

**THE
GLOBE
AND
MAIL** ✦



FESTIVE FEASTS

COLLECTION OF THE GLOBE'S BEST WINTER RECIPES



THE GLOBE AND MAIL
FESTIVE FEASTS

A collection of 50 recipes that are
perfect for the Holidays, Fall and Winter
season featured on The Globe and Mail
and written by Julie Van Rosendaal
and Lucy Waverman

Festive Feasts

**A Collection
of The Globe's best
winter recipes**

FEATURES ARTICLES BY JULIE VAN
ROSENDAAL AND LUCY WAVERMAN
WRITTEN FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

PHOTOS BY TANYA PILGRIM,
JULIE VAN ROSENDAAL
AND DEBORAH BAIC

ILLUSTRATIONS BY WENTING LI



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351 KING STREET EAST, SUITE 1600,
TORONTO, ON CANADA, M5A 0N1

ANDREW SAUNDERS,
PRESIDENT AND CEO

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Chefs share their six recipes for your next potluck

JULIE VAN ROSENDAAL

Potlucks put the focus on getting together – while lowering your stress level and grocery bill. Here's what home cooks are bringing to the next big harvest feast.

These recipes were gathered from home cooks across the country – some with professional culinary chops or ties to the food industry, others known for a love of bringing friends and family together around the table.



Herbed Tomato Tart with Goat Cheese

Serves about 10

This tart comes from Miranda Halladay on behalf of Naramata Slow, a group dedicated to community and sharing ingredients grown, raised and sourced in the Okanagan region of B.C. Each October they host a potluck-style harvest supper with 250 friends and neighbours, makers and growers, that has become a hallmark to their mission. Leftovers are transformed into meals sold to raise funds for community initiatives. This is one of their go-to recipes; caramelized onions are optional (but delicious) and if you can find (and afford) heirloom tomatoes in a variety of colours and sizes, use them, but regular backyard or field tomatoes are equally delicious. Just make sure they're at their peak.

- 8 locally sourced field or heirloom tomatoes, sliced 1/4 inch thick
- kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- 2 medium onions, thinly sliced (optional)
- olive or other vegetable oil, for cooking
- 1/4 cup + 2 tbsp dry white wine, divided, preferably from the Naramata Bench (optional)
- 8 ounces goat cheese, at room temperature
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme (or 1 tsp dried)
- 1 tbsp fresh tarragon, chopped
- 1/4 cup finely grated parmesan
- 6 sheets phyllo, thawed
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, shaved into curls
- 1/4 cup julienned basil leaves (or a few whole, for garnish)

Lay the tomato slices in a single layer on paper towel to absorb excess moisture; sprinkle with salt on both sides and let rest for 30 minutes.

Heat a drizzle of oil in a large skillet set over medium-high heat and sauté onions until coated with oil. Cover and reduce heat to low and cook for 10 minutes, then remove the lid and add 1/4 cup wine and a pinch of salt and pepper. Continue to cook until caramel-coloured and all moisture has evaporated, 25-30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 375 F. Combine the goat cheese, white wine, thyme, tarragon and Parmesan in a food processor and pulse until well blended and smooth, adding more wine (or a splash of water) if needed to achieve a spreadable consistency.

Line a baking sheet with parchment and lay down 2 sheets of phyllo, keeping the rest covered with a tea towel. Brush with a thin layer of butter and repeat two more times to layer 6 sheets. Spread the goat cheese mixture evenly over the phyllo, leaving a half-inch uncovered around the edges. Spread with caramelized onions (if you made them), then layer the tomatoes in an overlapping pattern and brush with olive oil. Scatter with Parmesan curls.

Bake for 20 minutes, or until the phyllo is golden and tomatoes look slightly roasted. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and basil leaves. Serves about 10.



Stuffed Spatchcocked Chicken

Serves about 6

Chef Jonathan Cheung is the owner of Appetite for Books in Westmount, Que., one of only two dedicated cookbook stores left in Canada (the other is the Cookbook Company Cooks in Calgary), where he hosts events with visiting chefs and authors, and teaches cooking classes in the open kitchen. A spatchcocked bird cooks far more quickly than a traditional roasted chicken or turkey (in this recipe, it's done in an hour and 15 minutes); the recipe makes enough stuffing to accommodate a smaller bird, and it's easy to bump up the quantity for a larger bird (which will also require a slightly longer roasting time).

- 8-10 cups country-style bread, cut in medium dice
- 6 tbsp olive oil, divided
- 250-500 g mild Italian sausage or fennel sausage, casings removed and crumbled (optional)
- 1 large carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 large Spanish onion, peeled and diced
- 6 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 small bunch fresh sage, roughly chopped
- 5 sprigs thyme, leaves pulled off the stems (discard stems)
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 cups good-quality chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 large egg
- 1 5-6 lb chicken, spatchcocked (ask your butcher to do this)
- canola or other vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 375 F. Toss the bread in 3-4 tablespoons of the olive oil and spread out on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Toast for 15 minutes, or until lightly golden and dry. Set aside.

Preheat a large sauté pan over high heat. Add 2 tbsp olive oil and cook the crumbled sausage until browned, about 5 minutes. Add the carrots, onion, garlic and herbs, reduce the heat to medium high and sauté for 15 minutes, or until tender. Season generously with salt and pepper and remove from the heat.

Add the toasted bread and the broth and mix. Transfer half the mixture to a food processor, crack in the egg and process until smooth. Transfer to a large resealable plastic bag or a piping bag. Place the remaining stuffing in a loaf pan or similar-sized baking dish.

Place the spatchcocked bird skin side up on a clean cutting board. Using your fingers, gently loosen the skin away from the breast meat, doing your best not to tear it. You need to create a pocket for the stuffing. Work your way down to the thigh, trying to gently separate the skin from the top of the breast down to the bottom of the thighs, or even to the bottom of the legs. Lightly drizzle with oil and season generously all over with salt and pepper.

Snip off the corner of the resealable bag, about the size of a nickel. Stick the piping bag between the skin and the meat of the right breast and pipe the stuffing underneath. Repeat on the other side. Massage the skin a bit to equally distribute and smooth out the purée. Pipe any leftover stuffing under the skin around the legs.

Place a rack in a roasting pan or lined baking sheet. Place the chicken, skin side up, on the rack and place in the oven. Roast for 1 to 1 1/4 hours, or until a digital thermometer reaches 130 F in the thickest part of the breast and the thigh. At this point, if the skin is browning too fast, tent with foil and continue cooking until the thermometer reaches 160 F. Remove from the oven and allow to rest for 20-30 minutes. Meanwhile, cover the remaining stuffing in the loaf pan with foil and place in the oven to cook for 20-30 minutes.

To serve, cut the legs off of the bird and carve the dark meat. Using a large sharp knife, try to remove the breast in one piece; start by slicing along the breast bone and slowly carving down along the bones. Once removed, slice lengthwise. Repeat with the other breast. Serve with the baked stuffing. Serves about 6.



Maple Rosemary Tartiflette

Serves about 6

This unique scalloped potato dish with maple rosemary cream comes from Anne and James Tigley, who live in PEI – they came up with it for a dinner party years ago, and it has been a favourite ever since. Tartiflette originated in the Haute-Savoie region of the French Alps, made with Reblochon cheese; they use Camembert, or you could use a Canadian Champfl-eury, Oka or other washed rind or bloomy rind cheese.

- 2 lb russet or Yukon gold potatoes (preferably grown in PEI)
- 6 slices bacon (optional)
- 2 tbsp butter (divided)
- 2 medium onions, halved and thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup white wine (optional)
- 1 tbsp finely chopped rosemary, divided
- pure maple syrup, to taste
- 2 cups 18 per cent cream (approximately; divided)
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 1 small-medium wheel Camembert, cold

Peel and very thinly slice the potatoes (a mandoline is great for this); place in a bowl cover with cool water. Cook the bacon until crisp; transfer to a plate, reserving about a tablespoon of fat in the pan. Slice or crush the bacon slices once cool enough to handle.

Add 1 tablespoon of butter to the pan with the bacon fat, set over medium heat, add the onions and cook, stirring frequently, until soft and starting to turn golden. Add the garlic and cook for another minute. If you like, add a splash of wine and cook for 1-2 minutes, until it evaporates.

Remove the rind from the Camembert and slice into smaller pieces or wedges. To assemble the tartiflette, remove the potato slices from the water and pat dry on a tea towel or paper towel.

Butter a 9x5-inch loaf pan (or a similar-sized baking dish) and place a couple of layers of potatoes on the bottom. Top with some of the onion mixture, bacon, a pinch of rosemary and some bits of cheese, and drizzle with a tablespoon or two of maple syrup. Do this two more times, then pour about 1 cup of cream over the top and down the sides – Anne Tigley notes she doesn't measure her cream, but adds enough to come about a third of the way up the side of the dish. Cover with plastic wrap, weigh down with two large cans and refrigerate for an hour. Remove from the fridge 30 minutes before baking, and preheat the oven to 350 F.

