









JULIA  
CHILD'S  
Menu Cookbook

by Julia Child

*In collaboration with  
E. S. Yntema*

*Photographs by  
James Scherer*

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# JULIA CHILD'S Menu Cookbook

A new one-volume edition combining the complete texts of  
*Julia Child & Company* and *Julia Child & More Company*



Also by Julia Child

*Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume I*  
(with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle)

*The French Chef Cookbook*

*Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume II*  
(with Simone Beck)

*From Julia Child's Kitchen*

*The Way To Cook*

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# Foreword and Acknowledgments

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The two books that this volume combines into one were originally issued by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. to accompany the two television series, *Julia Child & Company*, and *Julia Child & More Company*. Since shows and book were to appear simultaneously, it was hard to be television cook as well as writer. How wonderfully fortunate we were, then, to find a fast working professional collaborator with literary style and dash, E. S. Yntema. She fitted in beautifully with our cooking team, being a fine cook herself.

I am always inclined to the “we” form when writing about this book since “we” were a team, a family of intimates during the shooting of these Company shows. We worked intensely, ate wonderfully, and had a very good as well as always interesting time. Our leader was Russell Norash, Producer-Director, with whom I’ve very much enjoyed working since our very first show. Second leader and dear friend was Ruth Lockwood, close collaborator in the planning and execution of the programs. Photographer James Scherer, and Food Designer/Cook Rosemary Manell, were essential members of the team, as was Executive Chef Marian Morash and Executive Associate Elizabeth Bishop.

Members of our cooking team at one time or another were Gladys Christopherson, Bess Coughlin, Wendy Davidson, Bonnie Eleph, Jo Ford, Temi Hyde, Sara Moulton, Pat Pratt, John Reardon, and Bev Seamans. Our able make-up artist was Louise Miller, and office managers were Avid De Voto and Marilyn Ambrose.

It takes a particular peck of people to put on a menu-type cooking show, and I’ve not even mentioned the production team including cameras, lights, tape editors, and so forth. Nor have I put in a word of deepest appreciation to Chris Pullman, book designer, and to my own dear, unique, and only editor at Knopf, Judith Jones. I thank them all profoundly!



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# Introduction

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This is a book of menus. The first half consists of those for special occasions—the special kind that most of us run into most of the time. For example, you suddenly find that your guest list has swelled to 19 people. You can't sit them down at your table; you'll have to serve them buffet style. Anyway, stand-up or sit-down, what do you feed to 19 people when you're the cook and butler combined? How do you shop for the meal? What staples do you have on hand? How do you time the cooking and then, of course, how do you cook everything?

Or, on another occasion, you are to have a comfortable family-style Sunday night supper, with both grown-ups and children. What would be fun for all? What do you have ready, and what can everyone join in on? Or you've planned a barbecue but it looks like rain, or you just want a cozy and delicious meal for intimate friends.

The second group of thirteen menus is concerned more with special foods than special occasions. What to do with mussels, for instance. Or can the classic way with onion soup be better still? How about making a *pâté en croûte*, or an old-fashioned chicken dinner? These menus keep a thrifty budget in mind, but allow for an occasional splurge, like a rack of lamb, or a lobster soufflé.

This book tells you the whole story for every dish on each of the menus—how to buy, how to cook, and how to serve. Because the best food is the freshest, other choices are available for almost every dish, in case ingredients are not available or a particular item of food does not appeal to you. Finally, since the occasions I have chosen are those that frequently crop up in life, there is an appendix of alternate menus for the

same situations, made up of recipes drawn from other books (mostly my own!). Thus you should never be at a loss for what to serve.

Words are not enough, however, when one is reading about a meal rather than seeing it being prepared. Here, therefore, you will find beautiful close-up color photographs of the food before, during, and after its cooking, as well as displays not only of the finished dish, but the look of it when presented in a whole menu.

How-to illustrations are of prime importance in describing complicated procedures: exactly where do you grip the stem when you are to rip it off from a leaf of fresh spinach? Where do you cut to remove a chicken thigh from its attachment to the small of the back? What does a half-finished roll-out of puff pastry look like? Thanks to the patient devotion and talent of our photographer, James Scherer, and of our food designer, Rosemary Manell, you can see exactly how, and you'll see it from the cook's point of view.

This menu book combines into one volume the two *Julia Child and Company* books that appeared with the television series of the same name, and I am delighted they are together at last.

J.C.

Cambridge, Mass., March 26, 1991

*Note: throughout this book, ● indicates a stopping point in the recipe, and ▼ indicates further discussion under Remarks.*



JULIA  
CHILD'S  
Menu Cookbook

*A menu designed around duck, with a special roasting method which guarantees perfect cooking and easy carving. Herewith, also, a sumptuous apricot and hazelnut cake.*



# Birthday Dinner

## Menu

*Chesapeake Lump Crabmeat Appetizer*



*Roast Duck with Cracklings  
Purée of Parsnips in Zucchini Boats  
Broccoli with Brown Butter and Lemon*



*The Los Gatos Gâteau Cake*



*Suggested wines:  
Chablis with the crab; Burgundy or  
Pinot Noir with the duck; Sauternes or  
Champagne with the gâteau*

Whenever anyone asks me what I want for a birthday dinner, I always say, “Roast duck and a big gooey cake.” I love to eat duck when the skin is crisp and mahogany red-brown, the legs and wings just tender through, the breast meat moist, rosy, and tender. And guests always feel it’s a special treat. You don’t see duck too often at dinner parties. It does pose problems, and I’ve been giving them some thought.

Even a carver as adept as my husband finds that the docile duck becomes as stubborn as an ostrich on the carving board; that’s the first problem. Second is the fact that roasted the usual way the breast meat is done much sooner than the leg and wing. Fat is problem number three: for perfect flavor, the fat must be drained off during cooking. But if you want a crisp skin, you can’t cook it in the normal manner because the meat will be overdone. Many a cook is resigned to ruining the meat in order to enjoy a crackling skin.

A famous Chinese solution to these problems is Peking duck, the glory of Mandarin cuisine, for which one starts way ahead by forcing air between the duck’s skin and flesh and hanging up the inflated carcass to dry. For the fine Norman ducks of Rouen, which are a cross between wild and domestic strains and are sold unbled, the French have thought up the duck press and produce a carnal feast indeed. Here the partly roasted bird is peeled of its skin, the breast is carved, the legs and wings are removed, and the carcass is crushed for its juices. The breast is then warmed in these juices, a rich dark red, laced with Burgundy wine. The legs and wings finish cooking while you eat the more delicate breast, and they come in as an encore. This requires

expert servers, a chafing dish, and a duck press. But when we filmed the process at the Dorin brothers' restaurant in Rouen, I also showed a less elaborate alternative. With that in mind, I decided to continue with the roast-peel idea that I used then to produce another and simpler dish.

This way of dealing with duck involves neither sideboard antics nor fancy paraphernalia; and it solves all three of the problems I mentioned. The duck can be beautifully presented, since it is carved in the kitchen, and served before its redolence evaporates. I like to contrast its rich flavor, crisp skin, and succulent meat with a velvety purée of parsnips. Their very special flavor, earthy and sweetish—so compatible with duck—is transformed by puréeing. People who think they don't like parsnips are almost always enchanted with them this way, wondering happily, "What can it be?" I like to serve the parsnip purée in baked zucchini shells—chosen for their unobtrusive taste and their jade and emerald color—an easy and elegant vegetable accompaniment. I'd hate to disturb the rapport of these congenial flavors with anything else, so I serve another vegetable as a separate course.

Like opposite primary and secondary colors, fruit flavors seem to balance duck. So I've chosen a fruit-layered cake for the birthday dessert: crisp strips of nut meringue spread with a luscious apricot filling flavored with orange liqueur and a touch of Cognac, plus a discreet amount of butter cream, just enough to mediate the contrast in taste and texture.

I like this luxurious menu; and I also like to feel rested as well as hospitable when I call my best friends in to the table. No damp brow or hot hands for the birthday cook! I prepare most of this very posh dinner well in advance, and the work itself isn't difficult. The gorgeous cake is not only more fun to make than the sponge-layer kind, it's easier. And in the privacy of my kitchen, nobody can see me subduing the duck.

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## Preparations

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### Marketing and Storage: Staples to have on hand

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Salt  
 Peppercorns  
 Sugar (both granulated and confectioners)  
 Pure vanilla extract  
 Almond extract  
 Cream of tartar  
 Stick cinnamon  
 Bay leaves  
 Thyme or sage  
 Mustard (the strong Dijon type or  
 Düsseldorf) ▼  
 Apricot preserves or jam (optional)  
 All-purpose flour  
 Olive oil and cooking oil  
 Wines and liqueurs: dry white French  
 vermouth, Cognac or rum, dry Port or  
 Sercial Madeira, orange or apricot  
 liqueur  
 Vegetables and fruits: a few carrots, onions,  
 shallots or scallions, an orange, and  
 lemons  
 Eggs (12)  
 Cream (½ pint [225 g] or so)  
 Fresh bread crumbs (in the freezer) ▼

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### Specific ingredients for this menu

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Crab (enough for 6 as a first course;  
 see recipe) ▼  
 Ducklings (two 4- to 5-pound or 2- to  
 2½-kg) ▼  
 Zucchini (6, about 6 inches or 15 cm long)  
 Parsnips (1½ to 2 pounds or ¾ to 1 kg)  
 Broccoli (2 bunches)  
 Parsley (1 bunch; or 1 or 2 of watercress)  
 Unsalted butter (about 1 pound or 450 g)  
 Dried apricots (1 pound or 450 g)  
 Whole shelled hazelnuts and blanched  
 almonds (about 4 ounces or 120 g of  
 each) ▼  
 Shaved (thinly sliced) almonds, toasted (about  
 8 ounces or 240 g)

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► **Remarks:**  
**Staples**

**Mustard:** always store prepared mustard in the refrigerator, otherwise it goes off in flavor; most supermarkets carry several varieties of strong European-type mustard, and the ball-park variety is not meant here. **Bread crumbs:** it's useful to have these always on hand in the freezer, and crumbs from fresh bread are best. To make them easily, cut crusts off nonsweet white bread, such as French, Italian, and Viennese, and crumb either in the blender or with the grating disk of a food processor; store in a plastic bag in the freezer where they will keep for weeks.

