

Cranberry-Walnut Irish Soda Bread Muffins with Whipped Maple-Cinnamon Cream Cheese

MAKES 12 MUFFINS

My parents went on one big vacation a year, without the four children. It was usually somewhere totally eighties, like Acapulco or Key West. They would leave us in the care of my dad's sisters, Aunt Fran and Aunt Catherine, who were the best—and our most requested—sitters. But every so often, they weren't available, so they would have to call in the reserve babysitter. This was a young twenty-something named Kathy Fiorito. She somehow managed to keep us all on somewhat of a schedule while successfully preventing us from destroying our home or one another, all the while being that cool and fun young babysitter you read about in Judy Blume novels.

It was like our own little vacation. Rules were looser, pizza was delivered more frequently, and Kathy often made us Irish soda bread, which was odd considering she was from an Italian-American household and cooking for a bunch of Italian-American children. Maybe it was because her boyfriend was Irish, or my parents' vacation usually fell during the week of St. Paddy's Day, or maybe she was half Irish, which was rare yet not unheard of in our world. Regardless, I remember a loaf of somehow moist yet crumbly soda bread sitting on the stove, just waiting to be thoroughly smeared with a big ol' hunk of cream cheese.

DR. MAURO'S SODA BREAD TIP OF THE DAY: *If you don't have cream cheese, salted butter is a damn fine substitute.*

Nonstick cooking spray
½ cup dried cranberries
1 cup Guinness Extra Stout
2¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon kosher salt
1 large egg
1 cup buttermilk
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
½ cup chopped walnuts
Flaky sea salt, for garnish
Demerara sugar, for garnish
1 recipe Whipped Maple-Cinnamon Cream Cheese (recipe follows), full-fat cream cheese, or softened butter, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Spray a 12-muffin tin liberally with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Combine the cranberries and Guinness in a small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high for 45 seconds, then set aside to steep and cool, which will saturate those cranberries with all that lovely beer flavor. Strain and set aside.
3. Combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl. Whisk the egg, buttermilk, and butter in a medium bowl.

Add the wet mixture to the dry and stir until just mixed. Do not overmix—you just want all the dry ingredients hydrated. Gently fold in the cranberries and walnuts.

4. Fill each muffin well about three-quarters full. Top each with a pinch of flaky sea salt and demerara sugar. Bake for 18 to 25 minutes, until a toothpick or cake tester comes out clean.
5. Let cool for 5 minutes in the pan, then quickly and carefully remove the muffins from the tin. Finish cooling on a wire rack. Keep the muffins for up to 2 days in an airtight container at room temperature. To properly reinvigorate, refresh in a 400°F oven or toaster oven for 5 minutes.
6. Serve with Whipped Maple-Cinnamon Cream Cheese, cream cheese, or butter.

Whipped Maple-Cinnamon Cream Cheese

Use this magical blend on everything!

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

One 8-ounce package full-fat cream cheese, at room temperature
¼ cup pure maple syrup
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon kosher salt

1. In a large bowl, use a hand mixer on medium-high speed to whip the cream cheese, maple syrup, cinnamon, and salt until smooth.
2. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.



Candied Bacon

MAKES 12 TO 14 SLICES

This method has been perfected for many years. The key is good, fatty bacon. And patience. Also timing: You need to pull it at the right moment, when amber meets mahogany. This is the bacon that puts the B in my BLT Sliders (page 34).

Nonstick cooking spray
2 cups unpacked light brown sugar
12 to 14 slices medium-cut applewood smoked bacon (the fattier the better)

1. Preheat the oven to 275°F. Line a rimmed sheet pan with foil, spray it with nonstick cooking spray, and set a wire rack on the pan. Spray a second wire rack and set aside.
2. Place the brown sugar in a pie dish. Gently press each slice of bacon into the sugar until coated (there can be patches of uncoated bacon). Work quickly, as the brown sugar can compromise the moisture of the bacon and impede caramelization. Set the bacon on the prepared rack set in the sheet pan as you work.
3. Bake until super crispy and golden, rotating the sheet pan midway through cooking, 50 to 60 minutes total depending on your oven and the thickness of the bacon.
4. Remove the bacon right away to the other prepared wire rack to keep it from sticking. Cool for 30 minutes, until peak crispness is achieved. Take a brittle bite and realize quickly that this here bite of candied bacon is one of the greatest bites you've taken. Maybe not ever, maybe not even this year, but definitely the best bite you've taken in a very long time.
5. Not making sliders? Serve this bacon on a salad. Even on ice cream. Tell your love handles they're welcome. Eat immediately or store on a wire rack in the fridge for up to 2 days to keep the texture nice and firm. You can keep at room temp for a half a day or so, but the warmer your kitchen is, the quicker the bacon will lose its texture.



