

Super-quick • Kid-friendly SALAD ON A STICK

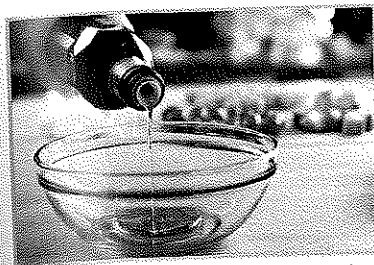
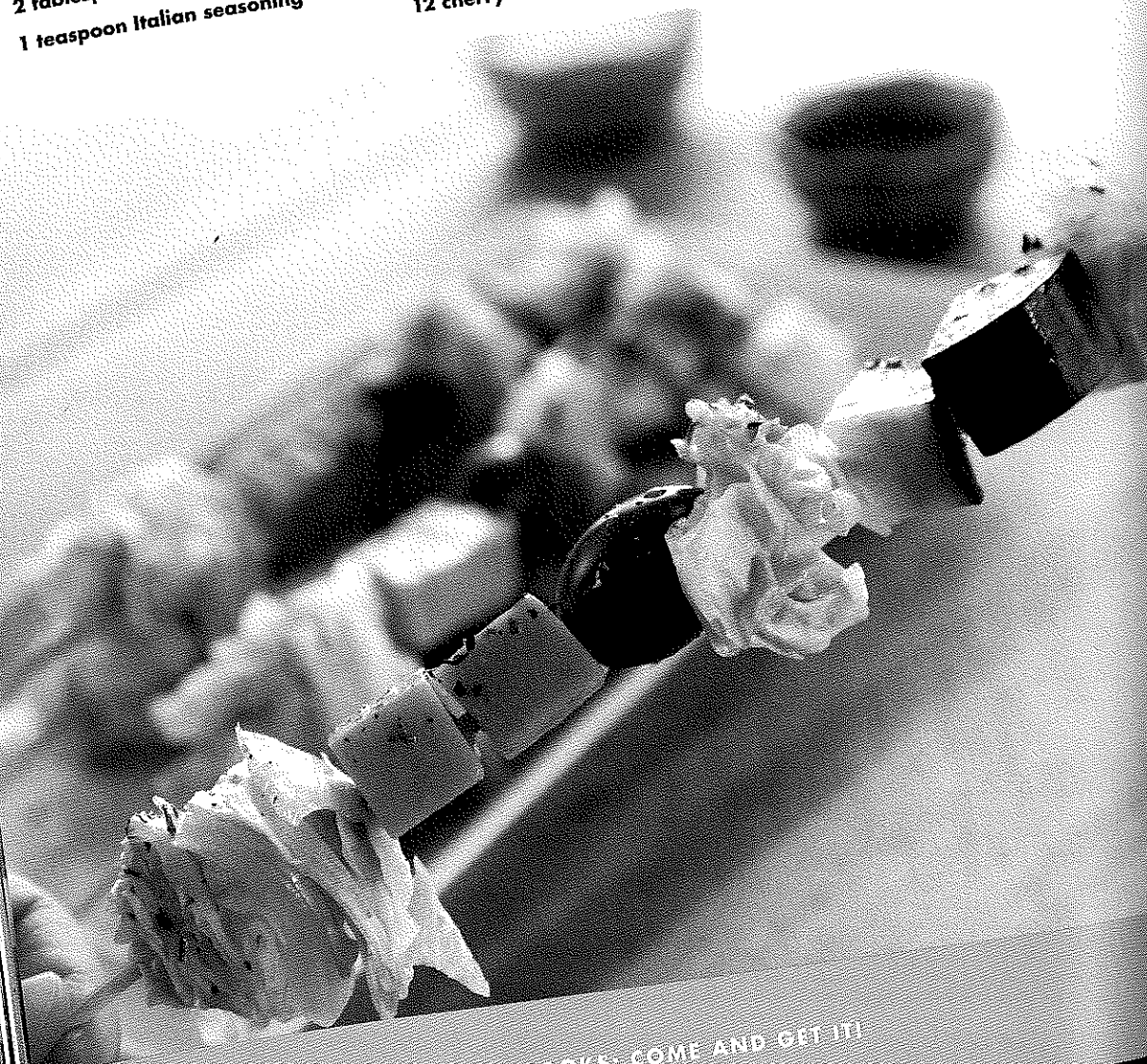
MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

The big selling point of this salad is that it's F-U-N, fun! I mean, sure . . . it might be just as easy (okay, easier) to throw salad ingredients into a bowl and toss them with the dressing. But I ask you: What mark are we trying to make here on the world, people?!? Are we men or are we mice?!? Are we bold and courageous or are we standard and predictable?!? I think you need to spend some time taking a good, hard look at yourself and evaluating whether or not you really want to be here!!!!!!
Sorry, I sound like a high school football coach.

