

15-MINUTE MARINARA

Active time: 15 minutes | Total time: 15 minutes | Makes 2 quarts

- ½ cup oil
- 2 yellow onions, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2½ teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Two 28-ounce cans tomatoes (crushed preferred, or whole peeled)
- A little bit of water to rinse out the can (about ¾ cup but don't expect you to measure this)

Heat the oil in a medium pot over medium-high heat. Add the onions, garlic, 1 teaspoon salt, and several grinds of black pepper. Cook, stirring often, until the onions are translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and water, the remaining 1½ teaspoons salt, and some more black pepper.

Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly reduced, about 10 minutes. Blend if you like. Let cool, then divide the sauce into pint-size containers. Refrigerate for about a week or freeze up to 6 months.

Makes the equivalent of two 32-ounce jars.

53-MINUTE RAGU

Active time: 15 minutes | Total time: About an hour | Makes about 5 cups

- 1 stick unsalted butter
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped, grated, or pressed
- 1 pound sweet Italian sausage, casings removed, ground beef, or ground pork
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- Few sprigs fresh oregano or 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, optional
- ½ cup red or white wine, optional
- One 28-ounce can crushed or whole peeled tomatoes
- Parmesan rind, optional

Melt the butter in a large, heavy-bottom pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring often, until translucent, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the sausage and 1 teaspoon of salt. Cook, stirring and breaking up the sausage with a spoon or spatula, until it starts to turn golden and the bottom of the pot starts to brown, too, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the tomato paste, oregano, and crushed red pepper flakes, if using, and cook, stirring, until the tomato paste is slightly darker in color, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the wine, if using, bring to a simmer, and cook for 1 minute.

Add the crushed tomatoes. If using whole peeled tomatoes, place them in a small bowl, along with their juices, and crush them with your hands, then add them to the pot. Rinse out the can with about ¾ cup of water and add that liquid to the pot along with the remaining 1 teaspoon salt and the Parmesan rind, if using. Bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, partially covered, until slightly reduced, 20 to 30 minutes. Let cool, then transfer the sauce to pint-size containers. Refrigerate for about a week or freeze up to 6 months.

OVEN-BAKED MEATBALLS

Active time: 10 minutes | Total time: 25 minutes | Makes about 24 meatballs

½ cup whole milk

½ cup panko, crushed crackers,
or Oil and Herb Croutons
(page 46), crushed

½ cup grated Parmesan or
pecorino

1 large egg

½ teaspoons kosher salt

1 garlic clove, grated

1 teaspoon fennel seeds, chopped

1 teaspoon dried oregano

Freshly ground black pepper

1 pound ground beef, pork, meat-
loaf mix, or turkey

Preheat the oven to 425°F.

Mix the milk, panko, Parmesan, egg, salt, garlic, fennel seeds, oregano, and several grinds of black pepper in a large bowl. Add the meat and, using clean hands, fold everything together until evenly combined. Roll the mixture into ½-inch balls and place on an ungreased rimmed baking sheet.

Bake until sizzling and no longer pink, about 10 minutes. Increase the heat to broil and broil until lightly browned on top, about 3 more minutes.

To freeze: let cool completely, then transfer to a resealable plastic bag. Freeze up to 6 months.



GIANT FENNEL & RAISIN SCONES

Active time: 10 minutes | Total time: 1 hour | Serves 8

This recipe is inspired by Irish soda bread. More accurately, it is inspired by my desire to spread an inappropriate amount of butter on all breadlike things, especially Irish soda bread. You can eat it unadorned, preferably with a cup of Irish breakfast tea, but I highly recommend a healthy smear of slightly softened salted butter. I use fennel seed in the mixture to keep things from getting too sweet, but feel free to omit them if they aren't your thing. You can also substitute any dried fruit you like in place of the raisins. This is best eaten warm. Slice any leftovers and reheat in the toaster.

2½ cups all-purpose flour

½ cup whole wheat flour
(or all-purpose flour)

½ cup sugar, plus 1 tablespoon for
sprinkling

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 cup raisins, dried apricots,
or dried cherries, chopped
raisin-size if necessary

1 tablespoon fennel seeds,
caraway seeds, or rolled oats

½ sticks (¾ cup) cold unsalted
butter, cut into pieces, plus more
for serving

1 cup whole milk

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a large bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, ½ cup sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Add the raisins and fennel seeds and whisk to combine. Add the butter and, using your fingers, work into the flour, pinching and squishing until the mixture is sandy.

