

1996

musa dagh malanga soup

At various times culminating in World War I, the Armenians had some [serious problems](#) with the Turks. The Turks say the same about the Armenians, but the bodies on the ground and in the rivers were usually Armenian. One community [Musa Dagh](#) was lucky enough to have a nearby coastal mountain with an easily defended access path that enabled them to hold out till a rescuing French Navy ship arrived on the sea side. The French later resettled many of them in a little town called [Anjar](#) in the Bekaa valley of Lebanon (not the town in Kansas, geographic center of the continental United States), where they were able to continue making their widely unknown but fabulous malanga chick pea soup, a Musa Dagh tradition that might otherwise have vanished except for that mountain and some hardheaded Armenians. Some of whom, thanks to another ugly Middle Eastern conflict, ended up as dr bob's inlaws in America (the United States of). So that you too can now enjoy this wonderful dish. Provided you have some Puerto Ricans around. They seem to be the only Americans who actually know what a malanga is and provide the food distribution system with a target market demand.

What is a malanga?

A big hairy brown root vegetable with a white interior, used like a potato in Puerto Rican cuisine, though resembling a coconut more than a tuber. And brought to upscale continental Americans (Lebanon, KA, remember) by the 90's "Nuevo Latino" cuisine, news of which filtered down to the dr bob cooking team in the food section of the local paper, complete with a poor quality color photo of the super tuber. Apparently from what our local clan malanga forager says, there are a number of imposter malangas to be found at the only local malanga supplier, so some skill is required in the hunt.

The Arabic word is "elaas", while the Armenian word is "goulougas". If you are lucky, enough humans from one of these three ethnic groups live near you to make malangas appear somewhere in your food distribution system. Usually in the winter season when this soup really hits the spot.

Isgouhi makes it happen for us.

ingredients

1)

- 1 c dried chick peas
- 1 lb lamb shoulder or stew meat
- 1 t salt
- 1/8 t black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- water to cover

2)

- 2 lb malangas
- 1 lemon, juice from
- ? t salt (to taste)
- water to cover

3)

- 1/2 - 1 c yogurt (thin - thick)
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 T tomato paste
- 1 T sweet red pepper paste (optional)
- 2 c water
- 1/2 lemon, juice from
- 1/2 t salt
- 1/4 t black pepper
- 1/4 t red pepper

instructions

1. Soak the dried chick peas overnight in water. When ready to make the soup, drain.
2. Bring the meat to a boil and then drain and rinse to eliminate the scum which forms.
3. Put the meat and chick peas in the pressure cooker with the group 1 spices and just cover with water. Bring to a boil, remove the scum which forms on the surface, close and cook at full steam 10 minutes. Allow to cool down until pressure releases and remove contents temporarily to another pot.
4. Meanwhile peel the malangas and cut into roughly 1 inch by 1 inch by 1/2 inch irregular chunks, rotating around the malanga twisting the knife as you cut into it to snap off pieces one at a time.
5. Then cover with water, add juice of 1 lemon and some salt, and let sit.
6. Beat the yogurt and egg in a small bowl until very smooth [adding a well beaten egg to the yogurt helps prevent it from separating when boiled], pour it into the pressure cooker and add the remaining group 3 ingredients, mixing until smooth.
7. Add the drained malanga pieces and just enough water to cover the malanga.
8. Bring to a boil uncovered to prevent yogurt separation, then cover and cook 10 minutes at full steam. Allow to cool down until pressure releases. Malanga should be firm and not mushy.
9. Open the pressure cooker and add the meat and chick peas and heat 5 minutes uncovered.
10. Remove from heat and serve.

notes

1. When the day finally came for Isgouhi to do the malanga soup class in our kitchen (you never get it right until you do it yourself in your own environment), we had forgotten to soak the chick peas overnite. In fact we didn't even have any on hand since we always kept taking them to her kitchen for her to use. So we had to make a special early morning trip to the market. Apparently only 7 hours of soaking are sufficient. And since the malanga bob found [Philly 69th St Pathmark] was so big [a foot long but we forgot to weigh it: see the super-tuber photo], the double recipe we made wouldn't fit back in the pressure cooker simultaneously at the last step, so the final boil was done in our 12 qt pasta pot. Leftover city.
2. More [info](#) about malangas, including photos, is available.
3. Reviewing the recipe later with the cook's other daughter led to more revisions, so we decided to do a second class again in our own kitchen. Every time this recipe is executed,

there are changes in procedure! Isgouhi used 2 pressure cookers to speed up things (this is not one of the changes we mean), but we revised for the 1 pot approach. Maybe one day this process will converge. Putting Mediterranean mom cooks into reproducible recipe format is not an easy task.

ps (taro root!)

Looks like the joke is on us. The name "taro root" does not seem to be in use in the supermarkets that market malangas to us, so barkev naturally thought that malanga was the word used here for the "true malangas" that he recognized from the Middle East, but it later became clear from a more diligent internet search that barkev's true malangas are really [taro root](#), which is found and used in all parts of the world [taro = taro root = dasheen = coco = cocoyam = eddo = Japanese potato = baddo = elephant's ear = old cocoyam = sato-imo, according to [The Cook's Thesaurus](#)], although unknown to the American public at large. But taro root doesn't make a nice alliteration (repeated first letter words) or rhyme like the name of the soup that we have used for years, so we'll just leave it be.

malangas.htm: 9-may-2003[[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

armenian chick pea tomato pasta soup

This is another Armenian soup often made by Isgouhi in the same class as the [malanga](#) one, but without a hard to find key ingredient. I got her to dictate this recipe to me 3 different times over the course of a few years, but each version had some variations. The following is a compromise. There is a good reason why this is frequently served. Healthy and tasty. Sorry about the meat.

ingredients

- 1)
 - 1 c dried chick peas (= 1/2 lb dried) or 1 can wet peas
 - 1 - 1 1/2 lb lamb shoulder or stew meat (even beef)
 - 2 bay leaves
 - 2 t salt
 - water to cover, plus some
- 2)
 - 1 lb baby shells, cavatelli (2 c?) precooked al dente
- 3)
 - 2 T tomato paste (heaping = 3oz)
 - 2 lemons, juice from
 - 6 cloves garlic, pressed
 - water to cover
 - 1/2 t allspice
 - 1/2 t black pepper
 - 1/2 t [Middle Eastern red pepper powder](#)
 - 1/2 t salt
- 4)
 - 1 - 4 T butter
 - 6 cloves garlic, pressed
 - 2 T dried mint

instructions

1. Soak the dried chick peas overnight in water. When ready to make the soup, drain.
2. Bring the meat to a boil in an uncovered pressure cooker with 1 t salt and 1 bay leaf, boil 5 min, and then drain and rinse to eliminate the scum which forms. Discard first bay leaf.
3. Add the chick peas, 1 t salt, and the second bay leaf to the meat in the pressure cooker and just cover with water, plus a little bit. Bring to full steam and cook 15 minutes covered.
4. Mix the tomato paste with a little water in a saucepan and stir in the lemon juice and spices and then pour into the pressure cooker.
5. Bring the soup to a boil uncovered and then add the pasta. Boil 5 minutes uncovered.
6. Meanwhile saute the butter, garlic, and mint separately until the garlic and butter is a light golden brown color.
7. Add to soup and boil 5 minutes more. Remove from heat and serve.

notes

1. This still needs some feedback from the chef.
2. [Illustrations](#) available.

armcpps.htm: 17-jan-200\5 [[what, ME cook?](#)] © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

french apple tart

ms_ani would like to go to France and spend some time there but that's not gonna happen anytime soon. [Famous last words: an impossible to refuse airline deal sent us on a long weekend direct flight to Paris one month later, but still, a few days is not what she had in mind.] She would also like to start doing French cooking. Much easier. So we picked up a small [French bistro cookbook](#), every dish beautifully photographed. The [French apple tart](#) popped out at us. Sweet pastry crust, vanilla bean pastry cream, thin sliced apples neatly arranged in a circular pattern. Only two problems: no vanilla beans and no tart pan with removable bottom. The first was solved at a local supermarket in the bottled spice section but WHOA! Over three bucks for a couple long bean pods in a spice jar. As for the second we had no time to get to a cooking supply for the affluent store so we improvised—we used a cheesecake springform pan. Not perfect but good enough to fill in till the right pan came along, which it did soon after.

