

BRAISED CABBAGE WITH BACON

It's always a feat to get certain members of my family to eat their greens. I use all kinds of trickery to sneak it into their diets. I put spinach in fruit smoothies and when desperate, I add bacon to my sautéed vegetables. Bacon can make anything taste better. I realize bacon isn't a super food, but it should be.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

4 strips bacon

Canola oil, as needed

1 onion, thinly sliced

4 cups Napa cabbage, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

salt and pepper to taste

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chicken stock

1 Tablespoon soy sauce

1 Tablespoon maple syrup

PREPARATION

In a large skillet, render the bacon. Once crispy, remove bacon strips and place on paper towel. Set aside. When cool, chop up the bacon strips and reserve.

Sauté onion in rendered bacon fat for about 6 minutes until beginning to brown. If too dry, add canola oil as needed. Add in cabbage, pepper flakes, salt and pepper. Continue to sauté for one minute. Add chicken stock, soy sauce and maple syrup. Continue to sauté until wilted, about 3-4 more minutes. Turn

off heat, add the bacon, toss, then serve.

FRIED HAKE OVER COCONUT RICE WITH TURMERIC SAUCE

I'm not a huge fan of flaky white fish unless it's fried. Originally I thought I'd try this in the airfryer—which you could do—but knew I'd like it better frying it in oil. It was worth the extra calories. I served it with some coconut rice that I had left over and I made a quick turmeric sauce to pull the dish together. Feel free to mix and match your favorite rice dishes and sauces! If you come up with a good one, let me know!

INGREDIENTS (serves 2-3)

FOR SAUCE

2 Tablespoons Canola Oil

1 medium onion, chopped

1 Tablespoon fresh Turmeric, grated

1 clove garlic, grated

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cumin

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup coconut milk

Salt and pepper to taste

FOR RICE

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups coconut milk

2 cups chicken broth

2 cups basmati rice

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

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

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sweet shredded coconut

zest of one lemon

FOR HAKE

1 cup canola oil

1 pound Hake (or Cod or other flaky white fish), filleted

1 egg, beaten

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

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

Salt and pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup thinly sliced green onion

Tzatziki for garnish (optional)

PREPARATION

FOR SAUCE

In a sauce pan, heat the olive oil until it begins to shimmer. Add the onions and cook until translucent, about 4-5 minutes.

Place the onions, tumeric, garlic, cumin and coconut milk in a blender. Season with salt and pepper and blend on high until smooth. Taste and re-season if necessary. Set aside.

FOR RICE

In a saucepan, combine coconut milk, broth, rice, salt, currents and shredded coconut. Bring the mixture to a boil, then cover, turn down the heat and simmer for about 18 to 20 minutes, until the liquid is absorbed. Turn off the heat, then let stand covered for 5 to 10. Fluff the rice with a fork, then gently stir in the lemon zest.

FOR HAKE

Season the hake with salt and pepper. Cut into two or three equal sized pieces. Place the flour, egg and panko, each in their own bowl. Season each with salt and pepper and mix. Dredge each piece of the fish through the flour, then the egg, then the panko.

In a large, deep skillet, heat the cup of oil on medium heat. The oil should come up about $\frac{1}{2}$ " high in the pan. Add more if necessary. Bring up to 350 degrees.

Using tongs, gently place the fish pieces in the pan. Be careful of splatters. Cook until brown, about 3-4 minutes. If it's browning too quickly, lower the heat. Carefully flip each piece over and cook until the other side is brown, about another 3-4 minutes.

To plate, place some rice in the center of the plate. Pour some of the tumeric sauce over the rice. Place a piece of fish on top. Garnish with green onions and a spoonful of tzatziki.

FILO EGG PIE

A friend of mine was having a brunch and asked if I could bring a quiche or some type of egg dish. Since quiche is so 1990s, I started to scour the internet to find something new

and fun. I noticed a few videos of people using filo dough wrapped as fans to make a crunchy crust for an egg pie. It seemed like a fun technique, so I gave it whirl using the ingredients I love. It was a big hit! I hope you love it too.

INGREDIENTS (serves 6)

4 strips of bacon

1 onion, thinly sliced

Olive oil, as needed

8 cremini mushrooms, thinly sliced

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups gruyere, large grate

8 eggs

3 Tablespoons milk

1 package, filo dough (sheets)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup parmesan, small grate

salt and pepper to taste

chili flakes to taste

2 scallions, chopped

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

In a large skillet over medium heat, render the bacon. When browned, remove from skillet and set aside on a paper towel. When cool, crumble bacon, set aside.

Pour out half of the bacon drippings and reserve. Sauté the onion in the remainder of the bacon drippings. If too dry, add more drippings or olive oil as needed. Allow onions to start

caramelizing—about 6-8 minutes—then add the mushrooms and sauté until wilted, about another 3 minutes. Season with salt, pepper and chili flakes to taste. Again, if too dry add olive oil as needed.