Add the milk and use a fork to stir until evenly combined (the dough will be crumbly).

Dump the dough onto the prepared baking sheet into about an 8-inch circle, gently pressing and mounding the dough so it holds together. Sprinkle the top with the remaining 1 tablespoon sugar. Bake until golden and the scone sounds hollow when tapped with your finger, 45 to 50 minutes. Let cool slightly before cutting into slices or wedges. Serve warm with butter.



OLIVE OIL MUFFINS

Active time: 10 minutes | Total time: 40 minutes | Makes 12

I love a freshly baked muffin, split and steaming like the ones in the old Country Crock commercials. (I encourage a rewatch. The talking hands, the innuendo, the enormous tubs of margarine: priceless!) But when a craving for a freshly baked muffin strikes, I don't like to wait very long. These adaptable one-bowl muffins come together in a snap. They call for olive oil, not butter (which means no waiting for butter to soften). I like the flavor olive oil imparts to the batter, but vegetable oil works just fine, too, if that's what you have. Both make for a tender, moist crumb. Make them as is and serve with butter, then try one of the variations on page 145.

1½ cups all-purpose flour

¾ cup sugar

1 teaspoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon kosher salt

¾ cup milk (preferably whole)

⅓ cup olive oil

1 large egg

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line 12 standard muffin cups with paper liners. Whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients. Add the milk, oil, and egg and whisk to combine. Divide the batter among the muffin cups and bake until golden and springy when pressed, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving.



PITA CHIPS WITH TOMATOES & CUCUMBERS

Active time: 15 minutes | Total time: 15 minutes | Serves 4 to 6

There was a time when I was so obsessed with Stacy's pita chips that my coworkers joked I was getting paid to snack on them around the office. I'm still a fan, but I've diversified my snack profile since then. I will, however, find excuses to use them whenever possible, whether crushed in place of bread crumbs in meatballs or to coat a chicken cutlet. With a nod to fattoush—a zesty Lebanese salad of crunchy chopped vegetables and toasted pita—this salad is one of my favorite ways to use them and one of the easiest. The chips will soften ever so slightly when doused in the dressing and then slowly succumb over the next day or two, at which point they are chewy and interesting. Any longer than that and they get kind of soggy, so eat up.

1 English or 2 Persian cucumbers, sliced

1 pint cherry or grape tomatoes, halved or 1 beefsteak, cut into wedges

1 teaspoon kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

1 garlic clove, grated

1 tablespoon Za'atar Blend (page 52) or store-bought za'atar

2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for drizzling

1 cup lightly crushed pita chips

1 cup fresh parsley and/or mint leaves (or cilantro or basil)

In a medium bowl, toss together the cucumber and tomatoes with the salt and a few grinds of black pepper; set aside until the tomatoes start to give up some of their juices, about 5 minutes or so. Add the vinegar, garlic, Za'atar, oil, pita chips, and herbs and toss to combine.

You can make this with all tomatoes or all cucumbers, or add some sliced feta or chickpeas to make it a meal. Just don't skip the chips.





PEAS W/ FRIED ONIONS & LEMON

Active time: 20 minutes | Total time: 20 minutes | Serves 4

I will often run frozen peas under hot water, toss them with a little salt, and slide them on to my son's high chair tray. He likes 'em! But most nights, that's not quite enough for me. Even at their best, I find plain peas to be kind of starchy. Dousing them in melted butter or olive oil helps, but fried onions and chopped lemon really make them sing. Don't be intimidated by the whole lemon in the mix here. The bitter tang of the peel and all cuts through the sweet richness of the sizzled onions and potential starchiness of the peas. This recipe works with anything frozen and niblet-size. I prefer peas, but shelled edamame and corn are great options, too.

¼ cup olive oil

1 yellow onion, thinly sliced

10 ounces frozen peas, rinsed to thaw

½ lemon, seeded and finely chopped (peel and all)

1 teaspoon kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until dark brown (really dark brown in some spots), 6 to 8 minutes. Stir in the peas and cook until heated through, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat, stir in the lemon, and season with the salt and a few grinds of black pepper.