**Specific ingredients for this menu**

**Crab:** if you buy frozen crab, allow a day for it to defrost in the refrigerator, and see notes on crab in "Fish Talk," page 111.) **Ducks:** frozen

ducks, like all frozen poultry, should be defrosted in the refrigerator to minimize juice loss since too quick defrosting can cause the ice crystals to pierce the flesh. Your best alternative is to defrost them in a sinkful of water. In either case, leave ducks in their plastic wrapping, and allow 2 to 3 days in the refrigerator, several hours in water. **Hazelnuts and almonds:** nuts are perishable, especially hazelnuts (called filberts by some people); taste them to be sure they are fresh, and store them in the freezer. To skin hazelnuts, place in a roasting pan in a 350°F/180°C oven, tossing about every 5 minutes or so, for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the nuts are lightly browned; rub in a towel to remove as much skin as you easily can. Toasting also gives them added flavor. Toast whole blanched shaved almonds in the same manner.



## Chesapeake Lump Crabmeat Appetizer

Since how much you season your crabmeat depends entirely on its quality, I can only make suggestions. Freshly boiled crabmeat needs nothing on it, I think, only lemon, salt, and a peppermill passed at the table, and to each his own. Frozen and canned crab are very much up to you and your tastebuds as you fix your appetizer. Lemon juice, certainly, and often you will need very finely minced shallot or scallion, sometimes a little minced celery, and fresh minced dill or fragrant bottled dill weed, plus salt and pepper, and perhaps a tossing with good olive oil; I like to pass mayonnaise separately, for those who wish it. Arrange the crab on a bed of either shredded lettuce or romaine, or surround it with watercress, or wreath it in seasoned ripe tomato pulp or red pimiento. You could also include quartered hard-boiled eggs, but that would be dictated by how much crab you were serving per person—and since crab is a luxury,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup ( $\frac{3}{4}$  dL) for each guest is generous enough, even for a birthday party.



## Roast Duck with Cracklings

In this method, the duck is given a preliminary or partial roasting, then a skin peeling and carving; half an hour before serving, the legs finish cooking along with the skin, cut into strips which render their fat and crisp in the oven. The breast meat is warmed briefly in wine and seasonings just before being arranged on the platter with the browned legs and crackling skin. All but the final cooking may be done in advance.

*For 6 people*

**Two 4- to 5-pound (2 to 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ -kg) ducklings**

**1 Tb cooking oil**

**1 medium-size carrot, roughly chopped**

**1 medium-size onion, roughly chopped**

**Salt, thyme or sage, 1 bay leaf,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (1 dL) strong prepared mustard, Dijon type**

**Generous 1 cup ( $\frac{1}{4}$  L) lightly pressed down, fresh nonsweet white bread crumbs**

**2 Tb duck-roasting fat or melted butter**

**1 Tb minced shallots or scallions**

**Pepper**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup ( $\frac{1}{2}$  dL) or so dry Port or Sercial Madeira**

### Preliminaries to roasting

Chop the ducks' wings off at the elbows and brown them in cooking oil with the neck, gizzard, and vegetables, in a heavy saucepan, then simmer in water to cover and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt for an hour. Drain, degrease, and reserve liquid for sauce later; you should have about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (1 dL) strong meaty liquid.

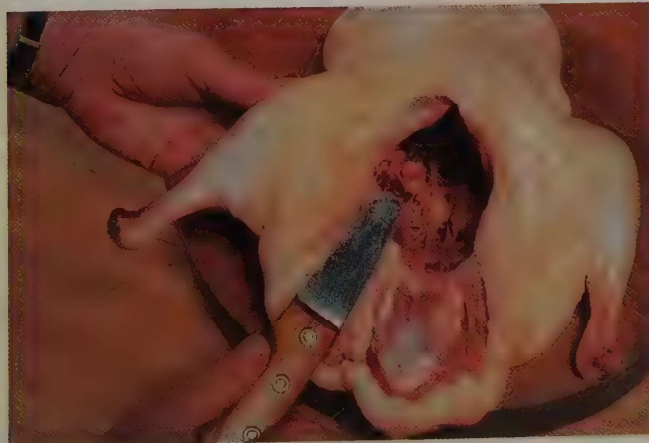
Meanwhile, here's a good trick for easy carving (you won't be carving at table with this recipe, but it still makes the duck easier to disjoint): working from inside the duck, sever ball joints where wings join shoulders (as illustrated opposite, top left) and second joints join small of back (opposite, lower left). Again for easy carving, remove wishbone from inside of neck opening and add to duck stock.

Sprinkle inside of duck with  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt and a pinch of thyme or sage, and tuck in the bay leaf. Pull out any loose fat from inside neck and cavity. Prick the skin all over on the back and sides (where you see the yellow fat under the skin) with a sharp-pronged fork or trussing needle, but do not go too deep where rosy flesh shows through skin, or the duck juices will seep out and stain the skin as the duck is roasting. To truss the duck, first, push needle through carcass underneath the wings, then come up around one wing, catch the neck skin flap against the backbone (upper right picture); come out over opposite wing, and tie. For the second truss (middle right picture), push needle through underside of drumstick ends, catching the tail piece as you go, come back over tops of drumsticks, and tie. The neatly trussed duck will look like the one in the bottom picture.

🕒 May be prepared for roasting a day in advance.

### A preliminary roasting

Preheat oven to  $350^{\circ}\text{F}/180^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Place ducks breast up in roasting pan and set in middle level of preheated oven. Roast 30 to 35 minutes, or until breast meat is just springy to the touch (rather than squashy like raw duck)—this means the breast meat is just rosy and easy to carve, but the legs and thighs (which will cook more later) are still rare.



### Skinning and carving—preliminaries to final cooking

While the duck is still warm, peel off its skin as follows: cut a slit down the length of the duck on either side of the breastbone, as I've done in the picture below, and remove skin from breast and thighs.

Then cut up the duck as shown in the lower right picture. Remove leg-thigh sections and separate legs from thighs; peel as much skin off them as you easily can, and cut off visible fat. Cut fat and skin into strips  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cm) wide and place in a baking dish. Paint legs and thighs with a thin coating of mustard, roll in crumbs, and arrange in another baking dish; sprinkle tops with a dribble of duck-roasting fat or melted butter.

Film a frying pan (not of cast iron) with duck fat or melted butter, sprinkle in half the shallots or scallions, carve the breast meat into neat slices, as illustrated, and arrange in the pan. Season lightly with salt and pepper and sprinkle with the remaining shallots or scallions. Pour in the Port or Madeira and the duck stock from the first paragraph. (You may wish to roast the carcasses and wings—which have little meat—a few minutes more and save for the cook's lunch the next day; that's what I do, at least.)

① May be prepared to this point several hours before serving.

#### Finishing the ducks

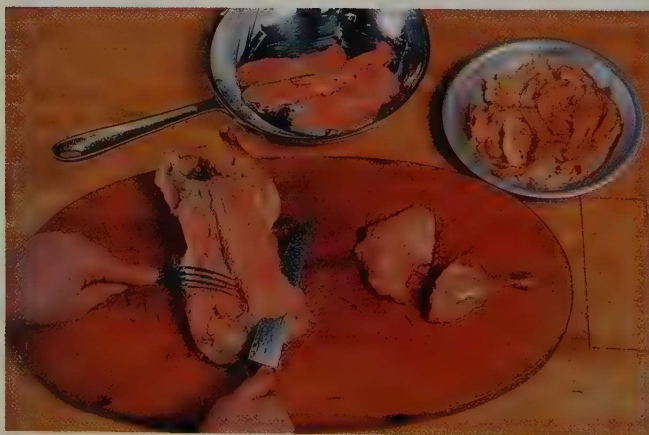
Preheat the oven to  $400^{\circ}\text{F}/200^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and half an hour before you plan to serve dinner, set dishes with crumbed legs and thighs and skin strips in

the upper-third level. Roast skin until the pieces have browned nicely and rendered their fat; remove with a slotted spoon to a plate covered with paper toweling to drain; then toss with a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Roast legs until just tender when pressed—about 20 to 25 minutes. Keep both warm in turned-off oven, door ajar, until you are ready to serve.

Between courses, as you are changing plates, bring the pan with the duck breast slices barely to the simmer, to poach the meat but keep it the color of a deep blush. Then arrange it on a hot platter and rapidly boil down the cooking juices until syrupy while you arrange the legs and the skin cracklings on the platter; pour the reduced pan juices over the breast meat and serve at once.

#### Remarks:

I was discussing duck the other day with a restaurant owner who serves a lot of duck to his clientele. He says he puts his in a  $250^{\circ}\text{F}/130^{\circ}\text{C}$  oven and lets them roast slowly for 3 or 4 hours, pricking them several times to drain out the fat. The meat emerges a nice medium rare, the birds exude a lot of fat, and when he is ready to serve he pops them back in the oven, at  $550^{\circ}\text{F}/290^{\circ}\text{C}$ , to brown and crisp the skin. I haven't tried the final crisping, since I fear so hot an oven and its effect on the rosy meat, but the slow roast is certainly easy and painless.



# Purée of Parsnips

*To go with roast duck, goose, pork, or turkey*

*For 4 to 6 servings (more than you need for the zucchini boats, but the purée is so good and reheats so well, I am suggesting almost double the necessary amount)*

**2 pounds (1 kg) parsnips**

**Salt**

**5 Tb cream**

**2 Tb butter**

**Pepper**

Trim and peel the parsnips and cut into slices about 1/3 inch (1 cm) thick. Place in a saucepan with water barely to cover and a teaspoon of salt. Bring to the boil, cover pan, and boil slowly 20 to 30 minutes or until parsnips are tender and water has almost entirely evaporated. Using a vegetable mill or food processor, purée, and return to saucepan. Beat in the cream and butter, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Set pan in another containing simmering water, cover, and let cook 20 to 30 minutes more—note the subtle change in taste that takes place. Correct seasoning before serving.

