

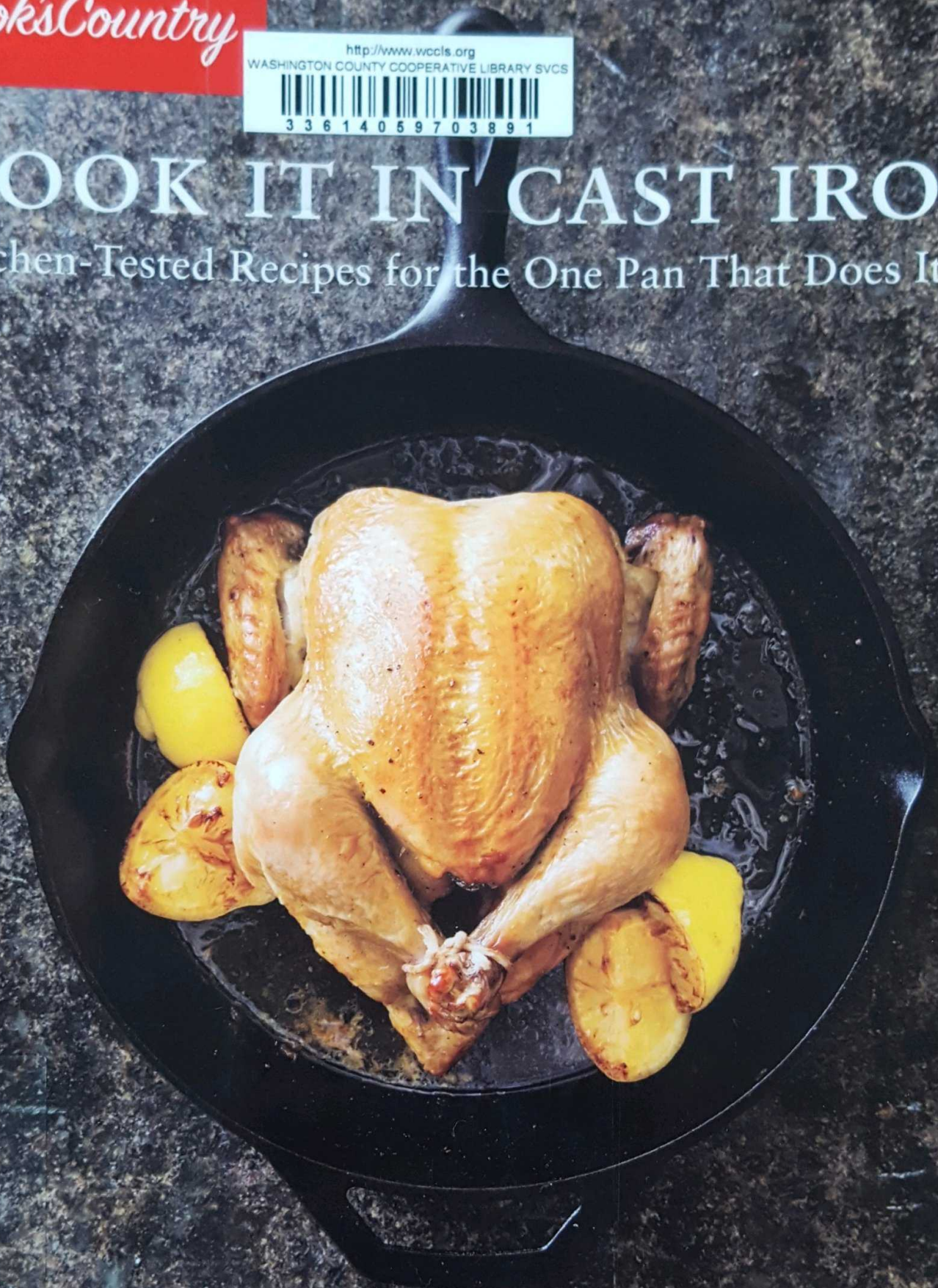
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COOK IT IN CAST IRON

Kitchen-Tested Recipes for the One Pan That Does It All





BAKED PEPPERONI PIZZA DIP

SERVES 8 TO 10

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS To bring pizza party flavor to a fun, easy appetizer, we turned classic pepperoni pie into a rich, cheesy dip that we could bake and serve right in the skillet. The cast-iron's excellent heat retention ensured that the cheese didn't separate or become congealed but stayed warm and gooey until the skillet had been scraped clean, with no need for Sterno or a hot plate. For the rich base of our dip, we combined cream cheese, mozzarella, and pizza sauce. Stirring in crisped pepperoni finalized the familiar flavor profile. Naturally, the perfect partner for our creamy, saucy dip was pizza dough. We rolled out ½-ounce dough balls, tossed them with garlic oil, and baked them right in the skillet. The cast iron created a crisp, golden bottom on these pull-apart parbaked mini rolls, and the whole thing was then spooned into the center of the skillet, inside the ring of garlic rolls. The dip mixture was then spooned into the center of the skillet, inside the ring of some cheesy dip. We like the convenience of using ready-made pizza dough from the local pizzeria or supermarket; however, you can use our Classic Pizza Dough (page 43). For the pizza sauce, consider using our No-Cook Pizza Sauce (page 176). To soften the cream cheese quickly, microwave it for 20 to 30 seconds.