Coconut Rice

MAKES 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

Here is my confession. I suck at making rice. Maybe it's because I didn't grow up eating rice. Maybe it's because I called in sick that day in culinary school. Maybe it's because I'm a heavy-handed, sausage-fingered buffoon who wouldn't know finesse if she asked me to slow dance at my eighth-grade coed mixer during an encore spinning of "More Than Words" (my jam).

Regardless, this is the only rice recipe I have successfully made in my home kitchen. Food scientists may conclude it's because of that wonderful coconut fat and how the lipids coat each grain of rice with a protective yet delectable layer, ensuring fluffier and more evenly cooked grains of rice. That may be true, but I also think the subtle tropical aroma and addictive texture of the crunchy shredded coconut instantly transport me via Economy Plus far, far away to the warmth and peace of Seven Mile Beach.

2 cups jasmine rice, rinsed under cold water until water runs clear
1½ tablespoons coconut oil
One 13.5-ounce can full-fat coconut milk, well shaken

2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1 cup shredded unsweetened coconut
Fresh lime slices, for serving
1 teaspoon lime zest, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Add the rice to a medium saucepan (one you have a matching lid for!). Spoon in the coconut oil and mix it into the rice. This creates a nice fat barrier to ensure well-separated grains of rice.
3. Add the coconut milk, salt, and 2 cups water to the pot. Give it a good stir and cover with a lid. Bring to a boil, then immediately reduce the heat to a gentle simmer. Simmer for 10 minutes, remove from the heat with the lid still on, and let the rice rest for 15 minutes.
4. While the rice is cooking, place the shredded coconut on a parchment-lined sheet pan. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, until golden brown and crispy. Let cool.
5. Fluff the rice with a fork and serve garnished with fresh lime slices, the lime zest, and a nice topping of toasted coconut.



Hawaiian BBQ Pork Extravaganza

MAKES 8 TO 10 SERVINGS

When I had just turned sixteen, Gus and Pam took us kids on our first tropical vacation. They cashed in a bunch of coupons and got a really great deal at a beautiful resort in Maui. My cousins, the Bernis, went too, and I'd never been more excited.

I was sporting a brand-new Discman and an updated physique thanks to a two-week crash diet called Cybergenics, where all I did was do high-impact group aerobics and eat cold chicken breasts.

My brother, Frank, and I and our two cousins Joe and Dave all shared our own suite. We quickly discovered the power of charging things to the room, mainly bottles of mai tai mix from the gift store and outrageously priced rum-packed pineapple cocktails served in actual pineapples with at least six straws.

We were a long way from our usual vacation at a friend's cottage on a lake in Wisconsin or at the Holidome in Rockford, Illinois, and the excitement was nonstop. We swam, snorkeled, and surfed. We sunned and snacked, and some of us burned. I tasted my first Kalua pork at a thrilling beachfront luau. I'll never forget the aroma of that succulent swine as it was pulled, right there in front of us, from the banana leaf-lined charcoal pit it was roasted in. I'll also never forget the first bite of that slightly sweet and buttery-soft pork. Nor will I ever forget the look of the server who handled the pork station as I went up for my fourth and final helping.

¼ cup packed light brown sugar
2 tablespoons kosher salt
1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon Chinese five-spice powder
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon ground ginger
1 tablespoon onion powder
One 5-pound boneless pork shoulder or butt, fat cap scored deep in a crosshatch pattern
8 tablespoons (1 stick) salted butter, at room temperature, for griddling
One 8-count package sweet rolls (I like King's Hawaiian sweet rolls)

SWEET CHILE SAUCE

½ cup rice vinegar
¼ cup packed light brown sugar
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
1 to 2 tablespoons red pepper flakes, or to taste
1 tablespoon freshly grated peeled ginger
1 garlic clove, grated

FOR SERVING

2 or 3 tablespoons salted butter, at room temperature
1 recipe Pickled Cukes and Carrots (recipe follows)
1 recipe Sweet and Hot Honey Hot Mustard (recipe follows)

1. Mix the brown sugar, salt, pepper, five-spice powder, garlic powder, ginger, and onion powder in a medium bowl. Rub the spice mix over the entire pork. Place the pork on a sheet pan fitted with a wire rack, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. If you have the time, let it sit in the fridge overnight—it will make a world of difference.

2. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and preheat the oven to 325°F. Remove the plastic wrap and cover the pork with a layer of parchment paper, then a layer of aluminum foil and roast for 3 hours.

3. Remove the pork from the oven, uncover, and drain any liquid fat from the pan. Return to the oven, uncovered, and roast until the internal temperature reaches 200°F and the pork is well browned, about 1½ hours more.

4. When the pork is almost ready, make the sweet chile sauce. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, bring the vinegar, brown sugar, and salt to a boil, then simmer until thickened and reduced by half, about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the red pepper flakes, ginger, and garlic.

5. Transfer the pork to a large dish, pour the sweet chile sauce on top, cover with foil, and let rest for 20 minutes. Using two forks, pull apart the pork.

6. As always, butter and griddle your bread! Set a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Schmear butter on both insides of each bun and, working in batches, place butter side down on the skillet. Gently griddle until golden brown, about 5 minutes.

7. Serve the pork in a build-your-own style with a plate of rolls and bowls of the pickles and honey mustard.

Pickled Cukes and Carrots

MAKES 4 CUPS

2 cups rice vinegar
¼ cup sugar
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 cup shredded carrots (from about 2 medium carrots, but I buy the preshredded carrots—so much easier!)
1 cup ¼-inch half-moon-sliced English cucumbers
1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1. Bring 1 cup water, the vinegar, sugar, and salt to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir well to ensure the sugar has dissolved. Remove from the heat and add the carrots, cucumbers, and red pepper flakes. Let sit for at least 30 minutes. This is referred to as “quick pickling” or “ain't got the time to pickle!”

2. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 1 month.

Sweet and Hot Honey Hot Mustard

MAKES 1 CUP

¼ cup ground mustard powder
¼ cup boiling water
2 tablespoons honey
1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
½ teaspoon kosher salt

1. Very easy! Mix all the ingredients in a small bowl until mustardy, smooth, and lump-free.

2. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Sweet Potato Potato Salad

MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

I had this for the first time in Cayman at a little roadside chicken joint appropriately named “Chicken! Chicken!” and I was hooked. I’ve had gallons of potato salad over the years, but never did I have a potato salad made with sweet potatoes! I took a bite and had an epiphany. It’s brighter, sunnier, and more festive than the standard potato salad and it deserves a spot at all your summer BBQs from here on out.

2 celery stalks, cut into small dice
½ small red onion, minced
½ cup mayonnaise
¼ cup roughly chopped gherkins
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard
1 tablespoon honey
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
¼ cup white vinegar
2 tablespoons minced fresh chives
2 tablespoons minced fresh flat-leaf parsley

1. Mix together the celery, onion, mayo, gherkins, lemon zest and juice, mustard, and honey in a large bowl. Season with

¾ tablespoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper and let sit while the potatoes cook. This mellows out the onion while marrying all the rest of the flavors with the mayo.

2. Place the potatoes in a large saucepan and add enough cold water to cover by 1 inch. Season the water generously with salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Once at a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until the potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes.

3. Drain the potatoes in a colander and, while still piping hot, add the vinegar. (It’s okay if some falls through the colander; plenty will penetrate the potatoes.) The hot potatoes will soak in all that vinegar flavor, seasoning each potato top to bottom. Using a rubber spatula, toss gently to combine.

4. Add the warm potatoes to the bowl with the dressing and toss with the chives and parsley. Season to taste with more salt and pepper. Serve immediately or store in an airtight container overnight. I prefer freshly mixed, slightly warm potato salad, so my vote is to serve it fresh. However, some people prefer the flavor when it has had a chance to chill out overnight in the fridge. If you do serve it the next day, be sure to adjust the seasoning, if necessary, with more salt and pepper.



How often do you look at a potato salad and proclaim out loud, “That’s a beautiful potato salad!”?



Crispy Broccoli with Asiago and Pine Nuts

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

The broccoli in this dish is saturated with lemon and funky Asiago flavor, yet the outside is crispy and charred. It's a ton of flavor using very few ingredients, and not only will your kids love it, but your whole family will begin to obsess over this broccoli dish.