❶ May be cooked in advance and reheated over simmering water.

# Zucchini Boats

*To hold a purée of parsnips or other cooked filling*

**6 zucchini of uniform size, about 6 inches (15 cm) long**

**Salt**

**2 to 3 Tb melted butter**

**Pepper**

Trim stem ends off zucchini and cut zucchini in half lengthwise. Hollow out the centers with a grapefruit knife, leaving a 3/16-inch (scant 3/4-cm) border of flesh all around. (Save removed centers for soup.) Drop the boat-shaped zucchini in a large pan of lightly salted boiling water and boil slowly 4 to 5 minutes, or until barely tender—they must hold their shape. Brush with melted butter, season lightly with salt and pepper, and arrange in a roasting pan. Shortly before serving, pour in 1/4 inch (3/4 cm) water, and bake 4 to 5 minutes in the upper third of a preheated 425°F/220°C oven—to give them a little more flavor, but without letting them overcook and lose their shape.

### Assembling

Arrange the hot zucchini boats in a serving dish, and with a pastry bag and cannulated tube, rapidly pipe the hot parsnip purée into them—much more attractive than when they are filled with a spoon. Serve at once.



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# Broccoli Flowerettes

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*For 6 people have a good 2 quarts or 2 liters of prepared broccoli—1½ bunches*

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This doesn't need a full-scale recipe, since broccoli is so easy to cook, but for the freshest-tasting, greenest, slightly crunchy, beautiful broccoli, you do have to peel the stems. Then the broccoli cooks in less than 5 minutes. Here's how to go about it: cut the stems off the broccoli, leaving the bud ends about 2½ inches (6½ cm) long; quarter the bud ends to make them all about 3/16 inch (scant ¾ cm) in diameter. From the cut end, pull off the skin up to the bud section. Peel the stems with a knife, going down to the tender white. Refrigerate in a covered bowl until you are ready to cook the broccoli.

To cook, you may blanch the broccoli ahead, and plunge into boiling water just before serving; or boil between courses, since it cooks so quickly. Bring a very large kettle with 5 to 6 quarts or liters lightly salted water to the rapid boil, drop in the broccoli, cover the kettle, and bring to the boil again over highest heat; as soon as the water boils, remove cover

and boil slowly 4 to 5 minutes, just until broccoli is cooked through, slightly crunchy, and a beautiful bright green. Remove at once from the boiling water—a large perforated scoop is useful here. If you are serving immediately, arrange quickly on a platter, seasoning lightly with salt and pepper, the Brown Butter Sauce (see following recipe)—or use melted butter—and drops of lemon juice. (Or you may pre-cook the broccoli until barely tender before dinner and spread it out on a towel to cool rapidly; keep a kettle of fresh salted water at the boil between courses, and plunge the broccoli into the boiling water just before serving, to reheat for a moment; then dress it on the platter as described.)

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## Brown Butter Sauce:

*For 6 servings*

Cut 1 stick (4 ounces or 115 g) butter into fairly thin slices—for even melting—and place in a small saucepan over moderate heat, bringing the butter to a boil. Skim off foam as it collects and cook until butter turns a nice nutty brown—this will take only 2 to 3 minutes in all. If serving immediately, spoon over the food, leaving speckled particles in bottom of pan. For later serving, spoon into a clean pan and either reheat or keep over hot water.



# The Los Gatos Gâteau Cake

*A Dacquoise type of apricot-filled torte*

*For a 12-by-4-inch cake about 2 inches high, serving 12 to 14*

## The Meringue-Nut Layers:

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup (1 $\frac{1}{3}$  dL) each toasted and skinned hazelnuts and blanched toasted almonds

1 cup ( $\frac{1}{4}$  L) sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup (1 $\frac{3}{4}$  dL or 5 to 6) egg whites

Pinch salt and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp cream of tartar

3 Tb additional sugar

1 Tb pure vanilla extract

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp almond extract

## Equipment

A blender or food processor; 2 pastry sheets about 12 by 15 inches (30 x 37 cm) each (non-stick recommended); a 14-inch (35-cm) pastry bag with  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -cm) tip opening (recommended); a flexible-blade spatula

Using a blender or food processor, pulverize the hazelnuts with half the sugar, then the almonds with the remaining sugar. Preheat oven to 250°F/120°C, placing racks in upper- and lower-third levels. Butter and flour the pastry sheets, and trace 4 rectangles on them 12 by 4 inches (30 x 10 cm), as I have done here.

Beat the egg whites at slow speed until they have foamed, then beat in the salt and cream of tartar; increase speed gradually to fast, and beat until egg whites form stiff shining peaks. Immediately sprinkle in the remaining 3 tablespoons sugar while beating, add the vanilla and almond extracts, and continue for 30 seconds more. Remove beater from stand and at once sprinkle on the pulverized nuts and sugar, folding them in rapidly with a rubber spatula as you do so. Scoop the meringue into the pastry bag and squeeze out onto the traced rectangles, starting at the edges of each and

working inward; smooth with a flexible-blade spatula. (Or spread and smooth with a spatula.) Set in oven and bake about an hour, switching levels every 20 minutes or so. The meringue layers are done when you can gently push them loose; do not force them, since they break easily and will budge only when they are ready to do so. Remove to a rack.

🕒 If not used within an hour or so, keep in a warming oven at 120°F/50°C, or wrap airtight and freeze.

## The Apricot Filling:

*About 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  cups (6 dL)*

1 pound (450 g) dried apricots

1 cup ( $\frac{1}{4}$  L) dry white French vermouth

2 cups ( $\frac{1}{2}$  L) water

1 stick cinnamon

Zest (colored part of peel) of 1 orange

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup (1 $\frac{1}{2}$  dL) sugar

2 Tb orange or apricot liqueur and 1 Tb Cognac or rum

Place the apricots in a saucepan and soak in vermouth and water several hours or overnight until tender. Then simmer with cinnamon and zest of orange for 10 minutes; add the sugar and simmer 10 minutes more or until very tender. Drain thoroughly and purée, using food processor or vegetable mill. Boil down cooking liquid (if any) to a thick syrup, and stir into the purée along with the liqueur.

🕒 May be completed a week or more in advance; cover and refrigerate.



**Confectioners Butter Cream:***For 1 to 1½ cups*

Make just before using

**8 ounces (225 g) unsalted butter****10 ounces (285 g; 2 cups sifted directly into cup) confectioners sugar****2 egg yolks****1 Tb pure vanilla extract****3 to 4 Tb orange or apricot liqueur, Cognac, or rum****Equipment****An electric mixer**

Beat the butter in a bowl over hot water just until softened, then beat in the sugar and continue for a minute or so until light and fluffy. Add the egg yolks, beating for 1 minute, then beat in the vanilla and liqueur. If too soft, beat over cold water until of easy spreading consistency.

**Assembling the cake**

(and additional ingredients)

**About 1 cup (¼ L) confectioners sugar in a sieve or shaker****2 cups (about 8 ounces or 240 g) shaved almonds, lightly toasted****Lightly whipped and sweetened cream to pass with the cake (optional)****Equipment****A serving board or tray to hold the cake; wax paper; a flexible-blade spatula; rubber spatulas**

The meringue layers break easily, but don't worry if they do; breaks—or San Andreas faults, as one California friend terms them—can be disguised. Save the best one for the top of the cake, 2 more for layers, and the final one is there just in case. Place double layers of wax paper strips on the serving board in such a way that they can be slipped out from sides and ends of cake after icing.

Set the least attractive of the meringue layers on the board, adjusting the wax paper to fit just under its edges. Reserving almost two thirds of the butter filling to ice the sides of the cake, spread half of what remains on the meringue layer, then cover with half of the apricot purée. Set a second meringue layer on top, and repeat with a spreading of butter cream and the remaining apricot. Top with a final meringue layer, and if it is unblemished dust with a coating of confectioners sugar. (If it is irreparably cracked, too much so to be disguised with sugar, ice it with butter cream and later sprinkle with almonds.)



Spread butter cream all around the sides of the cake. Then, with the palm of one hand, brush almonds all around to make an informal decoration. (Scatter almonds also on top, if you have the San Andreas fault to deal with.) Chill the cake—you may wish to cover it with a long box.

🕒 May be refrigerated for a day or two; the meringue layers gradually soften as the cake sits. Cake may be frozen; thaw in the refrigerator for several hours.

#### Serving

Cut cake into serving pieces from one of the small ends; a dollop of lightly whipped cream on the side goes nicely with the tart apricot filling.

#### Remarks:

This recipe allows for a good amount of butter cream, and you may wish to set a little aside. Then, if a reasonable amount of cake is left over, you can refrost the cut end and present, for all the world, a fresh new cake for its next go-around. As an aid to keeping the meringue-nut layers more crisp, you could paint the top of the bottom one, both sides of the middle one, and the bottom of the top layer with the following apricot glaze, letting it set for several minutes before filling the cake.

#### Apricot Glaze:

Boil up the contents of a 12-ounce (340-g) jar of apricot preserves with 3 tablespoons sugar, stirring, until last drops from a spoon are thick and sticky—and glaze reaches 238°F/115°C. Push through a sieve and use while still warm; return any left over to jar and keep for future glazings.

#### The fourth meringue layer

If you are sure of your layer stability, you can pulverize this one and either stir it into your apricot purée, or save it for a dessert topping as in the Floating Island, page 58. Or freeze it, and when you want finger cookies, cut it into crosswise strips with a serrated knife, sawing gently; cover with a sifting of confectioners sugar, or the icing of your choice.

## 🕒 Timing

This is a relatively fancy meal and involves quite a bit of work, but not much has to be done at the last minute. You can accomplish most of your marketing days in advance. The meringue-nut layers can be baked months beforehand if you freeze them, and the apricots can be cooked a week or more ahead. Just don't forget to thaw your ducks.

