herb, chopped
- 2 tbsp pine nuts, toasted
- small chunk of parmesan, shaved

DRESSING

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- salt and pepper
- honey (optional)

Slice the fennel with a very sharp knife or a mandoline. Chop the herbs. Toast the pine nuts in a small pan on medium heat (with no oil) until browned on all sides. Use a potato peeler to slice the parmesan into long strips. Put everything into a salad bowl and set aside.

In a small bowl, mix the olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and pepper. If you like a sweet dressing, add a bit of honey.

When you're ready to serve the salad, pour on the dressing and mix it all up with your hands.

Carrot-Orange Salad

FOR TWO

- 3 medium carrots, grated
- 2 small oranges, cut into rounds or wedges
- 5-10 olives, roughly chopped

DRESSING

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp honey
- salt and pepper

Grate the carrots, or, if you want slightly larger chunks and are particularly patient, julienne them. Slice the oranges and the olives. Use blood oranges if they're in season—they taste fantastic and look even better.

Mix the olive oil, honey, salt, and pepper, then toss the dressing with the salad.

The juice from the oranges will make everything tart, so you usually won't need to add anything acidic to the dressing. If you disagree, add some apple cider vinegar or lemon juice.





Savoury Pies and Tarts

Savoury pies are a shareable, beautiful, homey, and smile-inducing centre of a meal. They are also surprisingly easy to throw together. Just keep a few things in mind:

1 Make your own crust as often as you can. The more regularly you make them, the better and quicker you'll get. If you leave a few discs of pie dough in the freezer, you can pull one out when you need it and have the pie ready in a reasonable amount of time.

2 Don't worry about the amounts of anything in the actual filling of the pie or quiche. If you want more vegetables barely held together—like my vegetable pie recipe—just go for it. If you want something more like a classic french quiche, rich with savoury custard, then increase the quantities of egg and dairy.

3 Don't feel tied to any particular type of cheese or dairy. When I say to use milk, feel free to use yogurt, sour cream, whipping cream, or a combination. When I suggest a particular cheese, it is just that—a suggestion.

4 When making a tart with puff pastry, have a light hand with the toppings. Like pizza, the crust has trouble puffing up and crisping if it's too loaded down.

5 Don't panic! Sometimes these pies take a little longer to set up and get golden brown, and sometimes they turn out more watery than you would like, but I have never had one fail to be delicious.



Summery Tomato Tart

FOR FOUR

225 grams puff pastry
½ cup ricotta
¼ cup parmesan, grated
1 egg
1 large garlic scape (or a handful of chives or 3-4 green onions), finely chopped
lemon zest (optional)
salt and pepper
20-25 cherry tomatoes (the best you can find)

ADDITIONS

pesto
balsamic vinegar

Set the oven to 400 F.

Roll out the puff pastry and place it on a cookie sheet lined with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper. Put it back in the fridge until you are ready to put the toppings on. This will keep the pastry cold so that it puffs up nicely in the oven.

In a bowl, mix together the ricotta, parmesan, egg, garlic scape, lemon zest, salt, and pepper. Slice the tomatoes thickly or thinly, however you prefer them.

Take the pastry out of the fridge and spread the ricotta mixture on top, then layer with the tomatoes. It's hard to predict exactly how many tomatoes you'll need—just cover the tart with tomato slices!

Put the tart in the oven and cook for about 20 minutes, or until the pastry is puffed and brown and the tomatoes are juicy and cooked.

All- Butter Short Crust

MAKES ONE PIE

½ cup unsalted butter, cold
1¼ cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp salt
4-6 tbsp ice cold water
1 standard pie plate
food processor

Chop the butter into small chunks, put them in a bowl, and set in the freezer for at least half an hour. While the butter chills, add the flour and salt to your food processor. Prepare the ice water.

After 30 minutes, remove the butter from the freezer and add it to the flour mixture in the food processor. Pulse the mixture four to six times, or until it looks like loose crumbs. Add the water a tablespoon at a time, pulsing as little as possible—just until it mixes in. To ensure a flaky crust, you want the dough studded with small lumps of butter.

Once the mixture is crumbly and just barely moist throughout, turn it out onto a floured counter or cutting board. Bring the dough together into a rough disc shape. Don't worry if it seems crumbly and ragged—it will come together more in the fridge. Once your disc is formed, cover it in plastic wrap and refrigerate it for at least an hour.

Once the dough has been in the fridge for an hour, you can roll it out. Take two pieces of wax or parchment paper, heavily floured, and roll the dough out in between them. This keeps it even and makes for an easy transfer to the pie plate. Work as quickly as you can to keep the butter from getting warm.

Transfer to the pie plate and press it gently into place, trimming off the excess dough from the edges. Cool for another hour in the fridge before using.

Many recipes, especially quiches, call for you to “blind-bake” the crust before you fill it. This ensures that the crust becomes crisp by the time the filling is cooked.

To blind-bake the crust, pre-heat the oven to 350 F. Line the pie crust with parchment paper, then fill it with pie weights or dried beans or rice to weight the crust down.

Bake for 15 minutes, then remove the weights and poke through the crust with a fork in a couple dozen places. This keeps the crust from shrinking. Bake for another 10 minutes, until the crust turns a bit golden. Once it cools, it's ready to fill.





Broccoli Cheddar Quiche

FOR SIX TO EIGHT

1 all-butter crust, blind-baked
2 cups broccoli, cut into bite-sized pieces
3 eggs
1½ cups milk (or 1 cup milk and ½ cup sour cream or yogurt)
¼ cup green onion, chopped
1½ cups sharp white cheddar
1-2 tsp mustard
salt and pepper

Prepare and blind-bake your crust as explained on page 33.

Turn the oven to 350 F.

Steam the broccoli over boiling water for four minutes, or in the microwave in a plastic bag with a teaspoon of water for two minutes. Set the broccoli aside to cool.

In a bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, green onions, cheddar, mustard, salt, and pepper.

Arrange the broccoli in the pie crust. Carefully pour the egg mixture over the broccoli, then put the quiche in the oven.

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, until the quiche is golden brown and no longer jiggly in the middle.

1 all-butter crust, blind-baked
1 large bunch asparagus, cut into bite-sized pieces with the woody ends discarded
½ onion, diced
2 garlic cloves, finely diced
3 eggs
1 cup milk
½ cup ricotta
2 tbsp basil or other fresh herbs, finely chopped
1½ cups provolone, grated
1-2 tsp mustard
salt and pepper

Prepare and blind-bake your crust as explained on page 33.

Turn the oven to 350 F.

Chop the asparagus into bite-sized pieces. Cook in boiling water or steam for three to four minutes. It's ready once you can easily pierce it with a fork. Set the asparagus aside once it's cooked.

Chop the onion and garlic. Add a small amount of oil to a pan over medium heat. Sauté the onions and garlic until translucent.

In a bowl, mix the onions and garlic with the eggs, milk, ricotta, herbs, salt, pepper, and one cup of the provolone.

Coat the bottom of the pie crust with mustard and distribute the asparagus evenly. Pour the egg mixture over the asparagus, then cover the quiche with the remaining provolone.

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, until the quiche is golden brown and no longer jiggly in the middle.



Asparagus Quiche

FOR SIX TO EIGHT

Green Chili Cheese Pie

FOR SIX TO EIGHT

CRUST

½ cup unsalted butter, cold
½ cup all-purpose flour
½ cup whole wheat flour
¼ cup cornmeal
1 tsp salt
4-6 tbsp water

PIE FILLING

2 eggs
1 poblano peppers
2 Anaheim peppers
1 jalapeño pepper
½ cup corn
1 small tomato, diced
3-4 green onions
1 cup of milk
2 cups cheddar, grated
50 grams goat cheese
salt and pepper

Prepare and blind-bake your crust as explained on page 33, but replace ¾ cup of the all-purpose flour with the cornmeal and whole wheat flours.

Put the peppers on a cookie sheet and place under your broiler. Wait until the top of the peppers are lightly blackened, then use tongs to rotate the peppers. Repeat until they're blackened and blistered on all sides. Immediately transfer the peppers to a bowl and cover with plastic wrap to sweat.

After 30 minutes, gently remove the skins, stems, and seeds of the peppers and chop them into small pieces.

Turn the oven to 350 F.

Add the chopped peppers to a bowl with the rest of the ingredients except for one cup of cheddar. Mix it all together. Pour the filling into the pie crust and top with the rest of the cheddar.

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, until the pie is golden brown and no longer jiggly in the middle.



You can make veggie pie with many different combinations of vegetables—it's a great way to use up whatever's in your fridge. Just make sure that you choose vegetables that take approximately the same time to cook; don't use root vegetables like potatoes or carrots unless you partially cook them in advance. I strongly recommend using some zucchini because it's fantastic in this pie. Whatever vegetables you choose, either grate them or chop them into small pieces so that you can properly squeeze out the excess water. If you're using tomatoes, remove the seeds entirely to reduce the amount of moisture.

Prepare and blind-bake your crust as explained on page 33.

Turn the oven to 350 F.

Chop or grate the vegetables. Press them with a sieve to squeeze out any excess water, then set the vegetables aside.

Spread mustard on the inside of the pie shell.

Mix the eggs, milk, cheese, and vegetables, then season with salt and pepper or anything else you feel like. Pour this mixture into the pie shell. If there's room, feel free to sprinkle more cheese over the top.

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, until the pie is golden brown and no longer jiggly in the middle.

Veggie Pie

FOR SIX

1 all-butter crust, blind-baked
1-2 tbsp dijon or favourite mustard
5 cups various vegetables, chopped or grated
3 eggs
½ cup milk or other dairy
1 cup cheese
salt and pepper

ADDITIONS

any fresh herb, chopped
any spice
more cheese
chili peppers

Sautéed Vegetables

Vegetables are treated very differently in Italy than they are in North America. On many restaurant menus, you can order seasonal vegetables to start your meal. They are cooked just until done and seasoned with just a couple of simple flavours. That was the inspiration for this chapter.

I love fresh vegetables, especially in the summer, when they are at their peak of deliciousness and beauty. It is easy to fall into a rut with eating the same vegetables over and over, but hopefully these simple suggestions will inspire you to try a new vegetable and appreciate its flavour.

Sautéed vegetables can be eaten on their own, tossed with a grain or pasta, or used atop soups or salads. You'll find all kinds of ways to use them!

METHOD

How to Sauté Vegetables

Put a pan on medium heat and add oil or butter. Let it get hot, then add the vegetables. Leave them to cook for a minute or so.

If you're using tougher vegetables like carrots, add about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and put a lid over the pan to let the vegetables steam a bit. Let them cook for a few minutes, until they get tender and the water is almost gone.

For more tender vegetables like green beans, just add a bit of water but don't cook them for too long.

