

HUNGARIAN PAPRIKA

While common paprika found in the spice aisle of the grocery store can be so mild that it offers little more than color, true Hungarian paprika reveals the complexity of the paprika pepper (capsicum) from which it is made. The flavor depends on how much oil is released from the peppers' seeds during milling. Hungarian paprika is produced in five distinct grades, with sweet paprika and hot, or piquant, paprika the best-known grades outside Hungary. The sweet type, dark red and with a mild, yet slightly pungent flavor, is the more versatile of the two.

Stuffed Mushrooms

MAKES 24 MUSHROOMS

24 large fresh crimini or white button mushrooms, each about 2 inches (5 cm) in diameter, brushed clean

¼ cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) plus 2 Tbsp olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper

3 Tbsp unsalted butter, plus 3 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted

4 green (spring) onions, including tender green parts, finely chopped

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) dry Marsala, sherry, or white vermouth

⅓ cup (¾ oz/20 g) coarse fresh bread crumbs (page 125)

½ cup (2 oz/60 g) shredded Gruyère cheese

¾ cup (3 oz/90 g) freshly grated Parmesan cheese

½ cup (¾ oz/20 g) minced fresh flat-leaf (Italian) parsley

¼ tsp sweet Hungarian paprika (far left)

⅓ cup (3 fl oz/80 ml) heavy (double) cream, plus extra as needed

PREHEAT THE OVEN TO 350°F (180°C). Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment (baking) paper or grease the baking sheet.

Remove the mushroom stems, cutting away enough to leave a sizeable void that can be filled. Reserve the stems. Brush the mushroom caps, inside and out, with the ¼ cup oil. Place them, rounded side down, on the prepared pan. Season to taste with kosher salt and white pepper. Set aside.

Using a large chef's knife, chop the mushroom stems as finely as possible. Place the chopped stems in the corner of a clean kitchen towel, gather the towel tightly around the mushrooms, and twist to release as much moisture as possible. Set aside.

In a saucepan over medium heat, melt the 3 Tbsp butter with the 2 Tbsp oil. Add the green onions and sauté until the white parts are translucent, 2–3 minutes. Add the mushroom stems, raise the heat to medium-high, and sauté until lightly browned, 6–8 minutes. Add the Marsala and let boil until almost dry, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and add the bread crumbs, Gruyère, ½ cup (2 oz/60 g) of the Parmesan, the parsley, paprika, and the ⅓ cup cream. Season to taste with salt and white pepper. Add a little more cream if needed to make a thick mixture.

Spoon the stuffing into the mushroom caps. Sprinkle each with a little of the remaining ¼ cup (1 oz/30 g) Parmesan and drizzle with a little of the melted butter.

Bake until lightly browned on top, 20–25 minutes. Serve warm.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP: These mushrooms can be baked 3 or 4 hours in advance and kept at room temperature. Just before serving, reheat in a 350°F (180°C) oven for about 15 minutes.

Radishes with Chervil Butter

MAKES 32 SMALL BITES

¾ cup (6 oz/185 g) unsalted butter, at room temperature

½ tsp sea salt

3 Tbsp minced fresh chervil, plus chervil sprigs for garnish

16 radishes (far right), chilled

TO MAKE THE CHERVIL BUTTER, in a small bowl, stir together the butter, salt, and minced chervil until well mixed and creamy.

Remove a small sliver from the base and top of each radish, then halve it crosswise (across the “equator”). Each half will sit firmly and evenly with the larger cut side facing up. Arrange the halved radishes on a platter, larger cut side up. Spoon the chervil butter into a pastry (piping) bag fitted with a small star tip (see page 21). Pipe a small rosette of chervil butter in the center of each half.

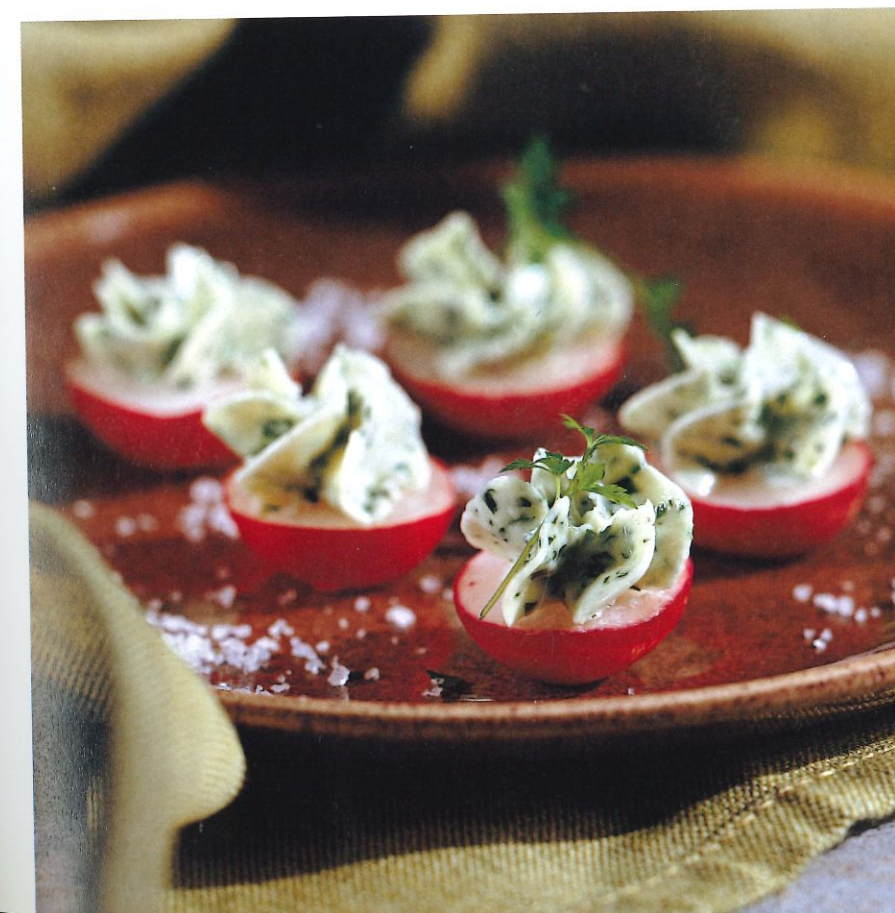
Decorate the platter with chervil sprigs or, if desired, press a tiny frond of feathery chervil into the side of each chervil-butter rosette. Chill before serving.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP: The butter-topped radishes may be refrigerated, uncovered, for up to 2 hours before serving.

