

Cook, Eat, Repeat

Ingredients, recipes and stories

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SPAGHETTI WITH CHARD, CHILES AND ANCHOVIES

SERVES 2, heartily

12 ounces rainbow (or other) chard (and see recipe intro)

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more to pour over at the end

8 anchovy fillets (from a jar or can)

3 fat cloves of garlic

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

½ cup hot water from a just-boiled kettle

8 ounces spaghetti

2–3 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan or Pecorino Romano, plus more to serve

1. Put a large saucepan of water on for the pasta and put the kettle on to boil at the same time.
2. Strip the leaves from the stalks of chard. Roll them up and slice finely, then leave to one side. Cut the stalks into ½–¾-inch pieces, depending on their girth.
3. Into a large saucepan, add the olive oil and the anchovies, and warm slowly, stirring and pressing down on the anchovies until they seem to melt into the oil.
4. Take off the heat, peel and mince or grate in the garlic, add the red pepper flakes, then put back on the heat, this time turned up to medium, and stir briefly before adding the chopped chard stalks. Turn the stalks around in the pepper-flecked anchovy oil for a minute or so to soak up the flavor.
5. Pour in the hot water, stir again, and bring to a bubble. Put the lid on the pan and cook at a fast simmer until the stalks are tender; this will take 5–7 minutes. If you're cooking with larger stemmed, more robust chard, then you may need to go for 10 minutes.
6. When the pasta water has come to a boil, salt it—it will rise up excitedly. Once it's calmed down again, drop in your spaghetti and cook following the package instructions, though start checking a couple of minutes before it says.
7. Add the shredded chard leaves to the stalks in their pan, give a good stir, replace the lid, and leave them to wilt in the hot pan. This could take anything from 2–4 minutes. Once they're ready, turn the heat off under the pan, keeping the lid on, while you wait for the pasta.
8. Use a pasta fork or tongs to add the cooked spaghetti straight to the waiting pan of chard. It doesn't matter if the pasta is dripping with water, as that starchy liquid will help thicken your sauce. Turn the spaghetti well in the chard and anchovy mixture; you may need to add up to 4 tablespoons of cooking water as you toss everything together; go slowly, and stop when the chard seems to turn into a sauce that cleaves to the strands of spaghetti.

9. Grate over about 2 tablespoons' worth of Parmesan or Pecorino Romano and toss again, then give a generous pour of olive oil, and do likewise. Taste to see if you want more cheese or oil, and proceed accordingly; then turn into a warmed bowl or bowls, and bring the cheese, a grater and the bottle of olive oil to the table with you.

CELERY ROOT AND ANCHOVY GRATIN

SERVES 4-6

6 cups cold water, plus more
as needed

2 tablespoons lemon juice

2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)

2¼-pound celery root (approx. 1 large)

4 fat cloves of garlic

1 tablespoon butter, plus more for greasing
dish

1¼ cups heavy cream

8 anchovy fillets

A good grinding of pepper

1. Put the cold water into a saucepan large enough to take all the celery root comfortably. It doesn't have to be huge; I fit mine into a pan that's 9 inches in diameter and 4 inches deep. Add the lemon juice and salt the water. Very carefully cut the celery root into quarters and then peel. In a processor or with a mandolin or, indeed, with the knife you used to cut and peel the celery root, slice very thinly. (If using the slicing disc in the processor, you will probably have to cut each quarter in half.) Add to the lemony water in the saucepan, topping up with a little fresh water if the celery root isn't just about covered.

2. Peel the cloves of garlic and drop them into the pan too, then bring to a boil over high heat. I put a lid on to make it faster, but keep an ear open so that you don't miss when it starts boiling. Cook on a rollicking boil, partially covered, for about 5 minutes until the pieces of celery root are tender, but not so soft that they're cooked through.

3. With a large strainer over a large pitcher or bowl, strain the celery root; I do this because I keep the liquid for making broth. If you know you won't, then lower in a ladle or measuring jug to remove some of the celery root-cooking water—get about one cup, just in case—to add to the anchovy cream later, and just drain the celery root in a colander in the sink, though it pains me to write those words.

4. Once the celery root is cool enough to handle, remove ½ cup of it (I go for the little chips and pieces, so that I have as many of the proper slices as I can for layering up in the dish later) and put into a bowl you can use with a stick blender. Retrieve the garlic cloves and add those to your bowl, too.

5. Butter your chosen dish (the one I use has internal measurements of 11 x 7 x 2¼ inches) and fill with the celery root slices.

6. Add the cream and anchovy fillets to your bowl of celery root offcuts and garlic, along with 7 tablespoons of the celery root-cooking water, then give a generous grinding of pepper and blitz with a stick blender. Resist the temptation to knock this back in one—or is it only me?—and

pour over the celery root in its dish (adding more of the reserved water should the cream not just cover) and leave for a couple of hours—or up to 2 days in the fridge—or blithely proceed straightaway.

7. Heat the oven to 375°F. Dot the 1 tablespoon of butter on top of the cream-covered celery root and cook for 50 minutes to 1 hour, until piping hot and golden brown, with the odd scorched bit, on top. If you're making this to go with the Beef Cheeks with Port and Chestnuts, make sure the gratin is on the higher shelf.

ANCHOVY ELIXIR

Makes approx. 1', cups

4 ounces salt-packed anchovies

3 fat cloves of garlic, peeled

2½ tablespoons lemon juice

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

½ cup cold water

TO SERVE

A few heads of red endive

Radishes or other raw vegetables of your choice

1. It might be wisest to follow the preparation instructions that come on the packaging of your salt-packed anchovies, but what I do is soak them in a dish (about 9-inch square) of cold water for 5 minutes, then throw the water out, fill up again, and leave to soak in the fresh water for a further 5. Then rinse each anchovy under the tap with the cold water running, tearing away and discarding the tails. If you want to remove the bones, too, be my guest; you will thereby gain huge respect for those who fillet anchovies for a living.
2. If using a bullet or other high-speed blender, put the soaked and drained anchovies, and all the remaining ingredients, into it, and blitz until you have a smooth, buff-gray and gloopily fluid sauce.
3. If using a stick blender, put the soaked and drained anchovies into a bowl with the garlic and lemon juice and blitz to a paste. Still blitzing, gradually pour in a third of the oil, and when that's absorbed, a third of the water, and carry on in this vein until both are used up.
4. Decant into a small serving dish or a few mini bowls and sit, respectively, on a platter or number of plates, and arrange your crudités around them.

NO-KNEAD BREAD

MAKES 1 modest-sized loaf

3¾ cups (400g) white bread flour

1¼ teaspoons (8g) fine sea salt

¼ teaspoon (1g, but it's hard to get it to register on the scales) instant dry yeast

1¼ cups (300g) cold tap water (or cooled pasta- or potato-cooking water, see recipe intro), plus more as needed

1 tablespoon (15g) lemon juice (omit if using potato- or pasta-cooking water, or powdered instant mashed potatoes)

Polenta or additional flour, for dusting

1. In a medium-sized bowl, stir together the flour, salt and yeast. Measure the water into a pitcher, stir in the lemon juice if using water from the tap, rather than water you've cooked potatoes or pasta in. Pour into the flour and, using your hand, a wooden spoon or a Danish dough whisk, mix it together until you have a wet, sticky dough; this will take under 30 seconds. Add more water if you feel it needs it, but just a tablespoon at a time—you don't want to make it too liquid. This is something you will feel surer about once you've made this a couple of times.
2. Cover the bowl with food wrap or a shower cap and sit at room temperature out of direct sunlight until the surface is dotted with bubbles and the dough almost doubled. This will take 16–18 hours. (This is the case for the white bread; other flours show a less dramatic increase in size.)
3. Once your dough has reached this point, dust a work surface or board generously with flour. Use a dough-scraper, for ease, to scrape out the dough onto your floured surface in one piece. It will be quite stringy and feel loose and sticky. Bring the edges of the dough up and over, into the middle, to form a low-slung round of dough.
4. Dust one half of a cotton or linen kitchen towel (not a waffle or terry cloth one) liberally with polenta or flour, and then transfer your rounded dough onto the dusted side of the kitchen towel, tuck marks down. Now sprinkle the top of the dough lightly with a little more polenta or flour before folding the kitchen towel over to cover it. Leave in a warm, draught-free spot for 1–2 hours for its second rise. I don't find it rises up much in this time but rather it expands outwards. I tend to leave it for 2 hours in winter, but find otherwise 1 hour is best for the white loaf or it spreads too much.
5. About 45 minutes before this second rise is up, put a Dutch oven, ceramic or heat-resistant glass casserole dish with its lid on into the oven and heat to 450°F. While Jim Lahey stipulates the dish be 4½–6½ quarts capacity, I find this works

best for me in a Pyrex casserole dish of 3 ½ quarts capacity.

6. When the dough's had its second rise, take the heated pot out of the oven, and take off the lid. Uncover the dough under the kitchen towel and then quickly and carefully invert it into the pot. And yes, you will get polenta or flour all over the place; I rather feel a handheld vacuum cleaner or dustpan and brush should be listed in the ingredients. After you've made this a few times, you may feel confident enough to lift it up from the cloth and invert with your hands.

7. Bake for 30 minutes, then remove the lid and cook for a further 15–30 minutes until the bread is a deep golden brown and bronzed in parts. When I'm baking my Rye and Cider Bread, I give it 45 minutes with the lid on, and 15 with it off. If you rap the bottom of the loaf, it should sound hollow when it's cooked, but don't burn yourself doing this. Once it's ready, slip the bread out of its casserole and onto a wire rack to cool thoroughly before eating, I'm sorry to say. This, perhaps, is a counsel of perfection, but if you cut or tear into it while it's still warm, it will stale immediately (unless you eat it all at that first sitting, of course). To keep the loaf fresh for as long as possible, store in a bread box. The next best method is to wrap it in a kitchen towel.

OLD-FASHIONED SANDWICH LOAF

MAKES 1 beautiful loaf

4 cups (500g) white bread flour, plus more for dusting

2½ teaspoons (7g) or 1 × ¼-ounce package instant dry yeast

2 teaspoons (8g) granulated sugar

2 teaspoons (12g) fine sea salt

½ cup (125g) spoiled milk (or sour cream), straight from the fridge

¾ cup (150g) cold water

7 tablespoons (100g) hot water from a just-boiled kettle

3 tablespoons (45g) soft unsalted butter (omit if using sour cream) plus more for greasing the pan

Vegetable oil, for kneading

1. Mix the flour, yeast, sugar and salt in a large bowl.
2. Pour the spoiled milk (or sour cream) into a measuring jug, add the cold water then the boiling water (to give you a generous 1½ cups or 375g). Stir in the soft butter; it won't melt entirely, but that's fine.
3. Pour the measuring jug of wet ingredients into the bowl of dry ingredients, stirring as you go, either with a wooden spoon, a Danish dough whisk or—and these are my tools of choice here—hands. Stir until all the flour—apart from a little that's clinging to the sides of the bowl—is absorbed into the dough; if this takes a minute I'd be surprised. Form into a rough ball, cover the bowl with food wrap or a shower cap, and leave for 10 minutes.
4. Pour a little oil onto the kitchen countertop and spread it with your hand to give a light sheen to an area big enough to knead on. Take the dough out of its bowl and duly knead it for 10 seconds. How you knead is very personal: we all have our different styles; I push the dough away with the heel of my hand and bring it back with my fingers. Form the dough back into a ball, return it to its bowl, cover it again, and leave for 10 minutes. Repeat this process twice, and after the third 10-second knead, form the dough into a ball again, put it back in the bowl, cover, and leave for an hour.
5. Line the bottom of a 2-pound loaf pan with parchment paper and very lightly grease the sides; I use an old butter wrapper for this. Take the plumpiously risen dough out of its bowl, and pat it out on your oiled surface so that you have a soft, puffy mattress about ¾-inch thick, with one edge about 1½ inches shorter than the length of your pan. Starting with this edge, and using both hands, tightly roll the dough into a scroll—or jelly roll, if that helps you visualize it better—and tenderly place it seam side down in your prepared pan; you may have to press the short sides gently to fit it in, as the scroll can get longer as you roll. Leave to rise for 1–1½ hours, until it's peeking out just above the top of the pan. Turn the oven on when it looks like it's nearly there.

6. So, heat the oven to 400°F. Dust the top of the dough with flour and bake for 45 minutes, by which time the bread will be risen, with a rounded and deep biscuity-gold top. Unless your oven is misfiring, it will definitely be done. Armed with oven mitts, quickly take the bread out of the pan, and put it on a wire rack to cool before slicing into it. To keep the loaf fresh for as long as possible, store in a bread box. The next best method is to wrap it in a kitchen towel.

PASTA WITH CLAMS AND BOTTARGA

SERVES 1, as a special treat

8 ounces small clams

**Bottarga, enough to give 3 tablespoons
when grated (never buy pre-grated
bottarga)**

1 fat clove of garlic

4 ounces lorighittas or linguine

**2 tablespoons extra-virgin
olive oil**

1 lemon

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

**3 tablespoons dry white vermouth
or wine**

1 teaspoon unsalted butter

TO SERVE (OPTIONAL)

Fresh parsley

Bread, to soak up the juices

It is not advisable to make ahead, store or freeze.

1. Put the clams into a bowl of cold water, and leave them for 15 minutes. Put the water on for the pasta, and assemble and measure out all your other ingredients. First, peel back the pellicle (or covering) of the bottarga to leave about ½ inch uncovered, and grate it finely into a bowl, until you have 2 tablespoons' worth, leaving a bit more to grate straight over the pasta if you want more as you eat. Peel the garlic, ready to be minced or grated shortly.
2. When the water is boiling, add salt and wait for it to fizz up, calm down and then come back to a boil again before adding the pasta, and cook following the package directions, but be prepared for it to be ready earlier, so start checking in good time.
3. Drain the clams, discarding any that are open.
4. When the pasta has about 4 minutes more to go, get out a heavy-based saucepan that comes with a lid and that will fit both clams and pasta in later (this is a solo portion, so it hardly needs to be big) and gently warm the olive oil in it. Take the pan off the heat and finely grate in the zest of the lemon, then mince or grate in the garlic, add the red pepper flakes, and stir well for a scant minute back on lowish heat.
5. Turn the heat up and add the clams, followed by the vermouth or wine, and quickly clamp on the lid so the clams steam open; this should take a couple of minutes. Discard any clams that remain closed.
6. When the pasta's ready, but on the al dente side, use a spider to ferry it from its pot to the clam pan (but if you're cooking linguine, tongs or a pasta fork would be better), add the teaspoon of butter, put the lid back on and give everything a good shake. Leave to stand with the heat off for 2 minutes.
7. Uncover, add most of your grated bottarga, and a little chopped parsley if wished, and give a gentle stir. Turn out into a shallow bowl, and sprinkle over

the rest of the grated bottarga, grating in even more as you eat if that makes you happy. It makes me happy. As does dunking some chewy bread into the briny juices left in the bottom of the bowl.

CRAB MAC 'N' CHEESE

SERVES 2, although I fear I could eat all of it without too much trouble

4 ounces Gruyère cheese (approx. 1 cup, grated)

2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan

1½ tablespoons all-purpose flour

¼ teaspoon ground mace

¼ teaspoon sweet smoked paprika

⅛ teaspoon Aleppo pepper, or hot smoked paprika, plus more to sprinkle at the end

1 cup whole milk

1 tablespoon tomato paste

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 fat clove of garlic

½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

8 ounces conchiglie rigate pasta

4 ounces mixed white and brown crabmeat (50/50)

1. Grate the Gruyère into a bowl and add the 2 tablespoons of grated Parmesan. Mix the flour with the spices in a small cup. Pour the milk into a measuring jug and stir in the tablespoon of tomato paste. Put a saucepan of water on to boil for the pasta.
2. Find a smallish heavy-based saucepan; I use one of 7 inches diameter. Over lowish heat, melt the butter, then peel and mince or grate in the garlic and stir it around in the pan quickly. Turn the heat up to medium and add the flour and spices. Whisk over the heat until it all coheres into an orange, fragrant, loose paste; this will take no longer than a minute. It soon looks like tangerine-tinted foaming honeycomb. Take off the heat and very gradually whisk in the tomatoey milk, until it's completely smooth. Use a spatula to scrape down any sauce that's stuck to the sides of the pan.
3. Put back on the heat, turn up to medium and cook, stirring, until it has thickened and lost any taste of flouriness; this will take anything from 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the Worcestershire sauce.
4. Take the pan off the heat and stir in the grated cheeses. It'll look rather fabulously like Velveeta now. Put a lid on the saucepan, or cover tightly with foil, and leave on the stove, but with the heat off, while you get on with the pasta. If you have an electric or ceramic stove it may be better to take the pan off completely.
5. So, add salt to the boiling water in the pasta pan, then add the pasta and cook following the package instructions, though start checking it a couple of minutes earlier.
6. When the pasta is just about al dente, add the crabmeat to the smoky cheese sauce, then once you're happy that the pasta shells are ready, use a spider to lift them into the sauce or drain them, reserving some pasta-cooking liquid first, and drop the shells in. Stir over lowish heat until the crabmeat is hot. If you

want to make the sauce any more fluid, as indeed you might, add as much of the pasta-cooking water as you need. Taste to see if you want to add salt—the crab meat you get in containers tends to be quite salty already, but if you’ve got yours from your fishmonger, it might need it.

7. Divide between two small shallow bowls and sprinkle with Aleppo pepper or hot smoked paprika.

WIDE NOODLES WITH LAMB SHANK IN AROMATIC BROTH

SERVES 2 lucky people

4 cups cold water

1 tablespoon gochujang paste

**2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)**

1 teaspoon allspice berries

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

1 star anise

1 lamb shank

1½-inch piece of fresh ginger

1 carrot (approx. 4 ounces)

2 fat cloves of garlic

2 smallish or 1 large shallot or ½ an onion

**8 ounces Savoy cabbage (approx. 4½ cups
shredded)**

**7 ounces pappardelle (not egg pappardelle)
or other wide noodles**

TO SERVE

Chili Crisp oil

1. Heat the oven to 300°F. Pour the 4 cups of water into a small Dutch oven with a tightly fitting lid (I use one of 8 inches diameter) and stir in the gochujang paste until dissolved, then add the salt, allspice, cumin seeds and star anise. Now add the lamb shank to the pot, and put over medium heat.
2. Cut the ginger into coins and add to the pot as well, along with the carrot, peeled (if you want) and cut into four, the garlic cloves, bruised with the flat of a wide-bladed knife, and the shallots, cut in half, though there is no need to peel them. In fact, I don't bother to peel anything. Once everything's in the pan, the lamb shank should be just covered. If it isn't, add some more water.
3. Once it's come to a boil, clamp on the lid and cook in the oven for 2–2½ hours, by which time the meat should be very tender indeed, and ready to fall off the bone.
4. Using tongs, transfer the lamb shank to a large-ish bowl, then strain the liquid over it. Leave to cool, then refrigerate overnight.
5. The next day, remove the solidified fat, and shred the meat—not too finely, you don't want stringiness—into a small saucepan, pouring over the liquid, and in another saucepan, large enough to take the pasta and cabbage, bring water to a boil.
6. Shred the cabbage. When the water's come to a boil, add salt, and turn the heat on very low under the pan of lamb and its broth so that it warms gently, though you do want it to be piping hot by the time the pasta and cabbage are cooked.
7. Add the pappardelle to the boiling salted water and when it's 3 minutes away from its full cooking time (check the package for instructions) add the cabbage

and stir well. When both cabbage and pasta are cooked, drain, then divide between two noodle bowls.

8. Using a slotted spoon, lift out the hot lamb and share between the two bowls, then ladle the broth on top. If you have any of the crispy chili oil add 1 teaspoon or so to each bowl, and take both bowls to the table, making sure you come back for the Chili Crisp oil, so you can add more as you eat.

FISH STICK BHORTA

SERVES 2, with essential leftovers

FOR THE PINK-PICKLED ONIONS

½ red onion

**Red wine vinegar or lime juice
to cover**

FOR THE BHORTA

2 regular onions (approx. 10 ounces)

2 red chiles

2 fat cloves of garlic

**1 tablespoon finely grated fresh ginger
(approx. 3-inch piece)**

12 fish sticks

**3 tablespoons cold-pressed rapeseed or
vegetable oil**

2 tablespoons English mustard (from a jar)

**2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)**

4 ounces young spinach

1 lime

**3 tablespoons roughly chopped cilantro,
plus more to serve**

1. Make your pink-pickled onions as far in advance as you can: at least 2 hours, and up to 24. Cut your red onion half—or use a whole onion if you prefer, as you will easily find yourself adding them to much else—into fine half-moons. Put these into a jar with a lid, or simply into a bowl that you can cover. Pour over red wine vinegar (or lime juice), pressing down on the onions until they are all just immersed. Put the lid on the jar or cover your bowl, and leave the onions to steep.
2. When you're ready to make and eat the bhorta, heat the oven to 425°F. While you're waiting, peel and slice your 2 regular onions into fine half-moons, seed the chiles (or not if you prefer) and slice them thinly, and peel the garlic. If the skin is tough, peel the ginger (using the tip of a teaspoon) then grate it finely to give 1 tablespoonful.
3. When the oven's hot, and your ingredients are assembled and ready, put the fish sticks on a baking sheet and cook for approx. 20–25 minutes, which may be slightly longer than the package directs, but will ensure the bread crumb coating is really crisp.
4. Meanwhile, warm the oil in a large frying pan (I use a wok-shaped stir-fry pan), and cook the onions over medium-low for 20 minutes, stirring regularly, by which time they will be pale gold and soft.
5. Add the sliced chiles and cook, stirring all the while, for 3 minutes, then stir in the grated ginger, mince or grate in the garlic, and cook, still stirring, for another 2 minutes. Spoon in the mustard and salt, stirring to combine, then add the spinach leaves and let them wilt in the pan for 2–3 minutes, stirring regularly, then squeeze in the juice of the lime.

6. Take the pan off the heat while you get the fish sticks. Break them up a bit with a spatula then add them to the wok or frying pan. Toss everything together, breaking them up further and mashing them into the frying pan, then sprinkle over the cilantro.
7. Serve topped with the pink-pickled onions, adding extra chopped cilantro if wished.

SMOKY SQUID AND BEANS

SERVES 2

10–12 ounces squid (cleaned weight)

2 tablespoons Amontillado or other dry sherry (or use 2 tablespoons of juice from the lemon, below)

1 x 25-ounce jar of Spanish *judión* beans or 2 x 14-ounce cans of butter beans

3 tablespoons plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, and more to serve

1 lemon

4 fat cloves of garlic

½ teaspoon plus ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

½ teaspoon sweet smoked paprika, plus more for dusting

2 teaspoons tomato paste

¼ teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ⅛ teaspoon fine sea salt)

1. Slice the tubes of squid to open them out, and then cut into bite-sized pieces. If the tentacles are in large clumps, halve them. Transfer the squid to a small dish, spoon over the sherry, and mix well. If you don't want to use sherry, then by all means substitute with lemon juice, but zest the lemon first with a fine grater held over a small plate. Leave the squid while you get on with the beans.
2. Empty the contents of your jar or cans of beans into a colander, rinse thoroughly with cold water from the tap, then drain (it doesn't matter if there's still some water clinging to them) and tip into a serving dish or shallow bowl big enough to fit them and the squid in later, and bring over to the stove.
3. Pour the 3 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil into a wok-like pan (or wide, shallow braiser) that comes with a lid and, if you haven't already zested the lemon, finely grate in the zest now, and peel then mince or grate in the garlic. Add the ½ teaspoon each of red pepper flakes and sweet smoked paprika, and warm over gentle heat, stirring most of the time, for about a minute or until the oil starts sizzling aromatically.
4. Spoon in the tomato paste and cook, stirring, for another minute and then tip in the beans (along with a couple of tablespoons of the water that's collected in the dish) and stir them into the pan, turning them in the fiery red oil very, very gently. If you have drained your beans too efficiently, you may need to get your couple of tablespoons of water from the tap. Sprinkle in the salt, give a final gentle stir (the beans out of the jar are divinely soft, and you don't want to squish them). Turn the heat up just a smidgeon, clamp on the lid, and leave to cook for 3 minutes, by which time they should be warmed through.
5. Once the beans are hot, tip them back into the serving dish, and let them wait there by the stove, ready to be united with the squid.
6. Pour the remaining 2 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil into the pan, add the ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes, and turn the heat to high. Squeeze the squid

pieces in your hands over the dish they're in, then drop them into the hot chilefied oil and cook, stirring pretty much most of the time, for 3 minutes or until they are just cooked through and opaque. Don't cook them beyond this point or they'll get tough. Pour in the sherry (or lemon) and squid juices from the dish, not worrying about the slight gray tinge they might have; even if the squid has been cleaned, you often get a little inkiness.

7. Once this has bubbled up, turn the heat back down to medium-low and scrape the beans out of their bowl into the pan on top of the squid. Stir together gently, and taste to see if it needs any lemon. If you've used lemon juice to macerate the squid, I'm sure it won't, but if you have steeped the squid in sherry you might like to add a tablespoonful at the end. Add more salt if needed, too.

8. Return to the serving dish, drizzle or douse—as you see fit—with extra-virgin olive oil, sprinkle over some sweet smoked paprika and serve immediately.

FRIED CHICKEN SANDWICH

SERVES 1, ecstatically

5 tablespoons kefir, buttermilk or plain yogurt
½ teaspoon hot smoked paprika, plus ¼ teaspoon for flour, below
½ teaspoon fine sea salt, plus ¼ teaspoon for flour, below
1 teaspoon lemon juice
½ teaspoon Dijon mustard
½ teaspoon maple syrup
1 fat clove of garlic
1 small skinless, boneless chicken thigh
4–5 tablespoons all-purpose flour
Sunflower oil for frying, approx.
6 cups for a 9-inch saucepan, more for a wok

FOR ASSEMBLING

¼ cup garlic mayonnaise
1 teaspoon Chili Crisp oil or other chili sauce
¼ teaspoon honey
1 burger bun or 2 slices of white bread
A few leaves of iceberg lettuce, shredded
Kimchi or pickles of your choice
Pink-pickled onions

1. Pour the kefir, or buttermilk, or yogurt into a small dish and stir in the ½ teaspoon of hot smoked paprika, ½ teaspoon of salt, lemon juice, Dijon mustard, and maple syrup. Peel the garlic and mince or grate it in, too. Give a good stir, then add the chicken thigh and turn it in the marinade to make sure it's well coated. Cover the dish, then leave for at least 4 hours or up to 2 days in the fridge. (If you simply cannot wait that long, leave the chicken in its marinade out on the kitchen countertop for 20–40 minutes.)
2. Take the chicken, in its marinade, out of the fridge in good time to get to room temperature before you start to cook it.
3. Mix the flour with the remaining ¼ teaspoon each of hot smoked paprika and salt in a shallow dish. Lift the chicken out of the marinade, but don't try and shake it off. Dredge both sides of the chicken in the seasoned flour, then dip briefly back into the marinade and dredge again. This double-dredging is essential to get a thick, shaggy coating. You can leave the coated chicken in the flour dish until you fry.
4. Mix the garlic mayonnaise with the Chili Crisp oil and honey, and spread both pieces of a split burger bun (or a couple of slices of bread) with it. Put a plate lined with paper towels by (but not dangerously near) the stove, if you want to get rid of any excess fat once the chicken's cooked.
5. Pour enough oil into your chosen pan to come about 1 ½ inches up the sides. Heat until a small piece of bread becomes golden and crisp almost instantly; if you want to be precise, and have a food thermometer, then you want the fat to be at 375°F when the chicken goes in (and about 350°F as it cooks).

6. Using tongs, gently lower the chicken thigh into the hot oil, and cook for 3–4 minutes on each side, by which time the coating should be deep gold and very crisp and the chicken completely cooked through. Remove to the waiting paper-lined plate, remembering to take the pan of oil off the heat, and leave to stand for a couple of minutes while you shred some iceberg lettuce and get out your pickles. Put a handful of shredded lettuce on top of the mayo on the bottom slice, top with the fried chicken, add kimchi, pink-pickled onions and any other pickles you want. Scatter with a bit more lettuce and squidge on the top of the bun or second slice of bread. Go in cautiously: I have more than once burned my mouth.

MARZIPAN LOAF CAKE

gives 8–10 slices

5 ounces (150g) marzipan (white or yellow) or almond paste, at room temperature	¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
1 stick plus 1 tablespoon (9 tablespoons or 125g) soft unsalted butter	1 teaspoon baking powder (gluten-free if necessary)
1 teaspoon vanilla paste (or extract)	1½ teaspoons ground cardamom
¼ cup (50g) superfine sugar	3 large eggs, at room temperature
⅔ cup (75g) all-purpose flour (or gluten-free all-purpose flour)	

1. Heat the oven to 325°F and drop a loaf-pan liner into a 1-pound loaf pan, or line the bottom with parchment paper and butter the sides.
2. The easiest way to make this is to put everything (tearing the marzipan into lumps first) into the processor and blitz until smooth, stopping to scrape down the sides a couple of times.
3. If you don't have a processor, then I advise you to use almond paste rather than marzipan and beat it together with the butter and vanilla until thoroughly combined, then beat in the sugar. Stir the flour, salt, baking powder (though if you're not making this in a processor, use just ¾ teaspoon), and cardamom together. Beat the eggs into the butter mixture, one at a time, adding a third of the dried ingredients after each egg. Carry on beating when everything's in, to make sure you have a coherent batter with no lumps of almond paste visible.
4. Pour and scrape into the prepared pan and bake for 40 minutes (adding a loose covering of foil after 30 to stop it browning any further) or until the cake is beginning to come away from the sides and a cake tester comes out clean. It runckles a little on top as it cools.