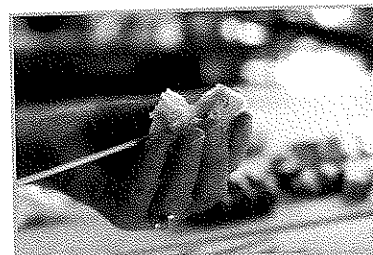
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning

- Kosher salt and black pepper
- ½ head iceberg lettuce, cut into small chunks
- 12 cherry tomatoes

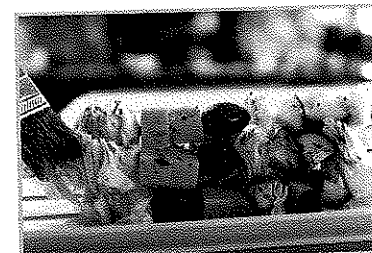
- 8 ounces mild Cheddar cheese, cut into cubes
- ½ cucumber, cut into chunks



1. Make the dressing! Drizzle the olive oil into a bowl . . .



4. Next, use wooden skewers to build the salads.



5. Place the skewers on a platter and brush the dressing all over them. Then the stick salads will be all ready to eat!



2. And add the vinegar, Italian seasoning, and salt and pepper to taste.



Go in any order you want! (And change up the ingredients to suit your fancy.)



3. Whisk until it's all totally combined.



You can snip off the sharp end of the skewers if you're serving them to youngsters.



6. Serve immediately (or pack them up for a picnic).

CHANGE THINGS UP!

Try:

- Small white mushrooms
- Whole black olives
- Chunks of zucchini or summer squash
- Asparagus tips
- Radish halves
- Thin-sliced ham or turkey, folded into wedges
- Cooked bow-tie pasta



Salads + evening walks = jeans fit



Make-ahead

TORTILLA PINWHEELS

MAKES ABOUT 40 PINWHEELS

Why, hello, 1994! It's wonderful to see you again. I've missed you so much, and I'd really like my small waist back. Thank you. And while you're at it, could you please send me some of those crazy easy tortilla roll-ups that people used to make for casual get-togethers? Because life has gotten rather complicated here in the new millennium and people think these are out of style. Which they are. But I don't care. And never mind, no need to send. I'll just make a batch myself!

Love ya. Say hi to my size 6 jeans!

Two 8-ounce packages cream cheese, at room temperature
One 1-ounce package dry ranch dressing mix

½ teaspoon black pepper
5 large (burrito-size) flour tortillas
1 red bell pepper, seeded and finely diced

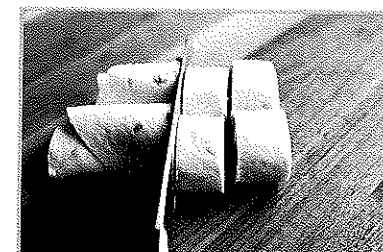
1 green bell pepper, seeded and finely diced
5 green onions, thinly sliced



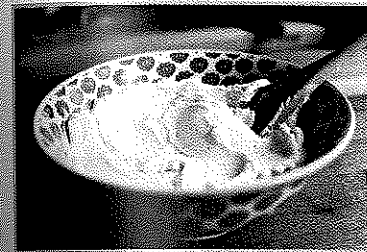
1. In a bowl, combine the cream cheese, three-quarters of the packet of ranch dressing mix (add more to taste), and the black pepper.



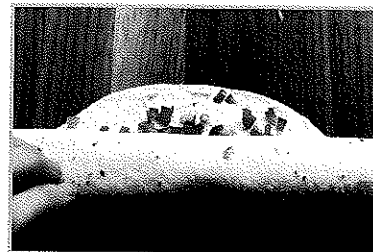
5. Sprinkle on the red and green bell peppers and the green onions.



9. Before serving, cut into 1-inch slices . . .



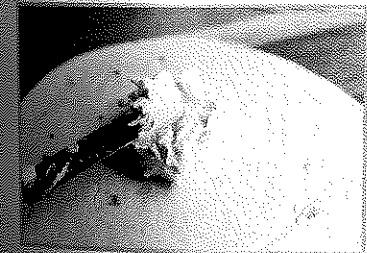
2. Stir it with a wooden spoon until totally combined.



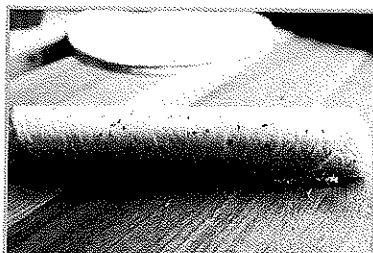
6. Roll the tortillas up nice and tight . . .



