

Recipes from The Hungry Cat Tavern



You cook what you kill

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Intro:

These are the recipes my husband and I have created and/or altered from other sources. These are to our tastes, no others. We always wanted to have our own restaurant so hence the name of our fictional establishment.

All temps in this book are in Fahrenheit. All measurements are in US standards, not metric.

If something has been cooked, it is very likely hot and will burn you if you aren't careful. All ovens vary in temp so know yours. I used a regular gas oven/stove in these recipes, so anything else e.g. a convection oven will need adjustments.

Not all recipes are in a standard format. Some are more procedure than ingredients. There is often color commentary added.

Nothing in here is meant to be "healthy" or "lite". We like butter and heavy cream.

Make the recipes as written then change them if you want. If you don't and then complain, it's no one's fault but your own.

I don't cook with much salt, so people can add it to their taste later.

All measurements are approximate except for baked goods.

Eggs are always large/jumbo.

Follow food safety rules.

Never replace butter with anything else in these recipes.

If I made a mistake, let me know. I'm not perfect.

Savory Things

Hot Thighs

A riff on hot wings. More meat and skin here.

Place thighs on broiler pan. Spread out skin so the fat drains away and crisps. Bake chicken thighs at 400 for at least an hour. This depends on how crisp you want your skin. Baste with hot sauce mixed with butter. Serve with blue cheese dressing.

Blender Béarnaise

This is a riff on the Joy of Cooking recipe. Serve with steak and vegetables.

- 1/4 cup white wine (those little 4 ounce travel bottles are great for this. We usually use Pinot Grigio)
- 2 tablespoons tarragon vinegar (I just put some fresh tarragon in white wine vinegar and let it sit.)
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped onion
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper (white if you have it, black if not)
- 2 tablespoons tarragon leaves (preferably fresh, but dried will do)
- 1 tablespoon chervil (I consider this optional)
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes
- 3 egg yolks
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup butter, melted and warm (don't use anything else)

Put onions, wine, and herbs in small sauce pan. Reduce volume by half. Watch it closely. Cool this. Place egg yolks and salt in blender. Process until blended. As the blender is running, add herb mixture. Then add butter in a thin stream. Process until it thickens, coating a spoon. Keep warm by placing the sauce in a container in hot water. I just plop the blender carafe into a bowl of hot water. This will not get hot enough to cook the eggs, so if

you are of a compromised immune system, you might want to use pasteurized raw eggs.

Macaroni and Milk

Just like it says. It's a poor folk's food that my husband had when he was raised by a single mom.

2 cups macaroni, cooked as the package directs. Drain.

Cover with whole milk by an inch in the sauce pan. Add 3 tablespoons of butter (not margarine!) and at least a teaspoon of ground black pepper and salt to taste. Heat until butter melted and warmed through. Serve as a soup. Betty served it with fried kielbasa sausage slices.

Meatloaf

1 packet of McCormick Meatloaf seasoning

8 slices of white bread, cubed

¼ cup of whole milk

¾ cup ketchup, plus liberal amounts for the top

2 eggs

1 ½ pounds ground beef, 80%-20%

Mix this together. Allow bread to soak until squishy. Add 1.5 pounds of ground beef, no higher than 80% lean. Mix thoroughly. Form into two lobed "brain" for even cooking. Coat liberally with ketchup. Bake at 350 for at least an hour, pouring off fat half way though. Internal temp should be around 165 or more. We eat this with boxed mac and cheese. It is good cold in sandwiches.

Mayonnaise and Ketchup.

This is the usual "special sauce" for most burgers. Mix until you get the shade of pink you like.

Meat Pies

Flaky Cheddar Cheese Crust (modified from

The Pie and Pastry Bible. Wonderful book. Get it if you like to cook.)The following makes a 9" single crust. I usually make a double batch and get about a dozen hand-sized pies from it

- 8 Tbsp butter (don't use anything else)
- 1 ½ c. white flour
- ¼ tsp. salt (don't use if you use salted butter)
- 1/8 tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (can omit or add extra)
- ¾ c. sharp cheddar cheese, grated and cold
- 2 ½ Tbsp ice water
- 1 ½ tsp. cider vinegar

Cut the butter into small cubes (3/4 inch) and wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 30 minutes.

Place flour, salt, baking powder and cayenne in a gallon Ziploc bag. Add cheddar cheese. Seal the bag, pressing most of the air out. Rub cheese and flour mixture together until it resembles a coarse meal. Open bag and add butter cube. Close bag and expel the air. Once sealed, use a rolling pin to flatten the butter into thin flakes. Place bag into freezer for 10 minutes or until butter flakes are very firm.

Open bag. Scrap sides of bag with a spatula to get butter flakes and flour into bottom of bag. Add ice water and vinegar. Seal bag, expelling most of the air. Knead the mixture in the bag until mixture holds together in one piece and feels slightly stretchy when pulled. Take the dough out of bag, flatten into a disc and wrap in plastic or just replace in bag and seal. Refrigerate at least 45 minutes, preferably overnight.

Take out of refrigerator and let set 5-10 minutes so dough is workable. Cut or tear dough into walnut sized chunks. Roll out between wax paper until 1/8" or so thick, usually about 7" diameter roughly. Fill with cooled filling, by placing a tablespoonful or two on half of the circle leaving a margin of about ½". Moisten margin and fold over rest of

dough, pressing to seal. Make a small slit on top to release steam.

To make the beef filling:

Take a 3-5 pound beef chuck roast. Chuck is what you want, even if some other cut is cheaper. It has enough fat to make the filling tender and juicy. Place the chuck roast in a roasting pan, the type that your grandmother had with the lid. Mix envelope of onion soup mix with a cup of water and pour over roast. Add 3 more cups of water. Preheat your oven to 450 degrees. Place roast pan in oven then reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees. Roast until you can easily pull apart with a fork, about 2 to 3 hours. Add water if it gets low. The fat and connective tissue will be sticky and soft.

You want about 2 cups of meat juices when you're done. When done, remove roast from pan. Dissect roast and remove all chunks of fat and gristle, and tear the meat into shreds. Take meat juices and pour into saucepan. Make a thickener of a loose paste of water/milk and cornstarch or flour. Bring juices to the boil and add thickener by the tablespoonful until it thickens to a good gravy. Cool gravy. Add to meat until it makes a moist mixture. You don't want too much gravy. Cool mixture. And proceed as above.

The pies can sit for a day before baking, but make sure to refrigerate. To bake hand-pies:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place pies on cookie sheet or jelly roll pan. Bake for 20-30 minutes. They will usually leak a bit of gravy but that doesn't hurt anything.

That's it! These are very good with horseradish sauce or the extra gravy and a beer.

Savory Toasted Cheese aka "Cheesy Goo"

A hot cheese dip/fondue. This is an actual medieval recipe.

- 3 parts cream cheese
- 2 parts butter
- 1 part brie (remove rind)

Melt together. It generally goes easiest to first melt the butter, and then add the cream cheese and then the brie.

Whip with hand beater for it to be satiny smooth. Dip bread, vegetables, meat pies, etc into it while warm. Keeps nicely in a fondue pot or for a crowd in a Crockpot.

Seafood Chowder

- 1 small can crabmeat (not surimi/krab!) (pick over to remove any shell and reserve liquid)
- 2 pounds white-fleshed fish, like cod, flounder, perch, catfish, etc.
- 1/2 pound sea scallops
- 2 small cans chopped clams ("small can" in this recipe means flat tuna type can. Reserve liquid)
- 1 small can minced clams (reserve liquid)
- 1 large can baby clams (not quite as big as a soup can. Reserve liquid)
- 4 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed 1/2" – 1" (preferably Russets, but use what you like)
- 4 medium onions, peeled and diced
- 2" cube of salt pork (not bacon! Yes, in this instance, bacon is *bad*. Use it and you'll simply have bacon flavored chowder which isn't the point. You can usually find this in the meat department around the bacon or hams.)
- 1/2 pound (2 sticks) butter (yes, **2** sticks. Do not use anything else!)
- 3/4 cup flour
- 4 cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy cream (yes, this too.)