VARIATION TIPS: Substitute basil for the chervil, creating another wonderful flavoring for the butter. Garnish with shredded basil leaves. You may also serve the radishes whole, with a sprinkling of sea salt, and plain unsalted butter on the side for dipping; this combination is popular in France.

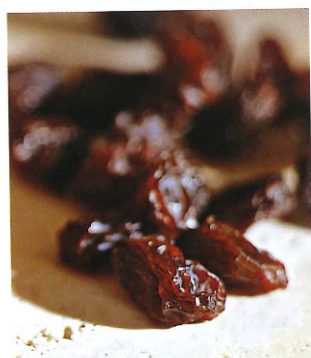
RADISH VARIETIES

Some marvelous varieties of radish are now showing up in farmers' markets. A mix of colors and varieties would make an appealing plate—look for white, black, French Breakfast, and Misato Rose. Whichever variety you choose, look for firm radishes with smooth skin and unwilted green leaves.



RAISINS

Dark raisins are made by sun-drying grapes, most commonly seedless Thompson grapes. The same grapes are used to make Golden raisins (sultanas), but they are bleached with sulphur dioxide and then dried in a dehydrator, for a plump result. Store both raisin types at room temperature in covered containers for up to a month or in the refrigerator for up to 6 months.



Curried Nuts & Raisins

MAKES 8–10 SERVINGS

Canola oil or vegetable-oil cooking spray for coating

2 Tbsp medium-heat curry powder (page 61)

1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

¾ tsp ground ginger

½ tsp salt

½ tsp sugar

¼ tsp freshly ground white pepper

¼ tsp cayenne pepper

⅛ tsp ground cinnamon

2 large egg whites, at room temperature

1½ cups (8 oz/250 g) salted roasted cashews

⅔ cup (4 oz/125 g) salted roasted peanuts

1 cup (4 oz/125 g) shelled sunflower seeds

¼ cup (1¼ oz/37 g) sesame seeds

1 cup (6 oz/185 g) raisins (far left)

POSITION A RACK in the upper third of the oven and preheat to 375°F (190°C).

Coat a shallow baking pan with oil. In a small bowl, mix together the curry powder, black pepper, ginger, salt, sugar, white pepper, cayenne, and cinnamon.

In a large bowl, beat the egg whites until blended but not foamy. Add the cashews, peanuts, sunflower seeds, and sesame seeds and stir to coat them evenly. Immediately sprinkle the spice mixture over the nuts, again stirring to coat evenly.

Spread the nut mixture in an even layer in the prepared baking pan. Transfer to the oven and bake for 5 minutes. Stir the nuts to break up any clumps. Continue to bake, stirring once or twice, until the nuts are crisp, dry, and fragrant, 10–12 minutes. Place the pan on a wire rack and let the nuts cool completely. Transfer the mixture to an airtight container and let stand at room temperature for 24 hours to develop the flavors. Stir the raisins into the nuts just before serving.



Chicken Satay with Peanut Sauce

MAKES 8 SKEWERS

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) peanut oil or vegetable oil

Juice of 1 lime

4 cloves garlic, minced

¼ cup (1 oz/30 g) chopped green (spring) onions, including tender green parts

2 Tbsp minced fresh ginger

2 Tbsp soy sauce

1 tsp Asian chile oil or sauce, or to taste

1 lb (500 g) boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of fat and cut into 1-inch (2.5-cm) chunks

1½ cups (10½ oz/330 g) Steamed White Rice (page 426) for serving (optional)

Peanut Sauce (far right) for serving



PEANUT SAUCE

To make the peanut sauce, in a nonreactive saucepan over medium-high heat, heat 2 Tbsp peanut oil. Add ¼ cup (1 oz/30 g) chopped green (spring) onions, including tender green parts, and sauté until translucent, about 3 minutes. Stir in ½ cup (5 oz/155 g) creamy peanut butter, ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) Chicken Stock (page 422) or prepared low-sodium broth, 1 tsp sugar, the juice of ½ lemon, 1 Tbsp soy sauce, and ¼ cup (1 oz/30 g) chopped peanuts. Simmer over low heat for about 10 minutes, stirring often. Add Asian chile sauce to taste. Makes about 1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) or 4 servings.