10. And serve them on a platter.



3. Divide the mixture equally among the tortillas . . .



7. Then wrap them individually in plastic wrap.



4. And spread it into an even layer all over the surface of each tortilla, making sure to get it all the way out to the edge.



8. Store in the fridge for at least 2 hours or up to 12 hours. I make them well in advance of when we need them!

CHANGE THINGS UP!

- Sprinkle ¼ cup chopped olives over each tortilla along with the peppers and green onions.
- Add shaved ham or turkey to the roll-ups.
- Add canned green chiles (well drained) to the cream cheese mixture.

SLOW COOKER MEXICAN CHICKEN SOUP

MAKES 8 TO 10 SERVINGS

I start to lose interest in slow cooker recipes that require much more work than just chucking in a bunch of ingredients and turning it on, because let's face it: That's the dang beauty of slow-cooker cooking! This incredibly flavorful, crowd-pleasing soup pretty much fits that bill, but for a couple of minutes you need to spend shredding the chicken at the end. A small price to pay for a super-tasty dinner!



- 3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts**
- 1 teaspoon chili powder**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
- 1 teaspoon black pepper**
- One 28-ounce can whole or diced tomatoes, with juice**
- One 10-ounce can diced tomatoes and green chiles (such as Ro*Tel)**
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth (more if you like the soup more liquid)**
- One 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed**
- 2 heaping tablespoons tomato paste**
- 1 medium onion, chopped**
- 1 canned chipotle pepper in adobo sauce (or 2 or 3, if you like things spicier)**
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped**
- 1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and chopped**
- Juice of 1 lime**
- Fixins: lime wedges, avocado, sour cream, grated cheese, crushed tortilla chips, and fresh cilantro leaves**



1. Place the chicken in a slow cooker. Sprinkle on the chili powder, cumin, salt, and black pepper.



4. The chipotle pepper and bell peppers . . .



7. Remove the chicken to a plate and use two forks to break it into chunks (or shred it finely).



2. Add the plain tomatoes with their juices, diced tomatoes and chiles, chicken broth . . .



5. And stir. Place the lid on the slow cooker and cook on high for 5 hours or on low for 8 hours.



8. Return the chicken to the soup, stir in the lime juice, then taste and add more seasoning if necessary.



3. The black beans, tomato paste, and onion . . .



6. Great things happen during that time!



9. Serve piping hot in a bowl with all the fixins!

CHANGE THINGS UP!

- Tear up a few corn tortillas and stir them into the soup toward the end.
- Stir in 6 ounces processed American cheese (Velveeta!) toward the end for a cheesy soup.
- Stir in ½ cup tequila with ½ hour left in the cooking process.

Jancy

CURRIED RICE

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

Oh, how I love a good rice dish. And ohhhhhh, how I love curry. This lovely side is nice and mild—not overpowering at all—and once you taste it the first time, you’ll be hooked and make it again and again. It’s like a good pair of jeans: It goes with everything!

