

SMOKED BASMATI COCONUT RICE

I love food markets—the more exotic, the better. Wherever I travel, one of my first trips is always to the local market. Luckily, here in New York, we have a few markets that seem to carry whatever obscure ingredient you can imagine.

One of my favorite places to shop aimlessly is Kalustyan's on Lexington Avenue. They carry spices and groceries from every corner of the world with an emphasis on Indian and Middle Eastern cuisines. If you need dried *galangal* from Malaysia or Persian *zereshk*, they've probably got that. Curious about their myriad of rices, I picked up a bag of their smoked basmati rice and played around with it. The smokiness of the rice pairs surprisingly well with the sweetness from the coconut. I usually serve this with a curry or Asian style fish.

INGREDIENTS (serves 4)

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

2 cups chicken broth

2 cups smoked basmati rice

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

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

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

zest of one lemon

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

PREPARATION

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 and green onion.

RATATOUILLE

We're big Pixar fans in our house, so when the movie *Ratatouille* came out, I wanted to figure out how to re-create the famous dish Remy makes for that harshest of food critics, Anton Ego. Although *ratatouille* is actually a very simple comfort dish made with whatever vegetables come from the garden, the addition of certain flavors as well as the presentation can turn this simple dish into a masterpiece.

Traditional ratatouille is made with a tomato base, but I make mine with a cauliflower puree instead, helping to keep the acidity down and my esophagus happy.

CAULIFLOWER PUREE INGREDIENTS

1 head of cauliflower, rough chop
2 tablespoons of olive oil
3 shallots, rough chop
2 gloves of garlic, rough chop
1 cup of chicken broth or bone broth
Salt and pepper to taste

RATATOUILLE INGREDIENTS

2 Japanese Eggplants

6 Roma Tomatoes

2 Yellow Squash

2 Zucchini

(When buying the vegetables, try to get them as close in size width-wise as possible.)

DRESSING INGREDIENTS

4 tablespoons of olive oil

2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped

2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped

1 tablespoon fresh chives, chopped

2 cloves of garlic, minced

Salt and pepper to taste

CAULIFLOWER PUREE PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Rough chop the head of cauliflower. In a large bowl, add the cauliflower, drizzle with olive oil, salt and pepper, and mix to combine. Pour cauliflower onto a baking dish and roast for 45 minutes.

In a large pot, sauté shallots until translucent. Add in garlic and sauté for an additional minute. Add in roasted cauliflower and the broth, bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Allow to cool, then using an immersion blender, combine until pureed. Set aside.

RATATOUILLE PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Slice up eggplant, tomatoes, squash and zucchini into 1/8-inch rounds and set aside.

Pour 2 cups of the puree into the base of a 12" round deep pie pan. Arrange the sliced vegetables on top of the puree in a circular pattern, alternating between them, (one zucchini, followed by one tomato, followed by one yellow squash, followed by one Japanese eggplant, overlapping each). Start from the outer edge, working in. (It's okay if you don't use all the vegetables you've sliced.) Season with salt and pepper.

In a small bowl, mix all of the dressing ingredients together and pour over the vegetables.

Cover the pan with aluminum foil and bake for 35 – 40 minutes. Remove the tin foil and continue to bake for another 15-20 minutes. Best served while hot.

Serves 6-8

SALMON POKE BURGERS

I try to eat salmon at least once a week to make sure I get some Omega-3 fat in my system. It seems to be the only fat that's good for you, so my hope is that it will seek out all the other fats and scare them away.

□I've broiled salmon, poached it, stir-fried it and baked it. But these grilled burgers are my favorite way to prepare it. It's also a great dish for a summer barbecue for those non-red meat eating friends we all have.

□**INGREDIENTS** (makes 4 burgers)

1 pound of fresh salmon

zest of one lemon

1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon garlic, minced
1 tablespoon ginger, minced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of panko
2 scallions, sliced thinly
3 tablespoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon sriracha
1 egg

□TO SERVE

4 lightly toasted or grilled brioche buns

Seaweed salad for garnish

Wasabi Aioli for garnish

□PREPARATION

Dice up salmon as finely as possible or gentle pulse in a food processor. Place in bowl with lemon zest, lemon juice, garlic, ginger, panko, scallions, soy sauce, sriracha and egg. Combine all ingredients.

□With a 4" round cookie cutter, press salmon mixture down to form $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch patties. Mixture should make four burgers. Place all on an oiled plate and let rest in refrigerator for one hour.

□Oil grill grates or grill pan. Heat until oil just starts to smoke. Using an oiled spatula, place burgers on grill for four minutes each side.

