

1997

97-00.htm: [[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

mocha/cappuccino/whatever pudding cake

Sometimes unpleasant little episodes in life can have long lasting pleasant consequences. Waiting time in a urologist's office, for example. Magazines to browse, what's this "[Cooking Light](#)" magazine? Browse, browse, browse, whoa ..., jackpot! Look at this mocha pudding cake. [Imagine terrific killer chocolate dessert photo.] Creamy pudding on the bottom, a tender brownie-like cake on top. Served warm with vanilla ice milk. Food orgasm.

"*Mr Jantzen, ...*" Back to business.

But this was too good to leave in a doctor's office waiting room and never see again. bob asks for a photocopy. And sends away for a subscription, starting after the eye-opening Jan/Feb 93 issue. Opening up a world of healthier food ideas that has proved far more utilizable in our kitchen than our other food mag sub, with our increasing awareness of the importance of nutrition in our lives.

Four years pass. Need a dessert for a lactose intolerant guest. Cheesecakes ruled out. A chocolate dessert might be the thing. A perfect opportunity to try that amazing chocolate pudding recipe. Hmmm. Where is that photocopy?

No time to excavate the entire dr bob cooking team food archives. Fortunately a few issues back, [Cooking Light](#) has a new pudding cake recipe, easily located. What? Cappuccino pudding cake? Close enough. Fortunately in the intervening four years, bob had bitten the bullet and opened up his life to coffee products. In the old days he would not touch coffee, coffee ice cream, or coffee anything. [Well, Kahlua was an exception proving that there was hope in modifying this behavioral aberration. And mocha was a backdoor entrance for coffee in some dishes that avoided direct coffee confrontation. And of course bob was an old [tiramisu](#) hand in spite of the coffee ban.] Doing the coffee initiation in Rome made it easier, since street cappuccino's are universally great there. Then Armenian coffee. Then gourmet coffee took hold in America and bob was ready. [Frappucinos](#), mocha blasts, lots of goodies.

Bob Dole had also made talking about himself in the third person socially acceptable for other bobs. [Ran against incumbent US President Bill Clinton in 1996. Time is not kind to the losers.]

So we made a few minor changes to accomodate our guest and available resources. Stiff layer on the bottom. Coffee sloshing around on top, it was certainly the strangest cake we've ever put into the oven, but it performed its inversion trick as advertized. And the result lived up to the expectation. Appropriately described by that special superlative dessert word: decadent.

Here are both recipes and our forced modifications of the second one required by the circumstances. The nutritional serving data are for 9 servings.

ingredients

Mocha Pudding Cake
Cooking Light
Jan/Feb 93, p.60
[Jun 98, p.106]

Cappuccino Pudding Cake
Cooking Light
Oct 96, p.74

CPC modifications
Winter 96-97

1)

1 c all purpose flour
2/3 c sugar
1/4 c unsweetened
cocoa
1 1/2 T instant coffee
granules
2 t baking powder
1/4 t salt

1 c all purpose flour
2/3 c sugar
2 T unsweetened cocoa
2 t baking powder
1/4 t salt

2)

1/2 c 1 percent lowfat
milk
3 T vegetable oil
1 t vanilla extract

1/2 c evaporated skim milk
1 t vegetable oil
1 t vanilla extract

1 percent lactaid milk

3)

veggie cooking spray

1/4 c semisweet chocolate bits

1/4 c grated bittersweet
chocolate

4)

1/3 c sugar
2 T cocoa

1 c firmly packed dark brown
sugar
1/4 c unsweetened cocoa

5)

1 c boiling water

1 3/4 c hot water
2 (.77oz) envelopes instant
cappuccino mix or 1/4 c other
flavor

2 pumps of 1 espresso serving,
plus hot water totalling 1 3/4 c

6)

1 c plus 2 T vanilla ice
milk [=16+2 T]

9 T frozen vanilla yogurt

Nutrition Info

calories 221
[25% from fat]
protein 3.5g
fat 6.1g
[sat 1.7g, mono 6g,
poly 2.3g]
carb 38.2g

calories 247
[11% from fat]
protein 4.2g
fat 4.2g
[sat 1.5g, mono 0.5g, poly 0.4g]
carb 52.4g
fiber 0.3g

fiber 0.4g	chol 1mg
chol 3mg	iron 2mg
iron 1.3mg	sodium 123mg
sodium 154mg	calcium 175mg
calcium 90mg	

Interesting how the numbers changed with a few more years of increasing interest in healthy eating.

instructions: [mocha/cappuccino]

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Combine group 1 ingredients in a bowl and stir well.
3. Add group 2 ingredients, stirring until smooth. [CAPPUCCINO: stir in chocolate bits or grated bittersweet chocolate.]
4. Spoon batter into [MOCHA: 8 in square baking pan coated with veggie spray / CAPPUCCINO: 9 in square baking pan].
5. Combine group 4 ingredients and sprinkle over batter.
6. MOCHA: Pour boiling water over batter.
CAPPUCCINO: Combine water and coffee mix, stirring to dissolve, and pour over batter. DO NOT STIR.
[BOB MODIFICATION: or add elongated espresso here.]
7. Bake [MOCHA: 30 min / CAPPUCCINO: 40 min] or until the cake springs back when lightly touched in center.
8. Serve warm, topped with [MOCHA: 2 T ice milk / CAPPUCCINO: 1 T frozen yogurt / BOB: generous scoop of vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt or Kalua/Frangelico/Tiramisu liqueur flavored whipped cream]
[Try serving your piece with only one or two level tablespoons of an ice cream product!]