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

½ medium onion, very finely diced

2 garlic cloves, grated

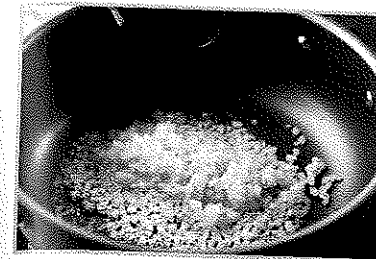
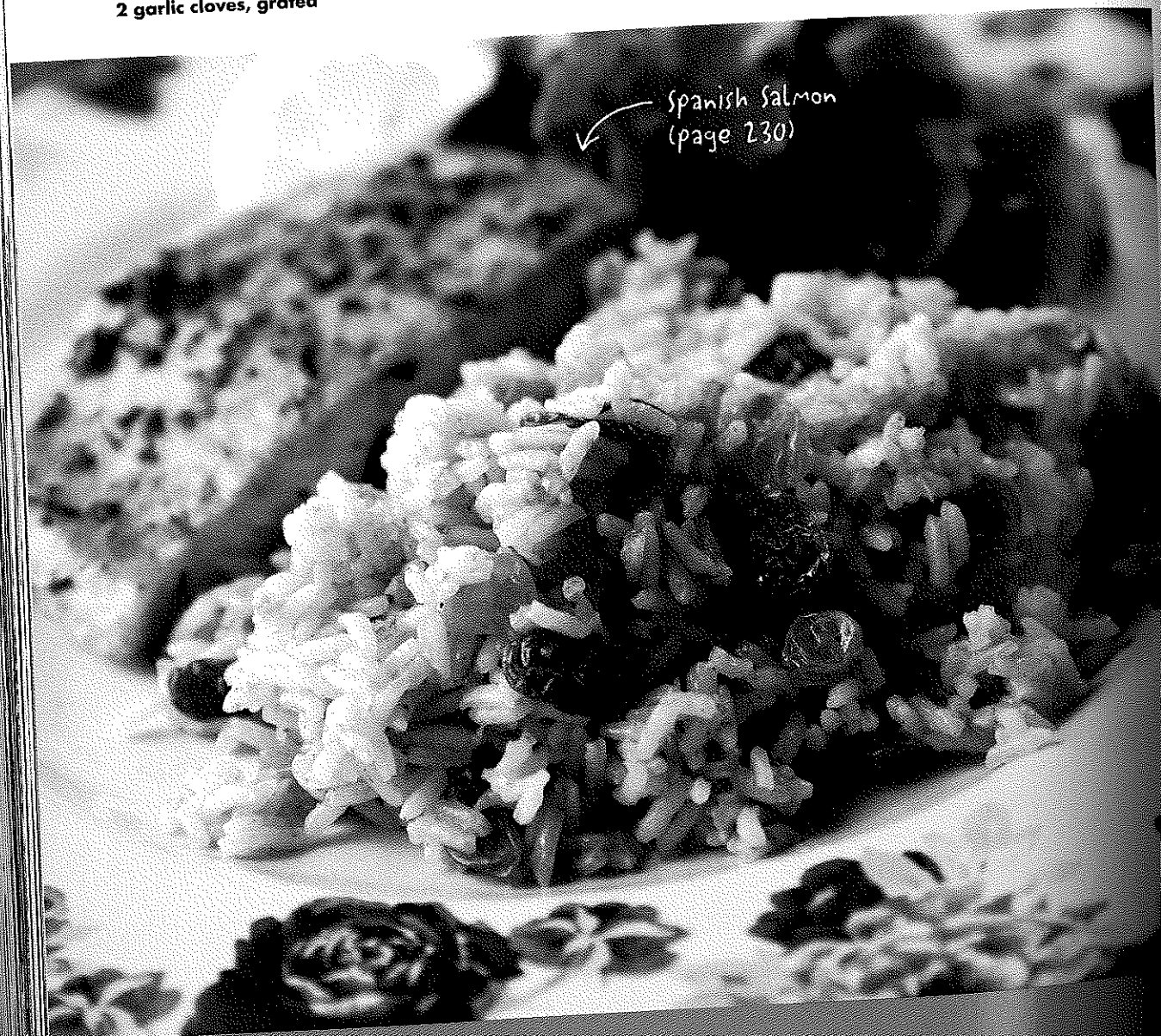
1 cup long-grain white rice

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 tablespoon curry powder

2 cups vegetable or chicken broth

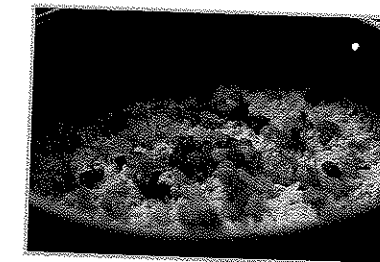
¾ cup golden raisins (optional)



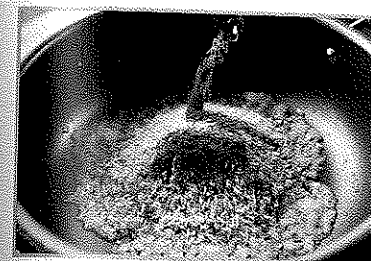
1. In a medium skillet (with a lid), heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until the onion is softened, a couple of minutes.



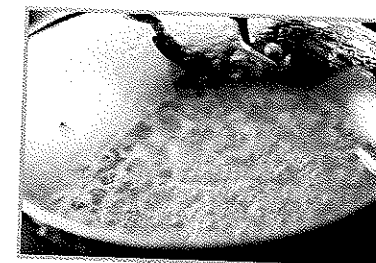
4. Then add the broth and stir to combine.



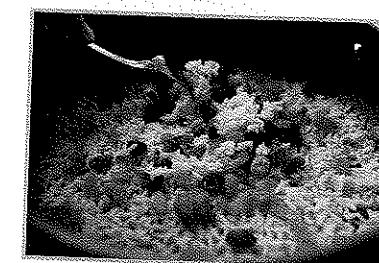
7. Add the raisins (unless you hate raisins, but even if you do, I still think you should add them!) . . .



2. Add the rice, salt, and curry powder . . .



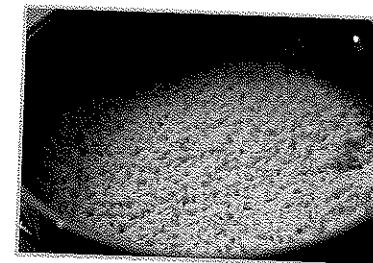
5. Bring it to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover the skillet, and let it cook for 15 to 18 minutes . . .