- 3 ounces thinly sliced pepperoni, quartered
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 pound pizza dough
- 8 ounces cream cheese, cut into 8 pieces and softened
- ¾ cup pizza sauce
- 4 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded (1 cup)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Cook pepperoni in 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat until crisp, 5 to 7 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer pepperoni to paper towel-lined plate; set aside. Off heat, add oil and garlic to fat left in skillet and let sit until fragrant, about 1 minute; transfer to medium bowl.

2 Place dough on lightly floured counter, pat into rough 8-inch square, and cut into 32 pieces (½ ounce each). Working with 1 piece of dough at a time, roll into tight ball, then coat with garlic oil. Evenly space 18 balls around edge of skillet, keeping center of skillet clear. Place remaining 14 balls on top, staggering them

between seams of balls underneath. Cover loosely with greased plastic wrap and let sit until slightly puffed, about 20 minutes.

3 Remove plastic. Transfer skillet to oven and bake until balls are just beginning to brown, about 20 minutes, rotating skillet halfway through baking. Meanwhile, whisk cream cheese and pizza sauce together in large bowl until thoroughly combined and smooth. Stir in mozzarella and three-quarters of crisped pepperoni.

4 Spoon cheese mixture into center of skillet, return to oven, and bake until dip is heated through and rolls are golden brown, about 10 minutes. Sprinkle with basil and remaining crisped pepperoni. Serve.

ASSEMBLING BAKED PEPPERONI PIZZA DIP



Evenly space 18 balls around edge of skillet. Place remaining 14 balls on top, staggering between seams of lower row. There will be some gaps in top row.

SAUSAGE LASAGNA

SERVES 6

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS A big, bubbling lasagna is the pinnacle of comfort food. We wanted a version that could be made quickly, with minimal effort (and minimal dishes) and without sacrificing any flavor. We started building a flavorful sauce by sautéing onion, garlic, and red pepper flakes. We then browned some sausage and added tomatoes, simmering only briefly to meld the flavors yet keep it fresh tasting. After cooking the sauce, we emptied the skillet and layered the lasagna as we would in a casserole dish with the tomato-sausage sauce, a ricotta-egg mixture, no-boil lasagna noodles, and plenty of Parmesan and mozzarella. Once our lasagna was assembled, we topped it with extra cheese and transferred the skillet to the oven. After a short 30-minute stint, we had the bubbly, cheesy top and perfectly cooked pasta we were looking for, all made in a single pan. Do not use nonfat ricotta or fat-free mozzarella here.

- 3 (14.5-ounce) cans whole peeled tomatoes
 - 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 - 1 onion, chopped fine
 - Salt and pepper
 - 3 garlic cloves, minced
 - ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
 - 1 pound hot or sweet Italian sausage, casings removed
 - 12 ounces (1½ cups) whole-milk ricotta cheese
 - 1 large egg yolk
 - 1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme or ¼ teaspoon dried
 - 8 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded (2 cups)
 - ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
 - 12 no-boil lasagna noodles, broken in half
 - 3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 3 In separate bowl, combine ricotta, egg yolk, thyme, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper. Combine mozzarella and Parmesan in third bowl.
 - 4 Spread ¾ cup sauce over bottom of now-empty skillet. Shingle 7 noodle halves around edge of skillet and place 1 noodle half in center. Dollop one-third of ricotta mixture over noodles, then top with one-quarter of mozzarella mixture and one-third of remaining sauce (in that order). Repeat layering process twice, beginning with noodles and ending with sauce. Top with remaining mozzarella mixture.
 - 5 Transfer skillet to oven and bake until cheese is golden brown and lasagna is bubbling around edges, 30 to 40 minutes. Let lasagna cool for 10 minutes, then sprinkle with basil and serve.

LAYERING NOODLES FOR SKILLET LASAGNA

After spreading sauce layer, shingle 7 noodle halves around edge of skillet and place 1 noodle half in center.



- 1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Pulse tomatoes and their juice in food processor until coarsely ground, about 10 pulses.
- 2 Heat 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat for 3 minutes. Add oil and heat until shimmering. Add onion and ½ teaspoon salt and cook until softened and lightly browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in garlic and pepper flakes and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add sausage and cook, breaking up meat with wooden spoon, until no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Stir in processed tomatoes, bring to simmer, and cook until sauce is slightly thickened, about 10 minutes; transfer to bowl.