notes

1. It's been a long time since the days we used to occasionally make chocolate chip cookies, so there were no chips on hand for this adventure. However, since our tiramisu topping choice had just been upgraded from cocoa to grated bittersweet chocolate, some of the latter was ready to go instead. We grated what seemed like a quarter cup onto a plate, and then picked it up to dump into the batter. POOF! It exploded into the air over several feet of kitchen counter and floor. [Static electricity.] Enough fell back onto the plate and counter to carry on.
2. For some reason, our overstuffed kitchen has no square baking pan, which if 9 inch on a side divides nicely into 9 squares each 3 inches on a side. We used a round glass dish and scooped the cake glop out with a flat ice cream scoop. Hard to describe the serving size. And we naturally exceeded the recommended frozen yogurt portion. Screw the numbers! [Easy to say with a Cooking Light recipe, eh?]
3. This recipe turned up in Cooking Light for the third time in the nineties (the fourth time if you count one of its repetitions in the best recipes of the last decade collection) with slight variations as Mocha Fudge Pudding Cake, October 1999, p.151, but shuffled the grouping

of the ingredients in such a way that makes it difficult to add another column to our table. Still holding the line at nearly only 11 percent calories from fat though. Based on these publication statistics, it must be pretty good, eh?

mcwpudck.htm: 8-dec-1999 [[what, ME cook?](#)] © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

fresh penne with zucchini, leek, arugula, etc

Through no fault of our own we have two electric extruder pasta machines (in addition to our motor driven flat pasta roller machine). One bought in dr bob's youth at the foothills of Mount Vesuvius with the help of an Italian mom's [daughter](#) and lugged back to the US with a heavy and annoying to use voltage transformer, the original Pastamatic. And more recently a Christmas gift Cuisinart. The latter having the distinct advantage of direct wall outlet plug-in. If we ever get our closet reorganized, both will be easily accessible, but for now only the newcomer can be extracted without extra effort.

Still under the influence of the preceding rughetta roman summer (rughetta = arugula), memories of a zucchini-rughetta lunch bar pasta inspired us to try this combination, crossed with nostalgia for [Ponza](#) penne on the beach ([zucchini "carbonara"](#)). Although fresh fettuccini are terrific, the pasta shape didn't seem appropriate for the sauce, so we hooked up the penne disk instead. Wacking off the penne cleanly was a bit of a trick. A few got mangled, but it didn't seem to matter. By coincidence we had just picked up a 2/3 lb container of hand dipped ricotta at [Fresh Fields](#). While hand dipping candles, or strawberries in chocolate, we can easily imagine, our cheesemaking ignorance limits us to guess that this means that its probably not the plastic stuff you usually find in the supermarket. It would have made a perfect addition to this pasta sauce had we thought of it. We didn't. Next time though, definitely.

ingredients

pasta

- 2 c white flour
- 1 c semolina
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1 t salt
- 170 ml egg water mixture
- 1 electric pasta machine
- or 1 lb dry penne

sauce

- 4 small zucchini
- 1/2 leek
- 1 clove garlic, pressed
- 2 T olive oil
- 1 egg
- 1/4 c half and half
- 1/3 c parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- freshly ground pepper
- 1 c loosely packed arugula, chopped finely
- [2/3 lb ricotta, superior quality]
- salt, to taste?

instructions

1. Make the fresh pasta according to your machine's instruction manual. This is supposed to make 3/4 of 3/2 lb pasta. [Can we still multiply fractions? That makes a bit over 1 lb, for those of you who need a hint.] If you are not in the home pasta maker business, buy a lb of fresh penne rigate (ridged) or break out a box of the dry stuff. Start the water boiling.
2. Food process the zucchini and leek (we used the greener half), then saute in olive oil with a pressed garlic clove.
3. Beat an egg and mix in the half and half. (Or any cream-like product, including evaporated milk?, would do here. We just had this on hand, and it could be replaced by some pasta water if the ricotta is used). Set aside. Grate the cheese. Chop up the arugula. We used our mezzaluna here.
4. "Butta la pasta." Toss the fresh pasta into the boiling water and watch it carefully. Once it boils again, it will only take a few minutes to cook. Check with al dente tests.
5. When ready, drain the pasta minimally and dump into the greens mixture over low heat. Pour in the egg mixture and stir around, hoping the raw egg will cook enough in contact with the hot pasta like in a carbonara sauce, enough to reduce the chances of food poisoning of course. We are not clear on this point and accept no responsibility for your experience with this problem. So far we have been lucky.
6. Mix in the freshly grated parmesan and then the arugula and freshly ground pepper, and if you remember, the ricotta. Serve immediately (it ages in minutes!), topping each serving with some more freshly ground pepper.

notes

1. What, no notes again?

fpwzlae.htm: 11-oct-1998 [[what, ME cook?](#)] © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

wild mushroom stuffing/dressing

Food & Wine Magazine, November 1996, p.126 [Stuffing if it goes in the bird, dressing if it stays out]

With the increasing trendiness and subsequent availability of unusual mushrooms in the nineties [in the USA, land of choice (consumer and otherwise)], it was only a matter of time before some food magazine hit us with a stuffing recipe like this one. Always on the lookout for new ideas in this department, our food radar is on full alert status when November issues hit the stores. Big roasted turkeys on the cover are a good tip-off, but more subtle seasonal icons are also effective in grabbing the consumer's attention. At least this consumer.

Only a few modifications here. Our romance of the decade with leeks forced its unrequested appearance here and although it doesn't make sense to have qualms about chicken broth while ingesting lethal amounts of poultry and fat laden gravy and accessories, always replacing chicken/beef broth by veggie broth is a veggie commitment we stick to. And heavy cream always trips our fat conscience so in an attempt to compromise we replaced some of it with milk the first year, but said what the heck the second year and went full fat. [We didn't actually say that—it's just an expression that seemed to fit the literary moment.] In fact the cream can be left out altogether to make this kosher or whatever, as done by one of our friends whose hot shot budding teenage computer head son failed to download our recipe, so she winged it on our voice communication summary. We actually used one less cup of broth than recommended the second time through, when ms_ani relented on her thyme veto and we used fresh stuff we found just in time, together with the missing criminis [we used fewer shitakes]. And eggs had been doing better in the intervening year in the court of public opinion so we relapsed to the original recipe there. Of course these are dairy so if the cream goes, so do they.

