



SHOPPING LIST
5 heirloom apples

- STAPLES**
1 lemon
¾ cup flour
¾ cup brown sugar
salt
cinnamon
6 tablespoons
unsalted butter

APPLE CRISP

Peel a few different kinds of apples, enjoying the way they shrug reluctantly out of their skins. Core, slice, and layer the apples into a buttered pie plate or baking dish and toss them with the juice of the lemon.

Mix the flour with the brown sugar, and add a dash of salt and a grating of fresh cinnamon. Using two knives—or just your fingers—cut in the butter, then pat the mixture over the top of the fruit. The cooking time is forgiving; you can put your crisp into a 375-degree oven and pretty much forget it for 45 minutes to an hour. The juices should be bubbling a bit at the edges; the top should be crisp, golden, and fragrant. Served warm, with a pitcher of cream, it makes you grateful for fall.

*Mountains of marinated eggplant,
meatballs, spiced nuts, pound cake ...
people who show up early for
Thanksgiving will not go hungry!*

OUR THANKSGIVINGS ARE WEEKLONG AFFAIRS, WITH SOME PEOPLE SHOWING UP Monday or Tuesday and others staying through the weekend. By Wednesday night every room is filled and people are camping on the sofas. The eating never stops.

When I'm expecting a lot of guests I always bake a simple pound cake. It's the little black dress of the pastry world; at night you can dress it up with ice cream, fruit, or sauce, while in the morning, toasted pound cake is a promising way to start the day. It's also a good keeper, so guests can help themselves whenever hunger hits.

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I've been using Jim Lahey's brilliant recipe, from his book *My Bread*, for years because it's so easy, and the results so satisfying. But after the storm I changed the recipe, adding a second and sometimes a third and fourth rise. The addition of time gives the bread considerably more character.

JIM LAHEY'S NO-KNEAD BREAD

SHOPPING LIST

3 cups bread flour
instant yeast

STAPLES

salt
cornmeal

Put the flour into a bowl with $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon yeast. Stir in $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups cool water (the mixture will be rather sticky), cover it with a plate, and leave it to rise in a cool place for 18 hours, until it's doubled in size. Punch it down and allow it to rise again until it's doubled; it will take less time. Do this at least one more time. More is better.

Nudge the dough gently out of the bowl onto a floured surface and shape it into a loose ball by folding the edges in. Sprinkle a towel with cornmeal, set the dough on the towel, put the towel on a plate, and wrap it loosely up around the dough. Allow the dough to double once more; it should take only about an hour this time.

Meanwhile, turn the oven to 475 degrees and set a cast iron Dutch oven or other covered casserole in it to heat up. When the dough has doubled, very carefully remove the casserole from the oven with sturdy oven mitts, remove the cover, and quickly turn the dough in; it may land slightly cockeyed, but don't worry.

Cover the pot and set it back into the oven. Bake for 30 minutes, remove the cover, and bake for another 15 minutes or so, until the loaf has turned a deep golden caramel color.

The scent of the baking bread will be almost shockingly delicious, but you're going to have to control yourself. You need to let the bread cool on a rack for at least an hour before eating it. But once that hour has passed, this bread, with some cold, sweet butter, will be one of the best things you have ever tasted.



Linda C.

Emily

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*How to be a great houseguest:
friend who stayed at our place
left good Parmigiano, bacon,
and eggs in the fridge for us.*

"USED ALL YOUR SUPPLIES," OUR DEPARTING FRIEND HAD SCRIBBLED ON THE EGG carton. "Didn't want to leave the cupboard bare. Your carbonara recipe has gotten me through a lot of hard times."

Still, I didn't expect to be making my standard fallback dinner quite so quickly. That first day back I was interviewed for a television show; my only job was to add context to a profile of the chef José Andrés, but the interview plunged me back into a world of hairdressers, makeup, wardrobe, and limousines. It was dizzying, and when Anderson Cooper began asking questions, I found myself talking fast, my mind racing as I turned into a completely different creature than the woman who'd been quietly cooking on the mountain.

"How are you feeling, after *Gourmet*?" one of the producers asked when the cameras were turned off. It was kindly meant, but it brought all the old feelings—failure, fear, inadequacy—roaring back.

They called a limo to take me home, and I sat in the back, feeling the adrenaline that had fueled me for the cameras leak away. Lacking the energy to go to

the store, I was grateful to know I had everything for carbonara. I stood at the stove cooking up this fast, familiar dish. The eggs hit the hot pasta and I tossed madly, watching them begin to cook, knowing it was time I found a job.

