



EATIN'S CANADA



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To Mom. Thank you for teaching me to bake, then letting me make pies on my own when I was eight years old.

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Eatin's Canada EASY DATE OVEN

Recipes and illustrations by Gayle Hurmuses

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INTRODUCTION

Relax, have fun!

Cooking for a date can be hot in more ways than one. It should be a cause for excitement... Sharing your home, a meal, libations, is fun...particularly if it's romantic...and especially if it ends with breakfast, like this book does!

If you don't cook a lot, especially if it's a new experience for you, don't do more than you're comfortable with. There's nothing wrong with preparing one special thing and having simple accompaniments, like a plate of olives and cheese for an appetizer and ice cream for dessert, buying part of the meal ready made.

The cooking itself is easy if you don't over think it. There are a very few simple rules to follow, beyond that, your only concern is satisfying your guests tastes and your own. The theme of this book is: Easy recipes that could be served on a date. Most can be served with only a salad and additionally with either rice or potatoes if you like a carbohydrate.

Simple Rules

- 1) Don't panic. Remember, you're cooking for someone you like who also likes you...not competing for stars in the Michelin Guide.
- 2) The most important consideration when cooking for a guest is that person's comfort and tastes. Know what foods your guest likes or dislikes (and any allergies) and then plan your cooking so that you can spend the maximum amount of time with your visitor.
- 3) Go easy with it. If you're new to cooking, make one dish and serve it with a salad. You really don't need anything else.
- 4) Prepare all your ingredients before starting to cook and have them ready to use in small dishes, or on your cutting board. Try to do the messiest stuff before your guest arrives.
- 5) Always stay in the room while cooking anything on top of the stove, unless it's simmering (a slow gentle movement of the liquids)...not boiling.
- 6) Pay attention to your nose, if food smells cooked, it's a good sign...but if it smells burned...not so much.

- 7) Don't cook at too high a temperature..especially not in order to speed things up. Take your time. Haste in cooking more often makes everything take longer by creating a greater risk of ruining the food (again, pay attention to your nose).

Entertaining

Have something simple ready when your guest arrives and serve a drink at this point. 'A drink' can be anything from tap water (with a slice of lemon is nice) to a cocktail. If you're not an experienced cook and want to serve an alcoholic beverage, open a bottle of wine. It's the easiest thing, and you can usually give your guest something to do while you cook (which may make them more comfortable), by asking them to open the bottle and pour.

Slice some cheese and put it on a plate with crackers and olives, or serve some crusty bread with a mixture of olive oil with a few drops of balsamic vinegar in it. With an appetizer and some music, the last few minutes of your meal preparations are part of the fun, especially if everything else is fully prepared.

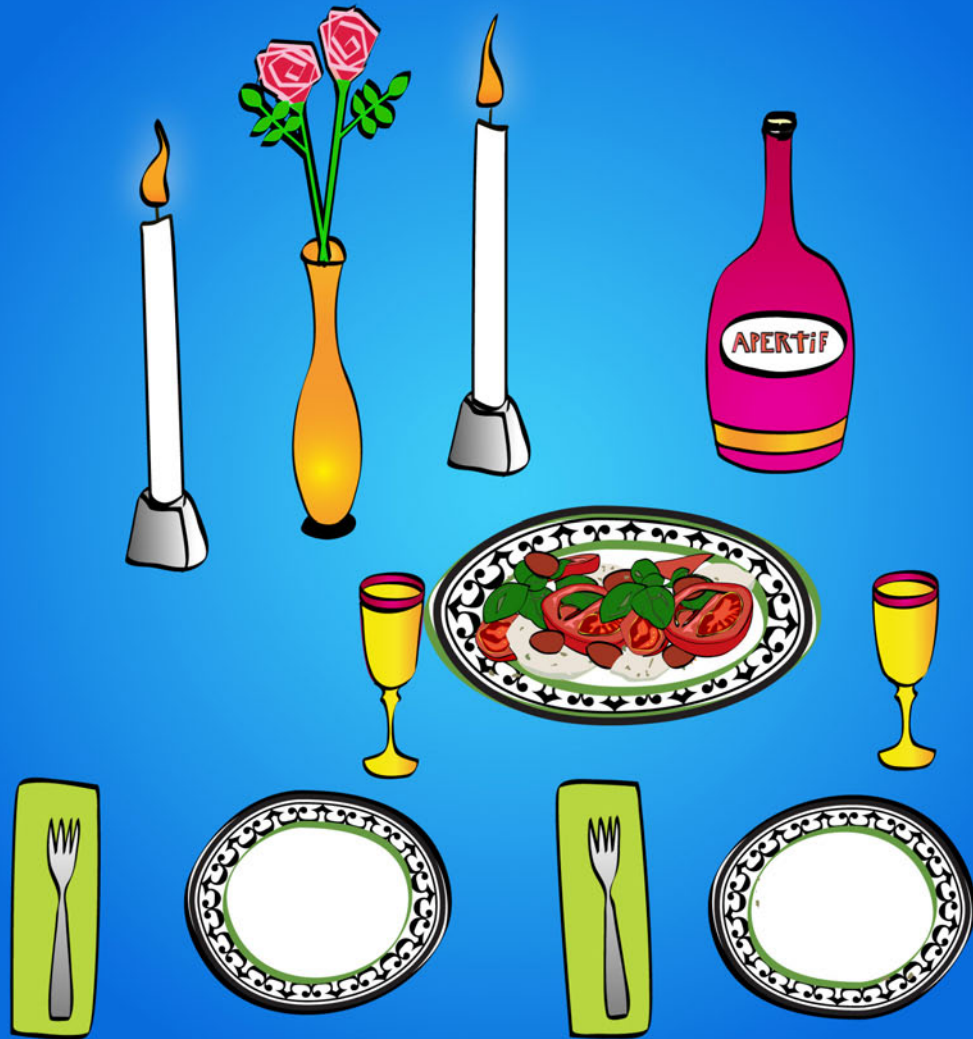
Use a tablecloth, rather than placemats. Try to have the table set before your guest arrives and before beginning your meal preparations. Consider some candles to provide lighting conducive to the meal you have planned. A tip, two candles provide a more flattering light than a single one.

And of course...when you serve your food, accept all compliments with grace. Don't let on if anything isn't exactly the way you wanted it to come out. A good guest will never comment on anything but perfection. One of the nice things about cooking for someone, especially someone you've just started dating, is you really get a chance to see what their manners are like and whether or not they appreciate the things you do for them. So, have fun and expect your guest to as well.

Substitutions

You may want or need to substitute ingredients for something listed in a recipe, for example, if you or your guest are vegetarians, or only eat seafood. For fish sauce, you can substitute soy sauce, and the chicken recipes in this book would also work with tofu, white fish, or seafood. I've made the Pomegranate Chicken recipe with shrimp and with haddock, the Mango Shrimp recipe works well with chicken, and the Lamb Puttanesque recipe works with shrimp and also with a firm-fleshed white fish.

Salads, Sauces and Appetizers



Salads, dressings and sauces

As much fun as cooking is, I love my time with friends more. Because of this, I tend to serve mostly salads as the vegetable when a guest is present. For European recipes, I typically use a dressing made of olive or walnut oil and balsamic vinegar (about 1/3 oil and 2/3 vinegar), or for Asian recipes, either a bit of oil and fish sauce, or a satay sauce, thinned out a bit with water. Salads are a great place to improvise.

When making the Lamb chops Puttanesque, for example, I prepare extra ingredients for the topping and use part of them in the salad, sometimes adding a bit of fruit and cheese as well. Often I'll then toss some of the sauce from the main dish into the salad just before serving, and lay the main course partly on top of the greens. If you do this, serve it immediately.