You'll need only about five minutes between first and second courses to crisp the duck cracklings and warm the breast slices; and just a moment before the third course to finish the broccoli if you have blanched it in advance.

Not long before announcing dinner, slip the dishes containing legs and skin strips into the oven. They can have sat an hour all prepared, and so can the breasts in their frying pan. You should get your wine bottles ready for evening, chill your whites, two hours before dinner.

Pre-roast, peel, and carve the ducks, if you're doing them the slow way, in the afternoon.

Early on the day of the party, you can assemble the cake and refrigerate it, purée the parsnips, and blanch the broccoli and the zucchini boats.

## Menu Variations

*The appetizer:* Rather than crab you could serve caviar, or any shellfish: mussels, oysters, clams, scallops, shrimp, lobster. (See "Fish Talk," page 111.)

*The main course:* The ragout with garlic (bonus recipe) is wonderful, and very easy to serve, but you'd have to change your vegetables accordingly, as the recipe suggests. With

the roast, you could omit the zucchini boats and just serve a plain parsnip purée in a dish, but no other way of cooking parsnips would suit roast duck so well. You might substitute a purée of turnips, celery root, or potatoes for the parsnips.

*The vegetable course:* This is probably the ideal way to cook broccoli. Any sauce but butter and lemon would be too rich on this menu, and a Polonaise garnish of browned crumbs and sieved egg would repeat the crumbs on the duck parts.

*The dessert:* You could fill your baked layers with puréed dried prunes. Or you could use very stiff, wine-flavored applesauce.

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## Leftovers

*The appetizer:* Since the crab is already seasoned, I wouldn't try it in a hot dish, but it would make fine stuffing for hard-boiled eggs or delicious sandwiches.

*The main dish:* Duck scraps are good in soup, or in a pilaff, or sauced in cocktail puffs or patty shells with drinks. Paul and I like to make a cannibal lunch for ourselves, picking the carcass (which I've roasted 15 to 20 minutes after its bloody carving). Then it goes into the stockpot.

*The vegetable course:* If you passed the lemon and butter sauce separately, any remaining unseasoned broccoli would be nice in a salad, soup, or timbale.

*The dessert:* Since I make a rectangular rather than round cake, I save a bit of butter cream, then beat up the butter cream to soften it, refrost the cut end of the cake as described earlier, and serve it again.

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## Postscript

The keynote of this dinner is flavor, and the duck dominates. If you think about this menu, you'll see that every dish on it was carefully chosen to contrast, in taste and color, with the duck—except the parsnips, which are such a good accompaniment to the bird that the two flavors almost combine in the mouth. Duck deserves this sort of "feature presentation." Having devised a way of dealing with its eccentricities, I serve it much oftener now, as the centerpiece of a luxurious dinner—as well as the grand main course for a plain family dinner. Duck has so much natural flavor and succulence that it is really one of my favorite meat treats.

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## Post-Postscript: A birthday bonus recipe

The following recipe is totally different in flavor from the roast duck preceding, is very little trouble to do, and is quite good reheated. For a larger birthday party, say 10 to 12 people, I think this would be tidier to serve. I'd buy 3 ducks and increase all the recipe proportions to match. With it I'd serve broccoli flowerettes and baked baby tomatoes, and perhaps a purée of some sort (like the parsnips recipe above, or a purée of turnips or rutabagas, or the potato-and-turnip purée in *Mastering I*), or instead of a purée, a mixture of steamed rice sautéed with little mushroom *duxelles*, or plain mashed potatoes. You would never know how much garlic this lovely duck dish contains if the cook didn't tell you. I wouldn't even call this a "garlic sauce"—it's just a satiny, full-flavored nap for the duck meat.

# Ragout of Duck with Twenty Cloves of Garlic

*For 4 servings*

A 4- to 5-pound (2- to 2¼-k $g$ ) duckling

1 head garlic, unpeeled, separated into cloves and roughly chopped

2 medium-size ripe tomatoes

1 Tb tomato sauce (if needed for taste and color)

Herbs and spices: 4 whole allspice berries, ½ tsp fennel seeds, ½ tsp thyme, 1 imported bay leaf

½ cup (1 dL) dry white French vermouth

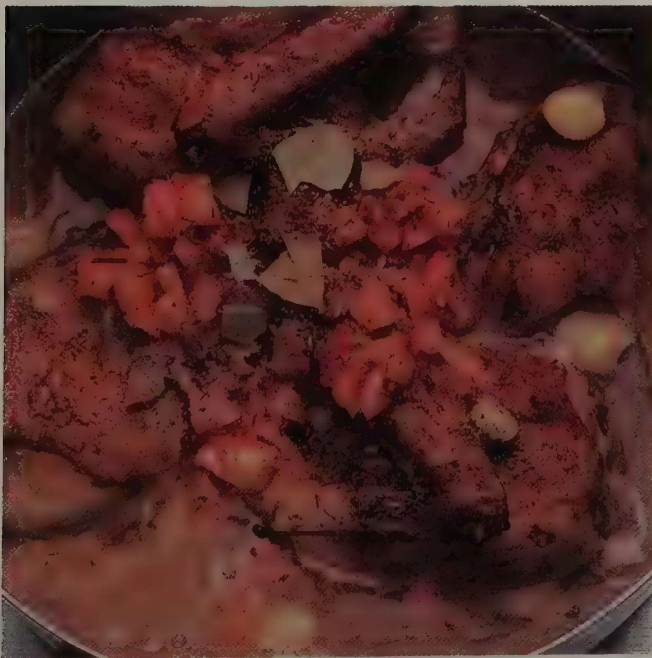
1 cup (¼ L) brown duck stock or beef bouillon

Salt and pepper

Parsley sprigs

## Preliminaries

Split the duck down the back on both sides of backbone and reserve backbone for duck stock, along with wing ends, which you sever at the elbows. Cut the peel off the gizzard and add to stock ingredients along with the neck. Cut the duck into 4 pieces, giving more breast



meat to the wing portions than to the leg portions to even things out. Cut off and discard fatty skin pieces and any interior fat. If you wish to do so—and it makes the best sauce—prepare a duck stock by sautéing the backbone, wing, neck, and gizzard peel with ½ cup (1 dL) each chopped onions and carrots; when lightly browned, drain off fat, add water to cover, salt lightly, simmer for an hour, strain, and degrease.

## Browning and simmering the duck

Prick the skin of the duck pieces all over at ½-inch (1½-cm) intervals and brown very slowly on all sides in a heavy chicken fryer or casserole, concentrating especially on the skin sides to render out as much fat as possible. Then drain out fat, add the unpeeled garlic cloves, tomatoes and optional tomato sauce, herbs, spices, vermouth, and stock to the pan, and season lightly with salt and pepper. Bring to the simmer, cover, and simmer slowly for about an hour, turning and basting occasionally, until duck leg and wing meat is just tender when pierced with a sharp-pronged fork. Remove from heat and let cool for 10 minutes or so, basting occasionally.

Remove duck pieces from pan, cut off the skin, and cut skin into strips. Sauté the strips slowly in a covered pan until they brown lightly, crisp, and render their fat; drain on paper towels and reserve. Meanwhile, thoroughly degrease the cooking liquid and strain it, pushing the garlic against the sieve to purée it into the liquid; boil down rapidly until sauce is lightly thickened. Return duck pieces to sauce and heat briefly, basting, to warm them. Carefully correct seasoning of sauce, and the duck is ready to serve.

❶ May be done somewhat in advance, if you keep the duck pieces barely warm in their sauce, and reheat to the simmer just before serving.

## Serving

Arrange duck on a platter and spoon the sauce over it. Decorate with parsley sprigs and sprinkle cracklings over the duck (you may wish to include the duck's liver, sautéed as the cracklings cook).

*For unspecified numbers, at unpredictable hours, a festive but practical menu. One of its minor components is the Perfectly Peelable HB Egg, on which there is new news.*



# Holiday Lunch

## Menu

*Chicken Melon, or Poulet de Charente à la Melonaise*

*Rosie's Great Potato Salad*

*Mayonnaise in the Food Processor*

*Skewered Vegetable Salad*

*Boston or Butter Lettuce Salad*



*Apple Turnover*



*Suggested wines:*

*Beaujolais, Côtes du Rhône, Zinfandel, or a very good rosé*

The thing is, we'd forgotten tomorrow was a holiday when we started asking people to lunch. Naturally it turned out they all were expecting houseguests, or children back from college with friends and about four sets of plans apiece. "See, Ma, if Johnny can get his clutch fixed he'll give us a ride back, but if he can't we'll have to take the two o'clock if you could just give us a lift over" kind of thing. Of course I said to the distracted ma's, "Well, come when you can, and bring whom you please," and thought no more about it until yesterday, when Paul pointed out that what we propose to do is feed lunch to anywhere from 6 to 20 guests, any time from noon until three.

It therefore follows, with cast-iron logic, that I am now doing funny things with chickens. Like most cooks, I tot up the limitations first, then look at the remaining possibilities. Six to 20 guests may mean huge leftovers; mustn't waste. We blew ourselves to veal on Monday, so we can't spend the moon today. We want to feel free tomorrow, so we cook now. We don't know all these friends-of-friends or their tastes: what does everybody like? And what is nobody allergic to? So far, a "made dish" (as opposed to a roast or sauté) of chicken looks a good answer. *But* it can't be hot, or it would dry out in three hours; and it can't be chilled, like an aspic, because the non-melting kind is rubbery. And we want the serving platter to stay attractive while under attack during a three-hour span.

*However:* the possibilities. Our friend Rosie the salad whiz is visiting us. We do have our faithful food processor, and Paul says he'll shell pistachio nuts and peel apples. Most of our friends' kids, home from cafeterialand, appreciate fancy food as never before.