We are stuffing whimps. Too much bad press. So we should technically call what we do dressing. But we don't. After all, how many hungry guests care about the distinction? [Rhetorical question.]

ingredients

what they said

1:

6 T unsalted butter
1.5 lb mixed fresh mushrooms,
 tough stems removed, mushrooms

cut into 1 inch pieces

2:

what we did

6 T unsalted butter
1/2 lb white mushrooms

1/2 lb portabello mushrooms
2/3 lb shiitake mushrooms
 (no crimini at store)

4	medium shallots, finely chopped	4	medium shallots, finely chopped
4	large garlic cloves, minced	4	large garlic cloves, minced
4	large celery ribs, finely chopped	4	large celery ribs, finely chopped
1	medium onion, chopped	1	large onion, chopped
1 T	minced fresh thyme	0	thyme (none fresh, ani veto)
		1	large leek, halved lengthwise, sliced finely crosswise
3:			
1 c	cup dry white wine	1 c	dry white wine
5 c	cups chicken stock	5 c	veggie broth (2 T Plantaforce concentrated low sodium bouillon + 5 cups water)
	salt and freshly ground black pepper		salt and freshly ground black pepper
4:			
1 lb	loaf peasant bread, cut into 1/2" cubes toasted until dry	1 lb	herbed stuffing bread (16oz)
		1/2 c	brown rice, cooked
2 c	heavy cream	1 1/2 c	heavy cream
		1/2 c	milk
1/4 c	cup finely chopped fresh flat leaf parsley	1/2 c	finely chopped fresh flat leaf parsley
3	large eggs, beaten	4	eggwhites + 1 egg, beaten together

instructions (no frill)

1. Precook brown rice according to package/cookbook.
2. Saute cleaned chopped mushrooms in 3T butter in large nonstick pot.
3. Food process group 2 ingredients all together and saute separately in 3T butter in large nonstick pot.
4. Add group 2 ingredients to group 1 pot with 1 cup wine and simmer until almost evaporated. Season with salt and pepper. Add 2 cups veggie broth (already boiled) and simmer until liquid reduces and thickens, about 13 minutes.
5. Mix bread cubes with parsley and then with remaining 3 cups of veggie broth. Add in mushroom veggie saut mix. Stir in cream and milk, then the egg mixture. Stir in rice.
6. Bake covered 1 hour at 325° F, in two oblong aluminum baking dishes or one bigger [11 in x 14 in] such dish. If desired, uncover after 45 minutes and bake 30 minutes or so till crust forms on top.

notes

1. This recipe was so well received at Thanksgiving that an emergency request for it went out by e-mail for a big dinner party in Baltimore just before Christmas. It was again a hit, if we

are to believe the reports.

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

fridge eviction butterflies

We always keep a lot of dry pasta on hand. It keeps. The fridge on the other hand, doesn't. Or rather its tenants don't. Every once in a while eviction is required. If early enough, the rousted occupants can be put to some good use other than adding to the rising landfill problems of our nation.

ingredients

- 1 lb butterfly pasta
- 1 shallot, chopped
- 1 leek, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1 small zucchini, food processed together with
- 1 carrot
- 1/4 red pepper, chopped
- 4 plum tomatoes, food processed to mush
- 3 green onions, food processed
- 2 t capers
- 2 T parsley, chopped
- salt, freshly ground pepper to taste
- touch of cayenne red pepper

instructions

1. Start the pasta water boiling and cook the butterflies al dente (don't forget the salt).
2. Meanwhile, prep and chop the veggies, food process the rest.
3. Cook it all up in a big nonstick pot until it looks right.
4. Combine with the pasta and eat.

notes

1. Good enough to record the ingredient list, but the details are a bit vague.

febtrfly.htm: 31-oct-2000 [what, ME cook? © 1984 dr bob enterprises]

adzuki beans etc risotto

Just a few days before this food event, dr bob heard this [public radio](#) discussion about how the reality of the meatpacking industry is that there is no humane way of converting animals to food and people who think otherwise are just fooling themselves. We were planning a fish kebob family dinner but there was this rib-eye steak sample and promotion thing at [Fresh Fields](#) that converted us to rib-eye steaks. Small ones. They were well received. One was left over. We slipped it into this risotto. Probably didn't contribute that much to the overall taste. Probably wouldn't be missed. Then this would be an acceptable vegetarian recipe. And we'd be guilt free for a meal. The [adzuki beans](#) were supposed to be the meat substitute, anyway.

ingredients

sauté-ables

- 3 T olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/4 red pepper (sweet)
- 3 c portabello mushrooms, cleaned and chopped
- 2 scallions, chopped
- 2/3 leek, chopped

toss-ins

- 1 1/2 c arborio rice
- 1/2 c white wine
- 1 can adzuki beans (15oz = 425g)
- 2 t veggie broth paste
- salt to taste
- black pepper to taste

finishers

- 1/4 c chopped fresh parsley
- 1/3 c parmesan cheese

instructions

1. The usual risotto treatment. Sauté up the sauté-ables, toss in the rice and mix it up for a minute, then add the wine and evaporate it, then toss in the remaining toss-ins and cook with the boiling water addition at regular intervals for about 20 minutes until rice is done, then stir in the finishers.

notes

1. A bit terse, but how many times can you say the same thing?

fusilli pasta medley

We'd been out to dinner the night before at an American seafood restaurant in Philly. They had an interesting sounding seafood penne pasta special so we tried it. It was okay, but just not quite right. A major problem was that the penne were not coated by the sauce, which was just abundantly dropped on top. In authentic pasta, a minimal amount of sauce is usually used to coat the surface of every piece of pasta—pasta shape and texture are in fact linked to the type of sauces which best accommodate each other in this sense. And the combination of ingredients in the sauce didn't seem to blend together into a flavor enhanced mixture.

