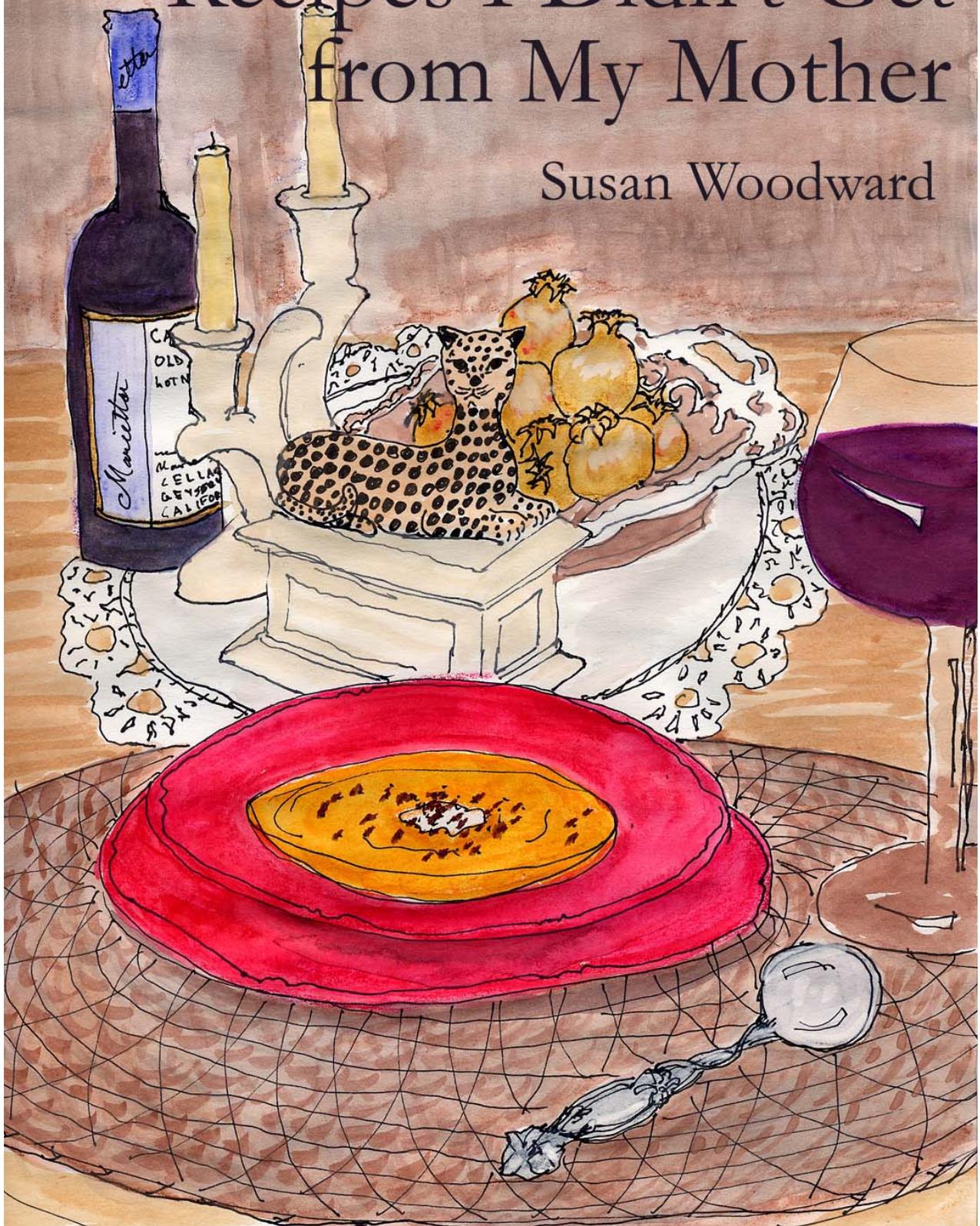


Recipes I Didn't Get from My Mother

Susan Woodward



*Recipes I Didn't Get from My
Mother*

A Cookbook

Susan Woodward

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To all of my friends
who have asked for the recipes
and especially to
Sonja
who has always liked my cooking

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SOUPS

MULLIGATAWNY SOUP

A good soup to start a dinner party or to have for a working girl's supper in the winter. Recipe exactly fills eight rim soups.

1 teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon ground coriander
¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
2 tablespoons plain vegetable oil (not olive or peanut)
3 slices fresh ginger root

Sauté the spices in oil until they bubble gently for a minute or two:

1 big potato, peeled and cut into pieces (white rose type potatoes give the smoothest texture, but all potatoes taste fine)
4 big carrots, peeled and cut into pieces
½ cauliflower, separated into pieces
5 cloves garlic, peeled
1 large tin chicken broth, 49 ounces (about 6 cups)
3 bay leaves
¼ cup basmati rice

The vegetables should be in pieces small enough for the blender to purée easily once they are cooked. A blender gives a smoother result than does a food processor.

Put the vegetables, garlic, rice, broth, and bay leaves into the pot with the oil and spices, bring the soup to a simmer, and simmer gently for about 40 minutes. The vegetables should be tender enough to purée. Remove and discard the bay leaves and slices of ginger, then purée the soup. Avoid a crisis: Don't put more than two cups of soup in the blender at one time. In one of the blender batches, add:

1 to 2 tablespoons mango pickle

Mango pickle can be bought at any Indian grocery and many Asian groceries. The best brand is Patak's. If you don't have mango pickle, substitute mustard seeds (fry a tablespoon of them in the oil with the other spices at the beginning), some cayenne pepper, and then add juice of a lime to taste for sourness just before serving.

After you have puréed the soup and added the mango pickle, add some more chicken broth or water if the soup is too thick. Then make some toasted cumin seeds, to garnish the soup and have around for other exciting, distinctive applications of fragrance and flavor. Just put:

¼ cup whole cumin seeds (more than you need)

now, but they keep well)

In a small heated nonstick skillet with no oil, and toss the seeds over moderate heat until they turn a bit dark and are noticeably fragrant. At this point, dump them out of the skillet onto a paper towel. Let them cool on the paper towel, and put them in a jar with a tight lid, and they will keep well for several months before they lose their oomph.

For the most elegant presentation, ladle the soup into soup plates, put a dollop (one to two tablespoons) of:

plain yogurt

in the center of each serving, and then sprinkle the toasted cumin seeds over the soup, rubbing them between your fingers as you sprinkle to release their fragrance. (If you get the soup too hot (spicy) for your taste, you can cool it down by mixing in plain yogurt.)

If and when you reheat this soup, use low heat and stir regularly, as once any soup is puréed it burns much more easily.

LEEK AND POTATO SOUP

Also known as *Five Kinds Onion Soup with Potato*.

3 russet potatoes, peeled and chopped coarsely
3 leeks
2 parsnips
2 cloves garlic
½ Spanish (yellow) onion, chopped coarsely
4 tablespoons olive oil
2 carrots, chopped
¾ cup finely chopped parsley
3 bay leaves
¼ teaspoon thyme
¾ cup chopped celery with leaves or
¼ teaspoon celery seed
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 big tin chicken broth
2 cups milk
more chicken broth or water as needed
1 cup cream
green onions and chives

Cut up the onion and put it in the pot with the oil. Let the onions wilt and brown ever so slightly. Cut the leeks in half lengthwise, and rinse well to get the earth out. Chop the leeks coarsely, using only about four inches of the green tops of the leek. Add the leeks and all other ingredients, except the cream and chives and green onions.

Bring to a boil and then simmer gently for 20 minutes.

Purée the soup three cups at a time in the blender, carefully removing the bay leaves before whizzing.

Add cream only to as much soup as you are going to serve, and sprinkle each bowl of soup with finely chopped green onions and chives. You could put the cream in each bowl and let each diner mix it in, if you want people to know they are being treated to luxuries. Or you could mix it in before serving, if you want to conceal the fact that part of the reason the soup is so delicious is that it has cream in it. As with any pureed soup, reheat gently and stir often to avoid sticking.

LENTIL SOUP

A really fine winter supper. Too filling to begin a dinner party.

2 medium onions
3 carrots
½ cup minced fresh parsley
5 cloves garlic, pressed
¼ cup olive oil
a 4-ounce lamb chop, inexpensive cut, with bones
1 tablespoon cumin
2 large cinnamon sticks
2 bay leaves
1½ cups lentils
½ cup short-grain brown rice
one 14-ounce tin of chicken broth
3 or 4 cups water
salt, pepper, cayenne pepper

Chop the vegetables finely and cook them in the olive oil over medium heat until they are wilted and begin to brown. Meanwhile, cut the lamb chop into tiny pieces, leaving on what fat your heart and figure can afford. If there is a bone, cut the meat off of it but put both the meat and the bone into the soup. Add the lamb and the spices and continue to cook until the lamb has lost its pinkness. Put in the bay leaves, lentils, and rice, chicken broth, and water. Season with salt, pepper, and cayenne, and bring the soup to a simmer. The lentils and rice will be fully cooked in 45 minutes, but this soup benefits from sitting around and being reheated. The flavor improves and the soup thickens as the lentils disintegrate.

A note on the lentils: The ones you buy at the supermarket, one pound in a plastic bag, are just fine. But if you have an Indian grocery nearby, the lentils available there are nice, a bit rounder and firmer than the ones in the supermarket, and they do not disintegrate in cooking quite as much. Buy the ones with brown skin but orange inside. Fancy French *lentils de Puy* are great for lentil salads, but too firm for this soup. I do not recommend them. And the lentils from the Indian grocery are not more delicious, just a bit out of the ordinary, and more likely to provoke comment. People are bored. Novelty entertains them.

YOGURT SIDE DISH

This isn't really a salad or a soup, and certainly not a main dish, so I'll put it here with the lentil soup it accompanies so nicely. It is also good with the Ezo Gelin soup, which comes from the same basic *moyen orient* tradition.

For two people:

2 cups plain yogurt (Whole milk yogurt tastes the best, but it is hard to find in these abstemious times. Low-fat is delicious, nonfat is pathetic. The brands with no carageenan or agar-agar or gelatin are the best. In the Bay Area, Pavel's.)
1 small onion (silver dollar size)
salt

You can't feed many people raw onions without doing something to subdue them first. Here you salt the onion and let it soak in yogurt.

Chop the onion *very* finely with a good sharp knife. (If there is much onion juice produced by the chopping, your knife is not sharp enough.) Salt the chopped onion lightly in a bowl big enough to hold the yogurt. Then put in the yogurt and beat it with a whisk until the yogurt is smooth and creamy except for the tiny lumps of onion. This tastes best if it sits for 15 to 30 minutes. You don't taste any sharpness from the onion. Really. Yogurt tastes so good with salt – much better than with sweet things.

OUTSTANDING CHICKEN SOUP WITH VEGETABLES

¼ cup olive oil
1 big onion, chopped
3 leeks, sliced into coins up as far as there is no sand
salt and pepper
6 chicken thighs (with skin)
1 cup chopped carrots
¾ cup chopped celery (with leaves)
¼ of a small white cabbage, chopped
¼ cup fine shreds of deep green leek tops
½ cup finely chopped parsley
½ cup finely chopped cilantro
3 bay leaves
1 rounded teaspoon dried fenugreek leaves
(not optional)
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 big can of chicken broth (32-ounces)

First chop the onion and the leeks, and put them in the pot with the olive oil to cook, and continue with the chopping of the other vegetables. Check on the onions and leeks and stir occasionally.

When the onions and leeks have begun to wilt, add the chicken thighs, skin side down, and salt and pepper their fleshy side. Nestle them in so that they rest on the bottom of the pot and will brown. When the skins have browned, turn them over. Let this cook until the onions begin to brown and look caramel in the bottom of the pot. You want them to be getting a bit brown but not burned, so that when you add the chicken broth and water, the liquid in the soup will be slightly brown in color from the browned onions.

Then add everything else, plus enough water to cover well. Simmer for 30 minutes. Then take the thighs out, discard the skins, and chop the meat and add it back to the soup. Discard bones too. Now it is ready to serve. Really. More cooking does not improve this soup. The chicken and vegetables are thoroughly cooked, and more cooking just disintegrates them, especially the cabbage.

I made this soup in July 2001 when I had a cold and needed chicken soup. It was most delicious. We exclaimed all through dinner how delicious it was. Since Bob learned from his father (who was a professor of medicine) that the best treatment for a cold is alcohol, we started with a gin and tonic before dinner (fizzy sweet stuff feels good on a tickled throat) and moved on to this soup with that luscious Thomas Fogarty Gewürztraminer. At dinner I wrote down what I had done so that we all

could reproduce the excellent result.

Yes the fenugreek leaves are essential. Most Americans do not use them much in cooking, but once you try them, you will realize that they are the secret ingredient in many things you have eaten before and liked, especially in childhood, and thought you could not reproduce at home. Find some.

DINNER PARTY CREAM OF _____ SOUP

Fill in the blank with: spinach, parsley, broccoli, cauliflower, or watercress. A soup to begin dinner.

This is a theoretical soup. The theory is to cook the vegetables lightly; make a soup base with butter, flour, and chicken stock; purée the vegetables with the soup base; add cream; and season to taste. Cream is not in fashion anymore but it is really delicious anyway. Rebel against the tyranny of abstinence. With slight variation, this theory can be applied to all the above vegetables with great success, to win you friends and to influence people. Parsley is the most influential, due to the devastating combination of novelty and deliciousness. Spinach is the most friendly, being also delicious and yet familiar. Should there be much imitation of the parsley, we will have to find a new leaf or flower to distinguish ourselves.

To serve six, for your soup base you need:

4 tablespoons butter
4 tablespoons flour
5 cups chicken stock
cream – at least ½ cup, but 1 cup is better

Cook the flour and butter together until it bubbles for a few minutes, but does not burn. Add the stock and bring it to a simmer, and simmer very gently until it thickens and then five minutes more.

Parsley or watercress: Steam about six cups (measured before cooking – two of the typical bunches in your average supermarket) of leaves on stems (but with the woody parts of the stems trimmed off) until the leaves are just wilted. Remember that cooking it will wilt it and the resulting volume will be a fourth of the original. Then before putting the steamed parsley or watercress in the blender, chop it so that the sections of stem are no more than ½-inch long, otherwise when you finish with the blending, you will have strings.

Broccoli or cauliflower: Boil about three cups of florets and pieces until they pierce easily with a fork, and in the case of broccoli, are still bright green. If you use much of the broccoli stem, be sure to chop it so that you don't end up with those vexsome strings.

Spinach: Clean two pounds of spinach really well or indulge yourself in baby spinach already clean and tender and sweet. Plunge it into a big kettle of boiling water. Remove it as soon as the water comes back to the boil. Drain and press it to remove the water. Again, chop it coarsely (½-inch) to escape that bane of all great dinner parties, strings in the soup. Put the chosen vegetable in the blender with about two cups of the soup

base. Purée. Add the purée to the rest of the soup base, add cream to taste, and correct the seasoning with fresh lemon and white pepper. With spinach or cauliflower, add a shake or grate or so of nutmeg. The green soups will be a beautiful bright green only if you don't reheat them too much. The cauliflower is the only version that can be prepared ahead and reheated with abandon. The green vegetables not only look prettier but also taste better if they are served soon after being prepared.

GAZPACHO

This soup is good for a light summer supper or the beginning of a summer dinner party.

**4 cups cold tomato juice (Libby's and Muir Glen
are the best brands)**
1 small onion, minced
2 cups diced ripe tomatoes
1 cup minced green pepper
1 cup diced cucumber
¼ cup minced fresh parsley
1 clove garlic, crushed
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
a dash of cumin, basil, and tarragon
juice of ½ lemon and a whole lime
Tabasco, salt, and pepper to taste

Mix everything together. Gazpacho will never taste quite the same twice due to variation in the taste of the vegetables, especially the tomatoes. So you will have to correct the flavoring by taste. Use a little sugar if it is too acid, more vinegar if it is not acid enough, and, of course, salt, pepper, and Tabasco. Add a little more cumin, not just Tabasco, if you want it to taste more Mexican. Chill this soup thoroughly before serving it. If the herbs are dried, the soup will benefit from sitting a few hours (in the refrigerator) so the herbs can absorb moisture. Having the tomato juice cold already gives you a leg up on the chilling process.

CHICKEN GUMBO SOUP

This soup is dinner, not the beginning of dinner. See *Menu Ideas*.

The basic idea here is to cook the chicken by boiling it and make a good, rich broth; make a roux to thicken and flavor the broth; cook some rice separately, nice and firm, to add that lovely toothiness; cook the okra and onions in the broth flavored with the roux, then add the cooked chicken, and serve the soup over the rice garnished with chopped, raw tomatoes, green peppers, and onion. Then Tabasco may be added for those who want yet hotter gumbo.

This may seem like a lot of trouble, but it is worth it. The right texture for the soup is achieved only by making a roux for the base flavoring and adding the okra. The right texture for the rice is achieved only by steaming it separately. If the rice is cooked in the soup, it becomes too mushy. And by cooking the chicken first and then just reheating it, it does not become stringy from over-cooking (which will happen if the soup is reheated several times). And then the final assembly with the raw vegetables gives the soup a zing it would not have if all the vegetables were cooked.

First the chicken. Put:

6 legs or thighs
3 large or six small breasts
an onion, a rib of celery, a carrot, and a clove of
garlic

in water just to cover. Bring the water to a boil slowly, and simmer until the chicken is tender, about 40 minutes. Let the chicken cool in the soup, then remove the meat from the bones and discard the skin, bones, and cooked vegetables, but keep the chicken meat and the broth.

Then the roux:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup vegetable oil
1 cup flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup each finely chopped onions, celery, and
green bell pepper (reserve $\frac{1}{2}$ cup from the total
mixed for the rice)

Spices:

**1½ teaspoons each of black pepper, white pepper,
and cayenne pepper**
1 teaspoon each dried basil and thyme (reserve
1½ teaspoons of the spice mix for the rice)

Heat the oil to very hot in a large, heavy skillet. Put in the flour all at once and stir vigorously with a wire whisk. Continue stirring, with the heat on fairly high, for three to five minutes, until the mixture turns about the color of peanut butter. Plan on paying attention to nothing else while you are doing this. You are not a professional. Do not answer the phone. You could be burned. When the mixture is red/brown, take it off the heat and add the minced vegetables and the spices. Stir the mixture and push it around until there is no danger of anything burning.

Add the roux to six cups of chicken broth. (Add some canned broth if you do not have enough). Adjust the liquid for a rich, slightly thick consistency.

Then the vegetables. Put:

2 medium onions cut into bite-size pieces
4 cups of okra, cut into bite-size pieces (Frozen is
fine, too)

into the broth and bring it to a slow simmer. Then put the rice on to cook.

The rice:

1½ cups Uncle Ben's Converted Rice
1¾ cups chicken broth
½ cup minced vegetables from above
1½ teaspoons of spice mixture from above
1 tablespoon butter

Bring the broth, chopped vegetables, spices and butter to a boil. Add the rice, stir, and bring back to a boil. Turn the heat very low, put on a heavy lid, and cook the rice for 18 minutes without lifting the lid. When the bell rings, lift the lid, fork the rice, put the lid back on, and let the rice rest at least five minutes.

While the rice is cooking, put the chicken meat in the soup with the okra and onions.

Then chop:

**a couple of tomatoes
another green pepper, and
an onion**

finely. By then the okra and onion should be cooked and the chicken meat hot.

To serve, put a scoop of rice in each dish, ladle the soup over it, and then put a handful of the chopped raw vegetables on top. Pass the Tabasco for the heroes. If you really love them, have the beer very cold, make cornbread to go with the soup and make a rhubarb crisp for dessert. A salad of Romaine lettuce and cucumber with ranch dressing is nice to start. See *Menu Ideas*.

BOUILLABAISSE

This soup is a big production. It is not merely dinner, it is dinner for a ceremonial occasion, a ritual feast. It is worth the effort.

The basic idea here is that you will first make a broth by boiling the shrimp shells and whatever fish carcasses you can obtain, in water, with a few seasonings. Then you prepare the main soup with tomatoes, onions, and garlic, and add the fish broth to it. In this vegetable/fish broth soup, you cook a common inexpensive fish, like cod, and then purée the tomato-onion-fish mixture. The purée then cooks another 45 minutes to develop its flavor. While it is simmering, you make a garlicky mayonnaise. The shrimp, scallops, clams, mussels, and more delicate fishes are added to the soup and cooked at the very last so that they are just barely done when the soup is served. When the soup is served, the mayonnaise is spread on little toasts of French bread which are then dipped in shredded gruyere cheese to be placed in the soup bowls, and the soup is ladled over it. Leftovers are not as good as the fresh soup, and fish is expensive, so plan carefully for zero leftovers. In the finished soup, you will be able to taste tomatoes, olive oil, garlic, fish and shellfish, chili, orange, herbs, fennel, and saffron. All are essential. This is a most delicious soup. It is one of the best things I know how to cook.

The broth: Start with the shells from the shrimp and whatever bones, heads, fins and skin you can come by. A yellowtail collar is a fine contribution, too, although the fillet of this fish is not the best suited to this soup. Wash everything in copious running water, then cover with two quarts of water and add:

1 teaspoon fennel seed
3 bay leaves
several grinds of black pepper
10 sprigs of parsley, not chopped
1 teaspoon salt

and boil it all together gently for 30 minutes. Strain this broth and discard everything but the broth.

Then prepare the vegetable body of the soup:

2 or 3 large onions, chopped in bite-size pieces
10 cloves garlic, crushed
1 cup of olive oil
1 teaspoon fennel seed, or a small bulb of fennel, chopped
½ cup parsley, chopped fine
1 teaspoon salt

Fry all of this together over medium heat in a large pot until the onions are well wilted and the garlic is cooked a bit. Then add:

1 large can crushed tomatoes
2 teaspoons thyme
3 strips (½-inch wide) orange peel (orange part only, no white flesh)
3 bay leaves
2 teaspoons ground black pepper
1 teaspoon saffron
2 teaspoons harissa sauce

and simmer about 20 minutes. Then add the fish broth prepared earlier, and:

1 pound of inexpensive fish fillets – frozen cod is fine

and cook until the fish is done. Then remove the bay leaves and orange peel (but save them), purée the soup in batches (blender gives the best result) and return the soup and the bay leaves and orange peel to the pot to simmer another 30 to 45 minutes. The puréed soup will be a light orange color, but it will develop into a fine *colorado* red as it simmers, and the flavor will develop also. After 30 minutes or so, taste the soup and correct the seasoning for salt, pepper, and *harissa*. To this point you can prepare the soup ahead. Freeze it if you are not going to use it within 24 hours.

Note on harissa:

You can buy harissa in a small can or in a tube at Middle Eastern markets and fancy supermarkets. The tube is better because it keeps a long time, although if you put the harissa from the can in a little jar and put olive oil over it each time you use some, it will keep well also. If you cannot find harissa, substitute a couple of fresh chilis, seeded (either Serrano or Jalapeño is good) and add ½ teaspoon each ground cumin, caraway, and coriander.

Sometime well before serving time, even the day before, make a mayonnaise with:

**1 egg yolk and
about ¾ cup of olive oil**

Start by beating the yolk with a whisk until it is pale yellow, then add the oil, first in drops, then in half teaspoons, whisking thoroughly each time to assure the mayonnaise properly emulsifies. When you have a good quantity, add:

**2 or 3 cloves crushed garlic
a bit of *harissa*
salt to taste**

If you had a lot of presence of mind, you could have dropped:

a tiny potato (1½-inch, red or white)

into the soup and it would be cooked in about ten minutes, and you could now fish it out and peel it and mash it. Or you could cook the little potato briefly in the microwave. Either way, peel it and mash it thoroughly, then mix a bit of the mayonnaise with it, then mix the potato into the mayonnaise. If you are not going to serve within a half an hour, cover and chill the spicy potatoey garlicky mayonnaise.

Slice:

a small baguette

into fairly thin slices and toast them lightly. You will need four to six pieces for each guest, assuming each guest will have seconds and that two to three will fit in your soup plates. The toasts can be prepared ahead, too, as the bread should be fairly thoroughly dry when they are finished toasting. Store them in a zip lock bag if you are not going to use them the same day.

When you are nearly ready to serve, heat the soup to a simmer, and put the shellfish and other fishes into the soup. Remember, you have a pound of fish in the soup already, and aim for about two to three persons per pound of filleted or cleaned fish or shellfish. For eight people I usually buy:

**1 pound shrimp
1 pound scallops
1 pound sea bass
2 dozen clams or mussels, or ½ pound of another
fish**

but other varieties are fine, too.

Good candidates for this soup:

sea bass, halibut, red snapper, cod, ling cod, shrimps, scallops, clams, lobsters, mussels, and even sole. Basically, most shellfish and all white-fleshed sea fishes.

Bad candidates:

swordfish, mackerel, tuna, yellowtail, bluefish, salmon, oysters, other oily fishes, squid and octopus, and all fresh-water fishes.

Depending on the volume, the shellfish and fillets will cook in as little as five minutes. If there are many creatures with hard shells, the cooking will take longer because their shells will cool the soup and it will have to come back to a simmer before the fish will cook.

While the soup is cooking, grate about:

¼ pound Gruyère cheese

spread the little toasts with the mayonnaise and dip each one in the grated cheese. Put two or three of the toasts in each bowl and ladle the hot soup over it. There is great danger here that the guests will discover how delicious the little toasts with spicy potatoey, garlicky mayonnaise and cheese are and eat them up before you serve, so proceed with caution.