¼ cup olive oil, plus ½ teaspoon for toasting the pine nuts

½ cup shredded Asiago (about 2 ounces)

½ teaspoon sugar

2 teaspoons kosher salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 broccoli crowns, cut into 1½-inch florets

(reserve the broccoli stems to use in Broccoli Stem "Fries," page 86)

¼ cup pine nuts

Zest and juice of 1 lemon

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.

2. Combine the ¼ cup oil, cheese, sugar, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Add the broccoli and toss to coat. Spread the broccoli in an even layer on a sheet pan and roast for 20 to 30 minutes, until the tops are slightly charred, stirring halfway through the roasting process.

3. Heat the remaining ½ teaspoon oil in a small skillet over medium-low heat. Add the pine nuts and gently toast, shaking the pan often, until lightly golden, 3 or 4 minutes. Pine nuts go from perfectly toasted to brutally burned in the amount of time it takes for you to call your mom, check the mail, or unload the dishwasher. It happens that quick, so be attentive and do not ever, under any circumstances, underestimate the toasting sensitivity of a tender pine nut.

4. Sprinkle the lemon zest and juice over the broccoli, toss, top with the pine nuts, and serve!

Not a packet of
cheese powder in
sight...



Stovetop Ooey Gooey Mac and Cheese

MAKES 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

Remember when your mom would make boxed Kraft macaroni and cheese? She'd mix the hot pasta with the cold butter, the milk, and that packet of fluorescent cheese powder. It was audible from a distance, the sound of the spoon sloshing against the macaroni as it became one with the instant cheese sauce. I could not wait to dig in . . . at least for the first few minutes of its life.

To me, boxed mac and cheese lasts just a mere couple of minutes before it starts to seize up and lose its luxurious creaminess. That's why as a kid I would inhale my bowl of mac and cheese within three minutes, usually resulting in what my father called "agita."

This recipe extends those glorious first three minutes for an additional thirty minutes and beyond. I've cracked the code.

Kosher salt

1 pound fusilli pasta

2 cups freshly grated sharp Cheddar
(about 8 ounces)

8 ounces Velveeta or similar foil-wrapped
shelf-stable cheese stuff, cut into 1-inch
cubes

2 tablespoons cornstarch

Two 12-ounce cans evaporated milk

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

1 cup pulverized butter crackers, like Ritz

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until al dente according to the package instructions. Drain and return the pasta to the pot.
2. In a medium bowl toss the cheeses and cornstarch until the cheese is fully coated.
3. Set a medium saucepan over low heat. Add the evaporated milk and mustard and whisk until smooth. Whisk in the cheeses and cook, stirring constantly, for about 5 minutes, until all the cheese is melted and the sauce is silky and smooth.
4. Add the cheese sauce to the pasta and stir until you reach dream cheesiness. Serve in a bowl and top with pulverized crackers. Watch the children cry tears of happiness . . . and then realize that boxed mac and cheese will no longer be accepted.

The Sloppy Lo

MAKES 8 SANDWICHES

Lorenzo's nickname is Lo, or LoLo. Like all great nicknames, its origin is entirely organic and really unexplainable. We didn't choose Lo; Lo chose him. You would think people would call him Enzo or Zo, but those never stuck. Lo has a great ring to it, and since I named this recipe after his nickname, he is forever dubbed Lo... at least in his old man's eyes.

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 pounds ground turkey or ground sirloin
- ½ medium yellow onion, cut into small dice
- 2 celery stalks, cut into small dice
- 2 small carrots, grated
- 1 cup ketchup
- Two 8-ounce cans tomato sauce
- 1 tablespoon packed light brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) salted butter, at room temperature, for griddling
- 8 whole wheat buns
- 1 recipe Pickled Cukes and Carrots (page 69)

1. Heat 1 teaspoon of the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the turkey and brown until no longer pink, breaking it up as it cooks. Set aside in a medium bowl. Add the remaining 1 teaspoon oil and the onion, celery, and carrots and sauté until softened, about 10 minutes. Return the turkey to the skillet and add the ketchup, tomato sauce, brown sugar, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Simmer until thickened, about 15 minutes.
2. As always, butter and griddle your bread! Set a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Schmear butter on both insides of each bun and, working in batches, place butter side down on the skillet. Gently griddle until golden brown, about 5 minutes.
3. Scoop the Sloppy Lo mix onto the buns and top with pickles. Serve with 14 napkins, preferably near a bathtub or garden hose.