LEMON AND ELDERFLOWER DRIZZLE CAKE

GIVES 9 squares

FOR THE CAKE

1½ sticks (12 tablespoons or 175g) soft unsalted butter
¾ cup (150g) superfine sugar
¾ cup (100g) rice flour (or all-purpose flour if you don't need this to be gluten-free)
¾ cup (75g) almond meal
A pinch of fine sea salt
1½ teaspoons baking powder (gluten-free if necessary)

3 large eggs, at room temperature

1 large lemon

2 tablespoons (30g) undiluted elderflower syrup

FOR THE SYRUP

3 tablespoons (45g) of juice from the lemon, above

7 tablespoons (100g) undiluted elderflower syrup

1 tablespoon (15g) granulated sugar

1. Heat the oven to 350°F. Line the bottom and sides of an 8-inch square (or round) cake pan with parchment paper, making sure the paper comes up the sides. If you're using a springform pan, just line the bottom and butter the sides.
2. Put the butter, sugar, rice flour, almond meal, salt, baking powder, and eggs into a processor. Finely grate over the zest of the lemon and blitz until you have a thick batter. Pour the 2 tablespoons of elderflower syrup through the funnel of the processor, with the motor still going, until combined.
3. If you don't have a processor, cream the butter, sugar, and lemon zest together until smooth, light and aerated. Mix the flour, almond meal, and salt together, add just 1 teaspoon of baking powder; you don't need as much for the non-processor variant, as you're whipping more air into the batter. Beat 1 egg into the butter mixture, and when that's combined, beat in a third of your dry ingredients, and carry on in like manner until eggs and dry ingredients are used up. Finally, beat in the 2 tablespoons (30g) of elderflower syrup.
4. Pour and scrape this fragrant, slightly nubby and quite delicious batter into your prepared pan and bake for approx. 25 minutes, by which time the top of the cake should have turned a deep golden brown, and the edges—themselves a darker bronze by this stage—will have started coming away from the sides of the pan and a cake tester should come out clean. Check on it at around 20 minutes and loosely cover with foil if it's getting too dark.
5. While the cake is in the oven, prepare the elderflower syrup. Mix 3 tablespoons (45g) of juice from the zested lemon and 7 tablespoons (100g) of the syrup in a pitcher. Ignore the granulated sugar for now.
6. When the cake is cooked, put it in its pan on a wire rack and prick all over with your cake tester, though a stick of spaghetti would do (it's a wonderful

stand-in cake tester as it is), and then very gradually pour the syrup over the cake so that it sinks in slowly and doesn't pool.

7. Once the syrup is soaked in, sprinkle over the tablespoon of granulated sugar in an even layer on top of the cake, and leave to cool completely. When cold, either lift the cake out of the pan using the paper, or just unspring if you're using a springform pan.

GLUTEN-FREE BANANA BREAD WITH CHOCOLATE AND WALNUTS

GIVES 10–12 slices

1⅓ cups (175g) rice flour
(or gluten-free all-purpose flour)

1 cup (100g) almond meal

2 teaspoons gluten-free baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

3 large (approx. 500g) very ripe or overripe bananas (to give 1½ cups, mashed)

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

7 tablespoons (100g) whole milk Greek yogurt, at room temperature

2 large eggs, at room temperature

½ cup (110g) vegetable oil

⅔ cup (125g) light brown sugar

6 ounces (150g) bittersweet chocolate, roughly chopped

1 cup (100g) roughly chopped walnuts

1. Heat the oven to 325°F and drop a paper liner into a 2-pound loaf pan or line the base with parchment paper.
2. Mix the rice flour (or gluten-free all-purpose flour), almond meal, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a bowl. Set aside for now.
3. Peel the bananas and, in a large bowl, big enough to take all the ingredients later, mash the peeled bananas thoroughly. Beat in the vanilla, then the yogurt, and, one by one, the eggs, followed by the oil and sugar.
4. When everything's combined, gradually beat in the flour mixture. Scrape down the sides of the bowl to make sure all is combined, and then fold in the chopped chocolate and walnuts.
5. Pour and scrape the batter into the lined loaf pan—it will come close to the top—then bake in the oven for 50–55 minutes until shrinking from the sides of the pan, and a cake tester (if you manage to avoid the gooey chocolate) comes out cleanish but with a few damp crumbs sticking to it. Set the pan on a wire rack, and let the cake cool completely before removing from the pan.

CHOCOLATE, TAHINI AND BANANA TWO WAYS

GIVES approx. 10 slices of banana bread or makes a molten cake for 2-3

2 medium (approx. 250g) very ripe or overripe bananas (to give $\frac{3}{4}$ cup mashed)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (55g) olive or vegetable oil
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50g) tahini, at room temperature (and see recipe intro)
3 tablespoons (50g) whole milk Greek yogurt, at room temperature (but only for the dessert)
1 large egg, at room temperature
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50g) superfine sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50g) dark brown sugar for the

dessert; 3 tablespoons (35g) for the bread
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (60g) all-purpose flour (or gluten-free all-purpose flour)
3 tablespoons (25g) unsweetened cocoa powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon fine sea salt
4 ounces (approx. $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 100g) bittersweet chocolate chips
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons sesame seeds, to sprinkle on top (only for the bread)

1. Heat the oven to 325°F if you're making banana bread, or 350°F for the molten cake. Put a paper liner into a 1-pound loaf pan or, for the molten cake, get out an ovenproof dish with a capacity of about 3 cups; mine is 7 inches in diameter and 2 inches deep.
2. Peel the bananas and, either by hand or using an electric hand mixer, mash the bananas, then beat in the oil, followed by the tahini. If you're making the molten cake, beat in the yogurt. Whether you're making the molten cake or the bread, now's the time to beat in the egg, then the sugars and vanilla.
3. Whisk or fork together the flour, cocoa, baking soda, and salt and slowly beat into the batter and when you can no longer see any specks of white, fold in the chocolate chips with a bendy spatula, which you will need to scrape the runny batter into either loaf pan or ovenproof dish. If it's banana bread you're making, sprinkle over the sesame seeds.
4. First, instructions for the bread: cook for 45–50 minutes until risen and firm to the touch, or until a cake tester comes out almost clean; some chocolate chips will make it a little sticky in parts. And don't worry about the cracks on the top; that is part of its deal, as it is for the molten cake. Let it cool completely in its pan on a wire rack and—if you can bear to wait—once it's cold, slip it out of the pan and wrap it in parchment paper, then foil, and leave it for a day before slicing and eating. I understand if this is too much to ask; I confess I don't always manage to wait.
5. And now for the molten cake: cook for 40–45 minutes, depending on whether you want it to have a gooily molten center or not. Once it's out of the oven, let it stand for 5–10 minutes before diving in for that first squidgy spoonful.

MINE-ALL-MINE SWEET AND SALTY CHOCOLATE COOKIES

MAKES 2 large cookies

⅓ cup (50g) all-purpose flour (or gluten-free all-purpose flour)

1½ tablespoons (10g) unsweetened cocoa powder

⅛ teaspoon baking powder (gluten-free if necessary)

⅛ teaspoon baking soda

⅛ teaspoon fine sea salt

3 tablespoons (50g) soft unsalted butter (or dairy-free baking block if you want these to be vegan)

1½ tablespoons (25g) superfine sugar

1 tablespoon (15g) dark brown sugar

¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

2 tablespoons (25g) mini bittersweet chocolate chips

¼ teaspoon flaky sea salt

1. Heat the oven to 350°F, and get out a—preferably light-colored—baking sheet. You don’t need to line it if it’s non-stick; otherwise, lie a sheet of parchment paper on it.
2. Stir the flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, and fine sea salt together in a small bowl just to combine them.
3. In a slightly larger bowl—I use a ceramic bowl that I now can’t look at without thinking of these cookies—vigorously beat the butter, both the sugars and the vanilla with a small wooden spoon until you have a buff-colored and creamy mixture. If you aren’t a messy person, you could use a cereal bowl for this.
4. Add a generous spoonful of the dry ingredients to the creamed butter and sugar and beat it in gently with your wooden spoon. Then—still gently, unless you want cocoa and flour all over the place—beat in the rest of your dry ingredients, in about three batches. Once the dry ingredients are absorbed, you can beat vigorously until you have a sticky, rich-brown dough, that clumps together, at which point you can stir in the chocolate chips.
5. It’s not often I demand this level of precision, but I now measure this mixture into two portions, each about ⅓ cup (or weigh and divide into two equal portions); you don’t need to be fanatical about this. Squidge each portion in your hands to form two fat patties about 2½ inches in diameter and place them on your baking sheet, at least 4 inches apart, as they spread while cooking.
6. Sprinkle ⅛ teaspoon of flaky sea salt over each cookie, and bake in the oven for about 12 minutes, until the top of each cookie is riven with cracks. At 10 minutes—which is when I start checking—they will be utterly smooth, but in the next 2 minutes they seem to transform themselves. I crouch by the oven, staring through the cloudy glass door feeling like, as the old Joan Rivers joke has

it (and forgive me if you've heard me tell this before), Elizabeth Taylor shouting "Hurry!" at the microwave.

7. Once the surface is cracked, and the cookies have spread, they are ready. They will, however, feel very soft—even uncooked—to the touch, and you will doubt me. But I will forgive you, as long as you obey me. So whip out the baking sheet, leaving the cookies in place for 5 minutes. Only then may you slip a metal spatula under the cookies and tenderly transfer them to a wire rack. For optimal eating pleasure, leave for another 10 minutes before biting into one. I often succumb after 5, which is perfectly permissible, I feel, though I should warn you that the cookie is unlikely to hold its shape by then. But in times of urgent need, such matters of form scarcely matter.

CRÈME CARAMEL FOR ONE

SERVES 1, blissfully

FOR THE CARAMEL

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

2 teaspoons cold water

FOR THE CRÈME

2 large egg yolks, at room temperature

2 teaspoons granulated sugar

¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

¾ cup whole milk

1. Heat the oven to 275°F, put the kettle on, tear off a piece of foil and cut out a square that's about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch bigger than the diameter of the top of the dish or mold you're using. When I first rushed to make this, I used a sweet little 7-ounce ceramic bowl that I must have bought once in a fit of cute, and found in the back of a messy cupboard. Fortune smiled: it was just right for the job. Otherwise, I favor preserving jars, water glasses or ceramic or glass ramekins; they all need to have a 7-ounce capacity and be heatproof.

2. Put your chosen mold very near the stove, and spoon the sugar into a very small saucepan with a light-colored interior—I use my pixie-pan, more properly known as a butter melter, with a 3½-inch diameter, but a milk pan of about 5½ inches is just as good—and add the 2 teaspoons of water. Swirl the pan a little, then put over medium-low heat to melt the sugar and bring it to a boil, lifting the pan up and giving it a swirl every now and again. Don't even think of stirring it. Once the now-clear melted sugar starts bubbling away, you can turn the heat up a little, and then wait for it to turn first gold, then amber, then watch until it's somewhere between maple syrup and chestnut; I like the caramel to be as dark and smoky as it can be without actually burning. Be patient, lift up and swirl the pan often and monitor it closely; as Tammy almost sang, Stand By Your Pan. Immediately it's turned the requisite deep amber, pour the caramel into the bottom of your mold, and now give this a swirl, just so the caramel goes a little up the sides. Place the mold in a small roasting pan or ovenproof dish.

3. In a Pyrex pitcher or similar, briskly stir the egg yolks with the sugar and vanilla extract, just until combined. I use a small silicone spatula for this, as a whisk would get too much air into the mixture.

4. Warm the milk—I give it 40 seconds in the microwave—and then pour it over the eggs and sugar, stirring and scraping with your little spatula, making sure there are no visible yellow bits of egg left at the bottom. Strain this—you must not think of dispensing with this step—over your caramel-lined mold and then, with a teaspoon, carefully remove any bubbles or froth. Cover the mold with your square of foil, making sure it doesn't touch the custard mixture, and seal it well all around the edges.

5. Pour hot water from the just-boiled kettle into the pan or dish to come about a third of the way up the mold, and slowly and steadily put it in the oven. Bake for 30 minutes, then lean in and very carefully remove the foil, and leave in the oven to cook for a further 20 minutes by which time it will be just set, with a little bit of a quiver.
6. Remove the pan from the oven and very carefully lift the crème caramel mold out of the water, and leave it on the countertop until completely cold. Cover with food wrap and put in the fridge overnight, or for at least 6 hours.
7. Take the crème caramel out of the fridge 30 minutes before you want to eat it. Uncover, and with a very small thin-bladed spatula, try very gently to pull the top of the soft-set cooked custard away from the sides of the mold. Fill a dish about 1 inch deep with water from a just-boiled kettle, or very hot water from the tap, and stand or dip the crème caramel mold in the water for the count of 5. Now for the fun part: sit a saucer or small lipped plate on top of the mold, turn it swiftly and firmly the right way up and give the smallest of shakes to help dislodge it. You will hear a muffled squelch as the crème caramel begins to slide out of the mold and onto its saucer. Gently remove the mold, and gaze at this tender, bulging, copper-topped beauty for a moment, before you plunge in your teaspoon, and become suffused, as you eat, by sweet serenity.

BURNT ONION AND EGGPLANT DIP

MAKES approx. 2½ cups

⅓ cup olive oil

3 onions (approx. 1 pound)

**3 medium eggplants (approx.
9 ounces each)**

1 head of garlic

2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt

(or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)

1½ teaspoons dried mint

2 tablespoons lemon juice

2 tablespoons tahini

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon sweet smoked paprika

⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1. Heat the oven to 425°F, and get out a large baking sheet (not a pan with high sides, or the eggplants and onions will braise rather than roast); I use one of 18 x 13 inches, measuring from the outside of each shallow lip. Pour in the ⅓ cup of olive oil.
2. Quarter the onions, remove the skins, then cut each quarter in half lengthways, leaving (if you can) the onion attached still at root end, and arrange on your baking sheet.
3. Halve the eggplants lengthways, then with a sharp knife, cut diagonal slashes into the fleshy sides in a cross-hatched pattern, and add these, flesh side down, to the baking sheet with the onions. Schmoosh everything about, really smearing the fleshy side of the eggplants with the oil, and making sure the onions are covered. Then turn the eggplants cut side up.
4. Lop the top off the head of garlic so that the cloves are just peeking through, and wrap in foil, making a tightly sealed but baggy parcel. Add this to your baking sheet if there's room, otherwise just put it into the oven as it is, at the same time as putting in the onions and eggplants. Depending on the fierceness of your oven and the materials of your baking sheet (the darker it is, the faster everything will brown), the onions and eggplants will take around an hour to cook to scorched softness. Check on them at about 40 minutes and throw in ⅓ cup of water, and turn the onions where needed.
5. As soon as the baking sheet has gone into the oven, spoon the salt and dried mint into a cup, add the lemon juice, stir to mix, and leave while the onions and eggplants are cooking.
6. When the onions are soft and browned and burnt at the edges, the eggplants darkened and floppy-fleshed, remove from the oven and let stand for 5–10 minutes, just to let them cool down a little before handling. Get the garlic out, unwrap it, and let it cool a little too.
7. Transfer the onions, scraping every bit off the bottom of the pan, to a bowl

that you can use with a stick blender. When you can touch the eggplants comfortably, use a spoon and your hands to get the flesh out of the charred skins, though you won't be able to separate it all, nor do you need to. Bits of charred tender skin will add to the taste. When you've got as much of the flesh out as you can comfortably manage, you can squeeze the skins in your hands over the bowl to get out the last bits of pulp. Add a tablespoonful of the burnt-onion-and-eggplant juices from the pan to your bowl. If the pan is dry by now, add a little water from the kettle to sluice it out. Once the eggplants are in the bowl, squeeze the caramelized garlic out of its papery skin on top on them. Don't burn your hands, but do try and get out every last bit you can.

8. Before you blitz everything together, add the waiting minty, salty lemon juice, tahini, ground cumin, sweet smoked paprika, and the extra-virgin olive oil, and blend until smooth and silky.

9. Taste for seasoning—it may need more smoked paprika—then decant into a bowl, and dip tortilla chips into it, spread it on toast, or eat it however you like.

SOUPY RICE WITH CELERY ROOT AND CHESTNUTS

SERVES 4

1 small celery root (2 cups, cubed)
1 large leek (scant 2¼ cups thinly sliced, white parts only)
A large bunch of Italian parsley
A bundle of fresh thyme
2 fat cloves of garlic
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons butter
½ teaspoon ground mace
heaping 1 cup Arborio rice
¼ cup Marsala
6 cups chicken broth
scant 1 cup cooked and peeled chestnuts (I buy these in vacuum-sealed bags)
2 tablespoons freshly grated Pecorino Romano or Parmesan, plus more to serve

1. Peel the celery root and cut into ¾-inch cubes. Wash the leek to remove any mud, if needed. Halve the leek lengthways then thinly slice it. Roughly chop enough parsley to give you 3 tablespoonsful, strip and measure out 1 teaspoon of thyme leaves, and peel the garlic cloves in readiness.
2. Get out a heavy-based saucepan that comes with a lid—I use one of 9 inches diameter—and to it add 1 tablespoon of the oil and 2 tablespoons of the butter. Warm over medium heat and, when the butter's melted, add the sliced leek and cook, stirring, for 3–5 minutes, until it loses its brightness and starts to show the first signs of softening.
3. Add the 3 tablespoons of chopped parsley and the teaspoon of thyme leaves, then mince or grate in the garlic. Take the pan off the heat for this if it helps.
4. Add the remaining butter to the pan, stir everything together, then, when the butter's melted, tip in the cubes of celery root and cook, stirring regularly, for 8–10 minutes or until you can feel that the celery root cubes are beginning to soften and fuzz a bit around the edges.
5. Stir in the ground mace, pour in the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil, and give another good stir, turning the heat up as you do so.
6. Add the rice, stirring until it's well coated, and pour in the Marsala, letting it bubble up and reduce a little, before adding the broth.
7. Finally add the chestnuts, breaking them up a bit with your hands as you drop them in.
8. Bring to a boil, then put on the lid, turn the heat down, and cook at a jaunty simmer for 15 minutes, giving it a stir halfway through to make sure it's not sticking to the bottom of the pan. After 15 minutes the rice should be cooked and the celery root soft, but if not, give it another 5 minutes. At this stage it will still be quite liquid.

9. Take off the heat and leave to stand for 10 minutes with the lid off. It will become thicker but still be comfortingly soupy. While it's standing, chop some more parsley to give you about $\frac{1}{3}$ cup. When the soup has had its 10 minutes, stir in the just-chopped parsley and 2 tablespoons of grated Pecorino Romano or Parmesan, and taste to see if you want more.

10. As you serve, sprinkle with some thyme leaves and maybe a sprig or two and put the cheese on the table for people to grate over as they eat.

SHORT RIB STEW FOR TWO

SERVES 2

2 meaty short ribs (approx. 5 inches long)

3 large shallots (approx. 4 ounces)

1½-inch piece of fresh ginger

1 red chile

4 fat cloves of garlic

Stalks from a small bunch of cilantro
(approx. ½ ounce)

Seeds from 3 cardamom pods

¼ teaspoon ground turmeric

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 tablespoon beef tallow or

1 tablespoon oil

2 tablespoons tomato paste

1¼ cups hot water from a just-boiled kettle,
plus more as needed

1 teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or ½ teaspoon fine sea salt)

1 teaspoon maple syrup (optional)

1. Take the short ribs out of the fridge, and let them get to room temperature. Once they've reached it, heat the oven to 300°F. Tear off a piece of parchment paper just a little bigger than the diameter of your Dutch oven (I use one that's 7 inches in diameter), and set aside for now.
2. Peel the shallots, and quarter them, and peel then slice the ginger into fat coins, putting both into a bowl you can use with a stick blender.
3. Seed the chile and bruise the garlic with the flat side of a heavy knife to help remove the skins, then add the peeled cloves and seeded chile to the bowl, too, along with the cilantro stalks, cardamom seeds, turmeric, and cinnamon.
4. Use a stick blender to turn everything into a paste. Be patient: at first you'll think it's never going to happen, but after a while, everything will turn obligingly into a vibrantly colored mush.
5. Melt the tallow or heat the oil in your little Dutch oven on the stove. Add the paste and fry for about 5 minutes over medium-low heat, stirring most, if not quite all, of the time. As it cooks, the paste will seem to condense and tighten; it will also lose its cheery brightness.
6. Stir in the tomato paste, and cook for another minute. Then add the water and salt, stirring well, to combine.
7. Add the ribs to the pot, bone side up, and press down so that the liquid only just covers them; it doesn't matter if the bones themselves peek out. If you need a little more water for this, then add it. And if you're using a much bigger Dutch oven, you might need quite a bit extra water. Bring to a bubble, then get your piece of parchment and scrunch it up, then open it up again, and put on top of the stew, tucking the edges in and up around the inside of the pan. This is your cartouche; it will help prevent the scant liquid from evaporating. Place the lid

on the pot and transfer to the oven. Cook for 3 hours, by which time the meat should be meltingly tender.

8. Once out of the oven, remove both the lid and cartouche—a thing of beauty, like an ancient map on an unfurled papyrus scroll—and, when it's not too piping hot, have a taste. Only you will know if you want to add the maple syrup: sometimes the pungency of the rich juices seems to need it for balance; ingredients always vary, and you need to respond to them accordingly.

9. Leave to cool, then refrigerate, with the lid on. About 2½–3 hours before you want to eat, take the Dutch oven out of the fridge, and remove the firm, thick orange fat.

10. Once the fridge chill is well and truly off it, heat the oven to 400°F. Add water so that the meat is just covered, though don't worry if the bones themselves aren't completely submerged. Tear off a sheet of parchment paper to make a new cartouche and place over the ribs, tucking it in well, then put on the lid, and cook for 45 minutes, or until piping hot.

11. Remove the short ribs from the Dutch oven—don't worry if the meat comes away from the bone: it just makes it all even easier to eat—and put the pot of juices on the stove top to bubble away for a minute or two to reduce and thicken. Obviously if you've had to use a big pot and have added a lot of water, you'll have to bubble it away for considerably longer to get a thick sauce-like gravy.

12. Sit the short ribs on your polenta or mashed vegetables and pour the sauce over. If you want a sprinkle of something on top, consider some finely chopped chives, although it certainly might make sense to go for the cilantro left from the stalks you used in the paste, but taste first before you decide.

MARROWBONE MEAT SAUCE

SERVES 4–6

3 medium onions (approx. 4 cups, chopped)
3 tablespoons beef tallow or
3 tablespoons oil of your choice
2 medium carrots (approx. 1½ cups, diced)
4 fat cloves of garlic
1 celery stalk
1 teaspoon dried thyme
Approx. 14 ounces marrowbone, cut in half
lengthways like canoes
1 pound ground beef

8 ounces ground pork
7 tablespoons red vermouth (or red wine)
1 x 14-ounce can of diced tomatoes
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 cup beef broth
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce (gluten-free if necessary)
2 fresh bay leaves
1½ teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or ¾ teaspoon fine sea salt)
A good grinding of pepper

1. Peel and chop the onions. Melt the tallow or warm the oil in a large heavy-based Dutch oven (I use one of 10 inches diameter or a 12-inch one if I'm making dumplings, in which case you might need a bit more fat for the pan) and add the onions. Stir well and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes, stirring frequently, then turn down to low and cook for a further 30–40 minutes, stirring and pressing on them every now and again, until they are soft, golden and jammy.
2. While the onions are cooking, peel the carrots and chop into ½-inch dice, peel the garlic and thinly slice the celery.
3. Heat the oven to 325°F.
4. Once the onions have had their full cooking time, sprinkle over the dried thyme and mince or grate in the garlic, giving a good stir. Turn the heat up to medium, add the prepared celery and carrots and cook, stirring, for another 5 minutes. Tip this vegetable mixture into a bowl, scraping out every last bit from the pan.
5. Using a spoon—and a robust one at that—dig out the marrow from the bones into the Dutch oven, then put the pan back on the heat, over a lowish flame, and help the marrow melt by giving it the odd stir. When it's almost completely melted—some bits will blobbily resist—turn the heat up, and when the fat is hot, crumble in the ground beef and pork, stirring well to turn it in the marrowfat. Once it's largely lost its raw look, add back the sweet-soused onion mixture, again scraping to get every last bit out of your bowl.
6. Pour in the red vermouth (or wine), the canned tomatoes, the tomato paste and the beef broth. Add the Worcestershire sauce, bay leaves and salt and give

a good grinding of pepper, and then stir well before dropping in the scraped-out marrowbones.

7. Clamp on the lid and cook in the oven for 2 hours. If you're going for the dumplings—see recipe intro for directions—add them on top of the meat sauce after 1 ½ hours (removing the bones first), and put the lid back on and cook for a further 30 minutes. Some people like to give a bit of time with the lid off to crisp up the dumplings—I don't. If eating with dumplings, serve immediately as they will lose all their inexplicable lightness on standing.

BEEF CHEEKS WITH PORT AND CHESTNUTS

SERVES 3-4

2½ pounds beef cheeks

3-4 large leeks (6¼ cups sliced, white parts only)

2 fat cloves of garlic

2 carrots (approx. 2 cups, large chunks)

1 large or 2 small celery stalks

A small bunch of Italian parsley (approx. 1 cup)

3 tablespoons beef tallow or

3 tablespoons oil of your choice

1 orange

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

A very generous grating of nutmeg

¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons ruby port

1½ cups beef broth

2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce (gluten-free if necessary)

1 teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ½ teaspoon fine sea salt)

A good grinding of pepper

heaping 1 cup cooked and peeled chestnuts (I buy these in vacuum-sealed bags)

1. Heat the oven to 300°F. Tear off a generous piece of parchment paper a bit bigger than the diameter of your Dutch oven (I use a heavy-based one of 9 inches diameter) and set aside for now.
2. Cut the beef cheeks into large chunks, about 2 ½ inches; if the cheeks are still covered in membrane, carefully cut it away and peel it off first. Trim then wash the leeks to remove any mud, as needed. If your leeks are chunky, cut them in half lengthways, and then into 1-inch slices; if they are relatively slender, just slice them. Peel the garlic cloves.
3. Peel the carrots, cut into chunks, drop into the bowl of the processor, and add the peeled garlic. Tear the celery into smaller pieces and add, too, along with the parsley (leaves and tender stalks), and blitz until very finely chopped. Or just chop everything finely by hand.
4. Melt 2 tablespoons of beef tallow or warm 2 tablespoons of oil in your Dutch oven and, in two batches, brown the meat over medium-high heat, then remove to a bowl.
5. Add the remaining tablespoon of tallow (or tablespoon of oil) to the pan, turn the heat down to medium-low, then add the carrot mixture and cook, stirring, for 3-4 minutes.
6. Finely grate the orange zest into the pan, and stir in the fennel seeds and grate in the nutmeg—which smell heavenly as they hit the heat—then add the leeks. Turn up the heat to medium and cook, stirring frequently, for about 5 minutes, by which time the leeks will have wilted a bit.
7. Return the meat to the pan, scraping in any juices that have collected in the bowl, and stir well so that everything is mixed together.

8. Pour in the port and let it bubble up before adding the beef broth, Worcestershire sauce and salt, and grind pepper generously into the stew. Add the chestnuts, stir well and, when bubbling, squish the meat down in the pan with your spoon or spatula so that it is just submerged in the liquid. Scrunch up your piece of parchment paper, unscrunch it and press it down on top of the stew, tucking the edges in and up around the inside of the pan, then put on the lid and cook in the oven for 3 hours, by which time the meat will be gorgeously tender. Remove lid and parchment and let cool before refrigerating for up to 3 days. Though you certainly should taste for seasoning before letting it cool too much.

9. To reheat, take the stew out of the fridge, remove any of the now solidified fat on the top if you wish, and let come to room temperature.

10. If the meat isn't just covered by its gelled stock, add a little water so that it is. Tear off a sheet of parchment paper to make a fresh cartouche and replace the lid and, if serving with the Celery Root and Anchovy Gratin, put in a 375°F oven for 50 minutes to 1 hour, making sure the gratin is on the shelf above the Dutch oven. If you want to bake potatoes in the oven at the same time—although you'll need to give them a head start—you can reheat at 400°F for 40–50 minutes. Make sure the stew is piping hot before you serve it.