Remove the plastic wrap, cover with foil and cook for 30 minutes, then remove the foil and cook for another 10, or until bubbly and golden. Let sit for 20 minutes. To make the maple cream, melt the remaining tablespoon of butter in a small saucepan, cook the shallot with a pinch of rosemary for 2-3 minutes, until soft, then add the remaining cup of cream and a tablespoon or two of maple syrup. Whisk until heated through, but do not boil. (The sauce can be made ahead; the longer it sits, the better the flavour, and it will thicken a bit.)

Serve the tartiflette in slices or wedges, drizzled with the maple cream. Serves about 6.



Root Vegetables, Sage Brown Butter & Blue Cheese

Serves about 6

An international authority on cheese, Janice Beaton has been making this dish for about 15 years; she tends to throw it together by feel at her home in Mabou, on the west coast of Cape Breton Island. The sweet potato is easily tucked into the oven while you're baking something else, and the almost-finished purée is the perfect dish to transport and reheat on the stovetop, crumbling in the blue cheese when you're ready. If you like, set aside a few sage leaves and cook them in a bit of oil until crisp for added garnish.

- 400 g rutabaga, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 550 g dark-fleshed sweet potato
- 1/3 cup (75 g) butter
- 1 shallot, minced
- 12 large fresh sage leaves, finely chopped or 2 g dried sage
- salt and pepper to taste
- 100 g strong blue cheese, such as Bleu Bénédictin, Bleu d'Elizabeth, Blue Juliette, Dragon's Breath, or any Roquefort-style

Preheat the oven to 375 F. Bake the whole sweet potato until fork tender, 30 to 40 minutes. Boil the rutabaga until fork tender, which may be up to an hour. Drain and cover to keep warm.

While the vegetables are cooking, melt the butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook until medium brown, then add the shallots and sage. Continue to cook over medium-low heat for another five minutes.

Remove the peel from the sweet potato and place the potato flesh in a blender along with the rutabaga and butter mixture. Purée until the mixture has a smooth texture. Transfer from the blender to a saucepan and stir in the blue cheese. Season with salt and pepper and serve warm. Serves about 6.



Coriander Chutney

Makes about 2 cups

Torontonian Theresa D'Souza makes a spectacular fresh coriander chutney, which her family spreads on soft buttered white bread, or stirs into yogurt to make Goan raita to serve with her Pakistani biryanis. It's delicious with just about everything, and perfect to bring to a party.

- 10-20 raisins
- 1 large bundle fresh coriander (cilantro)
- 1 small onion or large shallot, chopped
- 1 jalapeno or 3 small green chilies, chopped (remove seeds and membranes for less heat)
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled
- juice of a lemon
- 1/4-1/2 cup ground almonds
- 1/4 cup coconut cream (optional)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp pepper

If the raisins are very dry, soak them in some warm water while you get the rest of the chutney going. Put the coriander, onion, chilies, ginger, garlic and lemon juice into a blender and pulse, scraping down the sides, until partially blended. Drain the water off the raisins and add them along with the coconut cream, almonds, salt, cumin and pepper and blend, scraping down the sides to help blend it into a fine paste.

Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to four days, or freeze for longer storage. Makes about 2 cups.



Maple Pecan Pie

Serves about 8

Born and raised in Paris and now living in Calgary, Saïd M'Dahoma was working toward his PhD in neuroscience when he switched his focus to mastering pastries. Though he teaches technical French pastry classes online, he sometimes makes life easier by using a frozen ready-to-bake pie shell for this classic fall dessert, and prefers maple syrup to the customary golden syrup. (He loves his slice with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.)

- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie shell

Pecan filling:

- 3 eggs
- 1/3 cup (80 g) turbinado or golden brown sugar
- 1/3 cup (80 g) pure maple syrup
- 3 tbsp (40 g) butter, melted
- 1/4 cup (30 g) all-purpose flour
- 1 cup (130 g) finely chopped pecans
- 1 cup (130 g) pecan halves

Preheat your oven to 360 F.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the eggs, sugar, maple syrup and butter. Whisk in the flour and then the chopped pecans. Pour the filling into the unbaked pie shell and place the pecan halves on top in concentric circles.

Bake for 50 minutes, or until golden brown. Serves about 8.



Savoury, spicy and hearty soups ideal for a side or a main

LUCY WAVERMAN

Soup making is an easy and useful skill to learn because anything edible can be added to a broth. Simmer a handful of carrots spiced with some curry powder in chicken stock; a few elderly zucchini perked up with apples and watercress; leftover greens combined with a tin of kidney beans and some pasta – the combinations are endless.

Good soups start with good stock, but bouillon cubes have replaced stock pots in most modern kitchens. Today there are endless exceptionally good stock substitutes ranging from the stock your butcher makes to tetra-packed organic stock at the supermarket. My personal favourite is Better than Bouillon stock base paste, widely available and not full of additives or preservatives.

Many of the following soups are hearty enough to be served for dinner along with some sourdough and butter, or try the beer and cheese bread recipe below. Others, mostly the pureed ones, are meant as a first course. I prefer to oven-roast vegetables before adding them into the soup pot as that intensifies their flavour. But if you are short of time or energy then just add them to the pot unroasted and cook the soup a little longer.

The easiest soup is what I call refrigerator soup, where you take the odds and ends in your fridge, including salad, add some stock, bring to a boil, simmer five minutes or until veggies are soft, then puree. Finish with a garnish of herbs or whatever you have on hand.



Essence of mushroom soup

Serves 4

A rich mushroom soup with only traces of fat in it. The more kinds of mushrooms you can find the better the soup will be. You can streak a little yogurt or sour cream across the surface of the soup for added interest. Dried porcinis are available at most gourmet shops but if unavailable use any dried mushroom to boost the flavour.

- ½ cup dried porcini mushrooms
- 1 cup hot water
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¾ cup green onions, chopped
- 1 lb mixed wild mushrooms, chopped
- 1 large portobello mushroom, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh tarragon, chopped or 1 teaspoon dried
- 4 cups chicken stock
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ¼ cup chopped chives

Soak dried mushrooms in hot water for 30 minutes. Strain reserving mushrooms and liquid separately.

Heat oil in large pot on medium-high heat. Add green onions and all mushrooms and sauté for 3 minutes or until mushrooms begin to lose their juices.

Add tarragon, stock, dried porcini, and soaking liquid. Bring to boil, reduce heat, and cook 10 minutes or until all vegetables are tender. Season with salt, pepper, soy sauce and lemon juice.

Puree soup in blender or food processor. Return to pot, bring to boil and simmer 5 minutes to combine flavours.

Garnish with chives.

Spiced roasted cauliflower and fennel soup with spinach

Serves 6

By using vegetable stock, this soup is both gluten- and dairy-free. You can buy pickled red onions or make a quick pickle yourself. You can also omit it, but the tang balances the soup beautifully. The Thai curry paste lifts the soup from good to extraordinary. The soup freezes well, and the recipe can be cut in half without altering the flavour.

- 1 medium head cauliflower
- 1 fennel bulb
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup onions, chopped
- 1 teaspoon Thai green curry paste
- 6 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon crushed fennel seeds
- 4 cups packed baby spinach
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest

Garnish

- ½ cup pickled red onion
- 6 Fennel fronds
- Preheat oven to 400 F.

Cut cauliflower into florets. Trim stalks off fennel bulb. Cut in half, lengthwise, then cut ½-inch wide wedges lengthwise through root. Toss with cauliflower and 2 tablespoons oil and season with salt and pepper. Place on a baking sheet and roast until browned and tender, rotating after 15 minutes, about 25 to 30 minutes total.

After roasting, cut fennel into chinks and recombine with cauliflower. Reserve.

Heat oil in large pot over medium heat. Add onions and sauté until tender, about 4 minutes. Stir in curry paste and cook 30 seconds. Add cauliflower, fennel, stock, and fennel seeds. Bring to boil, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until all vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes. Stir in spinach and lemon zest just until spinach wilts, about 1 to 2 minutes. This gives the soup a beautiful green hue.

Puree with an immersion blender or a regular blender. Taste for seasoning adding salt and pepper as needed. Reheat when needed and garnish with pickled red onions and fennel fronds.

Curried parsnip soup

Serves 6

Parsnips have a sweetness to them and when combined with some spice, make an out-of-the-ordinary soup. Garnish with a little apple compote. Freeze any leftover coconut milk – it keeps for months.

- 4 medium parsnips, peeled and cut into large dice
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon ginger, chopped
- 1 tablespoon curry powder (less if you want a more subtle taste)
- 1 apple, peeled and chopped
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- ½ cup coconut milk
- Salt to taste

Apple compote

- 1 tablespoon butter
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ½ cup apples, diced in ¼-inch (5-mm) pieces
- ½ teaspoon grated lime rind

Preheat oven to 450 F.

Toss parsnips with vegetable oil, place on a baking sheet and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring several times so that they brown evenly, or until parsnips are browned but not fully cooked. Set aside.

Heat butter in a soup pot over medium heat. Add onion and ginger and sauté for 2 minutes. Add curry powder and stir together. Add apples and parsnips and cook another 2 min-

utes or until flavours have combined.