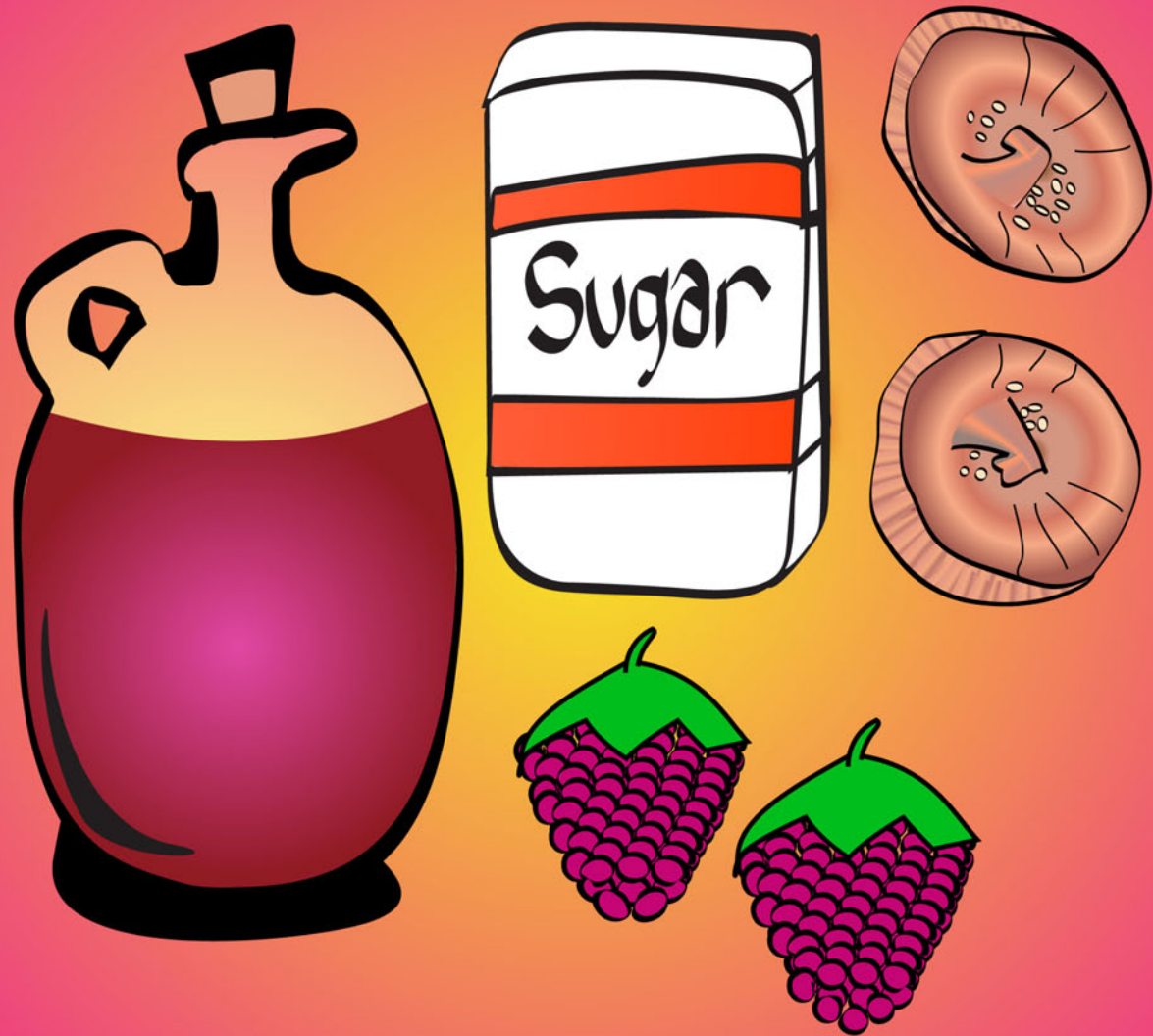
It's a good idea to prepare the salad first, so that when the hot entree is ready, you can serve dinner right away. Make sure the salad greens are torn into small, bite-sized pieces. To make it easier to prepare salads, purchase mixed baby greens, but if you buy a large quantity of these, do put either a paper towel or a clean white cotton cloth in the container. This will help absorb the excess moisture, keeping the salad crisp and fresh.

You can also make a salad using leftover, or previously cooked vegetables with: Any of the dressings or sauce recipes in this book, prepared dressings, or a simple mayonnaise with minced garlic and a bit of lemon juice.

Appetizers and main courses

While some things are more commonly appetizers or mains than others, the principal difference is the amount served. Most of the appetizers in this book would be great main courses. Make larger or more salad rolls, a bigger bowl of corn and crab soup, or add some grilled shrimps to the mango salad and you have a meal.

By the same token, most of the main courses in this book would be excellent appetizers, if nicely presented and properly paired with another dish as the main. Smaller servings of spanakopita, eggplant parmesan, or mango shrimps, for example, are all perfect appetizers. Make half of any of the main course recipes to have an appetizer for two, or the full recipe, to serve to four or more.



FLAVOURED BALSAMICS

INGREDIENTS

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Fig Balsamic | | Raspberry Balsamic and Sauce |
| 1 Bottle Balsamic Vinegar | | 1 Bottle Balsamic Vinegar |
| 1 Package Dried Figs | | 1 Pint Raspberries |
| | | 1/2 Cup Sugar |

METHOD

Fig Vinegar

- 1) Slice the figs and put them in a mason jar.
- 2) Pour balsamic vinegar over them and close with a plastic lid.
- 3) Store for at least two days before using, leave the figs in the jar and top up as needed.
- 4) Great for salads and deglazing pans used to fry lamb chops.

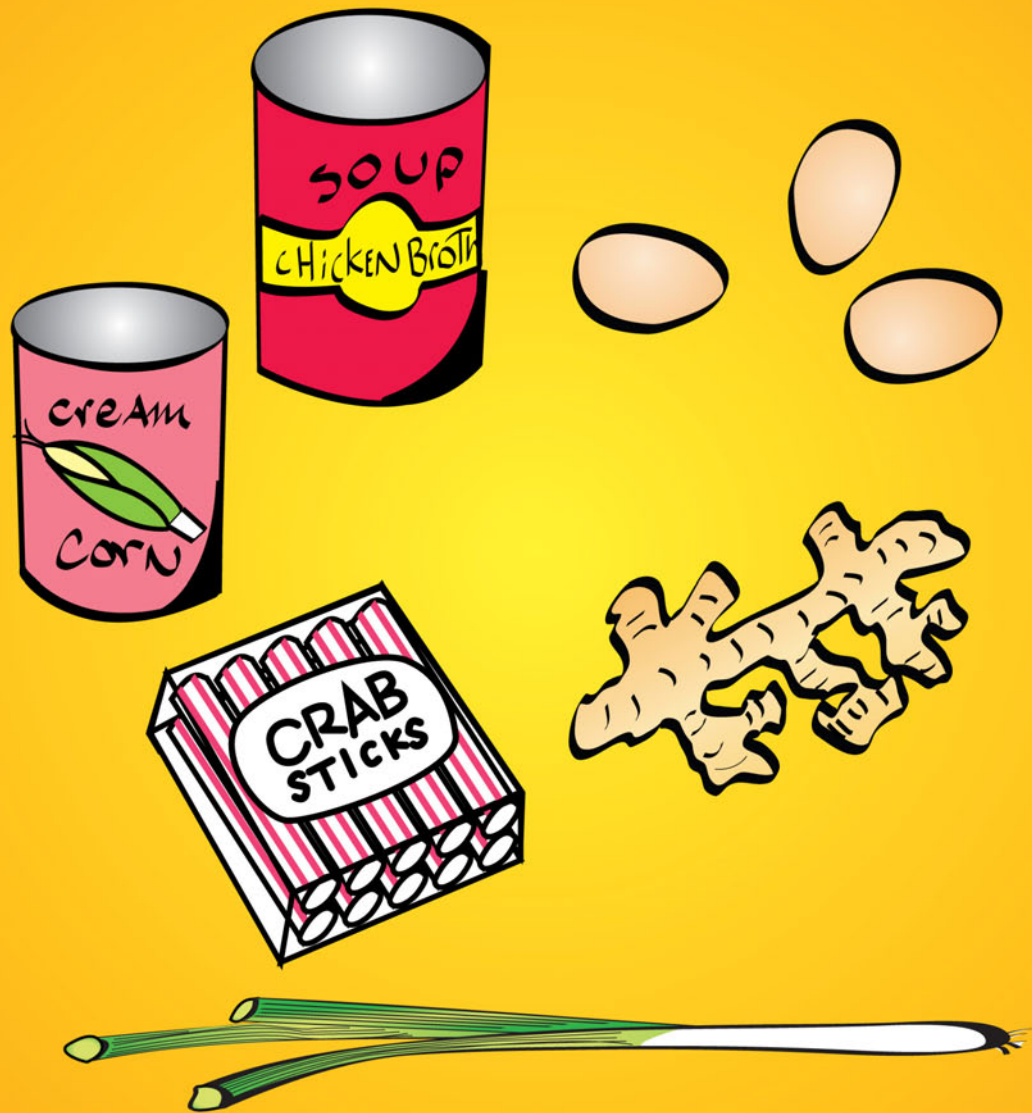
Raspberry Vinegar

- 1) Wash the raspberries and put them in a mason jar.
- 2) Leave in a dark cupboard for 2 weeks before straining the vinegar off the fruit.
- 3) Put the vinegar into a glass bottle with a tight fitting lid and use for vinaigrettes.

Raspberry Sauce

- 1) Put the fruit into a bowl, add 1/4 cup of sugar and stir until it becomes liquid.
- 2) Pour into a jar and seal, or use immediately as a dessert topping.

When buying dried figs, make sure they are still a bit soft and pliable, not hard.