So ms_ani rummaged through the fridge for something to throw together for a fresh pasta sauce, fusilli was the shape choice, and came up with this. It was far superior to the restaurant and the light bulb went on signaling part of the reason why—the sauce coatability, in contrast with the previous night's experience.

ingredients

pasta

1 lb fusilli

sauce

2 T olive oil

1 leek, chopped

2 cloves garlic, pressed

1/4 sweet red pepper, chopped

2 zucchini, chopped

2 mushrooms, chopped

5 fresh plum tomatoes, pureed in food processor

1/8 t cayenne red pepper

salt to taste

finishers

1/4 c fresh basil, chopped

black pepper to taste

freshly grated parmigiano to taste (1/4 to 1/2 c?)

instructions

1. Start the pasta water boiling and cook the fusilli al dente with the usual amount of salt.
2. Meanwhile, do the veggie prep.
3. Then saute the leeks in olive oil till softened
4. Add the garlic, and stir around a bit, then the red pepper, zucchini, mushrooms and tomato puree. Cook for about 10 minutes and stir in the chopped basil.
5. Combine the pasta and sauce and mix in the black pepper and parmigiano.

notes

1. After all this coating chatter, make sure the sauce gets well acquainted with the fusilli before serving.

fslimdly.htm: 2-nov-2000 [[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

yoga truant mushroom soup

We had a summer break from yoga. September arrived. Hari called. Yoga class tonite at Betty's place. Okay. But it was not okay. ms_ani finally had the guts to back out and leave bob to do solo yoga. So while he was out going through the motions, unable as usual to even come close to most of the positions, ms_ani tried to compensate for his all too obvious disappointment by experimenting with one of his favorite foods: cream soup. Ready when he returned. Really hit the spot. bob didn't last long as a solo team. The truant count soon increased to two.

ingredients

base

- 3 T butter
- 3 leeks, chopped
- 1 big potato, diced

mushrooms

- 4 portobello mushroom caps

liquids

- 2 1/2 c veggie stock (water + 2 t veggie paste)
- 1 1/4 c milk
- 1/3 c [Parmalat](#) cooking cream (evaporated milk or real cream?)

spices

- freshly ground pepper
- salt to taste

instructions

1. Melt butter in saucepan, add leeks and potatoes and mushrooms. Stir to coat with butter. Cover and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes or so until beginning to soften.
2. Add stock and bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 to 20 minutes or until veggies are tender.
3. Stir in milk and puree with hand blender.
4. Reheat and add cream, salt and pepper.
5. Serve.

notes

1. In Italy every supermarket sells this thick cooking cream in a little carton, just enough for a single recipe. Panna da cucinare. Our heavy cream is like water in comparison. No waiting time to thicken up the panna, since it comes just right. But we can only bring over so many little cartons per year in our baggage, so we ration this closely. Parmalat has begun importing its cartoned milk, but not the cream so far. Maybe one day...
2. Oops. We forgot to read the expiration date. This stuff doesn't last very long.

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

apple cinnamon rice pudding

This recipe is the culmination of a collage of memories. Years ago when dr bob was a relatively young thirty-something wide-eyed American visiting Milan one oppressively hot August in the company of another eclectic food fan and friend, they stumbled onto this cute little bookstore restaurant "La Libreria non Liberia" (loosely translated: "The Bookshop, Not!"). There was a vegetarian mini-menu, but the only thing that stuck in long term memory was a wonderful apple rice pudding of some sort. Bob later wrote for the recipe but never got a response. The shop disappeared by the time of the next return visit.

Then there was dr bob's addiction to Whitney's apple raisin yogurt that spoke to a similar culinary desire, minus the rice. The free market cured him of that by eliminating first the flavor choice and then the product and finally the company itself, which did not survive the merger mania of the late 20th century. Curiously a flavor combination that bob would not have ever tried by choice because of the raisin combination but when offered it by his childhood next door neighbor turned flavor chemist friend dennis (no [menace](#)), he was pleasantly surprised. Just goes to show you how important outside influences can be.

Later in life, bob was comparing all the plain rice pudding recipes he could find in the cooking team library. The cookbooks were stacked together, one inside the other, opened at the rice pudding page waiting for the right moment to act. Which never came. The books were reshelved. A contributing factor may have been indecision on the basic rice pudding question: to bake or just stovetop it all the way? The baking part often required putting the pudding bowl into a pan of boiling water, which sounds like unnecessary effort. Yet was this the secret behind really creamy rice pudding? Or a false hope? Meanwhile a local entrepreneur began marketing this really yummy creamy rice pudding in all the area supermarkets. Just pay the money and enjoy. Of course that seems like cheating in a way. And how do we share our love of rice pudding with distant friends in distant lands?

A credit card free offer of a 6 month sub to another cooking mag we had been occasionally grabbing, *Eating Well*, was hard to refuse. And difficult to terminate. Clever marketing. So three cooking mag subs contributed to the information overload of the end of the millennium at dr bob central. Until the newcomer crashed and burned in 1999. Substituted by *Food and Wine* for a while until we worked up the courage to cancel. Anyway, the apple cinnamon rice pudding recipe arrived just in time for a cookout dessert contribution. And forced the issue of bake or no bake. Bake. Not as much of a hassle as anticipated. But not as creamy either. Maybe we over baked it?

ingredients

rice base

- 1 1/2 c water
- 3/4 c short grain rice, like arborio
- 1/2 t salt
- 2 c 1% milk

egg mixture

1 c 1% milk
2 large egg yolks
1/4 c pure maple syrup
2 T packed light brown sugar
1 t pure vanilla extract

fruit components

2 tart apples, like Granny Smith
1 t fresh lemon juice
1/2 c raisins

garnish

ground cinnamon

instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 375°. Coat an 8 in square baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a 2 qt saucepan, bring the water to a boil and then add the rice and salt. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the water is absorbed, about 10 to 12 minutes.
3. Add 2 c milk to the rice and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 8 minutes. (Discard any skin that forms on the surface.)
4. In a medium bowl, whisk the egg mixture components until smooth.
5. Peel and coarsely grate the apples. Place them in a small bowl and toss with the lemon juice.
6. Remove the rice mixture from the heat and stirring constantly add about 1 c to the egg mixture. Then scrape this back into the rest of the rice mixture, stirring constantly. Add the raisins and grated apples.
7. Scrape the mixture into the prepared baking dish and place it in a shallow roasting pan and pour enough simmering water into the roasting pan to come halfway up the sides of the baking dish.
8. Bake the pudding for 35 to 40 minutes, or until barely set.
9. Serve warm or chilled, dusted with cinnamon.