Add chicken stock and bring to a boil. Cover reduce heat to low and let simmer for 15 minutes or until vegetables are soft.

Puree soup, add coconut milk and simmer for 5 minutes, thinning with a little water if needed. Season with salt to taste. Keep warm.

Heat butter in a skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle in sugar and add apples. Cook until apples are slightly golden, about 4 minutes. Stir in grated lime rind. Garnish soup with apple compote and serve.



Minestrone soup

Serves 6

Minestrone is an adaptable soup. The vegetables in it should change with the seasons. Specific amounts of vegetables are not needed – just toss in what you have. The Parmesan rind, if you have any, gives an even deeper flavour (remove before serving). This soup keeps refrigerated for five days, or you can freeze leftovers. Another great way to serve the soup is like a ribollita – grill or toast some rustic-type bread and pour the soup over the bread.

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup onion, diced
- 1 cup carrots, diced
- 1 cup fennel, diced
- 1 tablespoon garlic, chopped
- 1 green zucchini, diced
- 1 yellow zucchini, diced
- 2 teaspoon fresh thyme
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ½ teaspoon ground fennel seeds
- 1 bunch black kale, stem removed and cut into 1-inch (2.5-cm) pieces
- 1 19 ounce (540 mL) can white kidney beans, drained
- 1 ½ cups canned tomatoes with their juices, broken up
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- 1 2-inch (5-cm) piece Parmesan cheese rind, optional
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Garnish

- ½ cup shaved Parmesan

Heat oil in large soup pot over medium heat. Add onion, carrots, fennel and garlic and sauté over low heat for 10 minutes or until softened. Add both zucchini and sauté another 10 minutes or until vegetables are soft but not browned. Add thyme, red pepper flakes and fennel seeds and stir to coat vegetables.

Add kale, beans, tomatoes, stock, and Parmesan rind and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 20 to 30 minutes or until everything is soft and soup is flavourful. Season well with salt and pepper. Discard Parmesan rind.

If the soup is too thick add some water to thin it out. Spoon into bowls and garnish with shaved Parmesan.



Split pea soup with smoked turkey and collards

Serves 6 or 8

Smoked turkey meat is salty so be sure to season carefully. If the leg is big, cut off some turkey meat and reserve for another occasion. It makes great sandwiches. Collards take well to long, slow cooking. If you do not have them, add swiss chard halfway through the cooking time. Don't salt the peas until cooked as I find salt impedes the cooking process.

- 2 cups dried yellow split peas
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 cup onions, chopped
- ½ cup carrots, chopped
- ½ cup celery, chopped
- 1 bunch collard greens, stems and thick centre rib removed, leaves cut into 1-inch pieces
- 6 cups chicken stock
- 2 cups water
- 1 pound smoked turkey leg with bone
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Garnish

- 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Rinse peas, removing any that are wrinkled. Reserve.

Melt butter in a Dutch oven or other wide-mouth pot over medium heat. Add onion, carrots and celery and sauté until slightly softened, about 2 minutes. Add collard greens and cook for 2 minutes more or until softened. Add stock, water, peas, smoked turkey leg, thyme, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, turn heat to low and simmer uncovered for 1 to 1 ½ hours or until the peas are tender. If soup gets too dry, add water as needed.

Remove turkey leg and puree half of the soup with a hand blender. Stir in remaining soup. Taste for seasoning, adding salt and pepper as needed.

Shred some of the turkey meat to use as a garnish. Top each soup bowl with some shredded turkey, sprinkle with parsley and drizzle with olive oil just before serving.

Broccoli bisque with gremolata

Serves 4 to 6

The gremolata gives this broccoli soup a special depth of flavour.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 leeks, white and light green parts only, sliced
- 1 head broccoli, cut into florets, stem peeled and roughly chopped
- ½ cup Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 4 cups chicken stock
- ¼ cup whipping cream
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Gremolata

- ¼ cup finely parsley, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons lemon rind, grated

Heat oil in a soup pot over medium heat. Add leeks and sauté for 3 minutes or until limp. Add broccoli and sauté another minute. Add potatoes and toss together. Pour in stock and bring to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover pot and simmer for 12 to 15 minutes or until broccoli and potatoes are very tender.

Using a hand blender, process vegetables until smooth. Add cream, bring to boil and season with salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for 5 minutes to amalgamate flavours.

Combine parsley, garlic and lemon rind in a mini-chop or food processor. Process until well combined. Dot on top of soup before serving.

Zucchini soup with crispy ham and sheep's cheese

Serves 4

Roasting the zucchini intensifies the flavour of this soup. Sheep's milk cheese, serrano ham and Padrón peppers are typical Spanish ingredients. Adding them elevates the soup from a vegetable purée to a sophisticated first course. You could make it Italian by adding Pecorino, prosciutto and red pepper flakes instead.

- 3 firm zucchinis, cut in half lengthwise
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 large or 2 small leeks, white and light green part only, sliced
- 1/3 cup red potato, peeled and cubed
- 1 teaspoon sliced garlic cloves
- ½ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
- 1 teaspoon Spanish sweet paprika
- 3 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- ¼ cup orange juice

Garnish

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 Padrón or shishito peppers
- 3 slices serrano ham, thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup soft sheep's milk cheese, preferably Spanish

Preheat oven to 450°F.

Brush zucchini with 2 tablespoon olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast for 10 minutes, then flip and roast for 5 more minutes or until beginning to brown. Remove from oven.

Heat remaining oil in soup pot over medium heat. Add leeks and sauté for 3 minutes or

until softened. Chop zucchini and add to pot with potato and garlic. Sauté 2 minutes longer, then sprinkle in thyme and paprika and add stock. Bring to a boil, then simmer covered for 15 minutes or until vegetables are cooked. Purée with a hand blender or regular blender. Stir in orange juice. Taste for seasoning, adding salt and pepper as needed.

Heat olive oil in skillet over high heat. Add peppers and cook for 2 minutes per side or until blistered and charred. Remove to a plate and slice in half lengthwise. Reduce heat to medium and add ham. Sauté until crisp, about 2 minutes. Drain on paper towels. Place soup in bowls and top each with a spoonful of cheese, crisp serrano and half a pepper.

Solyanka

4 to 6 servings

While in St. Petersburg I wanted to taste Solyanka, a classic Russian soup with soul. Solyanka is basically a pickle and smoked meat soup made with pickles, their brine and at least three different kinds of smoked meat. It was superb. To make it, include all kinds of meats like pastrami, smoked ham, sausages, frankfurters, smoked chicken and bacon. It is common to add some typical Russian boiled sausage, like bologna. We used pancetta, chorizo and Montreal smoked meat. It has become a staple in our household for a hearty dinner. Top with sour cream, lots of dill and serve with good rye bread. It is like eating a smoked meat sandwich in a soup and it is heaven.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 ounces pancetta, chopped
- 4 ounces chorizo, chopped
- 4 ounces smoked meat, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 large carrot, chopped
- 6 cups beef or chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon allspice berries
- 1 tablespoon peppercorns
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 large baking potato, peeled and cut into small cubes
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika
- 3 large, pickled cucumbers, finely chopped
- ½ cup pickle brine
- 2 teaspoons capers, chopped
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Garnish

- ½ large lemon, sliced
- 2 tablespoons dill, chopped
- 1/3 cup sour cream or more to taste

Heat oil in skillet over medium high heat. Add pancetta, chorizo, and smoked meat. Sauté for 2 to 3 minutes or until beginning to produce fat. Add onion and carrot and sauté for 2 minutes or until tender. Remove meat and vegetables to a bowl with a slotted spoon. Discard fat.

Place stock into a large pot over medium heat. Put allspice, peppercorn and bay leaf into a tea egg or tie together in cheese cloth to form a pouch and place in stock. Add the cubed potato, tomato paste and paprika. Bring to boil and then simmer for 5 minutes over medium heat. Stir in sautéed meats, onions, and carrots, then add pickles, brine, and capers. Simmer soup for 15 to 20 minutes or until all vegetables are tender.

Remove from heat, cover, and let sit for several hours or overnight to blend the flavours. Taste for seasoning, adding salt if needed and lots of black pepper. Remove the bag of spices. If the soup is too thick, thin down with a little water.

Serve, reheated, with a thin slice of lemon, chopped dill and a swirl of sour cream in every bowl.

Peanut soup

Serves 4 to 6

Peanut soup is African in origin. Spike up the flavour by adding more pepper flakes to taste. Substitute tahini for peanut butter for a different but equally good flavour.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup onions, chopped
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and chopped
- 2 teaspoons garlic, chopped
- 3 cups chicken stock or broth
- 1 cup chopped canned tomatoes with juice
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes or to taste
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- ½ cup chunky peanut butter
- 2 cups baby spinach

Garnish

- ¼ cup roasted peanuts

Heat oil in soup pot over medium heat.

Add onions, peppers, sweet potatoes and garlic and sauté until soft, about 5 minutes. Add stock and tomatoes with juice, pepper flakes, salt, and pepper. Simmer for 20 minutes or until vegetables are soft.

