



Salmon Cucumbers

There are few dishes that look as fancy with as little work as salmon cucumbers. The color of the salmon against the backdrop of the cucumber makes for a perfect little bite. This dish can be prepared ahead and travels well, and since the cucumber slices make individual bites, they are great for passing around at a party.

30
MINUTES

1
DAY AHEAD

BRIDGE TO TABLE

MAKES 15 TO 20 CUCUMBER BITES

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons diced shallots
- 1/2 pound salmon fillet
- 1 large English cucumber
- Salt to taste
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 teaspoon hot sauce (Frank's RedHot preferred)
- 2 tablespoons capers
- 3 tablespoons chopped chives, for garnish
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Place a pan on medium-high heat. Add the olive oil and shallots and sauté for 3 minutes. Move the shallots to one side of the pan and then add the salmon and sauté for 4 minutes. Flip and cook an additional 2 to 4 minutes, depending on the thickness of your salmon and how rare you like it. Remove from heat and let cool.

Slice the cucumber into disks, approximately 1/4 inch thick; they should be thick enough to hold the filling on top but not so thick that they will take over. In a bowl combine the salt, mayonnaise, hot sauce, and capers. Flake the salmon into small pieces and add into the bowl. Mix until combined. Spoon the salmon mixture on top of the cucumbers, and top with chives and freshly ground pepper.

— HOW TO BRING IT —

This dish can be made a day in advance as long as it is covered well in plastic wrap: you don't want the salmon or cucumber to dry out. You can place the cucumbers on a serving platter and refrigerate, or you can put them on a sheet pan and then transfer them when you are ready to serve. Just don't stack them or the cucumbers will get soggy.

Alternatively, if you would rather assemble on arrival, you can certainly do that as well. Just make sure you have the time and space to do it wherever you are going.



Shaved Carrots Salad

This salad is so different it will make you wonder why you don't make more salads without lettuce—because who needs it? This salad has texture and flavor galore, not to mention so many colors that it will be the centerpiece of any table and have everyone guessing until they bite into it. It's also one of the few cold-weather salads that evokes summertime sunshine.

30
MINUTES

1
DAY AHEAD

FRIDGE TO TABLE

MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

- 1 pound carrots
- 1 cup pomegranate seeds
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 cup chopped parsley
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- Dash of salt

Using a cheese slicer or a vegetable peeler, peel the carrots. Discard the first outer layer of every carrot but then make each thick peel into as long of a strand as you can. You won't be able to use the entirety of every carrot, but when you start to run out of room you can always flip the carrot over to the other side—just make sure to always discard that initial peel.

In a large salad bowl, combine the pomegranate seeds, lemon juice, olive oil, sesame oil, vinegar, parsley, sesame seeds, and salt with the carrots and toss until fully combined.

— SUBSTITUTIONS —

The length of the noodle-like peeled carrots here is up to you: long strands look beautiful but they are also slightly less easy to eat. If you are going to an event where there are plastic knives and no tables, you may want to chop the carrot strands a bit before serving. You can even use precut matchstick carrots in a pinch.

Potato Salad with Soy Vinaigrette

I know what you're thinking: Why is potato salad even in the salad section? But that's where you've been going wrong about potato salad all these years. This is not your grandmother's heavy mayo-laden potato salad (no offense to your grandmother). More than just a plate filler, this lighter version feels bright and flavorful and—dare I say?—fun.



MAKES 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

1½ pounds small red potatoes or a mix of tricolored potatoes (about 15 to 20 potatoes)

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (about ½ a lemon)

2 tablespoons mayonnaise

1 tablespoon chopped tarragon

1 red bell pepper, diced

¼ cup diced red onion

¼ cup diced scallions (about 3 scallions)

1 cup chopped tomato

Dash of salt

Add the potatoes to a pot of water and bring to a boil. Cook for 8 to 15 minutes, depending on the size of your potatoes, until they are softened but still with a bit of bite. Strain and run cold water over them to cool.

Once they are cool, cut them into 1-inch pieces. Combine the soy sauce, lemon juice, mayonnaise, and tarragon. Add the potatoes to the pepper, onion, scallions, tomato, and salt and combine with the dressing.

