

COOK'S  
ILLUSTRATED

# RECIPE OF THE YEAR 1993-2015

**23**  
Best-Ever  
Recipes





# Best Pumpkin Pie

➤ NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 1993 ≡

## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

For a pumpkin pie recipe that produced a pie with a crisp crust and a soft, custardy filling, we began by baking our crust almost completely before filling it; that way we knew it would start out crisp. Next, we made sure that both the crust and the filling were hot when we assembled the pie; this meant that the custard could begin to firm up almost immediately rather than soaking into the pastry. Finally, we baked the pie quickly in the bottom of the oven, exposing the bottom of the crust to the most intense heat. We avoided curdling by taking the pie out of the oven immediately once the center thickened to the point when it no longer sloshed but instead wiggled like gelatin when the pan was gently shaken.

### THE BEST PUMPKIN PIE SERVES 8

If you do not have a food processor, the pumpkin may be put through a food mill or forced through a fine sieve with the back of a wooden spoon. Alternatively, you can cook the pumpkin, sugar, and spices together before pureeing and then whirl the mixture in a blender, adding enough of the cream called for in the recipe to permit the pumpkin to flow easily over the blades. In either case, heat the pumpkin with the (remaining) cream and milk as indicated and then slowly whisk the mixture into the beaten eggs. The pie may be served slightly warm, chilled, or at room temperature.

#### *Flaky Pastry Shell*

1¼ cups (6¼ ounces) all-purpose flour  
½ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon granulated sugar  
10 tablespoons unsalted butter, chilled and sliced ¼ inch thick  
3–3½ tablespoons ice water

#### *Brandied Whipped Cream*

1⅓ cups heavy cream, chilled  
3 tablespoons confectioners' sugar  
1 tablespoon brandy

#### *Pumpkin Filling*

2 cups canned unsweetened pumpkin puree  
1 cup packed (7 ounces) dark brown sugar  
2 teaspoons ground ginger  
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
¼ teaspoon ground cloves  
½ teaspoon salt  
⅔ cup heavy cream  
⅔ cup milk  
4 large eggs

**1. FOR THE FLAKY PASTRY SHELL:** Process flour, salt, and sugar in food processor until combined, about 5 seconds. Scatter butter over top and continue to process until incorporated and mixture resembles cornmeal, 7 to 12 seconds. Transfer mixture to medium bowl.

**2.** Sprinkle 3 tablespoons ice water over flour mixture. Using blade side of stiff rubber spatula, cut mixture into little balls, then press down on mixture with broad side of spatula so balls stick together in large clumps. If dough resists gathering, sprinkle remaining 1½ teaspoons ice water over dry, crumbly patches and press several more times. Form dough into 4-inch disk, wrap tightly

in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. (Wrapped dough can be refrigerated for up to 2 days or frozen for up to 2 months. If frozen, let dough thaw completely on counter before rolling.)

**3.** Generously sprinkle 2-foot-square work space with flour. Remove dough from plastic and place disk in center; dust top with flour. (If dough has been chilled for more than 1 hour, let stand until it gives slightly when pressed, 5 to 10 minutes.) Roll dough in all directions, from center to edges, rotating quarter turn and strewing flour underneath as necessary after each stroke. When dough is 9 inches in diameter, flip over and continue to roll (but don't rotate) in all directions, until dough is 13 to 14 inches in diameter and just under ⅛ inch thick.

**4.** Fold dough in quarters and place corner in center of 9-inch pie plate. Carefully unfold dough to cover plate completely, letting excess dough hang over edge. Using your hand, pick up edges of dough; use index finger of your other hand to press dough around plate bottom. Use your fingertips to press dough against plate walls. Trim overhang to ½ inch beyond lip of plate.

**5.** Tuck overhang under itself; folded edge should be flush with edge of pie plate. Press double layer of dough with your fingers to seal, then bend up at 90-degree angle and flute by pressing thumb and index finger about ½ inch apart against outside edge of dough and using index finger (or knuckle) of your other hand to poke dent through space. Repeat to crimp around pie plate.

**6.** Refrigerate dough-lined plate for 20 minutes (or freeze for 5 minutes). Using fork, prick bottom and sides, including where they meet, at ½-inch intervals. Press 12-inch square of aluminum foil inside shell, smoothing foil flush against corners, sides, and over rim. Prick foil bottom all over with fork. Chill pie shell for at least 30 minutes (preferably an hour or more) to allow dough to relax.

**7.** Adjust oven rack to lowest position and heat oven to 400 degrees. (Start preparing filling when you put shell into oven.) Bake pie shell for 15 minutes, pressing down on foil with your mitt-protected hands to flatten. Remove foil and bake shell for 8 to 10 minutes longer, until interior just begins to color.

**8. FOR THE PUMPKIN FILLING:** Process pumpkin, sugar, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and salt in food processor for 1 minute. Transfer pumpkin mixture to medium heavy-bottomed saucepan; bring to simmer over medium-high heat. Cook pumpkin mixture, stirring constantly, until thick and shiny, about 5 minutes. As soon as pie shell comes out of oven, whisk cream and milk into pumpkin mixture and bring to bare simmer. Process eggs in food processor until whites and yolks are mixed, about 5 seconds. With processor running, slowly add half of hot pumpkin mixture. Stop processor and add in remaining pumpkin mixture. Process 30 seconds longer.

**9.** Immediately pour warm filling into hot pie shell. (Ladle any excess filling into pie after baking for 5 minutes or so, when filling has settled.) Bake until filling is puffed, dry-looking, and lightly cracked around edges and center wiggles like gelatin when pie is gently shaken, about 25 minutes. Let pie cool on wire rack for at least 1 hour.

**10. FOR BRANDIED WHIPPED CREAM:** Using stand mixer fitted with whisk, whip cream, sugar, and brandy on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to high and whip until stiff peaks form, 1 to 3 minutes. Serve with pie.

# Barbecued Pork Spareribs

≧ JULY & AUGUST 1994 ≦

## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

We found that indirect heat was crucial to an authentic barbecued spareribs recipe, coming closest to replicating the results of barbecue pit masters. One way in which we fine-tuned our technique was to turn the ribs after 1 hour for even melting of the fat as well as even cooking. We also discovered that wrapping the ribs when they came off the grill, baking them for an hour, and letting them rest wrapped in foil for a half-hour markedly improved the texture. The wrapped ribs literally fell off the bone.

### BARBECUED PORK SPARERIBS

SERVES 4 TO 6

If you'd like to use wood chunks instead of wood chips when using a charcoal grill, substitute two medium wood chunks, soaked in water for 1 hour, for the wood chip packet. To remove the membrane (the thin white sheath that lines the concave side of the rack), insert a spoon handle between the membrane and the ribs of one rack to loosen slightly. Using a paper towel, grasp the loosened membrane and pull away gently to remove.

- 3/4 cup Dry Rub (recipe follows)
- 2 (2½- to 3-pound) racks St. Louis-style spareribs, trimmed and membrane removed
- 2 cups wood chips, soaked in water for 15 minutes and drained
- 1 recipe Barbecue Sauce (recipe follows)

1. Rub 3 tablespoons dry rub on each side of racks of ribs. Let ribs sit at room temperature for 1 hour.

2. Using large piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil, wrap soaked chips in 8 by 4½-inch foil packet. (Make sure chips do not poke holes in sides or bottom of packet.) Cut 2 evenly spaced 2-inch slits in top of packet.

**3A. FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL:** Open bottom vent halfway. Light large chimney starter two-thirds filled with charcoal briquettes (4 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over half of grill. Place wood chip packet on coals. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent halfway. Heat grill until hot and wood chips are smoking, about 5 minutes.

**3B. FOR A GAS GRILL:** Remove cooking grate and place wood chip packet directly on primary burner. Set grate in place, turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot and wood chips are smoking, about 15 minutes. Turn primary burner to medium-high and turn off other burner(s). (Adjust primary burner as needed to maintain grill temperature between 300 and 325 degrees.)

4. Clean and oil cooking grate. Place ribs meat side down on cooler side of grill. Cover (position lid vent over meat if using charcoal) and cook until ribs are deep red and smoky, about 2 hours, flipping and rotating racks halfway through grilling. During final 20 minutes of grilling, adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees.

5. Transfer ribs to wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet and brush evenly with ½ cup sauce. Cover tightly with foil and bake until tender, 1 to 2 hours.

6. Remove ribs from oven and let rest, still covered, for 30 minutes. Unwrap ribs, slice between bones, and serve, passing remaining sauce separately.



### BARBECUE SAUCE

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

This sauce can be refrigerated for up to four days.