Whisk in peanut butter until well blended, then stir in spinach. Simmer for 5 minutes. Season well with salt and pepper. Serve in bowls sprinkling each bowl with peanuts.

Mushroom barley soup

Serves 4 to 6

A hearty vegetarian soup. The barley absorbs a lot of stock, and when left to sit overnight absorbs even more. Add water if it gets too thick. If you have no leeks, increase the onion. I like a touch of cayenne at the end, but it is personal preference.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ cup onions, chopped
- ½ cup carrots, chopped
- ½ cup leeks, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic, chopped
- ½ cup pearl barley
- ½ teaspoon dried marjoram
- 6 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- 4 ounces brown mushrooms, torn into 1-inch pieces
- 2 ounces shiitake mushrooms, torn into 1-inch pieces
- 3 cups baby spinach
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Heat oil in soup pot over medium heat. Add onions, carrots, leeks, and garlic. Sauté for 2 minutes, then add barley and marjoram. Stir to coat in oil.

Add stock and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 to 35 minutes or until barley is just about tender.

Stir in mushrooms and cook for 10 to 15 minutes longer or until tender. Add spinach and let it wilt in. Season well with salt and pepper.

Beer and cheese bread

Makes 1 loaf

This excellent quick bread is craggy on top, which gives it an interesting look. It has an excellent cheesy flavour and makes a good base for toasted cheese sandwiches. It stars when served with soups. The bread tastes a little different depending on what beer you use but the texture is the same.

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 341 mL bottle lager or ale
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 cup Cheddar cheese, grated
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 teaspoon sesame seeds

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Combine all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, sugar, salt and baking powder. Stir in beer, mustard and cheese until mixture forms a batter.

Turn into buttered 9x5 loaf pan, don't smooth the top. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until light golden and firm to touch. A toothpick inserted in centre should come out clean. Brush top with butter and sprinkle over sesame seeds. Cool on a rack.

Parsnips have a sweetness to them and when combined with some spice make an out of the ordinary soup. Garnish with the little apple compote. Freeze any leftover coconut milk. It keeps for months.



Easy dinner ideas to make over the busy holiday weeks ahead

LUCY WAVERMAN

These interesting and relatively easy dinners for your family or for entertaining require a minimum of fuss and deliver maximum appeal. For even more simplicity, buy the dessert instead of making it.

Dinner 1: Vegetarian

Goat Cheese Biscuits

Makes about 9 biscuits

Serve these plain as a nibble before dinner or spread with tapenade. They are excellent with a salad, too. If not vegetarian, add a few chopped anchovies in with the flour. These keep for a few days or can be frozen, and the recipe is easy to double.

- ½ cup flour
- ¼ cup butter
- ½ cup goat cheese

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Add flour to food processor or combine by hand. Dice butter and add. Crumble goat cheese and add into processor. Pulse food processor until everything is combined and looks like coarse bread crumbs.

Place in bowl and combine into a ball. Chill 30 minutes. Roll out into a rectangle about ¼-inch (5 mm) thick. Cut 3-inch (7.5 cm.) rounds and place on ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes or until golden. Cool on a rack.

Slow-cooked Chickpeas with Spicy Peppers and Arugula

Serves 4 to 6

These chickpeas are rich, spicy and delicious. The recipe calls for four different types of peppers, which gives depth to the taste, but feel free to use whatever you can find. You may also substitute the hot peppers with one to two teaspoons of cayenne depending on your heat tolerance.

While it doesn't produce the same flavour, the cayenne will give this dish a real kick. Bitter and peppery, the arugula adds a fine contrast to the heat. Canned, rinsed chickpeas are an easy substitute. Just add to the pepper mixture and continue the recipe.

- 1 cup dried chickpeas, soaked overnight in cold water
- 6 cups water
- 1 cup chopped canned tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red pepper, ribs removed and cut in ½-inch dice
- 1 poblano pepper, ribs removed and cut in ½-inch dice
- 1 long red chili pepper, seeded and cut in ¼-inch dice
- 1 banana pepper, seeded and cut in ¼-inch dice
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and thinly sliced
- ½ teaspoons chili flakes
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Arugula Salad

- 2 cups baby arugula
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

To serve

Four to 6 ½-inch thick slices sourdough baguette, toasted

Drain chickpeas and rinse after soaking overnight. Combine with fresh water, tomatoes, parsley and thyme in a pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and slowly simmer, covered, for 1 to 1½ hours or until chickpeas are tender. Drain and set aside, reserving liquid separately.

Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add red, poblano, red chili and banana peppers and sauté for three to four minutes or until softened. Alternatively, add the red pepper and the cayenne and sauté one minute. Add garlic and chili flakes and cook until garlic is lightly browned, about one minute more.

Add chickpeas and sauté for two to three minutes or until chickpeas are coated with oil and have absorbed the flavour of the peppers. Pour in two cups reserved cooking liquid and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 15 minutes, or until liquid is thickened but still saucy. Season with salt and pepper.

Toss arugula with olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper.

Place toast on plates. Spoon over chickpeas and peppers. Top with arugula salad or serve on the side.

Lemon Cream

Serves 4

So easy and delicious, this has been my go-to dessert when I don't feel like cooking. The recipe was originally developed by my friend Annabel Langbein, a television cook and author in New Zealand.

Lemon Cream

- 1 cup whipping cream
- ¼ cup butter
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon rind
- ¼ cup lemon juice

Topping

- 1/2 cup blueberries
- 1 tablespoon sugar

Combine cream, sugar and butter in small pot and bring to boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat and simmer for three minutes. Stir in lemon rind and juice. Pour mixture into four one-cup ramekins and chill until set. Combine blueberries and sugar and top the lemon cream.

Dinner 2: Fish

Seared Tuna with Japanese Noodles

Serves 4

I like this best when the tuna is very rare, but cook it to your preference, grilling if desired. Mirin is sweet Japanese cooking wine, and is usually called aji mirin. The mirin available in grocery stores has very low alcohol and more sugar, but is perfectly acceptable. Wasabi is hot but fragrant Japanese horseradish that comes either powdered or reconstituted in a tube. Udon noodles are a fat white flour noodle available dried and sometimes fresh. Try health food stores or East Asian grocery stores to purchase. Substitute equal amounts of horseradish and mustard for wasabi, spaghetti for the noodles.

- 12 ounces udon noodles
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- 4 shiitake mushrooms, slivered
- 1 small bunch guy Lan (Japanese broccoli) or broccolini, trimmed and sliced into 2-inch pieces

Sauce

- 2 tablespoons mirin or sherry
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 4 green onions, slivered
- 4 1-inch thick tuna steaks
- Freshly ground pepper and salt
- Wasabi Cream
- 1 tablespoon prepared wasabi or to taste
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons whipping cream

Cook noodles in boiling water until al dente. Using tongs, remove into a bowl then add gyoza into water and blanch one to two minutes or until crisp tender. Drain well.

In large fry pan over high heat add one tablespoon oil. Add ginger, mushrooms and gyoza and sauté until softened, about two minutes. Stir in mirin, soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil and green onions. Toss with noodles. Keep warm.

Heat remaining one tablespoon oil in non-stick skillet. Add tuna and cook two minutes per side for rare or desired degree of doneness

Divide noodles between four serving dishes. Thinly slice tuna and place on top. Mix wasabi with mayonnaise and cream. Thin with a few drops of hot water if too thick. Place in squeeze bottle and streak plates and tuna with mixture to decorate. Alternatively drizzle on tuna with a teaspoon.

Smashed Cucumber Salad

Smashing cucumbers gets rid of the water so they better absorb the dressing.

- 1 long seedless cucumber
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon grated ginger
- ¼ cup chopped green onion

Cut cucumber in half lengthwise. Place flesh side down on a board. Smash with a cleaver or the back of a pot until it breaks in a few places. Place in a colander to allow any liquid to drip. Mix together soy, vinegar, sugar, sesame oil, ginger and green onion.

Place cucumber on a bowl or platter and toss with the dressing.

Instant Chocolate Mousse

Serves 4

A quick very rich chocolate mousse that looks exceptional served in espresso cups.

- 8 ounces (250 grams) of 70 per cent chocolate
- 1 teaspoon instant coffee granules
- 1 cup whipping cream
- 1 egg, beaten
- ½ teaspoon vanilla essence

Break up chocolate and place in a heavy pot with the coffee and cream. On low heat, slowly melt chocolate, stirring until the mixture is smooth.

Stir in egg and vanilla and continue to stir together until mixture is slightly thickened, about two minutes. Pour into four individual serving dishes and top with a chocolate-coated coffee bean. Refrigerate for two hours.

Dinner 3: Shrimp and orzo

Grilled Bread with Roasted Garlic and Mushroom Salad

Serves 4

An earthy appetizer. Use regular mushrooms if that is what is available, but the wild ones add extra flavour.

- 4 slices to 6 slices baguette
- ¼ cup roasted garlic butter or regular garlic butter (recipe below)
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 12 ounces mixed mushrooms, including shiitake, oyster, cremini (brown)
- 3 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 bunch arugula or 2 cups packed baby arugula
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Cut bread into four ½-inch (1 cm.) slices on the diagonal. Toast or grill slices. Spread with garlic butter.