RICE TO THE RESCUE WITH NUTS & HERBS

Active time: 5 minutes | Total time: 5 minutes | Serves 4

For several summers I worked as a private chef for a family in the Hamptons, an enclave of ritzy beach communities on the east end of Long Island in New York. Most of the time I cooked for a lovely older couple, their children and grandchildren. But friends and acquaintances rolled through the house in sets like waves. You'll stay for lunch! visitors were told. Come for dinner! they insisted. Ex-presidents, vegetarian children, kosher sons-in-law, exhausted candidates, campaign chairs observing halal—all were welcome. Which meant some fancy footwork on my part. This grain salad was a life raft for me whenever surprise guests joined the party. You can make it with whatever rice, grains, or nuts that you have around. And each time you change it up, it feels new. Make it as is and it's vegan (and pareve!). Add shaved Parmesan or sliced chicken to make it a meal.

3 cups cooked rice or grains, such as brown rice, barley, farro, quinoa, or a mix (from 1 cup dry)

3 scallions, thinly sliced, or 1 shallot, finely chopped

3 tablespoons olive oil

Zest and juice of 1 lemon or ½ tablespoons red or white wine vinegar

½ cup chopped toasted hazelnuts, almonds, pecans, and/or walnuts

½ cup chopped fresh parsley, basil, dill, and/or mint

½ cup golden raisins, dried cherries, or cranberries

½ teaspoon kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Combine the rice, scallions, oil, lemon zest and juice, nuts, herbs, raisins, salt, and several grinds of black pepper in a large bowl and toss to combine. The salad can be made up to 2 days ahead (after that it is no less edible, but loses some of its brightness).





SWEET POTATO GRITS

Active time: 15 minutes | Total time: 45 minutes | Serves 6

Grits are unsung pantry heroes if you ask me. They can go sweet, they can go savory; they can be a side or a breakfast; they're great à la minute, but make pretty awesome leftovers. This comforting side is the perfect excuse to use up random roasted vegetables that might be lurking in the back corner of the fridge, too. Baked sweet potatoes, roasted fall squash, even Long-Cooked Greens (page 74) turn a pot of buttery decadent grits into a slightly more sophisticated version of buttery decadent grits (if it ain't broke). Spread any leftovers in a cake pan and refrigerate overnight. When firm, cut into shapes (let kids punch out using cookie cutters) and pan-fry.

2 teaspoons kosher salt

1 cup grits (preferably not quick-cooking) or coarse-grind cornmeal or polenta

1 roasted sweet potato, mashed (about 1 cup), or 1 cup other leftover cooked vegetables

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

Freshly ground black pepper

Bring 5 cups of water to a boil in a medium pot over high heat. Add the salt and gradually whisk in the grits. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook, uncovering to whisk whenever you walk by or remember (a few times should do it) until the grits are very tender, 30 to 35 minutes.

Stir in the sweet potato, butter, and as much pepper as you like, until the butter melts and the grits are smooth and luxurious.

A couple other ideas: Stir in two cubes of frozen Flexo-Pesto (page 100) or top with Slow-Roasted Tomatoes (page 79) and grated Parm.

TENDER SKILLET CORN BREAD

Active time: 10 minutes | Total time: 40 minutes | Serves 8

Boy, do y'all have opinions about corn bread. When I asked my Instagram friends if they wanted a Jiffy-style corn bread (to me that means golden, crumbly, in need of butter) or a cakelike version, the comment floodgates opened. This version is right in between. It has a little bit of sugar, which helps to tenderize the corn bread without making it too sweet. This is best eaten the day it's made, but leftovers are excellent split, toasted under the broiler or in the toaster oven, and topped with butter, butter and jam, butter and honey, or butter and butter.

1 cup milk (preferably whole)

1 tablespoon lemon juice

½ sticks unsalted butter

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 cup stone-ground cornmeal

¼ cup sugar

1 tablespoon baking powder

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon baking soda

2 large eggs

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Combine the milk and lemon juice in a bowl or liquid measuring cup and set aside for 5 minutes. Ideally the milk will curdle a bit here; sometimes it's obvious and sometimes it's not—proceed either way. Melt the butter in a medium ovenproof skillet—I like cast iron—over medium heat.

Whisk together the flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder, salt, and baking soda in a large bowl. Add the lemon-milk mixture, melted butter, and eggs and stir until evenly combined. Transfer the batter back to the skillet. Bake until golden and risen, 25 to 30 minutes.

