



Savor the Season: Winter 2026

Favorite Seasonal Recipes from The Olive Oil Hunter





A Message from T. J.

Do you feel that chill in the air? There’s no better time for comfort food like stews and soups, so welcome to the updated Savor the Season: Winter 2026! This new edition now has 38 hale and hearty dishes, desserts included, all deliciously enhanced by your fresh-pressed olive oil. Though most farmers’ markets are on hiatus, there’s still much seasonal produce to be enjoyed. Root vegetables, squashes, and legumes deliver on flavor and satisfaction. It’s also time for pomegranates, blood oranges, and all types of dried fruits and nuts—wonderful foods that are part of the famed Mediterranean diet with its wide-ranging health benefits.

One of my goals in sharing these recipes is to take the mystery out of fine cooking so you can indulge as often as you like, not just on special occasions. In fact, you can turn any meal into a special occasion with these dishes from around the world. You’ll also discover quick hacks and simplified techniques for foodie favorites that only sound complicated, like ragout and risotto (hint: the right rice that makes it foolproof). Get ready to wow your tastebuds!

Happy drizzling!

T. J. Robinson
The Olive Oil Hunter®



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—*Larry Olmsted, award-winning food and travel journalist, describing these oils in his New York Times bestselling book, Real Food/Fake Food*

“Even if you buy the most expensive olive oils in the best stores in Manhattan, you can’t get your hands on olive oil of this quality!”

—*Ken McCarthy, Tivoli, NY*



T. J. Robinson, aka “**The Olive Oil Hunter®**,” is one of the world’s most respected authorities on all matters of olive oil. He is one of the few Americans invited to serve as a judge in prestigious Italian olive oil tasting competitions. When it comes to evaluating olive oils, he has been described as having a “platinum palate.”

For more information, plus the best way to store any olive oil, please click here...



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Banana Ricotta Pancakes

A sweet start to your day

Flavorful ingredients take this breakfast staple from ordinary to extraordinary.

1-1/2 cups flour
 1/2 cup white or golden whole wheat flour
 3 tablespoons sugar or equivalent
 2-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
 2 large eggs
 2 overripe bananas, well mashed
 1-1/4 cups milk
 1 cup ricotta cheese

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided use
 2 teaspoons vanilla
 Optional toppings: banana slices, walnuts or pecans, and maple syrup

- **Mix all the** dry ingredients in a large bowl.
- **In a separate** bowl, whisk the eggs until frothy, then mix in the mashed bananas, milk, ricotta, 3 tablespoons olive oil, and vanilla. Scrape the mixture into the bowl with the dry

ingredients and blend until there are no traces of flour in the batter.

- **Heat a griddle** over medium heat. When hot, brush with some of the remaining olive oil. Use a 2" (3-tablespoon) ice cream scoop to make as many pancakes as will fit. Cook for about 4 minutes, until the edges start to firm, then flip the pancakes and cook until firm, about 4 more minutes. Repeat with more olive oil and the rest of the batter. Garnish with your choices of toppings. *Yields about 16 pancakes*

The Only Blueberry Muffin Recipe You'll Ever Need

A super-charged treat that's very low in sugar

These nutty muffins have a great crunch and are packed with whole-grain goodness.

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil,
plus more for the muffin tin

1 1/2 cups white whole-wheat or
whole-wheat pastry flour

3/4 cup rolled oats

2 ounces almonds or walnuts,
roughly chopped

1 tablespoon baking powder

1/4 cup brown sugar

1 tablespoon stevia or sweetener
of your choice

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt

1 cup blueberries, rinsed and
patted dry

2 extra large eggs

1 cup milk, your choice of dairy
or plant-based

2 teaspoons vanilla extract or paste

- **Preheat your oven** to 350°F. Use a paper towel to coat a 12-muffin tin with a small amount of olive oil. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, oats, nuts, baking powder, brown

Ingredient Spotlight: Rolled Oats

You already know that fiber is a must for digestive health and that we often don't get enough. Need more motivation to up your intake? Researchers in Japan found that fiber may help brain health. They looked at the diets and health records of 3,500 participants from the 1980s to 2020 and found a link between a high-fiber diet and a reduced risk of dementia. An easy way to start the day is with rolled oats, perfect for baking, or steel cut oats, perfect when you have some extra time to cook them on the stove. But skip the instant options—there's no fiber to be had.



sugar, stevia/sweetener, cinnamon, and salt. Add the berries and toss to coat (this will keep them from falling to the bottom of the muffins). In a separate bowl, whisk together the olive oil, eggs, milk, and vanilla. Pour the liquid ingredients over the flour mixture and use a spatula to fold just until no traces of flour remain. Use an ice cream scoop or 1/4 cup measure to

fill the muffin tin and bake for 20 to 25 minutes, depending on your oven—they're done when the tip of a dinner knife inserted into the center of two or three muffins spaced out across the tin comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes, and then transfer the muffins to a rack to finish cooling. Store in a covered tin for up to two days on the counter or up to a week in the fridge. *Yields 12 muffins*

The "Skr's the Limit" Parfait

Homemade granola makes this breakfast a standout



I discovered skyr when I was working as a food writer during a trip to Iceland. It's a thick and creamy cultured dairy product with the protein of Greek yogurt, but milder in flavor. This breakfast treat starts with homemade granola, also a great snack on its own.

For the granola:

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1/4 cup each almonds and hazelnuts, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup pepitas (pumpkin seed kernels)
- 3 tablespoons freshly ground flax seeds
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon each allspice and nutmeg

For the parfaits:

- 24 ounces plain or vanilla skyr
- 2 firm large bananas, sliced
- **Make the granola:** Preheat your oven to 350°F and line a rimmed sheet pan with parchment paper. Toss all the ingredients together in a large bowl and then spread out the mixture on the parchment. Bake for 30 minutes or until crispy (don't let it burn), tossing every 10 minutes for even browning. Let cool and store in a glass container on the counter for up to 5 days.

Ingredient Spotlight: Flax Seeds

Flax seeds are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, fiber, and vitamin B1, but need to be ground before eating for the body to absorb those nutrients. Stash a bag of whole seeds in the fridge (to prevent their healthy oils from spoiling) and grind as needed using a coffee bean or spice grinder. Sprinkle on your favorite yogurt, stir a tablespoon or two into soups to thicken them, and use it to replace up to a third of the amount whenever bread crumbs are called for.



- **Make the parfait:** In four glasses, layer equal amounts of skyr, banana slices, and granola.

Yields 4 servings

Leek and Cheese Frittata

A stovetop sensation that cooks in minutes

This is the perfect centerpiece for a breakfast or brunch buffet—no slaving away in the kitchen required!

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 large leek | 1 teaspoon butter, softened |
| 6 large eggs | 2 tablespoons milk |
| 2 ounces freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano | 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil |
| | Pinch of coarse salt |



- **Trim and rinse** the leek (see “**Technique**” for details). Pat dry and cut into half-moons about 1/4-inch thick; set aside. In a bowl, whisk the eggs, cheese, butter, and milk.

- **Heat a lidded** 10-inch frying pan, add the oil, and sauté the leeks until softened, sprinkling on the salt as they

cook. Pour in the egg mixture and cook, without stirring, over medium heat until firm. Put the lid on the pan, remove from the heat, and let stand for 10 minutes. Serve the frittata hot or at room temperature. If you’d like to prepare it ahead by an hour or so, keep the lid on until you’re ready to serve. *Yields 4 servings*

Ingredient Spotlight: Leeks

Late winter marks the start of leek season. Leeks have a great health profile—they’re high in vitamin K with good amounts of vitamins B6 and C and the minerals copper, iron, and manganese. When shopping for leeks, look for ones that have long white/pale green sections free of any yellowing. The leeks should feel firm to the touch yet be somewhat pliable. Keep them in the fridge for up to two weeks, loosely wrapped in plastic to preserve moisture.



Technique: Cleaning Leeks

Leeks need careful rinsing because soil tends to collect in their layers as they grow. Cut off the roots and the dark green tops, then slice the leeks in half lengthwise—the white and the light green sections can be used. Working on one half at a time, splay the layers under running water, almost as though you were shuffling a deck of cards. Water coming from the sprayer of a kitchen faucet is excellent for getting between the layers. Blot dry with paper towels before using.



Citrus Fruit Sampler with Labneh

A breakfast that easily doubles as dessert

Labneh is a delicious cultured dairy product from the Middle East—I first tasted it on a press trip to Israel, the land of milk and honey. It's close to sour cream in its nutrient profile and thickness, yet because it's cultured, it has probiotics that sour cream lacks. It makes a wonderful topping for a mixed citrus salad. Choose from clementines, mandarins, Cara Cara and blood oranges, grapefruit, and pomelos—whatever is available locally.

4 or 5 assorted citrus fruits

12 ounces labneh

Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling

- **Zest one of the oranges;** set the zest aside. Use a sharp paring knife to cut away the peel and as much of the pith as you can from each citrus fruit, and then slice the fruits horizontally.

Fan out an assortment of slices on each of four plates and top with equal amounts of labneh, a drizzle of olive oil, and a sprinkle of the reserved zest. *Yields 4 servings*



Technique: Zesting

When sprinkled on a finished dish, fresh orange zest imparts a wonderful perfume. I love to use a Microplane grater because it makes such a fine zest, and it's so easy to move it over the entire surface of the peel to get all the goodness.

Chicken And Pistachio Terrine

A do-ahead first course or charcuterie board centerpiece

Chunkier than a pâté, this French classic can be made up to three days in advance. It's traditionally served with crusty bread, Dijon mustard, and cornichons.

- 2-1/2 pounds boneless skinless chicken thighs, divided use
- 12 thin slices prosciutto
- 10 ounces sweet Italian sausage meat
- 4 large shallots (5 ounces untrimmed), minced
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, more for drizzling
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons cognac
- 1 teaspoon dried tarragon
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup shelled pistachios
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries

- **Cut 12 ounces** of the chicken thighs into 1/2" cubes; set aside. Line a 9-inch by 5-inch loaf pan with prosciutto, arranging and overlapping the slices as needed so that they drape over the edges of the pan (they will make an envelope for the filling). Preheat your oven to 350°F.