8. And use a fork to fluff the rice. Yum!



3. And stir, letting everything cook for 1 minute . . .



6. Until all the liquid has been absorbed.



9. Serve it with chicken, fish, or steak.





11. Now cover the pan again (you can use the same plastic wrap) and let them rise for another 45 minutes to 1 hour. Just time this so that it works with your life! They'll be ready when you come back.



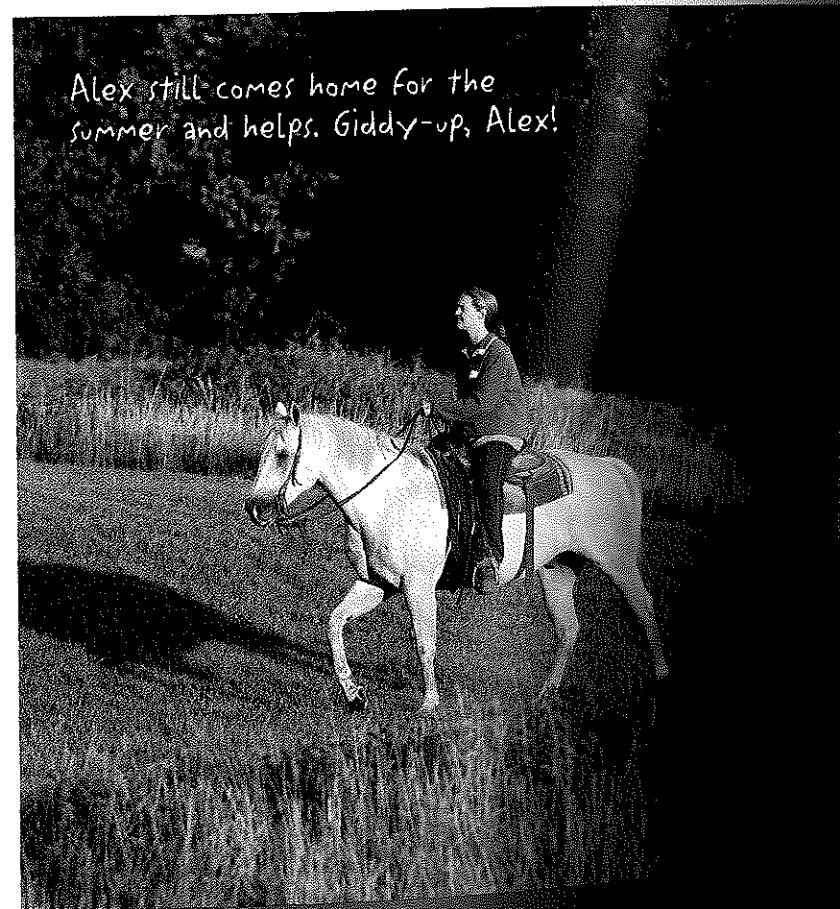
12. They should be risen to the point of almost touching by now, so you can bake them for 20 to 25 minutes.



13. And here they are!



These are so delicious warm out of the oven and slathered with softened butter! (Understatement of the century.)



Alex still comes home for the summer and helps. Giddy-up, Alex!

CONFETTI CORNBREAD

MAKES 9 THICK SQUARES OR 18 THINNER PIECES

This cornbread contains creamed corn, and you know what? I don't even know what *creamed corn* is. I only know that it comes in a can, it's very weird looking, and it makes for a really delicious cornbread if you dump it in the batter.

But what *is* creamed corn anyway?
Never mind. Don't answer that.



2 tablespoons butter, melted,
plus more for the pan and
softened butter for serving

1 cup fine-grind or coarse
cornmeal

1½ cups all-purpose flour

2 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon baking powder

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ cup buttermilk (or use a
little less than ½ cup milk with
1 tablespoon white vinegar—
instant buttermilk!)

2 large eggs

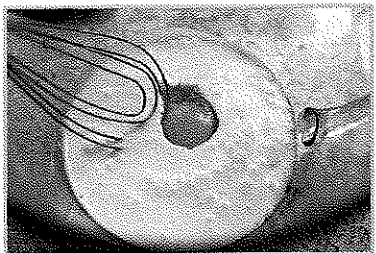
One 14-ounce can cream-style
corn

One 14-ounce can fiesta corn,
drained

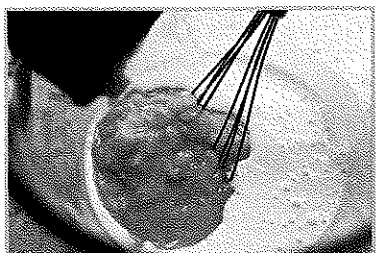
1. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
Grease a 9-inch square pan with
butter. (If you want a thinner
cornbread, use a 9 x 13-inch pan
and bake for about 20 minutes.)