Dice salt pork. In a large skillet, cook it slowly to render out the fat and get it crispy. Add onions and cook until translucent. Add drained seafood and 1 stick of butter. Heat, make sure butter is melted. Sift flour over seafood/butter/salt pork mixture, mix in well. This is what thickens things. Let cook a couple of minutes to get rid of the raw flour taste. Add reserved liquid from seafood. Heat to thicken.

In large pot (think stewpot, usually biggest in a set of pots which will barely work or something bigger. 6 QUARTS remember!), put milk, cream and potatoes and remaining stick of butter. Cook potatoes until able to be pierced by a fork.

Add seafood mixture. Heat through until thickened. Wonderful immediately and even better after a day or two. I would not recommend trying this in a Crockpot type vessel. It simple overwhelms it. You could use a slow cooker to keep it warm for a party.

Chimichurri

An Argentinean sauce for grilled meat. It's wonderful on just about anything. This is just my version, everyone has their personal recipe.

- 1 large bunch (a good handful) of cilantro
- 1 large bunch (a good handful) of parsley
- 8 cloves of garlic
- 1/4 cup lime juice
- 1/4 cup vinegar (white, wine, apple cider. NOT balsamic)
- 2/3 cup vegetable oil
- Salt to taste.

Rinse parsley and cilantro very **very** well. No one likes gritty chimichurri. I use a colander and really shake it around. Place cilantro and parsley in food processor with chopping blade. Blitz until finely chopped. Add garlic. Blitz again. Add juice, vinegar, and oil. Blitz again. Add salt to taste. It may go a bit white as it tries to emulsify but this will go away. This version looks like green pudding.

Chili

- 3 pounds ground beef (no more than 80% lean. preferably the fattiest you can get. As Alton Brown says, fat is flavor! besides most of it is poured off)
- 3 cloves of minced garlic
- 2 cups of chopped onions
- 1 medium can chopped tomatoes and green chiles (We generally use Rotel but other companies have the same thing)
- 1 medium can refried black beans (preferably Kumer's with the lime juice)
- 2 large cans of tomato sauce
- 1 medium can of pink beans (Goya works well, "in sauce" or not)
- 2 tablespoons of ground cumin

- 2 tablespoons of chili powder (any kind you like, I like Penzey's variations)
- As much heat as you like from chiles.

Fry burger, garlic and onions in large pot. Drain off extra fat. Add everything else. Cook until heated through or as long as you like. Tastes like it's been cooked for days, as chili should.

Murgh Korma (Chicken in Creamy Cashew Sauce)

I found the Saveur instructions for this recipe a little confusing and wrote them for myself a little differently. I hope you find them useful. The Saveur recipe is good for getting the complete amounts of each ingredient to start off with; I've broken them out for each step. This is definitely a dish that is much easier if you use separate bowls for the ingredients since they go in at different times. Read the recipe through before you start. You'll be glad you did.

1. Marinating the Chicken

- 2 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs and breasts, cut into 2" chunks
- 1 tbsp. minced ginger
- 1 tbsp. minced garlic
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- Kosher salt, to taste (regular table salt is finer so you need less)

Toss chicken, 1 tbsp. minced ginger, minced garlic, juice, and salt in a bowl; chill 1 hour. I prefer the thighs, my husband the breasts. I used my micrograter on the ginger and garlic. Since we love the curry gravy/sauce even more than the meat, I personally double all of the following amounts to make plenty of it. Note: I do not peel my ginger. It's thin skinned, and with this treatment all through the recipe no one will notice it at all. Just hack off any desiccated bits.

2. Nut Paste

- ¼ cup blanched almonds
- ¼ cup raw cashews
- 1 tbsp. poppy seeds
- 1/3 cup water

Purée almonds, cashews, poppy seeds, and water in a blender. The secret to this dish is to puree the heck out of

the nuts. You want it smooth. And yes, you'll get annoyed by the sound of the blender before you get there. The puree should not be grainy in texture from the almonds and cashews. The poppy seeds will be mostly intact but that's all the texture you want. It will be creamy, and thick; kind of a textural cross between smooth peanut butter and mayonnaise

3. Spice mix and onion paste

- ½ cup canola oil (I used a mixture of butter and oil for that "ghee" flavor)
- 1 tbsp. black peppercorns
- 2 tsp. fennel seeds
- 12 dried rose petals (optional)
- 3 green cardamom pods
- 2 whole cloves
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ stick cinnamon
- 3 large yellow onions, thinly sliced
- ginger, one 2" piece, peeled and thinly sliced
- garlic, 3 cloves, thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup of water

Heat ½ cup oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add peppercorns, fennel, rose petals, cardamom, cloves, bay leaf, and cinnamon; cook until toasted, about 2 minutes. Yes, it sounds like an insane amount of black peppercorns. It isn't. Remember it's the whole peppercorn, not already ground black pepper. I was also unsure about the fennel seeds since I do not the taste of it. You should add them; it makes up the complexity of the curry. I did not use the rose petals. I've had kormas with a strong rose taste and I find it's a little distracting.

Add sliced ginger, remaining garlic, and onions; cook until deeply caramelized, about 45 minutes. Stir occasionally. Purée mixture with ⅓ cup water; set onion paste aside. The caramelization makes the onions very soft and sweet. They will start to stick at the very end so watch them. If you blend the onion/spice mixture while it is hot, be careful. The blender will make it blurp out steam unexpectedly and it can burn you like napalm.

4. Putting things together

- ¼ cup canola oil (again, I used a mixture of butter and oil for that “ghee” flavor)
- onion paste
- 1 tsp minced ginger
- 3 green Serrano chiles, stemmed and minced
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric
- ½ tsp. paprika
- kosher salt, to taste
- marinated chicken
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup plain yogurt (I used whole milk Greek yogurt. The brand happened to be [Fage](#).)
- Nut paste
- 6 tbsp. heavy cream

Add ¼ cup of oil to pot over high heat. Add onion paste, ginger, and chiles; cook, until oil separates, about 6 minutes. Add turmeric, paprika, and salt; cook for 1 minute. Add chicken; cook until lightly browned, about 8 minutes. Add 1 cup water; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, covered, for 15 minutes. Add nut paste and yogurt; cook until emulsified, about 3 minutes. Stir in 4 tbsp. cream; drizzle with remaining cream to garnish.

The local grocery store didn't have Serrano chiles so I used what I think were green cayenne peppers. The spices and chiles made for a very nice heat that warmed the back of the throat but didn't sear the tongue. I didn't use much kosher salt in this recipe at all, and that's unusual since I love salt. For the whole thing, I probably used 1 teaspoon in the marinade and one in the sauce (kosher, not regular table salt. if you use table salt, use about half as much).

Rice or bread is an excellent accompaniment. We love basmati so we used that. My husband made a loaf of bread (frozen bread dough) and that went along fine, no naan needed. Naan recipe is later on in this book.

Cilantro-Mint Chutney

- 3½ cups tightly packed cilantro leaves, finely chopped
- 1 cup tightly packed mint leaves, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

- 1 small hot green Indian chile, stemmed
- ¾ cup plain yogurt (also used the whole milk Greek yogurt here)
- 3 tablespoons of water
- Kosher salt, to taste

Place cilantro, mint, juice, chile, and 3 tbsp. water in a blender and purée until smooth. Transfer to a serving bowl, and stir in yogurt; season with salt, and refrigerate until ready to serve.” Perfect with papadams (lentil wafers)

Here I also used the green cayenne; add more if you like more heat. I just threw the yogurt in the blender too. And don’t poke the leaves down with your favorite spatula while the blender is spinning. Poor thing was ripped in half. Sigh.....