Of course American apple pie prejudice lowered dr bob's expectations for this French flattened version, but let's face it—there must be some reason the average French restaurant can charge so much for its product. This tart is actually good and not overwhelming like a superpacked American pie, especially when you add the obligatory vanilla ice cream / frozen yogurt. dr bob was looking for nonfat frozen yogurt but only found lowfat vanilla bean ice cream. Only 20% calories from fat! And a great combination with the French tart of course.

Two steps precede the assembly / baking phase of this project, both of which may be done in advance (like the day before): 1) pastry cream (cooled) and 2) sweet pastry dough.

ingredients

pastry cream (crème pâtissière) [makes 2 cups, need only 1]

- 4 egg yolks
- 1/2 c sugar
- 1/3 c plus 1 T all purpose flour
- 2 c milk
- 1/2 vanilla bean (pod), split in half lengthwise

sweet pastry crust (dough ball)

- 1/2 c (4oz = 1 stick) plus 1 T unsalted butter, at room temperature, cut into pieces
- 1/2 c confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 egg
- 2 c all purpose flour
- 1/8 t baking powder

apple topping

- 3 - 5 Granny Smith apples (we only seem to use 2)
- 1 T sugar
- 1 T cinnamon
- 2 T unsalted butter, melted

instructions

pastry cream

Combine the egg yolks and sugar in a large bowl and whisk or beat until thoroughly combined. Add the flour and stir until smooth. Set aside.

Combine the milk and vanilla bean in a large saucepan over high heat and bring to a boil. As soon as it begins to boil, remove from the heat and remove the vanilla bean, scraping the seeds directly into the milk with the tip of a small sharp knife.

Whisk half the hot milk into the egg mixture in the bowl and return the saucepan to high heat. As soon as it begins to boil again, pour the bowl stuff into it, whisking constantly.

Stir over high heat with a wooden spoon until the mixture is smooth and then return to a boil and boil while stirring for 2 more minutes.

Remove from the heat and press plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the hot cream to prevent a skin from forming. Cool completely before using. Makes enough for 2 tarts. Make one, wait a while, make another.

sweet pastry dough

This is not a health food product. If your butter is still frozen like ours (we keep it in the freezer), you can paper thin cut it cross-wise (we use a super knife picked up at a home show, used to cut steel hammers for effect in the demo) and combine with the sugar using a manual pastry blender. If soft, then beat with an electric mixer on low speed until smooth, about 3 minutes.

Then add the egg and beat until creamy.

Using a rubber spatula, fold in the flour and baking powder just minimally and then beat on low until the dough is evenly mixed and clings together, about 2 or 3 minutes.

Shape the dough into a flattened oval, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours (up to 2 weeks). Bring to room temperature (allow an hour here too) before using.

sweet pastry crust: ball to pan

As previously noted in our early days (bavarian apple torte), these sweet pastry crusts are not user friendly. A floured pastry cloth is indispensable here to keep your beautifully rolled out crust from self destructing when transferring to the tart pan (even worse with the high sides of a cheesecake pan!)

Once you've rolled it out to the approximate diameter needed for the 10 inch (25cm) pan plus sides, very carefully loosely roll up the pastry from the pastry cloth to your floured cloth covered rolling pin and then unroll on the pan. Or if you have the magic pan, you can put the flat bottom on the rolled out dough and overturn and place in the sidewall support structure.

Any side breakage can be repaired by hand by just pressing overrun pieces into gaps. Trim the

extra dough even with the top of the sidewalls of the magic pan if you've got one and refrigerate.

apple prep

Preheat oven to 375°.

Core and peel the apples, then slice lengthwise very thin. Mix with the sugar and cinnamon.

tart assembly and completion

Get the crust out of the fridge and spread the cooled pastry cream evenly over the bottom (about 1/8 in deep). Then arrange the apple slices on top in concentric circles and brush with the melted butter.

Bake about 50 minutes until golden brown and slightly caramelized (the sugar).

Serve warm or at room temperature.

notes

1. There is always more dough than you need after rolling out any tart or pie crust(s). This recipe leaves enough dough for another sizable tartlet that can be used to experiment with new coverings. Gather it back together into a ball and roll it out again. This can be dropped in the middle of a glass pie plate, and the edges can be convinced to form some kind of crude edging. Whatever compromise you can work out with the excess dough is acceptable, since the alternative is more Western society waste. Let your imagination direct the effort here. The pastry cream recipe is also generous, so as long as you don't go overboard in piling it on (remember how rich it is), you'll have enough extra for the tartlet.
2. For example, crumb up a scant tablespoon or so of walnut crumbs in the blender and sprinkle over the pastry cream layer. Scatter on some of those pine nuts that you never know what to do with. Gently place small triangular cross cut pieces of the thinly sliced apple between the pine nuts. Shake a touch of cinnamon and sugar over it. Paint on what melted butter remains from the big tart. Maybe sprinkle on a bit more of the walnut crumbs.
3. Be careful to watch the tartlet during baking since its exposed edge crust will brown much faster than its protected big tart companion. We didn't watch, but it wasn't a disaster. Next time will be perfect.
4. [Illustration](#) available.

veggie bowties I: the joy of food processing

For years we did without. [Perhaps because we had not yet bought a house, and after we did, because we had.] Somehow buying the [big name food processor](#) outright seemed an extravagance. And any other one would never satisfy our amateur cooking ambitions, the typical ad campaign brainwashed consumers that we are. So we waited. Until the temptation came within reach—a seemingly pretty good sale price for the slightly reduced power version of the classic model—and we grabbed it. Happy little food processors we became. Except that our laziness prevented us from fully exploiting the processor potential. The two extra full disk cutting options. One with the big "extremely sharp blade" warning sticker still stuck on the shining metal. Until a dr bob mom visit, during which the question came up about using the slicer blade. The sticker came off. Some potatoes got sliced. Wow.

So back to the topic at hand. Veggie pasta sauces are a snap with the food processor. Just mine the refrigerator for its veggie deposits in the lower drawers. Assortments are good for this. First the onion, then the secondary items. Not quite like opening a jar, but jars just don't cut it, usually.

ingredients

pasta

1 lb bowtie pasta (farfalle)

veggie process group

1 celery stalk

1 carrot

1 turnip

2 green onions

1 large garlic clove

sauté starters

2 T olive oil

1 onion, chopped

1 red pepper, chopped

sauté intermediaries

2 small zucchini, sliced crossways

8 oz white mushrooms, chopped

finishers

1/2 c veggie broth (1 t veggie concentrate plus water)

salt to taste

pepper to taste

1/2 t paprika

2 T fresh parsley, chopped

instructions

1. Start the pasta water boiling and when ready throw in the bowtie pasta and cook al dente. Meanwhile:
2. Food process the food process group together, after cleaning, peeling, whatever seems

appropriate.

3. Sauté the onion and red pepper in olive oil.
4. When a bit softened, throw in the food processed group and combine.
5. Add in the zucchini and mushrooms.
6. When softened, add in the veggie broth and let simmer on low heat for a while until the liquid reduces a bit.
7. Add in the finishers.
8. Combine with the pasta. Serve with freshly grated parmigiano and black pepper.

notes

1. We were on a roll so we tried a variation ([next recipe](#)).

vegbow1.htm: 6-aug-2001 [[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

veggie bowties II: farfalle alla caponata (more joy)

Our only record of this is a printout of a February email to an Italian mom friend, casually informing her that no Caribbean vacation was in the works (spring break was coming up) but instead our first European long weekend vacation, in [Stockholm](#). It all started at the table eating nadereh's homecooked Iranian food when ani mentioned this [SAS](#) really low season promotional weekend package to Stockholm, a city dr bob knew well from professional collaboration with dr kjell and dr claes. She'd spotted it in the Sunday paper. Of course initially bob had said something like "What, are you crazy?" though more diplomatically put at the time, but when Cyrus said, "Why not?", bob thought, yeah, why not? Early childhood training to reject offers of good stuff with a polite no thank you cracked. Maybe it wasn't so crazy after all. Ani is an American industry wage slave, with 3 weeks max vacation per year, so we don't have the time for long fun vacations, what with the mandatory Italian summer visits and occasional Lebanon trips. So we went. And ani met kjell and claes's families on a bright sunny snow and ice weekend in the city and surroundings. A quick mix of big city excitement, friendship and family, beautiful urban and country scenery, walking on the frozen lakes and city not-a-river but looks-like-one water body, window shopping, European otherness, a visit to the Nobel dinner castle. Memories.