OXTAIL BOURGUIGNON

SERVES 4

4 pounds oxtail

1 large onion (approx. 1²/₃ cups, roughly chopped)

1 celery stalk

3 fat cloves of garlic

1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
(or 1 teaspoon dried thyme)

8 ounces portobello mushrooms (approx. 3¹/₂ cups, chunks)

8 ounces small crimini or button mushrooms
(approx. 3 cups)

8-ounce slab of pancetta or bacon (skin on)
or 1³/₄ cups lardons

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 teaspoon caraway seeds (optional)

2¹/₂ tablespoons all-purpose flour

¹/₂ teaspoon ready-ground black pepper

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon ground coriander

2 tablespoons beef tallow or 2 tablespoons
olive oil

2 cups full-bodied red wine (though, as the
name of the stew suggests,
it should properly be a Burgundy)

2 cups beef broth

9 ounces peeled pearl onions (approx. 1²/₃
cups). I use frozen; if you can't find them,
add another onion at the beginning.

3 fresh bay leaves

1. Take the oxtail out of the fridge to get to room temperature. Heat the oven to 300°F. Tear off a large piece of parchment paper slightly bigger than the diameter of the Dutch oven you're using—I use one of 10 inches diameter—and put to one side for now.

2. Peel and chop the onion, and thinly slice the celery. Peel the garlic cloves, and strip the leaves from the stalks of thyme. Chop the dark-gilled portobello mushrooms into approx. 1¹/₂-inch chunks.

3. Cut the skin off the pancetta, put it with the tablespoon of olive oil into your pot and leave over lowish heat to render the fat, while you chop the rest of the pancetta into strips approx. ¹/₂ x 1 inches. If you're using lardons, you will naturally dispense with this step.

4. Add the pancetta cubes (you can leave the skin in the pan) and cook for about 8 minutes, stirring frequently, by which time they will have rendered quite a bit of fat, and be bronzed and crisp.

5. Remove the pancetta—discarding the skin or, if you have any sense, eating it yourself—to a bowl big enough to take the onion and mushrooms later, too. Cook the chopped onion in the warm bacony fat, on low, for 10 minutes, keeping an eye on it, and stirring every now and again to make sure it isn't burning. Mince or grate in the garlic cloves and stir in the sliced celery, thyme and—if using—caraway, and cook for a bare minute.

6. Add the chunked portobello mushrooms to the pan and stir well for a minute or so, then add the whole crimini or button mushrooms and cook altogether,

stirring regularly for 4–5 minutes. Remove to the bowl with the pancetta, and take the pan off the heat for a moment.

7. Get out a large shallow dish, and in it mix the flour, pepper, cumin, and coriander, then dredge the oxtail pieces in the spiced flour on all sides.

8. Melt half the beef tallow or heat half the olive oil in the pan, and over medium-high heat sear half the oxtail pieces, transferring them, once browned, to the bowl, too. Do the same with the remaining fat and oxtail.

9. Add whatever flour is left behind in the dredging dish to the pan, and gradually stir in the red wine, followed by the beef broth. Stir well, and whisk to get rid of any floury lumps, and let it bubble a little before adding back the oxtail. Then add your frozen pearl onions if using (no need to thaw), then the remaining contents of the onion and mushroom bowl, using a bendy spatula to scrape out every last drop of flavorsome juices. Drop in the bay leaves, and press everything down into the liquid as best you can.

10. Let the pot come to a bubble, make a cartouche by scrunching up your piece of parchment paper, then unscrunch it and place it on top of the stew, tucking the edges in and up around the inside of the pan. Then clamp on the lid, and transfer to the oven to cook for 3 ½ hours.

11. Remove from the oven, take off the lid and parchment, press down—with a spatula or large spoon—to keep the meat and vegetables submerged, then leave to cool, before putting into the fridge, covered, for at least a day and up to 3 days. If you want, you can remove the layer of solidified fat when it's cold, but for me the fat is the point of oxtail.

12. On the day you want to eat this, take the stew out of the fridge in good time to reach room temperature. Heat the oven to 350°F. Make a fresh cartouche, and cook, lid on, for about 1 ¼ hours, by which time it should be piping hot. While this is enough, I like to give it another hour turned down to 275°F and it won't come to any harm if it stays there for considerably longer. Should you wish to reheat in a hotter oven to accommodate other dishes you might want alongside, simply reduce the time the oxtail has in the oven. Make sure it's piping hot before serving.

BLOOD SAUSAGE MEATBALLS

SERVES 4–6 (or 1 person 4–6 times)

FOR THE TOMATO SAUCE

1⅔ cups cold water
2 onions (approx. 2½ cups, roughly chopped)
3 tablespoons beef tallow or 3 tablespoons olive oil
2 fat cloves of garlic
3 tablespoons finely chopped Italian parsley
1 teaspoon dried thyme
2 x 14-ounce cans of diced tomatoes
1 tablespoon tomato paste
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce (gluten-free if necessary)
2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)

FOR THE MEATBALLS

1¼ pounds ground beef (not low fat)
8 ounces blood sausage (gluten-free if necessary)
2 fat cloves of garlic
3 tablespoons finely chopped parsley, plus more to serve
2 tablespoons finely chopped chives, plus more to serve
1 teaspoon dried thyme
2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)
A very good grinding of pepper
¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
2 tablespoons quick-cooking oats (not old-fashioned or instant, gluten-free if necessary)
2 large eggs, at room temperature

1. Take the ground beef and blood sausage out of the fridge so they lose their chill while you get on with the sauce. Pour 1⅔ cups of cold water into a measuring jug and put it by the stove in readiness.
2. To make the sauce, peel and roughly chop the onions. Melt your tallow or warm the oil in a large heavy-based Dutch oven—I use one of 10 inches diameter—then add the onion and cook over medium heat, stirring every now and then, for about 15 minutes, or until beginning to soften and get golden in parts. If you want to do this for longer on low heat, do, after you’ve given them a 5-minute start on medium.
3. While the onions are cooking, peel the garlic and finely chop 3 tablespoons’ worth of parsley. When the onions are ready, stir in the dried thyme and chopped parsley, and mince or grate in the garlic. Add the tomatoes, swilling out the empty cans with the water in your measuring jug before pouring it into the pan.
4. Stir in the tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce and salt and then turn up the heat to bring to a boil. Once boiling, turn down the heat a little and leave to simmer for 10 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, make the meatballs. Loosen the ground beef with your fingers as you drop it into a large bowl. Add the blood sausage, crumbling it in by hand as well.

6. Peel the garlic cloves, and mince or grate them into the bowl. Now finely chop another 3 tablespoons worth of parsley and 2 tablespoons of chives and transfer both to the bowl.
7. Add the dried thyme, salt, pepper and red pepper flakes. Then sprinkle over the oats and crack in the eggs. Mix this all together with your hands, making sure it's evenly incorporated.
8. Get out a large baking sheet or a very large cutting board. Then tear off walnut-sized lumps of the mixture and roll them between your palms to make meatballs, placing them on the baking sheet or board as you go. You should end up making about 40.
9. Drop the meatballs into the sauce in concentric circles, easing them in gently. Try to get the meatballs covered by the sauce and then bring to a bubble. At which point, clamp on the lid, turn the heat down a bit, and let it simmer robustly for 15 minutes.
10. Take off the lid and give the pan a very gentle stir, then leave without a lid for another 15 minutes, simmering a little less robustly now, by which time the meatballs should be cooked through, and the sauce divinely intense.
11. Check the sauce for seasoning, then leave off the heat for 5–10 minutes. While you wait, chop some chives (and parsley if wished) to sprinkle over. Ladle into bowls and eat joyfully with bread and butter or a buttery bowl of colcannon.

RHUBARB AND CUSTARD TRIFLE

SERVES 8–10, although I still make this if there are fewer of us; leftovers are to be relished, or generously boxed up and given to people to take home

FOR THE CUSTARD

2½ cups heavy cream

1 vanilla bean or 2½ teaspoons vanilla paste (or extract)

6 large egg yolks, at room temperature

2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons granulated sugar

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon cornstarch

FOR THE BASE

2¼ pounds pink hothouse rhubarb (trimmed weight)

1¼ cups granulated sugar

¾ cup red vermouth

18 to 22 savoiardi cookies or 6 to 8 ¾-inch-thick slices slightly stale pound cake (approx. 10 ounces)

FOR THE TOPPING

1¼ cups heavy cream

3 tablespoons chopped or nibbed pistachios

1. Get on with the custard first. Pour the 2½ cups of heavy cream into a heavy-based saucepan (I use one of 9 inches diameter), split the vanilla bean lengthways (if using), and use a pointy coffee spoon or the tip of a knife to scrape the damp black seeds into the cream. Drop in the outer pod, as well. Bring to a bubble but don't let it boil, then take it off the heat straightaway and cover with a lid to let it infuse for 20 minutes. Remove the outer pod of the vanilla bean, run it under the water from the tap to get any cream off, then leave it to dry and use it to scent sugar. If you're not using a vanilla bean, just warm the cream and add vanilla paste or extract once your custard is made.

2. Gently whisk the egg yolks, 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons granulated sugar and cornstarch in a large pitcher or whatever suits you. Keep whisking while you gradually pour in the warm cream and make sure it is all smoothly amalgamated. Wash out the saucepan and dry it—just use water, you don't need soap. Pour the custard mixture from your pitcher into the pan (using a bendy spatula to scrape out every last eggy bit from the bottom) and cook over medium heat for a minute, stirring with a wooden spoon (preferably one with a pointy bit to help scrape up bits from the bottom), and then on low heat, still stirring mostly with a wooden spoon, but transferring to a little whisk every now and again, too, until thick enough that it coats the back of a wooden spoon and, when you run your finger through it, it doesn't run into the bare stripe. I reckon this takes about 5 minutes altogether. Mind you, I do like to live dangerously. Go more slowly if you wish, and, at whatever speed you're going, take the pan off the heat regularly, and whisk the custard, to make sure it doesn't get too hot, especially around the edges of the base of the pan.

3. As soon as it's cooked, take it off the heat and scrape it into your pitcher (adding vanilla paste or extract if you haven't gone the vanilla bean route), then cover with a damp scrunched-up piece of parchment paper to stop it forming a skin. (Even writing "skin" in conjunction with custard makes me feel quite ill.) Once the custard has cooled down, put it into the fridge to chill.

4. Meanwhile, get on with the rhubarb. Heat the oven to 400°F. Cut the trimmed rhubarb into about 2-inch lengths if the ribs are slender; if chunky, cut into about 1-inch pieces. Put into an ovenproof dish in which they can (mostly) sit in a single layer—I use a large roasting pan measuring 15 x 14 inches, though you could get away with one a bit smaller—and sprinkle over the 1¼ cups of granulated sugar. Mix together well with your hands, leaving the rhubarb in a single layer, as much as possible, then cover the pan or dish with extra-wide foil, sealing the edges, and cook in the oven for approx. 30 minutes until the rhubarb is tender but still holding its shape.

5. Once the rhubarb is just cooked, let it stand out of the oven with the foil removed for 20 minutes. You might be disappointed with the color the moment it comes out of the oven, by the way, but after a few minutes it will begin to glow a bright candy pink. Gently transfer with a slotted spoon or spatula (or both) to another dish for now. You should have about 1¼ cups of liquid in the pan, although if you wait about 5 minutes, you will see more juice collecting under the rhubarb in its dish; add that to the juice in the pan.

6. Set aside ½ cup of the rhubarb juices for now and measure out another ¾ cup of the rhubarb juice (I should say that by the end of the hothouse rhubarb season it seems to make less liquid; if you don't have enough, I suggest you make up the amount with orange juice), then add to it the red vermouth. Taste one teaspoon just for the joy of it, although once you do so, it will be hard not to drink the rest.

7. Now make the rhubarb syrup for the top of the trifle. Pour the reserved ½ cup of rhubarb juice into a small heavy-based saucepan, bring to a boil and bubble away to reduce to a viscous syrup. I reckon if I start off with ½ cup, it takes about 4 minutes to bubble away (in a small, 6-inch diameter saucepan) to ¼ cup. If you start off with more, still aim to reduce it by half; any further than that and it will turn to rhubarb toffee. And if that does happen, just stir in a little hot water from the kettle to get it to a thick pouring consistency.

8. Arrange your savoiardi cookies or pound cake slices at the bottom of your trifle bowl. Squodge them in as you like, tearing them up as needed to fill any gaps; I tend to go for a layer about 2 inches deep. Pour your very delicious

rhubarb-vermouth liquid over, as evenly as you can, and let the savoiardi or cake slices drink it up thirstily, as any sensible person would.

9. Top the drenched savoiardi or cake slices with the rhubarb and pour over any juices that have collected in the dish. Once the custard is properly cold, carefully scrape it into the trifle dish on top of the rhubarb, smoothing it to the sides, trying not to smear the glass. The pink of the rhubarb underneath the yellow of the custard is a sight that makes me smile; a fond reminder of the boiled rhubarb & custard candies of my childhood. Cover the dish with food wrap and put into the fridge overnight.

10. Take the trifle out of the fridge a good 2 hours before you intend to eat it. Shortly before serving, whip the heavy cream—I like mine quite softly whipped—and spoon gently over the set custard. Use the back of your spoon to create a few whorls and whirls. Drip as much as you want of your reduced rhubarb syrup pinkly over the top and scatter over chopped or nibbed pistachios.

TOASTED MARSHMALLOW AND RHUBARB CAKE

GIVES 8-12 slices

FOR THE RHUBARB LAYER

14 ounces (400g) pink hothouse rhubarb
(trimmed weight)

½ cup (100g) granulated sugar

FOR THE CAKE

6 large eggs, at room temperature

1 lemon

7 tablespoons (100g) whole milk, at room temperature

2 tablespoons (25g) cornstarch

¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon (100g)
all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

¾ cup (150g) superfine sugar

⅔ cup (140g) vegetable oil, plus more
for greasing

FOR THE FROSTING

6 egg whites, from eggs above

1¾ cups (350g) superfine sugar

¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

½ teaspoon cream of tartar or ½ teaspoon
lemon juice

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1. Start by cooking the rhubarb. Heat the oven to 400°F. Cut the trimmed rhubarb ribs into 2-inch lengths if slender, 1-inch if chunky. Put into an ovenproof dish in which they will be able more or less to sit in a single layer—I use a 8 x 10 inches Pyrex dish—and sprinkle over the ½ cup (100g) of granulated sugar. Mix together with your hands, leaving the rhubarb in a single layer, as much as possible, then cover the dish with foil, sealing the edges well, and cook in the oven for approx. 30 minutes until the rhubarb is tender, but still holding its shape.

2. Remove the foil, and leave the dish of rhubarb out on the countertop, watching it glow ever more pink as it cools. Turn the oven down to 325°F. Line the bottoms of two 8-inch cake pans with parchment paper, and lightly grease the sides.

3. Separate the eggs, dropping the whites into a large mixing bowl or bowl of a freestanding mixer (whichever bowl you're using should be thoroughly washed and grease-free) and the yolks into another. Cover the bowl of whites with food wrap, and put to one side while you mix and bake the cake.

4. Finely grate the zest of the lemon and add to the bowl of yolks. Measure out the milk, juice the lemon, and add 2 tablespoons of juice to the milk, and leave to stand for a moment. Mix together the cornstarch, flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt, and set this aside for now, too.

5. Add the ¾ cup (150g) of superfine sugar and the oil to the yolks and whisk on medium-high speed for 3 minutes, by which time the mixture will be rich, gleaming and billowy. Actually, it looks rather like a glorious mayonnaise.

6. Still whisking, but slightly more slowly now, gently pour and scrape in the now curdled milk and, once it's in, carry on whisking until combined; the mixture looks like custard at this stage. Finally, whisking more gently now, gradually spoon in the dry ingredients. Once in, use a spatula to scrape down the sides, and fold everything gently together, before dividing the airy mixture between the prepared pans.

7. Bake for 20–25 minutes, by which time the cakes will have risen up extravagantly, the tops a golden brown; they will feel soft and puffy to the touch, but a cake tester should come out clean. Remove to a wire rack and let the cakes cool in their tins for 15 minutes—sinking a little as they do so—before very carefully turning out. You'll need to loosen the edges with a small offset spatula first. These are tender sponges, so don't rush or be rough. Once unmolded, gently pull back and remove the lining papers straightaway.

8. When the cakes are completely, completely cold—which will take about an hour—you can get on with the frosting. But first, tear off four strips of parchment paper, scrunch them, then unscrunch them and lay them flat to make the outline of a square on top of a cake stand. (This is to stop you covering the cake stand with sticky marshmallow frosting later. It may sound a faff, but I wouldn't advise you to leave out this step.) Put one of the cakes on it, top-side down, the paper strips under the edges. Also, now's the time to lift the rhubarb pieces out of their syrup in the dish and on to a plate.

9. So, to the frosting: get out a tall saucepan that you can sit your big bowl o' whites on (without the bottom of the bowl touching the water) and heat a little water in it until just about to come to a simmer. Mix the 1 ¾ cups (350g) of superfine sugar, the salt, and the cream of tartar (or lemon juice) together and add to the egg whites. Then sit the mixing bowl on top of the pan, so it's gently warmed by the barely simmering water underneath and, just using a balloon whisk (thoroughly washed and grease-free, again), keep whisking for 3 minutes, to dissolve the sugar. I couldn't say this is hard to do, but you can really feel it in your forearm. I'm always grateful when my 3-minute timer goes off.

10. Once the sugar's dissolved and you have a smooth opaque mixture that's warm to the touch, remove the bowl from the saucepan. Whisk at high speed for 5 minutes in a freestanding mixer, or for 6–7 minutes if using an electric hand mixer, by which time the whites will be very, very thick and ludicrously voluminous. Whisk in 1 teaspoon of the vanilla extract, and when it's incorporated, whisk in the remaining teaspoon, then give a good fold by hand to make sure every bit is mixed in.

11. Dollop a generous amount of marshmallow frosting on to the waiting cake, and smooth right to the edges, so that you have a layer about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick: this should use about a quarter of the frosting. Cover this with the rhubarb, though leave about $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch perimeter around the edge; I go slowly here, using a couple of soup spoons to ferry the rhubarb to the cake. And you might want to tilt the rhubarb plate away from you slightly as you transfer the slices, to make sure you leave any pooling liquid behind.

12. Top with the second cake, right way up, and use just under half the frosting left in the bowl to cover the top, going just beyond the edges. Then carefully spread the rest of the frosting thickly around the sides—leaving a tiny bit in the mixing bowl—until the whole cake is completely covered. Now for the really fun part: dip your fingers in the bit of frosting left in the bowl and then dab the top and sides of the cake, lightly pulling up and teasing out spikes of marshmallow frosting; I feel like an '80s hairdresser doing this. Bear in mind that sometimes, as you do the sides, you will pull bits of the frosting off, leaving a hole, but don't panic, just pat it back on. Gently pull out the strips of paper from beneath the cake and discard, then seal the bottom of the cake with any remaining frosting should you need to. Then, slightly dampen a piece of paper towel with cold water, and rub off any stray bits of frosting or sugar smear from the plate.

13. Take the cake somewhere you can kindle fire safely. Light a blowtorch and, holding it fairly near the cake and with not too timorous a flame, toast the top and the sides of the frosting.

14. I find this cake easiest to slice if left to stand for a couple of hours before serving. And you need to slice generously, as with all layer cakes.

PICKLED RHUBARB

FILLS 1 x 6-cup/1½-quart jar

1½ pounds pink hothouse rhubarb (trimmed weight)

1½ cups raw, unfiltered apple cider vinegar

1½ cups cold water

⅔ cup granulated sugar

3 fresh bay leaves

4 star anise

2 teaspoons pink peppercorns

**2½ teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or 1¼ teaspoons fine sea salt)**

1. Sterilize a 6-cup jar following the instructions in the recipe introduction.
2. Cut the tender, pink rhubarb into roughly 1 ½-inch lengths, and drop them into your preserving jar.
3. Pour the vinegar and cold water into a saucepan, and stir in the sugar. Add the bay leaves, star anise, pink peppercorns, and salt, and bring to a boil, giving another stir to make sure all the sugar's dissolved and pour the sharp-sweet pickling liquid over the rhubarb. The pink peppercorns will rise to the surface, where they'll stay, but that's fine.
4. When you've filled the jar, seal the lid tight, leave it to cool, then stash in the fridge for 2 days before eating it, though it will last for 4 weeks.

BEET, RHUBARB AND GINGER SOUP

Sharp and sweet, rhubarb and beets were made for one another, and this soup is a fitting celebration of their union. I had intended to make a beet and apple soup (hitherto a favorite) one day, only to find I had no apples, so substituted the rhubarb instead, and have never looked back. (Though if you want to make the apple variant, simply use 2 Granny Smiths in its place. Or, for a Christmassy version, use 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups of cranberries and an extra 4 ounces of beets.) The rhubarb undercuts what can, for me, be the cloying candied intensity of beets. Deep in color and sprightly in taste, this is a soup to have in a pitcher in the fridge for a tangy bowl of instant comfort whenever needed.

You can eat it just as it is, or swirl over a horseradish cream made by mixing $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of regular dairy or oat-milk cream with a pinch of salt, 3 tablespoons of freshly grated horseradish, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of apple cider vinegar and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of Dijon mustard. But I have grown to love it particularly with the Green Tahini Sauce—either the cilantro version or the ramps one. Or you can simply squiggle over some cream.

MAKES 1.5 liters

14 ounces rhubarb (trimmed weight)

**1 pound 2 ounces raw beets (approx.
3 cups roughly chopped)**

1 large onion (approx. $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups, chopped)

2 tablespoons olive oil

3 fat cloves of garlic

2 teaspoons ground cumin

4 cups cold water

**2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)**

3-inch piece of fresh ginger

1. Break or cut each rhubarb stalk into 2 or 3 pieces, just so they fit in the saucepan, and set aside. Wash the beets, remove the stalks and leaves, and trim each beet, cutting away the barnacly bits; there's no need to peel. Roughly chop into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch chunks. Peel the onion and roughly chop it.
2. Warm the oil in a decent-sized saucepan or Dutch oven that comes with a tightly fitting lid—I use one of 10 inches diameter—and cook the onion for about 10 minutes over medium-low heat, stirring frequently. It won't soften much in that time, but enough for now.
3. Peel and roughly chop the garlic, and stir it into the pan of onions. Cook for about 2 minutes, then stir in the cumin and tumble in the rhubarb and beets. Add the water and salt, turn the heat to high and bring to a boil. Once it's bubbling, turn the heat down, clamp on the lid, and let it all cook at a robust simmer until the beets are utterly, utterly soft. This always takes more time than you'd think: I'd reckon on $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, though it easily could take longer.

4. With a stick blender (and if yours comes with a soup-blending attachment, so much the better), blitz until you have a smooth and velvety ruby soup.
5. If the skin's tough, peel the ginger with the tip of a teaspoon, then coarsely grate it onto a plate. Moving fast, get out a piece of paper towel and spoon half the grated ginger into the center, then bring together the edges of the paper and twist. Holding this little swag bag over the soup, press on it to squeeze out the intense juice. Now get another square of paper towel, and do the same with the remaining half of grated ginger. Taste for seasoning, ladle out into waiting bowls, and drizzle over each a little horseradish cream or Green Tahini Sauce as you wish.

CHICKEN IN A POT WITH LEMON AND ORZO

SERVES 4–6

1 chicken (approx. 3½ pounds)	2 teaspoons dried tarragon (or dried thyme)
3 fat cloves of garlic	2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)
2 medium carrots (approx. 10 ounces)	½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
2 medium leeks (approx. 5 cups sliced, white parts only)	6 cups cold water
1 tablespoon olive oil	1½ cups orzo pasta
2 lemons	⅓ cup finely chopped Italian parsley, plus more to serve
	Freshly grated Parmesan, to serve

1. Untruss the chicken, if it comes trussed, and remove all the string. If time allows, let it stand out on a board for 40 minutes or so to let the chill come off it. Heat the oven to 350°F.
2. Peel the garlic cloves, and peel and cut the carrots into three lengths across, and then into sticks. Wash the leeks to remove any mud, if needed, and cut into approx. 1-inch rounds.
3. Heat the oil in a large heavy-based Dutch oven with a tightly fitting lid; I use an enameled cast-iron oval Dutch oven 12 inches long, in which the chicken fits neatly, leaving just a small space all around it to fit the vegetables later. Place the chicken in the hot oil breast-side down to color the skin; I do this over high heat for 3–5 minutes, or until the skin is richly golden. Then turn the chicken the right way up.
4. Take the pan off the heat and, aiming for the space around the chicken, finely grate in the zest from the 2 lemons, then grate or mince in the garlic (obviously some can end up on the chicken itself), add the dried tarragon (or thyme) and give a quick stir into the oil as best you can.
5. Scatter the vegetables around the chicken, followed by the salt and red pepper flakes (if using), and squeeze in the juice from your zested lemons.
6. Pour in the cold water—covering all but the very top of the breast—and put back on high heat, then bring the pot to a boil. Once it's bubbling, clamp on the lid and carefully transfer to the oven to cook for 1¼ hours, though check to make sure the chicken is all but cooked through and the carrots soft.
7. Take the pot out of the oven, and add the orzo all around the chicken, and push it under the liquid, giving something as approximating a stir as you can manage in the restricted space. Put the lid back on, and return the pot to the oven for another 15 minutes, by which time the orzo should be soft and swollen.

8. Let the Dutch oven stand, uncovered, out of the oven for 15 minutes before serving. The orzo will continue to soak up the broth as it stands.
9. While you're waiting, chop the parsley. Stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, and then sprinkle over a little more. You could shred the chicken now, but it looks so wonderful in its pot I like to bring it to the table whole.
10. Place a dish by the Dutch oven, and then pull the chicken gently apart with a couple of forks, removing any bones and skin that come loose to the dish. (For me, these bits are a particular treat: I live for the cartilage.) I find it easiest to do this while the chicken's still in the pot but, if you prefer, you can try and remove it to a cutting board; go carefully as it's likely to fall to pieces a bit as you do so. Stir the chicken and orzo again and ladle into bowls, sprinkling with parsley as you go. You may also want to offer Parmesan to grate over: I prefer it without, but there is a strong pro-Parmesan contingent in my house.

CHICKEN WITH GARLIC CREAM SAUCE

SERVES 4, or 6 if you get a bigger chicken or boost with extra chicken portions

FOR THE CHICKEN

1 chicken (approx. 3½ pounds) butterflied (or see step 1)

1 teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ½ teaspoon fine sea salt), plus more for sprinkling

2 fat cloves of garlic

2 tablespoons soft unsalted butter

5 tablespoons dry white vermouth (or wine) combined with 5 tablespoons cold water (or use scant ⅔ cup light chicken broth in place of the vermouth and water, if preferred)

FOR THE SAUCE

1¼ cups heavy cream

4 fat cloves of garlic

A good grinding of pepper

Flaky sea salt to taste

3 tablespoons finely chopped Italian parsley

3 tablespoons finely chopped chives

1. If you haven't got a butcher to butterfly the chicken for you, do not worry: it's easy enough to do yourself; indeed, it's a task I take perhaps unseemly delight in. Put the chicken, breast-side down, in a large but fairly shallow roasting pan (I use one that measures 14 x 15 x 2 inches) and push down on it until you hear a satisfying crunch. With some good kitchen scissors or poultry shears, cut through each side of the backbone, remove it, leaving it in the pan, then turn the chicken the other way up, and now press onto the breast to flatten it a little more.
2. Flip the chicken breast-side down again and sprinkle ½ teaspoon of flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ¼ teaspoon of fine sea salt) over the inside of the chicken. Peel the 2 cloves of garlic and mince or grate over the chicken, too, and rub lightly into the meat. Leave for 30 minutes or so to let the chicken come to room temperature.
3. Pour the cream into a small saucepan (I use one of 6 inches diameter). Peel the 4 cloves of garlic, and mince or grate into the cream, add a good grinding of pepper, stir well, and bring to a boil, then turn down and let it bubble away for 3 minutes. Don't worry about the cream boiling, just don't let it boil over. Stir regularly with a silicone spatula so that you can scrape down the sides as well. Take the pan off the heat, cover with a lid or foil and let it steep while the chicken cooks.
4. Heat the oven to 425°F. Turn the chicken the right way up, smear the soft butter over the skin, and sprinkle with the remaining ½ teaspoon of flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ¼ teaspoon of fine sea salt.) Pour the vermouth and water (replacing both with light chicken broth if you prefer) into the pan around the

chicken and transfer to the oven to cook for approx. 45 minutes, by which time the skin should be golden and crisp, and the meat completely cooked through. The juices should run clear if you use the tip of a knife to pierce where the thigh meets the body (or just waggle the thigh to see if it feels loose). Transfer the chicken to a cutting board and let it rest for 10 minutes. Pour the juices from the roasting pan into your saucepan of cream, scraping up any golden sticky bits.

5. While the chicken is resting, bring the cream sauce to just under a boil, then turn the heat down and let it simmer gently for 5 minutes, keeping an eye on the pan and stirring regularly. Taste to see if you want to add salt and pour into a warmed pitcher. Add most of the chopped parsley and chives to the pitcher and stir.