SIMPLE SPICY FISH SOUP

1 pound medium shrimp
2 pounds other assorted fish and shellfish
1 quart chicken broth
2 bay leaves
2 onions chopped into bite-size pieces
3 small carrots, peeled and sliced into thin coins
2 handfuls celery leaves and pieces, chopped
4 cloves of garlic, crushed
1 teaspoon fennel seed, crushed
6 tablespoons olive oil
1 small green chili (Serrano or Jalapeño)
½ cup chopped parsley
½ teaspoon each, powdered cumin and coriander
1 2-inch slice of orange zest
several grinds of black pepper
3 cups of crushed tomatoes (canned is fine)

This soup is dinner, and it is also known as *The Legendary Fish Soup of August 4, 1985*.

First peel the shrimps, then boil the shrimp shells, plus any fish bones or fish heads you may have, plus the bay leaves, in the chicken broth for 10 to 15 minutes. Strain the broth and set the broth aside. Then put the first set of vegetables and spices in a big pot with the oil and cook over medium heat until the vegetables begin to wilt. Stir regularly so nothing burns – the garlic is especially prone to burning. Slit the chili and remove the seeds, and leave it mostly whole so you can fish it out later so no one chomps on it inadvertently. Add the seeded chili and the remaining spices and vegetables, except the tomatoes, to the pot, and cook gently until they are thoroughly wilted in the oil.

Then add the fish broth and the tomatoes, and simmer for 30 minutes. Just before serving, add the fish and shellfish. The fish should be added first, then any shellfish later, so everything is just barely cooked when the soup is done.

Taste the soup and correct the seasoning with salt and Tabasco. Fish out the whole chili and discard it. The leftovers of this soup are not nearly so good as the fresh soup, so try to cook just the amount people will eat. Figure no more than ½ pound of seafood for each person, and less for light eaters. See the recipe for Bouillabaisse for guidelines as to which fish to use and which to avoid. Serve corn tortillas with the soup.

EZO GELIN (Red Lentil and Bulgar Soup)

This is a Turkish soup (pronounced ay (as in April) – zoh gay-leen – stress on the first and last syllables). I ate it first in Turkey. Then I found a photo of it in a cookbook there, and persuaded a kind-looking and also Turkish-looking person who was speaking English to someone to tell me the list of ingredients in English. Then I tweaked up the recipe at home until it tasted just like what I had had in Turkey. Another excellent working girl's supper.

1 cup red lentils
½ cup bulgar
1 onion, chopped fine
1 tablespoon tomato paste
2 tablespoons olive oil
8 cups (2 quarts) chicken broth
1 teaspoon paprika
1 tablespoon dried mint
dash of cayenne pepper, or a fresh chili

Sauté the onion in the olive oil until it wilts. Then put everything else except the mint in the pot, bring it to a boil, and simmer gently for an hour or so, until the lentils are tender and the soup is creamy. Add the mint once the soup is fully cooked, and let it rest very hot another 10 to 15 minutes before serving. The soup gets better with reheating.

Notes on ingredients:

Red lentils can be bought at Indian or Middle Eastern grocery stores. The best bulgar is the unhulled variety; it can be found at the ethnic groceries and also at health food stores. The best dried mint is found at Middle Eastern or Persian groceries (far better than what's at the supermarket), although the Indian grocery will have good dried mint also. For these occasions when you only need a bit of tomato paste, it is good to have one of those tubes of tomato paste that can be re-closed and kept in the refrigerator.

MOROCCAN SOUP (HARIRA)

¾ pound of lamb in cubes
6 chicken wings
4 chicken thighs
6 tablespoons olive oil

Put the lamb and chicken in the oil and sauté them together until they start to brown and smell really good. The goal of this frying is to develop the aroma and flavors of the browning. Then add:

4 heaping teaspoons of *ras el hanout*
½ teaspoon turmeric
3 bay leaves
1 heaping teaspoon dried fenugreek leaves
6 slices of fresh ginger
3 cinnamon sticks
2 chopped yellow onions
4 cloves garlic smashed or pressed

Tumble this around to mix in the spices and fry some more until the onions start to brown and give off their aroma. Not too long – take care not to let anything burn at this stage. Then add:

1 cup chopped parsley
½ cup chopped cilantro
**5 shredded carrots or one bag of carrots already
 shredded from the market**
¾ cup chopped celery with leaves
**¾ cup lentils (plain – with hulls on – supermarket
 brand is fine)**
2 zucchini chopped
1 can (14 ounces) chickpeas with their liquid
1 big can (28 ounces) of crushed tomatoes
**several big squirts of *harissa* from the tube
 (about 2 tablespoons)**
water – at least 3 tomato cans full
salt to taste
black pepper to taste

and cook this until it is done – chicken falls from the bone and lentils fall apart. An hour will be enough. Fish the chicken skin out for aesthetic improvement. As the soup cooks, add water if needed – the consistency should be *slightly* thick. Correct the seasoning for salt and harissa. If you want a thicker soup, make a paste of butter and flour (roughly equal parts, a tablespoon of each should do) mixed them together until smooth, and stir this into the soup a forkful at a time, waiting for the soup to return to a

boil each time, until the consistency you want has been reached. (This paste is called *beurre manié* (manhandled butter) in French cookbooks).

If you want to make it in the style as it is served in Marrakesh, put in a big handful of short (1- to 2-inch) fine noodles and cook ten minutes more just before serving. Last night I did not bother with either any thickening or the noodles and the soup was delicious.

A note on *Ras el Hanout*:

Ras el Hanout literally means *top of the shop* in Arabic and is a spice mix sold at spice shops in Moroccan cities. There are many, *many* different recipes. You can consult a Moroccan cookbook such as Paula Wolfert, search the web for one to buy, go to Morocco and buy some (highly recommended), or try this one, which uses mostly not-too-exotic (no rosebud pods or insects or pieces of antler) spices:

- 1 teaspoon peppercorns**
- ½ teaspoon whole cardamom seeds (hull removed)**
- ½ teaspoon whole cloves**
- 1 teaspoon whole coriander seeds**

- 2 teaspoons cinnamon**
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- 3 teaspoons ground turmeric**
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger**
- ½ teaspoon mace blades or ground mace**

Put the peppercorns, cardamom, cloves, and coriander in a skillet with no oil and toss over heat until they begin to smell really good. Turn out onto a paper towel to cool. Then put all the spices together in a grinder and grind until they are a fine powder. Store in a jar with a tight lid.

BAJA FISH SOUP

Makes two servings. A fine working girl's weekday supper.

1 onion, chopped into bite-size pieces
2 carrots, sliced into coins
¼ to ½ cup celery leaves
½ to ¾ cup fine slices of white cabbage
1 chili, Serrano or Jalapeño, seeded
2 bay leaves
**¼ teaspoon each ground cumin, oregano, and
fennel seeds**
2 tablespoons vegetable oil, plain or corn
**2 or 3 Roma tomatoes, sliced into coins, or ¾ cup of
crushed tomatoes in a can**
3 tablespoons tomato paste
4 cups chicken broth or water
**6 to 8 small or medium shrimp, shelled and
deveined (save those shells!)**
**1 fillet, about 8 ounces, of a white-fleshed ocean
fish, such as red snapper or sea bass or flounder**
**2 limes, cilantro, sliced fresh chilis, Tabasco, corn
tortillas**

Peel the shrimp, then put the shrimp shells and cilantro stems in a small pot with the water or chicken broth (add salt if you are using water) and bring to a boil to simmer 15 to 20 minutes. While this is cooking, cut up and arrange everything else, and then sauté the onion, carrot, celery leaves, cabbage and all herbs and spices gently in the oil until they all wilt a bit. Strain the shrimp shell broth, discarding the shells and stems. Add the broth and the tomatoes and tomato paste to the sautéed vegetables and simmer another 10 to 15 minutes, or until the carrots are tender.

Cut the fish fillet into strips, and put them in the broth. The cool fillet pieces will cause the simmering to stop. When the broth comes back to a boil, add the shrimp. As soon as the shrimps curl and turn pink (indicating they are just barely cooked), turn off the heat.

Then heat the tortillas one-at-a-time, in a nonstick skillet with no oil, keeping those already heated warm between potholders as you do the rest. Taste the soup for salt, and add lime and chili and cilantro to taste. Serve the soup with more lime slices, cilantro, Tabasco sauce, and chilies to add, and corn tortillas to serve as bread. Nice cold beer is recommended, also.

SALADS

PACIFIC RIM SALAD

A fine, light beginning for a meal, but not a meal in itself.

For six to eight servings:

**1 head each of Romaine lettuce, red leaf lettuce,
and green curly leaf or Boston lettuce**
1 Bartlett or ripe Bosc pear
1 Navel orange
1 kiwi
1 red bell pepper
maybe a few raspberries
3-4 tablespoons olive oil
Balsamic and red wine vinegars
soy sauce
black pepper

Tear the lettuce into bite-size pieces. For each person you will need about the amount of torn up lettuce that you can pick up with one hand. To calibrate your handful, take one handful of the clean, torn, but undressed lettuce and put it on a plate to see if it looks like the right amount for one. Then measure by handful. Leftover salad distresses me.

You can wash and tear up the lettuce early in the morning and put it in the refrigerator in plastic bags with a paper towel or two. The paper towels will absorb any moisture you did not get off with your lettuce spinner and the lettuce will be perfectly chilled.

Just before serving, peel the orange, slice it, and put it in a bowl big enough to hold all of the fruit. Peel and slice the kiwi. Core and chop the red bell pepper into bite-size pieces. Peel, core and slice the pear last so it doesn't have time to turn brown. Put all the fruit in the fruit bowl, including the raspberries if you are using them. Mix the fruit gently, perhaps with your hands.

Put the prepared lettuce in a salad bowl and toss it with olive oil. Taste one leaf to make sure the salad has enough oil. Then add the fruit and a shake of vinegar and a smaller shake of soy sauce, and toss gently again. Taste it again for oil, vinegar, and salt (the soy sauce). Pass the pepper grinder at the table. The amount of vinegar needed depends on the intensity of the juices given off by the fruit.

A SALAD OF GREAT SOPHISTICATION

To begin an elegant meal. A virtual declaration of dignified food. Men who are good at reading and following instructions have been known to produce successful dinner parties with this recipe, and even to please their own children (with the dressing, but a more friendly assortment of lettuce).

For each two servings:

1 endive
1 red bell pepper
½ bunch watercress

Dressing:

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon Balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon soy sauce
1 teaspoon good spicy mustard
1 small clove garlic, crushed
pepper

Do not add salt until you have tasted the salad.

Chop the endives into 1-inch pieces. Chop the red bell peppers into bite-size pieces. Wash the watercress, pinch off the stems at the first edible-looking leaf, and pat the watercress dry gently with tea towels. Toss the vegetables in a big bowl. Put them in a plastic bag and refrigerate them if you are not going to serve the salad right away.

Make the dressing in a little jar with a good lid so you can shake it vigorously. Pour it on the tossed vegetables and toss a bit more. Taste the salad for salt, and add more to your taste. Serve right away.

ROQUEFORT CHEESE SALAD

This salad is another dazzler. Everyone loved the Roquefort cheese salads of the sixties, but few of us now would be eager to eat that much sour cream at one sitting. By dressing the salad with a strongly flavored vinaigrette, and then sprinkling on the grated Roquefort, you get that wonderful rotten rich Roquefort taste without the extravaganza of sour cream.

To be dressed:

**1 head Romaine lettuce (enough for 4 people),
cleaned and torn into bite-size pieces**
**1 red bell pepper, cleaned and cut into bite-size
pieces**
2 or 3 cups watercress sprigs

Dressing:

1 green onion, chopped
4 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1 clove pressed garlic
salt, pepper
3 ounce piece of Roquefort cheese

Put the piece of Roquefort cheese into the freezer. If the cheese is at room temperature or merely refrigerated, it will be too soft to grate.

Wash the lettuce, tear it up, and spin it dry. If dinner is not imminent, put the lettuce in a plastic bag with a couple of paper towels and put it back into the refrigerator. Cleaned watercress sprigs (bite-size tops of watercress) can go into the bag with the lettuce. Cut the top off and trim the pepper, but don't cut it up until you are ready to toss the salad. Make the dressing in a little jar with a lid so that you can shake it up. You can make it ahead or not, as is convenient.

When you are ready to serve the salad, cut up the pepper into it, and toss the salad with the dressing. Then grate the Roquefort cheese, sprinkle half on the salad, and toss some more. Then put the salad on plates and sprinkle the rest of the cheese on the individual salads. This is an excellent salad to serve before grilled steaks or lamb chops.

Sixties Roquefort Cheese Salad

Crumble ¼ pound Roquefort into one pint sour cream, add juice of one lemon, two finely chopped green onions, and salt and pepper. Mix it up good and toss it with a good stout lettuce like Romaine – are you tempted?

And here's a great variation:

AN ELEGANT AUTUMN SALAD

My daughter Sonja served this salad at Thanksgiving several years ago. It is elegant enough for the most elegant dinner party. It would be wonderful to be able to serve it all year around, but pomegranates are one of those things nobody has figured out how to produce in seasons other than autumn. Hoard a few for the Christmas dinner salad. By January, they are all gone.

To serve six:

6 generous handfuls of designer mixed greens
1 pomegranate
2 ripe pears
¼ pound of Roquefort, Gorgonzola or other fine
blue cheese, frozen solid
1 lemon

Dressing:

6 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons raspberry vinegar, or red wine
vinegar and white wine vinegar mixed
1 teaspoon soy sauce
1 clove of garlic, crushed

Early in the day put the cheese in the freezer. Mix up the dressing when it is convenient, early or not. The greens will probably already be washed and ready to use. If not, wash, dry, and chill them.

Carefully open the pomegranate and remove the seeds to a bowl. (It is wise to wear something dark like black for this activity.) The pomegranate seeds can be done way ahead, even the day before, if you can protect them from predators able to open the refrigerator. Just before you serve the salad, peel the pears and cut each into a dozen sections. Squeeze the juice from the lemon over the cut pears so that they don't turn brown.

Put out the plates on which you are going to serve the salad. Then toss the greens with the dressing. Put the dressed greens on their plates. Arrange the pear slices over the greens, pointed to the center, four to a plate. Then sprinkle the pomegranate seeds over the salad. Finally, get the cheese out of the freezer, and grate some over each salad. People will be charmed.

And yet another great variation:

DESIGNER SALAD WITH GOAT CHEESE NUGGETS

Is this recipe too transparently derivative? Too many fancy restaurants offering such? Well, it is really good anyway, and evident from the requests for the recipe, it is not so clear how to produce it at home. You will need:

one 4-ounce log of fresh goat cheese
½ cup breadcrumbs
½ teaspoon each dried thyme, basil, and oregano
two cloves pressed garlic
¼ teaspoon salt
pepper
designer lettuce for six people, along with the
dressing for the *Salad of Great Sophistication*, or
the one for *Roquefort Cheese Salad*

Mix together the breadcrumbs, dried herbs, pressed garlic, and salt and pepper. About ten minutes before you serve salad, slice your log of goat cheese (you could buy it in a tub, but then you need to shape it into little patties) into six slices, and dredge each one in the crumb mixture, pressing it into them in to coat them thoroughly. Then put them in a lightly oiled non-stick baking pan, and then into the toaster oven. (If you don't have one of these, the broiler will do.) They are ready when the cheese melts enough so that the nuggets begin to spread slightly, and they have browned faintly, usually eight to ten minutes.

Toss the salad, and put a goat cheese nugget on each plate. The diners will be thrilled.

HOME MADE RANCH DRESSING

This is a creamy, herby, garlicky ranch-style dressing.

1 cup buttermilk
½ cup mayonnaise
½ teaspoon each (all dried):
 basil
 thyme
 oregano
 parsley
 celery seed
1 bay leaf (Turkish, not Californian)
2 cloves garlic, pressed
½ teaspoon powdered onion
1 clove pressed garlic
¼ teaspoon soy sauce
½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

With a whisk, mix the buttermilk gradually into the mayonnaise. Then add everything else, and mix. Store it in a glass jar in the refrigerator. It will be better after it sits for a day, and the flavors mix and the dried herbs re-hydrate fully. I think of this dressing as very Southern. It is particularly good on Romaine lettuce. Watercress sprigs are good too, and should always be added because they are so nutritious. Sneak them in as often as possible.

SUN-DRIED TOMATO VINAIGRETTE

Another dressing (also Sonja's idea) for designer (and other) lettuce:

**enough greens for 6 people – the greens may be
strongly flavored ones, such as watercress or
arugula, since the dressing is strongly flavored,
and the leaves may be delicate or stout**

¼ cup sun-dried tomatoes

3 tablespoons Balsamic vinegar

½ cup olive oil

2 cloves garlic, pressed

¼ cup pine nuts

6 tablespoons Parmesan cheese

The sun-dried tomatoes may either be the sort you buy loose and dry or the kind you buy packed in olive oil. We prefer the ones with oil because they purée to a smoother texture.

Put the tomatoes, oil, vinegar, and garlic in the blender and blend to a smooth purée. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the pine nuts and blend just a few seconds to chop the nuts just a bit. Then toss the salad with the dressing, sprinkle the Parmesan cheese over it, toss a bit more, and serve.

This dressing will look like what everyone called *French* dressing in the fifties and sixties, but it will taste a whole lot better.

CABBAGE SALAD OF CONSIDERABLE NOVELTY

8 cups chopped cabbage – the kind in a one pound bag with a little carrot and red cabbage is just fine
½ cup finely chopped parsley
¼ cup finely chopped green onions
½ cup chopped cilantro
½ red bell pepper, sliced into little strips
2 tablespoons plain vegetable oil, not olive, not peanut
2 tablespoons mustard seeds
2 tablespoons lightly toasted urad dal
2 generous teaspoons toasted cumin seed
salt to taste
juice of one lemon
pepper

Have all the vegetables ready in a big bowl.

Heat the oil and mustard seeds in a skillet (a cheap Teflon skillet will do) (and you also need a screen to put over the skillet) until the mustard seeds begin to pop. They will pop like popcorn. Allow popping to continue for a minute or so, until it slows down. Then add the urad dal. Mix this around a little, then pour it onto the vegetables. Add the cumin seed, rubbing it between your hands to release its fragrance.

Toss the salad a little. Then add the juice of the lemon, and taste for salt, and add salt until it is just right. Add a little black pepper if you like pepper.

This salad is delicious as soon as it is made, and also delicious the next day! Bob can take it in his lunch and get his crucifers. And if you are short of time, you can forget the parsley, cilantro, onions, and pepper, and the salad will still be really good

Buy mustard seeds, urad dahl (you can usually buy it already toasted) and cumin seed (you have to toast it yourself but it is no big deal – see the recipe for *Mulligatawny Soup*) in industrial quantities at an Indian market.

GRAVEL BEAN SALAD

You could also call this bean salad Empedreado (which just means gravel or pavement in Spanish) and it would sound more romantic, perhaps even more appetizing to those who know no Spanish. It is a superior bean salad.

**¾ cup cooked garbanzo beans (canned is fine,
drain and rinse them)**
**¾ cup cooked black beans (canned is fine, drain
and rinse)**
**2 ears of corn, cooked (boil 3 minutes) and cut
from
the cob**
**½ red bell pepper, chopped into pieces the same
size as the beans and corn**
¼ cup each, chopped chives, parsley, and red onion
1 clove garlic, pressed
2 tablespoons olive oil
red wine vinegar to taste
Tabasco sauce to taste
salt and pepper

Just toss all the ingredients, up through the olive oil, together gently. Put on a little vinegar and taste, adding more to your taste. Go easy and taste when adding salt, as canned black beans are usually plenty salty.

For a really elegant and delicious presentation, serve this salad with little toasts spread with olive paste and sliced tomatoes.

You know what else you could do? Don't drain the black beans (but do drain the garbanzos) and add a tin of chicken broth. Heat the whole thing to a simmer, simmer ten minutes, and serve it as bean soup. Put a dollop of sour cream on each serving. Really quite fine.

QUINOA SALAD

Quinoa (keen-wah) is a new designer grain alleged to be exceedingly nutritious. Before cooking, it looks like tiny gray balls. After, the balls puff and a little hull separates slightly from the grain. Eat it hull and all.

1 cup quinoa
1½ cups water or chicken broth

Boil the water or broth, put in the quinoa, and when the liquid comes back to a boil, lower the heat, put on a lid, and simmer for 15 minutes. When the bell rings, turn off the heat, fork the grains, put the lid back on and wait five minutes. Then cool an hour or so to at least lukewarm. The dressing:

4 tablespoons peanut oil or plain vegetable oil
2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
½ teaspoon of chili paste (or sambal bajak)
or ¼ teaspoon cayenne
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1 tablespoon fish sauce
1 clove garlic, pressed
1 teaspoon soy sauce
1 tablespoon brown sugar
a couple of grinds of black pepper

Mix up this dressing in a little jar with a tight lid and shake. It benefits from sitting an hour or two before it goes on the salad.

1 red bell pepper, cut into 1- x ¼-inch sticks
6 inches English cucumber, cut into
1½-inch by ¼-inch sticks
2 cups watercress sprigs
2 finely chopped green onions
½ cup cilantro leaves
4 kumquats, each sliced into 6 or 7 slices, seeds
discarded
4 or 5 big lettuce leaves, for serving

Combine the vegetables, quinoa and dressing and toss gently. Don't bruise the watercress and cilantro leaves. Arrange on lettuce leaves on decorative plates. Makes four to five servings.

RED CABBAGE SALAD

This is an informal salad. The many long strings make it a bit messy for a dinner party. So it is fine for a weekday supper, a lunch, or a picnic.

½ red onion, sliced very finely
½ head red cabbage, shredded finely
3 carrots, shredded or grated
1 green pepper cut into fine strips
3 tablespoons plain or olive oil
1 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
2 to 3 teaspoons caraway seeds, rubbed between
your hands
salt and pepper

This salad is best prepared several hours ahead, so the dressing can wilt the red cabbage a bit. It saves well for a day or two also. It carries well in a lunch or to a picnic.

Mix up the dressing and pour it over the sliced onion to soak while you prepare the rest of the vegetables. Then pour the onion and dressing over the rest of the vegetables. Taste, and add salt or pepper, or even more caraway seeds.

CABBAGE SALAD WITH VINAIGRETTE

What makes this coleslaw superior is that it does not have a creamy dressing but instead a vinaigrette. It is not sweet.

½ a white cabbage, shredded finely (the stuff in a bag at the supermarket is satisfactory if it is really shredded finely instead of chopped)
1 small bulb fennel, very finely sliced, with tough and fuzzy parts discarded
1 red bell pepper, sliced finely
1 cup julienne or shredded carrot
¼ cup finely chopped parsley

Dressing:

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
¼ cup regular salad oil, like canola or safflower
1 clove garlic, crushed
½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
¼ teaspoon sugar
1 bay leaf
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
½ teaspoon salt
black pepper to taste

Mix up the dressing and pour it on the vegetables and toss. Do it early in the day. Unlike a lettuce salad, this salad benefits from sitting and wilting. And it will still be good the next day and more.

Mexican variation:

Leave out the Worcestershire sauce from the dressing but add ½ teaspoon cumin seeds, rubbed in your hands or a mortar. Only near time to serve, add ¼ chopped cilantro leaves.

This mix of vegetables is also really good with the *Ranch Dressing* (page 31).

CHINESE CHICKEN SALAD

This makes a fine weekend lunch or summer weekday supper. It is too much food to begin a meal.

- 3 cups shredded Savoy cabbage**
- 2 carrots, peeled and grated or julienned**
- 1½ cups bean sprouts**
- ½ red bell pepper, cut in thin strips**
- 1½ cups watercress with stems pinched off up to the first edible-looking leaf**

- ¼ cup vegetable oil**
- ½ teaspoon sesame oil**
- 1 tablespoon Chinese vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon spicy mustard**
- ½ teaspoon sugar**
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce**
- 1 clove garlic, crushed**

- 1 cup cold cooked chicken breast, shredded (or turkey –another use for Thanksgiving leftovers)**
- ½ cup roasted, salted cashews**

Toss the vegetables together gently in a large bowl. Make the dressing in a small jar so you can put the top on and shake vigorously to mix the dressing. Then pour the dressing on the vegetables and toss again. Put the salad on plates, scatter the chicken meat artfully over the top, and then the cashews artfully over the chicken meat. Serves a fine lunch for three, and looks beautiful with so many colors in the vegetables. Chopsticks work better than a fork because there are so many long slender things in this salad. It tastes better eaten with chopsticks, too, but I am not sure why.

KUNG FU SALAD

This is a noodle salad. You will never find it in a Chinese restaurant, but you might find something similar in a fusion restaurant, or possibly in a highly advanced Southeast Asian restaurant. The dressing is much like the sauce served with spring rolls in Vietnamese restaurants.

**2 cups (measured after cooking) fine rice noodles
(or ramen), cooked and rinsed**

½ cup bean sprouts

**½ small cucumber, cut in julienne, for just under
one cup cucumber**

½ cup green cabbage, shredded

½ cup cilantro leaves, plucked off the stems

1 carrot, shredded large or julienne

1 thinly sliced red onion

1 red bell pepper, cut into little sticks

**3 tablespoons fish sauce (*nam plah*), best brand is
Tiparos)**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil (plain or peanut, but not
olive)**

2 tablespoons lime juice

1 teaspoon honey

1 clove garlic, pressed

1 teaspoon shredded ginger

1 teaspoon of finely chopped cilantro

**1 Serrano chili, seeded and thinly sliced into rings
dab of Chinese chili sauce or sambal bajak, or
Chinese chili oil**

Make the dressing in a jar with a tight-fitting lid so that you can shake it up. Cook the noodles according to package directions. (If there are no directions in a language you read, just boil them for three minutes, bite one to test for doneness, and if they are not done, keep testing every two minutes or so until they are done.) Drain them, then rinse them in cold water. Put them in a bowl and pour the dressing over them. Chop the vegetables, add them to the noodles, and toss everything together. Resist your instinct to salt a salad because fish sauce is salty, and the salad likely does not need more salt than this. So taste first before salting. Serve it right away. If for some reason the salad must sit, leave out the cilantro leaves and add them just before serving. They are the most fragile and bruisable element.