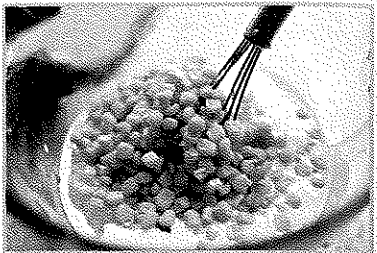
2. In a large bowl, combine the
cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking
powder, and salt. Stir it together.



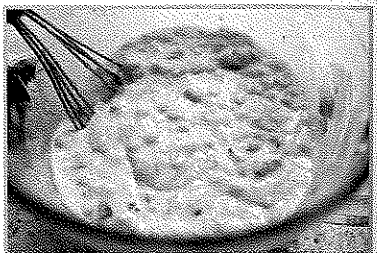
3. In a large bowl or measuring
pitcher, lightly whisk the
buttermilk and eggs.



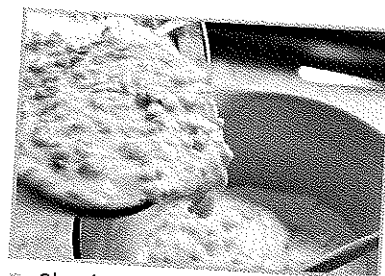
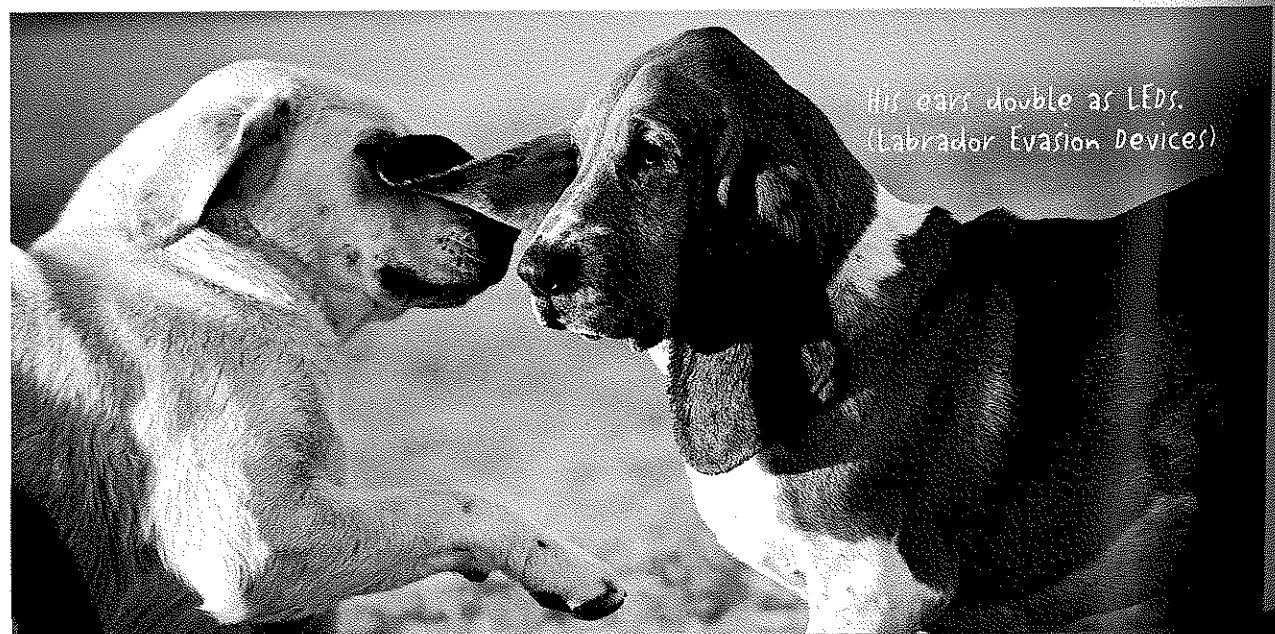
4. Add the creamed corn . . .



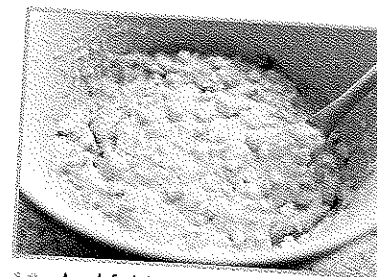
5. And the fiesta corn . . .



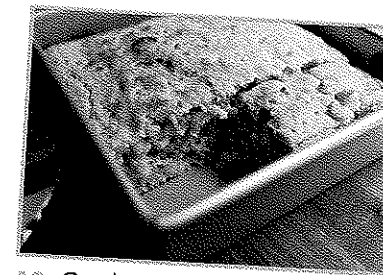
6. And stir it together.