TO MAKE THE MARINADE, mix together the oil, lime juice, garlic, green onions, ginger, soy sauce, and chile oil in a small bowl.

Put the chicken chunks in a baking dish or zippered plastic bag and pour the marinade on top. Cover or seal and let sit, turning occasionally, for up to 2 hours at room temperature or overnight in the refrigerator. If refrigerated, remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before grilling.

Soak 8 long wooden skewers in water to cover for 30 minutes, then drain (page 187). Build a fire in a covered charcoal grill and let the coals burn until covered with white ash. Using tongs, spread the coals 2 layers deep and place the rack 5–6 inches (13 to 15 cm) above the coals. For a gas grill, preheat on medium-high heat. Remove the chicken from the marinade, pat dry, and thread onto the skewers. Grill the skewers directly over medium-high heat, turning once, until well browned, 4–5 minutes on each side. Check for doneness by cutting into a piece of chicken. It should show no pink at the center.

Serve the skewers over the cooked white rice, if desired, topped with warm peanut sauce. Alternatively, for passed appetizers, arrange the skewers on a platter and serve the peanut sauce on the side.

VARIATION TIPS: Pork tenderloin or beef flank steak may be used in this recipe.

Pork should be cooked to 155°F (68°C), flank steak to 125°F (52°C). Adjust cooking times accordingly.



Spinach Salad with Blood Oranges

MAKES 8–10 SERVINGS

2 tsp balsamic vinegar

1 tsp raspberry vinegar

1 tsp fresh lemon juice

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

½ cup (3 fl oz/80 ml) extra-virgin olive oil

4 blood oranges or tangelos, about 1½ lb (750 g) total weight

1 fennel bulb, trimmed, fronds minced and reserved for garnish

10 oz (315 g) spinach leaves, preferably baby spinach leaves, well rinsed (far left), tough stems cut away, if necessary

½ small red onion, cut crosswise into very thin slices

IN A SMALL BOWL, whisk together the balsamic and raspberry vinegars and lemon juice, and season to taste with kosher salt and pepper. Slowly drizzle in the oil while whisking constantly to make a thick vinaigrette. Set aside.

Using a chef's knife, cut off the top and bottom of an orange down to the flesh. Stand the orange upright on the cutting board and, following the contour of the fruit, cut off the peel down to the flesh in vertical strips. (If using tangelos, simply peel by hand.) Cut the flesh crosswise into thin slices and remove the hard, white center and any seeds. Repeat with the remaining oranges. Cut the fennel bulb in half lengthwise and cut out the core (page 46). Cut each half lengthwise into thin slices.

Put the spinach leaves in a large bowl. Add the oranges, fennel, and red onion. Whisk the vinaigrette, add most of it to the salad, and toss well to coat. Taste and adjust the amount of vinaigrette and the seasoning. Transfer the salad to a large serving bowl or platter or divide among individual plates. Sprinkle with the reserved minced fennel fronds and serve.

Rice Salad with Tuna & Capers

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

Salt and freshly ground pepper

2 cups (14 oz/440 g) long-grain white rice

2 cans (6 oz/185 g each) tuna, preferably Italian olive oil packed (far right)

¼ cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) fresh lemon juice or white wine vinegar

¼ cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) extra-virgin olive oil

1½ Tbsp capers, rinsed

½ cup (¾ oz/20 g) chopped fresh flat-leaf (Italian) parsley

½ cup (¾ oz/20 g) chopped fresh basil, plus whole leaves for garnish

½ cup (¾ oz/20 g) chopped fresh cilantro (fresh coriander)

IN A SAUCEPAN OVER HIGH HEAT, combine 4 cups (32 fl oz/1 l) water and ½ tsp salt and bring to a boil. Add the rice, return to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed, about 20 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand, covered, until completely cool, at least 1 hour. Separate the grains with a fork.