HIGHLY REFINED SALAD DRESSING

1 egg yolk
**1 cup (+) oil – extra virgin olive, plain vegetable,
or mixed**
½ clove garlic, crushed
1 small shallot, finely minced
**the white of a green onion (the whitest third),
finely minced**
1½ tablespoons Dijon mustard
salt and pepper
about 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon soy sauce

You need a capacious metal or ceramic bowl and a metal whisk. Essentially, you make mayonnaise, then flavor it and thin it.

Put the egg yolk in the clean, dry, metal or ceramic (not plastic) bowl and whisk it until it turns pale yellow. Then add the oil starting with just a few drops at a time, then a teaspoon at a time, adding slightly larger amounts only as you see the oil is completely incorporated and your mayonnaise is emulsified and thick. Add all the flavorings except the vinegar and soy sauce, and then taste the dressing. If you need to add more oil (because the other flavorings are too strong), do it before adding the vinegar and soy sauce or it may not emulsify.

Add the soy sauce before the vinegar, then as you add the vinegar, taste the dressing several times. The vinegar should thin out the dressing so that it pours thickly but easily, and will not stand up in a spoon like mayonnaise. To avoid too much vinegar taste, add water if flavor is right but the dressing is still too thick.

This dressing is delicious on plain Romaine lettuce, and especially nice on the tender lettuces like red-leaf, lamb's ears (*mache*, en Francais), and Boston lettuces. It is also good on sophisticated versions of Cobb salad (with avocado, chopped bacon, thinly sliced roast beef or cooked chicken). It will keep in the refrigerator for several weeks (I have kept it for six and lived to tell), and in fact will be mellower several days after it is made.

This, like other mayonnaise, can be made in the blender if you make a larger batch (double or triple) so that you can get the egg yolks well beaten before starting the oil. Just put the yolks in the blender, blend until they are pale, and continue with the rest of the ingredients, pouring the oil in first in a very, very thin stream.

Blender method:

Put the garlic, mustard, shallot, green onion, and egg yolk in the blender. Start the motor on the slowest speed. Start pouring the oil in the thinnest stream possible. Keep pouring. After there is enough oil in the blender to cover the blades, check to see that it is emulsifying properly. Keep adding oil until it is all incorporated. Then add the soy sauce and vinegar to taste, and possibly water to the right texture.

ORTHODOX CAESAR SALAD

This salad is perfect to start a barbecue supper, for a supper of soup and salad, or for lunch on Saturday. About four servings.

1 head Romaine lettuce. Nothing else will do.

1 egg yolk

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 clove garlic

1 teaspoon oregano

1 teaspoon good spicy mustard

black pepper and salt

juice of half a lemon

croutons (see next recipe)

4 to 8 tinned anchovies

Wash the lettuce well and dry it with a spinner, tea towels, or paper towels. Tear the leaves into bite-size pieces, discarding the tough pale ribs. (Don't fret – most everything that is good for you in lettuce is in the bright green part of the leaf.) I am assuming here that your Romaine is of the East Coast quality – most of the outer leaves will have to be discarded, leaving four not enormous servings. On the West Coast you don't need to buy as much because more of the lettuce is beautiful and edible. I was always astonished that in East Coast supermarkets the produce guy is putting out what the West Coast guy would be tossing out.

Put the egg yolk in the bowl and stir it vigorously with a whisk until it turns pale yellow. Add the olive oil about a teaspoon at a time and whisk it around to incorporate it into the yolk. Then add the garlic, whisk some more, then oregano and mustard, and mix.

At this point, put the lettuce in the bowl and toss well. Remember that Caesar is supposed to be a heavily dressed salad, a sort of fresh garlic and anchovy extravaganza.

Then stick a fork in the cut side of the half lemon and squeeze the lemon and wiggle the fork at the same time to get the best juice extraction.

Taste the salad, then salt it. Add the croutons and toss. Cut up the anchovies as you wish (if you have potential anchovy-phobes, leave them whole for easy extraction), and toss them into the salad only if you are not going to make them easy for the guests to remove. The salad is pretty good without the anchovies, too, if you don't happen to have any. If you want to expand the recipe, you do not need more egg yolk. One yolk will emulsify many more cups of oil.

Croutons:

For Caesar and other salads. A substantial improvement over store-botten.

4 to 6 cups designer bread cut in small cubes
(stale is just fine)
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon oregano
1 teaspoon fines herbs
2 cloves garlic, crushed
salt and pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 200 degrees.

Melt the butter in a large (11- x 14-inch) pan. Add oil, and press the garlic (with the official garlic press) into the oil and butter. Add the herbs and mix well. Taste and add salt and pepper to your liking. Add the bread cubes and tumble them around in the oil, garlic and herbs until they are well coated. The pan should be big enough so that the croutons are well distributed for drying. Then dry them out in the oven for 15 to 30 minutes until the bread is quite dry but not browned.

These croutons will keep well in the refrigerator in an airtight container (such as a ziplock bag) for a month or two. They make wonderful snacks for those times when you want garlic and salt rather than something sweet.

MOROCCAN SALAD

This salad is typical of the salads served in kebab joints in Morocco, especially in the southern, Berber areas. It is easy to make, delicious, and really good for you. The touch of cumin makes it exotic. If you have some toasted cumin seeds around (see *Mulligatawny Soup*) use them instead of plain cumin. Then it's even more exotic.

**½ medium red onion or other mild onion, chopped
finely**
½ cup minced parsley
3 tablespoons olive oil
½ teaspoon red wine vinegar
½ teaspoon ground toasted cumin seeds
salt and pepper to taste
**3 or 4 really good large (3- to 4-inch)
tomatoes, chopped**
**½ cup chopped English cucumber, chopped to the
same size as the tomato (optional)**

You can't serve many people raw onions without doing something to subdue them first. (Yes I know.) Here the strategy is to put the oil and vinegar, the cumin, a little salt, and the chopped parsley on the chopped onion at least 30 minutes and up to four hours before the salad is to be served. Chop and add the tomatoes and cucumber, plus a few grinds of black pepper, just before serving.

Whether you include the cucumber should depend on several things: Are you fond of cucumbers? Do you have extra cucumbers? Does the salad need to be stretched (not enough tomatoes to make it look like much food)? The cucumber does not alter the flavor of the salad significantly, but it does make it crunchier and makes the onions seem milder.

BABA GHANOUJ

4 large eggplants

½ cup tahini (sesame seed paste)

juice of one lemon

2 cloves garlic, pressed

¼ cup to ½ cup water

cayenne pepper or *harissa*

¾ cup of fresh finely chopped parsley

salt and pepper

First, grill or broil the eggplants. Grilling (with no cover!) is better because it will impart a smoky taste that is missed if you use the broiler. Either way, slit the eggplants lengthwise in several places (so they don't explode), and grill or broil until the flesh is thoroughly soft and the skins are black and brittle. This usually takes at least half an hour.

Let them cool, then scrape the flesh out of the blackened skin. Discard the skin. The flesh will be goopy, but lumpy. Chop the eggplant flesh with two knives in a bowl until it is evenly cut in small lumps. I think a food processor whacks it up too much.

Tahini sauce:

Use an electric beater to make your life easy. First beat the tahini some to smooth it out, since in the jar or can it has usually separated into oil and meal. Then mix the lemon juice and pressed garlic into the tahini. Adding the lemon will turn the tahini lumpy and mealy, even if you had it smooth before. Don't panic. Then add the water, pouring in a thin stream while you beat, to the tahini and lemon mixture. The mixture will magically emulsify. Continue adding water until the texture is that of a creamy salad dressing. Add salt and cayenne pepper or *harissa* to taste, maybe even more garlic. Then mix this dressing into the eggplant flesh to taste. Stir in the parsley at the end. A few pomegranate seeds and olive oil drizzled on the top make for the devastating and authentic presentation. Serve with toasted pita bread.

You could also put this dressing on chunks of tomato and cucumber, with parsley mixed in, and it would be really good. You could add some bell pepper, red or green or both. The dressing is delicious on falafel, too, if you ever make them at home. And on grilled fish. Really quite versatile stuff.

A recipe for *Baba Ghanouj* is an important test for a cookbook. Any book that instructs you to put the eggplant together with the tahini sauce ingredients and just mix it all up should not be trusted. This is like tossing egg yolks and oil onto potatoes and other vegetables without first making mayonnaise and expecting to get potato salad. Neither the flavor

nor the texture will ever be right. Snake oil salesmen come in many varieties.

Baba Ghanouj tastes so much better when the eggplants are cooked on a charcoal grill. I try to remember to buy eggplants whenever I buy steak or chicken to grill. Then we try to remember to put the eggplants on the grill after the meat is finished (to be ghanoujed the next day). Then we try to remember to retrieve them later.

The first time we forgot the eggplants on the grill, there they were there the next morning, cool and ready to be scraped and mashed. Next time we didn't try too hard to remember them after dinner, and the squirrels ate one. Next time they ate them all. No skins left even. Ditto the time after. Then we remembered to fetch them from the still hot fire several times in a row. In the competition to remember, we beat the squirrels for nearly a year, then we forgot, and the squirrels had forgotten too (that eggplants were food). But only once. Next time we had to remember. Somehow I think this competition is inefficient.

BEET SALAD

Beets are an under-appreciated food. People really like them, and although they have not had any sensational publicity lately like carrots, tomatoes, and cabbages, I cannot imagine that so intensely colored a food is not very good for us. They just haven't figured it out yet.

4 medium (about 3-inch) beets

Cut the tops off the beets, scrub off any earth that clings to them, and snip off their tails. Put them in a pot with a rack over boiling water and steam them for 20 to 40 minutes (depending on the size). Test to see if they are done; they should be firm but tender when pierced with a small sharp knife. (You could also bake them in foil, but it takes longer.) Allow them to cool completely, and slip and scrape off the skins and chop them as you like them – sliced, diced, julienne. Then make a dressing for them, and dress them just before serving. If you dress them early and let them sit, they will absorb more dressing than you probably need to eat at this point in your career.

A good dressing for beets:

- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise**
- 2 tablespoons raspberry red wine vinegar**
- ½ teaspoon soy sauce**
- 2 teaspoon finely minced green onions**
- 2 tablespoons finely minced parsley**

Just mix up all but the parsley, pour the dressing on the beets, and toss until all is thoroughly pink. Then sprinkle on the parsley. They deserve a pretty plate.

And beets are delicious with just about any vinaigrette, too.

VEGETABLES

THE MOST WONDERFUL ASPARAGUS

18 spears asparagus
2 strips bacon
1 tablespoon butter
2 tablespoons dry sherry
salt and pepper

You need a frying pan with a lid.

Break off the tough ends from the asparagus (discard the tough ends) and slice the spears on the diagonal into 1-inch pieces, putting the tips, which cook more quickly owing to their great delicacy, into a separate pile. Cut the bacon into slightly smaller than bite-size pieces. Fry the bacon until it is not quite crisp and remove it from the pan. Pour out most of the bacon grease but not the bits left in the pan. Add the tablespoon of butter to the bacon leavings and add the asparagus pieces. Stir-fry the asparagus until it is bright green. Add the tips and fry another minute. Then put the bacon back in, add the sherry, and put the lid on. After one minute, turn off the heat. Toss the asparagus in its sauce, then taste and season with salt and pepper. Serve very soon. Makes only two servings.

BROCCOLI WITH OLIVE OIL AND LEMON

For each serving:

1 cup broccoli florets
2 to 3 tablespoons fine olive oil
juice of half a lemon
salt to taste
optional: 1 teaspoon of olive paste
freshly ground black pepper

Cut the broccoli florets off the stems, leaving only about an inch and a half of stem. Discard the rest of the stem. The stems do not taste as good as the flowers. Also, most of the nutritious stuff in broccoli is in the flowers, so don't feel guilty. Same with cauliflower.

Fill a big bowl with ice and water.

Steam or boil the broccoli just until it is bright green and pierced easily with a fork, about two to four minutes. Cooking time will depend on the maturity of the broccoli, so test early and keep cooking until you get to the right point.

Then remove the broccoli from the pot (one of those Chinese wire scoops is handy) and plunge it into the big bowl of water with ice. Once the broccoli has lost its heat, remove it from the ice water, drain it in a colander, then place it in kitchen towels and pat it dry.

Then dribble the oil over the broccoli, salt it, and toss it to coat with oil. Then squeeze on the lemon juice, toss just a little bit more, and put it on plates. Then grind on a bit of pepper. This is the most delicious way that I know to fix broccoli.

The olive paste addition is a recent innovation. As you would expect, it tastes more olivey, and the broccoli is even more likely to be eaten by broccoli haters.

TWO FINE WAYS TO PREPARE SPINACH

Both of these recipes require the spinach first to be boiled lightly. Steaming does not work so well because even if you are preparing spinach for just two people, there is such a great volume of it when it is raw that the steam cannot circulate and the spinach does not cook evenly. Allow at least one pound of spinach for each two servings. It is essential that spinach be clean and free of sand before you begin cooking. Before washing, tear the leaves from the tough part of the stems and discard the stems (and roots). Then wash the spinach gently in a sink full of water, drain and fill the sink again, then wash again. Keep washing the spinach like this until you get one sink full with no sand. Then put a pot of water on to boil.

SPINACH WITH FISH SAUCE AND CHILIS

First make a little sauce of sliced fresh chilis and fish sauce. (Fish sauce is used throughout Southeast Asia as soy sauce is used in China. In Thai it is called *nam plah*, which is available in all Chinese markets. The best brand is Tiparos). The chilis can be any hot chilis, such as Serranos or Jalapeños, and those tiny, pointy and hot bird's tongue chilis are good too. I think Serranos are the best, but I do not wait for them. Seed the chilis if you want the sauce less hot, or leave them in if you are brave. Just slice the chilis, put them in a little jar, and pour fish sauce into the jar to cover them, plus a bit more. Chilis with fish sauce keeps indefinitely, and the sauce is good for lots more than spinach (on *Singapore Noodles*, on fried rice, or on take-out Chinese food to perk it up), so make extra.

Plunge the spinach into the boiling water. As soon as the water comes back to a boil and the spinach rises to the top and is wilted but still bright green, either dump it into a colander and drain it, or scoop it out of the water with a wire scoop. Press the spinach in the colander to remove as much water as possible. Turn the spinach onto a board, slice it to make it easier to eat, put it on plates and then drizzle a teaspoon of the sauce over it.

SPINACH WITH PEARS

Before you boil the spinach, peel:

half a Bartlett pear (for each 2 servings)

and slice it into four slices and cook them lightly in the boiling water. They don't really need to cook much, but they should be hot. Fish them out of the water with a wire scoop, and put them in the food processor, but don't process just yet. Then boil the spinach as above, and when you have pressed out the water, put the spinach into the food processor with the pears, and process to a coarse purée. Do not over-process or the water in the spinach will separate out. Taste and salt lightly. The food processor gives a better result with this dish than does the blender, because the blender tends to make the dish watery in the same way over-processing does.

This dish must be served right away. It cannot be reheated. So plan carefully when you serve it so that it can be prepared at the last minute and so that you do not have too many other last-minute things to do. This spinach is especially nice with the veal curry (page 79) and rice pilaf with raisins and almonds (page 81).

DELICIOUS CARROTS

For four servings:

1 pound fresh, slender carrots
2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon brown sugar
½ teaspoon each dried thyme and basil
1 tablespoon fresh finely chopped parsley
salt and pepper to taste

The best carrots are the ones you buy with tops still on, which, if not wilted, are an assurance of freshness. Fresh, slender carrots are the sweetest and most flavorful and have no woody taste. Peel the carrots, they taste better that way. Then slice them into coins, the currency of long life.

Melt the butter in a saucepan that has a good heavy lid and stir the carrots in the butter to coat them with butter. Sauté them until a few pieces brown slightly. Then add the brown sugar and herbs, and put the lid on, and lower the heat so that the carrots just braise slightly for about 10 minutes. Stir them occasionally, and if liquid is accumulating, leave the lid off for a bit and turn the heat up until it has cooked away. There should be no juice – just a glaze. They are done when pierced easily with a fork or tooth. Taste one to see, then correct the seasoning for salt and pepper.

These carrots come out best if each piece of carrot fries slightly. They will not be as good if the layer of carrots is so deep that the carrots steam in their own juice instead of braising. So choose a pot that will hold the carrots in a layer no more than one piece deep, and keep an eye on them to see that juice does not accumulate. If any does, turn up the heat and cook them with the lid off for a bit until the juice evaporates.

LITTLE ROASTED POTATOES

For four people:

16 tiny potatoes, red or white
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves crushed garlic
1 teaspoon dried basil
1 teaspoon dried oregano
salt, or garlic salt, pepper

These are really easy and really delicious.

The potatoes should be small, about the size of ping pong balls. It doesn't matter whether they are red or white, both are delicious. You often find them in the market identified as "creamers," and indeed their insides taste creamy once they are roasted.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Quarter the potatoes. If some are larger, cut them so that each piece has some skin on it. Then sprinkle them with the olive oil, herbs, and salt and pepper (use garlic salt in place of plain salt if you want an even more intense garlic taste), press the garlic over them, and roll the potatoes so that each piece is coated with oil and herbs and garlic.

Arrange them in a pan skin-side down (they stick less on their skin sides). They should not be crowded, because you want them to brown, not to steam. In a 400 degree oven they should take about 35 minutes to be fully roasted. Test one with a fork to make sure they are done. They are done when they are brown on the edges and tender when pierced. These potatoes make people so happy. If you have real potato fans, especially if some of them are young men, you may need more than four potatoes per person.

Once I tried preparing the potatoes early in the afternoon and roasting them later, but they lost too much of their juice, and did not brown nicely. Vicarious learning is a great thing. Save yourself an inferior batch.

ROASTED BELL PEPPERS

These are so delicious. We fix them all the time. My husband says that his default kitchen chore is peeling roasted peppers. He is so lucky. All you need is:

bell peppers – red, orange, yellow, or green
a brown paper bag
olive oil, and maybe some capers

First, preheat the broiler. In most ovens, this means turn on the broiler and set it at high, and leave the oven door ajar so that the heat will not go off once the inside of the oven becomes hot. When you turn on the broiler, take the broiler pan out. While the broiler is heating, prepare the peppers. Cut them into pieces that are nearly flat so that the skins char evenly and quickly. Cut the top out of the peppers (discard the stem end) and cut the bottom off so that you have a nice little piece with three or four round cheeks. (These fleshy little pieces are the best part.) Then cut the sides into as many pieces as are necessary – usually three or four – to get fairly flat pieces. Trim the inner membranes off.

Line your broiler pan with foil, and put the pepper pieces on, *skin side up*. They should not overlap *at all*, as this inhibits charring. Put the peppers in, about three inches from the flame or electric element, and leave the door ajar so that the flame does not turn off.

NOW BE VIGILANT! Figure out the timing for your own oven with careful observation the first time and then always set a timer. The first batch of peppers takes about eight minutes to char thoroughly in my broiler, but took 14 minutes in Arlene's. The skins should be completely black. But don't leave them in any longer than it takes to blacken the skins, because with more cooking the pepper flesh will dry out.

As soon as the peppers have blackened, take the broiler pan out of the oven, and with tongs move the peppers into a paper bag. Fold the bag closed. If you are doing another pan of peppers, replace the foil on the broiler. And be mindful that the next batch will not take quite as long because the oven and pan are hotter. Second time, check after seven minutes.

After 10 or 15 minutes, the peppers in the bag will be cool enough to handle. Or you can wait even longer if it is convenient, and put several batches into the same bag. When they are all cool, slip the skin off each piece. If you cooked them enough but not too much, the skins will come

off easily. Discard the skins. You can eat the peppers right away, or you can save them for several days in the refrigerator. They become a bit more slimy if you save them, deliciously so. Dress them sparingly with olive oil (although this is not essential) and if you wish, salt (also not essential). Maybe even some capers (Bob Hall's favorite). I think the red and orange ones taste the best. But all have merit. And don't hesitate to buy pimientos if they are what is available, as they are delicious, too. A generous serving is two peppers per person.

SWISS CHARD THAT PEOPLE WILL EAT

1 bunch swiss chard
2 cloves garlic, pressed
½ white onion, sliced into thin 1-inch pieces
2 tablespoons olive oil

Bring a kettle of water to a boil. While it is heating, cut the stems out of the chard and discard them. The really nutritious part of the chard is the leaves, so don't feel bad about tossing the stems. When the water boils, plunge the leaves into the boiling water and bring it back to the boil. Fish the chard out of the water when the leaves are thoroughly wilted. Drain them, then chop into inch-wide strips.

Then heat the oil and sauté the onion until it wilts and just hints at browning. Add the chard, plus salt and pepper, then crush the garlic into the chard. Mix everything well. Cook until nearly all of the liquid has gone, and the chard has absorbed the oil. This takes five to ten minutes depending on how mature the chard is. Serve right away. Tastes really great with grilled lamb or steak.

TOOTHsome PORTABELLA MUSHROOMS

These are so good. We have them often. And they are really quick and easy.

1 portabella mushroom per person
1 tablespoon olive oil per person
1 clove of garlic per person
salt and pepper

Slice the mushrooms into thick slices – at least ½-inch. Heat the oil in a nonstick pan. When the oil is hot but not smoking, press the garlic into the oil, and push around it letting it sizzle in the oil just for a moment. Then put the mushroom slices in and toss them in the oil, and add salt and pepper. The mushrooms will absorb all of the oil almost immediately. At first it will seem like there is not nearly enough oil. Resist the impulse to add more oil. Keep tossing the mushrooms from time to time, letting them brown a little on both sides. Then put a lid on them and let them cook a bit longer, until they begin to shrink and wilt a little. At this point they will no longer look dry, but juicy and meaty, and will glisten a little from the oil. Then they are done!

This whole process takes only about five minutes. They are great with grilled meats, and also as a side dish with any pasta and red sauce.

You could also paint them with oil and garlic and grill them over charcoal if you are grilling other things. Then they get a slightly smoky taste. But they are really good just fried in the pan, too.

BEETS SERVED HOT

beets
oil and butter
caraway seeds

First, cut the tops off the beets, just above the top of the root.

You can steam the beets or bake them. Some people think they are more beety baked, more intense. I think they are just as good steamed. And they are a little easier to peel steamed. But they do dry out a little more baked, so perhaps this is where the impression of intensity comes from. In any case.

The time necessary to cook the beets depends on how big they are and also how mature. Big old beets can take a long time to cook, up to an hour. Young small beets (ping pong ball size) can be done in 10 minutes. It is okay to poke them with a small sharp knife to test. If they are tender all the way to the center, they are done.

If you bake them, put them in foil and close the foil to impede the loss of moisture.

Either way, when they are done wait until they have cooled enough to handle, and remove the skins. If they are thoroughly cooked the skins will slip off easily. Then slice the beets into rounds or strips or just cut them up as you wish.

Then heat a bit of oil and butter together, about $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon total fat for each medium size beet, and put in caraway seeds, about $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon for each medium beet, rubbing the seeds hard between your hands as you drop them into the fat. Then add the beets and toss to heat and coat, add salt and pepper to taste, then serve.

MAIN DISHES AND SIDE DISHES

SPICY TUNA STEAKS

1 teaspoon paprika
½ teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon turmeric
¼ teaspoon ground anise or fennel seed
½ teaspoon ground ginger
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon cayenne
salt and freshly ground pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
4 tuna steaks, about 6-ounces each

Rub the olive oil and lemon juice into the tuna steaks. Then put the spices, mixed well, in a plate, and dredge the tuna steaks in the spice mixture, rubbing it in so they are coated well. Cover them and let them sit an hour or two. They may be broiled in the oven, grilled over charcoal, or pan broiled in a good heavy nonstick skillet. In all three cases, no additional oil is necessary for the cooking.

Before you begin cooking, turn your oven on to 150 to 200 degrees, and put your dinner plates in the oven to warm. Hot plates and hot butter are important because if the tuna steaks are nearly raw in the center, as I recommend, they will get cold fast if the plates and butter are not hot. Then prepare the finishing garnish:

4 tablespoons hot melted butter
slices of lime for juice
coarsely chopped fresh cilantro

For the nonstick skillet, simply put the tuna steaks in a very hot skillet. The spices will brown nicely. Check the steaks by making a little cut to see when they are finished. They should be quite rare – raw even – in the center for the dish to be at its best. For steaks one-inch thick, this takes about two minutes on each side. Cut them with a sharp knife to peek and check. They should be browned on the outside and raw red in the middle.

When the steaks are done, put them on those nice hot plates, sprinkle on the chopped cilantro, drizzle the hot butter over them, and then squeeze on the lime juice. This tuna is good served with the bulgar pilaf and a plain green vegetable such as sugar snap peas, snow peas, asparagus, or green beans.

BULGAR PILAF

Bulgar is wheat that has been steamed, dried, and then cracked. It comes both hulled and unhulled. The unhulled variety makes the most delicious pilaf (and also the most delicious tabouli). Buy it at various Middle Eastern groceries or the health food store.