Tomato Orzo Salad

When pasta is included in a salad, it often supersedes the vegetable part of the equation. But really, it should complement the dish: you want greens and other ingredients to round out the pasta, offering texture, flavor, and lightness. This salad has all of those components, with a surprise ingredient. That small versatile pasta, orzo, with feta and spinach is a classic combination, but the addition of fresh tomatoes and tomato paste takes it to a different level. The depth of tomato flavor combined with the freshness of the tomatoes makes it a perfect salad for any season.



MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

8 ounces (1 cup) orzo pasta

1 tablespoon tomato paste

2 cups chopped baby spinach

1 cup crumbled feta cheese

2 cups halved cherry tomatoes

½ cup chopped basil leaves

¼ cup chopped scallions

1½ cups chopped cucumber (about 1 medium cucumber)

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Dash of salt

Bring a salted pot of water to a boil. Add the orzo and cook 8 to 10 minutes, or until al dente (it should still have a bit of bite). Drain and rinse with cold water.

In a bowl combine the orzo with the tomato paste until fully coated: make sure it is completely cool. Add the spinach, feta, tomatoes, basil, scallions, cucumber, vinegar, olive oil, and salt, and carefully stir together until it is evenly combined.

— HOW TO BRING IT —

This salad is fine cold or at room temperature. You can store it for up to 2 days covered in the fridge; just be sure to give it a stir before serving. If your tomatoes are on the watery side, you may not want to store it for more than a day.

BRING IT!

Snap Pea Salad with Parmesan and Bacon

Nothing makes a salad quite as universally beloved as the addition of bacon. Add in a bit of cheese, and you'd be forgiven for wondering how this still counts as a salad. But the crispness of the snap peas stands out among these strong ingredients. Hearty snap peas are a good replacement for lettuce or other greens because they don't wilt. This dish makes for an unctuous option when you want to add just a bit of meat to the proceedings.

30
MINUTES

1
DAY AHEAD

FRIDGE TO TABLE

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

4 ounces bacon

5 cups snap peas (about 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ pounds)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Juice of 1 lemon

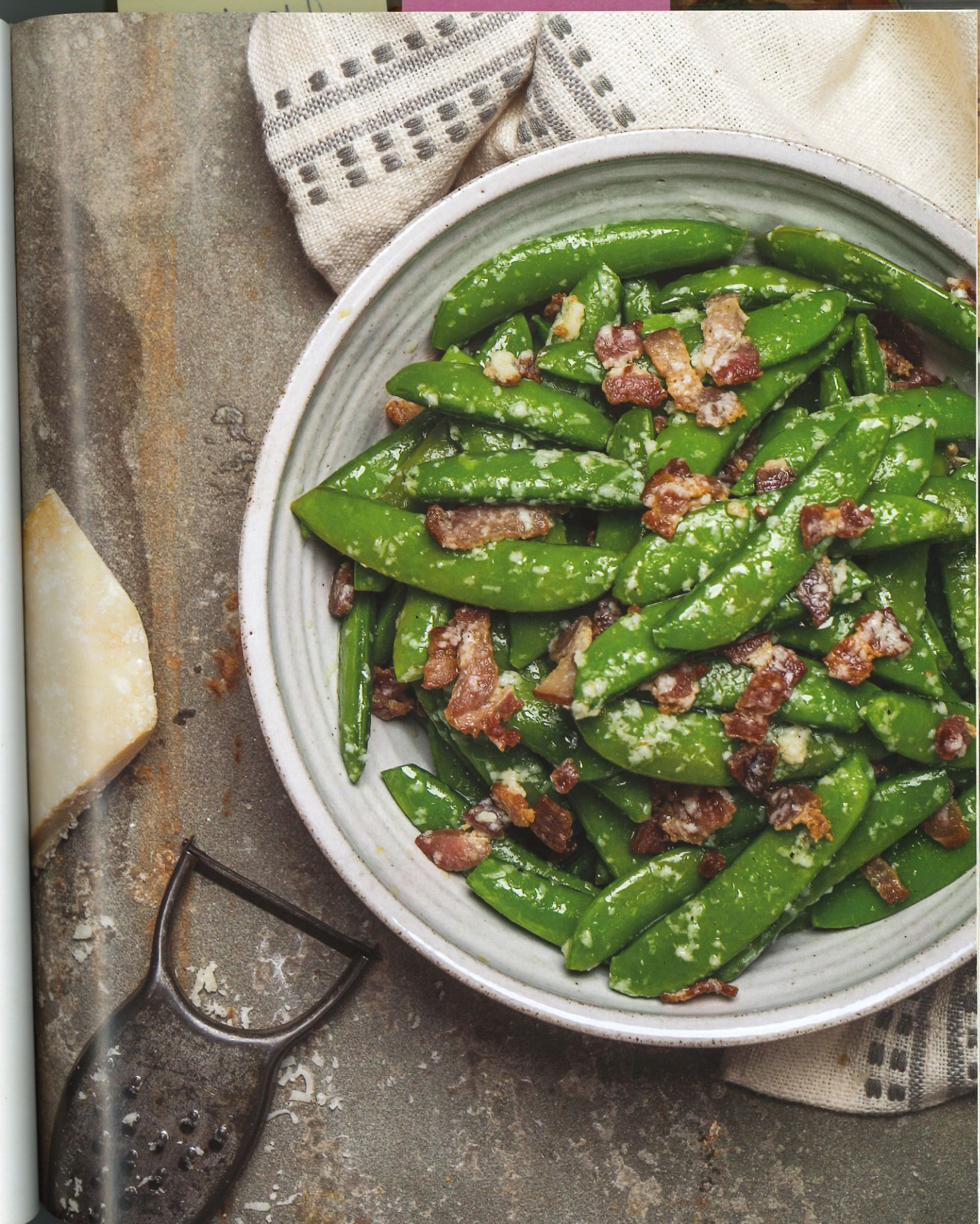
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Dash of salt and freshly ground black pepper