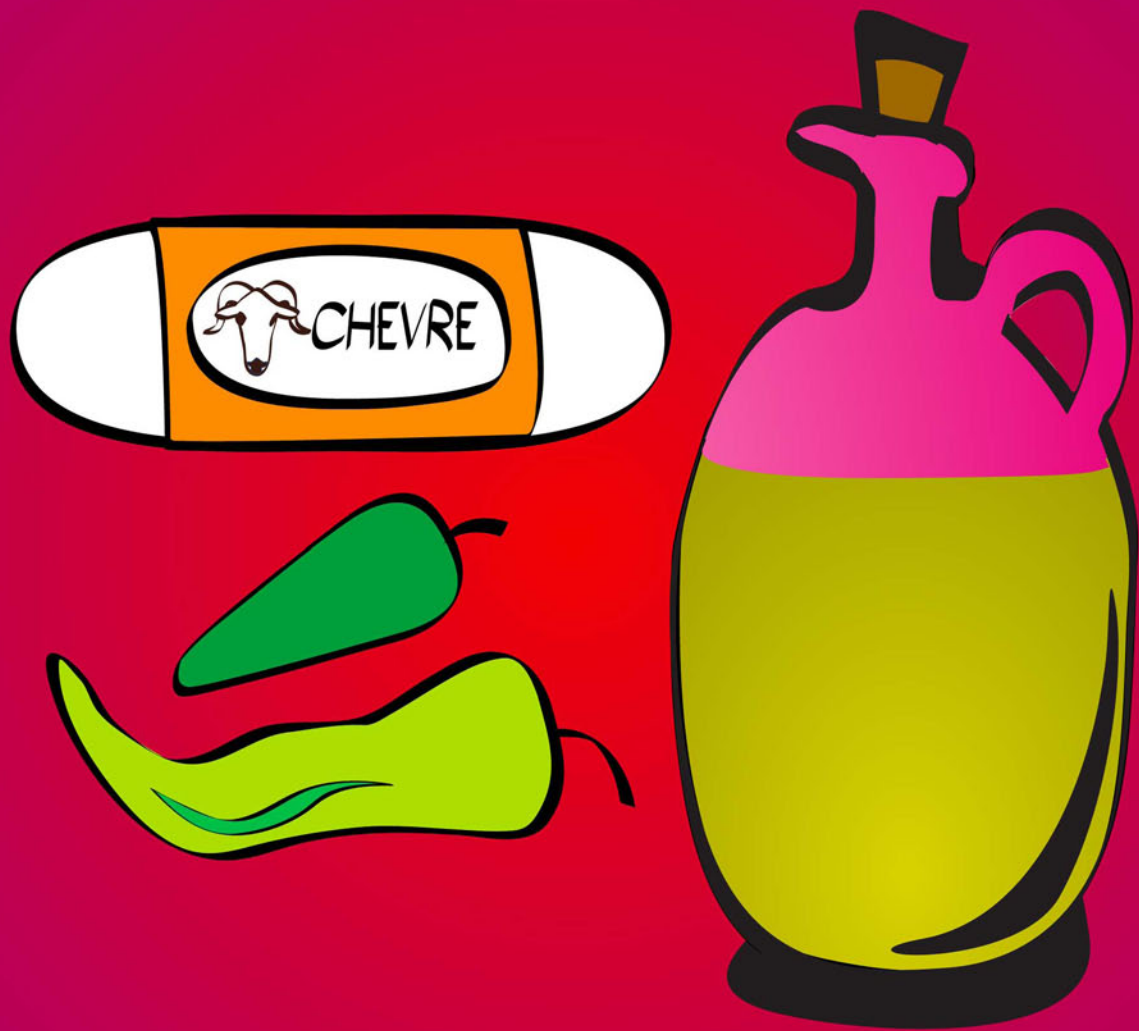
CORN AND CRAB SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Green Onion
- 1 Ginger Root
- 1 Can of Cream Corn
- 1 Can Chicken Broth
- 1/2 Package Crab Sticks or small can of Crab Meat
- 2 Eggs
- White Pepper

METHOD

- 1) Mince onions into fine slices, grate ginger, chop crab sticks into large chunks, putting each into a small bowl until needed.
- 2) Beat eggs (one per serving) in a small bowl.
- 3) Saute onions and ginger in a small amount of oil until fragrant, add chopped crab sticks or canned crab and cream corn, heat through.
- 4) Add chicken stock and simmer for 5 minutes.
- 5) When soup is simmering, pour beaten eggs into the soup in a steady thin stream.
- 6) When the egg threads are cooked, the soup is ready to serve.
- 7) Ladle into bowls and serve with minced green onions and a sprinkling of white pepper on top.



STUFFED HOT PEPPERS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 3oz log of Chevre (goat cream cheese)
- 1 Tablespoon Olive Oil
- 10 Jalapenos or other Hot Peppers
(if using larger peppers, use fewer)
- Salt

METHOD

- 1) Mix the chevre and oil together to make it spreadable; if it needs more oil, that is fine, use it.
- 2) Cut the stem ends off the peppers and slice them in half, removing the seeds.
- 3) Fill the peppers with the chevre mixture.
- 4) Oil and salt a cast iron skillet and add the stuffed peppers.
- 5) Bake at 400° for about 15 minutes, or until the cheese is golden.

You could use regular cream cheese for this dish if you aren't a fan of goat cheese. Make sure to use the olive oil as it has two functions: it helps to cook the cheese better, as well as to make it spreadable.



SATAY SAUCE AND MANGO SALAD

INGREDIENTS

Satay Sauce

- 1 Tablespoon Peanut or other Cooking Oil
- 1 Cup Peanut Butter
- 1/4 Cup Soy Sauce
- 2 Tablespoons Chili Garlic Sauce
- 1/4 Cup Chopped Cilantro Roots
- 1 Teaspoon Sesame Oil
- Hot Water

Mango Salad

- 1 Mango
- 1 Sweet Red Pepper
- 1/4 Red Onion
- Dressing
- Fish Sauce (ngoc nam)
- Lime Juice
- 1 Teaspoon Sugar

METHOD

Satay Sauce

- 1) Heat cooking oil and cook the chopped cilantro, then add the peanut butter, stirring to heat through and soften. Cook at a low heat for about one minute.
- 2) Add the soy sauce and the chili garlic sauce, stirring to incorporate into the peanut butter.
- 3) Add hot water to thin the sauce to the consistency of a dip.
- 4) Before serving, drizzle some sesame oil on to the surface of the sauce.

Mango Salad

- 1) Peel the mango, slice it into very thin strips and put it into a mixing bowl.
- 2) Cut the pepper in half, scoop out the seeds and slice both this and the onion into fine strips. Add these to the mango.
- 3) Combine the ingredients for the dressing and mix into the fruit and peppers.

If you don't have roots on your cilantro, use the leaves and add them at the end. The mango salad can either be served on its own, or as a topping for a mixed green salad. Thin the satay with a bit of extra water to use as a salad dressing. If you, or your guest have a nut allergy, use the same fish sauce, lime juice and vinegar mixture for the green salad.



SALAD ROLLS

INGREDIENTS

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| Thin to Medium Rice Vermicelli | 1 | Tablespoon Cooking Oil |
| Medium or Large Rice Papers | 1/4 | Cup Soy Sauce |
| 1 Head of Lettuce | 2 | Tablespoons Chili Garlic Sauce |
| 1/2 Cup Chopped Cilantro Leaves | | Salt |
| 1 Package Firm Tofu | | Sesame Oil |
| | 1/4 | Cup Satay Sauce |

METHOD

- 1) Mix the chili garlic sauce with the soy sauce and put into a wide shallow bowl.
- 2) Slice the tofu into strips and marinate in the chili garlic / soy sauce mixture.
- 3) Fill a 4 quart pot with water, add 2 teaspoons of salt and put on to boil. When it boils, add a 1-1/2" bundle of rice noodles and cook 10 minutes. Drain and toss with sesame oil.
- 4) Wash the lettuce and slice into ribbons.
- 5) Heat the cooking oil and add the tofu, stir-frying until slightly browned, add the marinade, toss to coat, then cover and cook on a low heat.
- 6) After allowing the cooked ingredients to cool, mix the vermicelli, tofu and lettuce with the cilantro and dress with Satay Sauce (from page 15, or purchase some).
- 7) Dip rice papers, one at a time into a plate filled with water, flip them to dip the other side, and remove to a dry plate. Wait 1 minute, then spoon some salad onto the paper and roll into a wrap, folding the open ends in as you do so. *For a diagram showing how to do this, go to page 58.*

Don't soak the rice papers, or they will get fragile, leave them to sit for a minute after removing them from the water and they will get more pliable. Can be made with chicken or shrimp instead of tofu. You can use the Satay Sauce on the previous page, buy one from the store, or use the fish sauce dressing from the Mango Salad. The rolls will taste different, but still good.

Main Courses



Pasta

Make sure to use the largest pot you have to cook pasta in as this helps both to cook it better and to get the excess starch out. Also, don't decide this is the time to start cutting down on salt. The salt called for in preparing pasta is part of the chemical process of cooking it properly. Without salt, the pasta will always be a bit tough and raw tasting...until it gets mushy. Use a bundle of pasta approximately 1" in diameter per person.

Vegetables

Salads are simple, but if you're not a fan, a vegetable or two on the side is also easy to prepare. Most can be simply washed and then steamed, boiled, or stir-fried in about 5 - 10 minutes. Many vegetables, like carrots, are great raw, and peeling is generally unnecessary. Wash them, cut off the stems and slice or chop into bite-sized pieces. If you're making rice using a rice cooker, it has a steamer tray that goes on top of the rice helping to keep it from boiling over in the pot. To make preparing dinner easier, if I'm making rice, I add my vegetables to the rice cooker, on top of the rice, in the last 5 minutes for soft vegetables like zucchini and 10 minutes for harder ones like carrots.

When you buy organic vegetables from a farmer's market, be prepared to wash them very thoroughly. Nothing ruins a meal more completely than sandy grit in the food. Aside from that concern, organic vegetables are a great way to maximize on flavour, especially with mixed greens. Salad mixes that I've purchased from organic markets have by far the most interesting blends.

As I said earlier, don't make it difficult for yourself. This book shows recipes for starters, main courses, desserts and breakfasts, but you don't need to pull out all the stops every time. Consider making only an appetizer when having a movie night, or before heading to a movie or music show. Maybe you'll both already have had supper before getting together, but it's nice to share a quiet drink together before heading out and have something to nibble on to go with that (or have after the show).

