

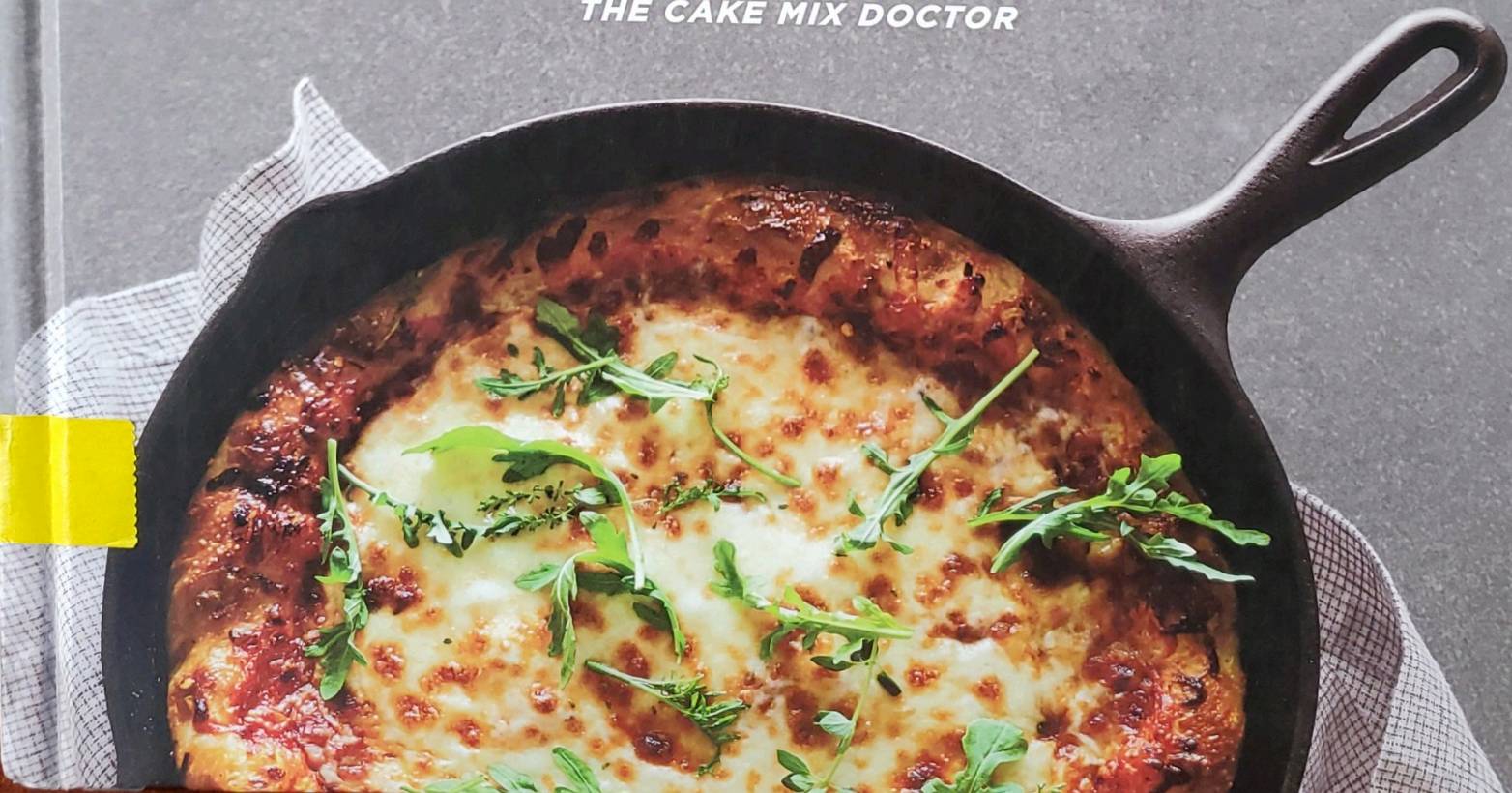
SKILLET LOVE



From Steak to Cake:
More Than 150 Recipes in One Cast-Iron Pan

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- 3 Pan-Griddled Artichokes with Fresh Romesco Sauce
- 4 Fried Green Tomatoes with Roasted Garlic Ranch
- 7 Potato-Onion Latkes with Cucumber Raita
- 8 How to Fry Okra Like a Southerner
- 11 Sorghum-Glazed Cauliflower Bites
- 12 Charred Brussels Sprouts and Sweet Raisins
- 13 Roasted Baba Ghanoush
- 15 Karen's Blistered Green Beans
- 16 Queso Fundido
- 18 Messy Meatballs and Sauce
- 19 Best-Ever Skillet Pizza
- 21 *Easy Homemade Pizza Crust*
- 22 Skillet Tartines Blueprint 
- 24 Grilled Cheese a Dozen Ways
- 26 Little Corn and Buckwheat Blini with Toppings
- 29 Fried Chicken Wings with Dipping Sauces
- 31 Pommes Frites
- 32 Beer-Battered Onion Rings
- 33 Bebe's Nuts and Bolts

If you think the skillet is made just for roasting chicken, then you will be pleasantly surprised by all the nibbles and appetizers in this chapter that come to you courtesy of your cast-iron friend. What does the skillet do for apps? It griddles artichokes, blini, and grilled cheese sandwiches. It fries chicken wings, okra, latkes, pommes frites, and beer-battered sweet onions. It chars Brussels sprouts, green beans, and asparagus. It simmers queso fundido so you can serve it up stove to table with chips and salsa. It bakes pizza at a fierce, high heat that mimics a wood-fired oven. It roasts eggplant and cauliflower and toasts bread for elegant tartines. The question really becomes: What does the skillet *not* do for appetizers?

CHAPTER

SMALL PLATES & SNACKS

CHARRED BRUSSELS SPROUTS and Sweet Raisins

MAKES 3 TO 4 SERVINGS / Prep: 20 minutes / Cook: 8 to 10 minutes

There is a reason that roasting Brussels sprouts is such a popular method. When you add cruciferous veggies to a hot pan, it caramelizes them and makes them taste sweet. That sweetness, combined with a crispy, charred exterior, provides the yin and the yang. Add yellow raisins, soy sauce, and onions and you get even more natural sweetness, and then balance with salt and pepper at the end. How a recipe with so few ingredients develops such complexity is a tribute to roasting in cast iron. Don't try to cook more than 4 cups of Brussels sprout halves in the pan at once or they will steam instead of sear.