BROWN BUTTER

When melting the butter, let it keep cooking until golden and nutty smelling. Proceed with the recipe as directed.

SCALLION

Add 1 bunch thinly sliced scallions to the melted butter. Proceed with the recipe as directed.

HONEY OR MAPLE

Substitute ¼ cup honey or maple syrup for the sugar. Proceed with the recipe as directed. Serve with butter and an extra drizzle of the same sweetener.



GARLIC & OIL BEANS

Active time: 5 minutes | Total time: 20 minutes | Serves 4

As I've mentioned, I make all of the recipes in this book in my real life. And I think I make these chickpeas most of all. Simmered in flavorful olive oil, they are so good and so easy and so flexible. Sometimes I make them with just the garlic, or just the shallot, or a bunch of scallions, because that's what I have. Sometimes I add a teaspoon of crushed red pepper flakes at the beginning, or stir in a handful of spinach at the end. I toss the finished beans with salad greens; I pile them on toast. I eat them over rice, under a dollop of yogurt, or alongside cottage cheese. I serve them as a vegetarian main with grilled vegetables, but they make a nice side for roasted or grilled lamb or chicken, too. See what I mean? Worth making all the time.

Two 15.5-ounce cans chickpeas or cannellini beans, drained and rinsed

½ cup olive oil

6 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled

1 shallot, halved and thinly sliced

3 to 4 sprigs fresh thyme or oregano, or ½ teaspoon dried

¾ teaspoon kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Line a rimmed baking sheet with a layer of paper towels. Spread the chickpeas on the paper towels and shake the sheet around a bit to dry them off.

Combine the chickpeas, olive oil, garlic, shallot, herbs, salt, and several grinds of black pepper in a large skillet. Turn the heat to medium-high and cook, stirring occasionally, until the chickpeas are golden and beginning to blister, 10 to 15 minutes. Serve immediately and they will be slightly crispy, or let them cool in the oil and store in the fridge for about 5 days.





SPICY LEMON CHICKEN SALAD

Active time: 30 minutes | Total time: 30 minutes | Serves 4

This recipe employs a technique called the postmarinade. I don't know if that's an official cooking term, but consider it official now. I learned it from my friend Theo, an amazing cook, who learned it from her parents, who emigrated from Corfu in the seventies. Theo's dad used a mixture of lemon juice, olive oil, water, and oregano, called "salamoura." He applied it to meat after grilling, to prevent flames from flaring up when cooking—common when oily marinades drip onto hot coals. Theo remembers her dad dipping everything in it, even hot dogs and hamburgers.

Since this marinade never touches raw meat, you really can use it on everything without wasting a drop. Plus it adds big, bright, herbaceous flavor at the last minute. No planning required. In this case, the pan juices from the chicken marry with the marinade to create a dressing that evenly coats the lettuce and is satisfyingly soaked up by the croutons.

½ pounds chicken cutlets

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ cup Garlicky Lemon Dressing (page 60), divided

½ cup grated Parmesan or pecorino cheese, divided

1 head romaine, chopped or torn into bite-size pieces

1 cup Oil and Herb Croutons (page 46)

Season the chicken with salt and a few grinds of black pepper. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and cook, turning occasionally, until golden brown and cooked through, 7 to 12 minutes, depending on thickness. Remove the skillet from the heat and add ¼ cup dressing; turn the chicken to coat and set aside to marinate.

In a large bowl, mix the remaining ¼ cup dressing with ¼ cup Parmesan. Add the romaine and toss to coat. Slice the chicken, add to the bowl, and toss to combine. Serve topped with the croutons and remaining ¼ cup Parmesan.

WINTER PASTA WITH GARLIC, OLIVES & LEMON

Active time: 25 minutes | Total time: 25 minutes | Serves 4

For thirteen years I lived in New York, where winter can be long and cold and dark and drive a person to consider one-way tickets to balmy island locales or self-medicate with huge bowls of noodles. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this pasta can shorten the duration and decrease severity of a common case of the Februaries. It's fast, warm, and bright, and since it's made solely with pantry ingredients, requires only slightly more effort than unfolding a beach chair. Lemon adds a bit of sunshine. Olives and Parmesan transport you to Sicily. A handful of long-lasting parsley reminds me that warmer weather will, in fact, come again.