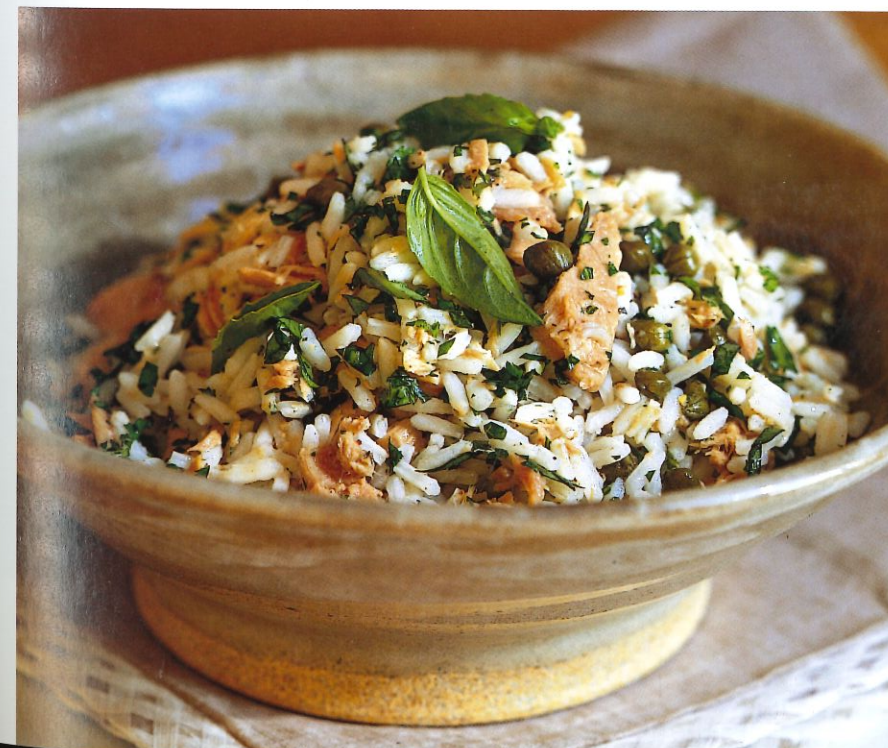
Drain the tuna of its excess oil, transfer to a bowl, and flake with a fork.

In a large bowl, stir together the lemon juice, oil, 1 tsp salt, and 1 tsp pepper. Add the rice, tuna, capers, parsley, chopped basil, and cilantro and mix gently.

Transfer the salad to a serving bowl and garnish with the whole basil leaves.

SERVING TIP: To make individual servings, cut large tomatoes in half and scoop them out, leaving a shell. Fill the halves with heaping portions of the salad and garnish each serving with a basil sprig.

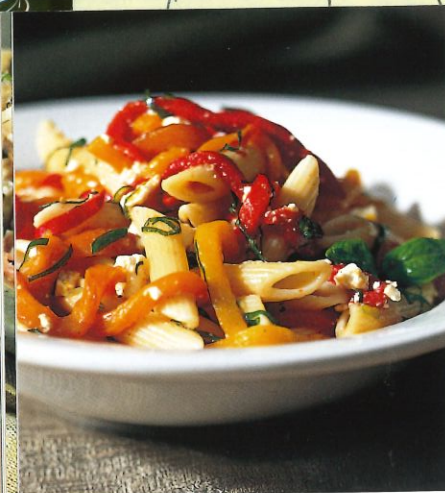
MAKE-AHEAD TIP: You can cook the rice the day before making the salad and refrigerate it overnight. Let the rice come to room temperature before assembling and serving the salad.



ITALIAN TUNA

Italian canned tuna is a great pantry item to keep on hand to add to salads or pasta dishes. Made from the belly of the fish and specially processed, this tuna has a flavor altogether different from that of domestic brands. If you cannot find Italian tuna packed in olive oil, you can buy water-packed tuna, drain it, cover it with extra-virgin olive oil, and refrigerate for 2 or 3 days before using.





PASTA COOKING BASICS

Use a large pot of water to cook the pasta quickly and evenly and add a generous amount of salt to the water after it reaches a boil to replace the salt leached from the pasta as it cooks. Always stir dried pasta immediately after adding it to the water and once or twice during cooking to keep it from sticking together. Cook until al dente, tender but still chewy. When draining pasta, reserve a little of the cooking water to add to the sauce if necessary; its starch content will thicken a sauce slightly. Use cooked pasta right away. If it must sit, toss it lightly with olive oil to prevent sticking.

Penne with Roasted Peppers & Vermouth

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE OR 6 FIRST-COURSE SERVINGS

2 Tbsp unsalted butter

3 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling

About 8 green (spring) onions, including tender green parts, thinly sliced

6 bell peppers (capsicums), preferably a mixture of red, yellow, and orange, roasted (page 401), peeled, and cut into long, narrow strips

Freshly grated nutmeg

Salt and freshly ground pepper

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) sweet red vermouth

1 lb (500 g) dried penne

¼ lb (125 g) ricotta salata (page 81) or feta cheese (page 180), grated or finely crumbled

About 12 fresh basil leaves, cut into julienne (page 313), plus sprigs for garnish

BRING A LARGE POT OF WATER TO A BOIL. Meanwhile, in a large frying pan over medium heat, melt the butter with the 3 Tbsp oil. Add the green onions and sauté until softened, about 2 minutes. Add the bell pepper strips and a pinch of nutmeg, season to taste with salt and pepper, and sauté until the peppers are tender and very fragrant, about 5 minutes. Add the vermouth and cook until reduced by half, about 2 minutes.

Generously salt the boiling water, add the pasta, and cook until al dente, 10–12 minutes. Drain, reserving about ½ cup of the pasta-cooking water. Add the pasta to the frying pan and cook briefly over low heat to blend the flavors, adding a few Tbsp of cooking water to loosen the sauce, if needed. Transfer to a warmed large, shallow bowl. Add 2 heaping Tbsp of the cheese, the basil, and a drizzle of oil. Toss. Taste and adjust the seasoning (you may not need extra salt due to the saltiness of the cheese). Garnish with basil sprigs. Serve hot or at room temperature, passing the remaining cheese at the table.