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|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 4 tablespoons unsalted butter | 1 teaspoon dry mustard        |
| 1 small onion, chopped fine   | ½ teaspoon hot sauce          |
| 2 garlic cloves, minced       | ½ teaspoon salt               |
| 2 tablespoons lemon juice     | 1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce |
| 1 tablespoon pepper           | ¼ cup cider vinegar           |
| 1 teaspoon paprika            |                               |

Heat butter in medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in lemon juice, pepper, paprika, mustard, hot sauce, and salt; bring to simmer; and cook for 5 minutes. Add tomato sauce and vinegar and continue to simmer until thickened, about 15 minutes longer.

### DRY RUB

MAKES ABOUT 1 1/3 CUPS

Store leftover spice rub in an airtight container for up to three months.

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|--------------------------------------|---|
| ¼ cup paprika                        | 1 tablespoon granulated sugar           |
| 3 tablespoons celery salt            | 1 tablespoon dried oregano              |
| 3 tablespoons garlic powder          | 1 tablespoon white pepper               |
| 2 tablespoons salt                   | 1 tablespoon pepper                     |
| 2 tablespoons chili powder           | 2 tablespoons cayenne pepper (optional) |
| 2 tablespoons ground cumin           |   |
| 1 tablespoon packed dark brown sugar |   |

Combine all ingredients in bowl.

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# Creamy Coleslaw

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➤ JULY & AUGUST 1995 ⇐

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## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

There is the promise of coleslaw: crisp and creamy. And then there's the sad reality: watery and washed-out. This seemingly simple side dish—shredded cabbage tossed with a mayonnaise-based dressing—is fraught with problems, most of which start with the cabbage. For surefire success, we salt the cabbage (along with shredded carrot and onion) and then let the mixture sit in a colander placed over a bowl. After about an hour, the salt will have drawn as much as  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of liquid from the cabbage—liquid that would otherwise have made our dressing watery. As for the dressing, most recipes call for just mayonnaise, but we've found that adding a little sour cream gives it an appealing tang. Plain white vinegar plays a supportive yet not overachieving role, and we temper its acidity with 2 teaspoons of sugar. After tossing the cabbage mixture with the dressing, we chill it for at least 30 minutes to allow the flavors to meld.

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### BASIC CREAMY COLESLAW

SERVES 8 TO 10

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After step 1, the salted, rinsed, and dried cabbage mixture can be refrigerated in a zipper-lock bag for up to 24 hours. Use the large holes of a box grater to shred the vegetables.

- 1 head green cabbage (2 pounds), quartered, cored, and shredded
- 1 carrot, peeled and shredded
- $\frac{1}{2}$  small onion, shredded
- 2 teaspoons salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup mayonnaise
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon pepper

1. Toss cabbage, carrot, onion, and salt in colander set over bowl. Let cabbage mixture drain until wilted, about 1 hour. Rinse cabbage mixture under cold water, drain, and dry well with dish towel.

2. Whisk mayonnaise, sour cream, vinegar, sugar, and pepper together in large bowl. Add cabbage mixture and stir to coat thoroughly. Refrigerate slaw until chilled, at least 30 minutes, before serving.

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# Chocolate Soufflé

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≧ SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 1996 ≦

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## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

After trying several bases for our Chocolate Soufflé recipe, we found that we consistently preferred a béchamel base. We noted, however, that the milk muted the chocolate flavor. To achieve a full chocolate flavor, we ended up removing the milk and the flour, separating the eggs (whipping the whites separately), increasing the amount of chocolate, and reducing the amount of butter. The base now consisted of egg yolks beaten with sugar until thick, creating plenty of volume. Eliminating the flavor-muting milk gave the soufflé intense chocolate flavor.

## CHOCOLATE SOUFFLÉ

SERVES 6 TO 8

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To melt the chocolate using a microwave, heat it at 50 percent power for 2 minutes; then stir the chocolate, add the butter, and continue heating until melted, stirring once every additional minute. Soufflé waits for no one, so be ready to serve it immediately.

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces, plus 1 tablespoon, softened, for dish
- ⅓ cup (2⅓ ounces) sugar, plus 1 tablespoon for dish
- 8 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped coarse
- 1 tablespoon orange-flavored liqueur, such as Grand Marnier
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 6 large eggs, separated, plus 2 large whites
- ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar

1. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Grease 2-quart soufflé dish with softened butter, then coat dish evenly with 1 tablespoon sugar; refrigerate until ready to use.

2. Melt chocolate and remaining 4 tablespoons butter in medium heatproof bowl set over saucepan filled with 1 inch barely simmering water, making sure that water does not touch bottom of bowl and stirring occasionally, until smooth. Stir in liqueur, vanilla, and salt; set aside.

3. Using stand mixer fitted with paddle, beat egg yolks and remaining ⅓ cup sugar on medium speed until thick and pale yellow, about 3 minutes. Fold into chocolate mixture.

4. Using dry, clean bowl and whisk attachment, whip egg whites and cream of tartar on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to medium-high and whip until stiff peaks form, 3 to 4 minutes.

5. Using rubber spatula, vigorously stir one-quarter of whipped whites into chocolate mixture. Gently fold in remaining whites until just incorporated. Transfer mixture to prepared dish and bake until fragrant, fully risen, and exterior is set but interior is still a bit loose and creamy, about 25 minutes. (To check doneness, use 2 large spoons to pull open top and peek inside.) Serve immediately.



# Strawberry Shortcakes

≧ MAY & JUNE 1997 ≦

## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

When developing our Strawberry Shortcakes recipe, we decided to go with an egg-enriched biscuit, which, though still very much a biscuit, was finer-textured and more cake-like than other types we'd tried. While we wanted juiciness from the berries, we didn't want juice only—that is, entirely crushed berries. But neither did we want dry chunks of fruit falling off the biscuit and onto the plate. Our solution was a compromise: Preserve the shape of some berries by slicing them, and release the juice of the others by mashing them.

### STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKES MAKES 6 SHORTCAKES

Preparing the fruit first gives it time to release its juices.

#### Fruit

- 2½ cups strawberries, hulled (8 cups)
- 6 tablespoons (2⅔ ounces) sugar

#### Whipped Cream

- 1 cup heavy cream, chilled
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

#### Biscuits

- 2 cups (10 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 5 tablespoons (2¼ ounces) sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces and chilled
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon half-and-half or milk
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten, plus 1 large white, lightly beaten

**1. FOR THE FRUIT:** Crush 3 cups strawberries in large bowl with potato masher. Cut remaining 5 cups strawberries into ¼-inch-thick slices. Stir sliced strawberries and sugar into crushed strawberries. Set mixture aside until sugar has dissolved and strawberries are juicy, at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours.

**2. FOR THE BISCUITS:** Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. Pulse flour, 3 tablespoons sugar, baking powder, and salt in food processor until combined, about 5 pulses. Scatter butter over top and pulse mixture until it resembles coarse meal, about 15 pulses. Transfer to large bowl.

**3.** Whisk half-and-half and whole egg together in bowl, then stir into flour mixture until large clumps form. Turn out onto lightly floured counter and knead gently until dough comes together (do not overwork dough).

**4.** Pat dough into 9 by 6-inch rectangle, about ¾ inch thick. Using floured 2¾-inch biscuit cutter, cut out 6 dough rounds. Arrange rounds on prepared sheet, spacing them about 1½ inches apart. Brush tops with egg white and sprinkle evenly with remaining 2 tablespoons sugar. (Unbaked rounds can be refrigerated, covered with plastic wrap, for up to 2 hours.)

**5.** Bake until biscuits are golden brown, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking. Transfer sheet to wire rack and let biscuits cool, about 10 minutes. (Cooled biscuits can be stored at room temperature for up to 1 day. Before assembling, reheat in 350-degree oven for 3 to 5 minutes.)

**6. FOR THE WHIPPED CREAM:** Using stand mixer fitted with whisk, whip cream, sugar, and vanilla on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to high and whip until soft peaks form, 1 to 3 minutes.

**7.** To assemble, split each biscuit in half and place bottoms on individual plates. Spoon portion of strawberries over each bottom, dollop with whipped cream, and cap with biscuit tops. Serve immediately.

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# Oven-Fried Bacon

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➤ JANUARY & FEBRUARY 1998 ⇐

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## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Our Oven-Fried Bacon recipe is a revelation. Cooking bacon in the oven has many advantages. First, the oven gives you a larger margin of error (a couple of minutes) than the skillet when it comes to timing. Second, the oven cooks the bacon strips more consistently; when part of the bacon is done, all of it is done—there are no raw or burnt spots. And the only thing you need to do once the bacon's in the oven is rotate the baking sheet halfway through cooking.