Next, add any flavourings that need heat, like garlic or dry spices. Let everything cook, stirring or tossing occasionally until the garlic is translucent.

At this point, shut off the heat and add tender flavourings like parmesan, olives, or lemon, along with salt and pepper! Always remember the salt and pepper! Serve immediately.





IDEAS

Sautéed Vegetables

WITH GARLIC AND LEMON: Lemon zest and juice (use both!) bring out the bright flavours of any vegetable. It's almost like salt. The garlic is a savoury contrast.

WITH OLIVES, FETA, AND DILL: These Mediterranean flavours will transform an otherwise boring side of vegetables into a dish that you'll actually appreciate.



WITH GARLIC AND CHILI: You can use either dried chili flakes or fresh chilies; both work well with sautéed vegetables. A small amount of garlic adds depth to almost any dish.

WITH CHORIZO BLEND: A sprinkling of chorizo blend (page 100) gives a spicy, smoky element to any root vegetable. It works really well as a side dish in the winter.



WITH GARLIC AND PARMESAN: When you're sautéing sweet vegetables like carrots or squash, go for complements that are savoury and salty, like garlic and parmesan.

WITH GARLIC AND GINGER: On its own, ginger can be either too flat or too sharp, but garlic brings its best qualities to the forefront. This is a great South Asian pairing.



WITH SOY SAUCE AND BROWN SUGAR: This is a classic shortcut to teriyaki flavour—savoury and sweet at the same time. It seems to turn picky eaters into veggie-lovers!

WITH CURRY: To quickly imbue your vegetables with the flavour of curry, sauté them in a mixture of cumin seeds, turmeric, ground coriander, cayenne, and salt.





Pizza

Pizza is a fun, versatile, and popular meal. With a reasonable amount of cheese and a thin crust, it is even fairly nutritious. It's a good way to use up leftover vegetables or to introduce new foods to picky eaters.

Pizza is particularly great for parties with friends and for getting kids into the kitchen. Encourage everyone to try at least one new kind of pizza every time you make it.

Almost any ingredient works as a pizza topping. There are only a few rules:

- 1** Use only small amounts of toppings. Your crust needs to support the weight.
- 2** When it comes to cheese, less is more. Don't try to cover every bit of the pizza.
- 3** If you want to put root vegetables or more fibrous veggies on a pizza, stir-fry or steam them first. Potatoes, broccoli, and thick asparagus will not get tender in just a few minutes in the oven.
- 4** Even if a combination seems weird, give it a try once—you just might love it. Pesto and kale makes a great pizza, as does potato and green onion.
- 5** Experiment with cheese and sauce, not just toppings.



Tomato Sauce

MAKES ABOUT TWO CUPS

- 1 tsp olive oil
- 3-4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- ½ tsp chili flakes
- 1 large can plum tomatoes (ideally San Marzano)
- salt and pepper

Put a pot on medium heat and add the olive oil. Once it's hot, add the chopped garlic and sauté until it becomes translucent. Add the chili flakes and stir, then add the tomatoes all at once and turn down the heat. Once the tomatoes are heated through, turn off the heat.

If you used whole tomatoes, purée the sauce with an immersion blender. Alternately, if you prefer a chunky sauce, just crush the tomatoes with the back of a wooden spoon. For pasta sauce, you're done!

If you're making pizza sauce, turn the heat back on and cook for 30 minutes to thicken it.

To make this sauce with fresh tomatoes—either for pasta or pizza—you'll need to cook it a little longer, just until the raw tomato flavour disappears.



Great Pizza Dough

MAKES THREE CRUSTS

2¼ cups all-purpose flour or bread flour
1 tsp salt
½ tsp instant yeast

1 tbsp olive oil
¾ cup + 3 tbsp ice water

Dump the flour, salt, and yeast into a big bowl. Add the olive oil. Really, you can use anywhere from ½ tbsp to 2 tbsp of oil; I don't find the amount makes much difference in the final crust.

If you have a stand mixer, use the flat beater to combine everything, including the water. Once it comes together, switch to the dough hook.

If you're using your hands, mix the oil into the dough, crumbling it into the flour until it's sandy in texture. Add the cold water. Mix until it just comes together. Then, pretend your hand is a bread hook and knead the dough for five to seven minutes. Keep a cup of ice-cold water beside you. When your hand gets too warm, dip it in the water.

The dough will be smooth but quite wet once you (or the mixer) finish kneading it. It should stick to the bottom of the bowl but not the sides.

When the dough is ready, place it in a lightly oiled bowl, cover the bowl with plastic wrap, and put it in the fridge. Alternately, you can slice or tear the dough into thirds, then place them on a lightly oiled plate or cookie sheet and cover them in plastic wrap. Either way, let the dough sit in the fridge overnight.

The next day, remove the dough from the fridge two to three hours before you want to make your pizza. Shape the dough into three balls. Cover the balls in plastic wrap or a moist dishcloth, because they'll develop a gross skin if they're exposed to air.

If you're concerned about eating white flour, feel free to substitute any amount of whole-grain flour for the all-purpose. Whole-wheat or multigrain pizza is still satisfying, just a bit denser and heavier.

This is an adaptation of Peter Reinhart's pizza dough. If you're interested in baking bread, go buy one of his books! He's the best.



Fast Pizza Dough

MAKES THREE CRUSTS

2¼ cups all-purpose flour or bread flour
1 tsp salt
1 tsp sugar
1½ tsp instant yeast
1 tbsp olive oil
¾ cup + 3 tbsp ice water

Mix and knead the dough as described on the previous page, adding the sugar along with the other dry ingredients. Note that you also need an extra teaspoon of yeast for this recipe.

After you're done kneading, place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl and cover it with plastic wrap. Let the dough double in volume. This should take 60 to 90 minutes.

Once the dough has risen, punch it down and form into three equal-sized balls.

Since this dough is a quick riser, it will be much less stretchy. You can try stretching it into crusts with your hands, but you'll probably need to use a rolling pin as well.



METHOD

Pizza in the Oven

Turn your oven up as high as it will go.

Stretch your dough into crusts. You can roll it out with a rolling pin, or just use your hands to pull the dough into a circle, slowly and carefully. Make it as thin or as thick as you like. I like it quite thin! Just make sure that both your hands and your work surface are dusted with plenty of flour.

Once the crust is the desired shape and thickness, dust the back of a cookie sheet with flour, cornmeal, or semolina to keep the crust from sticking, then place the crust on the cookie sheet. (You can use the top of a cookie sheet if it doesn't have a lip.)

Working quickly, add your toppings, keeping true to the "less is more" approach. Put the cookie sheet in the oven and cook for five to eight minutes, checking after about four minutes. The pizza is finished once the edges start to go brown. Keep an eye on your toppings; if the cheese gets oily, it's becoming overcooked and you should remove the pizza immediately.

Quickly sprinkle your pie with grated parmesan and chopped fresh basil. Enjoy!

METHOD

Pizza with a Baking Stone

Baking stones produce a crisp, professional pizza. They are also wonderful for baking other breads, since they help make a chewy crust and a moist, fluffy interior.

Place the stone in the oven before you turn on the heat. Let the stone get nice and hot. The hotter the stone, the more effective it will be.

Follow the same approach as with the instructions above, but once the pizza is ready to go into the oven, tilt the cookie sheet to slide the pizza directly onto the stone. I won't lie—this step takes a bit of practice. You have to be smooth and careful, yet also move quickly and confidently. At first, you may end up with some flopped or dropped tragedy pizzas, but they are rarely unsalvageable. You'll get the hang of it eventually!

If you are really interested in making great pizza, buy a wooden pizza peel. A peel allows you to transfer the pizza to the baking stone a bit more easily than the cookie sheet does.





METHOD

Pizza on the Barbecue

The barbecue is the best place to make pizza at home, so long as it's not too cold outside. Besides getting much hotter than a home oven, the barbecue produces a great char. Barbecuing pizza is also quite easy. You just need to be fast and have your toppings ready.

1 Prepare your toppings. Many toppings will need to be cooked in advance. Because the heat comes from below and the crust bakes so fast, the toppings will barely cook. Even cheese may not melt completely. Toppings like tomatoes will be fine, but if you have ingredients like asparagus, steam them first.

2 Put your toppings, sauces, and cheeses into small bowls. Grab a large spoon for each sauce, clean plates for the finished pizzas, a metal spatula, wet and dry cloths for your hands, and oil in a spray container or a bowl of oil with a brush.

3 Stretch or roll out your dough. If you've made the overnight recipe, you can stretch right at the grill. With the fast-rising dough, roll it out inside and lay the crusts on baking sheets dusted with flour or cornmeal. Cover the dough with a cloth.

4 Turn your grill to maximum heat and bring everything outside. If you don't have a table near the barbecue to put things on, the ground works fine!

5 Once the grill is hot, spray or brush it with oil. This may cause a small flare-up, but don't worry. Place a raw, stretched crust directly on the grill without any sauce or toppings. Close the lid and leave it for about 30 seconds. Once the dough starts to puff and has nice grill marks on the bottom, it's ready. If it isn't ready, close the lid and leave it for another 10 to 20 seconds.

6 Once the dough is slightly charred on the bottom, flip it over. As quickly as you can, spread on the sauce and add the toppings and cheese. Don't worry about perfection; this is supposed to be rustic!

7 Close the lid and let the pizza cook for a minute or so. Then peek under one side of the pizza to see how charred the bottom is. Try to check as little as possible; you want to keep the lid closed so that you don't lose heat. You'll have a good sense of the right cooking time after you do one or two pizzas. Remove the pizza as soon as it shows good char, even if the cheese hasn't melted yet.

8 After you've taken the pizza off the grill, sprinkle it with parmesan and basil or any other ingredients that can't stand the heat.

9 Slice and serve immediately.

10 While your guests enjoy the first pizza (and bring you slices at the grill, of course), repeat the above procedure until you have as many pizzas as you want.



IDEAS

Pizza

MARGHERITA: This classic is a reminder that, when it comes to pizza, simplicity is almost always best. Just tomato sauce, mozzarella, and basil. And maybe parmesan.

WITH PROSCIUTTO AND TRUFFLE OIL: Truffle oil isn't all that expensive, but it gives any pizza a very distinctive flavour—particularly when drizzled over cured meat.



WITH ROASTED BROCCOLI AND CHILIES: Sometimes, a pizza is just a canvas for whatever you have in the fridge. So long as you keep things simple, it's hard to go wrong.

WITH SPINACH AND GARLIC: If you put fresh spinach on a pizza, it will still be raw when it comes out of the oven. For more flavour, sauté the spinach with garlic first.



WITH SLICED GREEN BEANS AND LEMON ZEST: You don't often see green beans on a pizza, but they're great if you chop them finely. Make sure to cook them ahead of time.

WITH CHERRY TOMATOES AND PINE NUTS: Many great pizzas are a combination of one expected ingredient and one unexpected ingredient.