BAKED ZITI WITH CHARRED TOMATOES

SERVES 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS Baked ziti, a hearty combination of pasta, tomato sauce, and gooey cheese, can be time-consuming and fussy between making the sauce, boiling the pasta, and then assembling and baking the dish. We were looking to streamline this dish, achieving the same delicious results in less time and without watching over and dirtying a multitude of pots. Our first priority was the sauce. We used a hot cast-iron skillet to get a nice blisney char on grape tomatoes, bringing a deep, caramelized flavor to the sauce. We further bolstered the sauce by sautéing garlic, red pepper flakes, and tomato paste with the charred tomatoes. We then mashed everything to a coarse consistency and diluted it with water so that we could cook the ziti right in the sauce. Cooking the ziti in the skillet with the sauce saved us from using an extra pot, and the starch released from the pasta during cooking helped thicken the sauce nicely. We finished the sauce by stirring in basil and Parmesan. We then sprinkled the whole dish with mozzarella and broiled it in the oven. Being able to go from the stovetop to the broiler was another perk of the cast-iron pan, and the dish needed only 5 minutes in the oven for a perfectly melty, browned cheese layer on top. You can substitute perle for the ziti. Do not use fat-free mozzarella here.

- 1½ pounds grape tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon tomato paste
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 12 ounces (3¾ cups) ziti
- 3 cups water, plus extra as needed
- 1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
- 4 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded (1 cup)

1 Adjust oven rack 6 inches from broiler element and heat broiler. Heat 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat for 5 minutes. Toss tomatoes with oil and 1 teaspoon salt. Add tomatoes to skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly charred and blistered, about 10 minutes. Stir in garlic, tomato paste, and pepper flakes and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Off heat, coarsely mash tomatoes using potato masher.

2 Stir in pasta and water and bring to boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to vigorous simmer, cover, and cook, stirring often, until pasta is tender, 15 to 18 minutes.

3 Stir in Parmesan and adjust sauce consistency with extra hot water as needed. Stir in basil and season with salt and pepper to taste. Sprinkle with mozzarella. Transfer skillet to oven and broil until cheese is melted and spotty brown, about 5 minutes. Serve.

VARIATION

Baked Ziti with Putanesca Sauce
Add 2 anchovies, rinsed and minced, to skillet with garlic and increase pepper flakes to ½ teaspoon. Substitute ½ cup dry red wine for ½ cup of water in step 2. Substitute ¼ cup minced fresh parsley for basil and stir ½ cup chopped pitted kalamata olives and 2 tablespoons capers, rinsed and minced, into cooked pasta with Parmesan.

SMOKED TURKEY CLUB PANINI

SERVES 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS Italians have it right when it comes to sandwiches: They load meat, cheese, and flavorful condiments between slices of crusty bread and then compact the whole thing in a heated, ridged press for dense, melt-y grilled packages called panini. We wanted a smoked turkey panini recipe that we could make without a fancy press, so we turned to our trusty cast-iron skillet, which can produce steady, even heat just like that specialized appliance. To build the sandwich, we can zesty sun-dried tomatoes mixed into mayonnaise for a deeply flavored condiment that perfectly complemented the smokiness of the turkey. We also brushed some of the oil from the tomatoes on the bread for an additional flavor boost and a crisp, golden exterior: Bacon, crisped in the skillet, gave the sandwich additional smokiness and crunch, and Swiss cheese and arugula added flavorful depth. Cooking the sandwiches in the skillet under a heavy Dutch oven created perfectly pressed panini. We like to use rustic artisanal bread for this recipe; do not use a baguette, but rather look for a wide loaf that will yield big slices.

- 8 slices bacon
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ⅓ cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, rinsed, patted dry, and minced, plus ¼ cup tomato packing oil
- 8 (½-inch-thick) slices crusty bread
- 8 ounces thinly sliced Swiss cheese
- 8 ounces thinly sliced smoked turkey
- 2 ounces (2 cups) baby arugula

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet. Cook bacon in 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat until crisp, 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer bacon to paper towel-lined plate. Pour off fat from skillet, then wipe skillet clean with paper towels.

2 Combine mayonnaise and tomatoes in bowl. Brush tomato oil on 1 side of bread slices. Flip slices over and spread mayonnaise mixture on second side. Assemble 4 sandwiches by layering ingredients as follows between

prepared slices (with mayonnaise mixture inside sandwiches): half of Swiss, turkey, bacon, arugula, and remaining Swiss. Press gently on sandwiches to set. 3 Heat now-empty skillet over medium heat for 3 minutes. Place 2 sandwiches in skillet, reduce heat to medium-low, and set Dutch oven on top. Cook until bread is golden and crisp, 4 to 6 minutes per side, redistributing sandwiches as needed to ensure even browning. 4 Transfer sandwiches to prepared rack and keep warm in oven. Wipe skillet clean with paper towels and repeat with remaining 2 sandwiches. Serve.