2 tablespoons olive oil, divided use

1 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved (about 4 cups)

½ cup thinly sliced onion

1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce

¼ cup yellow raisins

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until smoking. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil and spread it out in the pan with a metal spatula. Dump the Brussels sprouts into the pan and let them sit, untouched until they begin to char, about 1 minute. Turn them with the spatula and let them begin to char on the other side, about 1 minute. Toss with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and the onion slices.
3. Place the skillet in the oven and roast until the Brussels sprouts are browned and cooked through, 8 to 10 minutes, depending on their size. Remove the skillet from the oven, add the soy sauce and the raisins, and toss with the spatula to combine. Add more olive oil to coat if you like. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Transfer the mixture to a platter and serve warm or at room temperature.

GILD THE LILY WITH CHERRIES

Add dried cherries or other dried fruits instead of or along with the raisins. Scatter chopped fresh chives or cilantro over the top before serving.

Best-Ever SKILLET PIZZA

MAKES 4 TO 6 SERVINGS AS AN APPETIZER; 2 TO 3 SERVINGS AS A MEAL

Prep: 10 minutes / Cook: 15 to 20 minutes

This recipe freed me from overpriced, lukewarm pizza delivered to my door. Now when my family craves pizza, I simply pull out the iron skillet. With pre-made pizza dough, sauce, and cheese, I can bake an amazing deep-dish pizza in less time than it takes for mediocre pizza to be delivered. The skillet is key, and so is baking at a searing 450 degrees F. In the end, you get a hot pizza with a crisp crust, cheesy interior, and whatever toppings you like—all at an affordable price. Truly amazing!

1 recipe **Easy Homemade Pizza Crust**
(page 21) or 1 pound store-bought
pizza dough (see Note)

1 to 2 teaspoons cornmeal

1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil

2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced

½ to ¾ cup tomato-based pasta sauce

2 cups (8 ounces) shredded mozzarella cheese

Honey, for brushing

Red pepper flakes (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F.
2. Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium heat until quite hot, 3 to 4 minutes. While the skillet is heating, stretch out the dough to get it as thin as possible, about 12 inches in diameter. You can do this in the air or by pressing it out with your hands on a cornmeal-dusted work surface.
3. Sprinkle cornmeal in the hot skillet.
4. Taking care not to burn your fingers, place the dough in the pan on top of the cornmeal, and press the dough halfway up the sides of the pan (it will shrink back, but this is OK). Whisk together the olive oil and garlic and brush this mixture over the dough. Spoon on the pasta sauce. (Note: If you like pepperoni on your pizza, this is where you would add it.) Scatter the cheese all over. Brush honey on the crust edges and sprinkle red pepper flakes on top of the honey, if you like. Turn off the stove, and place the skillet in the oven.
5. Bake until the cheese has melted and just starts to brown, and the crust edges are browned, 15 to 20 minutes. Carefully run a knife around the edges and slide the pizza out onto a board to slice and serve.

NOTE: You can purchase pizza dough at most supermarkets in the deli department. It's a good ingredient to keep in your freezer for pizza cravings. Let the dough rest on the counter for an hour to thaw. This dough takes slightly less time to cook (15 minutes) than the homemade crust takes (15 to 20 minutes).

EASY HOMEMADE PIZZA CRUST

ENOUGH FOR 1 (12-INCH) SKILLET PIZZA,
ABOUT 1 POUND DOUGH

Prep: 10 minutes / Rise: 1½ hours

¾ cup warm water (100 to 110 degrees F)

1 teaspoon active dry yeast

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

1½ teaspoons kosher or sea salt

Olive oil, for the bowl

1. In the bowl of a standing mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, whisk together the water and yeast to dissolve. Add the flour and salt and blend on low speed. Increase the speed to medium and beat until a soft dough forms. Remove the paddle, carefully pulling off all the bits of dough and putting those back in the bowl. Secure the dough hook attachment and beat on medium speed until the dough comes together into a ball and is springy, about 5 minutes. (If you don't have a dough hook, continue on with the paddle and then knead the dough with floured hands on a floured work surface until it is springy.)
2. You can use the dough right away, but your pizza will have a better texture if you let the dough rise. Dribble a little olive oil into a large glass or ceramic bowl and transfer the dough to the bowl. Turn the dough upside down so that the greased side is up. Cover the bowl with a thin kitchen towel and place the bowl in a warm spot in the kitchen until it has doubled in volume, 1 to 1½ hours. Punch down the dough with your fist, and use in the pizza recipe.
3. Alternatively, let the dough rise in a warm spot for 30 minutes, then cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight to slowly rise. When ready to bake, remove the plastic, drape a kitchen towel over the bowl, and let the dough come to room temperature, about 2 hours.

- 37 My Grandmother's Spoonbread
- 39 Black Skillet Cornbread
- 40 New England Spider Cake
- 42 Italian Piadina
- 45 Stovetop Naan with Fresh Herbs and Garlic
- 46 Buttermilk Skillet Biscuits
- 48 Potato-Raisin Bread Spiral
- 51 Skillet Yorkshire Pudding
- 52 Easy Garlic Skillet Knots
- 53 Cast Iron Sticky Buns with Caramel Sauce
- 56 Irish Soda Bread with Drunk Raisins
- 57 No-Knead Skillet Sourdough
- 59 Challah Wreath
- 60 Homemade English Muffins
- 61 Buttermilk Spice Drop Doughnuts Blueprint ●
- 63 Fresh Corn Hush Puppies Blueprint ●
- 64 Chocolate Chip Sour Cream Coffee Cake
- 66 New Orleans Beignets

I had no idea how versatile the cast-iron skillet was until I started baking bread in it. Depending on the recipe and how the bread needs to be cooked, the nimble skillet can adapt. It can bake a yeast-risen potato bread, challah, or sticky buns one day and griddle Italian piadina or garlicky naan the next. It can cook buttermilk biscuits crispy around the edges, and without blinking, bake a moist and tender chocolate chip coffee cake. The fact that you can crank up the heat under the skillet before the batter is poured in is the secret behind crispy cornbread. And that hot skillet is the reason Yorkshire pudding puffs up like a golden balloon once in the oven. For all our fried guilty pleasures—fritters, hush puppies, doughnuts, and beignets—the trustworthy skillet heats oil and keeps it at an even temperature, which means less greasy frying and more enjoying.