Fusilli with Sweet Sausage & Fennel

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE OR 6 FIRST-COURSE SERVINGS

5 Tbsp (2½ fl oz/75 ml) extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling

4 leeks, white parts only, rinsed (page 77) and thinly sliced

2 fennel bulbs, trimmed, cored, and thinly sliced (page 108)

½ tsp fennel seeds, ground in a mortar or spice grinder

Salt and freshly ground pepper

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) dry white wine

¾ cup (6 fl oz/180 ml) Chicken Stock (page 422) or prepared low-sodium broth

1 lb (500 g) sweet Italian pork sausages, casings removed and crumbled

Splash of sherry vinegar

1 lb (500 g) dried fusilli

Leaves from 6 large fresh tarragon sprigs, coarsely chopped

Handful of fresh flat-leaf (Italian) parsley leaves, coarsely chopped

1 cup (4 oz/125 g) freshly grated pecorino toscano or pecorino romano cheese (far right)

IN A DUTCH OVEN or large, heavy flameproof casserole dish over medium heat, heat 3 Tbsp of the oil. Add the leeks, fennel, and fennel seeds, season to taste with salt and pepper, and sauté until the vegetables begin to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the wine

and cook until reduced by half. Add the stock, cover, and cook until the vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes. Bring a large pot of water to a boil.

Meanwhile, in a heavy frying pan over high heat, heat the remaining 2 Tbsp oil. Add the sausage, breaking it up with a spoon. Cook until well browned, then season with salt and pepper to taste. Pour off most of the fat (keep a little to add flavor) and add a tiny splash of sherry vinegar.

Generously salt the boiling water, add the pasta, and cook until al dente, 8–11 minutes. Meanwhile, add the sausage to the pot with the fennel and simmer for 1–2 minutes to blend the flavors. You should have some liquid left in the pot to form a sauce. If not, add a little warm water or more chicken stock. Taste and adjust the seasoning and add a drizzle of olive oil.

Drain the pasta and put it in a warmed large, shallow bowl. Add a drizzle of olive oil, the tarragon and parsley, and about 3 Tbsp of the cheese. Toss. Add the fennel mixture, toss again, and serve at once. Pass the remaining cheese at the table.



PECORINO CHEESE

Made from sheep's milk, pecorino is produced in nearly every region of central and southern Italy. Each area's cheese has its own distinct taste. *Pecorino romano*, made around Rome, tends to be well aged and sharp. *Pecorino toscano*, from Tuscany, is mild and creamy when young, and stronger and drier when aged. Other famous pecorinos are made in Sicily and Sardinia. Look for these cheeses at well-stocked supermarkets or cheese shops, and taste-test several varieties so you can get to know their characteristics.





Korean Barbecued Beef

MAKES 4–6 SERVINGS

1½ lb (750 g) beef tenderloin, about 5 inches (13 cm) thick

4 cloves garlic, chopped

1 Tbsp plus ½ tsp sugar

6 Tbsp (3 fl oz/90 ml) light soy sauce

1 Tbsp dark soy sauce

1 Tbsp plus 1 tsp Asian sesame oil

2 Tbsp rice vinegar

5 green (spring) onions, white parts only, minced, green parts reserved and cut into julienne for garnish

1 tsp minced fresh ginger

2 Tbsp sesame seeds, toasted (page 194) and crushed

Freshly ground pepper

1 tsp Sriracha chile sauce (page 444)

1 Tbsp canola oil



THIN-SLICING MEAT

Korean cooks slice beef for grilling very thinly to allow for quick marinating and only the briefest cooking. A sharp chef's knife is key to slicing the meat sufficiently thin. To ease slicing, first place the beef in the freezer just until firm, 20–30 minutes. Then, using a single deliberate motion, slice the meat across the grain ⅛ inch (3 mm) thick. Avoid sawing the meat, which results in slices with jagged edges. If the slices are too thick, place them between sheets of parchment (baking) or waxed paper and pound them to an even ⅛-inch thickness with a meat pounder.

