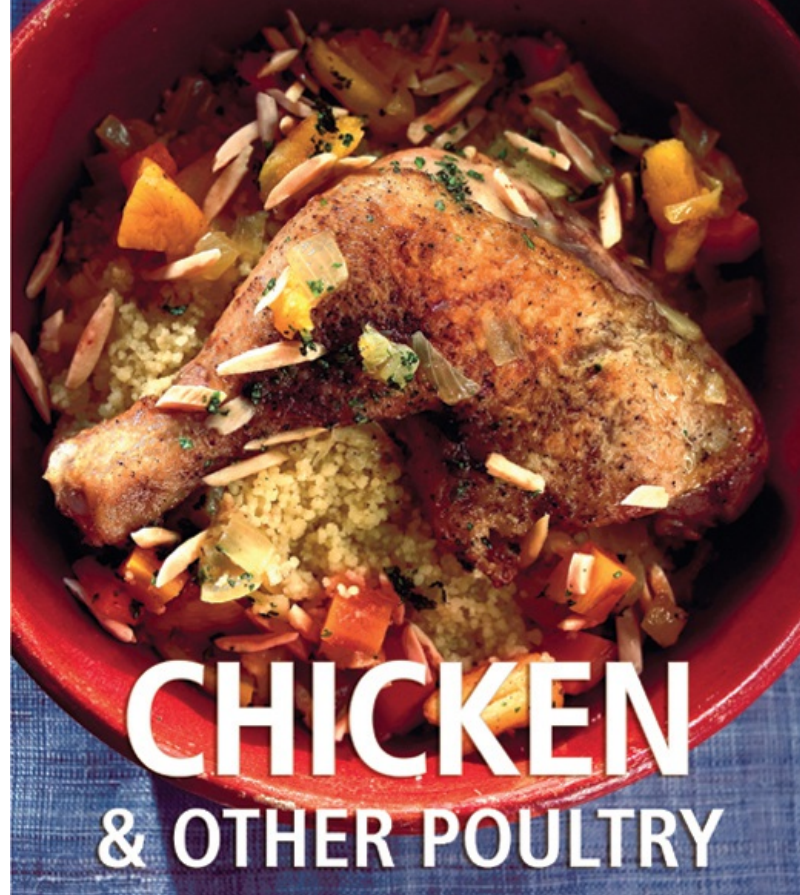


JAMES PETERSON'S
KITCHEN EDUCATION



CHICKEN & OTHER POULTRY

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Recipes and Techniques from *Cooking*


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AUTHOR'S NOTE

James Peterson's Kitchen Education is a series of electronic booklets featuring the most popular topics from my book, [Cooking](#). In this edition, *Chicken and Other Poultry*, I've included all the recipes that originally appeared in the chapters, Chicken and Turkey, as well as Duck and Small Birds. You'll find recipes for [roasted](#), [sautéed](#), [braised](#), [poached](#), [grilled](#), and [fried chicken](#), as well as [turkey](#), [duck](#), [squab](#), [quail](#), and more.

Each booklet opens with a section called [Assumptions](#). This is where I describe some of my preferences for particular ingredients and make recommendations for special equipment you might need to prepare these recipes.

The [Appendix](#) is full of really useful, additional information. In [Cooking Terms](#), I define the various terms and preparations used in the recipes. If you don't understand what it means to [deglaze](#) a pan or [steep](#) an ingredient, this is where you'll find a clear definition.

[The 10 Basic Cooking Methods](#) contains explanations and photography covering the ten basic cooking techniques that any cook needs in the kitchen: roasting, braising, poaching, sautéing, steaming, frying, grilling, smoking, barbecuing, and boiling. You won't need to know *all* of these techniques to make the recipes in this booklet, but they are used often in cooking and will be a good general reference.

[Basic Recipes and Techniques](#) is just what it sounds like, the section where we put the simple recipes, like [Basic Mayonnaise](#) or [Brown Chicken Broth](#), and how-to photo series, like [How to Peel and Chop Onions](#) or [How to Trim Artichokes](#), that you'll need when making the recipes in this booklet. At the end of this section are the [Conversion Charts](#), in case you need to convert your measurements from cups to milliliters, ounces to grams, or vice versa.

Feel free to scroll through the book and check out your favorite recipes. We've included lots of links to make it easy for you to jump around. While not essential, I do recommend that you read [The 10 Basic Cooking Methods](#) before you hit the kitchen. That way, the recipes reinforce what you've learned about each particular cooking technique that you're going to undertake.

Most of all, I hope you enjoy yourself. Cooking (and, to my mind, creativity in general) is about having fun and being relaxed. The anxiety-ridden, too-complicated meal is destined to fail while something simple and spontaneous is almost always sure to work. Good luck!



ASSUMPTIONS

I don't believe in observing a lot of rules when I cook, but I do have strong preferences about what makes cooking taste best.

INGREDIENTS

Baking powder: All baking powder is double-acting; it's almost impossible to find any other version on grocery store shelves.

Bay leaves: Use the imported European variety, not those from California where the leaves have an aggressive eucalyptus flavor and aroma.

Butter: All butter is unsalted. If you only have salted butter, don't worry, just cut down on the salt in the recipe. If you're trying to make [clarified butter or ghee](#), you'll have to use unsalted. And be aware that salted butter tends to burn a bit more easily than unsalted butter.

Cooking wine: Despite its virtues being extolled in many an old French cookbook, don't pour an expensive bottle of Bordeaux over a pot roast. True, a wine with bottle age gives wonderful flavor to anything braised, but unless you're set up with a cellar that guarantees you mature wine, don't buy aged wine for cooking unless you're very wealthy and don't care. In general, use white wine with a lot of acidity, which typically means French but not necessarily expensive; a generic Sauvignon Blanc is usually the right price and provides the requisite acidity and a bit of character you'll need for *beurre blanc* or for meats braised in white wine. For red, go for a lot of body. Red wines from South America are often a good value and wines that might be too soft to drink, such as a generic Merlot, are perfect for the pot. Zinfandel was once a great value but no longer, unless you happen onto a sale. Wine that you've had around too long and that is a bit madeirized (white) or has lost its color (red) is perfect for cooking, and in fact the defects of wine gone "bad" can turn delicious when simmered with vegetables, meat, and herbs. Sherry, provided it's dry, is often delicious in place of "regular" white wine, and white vermouth is great in a pinch when the only wine around is rare white Burgundy that friends brought to drink with dinner. When you are completely desperately out of wine, wine vinegar, especially your own homemade, will serve as a passable substitute.

Meat glaze: Use either [homemade](#) (take your best broth and reduce it to one-fifteenth its original volume) or a commercially available glaze, which can be the equivalent of broth reduced to one-thirtieth of its original volume.

Nut oils: These are notoriously perishable and are often rancid before you even open the bottle. The best way to avoid rancidity is to buy oil made from roasted nuts; the roasting greatly slows down rancidity. These oils are expensive, but very little is needed to flavor foods, so you end up using less than you would of a less expensive oil.

Salt: All salt is regular fine salt unless otherwise stated. If you have it, use fine sea salt as your basic salt, but otherwise regular "when it rains it pours" salt will be fine.

EQUIPMENT

Benriner slicer: Plastic vegetable slicers are convenient and less expensive alternatives to professional-style metal mandolines. For some tasks, the Benriner works better than its pricey cousin. Be sure to buy the Benriner brand, which has adjustable nuts that enable you to control the thickness of the slices (some brands have set inserts for creating various thicknesses and these are rarely the right size).

Cookware: Much is made about the materials used to make cookware, but it doesn't make an enormous difference if you cook in a copper pot or an aluminum one. Just remember that the pots and pans should be heavy so they cook evenly and don't get too hot in the areas right over the heat source. The best bargains are cast-iron skillets, commonly found in hardware stores. They're heavy and, once seasoned—heat a few tablespoons of vegetable oil in the pan until it smokes, then rub in the oil with a rag—can be used for just about anything. Aluminum pans, often found at restaurant supply stores, are also a good value; just keep in mind that aluminum sauté pans must be very hot—the oil in them should smoke—or food cooked in them will stick. Aluminum saucepans should never be used for sauces or soups containing egg yolks, or the liquid will turn gray.

Cooling racks: If you find a circular cake rack, nab it; they're perfect for improvising steamers. Otherwise just buy a large enough rack to cool at least a sheet pan full of cookies.

Kitchen towels: These are indispensable and should be sturdy and made of cotton (polyester doesn't absorb liquids). Don't use terry-cloth towels, which easily catch fire and leave lint on surfaces and foods.

Pots and pans: While a full collection of pots and pans looks great on the kitchen shelf, it's possible to cook with very few. A large pot is essential for boiling pasta and vegetables and for making broth. A saucepan is essential for soups and sauces and a skillet is necessary for sautéing. A collection of sauté pans of different sizes is ideal, enabling you to match them to the amount of food you are cooking so that you just fill the pan, the perfect condition for sautéing. A medium pot with low sides is great to have for making soups in which vegetables are sweated in oil or butter before liquid is added. A saucepan with sloping sides is perfect for making egg-yolk based sauces such as hollandaise. A heavy sauté pan can often be improvised as a roasting pan, but if you're buying a roasting pan, try to find one that fits as closely as possible the shape of whatever it is you'll likely be roasting; oval pans are often just right.

Sheet pans: The sheet pans I use are of standard size (professionals refer to them as "half sheet pans") and measure 17 by 13 inches. They fit in virtually all ovens.

Spider: A spider looks like a spider web. The web part is made of wire and is attached to a long handle. Spiders are the best implements for frying because they allow you to remove ingredients quickly without bringing up a lot of oil as a slotted spoon does.

Stoves: While all of us would like to have our kitchens equipped with six-burner Vulcan ranges, most of us do with less and some of us with a lot less. Fortunately the best cooking isn't dependent on the best equipment. The only consistently annoying idiosyncrasy of most home stoves is a lack of heat, which makes it challenging to brown foods quickly enough. Recipes in this book often call for "medium to high heat," which sounds like a very wide range. It is, except that medium heat on a professional stove is the equivalent of high heat on many home kitchen ranges. If your stove is limited in this way, you may find yourself using the highest heat for all but the most gently simmered dishes.

Strainers and sieves: A drum sieve, a ring of steel or wood with a sheet of screen stretched over it, is the ideal gadget for straining solid mixtures, which are worked through the screen with the back of a large spoon or metal mixing bowl. Drum sieves, sometimes called by their

French name *tamis*, are made in two forms: all metal with varying mesh screens and all wood with a fine mesh screen that requires replacing the whole device when worn out.

CHICKEN AND TURKEY

Chicken is truly versatile. Almost any technique can be used to cook it, and because its flavor is relatively neutral, it adapts well to countless flavor combinations. However you prepare chicken and turkey, one secret to success remains: don't overcook them. Most cooks follow recipes that call for cooking the bird to a temperature of 160°F or higher for fear of salmonella. But in fact, a whole chicken or turkey is done when the innermost part—where the thigh joint lodges in the back—reaches 140°F. The salmonella organism dies at a temperature of 137°F, and since the bacteria is found not in the meat, but only on the surface and in the cavity, both of which become much hotter than 137°F by the time the chicken is cooked to an internal temperature of 140°F, there is no need to overcook the chicken. When you cut the thigh away from the breast of a roast chicken or turkey, the thigh meat near the joint should still be pink or have red streaks. The meat is only undercooked when it is shiny and translucent looking. If you are cooking chicken parts, they are done when the breast and thigh meat bounce back to the touch.

ROAST CHICKEN

Inexplicably, roasting a chicken intimidates even experienced cooks, which is strange only because it is almost impossible to go wrong. If you overcook your chicken, the breast meat will be a little dry and if your oven isn't hot enough initially the skin may not brown, but in either case your chicken will still be perfectly delicious. Here are some tips that guarantee a perfectly roasted chicken:

1. START THE CHICKEN IN A VERY HOT OVEN.

This ensures that the chicken will brown. If it starts to get too brown, you can always turn the oven down, but if the bird starts out in too low an oven, it may not brown by the time it cooks through.

2. ROAST THE CHICKEN IN A HEAVY-BOTTOMED VESSEL AS CLOSE TO THE SIZE OF THE CHICKEN AS POSSIBLE.

Cast-iron skillets are often just the right size. Spread the giblets around the chicken so there is no space in the pan that is not covered. This prevents the juices from the chicken burning on the pan bottom.

3. DON'T USE A ROASTING RACK.

A rack keeps the chicken above the roasting pan. The roasting pan gets very hot, and as the juices from the chicken drip down onto it, they burn and smoke up the kitchen.

4. TRUSS THE BIRD.

For even cooking and a prettier finished bird, [truss](#) the chicken. Let the chicken rest for about 10 minutes, covered loosely with aluminum foil, before serving. This allows the heat to continue to penetrate to the inside of the chicken and leaves it cooked more evenly.

5. COVER THE BREAST WITH ALUMINUM FOIL.

There is the inherent problem of the breasts cooking faster than the thighs, so they dry out by the time the thighs are done. Fold a sheet of foil into a triple-thick layer, butter one side, and use it to cover the breast meat for the first 20 to 30 minutes of roasting, to slow down the cooking of the breast meat.

Safety

If not handled carefully, raw chicken can contaminate other foods with salmonella. Never, for example, cut up a chicken on a cutting board and then use the same cutting board, unwashed, to cut other ingredients that you will be serving raw or to later carve the cooked chicken. Cutting boards used for raw chicken should be well washed with hot water mixed with a little bleach to disinfect them. When working with raw chicken, wash your hands constantly.

Roast Chicken

The rite of carving makes a roast chicken seem like a special occasion, and with a little practice, any cook can look like an expert. [These photos](#) show the basic way to carve a chicken: into 2 breasts and 2 thighs with the drumsticks attached.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

One 4-pound chicken

Salt

Pepper

1 tablespoon butter, at room temperature

Jus or Gravy (optional)

2 pounds chicken drumsticks, wings, or backs, chopped into 2-inch pieces with a cleaver

1 large carrot, cut into 1-inch sections

1 onion, quartered

2 teaspoons flour, if making gravy

1 cup [chicken jus](#) from roasting pan or [chicken broth](#) or water

Preheat the oven to 450°F. [Truss](#) the chicken if you want to go to the trouble and season the chicken on the outside with salt and pepper. Take a sheet of aluminum foil about 18 inches long and fold it to create a triple thickness. It will need to be vaguely trapezoidal to cover the breasts and not the thighs. Smear one side with the butter and place it, buttered side down, over the chicken breasts.

If you are making a jus or gravy, spread the chicken parts, carrot, and onion in a roasting pan or skillet just large enough to hold them in a single layer and roast for 20 minutes.

Place the chicken in a pan just large enough to hold it or in the pan with the chicken parts. Roast the chicken for 25 minutes, take off the foil, and roast for 15 minutes more. Check the temperature by sticking an instant-read thermometer about 3 inches in through the skin between the breast and the thigh. When it reads 140°F, take the chicken out of the pan. If you don't have a thermometer, judge the doneness by lifting the chicken and tilting it so some of the juices run out of the cavity. If the juices are pink and cloudy, the chicken isn't done. If they are clear but streaked with red, it is done. If they are perfectly clear, with no red, the chicken is overdone. Lift the chicken out of the roasting pan by inserting a wooden spoon into the cavity. Tilt the chicken so any juice in the cavity runs into the pan. Let the chicken rest in a warm place loosely covered with aluminum foil for 10 minutes before serving.



If you are making a jus or gravy, look in the roasting pan to see if the juices have caramelized. If they have, the bottom of the pan will be coated with brown and a layer of clear fat will be floating on top. Just pour or spoon off the fat and discard it. If they haven't caramelized, you will see brown liquid combined with the fat. The mixture of fat and juices may even be cloudy, meaning the juices have emulsified with the fat, which you want to avoid. If the juices haven't caramelized, put the roasting pan on the stove top and boil the juices until they caramelize on the bottom and separate from the fat, and then pour off the fat. You now have a roasting pan with a layer of caramelized juices and no or very little fat. Add a small amount of water or chicken broth, put the pan on the stove, and scrape the bottom with a wooden spoon for a couple of minutes to dissolve the caramelized juices. Strain the juices and serve in a warmed sauceboat.

If you want to thicken the juices into a gravy—not usually worth the bother with a roast chicken—leave about a tablespoon of fat in with the juices, add the flour, stir it in the fat over the heat for a minute, and then whisk in the water or chicken broth.

[Carve the chicken.](#) If you need to divide the meat more equitably, cut the breasts crosswise in half and cut the thighs away from the drumsticks. Give everyone half of a breast and a thigh or a drumstick. Pass the jus or gravy in a sauceboat.

VARIATIONS

A lot of roast chicken recipes call for putting something in the cavity—often a lemon—but since a membrane separates the cavity from the meat, this does little to enhance the flavor of the chicken. Other recipes call for stuffing the chicken, often with elaborate mixtures, but in order to cook through the stuffing and make sure it is hot enough to kill bacteria, you have to overcook the chicken. A better solution is to slide flavorful ingredients under the skin, such as wonderfully aromatic tarragon or sage leaves. You can also slice large mushrooms, such as porcini or portobellos, about ¼ inch thick, sauté them in butter or olive oil, and then slide these under the breast skin. Or, you can chop mushrooms, cook them down on the stove top until the water they release evaporates, season with salt and pepper, and stuff this mixture under the breast skin.

When you do this, don't bother with the buttered aluminum foil, since the stuffing protects the breast meat from the heat. If you want to serve your dinner guests a whole breast each with the stuffing, roast 2 chickens and serve the thighs after or save them for leftovers.

Perhaps the earliest recipe that recommends stuffing aromatic ingredients under the skin is one that calls for [truffles](#). The chicken, which looks like it has been in a fight, is covered with black spots, a dish the French call chicken in half mourning. If you decide to embark on such an extravagant project, slide the truffles under the skin the night before you plan on roasting and wrap the chicken in aluminum foil. Leave it wrapped in the foil when you roast it. It won't come out of the oven brown and crispy, but all of the truffle aroma will be intact and the juice that collects in the foil will be celestial.

HOW TO TRUSS AND ROAST A CHICKEN



1. Cross the string over the drumsticks, and then tuck each end under the drumstick on the opposite side. Bring the string along the sides of the chicken over the unfolded wings and flip the chicken over.



2. Slide a length of string under the tail and about an inch farther back.



3. Pull the string over the back of the chicken.



4. Tie a knot and tuck under the wings.



5. Butter a triple thickness of foil for each chicken.



6. Lay the foil over the chicken breasts; don't cover the thighs.



7. Arrange the chickens on a bed of vegetables and chicken parts.



8. Roast for 25 minutes and remove the foil.



9. Roast until golden brown and the internal temperature is 140°F.

HOW TO CARVE A ROAST CHICKEN



1. Slide the carving knife under the thigh, and begin detaching it from the breast.



2. Cut through the joint and detach the thigh.



3. Slide the knife into the joint connecting the wing and detach the wing.



4. Slide the knife along one side of the breastbone, detaching the breast meat, and repeat on the other side.

CHICKEN JUS OR GRAVY

It is perfectly fine to serve a roast chicken with no sauce at all, but a light gravy or jus will enhance its flavor. A jus is simply a gravy that hasn't been thickened. In its purest form, it is just the drippings from the chicken. In authentic roasting—cooking on a spit—a pan is placed under the chicken to catch the juices, and that's it. When roasting in the oven, the pan that catches the juices is the roasting pan itself, and because this pan is hot, the juices often dry and caramelize on the pan bottom. If the pan isn't completely covered with the chicken and pieces of chicken, the juices can even burn. The chicken also releases fat that has to be separated from the juices.

Because a properly roasted chicken doesn't release much in the way of juices—an overcooked chicken releases lots of juices—it is helpful to augment the juices by adding chicken parts, like wings or drumsticks, to the pan along with an onion and a carrot. To get the chicken parts started, put the roasting pan with the chicken parts and vegetables in the hot oven about 20 minutes before adding the chicken.

When you have established that your chicken has reached the correct doneness temperature, cover it loosely with aluminum foil and keep it in a warm place while you figure out what to do about the jus.

HOW TO MAKE CHICKEN JUS



1. Put the roasting pan with the chicken parts and vegetables over high heat and cook until you only see clear fat.



2. Pour the fat out of the tilted pan.



3. Deglaze the pan with [broth](#) or water.



4. Over medium heat, scrape the pan with a wooden spoon to dissolve the caramelized juices.



5. Strain into a saucepan or sauceboat.

HOW TO CUT UP A RAW CHICKEN FOR SAUTÉING OR FRYING



1. Turn the chicken breast side down and cut through the wing joints, detaching the wings.



2. Cut the wing off at the second joint, so you leave a little still attached to the breast.



3. Pull a thigh forward and cut through the skin that runs along the side of the thigh.



4. Continue cutting until you reach the back, and then slide the knife along the back, under the oyster, the tiny nugget of meat nestled in the back.



5. Continue in this way until you have completely detached the thigh.



6. Rotate the chicken around and repeat on the other side.



7. Cut through the skin that connects the other thigh to the back.



8. Completely remove the second thigh.



9. Turn the chicken so the pointed end of the breasts is facing up. Whack through the bone with a knife to cut through the ribs and separate them from the back.



10. Pull the ribs away from the breasts.



11. Snap off the section with the ribs. Cut around the inside of the collarbone to detach the rib section.



12. Pull the skin over the breasts so they are both well covered.



13. Turn the breasts skin side down, and slice a knife through the cartilage that separates them.



14. Draw the knife forward through the breast.



15. Cut all the way through the double breast.



16. Separated breasts.

HOW TO BONE CHICKEN BREASTS



1. Pull the skin off the breasts.



2. Cut along the bone.



3. Completely cut away the bone.



4. Hack off the knob at the end of the wing joint.

HOW TO PREPARE CHICKEN THIGHS



1. Cut the joint and separate the thigh and drumstick.



2. Hack off the joint at the end of the thigh.



3. Slide a knife under the bone in the thigh, and cut through the joint that attaches it to the drumstick. This allows the thighs to cook at the same rate as the breasts.



4. Detach the thigh bone from the drumstick bone.

SAUTÉED CHICKEN

The tastiest way to sauté a whole chicken is to cut it up into 2 breasts and 2 thighs and sauté it in butter or olive oil. Always use a pan just large enough to hold the pieces. If the pan is too big, the juices run into the exposed parts and burn. Cover any spaces with the chicken giblets and the chicken back. Start the chicken skin side down so that the skin renders its fat and turns crispy. A nonstick pan is handy, since chicken skin can stick. If you don't have a nonstick pan, move the pan quickly back and forth on the burner during the first few minutes of cooking. If the chicken is sticking when you try to turn it, cook it for a few minutes more. It will often come loose when the skin cooks a bit longer.

Chicken Sautéed in Butter

The amount of butter in this recipe often puts off cooks and guests, but very little of it is actually absorbed by the chicken. In fact, if you measure both the fat that goes into the dish and the fat that comes out, you will discover more fat comes out. That's because the butter causes the fat in the skin to render and liquefy. And even though very little butter is absorbed, the chicken has an intensely buttery flavor because the proteins in the butter cling to the skin and flavor it. Many guests have declared this simple dish the best chicken they have ever eaten. If you are dead set against the butter, substitute olive oil.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

One 4-pound chicken

Salt

Pepper

4 tablespoons butter or pure olive oil

[Cut up the chicken](#) and season the pieces on both sides with salt and pepper.

In a skillet just large enough to hold the chicken, heat the butter over medium to high heat. Put the chicken pieces, skin side down, in the pan and cook for about 12 minutes, or until the skin is golden brown. Turn the pieces over and cook for about 7 minutes longer, or until the thighs and breasts are firm to the touch. Serve immediately.

VARIATIONS

Nearly every country in the world has simple sautéed chicken recipes such as this one. European recipes, especially French ones, tell you to pour out and discard the fat in the pan, and then put together some kind of sauce or garnish in the pan used to cook the chicken. This makes sense if you have used a traditional pan (not nonstick), which will have savory juices clinging to it. But if you have used a nonstick pan, there will be no clinging juices, so you can just as easily put together a sauce or garnish in another pan or saucepan while the chicken is cooking.

Chicken with Tomatoes and Tarragon or Basil

Make this dish near the end of the summer, when perfect tomatoes are in season.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

[Chicken Sautéed in Butter](#)

½ cup dry white wine or white vermouth

4 large or 6 medium tomatoes, [peeled](#), [seeded](#), and finely chopped

⅓ cup heavy cream (optional)

Leaves from 10 sprigs tarragon, or 20 fresh basil leaves, chopped at the last minute

Salt

Pepper

Prepare the chicken as directed, and then transfer to warmed plates or a platter and pour the fat out of the pan. Pour the wine into the pan and boil over high heat until reduced by about half. Add the tomatoes and continue boiling, stirring every minute or two, for about 15 minutes, or until the sauce thickens.