1 cup chopped onion
1 cup finely chopped carrots
6 slices ginger root
2 cloves garlic, pressed
¼ cup olive oil

Sauté the onions, carrots, ginger, and garlic in the olive oil. Then add:

1½ cups bulgar, preferably the unhulled variety

and sauté for another two to three minutes.

Then add:

½ teaspoon each ground coriander, cumin and allspice
¼ teaspoon each ground cinnamon and cayenne pepper
shreds of zest from half of a medium orange
2 big bay leaves
6 tablespoons currants or raisins

Currants give a better result than raisins because they are less sweet, but raisins are satisfactory if you have no currants.

1½ cups chicken broth

Bring to a boil, turn the heat low, and simmer for 25 minutes. This dish can be set aside at this point and reheated later. The microwave does a superb job of reheating. When you are ready to serve, remove the bay leaves and the ginger slices, and sprinkle in:

6 tablespoons chopped toasted pistachios

The nuts can be toasted either by tossing in a hot nonstick skillet with no grease, or in foil in the oven or toaster oven.

HEAVENLY MIDDLE EASTERN RICE WITH NOODLES

A magical outcome—the toasty taste and smell from the noodles suffuses the rice and is really delicious.

1 teaspoon olive oil
slightly more than ¼ cup of fine dry egg noodles,
slightly curly, or at least curved, broken into
pieces about an inch long
2 cups Uncle Ben's Original Converted Rice
2¼ cups water
salt to taste—I would use ½ tablespoon

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Put the olive oil on the noodles and toss them lightly until they are thoroughly coated with oil. Put them on a baking pan, spreading them out as much as possible. Put them into the hot oven. Keep an eye on them—it will only take a couple of minutes for them to turn brown. You must be vigilant to keep them from burning. Once they are brown, take them out immediately, stir them to expose the unbrowned sides, and return them to the hot oven. Now watch even closer, and remove them from the oven as soon as the newly exposed sides have browned. This will happen quickly. Pay attention. Once the noodles are browned and out of the oven, they can be set aside until just before dinner. Yes you can do them ahead. Way ahead.

Not long before dinner—about half an hour—bring the water to a boil in a good heavy pot. Salt the water, add the rice and noodles, and stir. When the water returns to a boil (right away, if the pot is good and heavy), put the lid on, turn the heat down to just keep the water simmering, and set the timer for 18 minutes. When the bell rings, turn off the heat, lift the lid and lift and stir the rice and noodles thoroughly and quickly with a fork. Put the lid back on. Wait at least five minutes before serving, which will allow the rice to absorb the remaining steam and improve its texture.

This dish can be warmed up successfully in the microwave, either from tepid or refrigerated. Put it in a ceramic vessel and cover it with saran wrap for the best result. This rice and noodles dish is especially heavenly with fish, but also good with chicken or lamb.

You could also add some tiny tender frozen peas, those three minute ones, just barely cooked to the rice when the bell rings, and stir them for the resting time.

CHOP SUEY GENEROUS

The meats and flavorings:

- 2 Chinese sausages (*lap chong*)**
- 12 shrimps bought in their shells, peeled, de-veined and sliced in half lengthwise**
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and halved**
- 4 thin slices ginger, don't bother to peel**
- 3 tablespoons plain vegetable oil**
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil**

First vegetables:

- ½ medium onion or ¼ large onion, chopped into bite-size pieces**
- 2 long ribs of celery, sliced into ½-inch pieces**
- ½ red bell pepper, chopped into bite-size pieces**
- 2 Jalapeno peppers, halved and seeded**
- 2 baby bok choy, firm bottoms chopped in bite-size pieces (tops go in next list)**

Second vegetables:

- 2 cups mung bean sprouts**
- the tops from the baby bok choy**
- 2 green onions, chopped finely**
- 6 dried Shiitake mushrooms, in a bowl with boiling water just to cover, or fresh of course (no soaking needed)**
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch**
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce**

Cover the mushrooms with boiling water first. Then fry the sausages, garlic and ginger in the oils until they begin to brown. Add the first vegetables and stir fry to wilt them slightly. Meanwhile take the mushrooms out of the water, squeeze slightly, and chop them into bite-size pieces. Add the soy sauce and cornstarch to the mushroom soaking water. Then add the second set of vegetables, stir fry to wilt (these will be much faster to cook) then add the shrimp and continue stir frying until the shrimp curl and turn pink. Then add the mushroom-soy-cornstarch mixture, stir fry a bit more to combine and coat everything. Taste for salt, perhaps salt lightly or add soy. Maybe add a bit of chili paste? Serve right away. Once you have done this a few times it won't seem like nearly so much trouble.

GRILLED BABY SALMON WITH BÉARNAISE SAUCE

This is an elegant meal. At a good fish market, you can buy baby salmon. They are about the size of trout – eight ounces each, cleaned and boned but with their heads on. You can broil them in the broiler, and since they are whole, peek inside to see how they are coming. Salmon tastes best when it is just barely cooked, so aim to have them just barely lose their darker red color in the center. It takes about three and a half minutes on each side in a hot broiler. They are also delicious done over charcoal. Make the Béarnaise sauce before cooking the salmon. The salmon should be served immediately after being cooked, so choose a social program in which you can leave the table and fuss with the fish for a bit, leaving the diners on their own for a few minutes.

1 baby salmon for each person
2 tablespoons melted butter
salt

Wash the little fishes before cooking them. Rub them all over under running water. Do not be alarmed if they feel slimy on the outside, even after being washed, so long as they have a nice, fresh-fish smell. They will not feel slimy after they are cooked. Leave the heads on. Do not open them up to broil them, but leave them folded, with one skin side up and one down.

Turn the broiler on high. Line the broiler pan with foil. Salt the inside of each little fish lightly, paint the skin of each fish with a bit of melted butter, and just lay them neatly on the broiler pan. When you are ready to serve them, put them in the hot broiler, turning them after three and a half minutes. Check again after another three minutes. Peek inside the fish closest to the center, to assure that they are just barely cooked. Return them for another minute if they are still red inside.

When they are done, serve them with *Béarnaise Sauce*, and perhaps *Most Delicious Carrots* and *Wild Rice* (see the *Roast Chicken* dinner in *Menu Ideas* for instructions on cooking wild rice). Don't forget to eat the cheeks. The cheeks are the best part. I have a fantasy in which I am a Manchu princess and am served an entire a plate of steamed fish cheeks with ginger and scallions. This follows a course of ducks' tongues with chili, garlic, and tender vegetables. You thought they should throw the tongues away?

BÉARNAISE SAUCE

Enough for six to eight servings of fish. Béarnaise is also delicious on steak. Actually, you could probably put it on shredded brown paper bags and it would be delicious.

¼ cup dry white wine
¼ cup white wine vinegar
2 tablespoons minced green onions
1 tablespoon dried tarragon
2 tablespoons minced shallots, *not optional*
salt, pepper
3 egg yolks
1½ sticks melted butter (salted is fine)

Boil the wine, vinegar, and seasoning down to about two tablespoons of liquid. Heat the butter to bubbling in a small pan that has a pouring spout on one side. Heat on the stove, not in the microwave.

Put the egg yolks in the blender and blend for a minute on the lowest speed. With the blender still running, pour the warm wine/vinegar mixture in a thin stream through the hole in the top of the blender lid. Use a tiny spatula to push the herbs out of the pan into the blender. Then, with the blender still running, pour the butter in a very thin stream through the hole in the lid. As you add more and more butter, the mixture will become thick, magically emulsified.

This method works. My Béarnaise failures occurred only when I heated the butter in the microwave or added the butter before the liquid, that is, when I didn't follow my own instructions. (Yes, I consult my own recipes when I cook.) Even with the many successes I have known through this method, I still pay homage to the kitchen gods when my Béarnaise emulsifies perfectly, because the result is so other-worldly in texture and flavor.

SEAFOOD ETOUFÉE

Etoufée is less trouble than it might at first seem. It involves making a shrimp shell broth, a roux seasoned with vegetables and spices, mixing the broth with the roux and cooking it to develop the flavor. This you can set aside until suppertime. Nearing suppertime, you need to make some rice. Then when it is time to eat, reheat the sauce, cook the seafood in melted butter, add the heated sauce, and serve. This may seem like a lot of work, but remember, you have to shell the shrimps anyway, so the additional effort to boil the shells is nothing much. And once you understand the imperative of not attempting to do anything else during the five minutes for browning of the roux, it is not so much trouble, either. If you use proper equipment and have everything ready and follow instructions, there is no reason for it not to come out wonderful the first time.

For eight people:

The seafood:

1 pound scallops
1 pound shrimp in shells
1 pound delicate white fish fillets, like sole, or
snapper, or sea bass

Shell the shrimps and butterfly and de-vein them. Put the shrimp shells in four cups of water with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and boil them gently for 30 minutes. Wash and drain the shrimps and put them back in the refrigerator, along with the scallops and fillets. Strain the shell broth and discard the shells.

On to the roux. Assemble and have ready:

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup vegetable oil (not olive or peanut)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon each: cayenne, black, and white pepper
1 teaspoon dried basil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried thyme
(put aside $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of the spice mixture to put
in the rice)
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup onion
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup celery
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup green bell pepper
(put aside $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the mixed vegetables to put
in the rice)

Proper equipment is important. Use a heavy skillet, 10- to 12-inches across. Cast iron, either plain or covered with enamel, is ideal. Heat the oil to very hot (so a tiny pinch of flour dropped into it sizzles immediately), then put in the flour all at once and begin mixing with the whisk. Continue to stir with the whisk, heat still on high, continuously. The mixture will turn pale brown then darker brown. Peanut butter is about the right shade. It will take four to five minutes. (If it happens much faster than this, the heat is too high.) During this time do not answer the phone or try to smile at the audience. You could be burned.

When the right color is reached, turn the heat off, put the spices in all at once, and mix. Then turn the heat back on low and add the vegetables all at once and mix (now with a spatula) and continue cooking and stirring until the vegetables are well wilted.

Add a little of the shrimp shell broth gradually. After the mixture has become somewhat gooey and is no longer just a paste, you can move the roux from the skillet and put it into the saucepan with the shrimp broth. Stir with the whisk until the paste is all dissolved. If the mixture is too thick, add a bit of chicken broth or water. Don't thin it too much, however, because when the seafood cooks it will give off some liquid and both the seafood juices and the butter in which the seafood cooks will further dilute the sauce.

At least 30 minutes before supper, make rice:

3 cups Uncle Ben's Original Converted Rice
3 and ½ cups water, chicken broth, or shrimp
broth
spices from above
vegetables from above

Bring the liquid and spices and vegetables to a boil. Put in the rice, return to a boil, put on a lid, turn the heat to lowest setting, and cook for 18 minutes without lifting the lid. When the bell rings, turn off the heat, lift the lid and fork the rice, and then put the lid back on and let the rice rest until supper. The rice will stay hot for a good half an hour. Rice reheats well in the microwave.

Grand finale:

1 stick (¼ pound) butter
shrimps, scallops and fillet, cut into bite-size pieces
sauce made from the roux, heated to a simmer
½ cup green onions, chopped finely

Melt the butter in a big skillet (14-inches is not too big), and put in the seafood and the green onions. Mix and turn gently until the seafood is barely cooked. Add the simmering sauce. Taste to see if it is fine. (It will be. Maybe a little salt?) Pass Tabasco sauce for those who want it hotter. This is best served with a mild green vegetable like asparagus, green beans, or sugar snap peas.

GRAVLAX

This is not for tonight's dinner. The fish must be cured for many days. Weeks even.

For the fish:

About 3 pounds salmon. This can either be a single piece from the center of the fish (most elegant), all bones removed, or 2 fillets (equally delicious), boned, but with skin on.

3 tablespoons salt

1½ tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon juniper berries

2 tablespoons brandy

2 big bunches dill

white and black peppercorns, slightly crushed

Mustard sauce:

2 tablespoons spicy mustard, like Dijon or Gulden's

¾ cup olive or vegetable oil

finely chopped fresh dill

dash cider vinegar

honey

salt and pepper

You can serve this either as an elegant first course, or for an informal supper, as the main course. It is elegant and delicious, and low in calories.

Mix the salt and sugar together. Rub the mixture thoroughly into the flesh sides of the fish. Crush the juniper berries and rub them and the pepper into the flesh side of the fish. You'll need a shallow (3-inch or so) heavy dish, such as a glass baking pan or enamel casserole, slightly larger than the fish piece. Spread the dish with about ¼ of the dill. Arrange the fish, skin side down on the dill, then put half of the dill on top the flesh side of the first fillet (or the center if you are using a single piece), and put the other fillet on top, flesh side down. The rest of the dill goes on top of the skin of the remaining fillet. Cover the fish and dill in saran wrap or foil. Put a weight, such as a brick (wrapped in foil if it is dusty) or a heavy chain (in a plastic bag) on top the fish. Turn the fish bundle over every couple of days.

The fish can be cut and served after four days, and it will be pretty good. But it is better after a week, still better after two, and just fine, really

good, after four weeks. (I have performed this experiment and lived to tell of it.) If you cure the fish for more than one week, empty the accumulated juices from the pan once a week or so, clean the pan, rinse the skin side of the fillets, and replace the wilted dill with fresh dill. Otherwise funny smells will accumulate in your refrigerator. Civilized life admits few refrigerator atrocities.

When you serve the fish, scrape away all of the dill, and slice the fish thinly on the extreme diagonal with a sharp knife.

For the sauce, mix the mustards together and whisk the oil into them. This is more foolproof than mayonnaise because the mustard is so acid. It will emulsify easily and be stable. Add honey, salt and pepper, and vinegar to taste. If you don't have honey, go and get some, because sugar, even brown sugar, is the wrong taste. Add fresh chopped dill – not the dill that has been sitting on the fish for a week. This sauce will keep for a week or two.

Serve the gravlax with mustard sauce, capers, thinly sliced mild red onions, and thinly sliced whole grain pumpernickel bread. You will be so well regarded.

GRILLED SALMON WITH THAT COLD GREEN HOT SAUCE

This is a great dinner when you want something elegant but not too time-consuming.

4 salmon steaks
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon ground cumin, toasted cumin if you
have it (see *Mulligatawny Soup*)

For the sauce:

2 cups plain yogurt
½ cup mint leaves
½ cup cilantro leaves
½ cup basil leaves
2 green chilis (such as Serrano), one seeded and
another, with seeds, in reserve
1 lime
1 clove of garlic
salt and pepper to taste

First, line a strainer with two or three layers of cheesecloth, put the yogurt in it, and set it over a bowl to drain. It will take the two cups of yogurt at least an hour to drain enough moisture to reduce to one cup. It will be nice and thick. (You could use a cup of sour cream instead of strained yogurt. It is not quite the same taste, but it is delicious.) Wash the leaves and dry them by rolling them in paper towels and squeezing gently. Put half of the strained yogurt in the blender with all of the leaves, and the green chili, and blend until you have a smooth green paste. Add the purée to the rest of the strained yogurt. (The point of not putting in all the yogurt is that the sauce should be rather thick, and the ride through the blender seems to liquefy it somewhat.) Season the sauce to taste with garlic, lime and salt. If you want it hotter, chop another chili, and add it, with its seeds, by small amounts until the hotness suits you. Or add a dash of cayenne pepper.

This sauce will keep well in the refrigerator for several weeks. Four weeks is the longest I have kept it and it was fine. If you skip the step of washing the leaves you will regret it because the sauce will likely have grit in it. If you skip drying the leaves you will regret it because the sauce will be watery instead of thick. It should stand up in a spoon, like yogurt. Learn from the experience of the experienced.

Now you are almost done. Turn on your broiler, or if you have time or a

full-service husband (or boyfriend, but be mindful the level of commitment implied by asking him to manage the grill for you), get the charcoal grill going. Season the salmon steaks with salt, pepper, and ground cumin seeds and a bit of melted butter or oil. Grill them on both sides, to your taste. Cook them on a hot fire so that they get little crisp edges on the skin without becoming too done in the center. Either pass the sauce or put a big dollop on each steak as you serve it.

This dish is good served with *Curried Cauliflower*, or the *Spinach with Fish Sauce and Chilis*, and either short-grain brown rice or wild rice.

NUEVO MUNDO PAELLA

This is a good dish to make when you are having a big group. The paella itself is sufficiently interesting and voluminous that all you need to serve in addition is a salad and a dessert. It is also so delicious that your regulars will yearn for it. This recipe is enough for eight or nine people.

9 chicken thighs, all skinned
18 tiny (cocktail size) smoked breakfast sausages
½ pound small shrimp in the shell
2 tablespoons olive oil
2½ cups chicken broth plus 1 cup white wine
1 red pepper, chopped into 1-inch sticks
1 green pepper, chopped into 1-inch sticks
2 medium onions, chopped into 1-inch sticks
1 cup tiny carrot sticks (yes, 1-inch is good)
1 Serrano or Jalapeño chili, halved and seeded
¾ cup small cherry tomatoes
3 bay leaves
2 tablespoons chives, finely chopped
big pinch saffron, salt, pepper
3 cups Uncle Ben's Original Converted Rice
1 (10-ounce) package tiny luxury frozen peas

Brown the chicken in olive oil in a good heavy skillet, 12- to 14-inches across and three to four inches deep, one that has a lid that fits. The chicken should be pretty close to fully cooked before you proceed further. Remove the chicken, and cook the sausages to release some of their grease.

Shell the shrimps and de-vein them, and boil their shells in the chicken broth and wine mixture. (Never throw out shrimp shells without using them for something.) Strain the stock and discard the shells. Reserve the de-veined shrimp for later.

Remove the sausages from the skillet, and drain out all but a tiny amount of the grease, then sauté the peppers, onions, and carrots in the remaining grease until they are soft. (Note the carrots: They are not traditional in paella, but they add color, they do not alter the flavor, and they are so good for us we should eat them every day. So put them in.)

When the vegetables are soft, return the chicken and the sausages to the pan, add the chili, tomatoes, bay leaves, chives, saffron, and salt and pepper, and the chicken/wine/shrimp shell broth, and bring all to a rolling boil. Add the rice and mix it in. Turn down the heat, put on the lid, and set the timer for 12 minutes. (Now is a good time to serve salad,

as you have 25 minutes or so before the paella will be ready.)

At the 12-minute bell, put in the shrimps and peas (broken up, not in a brick), pushing them down into the rice. The idea here is not to overcook the shrimp. (In most paellas, the shrimp are rubbery and not tasty because they are overcooked.) Now put the lid back on and set the timer for another eight minutes. When the bell rings, turn off the heat, fork up the paella, put the lid back on, and wait another five minutes. Then serve. Pass Tabasco for those who want it more spicy.

LAMB CURRY

1 tablespoon cumin seeds
4 sticks cinnamon
2 large onions, finely chopped
6 cloves garlic, peeled and minced or pressed
8 cloves
**2 tablespoons mixed yellow curry powder from an
Indian market**
6 slices fresh ginger
**3 tablespoons plain vegetable oil (not olive or
peanut)**
**1½ pounds lamb stewing meat, reasonably lean,
cut into pieces**
1 to 2 pounds lamb riblets
**fresh chilis, seeded or uncut if you don't want this
too hot (can be Serrano, Jalapeño, or other)**
1 cup desiccated coconut
2 cups boiling water
fish sauce, soy sauce, salt, lime juice, cilantro

Fry the onions, garlic, and spices in oil until the mixture becomes pasty and bubbles a little. Add a small amount of water, mix it in well, and cook the mixture until the water is cooked away and the oil separates out. Do this twice more, until the individual pieces of onion are indistinguishable. Then add the lamb, and tumble it in the spices and sauté gently for about 15 minutes. Keep turning. Add one or two cups of water and simmer gently for about two hours. The water should mostly cook away. Keep an eye on the pot so that it is always moist enough to be steamy and the meat does not get dry.

Make coconut milk by putting the boiling water on the desiccated coconut in the blender container, blend several minutes, then strain out the coconut bits (cheesecloth in a strainer is the best method, because you can wring the cheesecloth to extract the last of coconut essence – use rubber gloves if it is too hot for your hands) and put the coconut milk in with the lamb. Simmer on very low heat for another 20 minutes or so. If the sauce is not thick enough, add a little:

cornstarch

mixed in a small amount of cold water to thicken. Add no more than a tablespoon at a time, then cook until it thickens before adding more, so you don't get it too thick. Cook another 15 minutes, again very gently once the coconut milk has been added, so you don't curdle the coconut

milk. Then taste the curry and season it with fish sauce and soy sauce (for saltiness with a richness added), more cayenne pepper or fresh, sliced chilis if you want the curry hotter, and, just before serving, sprinkle it with lime juice and chopped cilantro (or pass lime slices and a dish of chopped cilantro). This is so delicious.

PIRATE CURRY

In the Straits of Malacca between Sumatra and Malaysia and Singapore, there are still many pirates. Food in this region reflects the influence of the Indonesians, Malays, Chinese, and Indians. This is the sort of curry eaten there.

2 tablespoons yellow curry powder mix (from the Indian market)
1 teaspoon whole cloves
1 teaspoon whole fennel seed, pounded or ground
1 teaspoon toasted whole cumin seed, pounded
6 chicken legs and 6 or 8 chicken thighs, skin removed
4 tablespoons plain vegetable oil
2 teaspoons sesame oil
1 large onion, chopped finely
8 cloves of garlic, peeled and sliced finely
6 slices of fresh ginger root (about an inch)
1 cinnamon stick
3 bay leaves
1 teaspoon tamarind
2 cups coconut milk made from
2½ cups boiling water
1 cup desiccated coconut
4 sprigs of basil, 5 to 6 leaves each
cornstarch, fish sauce, soy sauce, fresh Serrano or Jalapeño chilis, fresh cilantro

Skin the legs and thighs, mix up the first group of spices and rub it into the chicken meat an hour or so before starting to cook. Keep the cat away.

Sauté the onion, garlic, and ginger in the oils until the onion wilts. Don't let the garlic burn. Then add the chicken and sauté gently, tumbling the meat regularly, until it browns slightly, about 15 minutes.

Make the coconut milk by putting the desiccated coconut and boiling water into the blender. Blend on a medium speed for a couple of minutes, let the mixture rest for five minutes, then strain it through cheesecloth (cheesecloth is good because you can wring it to get the last of the coconut essence out – put on rubber gloves if it is too hot to handle with bare hands). Then add the cinnamon stick, bay leaf, tamarind, and coconut milk to the chicken, and bring the mixture to a very low simmer, and simmer about an hour – until the chicken is tender. (Coconut milk made from desiccated coconut is far better than that which comes from a

tin. Desiccated coconut keeps for a long time, so it is easy to keep it in inventory to accommodate sudden curry demands.)

When the chicken is tender, correct the sauce for texture and flavor. It will likely need a bit of cornstarch. Mix a tablespoon of cornstarch in cold water, and add this paste a teaspoon or two at a time, cooking after each addition so that you don't get the sauce too thick. Then cook another five to ten minutes to get rid of the raw cornstarch taste. Then add the sprigs of basil, soy sauce, and fish sauce for salt and richness, a bit of lime if more sourness is desired, and a sliced fresh chili (with seeds if much more hotness is desired, without seeds for only a little more hotness) and cook another five minutes. The basil sprigs, the ginger, and the bay leaves are not intended to be eaten.

Serve this curry with either Chinese-style egg noodles (buy them fresh at the Chinese market) or plain basmati rice, and a sourish green vegetable like spinach, mustard greens, bok choy, tat soy, or snow peas. Garnish with chopped cilantro.

This curry is much better when made with all dark meat. The dark meat cooks up much more tender than white meat, which tends to get dry and stringy even when cooked in a sauce like this.

Tamarind comes in many forms. Sometimes it is sold in a dried block, in which case you need to tear off a piece, soak it in boiling water and push it through a sieve to get the seeds out of it. Sometimes it is sold in dried slices (the best) and the slices can be cooked in the sauce and then discarded like bay leaves (use four slices for this recipe). And sometimes it is sold as a paste in a little jar, which is sometimes less flavorful but is convenient. See the recipe for Mulligatawny soup for a discussion of toasting cumin seeds. All of the ingredients can be found at an Indian market except the fish sauce and soy sauce, which is found at Asian markets.

Preparation time (not including shopping): 30 minutes to begin, and 10 minutes to finish. Cooking time: about 45 minutes in addition to preparation time.

VEAL CURRY

This is a good dinner party dish because it is not terribly hot, but it is interesting and delicious, and can be prepared ahead and reheated at the last minute. It is a curry in which the fragrant and sweet spices dominate.

2 pounds well-trimmed veal stewing meat in even-sized chunks
2 onions, finely chopped
3 to 4 tablespoons clarified butter
1½ tablespoons ground coriander
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1½ teaspoons freshly grated nutmeg
½ teaspoon ground cardamom, or 10 whole cardamom, with hulls removed, and pounded
1 teaspoon whole cloves
½ teaspoon turmeric
2 cinnamon sticks
3 (¼-inch) slices whole fresh ginger
2 bay leaves
¼ to ¾ teaspoon cayenne pepper, if you wish. Can be omitted entirely.
one 14-ounce tin of chicken broth
beurre manié (about 2 tablespoons of soft butter thoroughly mixed with an equal amount of flour)
¼ to ½ cup cream
soy sauce

Fry the onions in the clarified butter (clarified butter burns at a higher temperature than plain butter, and is better for this type of sautéing) until they are well wilted and just begin to brown. Then add the spices and mix and cook until they bubble. Add a tablespoon or two of water, and cook until the water cooks away and the oil separates from the spices. Twice more add water and cook it away. This develops the flavor of the spices.