SPAGHETTI ALLA CARBONARA

SHOPPING LIST

¼ to ½ pound bacon

STAPLES

salt

1 pound spaghetti
(dry, or see pasta
recipe, page 30)

garlic

3 eggs

Parmesan cheese

pepper

Serves 4

Bring a pot of water to a boil, salt it well, and toss in the spaghetti. Most brands of commercial spaghetti take about 10 minutes, which is all the time you'll need to make the sauce.

Cut anywhere from a quarter to a half pound of bacon into small pieces and brown them in a large skillet with a couple of whole peeled cloves of garlic. (The garlic is mainly for the pleasure of the fragrance.)

Break the eggs into a big bowl.

Grate a generous amount of Parmesan cheese (about half a cup).

Cook your pasta al dente.

Drain the pasta and immediately plunk it into the bowl with the eggs, tossing frantically so the hot pasta will cook them. Remove the garlic from the bacon and then add the bacon, along with as much of the fat as your conscience will allow. Toss. Add the cheese. Toss again. Add salt to taste.

Grind a good amount of pepper over the pasta and serve. You will instantly understand why this quick, easy dish has given so much comfort to so many people.

Linda C.

Emily

ASIAN EGGPLANT SALAD

SHOPPING LIST

- 1½ pounds long, thin Asian or baby eggplants
- 3 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 lime
- cilantro
- mint leaves

STAPLES

- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 clove garlic (minced)
- 1 teaspoon chile flakes

Serves 6 as an appetizer

Prick the eggplants all over with a fork and singe them over the burner of a gas stove, turning constantly, for about 10 minutes until the skin is black and blistered. Allow to cool.

Carefully peel the skin away from the eggplant (this can be fussy, and you want to get all the skin off). Pull the eggplant into strips and lay them in a shallow bowl.

Mix the fish sauce with the juice of the lime, the sugar, and couple of tablespoons of water. Add the minced garlic and chile flakes. Pour over the eggplant and marinate in the refrigerator for a few hours. When ready to serve, garnish with a few leaves of chopped cilantro or mint.

This makes a fine appetizer, or a perfect little side salad when you're serving Asian food. Sometimes, at lunch, I'll just eat the eggplant over rice.



Chelsea afternoon. The High Line, almost sunset. Man chants poetry. Scent of coffee in the air. Butcher shop: lovely roasts displayed like jewels.

IN THE CITY, SURROUNDED BY CEMENT, IT'S EASY TO BE OBLIVIOUS TO THE SMALL changes taking place around you: trees beginning to bud, early flowers peeking out of the ground. An artisanal butcher shop brings it all back, connecting you to the seasons.

"The young lambs have arrived," the butcher said when I walked in. "They've just culled the herd."

"Spring" lamb has become a year-round marketing term for conventional meat; factory animals can be harvested in any month. But when animals are allowed to live with nature, spring is the lambing season, the time of rebirth. When you buy humanely raised meat, lamb really is the first sign of spring. And there is nothing quite like it.

Pastured lamb has a sweetness that factory lamb lacks. I think it tastes best rare, but this is the meat that takes the worry out of roasting: it's delicious at any temperature. The only way to ruin young lamb is to serve it with that sticky sweet mint sauce that comes in a jar. Fresh mint sauce is another thing altogether; it's the perfect counterpoint to lamb, and a fine way to say farewell to winter.

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Clare

"IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D REALLY LIKE ME TO MAKE FOR YOU?" NICK ASKED. I studied him, wondering if I could ask him to attempt something as complicated as quiche. Then I remembered that I'd already done the hard part: I had an extra pastry crust stored in the freezer, ready for an impromptu meal.

A CUSTARD IN A CRUST

SHOPPING LIST

- 1 premade pie crust
- ¼ pound Gruyère cheese
- 1 cup heavy cream

STAPLES

- 3 eggs
- salt
- pepper
- nutmeg

Serves 6

"QUICHE?" NICK LOOKED WORRIED. "ISN'T THAT HARD?"

"The hardest part of making quiche," I told him, "is blind-baking the crust."

"What's that?"

"You take the empty crust, pierce it all over with a fork so it doesn't buckle, cover it with tinfoil, and fill it with weights.

There's a bag of beans that I use as weights, sitting next to the pie pans. All you have to do is put the weighted crust into a hot (four twenty-five) oven for twenty minutes, then remove the foil and the weights and put the crust back into the oven for another eight minutes or so, until it turns golden. Don't worry if it slumps a little in the pan. It always does and it won't matter. Then you let

it cool on a rack while you make the filling."