Add the cream, boil for about 2 minutes more—don't overdo it, or the sauce will be too thick and gloppy—and add the tarragon. Simmer for 30 seconds, season with salt and pepper, and serve over the chicken.

Chicken with Red Wine Sauce

This abbreviated version of coq au vin is best made with red wine chicken stock, which is broth made exactly like [brown chicken broth](#), except that red wine is used instead of water (but you can get by without it). Use a soft, low-tannin, low-acidic wine, such as a Merlot from Argentina.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

[Sautéed Chicken in Butter](#)

1 cup red wine or reduced red wine chicken stock (brown broth made with wine)

2 tablespoons homemade [meat glaze](#), or 1 tablespoon commercial meat glaze, dissolved in 3 tablespoons hot water (optional)

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

2 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon heavy cream, broth, or water, or more as needed (optional)

Salt

Pepper

Prepare the chicken as directed, and then transfer to warmed plates or a platter and pour the fat out of the pan. Pour the wine and the glaze into the pan and boil down until lightly syrupy. This will happen faster if you are using meat glaze and will not happen if you do not use the stock or glaze. Add the vinegar, boil for 30 seconds, and whisk in the butter. If the sauce gets too thick, thin it with a little heavy cream, broth, or water. Season with salt and pepper and pour over the chicken or pass in a sauceboat at the table.

Chicken Cacciatore

This combination of mushrooms and tomatoes is traditional and hard to resist. Try to find cremini mushrooms, which have much more flavor than their cultivated white cousins. For the best result, be sure to sauté the mushrooms over high heat so they brown rather than stew. The recipe calls for using unpeeled tomatoes and then straining out the peels, but you can also [peel and seed](#) the tomatoes or use canned tomatoes and avoid the straining step. If you don't strain the sauce, remember to pick out and discard the bay leaves.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

2 tablespoons butter or olive oil

1 onion, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, or ½ teaspoon dried thyme

4 large or 6 medium tomatoes, coarsely chopped

1 cup [chicken broth](#) or water

2 bay leaves

1 pound cremini or cultivated white mushrooms

2 tablespoons olive oil

[Chicken Sautéed in Butter](#)

Salt

Pepper

In a medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium to high heat. Add the onion, garlic, and thyme and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the tomatoes, broth, and bay leaves and simmer gently for about 15 minutes, or until the mixture thickens. Use the back of a ladle to work the mixture through a strainer into a bowl (or into the cooked mushrooms, if they are ready).

Meanwhile, wash and dry the mushrooms. Cut the end off the bottom of each mushroom stem if dried out or dirty, and then cut through the stem into quarters. In a large sauté pan, heat the oil over high heat until it begins to smoke. Add half of the mushrooms and toss and stir for 2 to 3 minutes, or until they start to brown. Add the rest of the mushrooms and continue sautéing for about 6 minutes, or until all the mushrooms are well browned and fragrant. If the mushrooms release water—something to avoid—continue cooking until all the water evaporates. Stir the mushrooms into the tomato sauce (or strain the tomato sauce into the mushrooms).

While the sauce is cooking, cook the chicken as directed and then transfer to warmed plates or a platter. Season the sauce with salt and pepper and serve over the chicken.

Chicken with Simplified Mole Sauce

Traditional mole sauces contain a frightening number of ingredients—although not always chocolate—but an excellent mole can be made with far fewer. A mix that includes all four dried chile varieties makes the flavor of the sauce more complex and intriguing, though it will still be satisfying with only one type. Serve this dish with rice or warm tortillas.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

12 dried chiles such as mulato, ancho, pasilla, and/or chilhuacle negro, preferably a mix

1 chipotle chile, soaked in warm water for 30 minutes to soften, then drained

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 teaspoon ground coriander

¼ cup almonds

1 onion, chopped

2 cloves garlic, chopped

2 tomatoes, chopped

2 cups [chicken broth](#) or water

¼ cup raisins

¼ teaspoon ground cloves

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon sugar

1 tablespoon sherry vinegar, or to taste

Salt

Pepper

[Chicken Sautéed in Butter](#)

Put all the chiles, except the chipotle, in a cast-iron skillet over medium heat and toast for about 5 minutes. Rearrange them every couple of minutes and turn them over so they are all roasted the same amount. Put them in a bowl with warm water to cover and move them around every 10 minutes for about 30 minutes total, or until they are soft and pliable.

Drain the chiles, cut off the stems, and rinse out the seeds. Stem and seed the chipotle chile. Cut all the chiles into several pieces each.

In a saucepan, heat the oil over medium to high heat. Add the coriander, almonds, onion, and garlic and cook gently for about 12 minutes, or until

the onion is translucent. Add the tomatoes and broth and simmer for about 5 minutes, or until the sauce thickens. Remove from the heat, let cool slightly, pour into a blender, and add the raisins, chiles, cloves, and cinnamon. Process for 1 minute, or until smooth, and then strain through a medium-mesh strainer into a clean pot. Bring the mixture back to a simmer, add the sugar and vinegar, and season with salt and pepper. Taste and add more vinegar if needed. While the sauce is cooking, cook the chicken as directed and then transfer to a warmed platter. Spoon the sauce over the top.

Provençal Chicken with Aioli, Tomatoes, and Basil

The trick to this dish comes from a Provençal fish stew called a [bourride](#), in which the stewing liquid for the fish is thickened with [aioli](#). Remember when chopping basil to sprinkle it with a little olive oil and chop it at the last minute so it doesn't turn black. You can be more or less refined about the tomatoes as you like: peel and trim away the inner pulp, so you end up with perfect dice, or just peel, seed, and coarsely chop.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

[Chicken Sautéed in Butter](#)

1 cup chicken broth, preferably [brown chicken broth](#)

4 tomatoes, [peeled, seeded](#), and diced or coarsely chopped (see headnote)

½ cup [aioli](#)

½ teaspoon saffron threads, soaked in 1 tablespoon water for 30 minutes

20 fresh basil leaves, finely chopped

Salt

Pepper

Cook the chicken as directed and transfer to warmed soup plates. Just before the chicken is ready, bring the broth to a simmer in a saucepan and add the tomatoes. Put the aioli in a bowl and slowly pour in half of the broth while whisking constantly. Pour this mixture into the broth remaining in the saucepan and whisk over low heat for just a minute or two to make sure the broth is nice and hot. Don't let it boil or the aioli will curdle.

Whisk in the saffron and its soaking water and the basil and season with salt and pepper. Pour the broth-like sauce over the chicken and serve.

Moroccan Chicken Tagine

Moroccan cooks have a light touch with the spices—ginger, cinnamon, cumin—that give their cuisine its identity. This dish calls for saffron, which you should buy in a relatively large amount, such as an ounce, to make it more affordable. If you decide to add the olives, be sure to use good-quality ones, rather than bland canned ripe olives. Serve the chicken and its wonderfully light sauce with rice or couscous in warmed soup plates.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

½ cup sliced almonds

[Chicken Sautéed in Butter](#)

2 tablespoons olive oil

4 cloves garlic, finely chopped

2 jalapeño chiles, seeded and finely chopped

1 onion, finely chopped

1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and grated

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon paprika

¼ teaspoon ground cloves

2 chipotle chiles, soaked in warm water for 30 minutes, drained, seeded, and finely chopped

2 cups chicken broth, preferably [brown chicken broth](#)

4 tomatoes, [peeled, seeded](#), and chopped

½ teaspoon saffron threads, soaked in 1 tablespoon water for 30 minutes

½ cup pitted black olives (optional)

2 tablespoons diced [preserved lemon](#), homemade or store-bought

Salt

Pepper

[Harissa](#), homemade or store-bought

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spread the almonds on a pie pan and toast in the oven, stirring occasionally, for about 12 minutes, or until they are fragrant and have taken on color. Pour onto a plate and let cool.

Cook the chicken as directed. While the chicken is cooking, in a sauté pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the garlic, jalapeño chiles, and onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the ginger, cinnamon, cumin, paprika, cloves, and chipotle chiles and cook for 1 minute more. Add the broth, tomatoes, and the saffron and its soaking water and bring to a simmer.

Just before serving, add the olives and lemon to the sauce and simmer for about 2 minutes. Season with salt (it may not need any because of the lemons and olives) and pepper. When the chicken is ready, place in warmed soup plates and ladle the sauce over the top. Sprinkle almonds over each serving. Pass the harissa at the table.

Coconut Curry Chicken

You can make this dish with heavy cream, instead of coconut milk—use 1 cup cream in place of the coconut milk—but it will be substantially richer. This dish is great served with jasmine or basmati rice.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

[Chicken Sautéed in Butter](#)

2 tablespoons butter

2 teaspoons flour

1 tablespoon curry powder

One 15-ounce can unsweetened coconut milk, preferably Thai

2 jalapeño chiles, seeded and finely chopped

Leaves from 1 small bunch cilantro, chopped at the last minute

Salt

Pepper

Prepare the chicken as directed, and then transfer to a warmed shallow serving platter. Just before the chicken is ready, in a small saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat and add the flour and curry powder. Stir with a whisk for about 1 minute, or until the curry smells fragrant, then pour in the coconut milk and add the chiles. Bring to a simmer and simmer gently for 5 minutes, or until the sauce has the consistency you like. Add the cilantro, simmer for 1 minute more, and season with salt and pepper. Pour the sauce over the chicken and serve right away.

Sautéed Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breasts

Chicken breasts are a lot tastier cooked with their bone and skin intact, but there are ways to enhance the flavor of boneless, skinless breasts. You can always serve them with a sauce or you can coat them. If you are cooking a boneless breast with no flour or breading, sauté it over the highest heat possible so that it browns, which will accentuate its flavor.

Keep in mind that the oil you use to sauté the breasts is not absorbed by the chicken, so you don't need to count the calories.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

3 tablespoons olive oil or canola oil

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

Salt

Pepper

In a skillet just large enough to hold the breasts, heat the oil over high heat. Season the breasts on both sides with salt and pepper. When the oil begins to smoke, add the breasts and cook, turning once, for about 4 to 6 minutes on each side, or until they bounce back to the touch. Pat the breasts with paper towels to remove any burned oil before serving.

Sautéed Boneless Chicken Breasts with Madeira Sauce

Since the main reason for cooking boneless, skinless chicken breasts is speed, it is handy to have an all-purpose sauce to liven them up a little. The butter in this sauce gives it a silky texture, but it can also be left out. Any sweet wine, such as Marsala or port, can be substituted for the

Madeira.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

Sautéed Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breasts

1 shallot, finely chopped

½ cup Rainwater or Malmsey Madeira

1 cup [brown chicken broth](#) boiled down to ¼ cup, 1 tablespoon commercial meat glaze, or 2 tablespoons homemade [meat glaze](#), softened with 1 tablespoon hot water (optional)

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh parsley

2 tablespoons butter (optional)

Salt

Pepper

Cook the chicken breasts as directed and transfer to warmed plates. Pour the burned fat out of the pan, add the shallot to the still-hot pan, and whisk over medium heat for about 1 minute, or until the shallot smells toasty. Add the Madeira—stand back in case it ignites—and boil down until reduced by about half. Add the broth or glaze—if you are using the glaze, you will have to stir it around until it dissolves and perhaps add a little water if the mixture gets too thick—and simmer the sauce until it has a lightly syrupy consistency.

Stir in the parsley, whisk in the butter, and season with salt and pepper. If the sauce is too thick, add a teaspoon or two of broth, water, or heavy cream. Spoon the sauce over the chicken breasts and serve right away.

BREADED AND FLOURED BONELESS CHICKEN BREASTS

You can also coat boneless, skinless chicken breasts with flour, egg, or bread crumbs, or all three, which will give the breasts more texture and, depending on what you sauté them in, more flavor. A simple dredging in flour will make the chicken breast a bit crispier and will allow you to sauté it on a slightly lower heat than if you were cooking it with no coating at all. If you then dip it in egg, a treatment the French call à la parisienne, you can cook it on relatively low heat. You will have made it richer but also more flavorful. Last, if you decide to give it a [final coating](#) with [bread crumbs](#) after you have dipped it in egg, or à l'anglaise, you must cook it gently so the breading doesn't burn. Here are the tricks for magnificent breaded chicken:

1. USE FRESH BREAD CRUMBS.

Use only fresh bread crumbs (not store-bought), made from fresh fine-crumb white bread, such as Pepperidge Farm Original White Bread, rather than a foam-textured white bread. Panko crumbs work well in a pinch.

2. USE FINELY TEXTURED BREAD CRUMBS.

Pass the bread crumbs through a fine-mesh strainer or a drum sieve so they are uniformly fine. This ensures they will absorb only minimal fat.

3. USE BUTTER.

[Cook the breaded breasts](#) in butter, preferably [clarified butter](#) so the milk solids don't cling to the breading and burn. The bread crumbs absorb the fat, so the fat must have a good flavor.

4. USE A LOT OF BUTTER.

The breading won't absorb it all—you end up actually eating very little—and you need a generous amount so the breading browns evenly.

5. STRAIN FAT BETWEEN PANFULS.

If you are cooking a lot of breaded breasts, you can keep using the same butter in the pan, but strain it between each use to rid it of crumbs, which can burn and ruin the taste of your butter.

6. DON'T OVERFLATTEN THE CHICKEN.

Flatten the breasts by whacking them with the side of a cleaver, but don't overdo it or the meat will dry out. Just flatten the thicker side enough so that the breast is of even thickness.

7. BREAD THE BREASTS JUST BEFORE YOU COOK THEM.

If you coat the breasts and then let them sit while you work on another task, the coating becomes partially absorbed and the breading will peel away from the meat while it is in the pan.

8. SERVE SAUCE ON THE SIDE.

If you want to serve a sauce with a breaded chicken breast, don't pour the sauce over the breasts, which will make the breading soggy. Instead, serve the sauce around the breasts. If you want to lighten the dish and prevent the bottom of the breasts from getting soggy, bread them on one side—the top side—only.

HOW TO MAKE FRESH BREAD CRUMBS



1. Cut the crusts off white bread.



2. Cut the bread into cubes, and process in a food processor.



3. Work the bread crumbs through a fine-mesh strainer.



4. Or work bread crumbs through a drum sieve.

HOW TO BREAD CHICKEN BREASTS WITH FRESH BREAD CRUMBS



1. Pound the chicken breasts on the thicker side so they are an even thickness.



2. Dredge the chicken in flour. Pat off the excess flour.



3. Dip the chicken in egg beaten with salt and pepper. Wipe off the excess egg.



4. Dip in the [bread crumbs](#), coating evenly.

HOW TO SAUTÉ BREADED CHICKEN



1. Put the chicken, most attractive side down, in [clarified butter](#) in a nonstick pan over medium heat.



2. Turn after about 3 minutes, or when golden brown. Cook on the second side until firm to the touch.



3. Put on paper towels to absorb the excess butter.

Breaded Boneless and Skinless Chicken Breasts

Breaded chicken and veal have a bad name because most of us have tasted indifferent weinerschnitzel or some version of veal scaloppine overcooked in burned vegetable oil. In fact, a properly [breaded](#) chicken breast cooked in [clarified butter](#) is one of the most satisfying ways to cook chicken.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

4 slices dense-crumb white bread, such as Pepperidge Farm Original White Bread, crusts removed

⅓ cup flour

1 egg

2 teaspoons salt

Pepper

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

4 tablespoons [clarified butter](#)

Cut the bread slices into quarters, place on a sheet pan, and heat in a 200°F oven for about 10 minutes, or just long enough to eliminate some of their moisture but not dry them out. Let cool. Process the bread in a food processor for about 1 minute, or until finely ground, then pass the crumbs through a fine-mesh strainer or a drum sieve so they are fine and uniform.

Put the bread crumbs and the flour on 2 separate plates. In a soup plate or small baking dish, beat the egg with the salt and a few grinds of pepper. Flatten each breast by pounding the thicker end with the side of a cleaver until the breast is of even thickness.

Working with 1 breast at a time, coat the breast with flour, pat off the excess, and dip it in the egg. Hold the breast above the egg by pinching one end, and then with the thumb and index finger of your other hand, wipe off any excess egg. Lay the breast down on the bread crumbs, wipe your hands to avoid getting egg into the crumbs, and carefully turn the breast over to coat it on the other side. As the breasts are coated, place them on a plate.

In a skillet (preferably nonstick), heat the clarified butter over medium to high heat. Gently add the breasts, most attractive side down, and cook, turning once, for 3 to 6 minutes on each side, or until evenly golden brown and firm to the touch. Don't use tongs to turn the breasts, as they will tear the coating. Instead, use a spatula and your hand. Drain briefly on paper towels and serve immediately.

VARIATIONS

One of the best variations is to replace the bread crumbs in this recipe with very finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or other hard dry cheese. You can also replace the bread crumbs with finely chopped mushrooms, or you can grind dried porcini or morel mushrooms, strain to obtain a fine powder, and use the powder in place of the flour. The breasts can then be sautéed with just the mushroom powder, or they can also be dipped in egg and bread crumbs.

BRAISED CHICKEN

Old-fashioned recipes for long-cooked chicken stews, such as authentic coq au vin or poule au pot, were made with a mature rooster (a coq) or hen (a poule) that was cooked for hours to soften its tough flesh. Since nowadays it is rare to encounter a hen, and almost impossible to find a rooster, most modern equivalents to these traditional recipes call for an ordinary chicken to be cooked just long enough to heat it through (see [Braising](#)).

A fricassee is a specific French dish served with mushrooms and baby onions, but the term also refers to a technique in which a cut-up chicken is lightly browned, as you do when [sautéing](#) chicken, and then liquid is added and the chicken is braised. The difference between a fricassee and sautéed chicken with a sauce is somewhat subtle, but fricassees often serve as the model for more refined and complicated (and rich) dishes in which the sauce contains cream and the chicken is served with more elaborate garnishes, such as wild mushrooms or an assortment of spring vegetables.

Chicken Fricassee with Morels

You can make this recipe with ordinary mushrooms or other wild mushrooms, either fresh mushrooms that you sauté at the last minute or dried

mushrooms reconstituted in water. Dried morels and porcini are the tastiest of all the dried mushrooms—in fact, dried morels have more flavor than fresh—but dried porcini can sometimes be tough, so that you have to chop them or at least cut them into small pieces. Peeling the pearl onions is the most timing-consuming part of this dish—something to do the night before in front of the television.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

One 4-pound chicken

Salt

Pepper

2 tablespoons butter

2 cups [chicken broth](#)

1 cup pearl onions or walnut-size boiling onions, [peeled](#)

1 ounce dried morels, soaked in ¼ cup water for 30 minutes

½ cup heavy cream

[Cut up the chicken](#) and season the pieces on both sides with salt and pepper. In a skillet just large enough to hold the chicken, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the chicken pieces, skin side down.

While the chicken is cooking, bring the broth to a simmer and add the pearl onions. Simmer for 10 minutes, and then lift the morels out of their soaking water, squeeze them gently to release the water into the bowl, and add the morels to the broth. Then carefully pour the soaking water into the broth, leaving any grit behind in the bowl.

When the chicken has cooked for about 10 minutes, turn it over and cook for about 5 minutes more. Pour the onions and morels with the broth over the chicken and cover the pan. Simmer gently for about 5 minutes, or until the chicken is firm to the touch. Transfer the chicken pieces and the onions and morels to a plate and keep them warm.

Put the sauté pan over high heat and boil down the broth for about 15 minutes or until it is lightly syrupy. You may end up with as much as ½ cup or as little as a few tablespoons. Add the cream and continue to boil for about 3 to 5 minutes or until the sauce is just thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Season with salt and pepper.

Put the chicken pieces on warmed plates and spoon the sauce, onions, and morels over them.

Chicken Fricassee with Spring Vegetables

Authentic baby peas seem to be in season for only a week or two in June, but frozen peas are the one frozen vegetable that is better than fresh most of the year. Just don't follow the directions on the package and boil them. They have already been boiled at the factory, so all you need to do is heat them through.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

One 4-pound chicken

Salt

Pepper

2 tablespoons butter

6 ounces green beans, preferably haricots verts, ends trimmed

8 baby carrots, peeled, or 2 small carrots, peeled and cut into 8 equal pieces

8 baby turnips, peeled (optional)

1 cup pearl onions or walnut-size boiling onions, [peeled](#)

2 cups [chicken broth](#)

½ cup heavy cream

1 cup fresh baby peas or frozen petite peas

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, tarragon, or chives, or a mixture

In a large saucepan, bring about 3 quarts water to a rapid boil.

While the water is heating, [cut up the chicken](#) and season the pieces on both sides with salt and pepper. In a skillet just large enough to hold the chicken, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the chicken pieces, skin side down. While the chicken is cooking, ready the vegetables for cooking. Turn the chicken over after about 10 minutes and cook for 5 minutes more.

Add a small handful of salt to the boiling water and add the beans. Boil for about 5 minutes, or until they lose all but the slightest crunch. Drain in a colander and rinse with cold water. While the beans are cooking, put the carrots, turnips, and onions in a small saucepan with the broth, bring to a gentle simmer, and simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are almost cooked through but still retain a little resistance when you poke at them with a knife. Remove from the heat.

Pour the vegetables and their broth over the chicken and cover the pan. Simmer gently for about 5 minutes, or until the chicken is firm to the touch. Transfer the chicken pieces and the vegetables to a plate and keep them warm.

Put the sauté pan over high heat and boil down the broth for about 15 minutes or until it is a light syrup. Add the cream, green beans, peas, and parsley and boil for about 2 minutes, or until the sauce is just thick enough to coat the back of a spoon and the green beans and peas are heated through. Season with salt and pepper.

Put the chicken pieces on warmed plates and spoon the vegetables and sauce over them.

Vegetable-Lover's Chicken Fricassee

This dish may seem complicated, but it really involves only fixing an assortment of vegetables and then serving them over the chicken. You can cut out some of the vegetables, if you like, or you can trade some of them out for whatever looks good at the market.

MAKES 6 FIRST-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

12 thick spears green or white asparagus

One 10-ounce package cultivated mushrooms, preferably cremini

½ cup fresh baby peas or frozen petite peas

⅔ pound fava beans in the shell, shucked (optional)

1 ounce dried morel mushrooms (optional)

2 large artichokes (optional)

½ lemon, if using artichokes

Salt

⅓ pound green beans, preferably haricots verts, ends trimmed

2 cups spinach leaves

18 or 24 pearl onions or walnut-size boiling onions (optional)

One 4-pound chicken, or 2 thighs and 2 breasts, or 4 thighs or breasts

Pepper

3 tablespoons butter or olive oil

3 cups [chicken broth](#) or water if using onions, or ¾ cups if not

1 small bunch chives
1 small bunch parsley, large stems removed
1 small bunch chervil (optional)
Leaves from 2 sprigs tarragon
½ cup heavy cream

Early on the day you will be serving the fricassee, [trim and peel](#) the asparagus spears. Cut each spear into 3 sections about 3 inches long. Wash and dry the mushrooms. Cut the end off the bottom of each mushroom stem if dried out or dirty. Shuck or thaw the peas and fava beans. Place the morels in a very small bowl with just enough water to reach one-third up their sides. Soak them for about 30 minutes, pressing down on them, and move them around every 10 minutes until they are completely soft. Lift them out of the water, squeeze them, capturing the water in the bowl, and put the morels in a separate small bowl. [Prepare the artichokes](#) for artichoke bottoms. Put the artichokes in a nonaluminum pot with plenty of water to cover and bring to a gentle simmer. Simmer for about 15 minutes, or until a paring knife poked into one of the artichokes goes through with moderate resistance. Drain the artichokes, rub with the lemon half, and set the artichokes and lemon aside. Select a pot that you can reach into with a large strainer or spider, so you can fish out the vegetables as they are ready. Fill with about 6 quarts water, bring to a rapid boil, and add a small handful of salt. Add the green beans and boil for about 5 minutes, or until they lose all but the slightest crunch. Scoop them out into a colander, rinse with cold water until cool, and transfer to a bowl. Add the asparagus to the boiling water and boil for about 3 minutes, or until tender. Scoop out with tongs into the colander, rinse with cold water until cool, and add to the bowl. If using fresh peas, boil them for about 1 minute, scoop them out and rinse them with cold water, and add them to the bowl. If using frozen peas, reserve them until you are ready to assemble the dish. Add the fava beans to the boiling water, boil for 1 minute, scoop them out into the colander, rinse them with cold water, and set aside in a separate bowl. Add the spinach to the boiling water, stir it around for just a few seconds until it goes limp, and scoop it out into the colander and rinse it with cold water. Squeeze out the water and reserve on a plate. Finally, add the pearl onions to the boiling water, boil for 2 minutes, and then drain into the colander and rinse with cold water. Peel the fava beans, using a paring knife and your thumbnail to remove the tough skin. [Trim and peel](#) the pearl onions and place in a separate bowl. Scoop the chokes out of the artichoke bottoms, and cut each bottom into 6 wedges. If you are not finishing the fricassee right away, put the artichoke bottoms in a bowl, squeeze in the juice from the lemon half, and toss to coat. Cover all the vegetables and refrigerate until you are ready to finish the dish. [Cut up the chicken](#) about 1 hour before serving, if using a whole chicken. Season the chicken pieces on both sides with salt and pepper. In a sauté pan large enough to hold the chicken, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the chicken pieces skin side down and cook gently for about 15 minutes. Turn the chicken over, cook for about 5 minutes longer, pour off and discard the fat in the pan, and pour in 2 cups of the chicken broth. Meanwhile, in a saucepan large enough to hold all the sauce and vegetables, combine the pearl onions and 1 cup broth, bring to a simmer over low to medium heat, and cook for 15 minutes. Slice the cultivated mushrooms and add to the pan with the onions. (Or, if not using the onions, combine the mushrooms with ¼ cup chicken broth in a saucepan large enough to hold the sauce and the vegetables.) Cover the pan and cook over low heat for 5 minutes. While the mushrooms are cooking, chop the herbs, reserving 4 chervil sprigs for garnish. Stir the herbs into the saucepan, add to the onions and/or mushrooms, and pour in the cream. Heat the spinach in the microwave or in a small saucepan. Put all the other vegetables—asparagus, peas, favas, morels, artichokes, and green beans—on top of the mushrooms. As you add the vegetables, season them with salt and pepper. Cover the pan and cook gently over medium heat for 3 minutes. Arrange the spinach in warmed soup plates and place a piece of cooked chicken on top of each mound. Spoon the sauce and vegetables over. Decorate with a chervil sprigs.