Heat olive oil in skillet on high heat. Add mushrooms and sauté until mushrooms are golden and tender, about four minutes. Stir in parsley, salt and pepper. Add balsamic, bring to boil and remove from heat.

Place arugula on four plates and top with garlic toasts. Spoon over mushrooms. Add a sprinkling of extra virgin olive oil and season to taste. Serve warm.

How to roast garlic

To roast garlic, place whole heads with the tops removed on foil, sprinkle each head with olive oil, close foil and bake at 400 F for 45 minutes.

Unwrap and squeeze garlic out of skins.

Sautéed Shrimp Mediterranean Style

Serves 4

A full flavoured Mediterranean dish that would be equally at home in Greece or Sicily. Serve over the orzo with feta for a perfect match, or serve with rice, pasta or couscous but add some feta into whatever you choose. Although the recipe calls for lots of garlic, the slices are treated like a vegetable and sautéed until softened and golden. They have a much milder flavour this way. Italian San Marzano canned tomatoes, if available, are the best for this dish.

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup sliced garlic
- 1 tablespoon seeded and sliced jalapeno pepper
- 1 pound large shrimp, peeled
- ¼ cup white wine
- 2 cups seeded chopped tomatoes, fresh or canned
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 2 tablespoon chopped Italian parsley

Heat oil in large skillet on low heat. Add garlic and jalapeno and cook for three minutes or until slightly softened and garlic just begins to colour.

Raise heat to high, add shrimp and sauté until shrimp are just beginning to turn pink, about one to two minutes. Remove shrimp from pan and reserve. Stir in wine and tomatoes, bring to boil, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes or until sauce is reduced and tasty. Season with salt and pepper. Return shrimp and reheat. Sprinkle with parsley. Serve at once.

Orzo with Feta

Serves 4

A creamy side dish that sets off the shrimp flawlessly. Using cream makes it a very luxurious dish, but replacing it with pasta cooking water will keep the calories down while giving flavour.

- 2 cups orzo
- ½ cup pasta cooking water or whipping cream
- 2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
- Freshly ground pepper

Bring a large pot of water to boil. Add orzo and boil until al dente, about five minutes. Drain well reserving ½ cup cooking water.

Add feta into orzo along with water and stir until sauce is creamy. Sprinkle over pepper to taste. Serve with shrimp.

Butter Pecan Bars

Makes about 20 bars

Omit the pecans and you have butter tart squares, Easy to make with all the flavour you expect from a good butter tart.

Base

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- ½ cup softened butter

Filling

- 3 eggs
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup melted butter
- 1 cup corn or maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Pinch salt
- 1 cup pecans

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Grease an eight-inch square cake pan. Combine flour, sugar and butter in food processor and process until mixture is crumbly. Press into base of prepared pan. Bake for 15 minutes or until slightly coloured. Remove from oven.

Beat eggs until foamy. Beat in sugar and flour. Stir in butter, corn syrup, vinegar, vanilla, salt and pecans.

Pour mixture into the partially baked base and bake for a further 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown on top and a toothpick comes out clean. Cool and cut into rectangles.

Dinner 4: Chicken and couscous

Watercress Apple and Zucchini Soup

Serves 4 to 6

A peppery, sweet combination that spikes the palate and is a good way to use extra zucchini. Serve hot or cold. Use a tart apple like Granny Smith or a slightly sweeter one like Pink Lady depending on your own taste.

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 large Spy apple, peeled and diced
- 4 cups chopped zucchini
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- 2 cups watercress leaves
- 1/4 cup whipping cream
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- Chili oil, optional

Heat butter in a pot over medium heat. Add onion and apple and sauté for five minutes or until soft but not brown.

Stir in zucchini and sauté for one minute. Pour in stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer for 20 minutes or until zucchini is tender.

Add watercress leaves and simmer for five minutes longer or until leaves are limp. Cool slightly, then puree in a food processor or blender. Return to pot and add cream. Bring to boil, reduce heat, simmer a few minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with extra watercress leaves and a few drips of chili oil.

Chicken Tagine with Cracked Green Olives

Serves 4 to 6

A tagine is a pottery cooking pot with a domed lid. Moroccans use them to bake slow-cooked dishes. If you buy one, bake in a regular dish and transfer it to the tagine for serving because, the lead content in Moroccan-made versions can be dicey. Make ahead and reheat when needed, and for a lower fat dish, remove skin from chicken. Use Hungarian or Spanish paprika vs. the hot variety. Buy preserved lemons in a jar (usually found in gourmet shops) or make an instant one yourself by simmering three or four slices of lemon covered in water and seasoned with two teaspoons salt and one teaspoon sugar. Simmer for 20 minutes or until the slices are limp. Remove lemon pith and slice up skin.

Seasoning mixture

- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes or to taste
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon saffron, crushed, optional

Chicken

- 8 chicken thighs or 4 chicken pieces cut in two
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ cup chopped parsley
- ¼ cup chopped fresh coriander
- 1 cup chicken stock or water
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup cracked green olives
- 1 tablespoon preserved lemon, slivered

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Combine spices and reserve. Season chicken with salt, pepper and one tablespoon seasoning mixture.

Heat oil in large skillet on medium high heat. Add chicken pieces and sauté three minutes per side or until golden. Remove.

Stir in onions and sauté about three minutes or until softened. Stir in garlic and cook one minute longer. Add spice mixture and herbs, then stock and lemon juice. Bring to boil, reduce heat to medium low, return chicken to pan, cover, place in oven and simmer 10 minutes. Remove cover and continue to cook another 10 to 15 minutes or until chicken is cooked through. Add olives and preserved lemon for final five minutes of cooking.

Serve over couscous.

Vegetable Couscous

Serves 4

This is a good side dish with lamb chops or fish, or serve as a vegetarian main by increasing the chickpeas to one cup. Use the “instant” couscous, which takes five minutes to prepare, available at grocery stores.

- ½ cup canned chickpeas, rinsed
- ½ cup carrots, finely chopped
- ½ cup zucchini, finely chopped
- ½ cup green onions, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1½ cups chicken stock or water
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon chili flakes
- Salt to taste
- 1½ cups dried couscous

Combine chickpeas, carrots, zucchini, onions and olive oil in a pot. Add stock, parsley, paprika, chili flakes and salt to taste. Bring to boil and sprinkle in couscous. Stir around, cover and remove from heat. Let sit five minutes, uncover and stir again. Re-season if needed.

Roasted Pears with Pomegranate Sabayon

Serves 4

To peel a pomegranate, cut the top crown off the fruit. Score the skin in quarters and bend back each quarter. Scoop the seeds into a bowl. One pomegranate yields about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup seeds and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup juice. The seeds can be frozen, if not needed. To obtain juice, squeeze as much out of the pomegranate as you can then add the seeds to a blender and blend until pulpy. Press through a sieve.

Roasting pears gives them a buttery flavour and sugary crunch. Use any sweet wine instead of the Italian sweet wine, vino santo, if desired. Late harvest Riesling works well too, or sherry. You can also use all pomegranate juice. Adding the pomegranate seeds gives a crunch to the sabayon.

- 4 pears, peeled, cored and halved
- 2 tablespoons butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar
- Sabayon
- 3 eggs
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vino santo or other sweet wine
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pomegranate juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pomegranate seeds with their juice

Preheat oven to 350 F. Place pears in baking dish. Dot with butter and sprinkle with sugar. Bake for 20 minutes or until tender. Remove pears with slotted to serving plates. Reserve any pan juices.

Place eggs and sugar in heavy pot. Over low heat, whisk together until thickened, about five minutes. Whisk in vino santo and any pomegranate juice and continue whisking until mixture triples in volume, about one to two minutes. Stir in pomegranate seeds. Spoon over pears.



11 healthy recipes to lighten up your winter menus

LUCY WAVERMAN

You can still eat comfort food classics like fish and chips, risotto and brownies with these versions that are lower in calories and fat.

Roman Spinach Soup

Serves 4

Buffalo mozzarella, which has a sweet nutty flavour, is half the fat of regular mozzarella. Substitute $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan if you don't have any, and use a package of frozen spinach if that's what's on hand. The soup is thickened by the cooked garlic, giving it a robust, interesting flavour.

- 3 leeks, white and light green parts only, chopped
- 8 cloves garlic, smashed and peeled
- 5 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 lb spinach, washed, stemmed and sliced
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 4 ounces buffalo mozzarella, crumbled

Combine leeks, garlic and broth. Bring to a boil then simmer covered for 10 minutes, uncover and simmer another 5 to 10 minutes or until garlic cloves are very soft.

Purée soup, return to pot and add spinach. Cook on medium heat for 2 minutes or until spinach wilts. Season well with salt and pepper and lemon juice. If soup is too thick, add a little more stock.

Serve soup in bowls, crumbling mozzarella into each serving.

Lentil and Sweet Potato Soup

Serves 6

This colourful and tasty mixture of sweet potatoes and lentils makes a healthy and bright soup that's low in calories. Lentils add protein to the mix, and the spicing, although not hot, adds a depth of flavour. Vegetable stock is available at many supermarkets; chicken stock can also be used. You can also use water, but the taste would not be as robust.