MAKING PANINI



Place 2 sandwiches in skillet and set Dutch oven on top. Cook until bread is golden and crisp, flipping sandwiches and replacing Dutch oven halfway through cooking.



SKILLET PIZZA MARGHERITA

SERVES 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS Getting crisp pizza crust from your oven can be a challenge, but with just a few tweaks and the right tools, you'll have homemade pizza that's miles better than offerings from the freezer case or the delivery guy. We started by rolling out pizza dough thinly and then gently pressing it into our cast-iron skillet. Heating the pizza dough in the skillet on the stove gave our crust a jump start before going into the oven. Once in the oven, the skillet functioned like a pizza stone and crisped up our crust perfectly in just minutes. Our simple, classic pizza toppings—pizza sauce, mozzarella cheese, and basil—allowed our crust to really shine. We like to use our Classic Pizza Dough (page 43) and No-Cook Pizza Sauce; however, you can use ready-made pizza dough and sauce from the local pizzeria or supermarket.

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound pizza dough, room temperature
- 1 cup pizza sauce
- 12 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, sliced ¼ inch thick
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

1 Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 500 degrees. Grease 12-inch cast-iron skillet with 2 tablespoons oil.

2 Place dough on lightly floured counter, divide in half, and cover with greased plastic wrap. Press and roll 1 piece of dough (keeping remaining dough covered) into 11-inch round. Transfer dough to prepared skillet and gently push it to corners of pan. Spread ½ cup sauce over

surface of dough, leaving ½-inch border around edge. Top with half of mozzarella.

3 Set skillet over medium-high heat and cook until outside edge of dough is set, pizza is lightly puffed, and bottom crust is spotty brown when gently lifted with spatula, 2 to 4 minutes. Transfer skillet to oven and bake until edge of pizza is golden brown and cheese is melted, 7 to 10 minutes.

4 Using potholders, remove skillet from oven and slide pizza onto wire rack using spatula; let cool slightly. Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon basil, cut into wedges, and serve. Being careful of hot skillet, repeat with remaining 2 tablespoons oil, dough, sauce, mozzarella, and 1 tablespoon basil. Cut into wedges and serve.

NO-COOK PIZZA SAUCE

MAKES 2 CUPS

While it is convenient to use ready-made pizza sauce, we think it is almost as easy, and a lot tastier, to make your own.

- 1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes, drained with juice reserved
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- Salt and pepper

Process tomatoes with oil, vinegar, garlic, and oregano in food processor until smooth, about 30 seconds. Transfer mixture to 2-cup liquid measuring cup and add tomato juice until sauce measures 2 cups. Season with salt and pepper to taste. (Sauce can be refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for up to 1 month.)

CAST-IRON SKILLET CALZONE

SERVES 6 TO 8

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS We reimagined a calzone as a pie with a top and bottom crust for a crowd-size version of this party favorite with a hefty dose of savory filling. The high sides of our cast-iron skillet made assembly easy: We lined the pan with dough and added layers of cheese, meat, and sauce. We like to use our Classic Pizza Dough (page 43); however, you can use ready-made pizza dough from the local pizzeria or supermarket. Use low-sodium marinara sauce to prevent the calzone from becoming overly salty. Serve with extra marinara sauce, if desired.

- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound hot or sweet Italian sausage, casings removed
- 4 ounces thinly sliced pepperoni, quartered
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 pounds pizza dough
- 8 ounces (1 cup) whole-milk ricotta cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 pound mozzarella cheese, shredded (4 cups)
- 1 cup low-sodium marinara sauce
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten with 2 tablespoons water
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds (optional)

1 Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Heat 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat for 3 minutes. Add oil and heat until shimmering. Add sausage and pepperoni and cook, breaking up pieces of meat with wooden spoon, until sausage is no longer pink, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Using slotted spoon, transfer meat mixture to paper towel-lined plate. Wipe skillet clean with paper towels.

2 Place dough on lightly floured counter, divide into two-thirds and one-third (one 22-ounce piece and one 10-ounce piece). Press and roll larger piece of dough (keeping remaining dough covered with greased plastic wrap) into 16-inch round. Loosely roll dough around rolling pin and gently unroll it onto now-empty skillet, letting excess dough hang over edge. Ease dough into skillet by gently lifting and supporting edge of dough with your hand while pressing into skillet bottom and

corners with your other hand. Some dough will overhang edge of skillet; leave in place.

3 Combine meat mixture, ricotta, basil, and pepper in bowl. Sprinkle 2 cups mozzarella over surface of dough. Dollop meat mixture over mozzarella and press into even layer. Spread sauce over top, then sprinkle with remaining 2 cups mozzarella.