BONELESS CHICKEN STEWS

A chicken stew is an example of short [braising](#) in which the meat is cooked just long enough to heat it through. This is different from long-braised stews made with lamb, veal, or beef that cook for hours to tenderize the meat.

Because the cooking time for the chicken is short, it does little to contribute flavor to the surrounding stewing liquid, so the liquid has to be manufactured from flavorful ingredients, such as broth, herbs, spices, or cream. Some of the best chicken stews are Indian, made with spices and yogurt, but Mexican mole-style dishes and Moroccan and Thai stews are also delicious.

Thai Chicken Curry

Thai curries, of which there are several types—yellow, red, green, and mussaman—are actually pastes traditionally made by grinding herbs and aromatic ingredients in a mortar. A food processor can be used instead, but it won't make a smooth enough paste, so you have to strain the mixture before you use it. You can buy premade Thai curry pastes, but they never have the same flavor as freshly made ones. A variety of flavor-packed ingredients go into Thai curry pastes, including cilantro (ideally the root), chiles, lemongrass (citronella, the same thing used to make candles), kaffir lime (zest or leaves or both), galangal (which looks a little like ginger but has a very different, pinelike flavor), and fish sauce, among others. Traditional recipes also call for shrimp paste, a heady ingredient made by fermenting shrimp in the sun. It is so pungent that many Western cooks leave it out of dishes for fear of the house smelling like an Asian fish stall on a hot day. The pastes are notoriously hot—green is hotter than red—and require a shocking number of chiles. This recipe strays from traditional versions in its use of poblano chiles, normally associated with Mexican cooking. They are a good choice because they provide plenty of flavor without overwhelming the dish with heat. Thai curries are best served with jasmine or basmati rice that has been simply boiled or steamed.

MAKES 6 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

3 poblano chiles, [charred, peeled, and seeded](#) and then chopped
2 jalapeño or Thai chiles, seeded and chopped (optional)
1 stalk lemongrass, 6 inches of white bulb part only, tough outer layer discarded, and very thinly sliced
3 shallots, chopped
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1 bunch cilantro, including stems, coarsely chopped
6 kaffir lime leaves
1-inch piece galangal, peeled and thinly sliced (optional)
1 teaspoon ground coriander
½ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon ground white pepper
2 cups [chicken broth](#) or water
¼ cup Thai fish sauce
½ cup fresh basil leaves, preferably small holy basil leaves
One 15-ounce can unsweetened coconut milk, preferably Thai

3 tablespoons fresh lime juice

2½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut on an angle into strips 2 to 3 inches long and ½ inch wide

In a food processor, combine the chiles, lemongrass, shallots, garlic, cilantro, 2 of the kaffir lime leaves, the galangal, coriander, cumin, white pepper, and 1 cup of the broth. Process for 1 minute. If the mixture gets too stiff and the blades can't turn, add a little more of the broth. Transfer the mixture to a saucepan, bring to a simmer, and simmer gently for 5 minutes to infuse the ingredients in the liquid. Work the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean pot large enough to hold the whole finished curry.

Add the remaining 1 cup broth and 4 kaffir lime leaves along with the fish sauce, basil, coconut milk, and lime juice and bring to a simmer.

Simmer for 5 to 10 minutes, or until slightly thickened. If the curry needs salt, add more fish sauce, which will provide both salt and savor.

Add the chicken, simmer for 3 to 4 minutes, or until just cooked through, and serve.

Velvet Chicken with Spices, Cashews, and Ghee

This is a somewhat rich dish because of the ghee. If you want to lighten it, replace the cream with plain yogurt and leave the ghee out entirely.

Serve with basmati rice.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

⅓ cup [ghee](#), or 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 onion, finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, chopped

1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and grated

3 tablespoons [Goan Red Spice Paste](#), or to taste

1 cup roasted cashews

1½ cups heavy cream, 2 cups plain yogurt, drained in a cheesecloth-lined strainer for 1 hour to overnight, or 1 cup plain Greek-style yogurt

1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut on an angle into strips 2 to 3 inches long and ½ inch wide

Salt

Pepper

In a pan large enough to hold the stew, heat 2 tablespoons of the ghee or the 2 tablespoons oil over medium to medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic, and ginger and cook, stirring occasionally, for 6 to 8 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Stir in the spice paste and cook for 3 minutes more.

Add half of the cashews and the cream and cook just long enough to heat the cream to the temperature of a hot bath. (If the cream is cold, it will turn to butter in the blender; if it is too hot, it will try to shoot out from under the blender lid.)

Pour the cream mixture into a blender and process for about 1 minute, or until smooth. Strain the puree back into the pan and bring to a gentle simmer. Stir in the remaining cashews, the chicken, and the remaining ghee, if using. Simmer for about 3 minutes, or until the chicken is just cooked through.

Season with salt and pepper and serve in warmed soup plates.

Chicken with Shrimp

Poulet aux écrevisses—chicken with crayfish—is one of the great dishes of France. The same method used for crayfish works for shrimp. Be sure to buy wild gulf shrimp with heads for this dish, as you will need the heads to make the creamy broth. Or, if you have shrimp heads reserved in the freezer, you can use them to make the broth.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

2 tablespoons olive oil

24 shrimp with heads intact, peeled and deveined, with heads reserved

4 tomatoes, chopped

½ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves or dried thyme

1 cup heavy cream

One 4-pound chicken, or 2 chicken breasts and 2 chicken thighs with drumsticks

Salt

Pepper

5 or 6 tablespoons butter

1 onion, finely chopped

½ teaspoon saffron threads, soaked in 1 tablespoon water (optional)

Leaves from 4 sprigs tarragon, chopped at the last minute

1 cup pearl onions or walnut-size boiling onions, [peeled](#), optional

One 10-ounce package cultivated mushrooms, preferably cremini

In a heavy skillet, heat the oil over high heat until it ripples. Toss in the shrimp heads and stir for about 5 minutes, or until red and fragrant. Remove from the heat, let cool, and then process in a food processor for 1 minute, or until finely ground.

In a saucepan, combine the ground shrimp heads, tomatoes, thyme, and cream, bring to a gentle simmer, and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove from the heat, strain through a coarse-mesh strainer, and then again through a fine-mesh strainer. Set aside.

If using a whole chicken, [cut it into pieces](#). Season the chicken pieces on both sides with salt and pepper.

In a sauté pan just large enough to hold the chicken, melt 3 tablespoons of the butter over medium heat. Add the chicken pieces skin side down and cook for about 10 minutes, or until lightly browned. Turn and cook on the other side for about 5 minutes more, or until lightly browned. The chicken shouldn't be completely cooked at this point. Transfer the chicken pieces to a plate and discard all but 1 tablespoon of the fat from the pan. If the fat is burned, discard all of it and replace it with 1 tablespoon fresh butter.

Return the pan to medium heat, add the chopped onion, and cook gently for about 10 minutes, or until translucent. Add the reserved shrimp head mixture, the saffron and its soaking liquid, and the tarragon, and let the sauce sit off the heat until close to serving.

While the chicken is cooking, put the pearl onions in a pan large enough to hold them in a single layer and add enough water to come halfway up their sides. Partly cover the pan, bring to a medium simmer, and simmer for about 15 minutes—watch closely and add a little more water if it begins to boil away—or until the onions are easily penetrated with a knife. If there is still water left in the pan, turn the heat to high and boil away the water. Then add 1 tablespoon of the butter to the pan and sauté the onions for about 5 minutes, or until lightly browned. Remove from the heat. Cut the end off the bottom of each mushroom stem if dried out or dirty. If the caps are larger than 1 inch across, cut through the stem into quarters.

In a sauté pan, melt the remaining 1 tablespoon butter over high heat. Add half of the mushrooms and toss and stir for 2 to 3 minutes, or until they start to brown. Add the rest of the mushrooms and continue sautéing for about 6 minutes, or until all the mushrooms are well browned and fragrant. If the mushrooms release water—something to avoid—continue cooking until all the water evaporates. Remove from the heat.

About 10 minutes before serving, return the chicken, skin side up, to the sauté pan, add the sauce, pearl onions, and mushrooms, and cover the pan. Bring to a gentle simmer and simmer for 5 to 10 minutes, or until the chicken is firm to the touch. Season the sauce with salt and pepper.

Put the chicken on warmed plates. Add the shrimp to the sauce and simmer for 2 minutes, or until it turns orange. Spoon the shrimp and sauce

over the chicken.

Chicken Korma

Once you have chicken broth or concentrated broth and Greek yogurt, you can throw this stew together in minutes. Serve it with plenty of rice, preferably basmati.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

1 cup plain yogurt, or ½ cup Greek-style yogurt

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into strips 2 inches long by ½ inch wide

Salt

Pepper

½ cup [ghee](#), or 4 tablespoons butter

1 large onion, very thinly sliced

2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger

2 teaspoons ground cumin

½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

¼ teaspoon ground cloves

2 cups [brown chicken broth](#)

½ cup heavy cream

If you're using regular yogurt, drain it in a cheesecloth-lined strainer placed over a bowl and let drain for at least 1 hour or up to overnight in the refrigerator. Greek yogurt requires no draining.

Season the chicken with salt and pepper and keep refrigerated until shortly before serving.

In a saucepan, heat the ghee over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 20 minutes, or until all the liquid the onion releases evaporates. Add the ginger, cumin, nutmeg, cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves and cook for about 2 minutes more, or until the spices are fragrant. Add the broth and boil down to reduce by half. Add the cream and continue to boil for about 3 minutes, or until slightly thickened.

Add the chicken and simmer gently for about 2 minutes, or until just cooked through. Stir in the yogurt, season with salt and pepper, and heat through before serving.

POACHED CHICKEN

Cooks often forget that whole chickens (and chicken parts for that matter) can be poached in savory broth with vegetables. A whole chicken can then be carved in the same way as a roast chicken—except the skin is pulled off and not served—and presented in soup plates surrounded by the savory broth and the vegetables. The result is light, beautiful to look at, and contains little fat.

Old recipes for poached chicken, especially in French cookbooks, call for a hen. But hens take a long time to cook and tend to dry out, so nowadays it is better to use a regular chicken. The vegetables are usually onions, carrots, and turnips, but almost any vegetable can be used. Leeks are tasty and look great on the plate, and if you are able to find baby vegetables, they create a handsome presentation. Larger vegetables should be cut into sections and can even be shaped.

Poached Chicken with Leeks and Root Vegetables

The chicken should be poached in chicken broth, which can then be served along with the chicken or saved and used again to poach another chicken. If you do the latter, the broth will become more concentrated with each use. For a richer version, add some heavy cream and chopped fresh tarragon, chervil, parsley, or chives, or a mixture, to the broth just before serving. This recipe can also be made by substituting baby vegetables for the adult vegetables called for here.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

4 leeks, white parts only

2 carrots, peeled

2 turnips, [peeled](#)

1 celeriac, peeled (optional)

One 4-pound chicken, [trussed](#)

3 to 4 quarts chicken broth, preferably [brown chicken broth](#)

[Bouquet garni](#)

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley

Salt

Pepper

Halve the whites of the leeks lengthwise and [clean](#), and then tie together into a bundle with kitchen string. [Cut the carrots](#) into sections.

Put all the vegetables in a pot just large enough to hold the chicken. The idea is to be able to cover the chicken with as little broth as possible. Put the chicken in the pot and pour over enough broth to cover. Nestle the bouquet garni in the center and bring to a gentle simmer over high heat. Immediately reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer and simmer for about 40 minutes, skimming off any froth that floats to the surface with a ladle.

To check for doneness, take the chicken out of the broth and insert an instant-read thermometer between the thigh and breast. The chicken is done when the thermometer reads 140°F. Or, stick a skewer into the joint where the drumstick meets the thigh. The juices should run clear, not bloody.

Pull the skin off the chicken and discard. [Carve the chicken](#) and put the pieces in warmed soup plates. Discard the bouquet garni and add the parsley to the broth. Spoon the vegetables over the chicken, and then ladle some broth over each serving. Sprinkle each serving with salt and pepper, rather than seasoning the broth, as you may want to use it for something else or reduce it.

VARIATIONS

To create a luxury version of this dish, don't serve the vegetables you cooked in the broth. When the chicken is ready, put 2 cups of the broth in a saucepan with 1 cup heavy cream and 1 ounce dried morel or porcini mushrooms that you have reconstituted in warm water in advance. Bring to a simmer and season with salt and pepper and then serve the creamy broth over the chicken.

To make the poached chicken with baby vegetables, count on 2 carrots, 2 turnips, 2 onions (golf ball-size boiling onions are perfect for this), and ½ leek per person. Don't put the vegetables in the pot at the beginning. Instead, wait until the chicken has been cooking for about 20 minutes, so the vegetables won't be overcooked.

Fresh tarragon and chives, chopped at the last minute and added to the broth, add a wonderful flavor. Heavy cream also helps tie the flavors of the broth, chicken, and vegetables together into a whole that is more exciting than the parts. You can use as little as ¼ cup or as much as 1 cup for 4 servings.

GRILLED CHICKEN

Few dishes are as simple and satisfying as plain grilled chicken. There are only two pitfalls: if you overcook chicken, it will be dry, and if the grill flares up too much, the meat will taste sooty. The trick to avoiding flare-ups, at least with a charcoal fire, is to grill the chicken pieces on their flesh side first. That way, the fire will have died down somewhat by the time you grill the skin side, which contains fat that causes flare-ups. If you are using a gas grill, grill the flesh side over high heat and then turn down the heat a bit to grill the skin side. The chicken is done when it bounces back to the touch, usually after about 12 minutes on each side, but this can vary widely depending on your fire.

While the basic technique for grilling chicken is the same, variations are created with different marinades and rubs that are applied before the chicken goes on the grill and with various mixtures that are brushed on during grilling. The possibilities are countless, with tandoori chicken, which calls for a marinade of yogurt and spices; jerk chicken, in which the pieces are coated with chiles and spices; and various classic American barbecue recipes, in which sauces based on tomatoes are brushed on the chicken as it cooks, among the most famous.

There is also the question as to whether to cook the chicken in a covered grill, which results in it being in part smoked. This is more or less successful depending on the source of the smoke. As with all meats cooked over fire, if the smoke comes from the fat of the chicken dripping onto the coals, the meat is going to taste greasy and sooty. If it comes from wood chips, it will have a lovely smoked-wood flavor. To get the best results, build a hot charcoal fire with the coals to one side in a grill with a cover, or preheat a gas grill to high and then turn off half of the burners. Grill the chicken skin side down directly over the fire until it is well browned and crispy but not cooked through, and then move the chicken to the side without the fire, and sprinkle the coals with a handful of wood chips. If using a gas grill, make a small sawdust-filled packet out of aluminum foil, and place the packet on one of the burners. Cover the grill, and “smoke” the chicken until it is done. See [Grilling](#) for more information.

Fried Chicken

The best fried chicken is made without batter. If you dust the chicken with flour only, it will absorb hardly any oil. The secret to success is to control the temperature of the oil so the chicken ends up golden brown and crispy at the same time that it is cooked through. An electric deep fryer or electric frying pan is a great help, because it eliminates the need to keep adjusting the temperature on your stove top. If you are cooking on the stove top, you will need a deep-frying thermometer.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

One 4-pound chicken

Salt

Pepper

About 2 cups flour

About 3 cups vegetable oil

[Cut up the chicken](#) and season the pieces on both sides with salt and pepper. Spread the flour on a plate and dredge the chicken pieces in the flour, patting off the excess. Place the pieces on a cake rack to dry at room temperature for 30 minutes. When dry, transfer the chicken pieces to a tray. Wash the cake rack thoroughly for later use.

Heat the oil in a deep cast-iron skillet, an electric deep fryer, or an electric frying pan to 350°F. The fat should be deep enough to cover the chicken, but keep in mind that some will be displaced when you add the chicken. Gently lower the chicken into the oil and deep-fry for about 10 minutes, or until well browned and when you take a piece out of the oil, it springs back to the touch. Using tongs, transfer to the cake rack to drain before serving.

TURKEY

Even though we can now buy turkey parts—breasts, thighs, and wings—at the supermarket, most of us still associate turkey with the whole roast bird served on holidays. And for many cooks, roasting a turkey is the only time they desperately reach for a cookbook for guidance on temperature and timing or turn to their grandmother’s foolproof recipe for stuffing.

Turkey worries cooks for three reasons: they want to know when it is done, how long it is going to take to cook, and how to make good stuffing and gravy.

Five Tips for a Successful Roast Turkey

1. LEAVE THE TURKEY OUT OF THE REFRIGERATOR BEFORE ROASTING.

If you leave a turkey, or any roast, out of the refrigerator for about 3 hours before roasting, it will cook more quickly and evenly (see [Letting Roasts and Steaks Sit at Room Temperature](#)). If you put an ice-cold bird into a hot oven, the outer part of the breast will overcook and dry out before the inside heats through.

2. DON'T STUFF THE TURKEY.

While this may sound heretical to some, stuffing a turkey can make cooking the turkey to the optimum temperature difficult. In order for the stuffing to reach a safe temperature, say, 145°F, the bird has to be considerably hotter, which means it will probably be overcooked. Stuffing can also be a health hazard if doesn't reach a sufficiently hot temperature, or if it is allowed to sit in the bird too long before it reaches the temperature that kills any bacteria. If you insist on stuffing the turkey, allow your bird to come to room temperature, and then stuff it just before it goes into the oven. Otherwise, the stuffing sits in the bird at a temperature that can favor the development of bacteria. Stuffing also absorbs juices from the turkey that would otherwise drip down onto the pan and provide flavorful gravy.

If you want to serve a stuffing, cook it in a separate roasting pan next to the turkey. Don't roast it in the same pan as the turkey, or it will absorb the juices you need for the gravy. Remember, the less stuffing, the more juices you will have for a flavorful gravy. If you want a flavorful stuffing, spoon gravy over it at the table.

3. DON'T USE A ROASTING RACK.

A roasting rack keeps the turkey above the roasting pan and will cause the juices to burn. A better trick is to put the giblets in the roasting pan and set the turkey on top of them. They will cook (you can chop them up for the gravy; see [Roast Turkey and Gravy](#)) at the same time they prevent the turkey from sticking to the pan and the juices from burning.

4. COVER THE BREASTS WITH ALUMINUM FOIL.

For the turkey to get hot enough at the point where it cooks last—at the thigh joint—the heat has to be given plenty of time to penetrate through the

breast and thigh. To keep the breast meat from drying out, cover the breast loosely with a triple-thick sheet of buttered aluminum foil. This insulates the breast, slowing down its cooking so it doesn't dry out.

5. CARVE THE TURKEY AT THE TABLE.

Many people have forgotten the old-fashioned ritual of carving at the table. Carving a big turkey makes a meal festive, a little more formal, and memorable. [Carve the bird](#) on a deep platter to catch juices. Be willing to be embarrassed the first few times, until you get the hang of it.

Roast Turkey and Gravy

When buying a turkey, buy at least a pound per guest and ideally a bit more so you will have leftovers. Unless you are stuffing your turkey, count on roasting about 8 minutes per pound. This is faster than most recipes recommend, but keep in mind this is based on the turkey being at room temperature before it goes in the oven.

The amount of juices you get for making gravy will depend on how long you cook the turkey and whether or not it is stuffed. If you don't overcook the turkey, you may find yourself with relatively few juices with which to make a jus or gravy, giving you two options: If you have few juices to work with, you will need to [caramelize the juices](#) before you make the gravy. If the bird has been cooked longer and released more juices, you can pour the hot juices and fat into a glass pitcher or degreaser, spoon or pour off the fat, and then make the gravy as shown.

MAKES 12 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS WITH LEFTOVERS

One 20-pound turkey with giblets, rinsed under cold running water and patted dry

Salt and pepper

2 tablespoons butter

Turkey Gravy

2 tablespoons flour

2 cups chicken broth or more as needed

Salt

Pepper

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Season the turkey on the inside and outside with salt and pepper. Place the giblets in a roasting pan just large enough to hold the turkey and set the turkey, breast side up, on top of the giblets in the pan. Take a sheet of aluminum foil about 24 inches long and fold it to create a triple thickness. It will need to be vaguely trapezoidal to cover the breast and not the thighs. Smear one side with the butter and place it, buttered side down, over the turkey breast. Tie the drumsticks together tightly with kitchen string.

Put the turkey in the oven and roast until well browned, about 1 hour. Remove the foil. Roast the turkey until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the meat between the thigh and the breast reads about 147°F. Remove the turkey from the oven, lift it out of the roasting pan, cover loosely with aluminum foil, and let rest in a warm place for at least 20 minutes before carving.

While the turkey is resting, make the gravy. Remove the giblets from the roasting pan and set aside. Look in the roasting pan to see if the juices have caramelized. If they have, the bottom of the pan will be coated with brown and a layer of clear fat will be floating on top. If they haven't caramelized, you will see brown liquid combined with the fat. The mixture of fat and juices may even be cloudy, meaning the juices have emulsified with the fat, which you want to avoid. If the juices haven't caramelized, put the roasting pan on the stove top and boil the juices until they caramelize on the bottom and separate from the fat, and then pour off all but 2 tablespoons of the fat. You now have a roasting pan with a layer of caramelized juices and a little fat. Sprinkle in the flour over medium heat and stir in for 1 minute. Whisk in the chicken broth, stirring over medium or medium-high heat until the gravy thickens as much as you like. Strain the gravy into a new saucepan and set over low heat. If using the giblets, strip the meat from the neck and chop it along with the heart, gizzard, and liver. Add the chopped giblets to the gravy, and transfer the gravy to a sauceboat.

[Carve the turkey](#) and serve with the gravy.

HOW TO ROAST A TURKEY



1. Spread the turkey giblets in the roasting pan and place the turkey on top of the giblets.



2. Tie the two drumsticks together with a piece of kitchen string.



3. Butter one side of a triple-thick sheet of aluminum foil just large enough to cover the breast, and place buttered side down over the turkey breast.



4. Roast the turkey until the thighs are well browned and then remove the aluminum foil.



5. Roast the turkey until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the meat between the thigh and the breast reads about 147°F. Cover the turkey loosely with aluminum foil and let rest in a warm place for at least 20 minutes before carving.

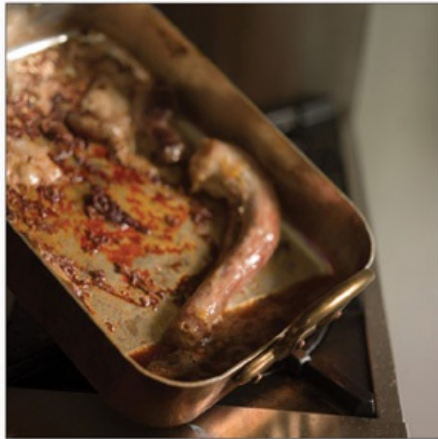
HOW TO MAKE TURKEY GRAVY



1. If you have roasted the turkey ahead of time and the juices are cold and congealed, skim off as much fat as you can with a spoon.



2. Boil down the juices by continually repositioning the roasting pan over the burner.



3. When all the juices have caramelized and formed a crust on the bottom of the roasting pan, pour off all but 2 tablespoons of the liquid fat.



4. Sprinkle the flour in the roasting pan and stir over medium heat.



5. Pour in the broth and stir over medium to medium-high heat.



6. Continue to stir until the gravy is the consistency you like.



7. Strain the gravy through a medium-mesh strainer.



8. If you are making giblet gravy, chop the meat from the neck, heart, gizzards, and liver. Add the chopped giblets to the gravy.