1 pound pasta, any shape

Kosher salt

¼ cup olive oil

2 yellow onions, halved and thinly sliced

8 garlic cloves, smashed and sliced

Freshly ground black pepper

½ cup pitted and chopped Castelvetrano olives

½ cup chopped fresh herbs such as parsley, chives, basil, and/or mint

Juice of ½ lemon

Grated Parmesan, for serving

Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water according to package directions for al dente.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large skillet over high heat. Add the onions and garlic and cook, tossing occasionally, until beginning to brown and blister, 3 to 4 minutes. Season with 1 teaspoon salt and several grinds of black pepper and continue to cook, tossing, until mostly dark brown all over, 6 to 8 minutes more. Reduce the heat as low as it will go while the pasta finishes cooking.

Using tongs, transfer the pasta directly from the pasta pot to the skillet along with 1 cup pasta water. Increase the heat to high and cook, tossing, until the liquid thickens and coats the pasta, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat, add the olives, herbs, and lemon juice and toss to combine. Taste and season with more salt and a few grinds of black pepper if you like. Serve topped with the Parmesan.

You can even add a can of drained tuna or some chopped sardines to this one.





WHATEVER VEGGIE IS IN THE PANTRY PASTA

WITH SAUSAGE & ROASTED GARLIC

Active Time: 15 minutes | Total time: 45 minutes | Serves 4

You can make this recipe with pretty much any roasted vegetable. The sausage is the anchor here and plays nicely with most vegetable friends. Try it with eggplant or zucchini in August, or roasted butternut squash in the fall. Roasted onions are a good dead-of-winter option, and come spring, when all the leafy green things are sprouting through the wet earth, skip the roasting and just toss them in with the sausage until wilted and tender.

1 large eggplant (about 1 pound), zucchini, peeled butternut squash, broccoli or cauliflower florets, or onions cut into bite-size pieces, or 1 pound spinach

8 tablespoons olive oil, divided

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 head garlic, halved crosswise

12 ounces pasta shape of your choosing

2 links Italian sausage (sweet or hot is OK), casings removed

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan, plus more for serving

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fresh parsley, basil, or mint leaves, for serving

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Toss the eggplant with 6 tablespoons of oil on a rimmed baking sheet. Season with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt and several grinds of black pepper. Shake to arrange in a single layer. Place the garlic on a square of foil; drizzle with 1 tablespoon oil and season with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and a few grinds of black pepper. Wrap the garlic and place on the baking sheet with the eggplant. Roast, tossing halfway through, until the eggplant is tender and brown and the garlic cloves are soft (unwrap to check—be careful of the steam), about 30 minutes. Squeeze the garlic cloves into the eggplant and discard the papery skins. (You can do this several hours ahead. I just leave mine on the stovetop until it's time to eat.)

Meanwhile, cook the pasta according to package directions for al dente. Drain and reserve 1 cup pasta water.

While the pasta cooks, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the sausage and cook, breaking up with a wooden spoon, until cooked through and dark brown in spots, about 5 minutes. Add the roasted eggplant and garlic and cook, tossing, for 1 minute. Add the pasta and the reserved pasta water and cook, tossing (liquid should be bubbling vigorously) until the liquid thickens and coats the pasta, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat, add the Parmesan and parsley, and toss to combine. Serve with more Parmesan.

PASTA WITH ZUCCHINI, NUTS & HERBS

Active time: 30 minutes | Total time: 30 minutes | Serves 4

Before you get mad about using only twelve ounces of pasta here, know that it's really plenty alongside a pound and a half of vegetables. Plus, it's nice to have a little bit of uncooked pasta around so you can toss it into soups or make a single serving of pasta with butter and cheese "for the kids." Try it with zucchini or summer squash, but it works with bite-size broccoli or cauliflower florets, too.

Kosher salt

½ cup olive oil

½ cup chopped pecans or walnuts

2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

½ pounds zucchini or other summer squash (about 3 medium), thinly sliced (about 6 cups)

Freshly ground black pepper

12 ounces pasta shape of choice

Zest and juice of ½ lemon (about ½ teaspoon and 1 tablespoon respectively)

½ cup grated Parmesan or pecorino

1 cup fresh basil, mint, or parsley leaves, for serving

This one is excellent cold out of the fridge: Pasta salad, but better.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.