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### OVEN-FRIED BACON

SERVES 4 TO 6

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A large rimmed baking sheet is important here to contain the rendered bacon fat. This recipe is easy to double for a crowd: Simply double the amount of bacon and use two rimmed baking sheets. However, if you're cooking more than one sheet of bacon at a time, be sure to rotate the sheets and switch their oven positions once about halfway through cooking. You can use thin- or thick-cut bacon here, though the cooking times will vary.

**12 slices bacon**

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Arrange bacon on rimmed baking sheet. Cook until fat begins to render, 5 to 6 minutes; rotate sheet. Continue to cook until bacon is crisp and brown, 5 to 6 minutes for thin-cut bacon or 8 to 10 minutes for thick-cut bacon. Transfer bacon to paper towel-lined plate, drain, and serve.

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# Twice-Baked Potatoes

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≧ JANUARY & FEBRUARY 1999 ≦

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## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

We had a head start on our Twice-Baked Potatoes recipe, having already developed a recipe for the Best Baked Potato. Starting there, we let the baked potatoes cool slightly before slicing them open and removing the flesh. We found that we could keep the skins from turning soggy and flabby by keeping them in the oven while making the filling. And for the filling we found it best to combine the potato with a tangy dairy ingredient like sour cream or yogurt, a small amount of butter, and ingredients with strong flavors, such as cheddar cheese. For a perfect finish, we placed the filled potatoes under the broiler, where they turned brown and crisp.

## TWICE-BAKED POTATOES

SERVES 6 TO 8

To vary the flavor a bit, try substituting other types of cheese, such as Gruyère, fontina, or feta, for the cheddar. Yukon Gold potatoes, though slightly more moist than our ideal, can be substituted for the russets.

- 4 russet potatoes (7 to 8 ounces each), rubbed lightly with vegetable oil
- 4 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, shredded (1 cup)
- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ cup buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 3 scallions, sliced thin
- Salt and pepper

1. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Bake potatoes on aluminum foil-lined baking sheet until skin is crisp and brown and paring knife easily pierces flesh, about 1 hour. Transfer potatoes to wire rack and let sit until cool enough to handle, about 10 minutes; set baking sheet aside.

2. Using oven mitt or folded dish towel to handle hot potatoes, cut each potato in half lengthwise. Using soup spoon, scoop flesh from each half into medium bowl, leaving ⅛- to ¼-inch thickness of flesh in each shell. Return potato shells, cut side up, to foil-lined baking sheet and return to oven until dry and slightly crisped, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, mash potato flesh with fork until smooth. Stir in cheddar, sour cream, buttermilk, butter, scallions, and ½ teaspoon salt until well combined. Season with pepper to taste.

3. Remove shells from oven and heat broiler. Holding shells steady on sheet with oven mitt or towel-protected hand, spoon mashed potato mixture into crisped shells, mounding slightly at the center. Return potatoes to oven and broil until spotty brown and crisp on top, 10 to 15 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes. Serve warm.

# Broiled Salmon

➤ SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2000 ⇐

## BROILED SALMON WITH MUSTARD AND CRISP DILLED CRUST

SERVES 8 TO 10



Heavy-duty aluminum foil measuring 18 inches wide is essential for creating a sling that aids in transferring the cooked salmon to a carving board. Use a large baking sheet so that the salmon will lie flat. If you can't get the salmon to lie flat, even when positioning it diagonally on the baking sheet, trim the tail end. If you prefer to cook a smaller 2-pound fillet, ask to have it cut from the thick center of the fillet, not the thin tail end, and begin checking doneness a minute earlier. We prefer thick-cut and kettle-cooked potato chips in this recipe; ridged chips will work in a pinch.

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|--|---|
| 3 slices hearty white sandwich bread, crusts removed                                     | 1 (3½-pound) skin-on side of salmon, pinbones removed |
| 4 ounces plain high-quality potato chips, crushed into rough ⅛-inch pieces (about 1 cup) | 1 teaspoon olive oil                                  |
| 6 tablespoons chopped fresh dill   | Salt and pepper                                       |
|  | 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard                           |

1. Adjust 1 oven rack to upper-middle position and second rack 3 inches from broiler element. Heat oven to 400 degrees.

2. Pulse bread in food processor to fairly even ¼-inch pieces, about 10 pulses. Spread crumbs evenly on rimmed baking sheet. Toast on lower rack, shaking pan once or twice, until golden brown and crisp, 4 to 5 minutes. Toss bread crumbs, crushed potato chips, and dill together in small bowl and set aside.

3. Change oven setting to heat broiler. Use sharp knife to remove any whitish fat from belly of salmon. Cut piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil to be 6 inches longer than fillet. Fold foil lengthwise in thirds and place lengthwise on rimmed baking sheet; position salmon lengthwise on foil, allowing excess foil to overhang sheet. Rub salmon evenly with oil, sprinkle with ¾ teaspoon salt, and season with pepper. Broil salmon on upper rack until surface is spotty brown and outer ½ inch of thick end is opaque when gently flaked with paring knife, 9 to 11 minutes. Remove salmon from oven, spread evenly with mustard, and press bread-crumbs mixture onto salmon. Return to lower rack and continue to broil until crust is deep golden brown, about 1 minute longer.

4. Using foil sling, lift salmon off sheet and slide salmon onto carving board. Serve.

### ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

To get to a recipe for broiled salmon with flavorful flesh and a golden, caramelized crust, we broiled the fish until it was almost cooked through and then applied a thin coating of mustard with a topping of fresh bread crumbs and crushed potato chips flavored with dill. We finished our salmon right under the broiler to make the topping crisp.



# Crispy Fried Chicken

≧ MAY & JUNE 2001 ≦

## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Our best fried chicken recipe would be worth the splatter and mess, producing seasoned meat coated with a crispy mahogany crust. We found that cutting up a whole chicken and brining it in a mixture of buttermilk, salt, and spices was the way to begin. Air-drying the brined chicken gave us extra-crispy skin. To finish our fried chicken recipe, we coated the chicken with a mixture of flour, baking powder, and baking soda for a light, shatteringly crispy crust and pan-fried it in peanut oil for clean flavor.

### ULTIMATE CRISPY FRIED CHICKEN

SERVES 4 TO 6

Avoid using kosher chicken in this recipe, or it will be too salty. Use a Dutch oven that holds 6 quarts or more for this recipe. Maintaining an even oil temperature is key. If using large chicken breasts (about 1 pound each), cut each breast into 3 pieces. If using smaller breasts (10 to 12 ounces each), cut each breast into 2 pieces.

8 cups buttermilk	3½ pounds bone-in chicken pieces (split breasts cut in half, drumsticks, and/or thighs), trimmed
½ cup plus 2 tablespoons salt	
¼ cup sugar	
3 garlic heads, cloves separated, peeled, and smashed	3–4 cups peanut oil or vegetable shortening
2 tablespoons paprika	4 cups all-purpose flour
3 bay leaves, crumbled	1 large egg
	1 teaspoon baking powder
	½ teaspoon baking soda

1. Whisk 7 cups buttermilk, salt, sugar, garlic, paprika, and bay leaves together in large container. Add chicken and turn to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 2 to 3 hours.

2. Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet. Rinse chicken well, place in single layer on prepared rack, and refrigerate, uncovered, for 2 hours. (At this point, chicken can be wrapped in plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 6 more hours.)

3. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Add oil to Dutch oven until it measures 2 inches deep. Heat oil over medium-high heat until it registers 375 degrees.

4. Meanwhile, place flour in shallow dish. Lightly beat egg, baking powder, and baking soda together in medium bowl, then whisk in remaining 1 cup buttermilk (mixture will bubble and foam). Working with 1 chicken piece at a time, dredge in flour, shaking off excess, then coat with egg mixture, allowing excess to drip off. Dredge chicken in flour again, shake off excess, and return to wire rack.

5. When oil is hot, carefully place half of chicken in pot, skin side down; cover; and fry until deep golden brown, 7 to 11 minutes, adjusting heat as necessary to maintain oil temperature of 325 degrees. (After 4 minutes, check chicken pieces for even browning and rearrange if some pieces are browning faster than others.) Turn chicken pieces over and continue to cook until breast pieces register 160 degrees and thighs and/or drumsticks register 175 degrees, 6 to 8 minutes longer. (Smaller pieces may cook faster than larger pieces. Remove pieces from pot as they reach correct temperature.) Drain chicken briefly on paper towel-lined plate, then transfer to clean wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet and keep warm in oven.