notes

1. [Eating Well](#), October 1997, p.26. I wonder where (if?) extinct magazines are archived in the world?
[It was resurrected a few years later with 4 seasonal issues per year.]
2. This was a recipe doctored (Rx) item, lightened from a yummy high fat favorite recipe of a reader. For six servings, the original had per serving 9 g fat, 325 cal, the lightened version 3 g fat, 270 cal: *7 g protein, 3 g fat (1.4 sat), 55 g carbo, 280 mg sodium, 76 mg chol, 1 g fiber.*

creamy potato mushroom soup

The brother-in-law didn't show up for dinner Tuesday night like he said he would. We called at work to remind him but he was in a different store location. We had done the meatloaf prep the night before and the mashed potatoes too. Everything was ready, including enough leftover eggplant-zucchini parmesan to pass for a veggie dish. Fortunately bob's mom dropped by unexpectedly, so by chance all was ready for her. However, there were plenty of leftovers for the next night. To be sure, bob thought a cream soup appetizer would stretch the menu enough for the brother-in-law's second chance dinner. Or is that brother's-in-law? We never remember.

Five cooking magazines were lying around the living room, with a number of cream soup possibilities. The big question to be decided was: heavy or healthy? (Heavy cream and lots of butter or no cream and little butter.) The light recipes called for cremini mushrooms so the mushroom selection was set. Off to the store, where organic milk was discovered, and some heavy cream was grabbed to keep our options open. It was fall break (mid-semester week vacation) so dr bob was off duty and a mid afternoon supermarket stop was no problem.

Bob peeled four mushrooms before mom suggested maybe washing was sufficient. The cooking library corroborated this point of view: "the flavor is all in the skin." Now they tell us. So the rest got cleaned only and the potato brush and mushroom brush got added to the "to get" list. Years of mushroom skins remained a tedious memory.

ingredients

what they said (Cooking Light , Sep 97)		what we did	
solids			
2	bacon slices	-> 2 T	butter
4 c	cremini mushrooms, chopped	1/2 lb	[= 3 1/2 - 4 c]
1/2 c	shallots, chopped	1/2 c	
3 1/2 c	Yukon Gold potatoes, cubed	5	medium generic potatoes [4 c]
liquids			
1	14.5oz can fat-free chicken broth, divided	3 c	boiling water plus 3 t veggie broth paste
	[16oz = 2 c]		
2 c	1% lowfat milk	2 c	[1% is our default]
2 T	sherry	2 T	cooking sherry
		1 T	dry Marsala wine
spices			
1/2 t	salt	1/2 t	
1/4 t	pepper	1/4 t	

instructions

1. We eliminated the "crisp then crumble the bacon" start to this recipe. bacon is not something we keep around the house after the bad rap it's consistently gotten over the years. And just 2 slices? It doesn't come in 2 slice packages very often. Pancetta on the other hand, is cut to order, so we occasionally have some of that on hand for Italian cooking. We suspect that it may be less damaging than the usual bacon product but are not sure. However, none was on hand this time.
2. Since there were no bacon drippings in the pan where the bacon had not been, we used butter to saute the mushrooms and shallots until soft, adding a small hit of Marsala towards the end of the suggested 5 minute saute period. We were unable to decide between using cooking sherry or the Marsala wine which another (Italian) recipe called for, having consulted our cooking library. Real sherry we dislike, as we do most sweet liqueur/wines (as in port wine, not cream liqueurs), so that was out of the question. Alternately tasting the cooking sherry and Marsala, neither one recommended for sipping, we decided in favor of Marsala but not on the first trial of the recipe, so we went with the cooking sherry. As a minor compromise, some marsala crept into the mushroom saute though.
3. So the softened mushrooms and shallots are set aside now. Add the potatoes and broth to the nonstick 6 qt pot and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce the heat, and boil 12 minutes or so until the potatoes are tender.
4. Transfer the potato mixture to a food processor and process until smooth.
5. Return to the pot and add the milk, mushroom mixture, sherry, salt and pepper. Cook over medium heat about 10 minutes until thoroughly heated. [The crumbled bacon was used as a garnish on the soup bowl portion at serving time in the original recipe.]

notes

1. Actually we boiled the potatoes first, then drained them and then combined them with the boiling water plus broth paste and half the mushroom shallot mixture and dumped it in the food processor with the milk. This turned out to be a mistake, since although it successfully pureed the stuff, fluid dynamics began to work when bob loosened the blade and it began overflowing internally though the blade cylinder opening (since the fluid level was higher than the top). We only lost about 1/2 cup on the counter (leaving us with a 1/2 cup to spare because of the added broth). A valuable lesson for future food processor practice. We put everything back in the nonstick pot where we sauteed the mushrooms. Meanwhile ms_ani, the hand blender specialist, entered the scene complaining about the cook not waiting for her to hand blend it instead, and took over damage control. Maybe next time we will follow the instructions, except for continuing to add half the mushroom saute to be pureed with the remaining stuff for more flavor.
2. Yukon Gold potatoes? We've seen them in a few cooking mag recipes lately and on one trendy restaurant menu so far, but not yet in the potato isle at the supermarkets we frequent. Maybe at some future date.
3. Some future date. They finally showed up.
4. And we later bought the mushroom brush, but ms_ani still usually insists on peeling.
5. A few years later dr bob did a web search on his legal name (vanity or justified curiosity?) and among the hits was surprised by seeing this recipe title show up, which for sure should not have contained the search string. Checking it out, it turned out that the original recipe web page had somehow gotten overwritten by the table of contents file in a web site update snafoo [mistake] a year earlier. Restoring the web page from the original text file while consulting the paper edition showed that the potatoes had been left out in

transferring the recipe to the original web page! So dumb luck and the incredible magic of web search engines led to this rather crucial correction in the revised version.