9. Taste the gravy and season with salt and pepper.

HOW TO CARVE THE TURKEY



1. Hold the thigh with a fork and slide a carving knife along the inside of the thigh against the breast.



2. Continue sliding the knife down all the way to the joint. Pull the thigh away from the breast with a fork.



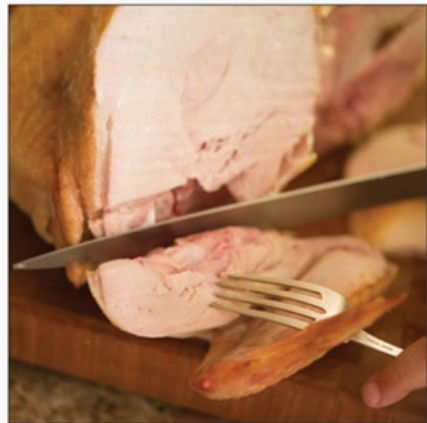
3. When the round end of the thigh bone is visible, cut through the joint and detach the thigh.



4. Slide the carving knife into the breast meat directly above the wing.



5. Slice off the breast meat down to the point where you cut above the wing and pull away the slices.



6. After slicing away several slices of breast meat, slide the knife into the cut above the wing and detach the wing.



7. Cut the drumstick away from the thigh (the first joint away from the second joint).



8. Slice the meat away from the thigh.



9. Slice the meat away from the drumstick.

DUCK

Because of their petite size and, in the case of duck, because of the fat contained in their skin, these birds can't be roasted in the same way as a chicken or turkey—by prolonged exposure to dry heat. Ducks, unless you like the traditional “crispy” variety, need to be cut up to be cooked in the best way and small birds such as squabs and quail need to be browned on the stove before going into the oven.

Unless you are lucky enough to have access to wild ducks, which are best when simply roasted rare or sautéed in the same way as the squabs in [Sautéed Squab with Its Own Jus](#), you will find only one or two varieties of duck in the market. The most common variety, found frozen in most supermarkets—fortunately, duck freezes well—is the Pekin (also called Long Island) duck, which is not to be confused with the Peking duck, the famed roasted bird of the Chinese table. In fancier places, you are likely to find mullard (also spelled “moulard”) ducks, which are giant hybrids used to make foie gras. They also happen to be especially delicious.

Lately, duck parts have begun to appear in markets. This makes cooking duck much simpler, since you can buy just the breast meat (often called magrets when they come from a mullard), which isn't much harder to cook than a steak, or just the thigh, which is easy to braise.

The inherent problem with American domestic ducks is that they have a thick layer of fat. If you roast a whole duck in the same manner as a chicken, you have to cook the duck for hours for the fat to render. You end up with so-called crispy duck that, while good in its own right, isn't nearly as exciting as a duck breast cooked rare or medium-rare. To cook duck successfully, you must break it down into its parts, since the breasts and thighs must be cooked differently. Duck breast meat is tender and cooks relatively quickly, while duck thighs are tougher and need to be braised or turned into confit. The ideal scenario is to braise the duck thighs, sauté the duck breasts, and use the braising liquid from the thighs to make a sauce for both.



(Clockwise from top left) Squab, quail, poussin (baby chicken), duck.

HOW TO CUT UP A WHOLE RAW PEKIN DUCK



1. With the duck breast side up, slide a large knife along the breastbone that runs along the top, keeping the knife pressed firmly against bone. Continue to slide the knife against the breastbone and ribs, always keeping the knife against bone, until you reach the base.



2. Cut through the joint attaching the thigh to the back.



3. Continue separating skin and meat from the underside of the duck until you reach the other side.



4. Turn the duck around and repeat on the other side.



5. Remove the rib cage.



6. When the duck is completely detached from the carcass, cut around the outline of the meat to separate the two breasts and two thighs.



7. Cut through the connective tissue to separate the breasts from the thighs.



8. The cut-up duck, ready for cooking.



[Sautéed Duck Breasts](#)

Sautéed Duck Breasts

The secret to a successful sautéed duck breast is to get the thick layer of fat that coats it to render and turn crispy without overcooking the meat. You can always trim off the fat, but it is awfully flavorful, and your guests always have the choice of not eating it anyway. One trick to get the fat to render as quickly as possible, before the meat overcooks, is to make a series of slashes through the fat at 90-degree angles, stopping just short of the meat. The breast is then sautéed over medium heat, almost entirely on the skin side. If the heat is too low, the meat will overcook before the fat renders and the skin browns. If the heat is too high, the skin will brown before it has had a chance to render any fat and before the meat can cook. The fat released by duck breasts, especially mullard breasts, is delicious for sautéing, particularly eggs and poultry. If you want to save it, pour the fat out of the pan halfway through the sautéing and keep it in the refrigerator for weeks or in the freezer for months. Don't wait until the end of sautéing. By that time, the fat has started to burn.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

4 Pekin duck breasts (about 7 ounces each), or 2 mullard duck breasts (about 1 pound each)

Salt

Pepper

Use a thin, very sharp knife to make about 20 slashes through the fat covering the breasts. Hold the knife on an angle so you are cutting somewhat sideways through the skin and can cut more deeply without cutting through to the meat. Give the meat a 90-degree turn and make 20 more slashes going in the other direction. Season with salt and pepper.

Put the breasts, skin side down, in a nonstick or well-seasoned skillet just large enough to hold them in a single layer over medium heat. (There is no need to put oil in the pan.) Cook Pekin duck breasts for 8 to 10 minutes, and mullard breasts for 15 to 18 minutes. If halfway into the sautéing the meat is getting very brown, turn down the heat. If it shows no sign of browning, turn up the heat. Turn the breasts over and turn up the heat to high. Brown on the flesh side for 1 to 2 minutes.

You can serve Pekin breasts whole or sliced, but mullard breasts should be served sliced because they are so large. To slice duck breasts, put them skin side down on a cutting board (the skin otherwise can be hard to cut through) and slice them diagonally, with the knife held at an angle, into strips, each with maximal surface area when sliced. Arrange the breasts on warmed plates to serve.

HOW TO SAUTÉ DUCK BREASTS



1. Score the skin on the breasts at an angle as deeply as you can without cutting into the meat. Score again at a 90-degree angle to the first set of

cuts.



2. Season the skin side of the breasts.



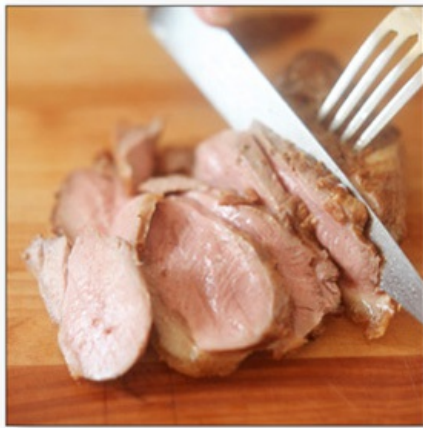
3. Put the breasts skin side down in a sauté pan over medium heat. Season the meat side.



4. After about 8 to 10 minutes for Pekin ducks and 15 to 18 minutes for mullards, turn the breasts over.



5. Sauté for 1 to 2 minutes on the meat side.



6. Slice the breasts and serve.

SAUCES FOR DUCK BREASTS

Most of us associate duck with fruit sauces, especially orange-based sauces. You can easily improvise almost any berry sauce: deglaze the pan used to sauté the breasts with broth or concentrated broth, add berries, simmer them until they soften, add a pinch of sugar and a few drops of vinegar to the sauce to create a sweet-and-sour effect, and then whisk in a little butter. Orange sauce is done a little differently.

Orange Sauce for Duck Breasts

Most recipes for duck à l'orange call for Grand Marnier, which is a delicious but expensive way to reinforce the flavor of oranges. You can get essentially the same result by combining orange zest and cognac. Cognac is expensive, too, but you need very little. Don't substitute generic brandy.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

3 navel oranges

1 cup water

1 teaspoon sugar

2 teaspoons sherry vinegar or other good wine vinegar

1 cup [brown chicken broth](#), 1 tablespoon commercial meat glaze, or 2 tablespoons homemade [meat glaze](#), softened in 3 tablespoons hot water

2 tablespoons Cognac or Grand Marnier

2 tablespoons butter (optional)

Salt

Pepper

[Sautéed Duck Breasts](#)

Squeeze the juice from 1 orange and reserve the juice. Slice off the zest of the remaining 2 oranges and cut into fine julienne. Section the oranges, remove the peel, and set aside.

In a saucepan, combine the julienned zest and water and bring to a boil. Boil for 2 minutes and pour off the water.

Add the sugar and vinegar to the orange zest and simmer over high heat until dry. Pour in the orange juice and boil down until reduced by about half. Add the broth and simmer for about 5 minutes, or until the sauce is lightly syrupy. Add the Cognac and simmer for 30 seconds. Whisk in the butter and season with salt and pepper.

Arrange the sliced breasts on warmed plates with the orange segments and spoon the sauce over the meat and oranges.

Berry Sauce for Duck Breasts

Since all berries behave in the same way, you can use any type in this recipe, plus you can use cherries and fresh currants too. You will need to adjust the sweetness and sourness of the sauce to balance the flavor of the fruit.

2 teaspoons sugar, or as needed

2 tablespoons sherry vinegar, or as needed

1 cup [brown chicken broth](#), 1 tablespoon commercial meat glaze, or 2 tablespoons homemade [meat glaze](#), softened in 3 tablespoons hot water

1 cup blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, fresh red or black currants, or pitted cherries

Salt

Pepper

2 tablespoons butter

[Sautéed Duck Breasts](#)

In a small saucepan, heat the 2 teaspoons sugar over medium heat, stirring with a wooden spoon until the sugar melts and browns slightly. Add the vinegar and continue to cook until it evaporates. Then add the broth and boil down for about 5 minutes, or until the mixture is slightly syrupy and coats the back of a spoon.

Add the berries, cover the pan, and simmer over high heat for 4 minutes, or until they release their juices. Using a slotted spoon, gently remove the berries and reserve. Boil down the sauce, which will now be thinner because of the liquid released by the berries, until it has a syrupy consistency.

Taste the sauce and adjust with more sugar or vinegar. Season with salt and pepper and whisk in the butter. Return the berries to the sauce and reheat gently.

Arrange the sliced breasts on warmed plates and spoon the sauce over the top.

DUCK THIGHS

Duck breasts have become enormously popular in part because they are so easy to cook and take so little time. Now most of us can find boneless breasts at the supermarket, but if you have started out with a whole duck, you are going to have those extra thighs. Since thighs take a long time to cook, you may want to save them up in the freezer until you have enough to make it worth the effort to cook them. There are three ways to cook duck thighs: braising, slow roasting, and cooking into confit in their own fat.

Pekin thighs braise relatively quickly, in about 1 hour, while mullard thighs take about 2 hours. The advantage of braising is that you are left with a marvelous braising liquid that you can serve with the thighs, over duck breasts, or with both. If you are being ambitious, braise the thighs and serve part of the thigh and part of the breast on each plate. Slow roasting is the easiest method but leaves you with no sauce. Cooking the thighs in duck fat—not nearly as scary as it sounds because they end up absorbing very little fat—is the most time-consuming approach, but it may also be the way to get the most flavor out of the thighs.



Slow-Roasted Duck Thighs

You can serve 2 Pekin duck thighs or 1 mullard thigh per serving as a main course, or you can divide the thighs and breasts so everyone gets half of a Pekin duck breast and half of a thigh or, if you're serving mullards, half a breast or a whole thigh. If you are not serving thighs at the same time as the breasts, you can make these duck thighs a more complete dish by finishing them with sauerkraut, shredded red cabbage, or beans.

MAKES 6 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

12 Pekin duck thighs, or 6 mullard duck thighs

Salt

Pepper

Trim off excess fat if you're using [mullard thighs](#). Season the thighs on both sides with salt and pepper and put them, skin side up, in a heavy roasting pan that holds them in a single layer without a lot of extra space. Slide the pan into the oven, turn the oven to 350°F (there is no need to preheat), and roast Pekin thighs for 1½ hours or mullard thighs for 2½ hours, or until the skin is brown and crispy and a skewer or knife slides easily in and out.

Slow-Roasted Duck Thighs with Sauerkraut

Sauerkraut makes a tart and crispy foil for the rich thighs and is an easy addition: simply pile it on top of the thighs about 30 minutes before they are done.

MAKES 6 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

[Slow-Roasted Duck Thighs](#)

2 quarts sauerkraut, drained and rinsed in a colander

Roast the thighs as directed, using a roasting pan large enough to hold both the thighs and the sauerkraut. When the thighs are about 30 minutes away from being done, pour out all but about 3 tablespoons of the fat, and cover the thighs with the sauerkraut. Cover the pan and continue to cook for 30 to 45 minutes, or until the sauerkraut has the texture you like. (Don't worry about overcooking the duck.) Serve the thighs and sauerkraut on warmed plates.

Slow-Roasted Duck Thighs with Red Cabbage and Apples

The sweetness of the apples and the tartness of the vinegar make this a great combination. Use a sharp knife to shred the cabbage.

MAKES 6 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

[Slow-Roasted Duck Thighs](#)

1 small red cabbage, shredded

10 juniper berries, crushed

4 tart apples, peeled, cored, and cut into ½-inch dice

¼ cup sherry vinegar or other good wine vinegar, or as needed

Salt

Pepper

Roast the thighs as directed, using a pot large enough to hold the cabbage, apples, and thighs. When the thighs are about 30 minutes away from being done, pour out all but about 3 tablespoons of the fat, and add the cabbage and crushed juniper berries and cook, covered, until shrunk by half, about 20 minutes. Add the apples and vinegar. Cover the pan and continue to cook for 30 minutes more.

Before serving, season the cabbage and apples with salt and pepper and a little more vinegar if the mixture lacks tang. Arrange the thighs on top of the cabbage and apples to serve.

HOW TO MAKE SLOW-ROASTED DUCK THIGHS WITH RED CABBAGE AND APPLES



1. Roast duck thighs for about an hour. Pour out all but 3 tablespoons of the fat, and add the cabbage and juniper berries. Cover and cook until shrunk by half, about 20 minutes.



2. Sprinkle apples and vinegar over the thighs. Cover and cook about 30 minutes more. Season with salt and pepper.



3. Serve the thighs on a mound of cabbage.

Duck Thighs Braised in Red Wine

Braised mullard thighs are one of the richest and most satisfying of all duck dishes. Look for mullard thighs in fancy grocery stores or check mail-order sources. They are usually relatively inexpensive, since most people don't know what to do with them. This recipe takes a long time but involves very little real work, and the results are worth the effort. You can also make this dish a day ahead and reheat it just before serving.

MAKES 6 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

6 mullard duck thighs, or 12 Pekin duck thighs

Salt

Pepper

1 large carrot, peeled and sliced

1 large onion, sliced

2 cloves garlic, crushed

1 cup red wine

1 quart chicken broth, preferably [brown chicken broth](#), made without salt

Bouquet garni

Trim off excess fat as shown if you're using mullard thighs. Season the thighs on both sides with salt and pepper and put them, skin side up in a single layer, in a heavy pot with the carrot, onion, and garlic. Slide the pot into the oven, turn the oven to 400°F (there is no need to preheat), and roast Pekin duck thighs for 1½ hours or mullard thighs for 2½ hours, or until the skin is golden brown.

Turn off the oven or, if you want to braise in it, turn it down to 300°F. If you notice cloudy liquid in the pan, place the pan (still holding the thighs) over high heat and boil down the juices so they caramelize and you are left with a shiny layer of liquid fat floating on top. Pour off the fat. Add the wine and broth, nestle the bouquet garni in the center, and bring to a gentle simmer on the stove top. Cover the pot with a sheet of aluminum foil, pressing it down so the middle hangs over the thighs. (This causes moisture that condenses within the pot to baste the thighs from the inside.)

Then cover with the lid and simmer very gently on the stove top or in the oven for 1½ hours for Pekin thighs or 2½ hours for mullard thighs, or until the thighs offer no resistance when you poke at one with a knife. (If you pull up the thigh when you pull out the knife, the thighs aren't ready.) Transfer the thighs, still skin up, to a clean pot—or clean out the same pot—in which they fit as snugly as possible in a single layer. Strain the braising liquid into a saucepan, place the pan off center on a burner over medium heat so the liquid boils on only one side and pushes the fat to the other, and simmer, regularly skimming off any fat and froth with a ladle, for about 15 minutes, or until clear and free of fat. Pour the degreased braising liquid over the thighs and slide the pot, uncovered, into the oven set at 400°F. Baste the thighs every 10 minutes for about 30 minutes, or until they are covered with a shiny glaze and the braising liquid is syrupy. Serve the thighs in warmed soup plates surrounded by the braising liquid.

HOW TO MAKE BRAISED MULLARD DUCK THIGHS



1. Trim excess fat off the thighs.



2. Slide the knife along the fatty side of the thigh, leaving only a thin layer of fat.



3. Place a heavy knife over the thigh bone just in from the nub and give it a good tap with a hammer. (By doing this, instead of just hacking at the bone with a cleaver, you prevent splintering.)



4. Place a chopped onion, a chopped carrot, and two cloves crushed garlic in a pan just large enough to hold the thighs. Add the thighs, skin side up. Season with salt and pepper. Roast in the oven until well browned and the pan is full of fat.



5. If you notice cloudy liquid in the pot, place the pot over high heat to evaporate the juices and cause them to caramelize.



6. Hold the duck in place with a pan lid and pour off the fat.



7. Pour enough wine and broth into the pot to come about one-third up the sides of the thighs.



8. Cover the pot with aluminum foil and then with the lid and simmer very gently on the stove top or in the oven until the duck thighs are easily penetrated with a knife.



9. Take the thighs out of the pot, strain the braising liquid, and discard the vegetables. If you have time, degrease the liquid by chilling and skimming off the fat as shown here or in a saucepan, over medium heat, with a spoon.



10. Strain the degreased braising liquid back over the duck thighs. Put the pot in the oven, and baste the thighs every few minutes with the braising liquid until the liquid becomes syrupy.



11. Serve the thighs with the braising liquid spooned on top. Here, the thighs are served with sautéed apple wedges.

Duck Confit

A generation ago, duck confit was an obscure regional dish from southwestern France, well on its way to being forgotten. Fortunately, it has not only been rediscovered but also become enormously popular, especially in restaurants, where it is often added to other foods to contribute flavor. A description of how to make duck confit might sound a little intimidating in this fat-conscious age. It is made by cooking duck parts very gently in rendered duck fat until the the duck flavor is concentrated in the meat and the meat is meltingly tender. The fat, while useful for cooking, is usually wiped off the duck parts before they are served, so very little of it is actually used. Once you have duck confit on hand, you can use it instead of the slow-roasted duck thighs in [Slow-Roasted Duck Thighs with Sauerkraut](#) and [Slow-Roasted Duck Thighs with Red Cabbage and Apples](#), or you can use some of the suggestions that follow.

Thighs are the most practical cut to use for making confit for two reasons: if you have bought a whole duck to secure the breasts, you have the thighs left over, and if you buy thighs, they are less expensive than breasts. When made into confit, the meat is tastier than the breast meat. To make the project worthwhile, you need at least 12 Pekin thighs or 6 mullard thighs and some extra fat from a duck or two.

MAKES 12 OR 6 CONFIT THIGHS

12 Pekin duck thighs, or 6 mullard duck thighs

Salt

Pepper

5 cloves garlic, minced and then crushed with the flat side of the knife

1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, chopped, or dried thyme

2 bay leaves, chopped

2 quarts duck fat trimmings or rendered duck fat

Trim off excess fat if you're using [mullard thighs](#). Season the thighs liberally with salt and pepper. Chop the garlic, thyme, and bay leaves into a paste on a cutting board, and rub the mixture on the thighs, especially on the flesh side. Cover the bowl and refrigerate the thighs overnight. (If you are in a rush, you can skip the overnight marinating.)

If you are using fat trimmings, puree them in a food processor for about 1 minute, and then put them in a heavy pot with high sides that's large enough to hold the thighs and the fat. Put the duck fat over medium heat on the stove top for about 10 minutes, or until it starts to render, and then nestle the duck thighs, skin side down, in the pot. If you are using already-rendered fat, put the fat in the pot and add the thighs. If the fat doesn't completely cover the thighs, don't worry. They will shrink and render fat of their own. Simmer the duck, uncovered, over low to medium heat—a bubble should rise in the pot every second or so—for 3 hours, or until the liquid fat is clear and the thighs are easily penetrated with a knife.

If you want to keep the confit for more than a few days, transfer it while it is still hot to sterile jars and ladle over the hot duck fat, making sure that no meat is sticking up above the fat. Seal the jars and store in a cool place or in the fridge for up to a month. If you are keeping for only a few days, don't worry about covering all the meat.

Ideas for Duck Confit

Duck fat and confit can be used in small amounts to flavor vegetables, such as green beans, dried beans, cabbage, mushrooms, or spinach. Boil green beans, drain, and then reheat in a tablespoon or two of duck fat with some shredded confit. You can wilt spinach or sauté mushrooms, especially wild mushrooms, in duck fat and add a little shredded confit. You can nestle confit into partially cooked dried beans and then finish the cooking. Or, make [Cassoulet](#). Last, cook confit with shredded cabbage, vinegar, and maybe some apples to create the effect of a choucroute (substitute the confit for the duck thighs in [Slow-Roasted Duck Thighs with Red Cabbage and Apples](#))—the sauerkraut with meats served in every French brasserie.

Confit is also the base for a thick soup—recipes say that a spoon plunged into the soup should stay straight up—called a garbure, popular in southwestern France. It is essentially a vegetable soup, usually containing beans, made with plenty of confit—a kind of liquid cassoulet.

HOW TO MAKE DUCK CONFIT



1. Trim excess fat off the duck thighs and reserve the fat.



2. Chop garlic, thyme, and bay leaves and make a paste.



3. Rub the paste on the thighs, especially on the meat side, along with salt and pepper. If you have time, store overnight in the refrigerator.



4. If using fat trimmings, puree the fat in a food processor.



5. Pureed duck fat.



6. Transfer the fat to a heavy, high-sided pot and render it over high heat for 10 minutes. If you're using already rendered fat, melt it in the pot.



7. Place the thighs, skin side down, in the pan. Initially the fat surrounding the thighs will be cloudy.



8. When the fat is clear and transparent and a knife slides easily in and out of the meat, the confit is ready.

SQUAB AND QUAIL

Small birds must almost always be browned before they can be roasted, because by the time they brown in even a very hot oven, they are likely to be overcooked. This is especially true for birds with red meat, such as squab, which are roasted to a lower internal temperature than white-meat birds, such as quail, poussin (baby chicken), or pheasant.

SQUAB

Squab (pigeon) may be the most delicious farmed-raised bird and the one that tastes the most like wild game. It is best cooked simply—[roasting](#) is the classic technique—and served carved, unless your guests know what they are doing. Like duck, squab has red meat and should be cooked rare to medium-rare. Because of this and because squabs are small (each one is a single serving), they have to be browned very quickly—more quickly than most home ovens can manage. To avoid overcooking them, preheat the oven to 500°F, brown the squabs on the stove top in some olive oil, clarified butter, or duck fat, and then immediately roast them for about 10 minutes.

A somewhat more elaborate approach, but one that lets you avoid the last-minute carving, is to cut up the squabs in advance and sauté only the breasts and thighs. If you are being ambitious, you can use the carcass to make a little broth, which in turn can be used to make a sauce or jus.

HOW TO ROAST SQUAB AND OTHER SMALL BIRDS



1. Red-meat birds, such as squab, should be browned on the stove top before roasting.



2. Put the browned birds (poussin are shown here), in a roasting pan just large enough to hold them, and season with salt and pepper.



3. Preheat the oven to its highest temperature. Cover the breasts with a double-thick layer of buttered aluminum foil.



4. Roast until the thighs brown, remove the foil, and continue roasting until the breasts brown.

Sautéed Squab with Its Own Jus

Here, the breasts and thighs are taken off the squabs and a little jus is made out of the carcasses. The trick to extracting the flavor from the carcasses is not to simmer them for hours as though making a broth, but to roast them and deglaze the pan several times, letting the juices caramelize each time. It is best if you have homemade chicken or duck broth.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

4 squabs, about ¾ pound each, with giblets

Salt

Pepper

1 carrot, peeled and sliced

1 onion, sliced

2 cloves garlic, crushed

2 sprigs thyme (optional)

½ bay leaf

3 cups [chicken broth](#) or duck broth

2 tablespoons olive oil, duck fat, or [clarified butter](#)

2 tablespoons butter (optional)

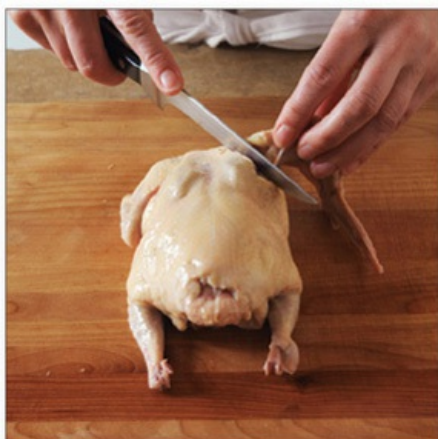
Preheat the oven to 500°F. [Take the breasts and thighs off the squabs.](#) Take the small thighbone out of each of the thighs. Season the breasts and thighs on both sides with salt and pepper and refrigerate until needed.