6. Cut the chicken up and arrange on a warmed platter. Pour a little of the sauce over, and sprinkle with the remaining herbs. Bring the pitcher to the table with the chicken so that people can pour more over as they eat. It's a lot of sauce, but that's the way we like it. Should you have any left over, warm it up, add a little grated Parmesan and some more freshly chopped parsley or chives, toss with pasta or drizzle over steamed baby potatoes or, frankly, anything you'd like.

ONE-PAN CHICKEN WITH APRICOT HARISSA AND SWEET POTATOES

SERVES 4

2 pounds sweet potatoes (approx. 5 medium)
2–3 red bell peppers (approx. 3 cups pieces)
2 large leeks (approx. 5 cups sliced, white parts only)
3 tablespoons olive oil

¼ cup Apricot Harissa

8 chicken thighs, skin-on and bone-in

3–4 limes

1–2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or ½–1 teaspoon fine sea salt)

1. Heat the oven to 400°F.
2. Wash the sweet potatoes, then cut into approx. 2-inch slices or chunks. Seed the peppers and cut into approx. 2-inch pieces, discarding the pith, and slice the leeks into ¾-inch rounds, washing first to remove any mud, if needed.
3. While you need a large roasting pan for this, it's better if it's relatively shallow. I use one that's 14 x 15 x 2 inches. Get out whichever pan fits the bill best, and pour in the oil, spoon in the harissa, and whisk or use a fork to mix, then add the prepared sweet potatoes, peppers, and leeks and toss well together.
4. Add the chicken thighs and toss again, and really rub the chicken skin with the harissa-brightened oil, then arrange the chicken skin-side up, jostling among the vegetables. You'll have to crowd everything in a bit.
5. Juice 1 ½–2 of your limes to give you 2 tablespoons. Add this to the pan, sprinkle in the salt, then roast for 1 hour—turning the pan around halfway through if needed—by which time the chicken should be cooked through and crisp-skinned. If the skin isn't crisp enough, leave it in the oven for a bit longer.
6. I bring the pan to the table—along with a side plate of lime vwedges—and serve straight from it, making sure to spoon the bright juices, like a crazy fluorescent gravy, over everyone's plate too. And should you have any of the gravy and vegetables left over, they can be made (once defatted a bit) into a glorious soup, with or without the addition of coconut milk.

LASAGNA OF LOVE

MAKES 9–12 slices depending on how you cut it, though I wouldn't want to feed any more than 8 with this in my house

FOR THE MEAT SAUCE

2 large-ish onions (approx. 2¾ cups, chopped)
3–4 tablespoons olive oil
½ cup whole milk
¼ cup tomato paste
2 medium carrots
1 celery stalk
4 fat cloves of garlic
6 ounces (approx. 11 slices) pancetta (or bacon)
A small bunch of Italian parsley (approx. 1 cup leaves)
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves (or 1 teaspoon dried thyme)
⅛ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
12 ounces ground beef
12 ounces ground pork
1 cup red wine (good enough to drink)

or red vermouth
2 cups beef broth
2 x 14-ounce cans of diced tomatoes
2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)
3 fresh bay leaves

FOR THE BÉCHAMEL

Vegetable prep detritus from meat sauce, above
4 cups whole milk, plus more as needed
1 teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ½ teaspoon fine sea salt)
A good grinding of white pepper
2 fresh bay leaves
7 tablespoons unsalted butter
¾ cup all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan

FOR ASSEMBLING

18–20 dried lasagna sheets
4 ounces fresh mozzarella, not bufala
5 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan

1. Chop the onions, dropping the peeled skin into a saucepan big enough to make the béchamel shortly. I use one 9 inches in diameter and 3½ inches deep.
2. In a large, heavy-based Dutch oven or pan that comes with a lid—I use an enameled cast-iron Dutch oven of 10 inches diameter, with a capacity of 5¼ quarts, and wouldn't advise going any smaller—warm 3 tablespoons of the oil and, over medium-low heat, cook the onions for 5 minutes, then turn down to low and cook for a further 15 minutes, stirring every now and again until the onions are beginning to soften and color.
3. While the onions are cooking, first stir the tomato paste into the ½ cup of milk, and set aside for a moment. Peel the carrots if they need it (if they're organic, or the skin looks tender, I don't bother) and chop them each into 3 or 4 pieces, dropping them into the bowl of a food processor and the peelings and any discarded pieces into the saucepan with the onion skin. Tear the celery into pieces and add to the processor, then peel the garlic (dropping the peelings into the béchamel pan), and add the cloves to the processor. Cut the pancetta (or bacon) up a bit and add to the processor as well, along with the parsley (you can use all the tender stems too). Strip enough thyme leaves from the stems

to give you 1 tablespoon, add this too (or use 1 teaspoon of dried thyme) and blitz until everything is finely chopped, but not mush. Obviously, you could chop everything by hand. In which case, don't drive yourself mad trying to get everything as fine as the processor version.

4. When the 15 minutes is up on the onions, heat the oven to 325°F. Scrape every last bit of the bacony vegetable mixture from the processor into the pan, turn the heat up to medium-high, stir well and cook for 5 minutes, then turn the heat down again to medium-low, sprinkle in the red pepper flakes, and cook for another 5 minutes.
5. At this stage, I feel I should tell you to remove all the vegetables in order to brown the meat properly, but I have taken to simply adding it on top of what's in the pan already. So, turn the heat to high, crumble in the ground beef and pork and turn well in the pan for about 5 minutes. If you need to add another tablespoon of oil, do.
6. Add the wine (or vermouth), let it bubble up, and then pour in the beef broth, the cans of diced tomatoes, the tomato paste and milk mixture, salt and bay leaves and bring to a bubble. Taste to see if you want to add any more salt, and then clamp on a tightly fitting lid and transfer to the oven, leaving it to cook for 1 hour.
7. Straightaway, pour the 4 cups of milk for the béchamel over the vegetable peelings, add the salt, pepper, and bay leaves, and bring almost to a boil, but don't let it boil. Turn off the heat, cover with a tightly fitting lid (which will stop it from getting a skin, as well as making the flavors infuse better) and leave while the meat sauce cooks. When the meat sauce has been in the oven for 45 minutes, strain the milk into a large pitcher. If, when all the milk has dripped through, you are short of your full 4 cups, just pour in a little more milk to top up.
8. Clean out the saucepan (just with water's fine, you don't need soap), dry it well and melt the butter in it, then add the flour and mix together, over medium heat, for a couple of minutes, forming your roux, and cooking it a little; you should have a dingy primrose paste that, somehow, magically, seems to come away from the pan and cleave to itself as you stir and move it about.
9. Take the pan off the heat, swap your wooden spoon for a whisk, preferably a little one that's good for removing lumps, and slowly whisk in the milk. Don't worry, by the way, that the milk (thanks to the onion skins) will have a slightly peachy tone about it. I rather like it, actually, not that it is visible in the finished sauce.

10. When all the milk is whisked in, carry on whisking until you've got a smooth cream in the pan, and then put back on the heat, lowish, and keep whisking until you have a very, very thick sauce, with all taste of flouriness banished; this will take 5–7 minutes. Off the heat, quickly whisk in the 3 tablespoons of Parmesan and then scrape every last bit back into the large pitcher, tasting for seasoning as you go.
11. Take the meat sauce out of the oven, and give a gentle stir with a large ladle. Once you can taste it without burning your mouth, check for seasoning: it may well need more salt; do not be timid.
12. Now, it's just a matter of layering up. My lasagna dish measures 9½ x 14 x 2½ inches and it's a pretty tight fit. Sit the dish on a baking sheet. Line the dish with a couple of ladlefuls of the meat sauce, aiming to get more liquid than meat, and cover with a layer of lasagna sheets. I get 4 sheets in the bottom layer but find that for subsequent layers I need extra, which I snap into pieces for patching gaps. Put a couple more ladlefuls of the liquidy bit of sauce into a pitcher or bowl, and set aside for now.
13. Put a third of your béchamel on top of the lasagna sheets and use a spatula to help spread it a little, but don't worry about making an absolutely even, edge-to-edge covering. Top with a third of your remaining meat sauce, then cover with another layer of lasagna sheets, followed by your second third of béchamel, second third of meat sauce and third layer of lasagna sheets. Add your remaining béchamel and meat sauce in order and top with a final layer of pasta sheets and then add the set-aside liquidy meat sauce to cover, pressing down if you need to make sure the top layer of pasta is, if not submerged exactly, then lightly covered. Leave now for at least 30 minutes, but longer (up to 2 days) if needed; if you're leaving it for more than about 2 hours, you will need to refrigerate it.
14. When you are ready to bake your lasagna, heat the oven to 400°F. Finely chop or shred the mozzarella and sprinkle over the top of the unbaked lasagna, then sprinkle over the Parmesan. Cover with foil, trying not to press it down on the top of the lasagna, and bake for 40 minutes (if it's been refrigerated it'll probably need 1 hour). Remove the foil (pull off any cheese that's stuck to it and add it back to the top of the lasagna) and cook for a further 30 minutes until it's slightly scorched in parts, the cheese gooey, the pasta swollen and runkled on top, and everything piping hot all the way through.
15. Leave to stand, if you can bear it, for 20–30 minutes before diving in.

PAPPARDELLE WITH CAVOLO NERO AND 'NDUJA

This is a gorgeous, wintry, rib-sticker of a dish, just right to bolster and brighten where skies are dark and the air is chill. If you haven't come across 'nduja before (pronounced en-doo-ya, with the "en" mumbled, and the stress on the "doo"), I can best describe it as being like a fabulously fiery salami pâté, or a chorizo-ish spread (I can only imagine that 'nduja is a Calabrian rendition of the French andouille), and once you start cooking with it, you won't be able to stop. I always use the 'nduja that you buy cut into soft slabs, but it works just as well with the 'nduja paste that comes in a jar; it has perhaps a slightly more bitter edge, but you hardly notice that given its intense heat. Add it to anything—a bowl of chickpeas, a pan of mussels, a chicken stew—when you want to bring smokiness and heat; or, just eat it as it is, spread on toast. Here, it binds with the potato to make a fuzzy, buttery sauce to coat the thick pasta and minerally greens, and although two large pans are involved, very little work is required of you.

If you can't find 'nduja, or are vegetarian, then do use harissa in its stead, though you probably won't need more than a tablespoon or two, and I'd add a generous handful of halved cherry tomatoes, frying them in the butter until they give up some of their gloop; should you be vegan, use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of olive oil in place of the butter.

If it's a solo supper you're after, I suggest you generously divide everything by 5, give or take; use a tablespoon of butter and a larger potato, by all means. And you don't have to use pappardelle: I recently made this with fusilloni—comically giant fusilli—and the sturdy spiral shapes were a perfect foil for the full-bodied 'nduja sauce.

SERVES 6

1 large mealy potato, such as a russet
(approx. 10 ounces)

$1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds cavolo nero or other kale or dark leafy greens

1 pound pappardelle (preferably not egg pappardelle)

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

6 ounces (approx. $\frac{2}{3}$ cup) 'nduja (see recipe intro)

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more to serve

1. Fill a large saucepan with cold water, and add salt with abandon.
2. Peel the potato (as you want to help it break down a little as it cooks with the pasta) and cut it into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes, then add these to the pan of salted water and bring to a boil.
3. Meanwhile, pull the leaves off the stalks of the cavolo nero, tear them into smaller pieces, and leave in a colander for now.

4. Once the water in the pan has come to a boil, cook the potato cubes for 10 minutes, and then add the pappardelle; I don't use egg pappardelle, but the sturdier durum wheat kind, which take around 7 minutes to cook; if you have only the finer egg pappardelle, which take about half the time, add the cavolo nero to the water first. Give the pappardelle a good stir, and once the water has reached boiling point again, add the cavolo nero.
5. Set your timer for just under the recommended cooking time on your package of pasta, though start checking before that, and get on with the sauce. I use something called a stir-fry pan for this, which looks like a large wok, really. You need a pan that's big enough to take all the ingredients later, and with room to toss the pasta comfortably. Melt the butter gently in your pan of choice, and then, over low to medium heat, add the soft, squidgy, spicy 'nduja and stir it into the butter to make a sauce.
6. When the pasta's nearly ready, scoop out a cupful of pasta-cooking water, and then add about 3–4 tablespoons to the buttery 'nduja, and stir it in.
7. Then, once the pasta is done and the cavolo nero soft, drain both and tip into the 'nduja pan. It doesn't matter if the pappardelle and greens are wet; you will just have to add less water later.
8. Turn everything together carefully, as your pan will be very full indeed, and add more of the pasta-cooking water as needed to help emulsify the sauce.
9. Pour over the extra-virgin olive oil, and toss again, adding more if wished, and serve immediately. Bring the bottle to the table, to pour, greenly and greedily, over your pasta as you eat.

SPICED BULGUR WHEAT WITH ROASTED VEGETABLES

SERVES 3–4 as a main course (more when a side dish, obviously)

FOR THE BULGUR WHEAT

A small bunch of cilantro
(approx. 1 cup leaves)
2 fat cloves of garlic
1 teaspoon fennel seeds
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon coriander seeds
⅛ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1½ cups cold water
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 orange
1 heaping cup bulgur wheat

¼ cup red lentils
1½ teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or
¾ teaspoon fine sea salt)

FOR THE ROASTED VEGETABLES

2 large leeks (approx. 5 cups sliced, white parts only)
2–3 red bell peppers (approx. 3 cups pieces)
1½ cups cherry tomatoes
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon fennel seeds
1 teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or
½ teaspoon fine sea salt)
3 tablespoons olive oil
1½ cups radishes

1. You don't have to start on the bulgur wheat straightaway, but as it stands so comfortably once cooked, I tend to do it this way round. Finely chop some of the tender stalks of cilantro, just enough to give you about a tablespoon; peel the garlic; measure out the seeds and red pepper flakes; and have water in a measuring jug by the stove in readiness. If you are in a hurry to eat you could get on with preparing the vegetables now too.
2. Get out a not-too-large heavy-based Dutch oven or saucepan that comes with a tightly fitting lid—I use an enameled cast-iron one of 8 inches diameter—and very gently warm the oil over low heat. Finely grate in the zest of the orange, and stir it into the oil. Mince or grate in the garlic, add your spoonful of finely chopped cilantro stalks and stir these into the now golden oil for about 30 seconds. Turn the heat up a little, just to medium-low, and add the fennel, cumin, and coriander seeds, followed by the red pepper flakes, and give everything a good stir.
3. Turn the heat to high, and quickly add the bulgur wheat and lentils, and stir again, and well, to make sure everything is mixed together. Now add the water and salt and bring to a boil.
4. Once it's started bubbling, clamp on the lid and turn the heat back down to low, then leave to cook gently for 15 minutes—you can start chopping your vegetables—by which time all the water should be absorbed.
5. Heat the oven to 425°F. Wash the leeks to remove any mud if needed, and cut them into approx. 1 ¼-inch logs, and drop into a sturdy and fairly shallow

roasting pan in which, ideally, all the vegetables will sit snugly; I use one that's 12 x 10 x 2 inches. Cut the red bell peppers (seeding, and discarding any pith in the process) into large bite-sized pieces and add them to the roasting pan along with the whole cherry tomatoes.

6. When time's up on the bulgur wheat, turn off the heat, cover the pan with a clean kitchen towel, clamp the lid back on and leave for 40 minutes, though it will stand happily for a lot longer than this. I routinely leave this for 2 hours.

7. Sprinkle the seeds and salt over the waiting vegetables, then add the oil and schmoosh to mix. Pour 2 tablespoons of cold water and 2 tablespoons of juice from your zested orange into the pan and roast in the hot oven for 30 minutes, by which time the vegetables should be cooked and soft, and the leeks beginning to scorch in parts. While the vegetables are in the oven, halve the radishes from top to bottom.

8. When the leeks, bell peppers and tomatoes have had their 30 minutes, take the pan out of the oven, add the radishes, and mix. Because the vegetables—ideally—fit so snugly in their pan, they make a wonderful strongly flavored juice as they cook. However, if you've had to use a bigger pan, you may find that they're going a little dry, and might be sticking to the pan in places; if so add another tablespoon each of orange juice and water or more as needed. Put back in the oven to roast for another 10 minutes. Take the pan out of the oven and let stand while you put the finishing touches on the bulgur wheat.

9. Chop the cilantro leaves. Remove the lid and kitchen towel from the bulgur wheat and use a couple of forks to mix everything together in the saucepan and, importantly, to separate and fluff up the grains.

10. Tip into a serving bowl or dish, add most of your chopped cilantro and fork it in. Add a third of the roasted vegetables and mix in well but lightly with your two forks. Taste for seasoning—I often want to add more salt at this stage. Top with the remaining roasted vegetables, and sprinkle with the rest of the cilantro.

FEAR-FREE FISH STEW

I know a lot of people are hesitant about cooking fish, and I do understand why, but this, my friends, is the recipe to allay your anxieties and free you from fear. Your issues will be a thing of the past.

It's also very useful when you have to get dinner on the table fast, for although the sauce takes around an hour to cook (and for a good half of this time you can be lying languorously on a sofa, should your life allow for such luxuries), you can make it quite a bit in advance, actually; indeed, I think it is better for having time to steep and mellow. Then, when you're ready to eat, you just heat the sauce, adding $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water, chop up your fish chunkily, drop it all into the simmering pan, and supper's pretty much on the table.

Furthermore, you should regard the sauce as a welcoming base, ready to accommodate a good variety of fish. I've specified firm white fish to give you leeway, depending on what's available, but there is no reason why you couldn't use salmon either. And I have made this, too, with a couple of bags of raw shrimp from the freezer. Nor is there anything to say this couldn't be turned into a vegetable stew. In which case, increase the sweet potato, cutting any extra you add into bite-sized pieces rather than small dice (I still like to have some cut finely as below, since it helps give body to the sauce), along with parsnips, an eggplant and some zucchini, if they're in season; the zucchini should be added towards the end of the cooking time; feel free to add a can of drained chickpeas along with them. And you can stir in 8 ounces or more of young spinach leaves once everything's cooked, letting them wilt in the heat of the pan for a couple of minutes.

Serve spectacularly with plain black Venus rice if you can get it. Or make up the bulgur wheat following the preceding recipe, ignoring the roasted vegetable part, and boosting the quantities to $1\frac{2}{3}$ cups of bulgur wheat and $2\frac{1}{3}$ cups of water.

SERVES 4

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground mace
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground ginger
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground turmeric
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon hot smoked paprika
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cumin
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 large sweet potato (approx. $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups, diced)
A small bunch of cilantro (approx. 1 cup leaves)
Approx. $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch piece of fresh ginger

2 fat cloves of garlic
1 onion (approx. $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups, chopped)
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups cold water
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 orange
2 x 14-ounce cans of diced tomatoes
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fine sea salt)
1 teaspoon honey or maple syrup
 $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds skinless firm white fish, in 1 thick piece or thick-cut fillets

1. Measure all the spices into a little bowl, and then peel the sweet potato and cut into ½-inch dice, and leave to one side. Finely chop the tender stalks from the bunch of cilantro, to give yourself 3 tablespoonsful. Peel and finely grate the ginger, to give you 1 teaspoonful, and peel the garlic. Peel and roughly chop the onion. Fill a measuring jug with 1⅔ cups cold water.
2. Warm the oil in a heavy-based saucepan or Dutch oven that comes with a lid (I use one of 9 inches diameter). Add the onion, and cook it gently for about 20 minutes until it's beginning to soften and color.
3. Finely grate in the orange zest, mince or grate in the garlic, add the chopped cilantro stalks, and the grated ginger, and stir everything over gentle heat, then add the spices.
4. Tip in the diced sweet potato, and stir into the spiced onion over medium heat for a minute or so. Add the canned tomatoes, and half fill the empty cans with your water and rinse out into the pan.
5. Spoon in the tomato paste, and add the salt and honey or maple syrup. Halve your zested orange and squeeze out enough juice to give you a tablespoon and add that too, giving everything a good stir.
6. Turn up the heat to bring to a boil, then clamp on the lid, turn the heat right down, and leave to simmer for 40–45 minutes until the sweet potato is completely soft and the sauce has thickened slightly. You can do all of this in advance, heating up when you are ready to cook the fish, or move straight on to the fish now.
7. Cut your fish into large bite-sized pieces and add to the simmering sauce. Turn the heat down and put the lid on. Depending on how chunky or how cold the fish is, it'll need 3–5 minutes to cook in this gentle heat. Remove the pan from the heat, take off the lid and let it stand for a further 2 minutes.
8. Chop the leaves you have left from the stalkless cilantro, and sprinkle over the stew on serving.

BEET AND CHICKPEA DIP

MAKES approx. 3½ cups

2 medium raw beets (approx. 8 ounces)

1 x 25-ounce jar of chickpeas (or

**1½ cups dried chickpeas, soaked, cooked
and cooled)**

2–3 fat cloves of garlic

2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or

1 teaspoon fine sea salt)

2 tablespoons tahini

2–3 lemons

A few ice cubes, for blending

1. Heat the oven to 425°F. Cut the stems and tails off the beets, and wrap each beet loosely in foil, seal the parcels tightly, and roast for about 2 hours, though be prepared to go up to 3. Open up and pierce each beet with a knife to make sure it's tender. When you're satisfied your beets are cooked, unwrap the parcels and leave to cool.
2. Peel and break apart the beets, and drop the pieces into the bowl of a food processor. Tip the chickpeas out of the jar, helping them loose with a bendy spatula or spoon, making sure you get all the gloop, too; it's this that will help make it all so gorgeously creamy. If using chickpeas you've cooked yourself, add a couple of tablespoons of the liquid they cooked in, or more as needed.
3. Press on 2 of the garlic cloves with the flat of a knife to bruise them and release the skin. Peel it away and add the cloves to the processor. Add the salt, tahini, and ¼ cup of lemon juice. Process patiently—it will take a while to combine—and once it's well mixed, scrape down the bowl, add a couple of ice cubes, and blitz again until gorgeously smooth and radiantly, improbably pink. You can add another ice cube or two and go on for longer if you feel it needs it, until you have a light, super-smooth texture.
4. Taste to see if you would like any more lemon juice, garlic or salt, adding as necessary and blitzing again, then scrape into a serving bowl.

ROASTED RED PEPPERS WITH POMEGRANATE MOLASSES AND DUKKAH

SERVES 4-6

FOR THE DRESSING

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses
½ teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt)
1 fat clove of garlic

FOR THE PEPPERS

6 large or 9 small red bell peppers (approx. 2½ pounds)
2 tablespoons olive oil
¼ cup hot water from a just-boiled kettle, plus more as needed

FOR THE DUKKAH

½ cup shelled pistachios
2 tablespoons sesame seeds
2 teaspoons coriander seeds
2 teaspoons cumin seeds
½ teaspoon fennel seeds
½ teaspoon pink peppercorns
1 teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ½ teaspoon fine sea salt)

TO SERVE (OPTIONAL)

2-3 tablespoons pomegranate seeds

1. I start off with the dressing (often making it in advance to give the garlic longer to infuse). Pour the extra-virgin olive oil into a small jar—an old mustard jar, for example—and add the pomegranate molasses and salt. Press on the garlic with the flat side of a knife to bruise it, then remove the skin. Add the bruised garlic to the jar (if it's broken up, don't worry) and give it a very good shake.
2. Heat the oven to 425°F. Cut the bell peppers in half and take out the stalk, seeds and white pith.
3. Put the peppers cut-side down into a large lipped baking sheet—I use one that is 16 x 13 inches. Add the 2 tablespoons of olive oil, and schmooch to mix, leaving the peppers cut side down again. Aiming for an unpeppered corner, pour ¼ cup of hot water into the pan. Put immediately in the oven, and roast for about 40 minutes, by which time they should be very tender and scorched in places. Do check after 30 minutes, though, and if you think they are burning onto the baking sheet, add some more water; it will be so hot at this stage, you can use cold water.
4. Get on with the dukkah once the peppers have gone into the oven. Toast the pistachios in a dry frying pan (big enough to accommodate them in one layer) over medium heat, giving the pan a shake and a stir regularly, for about 3 minutes. Tip the nuts into a shallow dish to cool.
5. Toast the sesame seeds for 2 minutes, again giving the pan a shake and stir frequently, and tip these into a second dish or a saucer to cool. The sesame seeds are added whole to this dukkah, which is why you can't toast them with

the other seeds. Speaking of which, now toast the coriander, cumin, and fennel seeds, along with the pink peppercorns, which again will take only a couple of aromatic minutes, but you'll need to shake and stir pretty much constantly. Tip these into a third dish to cool.

6. With the sesame seeds set to one side, add the salt to the mixed seeds and peppercorns and grind coarsely; if you don't have a spice or coffee grinder, and can't face a pestle and mortar, a bullet blender (should you have one) will do, but blitz very briefly; this shouldn't be a powder or a paste, but fine, spicy rubble. Transfer this to a jar or bowl.

7. Remove 1 tablespoon of pistachios and chop them roughly with a knife or mezzaluna and add to the sesame seeds. Grind the remaining pistachios with whatever method you chose for the spices. The pistachios are soft, so although you should aim for small pieces, you will inevitably get some powder, too, and that's fine.

8. Add the ground pistachios, hand-chopped pistachios, and toasted sesame seeds to the jar or bowl of spicy rubble. Mix or shake well. You won't need all of the dukkah for the salad, but it lasts for ages, and you will find yourself sprinkling it over vegetables, avocado toast, salads and, of course, bread dipped in olive oil.

9. When the roasted red peppers are ready, if you want to peel them, put them straight from the oven into a bowl, cover with food wrap or a plate and leave to cool; this will help the skin lift more easily. Carefully lift off the skin with your fingers and arrange the soft peeled peppers on a platter. If you're not peeling them, you can transfer them from the baking sheet to the platter and serve warm or leave to cool.

10. When you're ready to eat, stand the jar of dressing in a bowl of warm water for 10 minutes, then shake well and pour over the peppers. Scatter over the pomegranate seeds if using. Sprinkle with dukkah and serve with pride.

ROOT VEGETABLE MASH

Both uplifting and comforting, this is a regular at my table from autumn onwards. There's pretty well nothing it doesn't enhance, from stews and roasts to the plainest piece of grilled fish or meat. It is also to be borne in mind with the Norwegian Pork Ribs. And unlike proper mashed potatoes, you can make it ahead and reheat it easily. Just warm a little milk in a heavy-based saucepan, add the gloriously orange mixture, and stir regularly until piping hot.

Should you have any left over, you could also add vegetable or chicken broth for a near-instant soup.

SERVES 4-6

6 medium parsnips (approx. 1½ pounds)

1 medium rutabaga (approx. 1½ pounds)

2 large carrots (approx. 12 ounces)

2 fat cloves of garlic

2 teaspoons fine sea salt

5 tablespoons unsalted butter

A good grinding of nutmeg

A good grinding of pepper

**1-2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or ½-1 teaspoon fine sea salt)**

1. Peel the parsnips, and cut the fat ends into thick slices or chunks—this might involve no more than cutting them into two or three—and halve the spindly tails, or leave them as they are if very small. Peel the rutabaga, and aim to cut it into chunks that match the pieces of parsnip (obviously, you won't have any spindly pieces). Peel the carrots and as they take much longer than either rutabaga or parsnips to cook, cut them into pieces about half the size of the others.
2. Put all your prepared vegetables in a saucepan; I use one of 9 inches diameter. Peel the garlic and throw the cloves in whole, and cover generously with cold water. Add the salt, partially cover the pan, and bring to a boil.
3. Once the water's boiling, turn the heat down a little and, still with the lid on top of the pan at a rakish angle, let the vegetables cook at a robust simmer for about 30 minutes or until all of them are soft enough to be mashed easily. Really make sure that the carrots are very tender or your mash will be grainy.
4. Dip a cup into the pan to get a little of the cooking water, in case you need it later (or better still keep all of the liquid for making soup), then drain the vegetables and, with a stick blender (using the soup attachment, if yours has such a thing), mash them in the hot pan with the butter, nutmeg, pepper, and 1 teaspoon of flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ½ teaspoon of fine sea salt). Obviously you can mash them by hand if you want.

5. Add a tablespoon of the cooking water, and continue to mash until you have as smooth a purée as possible. Add more liquid if you like a softer consistency, or indeed more butter if you feel the need, and check for seasoning, adding more salt, nutmeg and pepper as wished.