Rice (a general guide)

| | |
|------------|---|
| White rice | 1-1/2 cups water to one cup of rice, allow 20 minutes for cooking time. |
| Brown rice | 2 cups water to one cup of rice, allow 45 minutes for cooking time. |
| Red rice | 2-1/2 cups water to one cup of rice allow 75 minutes for cooking time. |
| Black rice | 3 cups water to one cup of rice, allow 2 hours for cooking time. |



PAD THAI

INGREDIENTS

- Thin to Medium Rice Vermicelli
- 3 - 4 Tablespoon Oil
- 1 Tablespoon Minced Garlic
- 1/2 Teaspoon Sambal Ulek (chili sauce)
- 1 Pound Chicken or Shrimp (or mixture)
- 3 - 4 Pieces Tofu (deep fried) cut in small cubes
- 2 Eggs lightly beaten (cooked separately)
- 1 Cup Bean Sprouts

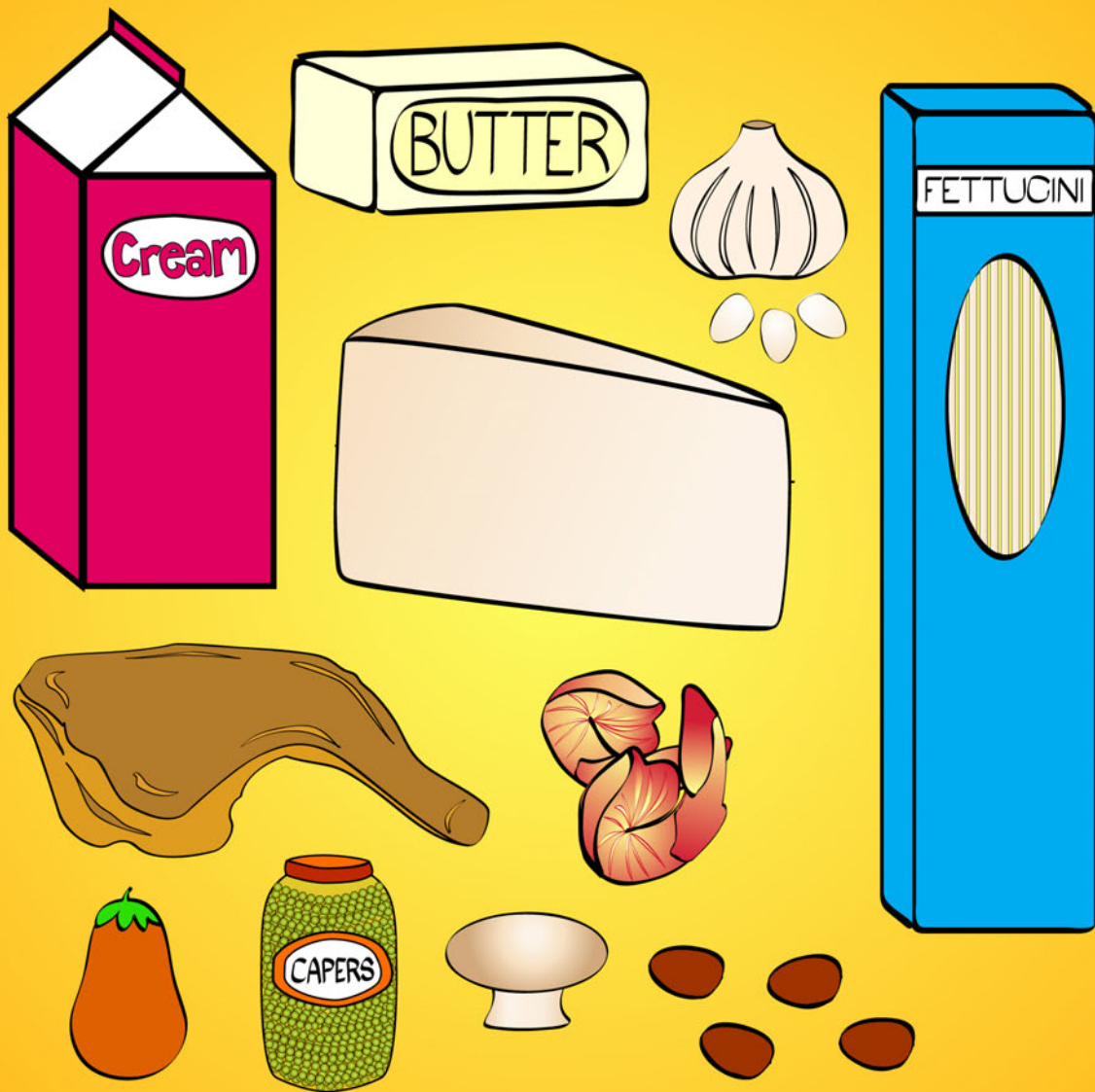
Sauce

- 1 Tablespoon Rice Vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon Sugar
- 1 Tablespoon Fish Sauce
- 2 Tablespoon Tomato Paste

METHOD

- 1) Soak rice noodles for 15 minutes.
- 2) Then, prepare sauce and set aside.
- 3) Saute garlic and sambal ulek until fragrant, then add chicken/pork and shrimp. Stir fry until the meat loses raw colour, add tofu.
- 4) Add tomato paste mixture and bring to a boil. Add drained noodles and toss in sauce while cooking, until all sauce is absorbed.
- 5) Put noodle mixture in serving dish and scramble the eggs in pan. Then, either fold the eggs into the noodles in serving dish, or return the noodles to the pan, and stir the noodles into the eggs. Stir the fresh bean sprouts into this mixture, and serve.

If you are a vegetarian, or cooking for one, soy sauce can substitute for the fish sauce. If you don't have Sambal Ulek, any chili garlic sauce or dried chiles may be used.



FETTUCINI ALFREDO

INGREDIENTS

- Fettucini
- 2 Tablespoons Butter
- 3 Garlic cloves
- 1/3 Cup Whipping Cream or Table Cream
- 1/3 Cup Grated Parmesan

Optional:

- Chicken
- Shrimp
- Mushrooms
- Olives
- Capers
- Sun dried Tomatoes

METHOD

- 1) Fill a 4 quart pot with water, add 2 teaspoons of salt and put on to boil.
- 2) When the water boils, add the pasta and cook as directed, usually about 10 minutes.
- 3) Use a bundle of about 1" diameter of pasta per person.
- 4) While the pasta is cooking, mince or crush the garlic, grate the cheese, and prepare any of the optional ingredients that you are using.
- 5) When the pasta is cooked, drain it and leave it in the colander while preparing the butter/garlic mixture.
- 6) Melt the butter in a saucepan at medium temperature, and add the garlic, cooking until you can smell the garlic becoming fragrant. *Do not cook at too high a temperature, or you will overcook the garlic. If you want to include optional ingredients, this is the point at which to do it.*
- 7) Toss the pasta in the butter and garlic and when it is coated, add the grated cheese.

To test the pasta for doneness, use a fork to capture one strand and taste it to see if it is ready. Don't use less salt in the water than indicated; the salt is necessary for the pasta to cook properly.



LINGUINI PUTTANESCA

INGREDIENTS

- Linguini
- 2 Tablespoons Butter
- 3 Garlic Cloves
- 10 Black Olives
- 1 Tablespoon Capers
- 6 Sun dried Tomatoes
- 2 Anchovies
- Grated Parmesan

- Optional:**
- Chicken
 - Shrimp
 - Mushrooms

METHOD

- 1) Fill a 4 quart pot with water, add 2 teaspoons of salt and put on to boil.
- 2) When the water boils, add the pasta and cook as directed, usually about 10 minutes.
- 3) Use a bundle of about 1" diameter of pasta per person.
- 4) While the pasta is cooking, mince or crush the garlic and the anchovies, slice the sun dried tomatoes, and chop the olives. Put the anchovies, sun dried tomatoes, olives and capers into a bowl.
- 5) Grate the cheese, and prepare any of the optional ingredients that you are using.
- 6) When the pasta is cooked, drain it and leave it in the colander while preparing the sauce.
- 7) Melt the butter in a saucepan, at medium temperature, and add the garlic, cooking until you can smell the garlic becoming fragrant. *Add optional ingredients now.*
- 8) Serve with the grated cheese.

You do not have to use peeled shrimp, but it is probably better for the experience of your date to do so. Do not cook the garlic at too high a temperature, or you will burn it. If the garlic becomes brown in cooking, you can keep using the now flavoured oil, but toss the garlic out.



LAMB PUTTANESQUE

INGREDIENTS

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 2 | Lamb Shoulder Chops | 1 | Tablespoon Capers |
| 1/4 | Cup Sheep Feta (crumbled) | 1 | Tablespoon Olive paste |
| 3 | Garlic Cloves (minced) | 2 | Roma Tomatoes (chopped) |
| 4 | Sun dried Tomatoes (sliced) | | Olive Oil |

METHOD

- 1) Heat olive oil, salt the lamb chops on both sides and fry the chops with the garlic on top. Cover for 2 minutes.
- 2) Flip the chops, covering them with the feta, add the sun dried tomatoes, capers and roma tomatoes. Cover again and cook for another 2 minutes.
- 3) Uncover, stir the tomato, caper mixture and add the olive paste, stirring into the rest of the sauce. Cook for about 1 minute.
- 4) Remove the lamb chops to plates.
- 5) Cook the sauce at a high temperature briefly to reduce.
- 6) Serve on top of the lamb chops.

Add a bit more balsamic vinegar to the pan after removing chops to de-glace the pan (loosen the cooked on bits) and use with a bit of oil as a hot salad dressing. Do this immediately before serving.