Take out the giblets, which are usually in a little packet in the cavity, save the livers in the freezer for [Squab Civet with Fava Bean Cassoulet](#), [Sautéed Quail Breasts and Thighs en Civet](#), or cook them for the cat, and chop each carcass into 4 pieces with a cleaver. Put the carcasses, giblets, carrot, onion, and garlic in a roasting pan just large enough to hold everything in a single layer. Roast for about 45 minutes, or until well browned but not until the juices burn on the pan bottom. Put the roasting pan on the stove top, add the thyme and bay leaf, and pour in 1 cup of the broth. Bring to a boil and boil down the juices until they caramelize on the bottom of the pan. Add another cup of broth and repeat. Add the final cup of broth and simmer for 1 to 2 minutes while scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon. Then pour the contents of the pan into a fine-mesh strainer set over a saucepan. Leave the pan off the heat until needed.

Ten minutes before serving, in a skillet large enough to hold the breasts and thighs in a single layer, heat the oil over high heat. When it begins to smoke, add the breasts, skin side down, and press down on them with the back of a spatula to keep them from curling. Cook for about 4 minutes, or until they stiffen. Add the thighs, turn the breasts over, and brown for about 2 minutes, or until the breast bounces back to the touch. Remove from the heat. If juices have caramelized on the bottom of the pan, pour out the burned fat and deglaze the pan with the reserved jus. Then bring the jus to a simmer, whisk in the butter, and season with salt and pepper.

Arrange the breasts and thighs on warmed plates and spoon the jus over them.

HOW TO CUT UP A RAW SMALL BIRD



1. Place the bird, here a squab, breast side down and cut through the joint that attaches the wing to the body to remove the wing. Repeat with the other wing.



2. With the bird tilted so it is almost on its side, pull the thigh toward the end of the bird and cut through the skin along the edge of the thigh.



3. Cut along the contours of the back, including the oyster (the little nugget of meat nestled in the back), sliding the knife along until you detach the thigh.



4. Turn the bird on its side and remove the second thigh in the same way.



5. Slide the knife against the side of the breastbone nearest you, and cut all the way down, knife always against bone, until you hit cartilage.



6. Cut around the wishbone (collarbone).



7. Cut the breast away from the bones.



8. Remove the second breast in the same way.



9. Remove the thighbone, but leave the drumstick bone intact.

HOW TO MAKE A JUS FROM A SMALL ROAST BIRD



1. Pour out any juices in the cavities of the birds into the roasting pan and put the pan over high heat.



2. Move the pan as needed so a brown crust forms over its entire surface.



3. Pour out and discard the fat in the roasting pan.



4. Deglaze the pan with wine or other liquid.

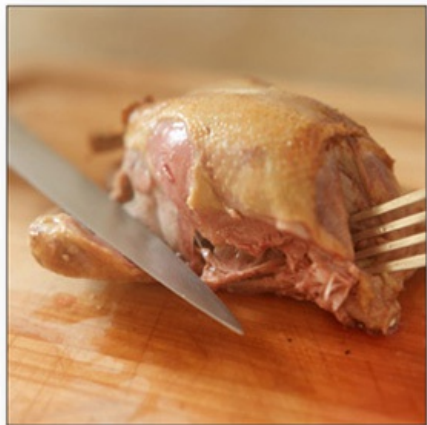


5. Stretch the jus with a little [meat glaze](#) or reduced broth (optional).



6. Deglaze by scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon or spatula, and strain the jus unto a small pitcher for serving.

HOW TO CARVE A SMALL ROAST BIRD



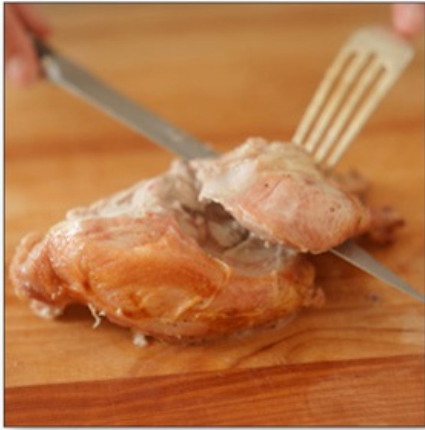
1. Hold the bird, here a squab, in place with a fork, pressing on the base of the cavity. Cut just above the wing until you reach the joint. Cut through the joint and remove the wing.



2. Slide the knife between the thigh and breast and continue down until you see the joint. Cut through the joint and remove the thigh.



3. Slide the knife along the side of the breastbone where you removed the thigh. Continue separating the breast and eventually push it out, away from the bird, and remove it.



4. Put the bird on its side and cut away the other thigh.



5. Cut away the second breast in the same way as the first. Prepare a [jus](#) and serve either whole or sliced.



6. Sliced roast squab served with jus spooned over the top.

Squab Civet with Fava Bean Cassoulet

This is an elaborate and expensive dish that you can simplify by eliminating the fava bean cassoulet or the liver mixture for the sauce, or by forgetting about the sauce entirely. But if you decide to make the complete dish, it will be one of your most impressive. When buying your squabs, try to find birds with all the giblets, including the heart, gizzard, and liver, because you will need them for the sauce. The squabs for this dish are prepared exactly the same way as for [Sautéed Squab with Its Own Jus](#), except that the jus is finished with giblet butter instead of plain butter. Most of the work for the elegant fava bean cassoulet can be done earlier the same day, and then the assembled cassoulet can be heated in the oven just before serving.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

Fava Bean Cassoulet

2 pounds fava beans in the shell, shucked

2 ounces foie gras

Salt

Pepper

2 tablespoons fresh [bread crumbs](#)

Giblet Butter

Giblets from 4 squabs and any saved-up squab livers

3 tablespoons butter

[Sautéed Squab with Its Own Jus](#)

To make the cassoulet, bring a saucepan three-fourths full of water to a rapid boil, add the fava beans, and blanch for 1 minute. Drain in a colander and rinse in cold water. Peel the fava beans, using a paring knife and your thumbnail to remove the tough skin.

Chop the foie gras and put it in a small sauté pan over medium heat. When it starts to melt, add the fava beans and stir them around to coat them with the foie gras fat. Season with salt and pepper and spread the beans in a small gratin dish or baking dish so they are about ½ inch deep.

Sprinkle the bread crumbs evenly over the top.

Thirty minutes before serving, place the dish in a 400°F oven and bake for about 12 minutes, or until the bread crumbs turn golden.

To make the giblet butter, take the giblets, except the necks (you can add the necks to the roasting pan with the squab carcasses), from the 4 squabs, put them in a mini food processor with the butter, and process until smooth, stopping as needed to scrape down the sides of the processor. If you don't have a mini food processor, chop the giblets with the butter until very fine, and then force the mixture through a medium- or fine-mesh strainer or drum sieve with the back of a spoon. Cover and refrigerate until needed.

To prepare the sautéed squabs, make the jus as directed, and then sauté the squabs. Deglaze the pan with the jus, whisk the giblet butter into the jus, and season with salt and pepper.

To serve, arrange the squab breasts and thighs on warmed plates and pass the cassoulet at the table. Or, for a more elaborate restaurant-style presentation, arrange the cassoulet in mounds in the center of 4 warmed plates. Slice the breast meat lengthwise into thin strips and arrange these, in a rosette pattern, over the fava beans. Put the thighs in the center and spoon the sauce over the top.

VARIATIONS

Roast squab is rarely everyday fare, and if you go to the trouble to make a jus or a sauce, it is fairly labor intensive. But since you are pulling out all the stops with this special bird anyway, you should consider adding sautéed wild mushrooms—especially morels or porcini—or even chopped [truffles](#) to the sauce. If you don't want to bother with the fava bean cassoulet, you can use other foods to prop up the squab meat and augment the dish. [Pureed Creamed Spinach](#), chopped [mushroom duxelles](#), or a round crouton, cooked in butter, is a nice platform. Or, try the ultimate extravagance: use a crouton and place a slice of [Foie Gras Terrine](#) between the crouton and the breast meat.

QUAIL

Because quail are small, about the size of a baby's fist, they can't be stuck into a hot oven to roast. The heat will penetrate and overcook them before they are crispy and brown on the outside. A better approach is to [sauté](#) them on the stove top until thoroughly browned and then finish them in the oven. You can adjust the oven temperature according to when you want to serve the quail: 400°F for 5 to 10 minutes; 250°F for 25 minutes or so.

If you don't want to roast the quail—perhaps you dread carving the little things or forcing it on your guests—you can take the breasts and thighs off the carcasses and sauté them. If you are ambitious, you can make a broth with the quail carcasses well ahead of time, reduce it to the consistency of hot maple syrup, and use it to deglaze the pan you used for sautéing the quail breasts and thighs. You can even puree the quail livers and hearts with butter and whisk the butter into the sauce at the last minute. Or, at the last minute, you can infuse the broth with a little finely chopped fresh chives or chervil and then whisk in a swirl of butter. Whatever your approach, keep the flavors simple, as the flavor of farm-raised quail is delicate.

HOW TO TRUSS QUAIL



1. Slide a length of string under the quail, just slightly in front of the thighs.



2. Pull one end of the string over the drumsticks.



3. Pull the other end of the string over the drumsticks, and tuck the string under the drumsticks to form an X.



4. Pull the string tight to bring together the drumsticks.



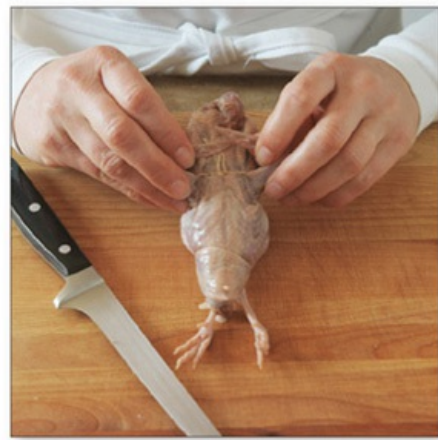
5. Bring the string back along the sides of the quail over the unfolded wings.



6. Flip the bird over so the string is hooked in the wings.



7. Pull the string tight and then knot. Cut off the excess string.



8. Fold under the wings.

HOW TO ROAST QUAIL



1. Season and truss the quail and brown them in oil over very high heat.



2. Roast in a 500°F oven for about 10 minutes, or until the breasts feel firm when squeezed.



3. Cut off the breasts and thighs and arrange on plates, collecting any juices. Caramelize the juices in the roasting pan, deglaze the pan with the collected juices or broth, and strain the jus into a small container.



4. Serve with the jus.

Sautéed Whole Quail

If they bother you, cut off the little feet with shears or a knife. [Trussing the quail](#) as you would a chicken makes them compact and helps them cook more evenly, but this isn't essential. The best pan for browning is nonstick, but if you are using something else, get it good and hot with some olive oil in it, make sure the quail are patted perfectly dry, and shake the pan back and forth as you sauté, so the little birds don't have a chance to stick. Count on 1 quail per person for a first course and 2 quail for a main.

MAKES 8 FIRST-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

8 quail

Salt

Pepper

3 tablespoons olive oil

½ cup quail, duck, or [chicken broth](#) (optional)

If the heads are still on, cut off and discard. If you like, trim the feet off the quail and then [truss](#) them. Preheat the oven according to your serving time, 500°F if you want to serve the quail within 5 to 10 minutes of putting them in the oven, or 250°F if you want to serve them after about 25 minutes. Choose an ovenproof sauté pan just large enough to hold the quail in a single layer.

Pat the quail dry with paper towels and season them liberally with salt and pepper. Pour the oil into the pan and heat over high heat. When the surface of the oil begins to ripple, add half of the quail and then move the pan back and forth on the burner as they brown. After 2 minutes or so, add the rest of the quail and sauté, turning the quail and moving the pan back and forth, for about 10 minutes, or until the quail are evenly browned. Slide the pan into the oven and roast for about 10 minutes at 500°F or for about 25 minutes at 250°F, then turn the oven off. Transfer the quail to a

platter and slide the platter into the oven with the door open, to stay warm while you make the jus. Pour the fat out of the pan and set the pan aside. The quail are ready to serve or carve if the breasts feel firm when you squeeze them between your fingers.

If you are carving the quail, use a cutting board with a moat to catch any juices that run out. Then use the juices to deglaze the sauté pan, scraping up any caramelized juices, and serve a tablespoon of jus over each quail. If you don't have enough jus to deglaze the pan, just deglaze it with a little broth. Similarly, if you collect only a small amount of jus after deglazing the pan, you can extend it with a little broth.

VARIATION

Once you have deglazed the sauté pan, you should have about ½ cup jus. If you don't have that much, add broth until you have ½ cup. Put the jus in the smallest saucepan you have, and add 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley and 2 tablespoons cold butter. Puree the sauce with an immersion blender with the pan over medium heat and season with salt and pepper.



[*Sautéed Quail Breasts and Thighs en Civet*](#)

Sautéed Quail Breasts and Thighs en Civet

If you cut up the quail ahead of time, there is no last-minute carving. You can even brown the breasts, skin side down, ahead of time and then roast them in the oven just before serving. The “en civet” means that you are including the giblets in the sauce by pureeing them with butter in a food processor and working the butter through a strainer. If you don't want to bother with all the sauce-making advice, just sauté the breasts and thighs until they are firm to the touch (unlike squab, quail is a white meat and is cooked to the same doneness as chicken) and serve them as they are.

MAKES 8 FIRST-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

8 quail, with giblets

Salt

Pepper

3 tablespoons olive oil

Optional Sauce

1 leek, white part only, [cleaned](#), or onion, cut in half

1 carrot, peeled and thinly sliced

[Bouquet garni](#)

1 quart [brown chicken broth](#), or more as needed to cover

4 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon fresh parsley, finely chopped at the last minute

[Cut the breasts and thighs off the bone.](#) Season on both sides with salt and pepper and refrigerate until needed. If the heads are still on, cut off and discard. Take the giblets—livers, hearts, gizzards—out of the cavities and reserve for the sauce, or sauté and give to the cat.

If making the sauce, preheat the oven to 400°F. Chop each carcass into a couple of pieces with a cleaver. Put the carcasses, leek, and carrot in an ovenproof sauté pan just large enough to hold everything in a single layer and roast for about 20 minutes, or until well browned but not until the juices burn on the pan bottom. Transfer the carcasses and vegetables to a saucepan and add the bouquet garni. Place the sauté pan on the stove top, add 1 cup of the broth, and deglaze the pan, scraping the bottom with a wooden spoon. Add to the saucepan. Then add enough broth to cover the carcasses, bring to a simmer, and simmer gently for 3 hours. Strain through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean saucepan, and discard the bones and vegetables. Simmer the strained broth until reduced to about ½ cup. Set aside.

Put the reserved giblets and the butter in a mini food processor and process until smooth, stopping to scrape down the sides of the processor as needed. If you don't have a mini food processor, chop the giblets with the butter until very fine, and then force the mixture through a medium- or fine-mesh strainer or a drum sieve with the back of a spoon. Cover and refrigerate until needed.

Ten minutes before serving, select a sauté pan large enough to hold the quail breasts and thighs in a single layer, add the oil, and heat over high heat. When the surface of the oil begins to ripple, add the breasts and thighs skin side down and sauté for about 2 minutes, or until well browned. Turn and brown on the other side for about 1 minute, or until the meat feels firm to the touch. Transfer to a warmed platter or plates.

To finish the sauce, pour the burned fat out of the pan, return to medium heat, and add the ½ cup reduced broth. Bring to a simmer and whisk in

the giblet butter and parsley. Season with salt and pepper and spoon over the breasts and thighs.

APPENDICES

[Cooking Terms](#)

[The 10 Basic Cooking Methods](#)

[Basic Recipes and Techniques](#)

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COOKING TERMS

A

Al dente: Literally, “to the tooth”; describes a cooked food, most commonly pasta, that is tender but still offers some resistance to the bite.

B

Bain-marie: A hot-water bath; used to ensure even, gentle cooking on the stove top or in the oven.

Bake: To cook uniform pieces of food uncovered in an oven, usually with a little fat or a small amount of liquid; also, to cook cakes, breads, pastries, pies, and other baked goods in an oven.

Barbecue: To cook food slowly over a charcoal or gas fire in a covered grill, usually with smoke.

Bard: To wrap meat in a thin sheet of fat to keep it moist.

Baste: To brush, pour, or spoon liquid over food as it cooks to prevent it from drying out.

Béarnaise sauce: Classic emulsified butter sauce made from clarified butter and egg yolks and flavored with shallots, tarragon, and vinegar.

Béchamel sauce: Classic white sauce made from butter, flour, and milk.

Beurre blanc: Classic emulsified butter sauce made by beating cubed butter into a white wine and vinegar reduction.

Beurre manié: A paste of butter and flour used to thicken braising and other liquids.

Blanch: To immerse food in boiling liquid as a preliminary cooking step, to be followed by a second cooking method; also, to immerse certain fruits and vegetables, such as peaches and tomatoes, in boiling water briefly to ease peeling.

Boil: To cook food by immersing it in boiling liquid.

Bouquet garni: A bundle of herbs added to soups, stews, and braises to infuse them with flavor.

Braise: To simmer food, such as a pot roast or whole chicken, in a small amount of liquid.

Broil: To cook food, usually relatively thin, small pieces, under—and usually quite close—to a heat source; the cooking equipment, known as a broiler, is often, but not always, part of the oven.

Broth: The flavorful liquid that results from cooking meat, poultry, seafood (fish bones and parts and/or crustacean shells), or vegetables and seasonings in water for varying amounts of time depending on the type of broth and the desired concentration.

Brown: To cook food, such as meat or poultry, over medium-high or high heat on the stove top or in a hot oven until the surface darkens to a rich brown.

Brown sauce: Classic French sauce made by reducing rich beef and/or veal broth to concentrate its flavor, combining it with tomatoes, and then thickening with a brown roux.

Butterfly: To cut a food, such as a boned leg of lamb or a peeled shrimp, nearly in half so it lies flat.

C

Caramelize: To cook foods over medium-high or high heat until their natural sugars are converted to a rich brown caramel; also, to heat sugar until it melts and turns brown.

Chiffonade: To cut a leafy vegetable into thin little strips by rolling the leaves tightly and slicing the rolls, controlling the size of the chiffonade by varying the thickness of the slices.

Chop: To cut food into pieces, from fine to large depending on the recipe; when no indication of size is given, cut into about ¼-inch pieces.

Chutney: A traditional Indian condiment made from fruits and/or vegetables and spices that may be sweet, sour, tart, and/or hot; nowadays, the term is also used for similar preparations originating in other countries.

Clarify: To melt butter and reserve the clear golden liquid for cooking, while discarding the milk solids; also, to create a crystal-clear broth by adding egg whites that trap scum and sediment and then straining the broth through cheesecloth.

Concassée: A chunky sauce made from a vegetable.

Confit: Poultry, primarily duck and goose, or meat slowly cooked in a generous amount of fat until tender and then stored covered in the fat; nowadays, the term is also used for vegetables, usually onions, slowly cooked in oil until softened.

Coulis: A strained pureed sauce made from a fruit or vegetable.

Cube: To cut food into uniform pieces that are of equal size on all six sides; when no indication of size is given, cut into ¼-inch cubes.

Curdle: To clump; can refer to the lumps that result when eggs in a sauce get too hot, causing the sauce to separate, or to the desirable curds that are produced when cooking scrambled eggs or making cheese or crème fraîche.

D

De-fat: To remove the fat, as is done for broths and jus, usually by skimming off the fat with a small ladle as the fat floats to the surface. Another method, commonly used for jus, is to use a degreasing cup that has a spout coming from the bottom of the cup instead of at the top, which pours off the jus below the surface of the fat. Last, broths and jus can be de-fatted by chilling them and then lifting off the congealed fat when cold.

Deep-fry: To cook food by immersing it in hot fat.

Deglaze: To use liquid to dissolve the caramelized juices on the bottom of a pan in which meat, poultry, or seafood has been sautéed, panfried, or roasted.

Degrease: To remove the fat from drippings, broth, braises, and the like.

Demi-glaze: A highly reduced brown sauce used as a base for meat sauces.

Dice: To cut food into uniform squares, from fine to large ($\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch) depending on the recipe.

Drain: To separate a solid food from the liquid in which it has been cooked or soaked, often by means of a colander or strainer, with the liquid usually discarded.

Drippings: The juices that collect in the pan when meat or poultry is roasted; also, the fat rendered from bacon.

E

Egg wash: A light coating of whisked egg white or egg yolk beaten with a pinch of salt that is brushed on some pastries and breads to enhance their baked appearance. The salt is added to thin the egg, making it easier to apply evenly.

Emulsify: To create a mixture of two or more ingredients that are held together by the presence of an emulsifier, such as egg yolks or cream.

Emulsion: A stabilized mixture produced when particles of fat are surrounded with molecules of an emulsifier, such as when the protein in egg yolks combines with oil to make a mayonnaise; a vigorously whisked vinaigrette of oil and vinegar is a temporary emulsion.

En papillote: To cook food in a parchment-paper package, usually resulting in it simultaneously steaming and braising.

F

Fillet: To remove the bones from meat, poultry, or fish; also, a piece of boneless meat, poultry, or fish.

Force meat: Seasoned ground mixture of meat, poultry, or fish used for pâtés, terrines, and as a stuffing.

French: To trim off the meat and fat from the last two inches or so of the bones on a rack of lamb or pork, a crown roast of pork, a prime rib of beef, or chops.

G

Ganache: A perfectly smooth mixture of cream and melted chocolate used as a glaze when liquid and as a filling when left to set.

Gastrique: A sauce component made by reducing vinegar (or sometimes wine) and sugar and used to impart a sweet-and-sour flavor.

Glaze: To cook food in a small amount of liquid that slowly evaporates, giving the food a shiny finish; also, to apply a thin, shiny coating and the coating itself.

Gravy: The drippings from a roast thickened, usually with flour.

Grill: To cook food over a heat source, either charcoal or gas jets.

H, J

Hollandaise sauce: Classic emulsified butter sauce made from clarified butter, egg yolks, and lemon juice.

Julienne: To cut food, usually vegetables, into strips about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch wide and thick and $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches long.

Jus: The drippings released from meat as it roasts, which are usually degreased and served as they are or thickened with flour for a gravy.

L

Lard: To insert strips of fat into meat to keep the meat moist; also, rendered pork fat.

Leaven: To give baked goods a lighter texture by adding beaten egg whites, yeast, baking soda, baking powder, or other leaveners to the batter or dough.

M

Macerate: To soak food, usually fruits, in liquid, such as wine or spirits, to flavor and/or soften them.

Marinate: To soak meat, poultry, fish, or other foods in a flavorful liquid mixture, typically a mixture of oil, an acid such as lemon juice, and herbs and spices, usually before cooking.

Medallion: A round of meat at least 3 inches in diameter.

Mince: To chop food into tiny pieces.

Mirepoix: A mixture of finely cut sautéed vegetables (carrot, celery, onion) used as a flavor base for braises, soups, sauces, and other preparations.

N

Noisette: A round of meat less than 3 inches in diameter.

Nonreactive: Used to describe a pan or bowl that will not react with acidic ingredients, such as lemon juice or tomatoes; stainless steel or enamel-lined aluminum are nonreactive materials, while copper, cast iron, and nonanodized aluminum are all reactive materials.

P

Pan-fry: To cook food, such as chops, steaks, or burgers, in a skillet or sauté pan with just enough fat to prevent sticking.

Pâté: Traditionally, a forcemeat cooked in a crust, but nowadays the term is used for crust-free forcemeat and is often interchangeable with terrine.

Pinch: A measuring term for the amount that can be picked up between your thumb and index finger; used primarily for spices.

Pipe: To force a frosting, sweet or savory filling, or other fairly thick mixture through the narrow end of a pastry bag or paper cone, commonly, but not always, to produce a decorative effect.

Plump: To restore moisture to dried foods, usually by soaking in liquid; commonly used for dried fruits, such as raisins and currants.

Poach: To cook food gently in a generous amount of liquid.

Puree: To blend, mash, or sieve (through a strainer, food mill, or other device) a solid food to a smooth consistency.

R

Reduce: To simmer or boil liquid to evaporate it and concentrate its flavor; a common technique in both sauce making and broth making.

Render: To melt the fat from meat or poultry.

Roast: To cook food, usually large pieces of meat or poultry, uncovered in the oven.