BROWN BUTTER COLCANNON

SERVES 4-6

2½–2¾ pounds russet potatoes, preferably of a uniform size

14 ounces kale to give approx. 10 cups small pieces

1 cup whole milk

2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)

4 scallions

10 tablespoons unsalted butter

1. Scrub any mud off the potatoes and put them whole into a large saucepan—I use one of 10 inches diameter—of salted cold water and bring to a boil.
2. Without knowing what size potatoes you’re using, it’s hard to be precise about how long they’ll take to cook: smaller potatoes will take around 40 minutes; larger ones will take around 1 hour. At any rate, cook, at a robust simmer (checking that the pan isn’t boiling dry, or that the water isn’t bubbling so fiercely the potatoes break into pieces) with the lid partially on, until the potatoes feel good and tender when you pierce them gently with a fork.
3. While the potatoes are cooking, strip the kale from the stems, and then tear into small pieces; even if you buy kale that’s ready-chopped, you’ll still need to go through it to remove any tough bits of stem.
4. Cook the kale in a small amount of salted boiling water until it’s soft—this should take around 5 minutes—and then drain. When you can handle it without burning yourself, squeeze out the excess water and put the kale back in the hot saucepan, cover the pan to keep it warm, and leave to one side for now. Thinly slice the scallions—I like to use most of the green part as well as the white—and leave to one side for now, too.
5. Once your potatoes are tender, take them out of the pan gently (draining them in a colander may make them disintegrate, and get waterlogged) and place on a large board. Empty out the pan and, remembering it’s still hot, carefully give it a quick wipe with paper towels. Put it back on the still-warm, turned-off stove and return the potatoes to the pan to dry out for a couple of minutes.
6. Mash the potatoes by whichever method you prefer. I like the texture from the skins, so I wouldn’t use a potato ricer. I mash straight in the pan, so I warm the milk in a pitcher in the microwave, pour it into the potatoes, add the salt and set to with a masher. (Whatever you do, don’t use a stick blender or you’ll turn them to glue.) When you’ve finished mashing them, fold in the cooked kale, and taste for seasoning. Put the lid on so that it all stays hot while you make the brown butter and warm a serving dish.

7. Put a small heatproof pitcher by the stove. Cut the butter into slabs, the better for melting, and duly melt it in a heavy-based saucepan—I use one 7 inches in diameter and 3 ¼ inches deep—over gentle heat. Once the butter's melted, turn the heat to medium, and carry on cooking, swirling the pan regularly, until the butter starts to turn a deep golden brown, with dark speckles at the bottom of the pan. Once it's toasty and hazelnutty, at around 7 minutes, remove the pan from the heat, and add the sliced scallions, which will make the brown butter sizzle furiously.

8. Pour two-thirds of this into the potato pan and the rest into your little pitcher. Beat the brown butter into the colcannon and scrape into your warmed bowl, making swirls in the top of the colcannon with your spatula or spoon. Pour the remaining brown butter and scallions on top and take to the table, in blissful anticipation.

FENNEL GRATIN

SERVES 4

2¼ pounds fennel (it's best to have 2 large bulbs rather than several smaller ones)

1 cup dry white vermouth

3 ounces Gruyère (approx. ¾ cup, grated)

2 fat cloves of garlic

1 cup heavy cream

**2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)**

A good grinding of pepper

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

1. Heat the oven to 400°F.
2. Cut off the chimney-like stems from the fennel, then halve the bulbs, cut away most of the core and cut each half into 3 or 4 wedges. Keep the offcuts for the stockpot and the fronds for salads.
3. Put these wedges into a heavy-based saucepan that comes with a tightly fitting lid—I use one of 9 inches diameter—and pour over the vermouth, then bring to a boil over high-ish heat with the lid on, so listen out for the bubbling. I know there's not a lot of liquid in the pan, but so long as the lid fits tightly, it shouldn't evaporate, and the fennel, as it softens, will give off liquid of its own. Once it comes to a boil, turn the heat down and let it simmer robustly for 15 minutes or until the fennel wedges feel soft when you prod them with a fork. Lift up the lid and check after 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and, with tongs or a couple of forks, transfer the now bedraggled fennel to a round, shallow dish of about 10 inches diameter or a 2-quart gratin dish. Reserve the cooking liquid.
4. Meanwhile, finely grate the cheese and peel the garlic. Measure the heavy cream into a pitcher, then mince or grate in the garlic, add the flaky sea salt, grind over the pepper, and stir in the grated cheese and the Dijon mustard followed by the vermouthy-fennel juices from the pan.
5. Whisk to mix before pouring over the softened fennel in its dish. Use a spoon and fork to turn the fennel in the cream, so that it's well coated, leaving it in a single layer. You may need to press down a bit on the fennel to make sure it's submerged, though don't worry if some of it is poking up.
6. Bake in the oven for 1 hour, until the gratin is bubbling, its top bronzed in places. Let the dish sit for about 10 minutes out of the oven before serving.

ROASTED CAULIFLOWER WITH APRICOT HARISSA AND SPINACH

SERVES 4–6

FOR THE APRICOT HARISSA

Approx. 18 (¾ ounce) long dried Kashmiri chiles

1 teaspoon caraway seeds

1 teaspoon coriander seeds

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

Seeds from 4 cardamom pods

6 soft dried apricots

**2½-inch piece of fresh turmeric
(or 1 teaspoon ground turmeric)**

4 fat cloves of garlic

1-inch piece of fresh ginger

2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt

(or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)

1 teaspoon sweet smoked paprika

¼ cup olive oil

1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar

FOR THE CAULIFLOWER AND SPINACH

**1 very large or 2 medium cauliflowers
(approx. 3¼ pounds)**

2 tablespoons Apricot Harissa

¼ cup olive oil, plus more as needed

1 tablespoon tomato paste

2 tablespoons orange juice

6 soft dried apricots

12 ounces baby spinach (approx. 12 cups)

1. To make the harissa, put the dried chiles in a heatproof bowl or pitcher, and pour over about 2 cups water from a just-boiled kettle. With a spoon, press the chiles down under the water—though they can't help bobbing up—then cover the bowl or pitcher with a plate, and leave the chiles to steep and soften while you toast your spices.
2. Put the caraway, coriander, and cumin seeds into a frying pan. Add the seeds from the cardamom pods, and then toast them all—that's to say, dry-fry them—over medium heat for a few minutes, giving the pan a shake and a shimmy regularly, to make sure the spices don't burn. When you are hit by their aroma wafting up from the pan, they should be toasted enough. Tip the seeds out into a shallow dish.
3. Get out a second bowl that will comfortably take all the harissa ingredients, and that you can use with a stick blender. Halve the apricots and drop them in. Add the turmeric, sliced into about 3 (or the dried turmeric if using) and peel the garlic, add it to the bowl, then peel the ginger with the tip of a teaspoon, cut it into a few small pieces and add these to the bowl, along with the salt and paprika.
4. When the chiles have had their 15 minutes of soaking time, lift them, one by one, out of the water, give them a bit of a waggle over the water, and pull off the stalks, letting the soaked chiles and their seeds drop into the bowl. Tip in the cooled spices, pour in the oil and vinegar, and blitz with a stick blender until you have a thick paste. You can use this straightaway to anoint the cauliflower.

5. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the harissa into a very large mixing bowl, add the ¼ cup of olive oil, 1 tablespoon of tomato paste and 2 tablespoons of orange juice and whisk to mix.
6. Get rid of any tired or discolored outer leaves from the cauliflower, then tear off the remaining leaves and reserve them. Cut or break the cauliflower into florets, discarding the core, then add to the mixing bowl and toss so that the florets are well coated, their elegant matt pallor now slicked a glossy dayglo orange. Add the more robust leaves (holding back the tightly curled, tender inner leaves for now) and toss again. Leave to steep for 20 minutes, but they'll be fine for a few hours. If you're cooking straightaway, you should heat the oven to 425°F now.
7. Tip the coated cauliflower leaves and florets into a large but fairly shallow roasting pan (I use one measuring 13 x 15 x 2 inches) and spread them out evenly, and roast in the oven for 30 minutes.
8. Immediately the cauliflower is in the oven, add the reserved tender leaves to the bowl with its oily orange residue and press the leaves into this, adding a little more oil to help the paste coat them, if needed. When the cauliflower has had its 30 minutes in the oven, add these leaves to the pan, turning any florets over, should you feel it's necessary. Roast for a further 10 minutes, or until the florets are soft throughout and scorched in places.
9. While you're waiting for the florets to cook, chop up the soft dried apricots or—as I do—snip them with scissors. Once the cauliflower's ready, remove the pan from the oven, add the snipped apricots and the spinach, and gently mix together. Put the pan back in the oven, though switch it off, and let the spinach wilt into the harissa-spiced cauliflower for 5–10 minutes in the residual heat (and put in a heatproof serving dish at the same time). It won't matter if you leave the pan in for longer; this is at its best warm rather than piping hot.

CRISP AND CREAMY ARTICHOKEs

SERVES 4-6

1½ pounds frozen artichoke bottoms

3 tablespoons olive oil, plus 2 tablespoons more

1 lemon

1 teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ½ teaspoon fine sea salt)

½ teaspoon Aleppo pepper (or use ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes plus

¼ teaspoon paprika)

3 fat cloves of garlic

6 ounces oyster mushrooms

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more as needed

3 ounces arugula (approx. 3 cups)

3 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley

½ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, plus a few sprigs

1. Thaw the artichokes; you can speed up the process (and this applies to any frozen food you want to thaw) by sitting them on an aluminum sheet pan. When they're almost completely thawed, heat the oven to 425°F.
2. If they are whole then cut each round into 3, then arrange on a lipped baking sheet in a single layer, and pour over 3 tablespoons of the olive oil. Finely grate the zest of the lemon over the artichokes. Sprinkle over the salt and the Aleppo pepper (or red pepper flakes and paprika) then gently schmoosh around to mix. Put in the oven to roast for 30 minutes.
3. Peel the garlic and tear the oyster mushrooms roughly in half, so you have soft gray velvet rags. Once the artichokes have had their 30 minutes, mince or grate the garlic into the pan, add the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil and quickly mix together. Drop the mushroom pieces on top and put back in the oven for a further 15 minutes, by which time the mushrooms will have dried in the heat (which tastes very much better than it sounds) and the artichokes will be crisp and bronzed on the outside and creamy within.
4. Take out of the oven, and immediately squeeze over the juice from half the zested lemon, pour over the 2 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil and toss gently to mix. Taste to see if you need any more lemon juice, salt or extra-virgin olive oil. You can serve these straightaway, or leave in the pan until they're room temperature, or perhaps a whisper above.
5. Line a large plate with arugula. Top with the artichokes and mushrooms, then sprinkle over the parsley and thyme, both leaves and delicate sprigs. Squeeze some lemon and drizzle a little extra-virgin olive oil over the arugula if you feel it needs it.

BUTTERNUT WITH BEET, CHILI AND GINGER SAUCE

**SERVES 4–6 (makes approx.
1¼ cups)**

FOR THE SAUCE

1 large raw beet (6–7 ounces)

**¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons whole-milk Greek
yogurt (or oat-milk crème fraîche if you
need it to be vegan)**

2 fat cloves of garlic

1¼-inch piece of fresh ginger

1 red chile

**1 teaspoon flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or ½ teaspoon fine sea salt)**

FOR THE BUTTERNUT

1 butternut squash

1 teaspoon ground mace

1 teaspoon ground ginger

¼ cup cold-pressed rapeseed oil or olive oil

**1½ teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or ¾ teaspoon fine sea salt)**

1. Heat the oven to 425°F, cut the tail and stem off the beet, and wrap loosely with foil, sealing the edges tightly, and roast in the oven for about 2 hours, or until it feels properly tender when pierced with the tip of a normal eating knife. Unwrap the parcel, and leave to cool.
2. Once the beet's cold, you can make the sauce. Put the yogurt in a bowl that you can use a stick blender with. Peel and halve the garlic cloves and drop them in. Then peel the ginger with the tip of a teaspoon, and either chop it roughly or cut it into 3 or 4 pieces, and add these to the bowl. Seed the chile and tear it into 2 or 3 pieces and add them to the bowl, too, followed by the salt.
3. Peel the beet, though unless you want more than a touch of the Lady Macbeths, it might be wise to wear gloves as you do so (I use disposable ones, and wash and reuse them). Break the beet up a bit over the bowl and drop the pieces in, too. Then blitz to a smooth, shocking-pink cream with a stick blender. You can also do all of this with a bullet blender. Set this amazingly vivid fluid sauce to one side for now.
4. To roast the butternut squash heat the oven to 400°F. However, were you making this to go with the roasted vegetables and bulgur wheat, for which you need the oven to be at 425°F, you can roast the butternut at this higher temperature, but put it in the oven on a shelf below the pan of leeks and bell peppers.
5. Do not peel the butternut, just halve it, remove the seeds, and then cut into large chunks. Tumble these into a large but fairly shallow roasting pan (I use one measuring 13 x 15 x 2 inches), sprinkle over the spices as evenly as possible, pour over the oil and then, with a couple of spatulas—or just use your hands—turn the butternut chunks well in the oil and spices until lightly coated. Sprinkle with

the salt, and roast in the oven for about 45 minutes, or until tender; squashes vary enormously and, until you cut up and cook one, you never quite know whether its flesh will be smooth and dense, or slightly grainy and watery. Let us hope for the former. But even a disappointing butternut can be salvaged successfully in any one of the three ways mooted in the recipe intro.

6. You can keep the butternut warm in the turned-off oven if that suits you, and then, when you're ready to serve, arrange on a platter or in a large shallow bowl, spoon some of the beet sauce pinkly over its orange flesh, and pour the rest into a little pitcher for people to add more if they want—and they will—as they eat.

SPICE-STUDDED RICE WITH CRISPY SHALLOTS, GARLIC AND CASHEW NUTS

SERVES 4-6

FOR THE RICE

2 onions (approx. 2⅓ cups, chopped)

2 fat cloves of garlic

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

1 teaspoon coriander seeds

1 teaspoon nigella seeds

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

½ teaspoon ground mace

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

3 cardamom pods

**2 tablespoons coconut oil or vegetable oil,
plus 2 teaspoons more**

1¼ cups basmati rice

2 cups vegetable broth

FOR THE CRISPY BITS

3 fat cloves of garlic

2 large shallots (approx. ½ cup, sliced)

¼ cup vegetable oil

⅔ cup raw cashew nuts

1. Peel and chop the onions, and peel the cloves of garlic. Measure out the many spices into a little bowl.
2. Heat the 2 tablespoons of coconut or vegetable oil in a large heavy-based saucepan that comes with a tightly fitting lid; I use one of 9 inches diameter. Add the onions, stir well, and then cook for 10–15 minutes over medium heat (turning it down if they begin to catch too quickly) until they're beginning to soften.
3. Rinse the rice in a strainer under the cold tap until the water runs clear. Set the strainer over a bowl, and bring it near to the stove.
4. Take the onions off the heat, and mince or grate the garlic into the pan, then stir in the spices. Put the pan back on the stove, turn the heat up to medium or medium-high, and stir in the 2 teaspoons of coconut or vegetable oil, followed by the rice, turning it in the pan so that it's well coated with the spiced oil. Before you add the broth, taste it to see how salty it is. If it's not very salty, add salt, then pour in the broth, turn the heat to high, and bring the pan to a boil. As soon as it starts boiling, clamp on the lid, turn the heat down to very low, and cook for 20 minutes, by which time the rice should be cooked, and all the broth absorbed. Turn off the heat, remove the lid, cover the pan with a clean kitchen towel, replace the lid and leave for at least 40 minutes and up to 1 hour. This step is essential to ensure the rice is fluffy rather than puddingy.
5. All that remains to be done are the crispy bits. You can fry the garlic and shallots now, or you can wait and do it towards the end of the rice's standing time. Either way, you may as well prepare them now. So, peel the garlic, and cut each clove into long thin slices. Then peel the shallots, and cut each one into fine circles, separating them with your fingers into a mound of fine, pink-edged hoops.

6. When you're ready to fry, cover three plates with a double layer of paper towels, and place them near the stove, though not so close they're in danger of catching alight. Heat the oil in a small frying pan, and fry the garlic slivers until golden. This doesn't take very long, so be ready to whip them out onto one of your paper-lined plates quickly. Now fry the delicate shallot rings, in two batches if need be (you don't want to crowd the pan) until they are a deep golden brown, and transfer them to another paper-lined plate.
7. Warm a large shallow bowl for the rice. When you are moments away from serving up, fry the cashews until golden, and duly transfer them to the third plate. Reserve the oil for future, fragrant use.
8. Thrash the rice with a large fork to break it up. Add half your fried garlic, shallots, and cashew nuts and fork them through to mix, fluffing the rice up as you do so. Tip into your warmed bowl, and sprinkle with the remaining cashews and crispy shallots and garlic.

CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER CAKE

GIVES 8–12 slices

FOR THE CAKE

1 stick plus 5 tablespoons
(13 tablespoons or 200g) unsalted butter,
plus more for greasing
1 cup (250g) hot water from a just-boiled
kettle
½ cup (50g) unsweetened cocoa powder
½ cup (100g) dark brown sugar
⅔ cup (125g) granulated sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1¾ cups (225g) all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda

2 large eggs, at room temperature

FOR THE FROSTING

(double the quantities below if making a
four-tier cake)

3 cups (300g) confectioners' sugar
1¼ sticks (10 tablespoons or 150g) soft
unsalted butter
¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon (200g) creamy
peanut butter (see recipe intro)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
¼ cup (60g) heavy cream

TO DECORATE

¼ cup (30g) chopped dry roasted peanuts

1. Heat the oven to 350°F. Butter two 8-inch cake pans (or four tier-cake pans) and line them with parchment paper.
2. Cut the butter into tablespoons (just to aid melting) and put into a heavy-based fairly wide saucepan—I use one of 9 inches diameter—and set over gentle heat. Add the just-boiled water, and whisk in the cocoa and both brown and white sugars, and keep on low heat, whisking gently, until the butter has melted, and you have a smooth, amalgamated mixture. Remove from the heat, and stir in the vanilla extract. Let stand for 5 minutes.
3. Measure out the flour in a bowl, add the baking powder and baking soda and fork to mix. Whisk the eggs together in a small pitcher.
4. Pour the eggs gradually into the saucepan, whisking all the while, until they are completely absorbed.
5. Finally, whisk in the flour slowly and gently until you have a smooth batter, and pour and scrape evenly into your waiting cake pans.
6. Bake in the oven for 18–20 minutes (or approx. 7 minutes for the ultra-shallow pans), by which time the cakes will be beginning to shrink away at the edges, and a cake tester will come out cleanish; it is a damp cake, though, so it's fine if a few crumbs cling to the cake tester.
7. Leave the cakes to cool for 10–15 minutes on a rack; they can be turned out once the pans are not so hot that you'd need to use oven mitts. Or you can leave them in their pans until cold. I always do this if making the four-tier variant.

8. To make the buttercream, you must first sift the confectioners' sugar into a bowl. This is one of the few jobs in the kitchen I hate, so I wouldn't tell you to do it if it weren't necessary.

9. In another—large—bowl (or the bowl of a freestanding mixer that you've fitted with the whisk), beat the butter and peanut butter together very thoroughly; that's to say, for 3 minutes if you're using a mixer, or 5 minutes with an electric hand mixer, by which time you should have a light and fluffy creamy mixture. Beat in the vanilla extract and salt.

10. Still beating, but now at a slightly lower speed, patiently add the sifted confectioners' sugar a spoonful at a time until you've used half of it, then beat in the rest in 3 batches. Once it's all in, turn up the mixer a little and carry on beating for 2 minutes, or for 3 with an electric hand mixer. Scrape down the sides, to incorporate any confectioners' sugar clinging to the bowl, and beat again for 30 seconds to 1 minute.

11. Still beating, add the cream a tablespoonful at a time and, when it's all in, carry on beating for 4 minutes (or for 6 minutes with an electric hand mixer) until you have a soft, aerated and moussily light mixture.

12. Peel away the lining papers from the cakes and put one of the layers, flat-side up, on a cake stand or plate. If this is a 2-layer cake, spread—armed, ideally, with a bendy spatula and a small offset spatula—about a third of the frosting evenly onto the waiting cake layer, taking it right out to the very edges of the circle; this will bulge out a bit when you place the other cake on top, which will make it easier for you to frost the sides. And if this is a 4-layer cake, just think in terms of spreading the frosting $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick.

13. Top with your second cake, placing it domed-side up, so that the two flat sides are meeting. Then spread another third of the frosting over the top. And if making a 4-layer cake, create your tower, spreading $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thickness of frosting between each layer, and on the top.

14. Use the bendy spatula to get a dollop of buttercream onto the side of the cake, then spread it gently to cover and smooth, ideally with a small offset spatula, and carry on like this, with your two tools, until the cake is covered all the way round. Then run the offset spatula on top and all round the cake again to smooth the buttercream. Leave plain or decorate with the chopped peanuts or as your heart desires.

CHERRY AND ALMOND CRUMBLE

SERVES 4–6

FOR THE CRUMBLE TOPPING

1¼ cups (150g) all-purpose flour (or gluten-free all-purpose flour)
½ cup (50g) almond meal
1 teaspoon baking powder
(gluten-free if necessary)
⅛ teaspoon fine sea salt
1 stick plus 1 tablespoon
(9 tablespoons or 125g) cold
unsalted butter
¼ cup (50g) granulated sugar
⅓ cup (30g) sliced almonds

FOR THE FILLING

2 or 3 medium Granny Smith apples (approx.
14 ounces or 375g or 2¾ cups chunks)
2 tablespoons (35g) unsalted butter
1 tablespoon (15g) granulated sugar
6½ cups (1¾ pounds or 800g) frozen sweet
pitted cherries
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon almond extract

1. To make the crumble topping, put the flour, almond meal, baking powder and salt into a bowl and mix together.
2. Cut the butter into approx. ½-inch cubes, add to the bowl, and blend into the flour using your fingertips—fluttering the soft pad of your thumb against the soft pads of your fingers—or use a pastry cutter, mixer, or processor, until you have a mixture that looks like rough pale oatmeal, with a few flattened pea-sized lumps of floury butter still visible. Add the sugar and use a fork to mix. You can now chill or freeze until needed.
3. To make the filling, peel the apples, then quarter and core them. Cut into approx. ½-inch chunks.
4. Melt the butter in a wide, heavy-based saucepan (that comes with a lid) over a lowish heat, stir in the sugar and add the apples. Give a good stir to mix, then cover the pan, and let the apples cook, still on a fairly lowish heat, for 15–20 minutes, until they are soft and beginning to break down a little. Stir from time to time so that the apples don't catch on the bottom of the pan. Mash the apples roughly in the pan.
5. Turn up the heat to medium-high and add the frozen cherries, stirring them into the apples and cook, covered, for 3 minutes only, or the cherries will make too much liquid. Remove the lid, and cook for a further 2 minutes by which time the apples will have been absorbed into their redness. It doesn't matter if the cherries are not completely thawed at this stage.
6. Switch off the heat, stir in the vanilla and almond extracts, and turn the fruit into a 9-inch round pie dish, or whichever ovenproof dish you plan on using.

7. You can let the fruit stand in the dish for up to 3 hours or leave it in the fridge for up to 5 days. When you want to bake the crumble, heat the oven to 375°F. Top with the crumble mixture just before cooking. Try and scatter the crumble evenly over the fruit, without pressing down on it, and make sure you go right to the edges.
8. Sprinkle the sliced almonds on top and cook for 30 minutes by which time the filling will have bubbled up beautifully around the edges, the topping will be golden, and the sliced almonds toasted.
9. Let the crumble stand for 15 minutes or so, and then serve with cream, crème anglaise or ice cream, as you wish.

RICE PUDDING CAKE

GIVES 8-12 slices

¾ cup (150g) Arborio rice

scant 3 cups (700g) whole milk

¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

1 lemon

**5 tablespoons (75g) soft unsalted butter, plus
more for greasing
the pan**

3 large eggs, at room temperature

⅓ cup (75g) granulated sugar

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Nutmeg, for grating

1. Put the rice, milk, and salt into a heavy-based saucepan—I use one of 7 inches diameter—and finely grate the zest of the lemon into it. Over high heat, and stirring regularly, bring to the point where it looks like it's just about to boil, though do not let it actually boil. Turn the heat down to low, and continue to cook the milk and rice for about 30 minutes, stirring every now and then, until the rice is cooked and the milk is absorbed. Keep an eye on it, as you don't want the milk to start boiling, nor do you want the rice to stick to the bottom of the pan.
2. Take the pan off the heat, and stir in the 5 tablespoons (75g) of butter until melted. Scrape the contents of the pan into a bowl large enough to take all the remaining ingredients. Leave for about 1 hour to cool. Once it's at room temperature, you can move on, so heat the oven to 325°F, and butter an 8-inch spring-form pan.
3. Separate the eggs, letting the whites fall into a large grease-free bowl (which could be the bowl of a freestanding mixer) and drop the yolks into a wide pitcher (or a bowl). Whisk the whites until stiff, and set aside for a moment. Add the sugar to the yolks, and whisk—I use a balloon whisk with vigour, rather than an electric one here—until pale and moussy.
4. Add the vanilla extract and 2 teaspoons of juice from the zested lemon to the yolks and sugar, and then pour gradually into the cooled rice, folding it in well as you go.
5. Dollop a large spoonful of the stiffly whisked whites into the rice bowl and stir briskly to lighten the mixture, and then fold in a third of the remaining whites gently but thoroughly, then another third, and when that's incorporated, fold in the rest. Pour and scrape this mixture gently into the prepared pan.
6. Grate nutmeg over generously and bake for 45 minutes; by then the top will have set, with no hint of wobble underneath.

7. Sit on a wire rack for about 1 hour, until it's just slightly warm. To ease the unmolding, slip a small spatula all around the edges, unclip the pan, and transfer the cake, still on its base (unless, like me, you don't mind risking damage trying to remove it), to a flat plate.
8. Serve each slice drizzled with a little of the glistening sauce mentioned in the recipe intro, or with the rhubarb compote when in season.

BLOOD ORANGE AND PASSIONFRUIT PAVLOVA

SERVES 2-4

FOR THE BASE

2 large egg whites, at room temperature

A pinch of fine sea salt

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (125g) superfine sugar

1 teaspoon cornstarch

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon white wine vinegar

FOR THE SYRUP

3-4 blood oranges

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50g) superfine sugar

FOR THE TOPPING

2-3 blood oranges

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (150g) heavy cream

1-2 passionfruit to give about 3 tablespoons (pulp and seeds)

1. Heat the oven to 350°F. With a pencil, draw a 6-inch diameter circle on a piece of parchment paper. Use the parchment to line a baking sheet, putting it pencil-side down.
2. Whisk the egg whites and salt in a grease-free bowl until satiny peaks form, and then beat in the sugar a spoonful at a time until the meringue is stiff and shiny. The trick to getting the meringue properly thick but still smooth and shiny is to whisk fast and furiously but add the sugar slowly and serenely. Sprinkle over the cornstarch and the vinegar. Then gently fold them in.
3. Mound the meringue mixture onto the baking sheet inside the outline of your circle, and smooth it patiently to the edges until you have a thick, straight-sided, flat-topped disc, rather like the crown of a barbershop singer's straw boater.
4. Put in the oven, then immediately turn the temperature down to 300°F and cook for 40 minutes. Leave the pavlova to cool in the switched-off oven, with the door ajar to let out the residual heat. If you take the pavlova out too soon the base will crack and collapse, so it's best to apply this gentler cooling-down method.
5. To make the syrup, finely grate the zest from 2 of the blood oranges into a small saucepan—I use one of 6 inches diameter. Squeeze the 3-4 oranges until you have $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (150g) of juice, and add to the saucepan, along with the superfine sugar. Give everything a good stir, then heat the pan until boiling, and let it boil for 5 minutes. Strain the syrup into a small heatproof measuring jug, and I implore you not to throw this zest away but eat it, just with a teaspoon; it tastes like fresh essence of marmalade. Pour the syrup back into the pan, keeping the measuring jug to hand, and continue boiling for about another 6 minutes or so until it has thickened and reduced to about half the volume, leaving you with 5 tablespoons (75g). Leave to cool in the measuring jug.

6. Now prepare the topping. With a small serrated knife, slice off the top and bottom of 2–3 blood oranges so that they sit flat on a board, then working from top to bottom, cut the peel and pith away from the rounded sides to reveal the flesh. Turn each orange on its side and slice into circles, and then cut some of those circles into smaller segments so you have a mixture of flower and petal shapes. Put the orange pieces in a bowl, or if you're not eating the pavlova the same day, seal in an airtight container.
7. When you're ready to eat and the pavlova base is cold, turn it onto a flat plate with the underside uppermost; this is so the tender marshmallow belly of the meringue melds with the soft topping.
8. Whip the cream until thick and airy but still soft, and spread on top of the pav base in a swirly mound, working the cream all the way to the edges so that it is evenly covered.
9. Halve the passionfruit and scoop the pulp onto the cream, then spoon over the orange pieces, letting the juice from both fill the swirls and dribble a little down the sides of the pav. Give the syrup a good stir and then drizzle a little over the top, pouring the rest into a dolls'-house-sized pitcher to serve alongside. If you don't have a pitcher small enough, pour it into an espresso cup with a coffee spoon on the saucer.

SUMMER PUDDING

SERVES 4-6

1½ cups red currants (approx. 9 ounces)

1½ cups black currants (approx. 4 ounces, if unavailable, increase the quantity of raspberries or blackberries by this amount)

1¾ cups cherries (approx. 7 ounces or replace with an extra 1 cup of raspberries or blackberries)

1⅓ cups blackberries (approx.