EGGPLANT PARMESAN

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Eggplant
- 1-1/2 Cup Tomato Sauce
- 1/2 Cup Grated Parmesan
- 1 Cup Grated Mozzarella
- 5 Cloves of Garlic
- 1 Tablespoon Capers
- Olive Oil

METHOD

- 1) Preheat the oven to 350°
- 2) Cut the eggplant into 1/2" slices and salt both sides. Leave to sit while preparing the rest of the ingredients.
- 3) Grate the parmesan and mozzarella, keeping them separate.
- 4) Mince the garlic finely and tear the olives off the pits (or buy them without pits).
- 5) Using a paper towel, blot the moisture off of the eggplant, place the eggplant in a single layer on an oiled cookie tray and bake for about 30 minutes, turning once at midpoint.
- 6) Spread half the tomato sauce on the bottom of a casserole dish or cake pan, sprinkle the capers, olives and garlic on the sauce and layer the cooked eggplant slices on top.
- 7) Spread the remaining tomato sauce on top of the eggplant slices.
- 8) Sprinkle the parmesan cheese on top of the sauce and the mozzarella on top of the parmesan.
- 9) Bake for 20 - 30 minutes, or until the kitchen is fragrant and the cheese begins to brown.

If your casserole dish is small, you may use multiple layers of eggplant, putting a bit of tomato sauce and parmesan between each layer. This can be either a side dish or an entree with salad, and is best prepared a day ahead and reheated, giving you more time with your guest.



POMEGRANATE CHICKEN

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Pound Skinless Chicken pieces
- 1/2 Lemon
- 2 Teaspoons Olive Oil
- 1 Tablespoon Chili-Garlic Sauce
- 1/2 Teaspoon Saffron Threads, crushed
- 1/2 Pomegranate
- Salt

METHOD

- 1) Remove the seeds from the pomegranate by cutting it into quarters, then holding it over a bowl to catch the seeds, push your thumbs into the skin, while your fingers hold the edges of the fruit. The seeds will pop out into the bowl easily.
- 2) Salt the chicken pieces.
- 3) Crush the saffron and soften in a bowl with 1/4 cup of hot water.
- 4) Mix lemon juice, chili-garlic sauce and olive oil. Coat chicken with this mixture and marinate for a few minutes.
- 5) Saute chicken pieces in skillet until lightly browned.
- 6) Add the saffron, water and the pomegranate seeds.
- 7) Cover and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Serve with salad tossed with olive oil and plain, raspberry, or fig balsamic vinegar, and rice cooked with saffron.



SPANAKOPITA (SPINACH PIE)

INGREDIENTS

- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|---------------|
| 1/2 | Pound of Feta | 1 | Package Filo |
| 1 | Bag of Spinach | 1/2 | Cup Olive Oil |
| 2 | Eggs, Beaten | | |
| 3-4 | Green Onions, Chopped (or 1 medium Cooking Onion) | | |

METHOD

Filling

- 1) Rinse the spinach, put it in a pot with a tight lid and turn the burner to medium temperature. The spinach should take 5 - 10 minutes to cook. You can stir it to prevent sticking.
- 2) Strain the cooked spinach through a colander and allow it to cool.
- 3) Chop the green onions and the cooled spinach.
- 4) Crumble the feta into a bowl and add the spinach, onions and beaten eggs. Mix thoroughly.

Crust

- 1) Make sure you have a large, clean, dry area for the filo and prepare an 8" x 8" pan for the pie.
- 2) With clean, dry hands, lay the layers on filo on top of each other, one by one, brushing each layer with a coating of olive oil. Make sure you use enough oil...there should be no dry spots.
- 3) When you have at least 6 layers of oiled filo, place it in the pan, fitting it to the sides and fill with the spinach mixture. Fold the edges inwards, neatly. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes.

Normally, I would advise buying bunches of spinach, but washing leaves of spinach properly can take a bit of skill, and the packaged stuff is generally clean...it simply needs a rinse. If you do buy bunches of spinach, you must wash it multiple times with fresh water and clean the sink between each stage. Nothing is worse than gritty spinach.



MANGO SHRIMP

INGREDIENTS

- Canola Oil
- 1 Pound Medium or Jumbo Shrimp
- 2 Teaspoon Crushed Chilies
- 2 Cloves of Minced Garlic
- 1-1/2 Cup Mango Juice
- 1 Tablespoon Fish Sauce
- 1/4 Cup Chopped Cilantro Leaves
- 1 Minced Green Onion

METHOD

- 1) Heat oil and stir-fry the shrimp for about 5 minutes, or until they turn reddish-orange.
- 2) Add mango juice.
- 3) Sprinkle chilies, cilantro, green onion and garlic onto shrimp and into sauce.
- 4) Simmer for 5 minutes with the lid on and for 5 minutes with the lid off, cooking until the sauce is reduced by 1/2.
- 5) Add the fish sauce and serve.

Make some rice and dress a salad with some oil (not olive oil) and a bit of fish sauce to serve with this. Also very good with rice noodle mixed with salad greens and dressed with some sesame oil, fish sauce and cilantro, or just put the shrimp and sauce on top. This can be made with other cooking oils, but I recommend Canola as it is a monosaturate.



THREE-BEAN CHILI

STAGE ONE INGREDIENTS AND METHOD

| | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|---------------|
| 1 | Pound (dried) Kidney Beans | 2 | Garlic Bulbs |
| 1 | Pound (dried) Pinto Beans | 1 | Chopped Onion |
| 1 | Pound (dried) Turtle Beans | 2 | Dried Chilies |
| | Salt | | |

- 1) Cover with water and cook at 250° for 6-8 hours.

STAGE TWO INGREDIENTS AND METHOD

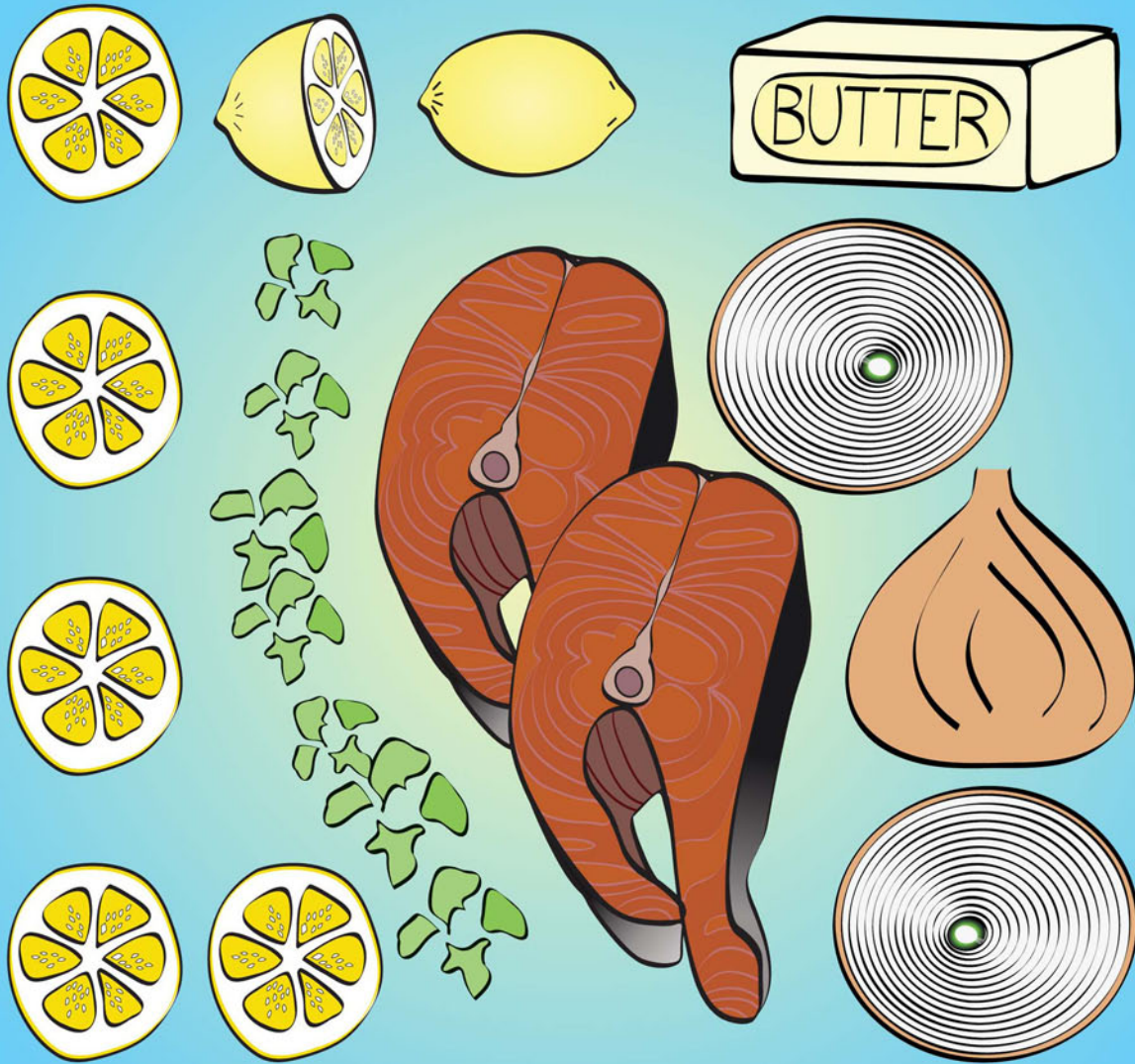
| | | | |
|-------|------------------|-----|---|
| | Oregano | 2 | 26 oz can Whole Tomatoes |
| 6 | Garlic cloves | 3-4 | Chilies of at least 3 types [Scotch Bonnet, Banana, Habanero, Jalapeno, Mulato] |
| 1-1/2 | Onions | | |
| 3/4 | Cup of Olive Oil | | |

- 2) Chop onion and mince the garlic and chilies, reserving half of this mixture in a container for stage three.
- 3) Stick a knife in the can and roughly chop tomatoes.
- 4) Saute onions, garlic and peppers with oregano.
- 5) Add to beans along with 1/2 of the tomatoes.
- 6) Cook, tightly covered with tin foil for another 6-8 hours.