Roux: Flour cooked with fat, usually butter, for thickening sauces, soups, or other foods; types vary from briefly cooked white roux to blond roux to long-cooked, intensely flavored brown roux.

S

Salsa: Most commonly a sauce made from coarsely chopped raw vegetables and/or fruits, flavored with herbs, often chiles, and an acidic ingredient such as lime juice.

Sauté: To cook food quickly, in small pieces or thin slices, in a little fat over medium-high or high heat to create a brown crust that accentuates flavor; traditionally, the food is tossed about by moving the pan back and forth in short, rapid jerks.

Sear: To brown quickly over high heat, often while sautéing. It has long been thought that searing seals in flavor, but it doesn't. It actually caramelizes the juices that are released by the food, converting them into a crust the instant they reach the surface.

Shuck: To remove an oyster, clam, or other bivalve from its shell; also, to remove beans or peas from their pods or ears of corn from their husks.

Sift: To pass an ingredient, such as flour or confectioners' sugar, through a sifter or strainer to aerate it and rid it of lumps.

Simmer: To cook food at just below a boil; small bubbles breaking intermittently on the surface indicate a gentle simmer, while larger, more frequent bubbles indicate a brisk simmer.

Skim: To lift away the top layer of a liquid; most commonly used for removing the scum or other impurities that rise to the surface of a broth as it cooks or to skim fat off of a braise or the drippings from a roast.

Slurry: A mixture of cornstarch and liquid, usually water, for thickening braising liquids, sauces, and other liquids.

Smoke: To infuse food with smoke; cold-smoked foods are cured, while hot-smoked foods are cooked.

Steam: To cook food over simmering or boiling water so that it cooks in the heat of the rising steam.

Steep: To draw the flavor out of an ingredient by soaking it in a hot or cold liquid.

Stew: To cook food cut into more or less bite-sized pieces in a small amount of liquid.

Stir-fry: To stir and toss ingredients in a wok over high heat.

Strain: To pour a puree or liquid, such as broth, or pass a dry ingredient, such as fine bread crumbs, through a strainer to rid it of unwanted solids or particles.

T

Terrine: A forcemeat or whole foie gras liver cooked in a porcelain or metal vessel that is also known as a terrine.

V, Z

Velouté sauce: Classic sauce made from butter, flour, and broth.

Vinaigrette: An emulsion of oil and an acidic ingredient, such as vinegar or lemon juice, with or without additional seasonings.

Zest: The colored portion of the skin of a citrus fruit.

THE 10 BASIC COOKING METHODS

Few cooking techniques require great skill or hours of practice. And even though lots of minor techniques and tricks are used in cooking, most dishes are prepared by one of ten basic methods: roasting, braising, poaching, sautéing, steaming, frying, grilling, smoking, barbecuing, and boiling. Once you have mastered these methods and understand how they work when applied to each basic food group, such as seafood, meats, and vegetables, you'll be able to alter recipes to suit your own taste or to take advantage of what's in the market—or you won't need a recipe at all.

Except for dishes served raw or marinated, such as ceviche or beef carpaccio, all cooking involves heat. Sometimes the heat is applied directly to the food, without moisture, as in roasting or grilling. Other times fats are involved, as in sautéing or frying, or water is used, as vapor when steaming and as liquid when poaching and braising. Sometimes the heat is intense, as when frying, or gentle, as when cooking a stew at just the hint of a simmer.

Some basic cooking methods include submethods, or techniques, such as peeling and shaping vegetables, glazing (really a form of braising), boning, filleting, and trimming all sorts of meats and seafood. As you learn to appreciate the role each of these so-called minor techniques plays in the basic methods, the details of cooking will make sense.

ROASTING

The word *roasting* comes from the French *rôtir*, which means “to roast.” Traditionally, roasting was done in front of a roaring wood fire on a spit, a *broche*, that was rotated slowly to ensure the food cooked evenly. The result was a brown, savory crust concealing a properly cooked interior, and, if the cook was savvy, there was a pan or tray below the spit to catch the juices.

Nowadays, most of us don't have access to spits and roaring fires, so we use an oven. When foods are roasted in an oven, they are surrounded by the heat, as opposed to being under or over the heat source, as with broiling and grilling, respectively. Baking is simply the act of heating something through in the oven. Roasting, in the oven or on the spit, works by exposing the food to hot dry air. When done correctly, oven roasting yields almost the same delicious effect as spit roasting.

Convection Ovens

A convection oven is simply an oven that's very windy inside with the hot air blown around with a fan. The effect is analogous to the heat index in the summer or the wind chill in the winter, when the movement of air affects the way the air feels. Heated moving air behaves like still air that's fifty degrees hotter. If you have a convection oven, use it during the browning phase of roasting. If your oven only goes up to 500°F, you can make it function like 550°F by using the convection oven. This is useful when you need to brown small items such as chickens or squab.

How Hot to Roast?

To brown a roast without over- or undercooking it, you need to consider how large it is. If it's a turkey, you can roast it at a moderate temperature for the entire time. That's because it will be in the oven long enough to turn a beautiful golden brown even if the oven isn't very hot. On the other hand, if you're roasting a small chicken or other little birds, the oven needs to be hot enough for the brown crust to form before the bird overcooks. This is especially important for birds such as squabs, which have dark meat and are cooked to a relatively low internal temperature. A good rule is to start at the highest possible heat, roast until a golden crust is formed, and then turn the oven down for the rest of the roasting. If you're roasting something *very* small, such as a quail, you would need a 1500°F oven to get it to brown before it overcooked. In this case, or any time you think your oven might not be hot enough to brown whatever you're roasting, brown the food on the stove top before you slip it in the oven.

A hot oven at the beginning of roasting not only browns the roast but also kills any bacteria on its surface. Once this has been accomplished, the oven temperature is not as critical. In fact, in some restaurants that serve prime rib, the roast is browned at a high temperature and then kept in a low oven—say, 130°F—for twenty-four hours. The meat can never overcook because it can't reach a temperature higher than 130°F, no matter how long it's left in the oven. The initial browning at a high temperature is essential, however. Starting the roast at 130°F wouldn't kill bacteria, which can cause the roast to go bad.

Don't try the twenty-four-hour method at home. Most ovens don't hold a temperature setting with sufficient accuracy, which makes the technique risky. In general, once the roast is browned, turn the oven down to 350°F. If the roast starts to get too brown before it is cooked through, turn the oven down again. If your guests are late, turn the oven down to 200°F. The lower the temperature and the longer the cooking, the more even the cooking will be.

Roasting Pointers

Roasts, especially large ones, should be brought to room temperature before they are roasted. While the actual length of time depends on the size of the roast, the time should never exceed 6 hours; leaving the roast out longer than 6 hours risks spoilage.

Start the roast in a hot oven until it browns and then finish it in a low to moderate oven.

Let the roast rest, loosely covered with aluminum foil, for at least 20 minutes before carving. How long it rests will depend on its size.

Testing for Doneness

The best way to determine if a roast is done is to stick an instant-read thermometer into the thickest part of a meat roast or between the thigh and the breast of a bird. Don't slide the thermometer in so far that it touches bone, because the bone is always hotter than the surrounding meat. If it's ready, take it out of the oven, cover it loosely with aluminum foil—not tightly or it will steam—and let it rest in a warm place for 10 to 20 minutes for large birds (but not for squab or quail, which should rest for no more than a few minutes). Resting has two effects: it causes the heat to continue to penetrate to the middle of the roast, leaving the roast more evenly cooked, and it allows the meat to relax (remember meat is essentially muscle), so that when you cut into it the juices have redistributed evenly throughout the meat and don't come pouring out. When checking the temperature, keep in mind that it will rise 5° to 10°F during resting.

Basting

Students often ask me when they should baste a roast. Cooks originally basted roasts to keep their surface from drying out, but basting is unnecessary for birds, because the fat in the skin renders as the meat cooks, keeping the meat from drying out. A meat roast—a rib roast, a leg

of lamb—should be left covered with a thin layer of its own fat, which will keep the meat from drying out. Some butchers, especially in Europe, trim all the fat off a roast and then tie a thin sheet of pork fat around the meat to keep it moist. The main problem home cooks face when it comes to basting is that repeatedly opening the oven door to baste allows heat to escape, which can prevent browning.

Stuffings

Many of us would regret forgoing the proverbial stuffed holiday turkey, but stuffings present a problem. When mixtures are stuffed into the cavities of birds or of meat roasts that have been split open, the roast usually has to be overcooked in order to cook the stuffing. Stuffings also absorb the juices released by the roast. They make the stuffing taste good, of course, but then there aren't enough juices for serving a jus or gravy. Yet another problem is the potential health risk: a stuffing can remain inside the roast at a warm, rather than hot, temperature long enough for bacteria to grow. If you do decide to opt for a stuffed bird or meat roast, always stuff it immediately before putting it in the oven so that there is less opportunity for bacteria to grow.

Gravy and Jus

This brings us to the question of whether to go with gravy or jus. Jus is just the drippings released by a roast, while gravy is the jus thickened, usually with flour. A jus is sometimes lightly thickened with cornstarch to give it a richer look, but it retains the sheen characteristic of a jus, rather than the more opaque look of a gravy. For example, in the United States turkey is usually served with a gravy and prime rib is usually serve with a jus.

A properly made jus or gravy has challenged cooks for centuries because roasts, at least when properly cooked, rarely provide enough drippings to go around. In times past, an extra roast was cooked well done so that it released all its juices, which were then used to supplement drippings from the roast being served. Some cooks, then and now, add broth to stretch a jus or a gravy. But even a concentrated broth doesn't have the pure, direct flavor of drippings. The problem is greatest with red-meat roasts that are cooked rare—the more cooked a roast, the more juices it releases—and with stuffed birds, because the stuffing absorbs a lot of the juices.

To prevent juices from burning, choose a heavy-bottomed roasting pan just large enough to hold the roast, with sides no higher than necessary, and don't use a rack. Roasting racks are useless. Rack partisans insist that racks allow the bottom of the roast to brown. But because the roast is not touching the pan, the juices from the roast drip down onto the bottom of the pan, which is at the same temperature as the oven, and then the drippings immediately burn, creating smoke that gives the roast a bad flavor and smells up the house. Any hope of using the juices to make a jus or gravy is lost. Cover the bottom of the roasting pan with pieces of onion and/or carrot (don't cut them too small or they'll burn too) to eliminate any exposed patches, to keep the roast from sticking to the pan, and to add flavor to the juices. To end up with more jus than the roast releases, you can also cover the bottom of the pan with a layer of meat trimmings that will release juices along with the roast. For smaller roasts, which roast in less time, you may want to put the meat trimmings in the pan with a carrot and an onion and roast them for 20 minutes or so to get them started before setting the roast on top.

Always keep an eye on the pan during roasting to make sure the juices aren't burning. If they threaten to burn before the roast is done, add about ½ cup water to the pan to stop them from cooking. However, do this only as a last resort. Adding moisture can prevent browning.

When the roast is done, you need to analyze the contents of the pan. If it's covered with trimmings and the trimmings still look raw, put it on the stove top over high heat and stir the trimmings around to brown them, so they will release their juices. If the roast has released a lot of juices—this often happens with a turkey, especially if it's overcooked a bit—you'll need only to separate the fat from the juices and serve the juices (the jus) as they are or make a gravy.

With a smaller roast, or with one that is cooked rare or medium-rare, you will probably see very few juices in the pan. The juices you do see may be emulsified with the fat into a cloudy, greasy-looking mixture, or they may have caramelized and formed a brown crust on the pan bottom. If the juices have formed a crust, just pour off and discard the fat. If the juices are emulsified with the fat, you need to separate them by putting the roasting pan on the stove top and boiling down the juices until they caramelize on the pan, leaving no liquid in the pan. You can then pour off the fat and proceed to make your gravy.

BRAISING

One of the simplest cooking methods to describe, braising is nothing more than simmering foods in a small amount of liquid. In the process, the foods not only absorb flavor from the surrounding liquid but also contribute to it, creating a cycle of exchange that results in profoundly complex and satisfying tastes. What complicates braising is its many submethods, or techniques, and variations.

For example, short braising, which is what you are doing when you simmer a piece of fish or chicken in a little wine, is basically cooking food just long enough to heat it through to the temperature at which it is done. Long braising, typically used for stews and pot roasts, is when food is heated to a relatively high temperature—far higher than it would be if you were roasting or sautéing—and kept there long enough for proteins to break down, fats to melt, and other reactions to take place that leave the meat with the characteristic melting texture of a good stew. Brown braising, when foods are browned before they are simmered, and white braising, when they are simmered without browning, are two more techniques. Most braising variations are distinguished by the choice of liquid, aromatic ingredients, vegetables, and herbs; how the liquid is enriched and/or thickened; and how the finished dish is garnished. Despite these myriad options, the basic method itself varies little.

Long-Braised Stews

A stew is simply a braise in which meat has been cut into more or less bite-size pieces. Older recipes recommend larding, which is the process of sliding strips of fatback, essentially bacon without any lean parts and that hasn't been smoked, into each cube of meat, which adds its own flavor and creates an impression of moistness, though nowadays this step is unusual. The meat is sometimes marinated, commonly with wine, herbs, and aromatic vegetables, and often it is browned before other ingredients—vegetables (often those used in the marinade) and liquid (wine, broth, or water)—are added. Usually a [bouquet garni](#) is slipped in at the beginning to add an herbaceous complexity. The stew is then brought to a gentle simmer, the froth is skimmed off with a ladle, the pot is covered, and its contents are left to cook at the slightest hint of a simmer until the meat is completely tender, usually in about four hours or so.

When a long-braised stew is presented in its most rudimentary form, the fat is simply skimmed off the top and the stew is served as it comes out of the pot, the aromatic vegetables left in. In more refined versions, the aromatic vegetables are picked out of the pot, the liquid is strained, degreased, and sometimes thickened (usually with a flour and butter paste called a *beurre manié*), and a garniture, such as the pearl onions, bacon, and mushrooms used for beef bourguignon, is prepared separately and combined with the meat just before serving. By changing the

liquid, the aromatic vegetables, and the final garniture, a cook who has made one stew can make or invent another.

Pot Roasts

A pot roast is a relatively large cut of meat that is cooked like a stew. The meat should not be too lean, since it is fat, not liquid, that keeps meat moist. If the meat happens to be lean, like a shoulder of veal or a leg of lamb, you'll need to lard it well with strips of fatback. The pot you use should match the size and shape of the meat as closely as possible to minimize the amount of liquid. The meat is usually browned, either in the oven or on the stove top, and then surrounded with aromatic vegetables and sometimes some meat trimmings or bones. You can add liquid right after browning, or you can first roast the meat until it releases all its juices and they caramelize on the bottom of the pan. Bring the liquid, which should usually come about halfway up the sides of the meat, to a simmer over medium heat on the stove top and then cover the pot. You need to invert the cover, or cover the pot with a sheet of aluminum foil, so that liquid condenses on the underside and drips down over the meat, effectively basting it from inside the pot.

You can then put the pot roast over low heat on the stove top or in a 300°F oven so that it cooks at the slightest simmer. Check it from time to time to make sure the liquid isn't boiling, which would dry out the meat and make the braising liquid cloudy and greasy. (Some cooks put a pot of water in the oven next to the braise, and then check it instead, to avoid uncovering the braising pot.) After a couple of hours, you can turn the meat over, so the top half is now submerged in the liquid, and continue braising until the meat is easily penetrated with a knife. Some older recipes even call for serving braised meats with a spoon. You can serve the meat as is, with the liquid perhaps reduced and degreased, or you can transfer the meat to a clean pot, pour the degreased liquid over the top, and put the uncovered pot in a 400°F oven. You then baste the pot roast until it is shiny and the braising liquid is syrupy and golden. The sliced or spooned meat is served with the braising liquid spooned over, or the braising liquid is finished with herbs, mushrooms, truffles, or various vegetables.

Short-Braised Stews

The best-known short-braised stew is beef stroganoff, in which cut-up pieces of tender meat are cooked just long enough to heat through and the braising liquid is finished with sour cream. Any tender cut of meat can be cooked this way, and the effect is dramatic when people expect the texture of stew and are instead greeted with the tenderness of a roast.

The inherent problem with this duplicity is that while the meat, provided it comes from a tender (and usually expensive) cut, will be properly cooked, the braising liquid will have had no time to develop flavor. For example, if you have decided to mimic a red wine stew but want your guests to find rare pieces of tenderloin instead of stewed chuck, you need to prepare the stewing liquid by making an authentic stew the night before and using the liquid, or you need to make a stock with beef bones and/or cheap cuts and red wine and then use that liquid.

What about Pressure Cookers?

For the same reason that foods cook more slowly at high altitude—because the lower atmospheric pressure allows water to boil at a lower temperature—a pressure cooker cooks foods under pressure at a much higher boiling point. In other words, foods can be braised at 300°F instead of 200°F, causing them to soften much faster. A pressure cooker is a good alternative to braising in a regular pot only if you're careful to keep it over low heat once it starts to release steam. This prevents rapid boiling, which can make stews greasy and dry.

Glazing Vegetables

Root and bulb vegetables, such as carrots and onions, are often braised in water or broth. The vegetables, sliced or shaped by rounding their edges, are placed in a straight-sided pan, ideally just big enough to hold them all in a single layer. Then water or broth is added to come halfway up their sides. They are then covered with a round of parchment paper, so the liquid will slowly evaporate while the vegetables are cooking, but partially covering the pan works just as well. The ideal is the complete evaporation of the liquid just as the vegetables have finished cooking. The liquid will have formed a glaze that covers the vegetables with their own natural sugars.

Sometimes a little butter and a pinch of sugar are added to the liquid to enhance the glaze. Onions are either brown glazed or white glazed, which is just as it sounds. When onions are white glazed, they are cooked just until they are coated with glaze. When they are brown glazed, they are cooked until the glaze is allowed to caramelize on the bottom of the pan. The pan is then deglazed with a little more water or broth and evaporated again so that a dark glaze covers the onions.

POACHING

Don't confuse poaching with boiling. Foods are rarely boiled—green vegetables are the exception—but meats and seafood are often poached in liquid that may approach a simmer but never boil. When we make broth, we poach meat, chicken, fish, or bones in water. If the water is allowed to boil, the churning action causes fat and proteins to emulsify into a cloudy, greasy mess. Gentle poaching, on the other hand, allows fats and proteins to accumulate on top of the broth, where we can skim them off with a ladle, or we can refrigerate the broth and wait for them to congeal and then lift them off, all at once, with a spoon.

Start with Cold Liquid or Hot?

When making broth, we always pour cold water over the meat and/or bones and bring it slowly to a simmer, so that the flavors of the ingredients are released into the liquid. If you start with hot water, the meat or seafood releases proteins in fine particles that cloud the broth, rather than form a froth that is easily skimmed off.

There are, however, exceptions to the cold-water rule. If you're poaching small fish, such as sardines or trout, it's best to start with simmering liquid. If you start with cold liquid and bring it to a simmer, the fish will be overcooked by the time the simmer is reached. If you're poaching a large fish, say, a whole salmon, it's best to start with cold liquid and gradually heat it. If the liquid is hot from the beginning, the fish will overcook on the outside and still be raw on the inside. By slowly heating the poaching liquid with the fish in it, the heat has time to penetrate it.

What Liquid to Use?

Depending on the dish, foods are usually poached in water, meat or fish broth, or a vegetable broth (called court bouillon). If you're poaching meats, it's best to poach them in broth, as it will leach out less of their flavor than water will. Seafood is usually poached in a fish broth or a court bouillon made with carrots, leeks or onions, a [bouquet garni](#), and usually some white wine. When seafood is served surrounded with the court bouillon that was used to poach it and the vegetables used to make the court bouillon are left in, the dish is referred to as *à la nage*, which translates roughly to "in the swim." When a court bouillon is prepared for something cooked *à la nage*, the vegetables are often cut in a decorative

way, such as in julienne, or at least are cut more carefully and evenly than they might be if they were being strained out and discarded.

Poaching Meats

Sometimes the distinction between stewing and poaching is ambiguous. The French make a veal stew, or *blanquette*, by poaching strips of veal breast in broth or water. The poaching liquid is then thickened with a roux and finished with cream and egg yolks. But when the poaching liquid is kept to a minimum—just enough is used to cover the meat—the dish can also be considered a stew.

Three of the best-known poached dishes are Italian *bollito misto*, which often contains an assortment of meats from different animals; New England boiled dinner, which despite the name is poached, not boiled; and French *pot-au-feu*, made with assorted cuts of beef. All of these dishes are cooked for several hours to tenderize the tougher cuts of meat they utilize. When tender cuts, such as tenderloin or duck breast, are poached in broth (traditionally a *pot-au-feu*), the name of the dish sometimes ends with *à la ficelle*, which means “with string.” The term refers to suspending the item being poached in the broth from a string tied to a spoon that spans the top of the pot, and it originates with a long-ago practice of French rural life in which villagers used a communal cauldron to cook their meats (tough, rather than tender, cuts), the string being the easiest way to retrieve their own meat without disturbing the supper of others. Poaching meats *à la ficelle* and serving them surrounded with broth and aromatic vegetables is a particularly lean and tender way to serve them.

SAUTÉING

Sauter means “to jump” and refers to tossing small items in a pan over high heat. The word has also come to mean the same as panfrying, in which foods are cooked in just enough fat to keep them from sticking to the pan. When you sauté a chop, steak, or chicken, for example, there’s no tossing, just turning when one side is properly browned. Smaller items, such as mushrooms, sliced vegetables, or shrimp, can actually be sautéed in the original sense of the word by giving the pan handle a quick tug that causes the foods to hit the sloping sides of the pan and fly up above the rim—in other words, tossing them into the air—and then back onto the floor of the pan. For anyone afraid of making a mess, sautéed foods can be stirred, of course, but tossing is still the ideal method for delicate foods, such as certain mushrooms.

The primary purpose of sautéing is to create a brown crust on foods to accentuate their flavor and appearance. In the past, cooks believed this crust sealed in flavor, but that idea has been largely debunked. What does happen is this: Almost all foods release liquid as they cook. This liquid usually contains combinations of sugars and proteins but is mostly water. Ideally, when you’re sautéing, the liquid evaporates the instant it is released, so that the sugars and proteins caramelize on the outside of the food when it comes in contact with the heat, forming a savory crust. If the heat is too low or the pan too crowded, the water won’t evaporate fast enough and will create steam. The steam will cook whatever else is in the pan, causing it to release liquid. Simply put, you end up boiling instead of sautéing. When just creating a crust, it’s called searing.

Anyone who has tried to sauté a pan full of mushrooms or to brown cubes of meat for a stew has probably encountered this phenomenon. To avoid it, get the fat in the pan almost smoking hot before adding the food. Then, when sautéing mushrooms, for example, add a handful, wait for them to sizzle and begin to brown, and then add more. When browning meat for a stew, sauté the cubes in relatively small batches, removing each batch before adding the next. Don’t wipe the pan between additions, but add more fat when necessary. If you add too much to the pan at one time, the pan will cool down and the food won’t brown.

Sometimes, especially when cooking meats and poultry, the pan is deglazed with liquid such as wine or broth, after sautéing. The liquid helps to dissolve the flavorful crust of caramelized juices stuck to the bottom of the pan, which are then used to form the base of a pan-deglazed sauce. To avoid burning the crust as you are sautéing, the pan should be just large enough to hold the sautéed foods in a single layer. If there’s empty space, it overheats and the released juices from the food run onto it and burn.

STEAMING

The effect of steaming is similar to that of poaching, except that the liquid, usually plain water, is in the form of a gas. Many cooks prefer steaming to other techniques, especially for vegetables and seafood, because they feel it leaches out fewer nutrients than cooking in simmering liquid does. This is true, but only to a point. However they are cooked, foods release liquid. When they are steamed, this liquid drips down into the boiling liquid used to create the steam; when they are poached, it disperses into the surrounding liquid.

Some traditionalists argue that cooking green vegetables in a covered pan turns them a homely gray, and because steaming requires a covered vessel, it has this effect. For long cooking, this is true, but since most green vegetables cook quickly, in five minutes or so, they end up every bit as bright when steamed as they do when boiled uncovered in salted water.

When foods are braised or sautéed, the liquid they release is incorporated into a sauce, so no flavor is lost. But when foods are steamed, the liquid they release falls into the boiling water that is then discarded. You can avoid this by using a small amount of flavorful liquid, such as wine, court bouillon, or water scented with a small [bouquet garni](#), for your steaming medium, watching carefully that it doesn’t run dry and burn. The flavor of the liquid will concentrate as it boils, plus it will be enriched by the juices released from the steaming food. You can then use this tasty steaming liquid as the base for a sauce, broth, or soup.