Add the veal and tumble it in the spices and butter until the pinkness is gone and it begins to brown slightly. This takes 10 to 15 minutes. (This step will keep the veal from giving off little flecks of protein that would have to be skimmed off to make the dish look nice – the sort of stuff that comes up when you bring raw veal to a simmer without first sautéing it.)

Then add the chicken broth, bring to a very gentle simmer, and simmer until the veal is tender – about an hour. Once the veal is tender, *stop cooking*. From here on, you just want to get the texture of the sauce right

(next paragraph) and then let the dish sit until just before serving time, when you may reheat it. The veal will come apart in strings if you cook it too much.

If the sauce does not seem thick enough when the veal is tender, add *beurre manié* in spoonfuls, cooking a bit after each addition to thicken, until the right thickness is achieved. Taste the sauce, and perhaps add soy sauce for saltiness, or cayenne (or a fresh, chopped, perhaps seeded chili) for hotness. The cream should be added just before serving to avoid it curdling.

Serve with a rice pilaf with almonds and currants (next recipe after *Vindaloo Dip*). This is sublime with spinach and pears, too (also in this book – see *Vegetables*).

RICH RICE PILAF TO GO WITH VEAL CURRY

1½ cups Uncle Ben's Original Converted Rice
¼ cup sliced almonds with skin on
¼ cup currants
2 tablespoons oil
2 cups chicken broth

In a good heavy pan such as enameled iron or heavy stainless steel, sauté the rice and almonds in the oil until they brown a bit – just a little. Add the chicken broth and currants and bring the mixture to a boil. Then turn the heat way down, cover the pan, and simmer without lifting the lid for 18 minutes. When the bell rings, turn off the heat, fork the rice to mix it, and wait five to ten minutes. Then lift the lid, fork the rice again, and put the lid back on until serving time. This rice can be reheated slightly on the stove, or thoroughly and successfully in the microwave.

And if you are having the sort of dinner party where the guests need to be warmed up with drinks and things to nibble on, here's a suggestion for a dip:

VINDALOO DIP

With this unexpected taste, you can dazzle people at parties. Novelty in food is highly valued in rich societies. Read Veblen to understand why.

1 cup plain lowfat yogurt
1 to 2 teaspoons vindaloo paste (my favorite brand is Patak's)

Mix the vindaloo paste into the yogurt an hour or two before serving to allow the vindaloo spices to dissolve thoroughly in the yogurt. Don't use a yogurt with less fat than *reduced fat* (made with two percent butterfat milk). Vindaloo paste can be purchased at the Indian grocery, and again, the best brand is Patak's. This dip competes successfully with onion soup and sour cream, guacamole, and the like, but has far less fat. It is delicious with all the usual chips and crackers, and also with raw vegetable sticks.

NOT MY MOTHER'S STUFFED CABBAGE

These stuffed cabbages are vaguely Middle Eastern, but spicy enough to be Indian, possibly Afghani or even Armenian. But don't fret categories. They are delicious, really delicious. To fix these efficiently, first bring a big pot of water to a boil and boil the cabbage. While the cabbage is draining and cooling, cook up the meat stuffing. Then pull the leaves to be stuffed off the cabbage, shred the rest, and cook it with the other vegetables. Assemble and bake. Make the sauce just before serving. For one medium-sized white cabbage, and the following filling, you can feed six people.

For the lamb filling:

1 pound lean ground lamb
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 large onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, crushed
2 tablespoons grated ginger
3 green chilis (Serrano or Jalapeño), seeds removed, and chopped
½ teaspoon turmeric
2 teaspoons *garam masala* (an Indian spice mixture. You can buy it ready to use or consult an Indian cookbook and make your own.)
juice of a lime
salt to taste
2 tablespoons chopped coriander leaves

Cabbage plus other vegetables:

1 medium (about 2 pounds) green cabbage
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 medium onions, sliced
5 cloves garlic, crushed
2 tablespoons grated ginger
1 cup canned crushed tomatoes (or some leftover tomato sauce)
salt to taste
1 lemon, sliced thinly

The sauce:

2 cups yogurt, from whole milk or lowfat milk
2 cloves garlic

**salt to taste (most people will like about ½
teaspoon)**

Bring a big pot of water to a boil. Cut the core out of the cabbage from the bottom. Drop the cabbage into the boiling water. It should be covered by at least one inch. Let it cook for five minutes, then take it out and let it drain, cored side down, for 15 minutes or so, until it is cool enough to handle. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Brown the lamb with the onions, garlic, ginger, and chilis in the oil until the pinkness is gone. Add the spices and continue to fry until it begins to brown. Set aside. (Note that *garam masala*, like *curry*, is not one of the essential building blocks of matter, but a mixture of several different spices, and in the case of *garam masala*, toasted lightly and ground. You can make your own, or you can buy some already prepared.)

Pull 16 or so leaves off the cooled cabbage, and shred the rest of the cabbage. Sauté the cabbage, onions, ginger, and garlic in oil until everything is soft. Add the tomatoes, and if this mixture is thick, add ½ cup or so of water.

Lay the cabbage leaves out and divide the meat among them and roll them up. Slice the lemon thinly. Line a casserole that will just hold all of the cabbage rolls with the thin slices of lemon. Spread half of the vegetable mixture over the lemon slices. Snuggle the cabbage rolls over them. Spread the other half of the vegetables over the cabbage rolls. Cover the casserole with aluminum foil and bake it for about 45 minutes, until the cabbage is thoroughly soft.

It is important that the yogurt be the sort to which no congealants (like carageenan, agar-agar, or gelatin) have been added. All of the national brands, like Dannon, Colombo, Lucerne, even Continental, have been ruined by adulterants added to give them the texture of packaged puddings. Americans really have made yogurt into a junk food, mostly. In the Bay Area Pavel's Russian Yogurt is unadulterated and superb.

Once you have the right yogurt, you're home free. Near time to serve, beat the yogurt slightly with a whisk (it will pour easily after you have done this), and add the garlic and salt to taste. Pass the sauce at the table so that those who want more later can have it. Rim soup plates are good for serving the cabbage rolls, as they tend to get away from you on a flat plate. Make up only as much yogurt sauce as you are going to use, as it is better fresh. If you have leftover cabbage rolls (they heat up extremely well in the oven or the microwave), make a bit more sauce later for the next round. If the yogurt has separated a bit, don't worry, just mix it up

again. A whisk works really well. It will be delicious.

ROAST CHICKEN WITH GRAVY AND WILD RICE

one 3- to 4-pound chicken
a little butter
a small onion
a rib of celery
a lemon
herbs, such as rosemary, thyme, oregano

Turn the oven on to 425 degrees. Remove the giblets from the cavity. (Giblets may either be roasted with the chicken or given to the cat. But don't give the neck to the cat. Instead put it in the bottom of the pan with the chicken to roast and contribute to the juices.) Put the chicken in a pan, rub a little butter on its breast and legs, and sprinkle a bit of salt and some herbs, such as rosemary or thyme or oregano, over the chicken and inside the cavity. Put a peeled onion, cut up if necessary, and some celery with leaves if you have it, in the cavity. Cut up the lemon, and put it inside the chicken cavity. Put the chicken in the oven. After 15 minutes, turn the heat down to 350 degrees, and insert a meat thermometer. If you don't have a meat thermometer, roast for 20 minutes per pound and then test the chicken by sticking a fork into the thigh. The chicken is done when the juices from the thigh run clear, not pink. Then put a meat thermometer on your grocery list. They are so handy.

When the chicken has either reached 170 degrees or the juices from the thigh are clear, turn off the oven, pour the juices out of the pan and into a saucepan, and put the chicken, covered with foil or a lid, back into the turned-off oven. The chicken will taste better if it sits for 15 minutes or so in a mildly hot oven to rest. This gives you time to make gravy and finish the other food to go with the chicken. Recipe for gravy is on the next page.

You should serve peas with roast chicken because they taste so good rolled around in the chicken juices. The tiny, tender frozen ones whose package instructs you to cook them for three minutes are just fine. You don't need to wait until fresh peas are in season. If the package instructs you to cook them for more than three minutes, they are the wrong peas. Keep searching.

GRAVY FOR ROAST CHICKEN

2 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons flour
¼ cup Madeira or Marsala wine
juices from the chicken
1 to 2 tablespoons sour cream
additional chicken broth (tinned is okay)

Melt the butter in a small skillet, add the flour, mix well (one of those flattish whisks is very handy) and let the mixture cook and bubble without burning for two or three minutes. Add the juices and bits of stuff from the chicken roasting pan. Stir some more with the whisk until thoroughly mixed, then add the Marsala or Madeira, and again stir until thoroughly mixed. If the gravy is too thick, add some tinned chicken broth. Taste for salt. To make the gravy really good, to add just a little zing and velvety smoothness, add a dab of sour cream. Taste again. Perhaps add more.

What vegetable to serve with this heavenly combination? Well, peas are great, of course, and you could make your life easy and get the tiny tender frozen ones that cook in three minutes and are entirely delicious. Or for more effort, you could stir-fry some sugar snap peas in butter and oil until they turned bright green and these would be delicious, too, although not as easy to roll in the gravy as plain peas. *The Delicious Carrots* in the vegetable section would be really good, too. Pease and carrots? Peas and a baked sweet potato? Oh yes. I lean towards a sweet vegetable, like carrots or peas or a sweet potato, rather than a sour one like spinach or asparagus, or a strongly flavored one like broccoli or chard.

WILD RICE

2 cups chicken broth or water
1 cup wild rice
1 medium onion, chopped finely
2 tablespoons butter or olive oil, or a combination
½ teaspoon thyme
2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Don't follow the directions on the package. They always advise too much liquid.

Sauté the minced onion in the oil and butter. Add the parsley and thyme to the onions. Add the two cups chicken broth and bring it to a boil. Add the wild rice. As soon as the liquid returns to a boil, turn the fire low and put the lid on. Set the timer for 50 minutes. When the bell rings, fork the rice and put the lid back on. Take out a few grains, let them cool, and bite them.

The rice is done only if the liquid has all been absorbed by the rice, and the grains are not too crunchy. Different brands of wild rice cook in different amounts of time, so you must bite the rice and decide whether it should be cooked longer. If the rice is too crunchy and there is still liquid, turn up the heat a little and cook it for another ten minutes, and taste again. If the rice is too crunchy but the liquid is gone, add a bit more chicken broth or water before you proceed with the additional cooking. If the rice is the right texture, but the liquid has not all cooked away, leave the lid off and the heat on to allow the liquid to cook away. If the liquid is all absorbed and the texture right, turn the fire off and put the lid back on until you are ready to serve.

Chopped mushrooms are really good in this, too. Add them when you add the onions. You could use Portabellas, Criminis, Shiitakes (either fresh, or dried and soaked), or the ordinary white ones. You could even get some dried Cepas or Porcini mushrooms add them. All are delicious.

THE PASHA'S CHICKEN

This is a delicious way to prepare chicken. The taste is subtle and delicate despite the many flavorings and the abundant quantity of them. This paste is enough for chicken for four people. Most of the work – making the paste and rubbing it into the chicken, is done a day ahead.

You will need:

chicken pieces to feed 4 people (4 large breasts, 4 small legs and thighs, 4 small legs and breasts, 4 half game hens, or 1 large chicken)

Make a paste of the following:

2 cloves pressed garlic
½ cup finely chopped cilantro
zest from 2 lemons, minced
2 tablespoons lemon juice
¼ cup mild paprika
3 tablespoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 tablespoons tahini (sesame paste)
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon saffron (yes, it makes a difference)
¼ cup honey
½ cup olive oil

Rub the paste into the chicken pieces, reaching under the skin with your fingers and rubbing some under it, and let the chicken marinate in the refrigerator for 24 hours.

Heat the oven to 400 degrees. Put chicken in a roasting pan, and insert the meat thermometer in the largest piece of chicken. Scrape the last of the marinade out of the marinating bowl and spoon it onto the chicken. Roast the chicken pieces for 15 minutes, then turn the heat down to 350, and roast until the internal temperature reaches 180 degrees. Then cover the pan with foil, turn off the oven, and let the chicken rest for 15 minutes before it is served. Serve it with the *Pasha's Couscous* (next page), of course.

THE PASHA'S COUSCOUS

For four servings:

- ¼ cup olive oil**
- 1 yellow onion, diced**
- 1 red bell pepper, diced**
- 4 delicate carrots, diced**
- ½ cup frozen tiny tender (3 minute) peas**
- 1½ cups chicken broth**
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne**
- 1 tablespoon mild paprika**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric**
- ¼ cup pistachios**
- ½ cup currants**
- 1½ cups couscous**
- big handful cilantro leaves**

Tear the cilantro leaves gently from the stems, keeping the leaves whole. Peel and dice the carrots (all diced vegetables should be about the same size as the peas) and nuke them in the microwave for a minute or so to soften them a bit. Sauté the onion in the olive oil until it is soft. Add the red pepper and sauté some more, just to coat the pepper pieces in oil. Add the broth, peas, carrots, spices and currants, and bring all to a boil.

When the pot boils, mix in the couscous, put the lid on the pot, turn off the heat, and wait five minutes. When the bell rings, fluff the couscous with a fork, mix in the cilantro leaves, put the lid back on, turn off the heat, and serve soon.

If you have some *ras el hanout* hanging around your kitchen, put a teaspoon of it into the couscous.

LAMB SHANKS WITH ONIONS AND GREEN BEANS

2 lamb shanks
½ pound green beans
4 cloves garlic
2 large onions
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons oregano
1 teaspoon rosemary
¼ teaspoon cumin
½ cup of red wine
1 can of white beans cannellini, white kidney
beans, or little white beans, optional, but highly
recommended
salt and pepper

You will need a heavy casserole with a lid.

This is another one of those meals that makes people so happy. It is really nice with either cannellini beans or with orzo. And though it takes a long time to cook, it is not much trouble, and everything but the salad cooks in one pot if you add the cannellini beans instead of cooking orzo. Start it early in the day to make sure that the lamb is thoroughly cooked. It can be done early and warmed up without loss.

Peel the garlic and slice it into thin slices. Make slits in the lamb shanks with a sharp paring knife, and insert the slices of garlic into the meat. Rub the shanks with olive oil, oregano, rosemary, cumin, and salt and pepper. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.

Brown the lamb all over in oil in the casserole. When the shanks are nicely browned, add the onions, sliced into half rings (don't chop the onions – they will be most delicious and easiest to eat if they are in strings rather than tiny bits), and let them brown. Then add ½ cup water to the pot, put the lid on and put the casserole in the oven (you can leave it on top of the stove if your pot is heavy and does not get hot spots). Bake or cook the shanks for two hours. Check to see how things are coming. Add water if they have gotten dry, and continue cooking until the meat falls from the bone.

When the meat is nearly done, snip the ends off the green beans, and add them and the red wine to the pot. Cook another 15 minutes, then add the cannellini beans, and cook yet another 15 minutes.

The green beans should now be well cooked and wilted. If there is congealed treasure in the bottom of the pot, add some more water or red wine to deglaze it, and stir and scrape until the congealed bits become part of the sauce. When all is liquid, but thick, take the shanks out and put them on warm plates, roll the vegetables well in the sauce, and then put the vegetables, with all dripping poured over them, on the plates.

This dish is nice served with orzo – little pasta in the shape of rice, as an alternative to the white beans. Add a big green salad to start (with Romaine lettuce, red bell peppers, chunks of cucumber, and maybe some good Kalamata olives and marinated artichoke hearts or bottoms), and some friendly red wine (Zinfandel, not too old, is the friendliest) and you will have a nice meal.

ENCHILADAS DEL CIELO

This recipe is the result of my efforts to recreate the enchiladas at La Plaza, the restaurant in the improved garage behind a house on Fulton Street in Ojai Valley. The restaurant closed in 1986. After failing to purchase the recipe, I resorted to devoting a couple of hours every Saturday afternoon to figuring out the texture and seasonings for the sauce. I think it is pretty good. La Plaza was reincarnated as a taco stand, La Plazita, on Ojai Avenue, serving delicious carnitas, but the enchiladas were much more greasy than I remember them in the restaurant, or than these are. Then in 1996, La Plazita was replaced by some fresh-mex outfit! So this recipe is all we have left. I am a social hero.

Assembly involves making the sauce, then heating tortillas, rolling them up with a filling such as shredded cheese, shrimps, or cooked shredded chicken meat (boiled gives a better texture than baked or grilled), and then dousing them with sauce and baking them for a few minutes – just to get them good and hot, so the cheese melts, etc. Ideally, bake the enchiladas on the plates on which they will be served so they do not have to be transferred. And remember, the chopped green onions scattered on at the end are essential. Frijoles negros, (black beans, the canned Goya ones are excellent) with a dollop of sour cream and more green onions, plus a couple of cherry tomatoes, are a nice accompaniment. Or pintos, especially if you cooked them yourself. Canned pintos are not as good as canned frijoles negros.

The sauce recipe makes enough for about 10 enchiladas. For each enchilada you will need about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an ounce of grated cheese (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated, and I recommend Monterey Jack or mild Cheddar), or about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup thawed, frozen shrimp, or equivalent amounts of cooked chicken meat. My favorite is the cheese, with the shrimp taking second. I usually make one of each for each person, and I don't attempt to serve more than four people at one time due to the many last minute maneuvers involved.

Sauce:

¼ cup vegetable oil (not olive or peanut; corn or ordinary is okay)
¼ cup plus a tablespoon, more or less, flour
¼ large onion, or one small onion, minced fine
3 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
1 tablespoon California chili powder
1 teaspoon New Mexico chili powder, or other chili powders, including cayenne, according to inspiration
1 teaspoon each, cumin and oregano
1 Serrano or Jalapeño chili, halved (and seeded, optional)
1 to 2 tins of chicken broth (you can use one, but not both, of beef)
1 tablespoon pickled Jalapeño peppers, minced
1 or more tablespoons brine from the pickled jalapeños
green onions, chopped fine

For assembly:

corn tortillas
grated Monterey Jack cheese
maybe thawed tiny frozen shrimp, or fresh shrimp shelled and halved
cooked shredded chicken, or cooked ground beef
chopped green onions. Don't even think about starting unless you have the green onions.
Cilantro may be used in addition, but not instead.

Heat the oil in an uncoated skillet (stainless steel, iron or enamel is good) until it is quite hot. Add the flour all at once. The quantity of flour should be sufficient to absorb all of the oil and make a mixture that is more gooey than liquid, but not stiff. Once the flour is in, keep the heat high and stir the mixture *continuously* with a wire whisk (no other tool will do) until it turns a sandy brown color – the color of peanut butter – four to five minutes. Plan on thinking about little else while this process is underway. You should not answer the phone or allow other distractions, because the mixture will burn quickly, and can burn you seriously if you splatter it on yourself.

Once the oil and flour roux has reached the right color, take it off the heat and mix in the onions and garlic. Return to moderate heat, and stir with a spatula until the onion is soft. Lower the heat, then add the chili powder and other spices and herbs, and mix. Then further lower the heat

and add chicken broth gradually, stirring, until the mixture is fairly liquid. Add small amounts and mix until smooth, then add more liquid, to keep the sauce smooth. How much chicken broth is right depends on the humidity and the flour, so precise measurements are not possible. Stir gently with the whisk until it is smooth. Add the pickled or fresh chilis or both, the Jalapeño brine, and simmer for 30 minutes or so. Taste, then adjust seasoning with Jalapeño brine and adjust the texture with chicken broth. The sauce will be plenty salty enough from the salt in the tinned chicken broth. The sauce can be kept for several weeks in the refrigerator.

Making the enchiladas:

Warm corn tortillas one at a time in a skillet (with no oil). Keep them warm by stacking them between potholders. Fill and roll the warm tortillas with Monterey Jack cheese or shrimp or whatever, put them on plates, cover with sauce and heat in a 300 degree oven until the cheese melts. Add a little more sauce when you take them out if they seem to have dried out, and garnish them with chopped green onions. And maybe those frijoles with sour cream and green onions and tomatoes.

Heating the tortillas:

The tortillas used for the enchiladas can be nuked briefly. But they taste better if heated in a nonstick skillet (medium high heat, no oil, about 30 seconds on each side), but this makes a much bigger difference for the tortillas used as bread to mop up the sauce than for the ones that are rolled and baked as enchiladas.

And when the occasion is really festive:

MARGARITAS

Anyone with a blender can do it.

1 can frozen concentrated limeade
1 limeade can full of Triple Sec
1 limeade can full of tequila
1 egg white
limes, sea salt

Put the limeade mix, tequila, Triple Sec, and egg white in the blender and blend thoroughly. Then add ice cubes, *one at a time, while the blender is running* (through that little hole in the center of the lid) until

the desired slushiness is achieved. Rub the rims of the glasses with a lime slice, then dip them in salt, fill carefully, and garnish with another lime slice.

SHRIMP TACOS

This is very informal food, but no less delicious for it. You could make it for lunch on the weekend. Or for a weekday working girl's supper. Or for dinner for people who were more interested in really delicious food than in ceremony. Keep in mind that tacos must be assembled by hand and eaten by hand.

For tacos for four, you will need:

- a dozen corn tortillas**
- 1 pound of shrimp in their shells**
- ¾ teaspoon powdered cumin seed**
- 6 tablespoons oil, olive or plain, altogether**
- 1 medium yellow onion, sliced**
- 3 red or green Jalapeño chiles, seeded and sliced**
- 4 cloves of garlic, squashed just enough to
remove the skin**
- salt to taste**
- juice of 2 limes**

And for the guacamole, if the avocados are worth it:

- 2 avocados**
- 3 cloves garlic, maybe more**
- salt**
- Tabasco sauce**

Optional garnishes:

- ½ cup chopped green onions**
- ¾ cup chopped cilantro leaves**
- sour cream (I always have it)**
- your favorite hot sauce**

If you are going to have guacamole, make it first. Just mash up the avocados until they are goopy, add three cloves of garlic (pressed), mix well, add salt to taste, then Tabasco to taste if you like the guacamole hotter. Chopped onion if you want to get fancy. Chopped tomatoes fancier. The only essentials are the garlic and salt. But everything depends on the quality of the avocado. High summer Hass or Bacons or Fuertes are great. They should have dark green skins and be just soft to the squeeze. Inside, the flesh should be light avocado green, but darker next to the skin. Florida avocados are not worth mashing, eating, or wasting good garlic on. If your avocados are good, your guacamole will be good almost no matter what you do. If not, it won't. If the avocados

are good, remember to pay your respects to Our Lady of Guacamole, aka the Virgin of Guacamole, patron saint of avocado growers, who need all the help they can get with the vulnerability of their crop to frost.

Shell the shrimps, cut them in half lengthwise along the back, de-vein them, and put two tablespoons of oil, the cumin seed powder, and a tiny shake of salt on them, mix well, and set them aside. Then slice the garlic, chop the onions – in fairly big pieces, as tiny things tend to fall out of a taco – and chop the lettuce and cilantro too if you are having those.

Heat the tortillas one by one in a nonstick pan with no grease. Heat until tiny pockets puff up, and there is slight browning. Once the skillet is hot, each tortilla should take no more than a minute, total for both sides. Stack them between potholders as they come out of the pan to keep them warm.

Heat the remaining four tablespoons of oil in a skillet large enough to accommodate all of the shrimp in one layer. On medium heat, add the garlic, onion, and slices of Jalapeño, and toss and fry until the onions and Jalapeños are soft. Then add the shrimps, and toss and fry until they curl up and turn pink, but not longer. This will be really quick. As soon as they have reached this point, turn off the heat and squeeze the juice from the limes over the shrimps. (Stick a fork into the cut half lime, and squeeze while wiggling the fork. This gets most of the juice out.) Put the shrimps into a serving dish, carefully scraping all of the liquid from the skillet onto them.

Serve everything at once! Invite each person to make a taco with a smear of guacamole and sour cream in the middle of the tortilla to anchor the shrimp, three or four shrimp pieces, and a handful of the lettuce, etc. If avocados are not in season (this is delicious enough to have without guacamole), then that liquid from the skillet is precious – use it as a moistener on the taco. The cooked garlic, onions, and Jalapeño can go into a taco, too, as Jalapeños are far less hot without their seeds.

You can add black beans to this meal if you need a stretcher. Goya are the best canned ones.

This shrimp is so delicious that I sometimes fix it to be eaten straight, or maybe with a little rice. You could give it to someone on a diet who needs some really delicious food but few calories. But what does one tortilla and a bit of guacamole add? Live a little.

TOMATO SAUCE

American tomato sauces taste different from Italian ones for several reasons: the addition of hamburger, the absence of herbs, use of plain oil instead of olive oil, and the failure to use proper tomatoes. If you like a meat sauce and all you have is round, American tomatoes, get some beans, make chili, and forget tomato sauce.

¼ cup olive oil
1 large onion, chopped fine
5 cloves of garlic, crushed
1/3 cup chopped parsley
1 teaspoon oregano
½ teaspoon basil
2 or 3 bay leaves
1 six ounce can tomato paste
1 large (32-ounce) can crushed tomatoes imported
from Italy
salt to taste
more freshly pressed garlic, to taste

Sauté the onions and garlic in olive oil until they are translucent, gently so the garlic does not burn. Add the parsley, oregano, basil, and bay leaves and cook another minute or two. Then add the tomato paste and fry it with the vegetables and oil for one or two minutes – this step makes the difference between a sweet, smooth tomato sauce and an acidic one. Then add the crushed tomatoes. If it seems too thick, add a bit of water.