CHAPTER 12

BREADS, BISCUITS & BUNS

STOVETOP NAAN

with Fresh Herbs and Garlic

MAKES 12 TO 15 NAAN

Prep: 25 minutes / Rise: 1½ hours / Cook: 2 to 3 minutes per batch

Living for a year in England gave me a love of Indian food that would last all my life. But I never thought I could create my own naan, the yeast-risen flatbread essential to Indian cuisine...that is, until I pulled out the iron skillet. It occurred to me that naan dough is only a simple flour mixture moistened by yogurt and needs a really hot surface to cook. It seemed natural to let the skillet mimic the floor of the tandoori oven, so I set to work. Naan is an old Indian bread, and some people believe it originally came from Persia (Iran). Because it contained yeast and required a good bit of technique to pull off, it was considered a bread of the wealthy and royal households, thus you see all the elaborate naan fillings on the menu at Indian restaurants. Fruit, coconut, meat, anything can be added to naan when your budget allows it. Today, we can make a much simpler version in our own kitchens. This recipe makes about a dozen, so save this for parties where Indian or grilled foods with nice sauces are served.

¼ cup (2 ounces) warm water

1 (0.25-ounce) package active dry yeast
(2¼ teaspoons)

1 tablespoon sugar

4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour,
plus more for dusting

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

¾ cup (6 ounces) whole milk,
at room temperature

½ cup (4 ounces) plain full-fat yogurt

Vegetable oil, for greasing

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted,
or olive oil

4 cloves garlic, peeled and thinly sliced

2 tablespoons roughly chopped fresh herbs
(such as rosemary, thyme, and/or oregano)

Kosher salt, for sprinkling

1. In a small cup or glass measure, stir together the water, yeast, and sugar until dissolved. Set aside the yeast mixture to bubble up, 6 to 8 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and baking soda. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and add the yeast mixture, milk, and yogurt. Stir with a wooden spoon until the mixture comes together. With oiled hands, knead the dough until it becomes a smooth ball, 3 to 4 minutes. Oil a large bowl and put the dough in it. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place it in a warm spot until the dough has doubled in size, about 1½ hours.
3. Punch down the dough with your fist and turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface. Knead it lightly and divide into 12 to 15 equal pieces. Roll each piece with a small rolling pin dusted with flour until it is about ¼ inch thick and 6 to 7 inches across.
4. Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until it begins to smoke.
5. Brush both sides of each dough round with melted butter or olive oil. Press some garlic slices into the dough. Reduce the heat to medium and place two or three naan in the skillet. Cook until the naan puffs up on top and is lightly browned on the bottom, about 1 minute. Turn the naan and sprinkle with some herbs. Cover the skillet and cook for 1 to 2 minutes more. Transfer the naan to a platter and drizzle with more melted butter or olive oil, if desired. Sprinkle with kosher salt. Repeat with the remaining naan.

BUTTERMILK SKILLET Biscuits

MAKES 12 (2½-INCH) BISCUITS / Prep: 10 minutes / Bake: 12 to 15 minutes

In my childhood home, we had hot biscuits on the dinner table five nights of the week. My father loved them and, thus, my mother learned to make them. She was an accomplished, self-taught cook, highly creative, and she loved working with her hands. Biscuits were an easy medium—you lightly mix the ingredients, cut, and bake in a hot oven. In an instant they are risen...and in another instant they are inhaled. So, the bar I set for biscuits was high. Not just any biscuit recipe would do. I wanted a soft and light interior, and a crispy top with a nice buttery flavor. This meant using a mix of butter for flavor and vegetable shortening for tenderness, plus self-rising flour, with the leavening all perfectly mixed into the flour. The skillet assures that the bottoms, sides, and tops have that nice tender, buttery crunch, a nod to my childhood. Serve them warm, with butter or honey.

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, chilled and cut into 16 cubes, plus 1 teaspoon unsalted butter, melted

3 cups unbleached self-rising flour, plus more for dusting

1 tablespoon sugar

¼ cup vegetable shortening

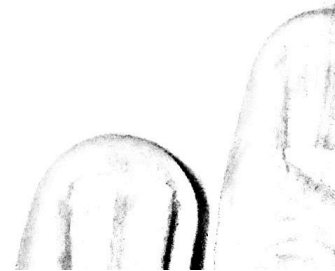
1 cup low-fat or full-fat buttermilk

Tips on the Right Flour and How to Cut Biscuits

I bake with unbleached self-rising flour, so if you are using bleached self-rising flour, add ¼ cup more flour so the dough will pull together to the right consistency. Cut into rounds with a sharp cutter, and press down quickly into the dough—don't tug the cutter. That keeps the sides of the biscuits nice and straight. Patch the scraps together for the last few biscuits, and tuck them in the pan—no one will notice. Or pat the dough into a rectangle and cut the biscuits into squares for no scraps.

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. Brush a 12-inch skillet with the melted butter and set aside away from the stove so the pan stays as cool as possible. (You don't want to refrigerate it, but you want the pan to be at the same temperature as the biscuit dough so the biscuits don't spread too much before they bake.)
2. Combine the flour and sugar in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade. Pulse 5 times to incorporate. Distribute the cold butter cubes on top of the flour. Dollop the shortening in pieces on top of the butter. Pulse 12 to 15 times, until the butter is incorporated and forms clumps slightly larger than the size of peas. Pour in the buttermilk and pulse 5 times, or until the dough just pulls together.
3. Turn out the dough onto a floured work surface. With floured hands, pat the dough out to a 1-inch thickness. Fold it in half and again pat it gently to a 1-inch thickness. Dunk a 2½-inch biscuit cutter in flour and stamp out 12 rounds, pressing down firmly and then releasing the dough. Take care not to twist the cutter as you're cutting. With floured hands, transfer the biscuits to the prepared skillet. The biscuits will just touch in the pan. Bake until they are golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Serve warm.

NOTE: If desired, brush the tops of the biscuits with a little extra buttermilk, beaten egg, or melted butter before baking. This gives the biscuits a glossy top.