"Hoagies and grinders,
hoagies and grinders...
navy beans, navy beans...
meatloaf sandwich..."
—Adam Sandler

Lorenzo
8604548170



Fire this up on a blustery autumnal evening.

Black Bean and Roasted Tomato Soup with Avocado Crema

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

I 100 percent credit this recipe to my very loyal and talented recipe tester, Lisa Krych. She is actually more than just a recipe tester; she's also a gifted food stylist and recipe developer and an amazing chef. This soup is all her, and it's frickin' wonderful. It's a great spin on traditional black bean soup.

- ½ pound smoked bacon or pancetta, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 1 medium yellow onion, minced**
- 2 garlic cloves, minced**
- One 14.5-ounce can fire-roasted diced tomatoes**
- 1 cup chicken stock**
- 2 chipotle chiles in adobo, chopped fine**
- Three 15-ounce cans black beans, including canning liquid**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
- 1 jalapeño, cored, seeded, and sliced thin, for garnish**
- 1 small bunch of cilantro, for garnish**

AVOCADO CREMA

- ½ cup Mexican crema or sour cream**
- 2 ripe avocados, pitted, peeled, and roughly chopped**
- Zest and juice of 2 to 3 limes, as needed**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

1. Set a medium saucepan or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the bacon and cook until crispy, 5 to 6 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate, leaving the fat in the pan.

2. Quickly add the onion and cook it in the bacon grease, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes, letting it get some good color. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute, until fragrant.

3. Add the tomatoes, stock, chiles, beans, bay leaf, and salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for at least 30 minutes, until the beans are tender, stirring occasionally.

4. To make the avocado crema, place the crema, avocados, and lime zest and juice of 2 of the limes in the bowl of a food processor and blend until smooth. If too thick, thin out with a bit more lime juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

5. Transfer the avocado crema to a bowl and cover the surface with plastic wrap to keep it from browning. Refrigerate the bowl.

6. Now back to the soup. Carefully remove the bay leaf and discard. Using an immersion blender, blend the soup until you achieve the consistency you desire; I like mine thick and chunky. (If you do not have an immersion blender, transfer the soup to a regular blender, but remove the plastic piece in the lid, place a kitchen towel over the top, and start on low. This will keep pressure from building up and causing the lid to pop off.) Taste and season with more salt if desired.

7. When ready to serve, retrieve your avocado crema chillin' in the fridge. Ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with the bacon, avocado crema, jalapeños, and cilantro. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3 days, or in the freezer for up to 3 months.

of the butter in a medium nonstick pan over medium-low heat and swirl constantly, until the butter is melted and the bubbling subsides. The butter will quickly start turning brown; cook, swirling the pan constantly, until it has a dark golden color with a nutty aroma, 5 to 7 minutes, then immediately transfer to a large bowl using a rubber spatula. Add the remaining 4 tablespoons (½ stick) of butter to the hot browned butter to round out the flavor; it will melt quickly.

4. Add the sugars, salt, and vanilla to the butter in the bowl and whisk to combine. Add the egg and egg yolk and whisk vigorously for 30 seconds, until smooth. Add the flour mixture and whisk until no longer lumpy, about

1 minute. Fold in the chocolate chunks and pecans.

5. Use a 4-ounce ice cream scoop or ¼ cup measuring cup to place 8 cookie balls on the prepared sheet pan. I like big ol' cookies, so 8 is great!

6. Top each ball of dough with 2 or 3 pinches of flaky sea salt. You can use kosher salt, but that flaky sea salt just makes these cookies sing.

7. Bake until the cookies are golden brown on the edges but still a bit gooey in the middle, 10 to 15 minutes. Sarah believes underbaking is better than overbaking.

8. Transfer to a rack to cool. Eat warm with ice cream and plenty of whipped cream if desired.

I Can't Believe It's Paleo Chocolate Chip Cookies

MAKES 12 COOKIES

The Food Network fifteen: The inevitable weight gain sustained by new Food Network talent during their first year. Side effects include bigger tummy, puffy cheeks, colorful XXL Robert Graham Shirts, slow movement, acne, irritability, and, in some severe cases, the inability to stop consuming everything presented to you. In some very severe cases (see: J. Mauro), the talent can gain up to thirty-seven pounds.