Combine the mushrooms, onions, crumbled bacon and $\frac{1}{2}$ the scallions. Place the mixture in a greased 9" circular baking dish. Make sure the baking dish is at least 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep. Allow mixture to cool, then sprinkle the gruyere over the mixture to cover.

Beat the eggs and milk together. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Take the filo sheets and fold them lengthwise as if making a fan. Then, starting from one end, roll up the fan into a circle and place in the center of the baking dish. Continue making the filo fans and start wrapping them around the first one until you have filo fans covering the entire dish. Don't overstuff the filo sheets. Keep them a little loose.



Pour the egg mixture evenly over the filo. Using a sharp knife, gently Poke a few holes in the filo or move the filo slightly to allow the egg mixture to spread out evenly. Sprinkle $\frac{1}{2}$ of the parmesan on top.

Place in oven and bake for 1 hour. After 25 minutes, start checking to see if the top is turning too brown or burning. Keep an eye on it. If it is getting too brown too quickly, lightly cover the dish with aluminum foil.

Allow to cool for fifteen minutes. Cut into 6 pie pieces. Garnish with the remainder of the chopped scallions and parmesan.

WINTER CITRUS SALAD

In an attempt to force some vegetables into me, my mom believed that salad was the key. But, it was always the same—iceberg lettuce, sliced cucumbers and tasteless supermarket tomatoes tossed with a dressing made from one of those Italian seasoning packets. It was not exactly a dish that I looked forward to.

But, in an effort to brush off the past and forge a new alliance with salad in my life, I've experimented with variations on the classic vinaigrette theme. Here's a winter salad I made for New Year's Eve and it was a big hit. It was the only dish that had no leftovers. Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4-6)

FOR THE SALAD

1 cup shredded Napa Cabbage

3 large handfuls lettuce and/or spinach mix (rough chop)

$\frac{1}{2}$ English cucumber, skinned and sliced

12 cherry tomatoes, quartered

1 carrot, julienned

$\frac{1}{4}$ red onion, thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup pecans, rough chop

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup dried cranberries

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Mandarin orange slices (best from can)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup feta cheese, crumbled

FOR THE DRESSING

4 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

3 tablespoons fresh orange juice (or use Mandarin juice from can)

1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard

salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

In a small bowl, whisk together all of the dressing ingredients. Set aside.

In a large bowl, lightly toss all of the salad ingredients together, but only half of the feta cheese. Pour the dressing on top and lightly toss. Garnish with the remaining feta cheese.

AIR FRIED CHICKEN THIGHS

After a recent party, I had a whole bunch of miscellaneous hors d'oeuvres left in the fridge. For those of you that follow my blog, you know I hate to waste food, so I came up with a simple way to use them in stuffed chicken thighs. You could use similar leftovers from your fridge as a substitute. Maybe you've got some roasted peppers or sliced olives or babaganoush hiding behind the milk. Take a look! You might not have to call Uber Eats tonight after all.

INGREDIENTS (serves 4)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup tapenade spread

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup goat cheese, crumbled

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup caramelized onions

4 skinless boneless chicken thighs

2 eggs, beaten

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour, seasoned with salt and pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup panko, seasoned with salt and pepper

Salt and pepper to taste

Canola oil for brushing

PREPARATION

Preheat air fryer to 400 degrees.

Lay out a piece of clear wrap on top of a cutting board. Spread out a chicken thigh and cover with another piece of clear wrap. Pound out each thigh until thin, about $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Remove the clear wrap. Season with salt and pepper.

Set out a clean piece of clear wrap and place one thigh on top. Spread a light layer of tapenade on the chicken thighs. Sprinkle goat cheese and onions down the center of each thigh. Using the clear wrap as a guide, roll up each thigh as tightly as possible, making sure the wrap itself doesn't get caught in the folds. Once the thigh is rolled up, place the clear wrap around it and tighten so they look like sausages or a sushi roll. Repeat for each thigh. Place the wrapped thighs in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

Carefully unwrap each thigh, then dredge each first in flour, then eggs, then panko.

Lightly brush each thigh with oil.

Place chicken thighs seam down in air fryer. Lower temp to 380 and bake for 15 minutes. Turn thighs over and bake for 10 more minutes. Remove from fryer and let rest for five minutes.

Slice and serve with salad. Spoon some tapenade on top of chicken slices.

ROASTED VEGGIES

It's easy to get bored with side dishes, particularly at this time of year. There are no local fresh tomatoes for a bright salad or piles of basil to turn into a pesto sauce. In the dead of winter, it's all about the root vegetables. So here is a simple and very tasty recipe that might cheer you up as you wait for spring to show its colors.