6. Return oil to 375 degrees (if necessary) over medium-high heat and repeat with remaining chicken. Serve.

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# French Potato Salad

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➤ JULY & AUGUST 2002 ⇐

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## FRENCH POTATO SALAD WITH DIJON MUSTARD AND FINES HERBES

SERVES 4 TO 6



If fresh chervil isn't available, substitute an additional 1½ teaspoons of minced parsley and an additional ½ teaspoon of minced tarragon. Use small red potatoes measuring 1 to 2 inches in diameter for this recipe.

2 pounds small red potatoes, unpeeled, sliced ¼ inch thick	2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
2 tablespoons salt	½ teaspoon pepper
1 garlic clove, peeled and threaded on skewer	1 small shallot, minced
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil	1 tablespoon minced fresh chervil
1½ tablespoons champagne vinegar or white wine vinegar	1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
	1 tablespoon minced fresh chives
	1 teaspoon minced fresh tarragon

1. Place potatoes and salt in large saucepan and add water to cover by 1 inch. Bring to boil over high heat, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until potatoes are just tender and paring knife can be slipped in and out of potatoes with little resistance, 5 to 6 minutes.

2. While potatoes are cooking, lower skewered garlic into simmering water and blanch for 45 seconds. Run garlic under cold running water, then remove from skewer and mince.

3. Drain potatoes, reserving ¼ cup cooking water. Arrange hot potatoes close together in single layer on rimmed baking sheet. Whisk oil, vinegar, mustard, pepper, minced garlic, and reserved potato cooking water together in bowl, then drizzle evenly over potatoes. Let potatoes sit at room temperature until flavors meld, about 10 minutes. (Potatoes can be refrigerated for up to 8 hours; return to room temperature before serving.)

4. Transfer potatoes to large bowl. Combine shallot, chervil, parsley, chives, and tarragon in small bowl, then sprinkle over potatoes and stir gently with rubber spatula to combine. Serve.

### ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

We wanted a French potato salad recipe that would be pleasing not only to the eye but also to the palate. The potatoes would have to be tender but not mushy, and the flavor of the vinaigrette would have to penetrate the relatively bland potatoes. To fulfill these recipe requirements, we sliced the potatoes before boiling them, eliminating torn skins and broken slices. Then we poured a vinaigrette flavored with mustard and garlic over warm potatoes spread on a baking sheet, folding in fines herbes before serving.

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# Tomato and Mozzarella Tart

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➤ JULY & AUGUST 2003 ⇐



## ✔ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Tired of tomato tarts with soggy crusts and long preparation time, we developed a tomato tart recipe that would have a solid bottom crust and great vine-ripened flavor. Our secrets for a great tomato tart? We used a two-step baking method for a flaky yet rigid crust and then “waterproofed” it with egg wash and layers of two kinds of cheese. We salted sliced tomatoes for 30 minutes to remove excess juice and then gently pressed them with paper towels. Baking the tart at 425 degrees quickly melted the cheese and preserved the tomatoes’ meaty texture.

## TOMATO AND MOZZARELLA TART

SERVES 4 TO 6

To thaw frozen puff pastry, allow it to sit either in the refrigerator for 24 hours or on the counter for 30 minutes to 1 hour; however, to keep the frozen dough from cracking, it’s best to let it thaw slowly in the refrigerator rather than on the counter. For the best flavor, use authentic Parmesan cheese and very ripe, flavorful tomatoes. Fresh mozzarella will make the crust soggy, so be sure to use low-moisture, shrink-wrapped mozzarella.

- 1 (9½ by 9-inch) sheet puff pastry, thawed
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup)
- 2 plum tomatoes, cored and sliced ¼ inch thick
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 4 ounces whole-milk mozzarella cheese, shredded (1 cup)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh basil

1. Adjust oven rack to lowest position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. Lay pastry in center of prepared sheet. Brush pastry with egg. To form rimmed crust, fold over long edges of pastry ½ inch, then brush with egg. Fold over short edges of pastry ½ inch, then brush with egg. Using paring knife, cut through folded edges and corners of pastry. Sprinkle Parmesan evenly over crust bottom. Poke dough all over with fork. Bake until golden brown and crisp, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer to wire rack and let cool.

2. Meanwhile, spread tomatoes over several layers of paper towels. Sprinkle with salt and let drain for 30 minutes.

3. Sprinkle mozzarella evenly over crust bottom. Using paper towels, press excess moisture from tomatoes. Shingle tomatoes evenly over mozzarella. Whisk oil and garlic together and drizzle over tomatoes. Bake until crust is deep golden, 10 to 15 minutes.

4. Let cool on wire rack for 5 minutes, then sprinkle with basil. Slide tart onto cutting board, slice into pieces, and serve.

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# Oven-Baked Brown Rice

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≧ MAY & JUNE 2004 ≦

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## FOOLPROOF BAKED BROWN RICE

SERVES 4 TO 6

To minimize any loss of water through evaporation, cover the saucepan and use the water as soon as it reaches a boil. An 8-inch ceramic baking dish with a lid may be used instead of the baking dish and aluminum foil. To double the recipe, use a 13 by 9-inch baking dish; the baking time does not to be increased.

- 1½ cups long-grain, medium-grain, or short-grain brown rice
- 2½ cups water
- 2 teaspoons unsalted butter or vegetable oil
- ½ teaspoon salt

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Spread rice in 8-inch square baking dish.

2. Bring water and butter to boil, covered, in medium saucepan. Once boiling, immediately stir in salt and pour mixture over rice in baking dish. Cover baking dish tightly with 2 layers of aluminum foil. Transfer baking dish to oven and bake rice until tender, about 1 hour.

3. Remove baking dish from oven and uncover. Fluff rice with fork, then cover dish with dish towel and let rice stand for 5 minutes. Uncover and let rice stand 5 minutes longer. Serve immediately.

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### BAKED BROWN RICE WITH PARMESAN, LEMON, AND HERBS

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Increase butter to 2 tablespoons and melt in 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add 1 finely chopped small onion and cook until translucent, about 3 minutes; set aside. Substitute chicken broth for water and reduce salt to ⅛ teaspoon. Stir onion mixture into rice after adding broth. Cover and bake rice as directed. Remove foil; stir in ½ cup grated Parmesan, ¼ cup minced fresh parsley, ¼ cup chopped fresh basil, 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest, ½ teaspoon lemon juice, and ⅛ teaspoon pepper before covering with dish towel.

### ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

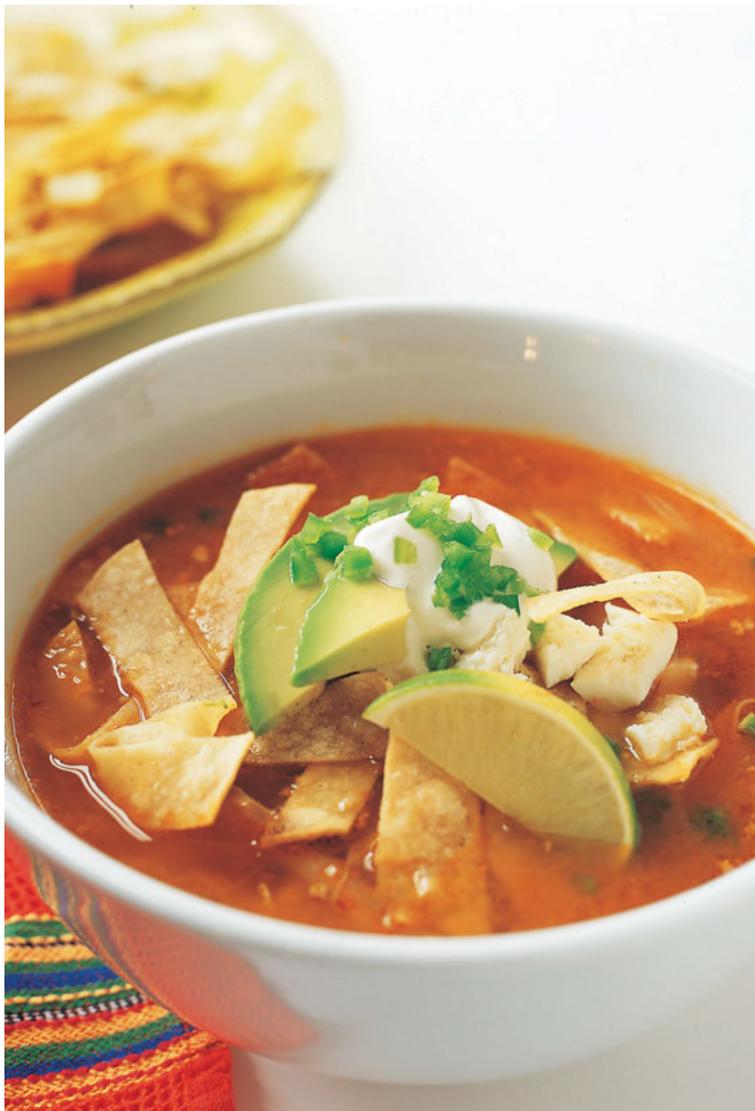
For our brown rice recipe, we cooked the rice in the oven to approximate the controlled, indirect heat of a rice cooker, eliminating the risk of scorching. Experimenting with proportions, we discovered why most brown rice is sodden and overcooked: Most brown rice recipes call for a 2:1 water-to-rice ratio. For our brown rice recipe, we found that 2½ cups water to 1½ cups rice gave us perfectly cooked rice.