- **Process the rest** of the chicken in a food processor until well minced (or use a meat grinder if you have one). Add in the sausage meat, shallots, olive oil, cream, cognac, tarragon, nutmeg, salt, and pepper, and pulse to mix well. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl and fold in the reserved chicken cubes, pistachios, and cranberries, then pack into the loaf pan. Smooth the top and fold over the ends of the prosciutto. Cover the top of the terrine with a piece of parchment cut to fit, then a piece of foil, sealing the edges tightly.

- **Place the pan** in a roasting pan in the center rack of your oven and fill the roasting pan halfway to the top with hot water. Bake for 75 minutes or until an instant-read thermometer reaches 165°F.

- **Let cool to** room temperature, then chill until firm, four hours or longer. To serve, run a spatula around the edge of the pan to loosen the terrine and invert it onto a platter. Slice and drizzle with olive oil.

Yields 8 to 10 servings

Potato and Onion Tart

A savory appetizer that will satisfy a crowd

This impressive dish makes a great centerpiece for a buffet, or you can serve it with a green salad for a light lunch or dinner. Look for frozen puff pastry made with real butter, such as the Dufour Pastry Kitchen brand—the company also has a vegan version. Tip: Defrost the dough in the fridge overnight and keep it in the fridge until it's time to roll it out.

3 teaspoons sea salt, divided use

1-1/2 pounds red or small Yukon gold potatoes, scrubbed and cut into 1/8-inch slices

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

1 large Vidalia or other sweet onion, peeled, halved, and cut into slivers

1 teaspoon sugar

White whole wheat flour

One 14-ounce sheet frozen puff pastry, defrosted

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

6 ounces Jarlsberg, Emmenthal, Gruyère, and/or fontina cheese, shredded

2 teaspoons dried dill or 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill

1/2 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

1 small egg

1 teaspoon water

- **Bring a large** pot of water to a boil. Add 1 teaspoon salt and the potatoes and cook them for 7 minutes. Drain and lay them out on a clean dishtowel to absorb excess moisture.

- **Heat a large** sauté pan. When hot, add the olive oil, the onions, 1 teaspoon salt, and the sugar, and cook on medium-low heat until the onions are caramelized and their liquid has all evaporated, up to 20 minutes.

- **Place a piece** of parchment paper about 24 inches in length on your countertop and sprinkle on a small amount of flour, then flour your rolling pin. Unfold the thawed dough on the paper, gently roll out the creases, and then roll it to about a 10-inch by 16-inch rectangle. Use a paring knife to trim any uneven edges and then to score a border 1 inch in from the edges on all four sides—it will look like a picture frame (be sure not to cut all the way through the dough). Lightly prick the dough within the border in an even pattern with a fork. Slide the



parchment paper with the dough onto a rimmed sheet pan and cut off any excess paper.

- **Use an offset** spatula to spread the Dijon mustard within the border of the tart. Top with the shredded cheese, sprinkling it on in an even layer, and repeat the process with the onions. Cover with the potato slices, arranging them in an overlapping pattern. Sprinkle on the final teaspoon of the salt and dill, then the Parmigiano. Whisk the egg with the water and brush it over the dough border. Chill the tart in the fridge for 15 minutes while you preheat your oven to 400°F.

- **Bake the pastry** for 30 to 40 minutes, depending on your oven, until it puffs up and browns. Let cool for 5 minutes, then cut into 8 pieces. Drizzle each slice with olive oil before serving. *Yields 8 servings*



Olive Crostini

This zesty dip makes a sophisticated snack

This olive and caper spread is a favorite from Provence. I like it slightly chunky, but you can pulse until you achieve a smoother texture.

2 large garlic cloves, peeled

1 tablespoon capers plus 1
tablespoon brine

1 cup cured and pitted olives such as
Niçoise or Kalamata, plus more for
garnish

- **Pulse the garlic** cloves in your food processor until they are minced. Add the rest of the ingredients (except the

2 teaspoons anchovy paste

1 teaspoon herbes de Provence

1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, plus
more for the bread and drizzling

1 baguette, cut into 3/4-inch slices

baguette) and pulse until the olives are finely chopped and the olive oil is incorporated.

- **Heat your oven** broiler. Arrange the baguette slices on a rimmed sheet pan and drizzle with olive oil. Place under the broiler to toast them, about 1 minute (watch carefully to avoid burning).

- **Mound each slice** with 2 tablespoons of olive dip and garnish with a whole olive and a drizzle of oil.
Yields 4 to 8 servings

Cannellini Bean and Gorgonzola Bruschetta

Skip the tomatoes—this topping will wow you!



Creamy beans, crispy prosciutto, and tangy cheese—could there be a more satisfying bruschetta topping than this? The combination is equally delicious on a bed of arugula for a hearty salad.

- 12 thin slices prosciutto
- 12 slices of baguette, each about 1/2-inch thick
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary needles
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes (optional)
- Two 15-ounce cans cannellini beans, drained, rinsed, and drained again
- 3 ounces gorgonzola dolce or another mild blue cheese
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- Coarse salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

- **Preheat your oven** to 350°F. Line a rimmed sheet pan with parchment paper and arrange the prosciutto on it in a single layer (use two pans if necessary). Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the prosciutto has changed color slightly and is just crisp—it will continue to crisp as it cools. Transfer to a wire rack to cool. Toast the bread while the oven is hot.

- **In the meantime**, heat a large skillet over medium-low heat and, when hot, add the olive oil. Add the rosemary, garlic, and optional hot pepper flakes, and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the garlic softens (don't let it brown). Stir in the beans, mashing them roughly with the back of a spoon. Stir in the cheese and cook until it melts. Add the lemon juice and season to taste with salt and pepper.

- **To serve**, spread the bean mixture on the toasted bread. Drizzle with more olive oil, then crumble the prosciutto on top. *Yields 4 to 6 servings*

Ingredient Spotlight: Cannellini Beans

All legumes are great sources of protein, but cannellini beans also offer a creaminess that can rival potatoes and with greater nutrients. One cup delivers 15 grams of protein and about 10 grams of all-important fiber, plus key vitamins and minerals. I'm all for the convenience of buying canned beans—look for no- or low-sodium varieties and always drain and rinse them well.

Not a member of the Fresh-Pressed Olive Oil Club?

Please see page 3 for your special invitation.

Sweet and Savory Labneh Board

A centerpiece sensation you can customize with each season

Move over butter boards! Labneh makes the perfect board base because you can sweeten it with a drizzle of honey or make it savory with a drizzle of olive oil plus a sprinkling of za'atar. Za'atar is a Middle Eastern spice blend as ubiquitous in that part of the world as our salt shaker is here. Every country, and even regions within every country, have their own proportions of ingredients. Feel free to experiment when making za'atar and when composing your labneh board.



For the za'atar:

- 1 tablespoon white sesame seeds
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon sumac
- 2 tablespoons dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon coarse sea salt

For the labneh board:

- 1 pint labneh
- 4 pitas, cut into triangles
- 4 slices dark bread, cut into triangles

For the savory side:

- 1 teaspoon za'atar
- 1/4 cup pine nuts
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 2 bell peppers, cored, seeded, and cut into wedges
- 6 ounces cherry tomatoes
- 1 English cucumber, trimmed and cut into 1/2-inch disks
- 3 large carrots, peeled, halved lengthwise, and cut into 3-inch lengths

For the sweet side:

- Honey
- 2 ounces pistachios
- 1/2 cup pomegranate arils
- 4 fresh figs, sliced in half
- 4 dried dates or apricots, sliced in half
- 2 Anjou pears, halved, cored, and sliced into wedges

- **For the za'atar:** Toast the sesame seeds in a small pan over medium
(continued on next page)

Sweet and Savory Labneh Board

A centerpiece sensation you can customize with each season

heat for about 3 minutes, watching closely so they don't burn. Turn off the heat and let them cool. Using a small food processor or a coffee grinder, pulse the sesame seeds along with the other spices until mixed, but stop before they turn to powder—there should be some texture to the blend. *Yields about 1/2 cup*

- **For the labneh** board: Swirl the labneh across a wooden board or large platter. Sprinkle one half with za'atar and pine nuts, drizzle with olive oil, and arrange the savory ingredients around it. Drizzle honey and sprinkle the nuts and arils on the other half of the labneh, and arrange the other fruits around it.

- **Scoop up the labneh** with the veggies, fruits, pita triangles, and bread slices. *Yields 4 to 8 servings*

Ingredient Spotlight: Pomegranates

Pomegranates, which grow on trees like apples, are a delicious source of powerful antioxidants called anthocyanins, the same nutrients that give grapes and berries their deep colors. They're also rich in vitamins K and folate as well as potassium. Most pomegranates sold in here come from California, but their history is thousands of years old and they're grown the world over.

To break through their hard shell, use a paring knife to cut out the small round blossom at the top, then score the peel from top to bottom to mark off four sections. Place the pomegranate in a large bowl and use your thumbs to break it into sections along the cut lines. Gently use your fingers to nudge the arils from the white membranes. Store the arils in a covered container in the fridge. Sprinkle on salads or just snack on them by the handful.





Horiátiki Salata

Take a less-is-more approach to this classic salad

This quintessential Greek salad isn't complicated, but two ingredients make it memorable: true Kalamata olives and freshly sliced slabs of feta (not packaged crumbles). Purists say the melding of the olive oil and the juice of the tomatoes enhanced by the oregano is all the dressing you need—that's why the lemon juice is optional.

1 large cucumber, thinly sliced

1/2 red onion, thinly sliced

1/2 green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and sliced into rings

2 cups of hothouse cherry tomatoes, halved

12 Greek Kalamata olives

Two 3-ounce slices of Greek feta

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, or more as desired

1 teaspoon dried oregano or za'atar (see “**Sweet and Savory Labneh Board**” on page 13) to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Coarse salt, like Maldon sea salt, to taste

2 lemon wedges (optional)

• **Prep all the** vegetables as directed and assemble them with the other ingredients.