STAGE THREE

- 6) An hour before serving, add the remaining ingredients to chili and cook, uncovered.

Use all the oil called for in this, it's an essential part of the texture and flavour. Do use the multiple types of beans and chilies, as each has a unique flavour. Strictly speaking, not a 'date recipe', but it's perfect for a potluck or chili cook off. Makes enough for 20. The recipe divides well, but with 4 types of chilies, make sure you only use a bit of the chopped mixture.



BAKED SALMON STEAKS

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Large Salmon Steaks
- 2 Lemons
- 1 Cooking Onion
- Butter
- Oregano
- Salt

METHOD

- 1) Preheat oven to 350°
- 2) Lay a sheet of tin foil on a baking tray that is large enough to wrap around both pieces of salmon, laid side by side.
- 3) Place slices of lemon and white onion on the sheet, sprinkle oregano on top and just a bit of salt and lay the salmon steaks over this.
- 4) Salt the top of the salmon and lay slices of onion and lemon on it, finishing each piece with a flat slice of butter of about 1 teaspoon.
- 5) Pull the tin foil up along two opposite sides and fold their edges together to seal them, then seal again along the remaining open ends, making sure to fold the edges at least twice.
- 6) Place the tray in the hot oven and bake for approximately 10 minutes per inch of thickness.

When the fish is properly cooked, a fork inserted into it and twisted slightly will show 'flakes' as the flesh separates.

Desserts & Sweets



Something sweet after dark

The evening is nearly done, the lights are low and it's time for a sensual pleasure, something silky and sweet to end the evening with. Whether you're serving dessert after an evening out, or as the closer of a meal you've prepared, try something trouble-free made ahead of time.

Keep the servings small, particularly if it's something rich, like the chocolate pudding or the lemon butter. Those two could easily be combined, by the way, in layers. Make sure the one layer is fully set before making the other and then layering it on top. Also, the lemon butter, would be equally good made with any other citrus fruit, although if using oranges, make certain to adjust the amount of sugar used.

Note that the lemon butter and the macaroons each use part of 3 eggs, the macaroons using the whites and the lemon butter using the yolks. I've never found yolks to freeze well, but whites do so perfectly. If you make the macaroons and have no plans to make lemon butter, you could add the yolks to an omelette. It will be rich, but just adjust the serving size. They could also be added to the eggs in the corn and crab soup or the pad thai if you make either of those.

When you make the macaroons, make sure there is nothing in the egg whites when you begin to whip them, no flecks of yolk, no water, or they will be hard to whip properly, if at all. Be certain that both the bowl and whip are clean and dry. Check as you are whipping them, that you are incorporating the white at the bottom of the bowl.

The candied orange peels keep extremely well and can also be coated with granulated sugar if you don't like chocolate or don't have any on hand. When using chocolate, make sure you have a good brand of high quality chocolate to use, some of the candy store types are made so that they do not harden again after being melted.

A bit of chopped candied orange peel is a nice addition to the chocolate pudding and if you make lemon peel instead, this would be great chopped in the lemon butter. There's nothing wrong with a bit of intelligent improvisation in the kitchen, it makes things more fun. In fact, there are many fun and imaginative ways to improvise with serving desserts that can occur outside of the kitchen as well...



CHOCOLATE POTS DE CREME

INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 Cup of Milk or Light Cream
- 1 Egg
- 1 Cup of genuine dark Chocolate Chips or a chopped up high quality bittersweet Chocolate Bar

METHOD

- 1) Put chips (or chocolate bar pieces) into blender and chop.
- 2) Scald milk (heat to the point of boiling).
- 3) Pour milk over chips and start blender, drop egg into this and blend thoroughly.
- 4) Pour into serving dishes and chill at least 4 hours.

Be absolutely certain that you are using true chocolate chips. Some are made such that they remain gooey after being cooked. If you are not sure, then use a high quality chocolate bar, like Lindts, or Dröste. Sometimes I'll put a spoonful of jam or preserves in the bottom of the dish before pouring the chocolate mixture in.



CHOCOLATE COVERED CANDIED ORANGE PEELS & ORANGE SYRUP

INGREDIENTS

- 10 Organic Oranges
- 9 Cups Sugar
- 4 Litres Water
- 1 Pound High Quality Chocolate

METHOD

- 1) Pour 3 quarts of water into a 4 quart pot.
- 2) Wash oranges thoroughly. Cut in half, squeeze out the juice and remove all the membrane from the peel. Add the juice to the pot of water.
- 3) Slice the pieces of peel into quarters and add to the pot of water.
- 4) Bring the water to a boil and add the sugar, stirring to dissolve completely.
- 5) Boil water, orange juice and sugar together in a large pot, for 10 minutes.
- 6) After cooling this mixture, refrigerate it for 3-5 days in a covered container.
- 7) Strain the liquid, then dry the peels on a clean towel, reserving the syrup.
- 8) Pour the syrup through a coffee filter and into sterilized bottles.
- 9) Cut peels into thin slices and dip in melted chocolate, coating thoroughly.
- 10) Cool the coated peels on a tray lined with tin foil or waxed paper.

To sterilize the bottles, boil them in water. Keep the syrup refrigerated. It's best to use a high-quality chocolate bar, the type you don't normally see in convenience stores. The standard 'chocolate' chips found in most grocery stores are formulated to not harden again after being cooked.



LEMON BUTTER

INGREDIENTS

- 3 Lemons
- 3 Egg Yolks
- 1/2 Cup Sugar
- 1/2 Pound Butter

METHOD

- 1) Cut Lemons in half, and squeeze out the juice.
- 2) Mix all ingredients in a heat proof glass bowl.
- 3) Cook the mixture over boiling water, stirring constantly until it thickens (about 5-10 minutes).
- 4) Pour the custard into glass jars.
- 5) Seal the jars with sterilized lids.
- 6) Cool and refrigerate. Will keep approximately for one month.

With graham or digestive crackers, this will taste like tiny lemon pies, minus the meringue. If you plan to keep it for any length of time, sterilize the jars by boiling them in water that covers them. The macaroons use the same amount of egg whites as you will have left over from this recipe. If you don't want to make those right away, you can successfully freeze the whites.



MACAROONS

INGREDIENTS

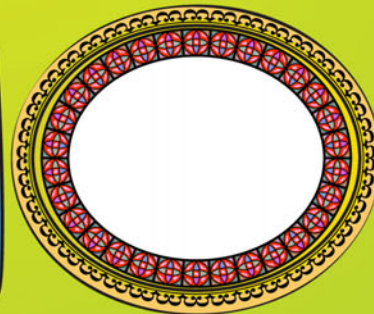
- 1 Package Sweetened Coconut Flakes
- 3 Egg Whites
- 1/2 Cup Sugar

METHOD

- 1) Beat the egg whites in a steel bowl until they begin to form stiff peaks.
- 2) Add the sugar slowly and beat into the egg whites.
- 3) Put the bowl on top of a pot of boiling water to create a double-boiler.
- 4) Continue to beat the egg whites while they cook.
- 5) Stir the coconut flakes into the mixture.
- 6) Put teaspoonfuls of the batter onto a greased cookie tray, lined with oiled parchment paper.
- 7) Bake at 350° for 8-10 minutes, until the macaroons are golden brown.

IMPORTANT: The bowl and mixer should be completely clean and dry when mixing the egg whites. To see what 'stiff peaks' look like, see the illustration on page 59. Watch the macaroons very carefully in the late stages of baking as they can burn quickly. The parchment paper isn't absolutely required, but helps by protecting the macaroons from direct heat.

Breakfast



Congratulations, you DID have an 'easy date'!

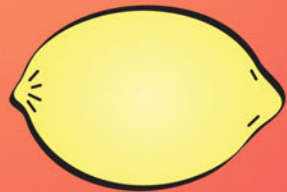
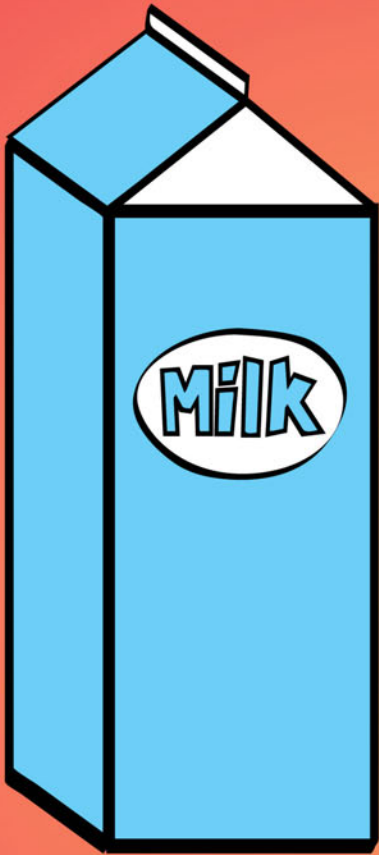
It's possible of course, that you've chosen to meet up for an early date, perhaps a bike ride and are having breakfast as part of that. I do hope however, that your use of this cookbook to create a wonderful evening led to an equally memorable night.