4 Brush overhanging dough of bottom crust with egg wash. Press and roll remaining dough into 14-inch circle, then loosely roll dough around rolling pin and gently unroll it over filling. Trim overhanging dough to ½ inch beyond edge of skillet. Pinch edges of top and bottom crusts firmly together. Roll overhang to be flush with edge of skillet, then crimp with tines of fork.

5 Brush top of calzone with egg wash and sprinkle with sesame seeds, if using. Using paring knife, cut eight 1-inch vents in top of dough in circular pattern. Transfer skillet to oven and bake until crust is golden brown, about 30 minutes, rotating skillet halfway through baking.

6 Using potholders, transfer skillet to wire rack and let calzone cool for 30 minutes. Being careful of hot skillet handle, slide calzone onto cutting board using spatula and slice into wedges. Serve.

MAKING A CAST-IRON SKILLET CALZONE



After unrolling dough onto skillet, ease it into skillet by gently lifting and supporting edge of dough with your hand while pressing into skillet bottom and corners with your other hand.

and cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are softened, 8 to 10 minutes. Uncover and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are deep golden brown, about

tart onto wire rack; let cool slightly. Being careful of hot skillet handle, repeat with remaining 1 tablespoon reserved fat, dough, and toppings. Sprinkle tarts with chives and cut into wedges. Serve.

CLASSIC PIZZA DOUGH

MAKES 1 POUND

This recipe can easily be doubled.

2 cups (11 ounces) plus 2 tablespoons bread flour

1⅛ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast

¾ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon olive oil

¾ cup warm water (110 degrees)

1 Pulse flour, yeast, and salt together in food processor to combine, about 5 pulses. With processor running, add oil, then water, and process until rough ball forms, 30 to

40 seconds. Let dough rest for 2 minutes, then process for 30 seconds longer. (If after 30 seconds dough is very sticky and clings to blade, add extra flour as needed.)

2 Transfer dough to lightly floured counter and knead by hand to form smooth, round ball, about 1 minute. Place dough in large, lightly greased bowl, cover tightly with greased plastic wrap, and let rise until doubled in size, 1 to 1½ hours. (Alternatively, dough can be refrigerated for at least 8 hours or up to 16 hours.)

HASH BROWN PIE

SERVES 4 TO 6

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS For a light-on-effort, big-on-flavor breakfast casserole, we started by cooking sausage in our cast-iron skillet. Next we fried shredded potatoes in the sausage fat. We added eggs, cheese, and scallions to the sausage and potatoes, periodically shaking the pan to distribute the mixture until the bottom was golden brown. Then, instead of flipping the hot, heavy cast-iron skillet, we simply ran a rubber spatula around the edge of the pan to loosen the pie, slid it onto a plate, and then used a second plate to invert the pie and slide it back into the skillet to brown the second side. You will need a 10-inch skillet with a tight-fitting lid for this recipe. To thaw the potatoes quickly, microwave them in a covered bowl for about 4 minutes, tossing occasionally.

- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 8 ounces breakfast sausage, casings removed
- 1 pound (5 cups) frozen shredded hash browns, thawed and squeezed dry
- 6 large eggs
- 4 scallions, sliced thin
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 6 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded (1½ cups)

1 Heat 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add 3 tablespoons oil and heat until shimmering. Add sausage and cook, breaking up meat with wooden spoon, until no longer pink, about 3 minutes. Add hash browns and cook, turning occasionally, until lightly browned and crisp, about 15 minutes.

2 Beat eggs, scallions, and pepper together with fork in large bowl until thoroughly combined and mixture is pure yellow; do not overbeat. Gently fold in potato mixture and cheddar.

3 Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in now-empty skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add egg mixture and cook, shaking skillet and folding mixture constantly for 15 seconds. Smooth top of egg mixture, cover, and cook, gently shaking skillet occasionally, until bottom is golden brown and top is lightly set, about 4 minutes.

4 Off heat, run heat-resistant rubber spatula around edge of skillet to loosen pie. Slide pie onto large plate, then invert onto second large plate and slide back into skillet with browned side up. Tuck edges of pie

into skillet with spatula. Continue to cook over medium heat until second side is golden and eggs are cooked through, about 2 minutes. Using spatula, slide pie onto cutting board and let cool slightly. Cut pie into wedges and serve warm or at room temperature.

FLIPPING HASH BROWN PIE



1 After browning first side, loosen pie with spatula and slide onto large plate.



2 Place second large plate face down over pie. Invert pie onto second plate so that browned side faces up.



3 Slide pie back into skillet, browned side up, then tuck edges into skillet with spatula.

SIMPLE CHEESE QUICHE

SERVES 6 TO 8

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS The ideal quiche has tender, flaky pastry and velvety custard. Parbaking the crust in our cast-iron skillet ensured it wouldn't be soggy or underbaked. Pulling the dish out of the oven when the filling was still slightly soft and letting it set up as it cooled guaranteed perfectly baked custard every time. You can substitute other fresh herbs such as tarragon or parsley for the chives. You can use our Foolproof Single-Crust Pie Dough or store-bought pie dough in this recipe.