The dramatic change in lifestyle when I started shooting my first season of *Sandwich King* really did lead me to become my heaviest and least healthy. The travel, the shooting, the dinners and drinks, the festivals—everything adds up. It's all so exciting that it's hard not to indulge in the delicious food and drink that are constantly offered to you. Problem is, I would then have to watch myself on the screen, and I was just unhappy with what I saw.

These cookies coincided with my discovery of the paleo diet and CrossFit, which often go hand in hand. Though my diet and exercise routine is more varied now, the philosophy of paleo eating helped me recalibrate my overall health with a diet of primarily clean proteins and vegetables.

Sarah began making these cookies at the beginning of our healthy journey as a way to satisfy our sweet tooth while still not falling off the rails into a trough of sundae. She is the number one reason we keep this health train on the tracks. She's a helluva motivator and a brilliant cook. To quote my very good friend Marc Murphy, she "seasons with authority" and bakes like a beast. She keeps our food fresh and exciting while still providing us healthy nourishment. It's all about balance.

¼ cup coconut oil
1 large egg, whisked
½ cup coconut sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 cup almond flour
¼ cup coconut flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
¼ cup (about 2 ounces) dark chocolate, coarsely chopped
Flaky sea salt, for sprinkling

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper.
2. Place the coconut oil in a coffee mug or microwave-safe vessel. Microwave for about 20 seconds, until liquid. Let cool for a couple of minutes.
3. Mix together the egg, cooled coconut oil, coconut sugar, and vanilla in a medium bowl. Add both flours and the baking soda and mix well to form a cohesive dough. Fold in the chocolate chunks.
4. Using a 1-ounce scoop, place cookie mounds 2 inches apart on the prepared sheet pan. Slightly flatten each mound with your palm and top with a nice sprinkle of flaky sea salt.
5. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes, until slightly golden. Let cool completely on a wire rack for about 20 minutes.
6. Since this is a healthier cookie recipe, you can enjoy 4 or 5 of these little protein- and good-fat-filled treats at a time. Store at room temperature, lightly covered, for 1 or 2 days.

Lemon Poppy Seed Bundt Cake with Strawberry-Vanilla Glaze

MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

Remember how cool lemon poppy seed muffins were? They were everywhere in the early nineties: gas stations, school cafeterias, convenience stores. I thought they were so darn healthy, too. They were muffins, *not* cupcakes. Muffins are permissible breakfast food while cupcakes are naughty desserts. You can eat muffins every day. Daily cupcake consumption can lead you down a dark path. Plus, lemon poppy seed muffins were the most healthy muffin because they contained both lemon and seeds. So that's fruit *and* protein.

Therefore, on my way to school, I would often stop by the White Hen convenience store down the block and purchase a giant 940-calorie lemon poppy seed muffin. I'd wash it down with a Diet Rite and proceed to attack the day with an abundance of energy while wearing an ill-fitting sweatshirt dusted in tiny black seeds and lemony crumbs.

Nonstick cooking spray, for the Bundt pan

2½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting the pan

4 large eggs, at room temperature

**3 tablespoons lemon zest
(from about 3 lemons)**

**¾ cup fresh lemon juice
(from about 3 lemons)**

2 teaspoons limoncello or pure vanilla extract

¼ cup poppy seeds

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (2¼ sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature

Strawberry-Vanilla Glaze (recipe follows)

Yellow and pink sprinkles, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray the Bundt pan with nonstick cooking spray, then dust with flour.
2. Whisk the eggs, zest, lemon juice, limoncello, and poppy seeds in a medium bowl.
3. Mix the flour, salt, baking soda, and baking powder in the bowl of a stand mixer with a paddle attachment. With the mixer on low speed, add the butter 1 tablespoon at a time until a pea-size crumble texture is achieved. Increase the speed to medium and slowly stream in the egg-lemon mixture until combined. Increase the speed to medium-high and beat for 2 minutes, until light and fluffy.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared Bundt pan. Smooth out the top and bake for 40 minutes, until a cake tester comes out clean. Let cool for 30 minutes, then turn out onto a cake pedestal.
5. Pour the glaze all over the cake. Top with sprinkles and serve immediately!

Strawberry-Vanilla Glaze

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

Zest and juice of 1 lemon

2 tablespoons strawberry preserves

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste or pure vanilla extract

1 cup confectioners' sugar

Whisk all the ingredients together until smooth.