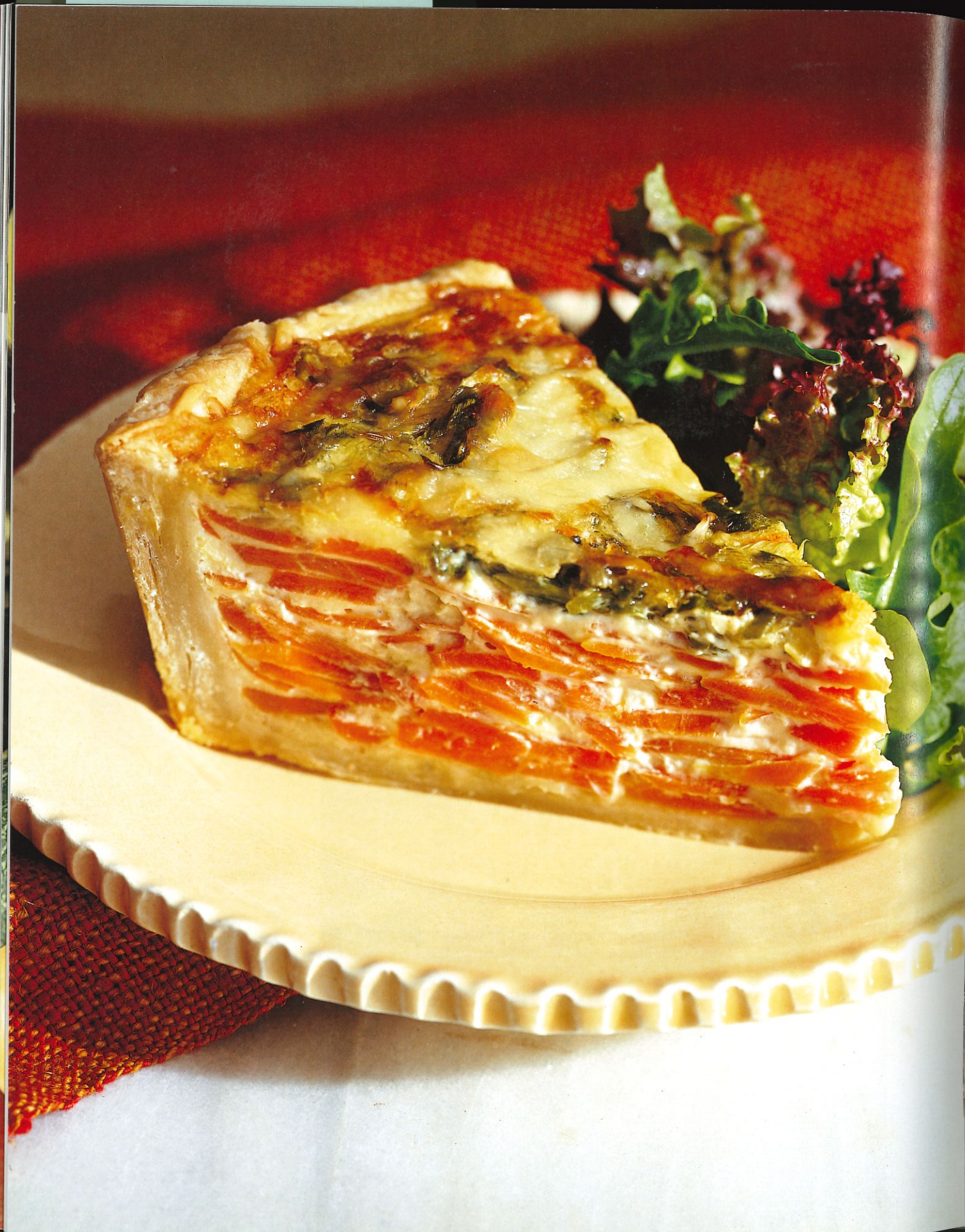
CUT THE BEEF ACROSS THE GRAIN into slices ⅛ inch (3 mm) thick (right). Working on a cutting board, use the side of the blade of a chef's knife or cleaver to mash together three-fourths of the chopped garlic and the 1 Tbsp sugar, forming a paste. Place the paste in a bowl and stir in 3 Tbsp of the light soy sauce, the dark soy sauce, the 1 Tbsp sesame oil, 1 Tbsp of the vinegar, all but 1 Tbsp of the minced green onions, the ginger, 1 Tbsp of the sesame seeds, ½ tsp pepper, and 1 Tbsp water. Place the beef in a shallow bowl and pour the marinade on top. Mix well, cover, and refrigerate for 1–3 hours.

Meanwhile, make a dipping sauce. On a cutting board, use the side of the blade of a chef's knife or cleaver to mash together the remaining chopped garlic and ½ tsp sugar, forming a paste. Place the paste in a bowl and whisk in the remaining 3 Tbsp light soy sauce, the remaining 1 tsp sesame oil, the remaining 1 Tbsp vinegar, the reserved 1 Tbsp minced green onions, the remaining 1 Tbsp sesame seeds, the chile sauce, and 1 Tbsp water. Set aside until ready to serve.

Build a fire in a covered charcoal grill and let the coals burn until covered with white ash. Using tongs, spread the coals 2 or 3 layers deep and place the rack 3–4 inches (7.5 to 10 cm) above the coals. For a gas grill, preheat on high heat. You may also preheat a stove-top grill pan over high heat.

Oil the grill rack or pan. Remove the beef from the marinade and pat dry. Discard the marinade. Working in batches, arrange in a single layer on the rack or pan. Sear, turning once, until crisp and brown on both sides, about 2 minutes per side. Wipe and oil the rack or pan between batches if necessary.

Transfer to a warmed platter, garnish with the julienned green onion, and serve at once with the dipping sauce.



Carrot & Cumin Tart

MAKES 4–6 SERVINGS

Savory Tart Dough (page 429), rolled into a 9½-inch round

2 Tbsp unsalted butter

5 or 6 green (spring) onions, white and tender green parts, thinly sliced

Salt and freshly ground pepper

½ tsp sugar

3–4 cups (12–16 oz/375–500 g) thinly sliced peeled carrots

½ tsp cumin seeds

2 large whole eggs, plus 1 large egg yolk

1⅓ cups (11 fl oz/340 ml) heavy (double) cream or half-and-half (half cream)

Pinch of fresh grated nutmeg or ground mace

1½ cups (6 oz/185 g) shredded Gruyère, Emmentaler, or Jarlsberg cheese

FOLD THE DOUGH ROUND in half and carefully transfer to a 9 or 9½-inch (23- or 24-cm) tart pan, preferably with a removable bottom. Unfold and ease the round into the pan, without stretching it, and pat it firmly into the bottom and up the sides of the pan. Trim off any excess dough by gently running a rolling pin across the top of the pan. Press the dough into the sides of the pan so that it extends slightly above the rim to offset any shrinkage during baking.