EASY GARLIC Skillet Knots

MAKES 16 (6 TO 8 SERVINGS) / Prep: 10 minutes / Bake: 20 to 25 minutes

This little recipe is proof that there is more you can create from pizza dough than just pizza. The dough is a canvas for all sorts of fun and interesting breads, especially these garlic knots. It's really more technique than recipe—you divide the dough into pieces and roll each piece into a rope, which you tie into a knot and dredge through a slurry of oil and garlic, then top with a cheese and spice mix before baking. These are perfect to serve alongside fall soups, winter chili, spring salads, and even alongside a platter of your best summer tomatoes.

1 recipe Easy Homemade Pizza Crust (page 21) or 1 pound store-bought pizza dough (see Note)

3 tablespoons olive oil

4 cloves garlic, peeled, 2 thinly sliced and 2 minced

¼ teaspoon kosher salt, plus a pinch

⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus a pinch, or cayenne pepper or harissa seasoning

¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

½ teaspoon dried oregano

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.
2. With a heavy knife, cut the dough into four equal pieces. Divide each piece into four equal pieces. Roll each piece into a rope 5 to 6 inches long. Set the ropes aside.
3. Heat the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the sliced garlic and sauté until golden, 3 to 4 minutes. With a slotted spoon, remove the sliced garlic from the skillet and set aside on paper towels. Remove the skillet from the heat.
4. Add the minced garlic to the skillet, along with a pinch each of salt and black pepper.
5. Roll one dough rope in the garlicky oil in the skillet, then tie it into a loose knot. Tuck it at the side of the pan. Continue with the remaining dough ropes, coating in oil, tying, and then placing in the skillet until it is filled with 16 garlicky knots, in a single layer.
6. In a small bowl, combine the Parmesan cheese, oregano, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ⅛ teaspoon black pepper. Top each knot with a generous teaspoon of the cheese mixture.
7. Bake until the garlic knots are deeply golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Scatter the reserved golden brown garlic slices on top. Serve warm.

NOTE: You can buy fresh pizza dough at many supermarkets, usually in the bakery section. You might even be able to buy from your favorite pizzeria and keep in the freezer.



CHALLAH WREATH

MAKES 2 LOAVES OR 1 WREATH

Prep: 30 minutes / Rise: 1 hour 30 to 45 minutes / Bake: 35 to 40 minutes

Baking yeast bread in an iron skillet seems quite natural, as the skillet allows the bread to bake evenly and enhances its golden crust. You might think you are limited to round breads, what with the shape of the skillet. But in the case of this recipe, you can bake challah in two braids, which join and form a circular wreath. For a festive party presentation, place a small bowl of mustard or chutney in the center and surround the wreath with sliced meats and cheeses. Or, if you choose, break the two halves of the wreath apart and slice one for serving and freeze the other. This challah, a recipe from my Atlanta friend Sara Franco, is beautifully textured and moist.

1 tablespoon unsalted butter,
at room temperature

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup warm water (100 to 110 degrees F)

1 (0.25-ounce) package active
dry yeast (2 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar

2 large eggs, lightly beaten

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable oil

3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups bread flour

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt

GLAZE

1 large egg

Poppy or sesame seeds (optional)

GILD THE LILY

Sprinkle the top with poppy and sesame seeds before baking. When ready to serve, nestle a small round of Camembert in the center of the wreath.

1. Rub the bottom and sides of a 12-inch skillet with the soft butter and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the water and yeast to dissolve. Whisk in the sugar. Add the eggs and oil and whisk to combine. Add the flour and salt and stir with a wooden spoon until smooth. Cover the bowl with a kitchen towel and place it in a warm spot to rise until doubled, about 1 hour.
3. Punch down the dough in the bowl and knead it until the dough is smooth, 3 to 4 minutes. Divide the dough in half. Divide each half into three pieces.
4. Working with one set of three pieces of dough at a time, roll each piece of dough between your palms or on the work surface into a rope 12 to 15 inches long. Lay the 3 ropes side by side. Beginning at the center, braid them, left over right, right over left, until you reach the ends, and tuck them under. Turn the braid 180 degrees (so the braided part at the top is now at the bottom) and braid the other half in the same fashion. Place this braided loaf in one half of the reserved skillet. Repeat the process with the remaining set of three pieces of dough, rolling and braiding, then place this braided loaf in the other half of the pan. Attach the loaves at their ends by pressing them together slightly to form a ring around the skillet. Cover the skillet with a kitchen towel, and let rise in a warm spot until nearly doubled, 30 to 45 minutes.
5. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. In a small bowl, lightly beat the egg for the glaze. Brush the braided wreath with the beaten egg, then sprinkle with poppy or sesame seeds, if desired.
6. Bake the challah until it is golden brown, about 20 minutes, then tent the skillet with aluminum foil. Continue baking for 15 to 20 minutes more, until it tests done (golden brown and firm to the touch). Transfer the challah to a rack to cool completely. about 1 hour, then slice and serve. Wrap leftovers in foil and store at room temperature for up to 5 days or in the freezer for up to 6 months.

NEW ORLEANS BEIGNETS

MAKES ABOUT 3 DOZEN BEIGNETS

Prep: 45 minutes / Rise: 1 hour 20 minutes / Cook: 3 minutes per batch

If you've never experienced the thrill of dunking a beignet in warm coffee at Café du Monde in the French Quarter of New Orleans, don't feel left out: I've figured out how to make luscious beignets at home. I pulled out my iron skillet, filled it with oil, and assembled a simple yeast dough of flour, sugar, egg, and milk. I cut the dough into little rectangles, and when they rose up to the top of the hot oil, they browned like little golden pillows. Then I shook those hot beignets in a brown paper sack with powdered sugar until they were coated . . . and pulled one out of the sack, still warm, and took a bite. And at that moment, I knew this was the best beignet I'd had in my life. But I'm still giving NOLA credit because they—and the French—came up with the idea!