Beef Stew

The ingredients are pretty standard; the process, not so much.

Take a 3-5 pound chuck roast. Remove fat. Cut meat into approximately 1” cubes. While cutting meat up, fry removed fat in large saucepan. Add a cup of chopped onions and brown them almost burning them with the fat. Add cubed beef and brown. Remove rendered gristly bits and throw away; keep the fat and tasty brown bits. Deglaze pan with one beer, preferably a dark beer. Add onion soup mix with enough water to cover beef and cover pan, cook on low heat until beef is tender, about an hour.

While cooking beef, peel 4 medium potatoes, 6 medium carrots and two medium onions. Chop into approximately 1” chunks. Place in stewpot with enough water to cover by an inch. Add herbs and spices to taste, we usually use tarragon, sage, thyme, black pepper and garlic. Cook until just tender.

Add beef to cooked vegetables. Cook together for 1/2 hour. We find this keeps the beef the dominant flavor in the stew.

For a good addition, take unpeeled garlic bulbs and cook with vegetables until soft. Take cooked garlic, squeeze out soft cloves and mix with softened butter. Great on homemade bread.

Roast Chicken Dinner

On a typical day I will start with the chicken, one fat roaster (I usually go for around 7 pounds) whatever you can get from the supermarket. As I've said before, I don't care if it's organic, free-range, kosher, fed marigolds to make it yellow, etc. As long as it's dead, plucked and gutted, I'm good. I pull out the giblets and throw them in a pot for broth. I also pull out any lumps of fat in the cavity and into the pot with them too. Finally, I inspect the cavity and remove any extraneous innards. You'll often find what I think are kidneys still hanging around, they won't hurt but they don't need to be in there. Give it a rinse and stick it in your roasting pan. (Note: what I do might not be completely draconian "food safety" approved. I have the cert; I know what it says. And you have been warned.)

I've used everything from a 9" square metal pan, a 9" x 13" glass pan and a classic "your grandma has one" black speckled roaster with lid. I like the roaster the best. First, I slice onions in fat rings (1" plus) and make a bed for the bird. I then plop it on top, and stuff at least a couple of tablespoons of squishy but not melted butter under the skin over each breast. I do not put anything in the cavity except, well, more butter, a couple of tablespoons worth.

Here's Vel's tip: Don't truss that bird! Let it splay out in all its glory. This started long ago when I made my first turkey in our first apartment. I didn't think to tie its legs when I roasted it and when it came out my husband decreed it the "slut turkey". One thing we noted, and appreciated, was that all of the skin (except the back of course), not just the top of the breast, was golden brown and delicious. Both of us like poultry skin when roasted, and we'll strip a bird clean if given the chance. No, a non-trussed bird will not look like something out of Norman Rockwell or the Food Channel. You are to be eating this, not framing it.

No spice rubs, no soaking the poultry in water/brine.

Now for the instructions from TJOC with my own additions. Roast the chicken at 425 degrees F for 30 minutes, lid off the roaster. Then reduce temp to 350 and roast for 20 minutes per pound of bird, with lid on roaster. Baste with butter, chicken drippings or broth when you

think of it. After I hit the time period indicated by poundage, I often cook it quite a bit longer. Raw chicken doesn't impress me. I usually roast until the legs are loose when you wiggle them. I have no trouble with the bird drying out at all, even the breast. Must be all of that butter..... FYI, the instructions for roasting a turkey are slightly different in the TJOC, thanks to the larger cavity. While the chicken is roasting (and the husband is asleep on the couch in a roasting poultry-scent coma), I make everything else.

Broth – add around 2 quarts of water to your giblets, fat, an extra leg or wing, whatever else you are making a broth with. I usually throw in some less than pretty onions and celery and a few sage leaves. Canned chicken broth, stock or bouillon (Better than Bouillon is indeed that) can be used to stretch things if you need more broth. Bring to boil, and then simmer for at least 45 minutes. I use this for adding to the pan drippings for gravy, moistening the stuffing, cooking my noodles in, basting, etc.

Mashed potatoes – Peel the potatoes, assume a potato per person plus leftovers, chunk them up in about 1.5” pieces, place them in water until ready for cooking so they don't turn gray. It takes about 15-20 minutes at a rolling boil to cook them and they can be reheated with a zap in the microwave. Mashing is a matter of desired texture. I technically whip my potatoes using an electric hand mixer, putting in butter and milk until they look “right”. Start with small amounts of milk. My husband, trying to make me mashed potatoes on his own for the first time, made what amounted to a potato milkshake, tasty but not quite what he expected.

Stuffing/Dressing – I used a loaf store-bought Italian bread, toasted (some browner than others) and left to cool. Rip it up in around 1” bits, size doesn't matter too much (or use a knife to cut them). Take three cups of finely chopped celery and 3 cups of finely chopped onions and cook them in guess what, more butter, until soft. See, it's not *all* protein fat and starch for the meal.

Add sage to your taste. I use fresh leaves from the plant I have in the back yard, about 6 good sized ones, rolled up and finely sliced (probably 1 ½ tsp dried powdered sage). Add salt to your taste and black pepper. When the

veggies are soft, mix them with the bread. Add enough broth to moisten well enough to stick together. I then put scoops of this into a well-buttered muffin pan aka the infamous stuffin muffins. This gets put in the oven with the chicken for at least an hour. Husband and I like crispy bits on the muffins.

Noodles – I have made homemade noodles for this meal before. Any recipe for a homemade egg noodle will work. But, honestly, a bag of “kluski” noodles works just as well. They’re pretty common at stores here in PA, one brand being “Pennsylvania Dutch”. They’ll be the somewhat ugly noodles, not all pale and thin like regular egg noodles. I cook these in the broth per the directions.

Other veggies – My husband usually requests beets or carrots. I get fresh, peel them if necessary (the “baby” carrots work well), boil them in as little water as possible until tender, and then coat with a little honey and yes, butter. I do love the classic green bean casserole but the husband hates ‘shrooms.

We occasionally have sweet potatoes with this. I’ve made them from scratch, but Bruce’s Yams are just about as good (or whatever brand you have in your area. There are even some frozen ones). Add a blanket of mini-marshmallows, bake them and you’re good to go.

Okay, we’re at the home stretch. We pull the chicken out of the roaster and place in microwave to keep warm (it’s empty and keeps the cats out of it).

Then the Gravy.....

We take the soft onions from under the chicken, the pan drippings and put all into at least a three quart sauce pan. No, we do not remove the fat. And yes, both of us have decent cholesterol readings. Broth is added to make enough to make lots of gravy (more broth, more gravy and maybe a larger pot). We then take our stick blender to it, pureeing the onions into the liquid. If it is not thick enough, bring this to a boil. At the boil, I add a slurry of milk and cornstarch. Cook til thickened. How much of that depends on how thick you like your gravy. I don’t like it pudding like, so I find that about 3 tablespoons of cornstarch, a quarter to a half cup of milk does a 3 quart pot of gravy well. Incidentally, the pureed onion gravy sans starch is great for

high-protein diet people. We invented it when we were doing South Beach. Which does work by the way.

Since it's just the two of us, no serving bowls are needed, just help yourself at the stove and eat at the coffee table. Husband takes an entire breast, I grab the wings. We share the skin, reluctantly. We generally get a chardonnay to have with this since it cuts the large amounts of fat well. Dessert is going to have to wait for another day. Eat well, my friends!

Postscript: Husband loves cranberry orange sauce on the bird. I take a can of gelled whole berry cranberry sauce (the stuff in the can), put it in a small saucepan. Take one orange, zest orange skin to pan. Squeeze juice into pan. Warm through.