□To serve, place each burger on lightly toasted or grilled bun.

□Garnish with seaweed salad. I like to use kuki wakame or hijiki—both Japanese seaweed salads that are often found in Asian markets or seafood stores. If you like heat, drizzle on some wasabi aioli.

TORTELLONI CARBONARA

Once I'm home for the day, the bra comes off and the fuzzy slippers go on. It takes a lot to motivate me to go out again. So if I haven't shopped for dinner or I've been spending too much money on pizza delivery, we could be left with cereal for dinner. Of course, since that's not much of a crowd pleaser, I often opt for this easy go-to dish. I usually have the bulk of the ingredients on hand and it's a quick and comforting dish that will make your family think you actually planned to make it all along.

□I like using the Kirkland 5-cheese Tortelloni with Parmigiano Reggiano from Costco. It's a great value, freezes well and tastes great. Plus, since it comes in a multi-pack, you know you'll always have some in your freezer when all else fails.

□INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

- 1 lb of tortelloni
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil
- 2 shallots, diced
- 8 cremini mushrooms, sliced
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 4 pieces of cooked bacon, crumbled

1 cup grated parmesan cheese (small grate)

2 whole eggs, 2 yolks

Salt, pepper and red pepper flakes to taste

Basil leaves for garnish

□PREPARATION

In a large pot, boil water. Follow the package instructions for cooking the tortelloni. Save at least one cup of the pasta water.

While the pasta is cooking, heat the olive oil in a large skillet. Sauté shallots until translucent. Add mushrooms and cook for 2 – 3 minutes. Add a splash more oil if too dry. Add in garlic and bacon and cook for one more minute. Season with salt, pepper and red pepper flakes to taste.

□In a small bowl, whisk the whole eggs and yolks together until blended. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Add in $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Parmesan cheese and stir until the cheese is well distributed. Set aside.

Remove the tortelloni from the boiling water using a spider or slotted spoon, adding them to the mushroom mixture in the skillet. Keeping the heat on low, gently stir together. Add in the egg mixture and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the pasta water. Mix all together. It's okay if the eggs seem to scramble a bit.

□Taste it and if the pasta seems too dry, continue to add more pasta water a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup at a time until the sauce comes to a consistency you like, being careful not to make it too watery.

□Plate the pasta in shallow bowls and garnish with basil and the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the parmesan cheese. Serve immediately.

SEAFOOD PAELLA

Everyone needs a great party dish and one of my favorites is seafood paella. One bite transports me to the Spanish seaside town of Torremolinos where I not only had my first taste of paella, but also one magical evening on the back of a motorcycle with a guy named Enrico. But that's another story.

□At the base of this dish is *sofrito*, an aromatic vegetable base used to enhance many Spanish dishes. You can find it pre-made in the supermarket, but I prefer to make my own.

□SOFRITO INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup, plus drizzle, of extra-virgin olive oil

3 large yellow onions, rough chop

6 medium cloves garlic, rough chop

2 large tomatoes, rough chop

Salt and pepper, to taste

□PAELLA INGREDIENTS

Extra virgin olive oil, preferably □

8 large whole shrimp, peeled with heads and tails intact, deveined□

8 large clams

8 mussels

1 link of Portuguese sausage or Linguiça*

3 clove garlic, finely chopped□

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

1 cup Spanish bomba rice

2 pinches of saffron

3 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups hot seafood stock**

Salt to taste

Chopped parley and chives for garnish

SOFRITO PREPARATION

Heat large skillet and add $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup olive oil. Once oil is shimmering, add in onions and sauté for 8-10 minutes until translucent. Add in tomatoes and garlic, allowing some of the liquid from the tomatoes to evaporate, another 8-10 minutes. Lower the temperature to a simmer and continue to cook until the sofrito is a deep redish color, about 30 minutes longer. Allow to cool for ten minutes. Place all ingredients in a blender and pulse until chunks are small, but the same size. Do not pulverize into a liquid.

This should make about 2 cups. You can refrigerate the sofrito in an airtight container for up to 5 days. I usually split it into four portions and freeze it for easy use. It's not just for paella. It makes a great base for pasta sauces and stews too.

PAELLA PREPARATION

Heat 3 tablespoons of the olive oil in a 12-inch paella pan over high heat. Add the shrimp and sausage, searing for about 1 minute each side and set aside. Add another tablespoon of oil and stir in the garlic, cooking for 1 minute. Add the sofrito and rice and cook for 1 minute more, stirring to coat the rice. Add the hot stock and increase heat to high.