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

brownie cheesecake torte

The moment the dr bob cooking team spotted this cover recipe* in a stack of mail waiting after another summer trip to Italy, we knew we had to make it. Claes the pasta hating swede gave us the excuse we needed a few days later on a rare trip from where else, Sweden. We made it in the morning so it was waiting for us after then mandatory [Jim's](#) cheesesteak (4th and South, Philly) straight from the airport followed by the first of many (mostly action) movies. Of course the real thing is not as overwhelming a sight as the incredible cover photo, but the noncooking team members seemed suitably impressed, independent of the amazing low fat composition. The dr bob cooking team's judgment was more reserved, perhaps jaded by too many now distant memories of a variety of full fat killer chocolate cheesecake combinations. Nonetheless, with its high flavor low fat ratio, this cheesecake is not one to let slip away in the information glut we're all swimming in these days.

Unfortunately the \$20,000 prize winning check the creator walked off with must have tilted the side of the brain responsible for the serving and maintenance instructions, since there were none. Nothing about refrigeration before or after serving. Perhaps they assumed it would be eaten in one sitting by the anxiously awaiting intended recipients as soon as it hit room temperature. We refrigerated it and served it cold. Numerous times. In small slices. Fat or no fat, no need to overdo it.

We e-mailed the cooking mag about the unresolved heat transfer aspects of the cheesecake problem. No surprise—they didn't respond. ms_ani did the second run through soon after, giving us the opportunity for fate to intervene with experimental evidence on the question. The remainder of the cake softened up pretty well after 4 hours in the car trunk on a late august afternoon when we extracted it for dessert at home after eating chinese. (Out.) Tastes much richer when soft. The crust was especially soft and pliable, nearly still in its dough state—perhaps because bob had forgotten the carrot baby food and had improvised with some previously opened fermenting pitted prunes from the closet (about 7 or 8?) that we pureed in our hand blender attachment with some hazelnut oil we'd picked up but never used, until they were sufficiently liquefied to replace the baby food? Or so we thought. But the same was true in successive renditions with the baby food. Must contribute to the rich chocolate sauce impression that it gives when served at room temperature?

On our third attempt we forgot to spray the pan first with cooking oil spray and even though it was a nonstick pan, it stuck. Since it was nonstick, we could only use a sharp plastic utensil to hack off the crust. We didn't lose much. But the bottom brownie crust looked more like chocolate glue than brownies, evidence that the prune puree substitute was not at fault in the second attempt.

We have made this cheesecake many more times, more than any other single recipe. Must be the low guilt factor.

* [Cooking Light](#), August 1997, p.71. Contest winner: Pricilla Yee. [Also online](#), but no mention of Pricilla.

ingredients

crust

1 15.1 oz package low fat fudge brownie mix
[read "Nestle's Snackwell's"]
2 t instant coffee granules
1/2 t ground cinnamon 1 4oz
jar carrot baby food
cooking spray

batter

1/2 c sugar
4 t all purpose flour
1 t vanilla extract
1 8oz block Neufchatel cheese, softened
1 8oz block fat free cream cheese, softened
2 large egg whites
2 T skim milk
1 T skim milk
2 T sugar
2 T unsweetened cocoa

serving extras

chocolate syrup (optional)
fresh raspberries (optional)

instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 425° F.
2. Combine the first 4 ingredients in a bowl. Firmly press the mixture into the bottom and about an inch up the sides of a 9 in springform pan coated with cooking spray. Set aside.
3. Combine next 5 ingredients and beat at medium speed with a mixer until well blended. Add the egg whites and 2 T milk and beat well. Combine 1/2 c batter, 1 T milk, 2 T sugar, and cocoa in a small bowl, stirring well. Then spoon the remaining original batter alternately with the cocoa batter into the prepared crust. Swirl together using the tip of a knife to achieve a pleasing marbled pattern.
4. Bake at 425° for 10 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 250°. Bake 45 minutes more or until almost set. Cool completely on a wire rack. Garnish with chocolate syrup and fresh raspberries, if desired.

notes

Makes 12 servings, in usual wedge slices. Per slice:
calories 277 (24% from fat), fat 7.5g (sat 3.8g, mono 2.3g, poly 0.9g), protein 7.9g, carb 44.1g, fiber 1.3g, chol 18mg, iron 1.6mg, sodium 338 mg, calc 76mg

pumpkin tiramisu

Pumpkin tiramisu? We were a bit skeptical at first but clearly intrigued. Browsing the ingredient list, it seemed like too much of a departure. No ladyfingers! No coffee! We imagined making some modifications to better fit our preconceived notion of what a pumpkin tiramisu should be. [Putting in ladyfingers soaked in coffee, for example.] But in the end we had the good sense to give it a try unchanged, and the result dispelled our reservations completely.

The recipe was another Thanksgiving supermarket food mag checkout rack snatch, the cover bait being pumpkin soup, a dish we'd like to experiment with but never get around to doing. It was an easy decision to go for it since our fabulous [wild mushroom stuffing](#) was harvested from the previous year's Thanksgiving issue of the same magazine, again to be repeated this season.

The one downside of Thanksgiving desserts is gluttony. Even after waiting a few hours after the big dinner, even a fabulous dessert like this one just cannot be enjoyed the way it should be following up exaggerated ritual food overload. Fortunately, like turkey, this can survive to the leftover stage. Better yet, make it for Thanksgiving and wait till the day after to serve it, or even for an unrelated occasion. Like the real [tiramisu](#), its flavor matures with time.

ingredients

cookie layer

2 T bourbon [or extra Kahlua, Frangelico, or tiramisu liqueur for dipping]
1 T granulated sugar
9oz package [chocolate wafers](#)

mousse

1 15oz can pumpkin puree
1/2 c dark brown sugar
1/2 t cinnamon
1/2 t ginger
1/4 t freshly grated nutmeg
1 3/4 c [about 500g or 1 lb container] mascarpone
1 3/4 c [about 16oz or 1 pint] heavy cream

topping

2 T unsweetened cocoa powder [or freshly grated bittersweet chocolate]

units

1 t = 1 teaspoon
1 T = 1 tablespoon
1 c = 1 cup (holds 1/4 liter water)

Instructions

1. In a very small saucepan, combine the bourbon with 1 T sugar and bring just to a boil. Remove from the heat. Line the bottom of a 10 in springform pan with 18 to 20 cookies,

- overlapping a few. Brush the cookies with half the bourbon syrup.
2. In a large bowl, combine the pumpkin puree with the sugar and spices. Add the mascarpone and cream. Beat the mixture on medium speed with a hand mixer until soft peaks form, but do not overbeat. Spread half the mixture over the cookies in the pan.
 3. Cover the pumpkin mixture with the remaining cookies, overlapping slightly. Drizzle with the remaining bourbon syrup, and then cover with the remaining pumpkin mixture. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.
 4. Just before serving sift the cocoa or directly grate the bittersweet chocolate over the top. Then release and remove the springform pan side and serve with a flat spatula. Actually the chocolate topping step can be done immediately in step 3 before refrigerating without adverse effects.
-

Notes

Food & Wine Magazine

November 1997, p 182: Thanks, Peggy Cullen. No website yet in 1999. [But soon after they saw the light.]

