

ANTHONY BOURDAIN

with
LAURIE WOOLEVER



APPETITES

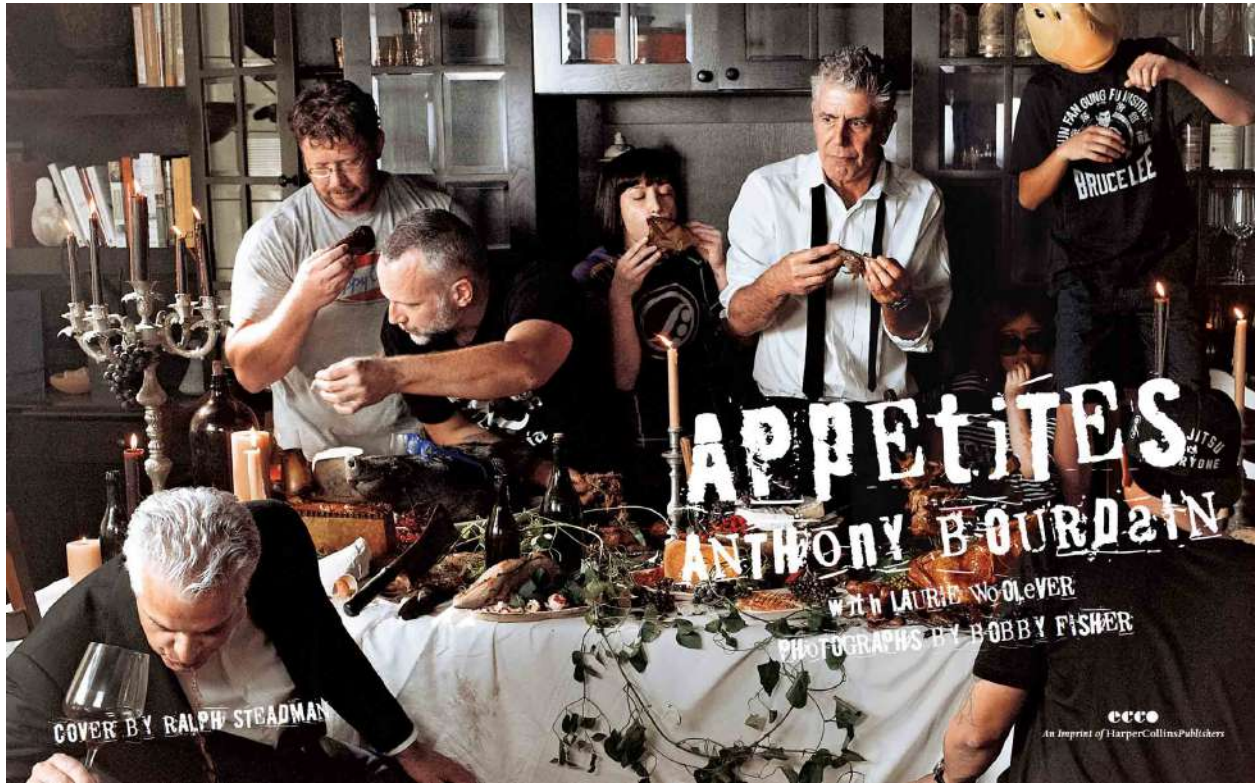
A COOKBOOK

ANTHONY BOURDAIN

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APPETITES A COOKBOOK



COVER BY RALPH STEADMAN

APPETITES

ANTHONY BOURDAIN

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DEDICATION

To Ariane and Jacques

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Dedication
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Woolever

INTRODUCTION

All happy families are alike . . .

—Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*

Tolstoy clearly never spent any time with my happy family.

My eight-year-old daughter, Ariane, does a terrific imitation of my wife threatening to choke a taxi driver. It's something she's seen often enough to get dead right—my wife's Italian accent, her anger, her exasperation as the driver takes yet another wrong turn on the way to my daughter's school, and finally the kicker: "I'm going to *keel* you with my bare-a hands!"

It has been many months, maybe years, since anyone has seen my wife out of her regular attire of rash guard and spats. She's a martial artist, a purple belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu, and she trains full-time, seven days a week. Most of her efforts are spent practicing horrifying new ways to quickly, forcibly manipulate opponents' feet, ankles, and knees in such ways as to permanently damage their tendons and ligaments.

I travel the world for a living. On any given day, I'm as likely to be found in a longhouse in Sarawak, Borneo; in a cafe in Marseille; or in an airport transit lounge in Doha as I am to be found at home. My daughter is used to seeing her father's face on TV and on the sides of city buses, accustomed to seeing him approached by strangers—and is decidedly unimpressed.

Her best friend, Jacques (pronounced "Jax"), from whom she has been inseparable most of her life, is Filipino, part of an extended family who easily spends as much time in our home as anywhere else. English, Italian, and Tagalog are heard interchangeably. My daughter is increasingly fluent in Italian. I am not.

What is it that "normal" people do?

What makes a “normal” happy family?

How do they behave? What do they eat at home? How do they live their lives?

I had little clue how to answer these questions for most of my working life, as I'd been living it on the margins. I didn't know any normal people. From age seventeen on, normal people had been my customers. They were abstractions, literally shadowy silhouettes in the dining rooms of wherever it was I was working at the time. I looked at them through the perspective of the lifelong professional cook and chef—which is to say, as someone who did not have a family life, who knew and associated only with fellow restaurant professionals, who worked while normal people played, and who played while normal people slept.

To the extent that I knew or understood normal people's behaviors, it was to anticipate their immediate desires: Would they be ordering the chicken or the salmon?

I usually saw them only at their worst: hungry, drunk, horny, ill tempered, celebrating good fortune or taking out the bad on their servers.

What they did at home, what it might be like to wake up late on a Sunday morning, make pancakes for a child, watch cartoons, throw a ball around a backyard—these were things I only knew from movies.

The human heart was—and remains—a mystery to me. But I'm learning. I have to.

I became a father at fifty years of age. That's late, I know. But for me, it was just right. At no point previously had I been old enough, settled enough, or mature enough for this, the biggest and most important of jobs: the love and care of another human being.

From the second I saw my daughter's head corkscrewing out of the womb, I began making some major changes in my life. I was no longer the star of my own movie—or any movie. From that point on, it was all about the girl. Like most people who write books or appear on television, who think that anyone would or should care about their story, I am a monster of self-regard. Fatherhood

has been an enormous relief, as I am now genetically, instinctually compelled to care more about someone other than myself. I like being a father. No, I love being a father. Everything about it.

I'm sure my wife has a different view on this, but if I could go back to the diaper-changing, wake-up-in-the-middle-of-the-night-to-soothe-crying-baby phase of fatherhood? I'd be overjoyed.

I recognize that I am, in some ways, overenthusiastic about this late-in-life move into responsible parenting. And that I have a tendency to try to make up for lost time. Since so many of my happiest memories of childhood—summer vacations at the Jersey shore, off-season Montauk, trips to France—are associated with the tastes and smells of the things I ate, I feel uncontrollable urges to smother the people I love with food. I've become the sort of passive-aggressive yenta or Italian grandmother stereotype from films who's always urging people, "Eat! Eat!" and sulking inconsolably when they don't.

This pathology is further complicated by my time as a professional. I have developed work habits that, over three decades, imprinted on me the need to be organized, to have a plan, to rotate stock, to label prepared foodstuffs, and to keep a clean work area.

So on top of my desire to make up for lost time, and my psycho-Ina Garten-like need to feed the people around me, I am obsessive-compulsive in my work habits and anally retentive in ways that you'd find ideal in a professional brunch cook, but probably disturbing in a husband or parent.

That's our family. And this is our family cookbook.

These are the dishes I like to eat and that I like to feed my family and friends. They are the recipes that "work," meaning they've been developed over time and have been informed by repetition and long—and often painful—experience.

As happens in the restaurant business, I will, from time to time, make small incremental sacrifices in "quality" for the often more important matter of serviceability. While it is a laudable ambition to prepare the best risotto in the world, that doesn't mean shit if your guests are sitting around with their stomachs growling, getting progressively drunker, while you dick around in the

kitchen, interminably stirring rice.

Fish served on the bone is admittedly “better.” You, uncertain of your knife skills, struggling to lift a fillet from a cooked Dover sole, tableside, in front of eight guests, might not be.

There is nothing remotely innovative about the recipes in this book. If you are looking for a culinary genius to take you to the Promised Land of next-level creativity, look elsewhere. That ain’t me.

Mostly, these recipes are direct lifts from imperfect memories of childhood favorites: things my mom fed me, things I liked or loved to eat during the happier moments of my life—the kind of food memories I like to share with my daughter—along with a few greatest hits from my travels, and some boiled-down wisdom on subjects like breakfasts and Thanksgiving dinner, presented in an organized and tactically efficient, stress-free way.

One of the first things I discovered as I transitioned into my new “Daddy” phase was that I was usually more frantic preparing a dinner party for five friends at home than I was cranking out five hundred à la carte dinners in a restaurant. The remedy for this anxiety, I’ve found, is to treat my friends or family just like another five-top in a sea of customers—until the food is served. Then I can sit down with them, relax, and enjoy their company. Just like a “normal” dad.

A Note About My Daughter



My daughter, Ariane, is eight years old at the time of this writing. She is mostly obscured in the photos in this book. Being recognized by strangers is as weird

and unnatural a thing as I have ever known, but I'm a big boy. I made my bed, and I won't complain when I have to lie in it. If I'm running through an airport, frantically looking for a bathroom, and a fan stops me for a photograph, this is a small price to pay for all the freedoms and the good things that being the sort of person who gets recognized in airports has brought me. It sure as shit beats working a busy brunch shift. I made an informed decision by writing book after book, by choosing to appear on television. At eighteen, my daughter will be old enough to make those kinds of decisions for herself. It would be wrong for me, or anyone else, to make those decisions for her.

[1] BREAKFAST





I am a very good breakfast and brunch cook. This was, during the darker periods of my employment history, both a blessing and a curse.

No matter how bad things were, how messed up I might have been, however disgraced, however unemployable by polite society, I could always get a job as a

brunch cook.

And while it's nice to know that I can, in a pinch, fall back on a reliable income stream, the smell of breakfast to me will always be the smell of defeat and remind me of the low points of my life when I'd wake up early on Saturdays and Sundays to cook off the bacon, put up the home fries, beat up a shitload of hollandaise, and then sling eggs by the hundreds.

It is because of all those bad associations that, for a long time, I avoided cooking breakfast—at all.

I've lately had to draw frequently on those experiences, because I'm the father of an eight-year-old, who, like most eight-year-olds, digs pancakes, and breakfast in general. So now that I'm cooking for an eight-year-old and her friends, I've acquired more joyous associations with that meal.

For instance, I'm frequently called upon these days to provide efficient pancake service to sleepover parties involving numerous children. And on vacation, I'm more inclined than not to have breakfast ready for houseguests.

So, after all those years of cooking what was essentially—and often literally—short order breakfasts, here is what I've learned.

SCRAMBLED EGGS

Escoffier was said to beat his eggs for scrambling with a fork, a secret clove of garlic affixed to the tines. I don't do that. I believe in eggs, salt, black pepper, and the whole butter that the eggs are cooked in. No milk or cream—or added water—will make a properly cooked order of scrambled eggs any better. I do, however, use a fork.

On a foodie message board a while back, some insufferable food nerd was commenting on an episode of one of Jacques Pépin's PBS cooking shows, in which Jacques had cooked scrambled eggs in a nonstick pan and stirred them with a fork. The offended poster worried out loud that the metal fork would be destructive to the nonstick pan's surface.

You know what? If Jacques Pépin tells you this is how you make a fucking egg? The matter is settled, fuck nuts. Now go back to arguing about Bundt cake recipes.

Here's how to scramble an egg: Break a fresh egg against a flat surface, like a cutting board, and empty it from its shell into a bowl so that you can inspect it for bits of shell, which you should of course remove and discard. Beat it lightly with a fork, dragging the yellow and white through each other. Heat whole butter in a pan. Pour in the egg and work your fork through. Not too vigorously; you want to gently pile the layers as they cook. When the egg is fluffy yet still moist, plate it quickly and serve it immediately. Remember, the eggs will continue to cook out of the pan.

OMELETS





Use fresh eggs, and as with scrambled eggs, break them on a flat surface and into a small bowl. Season with salt and freshly cracked pepper. I do not add milk or water. Just before cooking, and not a moment before, beat the eggs vigorously with a fork, but don't overdo it. Texturally, you want a rippling effect between yolk and albumen—not strips of visible egg white running through your omelet (which you want in scrambled eggs), but not a homogenous, totally smooth consistency either. Beat just until uniformly yellow. No more.

In a nonstick pan, heat a little whole butter. Do *not* brown.

When butter is bubbling, add the eggs and immediately move them around. I use a (relatively) heat-resistant rubber spatula. Jacques Pépin uses a fork. Whatever utensil you use, move it in a figure-eight pattern, drawing the wet eggs to the center and north (twelve o'clock) of the pan, letting the empty spaces that you've created become filled in with wet egg. Incorporate any egg splatter from the edges, not allowing anything to get crisp or more cooked than any other part. Do *not* flip an omelet.

The center of the omelet should still be moist and a tiny bit wet when you remove it from the heat—what the French call *baveuse*.

Plating your omelet is a very important step, and while it looks tricky, it's actually not.

Using a towel to protect your hand from heat, grasp the pan's handle from *underneath* in a V grip with one hand. Lift it up. Holding your plate in the other hand, tilt the pan onto the plate like a closing door, flopping the omelet onto the plate so it folds shut on itself.

If it looks like a pile of crap, not to worry. Lay a clean paper towel over the omelet like a blanket—like you're putting a child to bed. With hands together almost like praying, shape the omelet into a neat crescent: fat in the center, narrower at both ends. This will also sop up any excess butter or oozing egg.

If you're using fillings in your omelet, cook "dry" ingredients like onions, peppers, or ham in the butter in the pan before adding the egg, incorporating them into the actual omelet. Cheese, or anything else soft and likely to ooze, should be gently laid into the center of the cooking eggs just before removing from the fire and plating.

You should be able to make two omelets at once. Probably no more. Unless you're like me.

EGGS BENEDICT

A couple of tips on eggs Benedict: ✖ **Toast your goddamn muffins.** Everybody fucks up the muffin. Lazy line cooks everywhere neglect to toast their English muffins on both sides—they pop them under the salamander, broiling them on one side, and leaving the other side raw, spongy, cold, and tasting of the refrigerator. I hate that. Don't do it. It's a terrible food crime.

✖ **Be sure to grill or at least pan sear your Canadian bacon.**

✖ **Make your hollandaise comfortably ahead of time**—and store it, warm, in a wide-mouthed thermos for service. Nothing's more frustrating than having your hollandaise either break on you, or get too cold. (See [Hollandaise](#).) Poaching eggs is a challenge for most home cooks, and a lot of that stress and failure is due to the making of some bush-league mistakes, so: ✖ **Use a wide-based pot for your poaching water, not a deep one.** A sautoir is perfect. You want to reach into your pot with your slotted spoon at a comfortable angle and lift the eggs out. You're not bobbing for apples.

✖ **Add about ½ teaspoon white vinegar to the water.** It will help the egg whites coagulate and the egg to keep its generally roundish form once poaching.

✖ **Do not drop the eggs into the water.** When the water is at a gentle simmer, slide your already-opened eggs, in individual cups, one after the other, into the water, gently, from the surface. Tilt the cup and let the eggs slowly and gently slide sideways into the water. When done, which is to say cooked until fully formed but still runny in the center, lift each egg gently out of the water with a slotted spoon and serve immediately. . . .

Unless you have made the hubristic decision to serve eggs fucking Benedict to a party of ten guests in your home. Presumably, your guests will want to be served all at the same time, or reasonably close to that ideal. And unless you're a mastermind of brunch with a lot of short-order experience,

it's unlikely you will be able to successfully drill out twenty perfectly poached eggs in under two minutes. So what to do?

Now, I'm not saying you *should* do what I'm about to tell you. I'm just saying you *can* do it. I may or may not have done it when serving six hundred brunches (many of which included eggs bennies) during a three-hour period.

I may or may not have prepoached a shitload of eggs—undercooking them as much as humanly possible—just before service, then floated them in a bus pan filled with ice water.

For service, I'd finish them in seconds—or might have finished them in seconds—by giving them a long dip in simmering water.

You *can* do this successfully and still serve perfectly cooked eggs. It *does* make serving a whole lot of them at a time easier—and removes much of the risk factor.

But, of course, morally, it's just . . . wrong.

BACON



What does everyone want from bacon? The overwhelming likelihood is that they want it, above all other things, crisp. And not burnt.

In my experience, the best way to cook bacon is slightly in advance—in the oven. Set your oven at 350°F. Resist the temptation to set it hotter. Bacon takes a while, but when it starts going, it goes from raw to cooked to shit real quick.

Separate the bacon onto brown baking paper on a sheet pan.

Put in oven. Check often. Chances are, your oven has hot spots. Move the pan around from time to time, rotating, to account for this. If necessary, turn the

bacon over, using tongs or a metal spatula. Remove *just* prior to desired doneness. You can finish it, returning it to the oven if necessary, while your eggs or other items cook.

Hold cooked bacon on the interior pages of the newspaper of record, which have been proven to be among the most hygienic, bacteria-free surfaces you can find anywhere. Really. If you ever need to deliver a baby unexpectedly, just reach for a nearby *New York Times* Styles section. You can be pretty sure nobody has touched that.

HOME FRIES

Home fries almost always suck. They are a perfunctory add-on to most restaurant brunches only because they are cheap, filling, and take up a lot of room on the plate. They are relatively indestructible, meaning that they suck just as much after sitting around for four hours as they do when fresh.

Hash browns are a better idea. But the best idea is no potatoes at all. In my view, a few well-toasted, heavily buttered slices of bread are the perfect accompaniment to an egg breakfast. The combination of runny yolk and buttered, toasted bread is far better than invariably cold, starchy potatoes.

They say breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Maybe.

But the notion that you need a heaping gutload of eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes, *and* bread is grotesque. If you have a hard time tying your shoes after breakfast, or you feel like you really, really need a nap—when you only just woke up an hour ago—there's something wrong.

[2]
FIGHT!





AÇAÍ BOWL



Brazilian jiu-jitsu is a thing in our house. Our lives—all our lives—revolve around training schedules; at any given time, there's a heap of sodden,

frequently blood-smeared *gis* (the two-piece garment, secured by a belt whose color signifies level of expertise, worn by practitioners of jiu-jitsu, karate, and other martial arts) waiting outside the washer, and another set (Mom, Dad, and girl) hanging to dry on a special rack in my daughter's playroom.

Most of our professors are Brazilian, and it is an article of faith among Brazilian practitioners of martial arts that açai, the “miracle jungle fruit of the Amazon,” is the answer to—and cure for—all things, from ineptness at rear naked choke holds to cancer.

Whether the health benefits hold up under scientific scrutiny or not, the stuff is pretty delicious, and it's become a staple in our household. A post-training bowl of icy cold açai puree and fruit? It sure *seems* to make us all feel better.

Serves 2

½ to ¾ cup açai juice, Sambazon brand preferred

2 bananas, peeled

7 ounces frozen unsweetened açai puree, Sambazon brand preferred ¾ cup frozen blueberries

¼ to ½ cup fresh or frozen strawberries or raspberries ½ cup granola, for garnish (optional)

¼ cup cacao nibs, for garnish (optional) **SPECIAL EQUIPMENT**

Vitamix or another blender with a fairly strong motor Place the açai juice and one of the bananas in the blender's pitcher, then add the frozen açai puree, blueberries, and strawberries on top so that the blades suck in the frozen items. Pulse as needed to form a smooth sorbet, scraping down the sides of the pitcher with a spatula as necessary.

Slice the remaining banana. Divide the mixture between two bowls and top each with the garnishes. Serve immediately.





[3]
SALADS







CAESAR SALAD

Caesar salad is of Mexican origin. You probably didn't know that, crediting it instead to the Italians. Nope. Another reason to love Mexico—*unless* you insist on putting sad, overcooked, characterless strips of grilled chicken cutlet on top of it and mashing it down into landfill God does not want you to put chicken in your Caesar.

Serves 4 to 8

2½ cups extra-virgin olive oil

10 oil-packed anchovies, drained 4 garlic cloves: 2 peeled and smashed, 2 peeled and finely chopped 6 slices white sandwich bread, cut into ¾-inch dice

1 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

Juice of 1 lemon (about 2 tablespoons) ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce Dash of Tabasco sauce

3 egg yolks

1 large or 2 small heads of romaine lettuce, dark outermost leaves discarded, washed, chilled, and coarsely chopped 16 boquerones (white-vinegar-cured anchovies packed in oil), drained, for garnish (optional) SPECIAL

EQUIPMENT

Sheet pan lined with newspaper

Food processor or blender

In a wide, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 1 cup of the oil over medium-low heat. Add 4 of the anchovies and the smashed garlic and let cook until the anchovies fall apart and dissolve into the oil, aiding this process by gently mashing them with a wooden spoon. Increase the heat and add the diced bread, cooking for a few minutes and tossing to make sure that the bread is toasted and golden brown on all sides. Use tongs or a slotted spoon to remove the croutons to a mixing bowl, and gently toss with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the grated Parmigiano-Reggiano and salt and pepper. Transfer the croutons to the lined sheet pan to drain.

In the food processor, combine the remaining 6 anchovies, the chopped garlic, mustard, lemon juice, Worcestershire, Tabasco, and egg yolks and puree. Slowly drizzle in the remaining oil and puree until it has all been incorporated. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed.

In a salad bowl, toss the lettuce with the dressing, using enough to coat but not drown the leaves. Add the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano and toss gently again. Distribute the salad among individual plates, and garnish each plate with one or more *boquerones*, if using.

TUNA SALAD

If you're like me, you have certain expectations for your tuna salad based on early, formative tuna-salad experiences. I don't want mine to deviate too far from the lunch counters of my childhood. I want it on sliced white bread. I want it with crisp iceberg lettuce. And I do *not* want any creative additions distracting from the fundamental elements.

However, there's tuna . . . and then there's tuna. I like high-test jarred or canned tuna. Fresh tuna, as any Spaniard will tell you, is not necessarily the best tuna. And some of the canned stuff in Spain, such as Don Bocarte or Ortiz brand *ventresca* tuna belly packed in olive oil, will run you a hundred dollars a can. Buy the best available.

Serves 4 to 6

24 ounces oil-packed tuna, preferably Spanish or Italian varieties (see recipe headnote), drained $\frac{1}{2}$ red onion, peeled and diced (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) 3 ribs celery, diced (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) $\frac{3}{4}$ cup [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 8 to 10 slices of white bread

4 to 6 leaves iceberg lettuce

Place the tuna in a mixing bowl, along with the onion and celery. Add the mayonnaise a little at a time, breaking up the tuna with a fork and mixing as you go—this will give you the option to dial back the mayonnaise if your preference is to go lighter (an impulse I don't necessarily endorse but grudgingly acknowledge). Season the mixture with salt and pepper to taste and serve on bread with lettuce.

CHICKEN SALAD

Chicken salad is a pretty simple thing, which means that you've got to get the details right. What's essential here is how you cut the poached chicken. For proper chicken salad sandwich structure and engineering, I like a small, distinct dice. When the pieces are too large, the salad doesn't hold together as a sandwich filling. By contrast, when they're cut too small, your salad becomes an unappealing mush.

Makes about 1 quart, enough for 4 standard-size sandwiches 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 1½ pounds total) ⅔ cup [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise 1 small red onion, peeled and finely diced (about ¼ cup) 1 rib celery, finely diced

1 teaspoon celery salt

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh tarragon (optional) ¼ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

¼ teaspoon Tabasco sauce

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste Place the chicken in a heavy-bottom pot and cover with cold water. Bring the water to a simmer and cook at that level for 10 minutes, taking care not to let the heat level rise to a boil. Turn off the heat, cover the pot, and let sit for another 10 minutes. Using tongs or a slotted spoon, remove the chicken from the water and let cool, then cut into a ¼-inch dice.

Place the diced chicken in a mixing bowl and use a spatula to fold in the mayonnaise, onion, celery, celery salt, tarragon (if using), Worcestershire, and Tabasco. Taste and season with salt and pepper as necessary.

POTATO SALAD

This is a straight-ahead potato salad, with hard-cooked eggs replaced by bacon. Use good potatoes, don't overcook them, make your own mayonnaise, get the high-end thick-cut bacon (Nueske's, Snake River Farms, Benton's Country Hams, and Zingerman's all have excellent offerings on the web, or seek out the pork guy at your local farmer's market), and pay attention to the seasoning.

Makes about 2 quarts, to serve 8 to 12

2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes (about 6 or 7 large potatoes), peeled and cut into ¾-inch dice

1 tablespoon white vinegar

1 tablespoon kosher salt, plus more to taste

6 ounces thick-cut bacon

1 cup [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

Freshly ground black pepper to taste 1 small red onion, finely diced (about ⅓ cup) 1 rib celery, finely diced

10 to 12 cornichons, finely chopped ¼ cup attractive celery leaves, for garnish (optional) SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Plate lined with newspaper

Place the potatoes in a medium, heavy-bottom pot and cover by 1 inch with cold

water. Add the white vinegar and 1 tablespoon salt, stir lightly, and bring to a boil. Cook for about 10 minutes, until the potatoes are cooked through, then remove from heat, drain, and arrange in a single layer on a sheet pan to cool.

Meanwhile, cook the bacon in a skillet until crisp. Remove from the skillet and drain on the plate lined with newspaper. Once cool enough to handle, cut or crumble the bacon into small pieces.

In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, red wine vinegar, mustard, and salt and pepper to taste. Add the potatoes, bacon, onion, celery, and cornichons and fold together with a spatula. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. Garnish with the celery leaves, if using, and serve.

BOSTON LETTUCE WITH RADISHES, CARROTS, APPLES, AND YOGURT-CHIVE DRESSING

This particular combination of shapes and colors looks pretty and tastes good together, but there's some room for variation here. You can use other greens of a similar texture—red oak, baby arugula, romaine, young spinach—but avoid hardier types like frisée, escarole, or baby kale. Parsley, mint, or basil, or a combination, would work well in place of chives. Champagne, red or white wine, or apple cider vinegar can sub in for lemon juice, but don't use balsamic, which tips the balance into unconscionably sweet territory. When prepping your raw salad ingredients, remember that apples (and, to a lesser extent, radishes) turn brown once exposed to air, so don't do that prep too far in advance, or hit them with some lemon juice to forestall the inevitable.

Serves 4 to 8

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole milk yogurt

3 tablespoons best-quality extra-virgin olive oil 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed
lemon juice

1 teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 teaspoon fish sauce (optional but highly recommended)

3 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Head of Boston lettuce, washed and torn into bite-size pieces 3 red radishes (or 1
Watermelon or Breakfast radish), scrubbed and very thinly sliced 1 large or 2

medium carrots, peeled and coarsely grated 1 apple, preferably a semitart variety, cored and julienned In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the yogurt, oil, lemon juice, salt, pepper, fish sauce (if using), and chives. Taste and adjust seasoning as desired.

Arrange the lettuce, radishes, carrots, and apple in a salad bowl and toss together if you'll be dressing the salad in the kitchen (in which case you need to wait until guests are seated and chilled salad plates are at the ready before doing so, because once the acidic yogurt hits the salad, it starts breaking it down and making it look decidedly less lovely). Alternatively, do not toss the salad ingredients but instead leave segregated, as for *salade composée*, in which case you should serve the dressing alongside.

ICEBERG WEDGE WITH STILTON AND PANCETTA



Remember when everybody looked down on iceberg lettuce? When it was suddenly gone from menus everywhere? Me neither. Let's pretend it never happened.

Serves 6

6 ounces pancetta, cut into cubes 8 ounces Stilton or other high-quality blue cheese, crumbled $\frac{1}{4}$ cup [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise 2 tablespoons canola oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste Head of iceberg lettuce, washed, cored, and cut into 6 equal wedges $\frac{1}{4}$ cup coarsely chopped fresh Italian parsley $\frac{1}{2}$ cup [fried shallots](#)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Plate lined with newspaper

Place the pancetta in a large sauté pan and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the cubes are browned and have rendered their visible fat, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove the pancetta from the pan with a slotted spoon and transfer to the lined plate to drain.

In a medium mixing bowl, combine half the Stilton, the mayonnaise, oil, vinegar, and lemon juice and whisk together to make a homogenous mixture. Thin with 1 tablespoon water if necessary. Taste and season with salt and pepper.

Place a few tablespoons of the dressing in the center of each serving plate and top with an iceberg wedge. Drizzle each wedge with another tablespoon or two of dressing. Top each serving with some of the pancetta and the remaining blue cheese. Garnish with parsley and fried shallots and serve.

DO CHUA SALAD WITH HERBS, SCALLIONS, SPROUTS, AND EGG



Reasonably authentic Vietnamese flavors can be coaxed out of any kitchen if you shop right. Case in point: Vietnamese *do chua*, a quick pickle, easily made with just a few ingredients, an essential part of [Banh Mi](#), and the basis of this crunchy salad. Pay attention when buying herbs for this dish: no yellowed cilantro, giant woody-stemmed mint, or blackening basil, please. You can always throw a pork chop or some ground pork, beef, or lamb onto this thing, maybe some cooked rice or rice noodles, and call it dinner.

Serves 4 to 6

4 medium to large carrots, peeled and julienned 1 large daikon radish (1 to 1½ pounds), peeled and julienned

1 tablespoon salt

2 teaspoons plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar ¼ cup white vinegar

½ cup sherry vinegar

¾ cup hot water

1 bunch of scallions, roots trimmed, white and light green parts thinly sliced, green tops reserved for stock 2 cups crisp mung or soy bean sprouts 4 [hard-boiled eggs](#), peeled and quartered lengthwise 1 cup fresh young basil leaves 1 cup fresh young mint leaves

1 cup fresh cilantro leaves

[Nuoc Mam Cham](#) to taste Sriracha to taste

First, make the *do chua*: In a large mixing bowl, combine the carrots, daikon, salt, and 2 teaspoons sugar and toss well. Let sit for 30 minutes, then discard the liquid that has collected beneath the vegetables. Squeeze them dry with paper towels or a clean kitchen towel. Rinse and dry the bowl and return the vegetables to it, along with the remaining sugar, white and sherry vinegars, and hot water. Cover and let sit at room temperature for 1 hour, after which point you can either assemble the salad or transfer to a glass container and refrigerate for up to 3 weeks.