Once the stock is boiling, crush the saffron between your

fingers and add to stock. Add salt to stock.

Stir the rice during the first 5-minutes while boiling, then lower the heat to a simmer. The rice should take about 20-25 minutes to cook. DO NOT STIR THE RICE AGAIN.

□After the first 8 minutes, place the clams and sausage on top, pushing them into the rice. Cover the pan with aluminum foil to help the clams steam. 4 minutes later add the mussels, pushing them into the rice. Cover with foil again. 3 minutes after that add the shrimp, pushing them into the rice. Cover with foil until the full 20-25 minutes are done.

□The paella is finished when the rice has absorbed all of the liquid. Garnish with parsley and chives. Serve 4-5 people.

□*I prefer Portuguese sausages to the Spanish chorizo. I find the Spanish chorizo often overwhelms the delicate flavor of the saffron. But if you love Spanish Chorizo, go for it.

**For an extra special depth of flavor, use homemade lobster stock.

NO-KNEAD CHEESE BREAD

Whenever we go to visit my in-laws just north of Chicago, we always make a trip to Kenosha, Wisconsin, just to go to the Mars Cheese Castle. It's this wonderfully tacky, fake castle just off the highway that sells everything from cheese curds to authentic Danish *Kringles*. My husband is addicted to their cheddar cheese bread and has been known to show up back at his parents house with the bag empty.

I've made my own version, upping the sophistication a bit with some *Gruyère*, but it's just as irresistible as the Mars'

version. I'm not the first to come up with this "no-knead" technique, but it's a great time saver.

Don't worry about how long this bread will last before it gets stale. It will be gobbled up so quickly, you'll never have the chance to find out.

□INGREDIENTS

3 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups bread flour, plus more for dusting
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups shredded Gruyère cheese, use large grate
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sliced and pitted black olives (optional)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup prosciutto, cubed into $\frac{1}{4}$ " pieces (or 1 cup if you don't use olives)
2 teaspoons kosher salt
2 cups warm water
2 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons instant yeast
1 tablespoon olive oil

□SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Dutch oven Le Creuset #22, which is 2.75 quarts. It makes a nice boule shape. You can use a bigger Dutch oven but the loaf will be flatter.□

PREPARATION

In a small bowl, combine yeast and warm water. Stir to dissolve yeast, then set aside for ten minutes to bloom.□

In a large bowl, combine the bread flour, 2 cups Gruyère cheese (reserving remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup for topping), the prosciutto, black olives, and salt. Stir well.

Add the yeast/warm water mixture and stir with a silicone spatula until the dough comes together.

Using the spatula, fold the dough around the edges of the bowl toward the center, rotating the bowl each time and folding a total of 8 times. Cover with a kitchen towel and let proof in

a warm place for 60 minutes, or until almost doubled in size.

Using the spatula, fold the dough toward the center again 8 more times. Cover with the towel and let proof for an additional 30 minutes.

WARM THE DUTCH OVEN: Place the Dutch oven and lid in the oven, and preheat to 450°F for 30 minutes.

After the second rise, fold the edges of the dough towards the center 8 times, then flip over the dough and transfer to a piece of parchment paper.

Brush the top of the dough with the olive oil, so the cheese will stick. Sprinkle the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cheese on top. Using a sharp knife, razor, or lame, score the bread. That will allow the steam to escape. You can make an "X," or I like to cut a half circle on an angle.

Carefully remove the Dutch oven from the oven (it will be very hot!) and use the parchment to lift the bread into the pot.

Cover with the lid and bake for 30 minutes, then remove the lid and bake for 20 more minutes, until the bread is golden brown.

Lift the parchment paper, sliding the bread out of the pot and onto a wire rack. Remove the parchment paper and let the bread cool for at least 45 minutes before slicing.

Just try not to eat all at once. I dare you.

SALMON ROULADE

My husband and I practically live at the *sushi* bar across the street. We've spent countless hours watching Osamu, the owner and chef, prepare hundreds of pieces of *sushi* and rolls. Although I'm reluctant to make raw fish rolls on my own, knowing full well they'll never be as good as Osamu's, watching him inspired this idea for a smoked salmon roulade.

This is a great make-ahead dish that will help keep your stress level down if you're throwing a big party. I always have a few of these pre-made and standing by in the freezer for times when unexpected guests show up, so you might want to double or triple the recipe once you get the hang of it and store some in the freezer too. When ready to serve, pull one from the freezer, let it thaw for about five minutes. It will still be too cold to eat, but firm enough to slice. By the time you're done slicing them, they'll be nearly thawed and ready to dress and serve.