- 1 recipe single-crust pie dough, rolled into 12-inch round
- 5 large eggs
- 2 cups half-and-half
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 4 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded (1 cup)

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Grease 10-inch cast-iron skillet. Loosely roll crust around rolling pin and gently unroll it onto prepared skillet. Ease crust into skillet by gently lifting and supporting edge of dough with your hand while pressing into skillet bottom and corners with your other hand. Tuck ½ inch of dough underneath itself to form tidy, even edge that lies against sides of skillet. Press tucked edge against sides of skillet using index finger to

create attractive fluted rim. Wrap skillet loosely in plastic wrap and freeze until dough is firm, about 30 minutes.

2 Line pie crust with double layer of aluminum foil, covering edges, and fill with pie weights. Transfer skillet to oven and bake until pie dough looks dry and is pale in color, 25 to 30 minutes. Using potholders, transfer skillet to wire rack and remove weights and foil. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees.

3 Beat eggs, half-and-half, salt, and pepper with fork in 4-cup liquid measuring cup. Stir in cheddar. Being careful of hot skillet handle, return skillet to oven. Carefully pour egg mixture into shell until it reaches about ½ inch from top edge of crust (you may have extra egg mixture).

4 Bake quiche until center is set and knife inserted 1 inch from edge comes out clean, about 30 minutes. Let quiche cool for at least 1 hour before sprinkling with chives and serving.

FOOLPROOF SINGLE-CRUST PIE DOUGH

MAKES ENOUGH FOR ONE 10-INCH PIE

This recipe can be easily doubled to make double-crust pie dough; divide dough in half before refrigerating.

- 1¼ cups (6¼ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter,
cut into ¼-inch pieces and chilled
- 4 tablespoons vegetable shortening,
cut into 2 pieces and chilled
- 2 tablespoons vodka, chilled
- 2 tablespoons ice water

1 Process ¾ cup flour, sugar, and salt in food processor until combined, about 5 seconds. Scatter butter and

shortening over top and process until mixture forms uneven clumps with no floury bits, about 10 seconds.

2 Scrape down sides of bowl and redistribute dough around processor blade. Sprinkle remaining ½ cup flour over dough and pulse until mixture has broken up into pieces and is evenly distributed around bowl, 4 to 6 pulses.

3 Transfer mixture to large bowl and sprinkle with vodka and ice water. Stir and press dough together, using stiff rubber spatula, until dough sticks together. Turn dough onto sheet of plastic wrap and flatten into 4-inch disk. Wrap tightly and refrigerate for 1 hour. Before rolling out dough, let it sit on counter to soften slightly, about 10 minutes. (Dough can be refrigerated for up to 2 days.)

HOME FRIES

SERVES 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS A diner-style breakfast simply isn't complete without a side of crusty, deeply browned home fries. Diner cooks start off with roasted or boiled potatoes and use plenty of fat on a broad griddle to generate those great-tasting spuds. To replicate these perfectly crisp, fluffy fries at home, we replaced the griddle with our cast-iron skillet. Its unique properties encourage effective heat retention, which made getting a great sear easy even without a powerful restaurant griddle. We used Yukon Gold potatoes, which retain their shape through cooking. We tossed the potatoes with oil and parcooked them in the microwave before frying them, then sautéed the onion and garlic separately and stirred them into the potatoes just before serving. This kept the moist onions from compromising the crust on the potatoes and ensured that the garlic didn't burn. Chives sprinkled over the dish right before serving added a little freshness and enhanced the flavor profile. Although we prefer the sweetness of Yukon Gold potatoes, other medium-starch or waxy potatoes, such as red-skinned potatoes, can be substituted.

- 1½ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, unpeeled, cut into ¾-inch pieces
- 5 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ tablespoons minced fresh chives

1 Microwave potatoes, 1 tablespoon oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper in covered bowl, stirring occasionally, until potatoes begin to soften, 7 to 10 minutes; drain well.

2 Heat 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat for 3 minutes. Add 2 tablespoons oil and heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook until softened and lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds; transfer to bowl.

3 Heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil in now-empty skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add potatoes and gently pack into skillet using back of spatula. Cook, without moving, until potatoes begin to brown, 5 to 7 minutes.

4 Flip potatoes, 1 portion at a time, and lightly repack into skillet. Repeat flipping process every few minutes until potatoes are tender, well browned, and crisp, 12 to 16 minutes. Stir in onion mixture and chives. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

CUTTING POTATOES INTO EVENLY SIZED PIECES

1 Using chef's knife, cut 1 thin sliver from 1 side of potato. Set potato on cut side and slice crosswise into even planks.