Remove the *do chua* from its holding container with tongs and transfer it to a clean mixing bowl. You don't want to take all of the brine with you, but whatever it comes attached with is fine. Add the scallions, sprouts, and eggs and gently toss or fold together. Add the herbs and fold or toss again. Taste and season as desired with *nuoc mam cham* and sriracha, then serve immediately.

[4] SOUPS



CREAM OF TOMATO SOUP



When I was in second grade, I got beat up by an older kid named Skippy. Yes, his name was actually Skippy, and a more vicious, terrifying punk has never been produced by the New Jersey school system, I assure you. He and his fellow

third-graders held me down, pummeled me, and threatened to make me drink bleach. Needless to say, I went home in tears.

But Mom made me tomato soup. Or, more accurately, opened a can, added some milk to what was inside, and heated it up. You know what can I'm talking about.

Tomato soup remains the taste of comfort, security, and recently dried tears. It should make you feel better. It should not wander too far from the stuff that comes in a can. It should be served with Saltine crackers or oysterettes.

Serves 6 to 8

About 12 very ripe medium plum or similar-size tomatoes 3 tablespoons unsalted butter or olive oil 1 large yellow onion, peeled and finely chopped 2 medium carrots, peeled and finely chopped 2 ribs celery, finely chopped Salt and finely ground black pepper to taste 1 large garlic clove, finely chopped 1 (28-ounce) can peeled plum tomatoes 3 cups [Dark Universal Stock](#) or chicken stock 1 bay leaf
1 tablespoon sugar

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

¼ cup heavy cream

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Ice-water bath (large bowl filled with ice and cold water) Blender or immersion blender

Bring water to a boil in a large, heavy-bottom pot. Use a paring knife to cut an X into both ends of each tomato. Once the water boils, add the tomatoes to the pot, working in two batches if necessary to avoid overcrowding the pot or reducing the temperature too drastically. Allow the tomatoes to simmer in the water for 30 to 60 seconds, until the skin begins to loosen and peel away from the flesh. Using tongs, remove the tomatoes to the ice-water bath. Once they are cool enough to handle, peel off and discard the skin and coarsely chop the tomatoes.

In a large, heavy-bottom stockpot, heat the butter until it is just shimmering, then add the onion, carrots, and celery. Stir over medium-high heat until they soften and begin to release their juices, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and stir in the garlic. Continue to cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables have begun to brown, 7 to 10 minutes. Do not let them scorch or get dark brown.

Stir in the chopped fresh tomatoes and the canned tomatoes and their juices, rinsing the inside of the can with a bit of water and adding that to the pot, too. Once the mixture begins to bubble, add the stock, bay leaf, sugar, and vinegar. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and let cook for about 30 minutes, uncovered.

Remove the pot from the heat, remove and discard the bay leaf, and puree well in the blender. Stir in the cream and adjust the seasoning with salt, pepper, sugar, and vinegar as desired.



PORTUGUESE SQUID AND OCTOPUS SOUP



I fell in love with this stuff at a Provincetown joint called Cookie's Tap, which was popular with local fishermen and (allegedly) sports gamblers. I'd never tasted anything like it. It took me years of trying to get it right, and the version below, though an adaptation and not necessarily a faithful re-creation, catches, I think, the spirit and many virtues of the original.

I suggest you reduce the wine at the same time you make the octopus stock. It will take 30 to 45 minutes over medium-high heat to reduce from 3 cups to 1 cup.

Serves 4 to 6

1½ tablespoons canola oil

10 octopus tentacles, beak removed and discarded and tentacles cut into bite-size pieces
8 whole squid, beak removed and discarded and bodies peeled and cut into ¼-inch tubes

1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

1 medium yellow onion, peeled and coarsely chopped, plus 1 medium onion, peeled and cut into large dice
4 whole garlic cloves, peeled, plus 8 garlic cloves, peeled and thinly sliced
1 carrot, peeled and coarsely chopped

1 rib celery, coarsely chopped

1 large green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into large dice

1 tablespoon ground cumin

¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 sprig fresh oregano

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 bottle dry red wine, reduced by two-thirds

2 cups crushed canned tomatoes and their juices
2 Yukon Gold potatoes,

scrubbed and cut into large dice Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a large, heavy-bottom pot, heat ½ tablespoon of the oil over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Working in batches, lightly sear the octopus and squid pieces until they release their natural juices, 1 to 2 minutes. Drain and discard this liquid and set half of the octopus and squid aside.

Return the remaining octopus and squid to the pot and add the peppercorns, coarsely chopped onion, whole garlic cloves, carrot, and celery. Add enough water to just cover. Gently simmer for 1 hour to make the octopus stock. Strain the stock, discarding the solids (though you should eat the octopus), and set aside.

In a medium braising pan or Dutch oven, heat the remaining oil over medium heat. Sweat the bell peppers, diced onion, and sliced garlic in the oil for 3 to 4 minutes, then stir in the cumin, pepper flakes, and oregano and let cook another 2 minutes before stirring in the reserved octopus and squid. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, then add the tomato paste and cook for 1 to 2 minutes, until it has lost its bright red color and has begun to stick to the aromatics and the bottom of the pan. Deglaze with the reduced red wine, scraping the bottom of the pan as necessary with a wooden spoon, then add the crushed tomatoes and enough of the stock to cover by 1 inch. Add water if necessary. Add the potatoes, stir well, and allow the mixture to gently simmer for 60 minutes.

Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper to taste. Test the tenderness of the octopus. If it is not tender enough, continue to gently simmer for another 10 to 20 minutes, until it is tender.



PORTUGUESE KALE SOUP



Another Provincetown classic, inspired by the late Howard Mitcham, an unpretentious, brilliant Cape Cod cook and writer whose *Provincetown Seafood Cookbook* is an out-of-print treasure worth snatching up at any price. Mitcham used white pea beans, better known as navy beans, in his version; I prefer kidney beans.

Serves 8 to 10

1½ cups dried red kidney beans

1 large ham hock or comparable soup bone, cut into pieces to allow the marrow to escape into the broth 3 to 4 quarts [Dark Universal Stock](#)

½ pound Portuguese chouriço sausage, cut into ¼-inch-thick slices 1 pound linguiça sausage, cut into ¼-inch-thick slices 2 bunches curly kale, center stem removed and discarded, leaves washed and coarsely chopped 4 large or 5 medium waxy potatoes, peeled and cut into large dice Red pepper flakes to taste

1 tablespoon sherry vinegar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a large, heavy-bottom stockpot, soak the kidney beans for 12 hours in plenty of cold water, or cover the dry beans with 4 cups of water and bring to a rapid boil. Cover the pot, remove from the heat, and let sit for 90 minutes undisturbed. Drain.

In a clean stockpot, combine the soaked and/or cooked and drained beans and the ham hock and cover with the stock. Add 1 quart water. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook for 1 hour, using a slotted spoon or ladle to skim off and discard any scum that rises to the surface. Add the *chouriço*, *linguiça*, and kale, and simmer for another hour. Add the potatoes, pepper flakes, and vinegar, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Simmer for at least another hour, adding more stock or water as needed to keep all the ingredients submerged. The longer the soup simmers, the better the flavor; Howard Mitcham calls for a minimum of 5 hours.

BLACK BEAN SOUP



The mirepoix (really a *sofrito*) makes the soup here. Atop the usual onion, carrot, celery, and garlic, the bell pepper provides additional sweetness and the chorizo gives it a porky heft.

Serves 6 to 8

1½ cups dried black beans

2 tablespoons rendered pork lard or olive oil 4 links dry chorizo sausage,
coarsely chopped 1 red onion, finely chopped

1 small carrot, peeled and grated 1 rib celery, finely chopped

1 medium red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely chopped 5 garlic cloves,
finely chopped 2 teaspoons ground cumin

2 teaspoons dried oregano

2 teaspoons smoked paprika

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste ¼ cup sherry or red wine vinegar 4
cups [Dark Universal Stock](#)

2 links dry chorizo sausage, thinly sliced GARNISHES

Any or all of the following: hard-cooked and thinly sliced eggs, lime wedges,
cilantro leaves, finely chopped red onions, sliced scallions, sour cream, hot
sauce, toasted corn tortillas SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Immersion blender

Newspaper, for draining chorizo In a large, heavy-bottom stockpot with a lid,
cover the dry beans with 4 cups of water and bring to a rapid boil. Cover the
pot, remove from the heat, and let sit for 90 minutes undisturbed. Drain.

In a large, heavy-bottom saucepan, heat the lard over medium heat. Add the
chopped chorizo and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until it has
rendered most of its fat. Using tongs or a slotted spoon, remove the chorizo from
the pan and set it aside.

To the hot pan, add the onion, carrot, celery, bell pepper, garlic, cumin, oregano,
and paprika and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the
vegetables are soft and slightly browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Season to taste with salt
and pepper.

Turn the heat up to high and cook for 2 minutes, until most of the moisture from
the vegetables has sizzled away. Add the vinegar and stir it in to loosen the
browned bits in the pan. Continue to cook on high until the vinegar has bubbled
away and lost its “sharp” smell.

Add the stock and bring to a boil, then add the drained beans and stir well. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for about 45 minutes, until the beans are tender. Remove from the heat and pulse with an immersion blender so that the beans are mostly broken up but some chunky texture remains. Stir the reserved cooked chorizo into the soup. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper if necessary, and add a splash of water or stock if necessary to loosen.

Place the sliced chorizo in a small sauté pan and cook on both sides until it is seared and some of the fat is rendered. Remove it from the pan and let it drain on the newspaper.

Serve the soup hot, with the chorizo and all garnishes alongside.

NEW ENGLAND CLAM CHOWDER



There *is* only one chowder. All else is soup. And I'm a purist. I was taught to make clam chowder by a fantastic woman named Lydia, a professional cook and a notoriously hard drinker, from a Portuguese fishing family on Cape Cod. She was famous for her chowder—and her behavior. At the end of a shift, she'd often stagger through the kitchen doors, lurch out into the dining room, and deliver loud, horribly profane tirades directed straight at the owner, who'd be sitting there, paralytic with fear, in front of his guests. It is a testament to her chowder, I think, that he tolerated this. She'd use salt pork instead of bacon and drizzle a little clarified butter over the top at the end. Old school. They don't make them like Lydia anymore.

Serves 6 to 8

8 dozen clams, preferably quahogs, scrubbed ¼ pound salt pork or best-quality bacon, diced 2 white or yellow onions, peeled and finely chopped Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 3 Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and diced 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 cups whole milk

1 cup heavy cream

Pilot crackers, for serving

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan with a lid, arrange the clams, 1 to 2 dozen at a time, into a single layer. Add about ½ cup water, cover, and bring to a boil to steam the clams open. Check them frequently. Using tongs, remove the opened clams to a sheet pan to cool, and add more clams until they have all been steamed open, discarding any that have not opened after a reasonable amount of time—there are usually one or two duds per 2 dozen clams. Once they're cool enough to handle, remove them from their shells, reserving as much of the ambient cooking liquid (generally referred to as “liquor”) as possible, and place them in a small bowl or other container.

In a heavy-bottom stockpot or Dutch oven, heat the salt pork over medium heat until it begins to render its fat, adding a tablespoon or two of water to keep it from browning, and stirring occasionally. When the fat has mostly been

rendered, add the onions, stirring well to coat them with the fat. Season the onions lightly with salt and pepper and cook until they are translucent but not browned. Add the potatoes and just enough water to cover. Cook the mixture at a simmer until the potatoes are just tender.

Whisk together the flour and a few tablespoons of the milk to make a smooth slurry, then add this mixture to the stockpot, stirring well. Add the clams and their liquor and simmer for about 5 minutes, until the clams are just warmed through.

Just before serving, stir in the remaining milk and the cream and warm through, but do not boil. Taste the soup and season with salt and pepper as desired. Serve with the crackers alongside.



GOULASH

I've been making some variation of this dish since my earliest professional cooking days. This version was inspired by a recent visit to Budapest where a Gypsy singer prepared it for us in her home.

Serves 4 to 6

1½ pounds beef chuck, cut into 1-inch cubes Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

2 tablespoons canola or vegetable oil

2 medium white or yellow onions, peeled and coarsely chopped ¼ cup Hungarian sweet paprika 1½ teaspoons caraway seeds 3 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped

1 bay leaf

2 medium carrots, peeled and diced 1 parsnip, peeled and diced 1 rib celery, diced

3 waxy potatoes, diced

3 ripe plum tomatoes, peeled and coarsely chopped 2 medium to large green bell peppers, cored, seeded, and finely chopped GARNISHES

Sliced rye bread or other hearty country bread Sour cream

Season the beef well with salt and pepper. In a large, heavy-bottom pot, heat the oil over medium heat and add the beef. Sear the beef on all sides, then add the onions and season them lightly with salt so that they release their juices, stirring only as necessary to avoid scorching them. Let the onions get golden brown, which should take about 10 minutes, then stir in the paprika, caraway, and garlic.

Cook over medium-high heat for 2 minutes. Add the bay leaf, carrots, parsnip, and celery, and add water to just cover. Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Use a ladle or slotted spoon to skim off and discard any beef scum that rises to the surface. Let the mixture simmer, covered, for 45 to 50 minutes.

Add the potatoes and continue to simmer, covered, for another 20 to 25 minutes, until they are tender. Add the tomatoes and peppers and let simmer, uncovered, for another 5 minutes. Taste the broth and season with salt and pepper as necessary. Serve in bowls with the bread and sour cream alongside.

HOT BORSCHT



The ham hock and pig's foot make this a particularly full-bodied and satisfying version of borscht, a soup you might have previously equated with dishwater. The addition of the finely grated beet at the end of the cooking process is the key to getting that violent, almost bloody color in the bowl.

Serves 6 to 8

1 pig's foot, split lengthwise

1 smoked ham hock

2½ quarts [Dark Universal Stock](#)

2 tablespoons duck fat or rendered lard

2 white or yellow onions, peeled and cut into large dice Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 4 garlic cloves, peeled and coarsely chopped 4 carrots, peeled and cut into large dice 2½ pounds red beets (about 1 dozen small or 4 to 6 medium to large), peeled and cut into large dice, plus 1 medium red beet, peeled and finely grated 1 turnip, peeled and cut into large dice ¼ medium head of green cabbage, cut into ¼-inch-thick ribbons (about 3 cups) 5 sprigs fresh dill, stems and fronds separated, fronds reserved for garnish Juice of 1 lemon (about 2 tablespoons) or 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar or sherry vinegar Sour cream, for garnish

Place the pig's foot in a large, heavy-bottom saucepan and cover it with cold water. Bring to a boil, let cook for 5 minutes, then remove from the water and rinse well. Discard the water and wash and dry the saucepan. Combine the foot, hock, and stock in the pan, adding more water if necessary to cover the joints. Bring to a simmer and cook over low heat for 1 hour.

In a large, heavy-bottom stockpot or Dutch oven, heat the fat over medium heat. Add the onions, stirring to coat with the fat, and season with salt and pepper. Let cook for 5 minutes, then add the garlic, carrots, diced beets, and turnip, stirring to coat with the fat and released onion juices, and seasoning again with salt and pepper. Let cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, then add the cabbage and the dill stems, again stirring and seasoning.

Add the warm stock and bring to a boil, then add the foot and hock and simmer for about 40 minutes, until the vegetables are tender. Stir in the lemon juice. Taste the broth and season if necessary with salt, pepper, and/or more lemon juice. Stir in the grated beet and continue to simmer. Remove and discard the foot. Remove the ham hock, pull as much meat as possible off the bone, and return the meat to the simmering soup.

Serve with sour cream and dill fronds alongside.

KUCHING-STYLE LAKSA



In the hierarchy of steaming hot bowls of magical broth and noodles, *laksa* is at the absolute top. The best. The most delicious. Breakfast, lunch, or dinner—it will cure what ails you.

I'm not saying this is the greatest *laksa* recipe in the world. It surely isn't. But

I'm hoping it will give you an idea of how good *laksa* CAN be.

I'm a firm believer in the notion that a bowl of spicy noodles is a portal to perfect happiness. Many of my happiest moments these days seem to center on sitting on a low plastic stool, somewhere in Asia, eating chili-jacked noodles in broth. Malaysian *laksas* are as good as noodle soups can be. There is an incredibly delicious Penang version, with a tamarind and fish-based broth, chunks of mackerel and pineapple bobbing within—and while both styles have fervent adherents, the Kuching version is my favorite.

I like it spicy, so feel free to adjust with the addition of chili paste or peppers. Ideally you should, in my view, have worked up a solid sweat by the time you hit the bottom of the bowl.

The *laksa* paste mixture's flavors develop better with time, so it's worth making the paste a few days before you make and serve your *laksa*.

Serves 4

2 quarts [Dark Universal Stock](#)

1 large chicken breast, bone in, skin removed and discarded

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup [Sarawak Laksa Paste](#)

16 to 20 jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails intact, shells reserved for stock
2 large eggs

1 teaspoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

8 ounces rice vermicelli

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup coconut milk

Approximately 2 cups mung bean sprouts

Fresh cilantro leaves or small fresh cilantro sprigs, for garnish
Fresh sliced red chili peppers, for garnish

Lime wedges, for garnish

Sambal belacan (a chili pepper–shrimp condiment, available in Asian markets, well-stocked health food stores, or online) to taste
In a large, heavy-bottom

pot with a lid, bring the stock to a boil. Add the chicken, reduce to a simmer, and cook for 12 minutes. Turn off the heat, cover the pot, and let sit for another 12 to 15 minutes, until cooked through. Remove the chicken from the stock. When cool enough to handle, remove and discard the bones, and use two forks to shred the meat. Set aside until ready to serve the soup.

Return the stock to the heat and add the *laksa* paste and shrimp shells. Bring to a simmer and cook over low heat for 30 minutes.

While the stock simmers, whisk together the eggs and soy sauce in a mixing bowl. In a frying pan, preferably cast-iron, heat the oil over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Add the egg mixture and let cook for 2 minutes, then flip with a spatula and cook for another 90 seconds. Remove the egg from the pan and let cool, then cut into strips and set aside.

Fill a medium, heavy-bottom pot with water and bring to a boil. Place the vermicelli in a large mixing bowl. Once the water boils, remove it from the heat and pour it over the noodles so that they are completely submerged. Agitate them slightly to keep them from sticking together, then let sit for about 5 minutes. Test one noodle for doneness; once tender, drain the water and set the noodles aside, perhaps tossed with a few drops of oil if they seem to be sticking together.

Strain the hot stock mixture through the sieve, then return it to a high simmer and add the shrimp. Let them just cook through—about 30 seconds—then remove and set aside. Add the coconut milk, bring just to a boil, then remove from the heat and prepare to serve the soup.

Divide the vermicelli, chicken, shrimp, and sprouts among four serving bowls and top with the hot broth. Serve with the cilantro, chili peppers, lime wedges, and *sambal belacan* alongside.

SARAWAK LAKSA PASTE

Making this paste is a labor of love, and there is a shopping and prep time commitment involved. You can make things slightly easier on yourself by buying toasted and ground spices and seeds, but stay away from dehydrated shallots or garlic and do not skip the fresh chili peppers. Fresh gingerroot will make a decent substitute for galangal if the latter proves impossible to find.

Makes about 10 cups

10 shallots, peeled and coarsely chopped 5 large garlic cloves, peeled and coarsely chopped Large knob of galangal (about $\frac{3}{4}$ pound), chopped 10 fresh long red chili peppers, cut into chunks (you may modulate the heat by removing some or all of the seeds and pith; don't touch your eyes) $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried chili peppers, soaked in hot water for 20 minutes and drained 5 stalks lemongrass (white parts only), coarsely chopped $3\frac{1}{2}$ ounces macadamia nuts or cashews $\frac{3}{4}$ cup roasted peanuts

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sesame seeds, toasted

3 tablespoons cumin seeds, toasted and ground $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coriander seeds, toasted and ground 6 pieces star anise, toasted and ground 7 toasted and ground cloves

1 teaspoon ground nutmeg

10 cardamom pods

2 cups soybean oil

5 tablespoons salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup palm sugar

8 ounces tamarind pulp, mixed with a cup of boiling water **SPECIAL EQUIPMENT**

Food processor

Storage container(s) with 10-cup capacity In a large mixing bowl, using a large

mixing spoon, combine the shallots, garlic, galangal, fresh and dried chili peppers, lemongrass, nuts, seeds, and spices. Working in batches, grind the mixture to a paste in the food processor, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary with a rubber spatula. Set the ground batches aside together in a second large mixing bowl. When all of the ingredients have been ground together, heat the oil in a wok or wide, heavy-bottom braising pan over medium heat, then carefully add the ground mixture and cook for about an hour, stirring very frequently to keep the mixture from sticking or scorching. Scrape the surface of the pan as necessary to dislodge any stuck patches of paste so that they do not burn.

After an hour of cooking and stirring, stir in the salt, sugar, and tamarind water and continue to cook and stir for about 20 minutes. Remove from the heat and transfer to the storage container(s). Cover and refrigerate.

The mixture will keep, refrigerated and sealed, for up to a month, or in the freezer for several months.

BUDAE JJIGAE



This is known as Korean army stew, created, according to legend, from scrounged army PX canned goods during wartime. It's the ultimate dorm food. Just looking at the ingredients might make it sound like a horror, but it very quickly comes together and becomes delicious. It captures the essence of great cooking over the last few centuries: improvisational, born of war and hardship, nostalgic, sentimental, and transformative.

Serves 2 to 4

1 dried shiitake mushroom

4 large dried anchovies, heads and guts removed, wrapped in cheesecloth One 3 × 5-inch sheet dried edible kelp or kombu ½ teaspoon sea salt
12 ounces SPAM, cut into ½-inch-thick slices 1½ cups Napa cabbage kimchi (tongbaechu)

8 ounces sliced Korean rice cakes

1 white onion, peeled and thinly sliced
2 scallions (white and light green parts), thinly sliced 5 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
3 hot dogs, thinly sliced
8 ounces ground pork

3 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons gochujang (Korean fermented chili paste) 3 tablespoons medium/fine gochugaru (ground Korean red pepper) 3 tablespoons cheongju (Korean rice wine)

3 tablespoons canned baked beans

1 package ramen noodles, preferably the Korean brand Shin, seasoning packet discarded To make the anchovy broth, combine the mushroom, anchovies, kelp, 4 cups water, and the salt in a medium, heavy-bottom pot, and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes. Remove from the heat, strain and discard the solids, and set the broth aside.

Place the SPAM, kimchi, rice cakes, onion, scallions, garlic, hot dogs, and pork in small separate piles in a large shallow pot.

Add the soy sauce, *gochujang*, *gochugaru*, and *cheongju* to the pot, then slowly pour in the reserved anchovy kelp broth. Add the baked beans and 1½ cups water. Bring the contents to a steady simmer over high heat, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon.

Cook for about 10 minutes, then add the ramen noodles. Ladle the broth over the noodles to help them break apart. Continue to cook for 2 or 3 minutes, until the noodles are cooked through but still chewy.

SHRIMP BISQUE

The dignity of shrimp in the United States has suffered in the last several decades thanks to widespread shrimp farming (often under dubious conditions), bottomless shrimp specials offered by schlocky chain restaurants, and *Forrest Gump*. It doesn't have to be that way, though—look how well they treat shrimp on Spanish and Portuguese tables and in Japanese sushi bars, not to mention their use as a flavor-boosting paste in much of Southeast Asia. This recipe attempts to restore shrimp's pride by way of the bisque treatment, so often reserved for big brother, lobster.

Serves 6

1¾ pounds large shrimp, peeled and deveined, shells and 6 shrimp reserved 4½ cups [Shellfish Stock](#)

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil 3 shallots, peeled and finely chopped 2 scallions, trimmed and finely sliced 3 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped

2 tablespoons tomato paste

¼ cup Cognac

¼ cup Sauternes or sherry

1 tablespoon best-quality fish sauce

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter ¼ cup all-purpose flour

1½ cups heavy cream

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste Juice of ½ lemon (about 1 tablespoon) [Tempura Shrimp](#) or [Shrimp Salad](#), for garnish

SPECIAL

EQUIPMENT

Food processor

In a medium, heavy-bottom saucepan, combine the shrimp shells and the stock and bring to a simmer. Cook for about 20 minutes, then strain the mixture into a clean medium saucepan and discard the shells. Keep the fortified stock warm over very low heat.

In a large, heavy-bottom stockpot, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the shallots and scallions and cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, for about 5 minutes, until they are golden and translucent but not browning. Add the garlic and the tomato paste and cook for 1 minute. Add all but the reserved 6 shrimp to the pot; cook over medium-high heat for 2 minutes, until just cooked through.

Remove the pot from the heat and add the Cognac, which will not likely flame up but will burn off its alcohol and cook to dry very quickly. Return the pot to the heat, and scrape the bottom, dislodging browned bits. Deglaze with the Sauternes and fish sauce, continuing to scrape and stir to keep dislodging browned bits. Let cook for about 3 minutes, then remove from the heat, and, working in batches, transfer the mixture to the food processor, using a rubber spatula to make sure you get everything out of the pot and into the machine. Puree the mixture to a reasonably fine texture, turning each batch into a mixing bowl as you complete it.

NOTE: *If you choose to make tempura shrimp as a fancy garnish, you may wish to puree the soup to a very fine texture and pass it through a fine-mesh sieve, for greater textural contrast between the smooth soup and the crunchy shrimp.*

Make sure that you have both a whisk and a wooden spoon or spatula close at hand, as you'll be switching back and forth between the two tools as you build the roux and béchamel that form the base of the bisque.

Use the still-hot stockpot to heat the butter over medium-high heat until it foams and subsides. Sprinkle the flour over the butter and whisk to combine. Let cook for 2 minutes, switching to the wooden spoon or spatula to steadily continue to stir—the idea is to cook out the raw flour taste without letting the flour scorch or stick. Slowly pour in the reserved shellfish stock, whisking as you go until it has all been incorporated, then switch back to the wooden spoon to stir frequently over medium-high heat as the mixture comes to a boil and begins to thicken. Be sure to hit all angles of the bottom of the pot to dislodge any globs of butter and

flour paste and get them incorporated with the stock. When the liquid comes to a boil and is thick enough to coat the back of the spoon, add the shrimp puree and stir well, then stir in the heavy cream. Taste and season with salt, pepper, and the lemon juice. Garnish with either the tempura shrimp or shrimp salad.

TEMPURA SHRIMP

Makes 6 pieces

2 cups peanut oil

¼ cup all-purpose flour ¼ cup cornstarch

6 shrimp, reserved from above 1 egg, beaten and held in a small bowl ½ cup panko bread crumbs, held on a plate or in a shallow bowl Salt to taste

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Deep-fry thermometer

Plate lined with newspaper Make the tempura shrimp just before serving so that they are crisp and hot.

Heat the oil to 375°F in a medium, tall-sided pot, monitoring the temperature with the deep-fry thermometer. Keep the lined plate and a slotted spoon or set of tongs nearby.

In a wide, shallow bowl, whisk together the flour and cornstarch. Roll each shrimp in this mixture, patting them gently to remove any excess. Roll each shrimp in the egg, then in the bread crumbs. Submerge the shrimp in the hot oil and cook until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the oil and let rest briefly on the lined plate to absorb excess oil. Season with salt. Garnish each bowl of soup with 1 shrimp, and serve.

SHRIMP SALAD

Yields about $\frac{2}{3}$ cup

6 shrimp, reserved from above 2 teaspoons best-quality extra-virgin olive oil

2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 teaspoon very finely chopped (brunoise) shallots

1 teaspoon finely chopped chives

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste Place the shrimp in a small pot and cover with cold water. Bring to a high simmer and cook until shrimp are just cooked through, about 3 minutes. Empty the shrimp into a colander to drain, then dice them. Place in a small mixing bowl. Toss with the oil, lemon juice, shallots, and chives, and season with salt and pepper. Arrange a small amount of the salad atop each portion of soup just before serving.

WHITE GAZPACHO

Traditional gazpacho relies on perfect (or at least very good and ripe) tomatoes, which are available in the northeast for only a four-to six-week period in late August and early September. For the rest of the year, especially the hot and humid months of June and July, there's this white gazpacho, whose core ingredients—bread, water, nuts, garlic, oil—are seasonally and geographically agnostic.

Serves 6 to 8

5 or 6 (1-inch-thick) slices day-old country bread, crusts removed, cut into 1-inch cubes (about 3 cups) 1¼ cups slivered blanched almonds, finely ground
2 very fresh garlic cloves (nothing soft, spotty, or sprouting, please), peeled and finely chopped 1¾ cups chilled water (fancy bottled water is fine here, as is filtered tap water, as long as it's ice cold)

2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more to taste

⅔ cup best-quality Spanish olive oil, plus more for garnish if desired 2 tablespoons best-quality sherry vinegar, plus more to taste
1 or 2 (1-inch-thick) slices day-old country bread, crusts removed, cut into ¼-inch cubes (about ½ cup) ¼ cup slivered blanched almonds, lightly toasted, for garnish (optional) ½ cup attractive green table grapes, thinly sliced, for garnish (optional) 2 tablespoons fried capers, for garnish (optional)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Food processor or blender
Sheet pan or plate lined with newspaper

Place the 1-inch cubes of bread in a medium mixing bowl and cover with cold

water. Let sit for 5 minutes, then remove the bread from the bowl, squeezing out and discarding the excess water. Transfer the bread to the food processor.

Add the ground almonds, garlic, and chilled water to the food processor and season with the 2 teaspoons salt. Puree to form a creamy pastelike mixture, pausing as necessary to scrape down the sides with a rubber spatula. With the machine running, drizzle in $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the oil and continue to run the machine until the mixture is emulsified.

Transfer the mixture to a clean mixing bowl and whisk in the vinegar. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt as desired. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour.

Just before serving, make the croutons. In a small frying pan, preferably cast-iron, heat the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ cup oil over medium heat. Test the oil by dropping one of the $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch bread cubes into it. The bread should immediately sizzle. Once the oil is ready, cook the cubes in it for about 1 minute, until golden brown, working in batches if necessary to avoid overcrowding the pan and stirring once or twice with a wooden or metal spoon or spatula. Remove the toasted cubes from the oil with a slotted spoon and transfer to the lined sheet pan to drain. Season lightly with salt.

Garnish each serving of soup with the croutons and any or all of the following: toasted almonds, sliced grapes, fried capers, and an extra drizzle of oil.