1 (0.25-ounce) package active dry yeast (2¼ teaspoons)

¼ cup warm water (100 to 110 degrees F)

¼ cup granulated sugar

½ teaspoon salt

1 large egg, beaten

¾ cup evaporated milk

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled, or vegetable oil

3 to 3½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

4 cups peanut oil

½ cup confectioners' sugar

1. In a large bowl, combine the yeast and warm water and stir with a fork to dissolve. Stir in the sugar and salt. Add the beaten egg, evaporated milk, and melted butter or oil and beat with a wooden spoon until smooth. Add 3 cups of the flour and beat until well incorporated. Add another ½ cup of the flour as needed to pull the dough together. It should no longer be sticky. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place it in a warm spot to rise until doubled, about 1 hour.
2. Punch down the dough and turn it out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead it with your hands a few times and roll it into a rectangle 18 by 12 inches. It will be about ¼ inch thick. Cut the dough into rectangles measuring about 2 by 3 inches, cover them with waxed paper or plastic wrap, and let rise again for about 20 minutes.
3. Heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until it reaches 365 degrees F. Drop two or three rectangles into the oil and fry until they are golden brown on one side, about 1½ minutes, then turn them over to cook on the other side about 1½ minutes more. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the beignets to a rack set over brown paper to drain. Repeat with the remaining dough.
4. Put the confectioners' sugar in a paper bag and add the warm beignets, a few at a time. Toss until well coated. Serve immediately.

- 70 Fresh Blueberry Pancakes
- 73 The Only Pancake Recipe You'll Ever Need
- 74 Dutch Baby Blueprint ●
- 75 French Toast Challah Bake
- 79 Croque Monsieur
- 81 Chilaquiles
- 82 Fried Green Tomato BLTs
- 84 Smoked Turkey and Potato Hash
- 85 Big Skillet Scramble
- 86 Shakshuka
- 88 Quiche Lorraine in a Skillet
- 90 Fresh Asparagus Frittata Blueprint ●

Throughout history the skillet has been synonymous with breakfast. Look at it and try to say you don't immediately think bacon and pancakes. And I don't want to mess with a good thing that has satisfied generations. I just want to open your eyes to the infinite brunch possibilities that can spring from this pan—like Dutch baby, a restaurant staple that soars in a hot skillet at home. I'll share a way of making French toast—in the oven—that allows you to mix and mingle with brunch guests. And while fried eggs are fine, why not poach them in a bed of simmered tomatoes and peppers for shakshuka? Or turn them into south-of-the-border chilaquiles, whisk them into a classic quiche, or pour atop asparagus spears for an easy frittata? You even can fry green tomatoes and stack them into BLTs. Or bake croque monsieur sandwiches until golden. Best of all, the skillet goes right to the table, keeping brunch food warm and festive.

BRUNCH
AT HOME



DUTCH BABY

Blueprint

MAKES 3 TO 4 SERVINGS / Prep: 15 minutes / Bake: 20 to 25 minutes

What's a cross between a pancake and a popover? A Dutch baby, the German skillet pancake popularized by the Pennsylvania Dutch in America. It's important that the skillet is hot when the batter goes in and that the Dutch baby is baked at high heat to give it the best rise. Some recipes call for baking powder, but I find this makes the mixture heavy and prefer the simplicity and lightness of this recipe. It's just a blueprint, a blank canvas: If you want to jazz up the baby, look at my ideas below. And make sure the rest of the meal—and your guests—are ready when the Dutch baby goes into the oven. It will rise and then abruptly fall, and you don't want anyone to miss the drama!

.....

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

4 large eggs

1 cup whole milk

3 tablespoons granulated sugar, divided use

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

½ teaspoon grated lemon zest

1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour

Pinch salt

**Fresh berries, confectioners' sugar,
and maple syrup, for serving**

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Place a 12-inch skillet in the oven while the oven preheats.
2. When the oven comes to temperature, remove the skillet and add the butter. Set aside.
3. In a large mixing bowl, whisk the eggs to break up the yolks. Whisk in the milk to combine. Sprinkle in 2 tablespoons of the sugar and the vanilla and lemon zest. Whisk to combine. Add half of the flour and whisk until smooth, then whisk in the other half and the salt. (Alternatively, you can make the batter in a blender.)
4. Place the skillet over medium-high heat until the butter foams but does not burn. Pour in the batter. Sprinkle the remaining 1 tablespoon sugar around the edges of the Dutch baby. Place the pan in the oven and bake until the sides are browned and puffed up and the center begins to lightly brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and garnish with fresh berries, a dusting of confectioners' sugar, and maple syrup, if desired.



VARIATIONS

Cremini Mushroom and Spinach Dutch Baby

Sauté 1 cup sliced cremini mushrooms in 2 tablespoons butter in the skillet until soft, 2 to 3 minutes. Add 3 cups fresh spinach leaves and stir to wilt. Turn off the heat.

Make the batter as the recipe directs, with these changes: Replace the sugar with grated Parmesan cheese. Omit the vanilla and lemon zest. Add 1 teaspoon fresh thyme or basil leaves, if desired. Add a sprinkling of cracked black pepper.

When the batter is ready, reheat the skillet until the mushrooms and spinach are hot. Pour in the batter and sprinkle the top with the reserved 1 tablespoon Parmesan. Place the pan in the oven and bake as directed.

Bananas Foster or Apple-Cinnamon Dutch Baby

Peel and slice 1 large or 2 small bananas lengthwise into ¼-inch pieces. Or, peel 3 medium Granny Smith apples, quarter, and slice into ¼-inch pieces to yield about 3 cups apples.

Sauté the bananas or apples in 2 tablespoons butter in the skillet until soft, 3 to 4 minutes. Sprinkle with ½ cup sugar and ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon. Do not stir. Turn off the heat.

Make the batter as the recipe directs, with these changes: Omit the sugar. Replace the vanilla with dark rum, if desired.

When the batter is ready, reheat the skillet until the fruit is hot. Pour in the batter and sprinkle the top with 2 teaspoons sugar. Place the pan in the oven and bake as directed.

Here are two other ideas...

Add ricotta and prosciutto, and garnish with pea shoots, for a savory springtime Dutch baby. Replace the sugar with grated Parmesan cheese.

Sprinkle on miniature semisweet chocolate chips and marshmallows instead of the berries and confectioners' sugar in the basic recipe.