Combine the oil, pecans, and garlic in your largest skillet (ideally 12 inches) and place over medium heat. Cook, stirring, until the nuts and garlic are toasted, 2 to 5 minutes, depending on the strength of your stove. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the nuts and garlic to a small bowl.

Increase the heat to medium high. Add the zucchini to the oil in the skillet and toss to coat. Season with 1 teaspoon salt and several grinds of black pepper and cook, tossing occasionally until the zucchini is very tender and at least half is deeply golden brown (it's a lot of squash; not every piece will take on a ton of color), 12 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook the pasta according to package directions for al dente; reserve ½ cup pasta water and drain. Add the pasta and pasta water to the zucchini and cook, tossing, until the liquid is reduced and coats the pasta, about 30 seconds. Add the lemon zest and juice, half the nut and garlic mixture, ¼ cup Parmesan, and ½ cup basil leaves and toss to combine.

Serve topped with the remaining ¼ cup Parmesan, nut and garlic mixture, and ½ cup basil leaves.



UNIVERSAL YOGURT CAKE

Active time: 10 minutes | Total time: 1 to 2 hours | Makes one 9-inch cake

What I love about this cake—besides how moist and tender it is, how well it freezes, and the crunchy sugar topping—is that you can bake it in whatever baking pan you have. Round or square? Yep. Loaf pan? Done that (70 to 75 minutes). I even see your muffin tin wanting a piece of the action (20 to 25 minutes). Make it with whatever frozen or fresh fruit you have on hand. Also, I've made this recipe with milk or buttermilk in place of the yogurt, and it even works with nondairy options like almond milk or oat milk. It's endlessly adaptable and always delicious.

½ cup vegetable oil, plus more for pan

½ cup plain whole-milk yogurt

3 large eggs

1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar, divided

2 teaspoons baking powder

¾ teaspoon kosher salt

½ cups plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour, divided

2 cups frozen berries

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Brush a 9-inch-square baking pan with oil and line the bottom with parchment paper. Set aside. Whisk together the oil, yogurt, eggs, vanilla, and 1 cup sugar in a medium bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together the baking powder, salt, and ½ cups flour to combine. Whisk the wet ingredients into the dry until just combined. Toss the berries with the remaining 1 tablespoon flour. Fold into the batter and transfer to the prepared pan.

Sprinkle evenly with the remaining 2 tablespoons sugar. Bake until golden and a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean, 50 to 55 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving. Cake will keep, tightly wrapped at room temperature, up to 4 days. But it freezes really well; wrap tightly and freeze for up to 3 months.





HALF-BAKED PEANUT BUTTER PIE

Active time: 40 minutes | Total time: 1 hour, 25 minutes | Serves 8

Because it has a couple of moving parts, this pie looks more complicated to make than it actually is. Bottom line: if you can make whipped cream you can nail this pie. The salty cracker crust against the creamy peanut butter filling is a knockout combination. Topped with whipped cream and cocktail peanuts, it might make you swoon it's so good. Be warned: the peanut butter mousse filling is delicious on its own.

CRUST

6 ounces Ritz crackers, saltines, graham crackers, or chocolate wafer cookies (about 1½ sleeves Ritz, saltines, or grahams)

1 tablespoon sugar

Pinch kosher salt

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

FILLING

1 cup Greek yogurt (preferably full fat)

1 cup peanut butter, or other nut butter (smooth or crunchy)

¼ teaspoon kosher salt

½ cup light or dark brown sugar, divided

2 cups heavy cream, divided

¼ cup roasted salted peanuts, crushed

MAKE THE CRUST

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Combine the crackers, sugar, and salt in a food processor and process until finely ground (you should get about 1½ cups). If you don't have a food processor, place in a resealable plastic bag and bang and roll with a rolling pin or meat mallet until crushed. Add the melted butter and pulse until the mixture looks like wet sand.

Dump the cracker mixture into a standard 9-inch pie plate. Using the bottom of a flat-bottom measuring cup or water glass, press the mixture into the bottom and up the sides of the pie plate. Bake on the middle rack until dry and golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool.