# Tortilla Soup

➤ MARCH & APRIL 2005 ⇐

## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

By breaking the classic tortilla soup recipe down to its three main components—the flavor base (tomatoes, garlic, onion, and chiles), the chicken stock, and the garnishes (including fried tortilla chips)—we found that we could devise techniques and substitute ingredients to make our own compelling version of tortilla soup. To achieve maximum flavor, we composed a puree made from chipotle chile, tomatoes, onion, garlic, jalapeño, and a cilantro-oregano substitute for the Mexican ingredient epazote and then fried the puree in oil over high heat. We added the puree to chicken broth, which we strained after poaching chicken in it and infusing it with onions, garlic, cilantro, and oregano. Turning to the garnish, we oven-toasted our lightly oiled tortilla strips instead of frying them and substituted sour cream and Monterey Jack cheese for the harder-to-find Mexican *crema* and *queso fresco*.



## TORTILLA SOUP

SERVES 8

Despite its somewhat lengthy ingredient list, this recipe is very easy to prepare. If you desire a soup with mild spiciness, trim the ribs and seeds from the jalapeño (or omit the jalapeño altogether) and use 1 teaspoon chipotle chile pureed with tomatoes in step 3. If you want a spicier soup, add up to 1 tablespoon more adobo sauce in step 4 before you add the shredded chicken.

### Tortilla Strips

- 8 (6-inch) corn tortillas, cut into ½-inch-wide strips
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Salt

### Salt

- 2 tomatoes, cored and quartered
- ½ jalapeño chile
- 1 tablespoon minced canned chipotle chile in adobo sauce
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

### Soup

- 2 (12-ounce) bone-in split chicken breasts or 4 (5-ounce) bone-in chicken thighs, skin removed and trimmed
- 8 cups chicken broth
- 1 large white onion, quartered
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled
- 8–10 sprigs fresh cilantro plus 1 sprig fresh oregano or 2 sprigs fresh epazote
- 8 ounces Cotija cheese, crumbled, or Monterey Jack cheese, diced fine
- Diced avocado
- Lime wedges
- Fresh cilantro leaves
- Minced jalapeño chile
- Mexican crema or sour cream

**1. FOR THE TORTILLA STRIPS:** Adjust oven rack to middle position; heat oven to 425 degrees. Spread tortilla strips on rimmed baking sheet; drizzle with oil and toss until evenly coated. Bake until strips are deep golden brown and crisped, about 14 minutes, rotating sheet and shaking strips (to redistribute) halfway through baking. Season strips lightly with salt and transfer to paper towel-lined plate.

**2. FOR THE SOUP:** While tortilla strips bake, bring chicken, broth, 2 onion quarters, 2 garlic cloves, cilantro and oregano, and ½ teaspoon salt to boil over medium-high heat in large saucepan. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer until chicken is just cooked through, about 20 minutes. Using tongs, transfer chicken to large plate. Pour broth through fine-mesh strainer and discard solids. When cool enough to handle, shred chicken into bite-size pieces, discarding bones.

**3.** Puree tomatoes, remaining 2 onion quarters, remaining 2 garlic cloves, jalapeño, and chipotle in food processor until smooth. Heat oil in Dutch oven over high heat until shimmering. Add tomato-onion puree and ⅛ teaspoon salt and cook, stirring frequently, until mixture has darkened in color, about 10 minutes.

**4.** Stir strained broth into tomato mixture and bring to boil; then reduce heat to low and simmer to blend flavors, about 15 minutes. Add shredded chicken and simmer until heated through, about 5 minutes. Place portions of tortilla strips in bowls and ladle soup over. Serve, passing Cotija, avocado, lime wedges, cilantro leaves, minced jalapeño, and crema separately.

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Soup can be prepared up to adding shredded chicken to soup in step 4; let cool and refrigerate for up to 4 days. Return soup to simmer over medium-high heat before proceeding. Tortilla strips and garnishes are best prepared on day of serving.

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# Turtle Brownies

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≧ MAY & JUNE 2006 ≨

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## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

For our ultimate turtle brownie recipe, we wanted something reminiscent of a candy turtle: rich, chewy, and chocolaty, with a bittersweet, tooth-sinking caramel and an abundance of pecans. The real challenge was deciding on the right texture for the caramel sauce in our ultimate turtle brownie recipe. A mere 6 tablespoons of cream produced a caramel that was pleasantly chewy and gooey; 2 tablespoons of corn syrup kept the caramel from crystallizing or turning gritty; and 2 tablespoons of butter made it smooth and silky.

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### ULTIMATE TURTLE BROWNIES

MAKES 25 BROWNIES

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To drizzle the caramel over the brownie batter in step 4, use a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup dry measuring cup that has been sprayed with vegetable oil spray. If the caramel is too cool and no longer fluid, reheat it in the microwave.

#### *Caramel*

- 6 tablespoons heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water
- 2 tablespoons light corn syrup
- $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups ( $8\frac{3}{4}$  ounces) sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

#### *Brownies*

- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces
- 4 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup ( $3\frac{3}{4}$  ounces) all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon baking powder
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 cup (7 ounces) sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup chopped pecans, plus 25 toasted pecan halves
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup semisweet chocolate chips (optional)

**1. FOR THE CARAMEL:** Combine cream and salt in small bowl; stir well to dissolve salt. Combine water and corn syrup in heavy-bottomed medium saucepan; pour sugar into center of saucepan, taking care not to let sugar touch sides. Gently stir with spatula to moisten sugar thoroughly. Cover and bring to boil over medium-high heat; cook, covered and without stirring, until sugar is completely dissolved and liquid is clear, 3 to 5 minutes. Uncover and continue to cook, without stirring, until bubbles show faint golden color, 3 to 5 minutes longer. Reduce heat to medium-low. Continue to cook (swirling saucepan occasionally) until caramel is light amber and registers about 360 degrees, 1 to 3 minutes longer. Off heat, carefully add cream mixture to center of saucepan; stir with whisk or spatula (mixture will bubble and steam vigorously) until cream is fully incorporated and bubbling subsides. Stir in butter and vanilla until combined; transfer caramel to measuring cup or bowl and set aside.

**2. FOR THE BROWNIES:** Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Make foil sling for 9-inch square baking pan by folding 2 long sheets of aluminum foil so each is 9 inches wide. Lay sheets of foil in pan perpendicular to each other, with extra foil hanging over edges of pan. Push foil into corners and up sides of pan, smoothing foil flush to pan. Grease foil.

**3.** Melt butter, bittersweet chocolate, and unsweetened chocolate in medium heatproof bowl set over saucepan filled with 1 inch barely simmering water, making sure that water does not touch bottom of bowl and stirring occasionally until smooth and combined; set aside to cool slightly. Meanwhile, whisk flour and baking powder together in small bowl; set aside. Whisk eggs in large bowl to combine; add sugar, vanilla, and salt and whisk until incorporated. Add cooled melted chocolate mixture to egg mixture; whisk until combined. Add flour mixture. Using rubber spatula, stir until almost combined. Add chopped pecans and chocolate chips, if using; mix until incorporated and no streaks of flour remain.

**4.** Transfer half of brownie batter to prepared pan, spreading in even layer. Drizzle  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup caramel over batter. Drop remaining batter in large mounds over caramel layer; spread evenly and into corners of pan with rubber spatula. Drizzle  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup caramel over top. Using tip of butter knife, swirl caramel and batter. Bake until toothpick inserted in center comes out with few moist crumbs attached, 35 to 40 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking. Let brownies cool completely in pan on wire rack, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

**5.** Heat remaining caramel (you should have about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup) in microwave until warm and pourable but still thick (do not boil), 45 to 60 seconds, stirring once or twice; pour caramel over brownies. Spread caramel to cover surface. Refrigerate brownies, uncovered, for at least 2 hours.