Later followed by Paris, where we ran into more ani relatives (by chance being visited by ani's brother's childhood friend from Anjar then living in Texas) whose Armenian-Lebanese home cooking surpassed everything French we'd found except possibly lunch at [Fauchon](#), recommended by another Iranian couple who'd already done the city. And then Munich, where bob had spent 9 months after his year in Italy, visiting [piero](#) and accidentally catching Luigi, an old Rome connection /roommate from bob's [HS CFA](#) days. Having friends and relatives scattered around the globe definitely has its advantages.

ingredients

pasta

1 lb bowtie pasta (farfalle)

veggie process group

1 celery stalk

1 red pepper

2 green onions

sauté starters

2 T olive oil

1 onion, chopped

sauté intermediaries

1 eggplant (big), peeled and cubed

1/2 c black olives, chopped

2 t green jalapeño pepper, chopped

finishers

1 28oz (big) can pomodori pelati (peeled plum tomatoes)

salt to taste

pepper to taste

instructions

1. Start the pasta water boiling and when ready throw in the bowtie pasta and cook al dente. Meanwhile:
2. Food process the food process group together, after cleaning.
3. Sauté the onion and red pepper in olive oil.
4. When a bit softened, throw in the food processed group and continue sautéing.
5. Add in the eggplant and continue sautéing.
6. After cooking a bit, add in the pelati and cook about 15 minutes on low to medium heat.
7. Then season with salt and pepper.
8. Combine half the sauce with the pasta, freeze the other half with a dated post-it to use at a later date (we usually forget what goes in the freezer).
9. We served this with freshly grated pecorino Romano.

notes

1. Remember, never overwhelm pasta with too much sauce.
2. The e-mail noted that this was great for lunch the next day. Microwaved in Rubbermaid.
3. It must have been rita. The Italian mom friend. She never commented on our improvisation. How should we interpret that?

vegbow2.htm: 6-aug-2001 [[what, ME cook?](#)] © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

pork chops with portabello mushrooms and roasted peppers

We always keep some frozen meat in the freezer. Generally it is consumed not with advanced planning but with sudden need—requiring a microwave quick thaw and improvised preparation. This recipe is a slight variation of the cook's mom's Armenian meat treatment ("[cow in red wine sauce](#)"). Pretty tasty, assuming it's okay to admit liking stuff that once had a face. Served with [Armenian rice](#) with almonds. The cook had some wine. And fell asleep in front of the TV. A Friday night collapse. Meanwhile the bob channel surfed onto [Xena, warrior princess](#) uninterrupted until. The mother-in-law calls to announce the Miss USA pageant that we are missing. bob makes the big sacrifice.

ingredients

- 4 pork chops
- 2 T olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 4 small portabello mushrooms, chopped
- 1/2 c red wine
- 2 t tomato paste
- 1/2 c water
- 4 oz roasted peppers, about 4 pieces from a jar
- salt and pepper to taste

instructions

1. Brown the pork chops in the olive oil in a pressure cooker and set them aside.
2. Add garlic and sauté without browning.
3. Add mushrooms, sauté a bit and then add the wine and evaporate it.
4. Then put back the pork chops and add the roasted peppers.
5. Dissolve the tomato paste in the water and add.
6. Check the seasoning and then pressure cook about 15 minutes over medium heat.
7. Release pressure and serve.

notes

1. Ani, maybe you should check this version over?

produce bread: bananas, pumpkins, zucchini?

It's not bread. It's not cake. Just what is it?

When dr bob was young, cakes were [Betty Crocker](#) or [Duncan Hines](#) from a box. Mom made 'em. The bob made 'em. They never had produce in them. Lots of sugar and high fat icing. Bread was white, full of air, and easily returned to the dough ball state by imaginative kid hands. Not to mention often found in the company of peanut butter and jelly or bologna and cheese. Fortunately at some point in life, things changed. bob evolved into a higher plane of cake consumption.

And then things changed again. With a warning shot across the bow from the updated food pyramid. These produce breads we stumbled upon by chance are less damaging than the traditional versions and seem to be better off for it.

The first was a random save from our massive recipe harvest of years of multiple women's magazines sold to ms_ani in a telephone marketing package deal, who finds it hard to say no on the phone. The second came in a checkout counter impulse buy and got its first trial thanks to a pumpkin pack can grabbed for a Thanksgiving day cheesecake never made. Oops, not! It was from our next stage in life food magazine *Cooking Light*, which we now seem to use more than *Bon Appetit*, though both continue to roll in the door month after month and stack up in our cooking library with lots of post-its marking interesting recipes that rarely get a trial run.

Quite by accident a partial categorization of these cake-breads came from a bob's mom's visit. "Quick breads", she said. Sure enough there is a short explanation in the *Joy of Cooking*, even a section heading in *Betty Crocker* (but no hint there of what distinguishes a quick bread from a cake). Regular breads rely on yeast to rise, while quick breads just use baking powder (which Laurel's kitchen tells us destroys the B vitamin and thiamin) and perhaps baking soda—quick since no waiting around for rising time is involved—just pop 'em in the oven. Comparing cakes and quick bread recipes shows one obvious difference—cakes have more flour, sugar, and eggs per unit fat content. Could our cooking library be too specialized that we don't have other sources of info on this topic? Do we need more general cooking tomes? Can we e-mail one of those TV chef's?

notes

1. Produce. As in fresh produce. Which refers to fruits and vegetables. Maybe this is an Americanism. If you think about the word a while, you wonder what it has to do with fruits and vegetables. Must not be in many non-native English speakers' vocabulary.

dried cherry banana bread

ingredients

dry group

2 c all purpose flour
1/2 c whole wheat flour
1/3 c cornmeal
1 t salt
1 t baking powder

wet group

2 c mashed ripe bananas (about 4), food processor does the job
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
1/3 c buttermilk
2 T butter, melted
2 T vegetable oil
1/2 c sugar
1/2 t allspice
1/4 t cardamom
1/4 t cinnamon
1/8 t cloves

addins

1/2 cup dried cherries

instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Grease and flour a 9x5 inch loaf pan.
3. Soak cherries in 1 c boiling water 5 minutes, then drain.
4. Combine the dry group in a large bowl.
5. Combine the wet group in a medium bowl (we food process the bananas), then stir into the dry group bowl until just moistened.
6. Stir in the cherries.
7. Pour into the loaf pan and bake 60 to 70 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
8. Cool in the pan on a rack 10 minutes, then remove from the pan and cool completely.

notes

1. If you cut into 18 1/2 inch slices, each slice gets you:
Cal 165, Total fat 4g, Sat fat 1g, Chol 28mg, Sod 177mg, Carbs 30mg, Prot 3g.
2. Options. Hitting a supermarket for supplies in a winter snowstorm, some produce items impersonating 3 ripe peaches talked their way into the shopping basket. Although they turned out to be deceptively not what they appeared to be, they made a great alternative dried cherry replacement here. Peeled, pitted and sliced up like apples headed for a pie, we also used brown sugar in the wet group and since we ran out of cornmeal while emptying the box, we substituted about half with semolina (seemed like our only alternative) and added 2/3 c plain nonfat yogurt to ensure some degree of moistness. Not bad.
3. We made this over and over again until the next version muscled its way into our favorite spot.

another banana bread

This was the March 97 cover recipe for [Cooking Light](#) with the hook "our most *apeeling* banana bread" (p. 110). It is less dense and comes with the name Jamaican banana bread never explained in the accompanying article "bananas reveal their dark side" by the author abby duchin dinces (all lower case like dr bob). The recipe includes a shredded coconut topping we made once (in spite of bob's skepticism towards shredded coconut) but the extra effort did not seem to deliver enough extra payoff so we never bothered again. Leaving a bag of partially used shredded coconut in our fridge until the next century and then some. We like this a lot too.

ingredients

creamed mixture

2 T stick margarine (butter!), softened
 2 T tub light cream cheese, softened
 1 c sugar
 1 large egg

flour mixture

2 c all-purpose flour
 2 t baking powder
 1/2 t baking soda
 1/8 t salt

banana mixture

1 c ripe banana, mashed (food process it!)
 1/2 c skim milk
 2 T dark rum or 1/4 t imitation rum extract
 1/2 t grated lime rind
 2 t lime juice
 1 t vanilla extract

addins

1/4 c chopped pecans, roasted
 1/4 c flaked sweetened coconut

topping

1/4 c packed brown sugar
 2 t margarine (butter!)
 2 t lime juice
 2 t dark rum or 1/8 t imitation rum extract

topping addins

2 T chopped pecans, roasted
 2 T flaked sweetened coconut

instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375° F. Coat an 8x4 inch loaf pan with cooking spray and set aside.
2. Creamed mixture group: In a large bowl, beat together the margarine (butter!) and cream cheese at medium speed, then add the sugar, beating well, then the egg, beating well again.