MAKE THE FILLING

Whisk the yogurt, peanut butter, salt, and ¼ cup brown sugar in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, using an electric mixer, beat 1 cup of cream and the remaining ¼ cup brown sugar until stiff peaks form. Working in three additions, fold the whipped cream into the peanut butter mixture until evenly incorporated; transfer to the cooled crust and smooth the top. Freeze until just firm, at least 3 hours and up to 2 days. (Once set in the freezer, you can transfer the pie to the refrigerator where it will remain firm yet sliceable for a couple of days.)

ALMOND CORNMEAL CRUMB BARS

Active time: 35 minutes | Total time: 2 hours, 35 minutes | Makes about 12

When you work in restaurants, all the cooks have a notebook. In it you are to record recipes and/or vague associated wisdom so you can refer to them throughout the day's dinner preparation. Every professional cook I know preserved their notebooks, referencing golden ratios for everything from yeasted rolls to baba au rhum. I don't think I was a complete dum-dum (though I was a young twenty-three), but I totally missed the boat on this one. I tossed my notebooks one of the times I moved between that first restaurant job and now (there have been nine "permanent addresses"). It pains me to think of what was lost to paper recycling: recipes for cakes and caramels and candied peel, perfect custards and pot de crème. I've tried to re-create some of them, but they're never quite the same as I remember.

Like this recipe, which is based on a fregolotta, a shortbread-type cookie often served with ice cream at Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, where my boss had been a pastry cook. It is one of my all-time favorite cookies, because it is essentially all crumb topping. I never could locate the original recipe so I've made it into a bar, added a layer of fruit and experimented with different nuts. While it may not be the same as the original (who could say?) I like this version a lot. As usual, it's adaptable: use the nuts and berries that you prefer.

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus more for baking dish

¾ cup raw almonds, pecans, or hazelnuts, or 1 cup almond or other nut meal

2 cups all-purpose flour

½ cup yellow cornmeal

¾ teaspoon kosher salt, plus a pinch

1 cup sugar, divided

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

3 cups fresh or frozen berries

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter an 8- or 9-inch square baking dish and line with parchment paper, leaving a 1-inch overhang on two sides. Set aside. In a food processor, pulse the almonds until finely ground (you should have about 1 cup). In a large bowl, whisk together the ground nuts, flour, cornmeal, and ¾ teaspoon salt. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, combine the 1 cup butter and ¾ cup sugar and mix with an electric mixer on medium high until creamy, about 3 minutes. Add the vanilla and beat to combine. With the mixer on low, add the flour mixture and beat until crumbly. Press about two-thirds of the dough into the prepared dish.

In a medium bowl, toss the berries with the lemon juice, the remaining ¼ cup sugar, and a pinch of salt; scatter the mixture over the bottom crust and crumble the remaining dough over top, squeezing it together to make big chunks. Bake until golden brown, 55 to 60 minutes. Let cool in the dish on a wire rack before cutting into squares or bars.





SPARKLY JAM & NUT TART

Active time: 10 minutes | Total time: 1 hour | Serves 8

Here's another one of my favorite riffable emergency desserts. I often throw it together if I'm entertaining unexpectedly because it's super easy (if I have pie dough in the freezer) and really pretty. You know the drill by now: use any nut you like and your favorite jam. Some combinations I'm awfully fond of are apricot jam and pistachios (pictured), raspberry jam and peanuts, or blackberry or cherry and hazelnuts. Be sure to bake your tart on a rack set in the lower third position of the oven. This helps the bottom of the tart get nice and golden at the same rate as the top. Baking to a deep golden brown also ensures the leftovers are sturdy and portable.

¼ cup toasted nuts

2 tablespoons sugar

Pinch kosher salt

1 round Go-To Pie Dough
(page 111)

¾ cup store-bought jam or Frozen
Fruit Jam (page 86)

1 egg, beaten

Preheat the oven to 350°F with the rack in lower third position. Place the nuts, sugar, and salt in a food processor and process until the nuts are mostly sandy (some bigger bits are OK). Alternately, place everything in a plastic bag and bang with a rolling pin.

On a lightly floured surface, roll the pie dough to a 15-inch circle (you're going for ⅛-inch thickness; it really doesn't matter what shape it is). Spread the jam over the dough, leaving a 2-inch border. Fold the dough over the jam and brush the edges with the egg. Sprinkle with the nut and sugar mixture. Bake until golden brown, 40 to 45 minutes. Let cool before slicing.