CROQUE MONSIEUR

MAKES 8 SERVINGS / Prep: 20 to 25 minutes / Cook: 16 to 20 minutes

One of my favorite things to order at cafés in Paris—and even Seattle—is this golden, gooey sandwich of Gruyère and ham. Its name comes from the French verb *croquer*, which means “to bite,” and *monsieur* tells us that this is the version designed to be eaten by men. There is also a croque madame, distinguished by a fried egg on top! If you have ever eaten one—monsieur or madame—you know it is something wonderful to bite into. And the skillet makes the preparation easy because not only does it toast the bread, but it also serves as the pan in which the sandwiches bake and broil to crispy doneness. You can even cook the béchamel sauce in the skillet, then wipe the skillet clean before assembling the sandwiches. Serve with a green salad and sliced ripe tomatoes. This recipe can be halved.

-
- 16 slices white sandwich bread
 - 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature, divided use
 - 1½ cups whole milk
 - 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 - ½ teaspoon salt
 - ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 - ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
 - 12 ounces Gruyère cheese, shredded (about 3 cups), divided use
 - ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
 - 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
 - 8 ounces ham, thinly sliced

1. Cut the bread into 4-inch rounds, using a cutter or a glass. Reserve the bread scraps for making croutons or bread crumbs. Lightly spread both sides of half of the rounds using 1 tablespoon of the butter. Set all 16 rounds aside.
2. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. To make the béchamel sauce, warm the milk in a small saucepan over low heat. In another small saucepan, melt the remaining 2 tablespoons butter over low heat. Whisk in the flour and stir until thickened, about 1 minute. Slowly whisk in the warm milk until the mixture has thickened into a sauce, about 3 minutes. Turn off the heat and whisk in the salt, pepper, nutmeg, ½ cup of the shredded Gruyère, and the Parmesan. Set aside.
3. Toast four of the buttered bread rounds in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat until browned, about 2 minutes. Turn and brown the other side, 1 to 2 minutes. Repeat with the remaining four buttered rounds. Toast the remaining eight unbuttered rounds in a toaster until lightly browned.
4. Spread four of the buttered toasted rounds with half of the mustard and place them in the skillet. Place 1 ounce of ham on each round, and top each with ¼ cup Gruyère cheese. Top with an unbuttered toasted round. Spoon a heaping tablespoon of the cheese sauce on top of the bread round. Top with 1 tablespoon grated Gruyère. Place the skillet in the oven.
5. Bake until the sandwiches are cooked through, about 5 minutes. Switch the oven to broil, and broil on high until the sandwiches are bubbly and golden brown, 4 to 5 minutes. Cover and keep warm. Repeat with the remaining ingredients to make four more sandwiches, baking and then broiling. Serve at once.



FRIED RICE

Blueprint

MAKES 2 SERVINGS / Prep: 10 minutes / Cook: 8 to 10 minutes

I intentionally cook too much rice just so I can have the pleasure of eating fried rice the next day. I did this when my kids were younger, and they loved the haphazard combinations I would throw in that skillet. Now that they're gone, fried rice is just the right last-minute meal for two. The trick is to use a good bit of oil to keep the skillet greased so the egg doesn't stick. As this is a blueprint recipe, feel free to add whatever veggies you have on hand—preferably those that have crunch and color, such as carrots, bell peppers, okra, and green beans. You can turn this into a meal by sautéing chopped shrimp or chicken along with the onion.

**2 tablespoons vegetable oil,
plus more as needed**

½ cup finely chopped onion

**1 cup finely chopped fresh
or frozen veggies**

Soy sauce or teriyaki sauce

Hot pepper sauce (optional)

2 cups cooked rice

1 large egg

Freshly ground black pepper

**Fresh cilantro leaves and/or sliced
jalapeño peppers, for garnish (optional)**

1. Heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until it turns translucent, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the veggies and cook for 3 to 4 minutes (or less if using frozen, just to warm through). Season with 1 teaspoon soy sauce and a dash of hot sauce, if you like.

2. Add the cooked rice and stir to combine, adding a little more oil if the rice sticks to the pan. Add another dash of soy sauce. In a small bowl, beat the egg with a fork to break up the yolk, then gradually pour the egg into the skillet, stirring to scramble the egg and blend it into the rice. Season again with soy sauce and a few grinds of black pepper. Garnish with cilantro and/or jalapeño, if desired. Serve at once.

GLAZED CARROTS

Like Mom Made

MAKES 6 SERVINGS / Prep: 15 minutes / Cook: 12 to 15 minutes

While roasted carrots are sweet and delicious, they often shrink so much that I don't get to enjoy the full carrot experience. So, I make them in my skillet the way my mom taught me. This is a brilliant method that you can use for other crisp vegetables, like okra, that benefit from braising to soften them. Use orange carrots or carrots of all colors. To turn this into a meal, serve the carrots on a generous spoonful of plain Greek yogurt or stracciatella, the soft fresh cheese at the center of burrata.

1 pound carrots
2 tablespoons unsalted butter,
cut into cubes
1 tablespoon sugar
½ teaspoon kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup water
Grated zest and juice of 1 small lemon
Chopped fresh dill or
flat-leaf parsley, for garnish

1. Peel the carrots, but leave the tops on for presentation, if you like. Leave the smaller ones whole, but slice the larger ones in half lengthwise.
2. Spread out the carrots in a single layer in a 12-inch skillet and top with the butter, sugar, salt, and a few grinds of pepper. Pour the water into the skillet. Bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce the heat to low. Cover the skillet and let simmer until the carrots are fork-tender and the water has almost evaporated, 12 to 15 minutes. Turn off the heat.
3. Remove the lid from the skillet and add the lemon zest and 1 to 2 tablespoons lemon juice. Stir and let the juices bubble. Test the carrots for doneness. If the carrots are not done, add a little more water and turn the heat back on until they are done.
4. Garnish the carrots with chopped dill or parsley and serve at once.

MAINS

CHICKEN KATSU

MAKES 3 TO 4 SERVINGS / Prep: 25 minutes / Cook: 4 to 5 minutes

Traditionally made with pork in Japan, this recipe is also delicious with chicken breast or thighs, pounded until thin. It is similar to Smashed Chicken Scaloppine (page 157), but the prep differs. Here we dredge this chicken in flour, dip in egg, then coat in panko, which creates a very crisp outer layer that seals in the juices of the chicken and keeps it moist. When frying chicken cutlets in a cast-iron skillet, don't let the oil get too hot. When you see the chicken breading browning too quickly, turn the heat down a bit. The skillet retains heat so well that you've got to keep an eye on the oil while you fry. Katsu is traditionally served with a ketchup-based sauce called tonkatsu. Serve with steamed rice and spinach.