Selecting a Steamer

If you are shopping for a steamer, be sure to pick one that is large enough to hold a few pieces of fish and relatively large vegetables. Otherwise, they are all about the same: a pot for the liquid fitted with a perforated tray for the food—the steam travels upward through the holes—and a lid. Bamboo steamers also work well and can be found at Asian markets. Even if you don’t have a steamer, you can still steam. Just put a circular cake rack in the bottom of a large pan with a tight-fitting lid. Keep in mind, too, that some foods, such as mussels and clams, don’t require a steamer for steaming. Their shells hold them above the liquid.

Cooking en Papillote

Cooking foods en papillote, in which food more or less simultaneously steams and braises inside a parchment-paper package, yields a particularly dramatic presentation when served. The food, usually fish, is sealed in parchment with wine and herbs and then baked. As it cooks, the food releases its own flavorful liquid, which is trapped in the bag. At the table, the diner cuts open the package and is greeted with a wonderful whiff of the aromatic steaming liquid scented with herbs or, sigh, truffles.

FRYING

Despite its somewhat evil reputation as fattening and unhealthy, deep-frying seals in the flavor and nutrients of some foods better than any other

method and introduces very little fat when done properly. Successful frying depends on the right kind of fat and the right temperature. Getting the food as quickly as possible from the hot fat into the diner's mouth is also important. Once fried foods cool off, much of the satisfying sizzling-hot effect is lost.

The most flavorful fat, long favored by connoisseurs and the traditional favorite for French fries, is beef suet made by rendering the white brittle fat that surrounds beef kidneys. Because it's highly saturated and contains cholesterol, it's rarely used today for cooking; vegetable oil is its most popular replacement. Any vegetable oil—canola, safflower, corn oil, peanut oil, or pure olive oil (versus extra virgin, which is expensive and loses its flavor when heated)—will work. But vegetable oil has little flavor or sometimes has an unpleasant fishy taste, so many cooks use pure olive oil for frying.

Determining the right frying temperature depends on what you're frying and how large it is. Larger pieces, such as chicken parts, need to be fried at lower temperatures so the heat has time to penetrate to the interior by the time the crust forms. Smaller items, such as sliced vegetables, are fried at higher temperatures, so a flavorful crust forms before they absorb too much oil. French fries must be fried in two stages: the first at a lower temperature to cook the potato through, the second at a higher temperature to form the crust.

Sometimes you'll encounter fried foods that are particularly rich because they are enrobed in a thick, absorbent batter. These same foods can be lightened up by using a simpler batter—a no-frills mixture of flour and water—or by just dredging them in flour and patting off the excess before frying.

Be careful when deep-frying, as hot oil in large amounts can easily cause serious burns if you don't exercise caution. Electric skillets or deep fryers are convenient because they keep the oil temperature fairly constant without your having to fiddle with the controls. If you're frying on the stove top, use a heavy pot, never fill it more than half full of oil, and put it on a back burner so that no one bumps into it accidentally. When you're ready to fry, lower a piece or two of whatever you're frying into the hot oil to judge how much it is going to bubble up. If you add too much food at once, the oil can boil over. Have a large box of salt handy in case you need to douse the flames. Also, don't toss food into the oil with your hands, as the oil can splash up and burn you. Use a spider, which looks like a spider web with a handle, or a long-handled slotted spoon or strainer.

Stir-Frying

A stir-fry differs from a regular "fry" in that very little fat is used. Whereas fried foods are partially or completely immersed in fat, usually oil, stir-fried ingredients touch only enough oil to keep them from sticking to the pan, usually a wok. Stir-frying in fact is much more closely related to sautéing than it is to frying; the ingredients are kept in motion in the same way except that instead of being tossed, they are stirred, usually over very high heat.

GRILLING

Don't confuse grilling with barbecuing. Grilling simply means to cook over the heat source open to the air. Covering the grill will roast or bake the food but doesn't help it grill. The heat source can be a bed of charcoal or a row of gas jets or an indoor grill pan. The best grills allow you to adjust the distance of the grill rack from the fire. Thin foods, such as steaks or fish fillets, require intense heat to form a crust before the heat has a chance to penetrate and overcook the interior. The grill rack itself is ideally a heavy metal grid that is flat, not round like wire, which ensures attractive grill markets on steaks and chops. Gas grills have the advantage of requiring no fire building—a fire made with ordinary charcoal briquettes delivers no more flavor than a gas grill—and will still impart a grilled flavor.

Many cooks mistakenly think that a good grilled flavor comes from smoke and flame generated when fat from the grilling food drips down on the coals, causing flare-ups. But burned fat gives grilled foods a sooty flavor and is best avoided. While many grills nowadays come with covers, authentic grilling is done uncovered in the open air. A cover does offer some advantages. If you're cooking something large—a leg of lamb, for example—grilling it for the entire time over hot coals can result in a burned exterior before the interior is ready. To solve this problem, you can build the fire on just one side of the grill bed, grill the meat directly over the fire just long enough to brown and flavor it, and then move the meat to the side with no fire, and cover the grill to finishing the cooking. However, during this final step, when you are using indirect heat, you are basically roasting or baking the meat, not grilling it.

A covered grill is also handy if you want your grilled food to have a smoky flavor. Again, build the fire to one side and use it to brown the food. Then sprinkle the coals with a handful of wood chips that have been soaked for a couple of hours in water, or put a small sheet of aluminum foil over the coals and top it with a handful of sawdust. Put the food on the side of the rack away from the fire, cover the grill, and finish cooking the meat. The drill is essentially the same for gas grills, except that you don't soak the wood chips. Some gas grills come with a special smoker box to hold the chips. Otherwise, you will need to put the chips in a perforated foil packet and place the packet directly over the heat. The best woods for creating smoke are grapevine cuttings, hickory, mesquite, and fruit woods such as apple and cherry.

SMOKING

There are two ways to smoke—with hot smoke and with cold smoke. When hot smoking, the easier method of the two, the food smokes and cooks at the same time. Cold-smoked foods, such as smoked salmon, are cured but never actually cooked. The cold smoke adds flavor and acts as a preservative.

Hot smoking is relatively straightforward and can be done at home with a store-bought stove-top smoker or with a wok or sauté pan fitted with a round cake rack. Sawdust, wood chips from hardwoods or fruit woods, or tea leaves (if wok smoking) provide the smoke. You can also smoke in a [covered grill](#).

Cold smoking is more elaborate and requires more investment, but the results may be worth it when you compare the price of raw salmon with smoked salmon. You can make a cold smoker by investing in a hot smoker, which is essentially a metal box with an electric hot plate on the inside. On the top of the smoker is a small chimney. The trick is to take out the chimney and insert a length of stovepipe. Next, attach additional lengths of stovepipe that will direct the smoke sideways and then down into a cardboard box (the box the smoker comes in is the perfect size). Finally, hang the salmon in the cardboard box, seal the whole contraction up with duct tape, and start smoking.

BARBECUING

Barbecuing is basically a combination of grilling in a covered grill and smoking. Typically, a fire is built to one side of a grill, the meat is placed on the opposite side, and the grill is covered. Wood chips or sawdust are sometimes put on top of the coals to generate [smoke](#), and usually the meat is brushed with a sauce to flavor it and keep it moist. Depending on the cut of meat, the meat is cooked—actually sort of roasted and

smoked at the same time—either until it is just heated through (for tender cuts) or until it softens in the same way as meat that is braised. This softening of tougher cuts can take many hours, while the flavors of the meat, smoke, and sauce all mingle into a delicious melt-in-your-mouth finish.

BOILING

Blanching, the same as parboiling, is a preliminary cooking in hot water. Green vegetables are blanched by boiling in a large amount of salted water, whereas root vegetables are started out in cold water that's slowly brought to a gentle simmer and then maintained there until the vegetable cooks at least partially through. These terms often imply subsequent cooking using another method, such as sautéing, but often, especially when green vegetables are cooked and then creamed or served in a salad, the so-called blanching is their only cooking.

Protein-rich foods, such as meat and seafood, should never be boiled because it toughens them and clouds the surrounding liquid. Vegetables, however, are often blanched or boiled as a way of cooking them quickly to preserve their texture, flavor, and color (common candidates are green beans and asparagus). Root vegetables, such as turnips, celeriac, and potatoes, are sometimes blanched to cook them partially to fully through or to eliminate bitterness before they are fried, sautéed, or roasted. When blanching root vegetables, starting them out in cold water and bringing the water to a simmer helps the heat to penetrate the vegetable evenly, so it isn't more cooked on the outside than in the center. Pasta and some grains also need to be boiled.

BASIC RECIPES AND TECHNIQUES

Aioli Sauce

Aioli is delicious on grilled chicken, fish, or meat and can be whisked into soups for a last-minute burst of flavor. Make Basic Mayonnaise as directed, omitting the mustard and adding 1 egg yolk, 2 teaspoons water, and 2 cloves garlic, minced and then crushed with the flat side of the knife. Using a wooden spoon, slowly incorporate ½ cup extra virgin olive oil. Makes about 1½ cups.

Basic Mayonnaise

Classic basic mayonnaise calls for both mustard and lemon juice, but you can leave out the mustard or use vinegar instead of the lemon juice.

MAKES 1 CUP

2 egg yolks

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

¾ cup vegetable oil

Salt

Pepper

To make the mayonnaise by hand, in a bowl, whisk together the egg yolks, mustard, and lemon juice until blended. Spoon about 1 tablespoon of the oil into the egg yolks next to the side of the bowl. Using a whisk, and working from the side opposite the oil, whisk to incorporate the oil a small amount at a time by moving the whisk in circles and taking a little of the oil with each turn. It should take about a minute to work in the first tablespoon, and 30 seconds each for the subsequent tablespoons. (You can also add the oil drop by drop, but this is tedious.) Repeat until you have incorporated 4 tablespoons of the oil and the mixture is emulsified but has not yet thickened, and then start working in the oil in larger amounts. If the mayonnaise starts to look stiffer than bottled mayonnaise, add 1 to 2 teaspoons water. Season with salt and pepper.

To make the mayonnaise in a blender or food processor, combine the egg yolks, mustard, and lemon juice in the blender or processor container and process briefly to blend. Then, with the motor running, add the oil in a thin, steady stream. If the mayonnaise gets too stiff to turn with the blades, add 1 to 2 teaspoons water to thin it. Transfer to a bowl and season with salt and pepper.

VARIATIONS

To impress your guests, serve an assortment of different mayonnaises with barbecued chicken or fish. Put the mayonnaises in small, attractive bowls and pass them at the table.

Mayonnaise can be flavored with nearly any herb, curry powder or other spice mixtures, vegetable purees such as tomato or pea, mushrooms, truffles, horseradish, diced apples, capers, pickles, or diced vegetables. You can also add or substitute 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil or a nut oil (hazelnut, walnut, pistachio, and so on) to the recipe for Basic Mayonnaise.

Bourride

You can make a bourride with any fish, but a combination of two or more is best, and you will need bones and heads to make the broth. You can also make the broth with little inexpensive fish sold in ethnic markets, but you may have to clean them yourself. When you buy your fish, have them cleaned and filleted, and explain that you need the bones and heads for soup. If you like fish skin, have the fish scaled before it is filleted.

About half of the aioli called for here ends up in the soup, and the rest is passed at the table for guests to dollop into their soup or spread on little toasts.

MAKES 3 QUARTS (12 FIRST-COURSE SERVINGS OR 8 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS)

1 pinch saffron in 1 tablespoon water

[Aioli](#)

Salt

Soup

6 pounds whole fish such as red snapper, striped bass, sea bass, branzino, and/or sea bream, cleaned, filleted, fillets skinned if desired, and heads and bones reserved

2 pounds small, inexpensive fish such as whiting, cleaned and cut into 2-inch sections

½ cup dry white wine

2 tablespoons Pernod (optional)

8 tomatoes, coarsely chopped

[Bouquet garni](#)

Salt

Pepper

24 slices baguette, toasted on one side under the broiler

Add the saffron and its soaking water to the aioli and mix well. Taste and add more salt if needed.

To make the soup, begin by making the broth. In a large pot, combine the fish bones and heads, the whiting, wine, Pernod, tomatoes, bouquet garni, and about 2 quarts water. Bring to a gentle simmer and simmer for 30 minutes. Work through a coarse strainer or a food mill and then through a fine-mesh strainer.

Cut the fish into pieces about 1 inch on each side. You want an even number of pieces, so that everyone gets the same number of pieces of each type of fish. If you are leaving the skin on, sauté the pieces. Arrange the pieces on sheet pans, with thick pieces on one sheet pan, and thinner pieces on another, if they are not all the same thickness. Season with salt and pepper and refrigerate until needed.

About 20 minutes before serving, preheat the oven to 400°F. Bring the broth to a simmer in a stockpot. Put half of the aioli into a heatproof bowl large enough to hold at least half of the soup. Put the other half into a serving bowl and set it on the table with a spoon. Slide the fish pieces into the oven, giving them about 10 minutes per inch of thickness. Whisk about half of the simmering broth into the aioli. Pour this mixture back into the pot, turn the heat to very low, and stir for about 3 minutes, or until the soup thickens slightly. Don't let it boil, or the egg yolks in the aioli will curdle. Season with salt and pepper.

Arrange the fish on heated soup plates and ladle over the broth. Pass the toasts at the table to spread with aioli and dip in the soup.

Brown Chicken Broth

This broth is best made with drumsticks or wings because they are the chicken parts with the most flavor and natural gelatin. But you can also cut up whole chickens, which are often less expensive than chicken parts, and use either all the parts or everything except the breasts, saving them for another use. As a general rule, a 3-pound whole chicken or 3 pounds of chicken parts will yield a quart of brown broth.

MAKES 2½ QUARTS

Two 3-pound chickens, or 6 pounds chicken wings, drumsticks, and/or backs (backs should be chopped up into at least 3 pieces with a cleaver)

1 large onion, root end trimmed and then quartered without peeling

3 carrots, unpeeled, halved lengthwise, and sliced

1 stalk celery, sliced (optional)

1 handful of fennel stalks (optional)

3 quarts cold water or more as needed to cover

Bouquet garni

If you are using whole chickens, [cut them up](#). Separate the drumsticks from the thighs, cut each of the single breasts in half, and cut the backs into 3 pieces. If you are using only chicken backs, or backs combined with other parts, cut each back into 3 pieces with a cleaver.

Spread the chicken parts and all the vegetables in a heavy-bottomed roasting pan just large enough to hold them in a single layer. (If the pan is too large, the juices will burn; if it's too small, the chicken won't brown properly.) Slide the pan into the oven and turn the oven to 400°F. Roast, stirring the chicken and vegetables a couple of times as they cook so they brown evenly and thoroughly, for about 1½ hours.

Transfer the chicken and vegetables to a pot—ideally narrow and tall to facilitate skimming—and put the roasting pan on the stove top over high heat. Pour about 2 cups of water into the roasting pan, bring to a boil, and deglaze the pan, scraping up the browned-on juices from the bottom with a wooden spoon. Pour the liquid into the pot. Add enough water to the pot to cover the chicken and vegetables, and nestle the bouquet garni in the middle of the pot.

Bring to a gentle simmer and simmer uncovered for 1½ hours, skimming off the froth with a ladle every 15 minutes or so. Strain through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean container, let cool for 1 hour at room temperature, and then cover and refrigerate. Before using, pull off the fat that has congealed on top and discard. The broth will keep for up to 5 days in the refrigerator or 6 months in the freezer. If boiled every 5 days, it will keep indefinitely in the refrigerator.

HOW TO MAKE BROWN CHICKEN BROTH



1. Brown the chicken parts in the oven with the vegetables. Transfer the browned chicken and vegetables to a pot.



2. Pour water into the roasting pan over high heat and deglaze the pan, scraping up the browned-on juices.



3. Pour the liquid from the roasting pan into the pot. Add enough water to the pot just to cover the chicken and vegetables.



4. Nestle a bouquet garni in the pot and simmer the broth gently before straining.



[Cassoulet](#)

Cassoulet

It may be fair to say the French are an argumentative people, but Americans can be as vehement about what defines a New England clam chowder as the French are about what defines the true cassoulet. While each point of view has its own refined definition, cassoulet aficionados can be divided into three general groups: the Castelnau (don't bother trying to pronounce it) school, whose cassoulet contains mostly pork; the Carcassonne camp, whose cassoulet is made with lamb; and the Toulouse version, which seems to contain everything.

Unless you are a cook interested in replicating something tasted in a distant place—an effort often doomed to fail—you are best off understanding the principles behind a good cassoulet, as one might a bouillabaisse, and then adapting both the principles and your cassoulet to what is at hand. Essential, of course, are beans, but they can be any of a number of varieties (just make sure they are large and plump), and some kind of meat. Ideally, the meat should take plenty of time to cook, so it can cook simultaneously with the beans. If you are making your cassoulet with lamb or pork, stew the meat with the beans until both are done. If you are making your cassoulet with confit, simmer the beans in broth with aromatic vegetables and a bouquet garni, as well as something meaty to provide flavor, such as a blanched ham hock, a piece of bacon rind, or a ham bone. If you have good sausages, nestle them in the beans in the oven about 30 minutes before you think the whole concoction will be done.

MAKES 8 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

4 cups dried beans such as cranberry, navy, Tongue of Fire, or cannellini, soaked and drained

2 carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch sections

1 large onion, halved

1 stalk celery

[Bouquet garni](#)

2 quarts broth or water, or as needed

Salt

8 confit mullard duck thighs, or 16 confit Pekin duck thighs (see [Duck Confit](#))

1½ cups fresh [bread crumbs](#) made from 6 slices white bread

⅓ cup melted duck fat from the confit, or as needed

In a large pot, combine the beans, carrots, onion, celery, bouquet garni, and enough broth to cover by 3 to 4 inches. Bring to a gentle simmer and simmer uncovered, adding more broth or water as needed to keep the beans covered, until the beans are soft. The timing will vary depending on the type and age of the beans (older beans take longer), but it will range from about 60 to 90 minutes. (If you have an extra confit thigh, nestle it in the pot to flavor the beans.) If you are in a hurry, you can use a pressure cooker, which will take only about 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Drain the beans in a colander set over a large saucepan to collect any liquid the beans didn't absorb. If it is more than 1 cup, boil the liquid down to 1 cup.

Discard the bouquet garni, then spread the beans and vegetables in a baking dish, forming a layer about 2 inches thick, and season generously. Nestle in the duck thighs, sprinkle with half of the bread crumbs, and drizzle with half of the duck fat.

Bake for about 30 minutes, or until a crust forms. Gently fold the crust into the beans, and then sprinkle the surface with the rest of the bread crumbs and drizzle with the rest of the fat. Bake for another 30 minutes, or until a crust forms again. Serve directly from the dish.



[Foie Gras Terrine](#)

Foie Gras Terrine

This luxurious terrine can be made with one very large foie gras or two small foie gras and can be lined with fatback, lardo, or, as shown here, prosciutto.

MAKES ONE 10-BY-3-INCH TERRINE (ABOUT 12 SLICES)

5 ounces prosciutto, fatback, or lardo, sliced very thinly, or caul fat

2½ pounds fresh whole foie gras

Salt

Pepper

Line the terrine with the slices of prosciutto. Leave the excess hanging over the sides for covering the top.

Separate the two lobes that compose the foie gras liver. Pull out and discard any obvious veins from both lobes. It may seem like you are damaging the foie gras, but don't worry about appearance. Season generously with salt and pepper.

Press the foie gras firmly into the terrine, pressing it into the corners and sides.

Fold the excess prosciutto, hanging over the sides, over the top of the terrine. Hammer on the terrine with your fist to compact it. The foie gras should come up above the top rim of the terrine.

Place a rectangle of parchment paper on top of the terrine and then seal the terrine with a triple-thick layer of aluminum foil. Put a pan on top of the terrine to act as a weight.

Preheat the oven to 300°F. Put the terrine in a roasting pan with hot water coming halfway up the sides of the terrine, and bring to a simmer on top of the stove. Bake in the oven for approximately 1 hour or until the temperature in the center registers 140°F. Let cool at room temperature (leave the weight on) for 1 hour and then refrigerate overnight.

When the terrine is ready, peel away the foil and parchment and run a knife around the sides of the terrine. Slice the terrine.

HOW TO MAKE FOIE GRAS TERRINE



1. Line the terrine with prosciutto.



2. Separate the lobes.



3. Remove the veins.



4. Press the foie gras into the terrine.



5. Press the second lobe into the terrine.



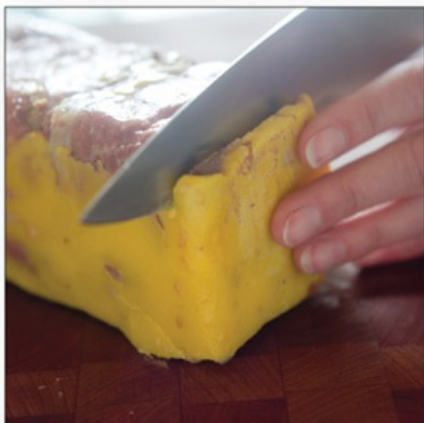
6. Fold the prosciutto over the terrine. Pack down the terrine.



7. Weight down the terrine. Bake the terrine in a water bath.



8. When cool, peel away the foil and parchment. Run a knife around the edges of the terrine.



9. Slice the terrine.

Goan-Style Shrimp Curry

This dish is a snap to make, once you have the curry paste on hand. The paste recipe makes about 2 cups—enough to help you get in the habit of

making shrimp curry on weeknights.

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

Goan Red Spice Paste

2 onions, finely chopped

6 cloves garlic, minced and then crushed with the flat side of the knife

4 tablespoons [ghee](#) or vegetable oil

8 red Thai chiles, seeded and finely chopped

2 teaspoons ground cumin

2 teaspoons ground cardamom

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

4 teaspoons ground turmeric

4 teaspoons ground coriander

1 teaspoon ground cloves

4 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

3 tablespoons paprika

Two 4-inch pieces fresh ginger, peeled and grated

1 cup red or white wine vinegar

One 15-ounce can unsweetened coconut milk

1 bunch cilantro, large stems removed and leaves finely chopped

1½ pounds large shrimp, peeled and then deveined if desired

Salt

2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

To make the curry paste, in a small sauté pan, cook the onion and garlic in the ghee over low to medium heat, stirring regularly, for about 7 minutes, or until the onion is softened but not browned. Add the chiles, cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, turmeric, coriander, cloves, pepper, paprika, and ginger and cook, stirring, for about 3 minutes, to bring out the flavor of the spices. Pour in the vinegar and remove from the heat.

Let the mixture cool, then puree in a blender for about 1 minute, or until smooth. Transfer to a tightly covered container and store in the refrigerator. It will keep for several months.

In a medium saucepan, combine 3 tablespoons spice paste, the coconut milk, and the cilantro and bring to a gentle simmer. Add the shrimp and simmer for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the shrimp has turned bright orange. Season with salt and sprinkle with the lime juice.

Harissa

8 assorted mild dried chiles such as ancho, guajillo, and chilhuacle negro, in any combination, soaked in hot water for 30 minutes to soften, drained, and seeded

2 cloves garlic

1 tomato, [peeled, seeded](#), and finely chopped

Salt

Pepper

To make the harissa, finely chop the chiles. Mince 2 cloves garlic with a chef's knife, and then crush them to a paste with the side of the knife.

Combine the chiles, garlic, and tomato and season with salt and pepper. Pass the harissa at the table.

Basic Spinach

Spinach with beurre noisette is a classic combination. The trick to successful spinach is to squeeze excess water out of it before tossing it with butter or lightly creaming it. If the spinach is cold—you have cooked it ahead of time and reheated it—this just means wringing it out in your hands; if the spinach is hot, you'll need to compress it against the side of the saucepan you cooked it in or in a strainer to extract the excess liquid.

MAKES 4 SIDE-DISH SERVINGS

Two 10-ounce bunches or 14-ounce bags spinach

Salt

3 tablespoons butter or heavy cream

Pepper

Bring about 4 quarts water to a rapid boil in a large pot and add 2 tablespoons salt, or set up a steamer and bring the water to a boil. Add the spinach and boil for about 30 seconds or steam for 1 to 2 minutes, or until it wilts. You can also put the spinach in a large sauté pan with a couple of tablespoons of water and stir it around over high heat for 1 to 2 minutes, or until it wilts. Drain the spinach in a colander and press on it with the back of a spoon to extract excess liquid.

In a sauté pan, heat the butter or cream over medium heat until the butter froths and the froth begins to subside, or the cream thickens. Stir in the spinach, mixing well. Season with salt and pepper.

Pureed Creamed Spinach

Spinach can be creamed without pureeing it, but most of us think of pureed spinach when we think of creamed spinach. You can cream spinach with a béchamel sauce or plain cream. Cream is easier but a bit rich.

MAKES 4 SIDE-DISH SERVINGS

[Boiled or steamed spinach](#)

½ cup heavy cream or béchamel sauce

Salt

Pepper

Prepare the spinach as directed, but omit the addition of butter or cream. Press the drained spinach well to eliminate any water.