WITH KALE AND PESTO: Sauté the kale to wilt it before you put it on the crust. Use basil pesto instead of tomato sauce. Mozzarella and parmesan are optional.

WITH CORN AND GREEN ONIONS: This has great southwestern flavours. Everyone who tries corn on pizza is an instant convert—it's sweet without the wetness of pineapple.





Pasta

Pasta, like so many of my recipes, is a vehicle for experimentation. It is wonderful whether you toss it with sautéed vegetables, any number of sauces, or just cheese and butter.

Like pizza, almost everyone likes pasta. It is thus a great place to try new ingredients or combinations. But avoid overcomplicated pasta dishes. Stick to just a few quality ingredients for your sauce, filling, or topping.

Keep in mind, too, that pasta as a main dish is not always the most well-rounded meal. Try to include plenty of vegetables and serve it alongside a salad.

Although it's a bit finicky at first, making your own fresh pasta is very satisfying. You'll become faster at it quite quickly. It really is just egg mixed with flour; soon, you'll find yourself making fresh pasta more often than you open a box of the dried kind.

Lastly, do your best to keep your pasta from getting overcooked. Pasta that still has a nice bite to it is much more satisfying than mushy noodles.

Macaroni and Cheese

FOR SIX TO EIGHT

4 cups dried macaroni
2 tbsp butter
1 bay leaf
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 tbsp all-purpose flour
2 cups milk
2 tbsp dijon mustard
1 tsp cayenne
5 cups grated cheese
salt and pepper

ADDITIONS

bread crumbs
tomato and basil
onion, garlic, bell pepper,
jalapeño, and corn
sautéed spinach
steamed broccoli
roasted squash and chili flakes
cauliflower instead of
macaroni

Turn the oven to 350 F.

Boil the macaroni for two to three minutes less than the package instructions tell you. It should still be quite firm, too firm to eat right away.

To make the sauce, put a pot on the stove on medium heat. Add the butter and bay leaf. Once it's hot, add the garlic. Let it cook until translucent, then add the flour. Whisk vigorously. This is called a roux. Continue to whisk for a couple of minutes, until the roux turns golden. Slowly add the milk, whisking all the time.

Cook until the sauce is thick. Now add the mustard, cayenne and all the cheese. Stir it until everything is incorporated and you have a nice thick cheese sauce. Adjust with salt and pepper or anything else you'd like to add to the dish for flavour.

Add the drained pasta to the pot with the sauce, then pour everything into a baking dish. If you'd like a crunchy crust, sprinkle the top with bread crumbs or cheese. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, then enjoy!

A warning: If you don't have a stand mixer, making fresh pasta is quite difficult. It takes a lot of muscle to make such firm dough by hand. Mind you, Italian grandmas have done so for centuries, but their forearms are a lot stronger because of it!

Multiply this recipe by the number of people you are serving. The stated quantities are just a useful ratio.

Add the flour to a bowl or stand mixer. Add the eggs. Mix with your bare hands or the mixer's flat beater. The eggs take a while to release all of their moisture, so don't panic if things are dry at first. If the dough still seems excessively dry after a couple of minutes, add a few drops of water at a time. You want a stiff dough that is quite dry. When the dough has come together, leave it in an oiled bowl for at least an hour.

Once an hour (or more) has passed, the dough will be smoother and more pliable. Now it is time to roll out the dough and shape it.

If you have a pasta maker, set the rollers to the widest setting and feed through a palm-sized piece of dough. Then set the rollers to the next narrowest setting and feed the dough through again. Repeat with narrower and narrower settings until the pasta is the desired thickness.

If you don't have a pasta maker, tear or slice the dough into palm-sized pieces. Dust your countertop or cutting board heavily with flour, then use a rolling pin to make the dough as thin as you like.

The thinner the dough, the quicker it will cook, but be careful not to let the dough get so thin that it tears. If the dough does tear, you can roll it into a ball and start over, but the pasta will be chewier and less tender.

By the time all the pasta is rolled out, it should be dry enough that it doesn't stick to itself. If it's still moist, leave it to sit for a few minutes. Then slice it with a knife or your pasta machine's cutting attachment and toss the noodles in a bit of flour so that they don't stick together.

When you're slicing the pasta by hand, it's easy to make the noodles a consistent size if you fold the dough over itself a few times first. Narrow linguini noodles are the most common choice, but I sometimes prefer broad, rustic pappardelle. Fresh pasta is also great in lasagna or ravioli, and beginners will have no trouble slicing the dough into such wide strips. I rarely make complicated shapes—it's fussy and tastes the same!

Boil in heavily salted water. Fresh pasta cooks in as little as 30 seconds if the noodles are thin. It's ready when it changes colour and starts to float.

Fresh Pasta

FOR ONE LARGE ENTRÉE

100 grams all-purpose flour or bread flour (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)

1 egg

a drizzle of water





Broad Bean and Goat Cheese Ravioli

FOR FOUR

2 servings fresh pasta (200 grams flour and 2 eggs)
450 grams broad beans
100 grams goat cheese
½ cup parmesan, grated
1 egg
salt and pepper

VARIATIONS

spinach and cheese
winter squash and herbs
potato and lemon
wild mushrooms
peas and mint
leek and bacon

Prepare the fresh pasta and set aside.

Shell the broad beans and steam or boil them until their skin starts to wrinkle. Drain them and remove the skin.

Add the cooked and peeled broad beans to a bowl with the rest of the ingredients. Adjust the proportions of cheese, salt, and pepper to taste. Purée the filling with an immersion blender or a food processor.

Alternately, feel free to invent your own filling. Anything with a creamy consistency will work well, which usually means that one of the ingredients should be a soft cheese or a root vegetable that you can mash. So long as you can make it into a tasty purée, it can become a great ravioli.

Roll the pasta into thin, uniform sheets. Lay one sheet on a lightly floured countertop or cutting board, then drop a spoonful of filling onto the pasta every few centimetres, depending on how large you want the ravioli to be. (Larger ravioli are easier to make.) Wet your fingertip and trace a line of water around each of the scoops. Lay a second sheet of pasta over the first, then slice between each ravioli to separate them. Press the edges of each ravioli together firmly, sealing them like dumplings. Repeat until you run out of filling or pasta.

Cook in boiling, salted water for 20 to 30 seconds, or until the pasta changes colour and is tender. Boil just a few at a time to keep them from sticking.

Toss the ravioli with herbs and butter, pesto, or your favourite sauce. Enjoy!





IDEAS

Pasta

WITH SPINACH AND TOMATO: On pasta of any kind, spinach and tomato are a classic pairing. This is remarkably quick to prepare on a night when you're tired.

RAVIOLI STUFFED WITH ROASTED RED PEPPER AND FETA: In general, ravioli should be cheese plus one other flavour. Here, the sweet roasted peppers balance the saltiness of feta.



WITH CANNELINI BEANS, TOMATO, AND SMOKED PAPRIKA: In North America, you don't often see beans in pasta dishes, but they're common in Italy—delicious protein without fat.

WITH CORN, SPINACH, TOMATO, AND CHEDDAR: You don't need to restrict pasta to the flavours of Italy. Corn and cheddar transplant this dish to the southwest instead.



WITH CURRIED CREAM SAUCE AND BROCCOLI: To make the sauce, sauté some garlic and onion, then add heavy cream and the spices for chana dal (page 66). Don't forget the salt!

WITH BALSAMIC VINEGAR, TOMATO SAUCE, AND CHEDDAR: This is as comforting as a traditional macaroni and cheese, but quicker to make and much deeper in flavour.



WITH PESTO AND TOMATO: Pesto and pasta are made for each other, but that doesn't mean you can't add other vegetables. Tomatoes help counteract pesto's oil and salt.

WITH TOMATO AND ZUCCHINI: Zucchini is full of water, so it makes its own sauce if you grate it before cooking. You can just chop the tomatoes—they cook down easily.





Dinner

Dinner is my favourite meal of the day. It's the one I put the most thought and care into, and the one I look forward to the most. Dinner signals an end to the day's troubles and the beginning of relaxing fun with friends and family.

These recipes are a combination of easy weeknight meals and more involved meals for the weekend.

All of these recipes are flexible, so don't be intimidated by a list of specific items you may not have in your kitchen. Many ingredients can be left out or substituted for something similar. As always, think about what you like and tailor the recipe to reflect that.

Most of all, I hope these recipes help you to nourish yourself, your friends and family, and leave you feeling fulfilled both culinarily and socially.

3½-4 cups vegetable broth
2 tbsp butter
1 tbsp olive oil
1 large onion, finely diced
3-4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 cup arborio or carnaroli rice
½ cup dry white wine
2 cups asparagus, chopped
1 cup corn, canned or cooked
½ cup parmesan, grated
salt and pepper

GARNISHES

fresh herbs, chopped
lemon juice to taste
handful of raw greens
truffle oil

VARIATIONS

beet and goat cheese
tomato and basil
pea and mint
spinach and lemon

Chop the vegetables and measure out the ingredients before you begin. Cut off the woody ends of the asparagus and chop the rest of the asparagus into bite-sized pieces.

Place your broth in a saucepan on low heat to simmer.

Put a fairly large, heavy-bottomed pot on medium heat. Add the butter and oil and let it melt. Add the onion and stir occasionally for about five minutes, until the onion just turns translucent. Add the garlic and cook for another two minutes. Add all of the rice and quickly coat it with the butter and onions. Add the white wine and stir until it has all absorbed. Cook for another 10 minutes, stirring occasionally and adding a ladleful of broth whenever the rice has soaked up the liquid.

At this point, the rice will have puffed up significantly, but still won't be completely cooked. Add the asparagus and stir to combine. Cook for another five minutes, adding the broth as before, then stir in the corn. Continue cooking, stirring, and adding broth until you're down to about half a cup of broth left in the saucepan. Taste the risotto to see if the rice is tender and creamy. If it is, take the risotto off the heat and forget about the remaining broth. If it isn't, add the last of the broth and let it absorb.

Once the risotto is off the heat, add the parmesan and plenty of salt and pepper. Taste it and adjust it with any seasoning you think it needs.

Asparagus and Corn Risotto

FOR FOUR





Chana Masala

FOR TWO

½ tbsp ghee or ½ tbsp butter
and a splash of olive oil
1 tsp cumin seeds
½ cup onion, diced
1 tsp garlic, grated
1 tsp ginger, grated
½ jalapeño, finely diced
3 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp turmeric
¼ tsp cayenne
½ tsp garam masala powder

1 tsp smoked paprika
½ tsp salt
1 cup canned, puréed tomatoes
2½ cups chickpeas, drained
(about 1 can)
½ cup water

GARNISH

cilantro
yogurt

Chop the onion, garlic, ginger, and jalapeño. Measure out all the spices except the cumin seeds and put them in a small bowl. Drain the chickpeas and measure out the canned tomatoes.