Simmer over very low heat for 30 minutes or so. Keep an eye out and a spoon handy to keep the bottom from burning. Add more water if the sauce seems too thick.

If you really like garlic, press another three or four cloves of fresh garlic into the sauce, as the first garlic will have mellowed with cooking. Put the crushed red pepper on the table for those who have lived near the border for a while. With all that recent news about how extremely good for us tomatoes are (the great lycopene vehicle), and how they are best if cooked, *and must be eaten with some fat if they are to be any good for you at all*, there is no reason why you should not eat this as often as you like. See *Elegant Noodles*, next, for a variation.

ELEGANT NOODLES WITH SEAFOOD AND RED SAUCE

For four people:

8 sea scallops
12 shelled and deveined shrimp
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons butter
3 cloves garlic, peeled and cut into pieces
16 Kalamata olives, seeds removed, chopped
16 fresh leaves of basil, chopped finely
3 cups tomato sauce (previous recipe)
1 pound linguine

Prepare everything so that is ready to go. Have everything ready – the shrimp peeled and de-veined, the garlic peeled, the olives pitted and chopped, basil chopped, and tomato sauce in a saucepan, hot.

Then, bring the water for the noodles to a boil. Put the noodles in, and when the water returns to a boil, stir the noodles enough to get them all under water, turn off the heat, put a tea towel over the pot, put the lid on top the tea towel, and set the timer for the amount of time the package directions instruct you to cook the noodles, usually about ten minutes. During the cooking, stir the noodles once or twice so that they do not stick together. This method produces lovely *al dente* pasta, and is more forgiving than straight boiling on those occasions when you don't fish the noodles out of the water immediately after the requisite cooking time, and is the only method by which I have ever succeeded in not overcooking capellini (angel's hair).

Melt the butter with the oil in a heavy skillet. When the butter is bubbling, add the garlic pieces and brown them slightly. Remove and discard the garlic and fry the scallops and shrimp, turning when the scallops just barely brown on the first side. The idea is to have the scallops warm all the way through, but a bit raw in the center, soft and buttery, and the shrimps just barely cooked. Then add the heated tomato sauce, and mix gently.

Pour the sauce over the pasta on serving plates. Arrange the basil and chopped olives over the sauce. Pass the crushed red peppers and grated Parmesan cheese at the table.

ITALIAN SAUSAGES WITH GREEN AND RED BELL PEPPERS AND ONIONS

Too informal for dinner for company, which is only too bad for the company. A fine supper. For two generous servings:

4 Italian sausages, the kind with lots of fennel seeds and garlic and sage and made with pork (about $\frac{3}{4}$ pound)
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 green bell peppers
2 red bell peppers
2 big yellow onions
 $\frac{1}{4}$ pound fettuccine

Prick the sausages all over so that as they cook, some of the grease escapes, and fry them with a little olive oil to help them along until they are lightly browned. Put two quarts of water on to boil in a big pot that has a lid (this will be for the noodles).

Slice the onions and peppers thinly in rings while the sausages are cooking. When the sausages are lightly browned, put the vegetables on top of them and cover the pan with a lid. Cook until the vegetables are well wilted, stirring occasionally to coat the vegetables with the fat and juice from the sausages.

When the vegetables are nearly cooked, salt the boiling pasta water, add just a small dollop of olive oil, and put the noodles in the water. Bring the pasta water back to a boil, and when it boils stir the pasta well to separate the noodles and get them all under water. Turn off the heat, put a tea towel over the pot, and place the lid on top of the tea towel.

Let the pasta sit in the hot water just a minute or two longer than the directions on the package for boiling them. Stir a couple of times to make sure they don't stick to each other or the pot. Toward the end, taste them for doneness. When they are done, drain them, and serve the sausage and peppers over the noodles. This is the best strategy for *al dente* pasta, regardless of the directions on the package.

You could use those new turkey Italian sausages instead of pork, but they are not nearly so delicious. In fact, they are pathetic. Really. I believe that delicious food makes people feel happy and content. Various pieces of research suggest that happy people are more likely to be healthy. It might be really risky to eliminate pork from your diet altogether.

NOODLES WITH PESTO

For the pesto:

1 cup loosely packed basil leaves
¼ cup fine olive oil
3 tablespoons pine nuts
3 cloves garlic, peeled and quartered
salt to taste
3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Put the leaves in the blender, then the oil, garlic, and nuts. Blend just a few moments until you have a smooth bright green paste. Add the cheese, whirl, then salt, whirl, then taste, and adjust. Most people will want between ½ and a whole teaspoon of salt.

If you are not going to use the pesto right away, or if you are going to have some left over, remove it from the blender and put it in a glass or ceramic dish and cover it *carefully* with Saran Wrap (Classic, not the new clingy variety). Push the saran wrap down onto the surface of the pesto, starting in the center, working to the edge of the dish, so that none of the surface is exposed to air. (No bubbles!) Exposure to air causes the cut basil leaves to oxidize, and spoils the flavor. The pesto will keep nearly a week in the refrigerator if you cover it carefully and completely.

Now this is so quick and easy that you could put the noodles on to cook before you start making the pesto. One pound of noodles (linguine is a really nice shape for pesto) is enough for six good servings, and this recipe will make enough pesto for six or eight servings, depending on how heavily you like the noodles dressed. You can either put a tablespoon of pesto on each serving and let people mix it into the noodles themselves, or dress all the noodles in a bowl and serve them from the bowl. In any case, pass additional grated Parmesan cheese at the table.

Reflections on pesto:

The recipe is so simple. So why is there such great variation in the quality of pesto? I think the secrets lie in the quality of ingredients and how the pesto is handled after it is made. I have never tasted a packaged pesto, fresh or not – not even one! – that I thought was worth taking home or eating. Why?

First, the basil leaves. They need to be fresh and unblemished, meaning no creases that are turning brown (becoming oxidized). And they should not be too mature. The best basil is a dark, spring green color and has a

delicate texture. If the basil leaves have taken on a leathery texture and the yellower color of late summer, they will not make good pesto. Or horrors, crumpled for a week in some wretched package.

Then the pine nuts. The freshness of the nuts is more important than the type of nuts. Walnuts, for example, can be substituted. The taste will be a little different, but it will still be delicious, far better than pesto made with pine nuts that are rancid. If you can buy pine nuts sold loose (yes! taste one), or sold in little plastic tubs at a trustworthy market, do so. The ones in cellophane packages are sometimes stale (slight, or more than slight, rancid taste). Your inventory of nuts should be kept in the refrigerator or freezer.

Then the oil. Again, rancidity is the thing to avoid. If you don't use olive oil often, and your bottle is more than three months old, smell and taste it critically, and if there is any hint of rancidity, buy a new bottle. Any standard brand of extra virgin olive oil – Bertolli's, Star, De Cecco, – will make a delicious pesto. And there is so much snake oil in the sale of olive oil these days, I hesitate to encourage anyone to pay \$15 for a quart of fancy oil, lest it not be so fine. But if you have a favorite, reliable, delicious, expensive olive oil, use it. And for heaven's sake, don't buy any of those gimmicky flavored olive oils.

And the cheese. The best is *Parmegiano Reggiano*, the real thing, fresh, grated at home, just before using. And yes, it makes a difference. And it is somewhat expensive. But keep your perspective here: Compared to just about any meat or fish you might have for supper instead, pesto is quite inexpensive, even when made with the best oil, nuts, and cheese.

Finally, the garlic. Again, fresh is better. And if there are any brown (slightly rotten) spots on an individual clove, toss it out and use another if you have plenty of garlic, and if you don't, carefully cut away the rotten spot before using the rest of the clove.

You can vary the proportions of garlic, nuts, oil, leaves, and cheese to suit your own taste. These variations will be less important than the quality of the ingredients you use.

SINGAPORE NOODLES

For each person:

The food:

1 teaspoon sesame oil
½ tablespoon vegetable oil – plain or peanut
½ Chinese sausage (*lap chong* at the Chinese grocery – get the ones without duck liver), sliced into coins
½ onion chopped into bite-size pieces
1 small clove garlic, pressed or chopped fine
½ red bell pepper chopped into bite-size pieces
a scant ½ cup small shrimp, thawed if frozen, but not drained
¾ cup bean sprouts

The seasoning:

fish sauce (*nam plah* at the Chinese and Thai markets)
Serrano or Jalapeño chilis, seeded and chopped fine, soaked in fish sauce
1 to 2 tablespoons coarsely ground unsalted peanuts
1 to 2 teaspoons sugar
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

At the very end:

a handful of noodles, boiled in salted water, (short curly egg noodles are fine)
1 finely chopped green onion

Along with:

a cooked sourish green vegetable, like spinach, green beans, or asparagus or bok choy, or tat soy or mustard greens.
very cold beer

Start a kettle of water boiling in which first the sourish green vegetable and then the noodles can be boiled. When the water has come to a boil, put the vegetables in to cook. Then in a capacious fry pan, start frying the Chinese sausages and onions and garlic in the oils. When the vegetables are done, whisk them out of the water with your Chinese wire

scoop, bring the water back to a full boil, and put the noodles and some salt in to cook.

When the onions are a little soft, add the shrimp with their juices, and keep the heat high so that the shrimp juice will boil away. When it is mostly gone, and there are brown bits, add the red bell pepper. When the red bell pepper is heated through, add the bean sprouts. When the bean sprouts are hot but not wilted, add the noodles (which should be done about now – try first), then a few squirts of fish sauce, the sugar, peanuts, and cayenne. Taste for salt, and add more fish sauce if needed. Put the noodles on plates and sprinkle with green onions. Tuck the sourish vegetable on the side of the plate. Serve the fish sauce with chilis on the table for hotness control. Don't forget the beer. Delicious with beer.

Chinese sausages are a hard salami-like affair, and keep indefinitely in the refrigerator. The shrimp may be either fresh, shelled and de-veined, or cooked frozen (if you use fresh shrimp, put them in to cook after the red bell peppers rather than before). Buy unsalted dry-roasted peanuts and grind them coarsely a cup or so at a time in the blender, and store unused ground peanuts in the refrigerator. Fish sauce can be bought at any Asian market, and comes in a quart-size primitive plastic bottle with a nib to cut off so that you can squirt the sauce out. It smells fishy but it does not taste fishy. It keeps indefinitely like soy sauce. Chilis can be chopped and put into a little jar with fish sauce anytime. They keep many months in the refrigerator. The fish sauce is so salty that the chilis pickle slightly and will not spoil. Keep green onions on hand at all times because you never know and they are so essential.

This dish tastes quite a lot like the fried noodles you can get on the street from the noodle sellers in Singapore, Bangkok, and Kuala Lumpur, and, like the fried noodles in these places, admits substantial variation. You can use bacon or *cha shu* (red roast pork) or even fresh pork (fry very hot so it browns a little) instead of Chinese sausages. You can use fish or cooked shredded chicken breast or squid rings instead of the shrimp. Or add some cooked duck. Or add a little fresh duck liver. You can use green pepper or green beans instead of the red bell pepper. Or add green pepper or green beans or asparagus. You can add an egg, cooked as a very thin omelet and shredded into strings (see Southeast Asia Fried Rice). You can add dried and soaked mushrooms, either tree ear fungus or shiitake. You can use any Chinese egg noodles, or bean thread noodles, or rice noodles. And you can add cilantro in addition to green onions at the end. And shallots sliced thin and fried crisp and brown in oil and added at the end are sublime, but take a lot of time.

Get carried away. It's worth it.

STREET VENDOR OR FOOD STALL FRIED RICE

For two servings:

- 1 egg**
- 1 onion**
- 1 Chinese sausage, or a quarter-pound of finely sliced raw pork, or cha shu, or bacon**
- 1 or 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 1 or 2 teaspoons sesame oil**
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup shredded green cabbage**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ slivered red or green bell pepper**
- 1 clove garlic**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ pound shrimp, fish, squid, or chicken, raw or cooked**
- 1 cup bean sprouts**
- several grinds of black pepper**
- Chinese soy sauce**
- fish sauce**
- fish sauce with sliced fresh chilis**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups cooked rice, either fine white, like basmati, or long-grain Thai rice, or even short-grain brown rice**
- 2 green onions, chopped finely**

First make a very thin omelet. Beat the egg in a little bowl, heat a nonstick skillet or griddle, wipe it lightly with oil, and when it is hot, turn down the heat, pour on the egg, and then push the egg around to form a thin circle. As soon as the egg looks like it is no longer runny on top, turn the omelet over, and cook just a bit on the other side. The egg should be thoroughly cooked but not browned. Oh, a little browning is okay, but not too much. Set it aside to cool. When cool, roll it up and then slice it into fine shreds, like long thin noodles.

Cut the onion once in half and then into slices so that it will separate into crescents when cooked. Fry the onion and cabbage with sausage or pork in oils on high heat until the onion and cabbage are soft and the meat slightly browned. Add the slivered pepper and the garlic, and heat through, then the shrimp (or whatever), and pepper. Finally, put in the rice and turn the heat up high. Toss and fry until the rice is hot and a little browned. Lower the heat, then toss in the omelet shreds and bean sprouts and mix them in gently. Season with soy sauce and fish sauce to taste, and finally scatter in the green onions, an essential part of the taste. Serve fish sauce with sliced fresh chilis (green or red) soaked in it.

The brown rice version you won't find in Asia, but it is really good. Serve with a green vegetable, like green beans, spinach, asparagus, mustard greens, Chinese broccoli, or common broccoli, boiled until just barely cooked. And, of course, cold beer.

This recipe is a great use for leftover rice from a good Chinese restaurant. Straight from the refrigerator, its texture is perfect for frying.

INSCRUTABLE COLD NOODLES

A fine lunch any time, and a nice supper in the summer.

2½ tablespoons soy sauce
1½ tablespoons Chinese vinegar (Chinking brand
is
the best)
1½ tablespoons chili oil
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 tablespoon sesame paste (tahini)
1½ tablespoons sugar
¼ teaspoon ground Chinese (Szechuan) peppercorn
1 or 2 cloves garlic, crushed
½ pound capellini (angel hair) noodles (Italian
pasta
is fine)
2 tablespoons minced green onion
about 4 inches of English cucumber, in 1- to 2-inch
julienne
2 cups bean sprouts
1 red bell pepper, cut into 1- to 2-inch fine strips

Put a big kettle of water on for boiling the noodles. Mix up the sauce and slice the green onion and cucumber so they are ready. Salt the boiling water, and put the noodles in the water, keeping the heat up high to bring the water back to a boil quickly. When the water returns to a boil, stir the noodles to make sure they are not sticking, turn the heat off, put a tea towel over the pot, put the lid on top of the tea towel, and wait two minutes. At this point the noodles should be perfectly cooked *al dente*. Taste one to make sure, then drain the noodles, and rinse them in cold running water to cool them. Shake them thoroughly to drain as completely as possible. Then toss the noodles in the sauce, add the vegetables and toss a bit more, and serve immediately. If you are really ambitious, you can garnish this with finely sliced red bell pepper.

Despite the Italian noodles, Xiao Ming (who gave me this recipe) says this dish tastes like the stuff back home in the Middle Kingdom (Center of the Universe?). It is also a lot better than most of the cold sesame noodles prepared for round eyes in New York City, which seem to suffer from having been prepared in a big batch for the evening and then having sat in the sauce and gotten soggy. Or maybe having been made with peanut butter instead of sesame paste. Oh goodness.

DESSERTS AND TREATS

YOGURT WITH GRAND MARNIER

A dessert for abstemious occasions.

To serve three:

2 cups plain yogurt

6 tablespoons frozen orange juice concentrate

2 tablespoons Grand Marnier

strawberries, raspberries, blueberries

Put a small amount of yogurt in a bowl and mix in all of the frozen orange juice. Mix in the rest of the yogurt bit by bit, then add the Grand Marnier. Serve decorated with berries. This should not be mixed more than two hours ahead as the interaction of the orange juice and yogurt will make the mixture watery, then sour. And with or without the Grand Marnier, it is good for breakfast.

TARTE AUX MYRTILLES

For an eight-inch tart:

1 baked pastry crust
2 cups fresh blueberries
juice of 1 orange
juice of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons red currant jelly
2 tablespoons Grand Marnier
1 tablespoon sugar
2 teaspoons cornstarch
1 egg yolk

Mix the cornstarch in a saucepan with the orange and lemon juice. Add the red currant jelly and sugar, and heat the mixture until the sugar and jelly melt and the mixture bubbles and thickens. Crush a few of the berries into the sauce to make the color more intense. Turn off the heat, and allow the mixture to cool slightly. While it is still a bit hot, beat in the egg yolk with a whisk. Then let it cool to finger comfortable, but still a bit warm, then mix in the Grand Marnier.

Then toss the rest of the berries into the sauce. Don't crush them. The berries gain flavor from the sauce, so this can sit for the afternoon. But don't put them into the crust until just before serving, because they will make the crust soggy if they sit very long. These blueberries are considerably more delicious than unembellished blueberries.

If you had some homemade *Lemon Curd* around (page 130) you could get almost the same result, really a satisfactory result, by adding a dab of Grand Marnier to it and just using that instead of making up the sauce described here.

TIRAMISU

This is a wonderful tiramisu. It is distinguished from others by the hazelnut flavor imparted by dipping the ladyfingers in hazelnut liqueur. And once you have mastered arranging the ladyfingers in your own pans, it is not much trouble because nothing has to be cooked or baked. And people love it. This recipe serves six to eight.

To begin:

1 to 2 dozen ladyfingers
½ cup very strong coffee
¼ cup hazelnut liqueur (Frangelico or other)

Get out the pan you plan to put the tiramisu in, perhaps to serve it from or to use as a mold for it. It can look wonderful in a clear glass pan, or in a pan that is not clear, or un-molded from a straight-sided mold such as a loaf pan, spring form pan or charlotte mold. Put the ladyfingers in place to figure out how many you need. Then mix the coffee and liqueur together, dip the cut sides of the ladyfingers in it, and set them aside.

Next prepare the main filling:

3 egg yolks
¼ cup powder sugar
1 to 2 tablespoons Marsala wine
8 ounces (or 250 grams, which is 8¾ ounces, which is close enough) Mascarpone cheese, imported from Italy, at room temperature

Beat the egg yolks and sugar on high speed until they are pale yellow and form a ribbon which disappears slowly when the beater is lifted and drawn across the mixture. Add the Marsala and taste. The mixture should have a distinct zabaglione or sabayon taste, that is, it should taste of Marsala and egg yolks.

Beat the Mascarpone cheese slightly to mix it and smooth it out (you don't need to clean the beaters between beating the egg yolks and the Mascarpone), then mix it into the zabaglione, first incorporating smaller amounts then larger ones. Taste again. Still taste that Marsala? If not, add a bit more.

Then whip the egg whites, which will be folded into the main filling:

2 egg whites
pinch of cream of tartar and another of salt
3 tablespoons powder sugar

Before whipping the egg whites, use soap to clean the beaters to get all the fat off of them or your egg whites won't come up. Beat the egg whites on medium until they foam a bit. Then add the cream of tartar and salt, and continue beating on medium/high until they begin to look uniformly white and you cannot see individual bubbles. Then add the sugar and beat on high until they stand in stiff peaks. Incorporate into the yolk/cheese mixture, first in smaller amounts, then larger ones.

You will also need:

2 ounces grated semisweet chocolate
½ cup whipping cream is optional

Grate the chocolate. A good quality chocolate bar will do, and the grating will work best if you refrigerate the chocolate so that it does not melt as you grate it.

Now you are ready to assemble. If you want to layer up using whipped cream, whip ½ cup of cream and sweeten it lightly. Another alternative is to serve with whipped cream on the side. Also, the dessert is so light that the whipped cream may be omitted without great loss. (It does, though, taste better with the cream.) The bottom layer (and possibly sides) should be ladyfingers, the next the egg and mascarpone mixture, the next whipped cream, and then the grated chocolate. There should be two complete sets. If you are going to un-mold the dessert, line the mold completely with saran wrap. Save some whipped cream to spread on the top (formerly the bottom) if you un-mold.

If you are going to serve the tiramisu by scooping it out of a pan, it looks most appealing if the top layer is just shaved chocolate over either whipped cream or the egg and cheese mixture. But if you are going to un-mold it, then it is most stable if both the very top (bottom as you fill the mold) and bottom (top when it turned out) and sides, are ladyfingers. So if un-molding is your plan, be sure and save some of the shaved chocolate (in the fridge!) to put on the top (previously the bottom) after you have un-molded it, otherwise you have dirty-looking ladyfingers (the coffee soaks through) on the top. Presentation matters.

AN ELEGANT LEMON TARTE

10-inch unbaked tart pastry, in its pan

5 eggs

6 medium sized lemons

1 cup sugar

4 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons apricot preserves

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake the pastry for ten minutes. Remove it from the oven and let it cool to room temperature. Zest five of the lemons with a zesting tool that cuts off only the yellow part of the peel in neat little shreds. Then juice these five lemons. You should have about $\frac{5}{6}$ cup of juice. The sixth lemon is for decoration.

Heat the oven to 350 degrees again if you turned it off before. Beat the eggs lightly, add the lemon zest, lemon juice, sugar, and melted butter. Mix this filling well, then pour it into the tart shell, and bake another 30 to 35 minutes, or until the tart filling has set. Remove it from the oven and let it cool to room temperature. The top will look crusty. When the tart is cool, melt the apricot preserves in a small pot, adding a spoonful or two of water to get the preserves to dissolve and be easily spreadable on top of the tart. Cut as many slices of lemon as you plan to make servings of the tart (cut from the ends of the lemon to get slices that are small if you are going to use many), and place them artfully on the baked filling, and then dribble, paint, or spread the apricot glaze over the entire tart, atop the lemon slices.

This tart may be prepared a day in advance. It will still be delicious. It looks lovely presented on a lacy paper doily, possible only if you use a pan whose bottom easily comes loose from its sides so you can lift out the tart. On the other hand, if you bake it and serve it in your own fluted china tart pan, everyone will know you didn't just buy it at some yuppie bakery.

Two interesting variations:

1. Instead of apricot jam for the glaze and lemon slices for garnish, use passion fruit jam to glaze, and then lime slices for the garnish. Really delicious, but more exotic.
2. Use raspberry jam or jelly to glaze, and raspberries to garnish. Buy enough raspberries to completely cover the top, and then this will be an unusually rich and tangy raspberry tart.

TARTE TATIN AU FENOUILLE

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons flour
1 stick (¼ pound) salted butter
a ¼ cup measure with one egg yolk plus enough
water to fill the measuring cup, mixed well
flour to roll

Filling:

4 large or 6 medium apples (choose the same ones
you would for apple pie – tart, firm apples, like
Granny Smith's)
1 small bulb fennel
¾ cup sugar
½ stick (2 ounces) salted butter
¾ teaspoon vanilla
juice of 1 lemon

This is a really interesting *tatin*. The fennel is enough like apple in color and texture that it is hard to find, but imparts a subtle, provocative taste. It provides the sort of novelty that distinguishes the food at the best restaurants these days.

First cut the butter into the flour, then add the liquid and mix lightly with a fork, then press the dough into a ball. Refrigerate for a couple of hours if you have time.

Slice the bulb of the fennel thinly crosswise, discarding the tough core and that fuzzy stuff in the middle and keeping only the crescent-shaped slices from the bulb. Peel the apples and put lemon juice on them to keep them from discoloring. Slice their cheeks off so that you will have two pieces from each apple with one round side and one flat side as large as possible, and then cut up the rest of the apple, discarding cores.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Put the sugar in a skillet – either an enamel skillet that can go into the oven, or a cast iron skillet. Melt the sugar and allow it to become brown. When the sugar is brown, put the apple cheeks in round side down, then distribute the rest of the apple and fennel slices over them. Pour the lemon juice from the apple bowl into the pan, too. Add the ½ stick of butter scattered in pieces. Allow the apples to cook gently without a lid for 10 to 15 minutes, so that some of the moisture cooks away. Roll out the crust. After the apples have cooked, take the skillet off the fire (only a little moisture should be present), add the vanilla to the pan, shake it

around to mix in the vanilla, then put the crust over the apples, and tuck it into the skillet around the edges.

Bake the tart in the oven until the crust browns – 25 to 30 minutes. You can warm it up on the stove before serving. After heating it gently for a bit, turn the tart (quickly!) onto a plate, crust down. The round, caramelized cheeks of apple will smile up at you. The people at your table will be happy. If there are more pieces of tart than there are eaters, you will have to put up with a little speech from Bob Hall about how delicious this is for breakfast, the subtext of which is that anyone who takes seconds is eating Bob Hall's breakfast, at his peril.

Worthy variations:

1. Plain apples (with no fennel).
2. Pears (again, no fennel).

For plain apples, proceed as above, without fennel. For pears, choose the pears carefully. The best pears are ripe Bosc pears, which are firm even when quite ripe. You can tell whether a Bosc is ripe by the color (the color showing through the brown speckles will be yellow, not green), and the fragrance. They should still be quite firm. Pears look especially appealing because you can arrange half pears with their pointed ends toward the center. Use three or four whole pears, and you may end up with seven half pears if eight don't fit. Again, cook them with their cheeks down in the pan so that they will be up when inverted for serving, and they fill the tart quite elegantly. If eight pear halves don't fit going around, carve the end off the eighth to make it round, and put it in the center.