BAO

dough adapted from Andrea Nguyen. Makes 16 medium buns

For the dough:

- 1 ½ teaspoons active dry yeast
- 1 cup lukewarm water (just warm to the touch)
- 2 Tablespoons canola oil
- 2 Tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour

16 2" squares of parchment paper

The dough: Put the yeast in a small bowl, add the water and set aside for 1 minute to proof.

Whisk in the oil to blend and dissolve the yeast. Set aside.

Make the dough: you've got two options here

Food Processor Method: Combine the sugar, baking powder and flour in the bowl of the food processor. Pulse 2-3 times to combine. With the motor on, pour the yeast mixture through the feed tube in a steady stream and allow the machine to continue running until the dough starts coming together into a ball, about 20 seconds. (If this doesn't happen, add lukewarm water by the teaspoon.) Let the machine continue for 45-60 seconds to knead most of the dough into a large ball that cleans the sides of the bowl; expect some dangling bits. Press on the finished

dough; it should feel medium-soft and tacky but should not stick to your finger.

Or By Hand: Combine the sugar, baking powder and flour in a large bowl. Make a well in the center and pour in the yeast mixture. Slowly stir with a wooden spoon, moving from the center toward the rim, to work in all the flour. (Add lukewarm water by the teaspoon if this doesn't happen with relative ease.) Keep stirring as a ragged, soft mass forms. Then use your fingers to gather and pat the dough together into a ball. Transfer to a work surface and knead for about 5 minutes, until smooth, fingertip-soft and slightly elastic. (You shouldn't need any additional flour on the work surface if the dough was properly made. Keep kneading, and after the first minute or two, the dough shouldn't stick to your fingers. If it does, work in a sprinkling of flour.) Press your finger into the dough; the dough should spring back, with a faint indentation remaining.

Let rise: Lightly oil a clean bowl and add the dough.

Cover with plastic wrap and put in a warm, draft-free place to rise until nearly doubled, 30-45 minutes (timing will vary depending on the temperature of the room). The dough is now ready to use.

If not using immediately, cover and refrigerate the dough until needed.

Filling: you can use pretty much anything that isn't too wet. I take roasted pork shoulder, mix it with hoisin sauce, sriracha, a little fish sauce, until it's moist. You can also use regular BBQ pulled pork, a dry curry, etc.

Assemble: Transfer the dough to a very lightly floured work surface, gather it into a ball and then pat it to flatten it into a thick disk.

Cut the disk in half and keep the second half covered to prevent it from drying out.

Roll the first half into a 12" log, and then cut it crosswise into 8 even pieces.

Flatten one piece of dough into a 1/4" thick disk, moistening your hands with a little water if the dough becomes too dry. Use an Asian dumpling pin (or regular rolling pin) roll the pieces into circles about 3 1/4" in diameter, rolling the outer edges thinner than the center.

To assemble the buns: hold a dough circle in a slightly cupped hand.

Use a spoon or fork to center about 4 teaspoons of filling on the dough circle, pressing down very gently and keeping about ½"-3/4" of the dough clear on all sides; your hand will automatically close slightly.

Use the thumb of the hand cradling the bun to push down the filling; using the fingers of the other hand, pull up the dough edge and pleat and pinch the rim together to form a closed bun.

Completely enclose the filling by pinching and twisting the dough closed.

Place the finished bun on a piece of parchment, pleated side up. (The parchment is important otherwise the buns will stick to the steamer.)

Repeat with the remaining dough and loosely cover the assembled buns with a kitchen towel until puffed and nearly doubled in size, 10-30 minutes, depending on the temperature in the room.

Steaming: When the buns are almost ready, bring water to boil in a wok and placing a steamer basket on top.

Place buns in the steamer basket, spacing them 1" apart and 1" away from the basket wall.

Cover the buns and steam until puffed and the dough is cooked through, about 15 minutes.

Transfer the buns, still on their parchment paper squares, to a wire rack to cool for 5 minutes. Repeat steaming until all the buns are cooked.

Serve warm or room temperature with a sauce made from soy sauce and a bit of garlic chile paste (sambal olek).

Make ahead: Can be made up to 6 hours in advance – shape and fill the buns then keep refrigerated to slow the rising process. Steam directly from the refrigerator.

To freeze: May be frozen up to 2 months. Prepare the buns fully and after steaming allow to come to room temperature then place on a parchment lined sheet pan and freeze until solid. Place frozen buns in a Ziploc for longer storage. Allow to thaw at room temperature for 15 minutes then resteam 12-15 minutes to warm through.

Messy Burgers

My husband makes me my ideal burger which we call “messy burgers”. You don’t need much equipment, just one good skillet, preferably cast iron, a lid and a wide flipper. Oh, and napkins, lots of napkins.

Most important, start with the right meat. We use, if we can find it, 73% lean / 27% fat hamburger. If we can’t find that, we use 80%-20%. I have nothing against 90% lean ground meat but that is for steak tartare, not a hamburger. Yes, Vel likes raw meat and would happily share a fresh kill with her beloved snow leopards. My husband makes wide, thin patties, about 7 inches wide and about a half-inch thick. Dusted with salt and pepper, they go into a hot cast-iron skillet for a good browning on both sides. With this fat content, they don’t dry out when cooked to well-done. This thin, they don’t need squished with the flipper. They do shrink so they will fit on a bun.

Next, get buns. Not ciabatta, not some frou-frou fig and feta artisan sourdough. You want a soft bun, right out of a bag from the grocery store. If you are lucky, you’ll have a local commercial bakery that makes toasted onion buns, with the bits of brown onions on top. Sometimes I grill them in a bit of butter, sometimes not.

Cheese is to be meltable, after a minute or two under a lid. Favorites are regular old American and blue cheese. The blue cheese does have to be a certain kind. It cannot be little crumbles that shoot everywhere off the burger and it does not need to be Roquefort or Maytag. For my burger, it must be Rosenborg/Castello Extra-creamy Blue Cheese Slices. I suppose you could get a chunk and slice your own but I like the convenience here. I like it since it is strongly flavored with a very nice funk. It also melts well.

Now for the other toppings. I chop everything into a medium-small dice. My teeth don’t shear as well as they could, so rather than having every bite a contest between me and a recalcitrant onion, tomato or bacon slice, I can just chomp right down. We make two kinds of onions, caramelized until soft and fresh diced. I’m a bit of an onion addict.

Stir-fry Chicken Fajitas

- 5 tbsp veg oil
- 2 tbsp butter
- ¼ c lime juice (fresh if you got it, but bottled works fine. This is what makes the difference from any supposed fajita recipe without it)
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp cumin seeds, coarsely crushed
- ¼ tsp ground cayenne aka red hot pepper (less if you want less heat)
- 2 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts cut into thin strips (also works with beef or shrimp)
- 2 red bell peppers cut into thin strips
- 2 orange bell peppers cut into thin strips
- 2 green bell peppers cut into thin strips
- 4 medium onions cut into a thin slice
- 5 garlic cloves minced
- ½ tsp black pepper

Marinade: Put 3 tbsp of oil, lime juice, cumin (both kinds) and cayenne into bowl. Mix raw chicken in. Marinade for 3-4 hours.

Put remaining oil with 1 tbsp of butte in wok (or a big skillet/stew pot if that's all you have). Turn heat to high. Cook meat and marinade together. When the chicken is opaque, remove meat from wok. Let marinade cook down, way down, until it's a thick sauce. Put in black pepper.

Then put veggies in on top of sauce. Stir to coat. Cook until veggies are tender. Placing a lid on the wok helps this process by trapping steam. Pull veg to sides of wok, add second tbsp of butter to well in the center, and let remaining juices cook down again into a thick sauce.

Return chicken to wok and mix to reheat. We often let the meat and veg get a little brown for more flavor.