7 ounces)

1⅓ cups raspberries (approx. 7 ounces)

⅓ cup granulated sugar

½ cup cold water

Approx. 12 thinnish (around ½-inch) slices cut from a large loaf of white bread

TO SERVE

Fresh mint (optional)

Heavy cream (not very much)

1. Set aside a couple of clusters of red currants for serving. Strip the rest of the currants off their stalks and drop them into a large saucepan that comes with a lid. If you're are going to follow me down the untraditional route and use cherries, pit them over the pan so that you don't waste their wonderful juices. Add the rest of the berries, along with the sugar and water.
2. Bring the pan to a bubble over medium heat, which will take around 5 minutes (or twice that long for frozen berries). Once it begins to bubble, put on the lid, turn the heat to low and cook the fruit gently for 3-4 minutes; this is just to encourage them to exude their juices.
3. Cut the crusts off 10 slices of bread, and line the sides of a 4-cup (1-quart) plastic bowl (see introduction) with as many of the slices as you need, cutting others in half to fill in the triangular gaps.
4. Use a water glass that has a diameter just a little bigger than the flat bottom of your bowl to cut out a circle of bread for the base and press it down to sit inside the other slices of bread. And cut the crusts off the other 2 slices, ready for the top.
5. Take all the bread out of the bowl and form a pattern or layout on your work surface in the order you lined the bowl. And if you're not using a flexible plastic bowl, you can line a china one with a generous overhang of plastic wrap to aid umolding later.
6. Put a ladleful of juice from the berry pan into a shallow dish and then take each slice in turn, beginning with the big pieces, and dip one side only of each slice into the juice, just to color it. Line the bowl, purply-red side outward.

7. Ladle out more juice as you need it: you don't want to wet the bread through, just to color it on one side. Finish with the round bit of bread for the base, and have the slices for the top ready but not dipped yet.
8. Ladle in the fruit and juice from the pan to fill the bowl. Let the mixture sit in the bread-lined bowl for about 5 minutes, and then you'll be able to top up a little more.
9. Cut the reserved slices so that they will fit neatly on top, and dip them into a little of the remaining juice, before pressing them down on top, colored side outward, to make a lid. You'll have a little juice left, but you'll need it later.
10. Once the bread top is on the pudding, cover with food wrap, and sit a plate that fits neatly on it just inside the rim of the bowl, and put something heavy on top to weigh it down as it stands. Leave it out on the countertop to cool.
11. Strain the leftover juices into a cup, cover and put in the fridge. The best thing to do with the fruit pulp in the strainer is eat it with cream now.
12. Put the cooled, weighted pudding in the fridge overnight or for up to 2 days, remembering to take it out in time to come to room temperature before serving.
13. Remove the weights, plate and food wrap, and if you're using a plastic bowl, give it a gentle squeeze to help the pudding slip out shortly. It may help, too, to slide a small thin-bladed spatula around the edges of the pudding at the top. Ready? Place your serving plate on top of the bowl and then quickly and firmly flip it all, putting the plate on the work surface, with the upturned bowl on top. Give the bowl another little squeeze and shake and then lift the bowl up and off. If the circle of bread that was on the bottom of the bowl does stick, gently remove it and put it on top of the turned-out pudding.
14. Using a silicone pastry brush, paint any patches of bread that have stayed white with the reserved juice, and decorate the top with the red currants you have set aside for this very purpose and, if you have it, a small sprig or two of fresh mint.
15. Slice into wedges rather like a cake, making sure everyone gets enough fruit, and serve with heavy cream in a pitcher.

BASQUE BURNT CHEESECAKE

GIVES 8–12 slices

FOR THE CHEESECAKE

22 ounces (600g) cream cheese, at room temperature

¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (175g) superfine sugar

3 large eggs, at room temperature

1¼ cups (300g) sour cream, at room temperature

¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

2 tablespoons (25g) cornstarch

FOR THE SAUCE

1 to 1½ tablespoons (15g) hard pure licorice pellets

scant ½ cup (90g) superfine sugar

1¼ cups (300g) water

A pinch of fine sea salt (optional)

TO SERVE

Blackberries or other berries of your choice

1. Heat the oven to 400°F. Get out a 8-inch springform pan and a roll of parchment paper. Unfurl a long piece from the roll, and when it looks like you've got enough to line the pan with an overhang of 2–3 inches, tear it off and press it into the pan, and down into the edges at the bottom. Now do the same again with a second piece, placing it perpendicular to the first so that the pan is entirely lined. Push this piece down, too, and don't worry about any pleats, creases and wrinkles; this is The Look. Sit something heavy in the pan to keep the paper in place while you get on with the cheesecake mixture.
2. I use a freestanding mixer fitted with the flat paddle for this, but you could easily use a large mixing bowl, wooden spoon and elbow grease. First beat the cream cheese with the sugar until light and smooth; I beat for quite a long time, certainly not under 2 minutes, and it would be at least 5 minutes by hand. It is absolutely essential—and I'm sorry to repeat myself—that the cream cheese is at room temperature before you start.
3. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, waiting for each one to be incorporated before adding the next, and when they're all mixed in, you can—beating all the while—pour in the sour cream.
4. Once that is also incorporated, you can slow down the mixer a little (or risk getting cornstarch all over yourself) and then beat in the salt, followed by the cornstarch, one teaspoon at a time. Remove the bowl from the mixer, scrape down the sides with a silicone spatula, and give everything a good stir.
5. Pour into the lined pan (removing whatever's been sitting in it, obviously), making sure no cheesecake mix is left in the bowl, and then rap the filled pan on the work surface about five times to get rid of any air bubbles.

6. Place in the oven and bake for 50 minutes, by which time the cheesecake will be a burnished bronze on top, even chestnut brown in places, and it'll have risen, like a dense soufflé. It will, however, still be very jiggy. It's meant to be. You'll think it's undercooked, but it will carry on cooking as it cools, and it should have a soft set, anyway.

7. Remove the pan to a wire rack and leave to cool. It will sink in the middle a little, but that too is part of its traditional appearance. I reckon it's cool enough to eat after 3 hours, although you may need to leave it for a little longer. If you want to chill it in the fridge, do, but not for more than 30 minutes.

8. Make the licorice sauce once the cheesecake is out of the oven. If you have a bullet blender, you can pulverize the licorice pastilles first, but whether whole or powder, put in a small saucepan with the 1 ¼ cups (300g) of water. Stir in the sugar, then put on a lowish flame until the licorice has all but dissolved, stirring to give it a bit of a nudge every now and again to help it melt. Then turn up the heat and let bubble away until reduced to ⅔ cup (150g)—turning the heat down a bit if it looks like it's boiling over. In a 6-inch diameter pan, I find this can take up to 20 minutes. Keep checking—you'll need a small heatproof measuring jug by your side. Stir in a pinch of salt, if wished, and leave to cool, when it will have the texture of a syrup, which in effect, it is.

9. Before serving, unclip and lift the sides of the pan up and away, and then lift the cheesecake up with the edges of the parchment. Place this on a board, and peel the paper back, and take it like that, rustically beautiful, to the table, along with your blackberries and even blacker licorice syrup. Just drizzle a little over the slices of cheesecake as you hand them out, allowing hardcore licorice lovers to spoon more over as they eat.

VEGAN LEMON POLENTA CAKE

GIVES 8–12 slices

1½ cups (150g) almond meal

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (150g) fine polenta (not instant) or cornmeal

2 teaspoons baking powder (gluten-free if necessary)

½ teaspoon baking soda

¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

7 tablespoons (90g) light olive oil, plus a little extra for greasing the pan

1 cup (200g) superfine sugar

2 large lemons, at room temperature

1 cup (250g) almond-milk plain soy yogurt, at room temperature

¾ cup (75g) confectioners' sugar

TO SERVE (OPTIONAL)

Berries of your choice

1. Heat the oven to 350°F, and line and lightly grease the sides of a 8-inch springform pan. Measure the almond meal and polenta into a bowl, add the baking powder, baking soda, and salt, and fork to mix.
2. Pour the oil into a wide-necked large pitcher, add the sugar and finely grate the zest of the 2 lemons on top. Stir together for a minute, then beat in the yogurt until completely incorporated. Then simply pour your pitcher of wet ingredients into your bowl of dry ingredients, making sure everything is completely mixed.
3. Scrape into the prepared pan, and bake in the oven for about 40 minutes, until the cake is beginning to nudge away from the sides of the pan, and a cake tester comes out clean. Make the syrup, though, as soon as the cake goes in the oven.
4. Put the confectioners' sugar into a small saucepan and add 5 tablespoons (75g) of juice from your zested lemons. Heat, whisking gently to beat out any lumps, just until the sugar's dissolved into the juice, and pour straightaway into a small pitcher to cool.
5. When the cake's cooked, transfer it to a wire rack and, with your cake tester, prick it all over, going in deep, to help the syrup run down into the cake. Pour or spoon the syrup over, trying to be patient, so the syrup doesn't just make a large pool on top.
6. Leave the cake, drenched with its syrup, to cool and, before unclipping, run a thin-bladed spatula round the edges to help dislodge it where the syrup has stuck it to the pan. If you don't feel confident of getting the cake off the base in one piece, don't worry. Serve the cake plain, or with berries of your choice.

NORWEGIAN PORK RIBS

SERVES 4–6 with leftovers

5½–6½-pound bone-in and skin-on belly pork, prepared as per instructions in recipe intro

3 fat cloves of garlic

3 tablespoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1½ tablespoons fine sea salt)

1 teaspoon juniper berries

A large bunch of dill

2 onions

1 cup hot water from a just-boiled kettle

1. You need to take the pork out of the fridge about an hour before you cook it so factor that into your timetable, adding it to the 3 hours, give or take, that the pork will be in the oven. For now, unwrap it and lay it skin side down on a large cutting board.
2. Peel the garlic cloves and drop them into the mortar part of a pestle and mortar, or into a bowl you can use with a stick blender. Add 2 tablespoons of the flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1 tablespoon of fine sea salt), the juniper berries and the stalks from your dill, and start either bashing, grinding and crushing or whizzing, as you prefer, until you have an aromatic green paste. It's harder work with a pestle and mortar, but I adore making it this way: it makes my kitchen smell, rather invigoratingly, like a Nordic spa.
3. Take this mixture over to the pork, and where the butcher has sawed through the bones, you will have two long troughs to tuck the paste into. Run a knife through them if you need to open up the cut area a little more. Press the mixture evenly between them.
4. Push as many of the dill fronds into the paste as you can fit. Turn the pork skin side up. Rub the skin and sides of the pork with the remaining 1 tablespoon of flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1½ teaspoons of fine sea salt).
5. Get out a large roasting pan—I use one measuring 13 x 15 x 2 inches. Peel the onions, then cut each of them into 3 thick slices; you need these as a flavor platform, to prop up the pork. One end must be slightly higher than the other, so that any liquid pours off and doesn't pool on the skin, so place the pork, skin side up, on the onions, arranging the slices as you feel best achieves that.
6. Leave the pork in the pan for about 1 hour to lose its fridge chill and, when you're not long off, heat the oven to 425°F.
7. Pour the 1 cup of just-boiled water into the roasting pan, cover the top tightly with foil, and cook in the hot oven for 45 minutes. It's counterintuitive, I know, but softening the skin now makes it crisp up unimaginably later.

8. When it's had its 45 minutes, take the pork out of the oven and remove the foil; the skin should have softened and puffed up a little. Use a large sharp knife to define the squares on the skin, cutting a little deeper into the original scoring marks. Or if you didn't get it done by the butcher, do your own scoring at this point, cutting the softened skin into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch squares; it's a curiously pleasant sensation.

9. Turn the oven down to 325°F. Put the pork back into the oven without the foil, but make sure first that it's still perched, one end higher than the other, on the slices of onion.

10. Give the pork 2½ hours at this temperature, by which time much of the fat should have rendered down, melting lusciously into the meat, and less lusciously into the pan, and the skin will be beginning to crackle. But if, when you poke the tip of a knife into the pork, it doesn't feel tender yet, leave it in for another 30 minutes.

11. Turn the oven back up to 425°F, and give the pork around 15 minutes—or a little longer if needed, but keep watch to make sure the skin doesn't go too far and burn—until the skin has turned into deep gold and crunchy cracklings, and some of the little squares may have popped up.

12. Take the pork out of the oven and remove carefully to a cutting board. Cut through both sides of each rib, down to where the butcher cut through the bones, to get a chunky rib section for each person. The crackling on the pork may make this tricky, so you can use poultry shears or kitchen scissors to cut through it—the splintering noise is rather splendid—before slicing down into the meat. This way each rib section gets a proper piece of cracklings. Because the meat has to be so heavily salted to boost juiciness and flavor, most of the onions will be far too salty to serve. One or two will be perfect though, and divinely sticky with pork fat; you can share these out meagrely now, eat them yourself, or save them for sandwiches later.

JANSSON'S TEMPTATION

SERVES 4-6

2 large onions (approx. 4 cups, sliced)
4 tablespoons butter, plus more for greasing
A good grinding of pepper
2 x 125g cans of Swedish *ansjovis* (see recipe intro)

1¼ cups whole milk
2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt, plus ½ teaspoon (or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt, plus ¼ teaspoon)
2¾ pounds potatoes
1¼ cups heavy cream
2-3 tablespoons bread crumbs (optional)

1. Peel the onions and slice into fine half-moons, and melt 3 tablespoons of the butter in a large frying pan; I use a non-stick one of 11 inches diameter. Add the onions to the pan, sprinkle with the ½ teaspoon of flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ¼ teaspoon of fine sea salt) and stir for a few minutes over medium-high heat. Once they start to lose their raw look, turn the heat down to low and cook very gently for 15–20 minutes. Keep an eye on them, and stir regularly: they should be soft and pale gold. If you think they are beginning to catch, you can sprinkle a very little water into the pan, or simply add more butter. Once they're ready, use a bendy spatula to scrape them and their buttery juices into a bowl to stop them burning in the hot pan.
2. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 400°F. Butter an oven dish of about 2 ½ quarts capacity; I use one (an old friend that you may have seen in a few of my books) of 13 x 8 x 2 ½ inches.
3. Peel the potatoes, cut them into narrow strips rather like French fries, then mound them into three roughly equal piles.
4. Put a third of the potatoes into the bottom of the buttered dish. Season with 1 teaspoon of flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ½ teaspoon of fine sea salt) and a good grinding of pepper.
5. Spread half the soft onions over the potato strips, followed by one can of *ansjovis*; it is up to you whether you add the liquid in the can or not.
6. And now layer up again: so, the second third of potatoes, salt and pepper as before, followed by the rest of the onions and the second can of *ansjovis*.
7. Top with the final third of potatoes, then mix together the milk and cream in a pitcher and pour it over, although it won't cover the potatoes completely. Push any that are poking up down into the creamy milk, just so that they're lightly covered, but don't worry if they pop up again.
8. Sprinkle over the bread crumbs if using and dot over the remaining tablespoon of butter, then bake in the oven for 1 hour, making sure you check

at 45 minutes; push a fork in, and if it meets with no resistance, the potatoes are cooked. They'll certainly be golden on top, but it's essential they're soft underneath.

9. The gratin will stand for a while until needed, and tastes just as good, if not better, warm rather than hot. Leftovers are easily reheated for repeated rapture. For many Swedes—and those of us who are not Swedish—it is these reheated leftovers that are the real Christmas treat.

ROASTED QUINCES

SERVES 4-6

¼ cup olive oil (or other fat of your choice)

2-4 quinces, depending on size

1. If you have small quinces, quarter them; if large, cut them into eighths. I neither peel nor core them, though if they're covered in fuzz, wipe or wash it off, depending on how you feel about such matters. Go carefully as you take a knife to them: they are brutes to cut into.
2. Heat the oven to 400°F, and pour the oil into a lipped baking sheet. If you're using duck fat, or anything else that's solid, then put the pan into the oven so the fat can melt.
3. Schmoosh the quince wedges in the oil, and then leave flat on the pan and roast for about 45 minutes (though they are more likely to need an hour), turning them after they've had 30 minutes. It's very difficult to say exactly how long they'll take, as they vary enormously; the color they turn as they cook can differ wildly, too. But when they're ready, they should be gloriously burnished, and feel tender if you pierce one with a fork.

PICKLED RED CABBAGE

FILLS 1 x 3-cup jar

¼ large red cabbage (5½ cups, thinly sliced)

4½ teaspoons fine sea salt

¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons medium dry hard
cider (or apple juice)

1⅓ cups raw, unfiltered apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

2 teaspoons peppercorns

2 teaspoons juniper berries

1 teaspoon mustard seeds

½ teaspoon dried thyme

2 fat cloves of garlic

1½-inch piece of fresh ginger

1. Sterilize a 3-cup (although a 1-quart one will be fine) preserving jar. I consider a jar sterilized if it's come straight out of the dishwasher and not so much as a finger has touched the inside of it. But you can just hand wash the jar in soapy liquid, rinse it well, and dry it in a 275°F oven. Leave to cool before filling.
2. Remove the core, then slice the red cabbage thinly and put into a colander. Sprinkle over the salt and gently toss the cabbage to get it all coated, then leave over a bowl for 3 hours. Do not be tempted to leave out this step. It makes all the difference.
3. Make the pickling liquid as soon as the cabbage is in the colander. Put the hard cider and vinegar into a saucepan, and add the sugar, peppercorns, juniper berries, mustard seeds, and thyme.
4. Peel both the garlic and ginger, cut them into thinnish slices, and add them to the saucepan. Give everything a good stir, bring gently to a boil, then turn up the heat, and let it bubble away for 2 minutes, switch the heat off and leave everything in the pan to cool.
5. When the cabbage has had its 3 hours, get out a large cutting board and lay a kitchen towel you don't mind staining on top of it. Take the colander to the sink and rinse the cabbage really well under the cold tap. Squeeze as much water as you can out of it, then spread it out on the kitchen towel and wrap it and pat it dry.
6. Put the cabbage into your sterilized jar, pushing it down so that it is tightly packed. Strain the pickling liquid into a pitcher, using a fine-mesh strainer so nothing drops through, and pour over the cabbage, then press down on the cabbage to submerge it all.
7. Put it into the fridge and leave for at least 2 days before eating it. In theory, it will keep happily for 3 weeks, but it is unlikely that you will have any left by then. Always remember to take it out of the fridge in time to get the chill off it before eating.

SCANDI CUCUMBER SALAD

SERVES 4–6 or fills 1 x 3-cup jar

1¼ cups raw, unfiltered apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

2 tablespoons coriander seeds

1 teaspoon peppercorns

**A small bunch of fresh dill (approx.
1 ounce)**

2 English cucumbers (approx. 1½ pounds)

2 teaspoons fine sea salt

1. Sterilize a 3-cup (although a 1-quart one will be fine) preserving jar either by putting it through the dishwasher, or by washing it in soapy water, rinsing it and then drying it in a 275°F oven. Either way, let it cool before filling.
2. Put the vinegar into a saucepan with the sugar, coriander seeds, and peppercorns. Tear the leaves from your bunch of dill, and drop the stalks into the pan, reserving the fronds. Give the vinegar a good stir, then gently bring to a boil, and let it bubble—but not too vociferously—for 2 minutes. Switch off the heat, and let everything cool down in the pan.
3. You don't need to peel the cucumbers, but you do need to slice them very thinly. I use a mandolin for this; if you want to do likewise, I must insist you wear a cut-resistant glove as you do so. Or don't go down to the very end of the cucumber.
4. Put the thinly sliced cucumber into a very large mixing bowl and, with your hand just above the bowl, sprinkle in the salt. Toss gently together, before leaving to stand for 30 minutes. When the time's up, finely chop enough of the reserved dill to give you about 3 tablespoons' worth.
5. Squeeze the cucumber slices in your hands over the bowl to get rid of excess water, leaving a dazzlingly vibrant green pond at the bottom of the bowl. Do not throw this precious liquid away. Transfer the slices to another bowl—sorry for the extra dish washing—and toss gently with the chopped dill.
6. Pack into your cold, sterilized jar. Strain the now cold pickling liquid into a pitcher, and pour over the cucumber slices, so that they are just covered, and leave to stand for 30 minutes before serving. Or place straight in the fridge, where it'll last for a week: it'll look a bit faded after a few days, but still be good to eat. And you must take it out in time to lose the fridge chill. I like to serve it, as I do the Pickled Red Cabbage, in its jar, with a fork in it, but if you want to serve it in a bowl, sprinkle a little more freshly chopped dill over it as you take it to the table.

GREEN, MEAN, DIRTY MARTINI

I can't say that this cocktail, in itself, particularly conjures up Christmas. In fact, it would be perfect on hot summer days (for those in the southern hemisphere, of course, the two are combined) but it incontestably belongs here, as it is an emanation of the Scandi Cucumber Salad, the previous recipe in this chapter and a crucial part of my Christmas Eve supper.

I have Caz Hildebrand, who has been the Art Director on all my books, to thank for this, as for so much over the years. It is she, who, on tasting the vivid green juice left behind in the bowl after the cucumber had been salted for the salad, suggested I make a dirty martini with it. Could a person be more right? This salty viridescent liquid is not merely an excellent substitute for the olive-jar brine in a dirty martini, but—I am most agreeably convinced—a superior one.

You may, of course, use vodka or gin in it, but the obvious choice would be, were you to have it in your liquor cabinet, a gin that is distilled itself with cucumber. And should you have a bottle lurking about somewhere, you could always use aquavit instead to enhance the Scandinavian flavor of the evening. Or, maybe better, keep the martini as it is, and have an icy shot or two of the aquavit—when it becomes *snaþs*—with the No-Knead Black Bread and smoked salmon.

MAKES 1 martini

¼ cup gin or vodka

1 tablespoon dry white vermouth

**2 tablespoons liquid leftover after
salting cucumbers**

Ice cubes, for shaking

1. Put a martini glass in the fridge or freezer to get good and cold.
2. Pour the gin (or vodka), dry white vermouth and the salty cucumber liquid into a cocktail shaker, along with a generous tumble of ice cubes. Shake it vigorously and then strain into your chilled martini glass. *Skål!*

POMEGRANATE FIZZ

This is a twist on an old favorite from The River Cafe in West London, which consists simply of delicately and graphily aromatic Moscato d'Asti, its sweetness all but swallowed up by the fierce sourness of limes. At home, you do not need to reach for the most exquisite of wines; a bottle of Asti Spumante or any sweet, sparkling Muscat you can find, will do just fine. Added to it, most seasonally, is freshly squeezed pomegranate juice along with the lime, offering its own fragrant sweet-sharpness. Yes, you can get pomegranate juice in a bottle, but this tastes very much better if you halve those beautiful, jewel-seeded crimson and coral coronated globes and squeeze them yourself. It's hardly laborious to do, even with a manual citrus press, and you need get only 7 tablespoons of juice from both pomegranate and lime.

While these are the proportions I like, it may well be that you want to vary them to your taste, so go slowly as you add juice to fizz, sipping a little after each addition. It's always hard to say exactly how much juice each fruit will yield, so to be on the safe side I have assumed that both the pomegranates and limes will be relatively unjuicy specimens. While it's important that the fruits are both at room temperature—if you juice them from the fridge, you'll get much less out of them—you should chill both juices before mixing the cocktail. If you can fit the pitcher for the cocktail itself in the fridge, too, so much the better. I mean, you want a relatively small pitcher—you need it to hold no more than a whisper under a quart—but I know that fridge space is at a premium at Christmas.

MAKES approx. scant 1 quart

**4–5 limes, to yield 7 tablespoons juice,
or more as needed**

**1–1½ pomegranates, to yield
7 tablespoons juice**

**1 x 750ml bottle of sweet fizzy Muscat
wine, chilled**

1. Juice the limes, pouring into a small measuring jug as you go, and stop when you get to 7 tablespoons (scant ½ cup). Cover and place in the fridge.
2. Now juice the pomegranate, bearing down on top and against the sides of the halved pomegranate so that the seeds really come into contact with the citrus press, and after each half is done, squeeze the juiced half with your hands to get out any more drops you can. When you have 7 tablespoons, duly strain this into a cup, glass or little pitcher, and place this in the fridge, too. If you have room, put the serving pitcher into the fridge at the same time.

3. When it's drinks time, open the fizzy Muscat and pour it slowly into your serving pitcher, so as not to let it froth up too much. Once the bubbles have quietened down, add the pomegranate juice, give the gentlest of stirs, then add half the lime juice, give another gentle stir, and spoon a little out into a shot glass to taste, then slowly—sipping after each addition, but steady now—pouring in as much of the remaining lime juice as you need to make it exactly as you like it.

MARMALADE MOLASSES SAUSAGES

Over the years I have categorically insisted that there can be no party without cocktail sausages. With heavy-duty entertaining no doubt off the cards this year, I had thought not to include them in my seasonal eating schedule, but find I cannot do without them. I now realize that the parties were just an excuse for having the cocktail sausages.

The molasses in these gives them a dark, deep, rich savoriness, edging on bitter, aided and abetted by the marmalade. I have given the choice of ginger preserves—often, itself, called ginger marmalade—as its peppery fire partners the molasses-rich treacle and fat of the plump juicy sausages just as rewardingly.

You certainly don't need a dip to go with these, but should you want one, I must tell you that these sausages are wonderful dunked in a sauce made with equal parts grainy mustard and crème fraîche (or sour cream), with or without some finely grated ginger stirred in as well.

MAKES 30, which should be enough for 4–6

3 tablespoons olive or vegetable oil
1 tablespoon molasses

1 tablespoon dark, bitter marmalade or ginger preserves

½ teaspoon fine sea salt

15 breakfast sausage links

1. Heat the oven to 325°F. Twist each sausage in the center to give two small sausages and snip the twist with scissors to separate.
2. Mix together 2 tablespoons of the oil, 1 tablespoon each of molasses and marmalade (removing the shreds or bits, which I do, most efficiently, by eating them) and the salt in a small bowl.
3. Arrange the sausages on a lipped baking sheet, preferably one that is light-colored and non-stick (otherwise line with parchment paper). Give the molasses mixture a good stir and spoon half of it out on top of the sausages and turn everything together well so that the sausages are very lightly coated all over. Drizzle over the remaining tablespoon of oil, and give everything another schmoosh, before taking to the oven and cooking for 30 minutes.
4. Remove the pan of sausages and, with a bendy spatula, scrape out every last bit of the remaining half of the molasses mixture on top of the sausages, and gently turn everything together in the pan. Put back in the oven to cook for a further 10 minutes, by which time the

sausages should be cooked—though do check—and a deep, glistening brown. Remove the pan from the oven, and let stand for about 5 minutes, then turn once again in the sticky pan to coat the sausages, allowing yourself the cook’s treat of eating one (or two) before transferring to a plate which you can then proffer generously.

RUBY NOODLES

These are, quite simply, a seasonal showstopper.

I first came across pasta cooked in beet juice in Felicity Cloake's wonderful *A-Z of Eating* (she in turn had found it in an American food magazine) and knew I had to make it. I did, and continue doing, although my recipe is rather different. Hers is a plate of hot pink spaghetti, tossed with toasted walnuts and wilted baby kale, and dotted with soft goat cheese; I prefer mine cold (yes, really), spiky with garlic, ginger, and red pepper flakes, the intense and earthy sweetness of the beets tempered with lime. Of course, there's nothing to stop you eating these spicy, sweet and sour noodles hot, but even if you're unconvinced by the idea, I implore you to try them cold.

It makes for a spectacular store-cupboard supper as the beet juice comes in bottles and, what's more, has a long shelf life. And while I always need an infusion of chiles and ginger and zingy sourness over Christmas, which these ruby noodles gloriously provide, there is something beautifully festive, too, about a bowl of stickily scarlet spaghetti, tossed in olive oil, and dill, with a salty snow of feta on top. To cook the pasta for this, follow the first three steps of the recipe below, but leave the ginger out of the beet juice, halve the garlic and red pepper flakes, and replace the lime with 2 teaspoons of lemon juice. Serve with as much chopped dill and crumbled feta as you like, and eat immediately.

But when I make the cold gingery noodles, I always like to have enough left over to keep boxed up in the fridge for another day. They will absorb their dressing, but you can bring back their glisten by adding a little Asian sesame oil, a splash or two of soy, and a spritz of lime.

SERVES 4

scant 1½ cups beet juice

2 limes

2 fat cloves of garlic

2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger

2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)

½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

12 ounces spaghetti

2 teaspoons Asian sesame oil, plus
2 teaspoons more

3 teaspoons fish sauce or vegan "fish"
sauce

1 teaspoon plus 1 tablespoon brown
rice vinegar

4 teaspoons soy sauce

¼ cup roughly chopped cilantro

2 tablespoons finely chopped chives

1. Put water on to boil for the spaghetti, adding salt as usual when it comes to a boil.
2. Pour the beet juice into another saucepan, also large enough for the pasta later, and add the juice of one of the limes. Peel and mince

or grate in the garlic, then stir in (I'd advise against using a wooden spoon, unless you don't mind its getting stained) the grated ginger, salt, and red pepper flakes. Once you put the pasta in to cook, bring this pan to a simmer over low heat.