• **Divide the ingredients** evenly on two dinner plates or in salad bowls. Start with the cucumber slices and layer on the red onions and green peppers. Then place the tomatoes and olives around the outside of the dish with a slab of feta in the center. Drizzle on the olive oil and sprinkle with oregano or za'atar, black pepper, and coarse salt. Add a squeeze of lemon, if desired. *Yields 2 servings*

Mediterranean Deviled Eggs

A recipe refresh with a healthy twist

They say what's old is new again, and that's definitely true about this classic hors d'oeuvre. But I like to give it a Mediterranean spin with heart-healthy extra virgin olive oil as the enrichment rather than butter—doing so yields more zest and creaminess. Use a variety of garnishes to give your platter a festive look.

12 hard-boiled eggs, peeled

2–3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons mayonnaise

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon minced shallot or onion

1 tablespoon roughly chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice, preferably from a Meyer lemon

1 tinned anchovy or 1/2 to 1 teaspoon anchovy paste

1/2 clove garlic, minced

Coarse salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Garnishes: olive slices, slivers of sun-dried tomatoes, drained brined capers, chopped chives, best-quality anchovies, basil chiffonade, caviar, and/or a sprinkle of pimentón (Spanish smoked paprika)



- **Cut the eggs** in half lengthwise, remove the yolks, and transfer them to the work bowl of a small food processor or a large glass bowl if using an electric mixer or a whisk. Put the egg white halves on a deviled egg platter or other oversized dish.

- **To the yolks**, add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, the mayonnaise, mustard, shallot or onion, parsley, lemon juice, anchovy, and garlic, and process until fairly smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste and the remaining tablespoon of olive oil if the mixture is too thick.

- **To fill the egg whites**, use a small spoon or a pastry bag fitted with a star tip. Garnish each deviled egg with one or more of the suggested garnishes.

Cover and refrigerate for up to 4 hours before serving. *Yields 24 egg halves*

Technique: Hard-Boiled Eggs

Want perfectly round centers? The day before cooking the eggs, place them on their sides in their carton. To make peeling easier, place the eggs directly from the refrigerator into boiling water and immediately lower the heat to a simmer to avoid the usual boil-over. Set your timer for 12 minutes, then plunge the eggs into ice-cold water to stop the cooking process and chill them quickly. Gently crack the shell all around and peel the eggs under running water.



Beef Barley Soup

A comfort food that's nutritious too!

Hulled barley retains more of its fiber than pearl barley and is more nutritious, but any type of this grain will work. The soup tastes even better the next day, making it a great do-ahead meal.

1/4 cup whole wheat flour

1 teaspoon sea salt, plus more to taste

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

4 beef short ribs

1 large onion, chopped

2 celery stalks, trimmed and sliced

12 ounces mushrooms, sliced

3 garlic cloves, minced

12 cups beef broth, more if needed

4 carrots, peeled if needed and sliced

1 teaspoon dried thyme

3 bay leaves

1 pound barley

• **Mix the flour**, salt, and pepper in a glass pie plate. Heat a large Dutch oven or stockpot. When hot, add the olive oil and then quickly dredge each short rib in the flour mixture, tap to remove any excess, and add to the pan. Using tongs, brown each rib on all sides, waiting about 2 minutes between quarter-turns. Transfer them to a dish.

• **Add the onions** and celery to the pot and sauté until the onions soften. Add the mushrooms and garlic and sauté until they brown. Return the ribs to the pot and add the broth, carrots, thyme, and bay leaves. Bring the broth to a boil, then turn down the heat to a simmer. Cover the pot and cook for 1 hour, then add barley and simmer with

the lid slightly ajar for another hour or until the barley is tender. Note: If the barley absorbs too much liquid, add another 2 cups broth (or water). Taste and season with more salt and pepper, if desired. Remove and discard the bay leaves before serving.

Yields 8 servings

Calabrian Pumpkin Soup

An Italian recipe passed down through generations

Calabria—in the southernmost part of Italy (picture the big toe of the “boot”)—is one of my favorite places in the world. This simple yet sublime twist on traditional squash soup comes from the Librandi family, one of the region’s outstanding olive oil producers. Mama Librandi shared the recipe with me! For convenience, look for packages of precut squash at the market. Freshly made croutons (see “Technique”) are a taste game changer compared to packaged ones.

One 3-pound pumpkin or butternut squash, peeled, seeds and membranes removed

2 medium Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

2 tablespoons water

Coarse salt, to taste

Croutons for garnish

- **Use a sturdy knife** to cut the pumpkin or butternut squash into cubes, roughly 1 1/2-inches (see “Technique: Prepping Winter Squash” on page 34). Do the same with the potatoes. In a medium saucepan, combine the pumpkin, potatoes, 3 tablespoons of olive oil, and water. Cover and cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 50 to 60 minutes. Purée until smooth with an immersion blender or use a conventional blender, working in batches to

avoid spillovers (don’t fill your blender by more than half at a time). Salt to taste.

- **Divide the soup** between warmed soup bowls. Drizzle generously with additional olive oil and garnish with croutons. *Yields 6 appetizer servings or 4 main course servings*

Technique: Quick Croutons

Rub a halved garlic clove over both sides of two or three slices of day-old rustic bread or a baguette halved lengthwise. Cut the bread into uniform cubes and place them on a rimmed sheet pan large enough to comfortably hold them in a single layer. Sprinkle them with extra virgin olive oil, your choice of herbs and/or grated cheese, coarse salt, and freshly ground black pepper, and toss well. Spread them out and bake in a preheated 400°F oven until crispy, between 10 and 15 minutes, flipping them halfway through with a metal spatula for even browning. Keep your eye on them so they don’t burn.



French Lentils and Sausage

A hearty dish for a first course or the main meal!

It's often said that Lyon, not Paris, is the center of French gastronomy. Having been there early in my career, I quite agree. It was there that I met the father of modern French cooking, Paul Bocuse, and ate at Le Poëlon d'Or, the famed bouchon ("bouchon" is a strictly guarded local designation for restaurants offering regional comfort foods in a warm, friendly atmosphere, and many dot the city). Its building dates back to 1890—and its ceiling is a designated UNESCO World Heritage site! The tiny French green lentils in this traditional recipe are reminiscent of caviar in appearance, and you'll see the famous cold lentil salad, Le Caviar de la Croix Rousse, on menus across Lyon, another great dish to make with this legume.

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 1 pound fresh garlic and herb sausage, or smoked kielbasa, sliced into 1 1/2-inch rounds
- 2 cups diced onions
- 1 cup diced carrots
- 1 cup diced celery
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 500 grams (just over 1 pound) French green lentils, rinsed and picked over
- 1 large bay leaf
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme, preferably French
- 4 cups homemade or low-sodium store-bought chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 cup crushed tomatoes
- 1/4 teaspoon coarse salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar



- **Heat a large** Dutch oven over medium heat. When hot, add the olive oil and the sausage slices. Cook until browned, then use a slotted spoon to transfer the sausages to a small bowl.

- **Add the diced** vegetables to the pot and cook over medium heat until the onions are soft and translucent, but not browned, and the carrots and celery

(continued on next page)

French Lentils and Sausage

A hearty dish for a first course or the main meal!

On a cold night, a supper of hot lentil soup rich with garlicky sausage can't be beat.

have started to soften, about 15 minutes. Add the reserved sausages and the remaining ingredients except the vinegar, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until the lentils are tender, about an hour—they should still retain their shape and not be mushy. Add the vinegar after 30 minutes and stir to combine. Remove the bay leaf before serving. Ladle into large mugs and drizzle with olive oil.

Yields 10 to 12 generous servings

Technique: Mirepoix

This combination of onions, carrots, and celery forms the base flavor layer of many French soups and stews. The traditional ratio is two parts onion to one part carrot and one part celery. The vegetables are finely diced and cooked low and slow to soften and sweeten without caramelizing. Variations exist throughout the world. In Cajun cooking, for instance, bell peppers take the place of the carrots, and the trio is called the holy trinity.

Ingredient Spotlight: Lentils

Lentils are a type of legume, along with beans and dried split peas. All are rich in folate and other B vitamins, potassium and iron, and many phytonutrients, which are nutrients found only in plant foods. What's more, legumes are considered functional foods because they help foster good health, including better blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels. Lentil varieties include black, brown, red, green, and French green. Many consider Puy lentils, or *lentilles du Puy*, the best green lentils available. Grown in the Puy region of France, southwest of Lyon, these lentils have a slightly peppery taste attributed to the area's volcanic soil. For authentic ones, look for the designation AOP (or *Appellation d'Origine Protégée*) on the label. (You'll find them sold in grams rather than ounces at specialty food shops and on Amazon.) Black lentils are another great lentil choice, and they're wonderful in spicy Indian dal.



Creamy Mushroom Soup

A melding of mushroom varieties gives depth to this perennial favorite

When I worked at the famed Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, I was in charge of soups and sauces at the Bistro. One of the most requested dishes was the cream of portobello mushroom soup. With so many mushroom varieties now readily available (many from online purveyors), I've updated my recipe to include a mix. Feel free to adjust based on availability.

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2–3 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- 2 pounds assorted varieties of mushrooms, such as button, cremini (baby bella), shiitake, and/or oyster, cleaned if needed, and coarsely chopped
- 5 cups homemade or low-sodium store-bought beef stock
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme or 1/4 teaspoon dried, plus more for serving
- 1/2 teaspoon sweet paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse salt, or more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or more to taste
- 1 cup half-and-half

Note: If you can only find dried shiitakes, prep them by placing them in a bowl, covering with hot water, and letting them soak for 20 minutes. Drain them over a bowl, squeezing out as



much liquid as you can and reserving it to use in place of an equal amount of the stock. Chop the shiitakes and set aside.