2 Stack several planks and cut crosswise, then rotate 90 degrees and cut crosswise again to create evenly sized pieces as directed in recipe.



APPLE FRITTERS

MAKES 10 FRITTERS

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS Apple fritters should be crisp on the outside and moist within, and their primary flavor should be pure apple. In order to achieve these goals, we had to overcome the problems caused by the amount of liquid in the fruit. We found that the best solution was to dry the apples with paper towels before mixing them with the dry ingredients. This removed the moisture that would otherwise have leached out during frying, ensuring that the final fritters were light and fluffy but still fully cooked. The cast-iron skillet's deep, straight sides were helpful for shallow-frying the fritters. Flattening the fritters as they fried ensured that the insides were cooked through by the time the exteriors had browned. Apple cider in both the batter and the glaze added to the strong apple flavor. We like the tart flavor of Granny Smith apples in these fritters, but you can also use Empires or Cortlands.

- 2 Granny Smith apples (6½ ounces each), peeled, cored, halved, and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 2 cups (10 ounces) all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (2½ ounces) granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 cup apple cider
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 4 cups peanut or vegetable oil
- 2 cups (8 ounces) confectioners' sugar

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Spread apples in single layer on paper towel-lined baking sheet and thoroughly pat dry with paper towels.

2 Whisk flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, salt, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, and ½ teaspoon nutmeg together in large bowl. In separate bowl, whisk ¾ cup cider, eggs, and melted butter together until smooth.

Add apples to flour mixture and toss to combine, then stir in cider mixture until incorporated.

3 Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet and line with triple layer of paper towels. Add oil to 12-inch cast-iron skillet until it measures about ½ inch deep and heat over medium heat to 325 degrees.

4 Using greased ½ cup dry measuring cup, carefully scoop out and drop 5 heaping mounds of batter into oil. Press batter lightly with back of spoon to flatten. Fry until deep golden brown, 6 to 8 minutes, flipping fritters halfway through frying. Adjust burner, if necessary, to maintain oil temperature between 300 and 325 degrees. Transfer fritters to prepared rack and keep warm in oven. (Fritters can be kept warm in oven for up to 30 minutes.) Return oil to 325 degrees and repeat with remaining batter.

5 Whisk confectioners' sugar, remaining ½ teaspoon cinnamon, remaining ¼ teaspoon nutmeg, and remaining ¼ cup cider together in bowl until smooth. Drizzle 1 heaping tablespoon glaze over each fritter. Let glaze set for 10 minutes before serving.



GERMAN APPLE PANCAKE

SERVES 4 TO 6

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS A German apple pancake is a crisp, fluffy, skillet-baked treat full of decadent caramelized apples. The pancake puffs and rises as it bakes, then falls in the center a few minutes after it comes out of the oven, creating a creamy, custardlike center. We used our cast-iron skillet to cook the apples until they were golden brown and perfectly tender before adding the thin, crêpe-like batter. Half-and-half imparted richness to the batter while keeping the texture nice and light. Pouring the batter into the already hot pan and preheating the oven to a high temperature (then lowering the temperature when the pancake went in) proved the ideal method to create enough steam to get the pancake to puff up without burning or overcooking. Using a cast-iron skillet helps produce the right texture and height in the pancake. Be ready to serve the pancake as soon as it comes out of the oven as its unique puffy shape sinks within just a few minutes. If you prefer sweeter apples, you can use Braeburns in this recipe. Serve with vanilla ice cream.



- ¾ cup half-and-half
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (2½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- ¼ pounds Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and sliced ¼ inch thick
- ¼ cup packed (1¾ ounces) light brown sugar
- Confectioners' sugar

- 1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 500 degrees. Process half-and-half, eggs, granulated sugar, vanilla, and salt in food processor until well combined, about 15 seconds. Add flour and process until thoroughly incorporated and no flour pockets remain, about 30 seconds.
- 2 Heat 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat for 3 minutes. Melt butter in skillet. Add apples and brown sugar and cook, stirring occasionally, until apples are softened and golden brown, 5 to 10 minutes.
- 3 Spread apples into even layer in skillet. Quickly pour batter over apples and transfer skillet to oven.

Reduce oven temperature to 425 degrees and bake until pancake is lightly browned around edges and puffed, 10 to 12 minutes, rotating skillet halfway through baking.

4 Using potholders, transfer skillet to wire rack. Dust with confectioners' sugar and slice into wedges. Serve immediately.

CORING APPLES



CORING WITH A CORER
Cut small slice from top and bottom of apple. Hold apple steady and push corer through. Peel and cut apple according to recipe.