3. Flour mixture group: Combine all this stuff and mix well.
4. Banana mixture group: Combine all this stuff and mix well. You can just throw it all in the food processor like we do.
5. Alternately add first the flour mixture and then the banana mixture a bit at a time, mixing well each time, ending with the flour mixture.
6. Stir in the pecans and coconut.
7. Pour batter into the pan and bake for 60 minutes.
8. Let cool in pan 10 minutes, then remove and cool slightly on a wire rack.
9. If you decide to prepare the topping, combine the topping stuff in a saucepan and bring to a simmer, then cook 1 minute stirring constantly and remove from the heat.
10. Stir in the topping addins and spoon the result over the loaf.

notes

1. 16 servings (1/2 inch slices) leads to the following single serving info:
Cal 187 (26% from fat), Fat 5.4g (sat 1.5g, mono 2.3g, poly 1.2g), Prot 2.9g, Carb 32.2g, Fiber 1.1g, Chol 15mg, Iron 1mg, Sod 105mg, Calc 55mg. Of course this discounts any rich icecream/frozen yogurt you might be tempted to serve it with.

banana-walnut-oatmeal bread

As the new century unfolds, health concerns multiply and bob turns to daily oatmeal intake as one measure in fighting cholesterol. 2004 brings another Cooking Light recipe for banana bread, to which bob could not resist adding the miracle food "walnuts", often found in the company of banana bread anyway. Ani found the recipe and made the first move, with some health upgrades in the flour and sugar ingredients suggested by bob together with the nuts. Then we made it repeatedly several times in succession. We were suitably impressed.

ingredients

dry stuff

- 1 1/2 c all-purpose flour (upgrade: 1 c white whole wheat flour plus 1/2 c all-purpose flour)
- 3/4 c sugar (upgrade: use unrefined cane sugar called turbinado or "Sugar in the Raw")
- 1 1/2 t baking powder
- 1/4 t baking soda
- 1/4 t salt
- 3/4 c regular oats (we just used oatmeal).

wet stuff

- 1 c mashed ripe banana (about 2 large)
- 1/3 c buttermilk (= 1/3 c powdered buttermilk in the dry stuff, 1/3 c water in the wet stuff)
- 1/4 c vegetable oil
- 1 t vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten.

instructions

1. This is really easy. Sift the flour and baking powder and soda and salt into a large bowl, then mix in the sugar and oats. That was all the dry stuff.
2. Then put all the wet stuff in a food processor and process.
3. Combine the dry and wet stuff together and pour into a loaf pan sprayed with veggie spray.
4. Bake at 350° for about 55 minutes in a preheated oven until a wooden tooth pick comes out clean when inserted in the center.
5. Cool 15 minutes in the pan on a wire rack, then invert and remove from pan and cool completely.

notes

1. [Cooking Light](#), September 2004, p. 164: (reader recipes) "A new classic", recipe by Kay Rothschild for banana-oatmeal loaf. We simplified the instructions. So easy that we do it over and over.
2. Now that we have a digital camera, we have an [illustration](#).
3. Nutrition info for the original recipe (no nuts): 1/12 loaf = serving slice: Calories 192 (28% from fat); Fat 6 g (sat. 1.1g, mono 1.5g, poly 2.9g); Protein 3.8g; Carb 31.4g; Fiber 1.3g; Chol 38mg; Iron 1.2mg; Sodium 154mg; Calc 52mg.

pumpkin bread

Still to do.

ingredients

instructions

- 1.

notes

- 1.

zucchini bread

Still to do.

ingredients

instructions

- 1.

notes

1. Hmm. We don't seem to be finding the right pumpkin or zucchini bread recipes for these slots.

prodbrd.htm: 8-sep-2004 [[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

no way creme d'artichauts (cream of artichoke soup)

Another family dinner. Fussy male in-laws on the guest list. What to make. Why not start with an irresistible cream soup? Beautifully photographed in the newly acquired [French cookbook](#). Yes. Artichokes have a certain class about them. But what's this [Armagnac](#) they call for? Substitutable by cognac or any good quality dry brandy?

Off to the state store we go in search of a cooperative clerk to broaden our knowledge of unfamiliar hard liquor. Finally we locate the target item. Whoa! Catch that price tag. What is this stuff? The [Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board](#) employee chokes at the inquiry. No idea. No alcohol encyclopedia. No CD-ROM to consult. No interest in satisfying the customer. Hey, we're just cooking with the stuff. We grabbed the cheap brandy on the bottom shelf.

The artichokes we popped out of a can. Broke in the food processor slicing blade on the potatoes. Food processed the rest normally. Cut down the killer cream. Toasted the hazelnuts. Puréed with the [Euro-hand-blender](#)-what-a-toy way easier than the [Vitamix](#) super blender routine. Dinner is served. Pass the bowls. Finally the moment of truth. The king of fuss and his junior assistant. Just a taste we timidly suggest. Met immediately with blocking hand motions and matching who are you kidding facial expressions from the king. Wrong color soup. Or something.

This soup is super. You don't need fresh artichokes. No Euro hand blender or super blender or food processor required. The French can do it by hand. Maybe we could too.

ingredients

base

1/3 c olive oil
1 white onion
3 celery stalks

stock

1 14 oz can artichoke hearts
1 large potato, peeled
4 c vegetable broth

flavor upgrade

1/3 c hazelnuts
2 t salt (or to taste)
1 t white pepper
3/4 c heavy cream
3/4 c evaporated milk
1/2 c Armagnac, cognac, or dry brandy

instructions

1. Sauté the coarsely chopped onion and celery until golden brown (8-10 min) in olive oil.

2. Add drained artichokes, coarsely chopped potato, vegetable broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium, cover and simmer until thickened slightly (about 45 min).
3. Meanwhile, toast and skin hazelnuts: spread in a single layer on a baking sheet and toast 5 minutes in a preheated 400° F oven, then rub the nuts against each other in a kitchen towel to remove as much of the skins as possible. Cool and chop coarsely.
4. Puree the soup with a hand blender or in batches in a regular blender. Add the remaining ingredients and bring to a simmer over medium heat.
5. Sprinkle some chopped hazelnuts over each serving.

notes

1. The 3/4-3/4 mix of heavy cream and evaporated milk was a compromise with health considerations. 1-0 or 0-1 ratios or any 1 1/2 total cup combination is acceptable depending on your whim. We used nonfat evaporated milk.
2. For the broth we use a vegetable broth paste, about a heaping tablespoon for the 4 cups.
3. White pepper is only so the soup doesn't look dirty. Black pepper is fine if you don't have the white.
4. Shouldn't there be some clever endnote?

postscript

Years later we learned through our only friends in Yerevan that Armenia has a [long tradition](#) of making cognac/brandy (although the French don't seem to like use of the word cognac for foreign production), and one version of Armenian cognac/brandy is called [Ani](#), a few bottles of which have been hand transferred to us in Europe by Vahe, with the original Russian Cyrillic lettering on the label, through which one can still decipher the name Ani. Cognac is a very particular and usually superior form of brandy and judging by the price tag of what we see in our State Stores, Armagnac, a similar style brandy, is even more particular. For the record, Cognac is a town in France, and if your cognac is not produced from nearby grapes, an army of French lawyers will be on your case. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and resulting economic distress mixed with corruption in Armenia, the French simply bought out their Armenian "cognac" competition, according to our Ani supplier, making sure its labels read "brandy" instead. If not entirely true, it still makes a good story.

hot asparagus and red potato salad revisited as a pasta sauce

Yes, we like pasta. But we have to admit that a large factor behind it so often is its flexibility. Fridge/pantry-excavation pasta sauces don't require advance planning. This time the star player was a nice bunch of asparagus. Risotto would have been a good move but we'd done that the night before. Soup would have been another, but under after-work primal-feeding-urge influences, soup seemed like a long term goal.