7. Slowly pour the corn mixture
into the dry ingredients . . .



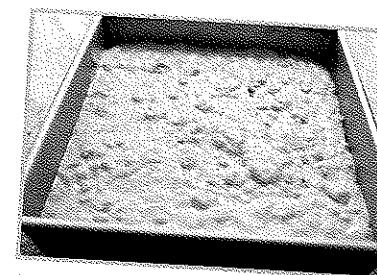
10. And fold until it's mixed
together.



13. Cut the cornbread into
squares . . .



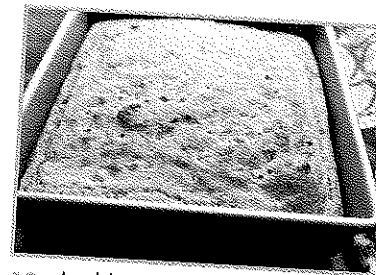
8. Folding as you go.



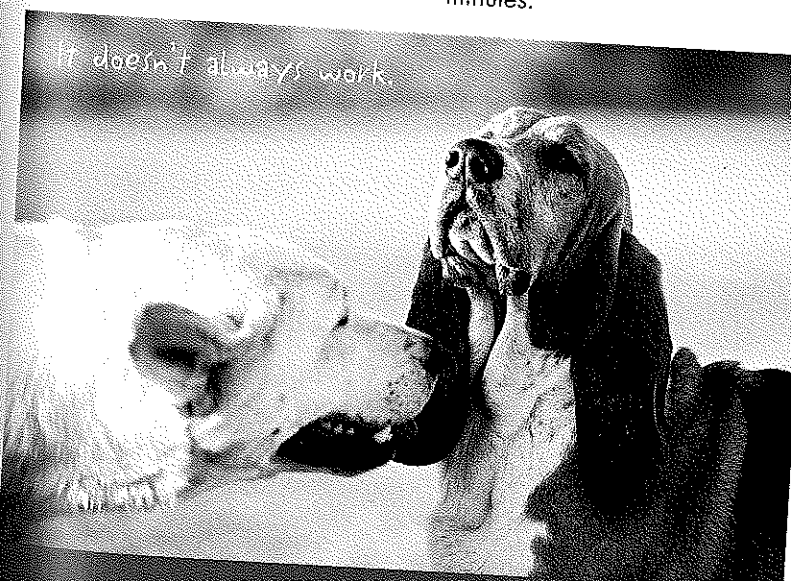
11. Pour the batter into the
pan . . .



9. Pour in the melted butter . . .



12. And bake until golden on top
and set in the middle, 23 to 25
minutes.



14. And serve it warm with
softened butter!

Make-ahead • Kid-friendly

DUMP CAKES

MAKES AS MANY AS YOU NEED!

Let's just get this out of the way: Dump cake is canned fruit, boxed cake mix, and butter—baked together so that it looks like a from-scratch cobbler made with fruit you grew in your orchard.

Once you accept that basic set of facts, you can relax and enjoy every bite!

Butter, for greasing the baking dishes

CHERRY-PINEAPPLE DUMP CAKE

One 21-ounce can cherry pie filling

One 15-ounce can crushed pineapple (do not drain)

1 box white cake mix

12 tablespoons (1½ sticks) butter

PEACH DUMP CAKE

One 29-ounce can sliced peaches in syrup (do not drain)