- 1 cup onions, chopped
- 1 cup carrots, chopped
- 3 cups sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1 teaspoon ginger, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon chili flakes
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ cup red lentils
- 5 cups vegetable stock
- ¼ cup yogurt, optional
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- Garnish
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- ¼ cup sage leaves

Combine onions, carrots, sweet potatoes, ginger, chili flakes and cinnamon. Add lentils and stir everything together.

Add stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes or until vegetables are very soft and lentils have exploded.

Puree soup in food processor or with hand blender. Return to pot, stir in yogurt and season with salt and pepper. Stir in lime juice and maple syrup. Reheat when needed.

Heat oil in a small skillet over medium-high heat and fry sage leaves for 30 seconds or until crisp. Drain on paper towels. Use to garnish soup.

Low-fat Fish and Chips

Serves 4

Nothing beats deep-fried fish, but here is a lower-fat version for when the craving strikes. Serve with lemon slices and a salad.

- ¼ cup buttermilk
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped
- ¼ cup flour
- ¼ cup cornmeal
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 6-ounce pieces cod or haddock, skinned

Preheat oven to 400 F.

Season buttermilk with salt and pepper. Combine dill, flour, cornmeal, salt and pepper in a dish. Dip fillets into buttermilk. Dip each side into flour mixture and shake off any excess.

Cover baking sheet with parchment paper and oil the paper. Bake fish for 12 to 15 minutes, until coating is slightly browned and white juices just appear.

Oven-baked chips

Cut 3 russet potatoes into thick French fries. Toss with 2 tablespoons oil, and salt and freshly ground pepper to taste. Bake at 425 F for 15 to 20 minutes, depending on size, turning occasionally or until golden brown. (If you are making them in the same oven as the fish, you can bake at 400 F, but note it will require a longer bake time.)

Oven-poached Black Cod

Serves 4

A drop-dead gorgeous recipe – low in calories and high in taste. Substitute halibut or grouper for black cod if desired. Large scallops work too.

- 2 12-ounce fillets black cod
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- ¼ cup light soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon crushed garlic
- 1 teaspoon crushed ginger root
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon lemon rind, grated
- 2 star anise, ground, or ½ teaspoon ground fennel

Garnish

- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 250 grams (4 oz) shiitake mushrooms, quartered
- ¼ cup slivered green onion
- ½ cup coriander sprigs

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Place cod in a baking dish in a single layer.

Combine oil, soy sauce, water, sesame oil, balsamic vinegar, garlic, ginger, cinnamon, lemon rind and star anise. Pour over fish and cover with foil.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until fish is opaque and just cooked.

Heat oil in a small skillet over medium heat. Add shiitake mushrooms and fry until just limp, about 2 minutes. Stir in green onions and coriander and remove from heat.

Place fish on a platter and surround with mushrooms. Pour over cooking liquid.

Beef and Barley Skillet Supper

Serves 4

This is a healthy one-dish meal that takes minutes to put together. Switch up the vegetables depending on what you have on hand. Serve with a salad.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 lb lean ground beef
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 small carrots, diced
- 2 small zucchini, diced
- 1 cup pearl barley
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 cups boiling water or stock
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped

Heat oil in a large skillet. Add beef, thyme and red pepper flakes. Sauté beef until browned, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Add onions, peppers, garlic, carrot and zucchini. Combine with meat and sauté 2 minutes. Add barley and soy sauce and mix with meat and vegetables.

Pour over boiling water and stir together. Bring to a boil, cover skillet and cook on low heat for 45 minutes or until barley is tender. Add more water if needed.

Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Stir-fried Chicken, Green Beans and Lentils

Serves 4

Slightly spiced and utterly delicious, this dish is quick and healthy, too. Lentils du Puy, caviar lentils and black lentils are all small dark lentils, mostly grown in Saskatchewan. They are generally available in gourmet or bulk stores, but if you can't find them, substitute regular green lentils.

Lentils

- 1 cup lentils du Puy
- 3 cups water
- 2 slices lemon
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Chicken

- 1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup onions, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic, chopped
- 1 teaspoon ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon curry paste or powder
- 4 ounces (125 g) green beans
- ½ cup chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons yogurt
- 2 tablespoons coriander, chopped

Place lentils, water and lemon slices in a medium pot. Bring to a boil and simmer 20 to 25 minutes or until tender. Drain. Discard lemon slices and season lentils with salt and pepper.

Cut chicken breasts in ¼-inch slices. Season with salt and pepper. Heat wok on high heat. Add oil and heat for 1 minute more. Add onions and fry for about 2 minutes or until soft but

not brown. Stir in garlic, ginger and curry paste and fry 30 seconds.

Add chicken and beans and stir fry for 3 minutes or until chicken is browned but pink in centre. Stir in chicken stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 3 minutes longer or until chicken and beans are cooked through. Stir in yogurt and coriander. Serve over lentils.

Quinoa Risotto

Serves 4 to 6

You can buy mixtures of several colours of quinoa, which gives this recipe a splash of colour. Quinoa contains more protein than any other grain, making it an essential part of a vegetarian diet. Using a mixture of risotto rice and quinoa makes a festive side dish for the mushrooms. This is not the traditional way of making risotto, but it works very well.

- ½ cup quinoa, rinsed
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup arborio rice
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 2 cups hot vegetable stock or water
- 2 cups roasted diced squash or sweet potato
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped

Garnish

- ¼ cup Parmesan shavings

Place water in a small pot over high heat and bring to a boil. Add quinoa, cover, turn heat to low and simmer for 12 minutes or until water is absorbed and quinoa is tender. Set aside to steam, covered, while preparing rice.

Heat oil in a wide heavy-bottom soup pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add rice and sauté until rice becomes whiter and feels hot to the touch, about 3 minutes. Add onion and sauté another 2 minutes or until softened.

Add vegetable stock, bring to a boil, cover the pan and reduce heat to low. Simmer for 12 to 14 minutes or until rice is al dente.

Add squash and quinoa along with another splash of stock if mixture seems dry. Stir until they are fully incorporated, about 2 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Stir in Parmesan cheese and parsley. Garnish with shaved Parmesan.

To roast squash

Toss diced squash with 2 tablespoon olive oil, place on a baking sheet and roast at 400 F for 15 to 18 minutes or until tender and golden. Toss once halfway through cooking.

Broccoli and Cauliflower Salad

Serves 3 to 4

Broccoli and cauliflower are always a good combination, but their flavours really come out with this creamy anchovy drizzle.

- ½ head broccoli
- ½ head cauliflower
- ½ cup red onion, chopped
- Creamy anchovy drizzle
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons yogurt
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 3 anchovies, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon garlic, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- ¼ cup parsley, chopped
- ½ cup toasted pumpkin seeds

Cut florets from broccoli and cauliflower. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and add cauliflower florets. Boil for 2 minutes, add broccoli and boil 2 minutes longer or until crisp-tender. Drain and rinse with cold water until cold. Pat dry.

Combine mayonnaise, yogurt, Dijon mustard, vinegar, anchovies and garlic. Whisk in olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Toss with vegetable mixture and red onions. If too thick, thin with a little water.

Scatter parsley and pumpkin seeds over the mixture.



Low-fat Caesar Salad Dressing

Make about 3/4 cup

A salad dressing with half the calories of the regular one but plenty of taste. I usually have this at the ready in the fridge. It keeps a week.

- ½ cup ricotta
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- 2 anchovy fillets, chopped
- ¼ cup skim milk
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon garlic, chopped
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan, grated

Process ricotta, freshly ground pepper, anchovy fillets, skim milk, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce, garlic and olive oil in food processor or blender until smooth. Stir in Parmesan. Season to taste.

To make low-fat croutons

Cube slices of bread. Place on baking sheet and bake at 400 F for 5 to 8 minutes, turning once.



Fudge Brownies

Makes 32 small pieces or 16 regular

This brownie recipe is based on the one at Canyon Ranch, a luxurious spa in Arizona. It is super delicious, and a small piece goes a long way. Use baby food for the prune puree or make your own, but thin it out with some water. If it is too thick, it will not amalgamate properly.

- 2 tablespoons 70 per cent dark chocolate
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons prune puree
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 5 tablespoons cocoa powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
- Pinch salt
- 3 egg whites

Preheat oven to 300 F.

Lightly spray an 8-inch by 8-inch pan with canola oil and set aside. Line with parchment paper.

Melt chocolate, butter and oil in a pot over low heat. Add prune puree and mix well. Remove from heat and set aside.

Sift together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt.

In a separate bowl, whip egg whites and remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar until soft peaks are formed.

Gently fold half of flour mixture into chocolate mixture and mix well. Gently fold into egg-white mixture. Fold in remaining flour mixture to egg whites.

Pour batter into prepared pan, smooth out and bake for 30 minutes or until slightly wobbly in the middle.

Remove from oven. Cool. Cut into 1-inch by 2-inch pieces for a small serving.