TONKATSU SAUCE

- ½ cup ketchup
- 2 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon dark brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 tablespoon mirin (Japanese rice wine) or dry sherry
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and minced

CHICKEN

- 3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups panko bread crumbs
- 1 cup vegetable oil

1. For the sauce, whisk together the ketchup, soy sauce, brown sugar, ginger, mirin, Worcestershire sauce, and garlic in a medium-size bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and let it rest at room temperature until ready to serve.
2. For the chicken, slice each breast two or three times with a sharp paring knife a third of the way through. Place the breasts in a shallow glass dish and sprinkle with the kosher salt. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 hours. The salt acts as a brine and tenderizes the chicken breasts.
3. Put one chicken breast in a gallon-size zipper-lock bag or between sheets of waxed paper and pound with a rolling pin or flat meat mallet to ¼-inch thickness. Repeat with the remaining chicken breasts. Put the flour in one shallow dish. Put the eggs in a second shallow dish and lightly beat with a fork. Put the panko in a third shallow dish. Dredge each chicken cutlet first in flour, then dip in egg, and then coat on both sides with panko.
4. Pour the oil into a 12-inch skillet and heat over medium-high until 350 degrees F. Add one or two pieces of chicken to the skillet, so they fit but have room around them, and fry until golden and crispy, 1½ to 2 minutes. Turn the chicken to cook on the other side for another 1½ to 2 minutes. Transfer to paper towels or brown paper to drain. Repeat with the remaining chicken.
5. Serve the chicken warm with the tonkatsu sauce.

- 201 The Cast-Iron Pound Cake
- 202 Brown Sugar Birthday Cake
- 205 Blueberry-Lemon Ricotta Cake
- 207 Prune and Rye Cake with Buttermilk Glaze
- 208 Strawberries and Cream Pound Cake
- 211 Georgia Burnt Caramel Cake
- 213 Fresh Pineapple Upside-Down Cake
- 215 Mississippi Mud Cake with Chocolate Fudge Icing
- 217 Cranberry and Almond Tart
- 218 Pear Skillet Gingerbread
- 220 Sweet Potato Skillet Cake with Pecan Crust
- 221 Brown Sugar Snickerdoodle Bites
- 223 Warm Chocolate Chunk Cookie to Share
- 225 Skillet Brownie on a Caramel Puddle
- 227 Classic Cherry Clafoutis
- 228 Lula's Toasted Coconut Pie
- 230 Our Favorite Buttermilk Pie
- 231 Rum-Roasted Peaches
- 233 Black and Blueberry Crumble
- 235 Apple Tarte Tatin
- 237 Fresh Berry Crostata Blueprint
- 238 Atlantic Beach Pie
- 241 Pumpkin Bourbon Tart with Pecan Crumble
- 242 Little Fried Hand Pies
- 244 Bananas Foster
- 246 Butter Pecan Skillet Ice Cream
- 247 Food Processor Pie Crust

Desserts are a natural for the cast-iron skillet. Cakes bake up moist, and pie crusts get crispy. I knew pineapple upside-down cake was made for this skillet, but I had no idea just how good a strawberries and cream pound cake or sweet potato spice cake would taste baked in a skillet as well. Or that tortes, tarts, pies, and cookies could be baked in it, making this skillet the only pan you need in a small kitchen. The trick when baking in cast iron is to fully use the skillet—toast nuts in it first, or layer down some fruit and sugar before you add a cake batter so the fruit caramelizes while the cake bakes. The skillet bakes crust so crisp that most pies lift right out for easy slicing. Or serve dessert right from the skillet—bake a clafoutis or fruit crumble, or a big chocolate chip cookie topped with vanilla ice cream that melts into the warm cookie dough as you scoop it into bowls.

CHAPTER 6

SWEETS



MISSISSIPPI MUD CAKE with Chocolate Fudge Icing

MAKES 12 TO 16 SERVINGS / Prep: 30 minutes / Bake: 30 to 35 minutes

The South is home to all sorts of wacky chocolate cakes like the Coca-Cola cake and this Mississippi mud cake—so named because the color resembles the deep, dark soil along the Mississippi River. What makes this recipe perfect for the skillet is that it can be made entirely in one pan, from stirring the batter to baking the cake. The marshmallows are scattered on the hot cake so they melt, and then the chocolate icing is poured over. What results is a gooey chocolate, decadent mess of a cake, intended to be spooned onto plates and served warm with a glass of cold milk.

CAKE

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1¼ cups granulated sugar
- ⅓ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1½ cups buttermilk
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1½ cups miniature marshmallows

CHOCOLATE FUDGE ICING

- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 4 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- ⅓ cup whole milk
- Big pinch salt
- 3 to 3½ cups confectioners' sugar

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, cocoa, baking soda, and salt.
3. Melt the butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium-low heat. Remove the skillet from the heat. Pour the buttermilk into the skillet and stir to combine with the melted butter. Add the beaten eggs and vanilla and stir to combine. Add the flour mixture to the skillet and stir until smooth, about 2 minutes. Run a wet paper towel around the edges of the pan to clean them up.
4. Place the skillet in the oven and bake until the cake springs back when lightly pressed with a finger, 30 to 35 minutes. Remove the skillet from the oven and immediately scatter the marshmallows over the top of the cake. Set the skillet aside.
5. To make the icing, melt the butter in a medium saucepan over low heat. Stir in the cocoa powder and milk. Cook, stirring, until the mixture thickens and just begins to come to a boil, about 1 minute. Remove the pan from the heat. Stir in the salt and 3 cups confectioners' sugar, a little at a time, whisking until smooth. Add up to ½ cup more confectioners' sugar if needed to make an icing that is pourable and spreadable.
6. Pour the hot icing over the top of the marshmallows. Let the cake rest for 30 minutes, then serve.

