

KarenaLaya

Classic Jambalaya is a delicious staple of New Orleans cuisine. But like so many dishes I love, there's often a tad too much fat added. Here's my paired down version that won't have your scale saying "One at a time please." It's a great one-pot dish that can be made in advance and feed the whole family.

NOTE: The stock and tomato products are the liquid sources for the rice. If two cups of rice require 4 cups of water, then make sure your stock and tomato liquid combined equals 4 cups.

(This recipe appears in my new book, "GETTING SAUCED – How I Learned Everything I Know about Food from Working in TV." For more stories and recipes, click here to purchase a copy – <https://bit.ly/gettingsauced>)

INGREDIENTS (Serves 6)

2 tablespoons canola oil

1 red onion, chopped

4 stalks celery, chopped

1 green pepper, chopped

1 pound turkey meat leftovers, chopped

4 links lean sausage (pre-cooked), sliced

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 (14-ounce) can diced tomatoes

1 (14-ounce) can tomato puree

2 whole chipotle peppers, with two tablespoons of adobe sauce from can

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne

2 cups turkey or chicken stock

2 cups rice

Salt and pepper, to taste

PREPARATION

Heat the canola oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Sauté the onions, celery, and pepper for 6 minutes until the onions are translucent. Season with salt and pepper. Add the turkey, sausage, and garlic and cook for 4 minutes.

Add diced tomato, tomato puree, the chipotle peppers with sauce, and the cayenne. Cook for another 2 minutes. Add the stock and rice and test the seasoning.

Increase the heat to high and bring to a boil, then cover, reduce the heat to low, and let simmer for 20 minutes, or whatever time the rice instructions suggest.

Serve in warmed bowls with a side of cornbread or your favorite crusty bread.

Feeling Sorry for Myself Grilled Cheese Sandwich

When life starts to go to the dark side, I can always cheer myself up with a good old-fashioned grilled cheese sandwich served with a side of potato chips. I'm sure, given enough cheese, it will cheer you up too.

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INGREDIENTS (Makes 1 sandwich)

3 tablespoons butter, divided

1 small onion, thinly sliced

2 slices brioche

$\frac{1}{4}$ wheel of Brie or cheese of your choice, sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$ apple, thinly sliced

Fig jam, your favorite brand

Potato chips (optional)

1 or more cocktails (optional)

1 pint ice cream (optional)

PREPARATION

Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a skillet of medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 8 minutes until browned and caramelized, set aside.

In the same skillet, melt 1 tablespoon butter and brown one side of each piece of bread. Remove from skillet and place one slice on a cutting board with the brown side facing up. Slather on fig jam. Top with sliced Brie, apples, and a heaping spoonful of onions.

Top with the other slice of bread, brown side touching the onions. You now have a sandwich with the two uncooked sides facing out.

Melt the remaining tablespoon of butter in the skillet over medium heat, and carefully place the sandwich back in the pan.

When the bottom has browned, carefully flip the sandwich over and brown the last remaining side. This way, all sides of the bread are toasty and buttery. It adds to the crunch factor—a very important element when one is feeling blue.

Serve immediately with a side of potato chips, your choice of alcoholic beverage, and a pint of your favorite ice cream.

Linguine Con Broccoli Aglio E Olio

Sometimes the simplest dishes can be the most satisfying. This is one of my go-to dishes when I need to get something on the table quickly. The aroma of the garlic always brings me right back to a wonderful lunch I once had in Venice.

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INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

1 lb linguini

1 large head of broccoli, cut into florets

3 tablespoons olive oil

6 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS

In a large pot, bring 4 quarts of water and 2 tablespoons of salt to a boil. Cook pasta as per boxed instructions.

Add the broccoli florets to a lidded pot, or a vegetable steamer, filling the bottom quarter of the pot with water, and steam the florets for about 5 minutes until they are bright green.

In a large sauté pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and sauté for 1 minute, or until fragrant. Stir in the red pepper flakes and cook for another minute. Add in the broccoli and cook for 4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and set aside over low heat.

Drain the pasta, setting aside some of the pasta water, and add pasta to the sauté pan. Stir to combine the ingredients and, if dish looks too dry, add in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pasta water.

Pour out onto large serving platter and garnish with Parmesan cheese.

Tuna Noodle Casserole

No one really wants to admit that some of those 1970s semi-homemade dishes our busy moms fed us were actually tasty on occasion. In truth, there is some comfort to them, if you can just get past the guilt of opening cans, dumping the contents, and then heating. I have trouble with that, but in times of stress, I need this dish. So, here's my take on it, using fresh ingredients. You'll note that I have substituted edamame for peas. I hate peas.

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INGREDIENTS (serves 4)

1 stick butter, divided, and softened

1 pound elbow macaroni

$\frac{1}{2}$ medium onion, finely chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

1 cup sliced cremini mushrooms

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour

2 cups milk

Salt and pepper to taste

1 large can tuna, drained and flaked

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup edamame

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded cheddar cheese

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded Gruyere cheese

4 tablespoons breadcrumbs

PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

Using 1 tablespoon of butter, grease a large Pyrex or ceramic baking dish.

Fill a large pot with salted water. Don't be shy; I use 2 tablespoons of salt. Bring to a boil on high heat. Cook the pasta as per boxed instructions until al dente. Drain and set

aside. Do not rinse the pasta.

Melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until translucent, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic, and cook for 1 minute. Add the mushrooms and cook 4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms have softened. Remove from heat and set aside.

