

CHICKEN MOLE SOUP

Making mole from scratch is quite a daunting task. I once took a cooking course in Mexico and there were over 26 ingredients to the recipe. It was fun to do, but sourcing all the right ingredients, not to mention the long cooking process, isn't always practical. But, there are some fantastic mole pastes on the market. I use the mole poblano from [Hernan](#). It really gives this soup a wonderful, rich flavor. If you like it spicier, add some red chili flakes or cayenne.

INGREDIENT (Serves 6-8)

2 Tablespoons olive oil
1 onion, sliced
1 green pepper, sliced
1 red pepper, sliced
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 cup shredded cooked chicken
1 can kidney beans
1 can corn
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons fresh ground pepper
3 ounces mole poblano paste
2 quarts chicken broth or bone broth
1 cup fresh baby spinach
blue corn chips, crumbled
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup queso fresco (chopped into small pieces, for garnish)
Sour cream for garnish

PREPARATION

In a medium sized pot, heat olive oil. Add onion and sauté for 6-7 minutes until they start to brown. Add the peppers, sauté for 2 more minutes. Add in garlic cloves, chicken, beans, and corn and sauté for 1 more minute.

Add the salt, pepper, and mole poblano and stir ingredients.

Add chicken broth. Bring to boil, then add spinach and reduce heat to simmer for ten minutes.

Re-season to taste.

To serve, ladle soup into bowls. Garnish with corn chips, cheese, and a dollop of sour cream.

GRILLED SALMON OVER FORBIDDEN RICE

For my taste, rice is always a great side with fish. But, jasmine rice or brown rice can get pretty dull after a while. I like to use forbidden rice (black rice) for both its taste and color. It's got a lovely nutty flavor, yet isn't as chewy as wild rice. It also makes for a dramatic presentation.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4-6)

2 pounds salmon fillet
2 scallions chopped, for garnish
1 cup forbidden rice
salt and pepper

MARINADE

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup white sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar
4 garlic cloves minced
2 teaspoons ginger minced
1 cup tamari sauce
3 tablespoons sake
1 tablespoon mirin
1 teaspoon sriracha or other hot sauce

PREPARATION

Season the salmon fillets with salt and pepper.

Combine all of the marinade ingredients in a bowl and whisk until sugars are dissolved.

Place the salmon fillets in a large bowl or Ziploc and pour in $\frac{3}{4}$ of the marinade, making sure the marinade covers all of the salmon. Refrigerate for 4 hours. (Reserve the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ of marinade in the refrigerator).

Prepare the rice as per box/bag instructions. (*NOTE: I like to substitute $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of tamari with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water, but that's optional.*)

Take the salmon fillets out of the refrigerator 20 minutes before you're ready to grill. Oil your grill pan (or outside grill grates) and heat grill pan to medium high. Place the fillets on the grill pan for 3-4 minutes each side. Discard the marinade from the bowl/Ziploc. Use the reserved marinade that was set aside as a glaze and brush the salmon a few times on each side as it cooks.

Place the rice in the center of a plate. Place the salmon on top of the rice and garnish with scallions.

Tortellini Spinach Soup

In the cold weather, nothing is as satisfying as a nice bowl of soup. Every week I make a big pot of bone broth and I'm always looking for different ways to use it. This recipe is quick and easy, yet good enough to serve to guests. Just ask my neighbors!

INGREDIENTS (serves 6-8)

3 tablespoons olive oil
1 large Vidalia onion, chopped
1 tablespoon minced garlic
1 large yukon potato, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1/2 pound sliced cooked polish sausage
2 quarts chicken bone broth or canned, low-sodium chicken broth
1 pound tortellini
3 cups chopped fresh spinach
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
Toasted crusty baguette slices
Grated Gruyere for garnish

PREPARATION

Heat the olive oil over medium-high heat in a large Dutch oven. Sauté the onions until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for one more minute. Add the potatoes and sausage and sauté until just beginning to brown. Season with salt and pepper, and add the crushed red pepper.