Liqueur problems

2 T of bourbon syrup is not much. And does not go very far. We dribbled a bit on the center of each cookie trying to make it stretch, but not being convinced, used some tiramisu liqueur in a cup to dip about 6 to 8 cookies that we put over the second layer of cookies. The chocolate wafers we used were not the overlapping kind, so we just laid them out touching each other packed as closely as the round springform pan allowed and then broke a few pieces to fill some of the gaps. And put a few extras around on top. After a day of aging, the cookies softened up nicely and the seed liqueur dispersed quite well into the mousse.

Whipping cream?

We were rather suspicious of the bit about whipping up this mess of ingredients and getting soft peaks. It seemed more reasonable to whip the cream separately and then fold together with the other stuff. But sure enough, it did form soft peaks. We're just born skeptics.

Illustrations

Here are the [mug shots](#).

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Illustrations

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chorak (armenian sweet roll/brioche)

It's the pits!

Like many traditional recipes, this one probably has as many variations as Armenian moms who bake from a mental cookbook. Isgouhi's version has earned her accolades from relatives and friends (not always reliable) and we like it (firsthand assessment) so we'll stick with her recipe. Among brioches (is that French for sweet roll?), chorak is interestingly unique because of the distinctive aromatic smell it acquires from the magic ingredient: powdered mahlab (available in middle eastern food stores), apparently extracted from the inner pit of sour black cherries according to Linda Chirinian of [Secrets of Cooking Persian/Armenian/Lebanese](#) who has a competing recipe by the way. Whatever. [Re-assess the first line of this tale.]

This is a great couple activity, although probably one which will not come up on a first date. Mother/daughter (cross-generational). Husband/wife (intragenerational?, usually). Sisters. Whatever.

ingredients

starter

2 T yeast
1 T sugar
1/2 T baking powder
2 T flour
1/4 c lukewarm water

dough

1 c = 2 sticks = 1/2 lb unsalted butter
1 c lukewarm milk
6 c flour
1 c confectioner's or regular sugar
1 t mahlab (heaping t)
1/4 t mazdaq gum + 1 t sugar
4 eggs

glaze

1 egg
1/4 t vanilla

instructions

1. Start butter melting, allowing it to cool down a bit after melted. Warm the milk
2. Meanwhile mix together the dry starter ingredients and stir in the lukewarm water in a small bowl. Cover and set aside for 10 minutes.
3. Mash together the mazdaq gum and sugar with mortar and pestle (or spoon in a bowl), if available (the sugar prevents sticking while mashing).
4. In a big bowl mix the flour, confectioner's sugar, mahlab, and mazdaq mixture, if available. Make a well in the center and put in the eggs. Beat them with a whisk or fork, then

mix in the starter mixture and then gradually incorporate the dry flour into the center by hand. Then add in the butter and mix till incorporated. Then add the milk a little at a time until we dough consistency is attained, no longer sticky. [If a helper is available, he or she can pour the milk on the dough worker's hands to clean off the clinging dough.] If still sticky add in more flour 3 T at a time until not sticky. Knead the dough about 10-15 minutes till smooth.

5. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and several kitchen towels and put in a warm place in the kitchen. Let rise at least 2 hours or overnight.
6. Knead a couple minutes, pulling the dough from the sides to the center. Let rise at least 2 hours or overnight.
7. Form into 1.5 in diameter balls, about 40.
8. Roll each ball out with the palms of both hands back and forth till nearly 18 in long. Break off 1/3 of the dough worm. Lay out the long piece and attach the short piece to its center (press together) to form a T. Then begin braiding, alternately crossing over (this is the standard 3 string braid, known all over the world mostly by women and a few enlightened men), and then fix the ends together. Put on cooking spray sprayed cookie sheets with generous spacing. [Another option is to make a little circularly swirled mound like a snake in coiled striking position, headless.]
9. Let rise another 1/2 hour.
10. Beat egg and vanilla together and brush over top of the rolls.
11. Bake in a preheated 350° oven about 20 minutes until golden brown. Check that the bottom of the rolls are not too dark along the way. It works best only using the middle rack for even baking, rather than using both upper and lower racks and switching halfway through, thus losing heat and leading to uneven baking.

notes

1. This recipe has been well documented visually by the dr bob cooking school low-end point-and-shoot zoom photography specialist. Our first start-to-finish project: [chorak moments](#).
2. Once when we were in a bit of a hurry and the recipe master was a participant, we received to green light to shorten the second rising from 2 hours to 1 hour. This did not seem to affect the results. Later this somehow became officially lowered to 1/2 hour.
3. dr bob was not informed about the masdaq gum until several renditions of this recipe, apparently some with and some without it. It is a special flavor gum marketed in the middle east by a subsidiary [Adams] of the multinational [Warner-Lambert] which employs one of bob's brothers. Small world. Maybe this is [mastic gum](#) (ristacia lentiscus), the mother of all gums? Needs more research... [For centuries the ancient Greeks chewed mastic gum (or mastiche pronounced "mas-tee-ka"). This is the resin obtained from the bark of the mastic tree, a shrub-like tree found mainly in Greece and Turkey. Grecian women especially favored chewing mastic gum to clean their teeth and sweeten their breath. Available on-line with mahlab (mahlepi?) from [Mediterranean Foods](#) or]
4. These seem to last at least a week in a sealed plastic container as they succumb to daily munching, provided that only one couple is doing the munching. Hmm. If it makes about 40 rolls, that's 20 apiece, which means about a 3 per person per day (based on double occupancy accommodations) rate. Give some away.

baked pasta with zucchini leek cheese sauce

The Mission: to produce an original baked pasta potluck supper dish calculated to favorably impress the other guests or at least not embarrass us, especially since our undeserved reputation as gourmet cooks had begun to disseminate among the crowd from whom the target guest list had been drawn (our usual dessert spot had been stolen by an earlier respondent). Using ingredients on hand. Some zucchini and arugula, both approaching the end of their usable refrigerator shelf life. Various leftover cheeses.

