

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.

TEN THINGS THAT DRIVE ME NUTS



TEN THINGS THAT DRIVE ME NUTS

- 1) When my mother calls saying she doesn't mean to complain and then is still at it twenty minutes later.
- 2) When I've just put on my Sunday best only to get pooped on by a passing pigeon.
- 3) When I order a pizza and they put HIS olives on MY half.
- 4) When my ankle twists and I fall in the most ungraceful way possible.
- 5) When the only mail I get are bills.

- 6) When I try to be responsible and put my AC on ECO mode only to sweat during the off-cycles.
 - 7) Canned peas.
 - 8) When squirrels have their way with our vegetable garden.
 - 9) When my husband comes home with all the ingredients we need for a dish except for the one he forgot.
 - 10) When my doctors preface everything with, "Well, you know at your age..."
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DON'T YOU JUST HATE IT WHEN...

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As much as I love it here in Brooklyn, it does have its challenges. It seems that ripping up the streets to replace one-hundred year old water mains is a relatively good idea, but not when it means they close your street and force the entire block to use your corner as a garbage dump. In an attempt at humor or art, one anonymous neighbor, or perhaps a mischievous passerby, took it upon himself to hang empty recycling bags on the iron window guards of our house. A few had expired boxes of food stuffs, while most seemed to be there just for show. It took some effort to mount the installation, as the bag handles were tightly knotted to the iron grates. I'm not sure what message was being sent, but W.T.F.?

(NOTE: As of this writing, and after a rather terse note was sent out to our block association, no one, surprisingly, has stepped forward to take credit for this work. Any leads would

be appreciated.)

PORTUGAL SNAPSHOTS



Almost everywhere you go in Portugal, there's an image waiting to be captured. Whether you've brought your iPhone, your fancy SLR camera, or the moment itself seers deep inside your memory bank, Portugal is a land of breathtaking and memorable sites. Even on a dreary day as the sun naps behind the clouds, mother nature is still ready for her close-up. Reclaiming a bench once meant for lovers, she lounges in her best moss and lichen gown warning you not to disturb her sanctuary.□



Porto, Portugal's second largest city, sits majestically along the *Duoro* river estuary in the north. Storybook buildings rise with the surrounding mountains, wasting no space as they jut up against each other like passengers in a crowded elevator. It's the perfect backdrop for moviemakers looking to shoot any time period since the advent of electricity. One gets the sense that nothing much has changed over the years. The surrounding twisting valleys with grape terraces etched into the earth still produce the world's finest ports. Locals go about their business, dodging the tourists that have gone to one tasting too many. It's got everything one could want—great food, great wine and the promise of great romance.□



Not far from Lisbon, the *Palácio de Pena*—or Pena Palace—emerges through the thick fog, its vibrant colors refusing to be obscured by the tenacious mist. Built in the Romanticist architectural style, this—quite frankly over-the-top castle is said to have inspired King Ludwig II's German castle, *Neuschwanstein*, which then inspired Walt Disney to create his castle in Disneyland. While you wait for the fog to clear, spend some time in the nearby village of Sintra at one of their many cafés. Make sure to try some *Pasteis de Nata*—those heavenly egg custard tartlets that should make everyone's top five list of things to taste in Portugal. Sintra even pushes the envelope with their *Queijadas*, a riff on the traditional egg custards made with the addition of cheese.□



If you were paying attention in fifth grade history class, you'd know that the Portuguese made some of the greatest discoveries in the new world. Vasco da Gama and Ferdinand Magellan might ring a bell. They are just a couple of the explorers represented on this monument.

Located on the coast near other important sights like Jerónimos Monastery and the Belém Tower in Lisbon, this monument faces the sea, the ship being led by Prince Henry the Navigator. As its rose-tinted stone pierces the azure sky, one gets the sense that this ship could sail with just one big push.



Have you ever passed by a window and wondered, “What’s the story here?” Perhaps this is the home of a woman who must trade her body in order to make enough money to care for her sick young son. Or maybe it’s a man with an underwear fetish who likes washing his neighbors dirty clothes. It’s possible that an old woman, widowed too early in life, takes in laundry to help supplement her income. Or it could simply be that a young family lives here and their dryer is broken.□

Images tell us stories. Choosing the right thousand words is the tricky part.

THE TOP TEN THINGS I LEARNED IN ASIA

- 10) A smile translates in any language. Silly translates too.
- 9) Eating local food from street vendors is like playing Russian roulette. It can be thrilling AND deadly.
- 8) You really don’t need a lot of stuff. The lighter the load, the easier the journey.
- 7) There are more western toilets around than you’d expect, but ALWAYS carry a package of tissues with you. You never know.
- 6) Technology has made the world a lot smaller and more homogenized. Truly exotic is harder and harder to find, particularly when you see traditional Balinese dancers texting backstage.
- 5) When your mother said to never cross the street in on-coming traffic, she clearly meant to add, “except in Hanoi.”