Serve with warmed tortillas (we like flour ones since they come in larger sizes than most corn ones), sour cream, salsa, avocados, cheddar cheese, refried beans, pretty much anything you'd like. I roll mine like a burrito but it inevitably bursts since I'm greedy. Of course, a beer goes nicely with these. I'd suggest something relatively light. In color and taste, not that gawdawful "lite" stuff.

Hot and Sour Soup

This is not the cornstarch thickened version that one usually gets in Chinese restaurants. Modified from Saveur.

FOR THE PORK:

- 1 tbsp. soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. brandy
- 4 oz. pork tenderloin, cut into ¼" cubes

FOR THE SOUP:

- 8 cups chicken stock
- 3 tbsp. soy sauce
- 3 tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 1 tsp. ground white pepper
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. cayenne
- 12 oz. firm tofu, drained and cut into ¼" cubes
- 6 shiitake or wood ear mushrooms, cut into ¼" pieces; and/or
- Slivered bamboo shoots, rinsed well
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 tsp. toasted sesame oil
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped cilantro, to garnish

Marinate pork for at least 2 hours. Mix other ingredients together and heat to boiling. Add pork and cook through.

Haluski aka Fried cabbage and noodles

I grew up eating lots of **haluski or fried cabbage and egg noodles**. This is one of my ultimate comfort foods. How I make it:

- 1 quarter head of green cabbage cut fine (I've cut it fine, shredded it, or grated it, depending on the texture I feel like)
- 3 tablespoons of butter and 2 of veg oil to help it not burn (yes you can cut down on the fat by putting in just a little butter for flavor and use olive oil)

- ½ pound of egg noodles cooked as on the package (I like the ones about a half inch wide, but any size will work)

Fry cabbage in butter and oil. It's typically cooked until translucent, but I have a taste for browned cabbage and will let it cook until I get dark brown bits on the cabbage. Then toss together.

World's Best Lasagna

This recipe is what fits in our 9"x13" glass baking dish, so it's not hugely thick.

- 7 lasagna noodles (whatever dried type of pasta you like)
- 1 large jar of [Prego flavored with meat](#) (this is the only sauce we like, size is around 2 pounds, or around a kilogram)
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 green/red sweet pepper, diced
- 2/3 pound of hot Italian sausage (about 3 links)
- 1 pound of ground beef (we prefer 73/27 if we can get it, or 80/20 if we can't)
- 4 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- ½ c ground parmesan cheese (the stuff in the shaker is fine)
- 1 pound whole milk ricotta
- 2 large/jumbo eggs

Take lasagna noodles and boil until pliable but not fully cooked.

Break up and fry ground beef. Drain off fat and pour in Prego sauce. This is the "meat sauce" below.

Dice pepper and onion, fry (use oil, burger fat, whatever) until there are some burnt edges. Allow to cool.

Break up and fry sausage. Drain fat and allow to cool.

Place ricotta in bowl, add eggs and mix until smooth. Add sausage and onions/peppers. Mix well. This is what makes the lasagna the best ever. Something about mixing the sausage and the cheese makes both better.

To construct:

Cover bottom of dish with thin layer of meat sauce.

Cover with layer of mozzarella.

Cover with noodles. We use three per layer and the 7th noodle is used to fill holes.

Cover with ricotta mixture.

Cover with noodles.

Cover with meat sauce.

Finish with layer of mozzarella. Shake parmesan on top.

Bake at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes or until golden on top. If your pan is as full as my husband makes ours, bake it on a cookie sheet to catch any wayward cheese or sauce. Always good with homemade bread with butter and garlic and a nice Chianti!

Pork Schnitzel

The recipe for this is very simple. Take one pork tenderloin. Cut into 2" chunks, pound flat on the cut end so it is tender, to about a ¼ inch. Heat oil (about ¼ inch deep in skillet until a crumb of panko frizzles in it. Then coat pork with flour, then egg wash and then panko. It should take about 3-5 minutes per side to cook to a golden brown.

German Potato Salad

A strange but tasty thing. This is from western PA (recipe is in most church cookbooks from the area) and how I grew up making it. It's a bit different than real German kartofelsalat. This is from the 1993 Immaculate Conception cookbook that my mother-in-law gave us, though I have doubled the sauce component.

- 6 medium potatoes cooked and sliced or chunked (I'd suggest using Yukon gold or regular white potatoes in this. Russets break down too much)
- 12 pieces of bacon chopped and fried (reserve bacon fat. Thick-cut bacon is great in this)
- 1 large onion chopped
- 4 tbsp flour
- 4 tbsp white sugar
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp celery seeds
- ¼ tsp black pepper

- 1 ½ cup water
- 1 cup apple cider vinegar

Fry bacon, remove when crispy. Fry onion in bacon fat until golden. Add flour to onion/fat mixture, mix well and cook for a few minute to get rid of the raw flour taste. Add sugar, salt, celery seed, and pepper. Mix until smooth. Then add vinegar and water. Cook until thickened, stirring continuously. When thickened, pour over potatoes. Stir in crisp bacon. Serve warm. It seizes up completely when cold thanks to those tasty saturated fats.

Quiche Lorraine -ish

Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit (190 degrees Celsius).

Prepare a 9 inch pie shell of your favorite pie crust. Prick it well and brush it with egg white which will seal it and keep the crust crisp.

Scald 2 cups of whole milk or cream (I use whole milk, since cream is way too rich in this for me). Scald means bring just up to boiling and then removing from the heat. Let cool to just warm to the touch.

Fry ¼ pound of bacon until crisp and crumble. Fry ½ cup of finely chopped onions in vegetable oil or butter until translucent and tender but not browned. Grate ½ cup of Swiss cheese.

Beat together cooled milk, 3 eggs plus the yolk left over from the egg white used to brush the crust, ¼ tsp of salt, 1/8 tsp of black pepper, a pinch of nutmeg (it really does make a difference). Make sure this is very well mixed.

Sprinkle grated cheese, bacon crumbles and onions on bottom of pie crust and pour custard mixture over it gently. Bake 35-40 minutes until top is golden and a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. You just want this to be barely set in the center. Overcook it and you will get a watery custard because the proteins in the eggs and milk constrict and force the water out.

Chicken Paprikash a la my relatives

- 2 tbsp butter

- 1 chicken, cut into wings, legs, thighs, back, breasts (a fryer is fine for this and I think a roaster would be too fatty)
- 3 pounds chopped onions
- Water to cover onions and partially cover chicken
- ¼ cup ground sweet paprika (I use Pride of Szeged)
- 3 tsp of salt (it will need more but allow everyone to add their desired amount at the table)
- 24 ounces of sour cream
- One pot that will hold 5 quarts or so

Take butter and melt in pot. Add onions and salt, cook until translucent. Add chicken pieces and water. Braise 20 minutes. Add paprika and then braise until chicken breasts can be pulled apart with a fork. This means the other parts will also be falling apart. My family would leave the chicken parts in the liquid, but you can pull out the parts, remove the meat and add it back in, throwing away the skin and bones. For me, it isn't real paprikash if it doesn't have the soft skin and bones in amongst the bits of meat. You could also let the liquid reduce if you want a thicker sauce. I like it more toward soup in thickness rather than stew.

Add all of the sour cream, stir in and heat through. Serve with crusty rolls and rice.

Naan

- 2 c Bread flour
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 1/8 tsp active dry yeast
- 3/4 c yogurt or buttermilk, room temp
- 2 Tbsp butter, melted
- 1 tsp to 1Tbsp water, as needed

Add all ingredients to bowl. Mix by hand or on low speed until a soft ball of dough is formed. Knead for about 10 mins by hand or with mixer, until dough is smooth and elastic, Transfer the dough to an oiled bowl and turn it once to coat with oil. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature for about 1 1/2hrs. Set rack in the lowest level of oven and place a pizza stone there. Meanwhile,

punch down dough and divide equally into 4 pieces. Roll into balls, cover, and let rest for 10 mins. Roll out each ball of dough on a floured surface to 1/4" thick and brush with butter. Place as many dough ovals will fit on the stone and bake until each oval is puffy and beginning to turn golden 6-7 minutes. Brush again with melted butter. Fold naan in half and place in cloth lined basket and keep covered. You can also put minced garlic, minced ginger, various seeds on this when you initially put the butter on it to go into the oven.