Put the ghee (clarified butter) in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. (Ghee is the traditional Indian choice, but you can substitute butter and a splash of olive oil if you can't find ghee.) Once the ghee begins to sizzle, add the cumin seeds and stir for about five seconds. Add the onion and sauté for two minutes. Add the garlic and cook for a minute. Add the ginger and jalapeño and cook for another minute. Add the spices and then the puréed tomatoes. Mix, then put a lid on the pan and let everything cook down for five to ten minutes.

Once the tomato has reduced and the ghee starts to separate from the sauce, add the chickpeas and water. Mix, then bring it to a boil before reducing the heat to a simmer. Cook for ten minutes, then squish a few of the chickpeas with your spoon to thicken the sauce.

Garnish with yogurt and cilantro. For a full meal, serve the chana masala over rice or with an Indian flatbread like naan or roti.





Veggie Burgers

FOR SIX

- 1 can chickpeas (about 2½ cups)
- ½ onion, roughly chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic
- ½ cup wilted spinach, drained
- ½ cup rolled oats
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp chipotle powder
- ½ tsp cumin
- 1 tsp mustard
- salt and pepper

chickpea flour or all-purpose flour for rolling

VARIATIONS

- black beans and corn with mexican spices
- red beans with star anise and chili powder
- lentils and sweet potatoes with ginger and coriander
- white beans and cooked eggplant with red curry paste
- pinto beans with green chilies

This is a very forgiving recipe—a little more or less of any of the ingredients makes little difference. The key is chilling the patties in the fridge so they firm up and can be grilled easily.

Drain the chickpeas, roughly chop the vegetables, and add everything to a food processor. Purée until smooth, scraping down the sides a few times to make sure all the ingredients are incorporated.

Sprinkle a cutting board with chickpea flour. Separate the mixture into six equal parts and form them into patties, using flour to keep your hands from sticking. The patties will be sticky at this point. Wrap them in plastic and chill in the fridge for two hours or so.

Grill on the barbecue or fry in a pan. Enjoy!

To change these considerably, stick to the same ratios but try different beans or vegetables or herbs or spices. I've made some suggestions, but use your imagination!





Chana Dal with Spinach

FOR FOUR

- 1 cup dried chana dal, rinsed and drained
- 2 tsp butter or olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 jalapeño, finely chopped (optional)
- 1 tbsp ginger, grated
- 1 cup fresh or canned tomatoes, puréed
- 2-3 cups spinach, chopped
- ¼ cup whipping cream (optional)

SPICES

- ½ tsp mustard seeds
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 2 tsp coriander powder
- ½ tsp cayenne
- 1 tsp garam masala powder
- 1 tsp smoked or sweet paprika
- 1 tsp salt

If you aren't a big fan of Indian cuisine, this still makes a great one-pot meal if you replace all the spices with just salt and pepper.

This recipe is quite quick except for cooking the dal (lentils) themselves. If you want to make it a weeknight meal, I recommend cooking the dal in advance. You can even freeze the cooked lentils if you make lots.

Soak the chana dal in two cups of water for at least two hours, then rinse them. Put the dal in a large pot and cover with enough water to submerge them by a couple centimeters. Bring to a boil on medium heat, then simmer for about two hours. Check every 30 minutes to ensure the dal are still covered with water. If they aren't, add more water.

Chop the onion, garlic, ginger, and jalapeño. Purée the tomatoes. Measure all the spices into a small bowl except for the cumin seeds and mustard seeds.

Put a heavy-bottomed pot on medium heat. Add the butter or oil and let it get hot. Add the onion and sauté until it turns golden-brown. Add the mustard seeds and stir once they start to sizzle. Add the cumin seeds and stir once they start to sizzle. Add the garlic and jalapeño and sauté until the garlic turns golden-brown. Add the ginger and stir. Lastly, add the tomato purée and the rest of the spices. Stir everything, then put a lid on the pot and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the oil and spices start to separate from the tomato mixture. If the mixture looks dry, add a bit of water.

Once the tomato mixture is ready, add the dal and stir. Bring the pot to a boil, then turn the heat down to a gentle simmer. Taste and adjust the seasoning, particularly the salt. Just before serving, add the spinach and let it wilt throughout the stew. Once the spinach is just cooked, turn off the heat and add cream if you like.

Serve over rice or with Indian flatbread like naan or roti.



Prepare the vegetables. For the lemongrass, peel off the woody outer layer and only use the white part of the stalk, usually the bottom five to ten centimetres. The rest is too tough to eat, so save it to make tea or discard it. Make sure to chop the lemongrass very fine.

Put a small pot on medium heat. Add the oil and let it get hot. Add the onions and keep stirring until they start to turn brown, about five minutes. Add the lime leaves and lemongrass and stir for another two to four minutes, or until the lemongrass is tender. Lastly, add the jalapeño, ginger, and garlic. Let everything cook for another minute or so.

Add the coconut milk. Let it come to a boil, then turn down the heat to a simmer. Add the soy sauce, brown sugar, and turmeric. Let everything simmer for about 10 minutes. At this point, you can leave it as is or take it off the heat and use an immersion blender to make a smooth sauce. Be sure to take out the lime leaves before blending though!

Taste the sauce and adjust anything that doesn't seem balanced. If it should be sweeter, add sugar. If it needs salt, add soy sauce. If it's too thick, add coconut milk. Once you're happy, turn off the heat and set the sauce aside.

Add some oil to a second pan on medium-high heat. Let it get warm. Add the tofu and stir-fry until all sides are golden-brown. Set it aside.

Repeat the above process with the longest-cooking vegetable you're using. In my case, this was the carrots. Stir-fry for two minutes. Next, add the other vegetables except for particularly delicate vegetables like spinach, which you should add right at the end. Stir-fry for another two to three minutes, until the vegetables are just tender.

Return the tofu to the pan with the other vegetables. Add the sauce and bring everything just to a boil.

Serve over rice with cilantro, green onions, peanuts, and lime juice.

SAUCE

- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1 shallot or ¼ red onion, finely diced
- 2 kaffir lime leaves
- 2 tbsp fresh lemongrass, finely chopped
- 1 jalapeño, finely diced
- 1 tbsp ginger, grated
- 2 garlic cloves, finely diced
- 1 cup coconut milk
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp brown sugar

STIR-FRY

- 2 tsp olive oil
- ½ cup firm tofu, diced
- 3-4 cups of whatever vegetables you want, for example:
 - 1 cup carrots, chopped
 - 1½ cups of gai lan, chopped (could use any Chinese green, broccoli, broccolini, or kale)
 - ½ cup red pepper, chopped

GARNISH

- cilantro, finely chopped
- green onions, finely chopped
- peanuts, roughly chopped
- lime juice squeezed over top

Lemongrass Chili-Coconut Stir-Fry

FOR TWO TO THREE





4 large or 6 small tortillas

FILLING

2 cups black beans (1 can)
2-3 garlic cloves, finely diced
1 large tomato, roughly chopped
1 chipotle in adobo, finely chopped
½ cup water
60 grams soft goat cheese
salt and pepper

SAUCE

1 bell pepper, roasted, peeled, and roughly chopped
2 Anaheim peppers (or 1 poblano), roasted, peeled, and roughly chopped
2 tsp butter or olive oil
3-4 tbsps cilantro stalks, finely chopped
4-5 green onions, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, diced
½ tsp chickpea flour or all-purpose flour
½ cup vegetable broth
salt and pepper

GARNISH

½ cup cheddar cheese, grated
1 cup lettuce, roughly chopped
3-4 green onions, finely chopped
avocado, sliced
yogurt or sour cream with lime juice and salt

Black Bean and Goat Cheese Enchiladas

FOR TWO TO THREE

Drain the beans. Chop the garlic, tomato, and chipotle.

Put a pan on medium heat with a bit of oil. Add the garlic and sauté for 30 seconds or so. Add the tomatoes and let them cook for about a minute. Add the beans and let them cook for a minute. Add the chipotle and water, then cover with a lid and cook for about five minutes. Add the goat cheese and stir. If the mixture is too dry, add a bit more water. Taste, then adjust the salt and pepper as needed. Take the pan off the heat and set aside.

To prepare the sauce, use the same method as the green chili sauce on page 102, adding the cilantro stalks when you cook the onions.

Turn the oven to 375 F. Distribute the filling throughout the tortillas, then roll them up. Place them in a baking dish and cover them with the sauce. Grate some cheese over the top if you'd like. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the sauce is bubbling around the edges.

Serve immediately with any of the garnishes I suggest.

Tacos are a great weeknight or weekend meal. They make it easy to use up leftover vegetables or salads from the rest of the week's dinner. Alternately, they can be a great excuse to sample all the fresh vegetables you bought at the market on the weekend.

You will need a hot filling and some toppings. Precisely what those are is up to you, of course!

For the hot filling, put some oil in a frying pan on medium heat. Let it get warm, then add the onion and cook until it turns translucent. Add the garlic. If you're planning to add any spices or other vegetables, now is the time. Fry until everything is tender and a bit brown. Add the tofu, meat, or beans. (For instructions on how to cook dried beans, see page 106.) Let the mixture cook, stirring occasionally to keep it from sticking to the pan. Add the tomatoes, continuing to cook for a few minutes to get some of the moisture out of the tomatoes. If the filling seems too dry, add a splash of water, vegetable stock, or tomato juice. Season with salt and pepper, then taste. At this point, adjust the seasonings and add any dairy you're planning to use.

Prepare the toppings while the filling cooks. Arrange them in small bowls or on a large platter.

Warm up the tortillas and fill each with a scoop of the hot filling. Let everyone garnish their tacos with the various toppings.

Tacos

FOR FOUR

8-12 corn or flour tortillas

HOT FILLING

- 2 tsp olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, finely diced
- 1 medium onion, finely diced
- 2 cups beans (canned or cooked from dry), ground tofu, ground meat, or combination
- 2 large tomatoes, finely diced
- salt and pepper

ADDITIONS TO HOT FILLING

- water, vegetable stock, or tomato juice for moisture
- hot pepper, finely diced
- bell pepper, roughly chopped
- carrots, roughly chopped
- spinach or kale, roughly chopped
- chipotle in adobo, finely chopped
- chorizo spice blend (p. 100)
- goat cheese or other dairy
- cumin
- oregano
- paprika

COLD TOPPINGS

- sour cream
- guacamole
- green chili sauce (p.102)
- green onions, finely chopped
- cilantro or other herb
- salsa
- any sautéed vegetable
- any raw vegetable, grated or thinly sliced
- cheese
- bacon





Green and White Chili

FOR SIX TO EIGHT

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, finely diced
- 1 jalapeño pepper, finely diced
- 1½ tsp cumin seeds
- 1½ tsp oregano
- 1½ tsp smoked paprika
- cayenne to taste
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- 2½ cups white kidney beans, drained (1 can)
- 4 cups vegetable broth or 3 cups vegetable broth and 1 cup light beer
- 4 cups cauliflower, chopped
- 1 bell pepper or 2 Anaheim peppers, chopped
- 1 small can green chilies
- 4 ounces cream cheese, diced
- ½ cup cheddar cheese, grated

ADDITIONS

- ½ cup corn
- substitute broccoli for cauliflower

Chop the onion, garlic, and jalapeño pepper. Drain and rinse the beans.