4) It appears if you are a cab driver in Hanoi, you can actually watch TV, talk on two phones at once, and still manage to steer with your elbows.

3) Yes, one can visit too many temples in Siem Reap.

2) Pictures are great, but better to remember the moment by being part of it.

1) Life is full of surprises if you're willing to be surprised

SINGAPORE First Impressions







And with the stroke of midnight, it is now my birthday. I'm celebrating alone in my very cozy business class seat, trying to keep down the three gin and tonics I foolishly chased with a *Grand Marnier* on ice, thinking it would put me to sleep. Instead, I have a pounding headache and my mouth feels as if one of those suction gizmos the dentist uses to remove all your spit is wedged under my tongue. Trying to take my mind off my ailments, I glance out the window. Below are the dimmed lights of India, a jeweled pristine sky twinkles above. It's quiet, peaceful and magnificent. I wonder what's going on down there? Are those pockets of light from a small village or could they be bouncing off the *Taj Mahal*? Or am I looking at the lights of an Ikea and its adjacent parking lots?□

It's hour nineteen of my journey from New York to Singapore and I'm equally excited and anxious. I've been hired to be the showrunner for a reality competition TV show called, *Fit for Fashion*. It's a cross between *Top Model* and *Biggest Loser*, just with smaller people. I'm replacing someone who flamed out, and walking into a show that is already behind schedule

and troubled. From my recent Skype calls to the production team, there is no question this team is stressed and going down fast. My job is to rally the troops, put the train back on the tracks and get the engine stoked to create a new show that will reach 150 million people in the Asian-English speaking market. What could go wrong?□

I've barely had time to pack my panties and blow the dust off my passport. I'm leaving my comfortable bed, the one I share with my surprisingly understanding husband, to go off on an eight-month adventure I actually know very little about. But I need this. Sometimes, opportunities come up that are so out of your comfort zone you have no choice but to go for it. I just spent a good chunk of my life producing food television and it's time to do something more challenging and less fattening. □

The sun is starting to rise from the east like a big fireball inching its way through streaks of magenta clouds. I can see the coastline of the city as an endless stream of tankers head for the harbor. The plane will soon touch down. A new day is dawning in Singapore. It's a new day for me too.

Once I arrive at my flat and settle in, hunger makes itself known, as my stomach growls with anticipation. I take the MRT (Metro) downtown to the Maxwell Road Hawker Centre, one of the more popular open air spots for cheap eats with over 100 different stalls from which to choose. Here, every province of China is represented, along with a mix of Singaporean, Malaysian, Indian and Thai dishes, each one making my mouth water. Names like *Popiah*, *Yong Tau Foo*, and *Bak Kut Tet* are just a few of the dishes I've never heard of, but am willing to try.

As I walk down the lanes, there's a Doppler-like effect of aromas. A whiff of wok-fried seafood rises and then ebbs as the pungent smell of curry takes its place, only to fade as I approach the next stall. The long line for *Hainanese* chicken

rice, Singapore's most popular dish, snakes out onto the sidewalk. Quart sized bowls of noodles with stir-fried pork and vegetables are ladled with piping hot home made broths. As far as the eye can see, people are slurping away enjoying their lunch.

I opt for *Char Kway Teow*, a Singaporean favorite recommended in one of my guidebooks. It actually originates from Malaysia and is made from flat rice noodles coated in pork fat, then stir-fried over high heat with dark soy sauce, chili, whole prawns, beans sprouts, Chinese sausage and blood cockles. I'm not quite sure why they are called blood cockles and perhaps that's best. I don't know if it's because I'm so hungry or if it's because the dish is so good, but I have to force myself not to gobble it down. It is rich and pungent, sweet and salty, and the cockles fall from their shells with ease. The portion is enough for two people, but no matter, I polish it off hoping my cast iron stomach won't fail me. ☐

Just as I take my last bite, a clap of thunder rumbles through the market. It is so loud it rattles some of the stacked plates. Within seconds, the skies open and the rain pours down, quickly creating little rivers around the market perimeter. As the tourists gather to the edges of the market wondering whether to make a run for it, I notice the locals remain seated, unconcerned. Another crack of lightning and the thunder follows, this time even louder.

The winds pick up and some of the garbage from the overflowing bins gets swept onto the streets. The rain continues to pound on the tin roof like a jackhammer breaking open a sidewalk. And still the locals remain unfazed. I overhear an elderly gentleman talking to his frightened grandson.

"It is monsoon season. Each afternoon, almost like clockwork, the skies can no longer take the heat, and they cry out in despair."☐

Ten minutes go by and the storm passes just as quickly as it entered. The sun breaks through and steam rises from the hot streets as the water begins to evaporate. With hopes of keeping my shoes dry, I tiptoe around the edges of the muddy puddles in search of my next adventure.