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil and place a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the bacon to the skillet, stirring occasionally until cooked, about 7 to 10 minutes (whether you want the bacon crispy or not is your choice, so just watch the timing).

While the bacon is cooking, add ice and water into a bowl large enough to hold all the snap peas. Trim the snap peas and add them to the boiling water for 1 minute. Immediately drain the snap peas and put them in the bowl of ice water. After another minute drain and set the snap peas aside to dry.

When the bacon is done cooking remove from the skillet onto paper towels to cool. Once the bacon is cool, chop into small pieces, approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Toss the bacon with the snap peas, Parmesan cheese, lemon juice, olive oil, salt, and pepper. Toss together to combine.



Bacon Mushroom Quiche

You might think the secret to flavor is just adding bacon, but it's actually about layering. The bacon sings in this quiche, while the umami of the mushrooms and the extra layer of leek make it highly addictive. With eggs, the ultimate comfort food, as the base, you have a dish that will please any palate.



MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

- 1 pie crust (store bought or page 119)
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 3 slices bacon, diced
- 2 medium shallots, diced
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 cup diced leeks (about 1 leek)
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme
- 1/2 cup milk
- 5 eggs, beaten
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 3/4 cup grated sharp Cheddar cheese, divided

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Place the pie crust in a pie pan and crimp the edges. Bake for 5 to 7 minutes, until it has started to harden. Remove it from the oven and cool.

Meanwhile, place a pan on medium heat and melt the butter. Add the bacon, shallots, mushrooms, and leeks. Cook for 5 to 8 minutes until the bacon has begun to cook and the leeks have softened. Pour into a bowl and combine with the thyme, milk, eggs, salt, pepper, and 1/2 cup of the cheese.

Pour the mixture into the pie crust and sprinkle the remaining cheese on top. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes or until the quiche has set but is still slightly jiggly. Cool for at least 15 minutes before serving.

— HOW TO BRING IT —

Quiche can be served hot or cold. It takes well to reheating as long as the temperature in the oven is not over 350°F and you don't overcook it.

Broccoli and Almond Quiche

A party always needs a few vegetarian options, but that doesn't mean they have to be boring. This dish has everything you need from a quiche: texture, flavor, and a few ingredients that leave you guessing. The almonds are a particularly surprising addition, adding both flavor and crunch. You'll wonder why you hadn't thought of this combination before.