So, our menu. Nothing could be more classical, or classier, than chicken boned to make *pâté* and roasted to a lovely color, and it feeds a lot of people. One could do it in the traditional *ballottine* shape, like a log; but you don't need calculus to see that the optimum form, with most volume to least surface, is a sphere. So a round, melon-shaped *pâté* it will be. I'll do three, keep one in reserve, put one, uncut, in the middle of my big round platter, then slice the third and make a wreath of perfect, even sections. No carving, no mess; and, if only half the people come, I'll have another party.

It won't take the three of us long to fix this festive meal, and right now the kitchen is a hive of industry. Rosie, with an artist's eye and a potter's deft hand, is preparing the makings of her three salads, each the last word of its kind: vegetable, lettuce, and potato. Perched on a high stool with a bowl in his lap, Paul is briskly popping pistachio shells for the tiny green kernels that look so pretty and crunch so nicely in a *pâté*. Every so often he darts a glance out the window: one of the resident

squirrels, extra lithe or extra smart, knows a way into the bird feeder. Sometimes we scold him, but mostly, I admit, we bribe him; and he loves pistachios. "Here, you rogue," and Paul flips one out.

I've boned and defleshed the chickens' skins and sewn each into a loose pouch. In goes the stuffing, nuts and all, while Paul starts peeling apples for the dessert. The chickens did look odd, bereft of shape; but now, tied in their cheesecloth corsets, they're firming up. Then the string: each loop, like a natural rib, reinforces the melon form. *Fathoms of string... can do most anything...* I find myself humming to "I Get a Kick Out of You," and realize suddenly that Cole Porter, as usual, got the tune right; but it took a cook to discover the real words. I have a Thing about String...

"So you have," says Rosie. "Why not decorate your turnover to look like a fat, well-tied parcel?"



## Preparations

### Recommended Equipment:

#### Knives and knife sharpening

To make Chicken Melon (see recipe), a sharp boning knife, white string, a trussing or mattress needle, and cheesecloth are essential. Especially important is the knife: if it won't cut like a razor, the boning and defleshing of a chicken are a horrendous if not impossible undertaking. You want a stout sharp-pointed knife, and I like a slightly curved 6-inch (15-cm) blade for this type of work. You should also have the proper sharpening equipment, since no knife, however fine its quality, will keep an edge—it will only take an edge. Get yourself, therefore, a proper butcher's steel, the kind with a foot-long (30-cm) rod of finely ridged steel set into a handle. To sharpen the knife, sweep its blade from its handle end to its tip down the length of the steel, holding the blade at a 20-degree angle—the movement is as though the steel were a long pencil that you were sharpening. Give a half-dozen swipes down one side, then down the other, and that should hone the blade to perfect cut-ability. For very dull knives, however, you should also have a carborundum oil stone, fine on one side and a little rougher on the other; use the same general technique first on the rough side, then on the smooth, and finish up on your butcher's steel.

#### Disagreement note

Some practitioners sharpen their knives in the other direction on the theory that this realigns the molecules in the steel. In my system you are pushing the steel back from the cutting edge to make it sharp. Both systems seem to work and if I have a particularly dull knife I sharpen it both ways, hoping for results.

## Marketing and Storage:

### Staples to have on hand

(Quantities for 6 people)

Salt  
 Black and white peppercorns (see Remarks, page 82)  
 Nutmeg  
 Fragrant dried tarragon  
 Optional: powdered cinnamon  
 Mustard (the strong Dijon type; see Remarks, page 5)  
 Cider vinegar and wine vinegar  
 Crisp dill pickles (1 small)  
 Canned pimiento  
 Chicken broth (½ cup or 1 dL)  
 Fresh olive, peanut, and/or salad oil ▼  
 Ingredients for a *vinaigrette* dressing ▼  
 Unsalted butter (12 ounces or 340 g)  
 Heavy cream (1 cup or ¼ L; and more if desired to accompany dessert)  
 Eggs (12)  
 All-purpose flour (unbleached preferred)  
 Plain bleached cake flour  
 Granulated sugar



Lemons (1)  
 Onions (1)  
 Celery (1 stalk)  
 "Boiling" potatoes (3 pounds or 1½ kg)  
 Shallots or scallions  
 Curly parsley, chives, and/or other fresh herbs  
 Recommended: flat-leaf parsley  
 Cognac

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**Specific ingredients for this menu**  
*(Quantities for 6 people)*

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Roasting chicken or capon (6 to 7 pounds or 2¾ to 3¼ kg) ▼  
 Boned and skinned chicken breast (1, or possibly 2) ▼  
 Boiled ham (¼ pound or 115 g)  
 Pistachio nuts (4 ounces or 115 g)  
 Boston or butter lettuce (2 heads)  
 Cooking apples (4 or 5) ▼  
 For the skewered salad, select among the following:  
 Artichokes  
 Avocados  
 Cherry tomatoes  
 Cucumbers  
 Mushrooms  
 Onions (small white)  
 Peppers (bell type: green, red, or both)  
 Potatoes (small new)  
 Topinambours (Jerusalem artichokes or sunchokes)  
 Turnips  
 Zucchini

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► **Remarks:**  
**Staples**

*Olive, peanut, and salad oils:* These may be used singly or in combination; just be sure your oil is fresh and of best quality.

*Homemade vinaigrette dressing:* See page 205 for recipe.

**Ingredients for this menu**

*Chicken:* If you don't think yours is plump enough to supply 4 cups (1 L) ground meat after boning, buy an additional skinless, boneless chicken breast. *Cooking apples:* See recipe for varieties, and check page 40 for background information.

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## Chicken Melon

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*Boned and stuffed chicken formed, in its own skin, into a pâté the shape of a melon.*

You can perform this operation on a small frying chicken, but it is far more impressive, and serves far more people, when you find yourself a large roaster or capon. In fact, there is no reason why you could not use the same system on a turkey—but heaven knows how long a 20-pound (10-kilo) bird would take in the oven. Not me! (My fanciful French title, *Poulet de Charente à la Melonaise*, was suggested by the small sweet spring melons from the Charente district of France, plus a corruption of *à la Milanaise*, a classical appellation from the old school designating a cheesy Italianesque concoction from the region of Milan. Of course, this chicken contains neither melon nor cheese, but it might describe to a knowing gastronome some conception of the dish. We have to have a little fun with this sort of thing, I think!)



For 14 to 16 servings

A 6- to 7-pound (2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>- to 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-kg) roasting chicken or capon

For the stuffing

To make about 5 cups (1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> liters)

4 cups (1 L) ground chicken meat—salvaged from the boned chicken, plus 1 or more skinless and boneless chicken-breast halves if needed

1 whole egg plus 1 egg white

1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp salt

9 grinds of the pepper mill

2 Tb minced shallots or scallions

A big speck nutmeg

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp fragrant dried tarragon

2 to 3 Tb Cognac

1 cup (<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> L) chilled heavy cream

Garniture for the stuffing

1 chicken breast, cut into <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch (<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-cm) dice

<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup (1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> dL) boiled ham, diced as above

5 Tb shelled pistachio nuts

Salt and pepper

1 Tb finely minced shallots or scallions

1 Tb Cognac

Pinch fragrant dried tarragon

Other ingredients

Salt and pepper

Drops of Cognac

Several Tb melted butter

Equipment

A very sharp boning knife; a large ball of plain white string (butcher's corned-beef twine); a trussing needle—a mattress or sail-makers needle; a square of washed cheesecloth about 20 inches (50 cm) to a side

Boning the chicken

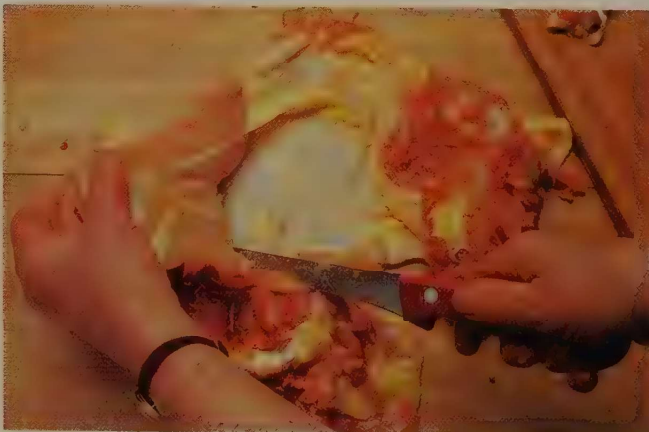
Your object here is to remove the carcass from the chicken leaving the skin intact except at the openings at the back vent and the neck and along the backbone. The meat of the chicken will go into your stuffing, and the skin will be the container for the *pâté* mixture. Proceed as follows.



First, for easy removal of meat from skin after boning, slip your fingers between meat and skin at the neck opening, and loosen skin all around breast, thighs, and as far down the drumsticks as you can—being careful not to tear the skin.

Then turn the chicken on its side and make a slit down the backbone from neck end to tail end. One side at a time, scrape down backbone, severing ball joints of wings at shoulder and of thigh at small of back and continuing down rib cage and side of breastbone until you come near its edge, at top of breast. Stop! Skin is very thin over ridge of breastbone and easily pierced. Do the same on the other side. Finally lift carcass and scrape close under ridge of breastbone (not against skin) to free the carcass. To remove wing and leg bones easily, chop off wings above elbows and chop ball joints off ends of drumsticks. Then remove

wing, thigh, and drumstick bones from inside the chicken, poking their skin sleeves inside out onto flesh side of chicken. Carefully cut and pull as much of the meat as you can from the chicken skin without piercing it. Sprinkle inside of chicken skin with a little salt and drops of Cognac. Reserve bones and carcass for chicken stock. Dice one breast-meat half and reserve for stuffing garniture, using second breast half and rest of meat to grind up for stuffing.