3. Cook the spaghetti in the salted boiling water for 5 minutes, then drain, add to the simmering beet juice pan, turn up the heat so that the beet juice bubbles more robustly, and cook it until the pasta is al dente. This can take up to 8 minutes, but check at 5. It really depends on the spaghetti you are using but I find it cooks more slowly in the beet juice. At any rate, you will need to hover over the pan a bit, tossing it around with a pasta fork every now and again to make sure it doesn't stick. When the spaghetti's cooked, it will have absorbed all the bubbling beet juice, except for a scant, shiny scarlet syrup. If the spaghetti has absorbed all the beet juice before it has cooked, add in a little hot water from a just-boiled kettle, very slowly, and in gradual increments, as needed.

4. Once the pasta is cooked, take the pan off the heat and add 2 teaspoons of the Asian sesame oil, 2 teaspoons of the fish sauce, 1 teaspoon of the brown rice vinegar, and 2 teaspoons of the soy sauce, toss well, and decant into a shallow bowl to cool.

5. It will be quite sticky when cold, but don't panic. In a little pitcher, mix together the juice of half a lime, the remaining 2 teaspoons of Asian sesame oil, the tablespoon of brown rice vinegar, the last teaspoon of fish sauce, and the last 2 teaspoons of soy sauce, pour over the noodles and toss to combine. Taste for seasoning and sprightliness; you may want more lime juice or salt. Add the chopped herbs, toss to mix, and devour.

TUSCAN BEAN SOUP

SERVES 6

1²/₃ cups dried borlotti beans
9 ounces onions (approx. 2 cups chopped)
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 celery stalk
1 large or 2 smaller carrots
(approx. 1¹/₄ cups, chopped)
3 fat cloves of garlic
1¹/₄ pounds potatoes (approx. 3¹/₂ cups, diced)
1¹/₂ teaspoons finely chopped rosemary needles
3 tablespoons freshly chopped Italian parsley

1 teaspoon fennel seeds (optional)
¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
2 tablespoons tomato paste
8 cups cold water
2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)
3 fresh bay leaves
Approx. 1¹/₄ pounds cavolo nero
2 thick slices of stale sourdough or other robust bread

TO SERVE, AS WISHED
Freshly grated Parmesan
Hot sauce

1. Soak the borlotti beans in copious amounts of cold water overnight, or for at least 8 hours.
2. Peel and chop the onions. Get out a large heavy-based saucepan or Dutch oven (I use one of 10 inches diameter) and warm the oil in it. Add the chopped onions, and cook for 5 minutes over medium heat, and then another 5 on low. They won't soften in that time, but should have turned translucent and lost their raw look.
3. Thinly slice the celery, and peel and finely chop the carrot. Add to the pan, give a good stir, and continue to cook for another 5 minutes.
4. Peel the garlic and mince or grate into the pan, and peel the potatoes, chop into ³/₄-inch cubes and stir into the vegetables in the pan, followed by the rosemary, parsley, fennel seeds (if using) and red pepper flakes.
5. Spoon in the tomato paste, giving a good stir to mix it in. Drain the beans, add them to the pot, and pour in the 8 cups of water. Add the salt and bay leaves, and bring to a boil over high heat.
6. Once it's come to a good rolling boil, turn the heat down, put the lid on at a jaunty angle, so that the pan is partially covered, and cook for about 45 minutes at a robust simmer.
7. Check to see if the beans are cooked through. They may well be, or then again, they may need up to 30 minutes more, in which case put the lid on fully, so you don't lose any more liquid.

8. Once the beans and potato cubes are soft, tear the leaves off the stalks of cavolo nero and add to the pan before clamping on the lid and cooking for 10 minutes.
9. When the greens are cooked, take the pan off the heat. Tear the bread into chunks and stir into the pot. Put the lid back on and leave for 5–10 minutes for the bread to swell and soften in the soup. Serve immediately with Parmesan and hot sauce as wished. By the time you get to second helpings, it will be solid—which tastes so much better than it sounds.

FERMENTED HOT SAUCE

MAKES approx. 2 cups

**12 ounces (300g) red chiles (approx.
3 cups, cut into 1-inch pieces)**

**2 ounces (50g) cloves of garlic (approx. 7 fat
cloves, ¼ cup plus
1 teaspoon roughly chopped)**

**5½ ounces (150g) fresh ginger
(3 × 3-inch pieces)**

0.4 ounces (10g) fine sea salt (1¼ teaspoons)

FOR THE END OF THE FERMENTATION PROCESS

1–2 tablespoons (12–25g) granulated sugar

**1–2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt
(or ½–1 teaspoon fine sea salt)**

1. Wash a 1-quart preserving jar, rinse thoroughly and let it drain and dry naturally, that's to say, without using a cloth.
2. Remove the stalks from the chiles, and peel the garlic. Scrape the skin from the ginger, using the tip of a teaspoon.
3. You can either chop them all by hand—somewhere between roughly and finely—then mix in a large bowl with the salt, or use a processor. If so, process them briefly, with the salt, then pulse until chopped but not reduced to mush.
4. Spoon this mixture into your clean (and now cold) preserving jar. Press it down with a spatula, then get a resealable freezer bag with a zip and sit it on top of the patted-down contents, with its mouth open, so that its seal sticks out slightly higher than the top of the jar. Of course, if you have fermenting weights, do use one instead, but this is my favored method.
5. Carefully fill the freezer bag with cold water and don't let any spill down the inside of the jar. In other words, run the tap slowly. Close the zip on the bag, expelling any air as you do so, and then screw or clip on the lid. The weight of the water-filled bag keeps the ingredients underneath the brine that they make as they ferment.
6. I stash the jar on a bookshelf, as I feel this protects it from too much cold or too much heat. With the jar thus protected, I haven't found enormous variation on fermenting times through summer and winter, though obviously heat will speed up the process and cold will retard it. Still, it's hard to be precise: a lot depends on just how fermented you want your hot sauce to be. For me 14 days seems to be the sweet—or sour—spot, but you will have to develop your own relationship with both process and sauce to work out what suits you.
7. With the proviso above, let us work on a 14-day fermentation period. You will need to burp your sauce every day. In other words, unclip or remove the lid,

lift the water-filled bag up a little, though you can keep it in the jar, and gently pat the bottom of the jar. This prevents any gassy build-up, but it won't matter if you miss the odd day. I find this a very bonding exercise. It also allows you to smell the development of the ferment.

8. You will be able to decide for yourself whether you want to ferment the sauce for a shorter or longer time the more you make it, but for now let's say that once the 14 days are up, wash and dry naturally (as before) a 2-cup jar. When it's cold, tip the chopped chiles, garlic, and ginger and their funky brine into a bowl you can use with a stick blender. Scrape the jar with a bendy spatula to make sure you don't leave even a fleck of chile behind.

9. I prefer this sauce smooth, like a vicious ketchup, so I blend it thoroughly; you can obviously have it as chunky as you want. Once it's the desired consistency, add 1 tablespoon of sugar and 1 teaspoon of flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or ½ teaspoon of fine sea salt). Stir it in and taste to see if you want to add the remaining sugar and salt. How much you'll want depends on the fermentation, the heat of the chiles to start off with, and, of course, your own taste. And if you grow to love this sauce as much as I do, as soon as you're blending one jar, you will be chopping up your chiles and so forth for the next.

10. Once you have blitzed your sauce, keep it in the fridge if you don't want it to ferment further, although I'm happy to leave mine out as we all whip through it so fast. While I am obliged to tell you officially that it should only be kept at room temperature for 1 week, I must confess that I do not follow the guidance I must give. At any rate, it's best to keep it in a cool place in the kitchen. If you get through your sauce more slowly than I do, unclip it and burp it regularly. But the risk is yours to take, so keep it in the fridge if you feel happier that way.

NO-KNEAD BLACK BREAD

MAKES 1 large loaf

2 cups plus 1 tablespoon (500g) Guinness or other dry dark stout, opened in advance if possible

1 large egg, at room temperature

2 tablespoons (30g) dark brown sugar

2 tablespoons (25g) extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons (35g) molasses

2¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons (300g) dark rye flour

2¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons (300g) white bread flour

¼ cup (25g) unsweetened cocoa powder

1 teaspoon activated charcoal (optional; see recipe intro)

4 teaspoons nigella seeds, plus 1 teaspoon for the top of the loaf later

4 teaspoons caraway seeds

4 teaspoons fennel seeds

¼ teaspoon (1g, but it's hard to get it to register on the scales) instant dry yeast

1¼ teaspoons fine sea salt

Oil, for greasing the loaf pan

1. Pour the stout into a measuring jug to come up to 1⅔ cups (400g); this will take a bit of time, as you need to wait for the frothing to subside. If you think about it ahead of time, it might be wise to open the bottle a bit earlier. Don't drink the remaining 7 tablespoons (100g) yet, as you may need some of it shortly. When the beer's calmed down enough to be measured clearly, add the white of the egg (reserving the egg yolk in a little covered bowl in the fridge for the egg wash the next day), followed by the sugar, the oil, and then the molasses. Stir or whisk gently to mix, as it may fizz up a bit.

2. Mix the flours, cocoa, activated charcoal (should you be using it), seeds, yeast, and salt in a large bowl. As with the standard No-Knead Bread, I like a Danish dough whisk for this, but you can use your hands or any stirrer of choice.

3. Give your measuring jug of dark liquid another stir, then pour a third into the bowl and mix. Repeat until all the liquid is used up. By this stage you may still need to use more liquid, so slowly stir in as much of the remaining stout as you need to form a stiff, sticky mixture. It won't look very dark: until it's baked, it has the rich buff color of cookie dough, unless you're adding activated charcoal, in which case it will be cow pie brown. Cover with food wrap (or a shower cap) and leave it in the kitchen for 16–20 hours, until it has increased in volume, has a slightly spongy texture and is bubbly on top.

4. Grease a sturdy 2-pound loaf pan, line the base with parchment paper, and scrape the bread dough into it, smoothing it very, very gently out to the edges and on top. Drape a clean kitchen towel over the pan and leave for 2 hours. It will rise a little, but not much. Heat the oven to 425°F towards the end of this time.

5. Add a teaspoon of cold water to the reserved egg yolk and use a little whisk or just a fork to loosen it, then dab a pastry brush into the yellow goo, and lightly paint the surface of the bread. I can't honestly say you use much of this yolk; if, like me, you find waste difficult, then just keep it to add to a couple of eggs for scrambling. Sprinkle the 1 teaspoon of nigella seeds on top and put the pan into the oven, straightaway turning the heat down to 400°F. Bake for 40 minutes, then (wearing oven mitts, and perhaps giving a nudge around the edges first with a small thin-bladed spatula) slip it out of its pan. It will feel almost cooked, but it is a dense, weighty loaf: don't expect white-bread lightness; even when fully cooked, this loaf feels as heavy as a brick.

6. Give the loaf a knock underneath: it probably won't sound hollow, but register the sound. Put it, out of its pan now, back into the oven directly on the shelf, for 10–15 minutes, by which time it will feel firm, but still with a bit of give at the sides and, when you knock it underneath, it will sound, if not exactly hollow, then hollower than it did before. Let cool completely on a wire rack before even thinking of cutting into it. To keep the loaf fresh for as long as possible, store in a bread box. The next best method is to wrap it in a kitchen towel.

LINZER COOKIES

MAKES 28 sandwich cookies, with ruthless re-rolling

¾ cup (100g) skinned toasted hazelnuts (see recipe intro)

⅔ cup (125g) superfine sugar

2¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons (300g) all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling out

1 stick plus 5 tablespoons (13 tablespoons or 200g) unsalted butter—cold if using a

processor, soft if making by hand

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

⅛ teaspoon fine sea salt

1 large egg, at room temperature

1 large egg yolk, at room temperature

Confectioners' sugar, to dust the cookies

Approx. ¼ cup (60g) red currant jelly

Approx. ¼ cup (60g) seedless raspberry preserves

1. For the processor method: tip the toasted hazelnuts and sugar into the bowl of the processor and blitz until you have fine sand, then add the flour. Cut the cold butter into ½-inch dice and add to the processor, along with the cinnamon, salt, whole egg, and egg yolk. Run the processor until the contents start to cohere and form a dough; this won't happen instantly, so be patient.
2. If you don't have a processor but have a bullet blender, you can grind the hazelnuts in that. Or if you have neither, simply use almond flour. And to make the cookies by hand, mix the ground nuts with the flour, cinnamon, and salt and set aside for a moment. Cream the butter and sugar together. Whisk together the whole egg and egg yolk in a pitcher then beat them very gradually into the butter mixture. Add the dry ingredients, a little at a time, and beat in until the mixture forms a soft dough.
3. Whether you've mixed the dough by hand or in a processor, divide evenly into 4. Roll each quarter into a ball, then gently squash to form fat patties. Cover tightly with food wrap and put in the fridge for 1 hour. You can, in fact, leave them in the fridge for up to 3 days.
4. Once your dough has rested, take two of the discs out of the fridge and let them stand for about 15 minutes, or longer if either your fridge is very cold or the dough's been sitting in it for a long time, heating the oven to 350°F while you wait. Get out a couple of cookie sheets and cut two pieces of parchment paper to exactly the same size as the sheets.
5. Put one piece of parchment directly on the countertop and when the dough feels ready to roll—firm, but not too cold—roll out one of the discs thinly (about ⅛-inch thick) on it. If you find your dough is very sticky, you can roll it out between two pieces of parchment.
6. Using a 2¼-inch round cookie cutter, dipped first in flour, cut 6 circles out of the rolled dough. You don't have to leave a huge gap between the cookies, as

the dough doesn't really spread much. Lift away the excess dough, leaving your circles on the parchment. Carefully place this parchment on one of your cookie sheets. Form a ball with this excess dough to add to the remainder of the other 3 discs later.

7. Repeat the process with the next disc, only this time you're making the top half of the cookie, so you will need to choose your mini cutters, dip them in flour and then cut out your shapes—a small hole, heart, Christmas tree, snowflake, angel, or star—and if the shape you're stamping out doesn't come out with the cutter, use a toothpick to help. Add the offcuts to the other scraps of dough, ready for re-rolling. If your kitchen is warm it can really help to put these cookies in the fridge on their parchment-lined cookie sheet for 10 minutes or so, as it will help the cut-out shapes keep a very clean edge.

8. Bake the cookies for 9–10 minutes, until they're only just beginning to turn a very light gold at the edges; they will, overall, still be pale. Transfer straightaway to a cooling rack or, if you'd feel safer, gently slide the loaded parchment on to the rack instead.

9. Repeat the process with the 2 remaining discs and all the squidged-together offcuts, making sure the cookie sheets have cooled down before you load them up.

10. When the cookies are completely cold, they are ready to be sandwiched. Dust the cookies you've cut a shape out of with confectioners' sugar and leave on the wire rack for now. Mix the jelly and preserves together until smooth, and spread ½ teaspoon of this mixture over one non-dusted cookie half, leaving a pale frame around the edge. Pick up a sugar-dusted cookie, carefully holding the edges only, and place it on top of the jelly-loaded cookie, feeling justifiably proud of yourself and your beautiful Christmassy creation. And carry on with the rest of the cookies, your festive sense of bliss increasing giddily as you go.

LUSCIOUS VEGAN GINGERBREAD CAKE

I am preposterously proud of this squidgy cake, and I don't mind who knows it. It's everything you want out of a gingerbread cake—sticky, spicy, deeply aromatic—and you would never miss the butter or eggs.

Eat darkly on its own, or with the glow of the Pomegranate-Poached Quinces and some oat-milk crème fraîche.

Warning: ideally you need to make this at least a day before you plan to eat it. Harsh, I know.

GIVES 12 slabs but could easily be cut into 18

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (140g) vegetable oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (200g) Lyle's golden syrup

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (200g) molasses

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (125g) dark brown sugar

8 (75g) pitted soft prunes (heaping $\frac{1}{3}$ cup, finely chopped)

3-inch piece (30g) fresh ginger

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

2 teaspoons ground ginger

1 teaspoon ground allspice

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground cloves

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ready-ground black pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon fine sea salt

1 cup (250g) oat milk

$2\frac{1}{4}$ cups plus 2 tablespoons (300g) all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking soda

2 tablespoons (30g) warm water

2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar

1. Heat the oven to 325°F. Line a 9-inch square pan with a sheet of parchment paper, so that it covers the bottom and comes up the sides of the pan. Leave something heavy on it to keep it down while you melt everything together.

2. Measure the oil in a measuring jug, and pour it into a fairly wide, heavy-based saucepan; I use one of 9 inches diameter. Measure the syrup and molasses using the oily measuring jug, as this will stop them sticking and help them pour out easily into the saucepan.

3. Tip the sugar into the pan, and chop the prunes finely before adding them. Peel the ginger with the tip of a teaspoon and grate it finely into the pan. Sprinkle in the spices and salt and warm over gentle heat, whisking to combine. But don't whisk too much: you do not want to get a lot of air in the mixture.

4. Once everything's melted and mixed, take the pan off the heat; it should be warm at this stage, rather than boiling hot. Add the oat milk, whisking gently to make sure it's incorporated.

5. Whisk in the flour in 3 or 4 batches, getting rid of any lumps patiently as you go. This will take a few minutes; the only lumps you should see are the little bits of prune, although they will melt into the gingerbread as it bakes.
6. Dissolve the baking soda in the warm water in a bigger cup than you think it needs, then add the vinegar and quickly whisk the fizzing mixture into the pan.
7. Pour the gingerbread batter into the lined pan carefully and bake for 50–55 minutes, though start checking at 45. It may look cooked at 45 minutes, but as it's so damp, a cake tester won't help enormously—you'd expect some crumbs to stick to it—so take it out of the oven and touch the top quickly; if cooked, it should bounce back a bit under your fingers.
8. Leave to cool in its pan on a rack, although I'm afraid I'm going to caution you against eating it the minute it's cold. To taste this at its best, wrap the pan first in parchment paper and then in foil, and leave for a day or two before cutting into it.

BLACK FOREST BROWNIES

MAKES 16 brownies

1 cup (150g) dried cherries	sugar
5 tablespoons (75g) kirsch (or orange juice)	¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
7 ounces (200g) bittersweet chocolate (preferably 70% cocoa solids and preferably labeled “for cooking”)	¼ cup (25g) unsweetened cocoa powder
1 stick plus 5 tablespoons (13 table-spoons or 200g) unsalted butter	4 large eggs, at room temperature
½ cup (100g) dark brown sugar	¾ cup (100g) toasted hazelnuts
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (225g) superfine	1¼ cups (150g) all-purpose flour (or gluten- free all-purpose flour)
	1 teaspoon finely chopped rosemary needles
	Confectioners’ sugar, for dusting

1. Heat the oven to 350°F. Line a 9-inch square pan with parchment paper. Leave something heavy on it to keep it down while you make the brownies.
2. Put the dried cherries into the smallest saucepan you have, pour over the kirsch (or orange juice) and bring to a boil, stirring frequently to make sure all the cherries get turned in the liquid. Once it comes to a boil, let it bubble for a minute, then take the pan off the heat, leaving the cherries to cool a little, and soak up the liqueur or juice.
3. Chop up the chocolate and cut the butter into slices to help it melt. Put these slices into a wide-ish saucepan—I use one of 9 inches diameter—and melt over very low heat. Add the chopped chocolate, and when it is all but melted into the butter, take the pan off the heat, stir gently with a spatula, add the sugars, salt, and cocoa, stir gently again, and take off the heat and leave to cool a little.
4. Crack your eggs into a pitcher, and whisk to combine. Put the hazelnuts into a bag, and bash with a rolling pin to break them up a bit. Rather satisfyingly, most of the hazelnuts spring apart in two perfect halves.
5. Gradually whisk the beaten eggs into the pan of melted chocolate and, when they’re incorporated into the batter, slowly whisk in the flour, until you can’t see it any more. Tip the steeped cherries, bashed hazelnuts, and chopped rosemary into the pan, and fold to mix, then scrape into your lined pan.
6. Bake in the oven for 25–30 minutes. When the brownies are cooked, the top will look a little dry, and the edges will be beginning to come away from the sides of the pan. A cake tester should come out with a few damp crumbs attached, but no raw batter. They will, however, be delectably gungy inside.
7. Leave to cool in their pan on a wire rack, even though they are gorgeous warm; they won’t hold their shape until they’re cold, though. Dust with confectioners’ sugar on serving. And if you put any leftovers (I know) in the fridge, you will be rewarded: fridge-cold, these brownies taste like the most glorious fudge.

POMEGRANATE-POACHED QUINCES

There is something magical about these poached quinces, with their soft, scented terra-cotta-tinted flesh and glowing pomegranate-perfumed syrup. While I eagerly make them from November onwards, as soon as the quinces come into season, they are so fabulously festive cooked like this, decoratively and decorously demanding a place at your Christmas table.

Don't get misled by the fact that they're fruit: this may seem like a light dessert, but in fact it is headily intense. Three quinces are more than enough for six people and, if you're lucky, will provide you with leftovers. I use these up greedily, either making a crumble with them or fashioning them into a quick-assemble plate trifle. By this, I simply mean I line a small plate with slices of pound cake—you can use the Marzipan Loaf Cake, the Lemon and Elderflower Drizzle Cake or just use a lemon or vanilla store-bought one—then dampen with Marsala or sherry, top with some softly whipped cream, the left-over quinces and a scattering of pomegranate seeds and toasted sliced almonds.

Should quinces elude you, you can make Pomegranate-Poached Pears. Make the syrup as for the quinces, reducing the sugar to 1 ¼ cups. Peel 6 firm pears—I suggest Bartlett, and you don't want them very ripe, which is probably just as well, as most pears are sold unripe—keeping the stalk intact. Cut a little off the bottom of each pear, so that it will be able to stand up on a plate later, and chisel out the core from the underneath. Try to remove it, and the seeds if you can, without damaging the rest of the pear. If you feel that's too fiddly, ignore me and just peel and poach. They won't need as long as the quinces; 45 minutes should do it, but do check them regularly while they cook.

SERVES 6

scant 3 cups pure pomegranate juice
(from a bottle is fine)

1¼ cups cold water

1¼ cups granulated sugar

3 fresh bay leaves

1 teaspoon pink peppercorns

A few sprigs of fresh thyme, plus
more to decorate

3 quinces

2–3 tablespoons pomegranate seeds,
to sprinkle over

1. Heat the oven to 325°F. Get out a large, heavy-based Dutch oven that has a lid, and into it pour the pomegranate juice and water, and add the sugar, watching it mesmerized as the white sugar is engulfed by the rubied liquid. Well, you don't have to watch, but I do.

2. Stir well, add the bay leaves, pink peppercorns, and a few sprigs of thyme, leaving the daintier sprigs for later, then stir again and set over low heat. You can leave it warming while you get the quinces ready.
3. Peel and quarter the quinces and then, carefully, core them. I sometimes, out of exhaustion or laziness, leave the cores in; the almost ethereal aroma of quinces never quite prepares one for their stony solidity. Unless you happen to have small quinces, cut the cored quarters in half lengthways. Add the prepared quinces to the pan as you go, as they'll brown quickly when exposed to the air.
4. When all the quinces are in the pan, turn the heat up. Once it starts boiling, scrunch up a piece of parchment paper slightly bigger than the diameter of the pan, unscrunch it again, and press it down on top of the quinces, tucking it in and up the sides of the pan. Clamp on the lid, and stagger over to the oven.
5. Cook for 1 ½–2 hours, until the quinces feel tender when you prong a few with the tines of a small fork. Remove the lid and the parchment paper, and, with a couple of spoons, turn the quinces over in their red liquid before leaving them to cool. I often make these a couple of days in advance and just leave the quinces in the pomegranate syrup, darkening ruddily as they sit.
6. Not long before you're ready to serve them, remove $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of the syrup (use a heat-resistant glass measuring jug) and pour into a small saucepan. Set the pan over high-ish heat, bring to a bubble and keep it bubbling, watching over it the whole time, until it has reduced by half. I keep the glass measuring jug right by the stove so that I can keep checking. When the garnet-glinting syrup is viscous and reduced, and you have $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of it, leave it to cool. If you have space in your freezer, you can strain the rest of the poaching liquid, bag or box it up and keep it for repeat performances. Or strain it, reduce it by half and keep it to pour over ice cream, or to scent pears or apples for pies or crumbles, or indeed, add to cocktails as you wish.
7. Using a slotted spoon, convey the quinces to a shallow bowl or plate with a slight lip, shaking your cargo gently over the pan as you go, so that you don't get too much liquid into your dish. Drizzle over the syrup, and scatter with pomegranate seeds and fresh thyme sprigs. Serve with real crème fraîche or oat-milk crème fraîche or whipped cream.

CHRISTMAS BREAD PUDDING

SERVES 4-6

6 slices of white bread

6 tablespoons soft unsalted butter, plus more to grease dish

¼ cup fig preserves or mincemeat

3 large eggs, at room temperature

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1¼ cups heavy cream, at room temperature

1¼ cups whole milk, at room temperature

FOR THE TOPPING

1½ teaspoons turbinado sugar

Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1. A couple of hours before you plan to make the bread pudding, take the bread slices out of the package (or slice the bread if you're not using ready-sliced) and lay them out to stale slightly.
2. Butter a pie dish with about a 6 cups capacity; I use an oval one 11 ¼ inches long, and measuring 8 inches across at its widest point.
3. Butter the slices of bread generously, spread half of them with the preserves or mincemeat, make sandwiches with the three remaining buttered slices, and cut each sandwich into 4 small triangles. Arrange these in your dish, overlapping each other in as orderly or higgledy-piggledy fashion as you like; you can tell which camp I'm in.
4. In a large pitcher, whisk the eggs with the granulated sugar and the ½ teaspoon of cinnamon, and then gradually whisk in the cream and milk. Pour this over the sandwiches in the dish, making sure the crusts get wet, and leave to stand for at least 30 minutes, or up to 2 hours. Spoon the custardy mixture over the slices now and then during this time, paying particular attention to the crusts.
5. Heat the oven to 350°F. When it reaches temperature, sprinkle the turbinado sugar over the top of the pudding, then bake for 35–40 minutes, until crisp and golden on top, with the custard around the bread puffy and softly set. But then, aren't we all at this time of year? Let stand for 10–20 minutes and then dust lightly with confectioners' sugar, letting a little seasonal snow fall on the golden pudding. Take to the table with a pitcher of heavy cream for people to pour over their bowls as they eat. It is Christmas, after all.

NEW YEAR DOUGHNUTS: OLIEBOLLEN

MAKES approx. 30

2 cups (250g) all-purpose flour

A pinch of salt

2 tablespoons (30g) superfine sugar

**2½ teaspoons (7g) or 1 × ¼-ounce package
instant dry yeast**

1 cup (250g) whole milk

An exuberant grating of nutmeg

1 lemon

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 tablespoons (30g) soft unsalted butter

1 large egg, at room temperature

**Sunflower oil for frying; depending on
what you're frying in, approx. 4 quarts
in a deep-fat fryer, and approx. 1½ quarts in
a 9-inch diameter saucepan**

Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1. Mix the flour, salt, sugar, and yeast in a large bowl.
2. Pour the milk into a saucepan or, if you have a microwave, a heatproof pitcher. Either way, finely grate in a generous amount of nutmeg, followed by the zest of the lemon, add the vanilla and butter and heat until lukewarm; I just give the milk 45 seconds in the microwave at top whack, which for me means 900W. And it doesn't matter, by the way, if the butter doesn't melt entirely.
3. If you've heated the milk in a pan, pour it into a pitcher. Crack the egg into the pitcher, quickly whisk it in, then pour the lukewarm, lemon-scented, nutmeggy, buttery, and eggy milk into the dry ingredients, beating vigorously with a wooden spoon or a little hand whisk until you have a smooth dough. Well, I say "dough" since you're making doughnuts with it, but actually it has more the consistency of thick cake batter.
4. Cover the bowl with food wrap or a slightly dampened kitchen towel, and leave in a warm place for about 1¼ hours, until the dough has puffed up voluminously and the surface is a mass of large bubbles. When I was young, a warm linen closet was always the place where dough would be left to prove, but times change, and I put the bowl on a shelf up above all the computer bits and pieces and their flashing lights, aka Mission Control. A warm and steamy kitchen will do fine, though. (And if you wanted to make the dough in advance, you could instead stash the bowl, covered with food wrap, in the fridge to rise slowly overnight or for up to 24 hours, in which case, let it come to room temperature before proceeding to step 5.)
5. Using, for ease, a bendy spatula, scrape down the sides, which will deflate the dough. It will start bubbling up again as you wait for the oil to heat.
6. If you're going to make your *oliebollen* in an electric deep fryer—which is very much easier—pour in sunflower oil until it reaches the minimum mark. Otherwise, use a heavy-based saucepan at least 5 inches deep and no less than 9 inches

in diameter—pour in enough oil to come up about 1 ½ inches. Heat the oil to 350°F. Don't leave the oil unattended while it heats up, but you can potter about nearby, getting yourself a rounded metal tablespoon measure and a teaspoon to shape the doughnuts (though you could just use a couple of soup spoons) and some tongs to turn them as they fry and to retrieve them once they're cooked. You'll also need to line a couple of large plates with paper towels (replacing as necessary) and fill a small bowl with cold oil for you to dip your spoons in while cooking.