Add the olive oil to a large pot or dutch oven on medium heat. Let the oil get hot, then add the onion. Once the onion starts to sizzle, turn the heat down a bit. Cook over low heat for about 10 minutes, until the onions are light brown and slightly caramelized. Feel free to cook for longer, stirring often to get the onions fully caramelized. This adds a lot of sweet flavour, but I often skip this step. Add the garlic and jalapeño and cook for another minute. Add the cumin seeds, oregano, smoked paprika, cayenne, salt, and pepper. You will adjust the salt and pepper again later.

Add the beans and broth. Bring everything to a boil, then turn the heat down to low. Put a lid on the pot and let it cook for 45 minutes to an hour. Stir occasionally to make sure that nothing sticks.

While the mixture cooks, prepare the rest of the ingredients. In a pot of boiling, salted water, cook the cauliflower for about four minutes, until just tender. Drain and put in a large bowl. Add the rest of the ingredients to the bowl, then set it aside.

Once the onion and bean mixture has cooked for 45 minutes to an hour, add the ingredients from the bowl. Stir everything around and cook with the lid on for another 15 minutes. Taste the mixture and add more seasoning if required. As soon as the pepper is tender, the chili is ready!

If you like thick chili, add a tablespoon of cornstarch, chickpea flour, or corn flour to a tablespoon of water. Stir it around to make a pasty liquid. Add this to the chili a few minutes before it's done and it should thicken up the broth further. This is not always necessary, though, because the beans and cheese will thicken the broth on their own.

Serve the chili with a bit of cilantro on top and some nice crusty bread on the side.

This recipe is also wonderful in a slow cooker. Make the onion and bean mixture, then transfer it to a slow cooker for 8 to 10 hours on low heat or 4 hours on high heat. Add the final ingredients about 30 minutes before serving.

1 tbsp olive oil
1 medium onion, finely diced
1 package ground round
6 garlic cloves, finely diced
3 bay leaves
2 tsp cumin seeds
1 tbsp dried oregano
4 tsp chili powder
2 tsp coriander
2 tbsp cocoa
1 cinnamon stick
1 bell pepper or 2 poblano or Anaheim peppers, diced
1-2 jalapeños or 1-2 chipotles in adobo
2 cans black beans, well rinsed
1 can diced or crushed tomatoes
1 small can tomato paste
1 bottle dark beer
1 cup brewed coffee
salt

TOPPINGS

avocado, chopped
guacamole
green onions, chopped
queso fresco
lime juice
cilantro, chopped
sour cream

Black Bean Chili

FOR FOUR TO SIX

Splash the oil into a heavy-bottomed pot on medium heat. Wait for it to get hot, then add the diced onion. Cook for three to five minutes, until the onion becomes translucent and starts to brown. Add the ground round and mix. Add the garlic, bay leaves, cumin seeds, oregano, chili powder, coriander, cocoa, and cinnamon stick. Let everything cook for a minute or two. Add the bell pepper and jalapeño or chipotle and cook for a couple of minutes.

Add the beans, tomatoes, tomato paste, beer, and coffee. Bring it to a boil and cook on low heat for about 90 minutes, stirring every 20 to 30 minutes to make sure nothing sticks to the bottom of the pot. If the chili seems too thick, add a bit of water or broth.

Taste, then adjust the salt and any of the other seasonings.

Serve with any or all of the suggested toppings as well as some tortilla chips or cornbread.





Gumbo- inspired Veggie Stew

FOR FOUR

ROUX

- ¼ cup ghee or 2 tbsp butter and 2 tbsp olive oil
- ¼ cup flour

- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3-4 stalks celery, diced
- ½ bell pepper, diced
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 garlic cloves, finely diced
- 1 cup canned or fresh tomatoes, puréed
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 2 large veggie sausages
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 cup green beans, chopped
- ½ cup green onions, finely chopped

SEASONING

- 1 tsp sweet paprika
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp smoked paprika,
- ½ tsp lavender (or thyme),
- ½ tsp oregano
- ½ tsp cayenne
- ¼ tsp cloves
- salt

Chop the vegetables. Mix all the seasonings together in a small bowl. Set all of that aside.

Now make the roux! A roux is just a mixture of flour and butter (or any fat, like oil) cooked until it comes together. This mixture will thicken any sauce and is used in all kinds of recipes. A dark brown roux is a very important component in a gumbo. It makes the stew thick but also gives it a toasty and surprisingly complex flavour.

To make the roux, put a heavy-bottomed pan or a dutch oven on medium heat. Add the flour and ghee and mix with a wooden spoon. Once the mixture starts to bubble, stir it every 10 to 15 seconds, letting the mixture get more and more brown. If the flour and ghee begin to separate, add a bit more flour until the mixture comes together as a smooth mass that is almost like a runny dough. Let the roux cook until it becomes the colour of peanut butter, or, for even more flavour, the colour of milk chocolate.

Now that the roux is ready, add the onion, celery, bell pepper, bay leaves, and all of the seasoning. Mix to coat the vegetables with roux and spices. Put a lid on the pot and let it cook for five minutes or so, stirring often. Once the onions are translucent, add the garlic, stir, and cook for two more minutes.

Next, add the tomatoes and broth, then stir again. Bring the mixture to a boil, then turn the heat down to medium-low.

Slice up the veggie sausages and lightly pan-fry them with the olive oil. Get a nice crust on both sides of the slices. Add the veggie sausage to the pot. Or just skip the frying and add the sausages to the broth immediately.

Let the stew thicken for about two hours over low heat. A bit longer won't hurt either. It will get thicker and more flavourful the longer it cooks.

About five minutes before you want to serve the stew, add the green beans and turn off the heat. Garnish with green onions before serving.

Stuffed Roasted Peppers

FOR TWO

2 poblano, Anaheim, or bell peppers
1 cup quinoa
1½ cups water
2 tsp olive oil
2 shallots or 1 small onion, finely diced
4 garlic cloves, finely diced
6-8 cherry tomatoes, quartered
½ cup peas, frozen or fresh
½ cup corn, canned or cooked
cilantro or parsley, finely chopped
¼ cup feta, crumbled
1 tsp dried oregano
1 tsp cumin
balsamic vinegar
salt and pepper

VARIATIONS

stuff the peppers with risotto
stuff the peppers with minced meat or taco filling
substitute another grain or small pasta for the quinoa

Put the peppers on a tray under your broiler. Turn them every few minutes, until they're black and crinkly on all sides. Alternately, if you have a gas cooktop, you can use metal tongs to hold them over direct flame. Once the peppers are roasted, put them in a metal bowl and cover it with plastic wrap. Leave the peppers to sweat for about 30 minutes, then peel off the skin. Set them aside.

Pour the quinoa into a pot with the water and a pinch of salt. Bring to a boil on medium heat, then turn down the heat and simmer for about 15 minutes. The quinoa is cooked when it is translucent, has doubled in size, and an opaque ring is visible around each grain. Set it aside.

Meanwhile, chop the vegetables.

Put a pan on medium heat and add the oil. Once the oil is hot, add the onion and cook until the onion is translucent. Add the garlic and cook for another minute or so. Add the tomatoes, peas, and corn to the pan. Cook for two minutes, then add the quinoa. Stir-fry for two minutes, adding a splash of water if the mixture looks dry. Add the cilantro, feta, oregano, cumin, and a small glug of balsamic vinegar. Season with salt and pepper.

Slice the peppers along one side and remove the seeds, membrane, and stem. Gently fill with the quinoa mixture. Overfilling is fine.

Place the peppers under the broiler for one to two minutes to warm up. Serve with tomato sauce (page 43), green chili sauce (page 102), sour cream, or yogurt spiced with cumin.

Depending on how big your peppers are, there may be leftover filling—if so, have it on a salad or for breakfast.





Desserts

Desserts are delicious and special, but they are inherently, well, optional. If you're planning to finish a meal with something unhealthy, you might as well make sure it's worthwhile!

Sometimes, when I want to make a special meal but don't feel inspired, I think of ideas for dessert and work backwards from there. Think about your favorite fruits and sweets to find your own inspiration!

Berry and Caramelized Bread Salad

FOR FOUR

- 3-4 cups assorted berries
- 2 tbsp mint, chopped
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 2 cups bread cubes (challah, croissant, or brioche are best)
- 3 tbsp butter
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ cup whipping cream
- ¼ cup milk