Nick went out to the kitchen and I could hear cupboards opening and tinfoil crackling. An hour or so later he came back into the bedroom triumphantly carrying the empty crust. "What now?" he asked.

You can put anything into a quiche: the custard is fine all by itself, but strips of bacon, bits of leftover ham, sautéed onions, vegetables, grated cheese—virtually everything tastes good married to a custard and a crust.

"I think there's some Gruyère cheese. Grate some and scatter it over the bottom of the prebaked crust. If there's some kind of leftover meat or vegetable, you can shred it

and add that as well. Or not. Then whisk three eggs with a cup of cream and a little salt and pepper. Grate a little nutmeg on top and stick it in the oven."

"How long do I bake it?"

"About thirty-five minutes. Maybe forty. At 375 degrees."

I heard Nick and Gemma out in the kitchen, murmuring as they cooked. Then I began to smell the fine scent of softly melting cheese. Suddenly Nick was back, looking worried. "It's been in there half an hour. How will I know when it's done?"

"You'll see. The custard will rise and get really golden. When it looks like it can't possibly go any higher, you'll know it's done."

He went back into the kitchen and I heard a shout, "Now!"

He sounded elated, and I knew exactly how he felt. There's nothing quite so spectacular as a just-baked quiche before the custard deflates. He and Gemma came into my room triumphantly bearing a gorgeous golden dome. The four of us finished every morsel, which made me a bit sad; leftover quiche is delicious.



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STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

SHOPPING LIST

- 2 cups pastry flour
- 3 cups heavy cream
- 3 pints strawberries

STAPLES

- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2-3 tablespoons sugar

There are about a million different ways to make biscuits. The simplest method I know is to begin with 2 cups of pastry flour, mix in 1 tablespoon of baking powder and ½ teaspoon of salt, and then gently stir in 1¼ cups of heavy cream. (If you use all-purpose flour, you'll need an extra 2 tablespoons of cream.) Knead it all together, pat it out, and cut it into 8 little rounds. Brush them with cream, put them on a baking sheet (leaving some space between them), and bake at 425 degrees for about 15 minutes.

With a 2¼-inch round cutter, this makes a dozen biscuits. If you don't have a biscuit cutter, don't worry; you can use the rim of a glass, or even a sharp knife if you want to cut them into triangles or squares.

While the biscuits are baking, put a bowl and the beaters of an electric mixer into the refrigerator to chill.

Allow the biscuits to cool on a rack. Meanwhile, whip 1½ cups of cream with the cold beaters in the cold bowl just until it holds soft peaks. Add 2 or 3 tablespoons of sugar—the sweetness is up to you—and whip a bit more. Do not overbeat the cream.

Slice the strawberries and sprinkle them with a bit of sugar; taste until you've got the balance right. (If the weather's been fine, the strawberries will need no help, but if it's been a rainy season, the berries will be less flavorful and you'll probably want more sugar.)

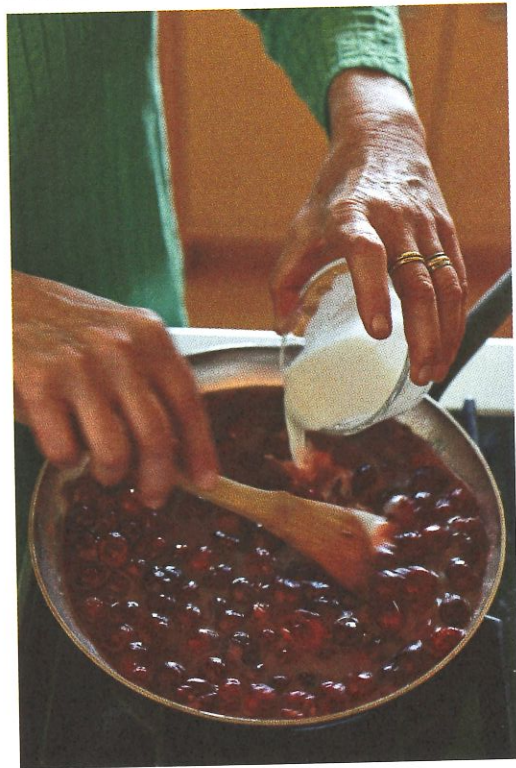
Cover the bottom of each biscuit with sliced berries. Spread on a bit of whipped cream. Put the top on, slather it with more whipped cream, and decorate with the remaining berries.