Brown Sugar SNICKERDOODLE BITES

MAKES ABOUT 4 DOZEN (1-INCH) SQUARES

Prep: 20 minutes / Bake: 25 to 30 minutes

Snickerdoodles—those irresistible cinnamon- and sugar-dusted cookies—were first baked as bars. So, honoring history, I made the cookie batter in my skillet and created small bites of that same beloved cookie. What the skillet does so well with bars and squares is crisp them up around the edges. And to keep the edges of these bites nice and clean, I score them with a knife straight out of the oven. If you want to present this as a giant cookie, perhaps a birthday cookie, do not score it. Stick candles in the still-warm cookie and slice it right at the table. Snickerdoodle pairs well with cinnamon, vanilla, or peach ice cream.

1 cup granulated sugar

½ cup lightly packed light brown sugar

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter,
at room temperature

½ cup vegetable shortening (see Note)

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 large eggs

2¼ cups all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon salt

TOPPING

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
2. In a large mixing bowl, beat both sugars, the butter, and the shortening with an electric mixer on medium speed until creamy, about 2 minutes, scraping down the side of the bowl once. Add the vanilla and the eggs, one at a time, continuing to beat on medium speed for about 30 seconds.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, and salt. Add the flour mixture to the butter mixture and beat on low speed until incorporated, scraping down the side of the bowl as needed. Dump the batter into a 12-inch skillet, smoothing the top.
4. To make the topping, stir together the sugar and cinnamon in a small bowl. Sprinkle the topping over the batter.
5. Place the skillet in the oven and bake until deeply golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes. Score the big cookie into 1-inch squares and let cool in the pan for 20 minutes. With a small metal spatula, transfer the squares to a rack to cool completely.

NOTE: Vegetable shortening makes a chewier cookie. If you want more butter flavor, use 1 cup (2 sticks) of butter instead of half butter and half shortening.



WARM CHOCOLATE CHUNK COOKIE to Share

MAKES 12 SERVINGS / Prep: 20 minutes / Bake: 25 to 30 minutes

Hands-down, this is the one-pan skillet dessert that brings everyone to the table. I don't care how many of your guests say they are not eating dessert. If you pull this warm cookie from the oven, place it on a trivet in the middle of the table, then pile on ice cream, it's just too hard to resist! The trick is not to overbake the cookie. You want to bake it until "medium-rare" so the edges are crispy but the center is still soft and spoonable.

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
¾ cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
¾ cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips
10 ounces bittersweet chocolate chunks
½ cup coarsely chopped walnuts or pecans
Vanilla ice cream, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Melt the butter in a 12-inch skillet over low heat. Turn off the heat. Stir both sugars into the melted butter. Fold in the eggs and vanilla.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, and salt. Add the flour mixture to the butter-sugar mixture and stir until smooth. Fold in the chocolate chips and chocolate chunks. Run a wet paper towel around the edges of the pan to clean them up. Scatter the nuts over the top of the batter.
4. Place the skillet in the oven and bake until the edges are lightly browned and the center is still a little soft to the touch, 25 to 30 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven. Serve warm with vanilla ice cream.

RUM-ROASTED PEACHES

MAKES 4 SERVINGS / Prep: 20 minutes / Bake: 20 to 25 minutes

This recipe comes with a disclaimer: Do not use fully ripe, in-season fruit. Because really, the best thing to do with gorgeous ripe peaches is to eat them out of hand and let the juices run down your arm. This dessert is for those other peaches—the ones that don't taste as sweet as promised, the ones that are a little firmer than you would like. These less-than-perfect peaches are just right for roasting and keep their shape beautifully!

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

½ cup lightly packed light brown sugar

3 tablespoons water

1 cinnamon stick

5 whole cloves

Pinch ground nutmeg

**2 tablespoons dark rum, bourbon,
or rye whiskey**

4 large peaches, cut in half and pitted

Vanilla ice cream, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Melt the butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the brown sugar, water, cinnamon stick, cloves, and nutmeg and stir until the sugar dissolves, about 4 minutes. Stir in the rum. Place the peaches, cut-side down, in the skillet, and spoon some of the cooking juices over them.
3. Place the skillet in the oven and bake until the peaches are tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Remove the skillet from the oven and let the peaches cool in the juices until you can handle them, about 20 minutes. Peel away their skins. Spoon vanilla ice cream into bowls and slice the peaches on top of the ice cream. Spoon the cooking juices over, discarding the cinnamon stick and cloves, and serve.



BLACK AND BLUEBERRY Crumble

MAKES 12 SERVINGS / Prep: 20 minutes / Bake: 40 to 45 minutes

Summer berries mean crumbles at our house. It's just so easy to pile fresh berries into the skillet, sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon, and top with an easy oat and flour crumble. The crumble is a sweet dough that is just that: crumbly. You want this mixture to hold its shape so that when it bakes it stays on top and gets browned and crispy. Serve warm—always—with vanilla ice cream. And, if there are leftovers, remove them from the skillet before storing. The natural acidity of the fruit is not good for the finish on your skillet.

1 teaspoon unsalted butter,
at room temperature

4 cups fresh blueberries

3 cups fresh blackberries
or raspberries

½ to ½ cup granulated sugar

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

CRUMBLE TOPPING

¼ cups packed light brown sugar

¼ cups unbleached all-purpose flour

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter,
chilled and cut into 24 pieces

1 cup rolled oats

Vanilla ice cream, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Grease a 12-inch skillet with the butter. Scatter the berries in the skillet. Sprinkle the sugar and cinnamon on top. Heat the skillet over medium heat, stirring and tossing the fruit until the sugar dissolves, 3 to 4 minutes. Pull the pan off the heat and set it aside.
3. For the crumble, combine the brown sugar, flour, salt, and cinnamon in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade. Pulse a few times to combine. Distribute around the work bowl. With your fingers, toss the butter with the flour mixture so it doesn't stick together, carefully avoiding the blades of the processor. Pulse 10 to 15 times, until the mixture just begins to pull together. Transfer to a mixing bowl and use your fingers to knead in the oats until the butter softens and the mixture gets crumbly. Drop the crumble mixture in big pieces on top of the fruit.
4. Place the skillet in the oven and bake until the crumble topping is dark golden-brown and the fruit mixture is bubbling around the edges, 40 to 45 minutes. Remove the skillet from the oven and let the crumble rest for 30 minutes, so the juices have a chance to thicken. Serve warm with ice cream.