- **Heat a large** Dutch oven or stockpot until warm. Add the butter and oil. Once the butter foams, add the onion and garlic and cook gently for about 5 minutes, stirring frequently, until softened but not browned.

- **Add the mushrooms** to the pan and stir over medium heat for 5 to 10 minutes until they begin to soften. Pour in the stock and bring to a boil. Add the soy sauce, thyme, paprika, salt, and pepper. If you used dried shiitakes, add them now along with

their soaking liquid. Lower the heat and simmer, partially covered, for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.

- **Use an immersion** blender to purée most of the soup, leaving about a quarter of the mushrooms chunky. (Or transfer about three-quarters of the soup to a blender or food processor in batches, process until smooth, and then return to the pot.) Stir in the half-and-half and heat through. Check the consistency, adding more stock or water if the soup is too thick. Taste and adjust the seasonings. Serve hot, garnished with sprigs of fresh thyme or a pinch of dried thyme. *Yields 4 to 6 servings*

Four-Cheese Cannelloni

An Italian favorite that satisfies

While you can use best-quality jarred sauce to halve the prep time, I've included a tomato sauce recipe made with passata, a silky uncooked Italian tomato purée, for added richness. Double it to have enough for another pasta dish later in the week.

For the tomato sauce:

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 garlic cloves, gently crushed
1 small onion, finely chopped
2 bottles passata, 700 ml each
1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt, more to taste
1 teaspoon sugar, more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

For the filling and topping:

10-ounce block Parmigiano Reggiano
4-ounce block Pecorino Romano
1-1/2 pounds fresh mozzarella, divided use
1 pound ricotta cheese
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
1 pound cannelloni tubes

• **Prepare the sauce:** Heat a deep skillet or saucepan over medium heat. When hot, add the olive oil, garlic cloves, and onions. When the onions



turn translucent, add the passata, salt, and sugar. Bring to a boil, then turn the heat down to a simmer. Cover the pan and continue to simmer for 45 minutes. Taste and add black pepper and more salt and/or sugar, as desired.

• **Prepare the filling:** Grate the Parmigiano Reggiano in a food processor. Reserve 1/2 cup and place the rest in a large bowl. Grate the Pecorino Romano and add it all to the bowl. Cut 1 pound of mozzarella into 1/2" cubes and add to the bowl along with the ricotta, olive oil, black pepper, and nutmeg. Mix well and transfer to a large pastry bag fitted with a 1/2" tip; set aside.

• **Cut the remaining** half-pound mozzarella into thin slices or shavings. Place half the tomato sauce in the bottom of a 13-inch x 9-inch baking pan; set aside. Preheat your oven to 350°F.

• **Cook the cannelloni** tubes according to package directions for al dente; use tongs or a large slotted spoon to stir the pot occasionally and keep them from sticking to each other. Drain in a colander and run cold water over them to cool them enough to handle.

• **One by one**, fill the cannelloni tubes with the cheese mixture and set in the baking pan; they should all fit in one layer. Note: If any of the tubes tear, you can still pipe a line of filling down the center and add to the dish. Top with the remaining sauce, the mozzarella slices, and the reserved half-cup Parmigiano Reggiano.

• **Bake uncovered** for 30 minutes or until the mozzarella has melted and lightly browned. *Yields 4 servings*

Pasta with Scallops

A silken sauce enhances a seafood favorite

This dish comes together in short order yet makes for an elegant presentation. The technique also lends itself to shrimp (if you make that swap, use one pound of peeled shrimp).



2 teaspoons sea salt, divided use

12 ounces pasta

1 tablespoon onion powder

1 tablespoon garlic powder

2 teaspoons sweet paprika

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

• **Bring a large** pot of water to a boil, then add 1 teaspoon salt and the pasta. While the pasta is cooking, prepare the scallops: Mix the other teaspoon salt and the onion powder, garlic powder, paprika, and black pepper in a glass

1 pound dry sea scallops

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 garlic cloves, minced

1/2 cup white wine or clam juice

2 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

pie plate. Heat a large skillet. While the pan is heating, pat the scallops with a paper towel and dredge them in the spice mixture. When the pan is ready, add the olive oil and the scallops. Sear the scallops until browned and crispy

on the edges, about 2 minutes on each side, then transfer them to a dish.

• **Add the minced** garlic to the pan and sauté until soft, about 3 minutes. Deglaze the pan with the wine or clam juice and add the butter, swirling it until it melts into the pan juices. Drain the pasta and add it to the skillet, swirling it into the sauce. Divide the sauced pasta among four dinner plates, then top with equal amounts of scallops and a sprinkling of chives. *Yields 4 servings*

Maiale con Salsa Verde (Pork with Green Sauce)

A flavorful sauce with surprising ingredients enhances lean tenderloin

Italian cuisine is synonymous with pasta and pizza, but pork is also a favorite. The tenderloin is the leanest cut of pork; it's on par with skinless chicken breasts. Because tenderloins have little fat and typically weigh only a pound, they cook quickly—and will quickly dry out if cooked too long, so set your timer as soon as you pop them into the oven.

For the pork:

- 2 pork tenderloins, about 1 pound each
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided use
- Coarse salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

For the salsa verde:

- 1 cup tightly packed fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tinned anchovy fillet, coarsely chopped
- 1 to 2 cloves garlic, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 1/2 tablespoons drained brined capers
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- Coarse salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

- **Preheat your oven** to 400°F. Trim off any fat and silver skin from the pork tenderloins and rub all sides with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Season generously with salt and pepper. Heat a large cast-iron or other ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat; when hot, add the rest of the olive oil and the tenderloins. Sear the meat until nicely browned, about 2 minutes per side, 8 minutes in all. Place the skillet with the meat in the oven. Roast the tenderloins until the internal temperature registers 145°F on an instant-read thermometer, about 10 to 12 minutes, or as needed. (The meat will still be slightly pink inside. Roast longer if you prefer your pork more done, but don't overcook it.) Let it cool slightly while you make the salsa verde.

- **To make the** salsa, combine all the ingredients in a blender or food processor and run the machine until well combined.

- **Carve the pork** tenderloin into 1/2-inch slices and arrange them on a platter. Drizzle with some of the sauce and pass the rest. *Yields 6 servings*



Roasted Chicken with Fennel

An unusual vegetable adds an aromatic taste to this dinner stalwart

This was another favorite from my days as a chef at the Biltmore in Asheville—a quick marinade with the bold flavor of fennel. We used it when grilling chicken breasts for a popular sandwich, and it works beautifully for a whole chicken as well. If you're a fennel fan, add the fennel seeds for greater depth of flavor.

2 large fennel bulbs, about 2 pounds in all

1 medium onion, sliced into 1/4-inch half-moons

1 large lemon, zested and juiced

6 cloves of garlic, peeled and chopped

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 teaspoons fennel seeds (optional)

Whole roasting chicken, about 4-6 pounds

1 teaspoon each coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper

- **Trim the roots** from the fennel and trim off and discard all but about 4 inches of the fronds. Slice the fennel bulbs lengthwise, then into half-moons; chop the fronds as you would dill. Place the slices and chopped fronds in a very large bowl and add the onion, lemon zest and juice, garlic, olive oil, and fennel seeds (if using), and mix well. Place the chicken in the bowl and thoroughly coat it with the marinade. Use your hands to make a pocket between the skin and the



breast meat and stuff it with some of the mixture. Place about a handful of the mixture in the bird's cavity. Let it sit for 30 minutes.

- **Arrange a rack** in the middle of your oven and preheat to 450°F. Transfer the chicken to a roasting pan. Arrange any remaining fennel and onions from the bowl around it, pour any liquid from the marinade over the top, then sprinkle the bird with the salt and pepper.

- **Roast, uncovered, for** 15 minutes, then reduce the temperature to 375°F and continue cooking for about 20 minutes per pound. Baste with the pan juices every 30 minutes. The chicken is done when the internal temperature registers

165°F on an instant-read thermometer (start checking about 20 minutes before you think it will be ready to avoid overcooking). Let it rest for about 10 minutes before slicing. Serve with the fennel and onions. *Yields 4 to 6 servings*

Ingredient Spotlight: Fennel

Known for its bright, licorice-like notes, fennel is normally in season during cold weather months, from late winter through early spring. It's a versatile vegetable, great for braising or roasting as a side dish, and it can be used raw in salads. When chopped, the fronds make a colorful garnish.



Wild Mushroom Lasagna

This 1970s sensation is back with even more flavor

Early in my career, I worked with the legendary food critic and cookbook writer David Rosengarten, author of bestselling classics like It's All American Food and The Dean & DeLuca Cookbook. For over four decades, Dean & DeLuca was known as one of the leading food emporiums in the country. Below is an updated version of David's white lasagna recipe, which created a sensation when first introduced. Readily available at many markets, fresh lasagna sheets are much easier to work with than boxed noodles, as they don't require precooking; trim them with kitchen scissors to fit the shape of your baking dish. If you can find them, dried porcini mushrooms help intensify the mushroom flavor, but the dish will still be delicious without them.

1 1/2 ounces dried porcini mushrooms

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided use, plus more for the baking dish

12 cups of assorted fresh mushrooms varieties (about 2 to 2 1/2 pounds), rinsed and trimmed as needed and very thinly sliced

6 shallots, peeled and thinly sliced

6 cloves garlic, peeled and thinly sliced

2 tablespoons finely minced fresh sage

1/2 cup heavy cream

1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

Coarse salt and freshly ground black

pepper, to taste

3 sheets of fresh lasagna, each about 9 inches by 13 inches each, or a 16-ounce box of dried lasagna

1 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, plus more for serving

1 pound smoked mozzarella, shredded

(continued on next page)

Wild Mushroom Lasagna

This 1970s sensation is back with even more flavor

Note: If using dried lasagna, parboil 9 pieces for about 5 minutes while the mushrooms are cooking, then drain.