INGREDIENTS (serves 6-8)

1 butternut squash, skin and seeds removed, cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ " squares

1 fennel bulb, stalks removed, cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ " squares

1 large red onion, skin removed, cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ " squares

2 large carrots, skins removed, cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ " squares

1 large parsnip, skin removed, cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ " squares

1 large potato, skin removed (optional), cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ " squares

olive oil

1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon garlic powder

salt and pepper

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Line two sheet pans with aluminum foil. Spread out the squash, fennel, and red onion on one pan, keeping each vegetable in its own section. Spread out the carrots, parsnip, and potato on the other pan, keeping each vegetable in its own section. Don't mix the veggies because some may cook faster than others and you'll want to remove those so they don't burn.

Drizzle olive oil over the veggies, then season with rosemary, garlic powder, salt and pepper. With your hands, mix each individual vegetable so that the oil and spices are evenly distributed.

Place pans in the oven. If you can fit both pans on one level, then do so. If not, place them in the center and bottom of your racks, trying to leave some space between them. Roast for ten minutes, then take out and stir, still trying to keep each veggie separate from the other. Roast for another ten minutes, and stir again.

Lower temp to 375 and if your pans are on separate levels, flip the position of the pans and roast another ten minutes. At some point, the onions and fennel and possibly the squash may cook faster, so feel free to remove them as needed so they don't burn. Set aside.

Stir vegetables and place back in the oven for the final ten minutes. (Total cook time 40 minutes.)

Place all the vegetables in a serving bowl and mix together.

DRIED MUSHROOM SOUP

A chef friend of ours often generously gifts us with a mishmash of ingredients that he over ordered. The latest to hit our shelves is a big bag of dried mushrooms and some rice noodles. Do I hear soup? Here's a tasty dish using Asian spices.

INGREDIENTS (serves 4)

2 cups of thinly sliced dried Chinese mushrooms

2 star anise

1 cinnamon stick

2 cardomon pods

6 coriander seeds

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 bay leaf

2 tablespoons canola oil

2 shallots chopped

12 fresh shiitake mushrooms sliced

2 cloves of garlic minced

1" knob of ginger minced

1 cup cooked chicken, cubed in $\frac{1}{2}$ " pieces

2 cups of baby spinach

1 quart of chicken bone broth or vegetable broth

1 tablespoon of soy sauce

1 tablespoon of mirin
1 teaspoon of fish sauce
1 package of rice noodles
basil leaves for garnish
salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

Soak the dried mushrooms in a medium sized bowl of warm water for 30 minutes. Slice the mushrooms and reserve the water.

Place the star anise, cinnamon stick, cardamon pods, coriander seeds, red pepper flakes and bay leaf into a sachet with a string, or use a piece of cheesecloth and tie some butchers twine around it. Set aside.

In a medium sized dutch oven, heat the oil. Add the shallots and cook until translucent, about three minutes. Add the fresh mushrooms, garlic and ginger. Saute for two to three minutes. Add in the cooked chicken and spinach and stir for one minute.

Pour in the bone broth and the dried mushrooms with the mushroom water. Add the spice sachet, soy sauce, mirin and fish sauce. Bring to a boil and then simmer for twenty minutes.

Add in the rice noodles and cook as per the package instructions. Do not add additional liquid. Remove the spice sachet. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve, ladle into soup bowls. Garnish with basil leaves.

TURMERIC SHRIMP WITH SPINACH

I love working with turmeric, even if it stains my fingers for the next couple of days. I love the color it adds to a dish, not to mention the flavor. For those of you that can't get enough shrimp, this recipe is for you!

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

FOR MARINADE

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1 teaspoon curry powder, *hot or mild depending upon your preference*

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

3 large garlic cloves, grated

1 teaspoon ginger, grated

Kosher salt

Fresh ground pepper

2 tablespoons olive oil

1.5 lbs large shrimps, peeled and deveined

FOR RICE

1.5 cups Basmati rice

1 teaspoon salt

1 cup coconut milk

2 cups chicken stock or water

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins or currents

FOR SHRIMP DISH

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 medium Vidalia onion, thinly sliced

1 (14-ounce) can full-fat coconut milk

1 tablespoon soy sauce

2 packed cups baby spinach

1 Serrano chili, thinly sliced

2 scallions, thinly sliced

Zest of one lemon

Thai basil or parsley, chopped for garnish

PREPARATION

FOR MARINADE

In a large bowl, mix together all the marinade ingredients. Add the shrimp and mix to coat well. Cover the bowl and place in refrigerator for one hour.

FOR RICE

Rinse rice under cold water until the water is clear. In a medium sized pot, combine rice, salt, coconut milk, chicken stock or water and currents. Bring to a boil and then down to a simmer for 20 minutes. Using a fork, fluff the rice and set aside with the cover on.