Winter Fruit Salad

Serves 6

Winter fruits make an excellent salad when they are marinated with a tasty dressing. Blood oranges are available from the end of January through April, and their intense ruby colour makes an attractive dressing.

- 2 blood or navel oranges
- 2 bananas
- 1 cantaloupe
- 3 kiwi fruit
- 1 cup seedless red or green grapes

Dressing

- ½ cup blood orange juice
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon chopped preserved ginger, or to taste
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cardamom

Peel oranges, removing all the white pith. Cut into sections. Peel and thinly slice bananas. Scoop cantaloupe into balls with melon baller, or dice melon, and add the fruit to a bowl. Peel and thinly slice kiwi fruit, toss with grapes and add to bowl. Combine blood orange juice, sugar, ginger, lime juice and cardamom in small bowl. Drizzle over salad and chill thoroughly before serving.



Roasted vegetables are perfect for cold-weather meals. A recipe for winter roasted salad

LUCY WAVERMAN

Though we associate salads with summer, there's no reason they should be relegated only to the season that produces the most local veggies. It makes sense to have salad for dinner when it's too hot to turn on the oven, but when it's cold out, why not turn the oven on to

make your salad?

The ingredients here are completely flexible; use what you like, or what you have, in quantities suited to your appetite and how many people are at your table. Cut your veggies into similar sizes, or if you're roasting different kinds, cut the dense ones (carrots, sweet potato) into smaller chunks, or give them more time before adding the others to the pan. (Remember, they'll shrink as they cook.) And of course any dressing you love will probably be perfect on your salad.

- Dense winter veggies such as carrots, cabbage, cauliflower, rapini, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, rutabagas, squash or anything else you like
- Cooked or canned pulses, such as lentils, butter beans or chickpeas
- Canola or other vegetable or olive oil, for cooking
- Salt
- Lemon or mandarin orange, halved
- Cooked grains, such as barley or farro
- Bread slices or ends
- Garlic
- Chopped celery
- Purple onion
- Chopped apple or pear
- Cheese or plant-based cheese
- Vinaigrette (or use your dressing of choice):
- Olive or other vegetable oil
- Red or white wine vinegar, or lemon or orange juice (preferably roasted)
- Grainy or dijon mustard
- Garlic
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Preheat your oven to 425 F. Cut your veggies into wedges or chunks a bit larger than bite-sized (trim the ends of rapini, but leave them whole) and spread out in a single layer on a parchment-lined baking sheet. If you like, add larger pulses, such as chickpeas and butter beans, to the pan as well. Drizzle generously with oil, roll everything around to coat and sprinkle with salt. If desired, add a lemon and/or orange half or two to the pan. Roast, stir-

ring once or twice, for 20-30 minutes, or until tender and starting to char on the edges. (If some veggies are cooking more quickly, take them off the pan early.)

Remove from the oven and if you like, shake some cooked grains onto the pan and stir to warm through and coat with some of the oil. Blitz bread slices or crusts in a food processor with a clove of garlic (or some dehydrated or granulated garlic) and a pinch of salt until as coarse or fine as you like, and toast in a skillet with a drizzle of oil or chunk of butter, until golden.

To make the vinaigrette, shake a ratio of 3:1 or 4:1 oil to vinegar or citrus juice in a jar with about a teaspoon of mustard, a bit of finely grated garlic, and some salt and pepper.

Spread your roasted veg out on a plate or platter, scatter with celery, purple onion, apple or pear, and some cheese if you like, drizzle with vinaigrette and top with crispy crumbs. Serves as many as you like.



Secrets to making the perfect meringue dessert

LUCY WAVERMAN

When you commit to making a beautiful mess, meringues are anything but complicated to make.

My Newest Pavlova Meringue Recipe

Serves 8

This makes a stunning dessert even without fruit. Make a ½ recipe for 4.

- 1 lemon cut in half
- 6 egg whites
- 1 cup plus 2 tbsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tbsp. white vinegar, lemon juice or rice vinegar
- 2 tsp. cornstarch

The meringue

Trace a 9-inch circle on parchment paper and place on a cookie sheet.

Preheat oven to 300 F (150 C)

Rub your bowl with a lemon half. This is the game-changer in making meringues. The bowl must be spotlessly clean, and I find that rubbing it with a cut lemon before I start the meringue makes billowier, crisper meringues.

Add egg whites and beat until foamy. Add salt. Slowly add the sugar, beating constantly. When the mixture is thick, glossy and holds stiff peaks, quickly fold in the vinegar and sprinkle in the cornstarch. Beat for 30 seconds. Mixture should remain very thick.

With an ice-cream scoop, spoon scoops of meringue on the parchment sheet in the circle. They can touch each other. About 9 scoops should fill the circle. Place in oven. Immediately turn down the heat to 275 F (135 C). Bake 1 hour. After an hour, turn off heat and leave meringues to cool in oven for an hour. (I have left them all night with no discernible difference). They will look huge and decadent and give the impression of a wreath. Slide onto your serving dish.



The topping

Combine 1 cup lemon curd with 1 cup mascarpone, then lighten the mixture with $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cup whipped cream or full fat Greek yogurt. Spoon onto the meringue. Melt 4 oz dark or milk chocolate and when liquid swirl over cream mixture with a fork. You can add fruit in the centre but no need.

Tips

Meringues should be made on a day that is dry. Humidity is their enemy. It causes them to absorb water and lose their crispness.

If any egg yolk gets in the mixture the meringue won't work. When you separate the eggs use 2 bowls. Add each egg white separately to the bowl and then into the beating bowl.

(That way, if yolk gets in it only spoils one white.) If inadvertently some yolk trickles into the white, then try removing with a piece of eggshell.

Use room temperature egg whites (they beat up better) and fine granulated sugar because it makes a slightly firmer meringue. I prefer less sugar in my meringues because the texture is lighter. Instead of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup per egg white, the standard amount, I use 3 tbsp. (45 ml.) The mixture is ready for baking when it is thick enough to hold stiff peaks and is glossy white.

More easy-to-make meringue ideas

Lemon Meringue Cream

Crumble meringues into a wine glass or small jar. Top with lemon curd (store-bought or homemade), whipped cream or Greek yogurt. Garnish with some mint. Optionally add fruit in a layer or mix the lemon curd and cream or yogurt together before adding.

Chocolate Meringue Cookies

Make the classic mixture and pipe out small meringues. Melt chocolate and dip meringues into melted chocolate once baked.

Meringue Jelly Roll

Spread the meringue mixture into a rectangle on a parchment lined baking sheet. Bake at 350 F (180 C) for about 15 to 20 minutes or until light brown. Cool for an hour then roll up like a jelly roll with a filling of your choice.



Here's why plant-based desserts are a piece of cake

JULIE VAN ROSENDAAL

Historically, baked goods have relied on eggs and dairy products, common ingredients on most farms, to help bind, moisten and leaven. Generations reinforced the notion that this is how you make cakes, muffins and cookies. My grandma's marmalade cookies call for butter and eggs, and my family's go-to (since the 90s) chocolate birthday cake calls for plenty of buttermilk.

But there's no reason baked goods need to contain animal products like eggs and dairy – and

baked goods that stray from tradition are not lesser versions, nor should they be considered “alternative.”

Vegan and plant-based baking is a noticeable theme among new cookbooks coming out this fall: There’s *Plantcakes* by Vancouver-based baker Lyndsay Sung, *BReD: sourdough loaves, small breads, and other plant-based baking* by B.C.-based vegan chef Ed Tatton, and other books, like *The Buddhist Chef’s Homestyle Cooking* by Jean-Philippe Cyr, have chapters dedicated to the subject.

All offer tips to add to your culinary tool box: there are plenty of plant-based butters (a rebranding of the term margarine) out there, and firmer brick-style is more consistent in texture than tub-style spreads, which can contain more water. Vegetable oils are amazing for cakes, muffins and quick breads. Shortening made with no animal products is perfect for flaky pastry; or start with a box of frozen puff, which is often plant-based too (check the label).

Not all milk comes from a cow: Sung recommends coconut (but warns the flavour can be detectable) or soy; I also like oat or pea-based milk, like *Sproud* or *NotMilk*, for baking. There are plenty of ingredients that bind and lift like eggs, and which you choose depends on what you’re making: there’s vinegar and baking soda, a generations-old method, or aquafaba – the liquid drained from a can of chickpeas – which can be whipped into airy meringue. There are store-bought egg replacers or you can stir 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed into 3 tablespoons of warm water to mimic the binding properties of an egg. And any batter that contains pectin-rich mashed bananas doesn’t need eggs at all.



Plant-Based Caramel Apple Cake with Oatmeal Cookie Crumble

Serves about 12

I road-tested this recipe for a wonderful fall cake from the new cookbook *Plantcakes*, by Lyndsay Sung. I've edited it slightly for space, and used two 9-inch round cake pans instead of the three 7-inch cake pans she calls for, which are less common in most kitchens. Feel free to make it three-tiered if you have the equipment.