[5]
SANDWICHES





A sandwich is a beautiful thing—one of the great innovations of modern history. It freed us from the tyranny of the plate, the table, the knife and fork. Between two slices of bread exist near-limitless possibilities for deliciousness.

But no matter how tasty or outrageous, how juicy or flavorful, and no matter

how engorged with meat, sandwiches remain a delivery system for their fillings. The purpose of the sandwich, like a hamburger, is to effectively deliver protein or other stuff into your mouth without a fork. Structure, texture, and proportion are as central to the success or failure of the sandwich as its taste.

That may be the very best chopped liver, but if the rye bread surrounding it falls apart, you may as well eat it out of a fucking trough. If there are so many ingredients on your deli sandwich named after a celebrity that you can't possibly fit the thing into your mouth in such a way as to include appropriate representation of each distinct layer in every bite, it's a failure. Your "Howie Mandel" may look like a tower of awesomeness, a teetering heap of pastrami, corned beef, brisket, slaw, Russian dressing, and sprouts—but if half the ingredients squirt across the table like the last shot of a Peter North film, what's the point?

It is for this reason that I declare the beloved American classic, the *club sandwich*, to be America's Enemy, a menu item that perfectly encapsulates all the principles of Bad Sandwich Theory.

Who invented the club sandwich, anyway? America's enemies, for sure. The club predates Al Qaeda—but it fits that group's MO. Mission: Destroy America. Method: Sap the will to live of ordinary Americans—by repeatedly fucking up their lunch.

Maybe it was the Nazis. Didn't they invent, like, methadone? And ephedra? The club sandwich was an even more evil idea.

What's wrong with it, you ask?

What's wrong with turkey or chicken breast, some crispy bacon slices, lettuce, and tomato on a sandwich? (And yes, adding a fried egg surely makes it only better.) How could any sandwich containing these delightful ingredients be a bad thing?

Where does the club go wrong? I'll tell you.

It's that third slice of bread. What's it doing there? It's the fifth column of sandwich elements, lurking silently and entirely uselessly, in the middle of an

otherwise respectable sandwich—until it can strike.

The entire club sandwich concept is fucked from the get-go. It's a sandwich designed to look good on a plate—after you've stuck extra-long frilly toothpicks into it and cut it into quarters. It's designed for eye appeal, and edibility be damned. Because as soon as you bite into that fucker, your teeth crush into the top and bottom layers of bread, compacting together the meat layers and the lettuce and tomato layers and that stupid extra slice of bread and, like in a collapsing building, anything soft is gonna get squished. The slippery tomato, unmoored by Russian dressing or mayonnaise, is sliding right out of the party along with the bacon, leaving you with a soggy turkey sandwich, a disproportionately double-thick top layer of bread, and a plate full of broken dreams.

That third slice of bread was put there to *look* good. They don't care about you. But I do. So please: **Continue to make your club sandwiches. Just leave out that third slice.**

SAUSAGE AND PEPPER HERO



I have, over the years, conquered many personal demons, weaknesses, and

unlovely personal habits that could be called guilty pleasures. But there's one shameful compulsion I still haven't been able to kick. Every time they have one of those lame street fairs in New York, the same tired cast of vendors gets trotted out: the guys selling stale dried spices, the tube-sock people, Mr. Funnel Cake. I hate all of it—except the sausage and pepper guys. They traffic in not particularly good hot and sweet Italian sausage, held and served at temperatures that would probably be considered suboptimal by the New York State Department of Health, squashed on a dirty griddle, and then piled into a squishy hero roll with some browned onions and peppers, the whole thing a greasy, soggy, unmanageable mess that generally falls apart in my hands before I can eat it. And within an hour of consumption, I'm shitting like a mink.

I know this from the first whiff, yet I am helpless to resist. Knowing full well the inevitable intestinal upheaval that will result, I sleepwalk, zombie-like, to my fate, willingly, happily, toward nasty deliciousness.

Prepared in the presumably more hygienic confines of your kitchen, this recipe will hopefully spare you the terrible personal cost of having to score on the street.

Serves 4

4 sweet Italian sausage links

4 hot Italian sausage links

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 large red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and thinly sliced
1 large green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and thinly sliced
1 large yellow onion, peeled and thinly sliced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
4 Italian hero rolls, sliced

Heat a large griddle pan or cast-iron skillet over high heat, then add the sausages, working in batches if necessary. Cook until browned on all sides and slightly bursting from their casings, then remove with tongs to a large plate or sheet pan.

Add the oil to the griddle or skillet, let it get hot, then add the bell peppers and

onion. Season with salt and pepper and cook until seared, soft and nicely browned at the edges, about 10 minutes, turning frequently with a spatula and pressing down as necessary.

While the vegetables are cooking, cut the sausages into 1-inch pieces. Once the vegetables are done, set them aside with the sausages and briefly warm the open rolls on the hot greasy griddle or skillet. Load the peppers, onions, and sausage chunks into the rolls, making sure to get an even distribution of sweet and hot pieces, and serve immediately.

MEATBALL PARM HERO



Here's another Italo-American classic for which I am a complete sucker. Beef

gives structure to these meatballs, while veal keeps them tender and pork makes them fatty and juicy. Be sure to cut your onions very fine, and use a light hand when mixing the ingredients.

Serves 8

3 tablespoons plus ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil 1 medium yellow or white onion, peeled and finely diced (about 2 cups) 4 to 6 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped 6 sprigs fresh oregano, leaves only, finely chopped 10 to 12 sprigs fresh Italian parsley, leaves only, finely chopped Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 1 pound ground beef chuck
1 pound ground veal
1 pound ground pork

1 cup panko bread crumbs

2 large eggs, lightly beaten

1½ cups dry white wine

1 quart [Pomodoro](#)

4 Italian semolina hero rolls with sesame seeds, cut in half lengthwise and crosswise 8 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, sliced

4 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Short-sided roasting pan large enough to hold 25 to 30 meatballs (11 × 14 inch or similar) Instant-read thermometer

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 3 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, oregano, and parsley, and stir well to coat with the oil. Season with salt and pepper and let cook over medium-low to medium heat for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are soft and translucent but not browned. Remove from the heat and transfer the onion mixture to a large mixing bowl. Let cool to room temperature. Clean the pan, which you will use to brown the meatballs.

Add the beef, veal, and pork to a mixing bowl, along with the bread crumbs and eggs. Season with salt and pepper. Mix well by hand. Form the mixture into twenty-five to thirty 2-inch balls, placing each one on a sheet pan as you form it.

Cover the meatballs with plastic wrap and refrigerate them for 15 to 60 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Remove the meatballs from the fridge.

Heat ¼ cup oil in the sauté pan over medium-high heat. Working in batches, sear the meatballs on all sides in the oil, turning them carefully with the spatula and tongs and adding more oil as necessary to keep them from sticking to the pan. Remove the cooked meatballs to the roasting pan.

Once all the meatballs are in the roasting pan, add the wine and 1 cup of the pomodoro sauce to the pan so that the liquid reaches about halfway up the sides of each meatball. Transfer the pan to the oven and cook for 25 to 30 minutes, until cooked through but still juicy (the interior of a meatball should reach 150°F on an instant-read thermometer).

While the meatballs are cooking, in a small, heavy-bottom saucepot, gently warm the remaining pomodoro sauce, stirring occasionally to keep it from scorching.

Remove the meatballs from the oven, and set the oven to broil.

On a clean sheet tray, arrange 3 meatballs in the center of each of 8 hero roll bottoms. Add a few tablespoons of pomodoro sauce to each set of meatballs, and drape each with a slice of mozzarella and a good sprinkling of the Parmigiano-Reggiano. Place the sandwiches under the broiler for about 2 minutes, until the mozzarella is slightly browned and bubbling. Top each with the remaining bread and serve immediately.

CHOPPED LIVER ON RYE



The New York Barney Greengrass serves, as far as I'm concerned, the best chopped liver around, but if you can't get to New York for it, make it as below. There are those who would do chopped liver a great disservice by combining it with a heap of turkey, some lettuce, and tomato, but for me, chopped liver calls for no adornment. Just two slices of seeded rye bread, not even toasted.

Be warned: You are probably not going to get this right the first time. The alchemy of "schmaltz" and the fine textural line between grainy and mush take some experimentation—but it's worth the effort.

Serves 4 to 6

4 large eggs

1 cup schmaltz (rendered chicken fat) 2 large or 3 medium white or yellow onions, peeled and coarsely chopped Salt to taste
2 pounds chicken livers, trimmed of connective tissue and fat Freshly ground black pepper to taste 8 to 12 slices seeded rye bread

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Ice-water bath (medium bowl filled with ice and cold water) Food processor (optional)

Place the eggs in a small, heavy-bottom saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring the water to a rapid boil. Once the water boils, remove it from the heat, cover, and let sit for 9 minutes (set a timer). Remove the eggs from the pot and slide them into the ice-water bath to cool.

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 1 to 2 tablespoons of the schmaltz over medium-high heat. Add the onions and stir well to coat with the schmaltz. Sprinkle with salt so that the onions release their juices. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the onions are dark brown and sweet, about 15 minutes. You can go faster than you would for caramelizing onions, but take care not to let them get blackened. Once the onions are cooked, transfer them to

a medium mixing bowl.

Wipe out the onion pan and heat another tablespoon or two of the schmaltz over medium-high heat. Add the livers, working in batches if necessary, because you want a nice dark brown sear, which you won't get if there are too many of them in the pan—they'll bubble pathetically in their own juices. Cook the livers until they are browned on all sides, at which point they should be at the degree of doneness known as "medium": not hammered to death but nothing pink or squishy. Remove from the pan and repeat with the remaining livers and a tablespoon or so of additional schmaltz if necessary. Transfer the livers to the bowl with the onions.

Remove the hard-boiled eggs from the ice-water bath and peel and coarsely chop them. Transfer to the bowl with the liver and onions and fold together gently. If using the food processor, transfer the mixture to the bowl, drizzle in about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the schmaltz, and pulse judiciously. You want to create a reasonably homogenous but still chunky mixture. Add more schmaltz as needed to thin the mixture out. You can also chop the mixture with a knife, or a mezzaluna, if you happen to have one. Taste the mixture and season with salt and pepper.

For best results, refrigerate the mixture for a few hours, during which time the intense flavor of the onions will permeate the whole thing. Before serving, let the chopped liver sit out of the fridge for about 15 minutes, to soften and relax slightly. Construct sandwiches of your desired thickness on the rye bread and serve, ideally, with a Dr. Brown's Cel-Ray soda.



ROAST BEEF PO' BOY



You're not going to be able to completely re-create the po' boy experience

outside of New Orleans, but this recipe will get you pretty damn close. Of utmost importance is the bread. What you want, if you're not in or near a New Orleans bakery that specializes in po' boy bread, is the fluffy, insubstantial, nutrient-free, bleached-white "French bread" that's like the uncultured American cousin of French baguettes, baked in an industrial kitchen and delivered in long white paper bags to any neighborhood grocery store.

Serves 4, with plenty of leftover meat ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 1 beef rump roast (about 5 pounds)

4 tablespoons canola oil

3 to 5 yellow onions, peeled and coarsely chopped 1 rib celery, coarsely chopped
½ medium green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and coarsely chopped 6 garlic
cloves, peeled and coarsely chopped

2 bay leaves

1 quart [Dark Universal Stock](#)

2 loaves New Orleans French bread from Gendusa's, Leidenheimer, or Dong Fong bakery, or acceptable substitute (see recipe headnote), cut into 6-inch lengths Scant cup of [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise, preferably Blue Plate brand Head of iceberg lettuce, washed, cored, and shredded 2 or 3 ripe plum tomatoes, thinly sliced

Thinly sliced dill pickles, drained (optional) Preheat the oven to 325°F.

In a small mixing bowl, whisk together ¼ cup of the flour and enough salt and pepper to generously season the whole roast. Place the roast on a sheet pan and dust the outside of the roast with this mixture.

In a Dutch oven, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium-high heat and sear the roast on all sides in the oil until golden brown. Remove the roast to a holding plate. Add the onions, celery, bell pepper, and garlic to the Dutch oven, seasoning them with salt and pepper and scraping the bottom of the pan with a

wooden spoon to dislodge browned bits of beef fond and flour. Cook until the vegetables are just beginning to become tender, 3 to 5 minutes, then remove them from the pan and set aside with the roast.

Add the remaining 2 tablespoons oil to the pan, and once it's good and hot, add the remaining 2 tablespoons of flour, stirring constantly and scraping the whole surface of the pan to keep the flour from scorching or sticking. Cook for about 2 minutes, then return the roast and the vegetables to the Dutch oven and add the bay leaves and enough stock to submerge the meat. Cover and cook in the oven for 2 hours. Check the meat, add more liquid if necessary to keep it mostly submerged, and cook for another hour or two, until the meat is easily shredded with a fork. Remove from the oven, let cool for about 30 minutes, transfer the meat to an airtight container with a lid, and refrigerate for at least 8 hours or overnight.

Meanwhile, ladle the cooking liquid through a colander and into a mixing bowl, pressing down on the vegetables to extract as much liquid as possible, and even mashing them through the sieve if you can. Cover and refrigerate this gravy overnight.

The next day, slice the meat as thinly as you possibly can. Remove and discard the fat cap from the gravy; heat the gravy gently in a medium, heavy-bottom saucepan. Taste it and season with salt and pepper if necessary. Transfer as much meat as you'll need for sandwiches into the warm gravy, and continue to cook gently to warm the meat.

Lightly toast the sliced bread. Spread the inside of each piece of bread with mayonnaise, which you should season lightly with salt and pepper. Layer each sandwich with meat, gravy, lettuce, tomatoes, and, if using, pickles. Serve with cold Barq's root beer or Dixie beer.

OYSTER PO' BOY

Serves 4

2 cups buttermilk

½ cup Louisiana hot sauce

4 dozen oysters, shucked

2 cups peanut oil, for frying 1 cup all-purpose flour

1 cup fine yellow cornmeal

Freshly ground black pepper to taste Salt

2 loaves New Orleans French bread from Gendusa's, Leidenheimer, or Dong Fong bakery, or acceptable substitute (see [recipe headnote](#)), cut into 6-inch lengths Scant cup of [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise, preferably Blue Plate brand Head of iceberg lettuce, washed, cored, and shredded 2 or 3 ripe plum tomatoes, thinly sliced Thinly sliced dill pickles, drained (optional)
SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Deep-fry or candy thermometer Sheet pan lined with newspaper In a medium mixing bowl, combine the buttermilk and hot sauce and whisk to blend. Add the oysters, toss gently to make sure all the oysters are immersed in the liquid, and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Heat the oil to 350°F in a pot, monitoring the temperature with the deep-fry thermometer.

In a separate medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour and cornmeal and season it with pepper. Set a cooling rack over the sheet pan. Make sure it is nearby before you begin to cook the oysters.

Take a few oysters at a time from the buttermilk mixture and dredge them in the flour mixture, then gently add them to the hot oil. Cook until golden brown and crisp on all sides, about 3 minutes apiece. Remove the oysters with a slotted spoon or tongs and transfer to the cooling rack. Season with salt and repeat the process with the remaining oysters.

Lightly toast the sliced bread. Spread the inside of each piece of bread with mayonnaise, which you should season lightly with salt and pepper. Layer each sandwich with oysters, lettuce, tomatoes, and, if using, pickles. Serve with cold Barq's root beer or Dixie beer.

NEW ENGLAND-STYLE LOBSTER ROLL



When it comes to lobster rolls, you've got your drawn-butter people and your mayonnaise people. Here, it's mayonnaise for the lobster salad, and butter before griddling the roll, which must be of the long, split-top variety. As for the meat, a judicious business owner might use only knuckles for a lobster roll, saving the choicer parts for more expensive offerings—and there's a qualitative dimension to that choice as well. A lobster roll made only from knuckles might actually be *better*. But unless you're having a big lobster dinner one night, and generating enough knuckles to make lobster rolls the next day, feel free, by all means, to use claws and tails.

Serves 6

1 tablespoon salt, plus more to taste
6 lobsters (1½ to 2 pounds each)
Roughly 1 cup [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise
1 rib celery, finely diced
2 sprigs fresh tarragon, leaves only, coarsely chopped
1 to 2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice, or to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, softened

6 split-top white hot dog rolls

Celery seeds, for garnish

Fill a large 4-to 5-gallon pot with 2 to 3 inches of water and add the tablespoon of salt. Position a steaming rack in the pot and bring to a boil. Working in batches of 2 or 3 lobsters at a time, steam them in the pot, covered, for 12 to 15 minutes, reaching in carefully about halfway through with the tongs to shift the lobsters around to help them cook evenly. Remove the cooked lobsters from the pot and continue with the remaining lobsters.

When the lobsters are cool enough to handle, remove the meat from the shell: Wrap the claws in a dish towel and whack them with the blunt end of your knife; crack open the tail, also wrapped in a dish towel, with your hands by folding it in half, then use your knife or kitchen shears, if preferred, to cut through the length of the underside and extract the meat; tap the knuckles with your knife or, gently, a meat mallet, if preferred, and extract as much of the meat as you can. Cut what meat needs to be cut into bite-size chunks and transfer it to a large

mixing bowl.

Fold in the mayonnaise, eyeballing so that there's enough to coat the lobster but not enough to make it the main event, then add the celery, tarragon, and lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Chill the mixture until ready to assemble the sandwiches.

Heat a griddle, griddle pan, or cast-iron skillet to medium-high while you spread the inside of each hot dog roll with $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of the butter; melt the remaining 1 tablespoon butter on the griddle or in the pan and place the rolls on the hot surface, buttered side down, to toast to golden brown over medium heat, working in batches if necessary.

Remove the toasted buns from the pan, fill each generously with the lobster mixture, garnish with the celery seeds, and serve with a cold Narragansett beer.

GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICHES WITH CARAMELIZED ONIONS

The brilliant Gabrielle Hamilton uses mayonnaise on the outside of her grilled cheese sandwiches, as do many diner cooks, and you should, too. It doesn't get brown as quickly as butter, so the sandwich needs far less babysitting in the pan, from which it emerges with an impressively even golden crust. Go ahead and use the stuff from the jar, unless you happen to have the homemade variety already on hand.

Serves 4

6 tablespoons ($\frac{3}{4}$ stick) unsalted butter

4 large white or yellow onions, peeled and finely sliced Salt to taste

8 slices Japanese milk bread (a soft, sweet yeast-raised bread made with whole milk, sugar, and butter, often available at Asian markets; may substitute standard white sandwich bread) 6 to 8 tablespoons [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise 6 to 8 ounces best-quality sharp cheddar cheese, grated In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons of the butter over medium-low heat and add the onions. Season the onions lightly with salt and stir them around with a wooden spoon or spatula to evenly distribute the butter and break up the stacks of slices. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until the onions are nicely caramelized, 25 to 30 minutes. You can't rush this process with high heat. Once the onions are caramelized, remove from the heat and let cool slightly, then give them a good chop, so that they will be easy to eat in a sandwich.

With a butter knife, spread one side of each slice of bread with an even layer of mayonnaise. In a medium cast-iron skillet or nonstick sauté pan, heat $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of butter over medium-high heat until it foams and subsides, then place one slice of bread, mayonnaise side down, in the hot pan. Top it with an even layer of grated cheese and scatter some of the onions over the surface of the

cheese. Top this with another slice of bread, mayonnaise side up. After 2 to 4 minutes, flip the sandwich with a spatula and add ½ tablespoon butter to the pan. Let cook for another 3 minutes or so, then remove the sandwich and repeat this process with the remaining butter, bread, mayo, cheese, and onions. Slice on the diagonal and serve at once.

PAN BAGNAT



This delicious Provençal sandwich was once the source of many headaches in the Les Halles kitchen. These days, it's a great thing to bring to the beach or on a picnic. Here's one instance in which I'll employ a brioche roll, as it nicely

contains the pressed ingredients; in a pinch, a ciabatta or focaccia roll would make an acceptable substitute.

Serves 4 to 8

¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh Italian parsley 12 salt-packed anchovies, rinsed, drained, and finely chopped

2 tablespoons capers, drained, rinsed, and finely chopped

16 ounces best-quality tuna, canned in olive oil, drained and oil reserved separately Freshly squeezed lemon juice to taste

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 4 round brioche sandwich rolls (about 4 ounces each) ¾ cup black olive tapenade

6 [hard-boiled eggs](#), peeled and thinly sliced 2 ripe plum tomatoes, cored and very thinly sliced SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

2 scrupulously clean sheet pans, 1 lined with foil, plastic, or parchment paper Bricks, heavy skillet, or other weighted objects In a medium mixing bowl, combine the parsley, anchovies, capers, and tuna and mix in enough of the reserved tuna oil so that the mixture is fairly wet with oil. Taste and season with lemon juice, salt, and pepper as needed.

Use a butter knife or small spatula to spread the inside of both parts of each roll with tapenade. Fill the sandwich with a layer of tuna and top with sliced eggs and tomatoes. Place the sandwiches close together on the lined sheet pan and place the other sheet pan atop the sandwiches. Press down hard enough to flatten the sandwiches, but not so hard that everything oozes out. Top this rig with the bricks to keep the pressing going. Press for at least 30 minutes before eating.

MACAU-STYLE PORK CHOP SANDWICH



This sandwich, loosely inspired by a pork chop bun served to me for television in Macau, is possibly the most delicious thing in the book. We had a hard time shooting it, because everyone in the room kept eating the models.

Serves 4

4 boneless pork rib chops or cutlets (about 6 ounces each) ¼ cup soy sauce

¼ cup Chinese rice wine

¼ cup black vinegar

1 tablespoon sesame oil

4 garlic cloves, peeled and coarsely chopped

1 tablespoon five-spice powder

1 tablespoon dark brown sugar, packed

1 large egg

½ cup all-purpose flour

1½ cups panko bread crumbs

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 2 cups peanut oil, for frying, plus more as needed

8 slices white sandwich bread

Chili paste, for garnish

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Meat mallet or heavy-duty rolling pin Sheet pan or platter lined with newspaper

Pound the pork to ¼-inch thickness, using the meat mallet. If using a rolling

pin, be sure to wrap the meat in plastic before whacking it (and consider getting yourself a meat mallet).

In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, rice wine, vinegar, sesame oil, garlic, five-spice powder, and sugar. Place the pork in a zip-seal plastic bag or nonreactive container and pour the marinade mixture over, turning the chops to ensure that they're evenly coated with liquid. Seal the bag and refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 12 hours.

Remove the chops from the marinade and brush off the garlic. Beat the egg in a shallow bowl and place the flour and bread crumbs in separate shallow bowls. Season the flour with salt and pepper. You may need to add a tablespoon of water to the beaten egg, to loosen its texture so that it adheres evenly to the meat.

To a large, heavy-bottom frying pan, add the peanut oil and heat over medium-high.

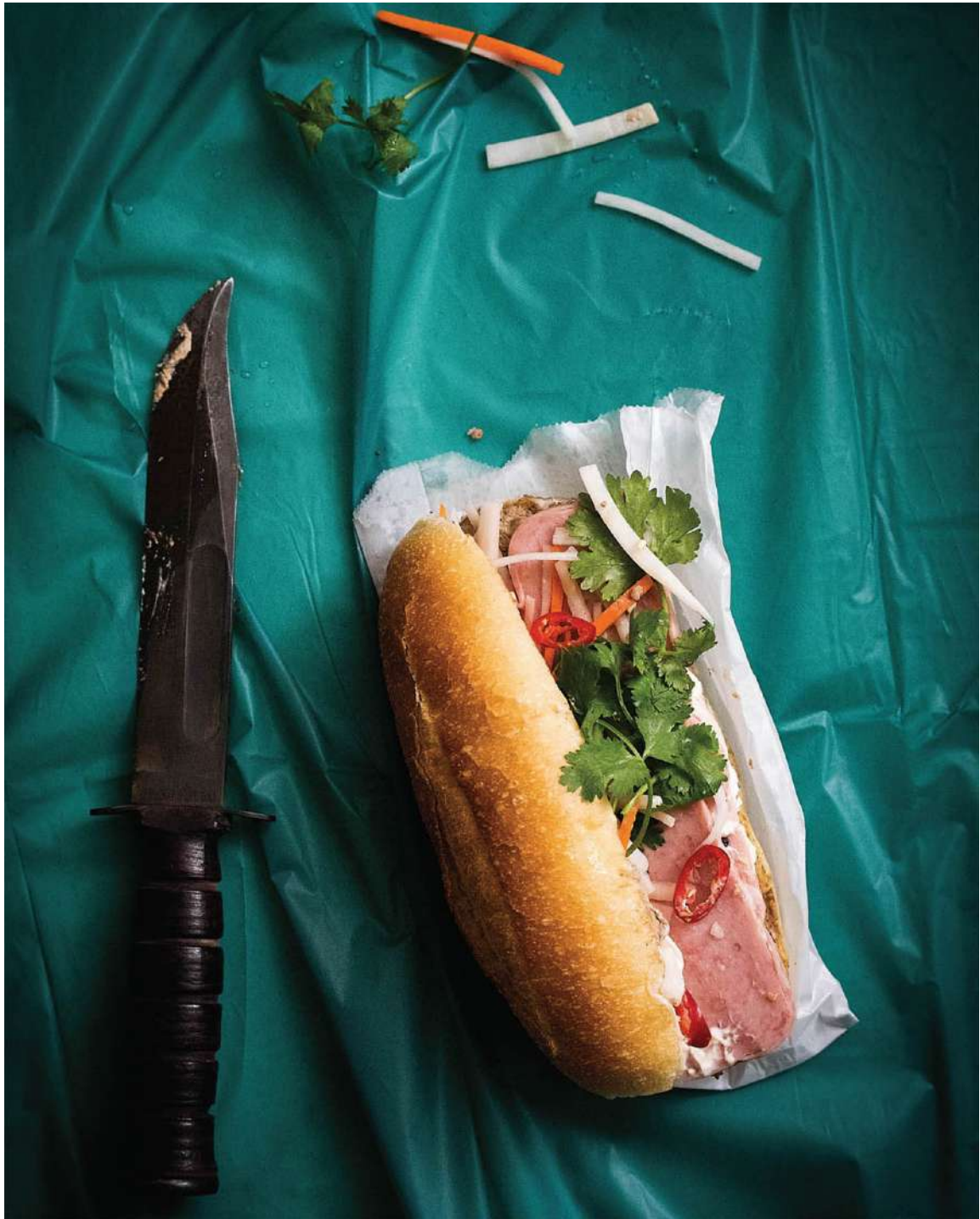
While the oil heats, dredge the chops in the flour, batting off any extra, then in the egg, then in the bread crumbs.

Test the oil with a pinch of bread crumbs. If they immediately sizzle, carefully slide the chops into the hot oil, working in batches if necessary to avoid overcrowding the pan and bringing down the temperature of the oil. Cook for about 5 minutes per side, or until golden brown. Remove the cooked chops from the oil and let drain on the lined sheet pan. Season lightly with salt.

Toast the bread until golden brown.

Assemble the sandwiches and serve with the chili paste alongside.

BANH MI



As with the po' boy, the most important aspect in *banh mi* construction is the bread. It looks like a French baguette, but the wheat flour is cut with rice flour to create a lighter, crisper, somehow sog-proof vehicle for the porky, livery goodness within. If you're lucky enough to live in a part of the United States with a Vietnamese bakery, like Dong Phuong in New Orleans, get your bread there. Otherwise, as for po' boys, try the lightweight "Italian" or "French" bread that's delivered daily to most large grocery stores. The shape isn't exactly right, but the consistency is closer in spirit than actual French baguette.

You can, of course, buy pâté for this sandwich, but it's easy and fast enough to cook some fresh chicken livers and make a softer-edged variation on chicken liver vinaigrette, as per below.

Serves 4

½ pound chicken livers, trimmed of connective tissue and fat Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

5 tablespoons unsalted butter

¼ cup dry white wine

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 to 2 tablespoons canola oil, as needed

½ cup [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise 4 (7-inch) Vietnamese baguettes, sliced lengthwise 1 (7-ounce) can classic SPAM, thinly sliced 2 cups [do chua](#), drained well and patted dry 2 Thai bird chili or jalapeño peppers, very thinly sliced 8 sprigs fresh cilantro, leaves only, coarsely chopped Soy sauce to taste

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Blender or food processor

Season the livers well with salt and pepper. Heat 2 tablespoons of the butter in a

large, heavy-bottom sauté pan until it foams and subsides. Add the livers and cook for about 3 minutes per side, until nicely seared. Remove the livers from the pan and transfer them to the blender. Deglaze the pan with the wine and vinegar, stirring well with a wooden spoon to dislodge the browned bits. Once the sharp smell of alcohol and vinegar subsides, remove the pan from the heat and transfer its contents to the blender and puree with the livers, adding a bit of oil as needed to keep the mixture loose. Scrape out into a mixing bowl to cool. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. This will yield about 2 cups loose pâté.

In a clean mixing bowl, combine the remaining butter, which should be at room temperature, and the mayonnaise and mix well to incorporate. With a butter knife, spread the inside of each baguette with some of the mayonnaise mixture, and then with some of the liver mixture. Add a layer of sliced SPAM to each sandwich, then top with do chua, pepper slices, and cilantro. Season with a sprinkle of soy sauce and serve at once.

[6]
PARTY 101





During a dark period of my life, I worked in the twilight world of fly-by-night catering, usually under an alias (for reasons I'd rather not get into, as I'm uncertain about the relevant statutes of limitations). Later, I was the chef of a large nightclub and banquet facility in midtown Manhattan.

So I've worked a *lot* of parties. I've written menus and prepared finger food for many tens of thousands of fingers over the years. Probably hundreds of thousands.

I've seen some shit.

I've also learned to hold certain truths to be self-evident.

It is obvious, for instance, that when you're throwing a cocktail party with food that most of your guests will eat while standing up, you're expecting more guests than you have seats for, and therefore need to plan accordingly.