Add the broth, cover, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook, uncovered, until the potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes.

Add the tortellini and spinach. Simmer for as long as it takes to cook the tortellini as per the box or package instructions. The tortellini should float to the top when done.

Re-season with salt and pepper if necessary.

Ladle soup into large bowls and garnish with baguette slice, and Gruyere.

Rock Shrimp Fried Rice

Wondering what to do with that leftover white rice that came with your Chinese take out? Don't be so fast to throw it away. You can turn it into a whole new meal. This recipe for shrimp fried rice is quick and easy. I like to use rock shrimp for it because they are smaller than most shrimp and I can get them cleaned and deveined at my local fish market, but you could sub them out for leftover chicken or pork, or if you're a vegetarian, use tofu.

INGREDIENTS (serves 2)

2 tablespoons mirin
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon water
1 teaspoon sugar
4 tablespoons soy sauce
1 clove garlic, minced
1 teaspoon ginger, minced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound rock shrimp, cleaned and deveined.
2 tablespoons canola oil
1 teaspoon sesame oil
2 cups cooked rice
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 egg beaten
Chinese fried noodles and 2 chopped scallions

PREPARATION

In a small bowl, combine mirin, lemon juice, water, sugar and 2 tablespoons of soy sauce. Whisk until sugar is dissolved. Pour into ZipLoc bag and add rock shrimp. Massage marinade around rock shrimp and put in fridge for 4 – 8 hours.

Place a wok over high heat and add canola and sesame oils. Add the garlic and ginger and cook for one minute until fragrant. Add the rice, 2 tablespoons of soy sauce, one chopped scallion, rock shrimp and marinade. Sauté for 3-4 minutes until the shrimp are pink and cooked through. Make a well in the middle of the rice/shrimp mixture. Pour in the egg and scramble. Combine all together. If too dry, add one tablespoon of water and combine.

Serve in bowls or on a platter and garnish with Chinese fried noodles and remaining chopped scallion.

Sliced Beef Pho

Although I've traveled all across Asian, the best pho I've ever had was in a strip mall in Virginia. Go figure. I've been trying to recapture the delicious flavor of their broth for years, and this recipe comes fairly close.

This recipe requires charring vegetables on top of the stovetop directly on the grate. But I always find that so messy that I like to use my barbecue vegetable grill pan. If you don't have a gas stove, you can broil the vegetables until charred.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

1 large vidalia onion, peeled and quartered
1 2-inch knob of fresh ginger
8 cups homemade [turkey bone broth](#)
3 tablespoons fish sauce, plus more to taste
2 star anise
3 tablespoons brown sugar
1 pound sirloin steak
salt and pepper

five spice

1 (1-pound) package dried rice vermicelli

FOR GARNISH (all optional)

Bean sprouts

Thai basil

Jalapeño, thinly sliced

Limes, quartered

Chopped cilantro

Fresh scallions, thinly sliced

Fried shallots

Sriracha

Oyster sauce

PREPARATION

Place the onions and ginger on a grill pan directly over a high flame on your cooktop. Cook until charred, turning the vegetable pieces until charred on all sides, about 6 -7 minutes. Set aside to cool. Chop the onions. Cut the ginger into thick slices.

In a large soup pot, add the stock, onions, ginger, fish sauce, star anise and brown sugar. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for one hour.

Generously season the steak with salt, pepper and five spice. Using a grill pan, sear both sides until you have grill marks. It's okay if steak is still very rare, it will continue to cook in broth later. Allow to rest and cool for ten minutes. Thinly slice and set aside.

Cook the rice noodles according to the instructions on the package. Drain and set aside.

Place the garnishes on a platter: bean sprouts, Thai basil, cilantro, jalapeño, limes and scallions. Place the fried shallots in a small bowl. Pour some Sriracha in a small bowl and pour some oyster sauce in another small bowl.