MAKES 8 SERVINGS

- 1 pie crust (store bought or page 119)
- 2 cups chopped broccoli
- 3 garlic cloves, diced
- 5 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne
- 1/4 teaspoon coriander
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon parsley, finely diced

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Place the pie crust in a pie pan and crimp the edges. Bake for 5 to 7 minutes, until it has started to harden. Remove it from the oven.

While the crust is baking, bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Blanch the broccoli for 3 minutes. Drain it in a colander, and rinse with cold water. Set aside and let the broccoli dry.

In a bowl combine the broccoli with the garlic, eggs, milk, almonds, cayenne, coriander, feta, salt, and pepper. Pour the mixture into the pie crust. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes or until the quiche has set but is still slightly jiggly (start checking on the early end of the range). Sprinkle the parsley on top and cool for at least 15 minutes before serving.

— HOW TO BRING IT —

Quiche can be served hot or cold. It reheats well at a low temp (under 350°F): don't overcook it or the eggs will be rubbery.

Short Ribs with Quick Pickled Shallots

My sister's birthday is in February, and this has become my go-to dish to celebrate. It is full of so much flavor that it can warm even the frostiest of days. It can be served hot from a single pan, or you can store it and reheat it. Short ribs are tough to mess up, and they will serve you well as long as you give them enough flavor to absorb. And that flavor is the key. To balance out the richness of the dish, we have a secret weapon: pickled shallots. I know the word "pickled" can spark fear but don't let it: simply let the shallots sit while the ribs cook. They're an easy addition that makes a world of difference. This dish will improve with age, so make ahead if you can: a day in the fridge will make it more flavorful. It's a complete win-win.

1
DAY AHEAD

MAKES 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

FOR THE SHORT RIBS

5 to 6 pounds of bone-in short ribs

Salt and freshly ground black pepper, plus extra salt for seasoning

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

2 large carrots, diced

1 large onion, diced

2 cups diced mushrooms (about 1 pound)

4 garlic cloves, minced

2 cups red wine

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

1 tablespoon tomato paste

2 cups beef stock

1 tablespoon thyme

1 tablespoon chopped rosemary

FOR THE PICKLED SHALLOTS

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

2 teaspoons salt

4 shallots, diced

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Sprinkle salt and pepper on the ribs. Set a large pot on medium heat and add the oil (I like to use a cast-iron Dutch oven here if possible). Once the oil is hot, add the ribs and sear them in batches on each side for 2 to 3 minutes, until they have started to brown.

Set the cooked ribs aside and then add the carrots, onion, and mushrooms. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring, then add the garlic and cook another 2 minutes, or until the vegetables have begun to soften. Add the

red wine to deglaze the pan, scraping the brown bits off the bottom of the pan, and bring to a boil. Cook for an additional 10 minutes or until the liquid has reduced by half, stirring occasionally.

Add the mustard, Worcestershire sauce, tomato paste, stock, thyme, rosemary, and salt and stir together. Go easy on the salt, since the liquid will reduce (you can always add more but you can't take it away). Add the ribs back into the pot, bring the liquid back up to a boil, and cover tightly.

Place in the oven and cook for 3 hours or until the ribs are tender. If your pot is fairly full, you may want to put a pan lined with aluminum foil on the rack underneath the pot in case there is any spillage.

While the ribs are cooking, make the shallots. Whisk the cider vinegar, sugar, and salt together until everything has dissolved. Add the shallots and let them sit at room temperature while the ribs are cooking for at least 3 hours and up to 5, and then drain the shallots, rinse them, and set aside.

Once the ribs are finished remove the pot from the oven.

To serve immediately, skim as much fat off the top as possible (there will be a lot). The sauce should be a pretty soupy consistency, so remove the ribs and cook down the sauce on medium-high heat for 10 to 15 minutes until the sauce has reduced, stirring frequently. Add the ribs back into the pot and taste: add more salt here if needed. Sprinkle the pickled shallots on top and serve.