Here, then, are some basic rules. While not exactly the wisdom of the ages, these fundamentals will prove useful when planning a party:

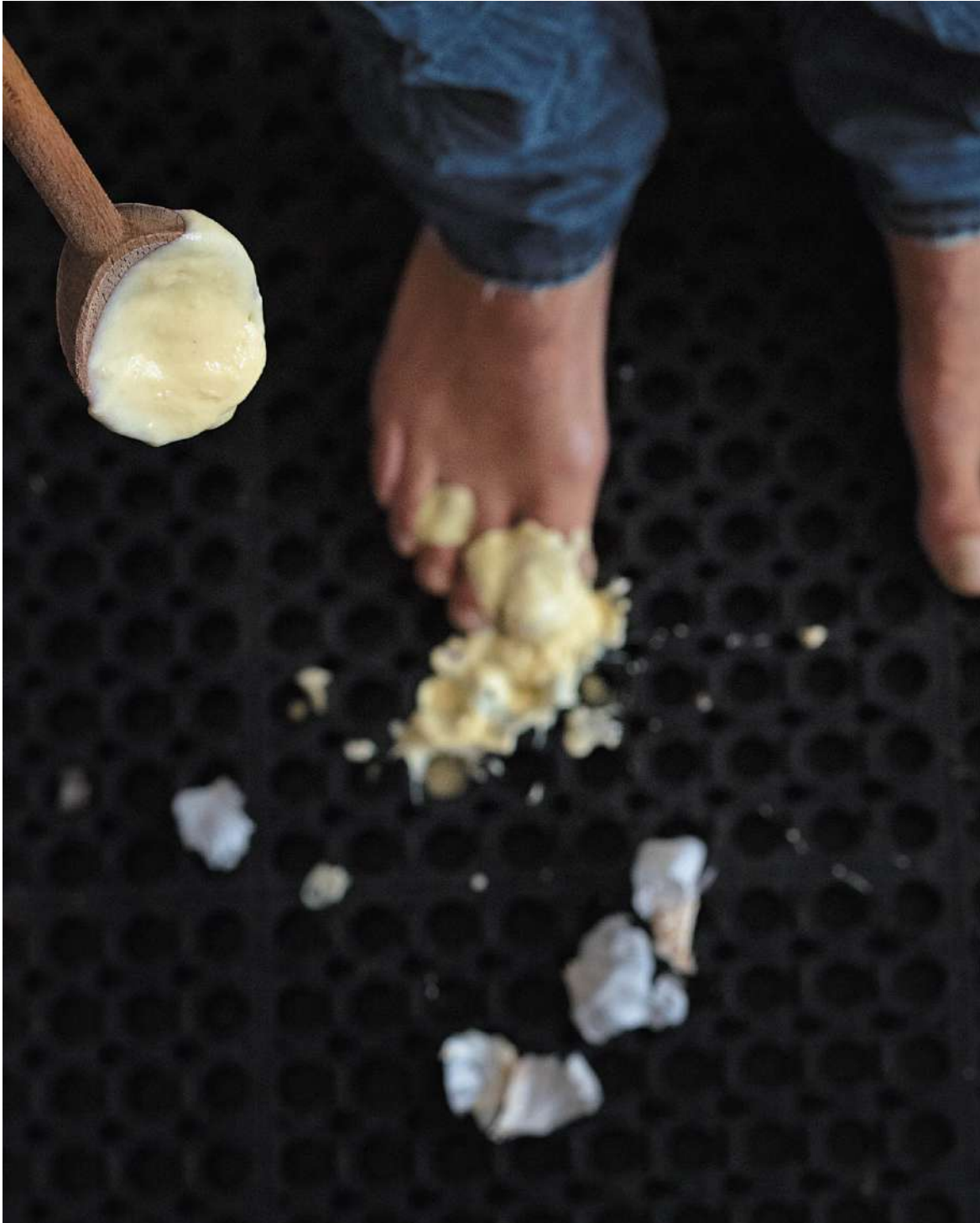
- ✘ Ask yourself, when writing the menu, "Will my guests have to balance a plate on their knee? Will they need a fork? A knife?" If the answer to any of these questions is yes, rewrite your menu. Otherwise, you are inviting a goat rodeo of spilled food, awkward conversations, and horrifying cleanup.
- ✘ Will my guests be able to pick up the food cleanly? Meaning: Will the structural integrity of the hors d'oeuvres enable your guests to eat them without dribbling all over their presumably expensive clothing?
- ✘ Can women with carefully applied lipstick fit said food items in their mouths without messing it up? And without distending their mouths or cheeks in a way they might believe to be unflattering to their appearance?
- ✘ Hopefully, some of your guests will be having sex after the party. Hopefully with you—but even if they're not, you need to consider the residual effects of the hors d'oeuvres you serve them. Excessive garlic, raw onions, lutefisk, and durian fruit would all be, for this reason, inadvisable. Whether the hors d'oeuvres will leave hunks of food stuck between their teeth is also something you might consider.
- ✘ Will there be enough for everyone? Plan on 3 to 4 appetizers per guest if dinner will follow, and 6 to 10 appetizers per person, depending on the girth of your guests, if the appetizers are being served in lieu of dinner.

All that being said, the single most important lesson I learned over the course of many years, and many, many parties, is this humbling but inescapable fact: that no matter what you serve, no matter how beautifully presented, strikingly garnished, exotic in flavor, or expensive (I don't care if you're serving up tubs of beluga and fresh, still-steaming buckwheat blinis, or shrimp the size of a baby's arm), what everybody wants, what they will be all over like a swarm, every time,

is commercially made freezer-case-sourced pigs in fucking blankets. It doesn't matter who your guests are. They will eat them, and they will love them. Whether this involves post-ironic posturing or just straightforward enthusiasm, they will love them just the same.

So the lesson here is this: **Always keep some pigs in blankets in the freezer.** They're the workhorses of the cocktail party. Did your guests hit the limited amount of crab cakes too hard? Afraid of running out? Send out a tray of pigs in blankets. They'll be delighted. Truffled larks' tongues in aspic all gone? No one will give a fuck once you send out those little doggies. And they'll think you're a genius.

BAGNA CÀUDA WITH CRUDITÉS



I used to cook vast tubs of this stuff. You can't beat it. Thick, hot, garlicky cream—into which you dip raw vegetables or bread? Please. And it's easy as hell.

As for the vegetables, choose wisely. Take care with your cuts, make sure everything is very clean but not wet, and reject anything that's even slightly dark edged, dried up, or that would otherwise contribute to the bad reputation that follows crudités.

Makes 1 quart, to serve about 25

8 ounces salt-packed anchovies

1 quart heavy cream

16 garlic cloves, peeled and smashed

½ cup best-quality extra-virgin olive oil 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 3 medium to large red, yellow, or orange bell peppers, cored, seeded, and cut into long, thin strips 20 true baby carrots (NOT those waterlogged, plastic-bagged nubs that look like bloated pinky fingers) with greens attached, peeled and trimmed if necessary
20 Breakfast radishes, trimmed and cut in half lengthwise 2 heads of Belgian endive, washed and separated into spears 1 baguette, thinly sliced

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Blender or immersion blender

Place the anchovies in a small bowl, cover with cold water, and soak for 10 minutes, then drain, rinse, pat dry, and set aside.

In a medium saucepot, combine the cream and garlic and bring just to a boil, stirring occasionally and keeping an eye on it to avoid a messy boilover. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until the cream is reduced by half and the garlic is very fragrant, 20 to 25 minutes.

In the meantime, in a small saucepot, combine the oil and butter and bring to a low simmer. Mix well with a wooden spoon and add the reserved anchovies. Continue to simmer until the anchovies have completely melted into the hot fat. This should take about 30 minutes.

In the blender, combine the cream and garlic mixture with the oil, butter, and anchovy mixture and puree. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper as desired.

Serve the *bagna càuda* warm, employing a fondue pot if desired, with the raw vegetables alongside. Baguette slices should be held under the dipped vegetables to catch any drops and will become a delicious snack on their own, once dripped up a few times.

BELGIAN ENDIVE WITH CURRIED CHICKEN SALAD

Yes, I *know*: 1970 called. It wants its hors d'oeuvre back.

This is another reliable classic from my fly-by-night catering days. They're tasty. They're pretty. You could train a crackhead rodeo clown to make them.

Makes 40 to 50 pieces

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts 2 teaspoons salt, plus more to taste 1 bay leaf

1 teaspoon black peppercorns

2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed with the flat side of your knife ½ cup [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise Juice of ½ lemon (about 1 tablespoon)

3 teaspoons mild yellow curry powder

1 shallot, peeled and finely chopped ½ teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger ½ cup toasted walnuts, coarsely chopped ½ cup raisins, coarsely chopped Freshly ground black pepper to taste 3 to 4 heads of Belgian endive, washed and separated into spears (discard leaves that are too small) ¼ cup fresh cilantro or Italian parsley leaves 1 to 1½ cups [Mixed Fruit Chutney](#)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Instant-read thermometer

Place the chicken breasts in a pot that is large enough to hold them in a single layer, and add the salt, bay leaf, peppercorns, and garlic. Cover with cold water and bring to a boil, watching carefully. As soon as the water boils, reduce the heat to a simmer, cover the pot, and continue to cook until the breasts are cooked through, 8 to 10 minutes, or the meat is gently firm and an instant-read thermometer registers 165°F when inserted into the thickest part of the breast.

Use tongs to remove the chicken breasts from the water. Transfer to a plate and refrigerate to stop the cooking process.

Once the chicken is cool, cut it into a ¼-inch dice and transfer it to a mixing bowl. In a separate mixing bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, lemon juice, and curry powder, then fold in the shallot, ginger, walnuts, and raisins. Fold this mixture into the diced chicken, then season with salt and pepper.

Arrange the endive spears on a platter and cover the base of each one with a heaping tablespoon of chicken salad. Garnish with the cilantro leaves and a dab of chutney and serve.

***CHICKEN SATAY WITH FAKE-ASS SPICY
PEANUT SAUCE***



There are certain lowbrow items that even the most discerning guests go crazy for at catered parties: Among them are (the aforementioned) pigs in a blanket, steroidal strawberries dipped in chocolate, and meat on a stick. Trim a pineapple and jab a bunch of chicken skewers into it, like some demented poultry porcupine, and do not skimp on the Fake-Ass Spicy Peanut Sauce.

Makes about 45 pieces

½ cup vegetable or other neutral oil
Juice of 3 lemons, or 2 lemons and 2 limes (about 6 tablespoons)
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons fish sauce
2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon soy sauce
3 stalks lemongrass, coarsely chopped, or finely grated zest of 3 lemons or 5 limes
2 shallots, peeled and coarsely chopped
4 garlic cloves, peeled and coarsely chopped
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons light brown sugar, packed

2 teaspoons ground coriander

1 teaspoon ground turmeric or mild yellow curry powder
3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, sliced lengthwise into 1-inch-thick strips

1 cup chunky peanut butter

½ cup hot water

½ cup coconut milk

1 tablespoon sriracha sauce, or to taste (but you want it spicy)
SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Blender or food processor

45 wooden skewers

Grill, grill pan, or broiler

In the blender, combine the oil, the juice of 2 lemons, ¼ cup of the fish sauce, 2 tablespoons of the soy sauce, the lemongrass, shallots, 3 of the garlic cloves, ¼

cup of the sugar, the coriander, and turmeric. Blend on high speed for about 30 seconds.

Place the chicken in 1-gallon zip-seal plastic bags or a large glass casserole or baking dish with a cover and pour the marinade over, turning the pieces so that they are all coated. Seal and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours (any more time than that, and the acid and salt in the marinade will begin to erode the structural integrity of the flesh, leaving you with revoltingly mushy chicken).

While the chicken marinates, make the peanut sauce. In a mixing bowl, combine the peanut butter, hot water, and coconut milk and whisk well. Add the remaining juice of 1 lemon or 2 limes, 2 tablespoons fish sauce, 1 teaspoon soy sauce, 2 tablespoons sugar, and the sriracha and whisk well, adding a bit more water or coconut milk if necessary to thin the sauce to desired consistency. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional splashes of soy sauce, fish sauce, citrus juice or sugar as desired. Cover and refrigerate the sauce until 30 minutes before serving.

Soak the skewers in water for 30 minutes before cooking the chicken.

Preheat your grill. Remove the chicken from the marinade, reserving the marinade in the small bowl. Thread one piece on each skewer, leaving enough room at the bottom of the skewer for a “handle.” Grill for 5 minutes, then turn the skewers and use a basting or pastry brush to coat the chicken with the reserved marinade. Cook for another 5 minutes, or until cooked through (cut through the center of one piece to make sure there’s no translucent pink flesh). Serve hot, with the peanut sauce alongside for dipping.

DUCK RILLETTES

Preparing duck rillettes is a two-day affair: Salt and refrigerate the legs one day, and cook them the next, until the flesh is nearly falling off the bone but still intact. The tell is when the skin separates from the “knuckle” joint, exposing the duck’s “shin” bone.

Makes about 4 cups rillettes 6 duck legs (about 3 to 4 pounds raw total, with skin and bones intact) Salt, as needed

2 cups duck fat

Freshly ground black pepper to taste 4 sprigs fresh oregano

1 bay leaf

2 garlic cloves, peeled

Rub the duck legs generously with salt and arrange in a single layer in a shallow dish. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

Preheat the oven to 375°F and remove the duck legs from the refrigerator. In a small, heavy-bottom saucepan, melt the duck fat until it is clear. Season the legs lightly with black pepper and transfer them to a glass or ceramic casserole that will accommodate them snugly in a single layer. Pour the fat over the legs and nestle the oregano, bay leaf, and garlic around them. Cover the dish with foil and cook in the oven for 60 to 90 minutes, until the meat is nearly falling off the bone (see headnote).

Using tongs, remove the legs from the casserole, and once they are cool enough to handle, separate the meat from the skin and bones (which should be stashed in

the freezer for stock making). Shred the meat with a fork and place it in a mixing bowl. Place a strainer over the bowl and ladle the fat into it, discarding the oregano, bay leaf, and garlic. Gently fold together the meat and fat with a spatula. Taste and season as desired with salt and pepper, then use as directed for [Mutant Quesadillas](#), or store in a clean terrine, topped with the excess duck fat, covered with plastic, and refrigerated.

THE GRILL BITCH'S BAR NUTS



I first worked with Beth Aretsky, who later came to identify herself as “the Grill

Bitch,” at One Fifth, one of the many long-gone New York City restaurants of my checkered career. She created these spicy and sweet bar nuts, which caused many a customer to linger over drinks far beyond the advisable cutoff point. They are truly addictive.

Makes 8 cups

4 large egg whites

5 pounds mixed nuts

½ cup granulated sugar

¼ cup light brown sugar, packed

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

1½ tablespoons ground cayenne pepper 1½ tablespoons salt

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

2 (9 × 13-inch) sheet pans lined with parchment paper or silicone mats Preheat the oven to 325°F.

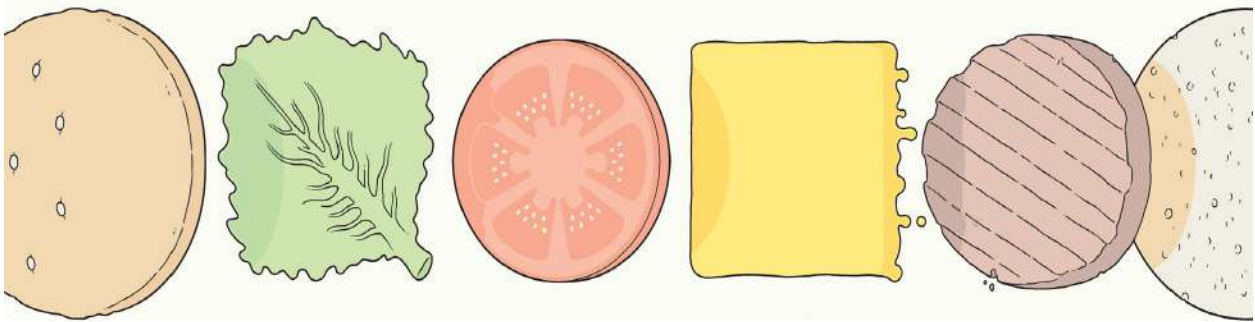
In a large mixing bowl, whisk the egg whites until they are foamy and nearly stiff.

In another mixing bowl, combine the nuts, sugars, cinnamon, cayenne, and salt and toss to coat. Fold in the egg whites, tossing gently to make sure that all the nuts have been coated in egg white.

Divide the mixture evenly between the two prepared sheet pans. Bake in the oven for 30 minutes, rotating the pans and stirring the nuts at the 15-minute mark. The nuts should be dry and crisp after 30 minutes.

Remove from the oven and let cool before serving.

[7] HAMBURGER RULES



Brioches are very nice.

For breakfast.

Do *not* think for a second that a brioche roll is a good idea for a hamburger. The brioche is a French invention. The French, however vital to all things culinary, have no cultural understanding of—or historic sympathies for—the American hamburger.

The purpose of the hamburger bun is to support and enhance the meat. Hamburger meat is, by definition, supposed to be fatty. A certain amount of grease is desirable. The bun is supposed to counteract the runoff, and absorb it. It is supposed to last, in direct proportion to the amount of meat left, until the last bite.

Brioches are greasy. They *add* grease. They also crumble and break apart in the hand as the burger reaches its butt end. It is not a reliable partner or friend. The potato bun, however, is the perfect delivery system for a fatty patty (or patties). It should be soft, pillowy, reliable, and decidedly proletarian.

Like sushi—another perfect food—a hamburger should be austere, seemingly uncomplicated, yet prepared with pride and precision.

One must continue to ask oneself, as if arranging flowers in the Japanese manner, “Is this necessary?,” stripping away that which does not serve the meat. The meat is the star.

Does one need a tomato slice? Does it really add anything? Here, a cost-benefit analysis is required. The tomato may be in season, and at its height of deliciousness, but will including it in the delicately constructed hamburger be worth the possible damage to its structure and “eatability”?

Cheddar or processed American? One must ask oneself constantly what one is willing to sacrifice for presumed “quality.” American cheese, clearly, is texturally and structurally superior as a binding agent—and has the added force of tradition on its side.

Lettuce? I’m not a fan. I’ll have my salad on the side. But I understand the desire for crunch. If you’re putting mesclun or baby arugula on your burger, though, Guantánamo Bay would not be an unreasonable punishment. Use finely shredded iceberg. Or *maybe* romaine. Period.

Onions add something to the party, but they must be thinly sliced. Paper thin. And fresh, *please*. Caramelized? No. Not a fan. Burgers should not be sweet. Any sweetness in a burger should come from the ketchup alone.

Speaking of which: Do not put “house-made chutney” on my hamburger. Please. Let ketchup do its job. And don’t make “house-made ketchup” either. Why would you do that? If it’s not broken, as they say, why the fuck would you fix it? Is your ketchup *really* better than the stuff that’s been our trusty condiment companion for decades? A waiter asks me if I’d like some “house-made” ketchup, and I tense up, anticipating further blows: Will Mumford and Sons suddenly emerge from the kitchen and begin playing tableside?

Mayonnaise? Maybe, if applied judiciously. You don’t want that burger shooting out from between the buns and landing on your genitals. It’s a tough call. How much do you really like mayonnaise? A cost/benefit analysis is called for here.

Bacon? By all means. But as with anything you put on a burger, serious attention must be paid to thickness, doneness, and cut, which is to say, use a standard-issue thin slice of bacon, and cook it to well done. And don't overload your burger with it. You can, as it turns out, have too much bacon.

[8]
PASTA





***SUNDAY GRAVY WITH SAUSAGE AND
RIGATONI***



I was always bitter that I wasn't Italian American. You know that scene in *Saturday Night Fever*, where Tony Manero is eating with his family? All the yelling and the smacking? That looked good to me.

We were discouraged from talking with our hands at my childhood dinner table. Voices were supposed to be maintained at a reasonable level and used for civil discourse only. Definitely no smacking. Mopping sauce with bread—getting too physically involved with your food at all—was something my mom was unlikely to approve of.

So, this Italo-American Jersey classic—a riff on the Napolitano strategy for (a) turning a bunch of bony, low-quality off-cuts of meat into something delicious, and (b) stretching one thing into two courses—is a realization of all my childhood yearnings.

Serves 4 to 6

2½ pounds oxtail, cut into pieces Salt and pepper to taste

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 to 3 pounds pork neck bones 2 pounds sweet or hot pork sausage links 1 large or 2 medium white or yellow onions, peeled and finely chopped 5 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed 3 tablespoons tomato paste

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes, or to taste

2 cups dry red wine

2 cups [Dark Universal Stock](#)

2 (28-ounce) cans crushed tomatoes 2 bay leaves

2 sprigs fresh thyme or rosemary 1 sprig fresh basil

1 pound dry rigatoni

4 to 6 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, for grating
SPECIAL EQUIPMENT
Cheesecloth
Butcher's twine

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Season the oxtail with salt and pepper. In a Dutch oven or large heavy-bottom ovenproof pot with lid, heat the oil over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Add the neck bones and oxtail, working in batches if necessary to avoid overcrowding the pan, and brown on all sides in the oil. Using tongs, remove the browned pieces and set them aside on a sheet pan or platter, which will collect their juices while the remaining pieces cook. Brown the sausages and set aside.

Once the sausages and bones have all been browned and removed from the Dutch oven, add the onion and cook over medium-high heat, stirring often and scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon so that the onion picks up the browned bits. Salt the onions a bit to release their juices as they cook.

Add the garlic, cook for 1 minute, then add the tomato paste, oregano, and pepper flakes and cook for a few minutes, until the tomato paste is dark reddish brown and has begun to stick to the pan. Deglaze the Dutch oven with the wine and let reduce by half.

Add the stock, tomatoes, and bay leaves. Wrap the herb sprigs in the cheesecloth and secure the bundle tightly with the twine to make a bouquet garni. Return the oxtail and bones to the Dutch oven. Season with salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Cover the Dutch oven and transfer to the oven to cook for about 2½ hours.

Remove the Dutch oven from the oven, add the browned sausages, and return to the oven to cook for another 30 minutes. The ragout should be thick but still juicy.

Remove and discard the bouquet garni and keep the gravy and sausages warm.

In a large, heavy-bottom pot, bring salted water to a boil. Cook the rigatoni according to the package instructions until just al dente. Drain the pasta in a colander and return it to the hot, empty pot. Toss the rigatoni gently over medium heat for about 30 seconds to dry it completely, using tongs if necessary to keep it from sticking to the sides of the pot. Ladle in as much of the warm

sauce as necessary to coat but not drown the pasta. Serve the pasta and sausages together, with the extra sauce and grated Parmigiano-Reggiano alongside.



LINGUINE WITH WHITE CLAM SAUCE



This would be a very good candidate for “last meal,” as it’s delicious as hell—and because you won’t have to worry about garlic breath in the next life.

Serves 4 as an entrée, 8 as part of a multicourse meal 5 dozen littleneck clams, scrubbed

¼ cup best-quality olive oil

12 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

½ cup dry white wine

1 pound dry linguine

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 3 tablespoons butter, cut into a few pieces

1 cup coarsely chopped fresh parsley leaves

In a large, heavy-bottom pot, bring about an inch of salted water to a boil. Gently place 4 dozen of the 5 dozen clams into the pot, cover, and let steam until the clams have opened, about 5 minutes. Check them frequently, move them around with tongs or a long-handled spoon as needed, and remove the clams to a large bowl as they open so that they do not become overcooked and rubbery. Do not discard the cooking liquid.

As soon as the clams are cool enough to handle, remove them from the shell with a soup spoon or clean fingers, keeping them intact as much as possible, and collecting as much of the liquor from within the shell as possible. If they're a little on the large side, give the clams a rough chop. Strain the cooking liquid through a fine-mesh sieve into a small bowl.

Wash out the pot, fill it three-quarters full with heavily salted water, and bring it to a boil.

When the water is just about to boil, warm the oil in a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan and add the garlic and pepper flakes. Cook over medium-low heat, taking care not to let the garlic get brown, which can happen in an instant. Add the wine and increase the heat so that the wine boils and reduces by half. Add the reserved clam liquor and a good splash of the clam cooking liquid, then the remaining 1 dozen clams. Cover and cook until the clams have steamed open. Remove the clams to the side as they open, and discard any that haven't opened within a reasonable amount of time. (It's not terribly uncommon to have 1 or 2 clams per dozen that just never open.) Add the linguine to the boiling water and cook according to the package instructions until just al dente.

While the pasta cooks, add the reserved cooked clams to the sauté pan and season with salt and pepper to taste. Add the butter and toss over the heat until everything is just hot.

Place a colander over a mixing bowl or clean pot, so that you may capture some of the pasta cooking water, and drain the cooked pasta in the colander. Immediately add the pasta to the pan with the sauce. Toss over the heat for 1 minute, adding some of the reserved pasta water, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time, if necessary, to loosen up the sauce. Garnish with the parsley, then transfer to a serving bowl. Add the clams in their shells and serve at once.

MACARONI AND CHEESE



Get that damn lobster out of my mac and cheese!

Truffles do *not* make it better. If you add truffle *oil*, which is made from a petroleum-based chemical additive and the crushed dreams of nineties culinary mediocrity, you should be punched in the kidneys.

Serves 8

1 pound dry elbow macaroni
5 tablespoons unsalted butter

5 tablespoons all-purpose flour

4½ cups whole milk
2 teaspoons mustard powder
2 teaspoons ground cayenne pepper

1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

8 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated 4 ounces Gruyère cheese, grated
5 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated 3 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, cubed 4
ounces cooked and thinly sliced ham, julienned (optional) 2 teaspoons salt, or
more to taste

Freshly ground white pepper to taste (optional) Preheat the oven to 375° F.

In a large, heavy-bottom pot, bring salted water to a boil and add the elbow macaroni. Cook according to the package instructions until just al dente, then drain and set aside.

Make sure you have both a whisk and a wooden spoon nearby, and something to rest them on. You will be switching back and forth between the two utensils as you first make a roux and then build on that to make a béchamel.

In the still-hot macaroni pot, heat the butter over medium-high heat until it foams and subsides. Whisk in the flour, then switch to a wooden spoon and stir

steadily over medium-high heat until the mixture begins to turn a nutty golden brown, about 2 minutes. Do not let the mixture scorch. Whisk in the milk and bring the mixture just to a boil, stirring with the wooden spoon and making sure to scrape each part of the surface of the pan so that hunks of flour or milk do not stick. Reduce to a simmer and continue to cook and stir until the mixture is slightly thicker than heavy cream.

Whisk in the mustard powder, cayenne, and Worcestershire, then add half the Parmigiano-Reggiano (you'll sprinkle the rest over the top) and the rest of the cheeses and, if using, the ham, and stir until the cheeses have melted completely. Stir in the cooked macaroni and mix well. Remove from the heat and stir in the salt and optional pepper.

Transfer the mixture to a glass or ceramic casserole, top with the remaining Parmigiano, and bake in the oven for 15 to 20 minutes, until the top is golden brown and the mixture is bubbling slightly.

Serve hot, or refrigerate and gently reheat the whole thing, or in portions as needed.

SPAGHETTI ALLA BOTTARGA



After I fell in love with this dish on the Sardinian coast, I asked my father-in-law to show me how it's done.

In many ways, it encapsulates the Italian philosophy of cooking, its essential idea: Get a very few excellent ingredients, then proceed to *not* fuck them up.

Serves 4 to 6

1 pound dry spaghetti

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 garlic clove, peeled and finely sliced

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

4 ounces bottarga, grated, or more to taste Salt to taste

In a large, heavy-bottom pot, bring salted water to a boil and cook the spaghetti according to the package instructions until just al dente.

Meanwhile, in a large, high-sided skillet or sauté pan, warm the oil over medium-low heat. Add the garlic and pepper flakes and let them steep in the oil until they become fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat, let sit for 2 minutes, then add half the grated bottarga and gently swirl the skillet.

Drain the cooked pasta in a colander and transfer it to the skillet with the warm oil. Toss well to combine, then top the pasta with the remaining bottarga. Taste and season if necessary with salt (bearing in mind that bottarga is quite salty), then serve immediately in bowls.

LASAGNE BOLOGNESE



It's a myth that you need to boil fresh or dried lasagne noodles before baking the whole thing, but what *is* true is that lasagne is better the second day when it has settled, so if you have the time, I recommend making this a day before you plan to serve it.

Serves 8 to 10

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 large white or yellow onion, peeled and finely chopped
2 large or 3 medium carrots, peeled and finely chopped
3 ribs celery, finely chopped
4 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound chicken livers, trimmed of connective tissue and fat and finely chopped
 $\frac{3}{4}$ pound ground beef chuck
 $\frac{3}{4}$ pound ground veal
 $\frac{3}{4}$ pound ground pork
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup tomato paste (about 6 ounces)
1 cup Vermentino, Trebbiano, or other Tuscan white wine
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups whole milk

2 bay leaves

4 cups [Béchamel Sauce](#)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

1 pound dry flat lasagne noodles

6 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, very thinly sliced
To make the Bolognese sauce, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a medium, heavy-bottom pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, carrots, celery, garlic, and thyme and season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring regularly with a wooden spoon, until the vegetables are tender and have released their juices, 7 to 9 minutes. Stir in the livers and cook over high heat for 2 minutes, then add the beef, veal, and pork, stirring and breaking up over high heat. Season again with salt and pepper. Continue to cook over high heat until the meat is brown, stirring regularly and scraping the bottom of the pot as necessary to keep the meat and vegetables from scorching.

Once the meat is browned, stir in the tomato paste over medium heat. Let cook for about 20 minutes, stirring regularly. Add the wine, bring to a boil, and let cook until reduced by half, then add the milk and bay leaves and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours, stirring occasionally. You may need to add a bit of water (or chicken or veal stock, if you have it) if

the sauce seems to require it.