**6.** Using foil overhang, lift brownies out of pan, loosening sides with paring knife, if needed. Using chef's knife, cut brownies into 25 even-size squares. Press pecan half onto surface of each brownie. Serve chilled or at room temperature. (Brownies can be wrapped in plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 3 days.)

# Indian-Style Curry

➤ MAY & JUNE 2007 ◀

## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Toasting store-bought curry powder in a skillet for our vegetable curry recipe turned it into a flavor powerhouse. Further experimentation proved that a few pinches of garam masala added even more spice flavor. To build the rest of our flavor base, we started with a generous amount of sautéed onion, ghee (or vegetable oil), garlic, ginger, jalapeño, and tomato paste for sweetness.

### INDIAN-STYLE CURRY WITH POTATOES, CAULIFLOWER, PEAS, AND CHICKPEAS

SERVES 4 TO 6

Serve over basmati rice along with Onion Relish and Cilantro-Mint Chutney (recipes follow).

#### Spice Mixture

- 2½ teaspoons garam masala
- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin
- 1½ teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon mustard seeds
- ¼ teaspoon ground fennel
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

#### Curry

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 onions, chopped fine
- 12 ounces red potatoes, unpeeled, cut into ½-inch chunks
- Salt and pepper
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 jalapeño chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 4 cups cauliflower florets, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup water
- 2 plum tomatoes, cored, seeded, and chopped fine
- ½ cup frozen peas, thawed
- ½ cup plain whole-milk yogurt
- ¼ cup minced fresh cilantro leaves
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon lime juice

**1. FOR THE SPICE MIXTURE:** Combine all spices in small bowl. Heat oil in small nonstick skillet over low heat until shimmering. Add spice mixture and stir until fragrant and mixture forms paste, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.

**2. FOR THE CURRY:** Heat oil in large Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add onions, potatoes, and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring constantly, until onions are softened and lightly browned, 10 to 12 minutes. Stir in garlic, ginger, jalapeño, and tomato paste and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

**3.** Stir in cauliflower and spice mixture and cook, stirring often, until cauliflower just begins to soften, about 5 minutes. Add chickpeas and water and bring to boil. Cover, reduce to simmer, and cook until vegetables are tender, 8 to 12 minutes. Add tomatoes, peas, yogurt, cilantro, and butter, stirring until combined. Return curry to medium heat and cook until butter is melted and sauce is hot, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in lime juice. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve.



#### CILANTRO-MINT CHUTNEY

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

- |                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2 cups fresh cilantro leaves  | 1 tablespoon lime juice |
| 1 cup fresh mint leaves       | 1½ teaspoons sugar      |
| ⅓ cup plain whole-milk yogurt | ½ teaspoon ground cumin |
| ¼ cup finely chopped onion    | ¼ teaspoon salt         |

Process all ingredients in food processor until smooth, about 20 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl halfway through processing. (Chutney can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.)

#### ONION RELISH

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

If using a regular yellow onion, increase the sugar to 1 teaspoon.

- |                               |                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Vidalia onion, chopped fine | ½ teaspoon sugar     |
| 1 tablespoon lime juice       | ⅛ teaspoon salt      |
| ½ teaspoon paprika            | Pinch cayenne pepper |

Combine all ingredients in medium bowl. (Relish can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.)

# Slow-Roasted Beef

➤ JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2008 ⇐



## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

For an inexpensive slow-roasted beef recipe, we transformed a bargain cut into a tender, juicy roast by salting the meat a full 24 hours before roasting and then cooking it at a very low temperature, which allowed the meat's enzymes to act as natural tenderizers, breaking down its tough connective tissue.

## SLOW-ROASTED BEEF

SERVES 6 TO 8

We don't recommend cooking this roast past medium. Open the oven door as little as possible and remove the roast from the oven while taking its temperature. If the roast has not reached the desired temperature in the time specified in step 3, heat the oven to 225 degrees for 5 minutes, shut it off, and continue to cook the roast to the desired temperature. For a smaller (2½- to 3½-pound) roast, reduce the amount of salt to 1 tablespoon and pepper to 1½ teaspoons. For a 4½- to 6-pound roast, cut it in half crosswise before cooking to create two smaller roasts. Slice the roast as thin as possible and serve with Horseradish Cream Sauce (recipe follows), if desired.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 (3½- to 4½-pound) boneless eye-round roast, trimmed | 2 teaspoons plus 1 tablespoon vegetable oil |
| 4 teaspoons kosher salt                               | 2 teaspoons pepper                          |

1. Sprinkle all sides of roast evenly with salt. Wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate 18 to 24 hours.

2. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 225 degrees. Pat roast dry with paper towels; rub with 2 teaspoons oil and sprinkle all sides evenly with pepper. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Sear roast until browned on all sides, about 12 minutes. Transfer roast to wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet. Roast until meat registers 115 degrees (for medium-rare), 1¼ to 1¾ hours, or 125 degrees (for medium), 1¾ to 2¼ hours.

3. Turn off oven; leave roast in oven, without opening door, until meat registers 130 degrees (for medium-rare) or 140 degrees (for medium), 30 to 50 minutes longer. Transfer roast to carving board and let rest for 15 minutes. Slice meat as thin as possible and serve.

## HORSERADISH CREAM SAUCE

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

Buy refrigerated prepared horseradish, not the shelf-stable kind, which contains preservatives and additives.

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|----------------------------|-------------------|
| ½ cup heavy cream          | 1 teaspoon salt   |
| ½ cup prepared horseradish | ⅛ teaspoon pepper |

Whisk cream in bowl until thickened but not yet holding soft peaks, 1 to 2 minutes. Gently fold in horseradish, salt, and pepper. Transfer to serving bowl and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to 1 hour before serving.

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# Chocolate Chip Cookies

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≧ MAY & JUNE 2009 ≦

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## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Our perfect chocolate chip cookie recipe had to produce a cookie that would be moist and chewy on the inside and crisp at the edges, with deep notes of toffee and butterscotch to balance its sweetness. Melting the butter gave us the chewiness we were looking for. Cutting back on the flour and eliminating an egg white also improved texture and brought the brown sugar flavor to the fore. To give our chocolate chip cookies the crisp edges and toffee flavor we wanted, we let the sugar dissolve in the batter for 10 minutes and then baked the cookies at a high temperature so the edges darkened while the centers stayed soft.

## PERFECT CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

MAKES ABOUT 16 LARGE COOKIES

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Avoid using a nonstick skillet to brown the butter; the dark color of the nonstick coating makes it difficult to gauge when the butter is sufficiently browned. Use fresh, moist brown sugar, as hardened brown sugar will make the cookies too dry. This recipe works with light brown sugar, but the cookies will be less full-flavored.

1¾ cups (8¾ ounces) all-purpose flour	1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon baking soda	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
14 tablespoons unsalted butter	1 large egg plus 1 large yolk
¾ cup packed (5¼ ounces) dark brown sugar	1¼ cups (7½ ounces) semisweet chocolate chips or chunks
½ cup (3½ ounces) granulated sugar	¾ cup pecans or walnuts, toasted and chopped (optional)

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Whisk flour and baking soda together in medium bowl; set aside.

2. Melt 10 tablespoons butter in 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Continue cooking, swirling pan constantly, until butter is dark golden brown and has nutty aroma, 1 to 3 minutes. Transfer browned butter to large heatproof bowl. Add remaining 4 tablespoons butter and stir until completely melted.

3. Add brown sugar, granulated sugar, salt, and vanilla to melted butter; whisk until fully incorporated. Add egg and yolk; whisk until mixture is smooth with no sugar lumps remaining, about 30 seconds. Let mixture stand for 3 minutes, then whisk for 30 seconds. Repeat process of resting and whisking 2 more times until mixture is thick, smooth, and shiny. Using rubber spatula, stir in flour mixture until just combined, about 1 minute. Stir in chocolate chips and pecans, if using. Give dough final stir to ensure that no flour pockets remain and ingredients are evenly distributed.

4. Working with 3 tablespoons of dough at a time, roll into balls and space them 2 inches apart on prepared sheets.

5. Bake cookies, 1 sheet at a time, until golden brown and still puffy and edges have begun to set but centers are still soft, 10 to 14 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking. Transfer sheet to wire rack; let cookies cool completely before serving.

# Classic Pot Roast

➤ NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2010 ⇐



## CLASSIC POT ROAST

SERVES 6 TO 8

Chilling the whole cooked pot roast overnight improves its flavor and makes it moister and easier to slice.