There are only a very few recipes for breakfast given here, but the omelette provides a lot of scope for experimentation. While shredded or crumbled cheese is a classic filling (my personal favourite is feta cheese with avocado), many leftovers can also be considered. If you can imagine it tasting good inside an omelette, chances are that you'll enjoy it.

The critical issue with an omelette is to have fresh eggs. It's fairly rare to run into a bad egg, but nasty when you do and they always seem to appear when one only has a few eggs left in the first place...or when the bowl already has a half-dozen in it...and you can't remove a bad egg from a bowlful. Something I was taught in home economics class in high school, and still do when I'm either making large omelette or using my last few eggs, is to break each into a small dish and then add them to the large bowl.

A fresh egg will have a white (albumen) that is gelatinous and holds together well, with only a bit of wateriness and a yolk with a bright colour which sits high above the white in a distinct half ball. As it loses freshness, these characteristics will change gradually, until the white is thin and watery and the yolk is flat. When they're approaching to this stage, they're passable for baked goods, but not for a good omelette. Even for baked goods, if you have better eggs, you should use those instead. The worst, which rarely happens anymore (but I've had some nasty surprises), is a black egg.

The cheese recipe is extremely simple and can be made in 15 minutes if you're pressed for time, but setting it up the night before creates a slightly tarter flavour and also a faster morning preparation. Finishing it in the morning means it's nice and warm when you serve it, which is ideal. Make sure that after initially boiling the milk, you don't heat it to that degree again, or the cheese will be harder...not ruined by any measure, but not as tender. If it's not separating properly, you need to add more lemon juice, or perhaps supplement the lemon juice with a bit of white or apple cider vinegar. If your guest likes Ricotta cheese, this is the simplest thing you can make for breakfast (along with some toast, or fresh croissants) and one of the most impressive for the effort involved.



RICOTTA CHEESE

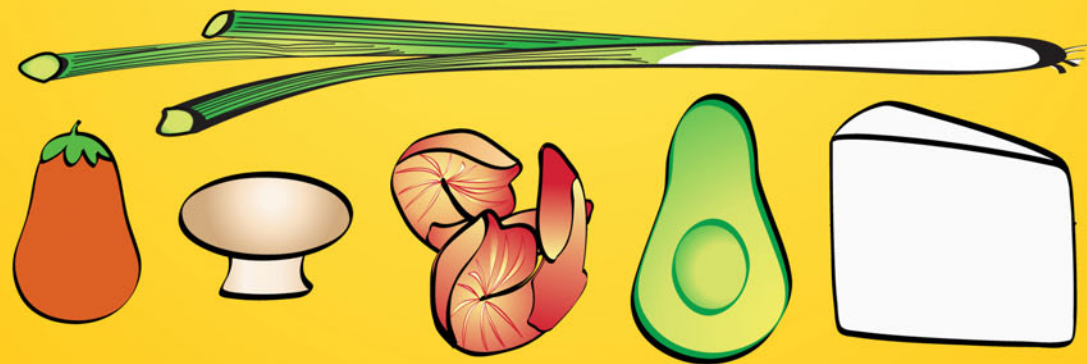
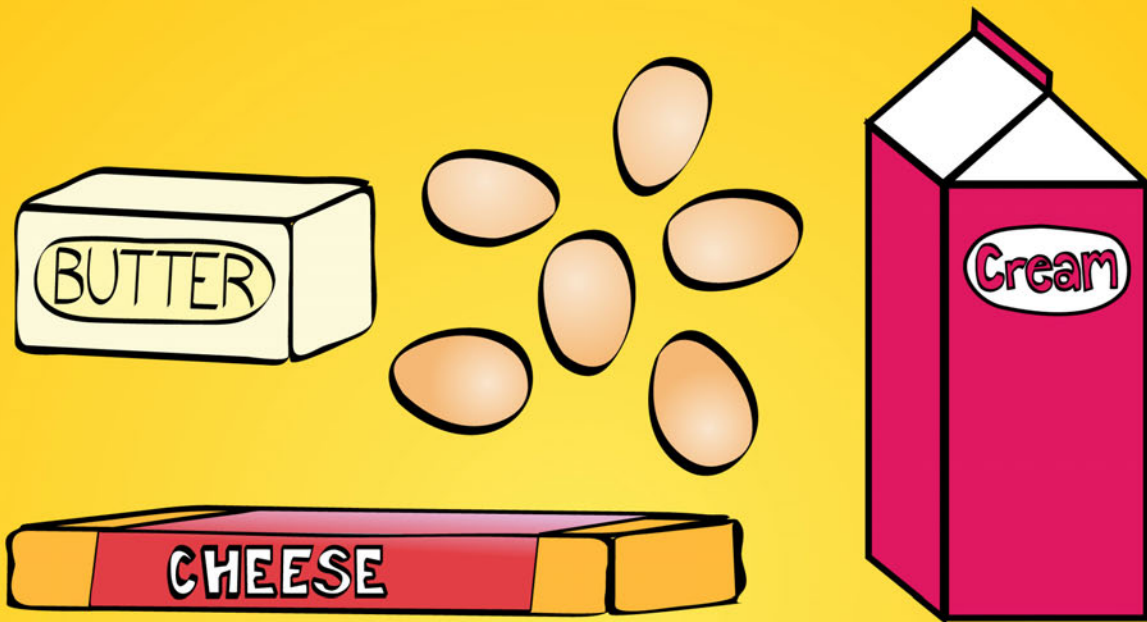
INGREDIENTS

- 1 Litre Homogenized Milk
- 2 Lemons
- Salt

METHOD

- 1) Salt the milk, bring to a boil (it will start to get frothy looking).
- 2) After 3-5 minutes, turn it off and add the juice of one lemon.
- 3) Remove the pot to a cooling pad, cover and leave overnight.
- 4) Add the juice of the second lemon and boil the milk again.
- 5) As the milk begins to boil, you will see it start to separate into a watery liquid (whey), and bits of milk solids (curd). As the whey becomes clearer and the curds begin to congeal, turn off the heat. This will happen fairly quickly, so stand ready and stir the mixture gently from time to time. Allow this to cool a bit before proceeding to the next step.
- 6) Use a soup ladle to spoon the curds and whey through a sieve lined with four or more thicknesses of cheesecloth (if you pour, you'll ruin the cheesecloth and the cheese).
- 7) When this is fully drained, serve it.

PLEASE NOTE; You will need cheesecloth for this recipe. You can buy this at a food store, hardware, or fabric shop (although if from a fabric shop, it will have 'sizing' and must be washed first). The whey can be stored for up to ten days and used in power drinks, or in any recipe that calls for milk, I use it to make biscuits.



OMELETTE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Tablespoon Butter or Margarine
- 5 - 6 Eggs
- 1 Tablespoon Cream
- 1/2 Cup Grated Cheese

Optional:

- Green Onion
- Sun dried Tomatoes
- Mushrooms
- Shrimps
- Avocado
- Feta
- Nearly any leftovers

METHOD

- 1) Crack the eggs into a mixing bowl and beat with the cream until well mixed.
- 2) Grate the cheese and cut any optional ingredients, as required.
- 3) Melt the butter in a saucepan at a medium heat. When the butter is fully melted and bubbling slightly, add the beaten egg mixture.
- 4) While the eggs are cooking, use an egg turner to poke any bubbles that arise, using the small holes formed as a place to guide the uncooked eggs into, by tilting the pan. As the eggs start to thicken, add the cheese on top of the eggs on one side of the pan.
- 5) Add any optional ingredients on top of the cheese now.
- 6) Fold the side that is untopped, over onto the filling and serve.

Pretty much anything can be put into an omelette. Two of my personal favourite fillings are avocado and feta, or leftover stuffed hot peppers. Make sure that all your preparatory work is done before cooking the eggs, as they cook quickly and will require your full attention. If you are using optional ingredients that require cooking, such as the mushrooms or the shrimps, cook them in the pan before the eggs and then reserve on a serving plate until the egg is cooked. Add more butter to the pan afterward.