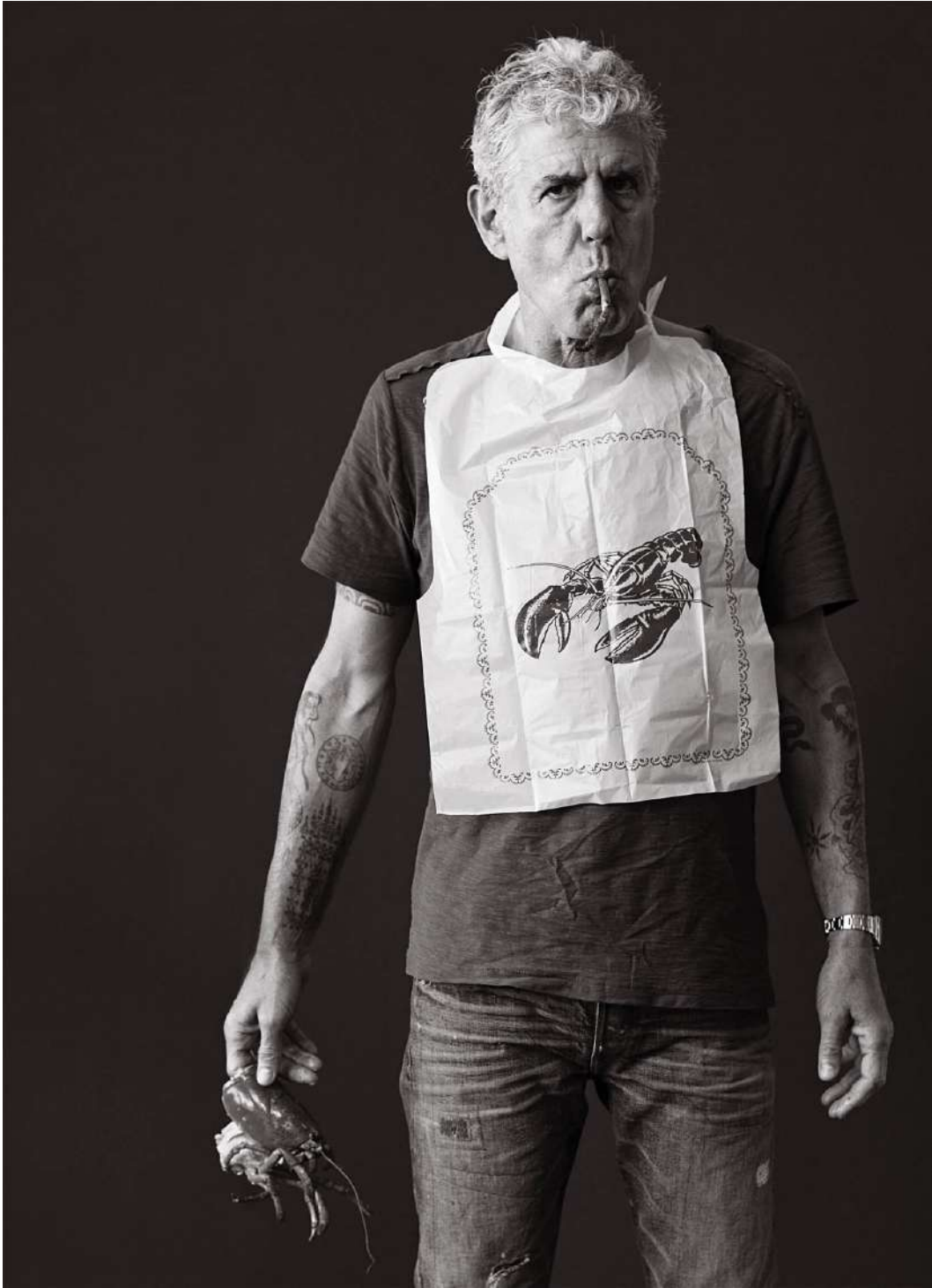
Taste the sauce and season with salt and pepper if necessary. Remove from the heat and stir to release steam and allow it to cool slightly. Skim the fat off the top with a ladle and discard.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Coat the inside of a 9 x 13-inch (or similar size) baking dish with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Cover the bottom of the dish with a layer of béchamel. Sprinkle some Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese atop the béchamel. Top it with a layer of noodles. Top the noodles with a layer of Bolognese sauce, and repeat with the béchamel, grated cheese, noodles, and Bolognese until the pan is full to the top. The top layer should be Bolognese, dotted with béchamel, with thin slices of mozzarella laid across the top.

Place the baking dish on a sheet pan and bake in the oven for about 50 minutes, until the lasagne is browned on top and beginning to bubble. Remove from the oven and let cool. If you must serve it the day you've made it, let it rest for 15 minutes before slicing. For best results, let cool completely overnight. The next day, reheat at 350°F, covered loosely with foil, until bubbling. Remove from the oven, let rest 20 minutes, then serve.

***RAVIOLI OF SALT COD WITH LOBSTER
SAUCE***



I got a lot of mileage out of this dish back when I worked at Coco Pazzo Teatro (my first and last job as the chef of a high-quality Italian restaurant). It was a riff on something Scott Bryan was doing for a while back in the day at his restaurant Indigo. The original inspiration is lost in the fog of the eighties, but this? This

shall live forever.

Serves 4 to 6

1 pound salt cod

1¼ cups heavy cream
2 sprigs fresh thyme
2 sprigs fresh parsley

1 bay leaf

8 garlic cloves, crushed
1 lobster (about 2 pounds), steamed, shelled, and separated into its parts (see [here](#))
¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley leaves

¼ cup all-purpose flour, or more as needed
1 pound [Fresh Pasta Dough](#), rolled into sheets
½ cup semolina flour, or more as needed
2 tablespoons (¼ stick) unsalted butter
2 shallots, peeled and finely chopped

½ cup dry white wine

1½ cups [Shellfish Stock](#)

Finely chopped fresh chives, for garnish
Place the cod in a large mixing bowl and cover by at least an inch with cold water. Soak the cod for 24 hours, to rehydrate and to reduce the intense saltiness that has preserved it to this point. You must change the water once an hour for the first few hours, and then, ideally, every few hours after that. In a perfect world, you'll start the dish in the morning or afternoon, and finish it the following morning or afternoon. And no, you won't have to interrupt your sleep to continue changing out the water, as long as you've taken care with it in the beginning.

Remove the fish from the water, pat it dry, and set aside.

In a large, heavy-bottom stockpot, combine 1 cup of the cream, the thyme, parsley sprigs, bay leaf, and garlic and bring to a boil. Add the cod and reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook for 5 to 8 minutes, then remove the fish with a slotted spoon and transfer it to a clean bowl. Once it's cool enough to handle, shred it finely, using very clean hands. Fold in the lobster knuckles and any odd bits, holding back the claws and tails for the main event.

Return the cream mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat to a high simmer to cook for 10 to 15 minutes, which should thicken up the mixture nicely. Strain it through a sieve into a clean bowl, stir in the oil, and set aside until it has cooled to room temperature, then slowly introduce the cream mixture to the shredded cod, mixing it in with the wooden spoon. This will be your ravioli filling, which should be moist enough to be appealing but not so moist that it will soak through a thin sheet of pasta. Taste the mixture, season with salt and pepper, then fold in the chopped parsley.

Lightly dust a clean, dry wooden cutting board or other work surface with all-purpose flour and set out one sheet of pasta on it. Dust a sheet pan with the semolina flour and keep it close at hand. Place about 1 tablespoon of the filling at even intervals, about 2 inches apart, across the sheet of pasta, then top this with a second sheet of pasta, pressing gently down around the filling lumps to form your ravioli. Cut around them, using a pasta cutter or chef's knife, and stash each raviolo on the sheet pan.

Fill the large pot, which you have washed, of course, with heavily salted water and bring it to a boil.

Cut the lobster tail and claws into large chunks.

While you wait for the water to come to a boil, heat 1 tablespoon of the butter in a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan over medium-high heat until it foams and subsides. Add the shallots and cook until just translucent, about 2 minutes. Stir in the wine and reduce by half, then add the stock and reduce until the mixture just barely coats the back of the wooden spoon. Stir in the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cream, taste, and adjust the seasoning. Add the chunks of lobster and remove the sauce from the heat a minute while you turn your attention to the ravioli.

Your water should be boiling by this point. Gently add the ravioli to the boiling water, separating them if they stick together, and cook until they float to the top, 3 to 5 minutes. Return your sauce to medium heat, and as they surface, use a slotted spoon to transfer the ravioli and the remaining 1 tablespoon butter to the sauce, agitating frequently to get them coated in the sauce. Taste and readjust seasoning if necessary. Serve at once, garnished with chives.

[9]
FISH AND SEAFOOD





BLUEFISH IN TOMATO VINAIGRETTE

Oh, much maligned bluefish!

Perennially ignored by both restaurants and home cooks alike.

The ugly girl at the prom.

Rise up!

Bluefish is fun to catch but largely shunned by diners. I was introduced to it in Provincetown, where it was all over the menu at places favored by locals. We had it at my restaurant, but it never sold. I'd eat it steak cut, across the bone, at Tips for Tops'n restaurant, an affordable family joint around the corner from our summer rental.

I've been hoping for decades that bluefish catches on as "the next big thing." And I've been disappointed. Considered too perishable, it requires decisive yet delicate handling immediately after being caught to remove the blood line and dark red muscle running along its spine. But if bought fresh—and cooked very soon after—it's really one of the great fish experiences.

Serves 4

Juice of 1 lemon (about 2 tablespoons)

3 tablespoons best-quality extra-virgin olive oil

1½ to 2 pounds bluefish fillets, cut into 4 portions
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 shallots, peeled and thinly sliced

3 large ripe red tomatoes, any variety, cored and seeded
2 tablespoons sherry

vinegar

1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves

Preheat the broiler and set the oven rack so that the fish will be 4 to 6 inches from the broiler element.

In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the lemon juice and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Season the fish with salt and pepper and place it in a glass or ceramic casserole dish, skin side down, and pour this mixture over the fish, making sure that it's evenly distributed over the surface. Scatter the shallots over the fish and let sit for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, grate the flesh of the tomatoes on the large-holed side of a box grater and transfer to a medium mixing bowl. Add the vinegar, the remaining 2 tablespoons oil, and the thyme. Season with salt and pepper, whisk together, taste, and adjust seasoning as desired.

Transfer the fish to a broiler pan, leaving the shallots intact, and broil for about 10 minutes, until the center of the thickest part is just barely translucent. Remove from the oven, transfer to a serving platter, drizzle with the tomato vinaigrette, and serve immediately.

CLAMS WITH CHORIZO, LEEKS, TOMATO, AND WHITE WINE



You need the fresh, soft, fiery red version of chorizo for this dish, the kind that bleeds out bright red-orange grease into the pot when you heat it.

Serves 4

2 tablespoons olive oil

6 ounces best-quality fresh chorizo, thinly sliced 1 large or 2 medium leeks (white parts only), trimmed and sliced (about 2½ cups) 4 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped, plus 2 garlic cloves, peeled and cut in half Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 cup dry white wine

1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
4 dozen littleneck clams, scrubbed

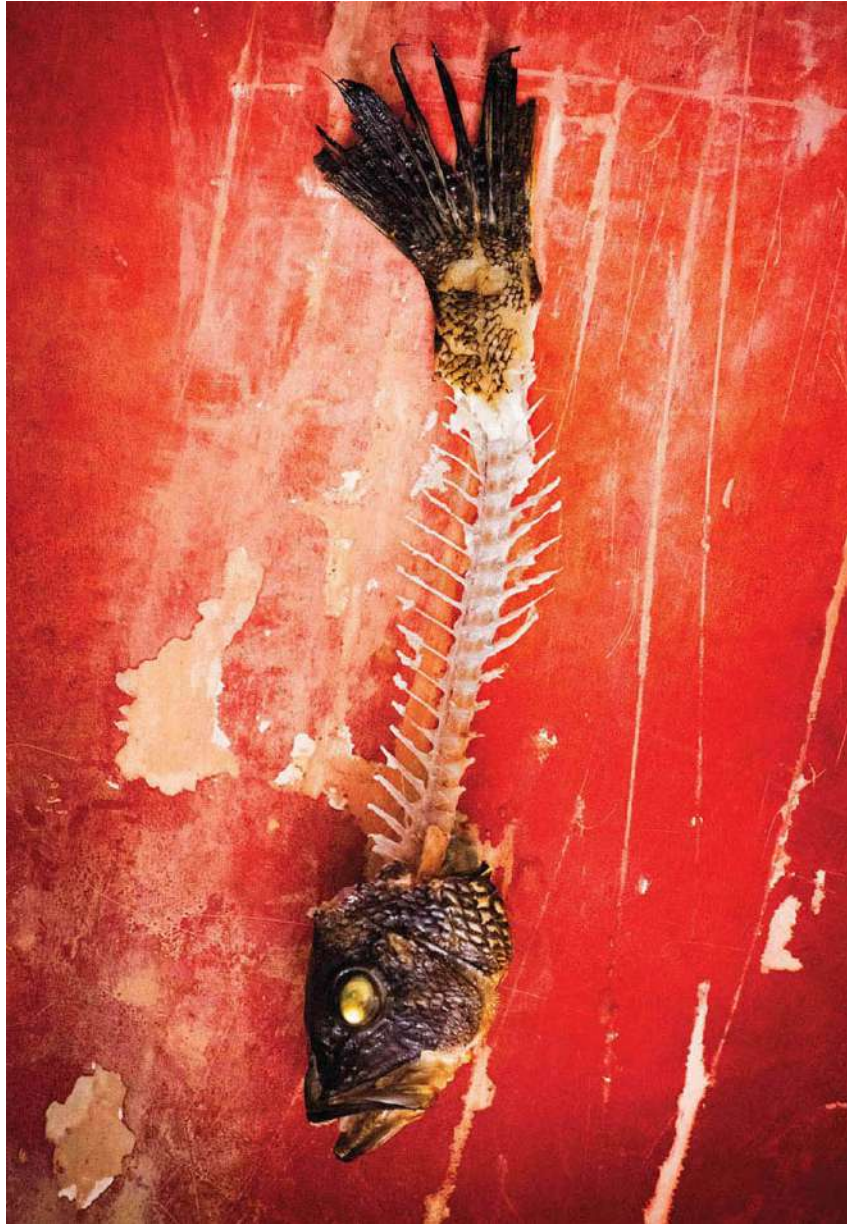
4 thick slices crusty sourdough bread

In a large sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium-high heat, then add the chorizo and cook, stirring with a wooden spoon, until the chorizo has rendered its fat and is crisp and browned at the edges, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil, the leeks, and chopped garlic and stir to coat the vegetables with the oil. Season with salt and pepper and continue to cook until the vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in the wine, increase the heat to high, and cook until the wine is reduced by half. Add the tomatoes and let the mixture come to a high boil. Add the clams, working in batches if necessary to ensure that they're in a single layer. Cover the pan and cook until the clams have opened. Discard any unopened clams.

While the clams cook, toast the bread, then rub the surface of each piece of bread with the cut side of one of the remaining garlic cloves.

Serve the hot clam mixture in a shallow serving bowl with the garlic toast alongside.

WHOLE ROASTED WILD BLACK SEABASS



If you suffer from even a modicum of performance anxiety, present this glorious thing whole to impress your guests, then take it back to the kitchen to fillet it in private.

Serves 2 to 4

2 whole wild black seabass (1 to 1½ pounds each), gutted and scaled

4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 bunch of fresh oregano

½ bunch of fresh thyme

1 lemon, thinly sliced

1 white onion, peeled and cut into ¼-inch-thick slices 1 pound new potatoes, steamed

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Instant-read thermometer

Preheat the oven to 500°F.

Using kitchen shears, snip off and discard all of the seabass fins. Rinse the fish well under cold water and pat dry. Rub each fish inside and out with 1 tablespoon of the oil and season inside and out with salt and pepper. Place one or more sprigs of oregano and thyme, and a lemon slice or two, inside the cavity of each fish. Arrange the onion slices in a single layer on the bottom of a roasting pan so that they act like a rack for the fish. Arrange a layer of herbs and lemon slices atop the onions, then place the fish on top of this. Top the fish with a final layer of herbs and lemon slices, drizzle with the remaining 2 tablespoons oil, and cover tightly with foil.

Roast in the oven for 20 to 24 minutes. Look inside the cavity of one of the fish to make sure it's cooked through—the instant-read thermometer, inserted at the thickest part, should read 130°F. If it's slightly under, return the fish to the oven for 5 minutes, but turn it off, so that it continues to cook slowly and doesn't get

dried out.

Remove from the oven and present the fish on a serving platter with all its herb and lemon garnish. In the dining room or, preferably, in the kitchen, fillet the fish: First, pull off and discard any visible remaining fin bones. Then, working on the fish one side at a time, slice through the skin and flesh, down to the bone, right behind the head and just above the tail. Starting from the head, work your knife down and under the fillet, then run your knife along the length of the spine, beneath the cooked flesh, before gently lifting the fillet off and onto the serving platter. Turn the fish and repeat on the other side. Season each fillet with additional salt, pepper, oil, and/or lemon juice. Serve with steamed new potatoes and rosé.

[10]
BIRDS





ROAST CHICKEN WITH LEMON AND BUTTER



Everyone should know how to roast a chicken. It's a life skill that should be taught to small children at school. The ability to properly prepare a moist yet

thoroughly cooked bird, with nicely crisp skin, should be a hallmark of good citizenry—an obligation to your fellow man. Everyone walking down the street should be reasonably confident that the random person next to them is prepared, if called upon, to roast a chicken.

It seems like a simple thing. Yet there's a reason this task was a traditional test of a new cook's basic skills when auditioning for the great kitchens of Europe. It's as easy, if not easier, to fuck it up as to do it right.

Respect the chicken!

Serves 4

1 best-quality chicken (about 2½ pounds), preferably organic
Sea salt to taste
Crushed black peppercorns to taste
4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter 10 sprigs fresh thyme

1 fresh bay leaf

½ lemon, cut into 4 wedges

1 cup dry white wine

Juice of 1 lemon (about 2 tablespoons) 1½ cups chicken stock
¼ cup finely chopped fresh parsley
Freshly ground black pepper to taste [Pommes Anna](#)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Butcher's twine (optional)

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

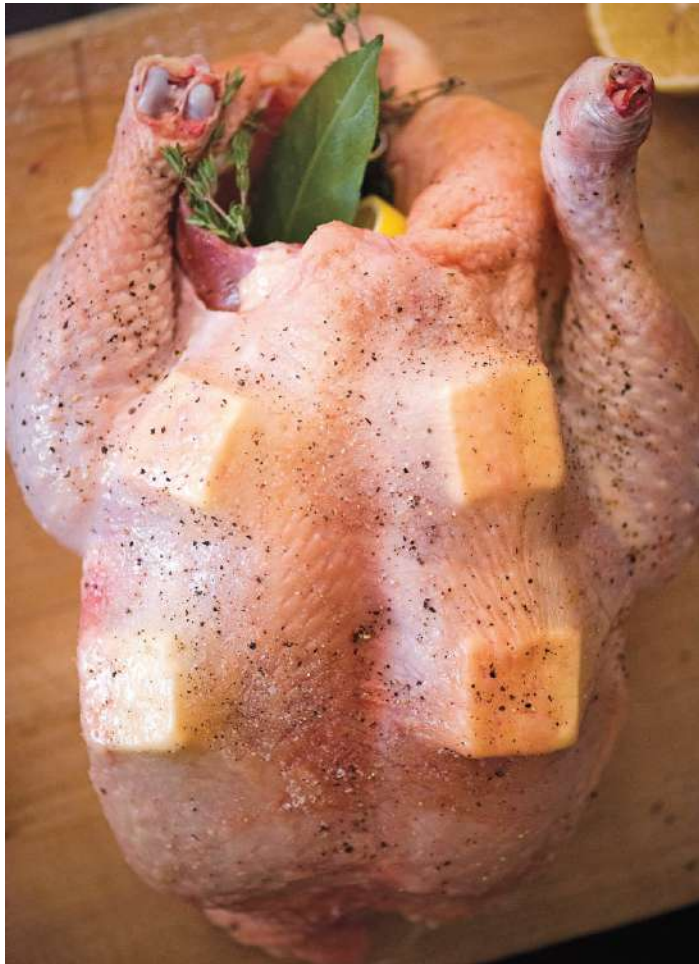
Rub the bird inside and out with salt and crushed peppercorns. Stuff a ½-tablespoon knob of butter under the skin of each side of the breast, and under the

skin of each thigh. Stuff the thyme, bay leaf, and lemon wedges into the chicken's cavity.

Use the tip of a paring knife to poke a small hole in the skin just below each of the chicken's legs, and tuck each leg carefully into that hole. (You may also truss the chicken with butcher's twine if you know how, but this is much simpler.) Place the chicken in a flame-proof roasting pan and roast for 30 to 40 minutes, rotating the pan, moving it to different parts of the oven to account for hot spots, and basting the bird two or three times with a bulb-top baster or long-handled metal spoon. Reduce the oven's heat to 300°F and continue to roast, basting frequently, for another 30 to 40 minutes or until the bird is done: When you poke the fat part of the thigh with the paring knife, the juices should run clear.









Remove the bird from the oven, let it rest 15 minutes, then remove the breasts and legs from the carcass, reserving everything. Use a ladle to skim off and discard as much surface fat from the pan juices as possible. Place the roasting pan on the stovetop over high heat and stir in the wine and lemon juice, scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon to dislodge and dissolve the browned bits. Bring this mixture to a boil and cook until it is reduced by half. Stir in the stock with the wooden spoon, bring to a boil, and reduce again by half. Remove from the heat and strain this sauce through a sieve into a medium, heavy-bottom saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in the remaining 2 tablespoons butter, a tablespoon at a time, until the sauce is thick and glossy. Fold in the parsley and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper as necessary.

Serve the chicken—half of the breast plus a drumstick or a thigh per person—

with the sauce ladled over, pommes Anna alongside, and any remaining sauce in a sauceboat on the table.

CHICKEN POT PIE



The model, the Platonic ideal for this recipe, is the Horn & Hardart version. My

dad worked two jobs in those days—managing Willoughby’s camera store in Manhattan by day and being a floor manager at the nearby Sam Goody in the evenings. Sometimes my mom, my brother, and I would pick him up after work, and we’d go for late dinner at Horn & Hardart in the Garden State Plaza in Paramus, New Jersey. The chicken pot pie was delicious, though it never had enough chicken. This one addresses that problem.

Serves 4 to 6

3 cups [Dark Universal Stock](#) or chicken stock 3 pounds chicken thighs, with skin and bones, visible fat trimmed and discarded Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 1 pound russet potatoes (about 3 large potatoes), peeled and diced 6 tablespoons ($\frac{3}{4}$ stick) unsalted butter 8 pearl onions, peeled, trimmed, and quartered lengthwise 2 medium carrots, peeled and diced
2 ribs celery, diced
Leaves from 5 to 7 sprigs fresh thyme 4 to 8 fresh sage leaves, finely chopped $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon celery salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

1 cup whole milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen sweet peas
1 batch [Savory Pastry Dough](#), rolled to $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thickness 1 egg, beaten

In a medium, heavy-bottom saucepot, bring the stock to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and add the chicken. Poach the chicken in the stock for about 10 minutes, then remove from the heat, cover, and let sit for 25 to 30 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through. Remove the chicken from the stock with tongs; do not discard the stock. Once the chicken is cool enough to handle, remove and discard the skin and bones, and shred or coarsely chop the chicken, keeping large chunks mostly intact. Season the chicken with salt and pepper and set aside.

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Add the potatoes to the warm stock and bring it back to a high simmer. Cook the

potatoes in the stock for 5 to 8 minutes, until they are somewhat tender but not cooked through, as they will continue to cook in the oven. Remove from the stock with a slotted spoon and set aside with the chicken.

In a medium, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons of the butter over medium-high heat until it foams and subsides. Add the onions, carrots, celery, thyme, sage, and celery salt and cook over medium heat until the vegetables are somewhat tender but not completely cooked through. Remove from the heat, season the vegetables with salt and pepper, and set aside with the chicken and potatoes.

Make sure you have both a whisk and a wooden spoon nearby, and something to rest them on. You will be switching back and forth between the two utensils as you first make a roux and then build on that to make a béchamel.

In a clean saucepot, heat the remaining 4 tablespoons butter until it foams and subsides, then stir in the flour with the wooden spoon and continue to cook and stir for 1 to 2 minutes, until the flour is slightly fragrant and just beginning to brown. Whisk in the milk and 1 cup of the reserved stock, whisking constantly to break up the flour and butter paste and quickly incorporate it into the milk. Switch to the wooden spoon and continue to stir, reaching all corners of the bottom of the pot to keep any flour from sticking and scorching, until the mixture is thick enough to coat the back of the spoon. Remove from the heat, season with salt and pepper, and stir in the reserved chicken, potatoes, cooked vegetables, and peas. Add a splash of the reserved stock if necessary to keep the matrix loose and liquid.

Transfer the mixture to a 9 x 13 (or similar size) baking dish and use a rolling pin to roll out the dough to roughly 10 × 14 inches, dusting liberally with flour. Roll the dough onto the rolling pin and carefully roll it out over the chicken mixture in the baking dish, folding over the edges and fluting with a fork. Cut four 1-inch slits in the top of the dough with a paring knife. Place the baking dish on a sheet pan and bake in the oven for 20 minutes, then remove from the oven and brush the dough with the beaten egg. Bake another 10 to 15 minutes, until the dough is golden brown and the liquid has begun to bubble and steam through the slits. Serve hot from the oven.

SAVORY PASTRY DOUGH

Makes one 10 × 14 crust 12 ounces (approximately 2¹/₃ cups) all-purpose flour
Pinch of salt

½ pound (2 sticks) cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes ½ cup ice water

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Food processor Place the flour, salt, and butter in the bowl of the food processor and turn the machine on, processing until the ingredients form a cohesive whole. With the machine still running, add the water all at once; turn off the machine as soon as the dough binds and comes away from the sides of the bowl. Roll it all into a ball, wrap it in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, then roll out and bake as directed.

KOREAN FRIED CHICKEN



There are many ways to make tasty fried chicken, and I like them all, but I'm particularly enamored of the Korean way, which requires some planning ahead but is extremely satisfying. The blanching and freezing technique was lifted from Danny Bowien at Mission Chinese, who does this with his chicken wings. The freezing step makes this dish into a two-day affair, and you'll need to clear some room in your freezer, but it's essential for extra-crisp results.

Serves 6 to 8

FOR THE MARINADE

1 cup roasted chili oil

¼ cup kosher salt

1 tablespoon medium/fine gochugaru (ground Korean red pepper) FOR THE CHICKEN

4 pounds chicken legs, separated into thighs and drumsticks About 4 quarts peanut or soy oil, for frying 1 cup potato starch or tapioca starch FOR THE SAUCE

1 cup gochujang (fermented Korean pepper paste)

8 garlic cloves

½ cup pure maple syrup

1 tablespoon soy sauce

2 teaspoons fish sauce

¼ cup cheongju (Korean rice wine)

¼ cup Frank's RedHot sauce

2 teaspoons MSG (optional but recommended) TO SERVE

Korean-Style [Radish Pickles](#)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Deep-fry or candy thermometer

2 sheet pans lined with newspaper

2 cooling racks, each approximately the same size as the sheet pans Food processor or immersion blender In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the chili oil, salt, and *gochugaru*. Add the chicken and toss to coat with the marinade. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes and up to an hour.

Add frying oil to a large, deep, straight-sided frying pan (or other vessel suited to frying chicken) so that it is no more than half full. Bring to 300°F over medium heat, monitoring the temperature with a deep-fry thermometer.

Place the potato starch in a shallow bowl. Working in batches, remove the chicken from the marinade, letting the excess drip off, then toss into the potato starch to coat.

Set the cooling racks over each lined sheet pan.

Working in batches, carefully transfer the chicken to the hot oil. Blanch in the oil for 6 to 8 minutes per side, turning the chicken as necessary. The chicken should be opaque looking, and about 75 percent cooked through. (If you're unsure, cut into a piece of chicken to inspect the doneness from the inside.) Use tongs or a slotted spoon to remove the chicken to the cooling rack, and continue until all of the chicken has been blanched.

Once it is completely cool, transfer the chicken to a clean sheet pan (or remove the rack and discard the newspaper from one pan), wrap it tightly with plastic wrap, and freeze for 8 hours or overnight.

The next day, combine the *gochujang*, garlic, maple syrup, soy sauce, fish sauce, *cheongju*, hot sauce, and, if using, the MSG in the food processor and blend well. This is the sauce that you will brush the chicken with as it comes out of its finishing fry.

Pull the chicken from the freezer and unwrap it about 1 hour before cooking.

Add frying oil to your pan or pot so that it is no more than half full. Bring it to 350°F over medium heat, again monitoring the temperature with the thermometer. Set up your lined sheet pans with the cooling racks. Working in small batches, fry the chicken for 10 to 12 minutes, rotating in the oil as needed, until golden brown. Let drain and cool slightly on the cooling rack, then use a pastry brush to coat each piece with the sauce. Serve with the radish pickles and cold beer.

CAST-IRON GRILLED CHICKEN

Outdoor grills, and the space to operate them safely, are tough to come by in New York City, but anyone can use a cast-iron grill pan to get real char on their food. Chicken thighs are tender and forgiving, and don't necessarily require a marinade, so you could simply season them and throw them on a hot cast-iron grill with great results. However, the yogurt marinade here lets you add to the flavor with spices and herbs that would otherwise get scorched in cooking, and the texture of cooked chicken that's been marinated in yogurt reminds me of street meat, without the explosive diarrhea.

Serves 4 to 6

1½ cups plain whole milk yogurt ¼ cup olive oil

1 tablespoon ground cumin

15 cardamom pods, crushed 1 tablespoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 to 2½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs 1 to 2 tablespoons canola or grapeseed oil, for brushing the grill Salt to taste

Frank's RedHot sauce (optional) SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Cast-iron grill pan or grill Instant-read thermometer In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the yogurt, olive oil, cumin, cardamom, oregano, and pepper. Place the chicken in a plastic zip-seal bag or nonreactive container with lid, and pour the yogurt mixture over, making sure each piece of chicken is evenly coated on all sides. Seal or cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 24 hours.

Preheat the oven to 400°F (or if using an actual outdoor grill, light it).

Remove the chicken from the refrigerator and let it sit at room temperature for about 15 minutes. Rub a grill pan with 1 to 2 tablespoons canola oil, depending on its size. Begin to heat the grill pan over high heat; you'll know it's ready to go when you can see waves of heat shimmering off it. This would be a good time to turn on your kitchen vent and turn any other fans on.

Remove the chicken from the marinade, letting any excess drip off. Pat the chicken dry with paper towels and season it liberally with salt. Place on the hot grill pan and let cook, undisturbed, for 6 to 7 minutes, so that it is distinctly grill marked. Using tongs, turn the chicken to cook on the other side for about 5 minutes, then transfer the chicken, still on the grill pan, to the hot oven to finish cooking for about 10 minutes. The internal temperature should be 150°F at the thickest part. Remove from the oven, let rest for a few minutes, then serve, sliced or whole, with hot sauce if desired.

ROASTED QUAIL WITH POLENTA



Just after I first met Ottavia, I asked her about the place in Italy where she grew up. “So . . . what are the specialties of the area? Like for food?”

She looked at me like I was simple-minded, and said, “What do you mean? In the summer, we eat the feesh from the lake. In the winter, we eat the birds from the mountains!”