Happy memories off the hot asparagus and red potato salad suggested a spontaneous conversion. Well, not entirely spontaneous—we did stop along the road home for some red potatoes—but not even a block out of our way. The cannelloni were volunteered as a stand-in for the missing meat/fish item. Another vegetarian by default night.

ingredients

- 1)
 - 5 small red potatoes
 - 1 lb thin asparagus
- 2)
 - 2 T olive oil
 - 1 leek, finely chopped
 - 4 garlic cloves, pressed
- 3)
 - 2 small zucchini, chopped small
 - 2 small yellow squash, chopped small
- 4)
 - 2 t balsamic vinegar
 - 2 t Dijon mustard
 - 1/2 c reserved asparagus water
 - 1 19oz can (540g) cannelloni
- 5)
 - 1/2 c light cream
 - 1 t salt
 - freshly ground black pepper to taste
 - 1/2 c parmigiano
- 6)
 - 1 lb farfalle (butterfly pasta)

instructions

1. So bob took the lead here with the creative development. The potatoes were started boiling after cleaning and chopping to half inch cube equivalent chunks and the asparagus were cleaned and mounted in their vertical pot, both for about a 10 minute boiling run, while the pasta water was started.

2. Pressing the garlic in the olive oil and throwing in the chopped leek started the sauté phase,
3. followed by the kitchen helpers chopped squash add-in, previously prepared. Softening the squash about 5 minutes without burning it,
4. a few shakes of vinegar and the mustard join forces and then some of the asparagus water to loosen things up again.
5. Meanwhile the asparagus is done and requires chopping into 5/8 inch pieces (no rulers needed) reserving the tips for the final assembly.
6. Incorporate the drained potatoes, the asparagus pieces, some more asparagus water, the cannelloni, and continue heating.
7. Near the pasta al dente drain time, add the cream and salt and pepper.
8. Finally add the drained pasta, the reserved asparagus tips, the cheese, and mix it up well.

notes

1. Then the moment of truth. These experiments, although always ingestible, don't always beg to be immortalized in print. And was that a few too many shakes of the balsamic vinegar? Drum role. The first bite goes down. YES! A big success. But those folks who **only** buy the tomato-based ready-to-eat-just-heat sauces in a jar—they'll never understand.
2. We had to add the word "**only**" since we're occasionally guilty of picking up jars too. But to their defense, quality has improved drastically in some of the new offerings inspired by an elevated interest in more authentic Italian food products than the market used to offer.

asprpps.htm: 7-aug-2001 [what, ME cook? © 1984 dr bob enterprises]

cheesecake al limoncello

Italians love cheesecake, like Americans love [tiramisu](#). The difference is that they don't adopt foreign dishes like we do. So whenever the dr bob cooking team is persuaded to do a cheesecake in Italy, it is a big success, but not one which inspires imitation by the locals.

[Limoncello](#) is a lemon ("limone") [liqueur](#) made in the Italian islands of Capri, Ischia, and Ponza scattered from Naples towards Rome and no doubt in many other places there as well, given that Italy is blessed with both an abundance of lemons and a well known priority for alcohol in its liquid consumable traditions. The team acquired a bottle in Capri years ago with baking in mind, but it never found its way out of the refrigerator where it is always ready to be served in its mandatory chilled state, should we ever remember that it can also be imbibed directly without prior insertion into some labor intensive dessert.

A trip to Naples with a follow-up visit to [Ponza](#) reminded us of its potential baking possibilities. Limoncello seemed to be enjoying a wave of popularity in Italy at the time, so when on very short notice a cheesecake was requested, it seemed like a logical choice for a new experiment in the killer dessert department, without having to fuss with actual fresh fruit, obvious choices for which were not readily available. With the amount of cream cheese that materialized in the original Naples improvisation, only a low profile cake was possible. Encouraged by the success of the simple no-frills version, a standard sized normal height three layer version was planned for a big 39-at-one-table-43rd-birthday-party-seafood-based-antipasto-and-pasta- blowout extravaganza on Ponza, with desserts contributed by some of the guests, among which was the dr bob team entry. Finding ourselves somewhat embarrassed by the wave of compliments for our creation, somehow miraculously divided up among most of the guests, we downed a second piece of the mascarpone cream cake (generously cut larger than the first!) to show our enthusiasm for the closest competitor. We survived.

Of course this recipe was inspired by the legendary [Mother Wonderful hazelnut cheesecake](#), but since the local copy of the complete "[What, ME Cook?](#)" book was not kept in a prominent and immediately accessible location ("somewhere in the house, but I don't know where," loosely translated from the Italian), we had to go with an extrapolation from the three singles "[No Excuses Left Cheesecake](#)," "[Simple Soft Touch Cheesecake](#)," and "[bob's Converted Lindy's Strawberry Cheesecake](#)" all stashed together in one of the host's few cookbooks, having been obtained by letter in the early days before aggressive book distribution of the entire edition by dr bob vanity press. Naturally never used.

In the expanded version on Ponza, the vague memory of mixing plain yogurt and [Fiorello](#) (a mascarpone-creme-frais-like Italian product, see "Cheesecake Supplement for English Speaking Italians") to produce a sour cream substitute for the topping was confronted with the hard reality of availability with only fruit flavored yogurt, so mascarpone, the magic ingredient of tiramisu, took its place.

The cake was actually baked in plug-in-the-wall electric oven just big enough to fit the 22.5cm (9.5in) springform pan borrowed from Annamaria and equipped with a temperature setting, unlike most Italian ovens. We started out a bit high to get going and saved the cake just in time from getting too browned by turning it down to 180° C (about 350° F). Thinking that by using the

electric coils both above and below for more uniform heat distribution turned out to be a miscalculation, since the pseudo-sour-cream layer ended up getting broiled, but in spite of its somewhat golden brown highlights, the taste was not affected, as testified to by the army of guests who wiped it out.

ingredients

versione bassa (Napoli)	versione alta (Ponza)		US version
crust			
75g	125g	burro fuso	1/4 c = 2oz = 4 T = 1/2 stick melted butter
100g	150g	Mulino Bianco Grancereale	1 c graham cracker crumbs
50g	50g	Saiwa Lingue di Gatto oppure Parmalat Nussli	1/2 c vanilla wafers or hazelnut cookies
0 Cu	2 Cu	zucchero	2 T sugar
batter			
450g	800g	Philadelphia (formaggio fresco)	4 8oz cream cheese
150g	300g	zucchero (1.5 tazze)	1 1/2 c sugar
2 Cu	4 Cu	farina	4 T flour
1/4 cu	1/4 cu	sale fine	1/4 t salt
1/2 cu	1/2 cu	buccia di limone	1/2 T lemon zest
3	4	uova	4 eggs
1 Cu	8 Cu	limoncello	1/2 c limoncello
topping			
	150g	Fiorello (latticino cremoso)	2 c sour cream
	250g	mascarpone	
	3 Cu	zucchero (normale o a velo)	1/4 c sugar
	1 cu	limoncello	1 t limoncello
a piacere	spolverata di zucchero a velo		

units

Cu = cucchaio = T (tablespoon)

cu= cucchiaino = t (teaspoon)

c = cup (holds 1/4 liter)

instructions (italian)**La Crosta**

Sbriciolare i biscotti, mischiarli col burro, e premerli nel fondo della teglia col lato toglibile (24cm circa), e 2.5 cm lungo il lato nella versione alta. [Si puo' mettere un po di buccia di limone anche nella crosta. Biscotti del tipo "digestivo integrale" vanno bene qui.]