Remove the star anise and as much ginger as possible from the pot. Add in the sliced beef and return soup to a simmer. Adjust seasoning to taste, adding fish sauce, sugar or salt to taste.

Place some rice noodles into large soup bowls. Ladle the soup over the noodles.

Serve accompanied by platter of garnishes. This way people can garnish their soup bowls to their own tastes.

***Note:** If there are leftovers, try to keep the rice noodles separate from the soup. The noodles will absorb too much of the broth overnight and get gummy if they are mixed together.*

Citrus Marinated Red Snapper

In an effort to eat a bit healthier, I've been testing out some different combinations of foods. Saying no to meat and pasta is tough, but if you use the right grains and veggies you can at least add some bulk to a meal and not starve yourself.

This red snapper dish with cauliflower and lentils was surprisingly satisfying. Okay, would I have rather had spaghetti carbonara? Yes, but my cardiologist will be glad I made this instead.

INGREDIENTS (serves 2-4)

1 pound red snapper filets
4 tablespoons of olive oil
2 onions, sliced
3 cloves garlic, sliced
1 cup black lentils

1.5 cups mushroom broth or water
1 cup white wine
1 cauliflower (chopped into small pieces)
salt and pepper
zest of one orange for garnish
2 tablespoons parsley, chopped for garnish
seeds of one pomegranate (optional)

MARINADE

2 tablespoons orange juice
1 tablespoon honey
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 tablespoon lime juice
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon ginger, minced
2 tablespoons soy sauce

PREPARATION

In a small bowl, whisk together all of the marinade ingredients. Season the snapper filets with salt and pepper. Gently place the filets in a Ziploc bag. Add the marinade and seal tightly. Allow the marinade to cover the filets and place the bag in the refrigerator for one hour.

In a large skillet over medium-low heat, add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. When hot, add the onions and garlic and sauté until they begin to brown, about twenty minutes. Set aside.

Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees. Place a sheet of aluminum foil over a large baking sheet. Spread out the cauliflower evenly over the aluminum foil. Season with salt and pepper. Generously drizzle 2 tablespoons of olive oil over the cauliflower. Mix with your hands and re-spread out evenly over aluminum foil. Bake for 20 minutes or until the cauliflower begins to brown. Set aside.

In a medium sized saucepan, add one cup of lentils and 1.5 cups of broth and 1 cup of white wine. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer for 20 minutes.

While the lentils are cooking, spread the onions out onto a medium sized baking dish. Gently remove the fish filets from the marinade and lay on top of the onions. Pour the remaining marinade over the fish. Bake for 25 minutes at 400 degrees.

To serve, use a spatula to gently place the onions and fish filets on a platter. Place the lentils on one side of the fish and the cauliflower on the other.

Garnish with orange zest, pomegranate seeds, and parsley.

JACK'S SUNGOLD GAZPACHO

Not surprisingly, a lot of our friends tend to be serious cooks. I recently had this gazpacho at my friend Jack's house. He's one of those guys that knows how to make classic French dishes with wildly naughty sauces. I was surprised that he actually served us this gazpacho – a lean and mean starter that was unbelievably delicious.

It's a quick and easy recipe that is a great way to use all those tomatoes in your garden. He likes to use Sungolds, but cherry tomatoes will work too. They both tend to be a bit sweeter than larger tomatoes and they add a nice flavor profile to the dish.

INGREDIENTS (serves 4-6)

4 cups Sungold tomatoes or cherry tomatoes

1 cucumber, rough chopped

1 green or red pepper, rough chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

4 tablespoons olive oil

4 tablespoons sherry or white wine vinegar

1 teaspoon salt

fresh basil for garnish

PREPARATION

Combine all ingredients (except fresh basil for garnish) in a food processor. Combine until smooth. It may be a little chunky, which I like, but if you like it super-smooth, continue pulsing it in the food processor until you get a consistency you like.

Chill in refrigerator for one hour. Garnish with fresh herbs.