IF YOU'RE INCLINED TO GO FOR SPECTACULAR INSTEAD OF EASY, HERE IS THE BEST biscuit recipe I know. It comes from my friend Nancy Silverton, who asked me to test it for her. "Are you aware," I asked when I was done, "that there's almost half a stick of butter in each of these biscuits?"

Her response was, "Yep."

So be warned. These are a lot of work. Your fingers will freeze. Your oven will smoke. Your fire alarm will go off. On top of that, they contain an unconscionable amount of butter. On the other hand they are, hands down, the best biscuits I've ever tasted. One bonus: you can keep unbaked biscuits in the freezer and simply cook one up whenever you're hit with a need for serious excess.

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SOUR CHERRY CROSTATA

SHOPPING LIST

2 pints fresh sour cherries

STAPLES

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 lemon
2¼ cups flour
salt
3 tablespoons cornstarch

Working with pastry dough can be difficult in the heat of summer. And this one, being soft, is challenging. Unlike regular pie dough, however, this cookie-like pastry is very forgiving and no matter how much you handle it, it won't get tough. If it gets too soft, simply put it back in the refrigerator for 5 minutes to let it cool off. It will become much more accommodating.

Mix 1½ sticks of soft butter with ½ cup of the sugar in a stand mixer until fluffy.

Break the egg into a small dish and beat it; reserve a bit to wash the pastry later, and add the rest of the egg to the butter. Toss in the vanilla.

Grate the rind of the lemon into the flour. Add a pinch of salt and slowly add the flour to the butter-egg mixture until it just comes together. Divide into 2 disks, wrap in waxed paper, and put in the refrigerator to chill for half an hour.

Meanwhile, make the cherry filling by removing the pits from the fresh sour cherries; you should have 4 cups once the pits are removed. (You could also use 4 cups of frozen pitted sour cherries; do not defrost before using.)

Melt the remaining butter (3 to 4 tablespoons) in a large skillet. Add the cherries, ½ cup of sugar, and the juice of half the lemon and stir gently, just until the liquids come to a boil. Don't cook them too long or the cherries will start to fall apart.

Make a slurry of the cornstarch with 3 tablespoons of cold water and stir it into the boiling cherries. Cook for about 2 minutes, stirring, just until the mixture becomes clear and thick. Allow to cool.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees and put a baking sheet on the middle shelf.

Remove the pastry disks from the refrigerator. Roll out the first one, between two sheets of plastic wrap, to a round about 12 inches in diameter. Now comes the tricky part: invert it into a 9-inch fluted tart pan, with high sides. The dough will probably tear. Don't worry, just patch it all up, pat it around the bottom and up the sides of the pan, and put it back into the refrigerator to re chill.

Roll out the second disk in the same manner, put it onto a baking sheet (still on the plastic wrap), remove the top sheet of

plastic, and cut this into 8 or 10 strips, about 1 inch wide. Put the baking sheet into the refrigerator to chill for a few minutes.

Remove the tart shell and the strips from the refrigerator. Pour the cherry filling into the tart shell. Now make a lattice of the strips on the top, crisscrossing them diagonally. Don't worry if they're not perfect; no matter what you do, the tart's going to look lovely when it emerges from the oven. Brush the strips with the remaining beaten egg, sprinkle with sugar, and put into the oven on the baking sheet. (You need the sheet to keep cherry juices from spilling onto the oven floor.) Bake for about 45 minutes, until golden.

Cool for 1 hour, on a rack, before removing the side of the tart pan. Allow the tart to cool completely before serving.

The indigo bunting is back! Crisp cold watermelon on a dew-damp lawn. Sour cherry lemonade. Rainbow colors of a summer morning.

I'VE NEVER BEEN A BIRD-WATCHER, BUT WHEN I WAS STUCK IN BED, GAZING OUT the window, I found their antics endlessly entertaining. I even bought a bird guide for the sheer pleasure of reading the names: wood thrush—purple finch—red-winged blackbird.

But the indigo bunting was my favorite. Each sighting reminded me of the summer when Nick was six and we rented our first house in the country, intended as a family month of swimming, sunshine, and fresh food. Our plans were shattered when CBS sent Michael off on a last-minute assignment.

Furious, I called my friend Marion Cunningham in the Bay Area, moaning

about my misfortune. Marion was an American icon; she'd been James Beard's assistant, she rewrote *The Fannie Farmer Cookbook*, and she acted as den mother to a large group of American food folk.