INGREDIENTS

12 oz. package smoked salmon
1/2 cup sour cream
1/2 cup whipped cream cheese
1 tablespoon lemon or orange zest
1 teaspoon chives
1 scallion, chopped
1 cucumber, sliced in 1/4" pieces□

FOR GARNISH

Red Caviar
Chives, chopped
Sliced avocado (optional)
Everything Bagel Topping□ (optional)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:

1 *sushi* rolling mat or soft placemat

Makes 2 roulades

PREPARATION

Place a sheet of plastic wrap over a *sushi* bamboo mat. Lay out 1/2 of the smoked salmon slices to create an 8 x 8" square of salmon, only overlapping the salmon edges slightly.

In a bowl, combine sour cream, cream cheese, zest, chives & scallion.

Thinly spread a third of the sour cream mixture over the smoked salmon, leaving about a 1/2 inch border of salmon.□

Starting at the bottom, tightly roll up the smoked salmon, as if making a *sushi* roll. Use the plastic to lift and roll, making sure not to let the plastic get caught in the roll itself. Once the roll is complete, place the *sushi* mat over the roll and clamp your hands over it, tightening the roll.

Take a clean piece of plastic wrap and tightly cover the roll. Freeze roll for at least 20 minutes before cutting. (If planning to store for longer, cover wrapped roll with aluminum foil and place in Ziploc freezer bag.)

□Repeat process for 2nd roll.

To serve, slice salmon rolls into 3/8" pieces and place on cucumber slices. Put a dollop of leftover sour cheese mixture on top. Garnish with red caviar and chives.

Or if you want to dress up your Sunday bagels and lox spread, schmear some more cream cheese on half a bagel. Place six to seven slices of roulade on top. Garnish with avocado slices and Everything Bagel topping mix.

BURRATA IN THE GARDEN

Every summer we plant an urban vegetable garden on our roof deck. Depending upon the year, we've had some success, particularly if we beat the squirrels to our harvest. But by far, the most consistent and tastiest crops are our cherry tomatoes. We plant all different kinds and sizes. I like using small, sweet tomatoes for this dish, but feel free to use whatever kinds you've grown.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

1 lb Fresh Burrata
28 Cherry tomatoes
4 chives, chopped
Balsamic glaze
Olive Oil
Salt and pepper to taste.

□PREPARATION

Divide the burrata into four portions and place each portion in the center of a bowl or plate. Place about seven cherry tomatoes on and around the cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Sprinkle on chives and garnish with a drizzle of balsamic glaze and olive oil.

TWO INGREDIENT MARINADE

Admit it—you ordered Chinese food at least once a week during Covid lockdown. Okay, maybe you didn't, but I did. My local

take-out place always throws in soy sauce and duck sauce packets by the handful. Being someone who hates to waste, I put them to good use for this very simple marinade.

Sometimes I just need to get dinner on the table without much fuss. This is particularly good on skirt steaks, but it works great with chicken too.

INGREDIENTS

$\frac{1}{4}$ Cup Chinese Duck Sauce (or Apricot jam)

$\frac{1}{4}$ Cup Soy Sauce

PREPARATION

Mix ingredients together. Place in Ziploc with some seasoned meat, and refrigerate overnight.

Just oil those grates, heat up the grill, and you'll be all set to go.

KK's EXOTIC SPICE BLEND

Whenever I travel, I'm a sucker for those pre-packed spice blends used in the local cuisine. I've got Voodoo Spice from the Caribbean, Creole seasoning from New Orleans, Pacific Cioppino Spice blend from San Francisco, and Shichimi Tagarashi from Tokyo. They're all taking up space in my pantry, having been forgotten about as soon as I get home.

□Most blends always have some flavor or ingredient in them that I just don't like—usually dried thyme. Once I taste that, a dish is ruined for me. So rather than continuing to waste money, I decided to create my own rub. It's great for

marinating meats, but I've also used it as a base in soups and stews. Feel free to make it your own by subbing out what you don't like. Believe me, I won't mind.

INGREDIENTS

2 tsp smoked salt flakes

2 tsp Aleppo pepper

2 tsp aniciote

2 tsp harissa

2 tsp garlic powder

2 tsp onion powder

2 tsp maple flakes

2 tsp brown sugar

1 tsp mustard powder

1 tsp chipotle powder

1 tsp cayenne

PREPARATION

Mix all ingredients together.

Adjust to taste.

Store in airtight container. Best used within three months.