Bread flour is essential in this. You use all-purpose for fluff and bread flour (or even high gluten flour) for chew.

Buffalo Blue Cheese Tart

- 1 sheet of defrosted puff pastry (they usually come in boxes of two)
- 1 slice of Danish blue cheese 5 inches on a side and a half inch thick (the original used gorgonzola dolce).
- Hot sauce, like Frank's or Crystal or something similar

Fold the pastry sheet in half, placing the cheese on one side. Moisten edges with milk and crimp with a fork to seal. Brush with milk to get a golden brown crust. To bake, follow the directions on the puff pastry box, in this case 430 degrees until golden brown. It took about 30 minutes. The blue cheese melted very nicely to fill the entire tart. A drizzle of hot pepper sauce, make it a nice riff on the classic buffalo hot wings.

Closest cheap thing you get to an Italian grinder outside of a sub shop

- 2 slices of bologna (beef/pork rather than poultry)
- 1 slice of American cheese (the individually wrapped slices are fine)
- handful of thinly cut lettuce
- Gazebo Room Salad Dressing
- Dried oregano
- 2 slices of Italian bread toasted

Make a radial slit in each slice of bologna. This will keep it from curling up in the frying pan. Fry bologna until browned and hot. Place cheese on top and allow to melt. Place meat and cheese on toasted bread. Place lettuce on top and as much dressing as you'd like. A good shake of oregano tops it off.

Toasted Onion Cheese Spread

This is my take on those really expensive little pots of flavored cheese spreads in the grocery.

- 2 block of Neufchatel cheese (or cream cheese)
- ¼ cup of dried onion flakes
- 1 tsp seasoning salt (your choice, cheaper is saltier)

In a dry hot skillet, toast dried onion flakes until light brown. Mix with cheese and salt. Refrigerate overnight to allow onions to rehydrate. Spread on crackers or veggies of your choice.

Dried Beef Dip

- 2 packets or jars of dried beef (about a half a pound if you can get it loose), diced
- 1 cup of mayonnaise
- ½ cup sour cream
- ¼ cup dried onion flakes
- 2 tablespoons dried parsley

Blend together. Let set overnight to hydrate onions. Yes, you can use fresh onions but I liked dried ones better in this. Goes well with fresh bread or a hearty one from the bakery.

Alfredo Sauce

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 3 oz shredded parmesan reggiano
- ½ tsp flour

Mix flour with cheese. Heat cream until bubbles form around sides. Add cheese/flour mixture and stir constantly until cheese melts into the cream. Serve immediately. A good amount for two. An excellent addition is fresh shrimp, no shells or tails, fried in butter, a little white wine and McCormick's Montreal Steak Seasoning.

Pigs in a Blanket

- 1 tube of refrigerator croissants
- 4 hot dogs (we like Oscar Mayer wieners)
- 4 tsp butter
- 4 slices of American cheese

Unroll croissants. Pinch together two triangles to make a total of four squares. Place hot dog from corner to corner of square, fold cheese slice to fit. Cocoon in dough with no holes so cheese doesn't leak out. Bake 13-15 minutes at temp recommended on tube. They will be golden brown and molten inside. Serve with ketchup/ mayo mix or your favorite condiment.

Cream of Chicken Soup with Rice

- 1 can cream of Chicken soup, condensed
- 1 canful of whole milk
- 2 cups of cooked white rice

Make soup according to directions using can of milk. Add rice. Heat through. This is an amazing hit of energy with its mix of fat, protein and carbs.

Curried Pork Chops

Once upon a time, the Shake and Bake box had this on its side.

- 1 box of shake and bake breading mix (comes with 2 packs, one pack will do about 6 thin chops or 4 thick ones)
- 1 tsp of curry powder for each pack of breading

Pour breading and curry powder in provided bag. Bread chops as directed. Bake as directed. Half way through baking, drizzle chops with honey and continue baking.

Sweet Things

Cardamom Shortbread

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cups butter (don't use anything else!)
- 4 cups flour
- 1 tsp ground cardamom

Cream butter and sugar together with cardamom. Add flour one cup at a time and mix well. Press into 9"x13" pan. Bake at 325 degrees (Fahrenheit) for 35-40 minutes. Doubling this recipe will fill 4 8"x8" aluminum pans, useful for bake sales.

Rhubarb Desert

- 3 to 4 cups of cubed frozen rhubarb thawed
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 (3 oz) package of strawberry Jell-O, not sugar free
- 1/2 white cake mix (2-layer size, about 18 ounces)
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup melted butter

Butter 9x9" baking pan. Put rhubarb in, sprinkle jello and sugar over it. Pour in water. Sprinkle cake mix over rhubarb mixture. Pour over melted butter. Bake at 350 degrees for about an hour, until cake mix is puffed and golden and rhubarb is bubbling.

Goop Recipe

Otherwise known as Chocolate Coconut Balls. If you make angel food cake from scratch, it's a great way to use up the egg yolks.

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 cup whole milk
- 4 egg yolks
- 4 tbsp butter (don't use anything else!)
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 12 oz. semi-sweet chocolate chips

1 cup chopped nuts and/or shredded coconut (optional)

Sift flour, sugar, salt together in small bowl. In double-boiler, put milk, yolks and butter, heat until butter melts. Add flour mixture. Cook until very thick (takes about 10 – 15 minutes). Remove from heat and stir in chocolate chips and vanilla, or pour milk mixture over chips and vanilla in a bowl. Refrigerate for several hours. Roll into balls, a small disher is handy for this and roll into nuts/coconut/powdered cocoa, if desired.

Cinnamon Orange Coconut Cookies

- 1.25 cups flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 3/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/8 cup butter softened
- 1/8 cup vegetable shortening
- 1/2 c sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 tsp orange extract
- 3/4 cup flaked coconut(I use flaked sweetened since I use it in other things)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees Celsius). Line cookie sheets with parchment or grease.

Cream shortening, butter, sugar together. Add egg and orange extract and beat until mixed. Combine dry ingredients in a separate bowl, mix and then add to creamed mixture. Beat until smooth. Mix in coconut.

Scoop into 1 inch balls. Roll in cinnamon sugar. Place on cookie sheets and flatten slightly. Bake for 8-10 minutes. Cookies will puff slightly and will be pale and soft when you remove them from oven. They will firm as they cool. They can be dipped in chocolate but I find that is just gilding the lily.

Apple Dumplings a la Betty

Apple dumplings are essentially apple galettes or crostadas, where pie dough is rolled out, filled with apples and then the sides of the pie dough are just brought up and over, not using a pie pan. These ones are different in that the dumplings are placed in a 9" x 13" baking dish and hot sugar syrup is poured around them **before** baking. This is my mother-in-law's recipe and I was sure that it could not possibly work and that the dough would simply disintegrate. But it doesn't.

This is a bit more of a procedure than a recipe. Preheat oven to 425 degree Fahrenheit (218 degrees Celsius). Take your favorite pie dough .Make rough circles of dough about 1/8" thick and around 10 inches in diameter. Take sliced raw apples coated in a mix of sugar, cinnamon and a little flour and place them in the center of each circle, enough to be a small pile but that will allow a couple of inches of dough to wrap up and around them (I usually use about 6-8 baking apples. I prefer Winesap apples but they are nearly impossible to get). About six dumplings should fit in a 9" x 13" pan. Then make a syrup of 1 cup sugar, one cup water and three tablespoons of butter, boiling for 3 minutes until slightly thickened. Pour **hot** syrup around dumplings and place in oven for approximately 45 minutes. Test doneness by poking apples with a knife to see if they are soft.