Refrigerate or freeze the tart shell until firm, about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, place an oven rack in the lower and upper thirds of the oven and preheat to 375°F (190°C).

Partially blind bake the tart shell (right). Place a baking sheet on the lower rack to catch any drips when you bake the tart.

To make the filling, heat a large, heavy frying pan over medium heat until it is hot but not smoking. Add the butter. When it begins to foam, add the green onions and sauté until wilted, about 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from the heat.

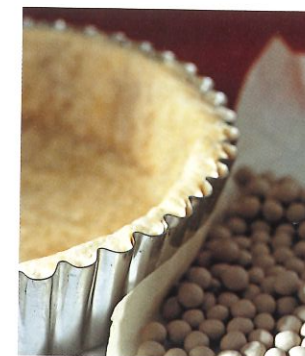
Bring a saucepan of water to a boil. Add salt to taste, the sugar, and the carrots and parboil until half cooked and bright orange, 1–2 minutes. Drain and set aside to cool.

In a small frying pan over medium heat, toast the cumin seeds until they are fragrant and take on a little color, 2–3 minutes. Pour onto a plate and let cool.

In a bowl, whisk together the whole eggs, egg yolk, cream, and nutmeg until blended, then season with salt and pepper.

Sprinkle half the cheese evenly over the bottom of the cooled pastry crust. Arrange as many of the carrot slices in the crust as will fit tightly, sprinkling them with the cumin and green onions as you add them. Pour the cream mixture over the carrots, filling the tart pan almost to the rim. Sprinkle the remaining cheese over the top.

Bake the tart on the upper rack until the top is golden brown and the filling is set, 25–30 minutes. Remove from the oven and let rest for at least 10 minutes before serving.



BLIND BAKING

Also called prebaking, blind baking means partially or completely baking a pie or tart shell before filling it. To partially blind bake, place an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat to 375°F (190°C). Lay a sheet of parchment (baking) paper over the pastry-lined tart pan; it should extend slightly beyond the rim. Weight it down with pie weights or raw rice. Bake for 20 minutes until pale gold. If the dough still looks wet, continue to bake, checking it every 5 minutes. To fully blind bake, remove the weights and parchment and return to the oven until golden, 7–10 minutes longer for a total baking time of 30–40 minutes. Let cool on a rack before filling.



USING SPICES

Spices get their flavors from essential oils that evaporate over time, so they need to be replaced periodically. If stored in tightly closed containers in a cool, dark place, ground spices will last for about 6 months and whole spices will last for about 1 year. Purchase spices in small amounts from stores with high turnover. For the most pronounced flavor, use whole spices and grind them fresh. To grind the cinnamon for this recipe, toast part of a cinnamon stick in a small frying pan over medium heat until fragrant, then break up and grind in a mortar with a pestle or in a spice grinder.

Mexican Wedding Cookies

MAKES ABOUT 4 DOZEN COOKIES

1 cup (8 oz/250 g) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1¼ cups (5 oz/150 g) confectioners' (icing) sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
¼ tsp salt

1¾ cups (9 oz/280 g) all-purpose (plain) flour
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1 cup (5 oz/155 g) ground blanched almonds

IN A LARGE BOWL, using a mixer on high speed, beat the butter until fluffy and pale yellow. Add ½ cup (2 oz/60 g) of the confectioners' sugar and continue beating until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla and salt and beat on low speed until blended.

Sift the flour and cinnamon together onto a sheet of waxed paper. Add the flour mixture to the butter mixture and mix on low speed or stir with a wooden spoon just until blended. Stir in the almonds. Cover and refrigerate until the dough is chilled, but not hard, and is no longer sticky to the touch, about 15 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Have ready 2 ungreased baking sheets. Sift the remaining ¾ cup (3 oz/90 g) confectioners' sugar into a shallow bowl.

Shape the dough into 1-inch (2.5-cm) balls. Place about 1 inch (2.5 cm) apart on the baking sheets.

Bake the cookies until just golden on the bottom, 10–12 minutes. Let the cookies cool on the baking sheets on wire racks for 5 minutes before removing them one at a time and rolling them in the sugar. Let cool completely on wire racks.

Double-Chocolate Ice Cream

MAKES ABOUT 1 QUART (32 FL OZ/1 L)

1½ cups (12 fl oz/375 ml) whole milk
1½ cups (12 fl oz/375 ml) heavy (double) cream
4 large egg yolks
½ cup (4 oz/125 g) sugar
2 Tbsp unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder (page 388)

Salt
6 oz (185 g) bittersweet or semisweet (plain) chocolate, coarsely chopped
2 tsp vanilla extract

IN A HEAVY 2-QT (2-L) SAUCEPAN, combine the milk and 1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) of the cream. Cook over medium heat until bubbles form around the edges of the pan, about 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine the egg yolks, sugar, cocoa, a pinch of salt, and the remaining ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) cream in a bowl. Whisk until the mixture is smooth and the sugar begins to dissolve.