- **Place the dried** porcini mushrooms in a bowl, cover with two cups of hot water, and soak for 30 minutes. While they're soaking, preheat your oven to 325°F. Heat a very large sauté pan over medium-high heat; when hot, add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and half of the fresh mushrooms (work in smaller batches if necessary to avoid crowding). Sauté for 2 minutes, or until they begin to brown slightly. Use a slotted spoon to transfer them to a large bowl. Add the remaining oil to the pan with the rest of the fresh mushrooms as well as the shallots, garlic, and minced sage. Sauté for 2 minutes, then return the first batch of cooked mushrooms to the pan. Drain and add the porcinis. Add the cream and cook over medium heat until the cream thickens slightly, about 1 minute. Stir in the nutmeg and season to taste with salt and pepper.

- **Lightly brush the** inside of a 13-inch by 9-inch by 3-inch baking dish with olive oil. Place a lasagna sheet (or three lasagna strips) on the bottom of the dish. Cover with half the mushroom



mixture, half the Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, and a quarter of the mozzarella. Top with another layer of pasta, the remaining mushroom mixture, the remaining Parmigiano-Reggiano, and another quarter of the mozzarella.

- **Top with a** final layer of pasta and the rest of the mozzarella, spreading out the cheese evenly. Cover tightly with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove from the oven and turn the setting to broil. Take off the foil and place the lasagna under the broiler to brown the top, about 2 minutes. Let it rest for 10 to 15 minutes before cutting. Serve with more grated Parmigiano-Reggiano. *Yields 8 servings*

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Party-Hearty Chili

A deeply flavorful favorite made in just one pot

A mix of rich spices takes run-of-the-mill chili to a whole new level. You'll need a few hours for the flavors to develop, but not a lot of active effort. And the results are more than worth it, especially when you're feeding a crowd!

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 2 large onions, diced
 3 garlic cloves, minced
 16 ounces cremini (baby bella) or white button mushrooms, trimmed and sliced thin
 2 pounds ground beef, chicken, or turkey
 One 6-ounce can tomato paste
 One 28-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes with their liquid
 Two 15-ounce cans great northern beans, drained, rinsed, and drained again
 Two 15-ounce cans kidney beans, drained, rinsed, and drained again
 3 bay leaves
 2 cinnamon sticks
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

2 tablespoons ancho chile powder
 1/2 teaspoon each cayenne, allspice, and coarse salt
 1 tablespoon apple cider or sherry vinegar
 Optional toppings for serving: diced raw onions, shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, and crushed corn or tortilla chips, as desired



• **Heat a Dutch** oven or large stockpot over medium heat. When hot, add the oil, and then the onions and garlic; cook until soft. Add the mushrooms and sauté until soft. Add the ground meat in batches and cook until browned. Push everything to the sides

of the pot and add the tomato paste. Cook it until it turns a deep brownish red (this intensifies its flavor), then fold it into the mushrooms and meat. Add the remaining ingredients and stir to combine. Bring to a low simmer, cover, and cook for 3 hours, stirring every half

Technique: Grinding Your Own Meat

Convenience rather than flavor is the reason to buy packaged ground meat at the market. Doing the grinding yourself allows you to choose your cut of beef (and fat content) or, in the case of chicken or turkey, your desired mix of light and dark meat. A home grinder, like the attachment made for the KitchenAid mixer, is great, but you can grind your own meat with the steel blade of a food processor using the pulse function. The secret to a great grind is a chill-down for the meat and the grinder parts/processor blade.

Prep the meat by trimming as needed and then cutting it into 1- to 2-inch cubes. Place the cubes in a single layer on a rimmed sheet pan and pop into the freezer along with your grinding blade for about 30 minutes—you want the meat to be cold and firm but not frozen.

For the average-size food processor, pulse about 8 ounces at a time; use a spatula to get out as much as possible before adding another batch.

hour. (If the chili gets too thick, add 1/2 cup of water.) Remove the bay leaves and serve in large bowls with assorted toppings. *Yields 8 or more servings*

Garlic-and-Pepper-Crusted Beef Tenderloin

This two-step method gives flawless results

There's nothing more celebratory than a beef tenderloin. The center cut is the most choice, tender, and leanest part.



- 8 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 tablespoons coarse salt
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil, plus 2 tablespoons for searing
- 1 tablespoon freshly and coarsely cracked black peppercorns
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves
- 1/4 cup fresh rosemary needles from a 3- or 4-inch sprig
- 2 tablespoons grainy mustard
- One 3-pound center-cut beef tenderloin, trimmed as needed

• **Preheat your oven** to 450°F. In a small food processor, process the garlic and salt until the garlic is finely chopped. Add the 1/3 cup olive oil, black pepper, thyme, and rosemary, and process until the herbs are evenly chopped. Stir in the mustard and set aside.

• **Heat a large** cast-iron skillet or Dutch oven on the stovetop over medium-high heat. When hot, add the 2 tablespoons of olive oil and then the beef, searing it on all sides until nicely browned, 3 to 4 minutes per side, making quarter turns with tongs. Transfer the meat to a cutting board and let cool slightly.

• **Coat the meat** evenly on all sides with the reserved herb mixture. Transfer the tenderloin to a meat rack set in a roasting pan. Roast the

Ingredient Spotlight: Garlic

Beyond adding wonderful flavor, garlic contains a powerful compound called allicin, released soon after the cloves are crushed or chopped—after you do your prep, wait 10 minutes before using the garlic to allow the allicin to develop. When I buy garlic, I always buy organic, and I always turn over the head to make sure there's still some of the root network, a sign that it's American grown. Beware of Chinese imports, bleached in chlorine to artificially enhance their appearance. The telltale sign? A concave area on the bottom where the roots used to be.

tenderloin until the internal temperature reaches your desired doneness on an instant-read thermometer, about 20 to 30 minutes (depending on its thickness). Let it rest for at least 10 minutes before carving to prevent the juices from running out. *Yields 8 servings*

Technique: Testing Meat for Doneness

No matter what your preference for doneness, test with an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the meat. Rare is 120° to 130°F; medium rare, 130° to 135°F; medium, 135° to 145°F; medium well, 145° to 155°F; and well, 165°F. Keep in mind that when you take a roast out of the oven, it will continue to cook and can go up by another 5 degrees, so plan accordingly.

Rocco DiSpirito's "Mama's Meatballs"

Homemade marinara sauce elevates classic meatballs

I first met celebrity chef, restaurateur, cookbook author, and James Beard award winner Rocco DiSpirito when we were both at the Food Network in the early 2000s. Rocco, who's often seen on many of Guy Fieri's shows, had his own reality show back then about opening a restaurant in New York City. Rocco is well known for his Italian classics, and his meatballs in marinara sauce are total comfort food. If you're short on time, you can use 6 cups of your favorite jarred marinara sauce. Or you can make Rocco's sauce a day or two in advance and refrigerate until needed (warm it before adding the meatballs).



For the marinara sauce:

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 of a medium yellow onion, peeled and finely diced
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- Two 28-ounce cans tomato purée
- One 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 1 cup homemade or low-sodium store-bought chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon sugar

- Coarse salt, to taste
- Crushed red pepper flakes, to taste

For the meatballs:

- 1/3 cup homemade or low-sodium store-bought chicken stock
- 1/4 of a medium yellow onion, peeled and sliced
- 1 clove garlic, peeled
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

- 1/2 pound ground beef
- 1/2 pound ground pork
- 1/2 pound ground veal
- 1/3 cup plain bread crumbs
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, plus more for serving
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Extra virgin olive oil

(continued on next page)

Rocco DiSpirito's "Mama's Meatballs"

Homemade marinara sauce elevates classic meatballs

- **Make the marinara:** Heat a Dutch oven or stockpot over medium heat. When hot, add the olive oil, onions, and garlic, then cook for about 10 minutes, or until garlic is tender and onions are translucent but not browned.

- **Push everything to the sides** of the pot and add the tomato paste in the center. Cook it until it turns a deep brownish red (this intensifies its flavor), then fold in the onions and garlic. Add the tomato purée and crushed tomatoes. Pour the chicken stock into one of the empty 28-ounce cans, swirl it around, fill it to the top with water, and add to the pot along with the sugar. Stir and bring to a simmer. Taste and season with salt

and red pepper flakes.

- **Cover and simmer** the sauce for about 1 hour. It should be smooth and fairly thin but not watery. Uncover and simmer for 3 minutes if you'd rather make a thicker sauce, or if it seems too thick, add a little water. Set aside and keep warm. Yields about 6 cups.

- **Make the meatballs:** Place the chicken stock, onion, garlic, and parsley in a blender or food processor and purée. Transfer to a large bowl and add the meat, breadcrumbs, eggs, Parmigiano-Reggiano, red pepper flakes, and salt. Combine with both hands until the mixture is uniform, but don't overmix.

- **Put a little** olive oil on your hands, scoop out about 1/4 cup of the meat mixture, and form into a ball. Repeat with the rest of the meat. If you prefer bigger or smaller meatballs, adjust the browning time in the next step.

- **Heat a 10-inch-wide** and straight-sided sauté pan over medium-high heat; when hot, pour in about 1/2 inch of extra virgin olive oil. Add the meatballs to the pan (working in batches if necessary) and brown, turning once. This will take about 10 to 15 minutes. Once the meatballs have browned, use a slotted spoon to transfer them to the pot with the marinara. Stir gently and simmer for 1 hour. Serve with grated Parmigiano-Reggiano. *Yields 4 to 6 servings*



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Cauliflower Pizzaiola

The ultimate answer to crustless pizza

These days, cauliflower is on menus all over the globe, prepared a myriad of ways because it makes such a great canvas for spices. But I'll never forget the meal I had at the legendary Charlie Trotter's Chicago restaurant back in the late '90s. It was the first time I ever had cauliflower steak and it was completely innovative. Trotter was already a legend for elevating vegetables to the starring role at the table, and for me, as a young culinary student, the dish was an eye-opener. Craving low-carb pizza? Skip the supermarket's processed cauliflower crusts and build your pizza on a just-roasted cauliflower steak.