Tatin troubleshooting:

There are two steps in the *tatin* where danger lurks. The first is in the burning of the sugar. The sugar should be about the color of Coca Cola in a pan that is white or silver colored. Now remember the melted sugar will be only a quarter of an inch or so deep, and this much coke will not be as dark as coke in the bottle. Also recall that when you put the fruit into the sugar, the burning will immediately stop because the fruit will cool it. If the sugar is not burned enough, it will not have that exciting caramel taste. If it is too burned, it tastes, well, burned.

The second danger point lies in the turning out of the *tatin*. You can always punt by serving it from the pan instead of turning it. But you can do better.

First, be mindful of how much moisture there is under the crust. If there is very little, you may want to add a couple of teaspoons of water and

heat the *tatin* a bit on the stove before turning it out, so that it will slide away from the pan easily and not stick. If there is too much moisture, pour off the excess liquid into a bowl, turn the *tatin* out onto the serving plate, return the excess liquid to the pan and boil it down, and then pour it back over the tart.

The difficulty is not oven calibration or pan size, or the cook's incompetence, but mainly variation in the juiciness of the fruit. It can't be conquered with present technology, and remains a problem of judgment as to appearance, smell, and taste.

THE ALICE B. TOKLAS CHOCOLATE CAKE

This is not one of Alice's recipes, but she would have approved. This cake has both a filling, and on top of this, a frosting. The frosting and filling are gooey and will not stay on the cake unless it is contained in a cake pan, so bake the cake in a 9- x 13-inch pan, frost it in the pan, and then it can be taken to a picnic, and served from the pan.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

The cake batter:

Sift together:

2¼ cups flour
¾ teaspoon salt
1½ cups sugar
1½ teaspoons baking soda

Blend, then add to the dry ingredients:

1 and 1/3 cups plain vegetable oil
1½ tablespoons vinegar
1½ teaspoons vanilla
1½ cups cold water
2 ounces unsweetened chocolate

The rising action for this cake is provided by the reaction of the vinegar and baking soda, just like in the soda/vinegar bombs that five-year olds like so much. So the batter should be poured into a greased pan and baked immediately. Bake 30 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out not quite clean, but not coated with liquid, just a few moist crumbs.

Filling:

about 1½ cups raspberry jam
2 cups fresh raspberries

After the cake has cooled, spread the top of the cake with raspberry jam, and arrange the fresh raspberries over it.

Then make the frosting:

1 cup sugar
¼ cup butter
¼ teaspoon salt
1 square (1 ounce) unsweetened chocolate
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon vanilla

Mix everything but the vanilla together and bring to a boil. Boil two minutes. Beat it until it is just warm, then beat in the vanilla, and dribble the frosting over the raspberry filling already on top of the cake.

Refrigerate any leftover cake so that the raspberries don't get moldy.

A worthy variation:

The original version of this family recipe used a pineapple filling. Sonja, for example, knew only the pineapple version as a child. Raspberries were hard to come by or expensive. Now, we all prefer the raspberry variation, but the pineapple has merit, too. One is that the pineapple filling, unlike the fresh raspberries, will not get moldy if left out at room temperature for a couple of days. And the cake is really good after sitting out (covered) a day or two. So if you don't have raspberries, or you want the luxury of moist leftover cake at room temperature, try the pineapple. Only the filling is different.

1½ cups crushed pineapple
1/3 cup sugar
1½ tablespoons cornstarch

Mix these ingredients thoroughly in a sauce pan, bring them to a boil, cook until the mixture thickens, then let it cool to room temperature, then spread it on the cake. Proceed as above with the chocolate frosting.

PEACH DUMPLINGS

4 big peaches
about ½ cup sugar
about 2 teaspoons cinnamon
2 teaspoons butter

For the pastry:

2¼ cups flour
1 large teaspoon salt
1 cup less one tablespoon lard or butter
juice of ½ a lemon
1 egg yolk

Make the pastry first by cutting the lard (lard makes an even flakier crust than butter does, and tastes wonderful, and is not as bad for us as shortening, so there) into the flour and salt until the mixture is like coarse meal. Put the egg yolk and the juice of the lemon in a measure cup and add enough water to make one-third of a cup. Beat this mixture, then add it in tiny amounts in the usual fashion for making a pastry crust, just to moisten but not thoroughly mix the pastry (the point is to have the lard in tiny pieces, not evenly distributed through the flour). You can do this in a food processor with its pastry blade. Wrap the pastry and let it rest in the refrigerator for a couple of hours if you have time.

Just before you are ready to roll pastry, preheat the oven to 350 degrees, and mix the cinnamon and sugar together. It should look like what you would put on cinnamon toast.

Then remove the seeds from the peaches by cutting a seed-sized hole in the top of each peach, and if necessary, using pliers to yank the seed out. This will work even on cling peaches. Each peach will be left with a nice hole, to be filled with the mixture of cinnamon and sugar. The amounts are not precise here, because the idea is to completely fill each peach with cinnamon sugar. Top the cinnamon and sugar with ½ teaspoon butter.

Roll the pastry in four round pieces, and wrap each peach with pastry. Press the pastry to secure it around the peach. If you have some cinnamon sugar left, sprinkle it on the pastry-wrapped peaches for color. Bake for 30 to 45 minutes at 350 degrees. Cooking time depends on the size and ripeness of the peaches. The peaches are done when they are pierced easily with a fork and the pastry has browned a bit.

CRANBERRY HAZELNUT PIE

The theory for this pie is the same as for the better-known and much-loved pecan pie, but the practice involves hazelnuts instead, plus cranberries for extra excitement and to relieve the sweetness. If you serve it to a really small group and there is some left, you had better get up early if you want any for breakfast. Another inefficiency resulting from ambiguous property rights to the contents of the refrigerator and other leftovers.

For a single pie crust:

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons flour
1 stick less one tablespoon of butter (or lard, but margarine isn't good for you)
¼ teaspoon salt if you used unsalted butter, otherwise no salt
¼ cup water

Cut the butter into the flour until the butter is no bigger than pea-size. Mix in the water gently with a fork, a tiny bit at a time, and squeeze the dough into a ball, quickly so that your warm hands do not melt the butter. Roll it out round and fit the rolled pastry into a lightly greased 9-inch pie tin and crimp the edges up nicely (you will need the extra depth to contain the pie filling).

Filling:

1 to 1½ cups fresh or frozen, thawed, whole cranberries
1 cup hazelnuts, skins off
4 eggs
1 cup brown sugar
½ cup light corn syrup
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup plus one big tablespoon melted butter
1 teaspoon vanilla

Mix the nuts and berries and put them in the pie shell. Beat the eggs until they are frothy, then add the remaining ingredients, mix well, and pour it over the nuts and berries. Bake 10 minutes at 400 degrees, then lower the temperature to 325 and bake another 30 minutes or until set. Cool on a rack to room temperature. And of course, you could use either walnuts or pecans instead of the hazelnuts.

DIVINELY INSPIRED PUMPKIN PIE

1 unbaked 10-inch pie crust
2 cups fresh steamed pumpkin, scooped out of the skin
14 ounces cream or evaporated milk
½ cup molasses
3 eggs
½ cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
½ teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 tablespoons rum or brandy

Cooking the pumpkin can be done well ahead. Cut open the pumpkin, scrape out the seeds, and cut the pumpkin into pieces small enough to fit in a big pot fitted with a steaming rack and a lid. Steam the pumpkin until it is soft. It will take 30 to 40 minutes for the pumpkin to be sufficiently cooked to be scraped easily out of the skin. A smallish pumpkin usually yields enough fruit for two pies.

When you are ready to make the pie, preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Mix everything in the blender until smooth. (If your blender container holds only four cups, you may need to add only part of the cream or milk, then transfer to a bowl, and add the rest.) Pour the mixture into the 10-inch unbaked pastry crust. Put the pie in the oven and lower the heat to 350 degrees. Bake 45 minutes to one hour, or until a knife inserted gently into the center of the pie comes out clean.

LEMON CURD

Lemon curd is sort of like jam, except that it contains eggs and butter, not just fruit and sugar. But its uses are somewhat similar. You can spread it on toast. You can put dollops on shortbread cookies for a tiny, instant, lemon tart. You can use it for the under-padding in any berry tart, or just put it on berries or sliced peaches and serve them. You can use it as filling for a cake. You can eat it with a spoon right out of the jar. Among store-botten brands, I think Pettigrew's is the best. But homemade isn't much trouble and is really a lot better.

This is Shirley's recipe. We used it for our last joint lemon curd production extravaganza. Prepare your jars by running them and their lids through the dishwasher, then put them and their lids on a pan in a hot (400 degree) oven. This will not be enough sterilizing to keep the lemon curd indefinitely without refrigeration, but it will considerably slow any mold from developing on the curd inside the refrigerator. By the way, my last batch did spoil before I used it all, but not by molding. Instead, strange little eruptions, indicating sinister activity below, appeared. Seemed wise not to eat it, or even taste it. It was more than six months old.

Here's what you need:

6 lemons, to make 1½ to 1¾ juice plus zest together
9 eggs
2 sticks (½ pound) butter
3 cups sugar

Zest the whole lemons by rubbing their skins – you want the yellow part only, not the pulpy white part – on a fine grater. Then halve and juice them. Measure the total rind plus juice, and if there's not enough, do another lemon.

Beat the eggs, sugar, and lemon juice together until smooth. Then add the butter and heat everything together in a large heavy pan. Stir fairly continuously once the mixture has become hot, and cook it until it has congealed to your taste. Test by putting a small dollop on a cold china plate. It takes about 30 minutes of boiling to get to the right texture. When chilled, the lemon curd should not be firm like Jello, but should stand up in a spoon and ooze over the edges slowly. It's great stuff to have around.

LEMON PUDDING CAKE

3 eggs, separated
1 cup less one tablespoon sugar
1 cup milk (1% is okay)
3 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons butter
¼ cup plus one tablespoon lemon juice
zest of 1 lemon
¼ teaspoon salt

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Butter a casserole (like a soufflé dish) of at least one quart capacity. Find a pan that this casserole can sit in that will hold ½-inch of water around the casserole.

Beat the egg whites at high speed to stiff peaks, adding the ¼ cup sugar a bit at a time.

Beat the egg yolks with the rest of the sugar and the other ingredients for two minutes at medium speed.

Fold the egg-white and egg-yolk mixtures together to make a fluffy batter. Pour the batter into the casserole, place the casserole in the pan of water, and bake the whole assembly for 50-55 minutes. The resulting cake should be firm and ever so slightly brown on the top, but gooey on the bottom. Allow the pudding cake to cool for a couple of hours before serving.

All lemon lovers will really like this a lot. Scoop it out with a big spoon so that everyone gets her share of the gooey part on the bottom. Maybe serve it with some berries.

HEAVENLY BUTTERMILK PANCAKES

The only hard part is remembering to buy buttermilk. Works for waffles too.

3 eggs
2 or 3 cups buttermilk (no substitutes)
2¼ cups whole wheat flour (again, no substitutes)
3 tablespoons melted butter or vegetable oil (not olive or peanut)
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
salt to taste

Beat the eggs until they are frothy. Mix in the buttermilk. Then mix in the flour. The batter can now sit, even overnight, until you are ready to use it, at which time you add the baking soda and baking powder. Before you begin to cook, assess the consistency of the batter, and perhaps add some more buttermilk to thin it. Of course, it is really good with blueberries mixed in. But if you do add them, put them in at the last minute and don't stir much or the batter will become gray, off-putting to some customers.

For pancake novices: you need a heavy frying pan, like heavy aluminum lined with a nonstick coating, or cast iron, or heavy stainless steel. Heat the pan thoroughly, and put a light coating of vegetable oil (not olive or peanut, please oh please!) in the pan. Test the pan for hotness by dropping just a drop of batter into the oil. If it does not sizzle immediately, heat the oil and pan more before beginning.

Put the batter gently into the pan, using a big spoonful for each pancake (or a ½ cup measure cup full). Turn the heat down a little, and cook and watch until bubbles have come up all over each pancake. Lift an edge gently and peek to see if the pancake is brown. When the pancakes have become pleasingly brown on the first side, turn them over. Again, cook until they are brown on the second side, peeking for accuracy.

Leftover batter is still ok the next day, but the pancakes made from it are not quite as puffy as before. A better plan, however, is to make legacy pancakes. Cook up all of the batter as either pancakes or waffles after breakfast, wrap them individually in saran wrap, and freeze them, to be unwrapped and reheated in the toaster. They are delicious. The legacy pancake manager (usually Xris) has first claim on all legacy pancakes.

Pancake FAQs:

Can we substitute regular milk or yogurt for buttermilk?

No. Send somebody to the store.

Can we substitute regular flour for whole wheat flour?

No. Send somebody to the store.

What if we don't have any real maple syrup?

Send somebody to the store. Trader Joe's has the best deal on maple syrup. Get some beer too while you are there. Joe always has a deal on beer.

Will this batter work okay for waffles?

Yes, this is noted earlier. Works just fine.

What if we only have two eggs?

Make a full batch anyway. It will be ok.

FRENCH TOAST

2 eggs
½ cup milk
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
a shake of ground nutmeg
a shake of ground cloves
3½ slices stale whole wheat bread
oil for frying–not olive or peanut

Beat the eggs with the milk and spices. Put the bread into this mixture and soak it, turning so that one piece is not more soggy than the others.

Heat the oil for frying. Test it with a drop of the egg milk mixture. If it sizzles immediately, the oil is ready. If not, heat some more.

Fry the toast until it is agreeably brown on the first side (it is okay to peek) and then turn and fry the other side to the same shade.

Serve with real butter, real maple syrup, and maybe some nice berries.

RHUBARB CRISP

For the filling:

8 cups diced rhubarb
1 cup sugar
zest of 1 orange
½ cup orange liqueur
2 tablespoons cornstarch

For the topping:

1 stick of butter, still cold from the refrigerator
1 cup flour
¾ cup of rolled oats
¾ cup brown sugar
1 tablespoon cinnamon
pinch of salt
¾ cups sliced almonds (with skin on edges)
1 egg

A cozy treat. Makes six to eight servings depending on how much ice cream you have.

You need a baking dish that holds two and a half to three quarts (remember eight cups is two quarts). If you try to fit this into a smaller dish it will look okay when you put it together but once in the oven it will boil over and then make burned sugar smells in your oven until you break down and clean the oven. Learn vicariously. A deep 10-inch pie dish or soufflé mold will do nicely.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix the cornstarch in the liqueur. Toss the rhubarb with sugar, orange zest and liqueur and cornstarch mixture.

Then mix the butter, flour, oats, brown sugar, salt and cinnamon. Can be done with your hands, with a pastry blender, or in a Cuisinart machine if you cut up the butter into pieces no bigger than one tablespoon (eight to a quarter pound stick). Beat the egg lightly then mix it in, then finally mix in the almonds.

Put the rhubarb mixture in the bottom of the dish, and sprinkle the topping evenly over it. Bake for about 50 minutes. Nice served with vanilla ice cream.

COOKIES OF MERIT

DEVASTATING BROWNIE COOKIES

4 ounces unsweetened chocolate
½ cup plain vegetable oil
2 cups sugar
4 eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
¾ teaspoon salt
½ cup walnuts or pecans
powdered sugar

Melt the chocolate in a bowl placed in a basin of hot water. Blend the oil and sugar into the melted chocolate. Add the eggs one at a time, beating after each addition until the mixture is smooth. Then add the vanilla.

Sift the flour with the baking powder and salt. Stir the dry ingredients into the chocolate mixture. Add the nuts.

Then chill the dough for two hours.

These cookies will be a terrible mess if you do not chill the dough. You won't be able to roll the dough into balls, and if you spoon it onto the pan, it will melt too fast in the oven and make a mess. So if you don't have time to chill the dough, make a different sort of cookie.

When the dough is thoroughly chilled and you are ready to bake, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Then, using your hands, roll the dough into little balls (smaller than a ping pong ball), and roll each ball lightly in powder sugar and place it on the cookie sheet. I highly recommend nonstick cookie sheets. Grease the cookie sheets lightly even if they are nonstick, and heavily if they are not. Bake the cookies 10 to 12 minutes. They should be chewy, neither gooey nor crisp, when cool.

This recipe makes four dozen cookies, and most ovens will take only two cookie sheets holding one dozen each, so when you have put the first batch in the oven, put the rest of the dough back into the refrigerator. Prepare the second batch only after cleaning the cookie sheets and allowing them to cool thoroughly.

PERSIMMON COOKIES

1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
1 to 2 cups sieved persimmon pulp
½ cup butter
1 cup brown sugar
2 eggs
2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
¾ teaspoon cinnamon
¾ teaspoon cloves
¾ teaspoon nutmeg
½ cup raisins
½ cup walnuts or pecans

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

You need one or two thoroughly ripe persimmons of the Hachiya variety (Hachiya are the ones with pointy ends, and seeds – the flat bottomed ones are Fuyus, which are a very different kettle of fish). Hachiya persimmons are ripe when they are deep orange and look slightly translucent and are soft to the touch. Cut the persimmon open into a sieve, and push the persimmon pulp through the sieve, leaving the skins and seeds in the sieve. Then stir the soda into the persimmon pulp and set it aside. In a few minutes, the persimmon pulp will have magically jelled!

Cream the butter and sugar together. Beat in the eggs, then the persimmon mixture. Sift the flour with the other dry ingredients, then mix them into the rest of the batter. Drop the batter by big spoonful onto the lightly buttered cookie sheets. Bake the cookies for eight to ten minutes. Recipe makes four dozen chewy, moist cookies.

PECAN PIE SQUARES

3 cups flour
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
¾ cup butter
¾ teaspoon salt

Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease your jelly-roll pan (15½ x 10½ x 1-inch). (You don't have a jelly-roll pan? Well, go buy one! They are useful for all kinds of things, like croutons. How can people expect to carry on civilized life without proper equipment?) Beat the flour, sugar, butter, and salt in a large bowl on medium speed until the mixture is crumbly – it will be dry. Or mix it in the food processor with the pastry blade. Press the pastry mixture firmly into the jelly-roll pan. Bake it until it is light golden brown, about 20 minutes.

During baking, prepare the filling:

4 eggs, slightly beaten
1½ cups sugar
1½ cups light or dark corn syrup
3 tablespoons butter, melted
1½ teaspoons vanilla
2½ cups chopped pecans

Mix eggs, sugars, butter, and vanilla until well blended, then stir in the pecans.

Pour the filling over the baked pastry, spreading it evenly. Bake another 25 minutes or so – until the filling is set. Let it cool completely before cutting into squares or you'll regret it.

LEMON SQUARES

You may note that lemon is a recurring theme here. When I was a little girl I was quite intent on learning how to make a lemon meringue pie, which I then believed to be the Most Delicious Food. I always had it for dessert when we went out for dinner, and my mother never made it often enough. Had I known this recipe when I was eight, it would have been a treasure.

First, heat the oven to 350 degrees.

For the crust:

1 cup all purpose flour
½ cup (one stick, don't measure) soft butter
¼ cup powdered sugar

Mix this together thoroughly, and press it into an ungreased 8 x 8 or 9 x 9-inch pan, building up a ½-inch edge around the side. Bake it for 20 minutes. While it is baking, make the filling:

2 eggs
1 cup granulated sugar
½ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
zest of 1 lemon

Take the zest off the lemon with one of those little tools that takes off the outermost part of the skin in tiny shreds (yes it is called a zester; buy one). Chop the zest shreds finely. Then cut the lemon and juice it. (Yes, one will be enough.) Then combine all of the filling ingredients and beat them together about two minutes at medium speed (no, not faster), at which time the mixture will be well mixed and slightly fluffy.

When the first 20 minutes of crust baking is complete, take the crust out of the oven and pour the filling into the hot crust. Return to oven and bake another 20 to 25 minutes. The squares are done when no indentation remains in the filling when you touch it lightly in the center. There should be no more than a hint of brown on the top. (Check after 20 minutes; if an indentation remains, or there is no hint of brown, bake a little longer.) Cool completely before cutting, or you'll regret it for this one too.

HOMEMADE CHEESE CRACKERS

Well, these aren't really cookies, but they satisfy a similar sort of yearning. This recipe makes 80 crackers. They are indescribably delicious, but lacking those high-tech additives, they become stale quickly. So if you don't want 80 crackers now, freeze some of the dough to bake on another occasion.

2 cups (six ounces) coarsely shredded sharp cheddar cheese at room temperature
 $\frac{3}{4}$ stick unsalted butter, also at room temperature
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cornmeal
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cumin
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt

In the food processor (don't try it without a food processor) blend the cheese and butter together. Add the rest of the ingredients and process until the dough forms a ball. Divide the dough into four equal portions and make a 1½-inch-diameter roll of each, wrap them in saran wrap, and chill them thoroughly – several hours or overnight. The chilling is essential for both the sliceability of the dough and for the finished texture of the baked crackers.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Slice the cylinders of dough into rounds about eight slices to the inch – about 20 to each roll. Don't slice all the dough at once, but only as many as will fit without crowding onto two nonstick baking sheets. Most ovens will accommodate only two baking sheets without developing hot and cool spots. It is wise not to try more than two sheets unless you have reason for great confidence in your oven. You should be able to get four rows of five crackers each – or one roll of dough – on a standard-size cookie sheet. Put the rest of the dough back into the refrigerator.

Bake the crackers for ten minutes, or until they brown lightly at the edges. When the crackers come out of the oven, dislodge them gently from their spots on the baking sheets immediately, and when they cool a bit more, remove them to wax paper to finish cooling. Wash the baking sheets and let them cool thoroughly. Continue with the next batch only when the baking sheets are clean and cool.

HOLIDAY FOOD

A Thanksgiving or Christmas Menu

Sonja's Autumn Holiday Salad

Roast Turkey
Stuffing in a Pan
Gravy with Madeira
Cranberry Sauce
Red Cabbage with Bacon, Red Wine, Apple, and Onions
Green Beans with Onions and Bacon
Mashed Sweet Potatoes

Divinely Inspired Pumpkin Pie or Cranberry Hazelnut Pie

Of course this is a huge amount of work. But hey, it's a holiday! And demand that others cook for the meals before this one or buy already prepared food or order pizza for the pre-holiday meals. Start a couple of days ahead cutting the bread to dry for your stuffing. Some things can be prepared well ahead with no quality lost – the cranberry sauce, and the red cabbage, and even the green beans and mashed sweet potatoes, so do it. One day or more ahead, make the turkey broth for the stuffing and extra gravy, and make the pies if you haven't assigned them to someone else. What must be prepared on feast day are the turkey, gravy, and final assembly of the stuffing. And of course, the salad. Here are the recipes.

CRANBERRY SAUCE

1 pound cranberries
½ cup frozen orange juice concentrate
zest from 2 oranges
¾ cup sugar

Zest the oranges using one of those little tools that takes the zest (colored part of the skin only) off in tiny shreds. If the shreds are long, chop them. Put the cranberries, sugar, zest, and OJ concentrate into a pot, stir well, and heat it to the boil. Boil just until the sugar is fully dissolved and a few of the berries have burst. This will be no more than five minutes. Then let the sauce cool, and put it in a bowl to serve it or store it. You are done. This cranberry sauce is so much better than what you get in a can. You will wonder.

RED CABBAGE WITH RED WINE AND BACON

1 head red cabbage, shredded finely (discard core)
2 cups chopped onions
2 cups chopped or shredded carrots
2 large apples, peeled and chopped
¼ pound bacon, cut in smaller than bite-size pieces
2 cups red wine
1 cup beef broth
4 cloves
1 crushed allspice berry
¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg
3 bay leaves

You need a big heavy pot with a lid.

Sauté the bacon until it begins to brown, then toss the onion and carrots into the bacon grease and sauté them until they wilt.

Then put in everything else, and mix and turn to make sure that all the vegetables are coated with bacon grease and red wine. Put the lid on. Cook for at least two hours, stirring and turning occasionally. This dish tastes best if the cabbage is cooked until it is thoroughly wilted early in the day, then reheated at suppertime.

STUFFING IN A PAN

People like stuffing (dressing) so much that the turkey cavity should not be the limit on how much dressing to make. So, don't put this stuffing in the turkey, put it in a 9- x 13-inch pan.

Begin three or four days ahead by drying out the bread. You'll need:

2 pounds bread (2 big loaves) – the best mix is 1 loaf of a not-too-dense whole wheat, and 1 sourdough

Cut the bread into fairly small cubes and let it dry for several days, until dry and hard. Stir occasionally so that all pieces get very dry.

A couple of days ahead, make a soup with:

3 big turkey wings, painted with oil and roasted in a 400 degree oven until they are well browned
3 ribs of celery with leaves
1 teaspoon celery seed
1 onion
6 sprigs of parsley
3 bay leaves
water to cover, but not more

Simmer for a couple of hours. Don't salt this broth, because you may want to use some of it to boil down to put into the gravy.

If you don't have time to make this soup, use canned chicken broth instead. But it cannot be boiled down for gravy because it is already quite salty.

On feast day, you'll assemble and bake the stuffing:

5 large onions, finely chopped
10 ribs of celery, finely chopped
2 cups sliced mushrooms
1½ cups walnuts, in small pieces
1 stick (¼ pound) butter
1 handful fresh sage, chopped finely, or 2 tablespoons dried
1 cup chopped fresh parsley
about 2 teaspoons each, thyme and rosemary
salt, pepper

Fry the onions, celery and mushrooms in butter until soft. Add the herbs and walnuts and cook another few minutes. Then add the bread and mix,

and finally add the turkey soup broth and continue mixing until the dressing is evenly seasoned and evenly and thoroughly moistened, but not sopping wet. Taste for salt and pepper.