FOR DISH

Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add the onions, and sauté until they begin to caramelize, about 8-10 minutes. If they start to burn, lower the temperature.

Add the shrimp and whatever remaining marinade there is to the pan. Spread the shrimp out and cook for two minutes. Flip the

shrimp over and pour in the coconut milk and soy sauce, stirring to combine all the ingredients with the shrimp. Cook for about 2-3 minutes until the sauce starts to thicken. Try to keep at a simmer, rather than a boil.

Add the spinach until it begins to wilt, about 2 minutes.

In shallow bowls, scoop out about a cup of rice in each and place 6-8 shrimp on top. Pour the sauce over each and garnish with scallions, lemon zest, thai basil and/or parsley.

PASTA WITH PARMESAN MUSHROOM SAUCE

I know this is sacrilege, but I'm not a big fan of tomato based pasta sauces, mostly because they give me terrible heartburn. So, I'm always trying to think of new sauces to create. I was playing around with some ideas, and I thought I'd do a spinoff of an Alfredo sauce, but not quite as heavy as most. With the addition of mushrooms and some white wine, this sauce really sings!

INGREDIENTS (serves 3-4)

1 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced

4 strips bacon

4 shallots, diced

4 cloves garlic, minced

olive oil (optional)

3 tablespoons of butter

3 tablespoons of flour

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup white wine

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup cream

pinch of ground nutmeg

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

salt and pepper to taste

1 pound pasta of your choice

1 cup parmesan cheese, large grate

parsley, chopped for garnish

PREPARATION

In a large non-stick skillet, render the bacon. Remove bacon strips and chop into small pieces, and set aside. Sauté the shallots in the bacon drippings until translucent, about 2 minutes. Add the mushrooms and cook for 4 minutes. If too dry, add some olive oil. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Remove all from pan and set aside.

Prepare the pasta as per boxed instructions. When ready, strain out pasta, but reserve one cup of the pasta water.

Remove skillet from heat and wipe down with a paper towel. Place skillet back on burner on low heat. Melt the butter. Add the flour and mix using a wooden spoon. Cook until the mixture looks like a smooth paste and is a blond color. Slowly add the white wine, cream, nutmeg and red pepper flakes. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to a light boil and then immediately lower to a simmer. (When you add in the liquids, the mixture may clump. Don't worry, just keep stirring and it should all come together.)

Add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of cheese and stir. Add in the mushrooms and gently fold into the sauce.

Add the strained pasta to the sauce in the pan and lightly toss with the sauce. If the sauce is too thick or you feel you need a bit more, add some of the pasta water a little bit at a time until it's the consistency you like. I usually use about 1 cup or less.

Serve in bowls. Garnish with remaining parmesan and parsley.

SKATE WING WITH SPINACH PROVENCAL

Have you ever gone into your local fish market and seen that weird looking fish that looks sort of like a fan? Well, that's skate wing. It's a surprisingly inexpensive fish considering how delicious it is. It's a light, succulent fish that holds up beautifully when sautéed in butter. It's part of the ray family and can be found in east coast waters.

I like to serve it alongside spinach Provencal, a classic vegetable dish I learned way, way back in my college days. Give it a try!

INGREDIENTS (serves 2)

FOR FISH

1 skate wing (have your fishmonger remove the cartilage)

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

1 egg, beaten

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

1 tablespoon [Gustus Vitae "Taste of Provence"](#) seasoning (or your favorite spice blend)

Salt and pepper to taste

4 tablespoons butter

FOR SPINACH

1 package pre-washed baby spinach (5 oz)

1 shallot, chopped

3 cloves garlic, chopped

1 egg, beaten

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup Parmesan, grated

Salt and pepper to taste

1 tablespoon butter

1 scallion, chopped for garnish.

PREPARATION

Set up three shallow bowls—one for flour, one for the beaten egg, and one for the panko. Split the spice blend evenly into each of the three bowls and mix. Season each with salt and pepper.

Dredge the fish first in the flour, then the egg, and then the panko. Set aside.

Heat a large skillet on medium heat. Melt 2 tablespoons of butter. Gently place the skate wing in the skillet and cook for 4 minutes. Using a large spatula, lift the fish, add 2 tablespoons of butter into the pan, then gently flip the fish, trying to keep it in one piece. Cook for another 4 minutes.

Remove the fish and set aside on a plate while you make the spinach.

Using the same skillet, melt 1 tablespoon of butter. Add the shallot and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté for one minute. Add the spinach and cook until it has wilted, about 1-2 minutes. Add the egg and Parmesan and mix with tongs until the egg has cooked, about 1-2 minutes.

TO PLATE: Use a large platter and place the fish on one side and the spinach on the other. Garnish the fish with scallions. (NOTE: If the fish has cooled down too much, place in microwave for no more than thirty seconds to reheat).