L'Impasto

Sbattere il formaggio e lo zucchero insieme finche' l'impasto diventa soffice. Poi aggiungere le uova, una alla volta senza sbattere troppo, e poi gli altri ingredienti di questo gruppo. Versare l'impasto nella teglia e metterlo nel forno gia' a temperatura media (circa 180° C) per un ora circa finche' il centro della superficie della torta non diventa solida.

Il Topping

Versione bassa: Lasciarlo raggiungere la temperatura ambiente e metterlo nel frigo per almeno 2 ore se non di piu'. Cospargere la superficie con zucchero a velo quando si serve.

Versione alta: Togliere la torta dal forno per riposare 10 minuti. Mischiare bene gli ingredienti dal gruppo 3 e spalmarli sulla superficie della torta e rimetterla nel forno per 10 minuti circa. Lasciarla raggiungere la temperatura ambiente e metterla nel frigo per almeno mezza giornata.

instructions (usa)**crust**

Crumb the cookies, mix with the graham cracker crumbs and melted butter, and press the mixture in the bottom and about an inch up the sides of a 9.5in springform pan.

batter

Beat together the cream cheese and sugar until smooth and fluffy. Add in the eggs one at a time without excessive beating to avoid removing the air, followed by mixing in the remaining group 2 ingredients. Pour into the pan and bake at 350° F for about an hour until the center of the surface is somewhat solid.

topping

Remove from the oven and let rest 10 minutes. Mix together the sour cream, sugar, and limoncello and spread evenly over the top. Bake another 10 minutes, remove and let cool to room temperature. Refrigerate at least half a day before serving.

notes**1. NO FAT CREAM CHEESE**

With the millennium drawing near, America's obsession with fat has finally led market forces to provide us with no fat cream cheese and sour cream to neutralize our nutrition guilt factor when consuming totally unhealthy rich desserts like this. [Note, however, that the nonfat product [PHILADELPHIA Free](#), which is packaged exactly like the killer cream

cheese version, does not have the words "cream cheese" written anywhere on the package.] We decided to go with the fake stuff twice already on this particular cheesecake. Both times the batter looked rather grainy compared to the smooth consistency of the real thing, but after baking it seems to turn out fine, except possibly for the baking time. One hour just doesn't seem to set the center of the cake, making a clean geometrical wedge serving presentation improbable. Maybe increasing baking time by 15 minutes will do the trick. We also chose low fat sour cream. The nonfat version is also acceptable here. Of course full fat products won't kill you if this is an occasional treat. Go for it.

2. **GARNISHING**

When recipes say to reserve a few berries, nuts, whatever, for garnishing (translation: cute food presentation decoration for the eye and not the stomach), we ignore the advice. Perhaps we are partly guilty of a "garnishing is for wimps" mentality, kind of like the anti-nut attitude of our early baking days. [See [apple bavarian torte](#), for example.] This time our sister-in-law foiled our no-frills unveiling of the cheesecake to our guests by commandeering the cake and placing 1 split strawberry with greens unhinged open at the greens in the center and 4 more pairs of separate split halves with greens at 8 equally spaced locations at the perimeter, with 4 blueberries filling each of the 8 gaps in between and 4 more at the tips and sides of the center split strawberry. Even we were impressed enough to take several photos [see the [illustrations](#)] of the spectacular result, perfectly blending the red, white, and blue of the US of A with the bianco, rosso e verde dell'Italia [white, red, and green of Italy]. But not enough to do it ourselves of course.

3. **PS**

This recipe would not have been possible without two wonderful friends, Laura of Napoli and Emanuela of Rome, two women who have touched bob's life in very different ways with lasting impact.

summer pasta

Not cooking the pasta sauce means less heat in the kitchen. If it's summertime, heat in the kitchen is not desirable. Thus was born summer pasta.

Cooking the pasta in advance and serving it cold is another trick for minimizing kitchen heat, but this requires advance planning. This option is usually ruled out for folks like us, and besides, the result is then called pasta salad, not summer pasta. A whole other cooking topic.

By coincidence a supermarket checkout magazine rack snatch the day before this creation (reinforced by the current month of one of our regular cooking mag subs) had a summer pasta recipe that the dr bob cooking team actually contemplated doing. The highlights: skinning the tomato routine x-marking the ends with a knife, dropping into boiling water, then ice water, then peeling, then seeding ...

ms_ani said "What for? The skins are good for you."

Another tedious kitchen technique deep-sixed just in time.

We never noticed the skin or the seeds.

So the scene of the creative process: four for dinner and we were already late returning from work. And it was summertime. This recipe only takes as long as the pasta water takes to boil and al-dentize the pasta.

Our ingredient list is only suggestive, but the tomatoes and basil are mandatory. If no lactose intolerant guests are present, you can complete them to their natural trio with real mozzarella, not some supermarket impersonator, also chopped. The chick peas were a nice addition that just happened to be on hand. Use your imagination.

ingredients

pasta

1 lb farfalle (bowtie pasta)

chunky stuff

6 plum tomatoes, chopped

1 c basil leaves, chopped finely

1 green onion, chopped finely

1/4 red pepper, chopped finely

1 7 3/4 oz can (~1 c) cooked chick peas

1 1.1 oz can (~1/2 c) sliced black olives

1 1/2 T capers

nonchunky stuff

1/2 c? olive oil

salt and pepper to taste

instructions

1. Start the boiling process, then work on the veggie prep. Tomatoes first. We cut them in half just missing the stem scab, then notch out the scab on the one side, slice lengthwise into thin strips (max 3/8 inch), then crosswise to generate the requisite chopped tomatoes.
2. Fresh basil is not difficult to come by in the summer. But how do you measure it? Enough leaves (stems removed) to fill a cup unpresseed, maybe, then chop finely. We use our mezzaluna here. The two-handled half-moon knife that is more like a crescent moon than a half if you ask us (and even if you don't). The green onion and red pepper are quick.
3. Then open the cans. Toss in a few forkfuls of capers. Oil, salt, and pepper. Let it sit till the pasta is ready.
4. Then drain the latter and mix with the former. Not bad for so little effort.

notes

1. One last thing. You are allowed to do this out of season.

sumpasta.htm: 21-mar-1998 [[what, ME cook?](#)] © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

blueberry buckwheat pancakes

Buckwheat.

Alfalfa. Darla. Spanky. Our Gang. [The Little Rascals](#).

Buckwheat is a largely unfamiliar grain that in American culture has wierd word associations with a generation of Hollywood kids who grew up even before we were born, as well as with pancakes. Even with the added boost in name recognition from this historical film connection, it is an underused food item not only in the US and Italy but also in our own kitchen. For years now we've had several boxes of [pizzoccheri](#) (buckwheat pasta noodles from northern Italy) sitting untouched in our supply closet. They are hard to find over there and in specialty stores over here, so we tend to hoard them, waiting for that special occasion to use them with their traditional recipe. A special occasion which just hasn't been materializing like it is supposed to.

On the other hand the dr bob refrigerator supply department always has buckwheat flour on hand ready to add its unique flavor to our whole grain bread machine products. And to this very tasty breakfast treat we occasionally make when blueberries are not more outrageously priced than our subconscious food budget Nazi allows us to fork over for them (usually summer). Buttermilk, another ingredient with a strong pancake word association, is also a staple we always have in stock in powdered form for our bread machine production.

For us "pancakes" means only one thing—buckwheat pancakes, and this recipe from our largely unused food magazine archives is one of the reasons we still continue to subscribe and impulse buy them. For those rare jewels that say to us "Make me, make me" when we actually happen to be listening. And we make them. And make them again. And again.