### The stuffing

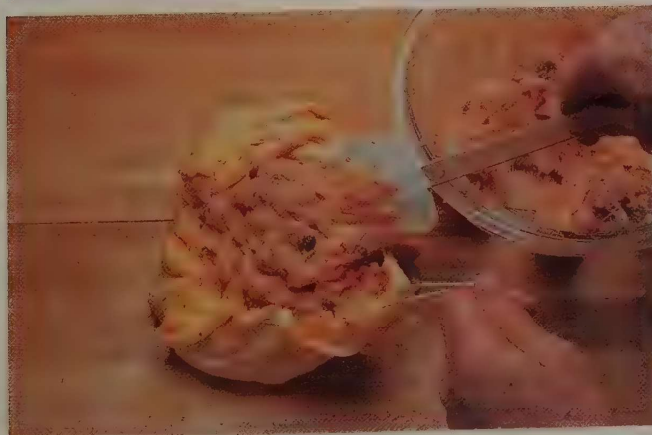
(If you do not have a food processor, grind up the meat, then beat in the rest of the ingredients.) Cut the meat into 1-inch (2½-cm) pieces and purée in the processor in 2 or 3 batches. Then return all to food processor, add the rest of the ingredients listed for the stuffing, and purée for a minute or so until finely ground. Sauté a spoonful in a small frying pan, taste, and add more seasoning if you think it necessary. Toss the garniture chicken, ham, pistachios, and seasonings in a bowl and let sit until you are ready to stuff the chicken, then fold into the stuffing.

### Stuffing the chicken

Thread your trussing needle with a good 16 inches (40 cm) of string, and you are now ready to make a pouch, with drawstring, of the chicken skin. To do so, sew a loose basting stitch around the circumference of the chicken skin and draw up the two ends of the string slightly to make an open pouch. Fill the pouch with the stuffing (not too full), pull the string

taut, and tie. Dip the cheesecloth square into melted butter, spread out on your work surface, and place the chicken, tie side up, in the middle. Tie the 2 opposite corners of cheesecloth together over the chicken, then the other 2 ends, to enclose the chicken in a ball shape. Cut off extra cheesecloth. Then, always from the central tie, wind successive rounds of string around the ball to make the melon pattern. (Hold one end of string taut as a guideline and twist free end about it to secure each loop as you wind it around the chicken.) Chicken is now ready to roast.

🕒 May be prepared a day in advance and refrigerated; may be frozen, but thaw before roasting.



### Roasting and serving

(So that chicken will brown nicely on the top as well as the bottom, but so that it will not lose its juices, start it tie side down and turn after 25 to 30 minutes, before any juices have managed to escape from that side.) Preheat oven to 350°F/180°C. Set chicken tie side down on a lightly buttered pie dish and roast in middle level of oven for 25 to 30 minutes to brown top nicely, then turn tie side up for the rest of the roasting. Baste occasionally with accumulated fat in dish. Chicken is done at a thermometer reading of 170°F/77°C. (Total cooking time is 1½ to 2 hours.) Remove and let rest 20 minutes, then carefully ease off the cheesecloth and string without tearing chicken skin.

Serve hot with pan juices and *béarnaise* sauce. Or let cool to room temperature, cover, and chill; serve as you would a *pâté*, as part of a cold lunch or as the first course for a dinner. To carve, cut into wedges, starting from the center, as though cutting a thick pie.



## Rosie's Great Potato Salad

After Rosie had tried a number of off-beat combinations and additions, hoping that the best possible salad might be something unusual, she concluded that the thing to aim at was that old-fashioned taste where the potatoes dominate and where there is just enough onion, the right amount of celery for a bit of crunch, enough eggs for their subtle effect, plus a light but sufficient binding and melding with the best mayonnaise. Here is her recipe.

*For about 2 quarts (2 liters),  
serving 6 to 8*

3 pounds (1½ kg) "boiling" potatoes, the type that will keep their shape when cooked and sliced—such as round red potatoes or new potatoes

½ cup (1 dL) chicken broth mixed with 2 to 3 Tb cider vinegar

Salt and pepper

1 medium-size to large mild onion, finely diced

1 medium-size stalk celery, finely diced

1 small crisp dill pickle, finely diced

3 hard-boiled eggs, diced

2 Tb minced fresh parsley, preferably the flat-leaf variety

1 canned pimienta, diced

½ to ¾ cup (1–1¾ dL) homemade mayonnaise (see next recipe)

*For decoration*

Strips of canned pimienta

Parsley and/or chives

Sliced or quartered hard-boiled eggs (see recipe at end of chapter)

Scrub the potatoes and boil in their jackets, in lightly salted water, just until tender (halve a potato and eat a slice to be sure). Then drain off water, cover pan, and let sit for 5 minutes to let them firm up and to make for easier slicing. Peel while still warm and cut into slices about 3/16 inch (3/4 cm) thick. Toss the still-warm potatoes gently in a large mixing bowl

with the broth and with salt and pepper to taste. Salt the diced onion lightly and add to the potatoes along with the celery, pickle, eggs, parsley, and pimiento. Toss and fold gently to blend flavors. Taste carefully and correct seasoning. When cool, fold in two-thirds of the mayonnaise, saving the rest for decoration.

① May be made a day in advance; cover and refrigerate.

An hour or so before you are ready to serve, taste again for seasoning and turn the salad into a nice bowl; mask the top with the remaining mayonnaise and decorate with pimiento, herbs, and eggs.

#### Remarks:

Rosie suggests, when you are making larger quantities, that you toss the equivalent of the above ingredients in a mixing bowl (or several bowls), turn that into a larger bowl, and continue with the same amount, adding each batch as you do it to the larger bowl. This way you can easily manage the potatoes and the perfection of the seasoning without breaking the slices.

## Mayonnaise in the Food Processor

Certainly the easiest way to make mayonnaise is in the food processor, where in 2 or 3 minutes you have 2 or 3 cups (or  $\frac{1}{2}$  liter). Regardless of method, the best mayonnaise is made from the freshest and best ingredients, since nothing can disguise a cheap-tasting oil, a harsh vinegar, or a fake lemon.

*For about 2  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups ( $\frac{1}{2}$  liter)*

1 whole egg

2 egg yolks

1 tsp strong prepared mustard (Dijon type)

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp or more salt

1 Tb or more fresh lemon juice or wine vinegar

2 cups best-quality light olive oil, salad oil, or fresh peanut oil—all one kind or a combination

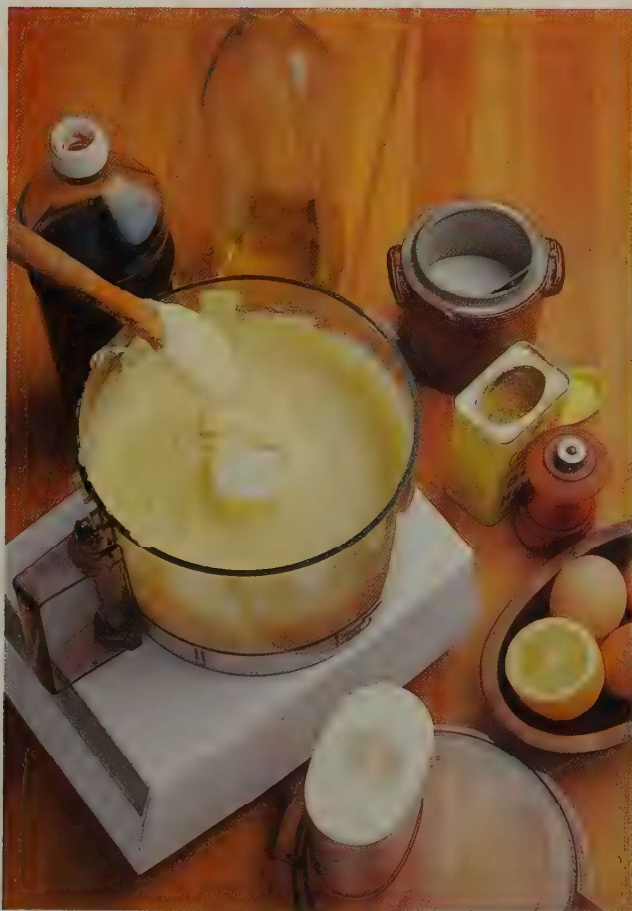
White pepper



Using the metal blade (I never use the plastic one for anything), process the egg, yolks, mustard, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt for 30 seconds. Then add 1 tablespoon lemon juice or vinegar and process half a minute more. Finally, in a very thin stream, pour in the oil. When all has gone in, remove cover, check consistency, and taste for seasoning: you will probably want to beat in a little more lemon juice or vinegar, and salt and white pepper, but you can also beat in driblets of cold water for a milder and lighter taste and texture.

**Remarks:**

The purpose of the whole egg here is to dilute the thickening capacity of the yolks, since if you have all yolks the mayonnaise stiffens so much in the machine you cannot add the full amount of oil. However, you can thin the sauce with droplets of water rather than egg white. The proportions I use are 3 yolks for every 2 cups or  $\frac{1}{2}$  liter of oil, and, in the processor, 1 egg white.



*Turned, or thinned-out, mayonnaise:*

I am not always successful with the processor when I have a badly thinned-out mayonnaise. (This sometimes happens when the mayonnaise has been kept in too cold a refrigerator: the emulsion property of the egg yolks has broken down, and they release the oil from suspension.) To restore the mayonnaise it has to be reconstituted bit by bit, and because the processor can't manage a small enough quantity initially to begin the homogenizing and reconstituting process, I've had more luck bringing the sauce back by hand or in an electric blender. I suggest that you start with a half tablespoon of Dijon-type prepared mustard and a tablespoon of thinned-out mayonnaise and beat vigorously in a bowl or blender until the mixture has thickened; then beat in the thinned-out sauce by driblets—it is the very slow addition of the sauce, particularly at first, that brings it back to its thick emulsified state.

*Freezing homemade mayonnaise:* It often happens to me that I've a nice jar of homemade mayonnaise in my refrigerator and then we go off somewhere on a vacation. I've found that I can freeze it, let it defrost in the refrigerator, and then reconstitute it just as though it were the thinned-out mayonnaise in the preceding paragraph.

*Using frozen egg yolks for mayonnaise:*

Thaw the egg yolks at room temperature or overnight in the refrigerator. Then whip them in an electric blender or food processor (if you have enough for the food processor—4 or 5 at least), adding a tablespoon of prepared mustard and another of lemon juice or vinegar, and proceed as usual.