The Classic Side Car

When it comes to cocktails, I usually default to a margarita or gin martini. But sometimes I like to shake things up and use those dusty bottles in the back of my liquor cabinet. One day I found a nice bottle of unopened cognac way in the back and decided to put it to good use by making an old classic, the Sidecar. Whenever I drink one of these, I feel as if I should be wearing a sequined dress, sipping quietly at a booth in an old speakeasy. It's very Nick and Nora.

I can't take credit for the recipe, but here is the standard way to make one.

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ ounces cognac

¾ ounce Cointreau

¾ ounce fresh lemon juice

Sugar (to garnish rim)

Orange twist (for glass garnish)

PREPARATION

Using a coupe glass, rub some lemon around the rim. Coat the rim of a coupe glass with sugar, and set aside. In a shaker, add the cognac, Cointreau and lemon juice. Add ice $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the shaker. Shake well until chilled. Strain and pour into coupe glass. Garnish with an orange twist.

CHICKEN WITH MUSHROOM & QUINOA

I think this might be my third or fourth recipe using chicken and mushrooms as the star, but it's one of the few combos that seem to please everyone in our house. This dish is super flavorful and the addition of quinoa makes you think that you're doing something good for yourself. I like it because I cook the quinoa in the same pot so that it absorbs the most flavor and leaves me with one less pot to clean!

INGREDIENTS(Serves 6)

2 Tablespoons French Onion Seasoning, or your favorite spice blend (I love the spices from [Gustus Vitae](#))

4 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

2 teaspoons honey

1 teaspoon mirin

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

Kosher salt and black pepper

6 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 2-inch pieces

1 large vidalia onion, thinly sliced

$\frac{3}{4}$ pound mushrooms, brushed clean and thinly sliced

1 cup quinoa

1 cup white wine

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup soy sauce

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup mushroom broth (or vegetable or chicken stock)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup parsley, chopped (for garnish)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Parmesan cheese, finely grated (for garnish)

PREPARATION

Season the chicken with the spice blend, then place in a Ziploc bag.

In a medium sized bowl, combine two tablespoons of the olive oil, the vinegar, mustard, honey, mirin, and cayenne pepper. Add salt and pepper to taste. Mix with a whisk and pour into the Ziploc bag. Seal bag after letting the air out. Massage the marinade around the chicken and place in the refrigerator overnight.

Then next day, remove the chicken from the refrigerator while you prepare the vegetables.

Heat a large dutch oven over medium high heat. Add two tablespoons of olive oil. When oil is hot, add the sliced onions and cook for 5 minutes. Add the mushrooms and cook for an additional 4 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Move the veggies to the side and place the chicken pieces and any remaining marinade on the empty side of the pot. Cook for three minutes, then turn the chicken over and cook for another three minutes. Combine the chicken and veggies together.

Add the quinoa, wine, soy sauce, and broth. Mix together.

Bring to a boil, then put down to a simmer for twenty minutes, stirring occasionally. .

Remove from the heat and let rest for five minutes to allow quinoa to absorb any remaining liquid.

Serve in bowls and garnish with the parsley and cheese.

APPLE SAUCE WITH RAISINS

There's nothing like a brisk autumn day in the country picking apples. Of course, once you get home you have the same dilemma we all do—what the heck do we do with all of these apples? Here's a simple recipe that solves that problem.

It's perfect for spreading on toast or using as the filling for fritters. I mix it with cottage cheese for a quick breakfast.

INGREDIENTS

6 apples, cored, skinned and cubed into $\frac{1}{2}$ " pieces

1/8 teaspoon cinnamon

1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

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

1 tablespoon lemon juice

zest of one lemon

PREPARATION

Combine all ingredients in a pot over medium heat. Cover the pot, but stir every few minutes. If it starts to boil, bring temperature to a simmer. The apples will reduce and get mushy. Cook until you get the consistency you like. I prefer mine a bit chunky, so it takes about 10-15 minutes.

If you like it smooth, continue to cook and use a potato masher to tamp down the apples.

It will keep in the refrigerator for about five days.