Peanut Butter Parfaits

MAKES 6 PARFAITS

If you haven't played with peanut butter powder yet, I suggest you start immediately. This healthy weeknight "dessert" is ironically inspired by one of Sarah's daily post-workout meals. The magic happens when you mix the yogurt with the peanut butter powder. It basically turns into peanut butter frosting that's actually good for you. Add the fresh berries and crunchy peanuts and you've got yourself a quick pantry recipe to either start your day or finish your evening. So serve these parfaits as a healthy-ish fun breakfast or a really quick no-bake dessert.

Do not do as I did and attempt to eat a spoonful of peanut butter powder straight from the jar. It's a very different experience from eating regular peanut butter straight from the jar. You will most definitely inhale it and most definitely choke on a sandy plume of tasty asphyxiant. Come to think of it . . . not a bad way to go.

One 32-ounce container whole milk Greek yogurt

1 cup peanut butter powder (I use PB2)

2 cups fresh blueberries

1 cup dry-roasted, salted peanuts

- 1.** In a medium bowl, whisk the yogurt and peanut butter powder until the powder is dissolved and incorporated.
- 2.** Place about ½ cup of this peanut butter goodness in each of 6 parfait glasses. Sprinkle in about 2 tablespoons of peanuts. Place another ½ cup of the peanut butter mixture on top, then top with ⅓ cup of the blueberries and about 2 tablespoons of peanuts. Serve fairly quickly as the peanuts soften and the blueberries start to get mushy if left sitting for too long. If necessary, you can refrigerate them for about 1 hour before serving.



Oh so elegant!

Deconstructed Cannoli Chips and Dip

MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

The minute a crispy cannoli shell is filled with rich ricotta, it starts to degrade at a rapid pace. It takes less than a half hour for the whole experience to become compromised. By the time you get home, the bakery box is a mess of fallen pistachio crumbles, weeping ricotta, and, often, soggy shells.

This dip is a wonderful and beyond simple way to replicate, over and over, that perfect first bite of a cannoli when you inhale a plume of confectioners' sugar as your teeth start to crunch down on the bubbly shell and the textures of the pistachio and chocolate chips swim together in your mouth in a sea of creamy and sweet ricotta filling. It's my favorite first bite in the pastry world . . .

Then you go in for the second bite . . . and all bets are off. Shards of shell fall around you like confetti in a Fellini film. Your fancy new button-down is coated in confectioners' sugar while a stray maraschino ricochets off your husky Bugle Boys and rolls across the linoleum floor. You try to catch all the falling bits, but you're too worried about chewing and tasting and getting all that wonderful flavor into your mouth!

By the time you finish your second bite of cannoli, your shirt looks like a dessert table at the end of your cousin's wedding and your floor is beyond repair. And God forbid you have to share a cannoli with others and you attempt to cut it up "for the table" . . . *madone!* Might as well break out the Shop-Vac and get a divorce attorney on the horn.

Do yourself and your family a favor by making this inventive and easy-to-make cannoli dip instead.

Canola oil, for frying

One 36-count package square wonton wrappers, cut in half diagonally

2 cups whole milk ricotta

½ cup confectioners' sugar, plus more for dusting

3 tablespoons orange liqueur, such as Grand Marnier

1 cup heavy (whipping) cream

1 cup chocolate chips

½ cup pistachios, coarsely chopped

½ cup maraschino cherries, chopped

Zest of 1 orange

1. Fill a Dutch oven one-third full of oil and heat it to 350°F over medium heat. Set a wire rack on a rimmed sheet pan.
2. Fry the wonton wrappers, working in batches so they fit in a single layer. Flip once or twice until golden brown, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove with tongs or a slotted spoon and drain on the prepared wire rack.
3. Combine the ricotta, sugar, and liqueur in a large bowl and stir until well mixed. Using a handheld mixer, whip the cream in a separate bowl until soft peaks form. Gently fold the whipped cream and ½ cup of the chocolate chips into the ricotta mixture.
4. Transfer the ricotta-cream mixture to a medium dip bowl or 8 × 8-inch baking dish and spread it out evenly. Starting from the left side, make a row of the pistachios, then the cherries, then the remaining ½ cup chocolate chips. Sprinkle the top with the orange zest. Dust the wonton chips with confectioners' sugar and serve on the side.