If using cream, boil it over high heat until it thickens to about ¼ cup, then remove from the heat. In a blender, combine the cream (or béchamel) and the spinach and process for 1 minute, or until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

HOW TO MAKE CELERIAC MACÉDOINE



1. Peel celeriac with a knife, not a vegetable peeler.



2. Trim off the sides ...



... of the celeriac ...



... so you have a perfect cube.



3. Cut the cube into slices $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. Cut the slices into bâtonnets.



4. Cut the sticks into cubes, or macédoine.

HOW TO MAKE CLARIFIED BUTTER AND GHEE



1. The home-style method for clarifying butter is the same as for making ghee. Melt butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat.



2. The butter will foam up at first.



3. After about 5 minutes, the foam will subside and you will see white particles floating in the butter.



4. When the milk solids form brown particles that cling to the bottom of the pan, the liquid is ready for straining through a fine-mesh strainer.

HOW TO MAKE MUSHROOM DUXELLES



1. Slice mushrooms.



2. Finely chop the slices.



3. Cook the mushrooms in butter or olive oil over high heat, adding only a small handful at a time to the pan, until all the liquid evaporates and the mushrooms are browned.



4. If you like, add heavy cream and cook until thick.

HOW TO MAKE PRESERVED LEMONS



Cut 4 lemons into wedges and stack them in a jar with 6 tablespoons coarse salt. Pour over enough lemon juice to cover, usually the juice of the 4 lemons plus juice from 5 additional lemons. Cover tightly, and let sit for 3 weeks before using.

HOW TO PEEL AND CHOP ONIONS



1. Slice stem and root ends off each onion, being careful not to cut too deeply.



2. Cut the onion in half through the root end.



3. Pull the peel away from each half. Slice the onion with the knife perpendicular with the base of the onion, keeping the slices attached at the root end.



4. Make 2 or 3 horizontal slices into the onion almost to the root end.



5. Keep the onion compact as you finish horizontal slices.



6. Cut across the slices.



7. Continue to chop as finely as you like.

HOW TO PEEL AND SEED TOMATOES



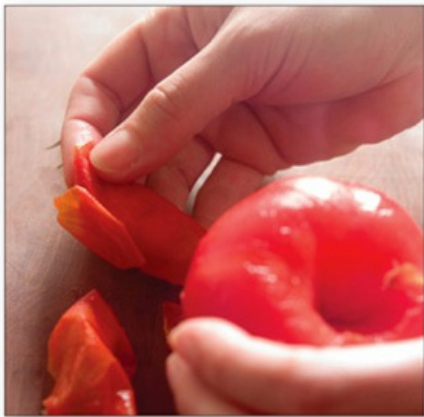
1. Plunge the tomatoes into boiling water and boil for 30 seconds to loosen skins.



2. Lift the tomatoes out of the boiling water and rinse under cold running water.



3. Cut out the stem.



4. Pull away the peel.



5. To seed the tomatoes, cut them in half through the equator.



6. Squeeze the halves and pull out the seeds with your fingers.

HOW TO PEEL AND SHAPE TURNIPS



1. Cut off the root end with a knife.



2. Peel with a vegetable peeler.



3. To cut into half-moons, cut in half lengthwise and slice the halves crosswise.



4. To turn turnips, cut the turnip into wedges and rotate each wedge against a paring knife.

HOW TO PREPARE ASPARAGUS



1. Trim an inch or two off the woody base of each stalk.



2. Peel the stalks from the base of the flower to the bottom of the stalk.

HOW TO PREPARE CARROTS FOR GLAZING OR ROASTING



1. Cut off the stem end.



2. Peel the carrot.



3. Cut into sections the length you want.



4. Cut the sections into wedges according to their size. For example, large sections may need to be cut in 5 wedges, while the thin end may only need to be halved.



5. If the carrots are old, cut out the tough core from each wedge.



6. If you want to round the edges, rotate them against a paring knife.

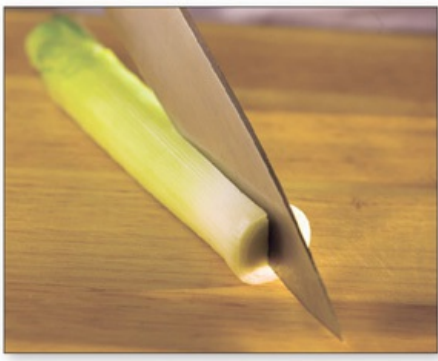
HOW TO PREPARE LEEKS



1. Cut off the greens, leaving about 1 inch of green attached to the white. Cut off the hairy root end.



2. Whittle off the outer green from the end of the leek white.



3. Cut the white in half lengthwise. Rinse under running water with the root end up. As you rinse, leaf through the membranes to release any sand.



4. Slice or julienne leeks.

HOW TO TRIM ARTICHOKE BOTTOMS



1. Cut off the stem, so the artichoke will stand upright on a flat surface.



2. Rotate the artichoke against a sharp paring knife to remove the outer leaves. Keep the knife perpendicular to the base.



3. Continue trimming until you see white on the side of the base.



4. Change the angle of the knife to about 45 degrees, and trim any green off the bottom of the artichoke.



5. Cut off the tops of the leaves.



6. Trim the top of the base where the leaves were attached.



7. Rub the artichoke bottom with lemon.



8. Simmer the artichokes until you can penetrate them with a skewer or paring knife. Scoop out the choke with a spoon.

Letting Roasts and Steaks Sit at Room Temperature

A roast or steak should be allowed to come to room temperature before it is roasted, grilled, or sautéed, so it cooks evenly and doesn't end up raw in the middle and dry and overcooked on the outside. The USDA recommends never leaving meat out for more than 2 hours, but unless you're dealing with thin steaks, 2 hours is not enough time for the meat to come to room temperature. It takes 4 hours for a large roast to come to room temperature and 3 hours for a thick porterhouse. If you're worried about bacteria, rub the steak or roast liberally with salt before letting it come to room temperature.

Meat Glaze

The best-known brand of commercial meat glaze, More Than Gourmet, is extremely concentrated. Whereas homemade meat glaze is made by concentrating good broth down to one-fifteenth of its original volume, commercial meat glaze behaves almost as though it has been cooked down to one-thirtieth. Use very sparingly when making sauces, about 1 teaspoon per serving, which is equivalent to 1 tablespoon of homemade meat glaze.

BELL PEPPERS AND CHILES

Bell peppers are typically used as ingredients in other dishes, such as salads or stews, as a garnish for seafood or meats, or as part of an antipasto platter. They taste best when they have been charred and their skin and seeds have been removed, a process that not only cooks them but also takes away some of their aggressive flavor. Bell peppers and some thick-skinned chiles such as poblanos can be charred right on the gas burner, as shown below, or can be slid under the broiler until blackened and then the skin peeled off in the same way.

HOW TO PEEL PEPPERS



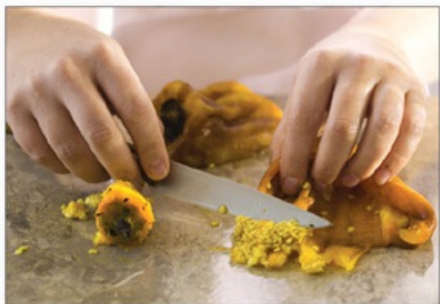
1. Put the peppers over the flame of a gas stove. Turn the peppers every couple of minutes so they blacken evenly. Cook until covered with black but not white, which indicates too much cooking.



2. Place the peppers in a paper bag or plastic wrap–covered bowl to cool and steam, which aids with peeling.



3. Rinse the peppers with cold water to cool them and pull away the peel with your fingers. Scrape away any stubborn patches with a knife.



4. Cut out the cores and scrape the seeds out of the inside.

BOUQUET GARNI

A bouquet garni is a bundle of fresh herbs or a packet of dried herbs used to flavor broths, sauces, stews, beans, and soups. The herbs are tied together so they are easier to pull out of the liquid at the end. Also, when making broths, a bundle isn't as likely to interfere when you are skimming off the froth and fat. If you put the herbs in the bottom of the pot and cover them with bones, or if the liquid is not being skimmed and is going to be strained, just put the herbs in loose.

Bouquet garnis are ideally made by tying up sprigs of fresh thyme with parsley stems or whole parsley (stems with leaves), bay leaves, and the greens from leeks. But you can use any herbs you like, as long as they release their flavors slowly, allowing them to meld with the other ingredients. Chervil and basil are best left out of bouquet garnis since they release their flavor very quickly. Tarragon, in general, is best added near the end of cooking, but it does lend a subtle delicacy to chicken broth when included in the bouquet garni.

If you have fresh thyme or thyme that has been dried on the sprigs, make the bouquet garni by just wrapping it in a short length of string or in unflavored dental floss. If you only have dried thyme leaves (don't bother with powdered thyme) use cheesecloth or leek greens to make little packets to encase the thyme. Most of us make bouquet garnis too small. A bouquet garni for a large pot of broth should be as thick as a man's wrist and a bouquet garni for a pot roast twice the thickness of a thumb.

HOW TO MAKE A BOUQUET GARNI



1. For a large bouquet garni, cradle the herbs in a washed leek green.



2. Tie with kitchen string to secure the bundle.

Which Herbs Go with What?

While there is no easy answer—this is a bit like asking what notes go with what instruments—the question can be discussed in terms of the two types of herbs, watery and oily, which behave in somewhat predictable ways. Water-based herbs have a relatively fleeting aroma, don't dry well, and grow stale quickly. In contrast, oily herbs, whose aroma is contained in their oils, release their aroma and flavor slowly into surrounding liquids and dry well. In fact, it may be that their natural oils are designed to prevent them from drying out in the hot climates where they usually flourish. Oily herbs are ideal for simmering in slow-cooked dishes such as stews and soups or for adding to a bouquet garni, while watery herbs are better suited to sprinkling on meats and seafood before grilling or for adding to sauces and soups at the last minute.

Basil

Is any herb more versatile or more seductive? Nowadays, basil is abundant in the summer, from our gardens and from local markets. In fact, it is so abundant that we are even a little stuck with it and feel guilty if we don't use it. Fortunately, any excess can be pureed with olive oil in a food processor (a pesto minus the garlic, the pine nuts, and the hand working of the authentic version), frozen, and then whisked into sauces or soups (especially vegetable and seafood soups) to provide a burst of summer in the cool months. When chopped with butter, it becomes a bit French and a perfect candidate to finish a subtle sauce or soup. It is marvelous with garlic, tomatoes, and saffron, and a swirl of the pesto-like puree, next to a dollop of [aioli](#) and a dribble of saffron with its soaking liquid, is unforgettable atop a fish soup or the French version of minestrone known as pistou. You can also whisk it into a fresh tomato soup or tomato sauce at the last minute. In fact, basil should always be used at the last minute—its aroma and flavor are fleeting—rather than simmered, as you would thyme.

Although it is an herb, basil is also a green, and in the summer months it is great in a salad. Try using equal parts basil leaves and arugula.

Chervil

At the moment, chervil is almost impossible to find and not that easy to plant. It is delicate and shade loving and very fussy. This delicacy translates into its appearance and flavor. A tiny filigree-like chervil sprig often provides the necessary final flair to a salad or a piece of shellfish. The flavor of chervil is vaguely like tarragon but much more delicate and fleeting. It shares with parsley a subtle freshness that can be used at the last minute in sauces for seafood, chicken, veal, and pork. It is also often combined with parsley, chives, and tarragon in the mixture known as fines herbes. While the idea of such a mixture is brilliant, the inclusion of tarragon, which is about four times more strongly flavored than the other three partners, poses a problem. The solution, of course, is to use only one-fourth the amount of tarragon as the other herbs.

Chives

Unlike most herbs, which can be chopped haphazardly until fine, chives must be approached with a certain precision, or they will look careless and feel raw in the mouth. Do your best to slice them microscopically thin.

Chives are of course a member of the onion family and can be used to flavor sauces and steaming liquid from shellfish and as a final garnish for soups. They are also part of the iconic fines herbes mixture.

Cilantro

To the uninitiated, and they are increasingly few, cilantro, the leaves of the coriander plant, taste vaguely of soap suds. To dispel this impression, and to show off cilantro at its best, use it, along with chiles, to flavor hot, spicy dishes, especially Indian and Mexican recipes. It is also magnificent in Thai and other Southeast Asian dishes, marrying well with fish sauce, lemongrass, and kaffir lime leaves. In any dish calling for curry powder, add a little chopped cilantro at the end, and the flavors of the spices will come into focus.

Lavender

While we think of lavender as a flower best suited to flavor soap, it is actually an herb that's included in herbes de Provence mixtures. Lavender adds a note of complexity when rubbed on foods for grilling or when sprinkled on sautéed mushrooms or zucchini. It is best when combined with garlic.

Marjoram

Somewhat hard to find and often confused with oregano, marjoram is worth tracking down. It has a distinctive, clean aroma that asserts itself without dominating. It is best used fresh, though drying doesn't actually harm it, but just weakens it a little. Chop marjoram with a little olive oil (the oil helps trap its flavor and keep it from turning black) and rub it on fish or meats before grilling or sautéing. It is wonderful with lamb—sprinkle it chopped on the meat itself or add it to a sauce—and if you have more than you need, you can hang it in a cool spot to dry or infuse it in olive oil. It doesn't do much in vinegar.

Mint

Some mint varieties are stronger flavored than others. The robust ones can be chopped and added to a vinaigrette for a salad, while the milder types, usually with larger leaves, can be used as salad greens along with basil and arugula. Lightly chopped mint is always a pleasant surprise on top of fruity summer tomatoes and is a classic addition to the French salad of cucumbers and crème fraîche, or to the Indian salad of cucumbers and yogurt known as raita. Mint can also be sneaked into any sauce or salsa that might otherwise call for cilantro, especially when chiles are part of the mix.

Oregano

One of the few herbs that intensifies in flavor as it dries, oregano comes in several varieties of which Mexican and Greek are the most popular. Use dried oregano on grilled meats—spread it, chopped, on the meat before grilling—and fresh oregano in more subtly flavored dishes such as beans.

Parsley

Because parsley is so widely available and inexpensive, it is often taken for granted. Many cooks put a parsley sprig on a plate without really thinking about what it adds. A sprig, in fact, doesn't add much except for a little clichéd color. But when parsley is chopped, finely and at the last minute, and added to seafood and meat sauces, it contributes an ineffable complexity and nuance. Indeed, it is often the missing element in a long-cooked sauce that has lost some of its vitality and freshness for having spent so many hours on the stove.

When buying parsley, look for the flat-leaf variety, sometimes called Italian parsley. It has a bit more punch than the frizzy variety, though the latter still has plenty to offer. Cut off the large stems, then wash the leaves, with the smaller stems attached, and dry them in a salad spinner. It is important that the leaves are dry when you chop them, or their flavor will stay in a puddle of liquid on the cutting board.

Chop parsley, as you should all herbs, with a razor-sharp knife that will cut, rather than crush. When crushed, herbs release their flavor, which ends up embedded in the cutting board. Also, chop the parsley at the very last minute. If this isn't practical, chop it about three-fourths of the way ahead of time, and then give it a final chop at the last minute, so it releases its flavor then. If you fully chop it ahead of time, it will smell like lawn clippings when you go to use it.

Rosemary

You need to be judicious with rosemary. It is aggressive and can take over the taste of whatever it is supposed to complement. Some cooks automatically think of rosemary when cooking lamb, but it has a nasty habit of making lamb taste gamy. To use it in the most subtle way, shove sprigs on the charcoal fire you use for grilling. Its smoke is gentle, imparting just a hint of the herb. Rosemary is good mixed with garlic, too, but make sure it is finely chopped to eliminate the prick of its sharp needles.

Tarragon

Tarragon has an unmistakable flavor that the uninitiated describe as reminiscent of anise or licorice. But it soon acquires its own identity. It is one of the fines herbs that especially complements fish and chicken, and, along with shallots, flavors béarnaise sauce. It goes beautifully with tomatoes, much like basil but more intricate, and when cream is included, the anise-like tarragon notes are brought stunningly into relief.

Once hard to find, tarragon now appears in such large bunches that cooks are often stuck with more than they can use. Shoving the extras down the neck of a bottle of vinegar is one obvious solution. But you can also finely chop it with butter to make tarragon butter that keeps, tightly wrapped, for months in the freezer. The butter can be used to finish seafood sauces—especially the steaming liquid from shellfish—or it can be whisked into a deglazed pan used to sauté chicken. It is not bad on grilled corn either. Don't try to dry tarragon, as it just turns stale. If your tarragon sprigs have thick stems, remove the leaves.

Thyme

Thyme may be second only to parsley in usefulness in the kitchen, though it is employed very differently. It can be used in three ways: slowly simmered in liquids so that its flavor is integrated with the flavors of the aromatic vegetables; chopped and added to sauces or other liquids just before serving for a sudden burst of direct flavor; or chopped and sprinkled on meats or seafood headed for the grill. Until recently, thyme was rarely available fresh, but now you can find it in the market year-round. You will seldom need a whole bunch, but since it dries easily without losing its character, this isn't a problem. Use only what you need and tie the rest of the bunch on one end with string and hang it in a cool spot in the kitchen to dry. When it is thoroughly dried, rub the sprigs between your palms, letting the leaves sprinkle down over a steak or chop to season it. You may also want to slip fresh thyme sprigs down the neck of an olive oil bottle to give your salads a little herbal flavor. Several thyme varieties are available, including lemon thyme. Don't substitute lemon thyme for regular thyme. Its aggressive lemon flavor is mildly reminiscent of furniture polish.

TRUFFLES

Nearly everyone is fascinated by truffles, both how they are hunted and what they really are. Some say they are a mushroom, others say a fungus but not a mushroom, and still others describe them as most closely related to yeast, which is both a plant and an animal. In any case, truffles grow underground, attached to roots of trees, usually oaks. Truffle hunters rely on pigs or dogs to detect the truffle's pungent aroma. Hunters without pigs or dogs look for unhealthy trees, worn down by the truffle parasite, and then search the ground around them for flies. Flies, it seems, are drawn to the same odor as pigs and dogs.

Once unearthed, some truffles sell for a small fortune. Others, less expensive, appear regularly on menus in Italy for not much more money than anything else. (In Rome, a few casual places make truffle pizzas.) Most truffles look a little like a golf ball and range in size from a marble to a large fist. The two best-known and most expensive truffles are winter truffles, white from northern Italy and black from France and Umbria. White truffles are usually eaten raw, shaved over pasta, veal, or just about anything the cook desires. Black truffles are usually cooked. Summer truffles, both black (from Tuscany) and white (from the south of France), are more common and less expensive than winter truffles and are often a good value. Be sure when buying a winter truffle that you are not buying a summer truffle. When you look at a cross section of a black winter truffle, you should see white filigree. A cross section of a summer truffle is an even dark brown or black. White winter truffles smell a little like garlic or a gas leak, while white summer truffles have a moldy smell, like a good Brie.

The flavor of truffles is somewhat similar to that of morels, especially truffles that have been sautéed to bring out their aroma. But more mysterious is the truffle's tendency to make foods taste more like themselves. An ordinary egg suddenly becomes the best egg ever. A supermarket chicken suddenly tastes like the finest organic free-range bird on the planet.

If you decide to splurge on a truffle or two, use it within a couple of days or freeze it. Store it in a large jar with a stick or more of unwrapped butter and, if you like truffle omelets, a few eggs in their shells. Overnight the truffle aroma will permeate the eggs and butter. You can use the butter in sauces and gravies, in mashed potatoes, or just spread it on bread. If you are not using the butter right away, wrap it tightly and freeze it. You can make truffle oil by storing your truffles covered in oil and then just saving the oil. Usually a night or two is long enough to flavor the oil.

Truffles complement rich, fatty foods, such as cream, butter, and eggs, all of which seem to trap the flavor better than, say, broth. In other words, eating truffles is not an occasion for dieting.



CONVERSION CHARTS
Volume

Formulas:

1 teaspoon = 4.93 milliliters

1 tablespoon = 14.79 milliliters / 3 teaspoons

1 cup = 236.59 milliliters / 16 tablespoons

1 liter = 202.88 teaspoons / 67.63 tablespoons / 4.23 cups

U.S.: 1 tablespoon

Imperial: ½ fl oz

Metric: 15 ml

U.S.: 2 tablespoons

Imperial: 1 fl oz

Metric: 30 ml

U.S.: ¼ cup

Imperial: 2 fl oz

Metric: 60 ml

U.S.: ⅓ cup

Imperial: 3 fl oz

Metric: 90 ml

U.S.: ½ cup

Imperial: 4 fl oz

Metric: 120 ml

U.S.: ⅔ cup

Imperial: 5 fl oz (¼ pint)

Metric: 150 ml

U.S.: ¾ cup

Imperial: 6 fl oz

Metric: 180 ml

U.S.: 1 cup

Imperial: 8 fl oz (⅓ pint)

Metric: 240 ml

U.S.: 1¼ cups

Imperial: 10 fl oz (½ pint)

Metric: 300 ml

U.S.: 2 cups (1 pint)

Imperial: 16 fl oz (⅔ pint)

Metric: 480 ml

U.S.: 2½ cups

Imperial: 20 fl oz (1 pint)

Metric: 600 ml

U.S.: 1 quart

Imperial: 32 fl oz (1⅔ pint)

Metric: 1 liter

Weight

Formulas:

1 ounce = 28.35 grams

1 pound = 453.59 grams / 16 ounces

1 kilogram = 2.2 pounds

U.S. / Imperial: ½ oz

Metric: 15 g

U.S. / Imperial: 1 oz

Metric: 30 g

U.S. / Imperial: 2 oz

Metric: 60 g

U.S. / Imperial: ¼ lb

Metric: 113 g

U.S. / Imperial: ⅓ lb

Metric: 150 g

U.S. / Imperial: ½ lb

Metric: 225 g

U.S. / Imperial: ¾ lb

Metric: 350 g

U.S. / Imperial: 1 lb

Metric: 450 g

Length

Formulas:

1 inch = 2.54 cm

1 foot = .3 m / 12 inches

1 cm = .39 inch

1 m = 3.28 feet / 39.37 inches

Inch: ¼ inch

Metric: 6 mm

Inch: ½ inch

Metric: 1.25 cm

Inch: ¾ inch

Metric: 2 cm

Inch: 1 inch

Metric: 2.5 cm

Inch: 6 inches (½ foot)

Metric: 15 cm

Inch: 12 inches (1 foot)

Metric: 30 cm

Temperature

Formulas:

$$\frac{9}{5} C + 32 = F$$

$$(F - 32) \times \frac{5}{9} = C$$

Fahrenheit: 250°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 120°C / gas mark ½

Fahrenheit: 275°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 135°C / gas mark 1

Fahrenheit: 300°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 150°C / gas mark 2

Fahrenheit: 325°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 160°C / gas mark 3

Fahrenheit: 350°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 180°C or 175°C / gas mark 4

Fahrenheit: 375°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 190°C / gas mark 5

Fahrenheit: 400°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 200°C / gas mark 6

Fahrenheit: 425°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 220°C / gas mark 7

Fahrenheit: 450°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 230°C / gas mark 8

Fahrenheit: 475°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 245°C / gas mark 9

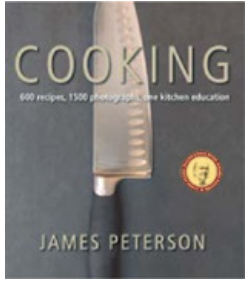
Fahrenheit: 500°F

Celsius / Gas Mark: 260°C

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

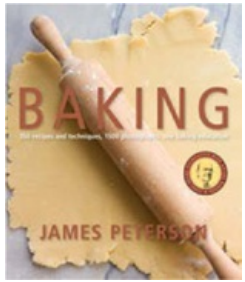
JAMES PETERSON is an award-winning food writer, cookbook author, photographer, and cooking teacher whose career began as a young restaurant cook in Paris in the 1970s. In the early 1980s, Peterson practiced his traditional French training as a chef-partner for a Greenwich Village restaurant called Le Petit Robert. A cooking teacher for over two decades since, Peterson has taught at Peter Kump's New York Cooking School and at the French Culinary Institute. After translating a series of French pastry books from French to English, Peterson was encouraged to write his own book. He is now the author of thirteen books, including *Sauces*, his first book, which became an instant classic and received the 1991 James Beard Cookbook of the Year award. His articles and recipes have appeared in national magazines and newspapers. A self-taught food photographer, Peterson also creates the photography for his books. James Peterson cooks, writes, and photographs from Brooklyn, New York.

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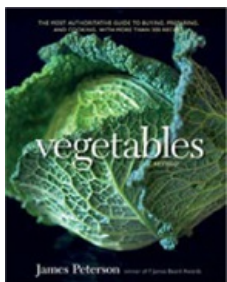
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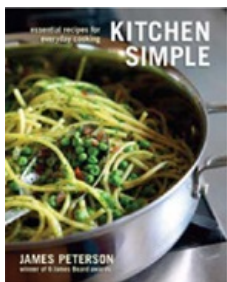
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