1 box white cake mix

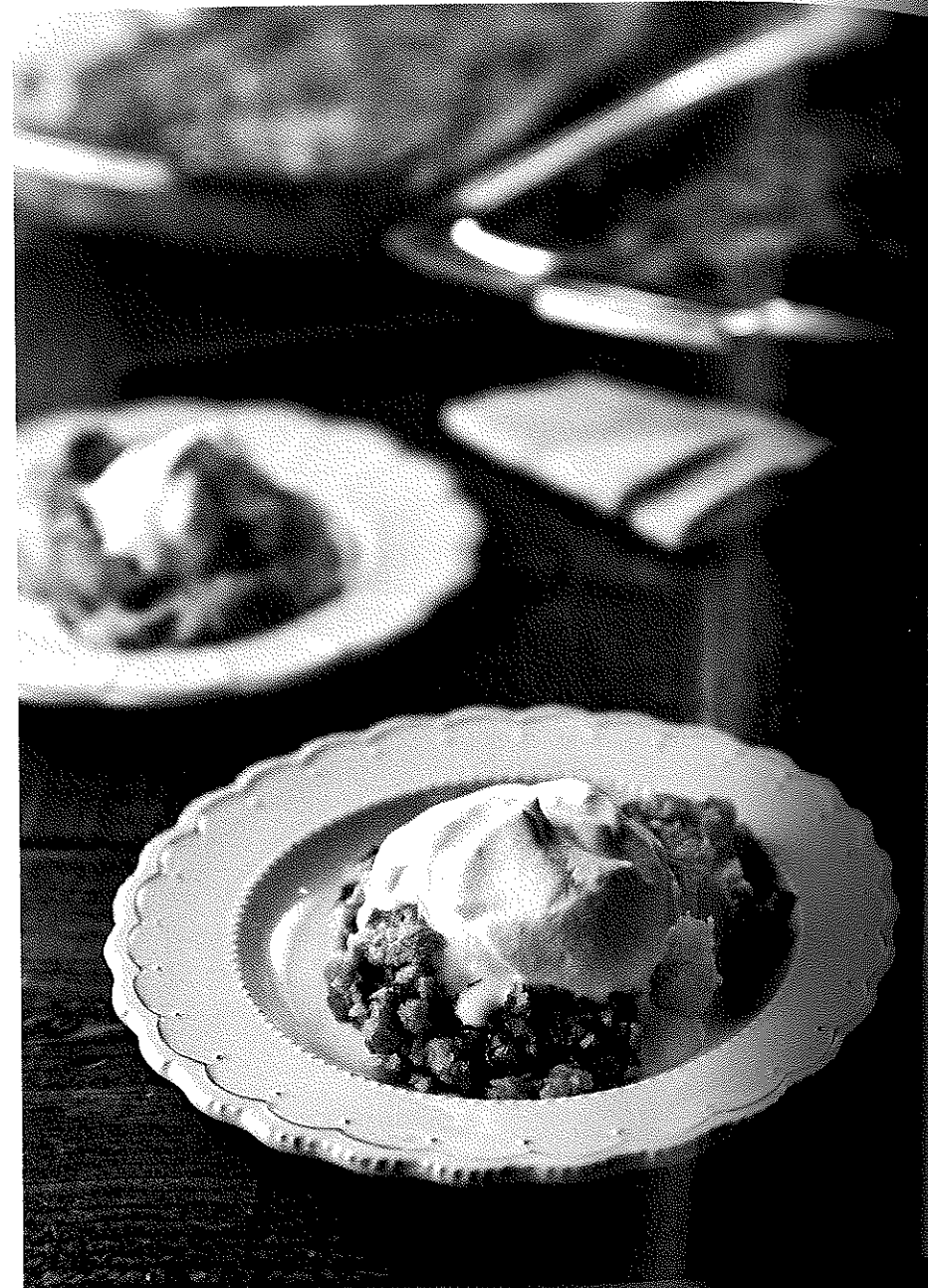
12 tablespoons (1½ sticks) butter

Whipped cream, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter two 9 x 13-inch baking dishes.



2. For the cherry-pineapple dump cake: Dump the cherry pie filling and crushed pineapple into one baking dish . . .



3. And stir it together until combined.



7. Repeat the process of sprinkling on the cake mix and laying on the butter slices.



4. Sprinkle the cake mix over the fruit to cover it totally.



8. Bake the cakes until the tops are browned and bubbling, 45 to 50 minutes.



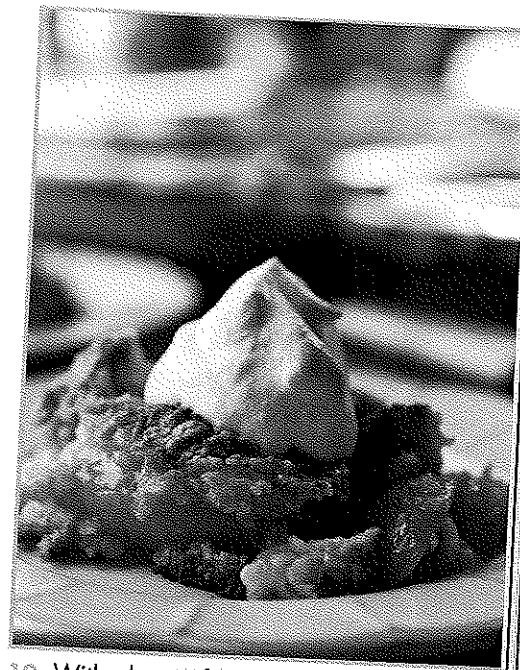
5. Slice the butter into tablespoons and distribute it evenly over the cake mix. (Please note that the original recipe for dump cake called for 2 sticks of butter instead of 1½. I'm all about healthy choices.)



9. Serve the dump cakes nice and warm . . .



6. For the peach dump cake: Dump the peaches into the other baking dish.



10. With plenty of whipped cream!

(Ice cream is also permitted.)

CHANGE THINGS UP!

Any combination of canned fruit and cake mix flavor can work! See how many different varieties you can come up with!

High-five after burning.