2 large heads of cauliflower

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil,
more as needed

Coarse salt and freshly cracked black
pepper, as needed

1 cup marinara sauce, store-bought
or homemade (see "**Rocco
DiSpirito's Mama's Meatballs**" on
page 30)

8 ounces shredded mozzarella

1 ounce freshly grated Reggiano-
Parmigiano

Optional seasonings: granulated
garlic and crushed red pepper
flakes

- **Preheat your oven** to 400°F. Prep the cauliflower: Remove the green outer leaves from each head and carefully trim back the stem. Stand the cauliflower upright on a cutting board and cut two or three "steaks," each about 3/4-inch thick, from the center



of each head. Reserve the remaining cauliflower for another dish.

- **Arrange the steaks** on a rimmed sheet pan (you may need an additional sheet pan if the heads are very large). Brush both sides of each steak with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast, flipping once with a metal spatula, until the cauliflower

Technique: Cauliflower Rice

This is an excellent substitute for regular rice to both save on carbs and get in lots of nutrients, and it's a wonderful way to use leftover cauliflower. Cut florets into even chunks and pulse a few times in a food processor until they turn into rice-like pieces.

is tender and both sides are lightly browned, about 30 minutes. Take the sheet pan out of the oven and set the oven to broil. Top each steak with equal amounts of marinara sauce and the cheeses and place under the broiler for about 2 minutes—don't walk away as the cheese will melt quite quickly. Season as desired. *Yields 4 servings*

Roasted Squash and Sage Risotto

A recipe that demystifies Italy's signature rice dish

Risotto is a time-honored classic from Milan in northern Italy, where the culinary emphasis is on dairy, unlike the tomato-based dishes of the south. It's a bit labor-intensive because you must slowly add liquid to the rice and stir constantly to coax it to creamy perfection. Once you know the basics, experiment with different ingredients—shrimp, wild mushrooms, peas, leeks...risotto is infinitely customizable.

- 1 1/2-pounds squash, such as Hubbard or kabocha
- 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided use
- 3 large fresh sage leaves, finely minced
- 1 leek, trimmed, cleaned, and thinly sliced crosswise (see “Technique” on page 7)
- 5 to 6 cups homemade or low-sodium store-bought chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 1/2 cups raw rice, such as Carnaroli, Vialone Nano, or Arborio
- 1 cup dry white wine, warmed
- Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, plus more for serving
- 5 ounces baby spinach, rinsed and patted dry with paper towels
- Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

- **Preheat your oven** to 400°F. Peel, seed, and cut the squash into 1-inch cubes to make 2 cups (if your yield



is higher, roast them all and save the extra squash to toss in a salad the next day). Place 2 tablespoons of the olive oil on a rimmed sheet pan, add the squash and sage, and toss to coat. Bake for 30 minutes or until tender, flipping the cubes with a metal spatula at the halfway point.

- **Meanwhile, heat a** large, heavy sauté pan over medium-low heat. When hot, add the remaining 3 tablespoons of olive oil and the leeks, sautéing them until soft, but don't let them brown. While they're cooking, heat the stock

in a saucepan on an adjacent burner. Once the leeks are soft, immediately add the rice to the sauté pan and stir to thoroughly coat with the oil. Cook until the rice is slightly translucent, about 7 to 10 minutes.

- **Increase the heat** under the rice to medium, add the wine and nutmeg, and stir until the liquid has nearly evaporated. Ladle a cup of the hot stock into the rice mixture and stir attentively. When the liquid has mostly been absorbed, stir in another cup of

(continued on next page)

Roasted Squash and Sage Risotto

A recipe that demystifies Italy's signature rice dish

hot stock. Repeat until the rice is nearly al dente, about 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in the 1/2 cup of Parmigiano-Reggiano, the roasted squash, and the spinach. Cook for 3 to 5 minutes, until the squash is warmed through and the spinach is wilted. If the risotto seems a bit dry, add a little more stock. Season to taste—the risotto might taste salty enough from the cheese, but will benefit from a few twists of a pepper grinder. Top with more grated cheese and serve immediately.

Yields 4 servings

Not a Club member?

Please see page 3 for your special invitation.

Technique: Prepping Winter Squash

For a quick hack, I love buying precut squash chunks because most varieties have thick skin that can be difficult to deal with. But I don't want you to be deterred from buying whole squash at a farmers' market or even growing your own. Here's a great and easy prep:

Use a sharp paring knife (dull knives are a real danger in the kitchen) to make a 1/8-inch-deep cut lengthwise around the circumference of the squash, and then pierce it all over just as you would a sweet potato. Place it on five or six stacked paper towels and microwave it—3 minutes for a small squash, 5 minutes for a large one. This won't cook the squash, but it will make it easier to cut. Use oven mitts to remove the squash from the microwave and let it cool for a few minutes. Next, use a sturdy kitchen knife to go through the cut line you made to separate it into halves. With a soup or grapefruit spoon, scoop out all the strings and seeds and proceed with your recipe.

If you're prepping cubes for a recipe, use a vegetable peeler to remove the skin at this point, but if the recipe calls for roasting squash halves, leave the skin on while roasting; it will come off very easily afterward.

For more on winter squash, see "Sheet-Pan Roasted Vegetables" on page 38.

Ingredient Spotlight: The Best Rice Choices for Risotto

A short-grain rice is a must for risotto—jasmine and basmati rice just don't give off enough starch to create a creamy dish. Most risotto recipes designed for the American kitchen call for Arborio, a great choice. But most Italians prefer Carnaroli rice because it keeps

its shape better—it's harder to overcook, making your risotto more foolproof as well as light and creamy. Now, just to make things more interesting, around Venice the favorite is Vialone Nano, grown only in the province of Verona. It, too, stays firm while creating a light and creamy dish. Gustiamo.com sells both kinds if you'd like to do your own taste test. Whatever rice you choose, do

not rinse it—you want its starch intact. The cooking liquid, usually broth, must be kept hot in a second pot on the stove so that the temperature of the risotto stays consistent as you ladle it in. Something I find really helpful, though not traditional, is to use a small metal spatula with a straight, blunt edge to stir the risotto because it makes better contact with the pan than a spoon.

Ragout of Beef Dijonnaise

A French bistro classic right in your own home

For a soul-satisfying dish, this stew can't be beat. It requires a slow simmer, but is great as a do-ahead meal that gets better with age. Make it over a weekend and savor it mid-week when you're too tired to cook. It's delicious over wide egg noodles or mashed potatoes.

- 6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided use
- 2 thick slices of bacon, cut into small pieces
- 12 pearl onions, peeled
- 6 shallots, peeled and halved
- 1 pound cremini (baby bella) mushrooms, rinsed, trimmed as needed, and halved
- 2 pounds "petit beef filet" or beef shoulder steak, cut into in 1 1/2-inch cubes
- 2–3 tablespoons white whole-wheat flour or unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper



- 1/4 cup cognac or brandy
 - 1/2 cup dry red wine
 - 3 cups homemade or low-sodium store-bought beef stock
 - 1/2 cup Dijon mustard
 - 4 tablespoons grainy mustard
 - 6 large carrots, peeled, trimmed, and cut into 3-inch pieces
- **Heat a Dutch** oven or stockpot over medium heat. Add one tablespoon of olive oil and the bacon; cook until the bacon is crisp. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the bacon to a small bowl. Sauté the onions and shallots in the fat until tender, about 15 minutes. Use the slotted spoon to transfer them to a large bowl. Add another tablespoon of oil to the pot and sauté the mushrooms just until they soften, then transfer them to the bowl with the bacon.
- **In a clean** bowl, whisk together 2 tablespoons of the flour, salt, and

pepper. Toss in the beef cubes, coating them well (sprinkle on the third tablespoon of flour if needed). Add another two tablespoons of oil to the pot and sauté the beef in two to three batches as necessary to avoid crowding them. (Add another tablespoon or two of oil with each batch.) Brown the beef cubes on all sides, using tongs to turn them, then transfer them to the bowl with the onions and shallots.

• **Pour the cognac** or brandy and the wine into the pot to deglaze it, using a silicone spatula to get up all the bits of fond that formed on the bottom. Whisk in the beef stock and both mustards. Add back the onions, shallots, and beef, and reduce the heat to a simmer. Add the carrots and cook, partially covered, for about 2 hours. To finish, add back the mushrooms and the bacon bits and heat through. *Yields 8 servings*



Bourbon Sweet Potatoes

A comfort food that's also nutritious

High in beta-carotene and other important vitamins and minerals, sweet potatoes are great on their own, but this prep elevates them even further. Teetotalers can substitute apple cider for the bourbon.

3 pounds sweet potatoes of even size

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil,
divided use

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

3 tablespoons brown sugar

2 tablespoons bourbon

1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt

1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black
pepper

• **Preheat your oven** to 400°F. Place the potatoes on a rimmed baking sheet, prick them all over with the tip of a sharp knife, and drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Roast until the tip of a knife slides easily through them, between 60 and 75 minutes. When just

cool enough to handle, peel off and discard the skins.

• **Transfer the potatoes** to a large bowl and mash them to your desired consistency—smooth or with a few chunks left. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil and the rest of the ingredients and blend well. Serve at room temperature or reheat on the stove or in the microwave. *Yields 6 servings*

Sweet and Spicy Brussels Sprouts

This wonderful winter vegetable gets the star treatment

Elevate oven-roasted Brussels sprouts with this spicy Asian sauce.

1 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed
and cut in half lengthwise
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon sea salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black
pepper
3 tablespoons chili garlic sauce,
more to taste
4 tablespoons rice wine
4 tablespoons soy sauce

6 tablespoons brown sugar
1/2 cup unsalted roasted peanuts

- **Preheat your oven** to 400°F. Place the Brussels sprouts on a rimmed baking sheet, toss with the olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Roast, turning once, until tender and lightly browned on the edges, 20 to 25 minutes.

- **While the Brussels** sprouts are roasting, prepare the sauce: In a medium saucepan, stir together the chili garlic sauce, rice wine, soy sauce, and brown sugar, and heat through.

- **As soon as** the Brussels sprouts are done, transfer them to a large bowl, toss with the sauce, and top with the peanuts.