# Skewered Salad

## *Vegetable salad en brochettes*

This attractive way to serve salad vegetables makes it easy for guests, who pick up a skewered collection and bear it off on their plates. Use any combination of cooked and raw vegetables that appeals to you and will skewer successfully. Be sure, however, to use skewers with flat sides or double prongs, or two skewers per serving; the vegetables must hang in there, and the skewer must be solid enough to stay rigid from platter to plate. I find it best to prepare each vegetable separately and then marinate it in dressing long enough for it to pick up the desired taste, but not so long as to wilt it. Green vegetables and tomatoes, for instance, can wilt, while potatoes and topinambours will thrive in a dressing. Skewer the vegetables half an hour or so before your guests arrive, arrange in a platter, cover, and refrigerate. Just before serving, spoon on a little more dressing and sprinkle on finely minced fresh herbs, such as parsley and chives, or whatever other herbal delight your garden offers, like fresh chervil, tarragon, or basil. Here are some vegetable choices that have been successfully skewered in our house. (See

index for various dressings.)

*Artichokes:* hearts or bottoms, cooked in a *blanc* (as described on page 203) and halved or quartered, depending on size. Toss in the dressing half an hour or longer before skewering.

*Avocados:* skewered at the last minute. However, avocado chunks will hold quite nicely if you dip them first for a moment in a solution of cold water and lemon juice, in the proportions of 1 tablespoon of lemon juice for 8 of water.

*Cherry tomatoes:* either impaled whole, as is, or halved and tossed in dressing just before skewering.

*Cucumbers:* peeled, halved lengthwise, seeded, and cut into chunks. I always marinate them first for 20 minutes or longer in a little salt, a pinch of sugar, and droplets of wine vinegar ( $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt,  $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon sugar, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon vinegar per cucumber).

*Mushrooms:* use small caps or quartered large caps and drop for 1 minute in boiling water with lemon and salt to keep them fresh-looking. Toss in the dressing and leave for an hour, or more if you wish, before skewering.

*Onions:* the very small white ones. Drop into boiling water for  $\frac{1}{2}$  minute, then peel and simmer until just tender in lightly



salted water. Marinate for as long as you wish in the dressing.

*Peppers:* either green or red, halved, seeded, and cut into 1-inch (2½-cm) pieces. Drop them for 1 minute into boiling water just to soften slightly, then drain. Toss in dressing just before skewering.

*Potatoes:* small new ones. Boil in their skins in lightly salted water, just until tender. Peel or not, as you wish. Marinate while still warm in your dressing for as long as you like. (You wouldn't need potatoes when serving potato salad, of course, but they are good on skewers—be sure you have the waxy boiling kind or they will break up when pierced.)

*Topinambours* (Jerusalem artichokes or sunchoke): cook them in a *blanc* (as described on page 203) and toss while still warm in the dressing, letting them marinate for as long as you wish.

*Turnips:* white turnips or even the yellow rutabaga. Peel, cut into appropriate-size chunks, and boil in lightly salted water until just tender. Toss while still warm in the dressing, letting them marinate for as long as you wish.

*Zucchini:* scrub them, trim the two ends, but do not peel them. Boil whole in lightly salted water until barely tender. Cube them. Toss in dressing half an hour or so before serving.

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## Boston or Butter Lettuce Salad

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Rosie very carefully separates each perfect leaf from the central stem, washes the leaves with care in a basin of water, drains them on a towel or in the dish drainer, then gently surrounds them with clean towels and a plastic bag, and refrigerates them. Half an hour or so before serving, she arranges them stem down and smallest leaves in the center in a big bowl, so that the salad looks like an enormous head of lettuce sitting there. She covers the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerates it, and just before serving she dribbles a *vinaigrette* dressing, such as the one on page 205, all around and over the leaves. No tossing is necessary, and serving is easy since one picks up the leaves without disturbing the design—at least until near the end.



# Apple Turnover

I am particularly fond of the free-form turnover, since one can make it any size and shape, from mini to gargantua. Round is pretty, but either square or rectangular is more practical because it uses less dough and the leftovers are evenly shaped and therefore easily turned into decorations.

*For 1 large turnover about 9 by 9 inches (23 x 23 cm), serving 6 to 8*

**Sweet pie dough**

*Pâte brisée fine, sucrée*

1½ cups (215 g) all-purpose flour, unbleached preferred

½ cup (70 g) plain bleached cake flour

1½ sticks (6 ounces or 170 g) chilled unsalted butter and 2 Tb shortening

2 Tb sugar

¼ tsp salt

½ cup (1 dL), more or less, iced water

**Other ingredients for the turnover**

4 or 5 apples that will keep their shape in cooking, such as Golden Delicious, Rome Beauty, Newton, Monroe, Northern Spy

3 Tb or more sugar

½ tsp, more or less, powdered cinnamon (optional)

The grated rind and the juice of ½ lemon (optional)

1 Tb or more melted butter

Egg glaze (1 egg beaten in a cup with 1 tsp water)

**Equipment**

A food processor is dandy for making the dough; a rolling pin; a buttered pastry sheet; a pastry brush for glazing the tart



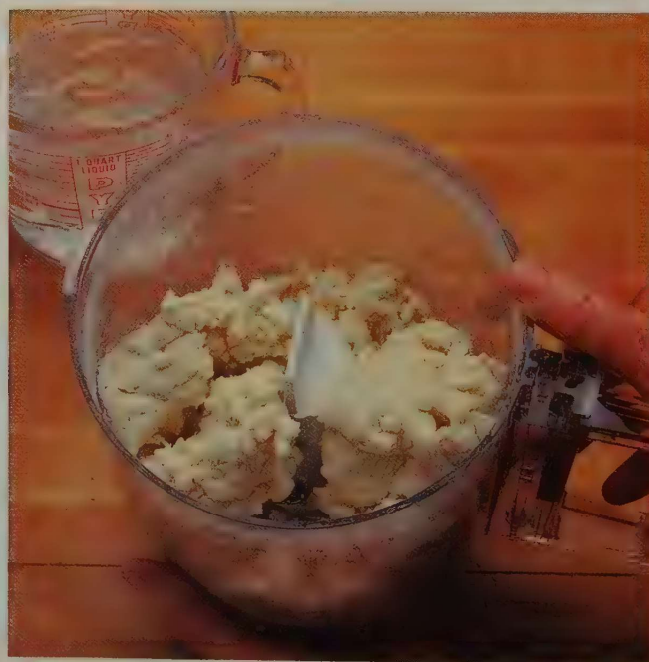
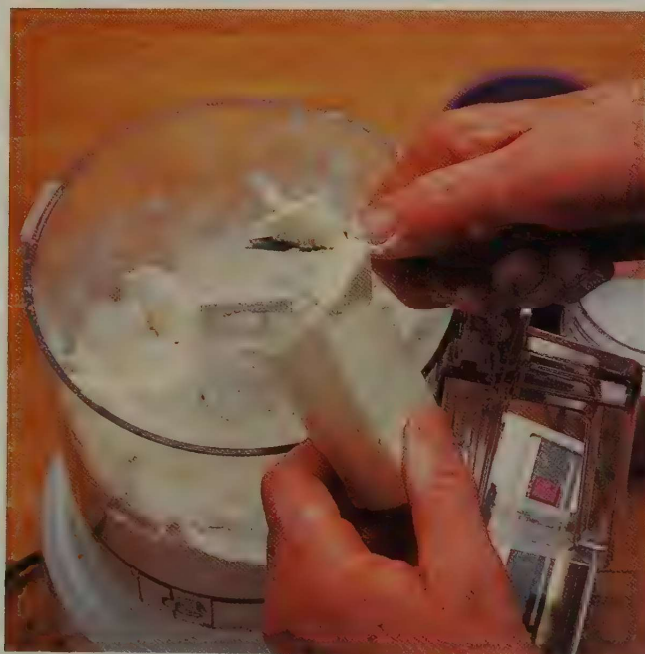
### The dough

Of course you can make the dough by hand or in an electric mixer, but the food processor is sensationally fast and foolproof using these proportions. Proceed as follows: with metal blade in place, measure the flours into the bowl of the machine, cut the butter rapidly into pieces the size of your little-finger joint, and drop into the flour, along with the sugar, shortening, and salt. Using the on-off flick technique lasting  $\frac{1}{2}$  second, process 7 to 8 flicks, just to start breaking up the butter. Then, with water poised over opening of machine, turn it on and pour in all but 1 tablespoon of the iced water. Process in spurts, on and off, just until dough begins to mass together but is still rough with some unformed bits. Turn it out onto your work surface and mass together rapidly with the heel of one hand into a somewhat rough cake. (Dough should be pliable—neither dry and hard nor, on the other hand, sticky. Pat in sprinkles more of all-purpose flour if sticky; cut into pieces and sprinkle on droplets more water if dry and hard, then re-form into a cake.) Wrap in plastic and refrigerate for at least an hour, to congeal the butter in the dough so that it will roll easily, and to allow the flour particles to absorb the water so that it will handle nicely and bake properly.

① May be made 2 or 3 days in advance and refrigerated—but if you have used unbleached flour it will gradually turn grayish; it can still be baked at that point if only mildly discolored since it will whiten in the oven. Or freeze the dough, which is the best plan when you want to have ready dough available; defrost at room temperature or overnight in the refrigerator—dough should be cold and firm for easy rolling.

### The apples

Quarter, core, and peel the apples, then cut into thinnish lengthwise slices. Toss in a mixing bowl with sugar and optional cinnamon and lemon rind and juice. Cover with plastic wrap and let macerate for 20 minutes or longer, so that apples will exude their excess juices.