Contrary to popular belief, one does not need a pancake mix box to make pancakes. They are a snap to make from scratch. Using a nonstick frying pan, or better yet, two in parallel for quicker results, the grilling is easy too. We rub the center of the pan with the end of a stick of butter before each single pancake is plopped down, rolling the pan a bit to help it spread out. One per pan so they don't crowd each other. And then we stack them on a plate on the stove using a deep bowl as a cover to keep them all warm until all the batter is used up. ms_ani likes them with the traditional maple syrup and butter treatment, while dr bob goes with a light powdering of confectioner's sugar and some exotic jam or jelly like guava or mango or papaya, but even strawberry goes well with the blueberries ([dulce de leche](#) too!). Either way, we are satisfied customers.

ingredients

small batch larger batch

dry

3/8 c	3/4 c	unbleached all purpose flour
1/4 c	1/2 c	buckwheat flour
1 T	2 T	sugar

3/4 t	1 1/2 t	baking powder
1/4 t	1/2 t	salt
1/8 1/4 t		baking soda
wet		
1 c	2 c	buttermilk (powder+water)
1 T	2 T	vegetable (or olive) oil
1	2	large eggs, separated (yolks+whites)
pan items		
		melted butter (judgement call)
3/4 c	1 1/2 c	fresh blueberries
9	18	approximate yield

instructions

1. Mix group 1 (dry) ingredients in a large bowl. Stir in group 2 (wet), except for the egg whites which first require electric mixer beating in a medium bowl until medium firm peaks form. Then gently fold the whites into the batter.
2. Heat a large nonstick pan or two over medium-high heat and lightly brush with melted butter or rub with the butter stick. Drop batter in 1/4 c amounts (only suggestive!) into the pan and spread to 4 inch circles. Sprinkle 5 or 6 blueberries over each round (sometimes we just dump them all directly into the batter first) and cook until the upper side is covered with small bubbles and the bottoms are golden (the color helps you regulate the heat), about 1 minute. We flip them over for about 10 seconds to make sure they are really done. Then brush or rub the pan with butter and repeat until the batter is gone.

notes

1. The blueberries can be substituted by chopped strawberries, or other suitable fruit, but then you have to change the name of the recipe. Of course.
2. Sometimes we just skip the fruit and do the pancakes plain. And one time while making the small recipe, the larger recipe white flour amount went in by mistake. Much fluffier pancakes but otherwise no problem.
3. This recipe entered the dr bob cooking school with [photos](#).

as american as apple pie

Tarts (the baked kind) exist everywhere in Italy—they're called crostata's—but pies are apparently against the law (culinary law) since, like cheesecakes, they cannot be found in the country, despite its longstanding love affair with "l'America."

And of all pies, apple pie is the American icon (not the clickable kind) most often listed after "mom" and "the flag" and sometimes still used in the phrase "as American as apple pie." Of course outside the USA it might be a good idea to remember that even North America has a lot of Americans who are quite different from what you find in the 50 states and lesser known US territories. [Canadians, Quebecians (might become necessary), Mexicans, etc.] However, this may be besides the point.

So why look at apple pie here? Well, the dr bob team makes an apple pie every once in a while, so having the recipe ready is not a bad idea. The real reason is that an Italian couple who had spent some time in the USA asked for a recipe for it.

We generally follow the traditional style [recipe](#) from our first cookbook, the American cooking classic [Betty Crocker Cookbook](#), published and regularly updated this century by the baking products company responsible for the nearly daily slices of box cakes in dr bob's childhood [prepared cake mix in a box—just add water and eggs to make the batter, bake in round pans, ice as a layer cake].

However, we use some tricks from other sources.

Making a fruit pie is serious stuff compared to making a cheesecake, for example. The irony is that many people have this totally mistaken impression that cheesecakes are so complicated, yet will turn out fruit pies for every traditional American holiday. The cheesecake crust you just press in the pan, you mix up the batter and dump it in and bake it. Pie crust requires working the fat [FAT!] into the flour, adding the moisture a bit at a time until it achieves some magic consistency, forming a ball of dough, waiting while it matures in the fridge, then working the dough into a flattened circle without breaking it up, then transferring into the plate without destroying it. Then there is the fruit filling prep, which with apples is a bit tedious. The assembly. And finally the baking. But American moms always did this as though it were a genetically encoded skill (though one which seems to be disappearing from the species).

[in progress?]

chick pea greens

After a bad G.I. year, dr bob went to Italy for 2 summer months. Admittedly the lost weight was beginning to find its way home before departure, but a daily double dose of healthy usually vegetarian Italian cuisine coupled with lots of walking put the system back into perfect working order. Lunch and dinner—pasta or risotto with fresh veggies, fresh real mozzarella, cooked veggies on the side. Usually a big hit of sautéed fresh greens. Chicory, escarole, spinach. Available almost universally in Italy's food service industry, from corner lunch bar to full blown restaurant. bob's weight returned to its previous equilibrium value.

Back in the US, this kind of food is just not available. The daily magic greens were history. In theory they could at least be done for dinner at home but the hectic American routine doesn't seem to lend itself to this end very well. Sure, bob tried all of the available greens. No chicory. But escarole, kale, curly endive, collard greens, Swiss chard, and of course the already familiar (fresh) spinach and broccoli rabe.

Yeah, we tried 'em all after re-entry. But nothing seemed to rival the stuff in Italy until this improvisation. The idea came from a supermarket cooking mag impulse buy. The recipe after the eye catching wild mushroom turkey stuffing. Thanksgiving was on the horizon. The recipe suggested mixing numerous greens into a single green thing. We had fresh spinach and kale on hand. About to marry in a quickie ceremony. Joined on the honeymoon by chickpeas to boost bob's protein intake. We tried it. We liked it. We'll do it again soon.

ingredients

- 2 bunches fresh spinach
- 1 large bunch kale
- 2 T olive oil
- 2-3 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1 leek, chopped
- 1 can cooked chick peas
- 1 lemon, juice of
- freshly ground pepper
- salt to taste

instructions

1. Wash and cook the greens in a very big pot with just the water clinging from the rinsing, until they meet the fate of the Wicked Witch of the West in the [Wizard of Oz](#), namely melt down to a limp mess in the bottom.
2. Drain and then sauté with the garlic and leeks in olive oil, starting the latter two first until softened and then mixing in the greens. After a bit of shuffling around, add in the chick peas and let them warm up a bit.
3. Add the lemon juice and salt and pepper at the end and serve.

notes

1. There should be some. Notes.
2. Like G.I. = gastrointestinal, having to do with the digestive system, which when not functioning properly, is a real drag, requiring intervention by the G.I. guy, usually unprofessionally ignorant of nutritional considerations and likely to prescribe long term pharmaceutical solutions.

chkpgrns.htm: 10-aug-2005 [[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

fettuccine zuffredo

Finding ourselves with about a pound of pasta sheets left over from a recent lasagna mission, we ran them through our electric motor driven pasta roller machine to flatten them first to the thinnest (most thin?) setting and then fettuccine-ize 'em. Finally fresh pasta for the mother-in-law who had been after us for some time for this. But how to match these magic carbohydrate ribbons with the creamy sauce they scream for without resorting to the classic but deadly alfredo sauce?

A little consultation with [Marcella](#) sparked memories of a heavenly zucchini carbonara-like spaghetti concoction served out of a rustic cave/bungalow/porchlike trattoria on the beach (Chiaia di Luna) at [Ponza](#), our favorite Mediterranean getaway island near Rome. Unlike the fancy hotels in the port, recipes from this operation have a low probability of showing up in [Gourmet](#) magazine like the [radicchio risotto](#) we have already reported on, so we are their only hope for a promotional plug. [Not worth much.]

One minor problem. No zucchini on hand. A quick call to the brother-on-law before departure saves the day. He'd bring 'em along. We just happened to have a bunch of fresh basil going bad in the fridge, about a half a cup was salvageable. And fresh Italian parsley too. The only detail that remained: the choice of egg yolk salmonella evasion tactics. Cooking the beaten egg yolk in a béchamel (white) sauce would provide the cream sauce component of our dish.

Ready?

ingredients

pasta

1 lb fresh fettuccine

zucchini stuff

2 T olive oil, some white wine

4 medium zucchini, food processed finely

1/2 c fresh basil, chopped

1/2 c fresh parsley, chopped freshly ground pepper

salt to taste

cream sauce

2 T butter, melted

2 T flour

1 c lowfat milk

1 egg yolk

1/3 c freshly grated parmigiano

1/3 c freshly grated romano

instructions

1. First food process the zucchini into mush and cook down for about 10 minutes in a large nonstick pot with the olive oil. They shrink by a factor of two in volume. Turn down the

heat to low and add some white wine if too dry so it won't burn. Mix in the chopped basil and parsley. [We used the mezzaluna on them.]