Later, on my first visit to the Lago di Garda area, my new father-in-law took the family to an *agriturismo* popular with the locals. They served game birds, roasted on spits over coals, nestled into mounds of polenta. Atop each mound was a depression, a carefully shaped crater, containing a pool of the birds’ rendered fat and juices.

Serves 4 to 8

6 cups [Dark Universal Stock](#)

1 cup medium-coarse polenta (also known as “corn grits”) 6 tablespoons ($\frac{3}{4}$ stick) unsalted butter

8 whole quails (about $\frac{1}{4}$ pound each)

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 8 sprigs fresh rosemary

8 sprigs fresh thyme

1 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 cup coarsely chopped fresh parsley leaves SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Stovetop-safe roasting pan, preferably cast iron In a large bowl, combine 5 cups of the stock and the polenta, stir a bit, cover, and refrigerate at least 4 hours and up to 12. (You may skip this step, which will just mean a longer cooking time—closer to 60 rather than 30 minutes. Your call.) Preheat the oven to 500°F. While the oven heats up—this may take 20 to 30 minutes—melt 4 tablespoons of the butter in a small saucepan. Season the inside of each quail with salt and pepper and stuff them with 1 sprig each of the rosemary and thyme. Use a pastry brush to coat each quail with the melted butter, then season the outside with salt and pepper and transfer to a stovetop-safe roasting pan. Set aside—the quails will cook quickly, and you’ll need to start

cooking the cornmeal first so that everything is done and hot at the same time.

Take the polenta and stock out of the fridge and transfer it to a large, heavy-bottom saucepot. Give it a quick stir and bring it to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook, stirring regularly but not necessarily constantly, for about 15 minutes. Slide the quails into the hot oven. Cook and stir the polenta for another 5 minutes, then turn the quail roasting pan and rotate the quails within it to keep them cooking more or less evenly. Let the quails roast for another 5 minutes, while you tend to the polenta, then remove them from the oven and let rest for another 5 to 10 minutes, while you finish the polenta.

Once the polenta is tender, creamy, and has absorbed all of the liquid, stir in the remaining 2 tablespoons butter and the cheese, whip well with a wooden spoon, taste and season with salt, then remove from the heat and transfer to the center of a serving platter. Use a ladle to fashion a volcano-style depression in the center of the polenta, then arrange the quails around the edge of the platter, in the polenta.

Transfer the roasting pan to the stovetop over medium-low heat. Whisk in the remaining stock and the oil and reduce slightly, until the sauce lightly coats the back of a wooden spoon. Season with salt and pepper to taste, then fill the volcano depression with the hot sauce. Cover the whole platter with parsley and serve immediately, with napkins.

[11]
THANKSGIVING







Thanksgiving:A Tactical Primer

Preparing a holiday meal can be a stressful affair. It's no mystery why murder

rates spike between mid-November and late December, what with all those relatives convened awkwardly around a table, many of whom see each other only rarely, some with long-simmering resentments and grudges that festered all year. It takes only one ill-considered remark or unfairly apportioned drumstick to turn what should have been a festive gathering into a slaughterfest of senseless butchery. And when you look at the list of “must-have” dishes expected, the prep work seems daunting, a logistical nightmare.

No need.

The following recipes may *look* long and complicated, but they’re really not if you remember that the key to a relatively easy, smooth-running, violence-free Thanksgiving is to adopt the following three-day strategy, which calls for a stunt turkey, a business turkey, and an understanding, at all times, that the real point of Thanksgiving is the leftovers. That at the end of the whole ordeal, when all the guests have gone home and you are alone in the house, you can smoke a little weed, sit there in front of the TV in your underwear, and enjoy a nice roast turkey sandwich with some reheated stuffing and gravy.

Thanksgiving shopping, prep, and cooking should be broken down as follows:

DAY 1

✘ **In the morning (or the weekend before Thanksgiving), buy all the shit you’ll need, store it in organized fashion, and cross-check it against your recipes to make sure there isn’t anything you’ve forgotten.** If there is, you’ve still got plenty of time.

In addition to extra turkey parts (see next page), various aromatic vegetables, herbs, butter, oil, wine, bread, fruit, nuts, and seasonings, there’s the matter of the bird—or actually, birds. You’ll need both a small “stunt turkey” and a large “business turkey,” which, if frozen, you should start defrosting immediately.

✘ **Make your stock.** This is where the extra turkey parts come in. By all means, reserve the necks and wing tips from your stunt and business turkeys, and make the most of the pan drippings and the “fond,” or scrapings, from the bottom of the roasting pan. But you’ll need a solid turkey stock before you

start fucking around with any actual turkeys. This means buying a separate bag of wings and necks, about 5 to 7 pounds total, to make the stock that will give the stuffing its essential turkey flavor and provide the base for what you might call “gravy” but what is, in fact, a sauce.

✘ **Leave the bread out to get stale for stuffing.**

Day 2

✘ **Turn your turkey stock into turkey sauce** or, if you must, “gravy.” Don’t worry, you can still enhance it with pan drippings at the last minute.

✘ **Assemble and bake the stuffing, covered, so that it doesn’t yet brown at all.** Tomorrow you can jack it with turkey grease and brown it a bit on top when you roast the birds.

✘ **Make your cranberry relish and store it in the fridge.** It’ll be even better tomorrow.

✘ **Knock out your side-dish prep.** Trim and halve your Brussels sprouts, trim your baby onions if you’re doing creamed onions, dice your slab bacon, and scrub your sweet potatoes. Label, group, and refrigerate everything, so that you can quickly finish side dishes tomorrow, while the birds roast.

DAY 3

✘ **Roast the (small) “stunt turkey.”** This is the pretty one that you’ll display for your guests. Keep it moist and shiny—moist towels and a light brush of oil—as it cools out of the way of the action. Ready your garnishes and feel free to dress it up like a showgirl: such embellishments as chop frills, elaborate fruit garnishes, a bed of old-school curly parsley or kale, and a bit of stuffing to obscure the bony cavity entrance are all totally appropriate visual fireworks to be employed liberally here.

✘ **While the turkeys roast, finish your side dishes.** Brussels sprouts and creamed onions have already been prepped, potatoes just need to be peeled, and the sweet potatoes can go straight into the water unpeeled. You can get

everything done on the stovetop while the birds are cooking, and hold it for quick reheating just before dinner.

- ✦ **Roast (and dismantle) the business turkey.** By the time your guests arrive, the business turkey should be ready, which is to say, just completely cooked, breasts removed from the bone and ready to slice, legs removed, drumsticks and thighs separated, wings good to go, moist towels on top.
- ✦ **Jack your stuffing with turkey grease and brown it, *uncovered*, in a hot oven.**
- ✦ **Display the intact, artfully garnished stunt turkey in all its glory, which should elicit much oohing and ahing from your amazed guests.** Then, whisk it into the kitchen, presumably to be carved.
- ✦ **In the relative privacy of your kitchen, pull out your business turkey, which is ready to slice, and get busy.** The whole process should take only a couple of minutes. Use a good serrated knife to ensure that each slice of breast comes with a strip of golden skin. To build the platter, I like to put a heap of stuffing in the center, cross the drumsticks decoratively, then slice and shingle first the dark thigh meat, then the breast meat, like a deck of cards around the stuffing. Throw on some parsley or watercress, if you like, and the effect is complete. No embarrassing and inept hacking at a whole turkey while your family looks on with horror: This bird is ready to serve.

Just be *sure* that you've stashed away some choice turkey bits. Later, after you've packed up thoughtful leftover kits for your guests to take home, you want to be certain that after all your hard work, you've got plenty of the good stuff for yourself.



the
BUSINESS TURKEY

the
STUNT TURKEY



THANKSGIVING GRAVY, STUFFING, AND TURKEY

Serves 10 to 12, with leftovers

1 small (8-to 10-pound) turkey (aka “the stunt turkey”) 1 large (18-pound) turkey (aka “the business turkey”)
5 pounds total turkey wings and necks, cut into 3 to 6 pieces each Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 cup dry white wine

2 large yellow onions, peeled and finely diced
4 ribs celery, finely diced
2 large carrots, peeled and finely diced
6 to 8 sprigs fresh thyme, plus 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves 1 large loaf of white bread

2 cups dry red wine

2 shallots, peeled and coarsely chopped, plus 4 shallots, peeled and finely chopped $\frac{2}{3}$ cup all-purpose flour, or as needed
A few splashes of Thai fish sauce (optional)
Worcestershire sauce (optional)
1½ cups peeled chestnuts
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, plus more as needed $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped fresh sage, plus 2 additional sprigs 1 pound mixed wild mushrooms, finely chopped
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped fresh parsley
2 large eggs, beaten

Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, or Kitchen Bouquet (a flavor and color enhancer; optional) SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Heavy chef's knife

Poultry shears (optional)

2 (or more) roasting pans, at least 1 of which should be stovetop-ready, and at least 1 of which should have a rack Serrated knife (or better yet, an offset serrated knife) Bulb-top turkey baster

Instant-read thermometer

Large carving board, ideally with trenches to catch juice **DAY 1: DEFROSTING**

If they're frozen, start your turkeys defrosting in the fridge as soon as you get them home. If they're fresh, use a heavy chef's knife or poultry shears to remove the wing tips and wishbones from both turkeys, and remove the necks and giblets from the inside of the birds. Refrigerate the giblets, which will go into the gravy, and the turkeys themselves. (If the birds are frozen, you'll deal with all of this later.) **Make the turkey stock.** Preheat the oven to 425°F. Assemble the wings and necks, and anything you have harvested from your fresh turkeys, if applicable, on one or more stovetop-ready roasting pans and season them with salt and pepper. Roast in the oven until nicely browned and fragrant, about 45 minutes, rotating the pans (and possibly the wings and parts themselves, if they're looking very browned on one side) about 20 minutes in, for even roasting. Remove from the oven.



Transfer the roasted wings and bones to a large, heavy-bottom stockpot. Pour the excess grease and juices from the pan into a small bowl or jar, and cover and refrigerate it. (You will use it later, to build the roux for your gravy.) Place the roasting pan over medium-high heat and stir in ½ cup of the white wine,

scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon to dislodge the fond, or browned bits. Cook until the alcohol smell no longer remains. Transfer this liquid to the stockpot along with the bones, and add half of the onions and celery, the carrots, and 4 to 6 thyme sprigs. Cover with cold water and bring to a high simmer (*not a boil*). Use a ladle to skim off and discard any scum that floats to the top. Reduce to a medium simmer and cook for about 5 hours.



Pour the stock into a wide bowl to cool down at room temperature for about 20 to 30 minutes, stirring occasionally to release steam and speed cooling. Transfer it into quart-sized plastic or glass containers or sturdy zip-sealed plastic bags and refrigerate. If you've done it right, the stock should be dark golden brown and have a definitively gelatinous quality. With 5 to 7 pounds of bones in a full 4-gallon stockpot, you can expect to get around 4 quarts of good-quality stock.

Prep your bread for stuffing. While the stock simmers, use a serrated knife to dice the bread for stuffing. You're looking to yield about 10 to 12 cups of diced bread. Scatter the bread cubes in a single layer on sheet trays and leave them out to dry.

Day 2: Turn your stock into gravy

Pull 3 quarts of turkey stock from the fridge and pour it into a medium, heavy-bottom pot. Add the red wine and coarsely chopped shallots, and bring to a high simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 30 to 45 minutes, until reduced by half. Strain the mixture into a bowl, discard the shallots, and return it to the pot.

Retrieve the container of reserved turkey fat and drippings from yesterday and scrape off enough fat—it will self-separate from the drippings in the refrigerator—to equal $\frac{2}{3}$ cup. (You may supplement, if necessary, with butter.) Place the fat in a medium, heavy-bottom pot. Measure out $\frac{2}{3}$ cup flour and, with your whisk and wooden spoon handy, heat the fat over medium heat until hot. Sprinkle the flour into the fat, whisking the mixture together to make a roux. Swap your whisk for the wooden spoon and continue to cook over medium heat for 1 to 2 minutes, stirring until the flour is lightly toasted and fragrant. Whisk in the stock and red wine mixture. Switch back to the wooden spoon and continue to stir and scrape to ensure that you pull up all the roux. Once the mixture comes to a boil, reduce to a high simmer, continuing to stir regularly until the gravy is thick enough to coat the back of the wooden spoon.





Taste and season as desired with salt and pepper. Some people use a hit of fish sauce, which I endorse. If the emotional needs of your guests require a darker gravy, you can brown it up with some Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, or Kitchen Bouquet. Tomorrow, you can further enhance the flavor with drippings from the turkey roasting pans.

Make stuffing. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Remove the remaining quart of stock from the fridge and bring it to a high simmer in a medium saucepot. Turn off the heat and cover the pan to keep the stock warm.

Arrange the chestnuts in a single layer on a sheet pan and roast in the oven until

browned and fragrant, about 10 minutes. Remove from the oven, let cool for about 5 minutes, then chop them to a medium-coarse consistency, as you would for chopped walnuts. Place the chestnuts in a large mixing bowl along with the bread cubes.

In a large sauté pan, heat 4 tablespoons butter over medium-high heat until it foams and subsides. Add the finely chopped shallots and the remaining onions and celery and sauté until translucent and fragrant, 3 to 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and stir in the thyme leaves and chopped sage. Continue to cook for another minute or two, until the herbs are fragrant, then transfer the mixture to the mixing bowl with the chestnuts and bread cubes.

In the same pan, heat another 4 tablespoons butter until it foams and subsides. Add the mushrooms and sauté, seasoning with salt and pepper and stirring regularly until they release their juice and it sizzles away. Deglaze the pan with the remaining ½ cup white wine, scraping the bottom to gather browned bits of mushroom. Add the mushrooms and reduced wine to the mixing bowl.

Grease another roasting pan with 2 tablespoons butter.

Add the parsley, eggs, and warm stock to the mixing bowl and mix with a light touch to get everything incorporated without compressing it too much. Transfer this mixture to the greased roasting pan, cover with foil, and cook in the oven for about 45 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool for about 15 minutes without the foil, then re-cover it tightly and refrigerate until tomorrow, when you'll jack it with drippings and brown the top.

Make your [cranberry relish](#) while the stuffing bakes, and do the prep for [Brussels sprouts](#) and [creamed onions](#).

DAY 3

Roast the business turkey. Preheat the oven to 425°F. If you haven't already, trim off the wing tips and remove the neck and the wishbone from the business turkey; these things can be saved in the freezer for your next round of stock-making. Set those giblets, and the ones from the stunt turkey, in a medium saucepot and fill it about halfway with cold water. Bring to a boil.

Rub the turkey all over with 2 to 3 tablespoons butter, and season inside and out with salt and pepper. Place it in a roasting pan with a rack, pour 2 cups of water into the pan, and transfer to the oven to roast. Periodically rotate the pan and use the bulb-top baster to baste the turkey with the grease and juices from the pan. An 18-pound bird should take just under 4 hours to cook through; the thickest part of the thigh should register 165°F on the instant-read thermometer.

Are your giblets boiling yet? Good. Let them cook for about 5 minutes, then drain and discard the water. Wash out the pot, and return the giblets to it. Add the remaining thyme and sage sprigs, cover with cold water, then let cook at a low simmer as the roasting continues.



About 15 minutes before you take the business turkey from the oven, remove the giblets from the pot, strain them, and discard the cooking liquid. In a medium sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons of the butter over high heat. Season the giblets with salt and pepper and sear them to golden brown in the butter. Remove from the pan, cut them into fine dice, and set aside.

Once your business turkey is done, take it out of the oven, transfer it to the carving board, and let it rest for at least 15 to 20 minutes. Reserve the juices and turkey grease from the pan in a bowl or jar.

Finish the [creamed onions](#) and [Brussels sprouts](#) while the business turkey roasts. Make the [sweet potatoes](#) and, if you have time, [mashed potatoes](#).

Roast the (small) “stunt turkey.” Rub the outside of the stunt turkey with 2 tablespoons of the butter and season it inside and out with salt and pepper. Place it in a roasting pan with a rack, pour about 2 cups of water into the pan, and roast in the oven. As it roasts, periodically rotate the pan and use the bulb-top baster to baste the turkey with the grease and juices from the pan. A 10-pound bird should take about 2½ hours; the thickest part of the thigh should register 165°F on an instant-read thermometer. Remove from the oven and let it rest for 15 minutes, then carefully transfer the turkey to your serving platter to be garnished at will. Add the turkey grease and juices from the roasting pan to those you collected from the business turkey.

Finish those side dishes that you haven’t yet finished. Pull the stuffing out of the fridge and let it come to room temperature. Increase the oven’s heat to 425°F.

Dismantle the business turkey. Remove each leg, at the thigh joint, from the carcass. Separate the thigh from the drumstick, and pull or cut the meat from the thigh bones. Run your knife down the center of the breast, just to the left and right of the bone that divides them, and continue to guide your knife to the ribs, gently cutting the intact breast muscle away on either side. Place all the meat on a sheet tray, cover with damp, clean towels, and stash it out of sight of nosy guests.





Jack the stuffing with grease, drippings, and giblets. Fold the reserved cooked giblets into the stuffing, and add enough reserved grease and juices so that it glistens. Slide the stuffing, uncovered, into the oven for about 15 to 20 minutes, until it's sizzling at the edges and browned on top.



After you have received big praise and glory from your guests for the presented stunt turkey, return to the kitchen to finish the job. You may wish to enlist a trusted accomplice for this. Get all your side dishes and your gravy gently warmed in the oven or on the stovetop. Whisk some reserved turkey grease and drippings into the gravy as it simmers, if desired. Carefully slice the breast meat, making sure to leave a strip of skin intact on each piece. Mound the stuffing in the center of the serving platter. Arrange the thigh meat around the stuffing, then top the thigh meat with shingles of breast meat, attractively arranged. Serve the platter, with gravy and all side dishes.

MASHED POTATOES, KIND OF ROBUCHON STYLE

This is not how the great chef Joël Robuchon makes his mashed potatoes. I *have* heard how from cooks who've worked for him, but they swore me to secrecy. If I told you, I'd have to kill you. I'm not sure they were telling me the whole truth in any case, so terrifying is the man's reputation. What I do know for sure is there's a *lot* of butter in them—and that the way that Robuchon actually makes them is too hard and too complicated for you (or me) to do sensibly at home.

But this will approximate—roughly—the kind of buttery, ethereal suspension that dreams (and Joël Robuchon's mashed potatoes) are made of.

Serves 4 to 8 as a side dish

2¼ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes (about 6 to 8 large potatoes), peeled and cut in half

2 tablespoons salt, plus more to taste

1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into cubes ⅓ cup heavy cream

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Ricer or food mill

Place the peeled potatoes in a medium pot and cover them with cold water. Stir in the salt and bring the water to a boil. Continue to cook until the potatoes are easily penetrated with a paring knife, 15 to 20 minutes. Be vigilant; a waterlogged potato is a disaster.

Drain the potatoes in a colander and let cool for about 3 minutes. Pass the

potatoes through the ricer, back into the hot pot. Place the pot over medium heat and stir the potatoes with a wooden spoon until you see steam being released. Add a quarter of the butter cubes at a time, stirring until most of the butter has been absorbed before adding the next batch.

Once the butter has been incorporated, add the cream, season with salt as necessary, then whisk the mixture vigorously to fluff it up. Serve immediately.

CREAMED PEARL ONIONS

This is a classic part of my Thanksgiving table. Yes, pearl onions are a pain in the ass to peel. Blanching them makes the job infinitely easier.

Serves 6 to 8 as a Thanksgiving side 1 tablespoon salt, plus more to taste 1 teaspoon black peppercorns

1 bay leaf

1 pound pearl onions

2 tablespoons (¼ stick) unsalted butter

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1⅓ cups whole milk

Freshly ground black pepper to taste ¼ teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves 3 fresh sage leaves, finely chopped SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Ice-water bath (large bowl filled with ice and cold water) Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Place the salt, peppercorns, and bay leaf in a large saucepot, cover with cold water, and bring to a boil. Add the onions, let boil for 1 to 2 minutes, remove the onions from the hot water using a slotted spoon or tongs (but do not dump the water, as you're going to use it again), and transfer them to the ice-water bath so that they're easy to handle. Slip off and discard the skins, and return the onions to the hot water. Cook at a simmer for about 8 to 10 minutes, until easily pierced with the tip of a paring knife. Remove them from the cooking liquid (which you may now discard, along with the aromatics) and transfer to a baking dish.

Make sure you have both a whisk and a wooden spoon nearby, and something to rest them on. You will be switching back and forth between the two utensils as you first make a roux and then build on that to make a béchamel.

In a medium saucepot, heat the butter over medium-low heat until it foams and subsides, then stir in the flour with a wooden spoon, making sure it is completely incorporated. Cook and stir regularly for about 3 minutes, then whisk in the milk, switching back to the wooden spoon to dislodge and break up any lumps of flour that might form and stick to the pan. Season with salt and pepper, add the thyme and sage, and continue to cook and stir until the mixture coats the back of the wooden spoon, 3 to 5 minutes. Pour this over the onions and transfer to the oven to cook until bubbling and browning at the edges, 15 to 20 minutes.

CANDIED SWEET POTATOES

Put those goddamn marshmallows away.

Serves 8 as a side dish 3 pounds sweet potatoes (about 6 to 8 large potatoes), more or less equally sized, cut into quarters 6 tablespoons ($\frac{3}{4}$ stick) unsalted butter

1 cup dark brown sugar, packed

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup apple cider

Pinch of salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup bourbon

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Place the sweet potatoes in a medium pot and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a high simmer, and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, at which point the sweet potatoes should be cooked through but still offering a bit of resistance to a fork. Drain and, once they are cool enough to handle, peel the potatoes and cut them into 1-inch chunks.

Use 1 tablespoon of the butter to grease a roasting pan that's large enough to hold the chunks in a single layer, and place the sweet potatoes in it.

In a small skillet, melt the remaining 5 tablespoons butter and the sugar together, then whisk in the cider, salt, and bourbon. Let bubble on the stovetop for 1 minute, then remove and drizzle the mixture over the sweet potatoes, tossing gently to coat. Roast in the oven, stirring the sweet potatoes with a wooden spoon and rotating the pan every 10 minutes, for about 40 minutes, until the sweet potatoes are very tender and the liquid is syrupy.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH BACON



Forget a salad on Thanksgiving; this is the only green thing you need on the table.

Serves 8 as a side dish

$\frac{3}{4}$ pound slab bacon, cut into 1-inch cubes 2 pounds Brussels sprouts, bottoms trimmed, cut in half lengthwise

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste Juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon (about 1 tablespoon), or to taste SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

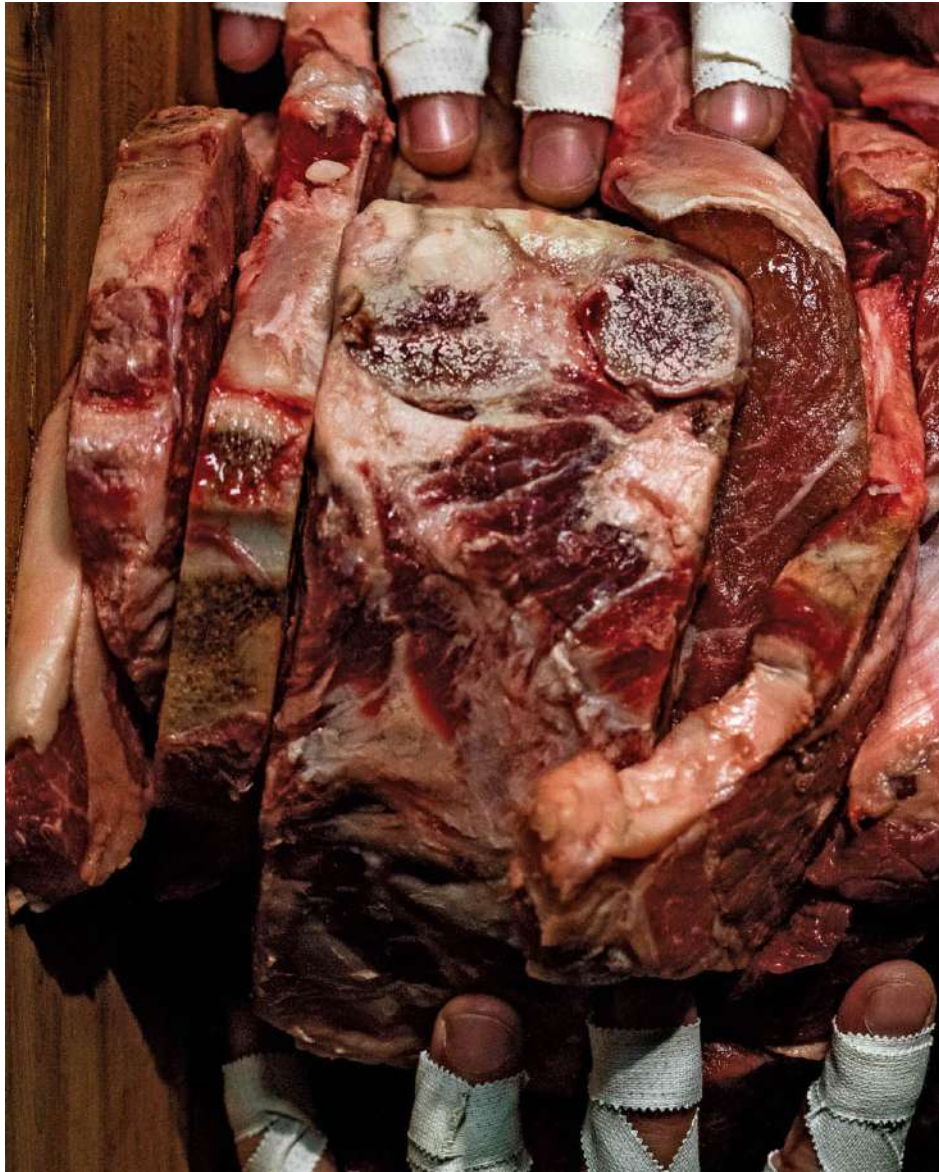
Plate lined with newspaper

Place the bacon and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water in a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan and bring the water to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-high and continue to cook until the water evaporates completely and the bacon browns and renders its fat, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon to make sure that the bacon cooks evenly. Once the bacon is good and brown, remove the pieces from the pan with tongs and let drain on the lined plate.

Assess how much bacon grease is in the pan; you'll need about 3 tablespoons to cook the Brussels sprouts. If there's a lot more than that in the pan, discard the excess.

Add the sprouts to the pan along with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup water. Turn and toss the sprouts to coat them evenly with the fat and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring regularly, until browned and tender. Add the butter and toss over the heat to coat the sprouts. Taste one and season with salt and pepper as needed. Add the reserved bacon and the lemon juice, toss once again over the heat, and serve.

[12]
MEAT









BIG FUCKING STEAK

Choose your steak well. If buying a rib eye or a bone-in rib steak, for instance, insist on the loin end, which has less connective tissue. If buying sirloin, get the rib end, for the same reason. Look for marbling—the white fat should be rippling through the actual muscle tissue.

Be wary of the term *grass fed*. While it's surely a good thing in principle, an exclusively grass-fed animal will usually be decidedly less fatty and well marbled. Better to ask your butcher for something that's been grass fed and grain finished.

American wagyu and *Kobe* are also two terms you want to be cautious about, as they are often little more than marketing bullshit and douche bait.

Real Kobe beef, in fact, is so lush and so fatty that it's possibly *too* much as a

main-course-size steak. A few ounces and you're done!

How you cook it is your choice: Either grill your steak or pan-sear it in a preheated cast-iron skillet, basting it with butter and finishing it in a 400°F oven.

But whatever you do, however you get there—when it's done—or just shy of being done, *rest your steak before poking, slicing, or otherwise interfering with it!*

Let it sit there on the board for a full 5 minutes. *Then* slice it—against the grain.

BRAISED PORK SHOULDER WITH FRIED SHALLOTS AND PICKLED VEGETABLES

I'll *drink* a Coke only in the service of fighting the effect of a hangover and in the company of superspicy Kung Pao chicken. It's a wholly unnecessary category of beverage for all other occasions. But: It possesses magical properties as a braising liquid, especially in combination with soy sauce, vinegar, garlic, and onions. Hold on to those free cans of Coke that are often thrown in with a large enough order of cheap Chinese delivery, and use them in this dish.

Serves 8 to 12

1 whole or 2 half pork shoulders or Boston butts, bone in (8 to 9 pounds total) 2
tablespoons salt, plus more to taste Freshly ground black pepper to taste 2¼ to
2½ cups peanut oil
1 large yellow or white onion, peeled and cut into chunks 20 garlic cloves,
peeled
10 to 12 thin slices fresh ginger ½ cup rice vinegar
1 cup soy sauce

3 cups cola

¼ cup red miso
1 red onion, peeled and thinly sliced 4 medium cucumbers or 2 English
cucumbers, peeled and sliced 1½ cups white vinegar
1½ cups water
¼ cup sugar
4 large shallots, peeled and thinly sliced Cooked sticky rice
Hot sauce

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Plate or sheet pan lined with newspaper **NOTE:** *As with many braised meat dishes, this one is best if left to cool in its cooking liquid overnight, but you can always skip that step if you're pressed for time, or really hungry.*

Preheat the oven to 300°F.

Season the pork all over with salt and pepper. In a large oven-proof braising pan, heat ¼ cup of the peanut oil over high heat until it shimmers. Add the pork and sear until golden brown on all sides. If you're using two half shoulders, you may need to dump out and replace the oil halfway through if it starts to smoke or get browned.

Once the meat has been seared, remove it from the pan with tongs and set it aside. Dump out all but about a tablespoon of the fat in the pan, and add the yellow onion, garlic, and ginger to the pan, stirring to coat with the oil, and adding a bit more oil if necessary to keep the vegetables from scorching or sticking. Season the vegetables with salt to get their juices released. Scrape the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon to dislodge browned bits. Once the vegetables are browned and beginning to soften, which should only take a few minutes, stir in the vinegar, soy sauce, cola, and miso, which you'll have to break up a bit with a spoon or spatula to help it melt quickly into the liquids. Bring to a boil and let reduce for about 5 minutes. Return the pork to the pan, cover, and transfer to the oven, where it should braise for at least 4 hours, or until extremely fork tender.