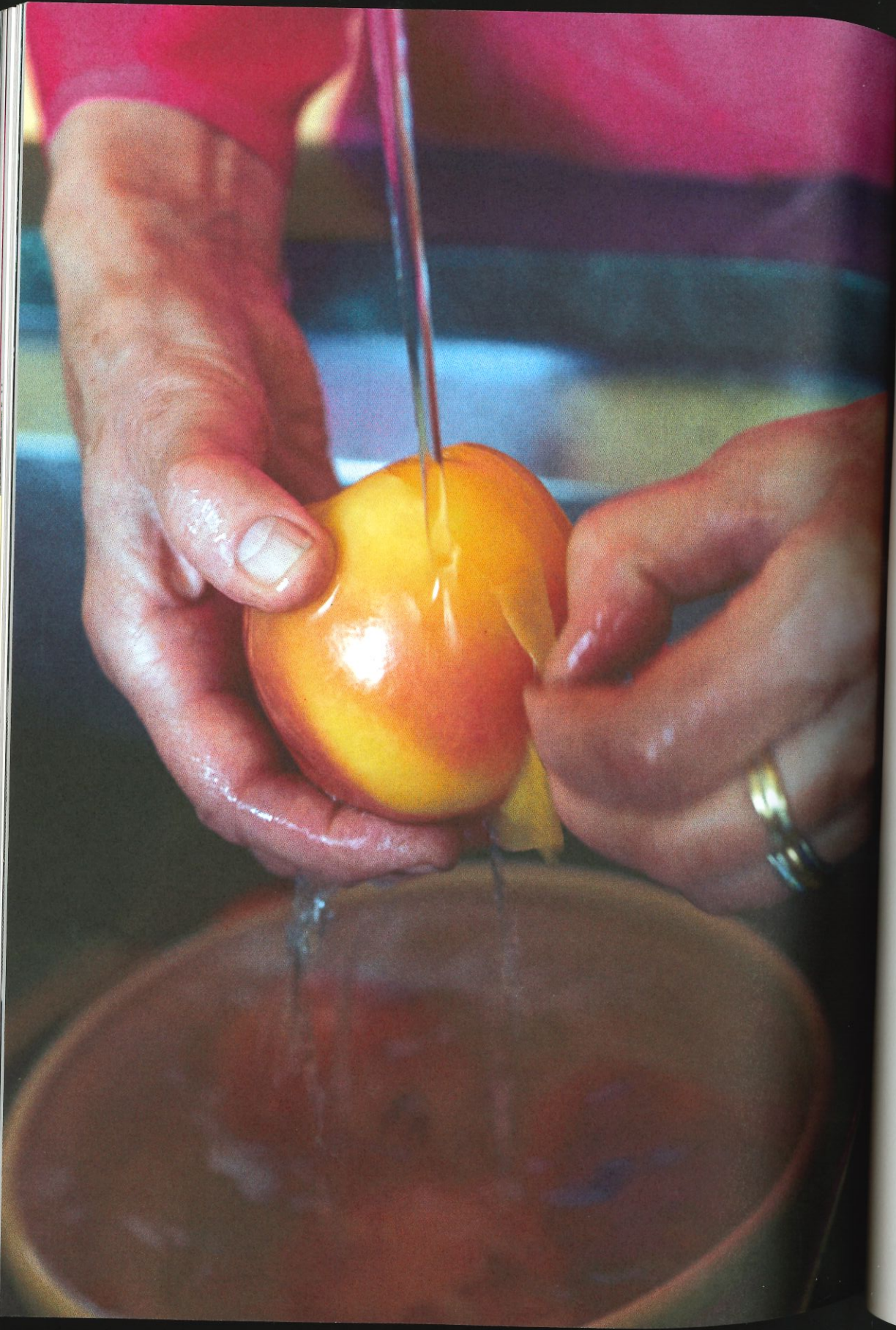
"Would you like me to come?" She said this as if it was the most natural thing in the world to drop everything and fly across the continent on the spur of the moment. "I could get the next plane out."

She was as good as her word, and she gamely folded her tall body into my battered little car, crammed in with a couple of cats, a mountain of toys, and an entire kitchen's worth of pots and pans. We headed north. I'd rented a farmhouse in the Hudson River Valley, complete with neighboring cows.