Sugar Cookies

These will make you very energetic. Proceed with caution. The method does count here.

- ¼ pound soft butter (nothing else!)

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp cream or whole milk
- 1 cup flour
- 1/8 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp baking powder

Preheat oven to 350. Mix butter, egg, milk and vanilla together and then add sugar. Mix flour, salt and baking powder together and add to the first mixture. Blend until smooth. Place small scoops on baking sheets, no greasing needed, or on parchment. They will spread wide. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until golden on the edges.

Chocolate Toffee Chip Cookies Recipe

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks, 1/2 pound) butter, softened
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup toffee chips (the local version is Heath Bits o' Brickle Toffee Bits)

The order mixed *does* make a difference in the texture of the cookies.

Combine flour, baking soda, and salt, in small bowl.

Beat softened butter, eggs and vanilla in large mixer bowl.

Add sugar, brown sugar, beating continuously. A stand mixer with the paddle attachment is handy for this.

Gradually beat in flour mixture. Stir in both kinds of chips.

Drop by rounded tablespoonfuls on to ungreased cookie sheets. A scoop/disher is a great tool to have if you make cookies. They flatten out quite a bit.

Bake in preheated 375 degree (Fahrenheit) oven for 9-11 minutes or until golden brown (dry on top). Let stand for 2 minutes; remove to wire racks to cool completely. Store in sealed container/bag. Add a piece of bread to keep cookies soft.

Cinnamon Rolls

I was looking for a recipe that only called for things I had in the house. I dug out my copy of "Artisan Bread in 5 Minutes a Day" and found their recipe for quick and dirty brioche dough. Now, it might only take 5 minutes to bring the ingredients together, but it will take at least a few hours, and likely overnight, to chill the dough enough to work with easily. If you don't, it'll be one big tar baby, latching hold of everything in your kitchen.

Brioche dough (I cut the recipe from 4 loaves to 1 loaf, so the amounts are a bit odd.)

- 3/8 cup lukewarm water
- 3/8 tbsp yeast
- 3/8 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/8 cup honey
- 3/8 cup butter, melted and cooled (I use regular salted butter, the recipe calls for unsalted)
- 1 5/8 cup of all purpose flour

Mix yeast, salt, eggs, honey, melted butter, and water in container. Mix in flour. The dough will be loose e.g. sticky and slightly lumpy. That's okay. Cover bowl with plastic.

Let rise on countertop for 2 hours. Then place in refrigerator and chill, preferably overnight.

When you are ready to bake the cinnamon rolls, first place a paste made from 6 tablespoons of butter and 1/2 cup brown sugar into the bottom of a 9 inch cake pan. Cover evenly. Set your oven to 350 degrees F.

Scoop chilled dough onto a floured surface. Dust top with flour and roll to 1/8" to 1/4" in thickness as a rectangle about 12 inches by 8 inches. Spread with a mixture of 4 tbsp softened butter, 1/2 cup of brown sugar, 1 tsp of cinnamon and a 1/4 tsp nutmeg. You can also add chopped nuts here. Roll from the long side. When you have your "snake", cut into 8 equal pieces. Place the pieces cut side up in the cake pan. Allow to rise 1 hour in the pan. Then bake for 40 minutes. Beware, the caramel glaze can bubble out. I'd suggest (after having had to clean my oven) to place the pan on a baking sheet or a sheet of aluminum foil.

Flip cinnamon rolls onto a plate as soon as you remove them from the oven. If you don't, be ready to chisel them out. They are, of course, best warm from the oven, but they do stay moist for a day or two afterward (if they last that long).

Cake Mix Cookies

We always have half a cake mix left after making the Rhubarb Desert. This makes a soft dense cakey cookie.

- ½ box cake mix any flavor
- 1 large or jumbo egg
- ¼ cup vegetable oil

Mix together until mostly smooth. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes.

German Chocolate Cake

This is from penzeys.com.

- ¾ Cup NATURAL COCOA POWDER
- ¼ Cup vegetable oil
- ½ Cup water
- 1 Cup butter, softened (2 sticks)
- 2 Cups sugar
- 4 egg yolks (save whites for later in recipe)
- 1 tsp. PURE VANILLA EXTRACT
- 13/4 Cups whole-wheat flour (or 2 Cups all-purpose flour)
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. SALT (LeAnn uses PACIFIC SEA SALT)
- 1 TB. white distilled vinegar + milk to fill 1 Cup (let sit 5 minutes before using)
- 4 egg whites

Coconut Pecan Frosting:

- 1 Cup evaporated milk
- 1 Cup sugar
- 3 egg yolks, slightly beaten
- ½ Cup butter (1 stick)
- 1 tsp. PURE VANILLA EXTRACT
- 1 1/3 Cups flaked coconut
- ½ Cup chopped pecans (optional)

Preheat oven to 350°. Place a medium-sized glass bowl in the freezer for beating the egg whites later. Grease and lightly flour three 8-inch round cake pans. Line the bottoms of the pans with waxed paper. Set aside.

In a saucepan, combine the COCOA, oil and water. Bring to a boil, remove from heat and let cool. In a large mixing bowl, cream the butter and sugar until fluffy. Add the egg yolks, 1 at a time, beating well after each. Beat in the VANILLA and cooled cocoa mixture. In a small bowl, combine the flour, baking soda and salt. Add the flour mixture alternately with milk mixture to the chocolate batter, beating after each addition until smooth. With clean beaters and the chilled bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form. Fold gently into the batter, using a flexible spatula and an over/under stirring method until mostly combined. Divide the batter among the cake pans. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the centers comes out clean. Cool on wire racks for 10 minutes. Remove from pans carefully and cool thoroughly on racks. Frost the top of each cake with Coconut Pecan Frosting; stack the layers. Pour the rest of the icing over the top so it runs down the sides. Serve while frosting is warm.

Frosting: (can be doubled if you really like frosting) In a medium saucepan, combine the evaporated milk, sugar, egg yolks and butter. Cook, stirring constantly, over medium heat until thickened, about 6 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in VANILLA, coconut and pecans. Frost cake. Store leftover cake in the fridge.

Quick Croissants and Nutella

- 1 tube of refrigerator croissants
- Nutella

Unroll croissants. Place about a tablespoon of Nutella on wide side and roll up to point. Bake as directed on label. They will be very hot inside when you first pull them out.

Cheesecake cupcakes

- 3 bars of cream cheese or Neufchatel, at room temperature
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

Blend until smooth. Let sit for an hour to allow the air that was beaten into escape. Fill cupcake papers ¾ full. Bake at 350 for around 20 minutes or until tops are just barely browned. You can use cookies for the base if you choose, something like a Nilla wafer or other small crisp cookie. Refrigerate for 3 hours if your husband lets you get them that far. Top with a spoon of sour cream and cherry pie filling.

Gobs

Whoopie Pies do not equal gobs. .

Also, gobs, the one true *gob*, is chocolate cakey cookies and vaguely vanilla filling, not every blithering flavor under the sun. *And* it's not filled with commercial frosting/icing, whatever you call it.

- *Cookie part:*
 - 2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup vegetable shortening (like Crisco, etc)
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup soured milk (1 tbsp vinegar to 1 cup whole milk)
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 4 cups flour
- 1/2 cup cocoa (I like dutched)
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp salt

Cream together sugar, shortening, and eggs in large bowl. Sift dry ingredients in separate bowl. Make very sure the

baking soda isn't in one big lump. Gobs are infamous for hiding a lump just so you can bite down on it and then proceed to run around gagging. There's usually not so much problem with the baking powder lumping up. Add soured milk, boiling water, vanilla and dry ingredients. Refrigerate batter for at least an hour. Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheets. Bake in preheated 450 degree (Fahrenheit) oven for 5-7 minutes. Test for doneness with toothpick.