BAKED FRENCH TOAST

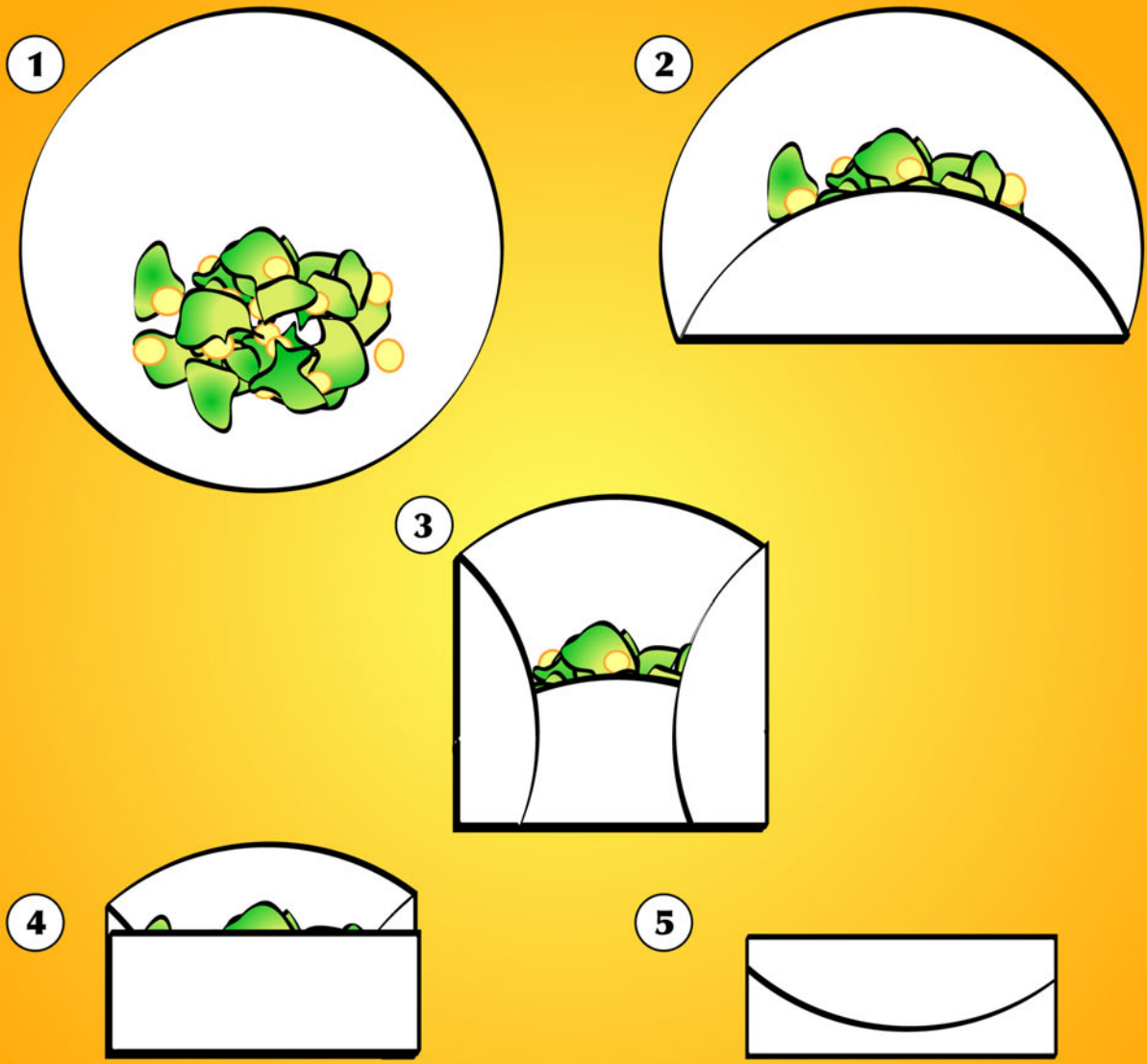
INGREDIENTS

- Butter
- 1 Tablespoon Sugar
- 4 - 6 Slices of Bread (slightly stale bread is ideal)
- 3-4 Eggs
- 3/4 Cup Juice (any kind), or Milk, or 10% Cream
- Fruit (most will work well)
- Maple Syrup or Jam

METHOD

- 1) Preheat oven to 350°
- 2) Grease a small baking dish with butter.
- 3) Beat the eggs, sugar and Juice (or milk, or cream) together in a bowl.
- 4) Prepare the fruit by washing and cutting it into bite sized pieces of any shape, peeling if you wish, although in most cases, it's unnecessary.
- 5) Line the pan with bread slices, filling any gaps in with torn pieces of bread.
- 6) Pour the egg mixture over the bread.
- 7) Allow to soak for at least 10 minutes, this is a good time to set the table.
- 8) Bake for about 20 - 30 minutes, until the 'toast' is fragrant and puffy. Test for readiness by pressing (very gently) on the top with the bottom of a fork or spoon to see if it springs back. The timing varies depending on the amount you make and the depth of the pan.
- 9) Go and have a shower together while this cooks.
- 10) Serve with maple syrup, or jam.

Serve with maple syrup or jam, or the orange syrup from page 45.



The illustration above shows how to fold a salad roll and many other types of wraps.



The illustration above shows what 'stiff peaks' should look like when making a meringue.

Cooking Tools

Don't worry too much about having the 'right' pan or pot for the dishes in this book (or for most cooking), aside from making sure it is large enough for pasta, which, as mentioned earlier, needs a big pot. What does matter is that the pot is big enough for what you are doing. This means that if you need to boil something, the pot must be big enough that there is room for the boiling to occur above the fill line. The fill line should be at least 2" below the rim of the pot and a bit more is better if you want to really boil something, such as potatoes. Half the kitchen fiascoes I have ever experienced were traceable back to a too-small pot (leading to liquids boiling over); the other half, to a lack of attention (leading to overcooked and/or burned food).

If you become very skilled at cooking you can get fussy about finessing your technique with the perfect tools, but by and large, so long as you're attentive and think things through, you can improvise a lot and save washing extra dishes. For example, instead of using both a pasta pot and a saucepan to make the Fettuccini Alfredo, I saute the butter and garlic in the pasta pot while leaving the pasta in the colander. This works well if your ingredients are all prepared before starting to cook. If you get distracted and the pasta sits too long and gets sticky, just run some hot water over it before tossing it back into the pot.

You can pretty much get away with the following cooking tools as a starting point:

Pots and Pans

- 1 Large (at least 4 quart) pot with lid for pastas and soups and such
- 1 Small (1-1/2 quart) pot with lid
- 1 12" frying pan, either cast iron or non-stick (don't use metal tools with teflon, it scratches the finish and ruins the pans)
- 1 6" frying pan, either cast iron or non-stick
- 1 10" steel or pyrex bowl, not only is this useful for mixing things, it is useful serving as the top of a double boiler
- 1 Blender: you really can't beat one of these. While I am not pushing any particular brands, I've had the same Osterizer blender since forever. The Magic Bullet looks pretty interesting too. and is recommended by friends that have one. At minimum, you should have a hand mixer. It's not quite as good as a blender, but it'll do, and is much easier to clean.

Implements

- 1 Egg flipper
- 1 Wooden spoon
- 1 Slotted spoon, plastic, if you use non-stick pans
- 1 Ladle or deep bowled spoon
- 2 Serving spoons
- 1 Wire whisk, there are various shapes and my personal favourite is one that is designed to also separate eggs. You need this to make whipped cream or meringues, unless you have a hand mixer.

Rice Cooker

While not truly 'necessary' a rice cooker makes life easier. It will cook potatoes and vegetables as easily as rice and is also a great way to make hard or soft-boiled eggs. The beauty is that rice cookers have a regulated temperature and automatically shut off when the water is gone, making it impossible to burn anything in one (although you can overcook). That feature alone makes a rice cooker one of my personal favourite tools. As with pasta, make sure to use salt when cooking the rice.

INGREDIENTS IN THIS BOOK

| FRESH | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Avocado | Feta | Linguini | Pomegranate |
| Bean Sprouts | Firm Tofu | Mangos | Raspberries |
| Bread | Fish Sauce | Mango Juice | Red Onion |
| Butter | Fruit | Milk | Rice Papers |
| Butter | Garlic | Minced Green | Rice Vinegar |
| Capers | Ginger Root | Mozzarella | Salmon Steaks |
| Chevre (goat cream cheese) | Grated Parmesan | Mushrooms | Sambal Ulek (Chili Sauce) |
| Chicken | Green Onion | Olive Paste | Sheep Feta |
| Chilies (dried) | Whipping Cream or Table Cream | Onion | Shrimp (Medium or Jumbo) |
| Chops | Hot Peppers | Oregano | Spinach |
| Cilantro Leaves | Jalapenos or other | Organic Oranges | Sugar |
| Cilantro Roots | Juice | Parmesan | Sweet Red Pepper |
| Crab Sticks | Lamb Shoulder | Peppers: | Tofu (deep fried) |
| Cream | Lemons | Banana | Tomatoes (roma) |
| Eggplant | Lettuce | Habanero | |
| Eggs | Light Cream | Jalapeno | |
| | | Scotch Bonnet | |

| PRESERVED | | DRIED | CANNED |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Anchovies | Satay Sauce | Crushed Chilies | Chicken Broth |
| Balsamic Vinegar | Sesame Oil | Dried Figs | Crab Meat |
| Canola Oil | Soy Sauce | Fettucini | Cream Corn |
| Capers | Sugar | Kidney Beans | Tomato Paste |
| Chili-Garlic Sauce | Tomato Paste | Linguini Piccolo | Tomato Sauce |
| Chips or high quality | Tomato Sauce | Pinto Beans | Tomatoes (Roma) |
| Chocolate Bar | Vegetable Oil | Rice Vermicelli | |
| Chocolate | | Saffron Threads | |
| Cooking Oil | | Sun dried Tomatoes | |
| Dressing | | Sweetened Coconut Flakes | |
| Fish Sauce (ngoc nam) | | Thin to Medium Rice | |
| Genuine Chocolate | | Turtle Beans | |
| Maple Syrup or Jam | | | |
| Olive Oil | | | |
| Olives | | | |
| Peanut Butter | | | |
| Salt | | | |