— HOW TO BRING IT —

One of the joys of this dish is that it actually gets *better* if you bring it. The longer it sits, the more the flavors develop. To make it ahead, allow it to cool down for 30 minutes after removing it from the oven and then refrigerate. It can stay in the fridge for up to 2 days. When you are ready to serve, spoon off the fat: it will have congealed and will be easy to remove. Reheat in a 350°F oven for 15 minutes and then move to the stovetop and remove the ribs. Cook down the sauce on medium-high heat for 10 to 15 minutes until the sauce has reduced, stirring frequently. Add the ribs back into the pot and taste: add more salt here if needed. Sprinkle the pickled shallots on top and serve.

Another suggestion for bringing this dish is to remove the bones from the ribs ahead of time. If people are eating standing up, or if they are likely to have a lot on their plates, removing the bones will make the dish easier to eat. Remove the meat from the bones and return it into the sauce. The dish won't have the same presentation value but it will be much easier to serve and eat.

Chickpeas with Chorizo

This is an easy side dish that is packed with flavor. It's so hearty that you may like serving it as a main, with a green salad. I love the spices combined with the chorizo. If you're not familiar with chorizo, it's a dense sausage that is a bit spicy, usually made with ground chili and paprika. If you can't find it, that's okay: any cooked spicy sausage could work here, but try to get something that has a smoky flavor. Served hot or at room temperature, this dish will add a bit of flair to any meal.

30
MINUTES1
DAY AHEAD

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 small onion, diced (about 1 cup)

2 cloves garlic, diced

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon ground cumin

2 cups cooked or canned chickpeas (about 1½ 15-ounce cans, drained and rinsed)

1 cup diced fresh tomatoes

1 cup diced precooked chorizo (about 5 ounces)

Dash of salt

2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Place a large skillet on medium-high heat. Add the olive oil and onion and cook, stirring occasionally until the onion begins to brown, approximately 5 minutes. Add the garlic, vinegar, cumin, chickpeas, tomato, and chorizo and cook for another 5 minutes; don't stir too often because you want the chickpeas and chorizo to brown. Add a dash of salt (taste to determine, since the chorizo can be salty). Transfer to a serving dish, sprinkle parsley on top, and serve.

— HOW TO BRING IT —

This dish is great warm, but it can also be served at room temperature. The spice tends to bloom after a day in the fridge, so it can be even better if you make it ahead. It travels well and doesn't need a lot of extra fussing to make it work on arrival, although you may want to add the parsley just before serving. If you do reheat, you can do it in a skillet on medium heat or in an oven at 350°F. You can add a dash of water or olive oil to make sure it doesn't dry out. Stir as it cooks again.

Mashed Potato Bake

Mashed potatoes are so simple and yet so satisfying. But they either get relegated to Thanksgiving meals or as a topping for fancier dishes. This dish doesn't play around with too many other flavors: the potatoes get to be the star, with a few other ingredients to bulk it up a bit. It's rustic and simple, but I've seen it become the sleeper hit of the dinner.

MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

3 pounds russet potatoes (about 6 potatoes)

¼ cup unsalted butter

½ cup diced sage leaves

½ cup diced parsley

½ cup diced shallots (about 2 to 4 shallots)

1 cup heavy cream

2 large eggs, beaten

½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

1 cup frozen peas

1½ teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.

Peel the potatoes, cut them into quarters (or

eighths for especially large potatoes), and place them in the pot. Cook for 20 minutes or until the potatoes are fork-tender.

While the potatoes are cooking, melt the butter in a skillet over medium-high heat with the sage, parsley, and shallots. Cook until the butter has fully melted and the shallots have become translucent, approximately 5 minutes.

When the potatoes have finished cooking, drain the water and mash the potatoes until they are almost smooth. I prefer to use a hand masher here rather than a blender because the texture comes out better. Add the butter mixture, heavy cream, eggs, cheese, peas, salt, and pepper to the potatoes and combine fully.

Scoop the mixture into a baking dish and place in the oven for 20 to 25 minutes, until the top has started to brown.

— HOW TO BRING IT —

You can make this recipe ahead of time and just brown in the oven before serving. Plan on needing a bit more time in the oven if the potatoes have been refrigerated. This dish is pretty forgiving so you can travel with it still warm if needed, but it is tastier fresh out of the oven.