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|---|---|
| 1 (3½- to 4-pound) boneless beef chuck-eye roast, pulled apart at seams and trimmed | 2 garlic cloves, minced                     |
| Kosher salt and pepper  | 2–3 cups beef broth                         |
| 2 tablespoons unsalted butter   | ¾ cup dry red wine                          |
| 2 onions, halved and sliced thin  | 1 tablespoon tomato paste                   |
| 1 large carrot, peeled and chopped  | 1 bay leaf                                  |
| 1 celery rib, chopped   | 1 sprig fresh thyme plus ¼ teaspoon chopped |
|   | 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar               |

1. Sprinkle roast with 1 tablespoon salt, place on wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet, and let stand at room temperature for 1 hour.

2. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 300 degrees. Melt butter in Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and beginning to brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Add carrot and celery; continue to cook, stirring occasionally, for about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in 1 cup broth, ½ cup wine, tomato paste, bay leaf, and thyme sprig; bring to simmer.

3. Pat roast dry with paper towels and season with pepper. Tie 3 pieces of kitchen twine around each piece of meat to create 2 evenly shaped roasts.

4. Nestle roasts on top of vegetables. Cover pot tightly with large piece of aluminum foil and cover with lid; transfer pot to oven. Cook meat until fully tender and fork slips easily in and out of meat, 3½ to 4 hours, turning roasts halfway through cooking.

5. Transfer roasts to carving board and tent with foil. Pour liquid through fine-mesh strainer into 4-cup liquid measuring cup. Discard bay leaf and thyme sprig. Transfer vegetables to blender. Let liquid settle for 5 minutes, then skim fat; add enough broth to bring liquid amount to 3 cups. Add liquid to blender and process until smooth, about 2 minutes. Transfer sauce to medium saucepan and bring to simmer over medium heat.

6. Meanwhile, remove twine from roasts and slice ½ inch thick against grain. Transfer slices to serving platter. Stir remaining ¼ cup wine, chopped thyme, and vinegar into gravy and season with salt and pepper to taste. Spoon half of gravy over meat. Serve, passing remaining gravy separately.

**TO MAKE AHEAD:** Follow recipe through step 4, then transfer cooked roasts to large bowl. Strain and defat liquid and add broth to bring liquid amount to 3 cups; transfer liquid and vegetables to bowl with roasts, let cool for 1 hour, cover with plastic wrap, cut vents in plastic with paring knife, and refrigerate for up to 2 days. One hour before serving, adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Slice roasts as directed, place in 13 by 9-inch baking dish, cover tightly with foil, and bake until heated through, about 45 minutes. Process liquid and vegetables in blender, bring gravy to simmer, and finish as directed.

## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

We started our pot roast recipe by choosing well-marbled chuck-eye roast, which is full of collagen and well suited for braising. Opening the pot roast and trimming away the excess interior fat got rid of the pesky globs that refused to render as the pot roast cooked. Leaving the meat in two smaller roasts also shaved cooking time and allowed the salt we used to penetrate and season the lobes even further. And finally, roasted vegetables thickened the pot roast's gravy while glutamate-rich ingredients beefed up its rich flavor.

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# Weeknight Roast Chicken

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➤ SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2011 ⇐

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## WEEKNIGHT ROAST CHICKEN WITH TARRAGON-LEMON PAN SAUCE

SERVES 4

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We prefer to use a 3½- to 4-pound chicken for this recipe. If roasting a larger bird, increase the time when the oven is on in step 2 to 35 to 40 minutes. Cooking the chicken in a preheated skillet will ensure that the breast and thigh meat finish cooking at the same time.

### Kosher salt and pepper

- 1 (3½- to 4-pound) whole chicken, giblets discarded
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 shallot, minced
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh tarragon
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position, place 12-inch ovensafe skillet on rack, and heat oven to 450 degrees. Combine 1 tablespoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper in bowl. Pat chicken dry with paper towels. Rub entire surface with oil. Sprinkle salt mixture evenly over surface of chicken, then rub in mixture with your hands to coat evenly. Tie legs together with kitchen twine and tuck wingtips behind back.

2. Transfer chicken, breast side up, to preheated skillet in oven. Roast chicken until breast registers 120 degrees and thighs register 135 degrees, 25 to 35 minutes. Turn off oven and leave chicken in oven until breast registers 160 degrees and thighs register 175 degrees, 25 to 35 minutes.

3. Transfer chicken to carving board and let rest, uncovered, for 20 minutes.

4. While chicken rests, remove all but 1 tablespoon fat from skillet (handle will be very hot) using large spoon, leaving any browned bits and jus in skillet. Place skillet over medium-high heat, add shallot, and cook until softened, about 2 minutes. Stir in broth and mustard, scraping up any browned bits. Simmer until reduced to ¾ cup, about 3 minutes. Off heat, whisk in butter, tarragon, and lemon juice. Season with pepper to taste. Carve chicken and serve with sauce.

### ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Roast chicken is often described as a simple dish, and it is, at least in terms of flavor—when the dish is made properly, the rich flavor and juicy meat of the chicken need little adornment. But the actual process of preparing and roasting chicken is anything but simple; recipes often call for complicated trussing techniques and for rotating the bird multiple times during cooking. And the most time-consuming part is salting or brining the bird, a step that ensures juiciness and well-seasoned meat. After systematically testing the various components and steps of a typical recipe, we found we could just tie the legs together and tuck the wings underneath. We also discovered we could skip both the V-rack and flipping the chicken by using a preheated skillet and placing the chicken breast side up; this method gave the thighs a jump start on cooking. Starting the chicken in a 450-degree oven and then turning off the oven while the chicken finished cooking slowed the evaporation of juices, ensuring moist, tender meat.



# Best Vegetarian Chili

➤ NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2012 ⇐

## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Vegetarian chilis are often little more than a mishmash of beans and vegetables. In order to create a chili—not a bean and vegetable stew—we’ve found replacements for the different ways in which meat adds depth and flavor to chili. Walnuts, soy sauce, dried shiitake mushrooms, and tomatoes add hearty savoriness. Bulgur fills out the chili, giving it a substantial texture. The added oil and nuts lend a richness to the chili, for full, lingering flavor.

### BEST VEGETARIAN CHILI

SERVES 6 TO 8

We prefer to make our own chili powder from whole dried chiles, but jarred chili powder can be substituted. If using jarred chili powder, grind the shiitakes and oregano and add them to the pot with ¼ cup of chili powder in step 4. We also recommend a mix of at least two types of beans, one creamy (such as cannellini or navy) and one earthy (such as pinto, black, or red kidney). For a spicier chili, use both jalapeños. Serve the chili with lime wedges, sour cream, diced avocado, chopped red onion, and shredded Monterey Jack or cheddar cheese, if desired.

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|--|---|
| 1 pound (2½ cups) dried beans, picked over and rinsed        | 3 tablespoons tomato paste                      |
| Salt   | 1–2 jalapeño chiles, stemmed and chopped coarse |
| 2 dried ancho chiles   | 3 tablespoons soy sauce                         |
| 2 dried New Mexican chiles                                   | 6 garlic cloves, minced                         |
| ½ ounce dried shiitake mushrooms, chopped coarse             | ¼ cup vegetable oil                             |
| 4 teaspoons dried oregano                                    | 2 pounds onions, chopped fine                   |
| ½ cup walnuts, toasted                                       | 1 tablespoon ground cumin                       |
| 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained with juice reserved | ⅔ cup medium-grind bulgur                       |
|  | ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro                    |

1. Bring 4 quarts water, beans, and 3 tablespoons salt to boil in large Dutch oven over high heat. Remove pot from heat, cover, and let stand for 1 hour. Drain beans and rinse well. Wipe out pot.

2. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 300 degrees. Arrange anchos and New Mexican chiles on rimmed baking sheet and toast until fragrant and puffed, about 8 minutes. Transfer to plate and let cool, about 5 minutes. Stem and seed anchos and New Mexican chiles. Working in batches, grind toasted chiles, mushrooms, and oregano in spice grinder or with mortar and pestle until finely ground.

3. Process walnuts in food processor until finely ground, about 30 seconds. Transfer to bowl. Process tomatoes, tomato paste, jalapeño(s), soy sauce, and garlic in food processor until tomatoes are finely chopped, about 45 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as needed.

4. Heat oil in now-empty Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add onions and 1¼ teaspoons salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until onions begin to brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Lower heat to medium and add cumin and ground chile mixture; cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add rinsed beans and 7 cups water and bring to boil. Cover pot, transfer to oven, and cook for 45 minutes.

5. Remove pot from oven. Stir in bulgur, ground walnuts, tomato mixture, and reserved tomato juice. Cover pot and return to oven. Cook until beans are fully tender, about 2 hours.

6. Remove pot from oven, stir chili well, and let stand, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Stir in cilantro and serve. (Chili can be made up to 3 days in advance.)