Cake

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 3/4 tsp. fine salt
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 3/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups grated apple (don't bother peeling it)

Oatmeal Cookie Crumbles

- 5 Tbsp sugar
- 3/4 cup rolled oats
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. fine salt
- 1/4 cup unsalted plant-based butter, room temperature, cut into pieces

Salted Caramel

- 1 cup sugar
- 2 Tbsp corn syrup or golden syrup
- 1/2 cup plant milk
- 2 Tbsp unsalted plant-based butter
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 tsp. fine salt

Frosting

- 1 ¾ cups unsalted brick-style plant-based butter, at room temperature
- 2 1/2 cups icing sugar, plus more if needed
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- salted caramel (above)

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray two 9-inch round cake pans with non-stick spray, and line the bottoms with rounds of parchment.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the oil, applesauce, sugars and vanilla until smooth, about 1 minute. Add the dry ingredients and mix until combined. Stir in the grated apple.

Divide the batter evenly between the prepared pans and bake for 25-30 minutes, until golden and springy to the touch. Let the cakes cool completely in their pans.

Meanwhile, make the cookie crumbles: combine the sugar, oats, flour and salt. Add the butter and blend with a fork or your fingers; press onto a parchment-lined sheet and bake for 15–20 minutes, until golden brown and crisp. Let cool completely and break into chunks.

Make the salted caramel: heat the sugar and corn syrup along with 2 Tbsp water in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over high heat until the sugar has dissolved. Let the mixture boil without stirring until it reaches a medium amber colour, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and carefully whisk in the plant milk (it will bubble up ferociously, so go slowly) along with the butter, vanilla and salt. (If the caramel hardens, stir it over low heat until it melts again.) Cool completely.

Make the frosting: in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter, icing sugar, vanilla and almost all of the salted caramel (save a few tablespoons for decorating) on low speed to combine, then beat until light and fluffy, scraping down the bowl as needed. If the frosting seems too loose, add a spoonful of icing sugar at a time until creamy and spreadable. Frost the completely cooled cake and top with cookie crumbles, and

drizzle with the reserved salted caramel. Serves about 12.



Five holiday meals that help feed our sense of nostalgia

JULIE VAN ROSENDAAL

Though December is often referred to as holiday season in this country, Canadians celebrate significant cultural and religious occasions throughout the year. The meals associated with these holidays draw friends and families together around tables and feed our sense of nostalgia. The Globe asked a diverse group of Canadians to share one of the dishes their festivities would not be the same without.



Hannukah

The Rosenblum Family's Latkes

Makes about two dozen

- 2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes
- 1 onion, minced
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten with a fork
- 1/4 cup flour or matzah meal
- 1 tablespoon oil, plus extra for frying
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1-2 teaspoons curry powder (optional)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Applesauce and sour cream, for serving

Grate the potatoes on the coarse side of a box grater onto a clean tea towel or double thickness of paper towel, and squeeze out as much moisture as possible. Put the grated potatoes into a large bowl, add the remaining ingredients and toss to combine everything well.

Set a heavy skillet over medium-high heat, add a generous drizzle of oil and add spoonfuls of the potato mixture to the pan, pressing them down to make thin latkes. Cook until deep golden and crisp on the bottom, then flip and cook until crisp and golden on the other side. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to drain excess oil.

Serve warm, topped with applesauce and/or sour cream.



Christmas

Darcy and Greg's Christmas Morning Waffles

Serves 2-4

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/4 cups milk (they use almond milk)
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 egg yolks, lightly beaten
- 2 egg whites

In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. In another bowl (or measuring cup), whisk together the milk, oil and egg yolks. Add to the dry ingredients and stir just until blended.

In a clean bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff but not dry; fold into the batter. Cook in a preheated waffle iron according to the manufacturer's directions. Serve immediately, with butter and maple syrup or your choice of toppings.



Lunar New Year

Van Kim Thi Pham's Thit Kho Tau (Caramelized Pork and Eggs)

Serves 4-6

- 2 pounds pork belly, cubed into 1-inch pieces
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 shallot, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup fish sauce (or more or less, to your taste)
- 6 hard boiled eggs, peeled
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons dark mushroom flavoured soy sauce
- 3 cups chicken or pork bone stock
- 1 1/2 cups coconut water
- 1 teaspoon coarse fresh cracked black pepper
- Green onion, crispy garlic, peanuts or cilantro, for garnish (optional)

In a large pot, bring 3 litres of water to a boil. Cube pork belly into rough 1-inch cubes, add to water and blanch for two minutes. Remove from the water with a slotted spoon and add half of the minced garlic and shallot to the pork. Sprinkle with salt and let it cool and marinate for 30 minutes.

In a clean pot set over medium-low heat, combine the sugar and fish sauce. Cook gently until a caramelized amber colour, and add the hard boiled eggs. Stir gently until evenly coated and remove from heat. Remove eggs and add pork; toss to coat in the rest of the caramelized sauce/liquid. Remove everything and set aside.

In the same pot, add oil and the remaining garlic and shallot. Cook on low heat until soft and fragrant. Return the pork to the pot, gently stir, and then add the eggs, soy sauce, stock, coconut water and black pepper. Simmer on low heat for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, until tender.

Once finished, you may want to skim some fat off the top as this dish will produce a lot. Season to taste, and serve with fresh hot rice. Like most stews, flavours will mingle and be much better the next day. If cooled overnight, the fat will solidify at the top and it will be easier to remove excess before reheating. If you like, garnish with green onion, crispy garlic, peanuts or cilantro.



Eid

Mariam Munawar's Rosewater and Wild Blueberry Cheesecake on a Chocolate Biscuit

Serves 12

Crust

- 1 1/2 cups chocolate biscuit crumbs (such as Oreo)
- 1/3 cup melted butter

Filling

- 4-8 ounces (250 grams) packages cream cheese
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups sour cream
- 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
- 4 eggs
- 4 tablespoons rosewater
- 2 tablespoons dry rose petals, plus extra for garnish (optional)

Blueberry sauce

- 2 cups blueberries, fresh or frozen
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon rosewater
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch

Preheat the oven to 325 F.

To make the crust, combine the chocolate crumbs and butter and press into the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan.

In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese, 1 cup of the sugar, the cornstarch and salt on medium speed using a handheld or stand mixer until well blended. Beat in 1 cup of the sour cream, the whipping cream and 4 tablespoons rosewater until blended well, using a spatula to scrape down the sides as needed.

Beat in the eggs one at a time, beating on low speed just until each is incorporated. Fold in the dried rose petals, if you're using them, and pour over the crust.

Bake for 50 minutes, or until the middle is almost set. Stir 2 tablespoons sugar into the remaining 1 cup sour cream. Spread carefully over the cheesecake and bake an additional 10 minutes.

Remove the cheesecake from the oven, let it cool completely, then refrigerate for at least 8 hours, until set.

To make the sauce, combine the blueberries, sugar, water, lemon juice and rosewater in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer. Stir the 2 tablespoons of cornstarch into 2 tablespoons water and add to the sauce; continue to simmer until thickened, then set aside to cool completely.

When the cheesecake is well chilled, pour the blueberry sauce over the top, leaving some room around the outer edge. Carefully garnish with dry rose petals around the outer edge.



Diwali

Jas Dosanj's Malabar Paratha

Makes 4 paratha

- 1 cup organic all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting and rolling
- 1 cup organic whole wheat flour
- 1 tablespoon organic cane sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
- 3/4 cup warm water (approximately, you may need more or less depending on your flour and humidity where you live)
- Vegetable oil for the dough and cooking

Put the flours into a large mixing bowl and add the sugar and salt. Rub in the melted butter, then gradually add the warm water until the dough comes together and you can form a ball.

Knead until soft. The dough will be sticky. Add a few drops of oil and briefly knead once more. Cover and let rest for 30 minutes; this will prevent the dough springing back when rolling and will make flaky paratha.

Knead again with a drizzle of oil. You'll notice the dough is soft and smooth this time. As you knead, push the dough away from you to activate the gluten.

Divide the dough into 4 equally sized balls. Flatten each into a patty, dip both sides into a shallow bowl of flour, and roll out as thin as you can – about 10 inches. (Don't worry if the dough rips or there are holes at this stage.)

With your fingers, smear oil over the dough (about 1-2 teaspoons for each paratha), then lightly dust with flour. Starting from one side, pleat the dough, folding it accordion-style to form layers, stretching outwards as you go. Coil it up like a cinnamon bun, tucking any loose bits underneath. (This can be done ahead of time; cover with plastic wrap to stop the dough from drying out.)

Once all the balls have been shaped, heat a tava or flat skillet over medium heat. One at a time, flatten the coiled dough, then roll out in a thin, even round shape again. Drizzle some oil into your heated tava, and rub it all over the surface with paper towel. Place the paratha on the skillet and cook, flipping twice, smearing with oil each time. It will start to brown and become crispy.

Once cooked (another two or so flips until it's crispy), place the paratha on your countertop and when it's cool enough to handle, squash using both your hands to separate the layers, or pick it up and clap your hands together with the paratha between them. Dust off your tava to remove any excess flour, then repeat for the remaining parathas. Eat straight away.