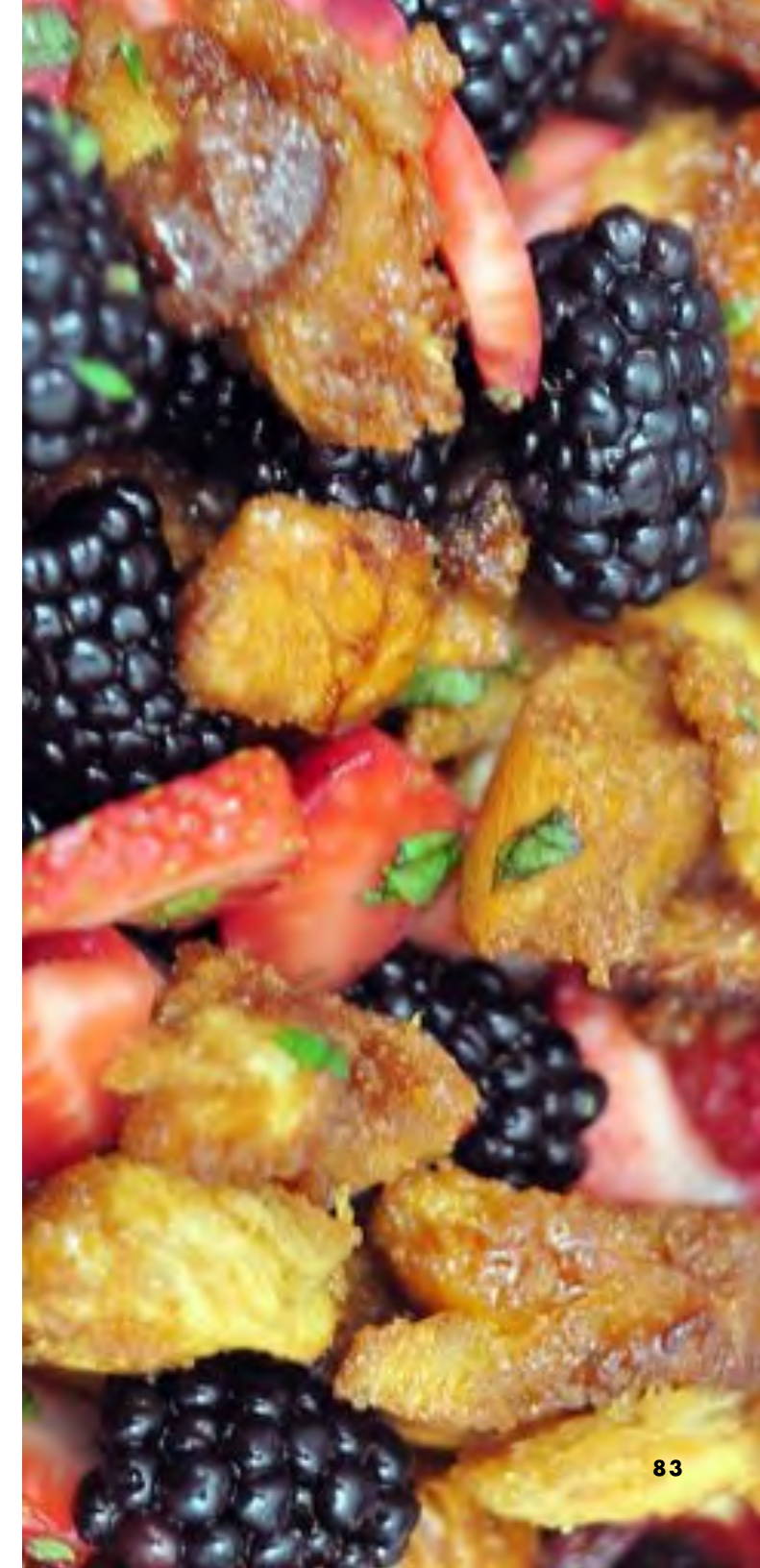
Clean your berries and mix them in a bowl with the mint and maple syrup.

Chop the bread into bite-sized pieces. Set aside.

Put the butter in a pan on medium heat. Once it melts, add the sugar and gently shake the pan to incorporate the sugar into the butter without stirring. Let the mixture bubble until it just turns brown at the edge. Add the bread, cream, and milk all at once. Keeping the pan on the heat, toss the bread in the caramel until everything is coated and the cubes are crisp. The caramel may bubble and harden a bit, so work quickly to get everything coated. It will be messy, but that's okay. After you achieve an even coating, take the pan off the heat.

Mix the bread cubes with the berries.

Try serving this with whipped cream spiked with vanilla and a bit of sugar.



Strawberry Cobbler

FOR FOUR TO SIX

4-5 cups strawberries, sliced
2 tbsp mint, chopped
1 tbsp basil, chopped
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup raw sugar
1 tsp vanilla
2 tbsp cornstarch
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
squeeze of lemon juice

TOPPING

3 tbsp cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornmeal
3 tbsp brown sugar
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk

VARIATIONS

berries with vanilla
apple with cinnamon and nutmeg
bananas with brown sugar and vanilla
berries with chocolate
nectarines with nutmeg
mango with basil

Put the sliced strawberries, mint, and basil into a bowl together. Toss with the raw sugar, vanilla, cornstarch, salt, and lemon juice. Leave the bowl in the fridge while you make the topping.

Turn the oven to 425 F.

For the topping, measure the butter into a small bowl and place it in the freezer for 30 minutes. In a medium bowl, stir together the flour, cornmeal, brown sugar, baking powder, and salt. Take the butter from the freezer and use a cheese grater to shave it into the dry ingredients. With your fingers, mix in the butter until everything is crumbly, but work quickly so that you don't warm the butter too much. The mixture will be lumpy—that's normal. Add the milk and stir until the mixture comes together but is still lumpy. If you stir too much, the biscuits will not be flaky.

Put the topping in the fridge to keep the butter cold.

Get out a baking dish. I usually use a pie dish, but a square cake pan or casserole dish would be fine too. Pile in the strawberries and then gently adds dollops of topping. The topping will not cover everything. It should look like several small biscuits cooking over lovely warm fruit.

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes. The topping should be golden-brown and the fruit should be syrupy and bubbly.

Enjoy with ice cream or whipped cream.





Pumpkin Cinnamon Buns

MAKES TWELVE

- 2 cups all-purpose flour or bread flour
- 2¼ tsp instant yeast
- ¼ tsp nutmeg (ideally freshly ground)
- ¼ tsp cloves
- 1 tsp cardamom
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp salt
- ⅓ cup milk
- 2 tbsp butter
- ½ cup canned pumpkin
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 egg

TOPPING

- 4 tablespoons melted butter
- ½ cup of brown sugar, packed
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp cardamom

ADDITIONS

- cinnamon chips

Measure out the flour, yeast, nutmeg, cloves, cardamom, cinnamon, and salt in a medium-sized bowl.

In a small saucepan or the microwave, warm the milk and butter until the butter is just melted.

In your stand mixer or a second bowl, mix the pumpkin with the brown sugar until the pumpkin is smooth. Add the milk mixture and the egg and beat until the colour becomes lighter. Add the flour mixture a bit at a time, mixing as you go. Use a spatula to scrape the sides of the bowl as you work. The dough is ready once it no longer sticks to the sides of the bowl. If the dough remains sticky, sprinkle it with flour and keep mixing until it pulls away from the sides.

If you're using a stand mixer, switch to the dough hook and knead for about five minutes.

If you're making the dough by hand, lightly flour your countertop and knead the dough for five to seven minutes.

Once the dough is elastic and smooth, place it in a lightly oiled bowl covered with plastic wrap and let it rise until it doubles in volume. This should take about 60 to 90 minutes.

When the dough is ready, punch it down. Using a rolling pin, flatten it into a rectangle about two centimetres thick. Brush the top of the dough with butter and sprinkle with brown sugar, cinnamon, and cardamom. Roll it up lengthwise and gently cut the roll into 12 buns.

Place the buns in a casserole dish or baking pan and cover with a moist tea towel. Let them rise for 45 minutes to an hour, until they have increased in volume by half.

Turn the oven to 350 F.

Bake the buns for 15 to 20 minutes or until they have puffed up and started to turn golden.

Drizzle with your favourite icing. I like a cream-cheese icing, personally.





My Mum's Ekmek

FOR EIGHT

SYRUP

2 tsp honey
2/3 cup dark rum
1 cup sugar
1 cup water

CUSTARD

2 egg yolks
2 tbsp all-purpose flour
2 tbsp arrowroot or cornstarch
3 cups milk
2/3 cup sugar
1 tbsp vanilla or the seeds of half a vanilla bean

CAKE

1 package rusks or 8-10 thin slices of bread, dried in the oven
cinnamon

TOPPING

1 1/2 cups whipping cream
3 tbsp sugar
almonds, sliced
cinnamon



Assemble the syrup ingredients in a pan. Boil gently for about 15 minutes, then leave to cool.

In a small bowl, whisk the egg yolks with the flour and arrowroot.

Pour the milk and sugar into a heavy pot. Add the egg mixture and whisk constantly over medium-low heat until it thickens. Remove from the heat and stir occasionally to prevent a skin from forming on top.

Line a large glass baking dish with rusks and pour the cooled syrup over top. If the rusks aren't completely soaked, you may need to make more syrup. Allow the syrup to soak in for about 10 minutes, then sprinkle with cinnamon.

Pour the cooled custard over the soaked rusks. Keep in the fridge until you're ready to serve it.

Just before serving, whip some cream to soft peaks with a bit of sugar. Spread it over the custard and sprinkle with almonds and cinnamon.





Drinks

Water is the perfect drink, but sometimes you want something a little more special, refreshing, or comforting.

These drinks are all quick to prepare and easy to change—try switching up the fruit or citrus, adding a special spice, or changing the alcohol.

Drinks are a great place to experiment with new flavours because the ingredients are all raw—you don't have to wait for anything to finish cooking to see if it works. You can also adjust things very easily. Too sweet? Add something sour. Too strong? Dilute it! And the risk is minimal, because even a so-so homemade drink is usually pretty nice.

Have fun—drinks aren't a chore!

4 tbsp cocoa
½ tsp cayenne
½ tsp cinnamon
pinch of salt
4 tbsp sugar or maple syrup or
2 tbsp honey
4 cups milk

ADDITIONS

substitute a splash of vanilla
for the cayenne
pinch of nutmeg
pinch of cardamom

In a small bowl, mix the cocoa, cayenne, cinnamon, salt, and sugar (but if you're using maple syrup or honey, don't add it yet).

Warm the milk in a pot on medium-low heat. Add the cocoa mixture. Add syrup or honey if you're using it.

Whisk everything until smooth. Keep it on the heat, stirring often, until it's just about to boil. Remove from heat.

Taste it. If it needs to be sweeter, add more sugar. If you like it richer and darker, add more cocoa.

Serve in mugs and enjoy! If you like whipped cream, here's an opportunity.



Hot Chocolate

FOR TWO



Lemon and Whisky

FOR TWO

6-8 lemons, juiced
2-3 cups cold water
¼ cup maple syrup
4 oz whisky

ADDITIONS

crushed or chopped fruit
mint
basil

Juice the lemons over a strainer so that you don't get seeds in your lemonade. Add the maple syrup and two cups of cold water.

Taste the lemonade and add more water, maple syrup, or lemon juice, as you see fit.

Pour into two glasses with whisky and ice.

White Wine Sangria

FOR FOUR

1 bottle white wine
1-2 cups of your favourite fruits
1 lemon, juiced

ADDITIONS

1 tbs honey or maple syrup
shot of rum or whiskey
vanilla bean
mint

Chop up the fruit, but leave any berries whole. Add them to a pitcher. Squeeze in the juice of a lemon and pour in the wine.

Leave the mixture in the fridge for two to three hours to let the flavours mingle.

Alternately, after letting the mixture rest in the fridge, purée it in a blender, then pour through a sieve. Serve over ice.





Pantry Items and Flavour-Boosters

Think of these recipes as your secret weapons. Homemade ketchup makes everything taste better!

Try making a few of these recipes when you have a bit of time on a Sunday afternoon, maybe when you're waiting for the laundry to ding. You will be more than satisfied with your time investment.

All the recipes are quite simple, some almost absurdly so, but you'll impress yourself and your guests when you get them just right.

Dry Rub

MAKES ABOUT ONE CUP

1/3 cup brown sugar, loosely packed
7 tsp ground coffee
5 tsp kosher salt
4 tsp smoked paprika
3 tsp sweet paprika
3 tsp chipotle powder
2 tsp cumin powder
1 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp clove powder
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Mix everything together, making particularly sure the brown sugar doesn't clump.