Grease the pan lightly with butter. (This will help the dressing get a bit crisp at the edges and not stick to the pan too badly.)

Put the dressing into the pan lightly (don't press it down) and cover it with foil. Bake for an hour to heat the dressing thoroughly, to mix and develop the flavors, and to let it become a bit crisp on the edges. Remove the foil for the last 15 minutes to brown and crisp the top.

GRAVY

turkey or chicken broth
turkey drippings, if you have them
flour
butter
dry Madeira wine, also known as Sercial Madeira
marmite
sour cream
salt and pepper

If the roasting pan has congealed bits of stuff in it, put a bit of broth in it, put it on the stove, bring it to a boil, and scrape the congealed bits until they dissolve in the broth. Heat the rest of the broth to a boil. Having the turkey broth hot will ensure that the thickening of the gravy happens promptly so that you can judge how much liquid to add.

Make a roux with butter and flour, about ½ tablespoon for each per person. Cook this briefly, until the flour and butter are completely mixed and have bubbled for a minute or two, to make sure you don't get that raw flour taste in the gravy.

Add ¼ cup Madeira to the bubbling butter and flour, whisk thoroughly, then add the deglazed drippings, then the turkey broth, about a cup at a time, allowing the gravy to come to a full boil between cups of broth added, until the consistency is right. If the gravy does not taste intense enough, or is not an appealing color, add a dab (¼ teaspoon to start, then more as needed) of marmite. Marmite will darken the gravy and also add a generic meaty taste. Then add a tablespoon of sour cream, whisk thoroughly, and then add salt and pepper to taste, and maybe more sour cream.

If the gravy tastes flat in a way that sourness would cure, add a bay leaf

and cook for five minutes. Taste, and if it is satisfactory, remove the bay leaf.

If the gravy is too thin, you can thicken it by adding more flour and butter, but only if you thoroughly mix soft butter with flour and add it by small amounts (teaspoon at a time) and whisk briskly to mix it in so that the butter melts in the sauce before any lumps can form. Lumps occur when larger than atomic quantities of flour cook in little clumps and adhere to each other. If this happens, you still have a fix: Pour the gravy through a sieve, and either discard the lumps or, if the sieve is really fine, mash the lumps through it.

Despite the best ingredients and instructions from experienced and successful gravy makers, there is still room for prayer in gravy making.

GREEN BEANS WITH BACON AND ONIONS

Romano green beans for 10 people
3 slices excellent bacon
2 large onions, sliced

Romano green beans are the large, flatish ones. Snap the ends off the beans and cut them into bite-size pieces.

Chop the bacon into smaller than bite-size bits, and fry it with a tablespoon of olive oil until it just begins to get crisp. Then add the sliced onions and cook and stir until the onions wilt slightly. Then add the beans and just barely enough water to cover them. The beans need to be cooked for five to ten minutes, depending on how mature they are. To get them just right, watch them until the bright green turns darker all over indicating that the surfaces are cooked. Then bite one every few minutes. They will not be bright green, but they will be delicious.

MASHED SWEET POTATOES

All you do is steam the potatoes in their skins (but cut up into pieces so that they fit into the pot and cook in reasonable time) for about 45 minutes, or until they are completely soft. Or you could bake them. For baking, don't cut them up, just pierce them in a few places so they don't explode in the oven. Steamed potatoes are easier to peel. Baked potatoes will make stiffer mashed potatoes. Whichever method you use, when the potatoes are thoroughly soft, peel them and mash them. Add salt and pepper and milk and butter, perhaps nutmeg or a few drops of lemon juice, or that secret magic ingredient, sour cream, to taste. The potatoes can be prepared ahead and reheated in the microwave successfully.

But which potatoes? There are three varieties of sweet potatoes available around here:

Garnet yams: slightly red-purple, garnet-colored skin, orange-yellow flesh, and excellent flavor.

Jewel yams: more orangey skin, the best orange-colored flesh, and slightly less interesting flavor than garnet yams.

Sweet potatoes: lightest skin, yellow flesh, a bit drier than the yams, but flavor has much merit.

My solution: use all three, and mash them together. If you are going to have slightly more of one, let it be the garnets.

AMERICANA TURKEY SOUP

If you don't make soup, you will feel guilty about tossing out all sorts of in principle edible food. Your turkey will have died partly in vain. So make soup. This soup is not something you will have to nag people to eat later, coercing them with promises of more pie or a share of the leftover gravy, it is really delicious for its own sake. Even worth roasting a turkey.

**turkey carcass, leg bones, wing tips, and all other
bones, skin, neck**
**any leftover turkey meat that will not go into
sandwiches or whatever**
1 cup wild rice
2 cups carrots peeled and sliced into coins
3 cups chopped white cabbage
2 slices of excellent bacon
1 large onion, chopped
½ cup finely chopped parsley
**¼ ounce Porcini mushrooms, broken into small
pieces**
1 heaping teaspoon fenugreek leaves
3 bay leaves
1 teaspoon thyme
salt and pepper to taste

After dinner, collect the turkey leftovers (not cut meat, but the bones and stuff) and cover them with water (at least 2½ quarts) and bring it to a boil and simmer until all meat comes easily from any bones in the soup. If you have leftover celery leaves, toss them in too. Strain this through a sieve and remove the bits of meat from the bones and chop them and set aside. You might want to do this after dinner, chill the result, and then resume soup production the next day. I recommend this plan.

Upon resumption, take two cups of the turkey broth, bring to a boil, and add the wild rice and cook it for an hour with the lid on. The rice should be plump, split, and tender. It does not matter if all the liquid has been absorbed, as you will just add it to the soup.

Chop the bacon into small pieces and fry in a pot big enough for the soup until it releases its grease and begins to brown and smell really good, and add the onion and fry just until it begins to brown. Add about two quarts of turkey stock, then the carrots, cabbage, mushrooms and parsley, and the fenugreek and bay leaves, and simmer for half an hour. Half an hour is enough. Quit while you are ahead. Then add the wild rice and the turkey meat, plus any spare leftover turkey meat, heat to a

simmer again, and the soup is ready.

Cabbage really does not take long to cook and it is better if not cooked too long. Cabbage and carrots have such a lovely homey sweetness. The vegetables in broth may be done before the rice even if you start the rice first. So just wait for the rice, then combine, and reheat. You will be so pleased with the result. Your holiday will be complete. And you have already done so much, someone else should do the dishes.

MENU IDEAS

An Elegant Dinner Party for Any Time of Year

Dinner Party Cream of Parsley Soup

Spicy Tuna Steaks

Bulgar Pilaf

Stir-fried Sugar Snap Peas

Lemon Tart or Blueberry Tart

All of the food on this menu is elegant, and the main dinner is light on fat, so you can serve a richer first course and dessert. Of course, these two tarts are not the richest desserts, but both have intense flavor, which is appropriate after an intensely flavored main course like the spicy tuna steaks. The sugar snap peas are chosen because they are a slightly sour vegetable (compared to, say, carrots), which is a nice contrast to the bulgar and tuna, which are both faintly sweet. They also have a crunchy texture, a nice contrast to the tuna and the bulgar. Or you could serve snow peas, plain peas (frozen ones, especially the luxurious tiny varieties, are quite satisfactory), green beans, or asparagus. Pour a strongly flavored Chardonnay with the main course. You may want a light red wine with the *Parsley Soup*. In the summer, you could have *Gazpacho* (page 13) instead of the cream of parsley soup.

Another Elegant Dinner Party, for a Small Group in Winter

Pacific Rim Salad

Veal Curry

Rice Pilaf with Currants and Almonds

Spinach with Pears

Cranberry Hazelnut Pie

In this menu, the main course is rather rich, so you start with a light but flavorful salad, and side dishes to go with the curry that are not too rich. Both the salad and the rice – and well, the spinach, too – have a fruity side. The dessert was chosen because it has an intense flavor, necessary after the intensely flavored main course of curry. Pour a Zinfandel or maybe a not-too-complicated Cabernet with the main course. The spinach with pears is a lot of trouble, so I recommend a small group, say six, not more.

A Supper for People You are Fond of in the Season of Peaches

Salad of Romaine, Cucumbers and Celery with Ranch Dressing

Chicken Gumbo and Corn Bread

Peach Dumplings

Tear the Romaine lettuce into bite-size pieces. Slice English cucumbers (so you can leave the peel on) lengthwise and then crosswise about six slices to the inch, and slice the celery ribs on the diagonal (also about six slices to the inch) so that the pieces are large enough to be speared with a fork. And I think the Jiffy package mixes for corn bread are quite satisfactory. This is a loving and friendly meal. Serve it with cold beer.

Another Great Dinner Party only for People Who Deserve It

Salad of Great Sophistication

La Bouillabaisse

Lemon Tart

As the recipe discloses, the bouillabaisse is a really big production. So big that when I make it I sometimes either make the dessert the day before or buy a dessert at a yuppie bakery. This menu is not for unadventurous eaters. And it is so much trouble you should invite only people who will really enjoy it. If you must invite people who are either unadventurous eaters or that you are entertaining for some reason other than love, cook something else. When you are really short of time, substitute the *Simple Spicy Fish Soup*.

The sophisticated salad is good with the bouillabaisse because its tastes are light and slightly bitter and sour, very different from the soup. *Pacific Rim Salad* would be fine, too. Many different desserts would do—again, the blueberry tart, the lemon tart, a chocolate mousse with Grand Marnier, a chocolate cake with coffee or hazelnut frosting, even *Alice's Chocolate Cake*. What doesn't go, you may ask? Any delicately flavored dessert, such as flan or crème caramel, a spice cake with brown sugar frosting, pears cooked in red wine. See? There are some.

A Dinner to Make Friends, but Not to Influence People

Broccoli with Olive Oil and Lemon

Sausages with Peppers, Onions, and Noodles

Pears in Red Wine (optional)

This is a perfect little menu. Delicious, homey, and wholesome. If you really want a dessert, make some pears in red wine. Put six small ripe Bosc pears, (peeled, halved, and cored), in a little pot with $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dry red wine, two strips of zest from a lemon (2- x 1-inch), $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar, and one cinnamon stick. Lid on, tight lid. Cook 20 to 30 minutes until the pears are easily pierced with a fork. Check once and move the pears to make sure all sides have some time in the wine. Remove the pears and boil down the liquid until it is reduced by half, put the pears back in, and let the pot cool down. Serve at room temperature with the juice spooned over. Pour Zinfandel, maybe Old Vine Red.

A Homesick for California Dinner

Pacific Rim Salad

Enchiladas

Frijoles Negros

Tortillas

Devastating Brownie Cookies

Enchiladas are intensely flavored and really stick to your ribs, especially when served with beans and tortillas. A light salad is called for.

Homesick people need brownies. The right wine is Mexican beer. Bohemia is my favorite. A serious beer, but fragrant and friendly. Not bitter.

Another California Nostalgia Dinner of a Different Sort

Romaine Lettuce with Roquefort Cheese Salad Dressing

Sweetbreads Grilled with Green Onions on Charcoal

Steak Grilled on Charcoal

Pinto or Piquito Beans Cooked All Afternoon with Bacon and Onions

Sourdough Garlic Bread

Very Best Asparagus

Baked Potatoes

In my family, this is an orthodox ancestral meal. To prepare the beans, first soak dried beans overnight. (Pintos are available everywhere. Piquitos are small pintos, sometimes also called Santa Maria beans. They cook up a bit firmer.) Pour off the water. For a pound of beans, fry a quarter pound of bacon, chopped into smaller than bite-size pieces, until not quite crisp, then add a large onion, chopped, and fry until it starts to brown. Add a teaspoon of dried basil leaves, the beans, and a quart of new water. Simmer the beans for several hours, or until tender. Then add salt to taste. (Water boils at a lower temperature when salted, so if you add salt earlier, the beans will cook slower.) Cook a little more.

Tear the sweetbreads (only an ounce or so per person) into chunks and remove any tough membranes. Paint them with olive oil, and season with garlic, pepper, and Lowrey's Seasoned Salt. Season the steaks with oil, garlic, salt and pepper. Oil the green onions lightly. Put the green onions on the grill. When they start smelling really good, grill the sweetbreads, placing them on the green onions for a bit, until crisp on the edges and done through. Cut up the sweetbreads at the grill, and put toothpicks in bite-size pieces as offerings to eager, hungry fans. Leave the onions on the grill until they are pretty burned. They smell wonderful and attract the crowd. When the steaks are done, remove them to a pan at the side of the fire to rest with the burned onions.

Toast sliced sourdough rolls on the grill briefly. Then dip the toasted rolls in melted butter with crushed garlic in it (two cloves for each four ounce stick) and put back on the grill for a moment. If you must have dessert, I suggest butter pecan ice cream. Wine: probably a Zinfandel – something not too sophisticated – a red wine that tastes like it is made from grapes.

A Decadent Baja Breakfast

Mangoes with Lime

Huevos Rancheros

Frijoles Negros

Tortillas

Sliced Cherry Tomatoes

Cut the two large sides off the mangoes as close to the seed as you can. Cut each sliced-off piece down to the skin diagonally in both directions. Then push the skin side in, and slice off the squares of flesh, which now stick out conveniently, into a bowl. Squeeze on lime juice. In the fall, have Fuyu persimmons instead of mango. Also with lime.

Warm the plates in the oven at 175 or 200 degrees. Set the beans to warming (canned ones are fine – three servings per can for Goyas). Slice the tomatoes (three per person). For the salsa for huevos, just buy a jar of a salsa, such as Chichi's, labeled *thick* and *mild*. About ½ cup is needed for one serving. Set it to warming. Heat the tortillas (three per person) as described in the recipe for Enchiladas. Fry the eggs (two per person) over-easy or sunny-side-up. When the eggs are done, put them on the warm plates, pour the salsa over the eggs, put the beans and tomatoes on the plates, and put the tortillas and Tabasco on the table. It's the beer, of course, that makes this breakfast decadent.

A True Pacific Rim Dinner

Pacific Rim Salad

Lamb Curry or Pirate Curry

Spinach with Fish Sauce and Chilis

Boiled Chinese Egg Noodles or Basmati Rice

Curry is rich, so all of the other food should be not too rich. To make perfect rice: (for eight people): Bring 2½ cups of water to a rolling boil in a heavy pot with a tight-fitting and heavy lid. When the water is boiling, pour in two cups of basmati rice. When the water returns to boil, turn the heat very low, put on the lid, and cook 18 minutes. When the bell rings, lift the lid, fork the rice, put the lid back on, and let the rice rest another five minutes. Cooked rice is effectively warmed up in the microwave.

A Dinner Party for Leonardo*Pacific Rim Salad**Grilled Baby Salmon with Béarnaise Sauce**Wild Rice**Delicious Carrots**An Elegant Lemon Tart, Raspberry Variation*

Now Leonardo really loves the *Noodles with Sausage and Peppers*, too. And of course also the *Elegant Noodles* with the scallops and shrimps and olives and basil and Portobello mushrooms. But since this is a dinner to thank him for all the wonderful carpets he has found for you and for his inspired but authoritarian re-hanging of your stuff, and since various mutual friends will be there, he will feel more honored if the food is something really elegant *and* delicious instead of merely delicious. So you better have those linen napkins bleached and ironed and the silver polished. Leonardo knows what civilized life is.

A Satisfying Winter Weekday Supper*Salad of Tomatoes and Romaine**with the Dressing for the Salad of Great Sophistication**Lentil Soup**Yogurt Side Dish**Lightly Toasted Whole Wheat Pita Bread*

Make the lentil soup on the weekend and have it ready and invite someone over for just a little supper after work. This supper will make someone happy and contented. Use with discretion. You don't really need dessert. Either Zinfandel or beer is delicious with this supper.

A Simple Supper for When You Have Had Enough Fancy Food for a Bit

Roast Chicken

Peas

Little Roast Potatoes

Chickens are pretty good these days, you don't have to do much to them. Be sure and take the package of giblets out (such a nice breakfast for the kitty) and then follow the Roast Chicken recipe. You can baste it, but if you forget it will still taste really good. Frozen peas are just fine. Buy the ones whose instructions say to cook them for only three minutes. If the instructions say to cook for more than three minutes, they are the wrong peas. They taste better with a little butter, salt, and freshly ground pepper.

A Supper to Make Bob Hall Happy

Broccoli with Olive Oil and Lemon, and Roasted Peppers

Noodles with Pesto

Tarte Tatin, Pear Variation

Bob Hall's three favorite foods are pesto, *Tarte Tatin*, and chocolate, in that order, I think. But he endorses the house guidelines about the consumption of crucifers and other vegetables, and his favorite crucifer is broccoli with oil and lemon. He is sentimentally attached to the *Roasted Bell Peppers* with capers because I served them on our second first date. He also claims that pesto is an aphrodisiac, but really, I can't tell any difference. As for *Tarte Tatin* vs. something chocolate, even on his birthday I don't make two desserts. I am tough. I ration.

A Menu to Seduce Someone

Of course this is a delicate social program. The food may not be the most important part. First decide whether this dinner will be for two or you will begin with a larger group and hope it will dwindle down to two. If you start with the larger group, you must decide whether he is self-possessed and you want to simply please him or whether he is one of those spiritually-underdeveloped types who will be more affected if the others at the table, who of course are known to be sophisticated eaters, are dazzled. If the latter is the case, go for either the *Bouillabaisse Menu* or the *Tuna Steaks*. But wonder why you are bothering.

If this is to be a simple dinner for two, choose a menu that can be prepared mostly ahead of time. You probably also need some piece of meat, like lamb chops or a steak. For heaven's sake, don't prepare boned, skinned, chicken breasts! (too abstemious, the wrong signal, advises Rick Warren-Boulton, who is expert in these matters). Most men still really like red meat, but should be fed only moderate servings for their own good. Most of them also really like Mexican food, but it is more risky, so wait for another date. The Italian *Sausages with Peppers and Onions* is a real man-pleaser, too. If you can't grill outdoors, go for the lamb chops. Men also like potatoes, so fix the little roasted garlicky potatoes. And a lot of them don't like vegetables much, so you probably should disguise them at least a little. So I recommend:

Mulligatawny Soup

Broiled Rare Lamb Chops with Olive Oil, Rosemary, and Black Pepper

Little Roasted Potatoes

The Most Wonderful Asparagus

You can have everything ready to go early. The soup can be done days ahead, and sitting on the stove ready to be heated. If the soup is too spicy for him and you like this book, he's the wrong guy, and you need to know this. If he does like it, you will have fed him cauliflower and carrots and he didn't even know. Rub the lamb chops with oil, rosemary (½ teaspoon for two), and pepper, and sprinkle them lightly with garlic salt. Cut up the asparagus and have it and the bacon and other ingredients ready to go. The little potatoes can also be prepared to the point where they are ready to go into the oven or toaster oven. So you are set. If all goes well, you won't want dessert. If it doesn't, you still won't want dessert. A good soft bottle of Zinfandel will be perfect. Something that tastes like it is made from grapes. Even if you aren't trying to seduce someone, this is a really nice menu for any time of year. Asparagus is always growing somewhere, it seems.

Dinner for the Senior Offspring

*Baba Ghanouj (with Whole Wheat Pita) or
Guacamole (with Tortilla Chips), and Olives
Salad of Friendly Lettuce*

*Mixed Grill: One or more of: Sweetbreads, Steak, Salmon, Lamb
Chops, and Dr. Bob's Chicken
That Cold Green Hot Sauce, and Crying Tiger Sauce
The Most Wonderful Asparagus
Little Roasted Garlicky Potatoes*

Chocolate Cake with Gobs of Coffee Chocolate Frosting

Many weekends our grown children who live nearby assemble at our house with spouses and dates for a swim, a visit, and an ancestral meal. We have developed our own variation on this, a little different from my father's. There are still steaks and chops and sweetbreads (see *Another California Nostalgia Dinner* for a recipe) chicken and salad, and asparagus, but seldom garlic bread, and we have added the *Baba Ghanouj* or *Guacamole* and the salmon. I think my father would have liked the *Baba Ghanouj*, but not the *Guacamole* or the salmon. He would have put the *Cold Green Hot Sauce* on the lamb, and loved the *Crying Tiger Sauce* on steak, but not raw fish. So things are always changing. The optimization model is the wrong model and the evolutionary model is the right model for understanding complex social institutions.

Friendly lettuce means nothing bitter or fuzzy (like Arugula or curly Endive). The SO-approved leaves are Romaine, red leaf, butter lettuce, and spinach, and a few leaves of watercress can be slipped in. The dressing can be *Vinaigrette with Roquefort*, *Dressing for the Salad of Great Sophistication*, *Very Refined Salad Dressing*, *Homemade Ranch*, or the *Sun-dried Tomato Vinaigrette*, or *Caesar*. Their favorite is *Caesar*, but we can't *always* have it or they'll get tired of it.

The mixed grill has something to make everyone happy and to provide plenty of leftovers for everyone, including us. But with so many young men, it is amazing how much of it gets eaten. The entire grill is straightforward except the chicken, for which a recipe and cooking instructions follow. I fix four little potatoes for each person, plus four extra for each male under 40, and ten spears of asparagus per person. There are never leftover potatoes or asparagus.

This meal is a pageant. The food is important, but so is the ritual. During the preparation of dinner, everyone must be in the kitchen, having some delicious, mildly intoxicating beverage, such as a Trader Bob (recipe below), and either helping or getting in the way, or over in the corner computing, except Bob Hall, who will be out tending the fire. At the fire,

golf and football may be discussed, but not elsewhere. At or away from the fire, gopher holes in word processors or Windows may be discussed before dinner, but *never* during or after dinner. (We want everyone to be in a good mood after dinner.) However, software production and litigation in software are so important that they must be discussed only at table so that everyone can hear. The flat tax is out of bounds at all social gatherings, including family gatherings (the truly interested can read the book). Any mention of anyone's hourly billing rate, especially in the context of reckoning the cost of a meal's preparation or deciding who should peel the carrots or run to the market is *per se* in bad taste and irrelevant.

Just before dinner, there must be some serious deliberation about which plates to use for which course, and whether they need be warmed. Someone must make a comment about our dish-intensive life. Someone must observe that the meal is very *phat*. (This is good.) There must be a chorus of *umm, cake, umming* when the cake is served. The young people must load the last run of the dishwasher for the evening. Then the ritual is complete.

DR. BOB'S CHICKEN

14 chicken breasts
½ cup lemon juice
½ cup olive oil
½ cup Kikkoman soy sauce
1 egg, to emulsify (do not vary with larger quantity)
a heavy sprinkling of kosher salt (about 1 teaspoon per breast)
ground pepper
pressed garlic to taste (we like one clove for each 2 pieces chicken)

Mix and beat together everything but the salt, and paint it heavily on the chicken. Sprinkle the chicken heavily with salt. Bob Hall says that the reason most people fail to replicate his superb results with his recipe is that they resist the heavy sprinkling of salt. Remember a lot of it dissolves and melts off into the fire. But this is not for anyone on a salt-limited diet.

The fire is important. Get one of those chimneys for starting the charcoal with newspaper so that you don't have to use a liquid lighter. The coals will be ready 25 to 30 minutes after lighting. The grilling must begin within ten minutes of the time the fire is ready, or it will be too far gone. When the coals are ready, spread them around the edge of the firebox (24-inches round) and keep a squirt bottle near the fire to put out flames.

Turn the chicken often and don't let the skin burn. Breasts take about 25 minutes to cook to a juicy but cooked (no red parts) state. Firmly resist all suggestions that you wouldn't have so much trouble with flames if you covered the barbecue – that would give you soggy baked chicken.

TRADER BOB COCKTAIL

Combine:

ice
1 or 2 ounces gin or light rum
3 ounces fresh grapefruit juice
3 ounces tonic water

in a large plastic tumbler. (Only plastic is allowed near the pool.) If you have some of those silly little bamboo umbrellas for tropical drinks, this is the time to use them.

For those on a low-carb diet, you may omit the tonic water.

CRYING TIGER SAUCE

Combine:

¼ cup lime juice
¼ cup Thai or Vietnamese fish sauce (*nam plah*)
¼ teaspoon (or more) crushed dried red chilis, or
½ teaspoon of sambal ulek
1 teaspoon minced cilantro, ½ of a green onion,
chopped, and
1 teaspoon powdered toasted basmati rice

Mix it up and serve. It benefits from sitting for a while, too. (Make rice powder by toasting rice in a skillet, tossing all the time, with no oil until it is light brown. Pour it out of the skillet onto a towel to cool, and when it is cool, grind it fine in a blender or carefully cleaned coffee grinder. Store in a tightly closed jar so you'll always have some.) Tigers like rare meat with this sauce, but the chilis make their eyes cry. Good on rare tuna steaks, and sashimi, too.

About the Author

Susan Woodward was raised on steak, salad, and tacos plus occasional Cantonese food in Ojai Valley. She tasted Béarnaise sauce, an embellishment offered with her 2,083rd steak, on an expedition to Los Angeles in 1965. Her search for a recipe resulted in the acquisition of Julia Child's inspiring and influential *Mastering the Art*. Beginning in 1966, she attended UCLA, where she was tantalized by Veblen and Hayek, became suspicious of Rombauer, Freud, and the other pantheorists, and discovered philosophy, social science and the foods of Asia beyond Canton. From 1985 to 1995 she lived mainly in Washington, DC, where she complained about the supermarkets and the summer weather. In 1995 she married Bob Hall, fellow traveler in (almost) all matters. Now she votes and pays taxes in Menlo Park, and has rediscovered the pleasure in hot weather, found supermarkets that are nearly perfect, and lives once again amidst a number of superb Cantonese restaurants.

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