In a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, melt 4 tablespoons butter. Whisk in the flour until smooth. Slowly whisk in the milk, and cook 5 minutes, or until the sauce slightly thickens. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

With the saucepan on low heat, add the tuna, edamame, the mushroom mixture, the cooked pasta, and the cheddar and Gruyere cheeses, and stir to combine just until the cheese begins to melt. Pour into the buttered baking dish.

In a small bowl, combine the breadcrumbs with the remaining 2 tablespoons melted butter and mix well. Sprinkle evenly on top.

Bake 25 minutes, or until the breadcrumbs are lightly browned. Let the casserole sit at room temperature for a few minutes before serving.

Air-Fried Bay Scallops With Mango Salsa and Sautéed Asparagus

I recently retired my beloved Magic Chef after 30 years of good use and replaced it with a [GE Cafe range](#). Surprisingly, it came with an air fryer built in, which I rarely use. But,

today I thought I'd fire it up. The bay scallops came out very tender with a nice crunch. Give it a whirl.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 2)

FOR THE FISH

1 pound bay scallops

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour

2 egg, beaten

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup panko

3 teaspoons [KK's Exotic Spice Blend](#) (or your favorite spice rub)

spray oil

FOR THE ASPARAGUS

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 shallot, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

10 asparagus spears, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ " pieces

Salt and pepper to taste

White and black sesame seeds for garnish

FOR THE MANGO SALSA

12 cherry tomatoes, quartered

$\frac{1}{2}$ mango, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ " cubes

1 scallion, chopped into small rings

$\frac{1}{2}$ orange, zested, then juiced

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 teaspoon honey

salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

Preheat air fryer to 400 degrees. Season scallops with salt and pepper.

Place the flour, eggs and panko in separate bowls for dredging. Add one teaspoon of the spice mixture to each of the bowls and combine each separately.

Place $\frac{1}{2}$ of the scallops in the flour to cover, shaking off any excess. Place scallops in eggs and using a slotted spoon, turn them until covered. Use the spoon to scoop them up, letting the excess egg drip off first, and then place in panko. Make sure all are covered and shake off any excess. Place scallops on parchment lined baking sheet, making sure they are separated enough so they aren't touching each other. Repeat process with the other half of the scallops.

Using a spray oil, spritz the scallops with oil, then place them in the air fryer at 400 degrees for 10-12 minutes.

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a skillet. Sauté shallot for about two minutes. Add garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add asparagus and sauté for about 4 minutes. They should be bright green and not too mushy. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Garnish with sesame seeds.

Combine all of the salsa ingredients in a small pan and heat over a low flame, just to warm up, about two minutes.

To plate, using a round 4" cookie cutter, fill the cookie cutter first with the asparagus mixture, then the scallops

next to that and finally the salsa, creating three separate circles of food. It's a fun way to present the dish and it's perfect for those picky eaters that don't like the different foods touching each other.

Spatchcock Chicken

If you're like me, whenever I roast a whole chicken, either the white meat is overdone or the dark meat is underdone. It's difficult to get it all right at the same time. That is, unless you spatchcock your bird. Spatchcocking gives you a fighting chance because you're literally flattening your bird allowing all of the pieces to cook evenly. It's a great dish for welcoming the summer this Memorial Day and a lot easier to do than you think.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4-6)

4-5 pound whole chicken

BRINE

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup kosher salt

1 orange, juiced

2 chipotle peppers

3 quarts water

CITRUS BUTTER

1 orange, zested and juiced

1 stick unsalted butter

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey or apricot jam

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne

1 Tablespoon rosemary, finely chopped

salt and pepper to taste

VEGETABLES

1 pound small potatoes, cut in half

1 large carrot, sliced $\frac{1}{2}$ "

1 onion sliced

olive oil

salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

In a large pot, combine all of the brine ingredients. Bring up to a boil, then down to a simmer for 10 minutes. Allow to cool.

To spatchcock the bird, place the bird on a cutting board breast side down with the legs facing you. Make cuts along both sides of the backbone, removing it from the bird. Save the discarded piece for stock. Flip the bird over and press down on the breastbone until you hear it crack and the chicken flattens. I learned this from watching this YouTube video—gotta love the BBC. It's much easier than it looks.

Place the chicken in a large Ziploc bag and add the cooled brine. Place in refrigerator over night.

The next day, preheat your grill to 400.

In a large bowl, combine the vegetables. Drizzle with olive

oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Place in aluminum foil and seal.

Remove the chicken from the brine and pat it dry. Season both sides with salt and pepper or your favorite spice rub.

In a small saucepan, melt the butter. Take off heat and add the orange juice and zest, the honey or jam, cayenne, rosemary and salt and pepper. Whisk to combine.

Place the vegetable pouch on the grill. Brush both sides of the chicken with half of the butter mixture. Place on the grill breast side up for 20 minutes. Lower the temperature to 375 and continue to baste every 15 minutes. You want internal temperature to be 165 for white meat, 170-175 for dark. Total cook time will be between 75 minutes and two-hours depending upon size of the bird. (Average cooktime – 15 minutes per pound). Start checking with a thermometer after 75 minutes.

When the chicken is to temperature, remove from grill. Place chicken on cutting board and cover with aluminum foil. Allow it to rest for ten minutes.

Take the vegetables out of the pouch and place them on a grill pan. Cook on direct heat for 5 – 7 minutes to add a bit of char, but don't overburn.

Remove vegetables from grill and place them on the bottom of a large platter.

To serve, cut the legs and wings off the chicken, slice the breast and place neatly on top of the vegetables.