Yields 4 to 6 servings





Sheet-Pan Roasted Vegetables

A simple technique for a perfectly cooked medley

This dish brings together a rainbow of both familiar and exotic veggies—feel free to substitute depending on what’s available in your area. Slow roasting brings out the flavors in each ingredient, so you get different taste sensations with every bite. Using a very wide selection of vegetables also makes this a great main dish. If there are any leftovers, I like to add just a splash of balsamic vinegar and enjoy them cold for lunch the next day.

4 parsnips, trimmed, peeled, and cut into 2-inch sections

6 large carrots, trimmed, peeled, and cut into 2-inch sections

1 small butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 2-inch chunks

4 yellow or candy stripe beets, peeled and cut into small wedges

2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves or 1 teaspoon dried, divided use

6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided use, plus more for drizzling

Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

2 fennel bulbs, trimmed and cut into wedges

2 red onions, trimmed, peeled, and cut into wedges

1 sweet onion, trimmed, peeled, and cut into wedges

1/2 pound sunchokes, peeled and halved

Maldon sea salt flakes, for finishing

• **Preheat your oven** to 400°F.

Combine the hard vegetables—parsnips, carrots, squash, and beets—in a large bowl along with half the thyme and half the olive oil. Add salt and pepper, and stir gently to coat the vegetables evenly. Repeat these steps in a separate bowl with the softer vegetables—the fennel, onions, and sunchokes.

(continued on next page)

Sheet-Pan Roasted Vegetables

A simple technique for a perfectly cooked medley

- **Transfer the hard** vegetables to a rimmed sheet pan or roasting pan large enough to hold them in one layer without touching (they need room to get a nice crisp on the edges) and place in the hot oven. After 30 minutes, transfer the soft vegetables to a second rimmed sheet pan, place it in the oven as well, and continue cooking for another 30 minutes or so until all the veggies are tender in the center and caramelized. For even browning, use a spatula to occasionally flip them throughout the roasting process.

- **Arrange the vegetables** on a large serving platter, drizzle with more olive oil, and sprinkle with a few grains of the Maldon salt. *Yields 8 servings*



Ingredient Spotlight: Winter Squash

Pumpkin steals the spotlight for holiday pies, but winter squash varieties get the glory for sweet side dishes without the need for sugar. Many are nearly as sweet as sweet potatoes, plus they have all the nutrients, like vitamin A, with fewer calories.

Acorn: The yellow flesh of this small round, ribbed squash is more savory than sweet. Look for mostly green skin—too much orange means it's past its prime.

Butternut: This cream-colored squash with a rounded bottom and long neck has sweet orange flesh.

Delicata: Oval in shape with light yellow and green stripes, this squash has yellow flesh and a mild flavor.

Hubbard: With its gnarly, pale blue-green skin and large size, you might overlook this variety, but its orange flesh is rich and sweet. (There's also a Hubbard variety that's small and orange.)

Kabocha: Available in dark green or red, kabocha is among the sweetest of squashes—a great change of pace from pumpkin in desserts.

Spaghetti: Milder and lighter in color (both the rind and the flesh) than other types, this squash separates into thin spaghetti-like strands when raked with a fork after roasting, making it the perfect sub for pasta.

Sweet Dumpling: This one's close in size to acorn squash but has a much sweeter taste, plus the skin is thin enough to eat.

Regardless of variety, a squash should feel firm and be free of soft spots and bruises. Most will keep up to a month or two in a cool, dry location.

Dried Apricot and Cranberry Pilaf

A sweet and savory side that's perfect with any protein

Rice is the perfect vehicle for a wide range of flavors, both sweet and savory. I'm a fan of the subtle aroma of jasmine rice for pilaf, but any long grain rice will work. Dried apricots and cranberries give this dish a sweet-tart taste, but feel free to use whatever dried fruits you like, instead of or even in addition to them.



2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
1 cup raw jasmine or basmati rice
2 1/4 cups homemade or low-sodium store-bought chicken stock
1/2 cup dried apricots, chopped fine
1/3 cup dried cranberries, chopped fine
3 tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted

2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
1 medium orange for zesting
Pinch of cinnamon (optional)

• **Heat a 3-quart** saucepan over medium heat. When hot, add the olive oil and sauté the diced onion until translucent; lower the heat as needed

Technique: Quick Stock

Stock adds far more flavor than water to recipes that require a cooking liquid. Many home chefs know the value of devoting a few hours every month or so to making a large batch of chicken stock and storing it in containers in the freezer for future use. You can also make a small batch on the fly whenever you buy (or make) a rotisserie chicken for dinner. After enjoying all the meat, place the chicken carcass in a crockpot with a stalk of celery, a carrot or two, a sliced onion, a garlic clove, a teaspoon of mixed dried herbs, a few black peppercorns, and, if you have one, a leek. Add water to cover and set the machine according to the manufacturer's directions.

to keep it from browning. Add the rice, stirring to coat it in the oil (this helps keep the grains distinct in the finished dish). Stir in the broth and bring to

(continued on next page)

Dried Apricot and Cranberry Pilaf

A sweet and savory side that's perfect with any protein

a low boil, cover, and cook until the rice is tender and most of the liquid is absorbed, about 20 minutes. Stir in the apricots and cranberries and remove the pan from the heat. Put the cover back on, wait 5 minutes, then fluff the rice with a fork. Stir in the almonds, parsley, and black pepper. Transfer to a serving bowl and zest the orange right over the top with a Microplane grater. Sprinkle with cinnamon, if desired.

Yields 4 servings

Ingredient Spotlight: Dried Fruits

Dried fruits, such as apricots, cranberries, raisins, and prunes, are great for recipes like pilaf because they add flavor without unwanted moisture. They also make terrific fiber- and nutrient-rich snacks, especially when mixed with heart-healthy nuts like almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, and pistachios. When shopping, read labels to avoid brands with added sugars—with the exception of cranberries, they should be sweet enough on their own. Note that while fiber is more concentrated when a fruit is dried, vitamins A and C are often lost, so dried foods shouldn't replace all the fresh fruit in your diet.



Fresh-pressed
olive oil enhances
all these recipes.

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Club member?*

You'll love ❤️ the
Fresh-Pressed
Olive Oil Club!

Please see why
on page 49.



Roasted Potatoes

Crispy on the outside, tender on the inside

A sensational alternative to French fries with healthy fat and less fuss!

- 1 pound mixed baby potatoes,
halved if large
- 8 unpeeled garlic cloves
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse salt, plus more
for serving
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black
pepper, plus more for serving
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh
flat-leaf parsley

- **Preheat your oven** to 400°F. In a large bowl, toss the potatoes and garlic with the oil, salt, and pepper. Spread out on a rimmed sheet pan and roast until tender on the inside (test with the tip of a sharp knife), 40 to 60 minutes, depending on your oven; toss with a metal spatula every 20 minutes for even browning. Sprinkle with the parsley and more salt and pepper before serving. *Yields 4 servings*

Ingredient Spotlight: Coarse Salts for Finishing

I love the slight crunch of a high-quality finishing salt with a noticeable texture, like Maldon sea salt flakes, Himalayan sea salt, and Australia's Murray River sea salt flakes. When you sprinkle these coarser grains on a dish right before serving, you'll see and taste the salt more but actually use less. You'll also get some natural minerals.

Graham Cracker Icebox Cake

Cookies and cream with a ganache glaze

Reminiscent of tiramisu, this dessert has layers of flavors that meld overnight in the fridge. It requires a lot of chilling time, but not much actual cooking. The seeds of the vanilla bean give the custard extra flavor, but you can substitute 1 tablespoon of extract—add it along with the olive oil.

- 2 large eggs
- 4 large egg yolks
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 6 tablespoons cornstarch
- 3 cups fat-free milk
- 1 vanilla bean
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2-1/2 cups heavy cream, divided use
- One 14-ounce box graham crackers
- 4 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
- 10 ounces dark chocolate, between 60%-70% cacao

- **In a large** saucepan, whisk the eggs, yolks, sugar, and cornstarch until well blended. Slowly whisk in the milk. Use the tip of a sharp knife to slit open the vanilla bean and remove all the seeds. Whisk the seeds into the egg mixture, then add in the pod.

- **Slowly bring the** mixture to a simmer over medium heat, whisking continuously to prevent it from sticking and the eggs from curdling. It will thicken and then come to a boil. Let it



boil for about a minute, always whisking. When thick, turn off the heat.

- **Set a large** strainer over a bowl and strain the custard through it, pressing lightly with the back of a large spoon; when finished, use the spoon to scrape off any custard clinging to the bottom of the strainer. Whisk in the olive oil, then let cool to room temperature. Refrigerate until cold and firm, about 3 hours.

- **When ready to** assemble, whip 1-1/2 cups heavy cream and the

confectioners' sugar until stiff. Fold in the chilled custard.

- **Place a layer** of graham crackers in the bottom of a 9-inch x 13-inch dish. Top with half the custard mixture, spreading it out evenly and into the corners of the dish. Arrange another layer of grahams on top, then the rest of the custard. Top with a final layer of grahams. Refrigerate for an hour to set the custard.

- **For the ganache** glaze, place the chocolate and the remaining cup heavy cream in a microwave-safe bowl and melt in the microwave for 3 minutes at 50% power. If needed, microwave for another 30 seconds. Whisk to blend thoroughly, then pour over the top of the cake, smoothing it out with a long offset spatula. Refrigerate uncovered for 30 minutes to set the glaze, then cover with plastic wrap or foil and chill overnight—it will take that long for the grahams to fully soften.

Yields 12 servings



Passionfruit Dream

A silky mousse-like dessert

Made with passionfruit fruit curd and the Icelandic style of yogurt called skyr, this creamy dessert is ultra-rich yet low in saturated fat. While you can use pulp from fresh passionfruit (you'll need 12 or more large ones), some brands, including Goya, sell 14-ounce packages of frozen pulp, which yields enough for this recipe; defrost before using.

