

GRILLED GREEN BEANS WITH WHIPPED RICOTTA

I love grilling summer vegetables, but I'm always looking for a way to dress them up. This simple whipped ricotta dish takes advantage of my garden herbs and is great as a topping to grilled green beans. But, make more ricotta than you need, because it's great on grilled bread or as a dip.

FOR THE WHIPPED RICOTTA

1 cup whole milk ricotta
1 teaspoon fresh chives, chopped
1 teaspoon fresh parsley, chopped
1 teaspoon fresh basil, chopped
1 teaspoon lemon zest
1 tablespoon olive oil
3 tablespoons fig jam
salt and pepper to taste
balsamic glaze for garnish

FOR THE GRILLED GREEN BEANS

1 pound French green beans
2 tablespoons olive oil
salt and pepper to taste
balsamic glaze for garnish

PREPARATION

Using an electric mixer with whisk attachment, whip the ricotta for about two minutes until smooth. Set aside.

In a separate small bowl, combine the herbs, lemon zest, olive oil, fig jam, and salt and pepper. Set aside.

Toss green beans with olive oil and salt and pepper. Place on a heated grill or on a grill pan and cook until they just beginning to char, about ten minutes. Turn beans halfway through to get grill marks on both sides.

TO PLATE: Place the green beans on a platter or plate. Make a well in the middle for a small bowl. Spoon the ricotta into the small bowl. Spoon out the olive oil/herb mixture on top of the ricotta. Drizzle with balsamic glaze.

JULY 4th LEFTOVER FRANKS & BEANS

Once your big 4th of July party is over, you might need a few ideas for how to use all of those leftovers. Here's an idea for franks and beans – a dish my dad loved. You could also add some hamburger too, just chop it up.

INGREDIENTS

2 teaspoons butter

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

1 clove garlic, minced

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

2 cups baked beans

8 franks, sliced

1/3 cup brown sugar

1 teaspoon honey

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

Melt butter in a skillet. Add onions and sauté until caramelized, about 8 minutes. Add garlic and red pepper flakes and sauté one more minute.

In a small bowl, combine brown sugar, honey and Dijon mustard. Add franks, beans, and honey mixture to skillet and mix together. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Place all contents of the skillet into a buttered casserole dish. Bake uncovered for 30 minutes. Stir mid-way through.

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

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 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 saute 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.

ALEX'S MAC & CHEESE

In previous blog posts, I've mentioned how delighted I am that the next generation in our family is getting comfortable behind the stove. My young cousin Alex is a man of particular tastes, but when he finds something he loves, he likes to master it. He's always been a big fan of pasta and cheese and it was only a matter of time before he found his perfect Mac and cheese recipe. I loved watching him make this dish and hearing his preferences on texture, cheese types and what definitely should not be included.

This is the perfect type of dish that can be improvised based on your own preferences. If you're a blue cheese nut, then go for it. If you're more of a pulled pork kind of person, then throw that in too. This dish is so evil, you might as well go for broke.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 8)

1 head of garlic ($\frac{1}{2}$ to use with this dish, $\frac{1}{2}$ to reserve for other dishes)

3 tablespoons olive oil

4 tablespoons of butter

4 tablespoons of flour

2 cups of milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper

6 strips bacon or turkey bacon

1 cup grated parmesan cheese (large grate)

2 cups grated cheddar cheese

2 cups grated gruyere

1 lb Cavatappi pasta or elbow macaroni

2 tablespoons chopped chives for garnish

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Place the head of garlic on its side and cut it in half. Place both halves on aluminum foil and pour olive oil over the cloves. Seal the foil around the garlic and place on baking

sheet. Roast in the oven for 30 minutes. Allow to cool and squeeze out garlic cloves. Chop the garlic and set half aside for other uses.

In a medium sized pot, melt the butter on medium heat. Add the flour and combine until it is a blond roux. Slowly add the milk, a bit at a time, and whisk together. Bring to a low boil until it thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon, (about 10 minutes). Add the salt, pepper and half the garlic. Taste to see if more spices are needed. Don't over salt because cheese has a lot of salt on its own.

Cook the pasta as per boxed instructions. When al dente, strain out the water and set pasta aside.

Turn down the heat under the milk mixture and keep on a simmer. Add the Gruyère and cheddar and stir until melted. Add the bacon and pasta and stir. Add Parmesan cheese right before serving. Garnish with chives.

If you are like my cousin Alex and enjoy a creamier, cheesier texture, then your Mac and cheese is ready to eat. But if you prefer a nice crust on top or if you think there might be leftovers, then place the mixture in a 9 x 12 buttered pyrex dish and place in the oven to bake for ten to twenty minutes, depending upon how crispy you like your Mac and cheese.

CHICKEN VINDALOO

For years I've been trying to make a good curry from scratch. I buy all of the spices to create flavored pastes, but there's always something missing. Although my dishes are tasty, they are nowhere near as flavorful as what I've eaten in Indian restaurants. But thanks to my favorite spice store—[Kalustyan's](#)

on Lexington Avenue in NYC—they've done the hard work for me. I'm not a big proponent of semi-homemade dishes, but in this case, getting a little help is so worth it. They carry a line of different curry sauces that really add some zing to a dish. It also cuts the prep time down so much that you can make this dish in less than an hour.



INGREDIENTS

4 tablespoons olive oil or ghee

6 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1" cubes

1 onion, sliced

1 red pepper, chopped into $\frac{1}{2}$ " cubes

3 cloves of garlic, minced

1" knob of ginger, minced

2 teaspoons of salt

1 teaspoon fresh ground pepper

1 ½ cups basmati rice

1-13.5 oz can coconut milk

1-12 oz jar of [Kalustyan's Vindaloo Spicy Curry](#)

PREPARATION

Heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil or ghee in a large dutch oven. Add the chicken and brown for four minutes, flipping the chicken pieces over half way through. Remove from pot and set aside.

Add 1 tablespoon of olive, the onion and red pepper and sauté for 6-8 minutes or until onion is translucent and beginning to brown. Add the garlic and ginger and sauté until fragrant, about one minute. Season with salt and pepper.

Using a strainer, rinse the rice until the water runs clear. Shake the strainer to remove any excess water. Add the rice to the pot and stir until integrated.

Add the coconut milk and Vindaloo Spicy curry. Stir well. Add the chicken and stir. Bring up to a boil, then down to simmer. Cover the pot and cook for 20 minutes. Turn off the heat and let rest for 10 minutes.

Serve in bowls.