It was a wonderful few weeks. Marion and I had been friends for years, but we'd never cooked together. I was enchanted to discover how fearless she could be in the kitchen. She baked cakes and cookies, produced fantastic breakfasts, and when she made a mistake she'd invariably wave her hand declaring, "It won't matter a bit!" Best of all, whenever Nick got bored she'd take him into the kitchen and encourage him to make a mess.

One morning an indigo bunting landed on the lawn. "Look!" she cried. "What a beautiful bird. I think we should celebrate." She and Nick disappeared for a while, and when they rejoined me my son was proudly carrying a pitcher of sour cherry lemonade.





FRESH PEACH BREAKFAST COBBLER

SHOPPING LIST
4 large peaches
½ cup buttermilk

STAPLES
1 lemon
¼–½ cup sugar
1 tablespoon
cornstarch
1 cup flour
1 teaspoon baking
powder
¼ teaspoon baking
soda
½ teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons
(½ stick) butter

Serves 4 or 5

Peel the peaches by dropping them into a pot of boiling water for about 40 seconds and then putting them under cold running water until they're easy to handle; the skins will slip right off. (If the peaches are not ripe, it might take as much as a minute in boiling water before the skins release their grip.)

Slice the peaches directly into a glass or ceramic pie plate, being sure to capture the juice. Squeeze half the lemon over the fruit. Mix the sugar (I prefer ¼ cup, but you might like it a little sweeter) with the cornstarch and stir it into the peaches.

Mix the flour with the baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Cut in the butter and very gently mix in the buttermilk. Plop the damp dough onto the peaches (it won't entirely cover the fruit, but it will spread as it bakes and give the cobbler a rustic air), and bake in a 400-degree oven for about half an hour.

Serve warm, with a pitcher of cream.



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Clare
v de C.
FARM

*Sun-warmed tomatoes sprinkled
with salt. The joy of warm biscuits.
Melting cheese. The scent of basil.
The best old-fashioned recipe.*

WHEN MY FRIENDS LEARNED THAT I WAS WORKING ON A COOKBOOK, IT BECAME A universally acknowledged truth that I must be in need of tomatoes. Every person in possession of a garden showered them upon me. I piled them in the kitchen, and on this morning, when I put the water on for coffee, the sight of those gorgeous red orbs, fat and shiny as Christmas ornaments, gave me a sudden sharp taste memory of James Beard's tomato pie.

The first time I met the great man, I told him, breathlessly, that I made his tomato pie recipe all the time. "Really?" he said, turning a sardonic eye on me. I immediately wished I'd come up with a more sophisticated dish.

And yet I continue to love this one. There's something so flat-out American about the flavor of cheese-scented mayonnaise when it curls into the tomatoes on a biscuit crust. I would not want to write a cookbook that did not include this classic.

JAMES BEARD'S TOMATO PIE

SHOPPING LIST

¾ cup buttermilk
4-6 ripe tomatoes
(about 2 pounds)
fresh basil leaves
1 cup grated sharp
cheddar cheese
1½ cups
mayonnaise

STAPLES

2 cups flour
2½ teaspoons
baking powder
salt
½ teaspoon
baking soda
6 tablespoons butter
parsley
pepper

Makes 6 small servings

Begin by making biscuit dough. Any biscuit recipe will do, and in a pinch you could use the ones you find in the freezer case of your supermarket. But I like the flavor of this buttermilk biscuit, and the way it looks with the little green flecks of parsley dancing through it.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Combine the flour with the baking powder, ½ teaspoon salt, and baking soda. Cut in the butter until it's the size of peas, and add a little flurry of chopped parsley (mostly because it looks pretty). Stir in buttermilk until the dough holds together, then turn out onto a floured surface and knead a few minutes. Pat the dough into the bottom and sides of a buttered 9-inch pie pan.

Cover the biscuit dough with the tomatoes, sliced into nice fat rounds. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Shower a couple of tablespoons of shredded basil on top.

Mix the grated cheddar cheese with the mayonnaise and spread the mixture on top of the tomatoes.

Bake for about 35 minutes, or until the top is golden brown. On a hot summer night it makes a satisfying little meal.

*Fresh morning, no clouds.
Thickly sliced tomatoes, salt sparkling
on top. Freshly buttered bread.
Scent of summer lingers on my fingers.*

THE COOKBOOK WASN'T MY ONLY SUMMER PROJECT. I WAS ALSO WORKING ON AN introduction to a new American edition of Elizabeth David recipes. The more I read about England's most important food writer, the better I liked her. Elizabeth David changed the way England ate; she was Julia Child, James Beard, and Chuck Williams (for a while she sold kitchenware products), rolled into one.