1/2 cup sugar
 3 tablespoons cornstarch
 4 large eggs
 1-3/4 cups passionfruit pulp
 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 3 cups plain fat-free skyr
 Optional garnish: fresh raspberries
 or pomegranate arils

- **In a medium** saucepan, whisk together the sugar and cornstarch, then whisk in the eggs, one at a time, followed by the passionfruit. Bring to a low boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Let boil for one minute and take off the heat; it should be thick. Whisk in the olive oil and vanilla until fully blended.

- **Transfer to a glass bowl** and cool

to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate for 1 hour up to overnight. The curd will continue to thicken as it cools.

- **When ready to serve**, use a spatula to fold the skyr into the passionfruit curd until well blended, then spoon into 6 serving cups. Garnish if desired.

Yields 6 servings

Glazed Banana Walnut Loaf

A perfect ending for winter meals

A sweet glaze turns classic banana bread into a satisfying dessert. For an even sweeter touch, fold 1/2 cup mini chocolate chips into the batter along with the walnuts.

- 1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup white whole wheat flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1-1/2 cups mashed overripe bananas, from about 3 large ones
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 2 extra-large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1/2 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped

For the glaze and finish:

- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk, plus more as needed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 firm banana, sliced
- **To make the loaf**, preheat your oven to 350°F. Line a 9-inch by 5-inch loaf pan with parchment paper, using



enough for an overhang of 2 inches on the long sides of the pan; set aside.

- **In a medium** bowl, mix the flours, baking powder, baking soda, nutmeg, ginger, cinnamon, and salt. In a large bowl, mix the mashed bananas with the olive oil, sour cream, sugar, eggs, and vanilla. Use a rubber spatula to fold in the nuts (and chocolate chips, if including) and then the flour mixture.

- **Transfer the batter** to the loaf pan and smooth the top with an offset spatula. Bake for 60 to 65 minutes, or until a knife tip inserted in the center comes

out clean. Let cool slightly before lifting the loaf from the pan by the sides of the parchment. Use a cake spatula to lift the loaf off the paper and transfer it to a rack to finish cooling.

- **When the loaf** reaches room temperature, mix the confectioners' sugar, milk, and vanilla until it forms a smooth glaze; add more milk if needed. Drizzle the glaze over the loaf. Right before serving, cut the banana into slices and arrange them on top of the loaf. Use a serrated knife for easier slicing. *Yields 8 to 10 servings*

Olive Oil Lemon Loaf

This citrus-infused cake is also oh-so-satisfying as an afternoon treat

Olive oil creates a tender and moist loaf that hardly needs any embellishment—just a drizzle of icing. If you want a more festive finish, sprinkle chopped pistachios over the top while the icing is still wet. Use a serrated knife for easy slicing.

For the loaf:

- 3 large eggs
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, plus more for the loaf pan
- 1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup pastry flour
- 1/2 cup white whole-wheat pastry flour
- 2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt

For the icing:

- 1–2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest, or more to taste

• **Bring the eggs,** ricotta, and yogurt to room temperature. Preheat your oven to 350°F. Lightly brush the inside of a 9-inch by 5-inch loaf pan with olive oil; set aside.



• **In a large bowl,** whisk the eggs until no whites are visible, then slowly whisk in the sugar, followed by the ricotta, yogurt, the 3/4 cup olive oil, lemon zest, and vanilla. In a separate bowl, combine the flours, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Fold it into the egg-oil mixture with a spatula until combined.

• **Pour the batter** into the pan and bake for 50 to 60 minutes, depending

on your oven. The cake is done when a dinner knife inserted in its center comes out clean. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack to cool to room temperature.

• **To make the icing,** whisk the juice and sugar until incorporated, and drizzle it over the cooled cake. Sprinkle on the zest and let the icing set for about 15 minutes before serving. *Yields 10 servings*

Blood Orange Mousse

The perfect marriage of orange curd and whipped cream

Extra virgin olive oil gives classic fruit curd all the silkiness of butter without its saturated fat. It's delicious spooned over thick yogurt and topped with berries...and magical when folded into whipped cream for mousse.



- 3 blood or Cara Cara oranges
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 3 large eggs, plus 1 yolk
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of sea salt
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
- Optional topping: candied orange peel

• **Rinse the oranges**, dry them thoroughly, then zest them with a Microplane grater; you should have a

generous tablespoon of zest. Juice the oranges; you should have about a cup of juice. Some pulp is fine to include, but remove any seeds.

• **In a small cup**, dissolve the cornstarch in 1/4 cup of the orange juice. In a heavy-bottomed 3-quart saucepan, use a silicone whisk to blend the eggs thoroughly, then whisk in one ingredient at a time in this order: the sugar, the cornstarch mixture, the rest of the orange juice, zest, vanilla, and salt—this will give you the silkiest results without needing to strain the mixture after cooking.

• **Place the pan** over medium heat and continue to whisk as you bring the mixture to a very low boil. Cook for 2 minutes to activate the cornstarch, lowering the heat if necessary to prevent a rapid boil. The curd will get thick very quickly.

• **Off the heat**, whisk in the olive oil until well blended and the curd is smooth. Pour the curd into a glass

Not a Club member?

For maximum flavor in all these recipes, be sure to use fresh-pressed olive oil.

To join the Club, see page 3.

Ingredient Spotlight: Blood Oranges

Along with its cousin, the Cara Cara orange, the blood orange is deep ruby-red in color (thanks to its anthocyanins, plant compounds that fight inflammation) and extra sweet in taste. Harvested in the winter, primarily in California and Texas, these oranges are also a great source of vitamin C.

bowl, and allow it to come to room temperature before covering and placing in the fridge to chill.

• **To finish, whip** the cream and confectioner's sugar until stiff peaks form, and then fold in the chilled curd. You don't have to be completely thorough. Serve in a large bowl or spoon into wide glass tumblers. Top with candied orange peel if desired. *Yields 6 servings*

Chocolate Dream

Luscious on its own or as a more elaborate dessert

This pot-de-crème-inspired chocolate dessert is simplicity itself, rich and creamy. Enjoy it as is or as the filling for an 8-inch tart—it's sensational with a pistachio crust.



10 ounces bittersweet chocolate pieces

1 1/2 cups half-and-half

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

- **Place the chocolate** in a large heat-proof glass bowl. In a saucepan over medium heat, bring the half-and-half to a simmer and immediately pour it over the chocolate. Wait 5 minutes and then stir until the chocolate is fully melted. Stir in the olive oil until well blended. Pour into four small dessert bowls or coupe glasses and refrigerate until firm, 4 hours to overnight.

Yields 4 servings

Ingredient Spotlight: Choosing Chocolate

Chocolate often gets a bad rap because of its high sugar content. For less sugar and more flavanols—one of the most important polyphenols in cacao—swap semisweet and milk chocolates for dark varieties with about 70% cacao. One ounce of a 70% chocolate has just 13 carb grams, three of which are healthy fiber.

Technique: Melting Chocolate

Buy coin-shaped wafers from brands like Valrhona, Callebaut, and Guittard because they melt very quickly. If you use bars, chop them coarsely before melting. (Save chocolate chips for cookies because they're made to not melt completely.)

An easy way to melt chocolate and cool it slightly before adding it to other ingredients is to place three-quarters of the needed amount in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave on the 50% setting for 1 minute at a time. When the chocolate has melted, add the reserved chocolate to the bowl, let it all sit for a minute, then fold it together—as the additional chocolate melts, it will also bring down the temperature of the microwaved chocolate.

Rave Reviews for Fresh-Pressed Olive Oil

Here's what Club members are saying...

"I have died and gone to Italy!!! I love the olive oils. Drizzled over freshly steamed vegetables, blended with fresh parsley and lemon served atop a grilled veal chop or steak, it's amazing and I want more...I've used it on salad, my homemade grill 'Lahvish' pizza, fresh figs stuffed with gorgonzola, my white bean and rosemary/garlic dip, served on a garlic rubbed baguette, and more. Can you feel the love? What else can I say, the love goes on ... and on ... thank you!!!!!!!!!!!!!" —*Jennifer L. Gower, Newport, RI*

"Yes, yes, yes, it was that mind-blowing and more! We usually just use the oil for dipping, and I pour it over feta cheese. As soon as you open the bottle the aroma is fantastic. It reminds me of when I was a little girl and my grandfather came back from Greece and he brought back olive oil just like that. It had that dark green color and smell. Please if I can buy more please let me know."

—*Diane Vourderis, Staten Island, NY*

"Had a little gathering on Super Bowl Sunday. Lined up the three bottles you sent and put a little of each in dipping dishes. Served with sour dough bread chunks. It was the most loved munchie we had. Many different opinions on which oil was the best, but a unanimous 'best olive oils ever' for the set of three. Makes a plain old ordinary salad sing. I had bought two additional sets of bottles for gifts, and both of the recipients would like to know how to get more of this liquid gold. It is so nice to have you scouring the earth for me. Thanks." —*Annie Osteen, Copperopolis, CA*

"Wow. I gave two sets as gifts. The folks loved it. Drizzled on tomatoes, mozzarella & basil, a hit. I've made the best salad dressing ever. Nice to have 3 choices. It's now my surprise ingredient."

—*Cynthia Cable, Rochester, NY*

"As a professional cook, caterer, and recipe developer in NYC, I am always on the hunt for the freshest and best-quality ingredients. There is simply nothing available for purchase online, or in any specialty market anywhere, that comes close to the quality of your olive oils. Every season I eagerly await my next shipment of your olive oils, and each time I am surprised and delighted. Your oils are my go-to condiment of choice and my 'secret weapon'—I use them to finish almost every dish I make. Their vibrancy and freshness make everything I cook come alive. I can't wait to see what's coming next." —*Jill P., New York, NY*

"The oil arrived yesterday and I opened it and used it on my salad. Words cannot describe. I am delighted and look forward to receiving more oil in the future. Thank you for sourcing this out and making it available. Pssst—since no one else was around, I even licked my plate clean—yummy!" —*Joy C., Salem, OR*

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