Use this on any piece of meat you plan to cook on low heat for a long time, like pulled pork. Or sprinkle it onto fish or steak just before grilling either of them on high heat.

If you omit the coffee, you can also use it in salad dressing, an omelette, or on vegetables. It's a great all-around spice blend.

Feel free to play around with any of the proportions according to your taste. In particular, to change the heat, just adjust the amount of chipotle.



Fridge Pickles

MAKES ONE QUART

1 one-quart mason jar
field cucumbers (as many as fit in the jar)
1 shallot or ½ small onion, sliced
3 garlic cloves, quartered
3-4 sprigs dill
1 cup white vinegar
1 cup water
1½ tsp mustard seeds
1½ tsp dill seeds
1 tbsp salt
1 bay leaf

ADDITIONS
1-2 crushed dry chilies
small piece of cinnamon bark
2 cloves
½ tsp coriander
1 allspice berry
½ tsp fennel seeds
½ tsp celery seeds

I strongly suggest you double or triple this recipe and give a few jars to your friends and family. They're very popular! But note that these pickles are not actually preserved—be sure to keep them in the fridge.

Cut up the cucumbers however you like. I usually slice them lengthwise into four or six slices each. Lean the jar on its side and alternate layers of cucumbers with with the onion, garlic, and dill.

In a pot, bring the vinegar, water, seeds, salt, and bay leaf to a boil. Turn the heat down and simmer for about five minutes.

If you don't maintain a spice collection, you can also buy pickling mix in the spice aisle of most grocery stores. Instead of the seeds and bay leaf, add a tablespoon of pickling mix to the water, vinegar, and salt. And if you like sweet pickles, add about three tablespoons of sugar.

Pour the hot liquid over the cucumbers in the jar. This may not be quite enough liquid because it's difficult to predict how much space the cucumbers will take up. If you run out, just make a bit more liquid with a ratio of equal parts vinegar and water and half a tablespoon of salt per cup of liquid. Don't worry about all the other stuff.

Let it hang out until the jar is reasonably cool. Put the lid on, give it a good shake and put the jar in the fridge for two weeks. After that, the pickles are ready to eat!





Chili-Lime Butter

MAKES AS MUCH AS YOU NEED

butter
chili powder
lime juice
lime zest
salt and pepper

VARIATIONS

roasted garlic and parsley
lemon zest and sun-dried tomato
garlic and lemon
dill and mustard
basil
raspberry

Leave some butter on the counter to soften. If you're impatient, you can accelerate the process by popping it in the microwave for a moment.

Put the butter in a bowl. Mix in some lime juice, a small amount of lime zest, chili powder, salt and pepper. Then put the butter back in the fridge to harden, wrapped either in plastic or the foil it came in.

I use flavoured butter on popcorn, baked potatoes, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn on the cob, green beans—anything, really! You could also melt it on a steak or put it under the skin of a chicken you're going to roast.

And of course you can also have it on bread.

whole head of garlic
dribble of olive oil
sprinkle of salt

Roasted Garlic

MAKES ONE HEAD

Turn your oven to 350 F.

Slice the top off a head of garlic and set it in a small casserole dish or on a baking tray.

Slowly drizzle olive oil into the garlic and let it absorb for a minute. Splash a bit more olive oil on top and finish with a pinch of salt.

Cover the dish with aluminum foil and put it in the oven for an hour, until the garlic is soft and light brown.

Alternately, wrap the garlic in aluminum foil and put it directly into the oven. So long as it's well wrapped, it shouldn't leak.

Once the garlic is cool enough to touch, squeeze the cloves out. Refrigerate or use immediately.

Roasted garlic is great anywhere you want a sweet, rich garlic flavour—on toast, mixed with butter, in salad dressing, or in most soups and sauces.



Chorizo Spice Blend

MAKES ¼ CUP

2 tbsp smoked paprika
½ tsp salt
1 tsp chipotle powder
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp oregano
1 tsp black pepper
1 tsp cumin
½ tsp clove powder
½ tsp coriander

Mix everything together. If you aren't using the spice blend immediately, store it in a sealed container.

Put these spices on vegetables (especially root vegetables like potatoes, sweet potatoes, and parsnips), eggs, tofu, beans, sauteed veggies, or, of course, ground pork.



Basil Pesto

MAKES AS MUCH AS YOU NEED

basil
parmesan
pine nuts
olive oil
salt and pepper
squeeze of lemon juice
(optional)

This recipe cannot deal in exact amounts. You just have to balance things out. Basil and olive oil are always the primary ingredients, complemented by smaller amounts of parmesan and pine nuts. If you want thick and spreadable pesto, use less olive oil; for a pasta sauce, use more olive oil. If you like pine nuts, use a lot of them! And so forth.

Chop up the basil as finely as you can. Grate some parmesan on top and chop the basil and parmesan together. This will get the basil all bruised, salty, and delicious.

Toast some pine nuts on medium heat. Keep an eye on them! It's easy to forget and let them burn, which will make your pesto bitter. Chop them up as roughly or finely as you like. A finer chop will make a more uniform pesto, but chunky pestos are lovely with pasta.

In a bowl, add the pine nuts to the basil and parmesan.

Pour olive oil over the mixture until you have a saucy consistency. Taste and adjust. It may need more parmesan, more pine nuts, or some salt and pepper. Do not add salt or pepper until you have tasted it once. The parmesan is often salty enough on its own.

I also like to add a squeeze of lemon juice, but this is entirely optional.

Enjoy your pesto on toast, over eggs in the morning, with pasta, in salad dressing, or tossed with roasted vegetables. Pesto is great just about anywhere, except maybe on chocolate-chip cookies.



My Dad's Green Chili Sauce

MAKES ABOUT ONE CUP

- 3 poblano or Anaheim peppers
- 2 tsp butter or olive oil
- ½ onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, diced
- ½ tsp chickpea flour or all-purpose flour
- ½ cup vegetable broth
- salt and pepper

Feel free to substitute any large chilies or bell peppers (or a combination). This will affect the heat of the sauce.

Put the peppers on a tray under your broiler. Turn them every few minutes, until they're black and crinkly on all sides. Alternately, if you have a gas cooktop, you can use metal tongs to hold them over direct flame. Once the peppers are roasted, put them in a metal bowl and cover it with plastic wrap. Leave the peppers to sweat for about 30 minutes, then peel off the skin. Carefully open the peppers to remove the placenta, seeds, and stem. Chop the peppers up roughly and set them aside.

Prepare the onion, garlic, and broth. Add the butter or oil to a pot on medium heat. When it's hot, add the onion. Sauté for about two minutes, until the onion is just translucent. Add the garlic and cook for another minute. Add the flour and stir it until it has coated the vegetables. Add the peppers and broth. Bring the mixture to a boil, then turn the heat down to medium-low. Let it cook for about 10 minutes.

If you have an immersion blender, purée the mixture directly in the pot. Otherwise, let it cool and use a blender. Once the sauce is smooth, add salt and pepper as necessary.



Hot Chili Paste

MAKES ABOUT ONE CUP

- 2 lemongrass stalks, just the white ends
- 6 garlic cloves
- 4 shallots or 1 small red onion, chopped
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 2 cups fresh chili peppers
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp lime juice
- 2 tbsp fish sauce

Get out the food processor. Purée the lemongrass, garlic, and onion together. Transfer to a saucepan with the oil and sauté on medium-high heat for a few minutes until fragrant and translucent.

Meanwhile, purée the fresh chilies. Add them to the saucepan. All of the ingredients will start releasing oil. The mixture will make your eyes water, so put the fan on! Keep stirring so that the paste doesn't get dry.

Add the rest of the ingredients and continue to sauté for about 10 minutes, until all the flavours come together. Taste and adjust the seasonings. Watch out—it'll be spicy! But that's kind of the point, isn't it?

Pour into a jars and store in the fridge. You can use this paste as you would any hot sauce—in soups, sandwiches, dips, etc.





Ketchup

MAKES THREE TO FOUR QUARTS

9 cups whole tomatoes (3 cans)
4 medium-large onions, diced
1 large bell pepper (red is best),
diced
½ cup brown sugar
¾ cup apple cider vinegar
1 tsp mustard powder
cayenne to taste (or 1 chipotle
in adobo)
salt

SPICE BALL (BOUQUET GARNI)
cheese cloth, 6" square
½ cinnamon stick
1½ tsp whole allspice
½ tsp cloves
1½ tsp fennel seeds
1½ tsp dill seeds
½ tsp mustard seeds
1½ tsp black peppercorns
1 bay leaf
1 garlic clove, peeled and
lightly crushed

This makes a lot of ketchup, so feel free to halve or quarter the recipe. You probably won't want to quarter the seasonings, so just remove the spice ball early. Keep in mind, though, that if you make the full recipe, you can give away the excess!

Put the tomatoes, onions, and pepper into a large pot without oil. Bring to a boil on medium-high heat, then turn down to a simmer. Leave to cook until the vegetables are soft, then purée with an immersion blender. Add the sugar, apple cider vinegar, mustard powder, and cayenne. Put a lid on the pot, leaving it askew so that steam can escape, and continue to simmer.

Wrap all of the spices in the cheese cloth and tie it into a ball. Drop the ball into the pot.

Taste the ketchup after it has simmered with the spice ball for 20 minutes. Add salt to taste. If the ketchup is flavourful enough, remove the spice ball. If not, leave the spice ball in but taste frequently. Continue to simmer for an hour, stirring every few minutes. Test for thickness by dropping a blob onto a plate. If liquid seeps from the edge of the blob, keep simmering.

Once the ketchup is thick enough, transfer it to a sealed container like a mason jar. Store in the fridge.



Salsa

MAKES TWO TO THREE CUPS

2 cups tomatoes, chopped
½ medium onion, finely diced
1 jalapeño pepper, finely diced
1 lime, juiced
¼ cup cilantro, finely chopped
salt and pepper

ADDITIONS

mango, peaches, pineapple,
finely chopped
beans
corn
other hot chilies
garlic

Chop the tomatoes into small pieces.

In the summer, the best salsas combine a load of fresh tomatoes with a smaller amount of choice vegetables and fruit. In the winter, it's better use canned tomatoes and cook them for a few minutes.

Chop the onion. If you like raw onion, keep it as is. Otherwise, take the edge off by adding the onion to a pan on medium heat with a bit of water. The onion is ready once the water has boiled off.

Mix the onion, tomato, and the rest of the ingredients. Be sure to add enough salt and pepper! Taste the salsa. You are looking for a balance of spicy from the peppers, sweet from the tomatoes, and bright and fresh from the herbs and lime juice. If something is out of balance, add the appropriate ingredient to bring it back into balance.

If you aren't a fan of cilantro, substitute another herb. Mint, savory, or lemon balm work well.