Remove the pork from the oven, uncover and let cool in the braising liquid. Using scrupulously clean hands, remove the meat from the bone-in chunks, placing it in a clean container large enough to hold all of the meat plus the strained liquid, and discard the bones and skin (reserve if you plan to make a roasted pork bone stock, cracklins, or the like). Strain the braising liquid through the sieve into the container with the meat, discarding the solids. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

At least an hour before you're ready to serve, place the red onion and cucumbers in a nonreactive mixing bowl. In a second bowl, combine the vinegar, water, sugar, and 2 tablespoons salt, and whisk to dissolve the sugar and salt. Pour this mixture over the cucumbers and onions, toss gently, cover, and refrigerate for at

least 1 hour.

Remove and discard the hard cap of fat from the top of the braising liquid. Use 2 forks to shred the meat. Add as much of the braising liquid as necessary to flavor it and keep it nice and moist.

In a small, heavy-bottom saucepan, combine the remaining 2 cups oil and the shallots and cook together over medium-high heat until the shallots become brown and tender, 12 to 15 minutes. You may need to stir them occasionally to keep them from sticking together. Remove the shallots from the oil with the slotted spoon and let them drain on the lined plate or sheet pan. Season with salt.

To serve the dish, reheat the meat on a griddle or in a cast-iron pan until it is cooked through and crisp on the edges, adding a bit of the peanut oil if necessary. Serve the meat, topped with the fried shallots, with the pickled vegetables, sticky rice, and hot sauce.

PAN ROASTED VEAL CHOP WITH WILD MUSHROOMS



If you're going to do this one, go to the best butcher you can find. Don't waste

your time and effort on those puny chops—often of questionable age and freshness—that are set out in your average grocery store meat bathtub. Veal is a subtle thing. Like sushi. And like sushi, the difference between decent and great is the difference between driving a Prius and a Ferrari. When buying veal, buy the best.

Serves 4

4 veal chops (each 12 to 14 ounces), trimmed Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

2 tablespoons canola oil

2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{4}$ stick) unsalted butter 1 pound mixed wild mushrooms, thinly sliced 4 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
5 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped Scant tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry white wine

2 tablespoons Madeira or sherry

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup veal stock or [Dark Universal Stock](#)

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

Take the chops out of the refrigerator about 20 minutes before you're ready to cook them. Season both sides with salt and pepper.

In a large, oven-proof sauté pan, heat the oil over high heat until it is smoking. Working in two batches if necessary, sear the chops in the hot oil for 3 minutes on one side. Turn the chops and sear on the second side for 1 minute. Transfer the chops to the hot oven and let cook for 6 minutes for medium-rare (which is what you want here). Remove the chops to a holding plate to rest while you cook the mushrooms.

Discard the accumulated oil and veal fat in the pan and add the butter. Cook over

high heat, stirring gently with a wooden spoon to start to dislodge the browned bits and keep them from burning. Once the butter has foamed and subsided, add the mushrooms, stirring frequently. You should hear a squeak as they cross the pan. Once they start to get juicy, stir in the shallots, garlic, and thyme and season with salt and pepper. Continue to cook for another few minutes, scraping the bottom of the pan, until the mushrooms are browned and tender. Add the wine and Madeira and cook until the pan is dry and there is no smell of alcohol evident, which should take about 3 minutes. Add the stock, stir briefly, and remove from the heat. Taste and adjust the seasoning if necessary. Serve the chops with the mushrooms alongside.

*CALF'S LIVER WITH BACON, LEEKS,
APPLES, AND CALVADOS*



Liver . . . booze . . . *fire!*

Serves 4 to 6

½ pound slab bacon, cut into small lardons 1½ pounds calf's liver, cut crosswise into ¼-to ⅓-inch-thick slices Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste ½ cup all-purpose flour

1 to 2 tablespoons canola oil

2 leeks (white parts only), trimmed and diced 1 Granny Smith or similarly tart apple, cored and diced ½ cup Calvados
¾ cup veal stock or [Dark Universal Stock](#)

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

[Mashed potatoes](#)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Plate lined with newspaper Place the bacon in a sauté pan (one that has a lid that fits, which you'll need later) over medium heat, adding a splash of water if necessary, and cook, stirring regularly with a wooden spoon, until most of the fat has rendered and the bacon is lightly browned. Remove the bacon to the lined plate to drain; discard the fat and wipe out or wash the pan.

Season the liver on both sides with salt and pepper, and dredge it in the flour, patting off the excess. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in the pan until it is smoking, then add the liver, working in batches if necessary, and cook for about 1 minute per side, taking care not to overcook it—it should still have a pink tinge inside. If the flour smells like it is scorching or there's anything turning too dark in the pan, add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Using tongs, remove the liver to a serving platter. Add the leeks to the pan over high heat, stirring and scraping up any browned bits with the wooden spoon. Season the leeks with salt and pepper and add the apple and the bacon, continuing to cook over high heat until all are browned and the pan juices have sizzled away.

Working decisively, with sleeves and hair and kitchen towels safely secured, and your pan lid close at hand, add the Calvados, which, for safety's sake, you have poured into a second vessel, to the hot pan. If you do it right, you should

experience a brief, dramatic flare-up of flame. Don't freak out—it'll disappear quickly. If it's burning too long or too high for your comfort level, put the lid on the pan, which will quickly extinguish the flames. Once the flames have disappeared, let the mixture cook for another 30 seconds, then add the stock and let reduce slightly. Add the butter and toss the pan over high heat. Taste and adjust seasoning as desired, then transfer the mixture to the serving platter alongside the liver. (You may wish to cut it into small portions for easy serving.) Serve immediately with mashed potatoes alongside.

SAUSAGE GRAVY WITH BISCUITS



If you ever get the chance, introduce a Frenchman, preferably one with no cultural understanding of Southern foodways, to sausage gravy with biscuits. Comedy *will* ensue.

Ever feed a grape to a dog? The look of confusion on its face as it rolls the grape around in its mouths, unsure whether to bite the thing or spit it out? That was the look on Eric Ripert's face when he first tried sausage gravy and biscuits.

Serves 4

4 [Buttermilk Biscuits](#), split 2 to 4 tablespoons margarine

2 pounds breakfast sausage

1 cup half-and-half (or equal parts heavy cream and whole milk) Generous lashings of Frank's RedHot sauce or similar Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Toast the biscuits lightly, if desired. Spread each biscuit half generously with margarine and place two halves, margarine side up, on each of four plates.

Heat a large frying pan or skillet over medium-high heat and crumble the sausage into the pan. Let it render its fat and get brown and crisp as it cooks, then stir in the half-and-half, cooking and scraping up the browned bits in the pan with the wooden spoon. Season with the hot sauce and salt and pepper and ladle the gravy over each of the four biscuits. This is a slightly sloppy dish that may hit your digestive tract like a greasy bomb; I suggest Tums and Wet Wipes.

COUNTRY HAM WITH RED-EYE GRAVY AND BISCUITS

This is a good thing to make with the country ham you procured on that last road trip to the South and, indeed, a good reason to seek out high-quality country ham in the first place.

Serves 2

2 (¼-inch-thick) slices country ham

2 to 3 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 [Buttermilk Biscuits](#), sliced in half

½ cup very strong black coffee

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Grape jam (optional)

Place the ham in a shallow bowl or casserole—you may need to cut each slice in half crosswise to make it fit—and cover with cold water, to reduce the saltiness. Let soak for about 20 minutes, then drain, rinse, and pat dry with paper towels.

Trim the ring of fat from around each slice of ham and place the fat in a cast-iron skillet. Cut 6 or so 1-inch slices around the perimeter of each slice of ham, which will keep it from curling in the pan. Render the ham fat in the pan over medium-low heat. Remove any remaining rind. If necessary, add a bit of butter (about a half tablespoon) so that there is enough fat in the pan to cook the ham. Add the ham to the pan and cook until browned on both sides, about 8 minutes total.

While the ham cooks, toast the biscuits lightly if desired. Spread each biscuit half generously with the remaining butter and set aside.

Once the ham is done, place 1 slice on each of 2 plates and add the coffee to the pan over high heat, stirring and scraping with a metal spatula to incorporate the browned bits and fat, though it will not actually emulsify in a meaningful way. Let the mixture bubble and reduce to about half its volume. Taste and season with salt and pepper if necessary. Serve the gravy splashed over the ham, with hot coffee, the biscuits, and grape jam alongside, if desired.

FEGATO ALLA VENEZIANA

The Venetians tend to slice the liver into small pieces—and then proceed to cook it to shit.

I prefer to cut it into thin (but not too thin) slices, and sauté to medium-rare. Make sure your onions are deeply caramelized, which takes some time.

Serves 4

6 tablespoons olive oil

4 to 6 yellow onions, peeled and thinly sliced (about 1 quart) Salt to taste

1 cup all-purpose flour

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

1½ pounds calf's liver, cut into approximately 2-inch-wide ¼-to ⅓-inch-thick slices
Juice of 1 lemon (about 2 tablespoons)

2 tablespoons (¼ stick) unsalted butter

½ cup freshly chopped Italian parsley leaves 8 to 12 [Fried Polenta Crescents](#)

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 3 tablespoons of the oil over medium-low heat, then add the onions and stir well to coat completely. Season lightly with salt and cook, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon, for 25 to 30 minutes, until the onions are soft and caramelized. You can't rush this process with high heat. Set the strainer over a medium bowl and place the onions in a strainer to drain off the excess oil.

In a shallow bowl, whisk together the flour and enough salt and pepper to well season all the liver.

In a separate large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over high heat until it is just smoking.

While the oil heats, dredge the liver pieces in the flour, patting off the excess. Sauté the liver in the hot oil for 1 to 2 minutes per side, and use tongs to remove the cooked pieces to a holding plate as you add the next batch to the pan, adding the remaining oil as necessary. Once all the liver has been cooked, reduce the heat to medium and stir in the lemon juice, scraping the bottom with the wooden spoon to dislodge browned bits. Return the liver and onions to the pan and add the butter, gently tossing and agitating the content of the pan to evenly distribute the butter. Add the parsley and season with salt and pepper if desired. Serve at once with the polenta crescents.

MEAT LOAF WITH MUSHROOM GRAVY



My mom's meat loaf is inarguably better than yours, but this is not my mom's meat loaf recipe. This one is an amalgam, intended to evoke all the important meat loaves in my life—and there have been many: ✨ The meat loaf I'd get at the family table as a child.

✨ The meat loaf I'd find (if I was lucky) in the steam table in the school cafeteria, usually festering in a pool of grayish commercial gravy. (God, I loved that stuff—especially when stoned.) ✨ The meat loaf in the familiar foil tray of a Swanson TV dinner (which freed me from the oppression of a loving dinner table!).

✨ The meat loaf my bosses insisted I keep on the menu at my first chef job. The restaurant failed, but the meat loaf was quite good.

This, then, is the sum of all those experiences.

Serves 6 to 12

2½ tablespoons canola oil

1 large yellow or white onion, peeled and very finely chopped
3 ribs celery, very finely chopped
2 sprigs fresh marjoram, leaves only, very finely chopped
3 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves only, very finely chopped
Salt and finely ground black pepper to taste

2 pounds ground beef chuck

1⅓ pounds ground veal

3 eggs, lightly beaten

1 cup panko bread crumbs

¼ cup tomato paste

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 pound cremini mushrooms, diced
2 large or 3 to 4 shallots, peeled and finely chopped (about ½ cup)

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1¼ cups veal stock
½ cup heavy cream

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Instant-read thermometer

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium heat and add the onion, celery, marjoram, and thyme. Season with salt and pepper and cook over medium-low heat, stirring regularly with a wooden spoon, until the vegetables are soft and translucent but not browned. Remove from the heat and transfer to a large mixing bowl to cool.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Once the vegetable mixture is cool, add the beef, veal, eggs, bread crumbs, and about 2 teaspoons salt and ½ teaspoon pepper and mix well with scrupulously clean or rubber-gloved hands. Use the remaining ½ tablespoon oil to grease a loaf pan and transfer the mixture to the pan, packing it down gently. Cover the loaf with foil and place the loaf pan on a sheet pan. Cook in the oven for 1 hour.

Remove the foil and spread the top of the meat loaf with the tomato paste. Continue to cook for another 30 to 45 minutes, until the instant-read thermometer inserted into the center reaches 150°F. Remove from the oven and let the meat loaf rest, in the loaf pan, on a wire rack.

While it rests, make the gravy. In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat the butter until it foams and subsides. Add the diced mushrooms and cook over high heat, stirring occasionally, until their released juices evaporate and the mushrooms begin to squeak against the surface of the pan when stirred. Add the shallots and salt and pepper to taste and continue to cook until the mushrooms get browned and the shallots are translucent or slightly golden, 3 to 5 minutes.

Sprinkle the flour over the mushrooms and stir well to evenly coat. Cook over medium heat, stirring more or less constantly, for about 2 minutes, to cook off the raw flour taste, then stir in the stock. Whisk the mixture to pull the stuck flour up from the surface of the pan and into the gravy. Add a splash more stock or water if necessary if the mixture seems too thick, then reduce the heat to low and stir in the cream. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed.

Serve the meat loaf in slices, with the gravy ladled over or alongside. Accompany with [mashed potatoes](#) if you like.



MA PO TRIPE AND PORK



Ma po tofu (*ma po* means “pockmarked grandma”), the classic Szechuan dish from which this recipe is adapted, taught me a lot of thing about myself. Dark things.

I had previously been aware of certain aspects of the “pain/pleasure” relationship, and I would err, always, on the “no pain” side. I didn’t care if it was a supermodel holding the nipple clamps and the riding crop. Pain—or even mild discomfort—never sounded even remotely enticing to me.

Then I visited Chengdu in China, and among other spicy, burning, numbing, endorphin-activating, highly addictive delights, I found *ma po* tofu. And my life changed forever.

This riff, which owes a debt to Danny Bowien’s constantly evolving *ma po* tofu at Mission Chinese, is intended as both an argument for tripe—and for pain.

It burns. It burns so good.

Serves 8

2 teaspoons plus 2 tablespoons rendered lard or duck fat

12 whole dried red chili peppers

1 piece tripe (3 to 4 pounds), cut into 1-inch squares

1 tablespoon white vinegar

1 ounce dried shiitake mushrooms, ground to a powder in a spice grinder
2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more to taste

2 teaspoons freshly ground Szechuan peppercorns, plus more to taste
1 to 1½ pounds pork shoulder, cut into 1-inch chunks
¼ cup Szechuan peppercorn oil, plus more for finishing
⅓ cup fermented black beans

12 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped

8 ounces cremini mushrooms, finely chopped

½ cup doubanjiang (spicy fermented bean paste) ⅓ cup tomato paste
1 to 2 teaspoons powdered MSG (optional)
12 ounces beer of no special distinction
2 to 3 cups [Dark Universal Stock](#) or chicken stock 1 tablespoon fish sauce

2 tablespoons cornstarch

Optional garnishes: pork floss, finely chopped fresh chives and/or chive blossoms, scallions, fresh cilantro leaves, steamed white rice
SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Ice-water bath (large bowl filled with ice and cold water) Spice grinder

In a small cast-iron skillet or heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 2 teaspoons of lard or fat over high heat until it is almost smoking, then add the chili peppers and reduce the heat to medium. Toast the peppers in the lard until dark red on both sides, about 4 minutes total. Use tongs to transfer the peppers to a small mixing bowl. If you want to dial back the heat, discard some of the seeds from inside the peppers once they are cool enough to handle, then transfer them to the spice grinder and grind into a fine, slightly pasty powder. Set aside.

Place the tripe in a large, heavy-bottom stockpot and add the vinegar. Cover with cold water, bring to a boil, and let boil for 10 minutes. Drain in a colander and shock in the ice-water bath. Clean out the stockpot and set aside.

In a wide, shallow bowl, whisk together the mushroom powder and 2 teaspoons each salt and Szechuan pepper. Toss the pork cubes in this mixture to evenly coat and season.

In the stockpot, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of lard over high heat. Working in batches to avoid overcrowding the pan, sear the pork on all sides in the hot lard, removing the meat with tongs to a nearby plate as it finishes.

Pour off any excess oil in the bottom of the pan, and over medium heat, add the Szechuan peppercorn oil, fermented black beans, garlic, mushrooms, and reserved ground chili peppers and stir, scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon to dislodge the browned bits of pork. Cook this mixture for about 5 minutes, or until the moisture from the mushrooms has largely sizzled away,

then stir in the *doubanjiang*, tomato paste, and, if using, MSG and cook, stirring regularly, for 3 to 5 minutes, to let the mixture darken. Deglaze with the beer, continuing to scrape the bottom of the pan. Once the beer has reduced slightly and there is no whiff of alcohol, which should only take a few minutes, stir in 2 cups of the stock and the fish sauce and let the mixture come to a boil. Add the reserved tripe and pork and the accumulated pork juices, and add more stock if necessary to barely cover the meat. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 2 to 2½ hours, until the pork and tripe are very tender.

In a clean mixing bowl, whisk together the cornstarch and 2 tablespoons cold water to form a slurry, then add this mixture to the simmering sauce, whisking and stirring well to incorporate it into the sauce and thicken it slightly.

Taste the sauce and adjust the seasoning with additional ground peppercorns, salt, MSG, and peppercorn oil as desired. Serve in a bowl, garnished with pork floss, chives, scallions, and cilantro as desired, and possibly splashed with more peppercorn oil or with more ground peppercorns sprinkled on top, with steamed white rice alongside.

ROAST LEG OF LAMB WITH FLAGEOLETS

The question here is, do you want to use dry flageolet beans—which have to be soaked overnight, or at least double cooked? Or do you want to simply crack a can? There’s a significant school of thought suggesting the canned might even be better. I cook my beans (canned or not) with plenty of lamb fat and seasoning. And my lamb is always roasted medium-rare—no more.

Serves 6 to 8

2 cups dried or 3 cups canned flageolets 1 boneless lamb shoulder (about 3 pounds) 15 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped 2 large very ripe beefsteak or similar red tomatoes, peeled and coarsely chopped 1½ tablespoons finely chopped fresh oregano leaves 2 bay leaves

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 20 oil-packed anchovies, drained with oil reserved and finely chopped 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh thyme leaves ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Butcher’s twine

Instant-read thermometer

Place the beans in a medium, heavy-bottom saucepot and add 6 cups water. Bring to a boil, let cook for 5 minutes, then cover and let sit 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Trim and reserve the excess fat from the lamb.

Drain and rinse the beans, and return them to the pot, along with the lamb fat, 3 cloves' worth of chopped garlic, the tomatoes, oregano, bay leaves, and oil. Add water just to cover—the tomatoes will release a lot of liquid as they break down. Stir well, bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and cook for 45 to 60 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the beans are very tender. Season with salt and pepper once the beans are done cooking. Cover to keep warm.

While the beans simmer, in a small mixing bowl, combine the remaining garlic, the anchovies and about 2 tablespoons of the oil they were packed in, the thyme, and pepper flakes and mix well. Remove and discard the netting that the lamb has inevitably been wrapped in, and open it up to lay flat on a clean work surface. Spread it with about half of the anchovy mixture, then roll and tie it into a cylinder with the twine. Use the remaining mixture to coat the outside of the lamb. Season lightly with salt and pepper and place it in a roasting pan, ideally one with a rack.

Roast for about 1 hour and 10 minutes, rotating the pan and turning the meat after about 45 minutes, until the instant-read thermometer registers 135°F. (The temperature will rise to 140°F as it rests, for medium-rare meat.) Let the meat rest for at least 10 minutes before slicing thinly. Serve with the flageolets alongside.

OSSO BUCCO



I learned how to make this dish at the restaurant Le Madri, which, like so many

places on my résumé, is sadly no longer with us. It was, I can say without bragging (I was only the sous-chef), a very good restaurant. And this braised veal shank was a revelation. I made this for my wife (then girlfriend) on an early date. She hails from a town not far from Milan—where the dish originated—and when she saw what I’d cooked for her in my small apartment above Manganaro’s Hero Boy on Ninth Avenue, she called her mom and mocked me (in Italian), incredulous that I’d do something so stupid and ambitious.

At the end of the meal, however, she said, “Not bad.”

Which, coming from my wife, is high praise.

Serves 6

6 veal shanks, each about 2½ to 3 inches thick
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
½ cup all-purpose flour
¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 large yellow onion, peeled and cut into large dice
6 medium carrots, peeled and cut into large dice
2 ribs celery, cut into large dice
2 garlic cloves, peeled and thinly sliced

1 bottle dry white wine

1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes and their juices, crushed by hand (let some chunks remain)
1½ quarts veal stock
½ orange, zested, peeled, and cut into quarters, with zest reserved for garnish
1 bay leaf

4 sprigs fresh rosemary

Whole parsley leaves (optional)

[Saffron Risotto](#)

Season the veal shanks on all sides with salt and pepper, then dredge in the flour, patting off the excess.

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat ¼ cup of the oil over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Add the veal shanks and sear until golden on both sides, working in batches if necessary. Once each shank is seared, use tongs to remove it to a sheet pan or large plate until they're all done.

In a Dutch oven, heat the remaining 3 tablespoons oil over medium heat and add the onion, carrots, celery, and garlic. Season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring regularly with a wooden spoon, until the vegetables are soft and beginning to brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the wine, bring to a boil, and let it reduce by half, stirring occasionally. This should take 15 to 20 minutes. Add the tomatoes and their juices and the stock, and bring to a rolling boil. Add the orange quarters, the bay leaf, rosemary, and the reserved veal shanks, return to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer.

Cook at a simmer, stirring very occasionally, for about 3 hours, until the veal is extremely tender and yielding to the touch. If serving immediately, place 1 shank in each of six shallow bowls. If serving later, remove the shanks and let cool separately from the sauce. (To reheat, return the shanks to the sauce and bring the whole thing, slowly, to a high simmer over medium heat.) Remove and discard the rosemary sprigs, orange sections, and bay leaf from the sauce. Taste the sauce and adjust with salt and pepper as desired. Ladle some of the hot sauce over each shank and garnish with the reserved orange zest and, if using, the parsley. Serve with saffron risotto alongside or in the same bowl.

NEW MEXICO-STYLE BEEF CHILI

No beans, no rice—chili should be about the meat and the peppers; in this case, New Mexico hatch chilis, which, outside of that fine state, can be found canned or frozen. They're piquant but mild, so you'll want to add heat with roasted poblanos at the beginning and jalapeños as a garnish. You can sub in harissa paste for tomato paste if you have it, which might be a geographic world away from the American Southwest but tastes fucking awesome.

Serves 6 to 8

4 poblano peppers

1 pound hatch chilis, fresh, frozen, or canned ½ cup all-purpose flour
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 2 pounds beef chuck, cut into 1-to-2-inch chunks

2 to 3 tablespoons canola oil

1 large white or yellow onion, peeled and coarsely chopped 3 garlic cloves, peeled and coarsely chopped 1½ teaspoons ground cumin
1½ teaspoons ground coriander
1½ teaspoons dried oregano, preferably from Mexico 2 tablespoons tomato paste or harissa

1 cup beer

3 cups [Dark Universal Stock](#) or chicken stock Jalapeño peppers, thinly sliced, for garnish Fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish Toasted tortillas or freshly fried

tortilla chips Sour cream

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Broiler pan

Turn on your oven's broiler. On a broiler pan that you've lined with foil, arrange the poblano peppers, and position the oven rack so that the pan will be as close as possible to the broiler. Place the pan under the broiler and let cook until the peppers' skin is blackened, turning the peppers with tongs so that they blacken on all sides, approximately 10 to 15 minutes total. Remove from the broiler, and once cool enough to handle, remove and discard as much of the blackened skin as possible as well as the peppers' stems and some or all of the seeds (which are the source of the peppers' heat). Coarsely chop the peppers and set aside.

Repeat this procedure with the hatch chili peppers, if you have been lucky enough to procure fresh ones; the frozen or canned ones have invariably already been roasted, peeled, and seeded, in which case you can just chop them.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour and about 1 tablespoon each of the salt and pepper and toss the beef in the mixture to coat. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a Dutch oven until just smoking, then add the beef, working in batches, and let sear until dark brown on all sides. Using tongs, remove the cooked beef to a plate and continue to cook remaining beef.

Add the onion and garlic to the hot pot and season with salt and pepper. Cook over medium-high heat, scraping the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon to dislodge browned bits, and adding another tablespoon of oil if necessary to keep the fond or the onion from scorching. After the onion has begun to soften and brown, about 3 minutes, add the cumin, coriander, and oregano and cook for another 2 minutes, then stir in the tomato paste and beer. Bring to a boil, and cook until the liquid is reduced by about two-thirds. Stir in the stock and return the beef to the pot. Add the reserved poblano and hatch chili peppers, bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer, and cook, covered, for about 90 minutes, until the beef is fork tender.

Remove from the heat and serve in bowls, with the jalapeños, cilantro, tortillas, and sour cream alongside, as well as lots of cold beer, preferably from New

Mexico.

[13]
SIDE DISHES





RATATOUILLE



Don't prepare this recipe, as I did, for a table full of Provençales. They will likely compliment you on your "nice vegetable dish" but will not call it "ratatouille." They have a point. Ratatouille is traditionally sort of sludgy. All the components are cooked together, encouraged to "marry."

I just can't.

In a break with the "right way" to do things, I cook all the vegetables separately, highlighting their differences, while (ideally) honoring the original flavor profiles. This version is fresher and crisper—and undeniably prettier.

Serves 6 to 8 as a side dish

1 to 1¼ cups extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium red onion, peeled and diced

4 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped

½ cup tomato paste
6 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves only, chopped

2 medium zucchini, trimmed and diced

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 medium yellow squash, trimmed and diced

1 large red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and diced 1 medium eggplant, diced (but save the internal pieces without skin for baba ganoush or another dish—it's crucial that each piece in this dish have some skin attached) 1 to 2 teaspoons high-quality aged balsamic vinegar

2 sprigs fresh basil, leaves only, coarsely

chopped

cnoppeu

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat ¼ cup of the oil over high heat. Add the onion and garlic; when the onion is translucent and just beginning to brown, reduce the heat and stir in the tomato paste and thyme. Remove from the heat and transfer the mixture to a sheet pan to cool.

Wipe out the sauté pan (or use a clean one) and heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in it over high heat. Add the zucchini and sauté over high heat until tender and beginning to become golden brown at the edges. Season with salt and pepper, remove from the heat, and transfer to the sheet pan with the onion mixture, keeping it segregated.

Repeat this procedure with another 1 or 2 tablespoons of the oil as needed, and the squash, pepper, and eggplant, cooking each vegetable separately, seasoning with salt and pepper, and allowing it to cool on one of the sheet pans. Wipe out the pan between vegetables.

Once the vegetables have cooled to room temperature, combine them in a large mixing bowl and toss gently. Add the balsamic and remaining oil to taste. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper, add the basil, and let the mixture sit at room temperature for 3 to 4 hours to let the flavors marry. Serve at room temperature.

SAFFRON RISOTTO

Years ago, in response to a short piece about risotto in the food pages of a New York newspaper, a well-known Italian restaurateur wrote an angry and impassioned editorial, denouncing the piece, in particular its assertion that you could half-cook risotto before spreading it out to cool, then finish the cooking when your guests arrive. *No* respectable Italian would *ever* do such a thing, wailed the restaurateur.

Which struck me as amusing. Because I'd worked for the prick—and I never saw risotto cooked any other way while in his employ. At any given moment, there'd be two full sheet pans of half-cooked risotto sitting on a station, and another two in the walk-in refrigerator.

Does this cheat impact the quality of the risotto? Yes. Most assuredly. But how much? So much that it's worth abandoning your guests for twenty-five minutes while you stand there in the kitchen, stirring fucking rice? So much that any of your friends can even tell the difference? No disrespect to your friends, but I sincerely doubt it.

Just be careful to not overcook it during the initial “blanch”—and finish it correctly. You want a fairly soupy, porridgy consistency. Your risotto should not stand up in a heap.

And please, please, please: If you're making risotto as an entrée, or as a course all its own, do not overload it with ingredients. Wild mushrooms, truffles, asparagus—whatever. Pick one.

And don't even think about truffle oil.

Serves 6 as a side dish

1½ quarts chicken stock

Generous pinch of saffron threads
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 small yellow onion, peeled and finely chopped

1½ cups carnaroli rice
½ cup dry white wine
4 tablespoons (½ stick) cold unsalted butter, cut into small chunks
½ cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
Salt to taste

Pour half the stock into a small, heavy-bottom pot and add the saffron threads. Bring to a low simmer over medium-low heat to begin to infuse the stock with the saffron.

In a medium, heavy-bottom pot, heat the oil over medium-low heat and add the onion. Stir well with a wooden spoon to coat with the oil and cook, stirring frequently, until the onion is soft and translucent but not browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in the rice, increase the heat to medium-high, and cook for 3 to 4 minutes, until the rice smells slightly toasty. Decrease the heat to medium-low and add the wine. Stir regularly until the wine has been absorbed by the rice and the sharp alcohol smell has cooked off.

Add the saffron-infused stock, a ladleful or two at a time, stirring regularly and adding more as each batch becomes absorbed. Once all of the saffron stock has been added, heat up the remaining stock using the same pot; continue to add that stock to the rice, stirring with each addition. Check the rice for doneness: It should be tender and cooked through, but not mushy. The mixture as a whole should be runny enough to cover the bottom of a bowl; add more stock as necessary so that the risotto doesn't sit up in a stiff lump.

Beat the butter and cheese into the hot rice mixture with the wooden spoon. Your goal is to incorporate some air into the mixture, to lighten the texture. Taste and season with salt. Serve immediately.

CREAMED SPINACH

There's no need to obscure the taste and color of fresh spinach with a béchamel sauce; some heavy cream and butter are all you need. The hardest and most important part here is making sure your spinach is completely grit-free.

Serves 8 to 12 as a side dish 3 pounds fresh spinach, roots and tough stems removed 1½ cups heavy cream

2 garlic cloves, crushed and coarsely chopped

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into cubes

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste Freshly grated nutmeg (optional)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Immersion blender or food processor Fill a large bowl with cold water and plunge the spinach into it, agitating a bit to get as much of the sand and dirt as possible to fall off the leaves and into the water below. Lift the spinach up and out of the water and into a colander; if there is a significant quantity of dirt and grit in the washing water, dump it out, rinse the bowl, fill it with cold water, and repeat the washing process. Let the excess water drain from the spinach, but don't dry it; the water that clings to the leaves is what you need to gently steam it.

Heat a large sauté or braising pan over medium heat and add the spinach, working in batches, turning it gently with tongs and letting it cook until it is just wilted and bright green, no more than 5 minutes. Transfer each batch of steamed spinach to a colander (a second one may prove useful here) and, when it's all been steamed and is cool enough to handle, wrap it in one or more clean dish towels or layers of paper towels and wring from it as much water as possible.