7. Once the oil is at 350°F (and if you're frying them in a saucepan, you really do need to use a digital or candy thermometer) carefully dip your rounded tablespoon measure and teaspoon (or pair of soup spoons) into the cold oil, then scoop up a tablespoon of dough, using the teaspoon to help mold it and then release it gently into the hot oil, then do the same to make a second one and fry them about 2 ½–3 minutes a side, so that they are a deep golden brown all over, and the dough is cooked all the way through. And the only way to find out is to eat these first two, allowing them to cool for a few minutes and dusting each with confectioners' sugar before you bite in.

8. Once you're happy with the timings, repeat the process (without necessarily eating them all) to fill your pan without overcrowding it; I don't like to fry more than four or five at the same time.

9. Transfer them as they're ready to the paper-lined plates to blot the excess oil. Leave them on the paper towels for 3–5 minutes; the confectioners' sugar will melt if it's sprinkled on them when they're piping hot. Then arrange on a few plates, and dust generously with confectioners' sugar. Eat immediately.

NEW YEAR DOUGHNUTS: APPELFLAPPEN

MAKES approx. 28

⅔ cup (75g) all-purpose flour

2 tablespoons (25g) cornstarch plus

½ teaspoon per apple

¼ teaspoon (1g, but it's hard to get it to register on the scales) instant dry yeast

7 tablespoons (100g) whole milk

1 tablespoon (15g) soft unsalted butter

1 large egg, at room temperature

1 tablespoon (12g) granulated sugar per apple

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon per apple

4 Golden Delicious apples

Sunflower oil for frying; depending on what you're frying in, approx. 4 quarts in a deep fryer, and approx. 1½ quarts in a 9-inch diameter saucepan

Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1. Mix the flour, the 2 tablespoons (25g) of cornstarch, and ¼ teaspoon of yeast together in a medium-sized mixing bowl; it needs to be a wide one for ease of dunking later.
2. Either in a saucepan or, if using a microwave, a heatproof pitcher, heat the milk and butter until just lukewarm; I give it 20 seconds on high (which for me means 900W) in the microwave.
3. If you've warmed the milk in a pan, pour it into a pitcher. Crack the egg into the pitcher of buttery milk, and immediately mix it in with a mini hand whisk.
4. Pour the eggy, buttery milk into the dry ingredients, whisking vigorously and patiently until smooth, and with the consistency of pancake batter. Cover, either with food wrap or a slightly dampened kitchen towel, and leave in a warm place (and see step 4 of the previous recipe) for about 1 ¼ hours, by which time it will be dotted with tiny bubbles, many no bigger than pinpricks. Place the bowl of batter as near to your frying station as you safely can.
5. If you're going to make your *appelflappen* in an electric deep fryer—which is very much easier—pour in sunflower oil until it reaches the minimum mark. Otherwise, use a heavy-based saucepan at least 5 inches deep and no less than 9 inches diameter—pour in enough oil to come up about 1 ½ inches. Heat the oil to 350°F, and though you must stay near the pan as you wait, you can look away briefly to prepare the apples, but—unless you're using an electric deep fryer—do keep breaking away from that to check back on the oil.
6. I prefer to do the apples 2 at a time, using a shallow dish for each. I'm sorry about the extra dish washing, but—as my late husband John used to say—throw the cat another canary. You're going to be washing up a greasy saucepan or deep fryer later on: another bowl or plate is neither here nor there. So, get two shallow dishes out and, in each, stir together 1 tablespoon (12g) of granulated sugar and ½ teaspoon each of cornstarch and cinnamon. And line a large

plate with a double layer of paper towels. Keep the roll handy, as you'll need to replace it over the course of your frying.

7. Peel and core 2 apples and cut each one into slices about ¼-inch thick. I reckon on getting 8 or 9 rings out of each Golden Delicious, but you may get 6 or 7 from smaller apples, though my record is far from seamless; one bad cut, and you've lost a ring. Besides, it may be wiser to get fewer slices out of each apple and not risk cutting yourself. At any rate, add the rings from each apple to its designated dish, and turn them, one by one, in the sugar, cornstarch and cinnamon.

8. When the oil is at temperature—and you will need to have a digital or candy thermometer handy if you're frying the *appelflappen* in a saucepan—take a cinnamon apple ring from its dish, and lower it into the batter, turning it a few times (don't worry about the batter getting cinnamon). Lift it out by hooking your index finger through the hole, hold it over the batter bowl for a moment, before carefully and very gently releasing it into the oil and fry for about 3 minutes a side, until the batter is golden brown and crisp and the apple within juicy and soft.

9. Using tongs, but taking care not to break the thin, crisp coating, transfer the *appelflap* to your paper-lined plate and leave it there for a couple of minutes before dusting it with confectioners' sugar and eating it to make sure you're happy with the timings. If you are, proceed as before, this time frying 4 apple rings at a time. And I always set the timer once the fourth ring has gone in. Repeat the process with the remaining apple slices.

10. Wipe out the dishes with paper towels before mixing up your sugar, cornstarch and cinnamon again. Turn the heat off under the saucepan while you prepare the apples for the next batch. Make sure the oil comes back up to temperature, and skim out any strands of batter left behind (crunch on them privately—cook's treat), before you fry, fry, and fry again.

11. Leave the slices on the paper towels for 3–5 minutes; the confectioners' sugar will melt if it's sprinkled on them when they're piping hot. Then arrange on a few plates, and spoon confectioners' sugar into a fine-mesh strainer or tea strainer and push against it with the back of a teaspoon to dust the *appelflappen* with confectioners' sugar. Serve immediately. They will get a bit soggy if left standing about. But that's unlikely to happen: they disappear fast.

MAKE-AHEAD, STORE AND FREEZE NOTES

If there are no make-ahead, store or freeze notes for a recipe below, that is because it is not recommended. Once cooked, all food must be cooled, covered and stored in the fridge as quickly as possible, and within 1–2 hours of making. Reheat leftovers only once. When reheating, follow the instructions given and check that all food is piping hot all the way through to the center.

Spaghetti with Chard, Chiles and Anchovies

Make Ahead – Prepare chard a day ahead. Store, covered, in fridge.
Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat in microwave or saucepan over medium heat, adding a little water if needed, until piping hot. Or eat cold.

Celery Root and Anchovy Gratin

Make Ahead – Assemble gratin up to 2 days ahead, press food wrap onto surface to submerge celery root and refrigerate. To cook, add extra liquid if needed, dot with butter and then bake, allowing an extra 20 minutes or so until piping hot.
Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 2 days. Reheat in a microwave or transfer to ovenproof dish, cover with foil and heat in 350°F oven until piping hot.
Freeze – Freeze leftovers in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Reheat as above.

Anchovy Elixir

Make Ahead/Store – Store in airtight container in fridge for up to 2 weeks. Shake well before use.

No-Knead Bread

Store – Store in airtight container or wrapped in clean kitchen towel in cool place for 3–5 days.
Freeze – Freeze loaf or slices in freezer bags, removing as much air as possible, for up to 3 months. Thaw at room temperature. Layer slices with parchment paper or food wrap if using individually. Slices can be toasted from frozen.

Old-Fashioned Sandwich Loaf

Store – Store in airtight container or wrapped in clean kitchen towel in cool place for 4–5 days.
Freeze – Freeze loaf or slices in freezer bags, removing as much air as possible, for up to 3 months. Thaw at room temperature. Layer slices with parchment paper or food wrap if using individually. Slices can be toasted from frozen.

Crab Mac 'n' Cheese

Make Ahead – Prepare cheese sauce (without crab) up to 1 day ahead. Press parchment paper onto surface and refrigerate. Reheat in saucepan over low heat until piping hot, cook the pasta and continue as directed in recipe. Eat when freshly made.

Wide Noodles with Lamb Shank in Aromatic Broth

Make Ahead – Prepare lamb shank to end of step 4 up to 3 days ahead. Store lamb and broth together, covered, in fridge. Reheat as directed in recipe.
Store – Refrigerate leftovers and use within 24 hours. Heat in saucepan over medium heat, stirring, adding extra liquid if needed, until piping hot. Noodles will soften on reheating.
Freeze – Freeze lamb (fat removed and meat shredded) covered with broth in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge.

Fish Stick Bharta

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat in microwave until piping hot. Or eat cold.

Smoky Squid and Beans

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, and use within 24 hours. Eat cold.

Fried Chicken Sandwich

Make Ahead – Marinate chicken up to 2 days ahead. Refrigerate, covered, then cook as directed in recipe.

Marzipan Loaf Cake

Store – Store in airtight container in cool place for up to 7 days.
Freeze – Tightly wrap whole loaf or slices in double layer of food wrap, then wrap loaf in layer of foil or put slices in airtight container. Freeze for up to 3 months (loaf) or 1 month (slices). Unwrap and thaw on wire rack at room temperature.

Lemon and Elderflower Drizzle Cake

Store – Store in airtight container in cool place for up to 5 days.
Freeze – Tightly wrap whole loaf (in its pan) or slices in double layer of food wrap, then wrap pan in layer of foil or put slices in airtight container. Freeze for up to 3 months (loaf) or 1 month (slices). Unwrap and thaw on wire rack at room temperature.

Gluten-Free Banana Bread with Chocolate and Walnuts

Store – Store in airtight container in cool place for 4–5 days.
Freeze – Tightly wrap whole loaf (in its pan) or slices in double layer of food wrap, then wrap pan in layer of foil or put slices in airtight container. Freeze for up to 3 months (loaf) or 1 month (slices). Unwrap and thaw on wire rack at room temperature.

Chocolate, Tahini and Banana Two Ways

Store – Store banana bread in airtight container in cool place for up to 5 days. Refrigerate molten cake leftovers, covered, for up to 5 days. Can be reheated in microwave.
Freeze – Tightly wrap whole loaf or slices in double layer of food wrap, then wrap loaf in layer of foil or put slices in airtight container. Freeze for up to 3 months (loaf) or 1 month (slices). Unwrap and thaw on wire rack at room temperature.

Mine-all-Mine Sweet and Salty Cookies

Make Ahead – Prepare dough discs up to 5 days ahead, cover and refrigerate. Bake as directed in recipe, allowing an extra 1–2 minutes.
Store – Store in airtight container for up to 1 day. Warm gently in

microwave at 70% power (600W) for 20 seconds. Do not reheat gluten-free cookies.

Freeze – Freeze uncooked dough discs on lined baking sheet until solid, transfer to airtight container and freeze for up to 3 months. Bake from frozen as directed in recipe, allowing an extra 2–3 minutes. Individually wrap baked cookies when cold, put in airtight container and freeze for up to 3 months. Unwrap and thaw at room temperature. Eat on same day.

Crème Caramel for One

Make Ahead – Prepare up to 3 days ahead, cover and refrigerate. Remove from fridge 30 minutes before serving.

Burnt Onion and Eggplant Dip

Make Ahead – Prepare up to 5 days ahead, cover and refrigerate. Remove from fridge 1 hour before serving.

Freeze – Freeze in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge.

Soupy Rice with Celery Root and Chestnuts

Store – Leftovers can be stored in the fridge, covered, for up to 2 days. Reheat gently in saucepan, stirring, adding extra liquid if needed, until piping hot.

Freeze – Freeze in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Reheat as above.

Short Rib Stew for Two

Make Ahead – Prepare up to 5 days ahead. Refrigerate, covered, and reheat as directed in recipe until piping hot.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers and use within 24 hours. Reheat until piping hot.

Freeze – Freeze in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Transfer to Dutch oven and reheat as directed in recipe.

Marrowbone Meat Sauce

Make Ahead – Prepare up to 3 days ahead, cover and refrigerate. For spreading on toast, reheat in saucepan over medium heat until piping hot. For serving with dumplings, reheat in Dutch oven over medium heat until piping hot, add dumplings, transfer to preheated oven and cook as directed in recipe.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers and use within 24 hours. Reheat until piping hot.

Freeze – Freeze in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge and reheat as above.

Beef Cheeks with Port and Chestnuts

Make Ahead – Prepare up to 3 days ahead. Refrigerate, covered, and reheat as directed in recipe until piping hot.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers and use within 24 hours. Reheat until piping hot.

Freeze – Freeze in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Transfer to Dutch oven and reheat as directed in recipe.

Oxtail Bourguignon

Make Ahead – Prepare up to 3 days ahead. Refrigerate, covered, and reheat as directed in recipe until piping hot.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers and use within 24 hours. Reheat until piping hot.

Freeze – Freeze in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the fridge. Transfer to Dutch oven and reheat as directed in recipe.

Blood Sausage Meatballs

Make Ahead – Prepare sauce up to 3 days ahead, cover and refrigerate or freeze as below. Form meatballs up to 1 day ahead using beef and blood sausage straight from fridge. Refrigerate on baking sheets, covered loosely with food wrap. Remove from fridge 1 hour before cooking. Reheat sauce in large saucepan until just boiling, reduce to a simmer and add meatballs.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat gently in saucepan until piping hot.

Freeze – Freeze leftover cooked meatballs in sauce in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge and reheat as above. Freeze sauce only in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge.

Rhubarb and Custard Trifle

Make Ahead – Prepare trifle (without cream layer) up to 1 day ahead, cover and refrigerate. Remove from fridge 1–2 hours before serving, then top with whipped cream.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 2 days.

Toasted Marshmallow and Rhubarb Cake

Make Ahead – Bake sponges up to 1 month ahead. Once cold, wrap each sponge in double layer of food wrap. Freeze on baking sheet until solid, remove from baking sheet, wrap in layer of foil and freeze until needed. Freeze egg whites in grease-free, airtight container for up to 1 month. Thaw egg whites overnight in fridge and bring to room temperature before making frosting. To assemble cake, make frosting as directed in recipe. Remove sponges from freezer and assemble cake while the sponges are still frozen and frosting is slightly warm. Toast frosting then let cake stand for 1–2 hours before slicing. The cake with frosting is best on day it is made.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 1 day. Frosting will soften slightly in fridge.

Pickled Rhubarb

Make Ahead/Store – Seal in sterilized jar and refrigerate as soon as cool for up to 4 weeks. If processed in a water bath, store in a cool, dark, dry place for up to 1 year. Once opened, refrigerate and use within 1 month.

Beet, Rhubarb and Ginger Soup

Make Ahead/Store – Prepare up to 5 days ahead, cover and refrigerate. Reheat gently in saucepan, stirring, until piping hot. Or eat chilled.

Freeze – Freeze in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge and reheat as above. Or eat chilled.

Chicken in a Pot with Lemon and Orzo

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat in microwave or saucepan over medium heat, stirring and adding extra water if needed, until piping hot. Pasta will soften on reheating.

Freeze – Freeze leftovers in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Reheat as above.

Chicken with Garlic Cream Sauce

Make Ahead – Prepare sauce to end of step 5 up to 1 day ahead, cover and refrigerate. Reheat in saucepan, stirring, until piping hot,

then add chicken juices.

Store – Refrigerate chicken and sauce leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat sauce in saucepan until piping hot. Reheat chicken in microwave or transfer to ovenproof dish, cover with foil and heat in 350°F oven until piping hot. Or eat cold.

Freeze – Freeze leftover chicken only in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Reheat as above.

One-Pan Chicken with Apricot Harissa and Sweet Potatoes

Store– Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat in microwave or transfer to ovenproof dish, cover with foil and heat in 350°F oven until piping hot. Leftovers can also be used to make soup.

Freeze – Freeze leftovers in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Reheat as above.

Lasagna of Love

Make Ahead – Prepare meat sauce up to 3 days ahead, cover and refrigerate until needed. Assemble lasagna (without cheese topping) up to 2 days ahead, cover and refrigerate until needed. Add cheese and bake as directed in recipe.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 2 days. Reheat in microwave or cover with foil and heat in 350°F oven until piping hot.

Freeze – Freeze assembled lasagna (without cheese topping) for up to 3 months. Tightly wrap dish in double layer of food wrap and layer of foil. Thaw for 24 hours in fridge. Add cheese and bake as directed in recipe. Freeze leftovers in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge and reheat as above.

Pappardelle with Cavolo Nero and 'Nduja

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat in microwave or saucepan, adding extra water if needed, until piping hot. Pasta will soften on reheating.

Spiced Bulgur Wheat with Roasted Vegetables

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 5 days. Reheat in microwave or transfer to ovenproof dish, cover with foil and heat in a 350°F oven until piping hot. Or eat cold.

Fear-Free Fish Stew

Make Ahead – Prepare sauce up to 5 days ahead, cover and refrigerate until needed. Place in saucepan, bring to boil and then reduce to simmer and continue as directed in recipe.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 1 day. Reheat in microwave or saucepan, adding extra water if needed, until piping hot. Fish will be flakes rather than pieces on reheating.

Freeze – Freeze sauce only in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge before using. Freezing stew with fish is not recommended.

Beet and Chickpea Dip

Make Ahead – Roast beets up to 2 days ahead, refrigerate until needed.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days.

Freeze – Freeze in airtight container for up to 1 month. Thaw overnight in fridge and use within 24 hours. If dip separates on thawing, blitz again in food processor.

Roasted Red Peppers with Pomegranate Molasses and Dukkah

Make Ahead – Roast bell peppers up to 2 days ahead, cover and refrigerate. Bring to room temperature before serving. Prepare dukkah and store in airtight container in a cool place for up to 1 month or in fridge for up to 3 months.

Store – Refrigerate leftover roasted peppers, covered, for an extra 3 days. Bring to room temperature before serving. Refrigerate dressing, stored in jar, for up to 1 week. Warm as directed in recipe before serving.

Freeze – Freeze dukkah in airtight container for up to 6 months. Thaw for 1 hour before using. Or sprinkle direct from frozen.

Root Vegetable Mash

Make Ahead – Prepare up to 5 days ahead, cover and refrigerate. Reheat as directed in recipe intro until piping hot.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, but do not exceed 5 days storage time from point of cooking. Reheat as directed in recipe intro until piping hot.

Freeze – Freeze purée in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Reheat as

directed in recipe.

Brown Butter Colcannon

Make Ahead – Prepare brown butter up to 2 weeks ahead, cover and refrigerate until needed.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat in microwave or transfer to ovenproof dish, cover with foil and heat in 350°F oven until piping hot. Or use to make patties.

Freeze – Freeze brown butter only in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge.

Fennel Gratin

Make Ahead – Assemble dish to end of step 5 up to 2 days ahead, press food wrap onto surface to submerge fennel and refrigerate. Bake, allowing an extra 15 minutes, until piping hot.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 1 day. Reheat in microwave or transfer to ovenproof dish, cover with foil and heat in a 350°F oven until piping hot.

Freeze – Freeze leftovers in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Reheat as above.

Roasted Cauliflower with Apricot Harissa and Spinach

Make Ahead/Store – Prepare apricot harissa up to 2 weeks ahead, cover and refrigerate.

Store – Refrigerate cauliflower leftovers, covered, for up to 5 days. Reheat in microwave or transfer to ovenproof dish, cover with foil and heat in 350°F oven until piping hot. Or eat cold.

Freeze – Freeze apricot harissa in portions in ice-cube trays. Once frozen, transfer cubes to airtight container. Thaw for 1 hour at room temperature and use immediately.

Crisp and Creamy Artichokes

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 5 days. Eat cold with extra shaved Parmesan or Pecorino Romano, if wished.

Butternut with Beet, Chili and Ginger Sauce

Make Ahead – Butternut squash can be prepared and coated with oil and spices up to 2 hours ahead. Cover and leave in cool place until needed. Or roast up to 3 hours ahead

and leave at room temperature until needed. Roast beets up to 2 days ahead and prepare sauce up to 1 day ahead. Cool, cover and refrigerate until needed.

Store – Refrigerate leftover butternut squash, covered, for up to 5 days. Reheat in 400°F oven for 20 minutes or let come to room temperature before serving. Refrigerate leftover sauce, covered, for up to an extra 4 days.

Spice-Studded Rice with Crispy Shallots, Garlic and Cashew Nuts

Make Ahead – Fry garlic, shallots and cashew nuts up to 2 hours ahead. Transfer to fresh paper towels and leave at room temperature for up to 2 hours. Can transfer to baking sheet and warm for 5–10 minutes in 220°F oven before adding to rice.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 2 days. Rice must be refrigerated within 2 hours of making. Shallots, garlic and nuts soften when stored. Reheat in microwave until piping hot and serve immediately.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Cake

Make Ahead – Prepare frosting (without cream) up to 1 day ahead. Cover and store in cool place. Whisk frosting briefly then whisk in cream before using.

Store – Store leftovers in airtight container in cool place for up to 5 days.

Freeze – Freeze sponge layers, individually wrapped in double layer of food wrap and layer of foil, for up to 3 months. Unwrap and thaw at room temperature for 2–3 hours.

Cherry and Almond Crumble

Make Ahead – Prepare crumble topping up to 1 week ahead. Cover and refrigerate until needed or freeze as below. Prepare fruit ahead and refrigerate, covered, as directed in recipe. Bake crumble up to 1 hour ahead. Leave in warm place before serving.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 5 days. Reheat in microwave or transfer to ovenproof dish, cover with foil and heat in a 350°F oven until warmed through. Remove foil for last 5 minutes to let topping crisp up a little. Or eat cold.

Freeze – Freeze crumble topping (without sliced almonds) in freezer bag or airtight container for up to

3 months. Use direct from frozen. Freeze individual portions of leftovers in airtight container for up to 1 month. Thaw overnight in fridge. Reheat as above. Or eat cold.

Rice Pudding Cake

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Must be refrigerated within 2 hours of baking. Eat cold.

Blood Orange and Passionfruit Pavlova

Make Ahead – Prepare meringue up to 1 day ahead. Store in airtight container until needed. Prepare orange segments up to 2 hours ahead and leave at room temperature or up to 1 day ahead and refrigerate overnight. Prepare orange syrup up to 1 month ahead, cover and refrigerate. If refrigerated, allow orange segments and syrup to come to room temperature before serving.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, loosely covered. Eat within 24 hours. Meringue will soften slightly in fridge.

Freeze – Freeze orange syrup only in airtight container for up to 6 months.

Summer Pudding

Make Ahead – Prepare pudding up to 3 days ahead. Leave in bowl and refrigerate until needed.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 2 days. Bread will soften the longer it is stored.

Basque Burnt Cheesecake

Make Ahead – Prepare licorice sauce up to 1 week ahead. Cover and refrigerate until needed. Allow sauce to come to room temperature before serving.

Store – Refrigerate cheesecake leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Refrigerate sauce leftovers, covered, for up to 3 months.

Freeze – Freeze cheesecake leftovers in airtight container for up to 1 month. Thaw overnight in fridge and eat within 24 hours. Sauce leftovers can be frozen in airtight container for up to 6 months. Thaw overnight in fridge.

Vegan Lemon Polenta Cake

Store – Store in airtight container in cool place for up to 7 days.

Freeze – Tightly wrap cake (on base of pan) or slices in double layer of food wrap, then wrap whole cake in layer of foil or put slices in airtight container. Freeze for up to

3 months (cake) or 1 month (slices). Unwrap and thaw on wire rack at room temperature.

Norwegian Pork Ribs

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat as directed in recipe until piping hot.

Jansson's Temptation

Make Ahead – Assemble dish (without bread crumbs) up to 2 days in advance, press food wrap onto surface to submerge potatoes and refrigerate. Add bread crumbs and bake as directed in recipe, allowing an extra 15–20 minutes, until piping hot.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 2 days. Reheat in microwave or transfer to ovenproof dish, cover with foil and heat in 350°F oven until piping hot.

Freeze – Freeze leftovers only in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Reheat as above.

Roasted Quinces

Make Ahead – Roast quinces up to 3 days ahead, cover and refrigerate. Reheat as directed in recipe intro or in 375°F oven for 15–20 minutes until piping hot.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, and use within 24 hours. Transfer to baking sheet, drizzle with a little olive oil and reheat as above. Or eat cold.

Freeze – Freeze quinces in airtight container for up to 1 month. Thaw overnight in fridge and reheat as above.

Pickled Red Cabbage

Store – Seal in sterilized jar and refrigerate for up to 3 weeks.

Scandi Cucumber Salad

Store – Seal in sterilized jar and refrigerate for up to 1 week. Cucumbers will discolor slightly after 4 days but remain good to eat.

Marmalade Molasses Sausages

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat in microwave until piping hot. Or eat cold.

Ruby Noodles

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 5 days. Eat cold.

Tuscan Bread, Bean and Kale Soup

Make Ahead – Prepare soup (without bread) up to 3 days ahead. Reheat in saucepan over medium heat, stirring, until just boiling, remove from heat and add cubes of bread.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 2 days but do not exceed 3 days from original cooking. Reheat in saucepan over medium heat, stirring and adding extra liquid as needed, until piping hot. Or make savory bread pudding.

Freeze – Freeze soup (without bread) in an airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Reheat as above.

Fermented Hot Sauce

Make Ahead/Store – Store sauce at room temperature for 1 week. Burp sauce if not used regularly, as it continues to ferment. Refrigerate for up to 1 year, but do not seal jar tightly and burp sauce occasionally if not used regularly, as it continues to ferment a little, even when stored in cold conditions.

No-Knead Black Bread

Store – Store in airtight container or wrapped in clean kitchen towel in cool place for up to 7 days.

Freeze – Freeze loaf or slices in freezer bags, removing as much air as possible, for up to 3 months. Layer slices with parchment paper or food wrap if using individually. Thaw at room temperature. Slices can be toasted from frozen.

Linzer Cookies

Make Ahead – Bake cookies up to 3 days ahead. Store, unfilled, in airtight container until needed. Once filled, cookies are best eaten on same day as they will soften over time.

Freeze – Freeze uncooked dough discs tightly wrapped and in airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge. Freeze baked but unfilled cookies in airtight container for up to 1 month. Thaw at room temperature. Fill cookies as directed in recipe.

Luscious Vegan Gingerbread Cake

Store – Store, wrapped in parchment paper and foil or in airtight container, in cool place for up to 5 days.

Freeze – Tightly wrap whole cake

left on parchment paper or slices in double layer of food wrap, then wrap whole cake in layer of foil or put slices in airtight container. Freeze for up to 3 months (cake) or 1 month (slices). Unwrap and thaw on wire rack at room temperature.

Black Forest Brownies

Store – Store in airtight container in cool place for up to 5 days or in fridge for 1 week.

Freeze – Wrap brownies individually or layer with parchment paper in airtight container. Freeze for up to 1 month. Thaw at room temperature or overnight in fridge.

Pomegranate-Poached Quinces

Make Ahead – Poach quinces up to 2 days ahead, cover and refrigerate.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers quinces, covered, for up to 3 days. Reduced syrup only keeps for an extra week, covered, in the fridge.

Freeze – Freeze poached quinces in syrup or reduced syrup only in an airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in fridge.

Christmas Bread Pudding

Make Ahead – Assemble pudding (without topping) up to 24 hours ahead, then cover and refrigerate. Let come to room temperature and sprinkle with sugar before baking.

Store – Refrigerate leftovers, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat in microwave or transfer to ovenproof dish, cover with foil and heat in 350°F oven until piping hot.

New Year Doughnuts: Oliebollen

Make Ahead – Prepare dough up to 1 day ahead, cover and refrigerate. Let come to room temperature before frying.

Store – Transfer cold leftovers to [paper towel-lined] plates and cover loosely with more paper towels. Store in airtight container at cool room temperature for up to 1 day. Reheat in 350°F oven on baking sheets for 5 minutes or until crisped up and hot throughout. Let cool slightly then serve as directed in recipe.

Freeze – When oliebollen are completely cold, put in airtight container and freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw at room temperature and reheat as directed above. Or reheat direct from frozen, increasing reheating time to 10–12 minutes, until hot throughout.

New Year Doughnuts:

Appelflappen

Make Ahead – Prepare batter up to 1 day ahead, cover and refrigerate. Let come to room temperature before frying.

Store – Transfer cold leftovers to paper-lined plates and cover loosely with more paper towels. Refrigerate for up to 1 day. Reheat in 350°F oven on wire rack set over baking sheet for 5–10 minutes or until crisped up and hot throughout. Let cool slightly then serve as directed in recipe.

NOTE

The following recipes contain raw or lightly cooked eggs, and are not suitable for people with compromised or weak immune systems, such as younger children, the elderly, or pregnant women:

Caesar Mayo

Toasted Marshmallow and Rhubarb Cake

For baking recipes, metric weights are given as well as cups. I prefer the accuracy of weights but however you assemble your ingredients, use one set of measurements—either cups and ounces or metric—as mixing them can affect the ratios in the recipe.