CORING WITHOUT A CORER
Cut sides of apple squarely away from core. Cut each piece of apple according to recipe.

CHOCOLATE CHIP SKILLET COOKIE

SERVES 8

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS A cookie in a skillet? We admit this Internet phenom made us skeptical . . . until we tried it. Unlike making a traditional batch of cookies, this treatment doesn't require scooping, baking, and cooling multiple sheets of treats; the whole thing bakes at once in a single skillet. Plus, the hot bottom and tall sides of a well-seasoned cast-iron pan create a great crust on the cookie. And this treat can go straight from the oven to the table for a fun, hands-on dessert—or you can slice it and serve it like a tart for a more elegant presentation. What's not to like? We cut back on butter and chocolate chips from our usual cookie dough recipe to ensure that the skillet cookie remained crisp on the edges and baked through in the middle while staying perfectly chewy. We also increased the baking time to accommodate the giant size, but otherwise this recipe was simpler and faster than baking regular cookies. Top with ice cream for an extra-decadent treat.

- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup packed ($5\frac{1}{4}$ ounces) dark brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ($3\frac{1}{2}$ ounces) granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg plus 1 large yolk
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups ($8\frac{3}{4}$ ounces) all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips

1 Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Melt 9 tablespoons butter in 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Continue to cook, stirring constantly, until butter is dark golden brown, has nutty aroma, and bubbling subsides, about 5 minutes; transfer to large bowl. Stir remaining 3 tablespoons butter into hot butter until completely melted.

2 Whisk brown sugar, granulated sugar, vanilla, and salt into melted butter until smooth. Whisk in egg and yolk until smooth, about 30 seconds. Let mixture sit for 3 minutes, then whisk for 30 seconds. Repeat process of resting and whisking 2 more times until mixture is thick, smooth, and shiny.

3 Whisk flour and baking soda together in separate bowl, then stir flour mixture into butter mixture until just combined, about 1 minute. Stir in chocolate chips, making sure no flour pockets remain.

4 Wipe skillet clean with paper towels. Transfer dough to now-empty skillet and press into even layer with spatula. Transfer skillet to oven and bake until cookie is golden brown and edges are set, about 20 minutes, rotating skillet halfway through baking. Using pot-holders, transfer skillet to wire rack and let cookie cool for 30 minutes. Slice cookie into wedges and serve.

MAKING A SKILLET COOKIE



To ensure a uniformly baked cookie, transfer dough to skillet and press into even layer with spatula.

HOT FUDGE PUDDING CAKE

SERVES 6 TO 8

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS Hot fudge pudding cake is a magical dessert; what starts out looking like a child's baking experiment gone wrong turns into a two-layered treat that any adult would eagerly tuck into. First, a fairly standard cake batter is topped with a sugar-cocoa layer, then liquid is poured over the top. As the batter bakes, the cake rises to the top, and what's left behind on the bottom turns into a pudding-style chocolate sauce. Most hot fudge pudding cakes end up looking rich and fudgy but have very little chocolate flavor. To make sure ours delivered on flavor as well as on looks, we used a combination of cocoa powder and bittersweet chocolate to add multiple layers of chocolate flavor. For the puddinglike bottom layer, most recipes we found called for water, but we saw an opportunity to take our dessert to the next level. Using 1 cup of coffee in addition to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water gave our pudding cake even deeper flavor (without actually making it taste like coffee). Making this treat in a cast-iron skillet was a no-brainer, since hot fudge pudding cake is meant to be served hot; cast iron does a great job of holding onto heat, so there was no worry that the dessert would cool down before it was time to eat. Serve with whipped cream.

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 6 pieces
- 2 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped coarse
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (2 ounces) unsweetened cocoa powder
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup packed (2 $\frac{1}{3}$ ounces) light brown sugar
- 1 cup (7 ounces) granulated sugar
- 1 cup brewed coffee
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup whole milk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 large egg yolk

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Melt butter, chocolate, and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cocoa together in 10-inch cast-iron skillet over low heat, stirring often, until smooth, 2 to 4 minutes. Set aside to cool slightly.

2 Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt together in bowl. In separate bowl, whisk brown sugar, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup granulated sugar, and remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cocoa together, breaking up any large clumps of brown sugar with fingers. In third bowl, combine coffee and water.

3 Whisk milk, vanilla, egg yolk, and remaining $\frac{2}{3}$ cup granulated sugar into cooled chocolate mixture. Whisk in flour mixture until just combined. Sprinkle brown sugar mixture evenly over top, covering entire surface of batter. Pour coffee mixture gently over brown sugar mixture.

4 Transfer skillet to oven and bake until cake is puffed and bubbling and just beginning to pull away from sides of skillet, about 35 minutes, rotating skillet halfway through baking. Using potholders, transfer skillet to wire rack and let cake cool for 15 minutes. Serve.