2. Beat the egg yolk with about 1/4 c milk and separately mix well the rest of the milk with the flour. Wisk the latter into the melted butter and thicken, about 5 minutes. Then wisk in the egg-milk mixture until smooth. Stir until the possible salmonella passengers are history. Reduce the heat.
3. Meanwhile the pasta water is coming up to steam. When it starts rolling, dump in the fettuccine (preceded by the salt, which we never mention). It should only take a few minutes. Check for the al dente state. If you can time this so that the pasta is done roughly just after the sauce, so much the better.
4. Drain the fettuccine but don't shake out the water. Pour immediately into the zucchini pot and mix it up. Then pour in the bechamel sauce and continue mixing. Finally the grated cheese joins the party. Serve immediately since it has a tendency to stiffen quickly if left to sit. Our guests were pleased.

notes

1. One danger of cream sauced pasta dishes, or in fact any sauced pasta dishes in America, is that they can often be described as "sauce with some pasta" instead of "pasta with some sauce." Moderation is not only healthy, it's in good taste. Don't overwhelm your pasta.
2. Another simpler variation of this arose when bob was too lazy to do the bechamel sauce and we still had some panna da cucinare a lunga conservazione left from the summer trip to Rome (cooking cream in small nonrefrigeratable cartons that has a long but not long enough shelf life: it always ends up being expired by the time we use it up). 2 medium zucchini food processed with the grating tool, 1/2 large leek food processed normally and sauteed together in 2 T olive oil for some 10 minutes and then 200 ml of panna mixed in and heated, then the burner turned off awaiting the pasta. Since we used store bought fresh garlic-parsley fettuccine, we did not add garlic to the sauce. We did not drain the pasta too thoroughly so that it would add some liquid to the sauce when mixed together, with 1/2 c parmigiano mixed in as well, and served with freshly ground black pepper. Good. Probably the panna could be substituted by some other quick solution like light cream. Too bad to have to rely on fat.

carrot cake cheesecake

Thanksgiving coming up soon. Pumpkin raisin breads and other holiday season veggie breads tempting us at every turn. Haven't made carrot cake for quite a while. Why not try something new? Instead of just cream cheese icing on top, why not a cheesecake? This kind of unorthodox combo layered creation had never been sighted by the dr bob cooking team anywhere in their recipe browsing activities. Perhaps a bad sign. Maybe it had been tried and failed and thus never made public? Probably many times. There should be a "don't try this because..." section in cookbooks to spare us the trouble of experimenting with a sure disaster. "Seems like a good idea but..." On the other hand, maybe people are just too conservative to boldly go where no one has ever gone before. To bravely explore new culinary worlds. To step beyond the limits of current kitchen culture?

So we do the experiment. Basically a bottom only graham cracker crust with a half small carrot cake recipe topped by a half simple soft touch cheesecake filling both from the dr bob archives, slightly modified by ineffective nutritional second thoughts and current flavoring ideas.

Serving time. It looks pretty good. But a little low. Did the hidden carrot cake layer rise inside? The moment of truth arrives. The first cut. Hmm. It cuts nicely. And the first piece slides right out. Seems like everything baked successfully in combination. Now the taste test. The first forkful moves up ... and in ... and ... YES! SUCCESS!

This was brilliant. Why didn't somebody ever think of this before? Perhaps like Post-Its, somebody had to be first.

ingredients

crust

1/4 c butter, melted
 1 c graham cracker crumbs
 1/4 c brown sugar

carrot cake layer [3/4 size halved and modified]

1/2 c veggie oil [or 3/8 c + 2 juicy prunes]
 3/4 c sugar [or Sucanat unprocessed sugar]
 1 1/2 eggs, beaten
 3/4 c flour
 1/2 t salt
 3/4 t baking soda
 3/4 t baking powder
 1/2 t cinnamon
 1/4 t nutmeg

1 c carrots, peeled and grated

1/3 c	walnuts, crumbed
1/8-1/4 c	raisins soaked in:
1/8 c	Frangelico hazelnut liqueur
cream cheesecake layer [simple soft touch cheesecake , halved]	
2 8oz	packages cream cheese (light)
1 14oz can	sweetened condensed milk
1 1/2	eggs, beaten
1/4 t	salt
1/4 c	lemon juice [2 T limoncello]
the topping	
1 T	toasted hazelnut crumbs

instructions

the crust

1. Start by nuking the half stick of butter in the microwave on high about 50 seconds. Or do it the old fashioned stovetop way.
2. Mix the graham cracker crumbs and brown sugar and then mix in the melted butter. Dump into the bottom of a large springform pan (we used a 10 1/8 = 26cm pan) to get a lower more elegant result.
3. Shake the crumbs around to spread them out and then press them down with a flat object, like a 1 cup measuring cup.

carrot cake layer

1. Begin soaking the 1/8 – 1/4 c raisins in the Frangelico.
2. Peel about 3 medium carrots and food process them into fine bits. Or grate them finely the old fashioned way.
3. Ignoring the tedious instructions of the original recipe, start the batter by pureeing 2 juicy prunes in 1/4 c oil in the handblender attachment cup or elsewhere, in a pathetic attempt to reduce the fat content. Dump in a large bowl.
4. Beat 3 eggs separately. We used the handblender attachment cup, since it was already out.
5. Flour is presifted these days so there is no need to sift the dry ingredients together onto the oil mixture. Besides if you substitute Sucanat for the sugar, it won't sift in since the particulate size is too big. Mix it in. However, a sifter does do a good job of scattering the other dry ingredients. Incorporate them one way or another and beat all this stuff together with an electric beater.
6. At this point if you did not read ahead, it will appear that something has gone wrong. This is not a batter but a dust bowl. We FORGOT THE EGGS. Before realizing this we added in another 1/8 c oil. Next time add half the egg mixture earlier, like in step 5. But either way it doesn't seem to matter to the batter.
7. Now beat in the carrot bits. Chop up the walnuts but not too finely. The handblender attachment cup works well here too. Beat them in. The walnuts.

8. Finally mix in the raisins and Frangelico. Looks like carrot cake batter now.
9. Pour into the springform pan and shake it around. Spread evenly with a spatula. Set aside.

cream cheesecake layer

1. Beat together the cream cheese and sweetened condensed milk. Then add the remaining egg mixture, salt, and limoncello (or lemon juice) and beat until smooth. And everybody says cheesecakes are difficult!
2. Pour slowly over the carrot cake layer.

the topping

1. Sprinkle about 1 T of toasted hazelnut crumbs evenly around the top of the cake using your thumb and two adjacent fingers in a repeated imitation of pinching salt.

the baking and fridging

1. Preheat your oven to 350° F sometime earlier than this. Bake for 50 minutes. Then check to make sure the center of the cheesecake layer is done. If so, turn off the heat and open the oven door at an angle so you can still walk around the stove doing your other kitchen activities. For about 30 minutes. This is probably unnecessary.
2. Then remove and let cool on a rack for an hour or so.
3. Then refrigerate. We did this after lunch and it was done and chilled nicely for the after dinner dessert.

notes

1. Pretend this was your own creation. Your baking reputation will surely improve.
2. [Illustrations](#) available.
3. [The Cheesecake Factory](#) arrives at [King of Prussia Mall](#) summer of 2002, but it takes an accidental weekday evening mall visit the next winter before we finally find no huge line and long wait to get into the place, in fact no line at all and we are finally ready to see what all the fuss was about painlessly. Big serving meals arrive, leaving little room for comfortable cheesecake tasting afterwards, but bob scrutinizes the showcase and decides to go for Craig's Crazy Carrot Cake Cheesecake to compare with his own experience. [Too many C's, there can't really be a Craig behind this...] It too is big, but delicious, and miraculously easy to finish. It's a more blenderized version than ours, with bits and pieces of carrot cake uniformly distributed in the cheesecake instead of layered. Next time we'll share one entree. As we leave, about 30 people are lined up, making us feel like we'd really been lucky with our timing. How long will it take to make it in again? ... stay tuned.