Coarsely chop the spinach, then arrange it on a sheet pan to further cool and air dry for about 15 to 20 minutes.

In a medium, heavy-bottom saucepan, combine the heavy cream and garlic and bring to a simmer. Let simmer over low heat for 15 to 20 minutes, then strain out the mixture through the sieve into a bowl, discard the garlic, and return the cream to the saucepan over medium heat.

Stir the spinach into the warm cream, then add the butter and continue to stir until it is melted. Puree the mixture with the immersion blender or pulse it in the food processor. Taste and season with salt and pepper, and, if desired, nutmeg. Transfer to a serving dish and serve immediately.

ROASTED CAULIFLOWER WITH SESAME



This shit is compulsively delicious. One adult could easily eat the entire head of cauliflower for dinner and feel good about it.

Serves 4 to 6 as a side dish 1 head of cauliflower, broken by hand into florets $\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon ground coriander

1 teaspoon dried oregano

Freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 tablespoons tahini
1 tablespoon white miso

2 teaspoons red wine vinegar

1½ tablespoons water

3 tablespoons toasted white sesame seeds

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the cauliflower, oil, salt, coriander, oregano, and pepper and toss well to evenly coat the cauliflower with the oil and spices. Transfer to a sheet pan and arrange in an even layer, making spaces between the pieces as much as possible. Roast the cauliflower in the oven for 20 minutes, turning the tray and lightly tossing the pieces halfway through.

While the cauliflower roasts, combine the tahini, miso, vinegar, and 1½ tablespoons water in a small mixing bowl, and whisk until smooth.

Once the cauliflower is done, remove it from the oven, transfer to a mixing bowl, and toss with the sauce and sesame seeds to coat evenly.

BRAISED BELGIAN ENDIVE

Straight out of Escoffier, by way of a dinner party in the Greenwich, Connecticut, of the early 1980s.

Serves 4 as a side dish

½ cup all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 to 3 tablespoons unsalted butter

4 heads of Belgian endive, washed, trimmed, and cut in half lengthwise ½ cup dry white wine

1 cup veal stock or [Dark Universal Stock](#)

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley

In a shallow bowl or plate, whisk together the flour, salt, and pepper.

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the butter over medium-high heat until it foams and subsides. Dredge the endive halves in the flour, patting off the excess, and place them, cut side down, in the pan. Let cook for about 3 minutes, then turn with tongs to sear on the opposite side for another 3 minutes. This may need to be done in two batches, with an additional tablespoon of butter; put the cooked endive aside on the holding plate while you cook the rest. Return all of the cooked endives to the pan, pour in the wine, agitate the pan

slightly, and let it reduce to nearly dry, then add the stock, agitate the pan, and reduce the heat to a simmer. Cover the pan and let the endives braise until tender, about 10 minutes. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon butter, and, once it has been incorporated into the braising liquid, taste and season with salt and pepper as needed. Remove the endives and sauce to a serving platter, garnish with parsley, and serve.

MUSHROOM SAUTÉED WITH SHALLOTS

Because they are so full of moisture, screaming high heat is essential here for getting your mushrooms to brown, and not steam, in the pan, so really preheat the pan before adding them. Use only the small amount of oil called for here, and do not overload the pan. You are sautéing, not poaching. Do not screw this up with any of these common—but entirely avoidable—mistakes.

Serves 4 to 6 as a side dish

1 tablespoon canola or grapeseed oil

1 pound mushrooms, any variety, thinly sliced 4 shallots, peeled and finely chopped Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

¼ cup finely chopped fresh parsley

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat the oil over high heat until it shimmers and just begins to smoke. Add the mushrooms and cook over high heat, tossing and stirring frequently with a wooden spoon or spatula, until the mushrooms become browned at the edges, and fragrant, about 4 minutes. The mushrooms should make a squeaking noise as they move across the pan.

Add the shallots and season with salt and pepper. Adding salt will cause the mushrooms to release their juices. Continue to cook over high heat until the juices have been sizzled away. Once the mushrooms are well browned and tender, add the butter, toss well to coat, then add the parsley. Remove from the heat and serve at once.

***ROASTED BABY BEETS WITH RED ONION
AND ORANGES***



This is a staple dish in my home, where my daughter devours it. You need not use high-quality extra-virgin olive oil; opt for a neutral oil and let the beet, onion, and citrus juices do the work.

Serves 4 as a side dish

1 pound baby beets (6 to 8 beets), scrubbed and trimmed

2 tablespoons canola or grapeseed oil

½ medium red onion, peeled and thinly-sliced 1 navel orange, peeled and cut crosswise into ¼-inch-thick wheels

2 teaspoons cider vinegar

12 fresh mint leaves, torn (optional)

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste Preheat the oven to 450°F.

Toss the beets in a roasting pan with 1 tablespoon of the oil, and roast in the oven for 45 to 50 minutes, until a paring knife slips easily into the center. Once the beets are cool enough to handle, slip off and discard the skins.

Let the beets cool to room temperature, then cut into ¼-inch-thick slices. Toss in a mixing bowl with the onion, orange, vinegar, the remaining 1 tablespoon oil, and, if using, mint. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

FRIED POLENTA CRESCENTS

Sure, you can make pedestrian polenta triangles, but it's not so difficult to make the more visually interesting crescents.

Serves 6 to 8 as a side dish, with probable leftovers

1 cup medium-coarse polenta (also known as “corn grits”)

5 cups water or chicken stock

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter

1 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

4 to 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Combine the polenta and stock in a large bowl, stir a bit, cover, and refrigerate at least 4 hours and up to 12. (Skip this step, and accept a longer cooking time—60 rather than 30 minutes. Your call.)

Transfer the polenta and stock to a large, heavy-bottom saucepot. Stir it and bring it to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook, stirring regularly but not necessarily constantly, for about 30 minutes. Once the polenta is tender and has absorbed all of the liquid, stir in 2 tablespoons of the butter and the cheese, whip well with a wooden spoon, season with salt and pepper, then remove from the heat.

Grease a half sheet pan with 1 tablespoon oil and turn the hot polenta onto it.

Wet or oil a spatula and use it to get the polenta as evenly distributed as possible across the tray; bang it decisively against the countertop to knock out any air bubbles. Let cool to room temperature, then wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for several hours, until completely chilled.

Transfer the polenta from the refrigerator to a cutting board, lifting it in one or two sections, using the spatula and an abundance of caution. With a 2-or 3-inch-diameter round cookie cutter, cut as many large circles from the polenta as you can. Cut each in half to form crescents. (If you want to get fancy, use a smaller cutter to cut away a section from each large circle to form a true crescent shape. This process can also be done freehand.)

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon oil and 1 tablespoon butter together until the butter foams and subsides. Working in batches, fry the crescents in the pan for 3 to 4 minutes per side, until golden brown on the edges, turning them carefully with a spatula and draining them on a cooling rack when done. As they cook and absorb fat, you may need to add the remaining butter and oil, a tablespoon or less at a time. Season with salt and pepper as needed and serve with [Fegato alla Veneziana](#).

POMMES ANNA

If using a cast-iron skillet here, make sure it's well seasoned to avoid the heartbreak of incomplete detachment when flipping the potatoes out of the pan to serve. For entertaining, I suggest making this several hours before guests arrive, and gently reheating it in a 300°F oven.

Serves 4 to 8 as a side dish

4 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes (about 10 to 12 large potatoes) ½ pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, melted Sea salt to taste
Crushed black peppercorns to taste

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Food processor fitted with thin slicing blade Parchment paper, cut into a circle the same diameter as the pan Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Peel the potatoes, and working quickly to avoid their discoloring, slice them very thinly in the food processor. Place the slices in a single layer on paper towels or clean kitchen towels and pat them dry.

Use a pastry brush to generously coat a 10-to 12-inch cast-iron or nonstick ovenproof skillet with some of the melted butter. Arrange a layer of potato slices in an overlapping circle in the bottom of the skillet. Brush these with the melted butter, season with salt and pepper, then top with another layer of potatoes in an overlapping circle. Brush with butter, season, and repeat until all of the potatoes have been added to the pan, seasoned, and buttered.

Brush the parchment paper lid with butter, press down gently on the potatoes, and cover with the lid. Cook in the oven for 30 minutes, then rotate the pan and cook for another 15 to 30 minutes, until the potatoes are golden brown and easily

pierced with a paring knife. Remove from the oven, let rest 5 minutes, remove the parchment lid, then run a spatula around the edges of the cake to loosen any stuck edges. Invert a large plate over the pan, and working quickly and decisively, invert the potato cake onto the plate.

GARBANZOS WITH CHERRY TOMATOES



Here, good olive oil is essential.

Serves 4 to 8 as a side dish or atop toast 2 cups cooked garbanzo beans, drained
1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon best-quality extra-virgin olive oil 4 garlic cloves,
peeled and thinly sliced Juice of 1 lemon (about 2 tablespoons) 1/2 teaspoon
salt, plus more to taste

1 pint ripe cherry tomatoes

2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh Italian parsley In a medium-sized, nonreactive bowl, combine the beans, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup oil, garlic, lemon juice, and salt and mix well. Cover and let sit at room temperature for 3 to 4 hours. (If letting marinate any longer, up to 24 hours, cover and refrigerate.) Heat the oven to 400°F. (Ideally you're roasting some chicken thighs or a piece of fish on the bottom rack of the oven, and have room on the top for the tomatoes.) On a sheet pan, toss the tomatoes with 1 tablespoon oil. Place in the oven and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, until the tomatoes are warm and softening but not yet bursting. Remove from the heat and stir into the garbanzo bean mixture, along with the parsley. Taste and adjust seasoning as desired.

KOREAN-STYLE RADISH PICKLES

Do not let the pungent intensity put you off; these pickles are delicious and essential to the [Korean Fried Chicken](#) experience.

Serves 10 to 12 as a side dish for fried chicken ¼ cup water

¼ cup white vinegar ¼ cup sugar

2 teaspoons salt

1 large daikon radish (about 1 pound), peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the water, vinegar, sugar, and salt. Add the radish and stir gently, then transfer everything to a glass or ceramic casserole dish. Cover and let sit at room temperature for 8 to 12 hours, or overnight. Transfer to the refrigerator and let sit for at least another 24 hours, and up to 3 days, before serving.

SUCCOTASH



A completely acceptable vehicle for frozen lima beans, and perhaps the only reason they ought to exist and endure.

Serves 8 to 10 as a side dish

2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{4}$ stick) unsalted butter

1 small yellow onion, peeled and finely diced 1 medium to large red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and diced 3 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped 1 large ripe red tomato, peeled, cored, seeded, and finely chopped Salt and freshly

ground black pepper to taste 2 cups frozen lima beans, thawed
1 cup water or [Dark Universal Stock](#)
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh oregano 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh
thyme
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley

2 cups corn kernels

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat the butter over medium heat until it foams and subsides. Add the onion and bell pepper; cook and stir until the onion is translucent but not yet browning. Add the garlic and cook for another minute, then add the tomato and season with salt and pepper. Once the tomato begins to break down and release its juices, after about 2 minutes, stir in the lima beans, water, and herbs. Cook and stir occasionally over medium-low heat for about 15 minutes, then stir in the corn and cook for an additional 5 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning if desired, then serve.

BUTTERMILK BISCUITS



Don't be afraid: Biscuits are easy as long as you do a few crucial things right, as per below. I've tried making these with lard, duck fat, and Crisco, but the best, fluffiest results come from ice-cold butter.

Makes about nine 3-inch biscuits or fifteen 2-inch biscuits 8 tablespoons (1 stick) frozen unsalted butter, plus 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup more for kneading and rolling 2 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

¾ cup cold buttermilk

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Sheet pan lined with parchment paper Preheat the oven to 450°F.

Let the frozen butter sit at room temperature for 5 minutes, then cut it into ½-inch cubes. Transfer the cubes to a small mixing bowl and place it in the refrigerator.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, and baking soda. Get the butter from the fridge and add it to the flour mixture, taking care to distribute it evenly. Working with a quick but light hand, use a pastry cutter to incorporate the butter and flour until it looks like coarse crumbs with some pea-size lumps. Add the cold buttermilk all at once and stir the mixture with a wooden spoon, using as few strokes as possible until the dough just comes together. Flour your hands and gently knead the dough five to ten times, just enough to bring it together a bit more and flatten some of the butter lumps.

Lightly flour a clean cutting board or other work surface and transfer the mixture to it. Use gentle pressure to press out the dough to a more or less even ¾-inch thickness. Cut as many biscuits as possible, using a simple grid pattern. Transfer the biscuits to the prepared sheet pan, leaving about 1 inch between each one.

Use a pastry brush to brush the top of each biscuit with the melted butter. Transfer to the oven and cook for 10 to 12 minutes, until they are golden brown and fragrant. Serve hot.

[14]
DESSERT



FUCK DESSERT.

Okay. I don't mean that. I like dessert just fine. But if I had to live without

one course for the rest of my life, dessert would be the one to go. I certainly don't know how to make pastries. Perhaps this explains my career-long suspicion of pastry chefs: They can do something that I absolutely cannot.

I may just not be a sweets guy. Sure, they tell you refined sugar is poison—and they're probably right. But they said that about heroin, too—and that turned out okay, didn't it?

Alright, maybe not.

I do, in fact, on occasion, enjoy a little bite of chocolate or something sugary at the end of a good meal. But *then* . . . I want cheese.

Cheese is magic. The cheese course, irreplaceable. All the knowledge accumulated by mankind and all the mysterious forces of the natural world reside in cheese.

Not just any cheese will do. What I want after a good meal is that king of cheeses: Stilton. And I would like some good port with that.

Sure, there may be “better” cheeses out there.

Maybe.

But I doubt it.

[15]
STOCKS, SAUCES, AND DRESSINGS



If you cook, you need stock. It's that simple.

***Real* (as opposed to commercially made) stock is the most important factor in making soups, sauces, and stews that taste like they've been made by a highly trained professional versus a mere professional.**

Make stock. Freeze it in small batches. Use it all the time.

DARK UNIVERSAL STOCK



Veal bones are nice. Stock and demi-glace made from roasted veal bones are even better—but many of my former colleagues have abandoned the old school in favor of lighter stocks: veal stock made from unroasted bones (which they claim is less bitter), or “demi-glace” made from roasted chicken bones. I am somewhat sentimental about doing things the traditional veal way, but as I’ve been out of professional kitchens for a long time, I say whatever floats your boat. Chicken bones are certainly easier to come by.

What follows is a perfectly serviceable recipe for universal stock. I encourage you to load your freezer with small containers of it.

It's as versatile as a blank canvas—a perfect background waiting for you to fill.

As a rule of thumb, you will be reducing this stock with red wine, straining it through a fine-mesh sieve, and infusing or garnishing with appropriate elements depending on the main ingredient.

If, for instance, you're making a sauce later for lamb, you can jack it with lamb flavor by reducing it with roasted lamb scraps, perhaps some rosemary and garlic, and some red wine. For a duck sauce, throw in some duck bones, heads, and/or feet if you have them, plus some bay leaves and maybe an orange rind. Nicely browned turkey bones and a sprig each of sage, rosemary, and thyme will customize it for turkey gravy, and pork bones, pig ears, and red wine or beer will do the job for a porky sauce.

Makes about 6 quarts

2 tablespoons canola oil

4 pounds chicken bones or as many as will fit into a large heavy-bottom stockpot
2 tablespoons tomato paste

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

2 large white onions, peeled and coarsely chopped 3 medium carrots, peeled and coarsely chopped
2 ribs celery, coarsely chopped
4 sprigs fresh thyme
4 sprigs fresh parsley
3 bay leaves

1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Oil 2 large roasting pans.

In one of the pans, toss together the chicken bones with the tomato paste and

flour to more or less evenly coat. Arrange them in an even layer and roast in the oven, turning and stirring the contents occasionally to keep bones from scorching, until the bones are browned, about 60 minutes.

While the bones roast, in the second pan, combine the onions, carrots, and celery and roast them as well, stirring regularly, until they are browned, about 30 minutes.

Transfer the bones and vegetables, but not any grease or other pan residue, to a large, heavy-bottom stockpot and fill the pot with cold water. Add the thyme, parsley, bay leaves, and peppercorns and bring the mixture to a high simmer, keeping vigilant in the last few minutes and reducing the heat to a low simmer before the mixture boils. Let simmer for at least 6 hours—better to let it go for 8 or 10—and use a ladle to skim off and discard the foam and oil as it rises to the top. There is no need to stir the stock as it simmers.

Remove the pot from the heat. Remove as many bones as you can with tongs, and discard them. Set up a sieve over a bowl or second stockpot—you may need to recruit a helper for this part, as you do not want to slip and lose everything you have just worked for—and carefully strain the stock, either by pouring it or ladling it through the sieve. Repeat the straining process a few times, until you are satisfied with the clarity of your stock. Transfer the stock carefully to storage containers, and chill in the refrigerator. Store in the refrigerator for up to 4 days, and up to 3 months in the freezer.

SHELLFISH STOCK



Got shrimp shells? Lobster heads? Crab carapaces? Smash them up a bit, load them into plastic bags, and freeze them. When you have the inclination, roast them in the oven and make a thick, dark, rich shellfish stock that can be, frankly, transformative. Freeze it in old-school ice cube trays or small containers; use it within three months.

Makes 2 to 4 quarts

1 tablespoon canola oil

Approximately 2 quarts lobster, shrimp, and/or crab shells

3 ounces tomato paste

1 large white or yellow onion, peeled and coarsely chopped
2 carrots, peeled and coarsely chopped
2 ribs celery, peeled and coarsely chopped
4 sprigs fresh thyme

4 sprigs fresh parsley

3 bay leaves

1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Oil a roasting or sheet pan and add the shells. Toss the shells with the tomato paste to coat them as evenly as possible. Roast in the oven for about 15 minutes, taking care to not let them brown or scorch, which will turn your stock into bitter garbage.

Transfer the roasted shells to a large, heavy-bottom stockpot, along with the tomato paste, vegetables, and aromatics, and cover by 2 inches with cold water. Bring to a simmer and calibrate the heat so that the pot bubbles lightly but does not boil. Use a ladle to skim off and discard the foam and scum that rises to the surface; you may find yourself doing several rounds of this in the first 30 to 45 minutes. Once the foam and scum slows, let the stock simmer for at least 6

hours. Do not stir the stock as it simmers; this will only muddy the proverbial waters.

Remove the pot from the heat. Remove as many large shell pieces as you can, using tongs, and discard them. Set up a sieve over a large bowl—you may need to recruit a helper for this part, as you do not want to slip and lose everything you have just worked for—and carefully strain the stock, either by pouring it or ladling it through the sieve. Repeat the straining process a few times, until you are satisfied with the clarity of your stock. Transfer the stock carefully to storage containers, and chill in the refrigerator. Store for up to 4 days in the refrigerator, and up to 3 months in the freezer.

OCTOPUS STOCK



This is an enchanted liquid that makes seafood stews richer, deeper, and better.

Makes 2 to 4 quarts, depending on the volume of the pot ½ tablespoon canola oil
10 octopus tentacles, beak removed and discarded and tentacles cut into bite-size pieces

1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

1 medium white or yellow onion, peeled and coarsely chopped 4 whole garlic cloves, peeled

1 carrot, peeled and coarsely chopped 1 rib celery, coarsely chopped

In a large, heavy-bottom pot, heat the oil over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Working in batches, lightly sear the octopus pieces until they release their natural juices, 1 to 2 minutes. Use tongs to remove the octopus pieces to a plate or bowl and drain and discard the liquid. Return the octopus to the pot and add the peppercorns, onion, garlic, carrot, and celery. Fill the pot about three-quarters full with cold water, bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Gently simmer for 1 to 1½ hours. Strain the stock, discarding the solids, and refrigerate or freeze.

POMODORO



Tomato sauce doesn't need a lot of ingredients. In fact, it *shouldn't* have a lot of ingredients. It should be quick and easy, and it should taste fresh—like tomatoes in season. It's *tomato* sauce after all. *Not* oregano sauce. Or garlic sauce. Let me stress this again, so you know I'm serious: *It's about the tomatoes*. And it should take no more than 45 minutes—preferably far less—of actual cooking time.

Makes about 5 cups

10 ripe red plum tomatoes

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 medium yellow onion, peeled and finely chopped 4 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 (28-ounce) can peeled plum tomatoes and their juices Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) unsalted butter 6 fresh basil leaves, gently torn into a few pieces SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Ice-water bath (large bowl filled with ice and cold water) Immersion blender

Fill a large, heavy-bottom pot with water and bring it to a boil. Use a paring or serrated knife to cut an X into both ends of each fresh plum tomato. Once the water boils, add the tomatoes to the pot, working in two batches if necessary to avoid overcrowding the pot or reducing the temperature too drastically. Allow the tomatoes to simmer in the water for about 30 seconds, until the skin begins to loosen and peel away from the flesh. Using tongs, remove the tomatoes to the ice-water bath. Once the tomatoes are cool enough to handle, peel off and discard the skin, squeeze out and discard the seeds, and coarsely chop the flesh.

In a large, heavy-bottom sauté pan, heat the oil over medium-low heat and add the onion, garlic, and pepper flakes. Let cook 1 to 2 minutes, stirring to keep the aromatics from browning, then add the chopped plum tomatoes and the canned tomatoes and their juices, squeezing the canned tomatoes by hand to crush them up a bit before they go into the pan. Stir well, season lightly with salt and pepper, and let cook for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes have completely broken down.

Remove the sauce from the heat and use the immersion blender to puree the sauce. (You may wish to carefully transfer the sauce to a large, deep mixing bowl, which will make it easier to manipulate the blender.) Return the sauce to gentle heat, add the butter, and cook and stir until the butter has been incorporated into the sauce. Stir in the basil leaves. Taste and adjust seasoning as necessary.

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE



Yes, I still loathe the concept of brunch. And when *Kitchen Confidential* came out over fifteen years ago, I apparently scared innumerable readers off the pleasure of hollandaise. I'd like to gently recant here and say that a sauce made well, with fresh ingredients, served just after it comes together, can still be a beautiful thing.

But still—fuck brunch.

Makes about 2 cups

1¼ pounds (5 sticks) unsalted butter ⅛ teaspoon crushed black peppercorns ⅛ teaspoon salt, plus more to taste 3 tablespoons white wine vinegar
1 tablespoon cold water

6 egg yolks

1 to 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice In a small, heavy-bottom saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat, using a slotted spoon to skim the white foam off the surface. Remove from the heat and pour the clear yellow liquid butter into a second small, heavy-bottom saucepan, taking care not to include any of the milky-looking liquid that remains at the bottom of the pan. Keep the clarified butter warm, but not hot.

In a third small, heavy-bottom saucepan, use a wooden spoon to combine the peppercorns, ⅛ teaspoon salt, and vinegar and cook over medium heat until the vinegar boils and almost completely evaporates (a state of near-dryness known as *au sec*). Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the cold water with the wooden spoon.

Transfer the mixture to a medium stainless-steel bowl, making sure to scrape it well with a spatula so as to not lose any of the reduction, which gives the sauce its essential flavor. Add the yolks to the bowl and whisk well.

In a medium, heavy-bottom saucepan, bring a few inches of water to a low simmer and place the bowl with the yolks over the simmering water. Whisk constantly, making sure you hit all the surfaces of the bowl, until the yolks are

pale yellow, thick, and creamy. The more air in the eggs, the less likely they will be to curdle over the heat.

Remove the bowl from atop the simmering water and begin to whisk in the clarified butter, starting with a few drops at first and adding another ladleful after each one is incorporated. If the mixture becomes too thick to beat, add a small amount of the lemon juice.

Once all the butter has been incorporated, whisk in the lemon juice and season with salt to taste. Strain the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a clean bowl or pot and serve immediately, or within 90 minutes, keeping the sauce warm but not hot.

MAYONNAISE

Some recipes call for the prepared stuff, but some, like chicken salad, demand a homemade mayonnaise. It's one of a category of emulsified dressings in which two unmixable liquids are held in suspension by a third—in this case oil and vinegar, brought together by egg yolks. The notion of an emulsion gets some cooks panicky, but there's no reason to sweat it. As long as you use the freshest possible eggs, beat the yolks well, and go slow and steady when incorporating the oil, you shouldn't have any trouble. And if you do, if the emulsion breaks because you've added more oil than it can hold? Whisk in another beaten egg yolk and watch the thing come back to life.

Makes about 2 cups

2 egg yolks

1½ tablespoons white wine vinegar

½ teaspoon salt, plus more to taste ½ teaspoon dry mustard

1¾ cup vegetable, canola, or grapeseed oil 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice, or to taste In a large mixing bowl, beat the egg yolks well with a whisk. Whisk in ½ tablespoon of the vinegar, then add the salt and mustard and whisk well.

Begin to add the oil, in a very slow and steady stream, whisking constantly. You may wish to enlist the help of a friend—one of you whisks while the other pours. Once you see the emulsion begin to form, you can add the oil a little faster, but do not dump it in. The emulsion breaks when the matrix is overloaded with oil.

If the mixture starts to become too thick to beat, you can thin it with some of the remaining vinegar. Continue to add the oil, then whisk in any remaining vinegar. Taste the mixture and adjust with the lemon juice and additional salt if desired.

BLUE CHEESE VINAIGRETTE

Makes about 2 cups

8 ounces best-quality blue cheese, crumbled ½ cup [Mayonnaise](#) or store-bought mayonnaise ¼ cup canola oil
¼ cup red wine vinegar

2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste In a mixing bowl, combine the cheese, mayonnaise, oil, vinegar, and lemon juice and whisk together to make a homogenous mixture. Thin with a tablespoon of water if necessary. Taste and season with salt and pepper.

MIXED FRUIT CHUTNEY



A dab of this stuff will relieve the crushing boredom of skinless grilled chicken breasts, steamed vegetables, and other such punishing foods.

Makes about 2 cups

6 dried figs, quartered

8 dried apricots, quartered

¼ cup raisins

1 Granny Smith apple, peeled, cored, and grated 1 cup finely grated fresh pineapple

2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 tablespoon finely grated lemon or lime zest 1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Place the figs, apricots, and raisins in a small bowl and cover with hot water. Let soak until softened, about 1 hour. Drain the fruit and add to a medium, heavy-bottom saucepan, along with all the remaining ingredients. Mix well, bring to a boil, and reduce to a simmer. Add a splash of water if it looks too dry. Cook,

stirring frequently, until the mixture has thickened and become somewhat sticky, about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat, transfer to a clean container, and refrigerate, uncovered, until well chilled. Will keep in refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

NUOC MAM CHAM (VIETNAMESE DIPPING SAUCE)

Makes about 1 cup

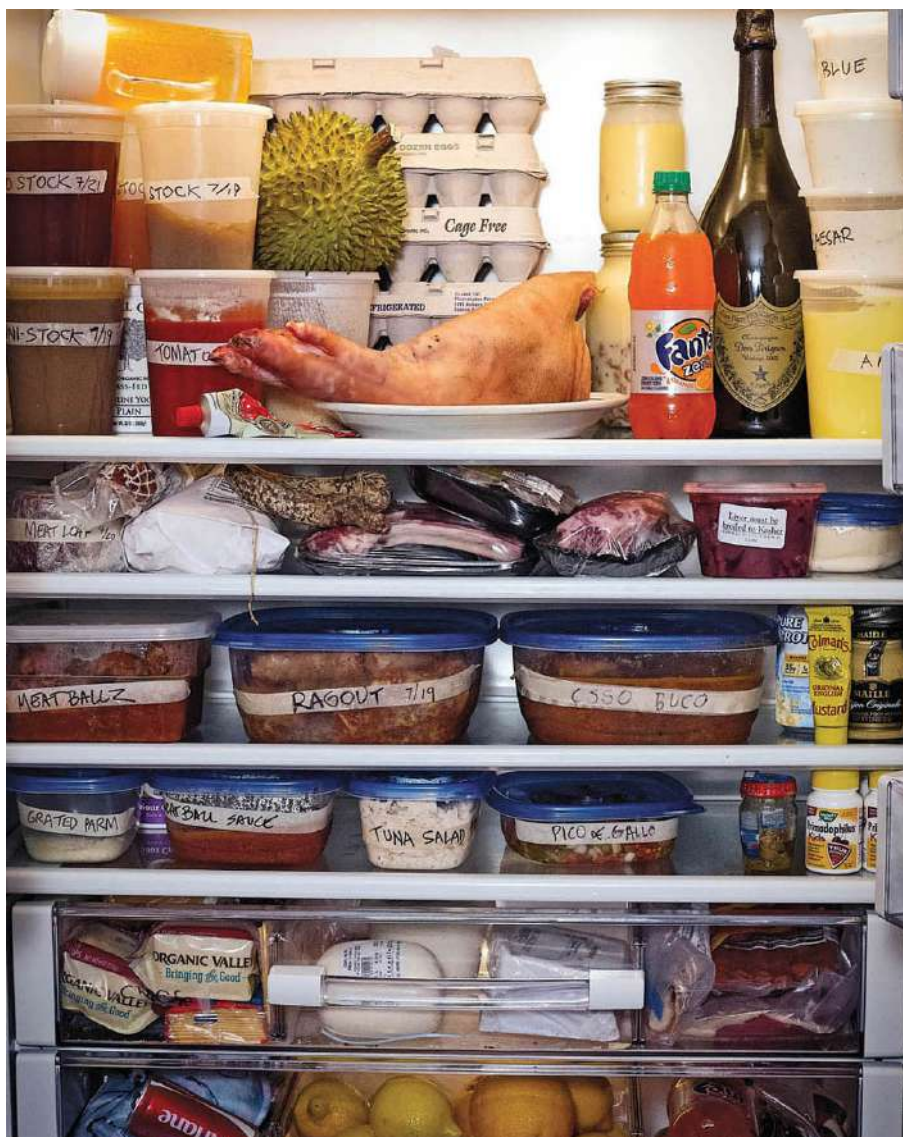
¼ cup freshly squeezed lime juice (from 3 to 4 limes), plus more to taste as needed

3 tablespoons sugar

2 to 3 tablespoons best-quality Vietnamese fish sauce, or to taste 1 fresh red Thai chili pepper, finely sliced 1 garlic clove, peeled and finely chopped In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the lime juice, sugar, and ¾ cup water. Add the fish sauce in increments, tasting as you go and adjusting with lime juice and fish sauce to get the best balance of flavors. Add the pepper and garlic and let sit for at least 30 minutes before serving. Cover and refrigerate for up to 1 week.

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