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# Soft-Cooked Eggs

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➤ JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2013 ⇐

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## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Traditional methods for making soft-cooked eggs are hit or miss. We wanted one that delivered a set white and a fluid yolk every time. Calling for fridge-cold eggs and boiling water has two advantages: It reduces temperature variables, which makes the recipe more foolproof, and it provides the steepest temperature gradient, which ensures that the yolk at the center stays fluid while the white cooks through. Using only ½ inch of boiling water instead of several cups to cook the eggs means that the recipe takes less time and energy from start to finish. Because of the curved shape of the eggs, they actually have very little contact with the water so they do not lower the temperature when they go into the saucepan. This means that you can use the same timing for anywhere from one to six eggs without altering the consistency of the finished product.

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## SOFT-COOKED EGGS

MAKES 4

Be sure to use large eggs that have no cracks and are cold from the refrigerator. Because precise timing is vital to the success of this recipe, we strongly recommend using a digital timer. You can use this method for one to six large, extra-large, or jumbo eggs without altering the timing. If you have one, a steamer basket does make lowering the eggs into the boiling water easier. We recommend serving these eggs in eggcups and with buttered toast for dipping, or you may simply use the dull side of a butter knife to crack the egg along the equator, break the egg in half, and scoop out the insides with a teaspoon.

4 large eggs  
Salt and pepper

1. Bring ½ inch water to boil in medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Using tongs, gently place eggs in boiling water (eggs will not be submerged). Cover saucepan and cook eggs for 6½ minutes.
2. Remove cover, transfer saucepan to sink, and place under cold running water for 30 seconds. Remove eggs from pan and serve, seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.

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## SOFT-COOKED EGGS WITH SALAD

SERVES 2

Combine 3 tablespoons olive oil, 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar, 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard, and 1 teaspoon minced shallot in jar, seal lid, and shake vigorously until emulsified, 20 to 30 seconds. Toss with 5 cups assertively flavored salad greens (arugula, radicchio, watercress, or frisée). Season with salt and pepper to taste, and divide between 2 plates. Top each serving with 2 peeled soft-cooked eggs, split crosswise to release yolks, and season with salt and pepper to taste.

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## SOFT-COOKED EGGS WITH SAUTÉED MUSHROOMS

SERVES 2

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in large skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add 12 ounces sliced white or cremini mushrooms and pinch salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid has evaporated and mushrooms are lightly browned, 5 to 6 minutes. Stir in 2 teaspoons chopped fresh herbs (chives, tarragon, parsley, or combination). Season with salt and pepper to taste, and divide between 2 plates. Top each serving with 2 peeled soft-cooked eggs, split crosswise to release yolks, and season with salt and pepper to taste.

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## SOFT-COOKED EGGS WITH STEAMED ASPARAGUS

SERVES 2

Steam 12 ounces asparagus (spears about ½ inch thick, trimmed) over medium heat until crisp-tender, 4 to 5 minutes. Divide between 2 plates. Drizzle each serving with 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil and sprinkle each serving with 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Top each serving with 2 peeled soft-cooked eggs, split crosswise to release yolks, and season with salt and pepper to taste.

# Smoky Pulled Pork

➤ JULY & AUGUST 2014 ⇐

## SMOKY PULLED PORK ON A GAS GRILL

SERVES 8 TO 10



Pork butt roast is often labeled Boston butt in the supermarket. We developed this recipe with hickory chips, though other varieties of hardwood can be used. (We do not recommend mesquite chips.) Before beginning, check your propane tank to make sure that you have at least a half-tank of fuel. If you happen to run out of fuel, you can move the pork to a preheated 300-degree oven to finish cooking. Serve the pulled pork on white bread or hamburger buns with pickles and coleslaw.

### *Pork*

- Kosher salt and pepper
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 2 teaspoons packed light brown sugar
- 1 (5-pound) boneless pork butt roast, trimmed
- 9½ ounces wood chips (4 cups)
- 2 (9-inch) disposable aluminum pie plates
- 1 (13 by 9-inch) disposable aluminum roasting pan

### *Vinegar Sauce*

- 2 cups cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 teaspoons packed light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

**1. FOR THE PORK:** Combine 5 teaspoons salt, 2½ teaspoons pepper, paprika, and sugar in small bowl. Cut pork against grain into 3 equal slabs. Rub salt mixture into pork, making sure meat is evenly coated. Wrap pork tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 6 hours or up to 24 hours.

**2.** Just before grilling, soak 2 cups wood chips in water for 15 minutes, then drain. Using large piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil, wrap soaked chips in 8 by 4½-inch foil packet. (Make sure chips do not poke holes in sides or bottom of packet.) Repeat with remaining 2 cups unsoaked chips. Cut 2 evenly spaced 2-inch slits in top of each packet.

**3.** Remove cooking grate and place wood chip packets directly on primary burner. Place disposable pie plates, each filled with 3 cups water, directly on other burner(s). Set grate in place, turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot and wood chips are smoking, about 15 minutes. Turn primary burner to medium and turn off other burner(s). (Adjust primary burner as needed to maintain grill temperature of 300 degrees.)

**4.** Clean and oil cooking grate. Place pork on cooler side of grill, directly over water pans. Cover and smoke for 1½ hours.

**5.** Transfer pork to disposable pan. Return disposable pan to cooler side of grill and continue to cook until meat registers 200 degrees, 2½ to 3 hours.

**6.** Transfer pork to carving board and let rest for 20 minutes. Pour juices from disposable pan into fat separator and let stand for 5 minutes.

**7. FOR THE VINEGAR SAUCE:** While pork rests, whisk all ingredients together in bowl. Using 2 forks, shred pork into bite-size pieces. Stir ⅓ cup defatted juices and ½ cup sauce into pork. Serve, passing remaining sauce separately.

## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

It's often difficult to imbue pulled pork with rich, smoky flavor when cooking on a gas grill. We cut our pork butt into three pieces to increase the surface area that the smoke could cling to. After salting the pork overnight, we take it directly from the fridge to the grill: The meat's cool temperature allows more smoke to condense onto its surface.

Instead of inundating the meat with smoke at the beginning, we get the most out of the wood chips by soaking half of them in water to delay when they begin to smoke. Our foil packets are the right size and shape to sit on the grill. They also have just the right size and number of openings to allow in enough oxygen so that the chips smolder but not so much that they catch fire. Finally, we stir together a bright and spicy vinegar sauce that highlights the pungent smoke flavors of our pulled pork.

# Slow-Cooked Whole Carrots

➤ JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2015 ⚡



## ✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

We wanted a technique for cooking whole carrots (currently a popular restaurant dish) that would yield a sweet and meltingly tender vegetable from one end to the other without the carrots becoming mushy or waterlogged. Gently “steeping” the carrots in warm water before cooking them firms up the vegetable’s cell walls so that they can be cooked for a long time without falling apart. We also top the carrots with a cartouche (a circle of parchment that sits directly on the food) during cooking to ensure that they are evenly cooked from end to end.

## SLOW-COOKED WHOLE CARROTS

SERVES 4 TO 6

Use carrots that measure  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches across at the thickest end. The carrots can be served plain, but we recommend topping them with our Pine Nut Relish (recipe follows).

3 cups water	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon unsalted butter	12 carrots ( $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds), peeled

1. Fold 12-inch square of parchment paper into quarters to create 6-inch square. Fold bottom right corner of square to top left corner to create triangle. Fold triangle again, right side over left, to create narrow triangle. Cut off  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of tip of triangle to create small hole. Cut base of triangle straight across where it measures 5 inches from hole. Open paper round.

2. Bring water, butter, and salt to simmer in 12-inch skillet over high heat. Remove pan from heat, add carrots in single layer, and place parchment round on top of carrots. Cover skillet and let stand for 20 minutes.

3. Remove lid from skillet, leaving parchment round in place, and bring to simmer over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until almost all water has evaporated and carrots are very tender, about 45 minutes. Discard parchment round, increase heat to medium-high, and continue to cook carrots, shaking pan frequently, until they are lightly glazed and no water remains in skillet, 2 to 4 minutes longer. Transfer carrots to platter and serve.

## PINE NUT RELISH

MAKES ABOUT  $\frac{3}{4}$  CUP

To make a relish, which we like to pair with carrots, we combine bold, acidic ingredients with fresh herbs and spices. Vinegar turns the ingredients into a spoonable relish. Pine nuts burn easily, so be sure to shake the pan frequently while toasting them.

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup pine nuts, toasted	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon minced fresh rosemary
1 shallot, minced	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon smoked paprika
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley	Pinch cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon honey	

Combine all ingredients in bowl.