Filling:

In a medium saucepan, stir 1 cup cold milk into 5 tbsp flour. Cook on low heat until thick. Cool. Cream 1 cup vegetable shortening with 1 cup of sugar and 1 tsp vanilla. Add to flour mixture and beat until fluffy.

Spread filling between two cookies. If they don't go away soon, refrigerate. They will mold like crazy if left out.

Bacon Chocolate

This originally came from "Bitchin' Kitchen" and the lovely Nadia G. We think we improved it a bit.

1 pound of bacon (US streaky style, smoked and well cured)

3 10-12 oz bags of chocolate chips (I prefer 2 Ghirardelli milk chocolate and one semi-sweet)

5 cups of crisped rice aka Rice Krispies

Finely chop bacon and fry until crisp. Drain off fat and drain bits on a paper towel. Melt chocolate, either on a double boiler or in a microwave 10 seconds at a time, stirring each time (yes it does work but it does take a while). Mix all together, so rice and bacon are well coated. Can place into a parchment lined 9"x9" pan, or place small scoops onto parchment paper. Refrigerate until hard.

Beverages

Coco Lava aka thick hot chocolate

- Packet of cook and serve chocolate pudding
- Twice as much whole milk as the packet directions calls for

Follow the directions, watch it thicken and that's it. And it's soooooo good. Feel free to add cinnamon, whipped cream, Irish cream, rum, espresso powder, a bit of cayenne, etc.

Burning Sensation

2 ounces of dry gin

.5 ounce of pickled jalapeno juice

.25 oz dry vermouth

Shake on ice. Pour into glass. Garnish with a sliver of pepper if you'd like.

Grasshopper

An old drink but I love it!

1 part green crème de menthe

1 part clear crème de cacao

1 part light cream (I find heavy cream a little too much in this)

Shades of Girl Scout Thin Mints! Shake with ice. When I'm feeling lazy, it's on the rocks.

Brandy Alexander

2 oz brandy (you can use cognac but why when you are mixing it so much)

1 oz clear or brown crème de cacao

1 oz cream

Shake over ice. A sprinkle of nutmeg is nice on this.

Mead

- 1 Gallon Water
- Honey, 5 Lb. for Sweet, 4 for dryish
- 1 in. Cinnamon Stick
- Zest and juice from 1 lemon
- Tea bag
- Champagne yeast packet

Equipment:

4 liter glass wine jug empty

1 gallon glass jug, empty

Vapor lock (also known as a fermentation lock) w/ rubber topper with hole in the center ("the bubbler")

Funnel

Clear plastic tubing (food grade)

Cork/capper + whatever type of bottles you intend to store it in when it's done.

While bringing water to a good roiling boil:

Add tea bag, use your favorite herbed/spiced black tea.

Note this is to provide the tannin, so be sure it has some real tea in it. I use always use Vanilla Almond tea from The Republic of Tea and sometimes add Constant Comment from Bigelow and/ or Chai Spice tea from Stash

Add lemon zest, lemon juice, cinnamon stick

Remove tea bag (s) when brew is a light amber...really weak tea.

Add honey once water is boiling...keep the jars of honey in a warm place (like a pan of hot water) so it's easier to pour. Save one of the jars and a lid.

When the pot returns to boil, begin skimming off the foam.

Yeah, this removes the zest, that's why we put it in early.

When you are sick and tired of skimming, and have most if not all the foam gone, and the thing has been boiling for around 45 minutes or more, turn off the heat and cover and let cool.

When the proto-mead is down to around 95 Degrees F. dip out about 1/4 cup and dissolve yeast into it.

Clean the larger wine jug out really really well. Rinse thoroughly with lots o' hot water. And let cool

Put the big jar in the sink, in case you spill. Using the funnel, pour the yeast mixture into the jug. Then pour in the proto-mead, only filling to the bottom of the neck.

If you use 5 lb. of honey you will probably have some proto-mead remaining. If making sweet mead, pour it into one of the empty honey jars, put on the lid and put it into the fridge. You'll use it later. If trying for a dryer mead you can discard the remaining proto- mead.

Fill the bubbler/ airlock about 1/2 full of water.

You should start to see the bubbles shortly. The better you mixed the yeast the longer it takes to start bubbling, but that's a good thing. Too active too soon and it will foam into the bubbler. If that does happen, just rinse out the bubbler and put it back on.

For the first 12 days shake the mead daily. Doesn't have to be a lot of shaking, just enough to wake up the yeasties and get them going. Let it sit quietly for 2 more days

First decanting: The Splash

Clean the gallon jug very well. Siphon the mead into the gallon jug, allowing it to splash onto the bottom. Siphon off as much as you can, try not to disturb the residue at the bottom. You should be able to get a gallon out of it easy enough.

Replace the bubbler and let the mead sit quietly for a week. Wash the 4 liter jug out very well.

2nd decanting

Siphon the mead into the wine jug, no splashing this time, let it run down the inside of the jug. Once again, leave the residue. Transferring from the gallon to the wine jug will leave the jug not quite full. If making sweet mead use the remaining proto- mead from the fridge. If making dryer mead, use water to top off to the neck.

Let sit quietly for another week.

3rd decanting

From the 4 liter jug to the gallon jug. Let sit quietly another week.

Continue alternating until the mead clears. Once clear, the alcohol content should be around 12%, a goodly wine. A hygrometer will give you an exact reading. The percent

alcohol is a factor of how much honey is dissolved, so you need to take a reading before fermentation. Bottle as you will. Make sure it's done fermenting or there is the distinct possibility that your bottles may burst if tightly sealed. To stabilize the mead for long periods, you may add a crushed Campden tablet; these contain sulfites and act as preservatives. If you use one it should be added at the 3rd decanting. These tablets are found in the same stores that you can find the yeast and the fermentation locks.

Sekanjabin

This is a mint, sugar and vinegar drink I was introduced to in the medieval recreation group I used to belong to. It sound strange but it's a great summer drink. You make a syrup and then add to water and ice to your taste.

2 cups sugar

1 cup water

1 cup of fresh mint leaves, packed or 10 mint tea bags (just about any mint works)

1 cup vinegar (I like either wine or apple cider. Don't use plain white vinegar or balsamic)

Boil sugar and water in small sauce pan to make a simple syrup. Add mint and steep for at least 3 hours. After this, remove mint and stir in vinegar. Bottled, it will last a few months in the refrigerator.

Random Tips and Opinions:

Dishers (aka scoops) are necessary for making cookies. It will make it go so much faster.

A spoonful of a good balsamic vinegar is a great treat and reviver of appetite.

Better Than Bouillon is so much better than anything other than homemade stock. We use it for the basis of pho/ramen broths, roast beef, gravies, etc.

Don Pepinos Pizza Sauce is a great very simple sauce.

Zatarains Low Sodium Jambalaya is best with shrimp and smoked sausage.

Low Sodium Spam is great if you like pork and its fat.

Danish blue cheese (e.g. Rosenborg) is the best for burgers in that it melts perfectly. Crumbles of regular blue cheese just roll off.

Hormel No Beans Chili is the perfect thing for a chili dog.

If you make shish kabobs or skewers, don't place the vegetables and meat on the same skewer. They don't cook right, even if they do look pretty. For that matter, just get a disposable aluminum pie plate, poke holes in it and cook your vegetables in a little oil over the grill.

No gas, only charcoal grilling.

Reduced balsamic vinegar, thick like a glaze is wonderful, including on vanilla ice cream. Make it by boiling inexpensive balsamic (not the good stuff!) to half its volume. Put it in a bottle.