METHOD

How to Cook Dried Beans

The best way to prepare dried beans is to soak them overnight. The next day, drain the water—you want to cook them in fresh water.

If you didn't have the foresight to soak the beans ahead of time, you can make up for it. Cover the beans with water, then bring them to a boil in a large pot. After 10 minutes, take them off the heat and drain them. Proceed with the next step.

Cover the drained beans with fresh water in a large pot. Bring to a boil on medium heat, then turn down the heat so that the beans boil gently. Put a lid on the pot, but leave it askew so the water doesn't boil over.

Check on the beans every half hour or so, making sure to keep them covered with water if it boils away.

Beans take vastly different lengths of time to become tender. The older and bigger they are, the longer they take to cook. Very old, very large beans can take as long as four hours.

If you are making refried beans or beans for a soup or stew, don't worry about overcooking them; it's fine if they're mushy. If you want to maintain their integrity, however, monitor them closely once they're getting close to done.

Once the beans are tender, you can drain them or leave them wet, depending on what you're using them for. Add salt to taste—they will need a fair bit!

ADDITIONS WHILE COOKING

- a bay leaf
- a bouquet garni of favourite tough herbs
- dried herbs and spices
- onion
- garlic
- chilies
- ginger

Index

All-Butter Short Crust32
 Asian Vegetable Scramble 14
 asparagus
 Asparagus and Corn Risotto 61
 Asparagus Quiche.....35
 Asparagus Soup..... 17
 balsamic vinegar
 Pasta with Balsamic Vinegar, Tomato Sauce, and Cheddar59
 basil
 Basil Pesto..... 101
 pesto..... 51, 59
 Margherita Pizza50
 batter, pancake8, 9
 beans 72, 106
 black beans 71, 76
 broad beans57
 cannellini beans.....58
 green beans..... 51, 79
 How to Cook Dried Beans 106
 white beans75
 beer 76
 Berry and Caramelized Bread Salad83
 Big Salad.....22
 Ideas 24-25
 black beans
 Black Bean and Goat Cheese Enchiladas71
 Black Bean Chili..... 76
 bread 83, 88
 breakfast6
 Broad Bean and Goat Cheese Ravioli57
 broccoli.....50
 Broccoli Cheddar Quiche34
 Pasta with Curried Cream Sauce and Broccoli.....59
 Pizza with Roasted Broccoli and Chilies50
 broth 17-21, 61, 75, 79, 102

butter32, 84
 Chili-Lime Butter98
 cannellini beans
 Pasta with Cannellini Beans, Tomato, and Smoked Paprika58
 Carrot-Orange Salad29
 cauliflower.....75
 Cauliflower Soup20
 Chana Dal with Spinach 67
 Chana Masala.....63
 cheese 11, 35, 53
 cheddar cheese ... 15, 21, 34, 36, 58-59, 71, 75
 cream cheese.....75
 goat cheese..... 57, 71
 parmesan cheese 9, 61
 ricotta cheese31
 chickpeas 63, 64
 chili
 Black Bean Chili..... 76
 Chili-Lime Butter 98
 chili pepper 68, 102-103
 Green and White Chili.....75
 My Dad's Green Chili Sauce..... 102
 Chorizo Spice Blend..... 100
 cinnamon buns
 Pumpkin Cinnamon Buns 87
 coconut milk 19, 68
 corn.....61
 Pasta with Corn, Spinach, Tomato, and Cheddar58
 Pizza with Corn and Green Onions51
 cornmeal 9, 84
 cream cheese.....75
 crust
 All-Butter Short Crust32
 cucumber 97
 curry.....63
 Curried Sweet Potato Soup 19
 Curried Vegetable Scramble 14
 Pasta with Curried Cream Sauce and Broccoli.....59
 Dressing23
 Dry Rub95

eggs.....	10, 34-37
Asian Vegetable Scramble.....	14
Curried Vegetable Scramble.....	14
Eggs Poached in Tomato Sauce.....	14
Green Sauce over Poached Eggs.....	14
Huevos Rancheros.....	14
Omelette.....	11
Omelette with Tomato and Garlic Scapes...	14
Scrambled Egg Wrap.....	14
Spicy Vegetable Omelette.....	14
Vegetable Scramble.....	13
ekmek	
My Mum's Ekmek.....	88
enchiladas	
Black Bean and Goat Cheese Enchiladas.....	71
Fast Pizza Dough.....	45
Fennel Salad.....	28
flour	
all-purpose.....	32, 44-45, 54, 84, 87
buckwheat.....	8, 9
whole wheat.....	8
Fresh Pasta.....	54
Fridge Pickles.....	97
fruit.....	7, 93
garlic	
Roasted Garlic.....	99
goat cheese.....	57, 71
Great Pizza Dough.....	44
Green and White Chili.....	75
green beans.....	79
Pizza with Sliced Green Beans and Lemon	
Zest.....	51
green chili	
Green Chili Cheese Pie.....	36
My Dad's Green Chili Sauce.....	102
Green Sauce over Poached Eggs.....	14
ground round.....	76
Gumbo-inspired Veggie Stew.....	79
Hot Chili Paste.....	103
Hot Chocolate.....	91
How to Cook Dried Beans.....	106
Huevos Rancheros.....	14

Ideas	
Big Salad.....	24-25
Eggs.....	14-15
Pasta.....	58-59
Pizza.....	50-51
Sautéed Vegetables.....	40-41
jalapeño pepper.....	9, 19, 21, 36, 53, 63, 67-68, 75-76, 105
kale	
Pizza with Kale and Pesto.....	51
Ketchup.....	104
lemon.....	17, 20
Lemon and Whisky.....	92
Pizza with Sliced Green Beans and Lemon	
Zest.....	51
lemongrass.....	103
Lemongrass Chili-Coconut Stir-Fry.....	68
Macaroni and Cheese.....	53
Morning Quinoa.....	7
My Dad's Green Chili Sauce.....	102
My Mum's Ekmek.....	88
olives.....	29, 40
Omelette.....	11
Omelette with Tomato and Garlic Scapes...	14
orange.....	29
pancakes	
Savoury Buckwheat Pancakes.....	9
Sweet Buckwheat Pancakes.....	8
parmesan cheese.....	9, 61
pasta.....	52
Fresh Pasta.....	54
Macaroni and Cheese.....	53
Ravioli Stuffed with Roasted Red Pepper and	
Feta.....	58
Tomato Sauce.....	43
with Balsamic Vinegar, Tomato Sauce, and	
Cheddar.....	59
with Cannelini Beans, Tomato, and Smoked	
Paprika.....	58
with Corn, Spinach, Tomato, and Cheddar	
58	
with Curried Cream Sauce and Broccoli.....	59
with Pesto and Tomato.....	59
with Spinach and Tomato.....	58
with Tomato and Zucchini.....	59

peas	
Cold Pea Soup.....	18
pepper	
Anaheim pepper.....	36, 71, 75-76, 80, 102
bell pepper.....	58, 75-76, 80
chili pepper.....	68, 102, 103
jalapeño pepper.....	9, 19, 21, 36, 53, 63, 67-68, 75-76, 105
Pizza with Roasted Broccoli and Chilies.....	50
poblano pepper.....	36, 71, 76, 80, 102
Stuffed Roasted Peppers.....	80
pesto	
Basil Pesto.....	101
Pasta with Pesto and Tomato.....	59
Pizza with Kale and Pesto.....	51
pickles	
Fridge Pickles.....	97
pie.....	30
All-Butter Short Crust.....	32
Asparagus Quiche.....	35
Broccoli Cheddar Quiche.....	34
Green Chili Cheese Pie.....	36
Veggie Pie.....	37
pizza.....	42
Fast Pizza Dough.....	45
Great Pizza Dough.....	44
Margherita.....	50
Pizza in the Oven.....	47
Pizza on the Barbecue.....	48
Pizza with a Baking Stone.....	47
Tomato Sauce.....	43
with Cherry Tomatoes and Pine Nuts.....	51
with Corn and Green Onions.....	51
with Kale and Pesto.....	51
with Prosciutto and Truffle Oil.....	50
with Roasted Broccoli and Chilies.....	50
with Sliced Green Beans and Lemon Zest...	51
with Spinach and Garlic.....	50
potato.....	13, 26
prosciutto	
Pizza with Prosciutto and Truffle Oil.....	50
puff pastry.....	31
Pumpkin Cinnamon Buns.....	87

quiche.....	30
Asparagus Quiche.....	35
Broccoli Cheddar Quiche.....	34
quinoa.....	80
Morning Quinoa.....	7
ravioli	
Broad Bean and Goat Cheese Ravioli.....	57
Ravioli Stuffed with Roasted Red Pepper and	
Feta.....	58
rice.....	68
Asparagus and Corn Risotto.....	61
ricotta cheese.....	31
Roasted Garlic.....	99
Roasted Potato Salad.....	26
rum.....	88
salad.....	22
Carrot-Orange Salad.....	29
Dressing.....	23
Fennel Salad.....	28
Ideas.....	24-25
Roasted Potato Salad.....	26
Salsa.....	105
sautéed vegetables.....	38
How to Sauté Vegetables.....	39
with Chorizo Blend.....	40
with Curry.....	41
with Garlic and Chili.....	40
with Garlic and Ginger.....	41
with Garlic and Lemon.....	40
with Garlic and Parmesan.....	41
with Olives, Feta, and Dill.....	40
with Soy Sauce and Brown Sugar.....	41
sangria	
White Wine Sangria.....	93
Savoury Buckwheat Pancakes.....	9
Scrambled Egg Wrap.....	14
short crust	
All-Butter Short Crust.....	32
soup.....	16
Asparagus Soup.....	17
Cauliflower Soup.....	20
Cold Pea Soup.....	18
Curried Sweet Potato Soup.....	19
Spinach-Lemon Soup.....	20

spice blends	
Chorizo Spice Blend.....	100
Dry Rub	95
Spicy Vegetable Omelette.....	14
spinach.....	64, 67
Pasta with Spinach and Tomato	58
Pizza with Spinach and Garlic	50
Spinach-Lemon Soup	20
Strawberry Cobbler.....	84
Stuffed Roasted Peppers.....	80
Summery Tomato Tart	31
Sweet Buckwheat Pancakes	8
sweet potato	19
Tacos	72
tart.....	30
Summery Tomato Tart	31
tofu	68
tomato.....	31, 50-51, 58-59, 63, 67, 76, 79, 104-105
Ketchup	104
Tomato Sauce.....	43
tortillas	71-72
truffle oil	
Pizza with Prosciutto and Truffle Oil	50
Vegetable Scramble.....	13
Veggie Burgers	64
Veggie Pie	37
veggie sausage	79
vinegar	97, 104
whisky	
Lemon and Whisky.....	92
White Wine Sangria.....	93
yogurt	23
zucchini	
Pasta with Tomato and Zucchini.....	59



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