The cooking library was not very helpful, so we decided to wing it, rereading our [fettuccine zuffredo](#) concoction first for inspiration. But as we began the sauté-ing and pasta water boiling, we suddenly realized we had no milk. Among many other things that the almost daily seasonal christmas consumer grazing runs at the mall had prevented us from replenishing. So the team sent out a member for a quick emergency essential supply run to the closest local supermarket, upon whose return the kitchen activity resumed. The fresh red pepper, acquired to complete the green ingredients to Christmas colors, was forgotten during this first attempt.

The potluck public reaction: "pretty good" but can you really trust people to be honest about something like this? Some went for seconds, however; not a bad sign. The verdict by our in-house spice and flavor consultant: needs an extra kick. So we find the next opportunity to rework the recipe. New Year's Day with the in-laws. This time we add an extra leek, a jar of chopped sweet red peppers, some paprika and nutmeg, and another half cup of milk to finalize the recipe. Not bad...

ingredients

pasta

1 lb penne or similar tube pasta

sauté-ables

3 T olive oil

2 shallots

2 medium large leeks

1/2 green pepper

4 medium zucchini (about 4-5 c), julienne sliced

2/3 c chopped arugula

1/3 c chopped parsley (or just more arugula)

7.25 oz (205g) jar of roasted sweet red peppers

salt and pepper to taste

a dusting of paprika

béchamel cheese sauce

3 T butter

3 T flour

3 1/2 c milk

1/2 c gruyere cheese, grated

1/2 c fontina, grated

1/8 t nutmeg

topping

1/4 c bread crumbs

1/4 c freshly grated parmigiano

instructions

1. Start the pasta water going, and when boiling, throw in the usual amount of salt and the pasta. Cook until al dente.
2. Meanwhile food process the shallots, leeks and green pepper together.
3. Julienne slice the zucchini and set aside.
4. Clean and chop the arugula and parsley.
5. Grate the cheeses.
6. Sauté the shallots, leeks and green pepper in olive oil until softened.
7. Add in the zucchini and continue a bit.
8. Add in the arugula and parsley and remove from heat.
9. Meanwhile make a béchamel sauce with the butter flour and milk: melt the butter, stir in the flour and gradually add in the milk. Thicken a bit.
10. Then mix in the gruyere and fontina cheese.
11. Combine half the pasta with the sauteed stuff and the other half with the cheese sauce since it won't all fit in one or the other pans. Combine in a 11x13 in baking pan.
12. Cover with the bread crumbs and parmigiano.
13. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes.
14. Broil about 5 minutes to brown the topping a bit.
15. Serve.

notes

1. Feel free to be creative with the overall mission guide. Just as long as you can eat the result.

ripped off recipe for pumpkin squash sage risotto

Ripping off the recipe

Another seasonal promotion at [Williams-Sonoma](#). Stacks of *The Pumpkin Cookbook* lined the opening display at the entrance. A quick scan yields an interesting possibility: pumpkin and sage risotto, beautifully photographed by the way. But ... we are trying to control our cookbook collection addiction. We'll just drop by again in season and jot down the ingredient list.

Good plan. Poor execution.

We're ten minutes away from the [largest retail space mall](#) in America (20th century) and we couldn't get back in time to catch the pumpkin promotion. No problem. They must have a few copies left over in the cookbook department. So the dr bob cooking spy checks it out. And out. And out. Not in any of the W-S topic slots. How could this be? Almost ready to give up, the target item drops into the field of view. Not a W-S topic book after all, but an unrelated cookbook authoring project. The spy doesn't want to be too obvious, so the list is entered into short term memory. Then at a safe distance, it is manually converted into hard copy. On a scrap of paper in the wallet. Except insufficient memory allocation space has led to the loss of half the ingredient list. Another pass. Return to a discrete distance and the list is complete.

The designated pumpkin had already been sitting on the kitchen counter for about a month. Supermarkets are full of them in the Halloween/Thanksgiving season. By the time we get around to the execution, the cookbook is on sale for 5 bucks. At that price what reason is there to not buy? We buy. Our furtive recipe stealing all for naught.

Finally the dish is done. Much anticipation. Looks good. But the flavor was somehow just not in the same league as the original photograph. What a disappointment. Such is life. If you don't try, you don't know. We'll have to try it again with butternut squash. Maybe we can save this yet.

ingredients

- 2 T olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1-2 T fresh sage
- 1 1/2 c arborio rice
- 2 c pumpkin flesh, diced (or butternut squash)
- 3 1/2 c boiling veggie broth
- 1/3 c pine nuts
- 1/3 c parmigiano
- 4 T milk
- pinch of nutmeg
- salt and pepper to taste

instructions

1. It's the usual story here. Sauté the onion and sage in olive oil until soft, then carefully fuse in the garlic without burning it.
2. Mix in the rice and pumpkin and stir around for a minute.
3. Add a cup of broth and simmer. Continue adding broth as it is absorbed until most of the broth is used, about 20 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, throw the pine nuts, milk and nutmeg in a blender and process until smooth.
5. Stir it into the risotto with the final hit of broth and simmer another 5 minutes.
6. Season to taste and serve.

notes

1. [The Pumpkin Cookbook](#), edited by Nicola Hill, Hamlyn, 1996, p.26.

pssrsto.htm: 25-jan-2003 [what, ME cook? © 1984 dr bob enterprises]