Remove the milk mixture from the heat. Gradually whisk about ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) of the hot milk mixture into the egg mixture, whisking constantly, until smooth. Pour the egg mixture into the saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until it is thick enough to coat the back of the spoon and leaves a clear trail when a finger is drawn through it, 4–6 minutes. Do not let the custard boil. Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl and pour the hot custard over it. Stir until the chocolate melts and the custard is smooth. Strain the custard through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl. Add the vanilla and stir to combine.

Place the bowl in a larger bowl partially filled with ice cubes and water. Stir occasionally until cool. Cover with plastic wrap, pressing it directly on the surface of the custard to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate until chilled, at least 3 hours or up to 24 hours.

Pour the custard into an ice cream maker and freeze according to the manufacturer's instructions. Transfer the ice cream to a freezer-safe container. Cover and freeze until firm, at least 3 hours or up to 3 days, before serving.

Serve in chilled ice cream bowls and top with chocolate curls (right), if desired.



CHOCOLATE CURLS

To make decorative chocolate curls, use a vegetable peeler to shave the edge (for narrow curls) or side (for wide curls) of a bar of chocolate. The bigger the chunk of chocolate, the wider the curls will be. To ensure long, handsome curls rather than stubby shavings, the chocolate must be room temperature or even slightly warm. Try rubbing the chocolate with your palm or, for larger chunks, microwave on low for about 5 seconds and repeat as necessary. Refrigerate the curls until ready to use, or keep at room temperature for no longer than 10 minutes.



Cranberry-Orange Muffins

MAKES 10 MUFFINS

CRANBERRIES

Harvested from bogs when cold weather arrives, tart, fresh cranberries are a signature fruit of autumn and early winter. They can be enjoyed throughout the year by freezing them in airtight freezer bags; they keep for up to 1 year in perfect condition. The combination of tart cranberries sweetened with oranges, another fruit of winter, is one of the classic flavor pairings in baking.



2 cups (10 oz/315 g) all-purpose (plain) flour

½ cup (4 oz/125 g) granulated sugar

½ cup (3½ oz/105 g) firmly packed light brown sugar

2 tsp baking powder

½ tsp salt

Grated zest of 1 orange

1 large egg

4 Tbsp (2 oz/60 g) unsalted butter, melted, or walnut oil

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) whole milk

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) strained fresh orange juice

1½ cups (6 oz/185 g) fresh cranberries (far left) or frozen cranberries, unthawed

½ cup (2 oz/60 g) pecans or walnuts, chopped

PREHEAT THE OVEN TO 375°F (190°C). Grease 10 standard muffin cups with butter or butter-flavored nonstick cooking spray; fill the unused cups one-third full with water to prevent warping.

In a bowl, stir together the flour, granulated sugar, brown sugar, baking powder, salt, and zest. In another bowl, whisk together the egg, melted butter, milk, and orange juice until blended. Add to the dry ingredients, stirring just until evenly moistened. The batter will be slightly lumpy. Using a large rubber spatula, fold in the cranberries and nuts just until evenly distributed, no more than a few strokes. Do not overmix.

Spoon the batter into each muffin cup, filling it level with the rim of the cup.

Bake until golden, dry, and springy to the touch, 20–25 minutes. A toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin should come out clean. Transfer the pan to a wire rack and let cool for 5 minutes. Unmold the muffins. Serve them warm or at room temperature, with butter.



Oatmeal with Dried Fruit

MAKES 2 SERVINGS

2 cups (16 fl oz/500 ml) whole or low-fat milk

1 cup (3 oz/90 g) old-fashioned rolled oats (far right)

Fine sea salt

2 Tbsp unsalted butter (optional)

1 Tbsp firmly packed light brown sugar

About 1 cup (6 oz/185 g) pitted dried fruit such as apricots, figs, peaches, dates, and/or prunes, diced

WARM TWO BREAKFAST BOWLS in a low (200°F/95°C) oven.

In a small saucepan over high heat, combine the milk, oats, and a pinch of salt. Using a wooden spoon, stir until the mixture begins to simmer. Reduce the heat to medium and continue stirring until the oatmeal is thickened, about 4 minutes.

Divide the oatmeal between the warmed bowls and top each serving with 1 Tbsp of the butter, if desired. Scatter each serving with half the brown sugar and half the diced dried fruit and serve at once.

NOTE: This recipe can easily be doubled.

VARIATION TIP: In addition to, or instead of, the diced dried fruit, add 2 bananas, peeled and diced, or ½ cup (2 oz/60 g) golden raisins (sultanas).



ABOUT OATMEAL

Many oatmeal manufacturers have begun to tout the heart-healthy benefits of oats, and for good reason. A cup (8 oz/250 g) of cooked oatmeal has only 145 calories and is full of iron, magnesium, and fiber. Oats are low in saturated fat and sodium, and can help lower cholesterol levels because of their high soluble-fiber content. Several varieties of oats are available. For the best results when making this recipe, use old-fashioned rolled oats.