### Forming the turnover

(Always work rapidly from here on to prevent the dough from softening; if it becomes difficult to handle, refrigerate it at once for 20 minutes or so, then continue.) Roll the chilled dough into a rectangle 20 inches long and 10 inches wide (50 x 25 cm) and trim off the edges with a pastry wheel or a knife—refrigerate trimmings for decorations later. Lightly flour surface of dough, fold in half end to end, and center on the buttered pastry sheet. Place a piece of wax paper at edge of fold, and unfold top of dough onto paper. Paint a border of cold water around the 3 edges of the bottom piece and pile the apples onto it, leaving a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (2-cm) border free at the 3 edges. Sprinkle on more sugar, and a tablespoon or so of melted butter. Flip top of dough over onto the apples, and press edges firmly together, to seal. Turn up the 3 edges all around, then press a design into them (to seal further) with the tines of a table fork and, if you wish, press a decorative edging all around those sides with the back of a knife.

🕒 If you have time, it is a good idea at this point to refrigerate the turnover (covered lightly with plastic wrap) for half an hour (or for several hours); it will bake more evenly

when the dough has had time to relax, and you, in turn, will have time to turn your leftover bits of dough into a mock puff pastry which will rise into a splendid design.

### Mock puff pastry decorations

(For massed scraps about the size of a half tennis ball)

Knead leftover raw pastry scraps briefly into a cake, roll into a rectangle, and spread 1 teaspoon of butter down two-thirds of its length. Fold into 3 as though folding a business letter; repeat with another roll-out, buttering, and fold-up. Wrap and refrigerate for 20 to 30 minutes, then roll and fold (but omit butter) 2 more times. For the simple decorations I used on this turnover, roll out again into a rectangle about 10 inches (25 cm) long, and cut into 5 strips about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cm) wide. Refrigerate, covered, until ready to use.



**Decorating and baking the turnover**

Preheat oven to 400°F/200°C. Paint top of turnover lightly with cold water. To simulate wrapping ribbon for your turnover "parcel," crisscross 2 strips of dough, laying them from corner to corner; lay 1 crosswise from top to bottom, and a final one horizontally, as shown. Loop the final strip into a loose knot and place on top. Pierce 2 steam holes 1/16 inch (¼ cm) in diameter in top of dough with the point of a knife, going down through the dough to the apples. Paint top of dough and decorations with a coating of egg glaze, wait a moment, and paint on another coat. (Egg glaze goes on just the moment before baking.) Make crosshatchings in the glaze with the back of a knife or the tines of a table fork—to give it a more interesting texture when baked.

Set turnover in the middle level of preheated oven and bake for 20 minutes, then check to see if it is browning too much. It bakes 35 to 40 minutes in all, and does best at high heat so the pastry will crisp; if it seems to be cooking too fast, turn oven down a little and/or cover top of turnover loosely with foil. It is done when bottom has browned nicely and when juices begin to bubble out of steam holes. Remove from oven and slide it out onto

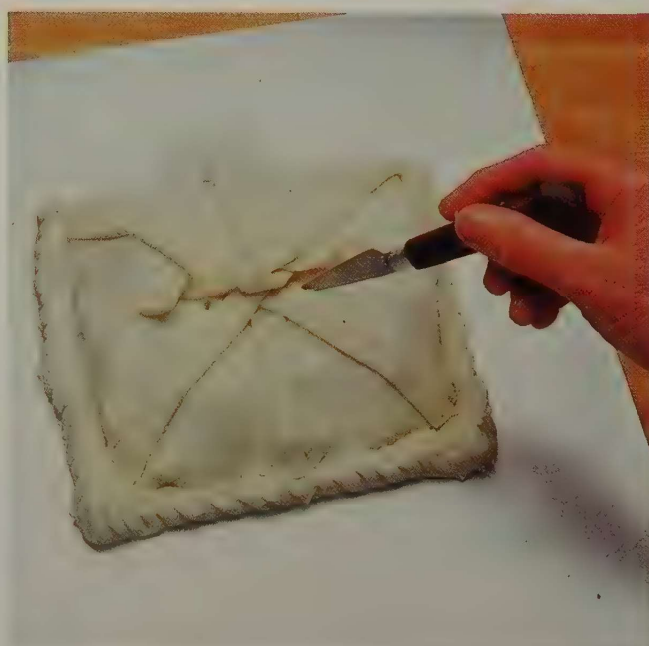
a rack. Serve hot, warm, or cold. You may wish to accompany the turnover with vanilla ice cream, fresh cream, lightly whipped and sweetened cream, or custard sauce.

**Remarks:**

*Other sizes, other fillings.* You can, of course, make turnovers any size and shape you wish, and you can use all sorts of fillings as long as they are not too juicy. Always macerate fresh fruit first with sugar and lemon to force out their excess juices, and a very juicy fruit should first be cooked. Canned fruits or jams bake well in turnovers, as do all sorts of dried nut and fruit mixtures.

**Pie and Quiche Dough:**

Use the same proportions of butter, flour, and water for meat pies, turnovers, and quiches but omit the sugar and increase the salt to ¾ teaspoon in all.



## 🕒 Timing

Wait till you hear the doorbell ring before drizzling dressing on the lettuce salad. Your only other last-minute job is the pleasant one of arranging beautiful platters and setting them out. Part of the skewered salad and the dressing can be prepared that morning, but the skewering itself, and the brief marination of mushrooms, cherry tomatoes, zucchini, and peppers, is done half an hour before guests are due.

Otherwise, all your preparations can be made the day before; and the turnover dough can be frozen. While the Chicken Melon roasts, you can cook the hard-boiled eggs, make mayonnaise, and prepare some of the salad vegetables: artichokes, onions, potatoes, topinambours, and turnips.

If you've never boned a chicken before, it's wise to make your first attempt at a leisurely pace, giving yourself time to stop frequently and take a fix on your location in the sometimes bewildering mass of flesh and bone. Once you've done it and understood it, this job is a breeze ever after, and takes little more time than, for example, carving a cooked bird.

## Menu Variations

*The Chicken Melon:* You can bone, stuff, tie, and roast almost any bird, or bake it in a pastry crust (see *Mastering II*), or poach it instead of roasting it and finish with an aspic glaze. Or simply pack the *pâté* stuffing into a terrine and bake it that way, or bake it skinless in a pastry case. But if you have a crust here, you will not want one for dessert!

*The salads:* If you omit the potato salad, a loaf or two of French bread will provide starch. For the lettuce salad, when perfect leaf lettuce is unavailable, substitute one of the mixed salads in this book. The make-up of the skewered vegetable salad will be determined by the season anyway.

*The Apple Turnover:* You could make little individual turnovers by the same recipe—but baking time will be only 20 to 30 minutes. Or use the same dough to make a tart or tartlets: bake the shell or shells, waterproof the inside with a melted jelly glaze, arrange the fruit (cooked or not, depending on type), and glaze again (see *Mastering I* for a basic method).

## Leftovers

*The Chicken Melon:* You might plan to have a little extra of the stuffing mixture and save it for a special meal! Lightly formed into little cakes, dredged with flour, and sautéed, it is a charming luncheon or first-course dish, something between a *quenelle* or mousse and a chickenburger, and can be given extra savor by a creamy, full-flavored *béchamel* sauce (for which you'd save every drop of degreased roasting juice). You can freeze an uncooked *pâté* mixture or the raw chicken melon itself; but few *pâtés* take kindly to freezing after cooking. However, a cooked, finished "melon" will keep a week under refrigeration.

*The salads:* The potato salad will keep in the refrigerator for 3 or 4 days; but not if it has sat at room temperature for any length of time. That's because mayonnaise, like any egg mixture, is vulnerable to bacterial action. If you have marinated vegetables to spare, why not dice them, fold into a mayonnaise, and serve on lettuce next day as a *macédoine* salad?

*The Apple Turnover:* If you have extra dough, refrigerate it or freeze it (see recipe) and use again (see Menu Variations). Extra macerated fruit can always be cooked gently, then puréed and used as a sauce for custard or rice pudding. The cooked turnover itself will freeze and may be reheated in the oven.

## HB Eggs

*An unusual and successful way to boil and peel them*

The perfect hard-boiled egg is one that is perfectly unblemished when peeled; its white is tender, its yolk is nicely centered and just set, and no dark line surrounds it. Excess heat toughens the egg, and excess heat also causes that dark line between yolk and white. To illustrate such a perfect estate, way back in the 1960s I did a whole television program on this earth-shaking subject, calling it "HB Eggs." No sooner was it aired than our French Chef office was flooded with suggestions, some of which were very useful indeed. As an example, one viewer suggested the use of an egg pricker, an instrument that pierces the shell at the large end to release the contents of its ever-present air pocket; if the air is allowed to remain it will expand when the egg heats, and that sometimes causes the shell to crack.

The most interesting idea came from the Georgia Egg Board, and the reason they got into the picture is that Georgia is a breeding ground not only for Presidents and peaches, but also for millions of eggs boiled and peeled by home cooks and especially by business enterprises. Because of the egg's commercial importance, scientists at the University of Georgia undertook a study involving over 800 of them and concluded that the best way of shrinking the egg body from the shell, to make for easy peeling, was to plunge the just-boiled eggs into iced water for one minute, meanwhile bringing the cooking water back to the boil, then to plunge the eggs into boiling water for ten seconds, and right after that to peel them. The iced water shrinks egg from shell, and the subsequent short boil expands shell from egg.

I tried out the Georgia method, found it good, and described it in my monthly column for *McCall's* magazine, thereby receiving even more new suggestions, including one from a testy 74-year-old asking if the U. of Georgia had nothing better to do! They should ask their grandmothers, said she who has been

boiling eggs since she was a little girl: she boils them 12 to 15 minutes, plunges them into cold water, and has never had the slightest bit of trouble peeling them.

However, since an actual boil really does produce a tough egg, the Georgia people will just tolerate a simmer but prefer what I call “the 17-minute sit-in,” where eggs are submerged in a pan of cold water, brought to the boil, then covered and removed from heat to remain for 17 minutes before their rapid cooling and peeling. I was therefore skeptical indeed when a letter came from the American Egg Board in Chicago outlining a series of experiments conducted by the Department of Poultry Science at the University of Wisconsin, using—of all things—the pressure cooker. How did they ever dream that up? I wonder. But it works very well indeed, and here is how to go about it.

#### HB eggs in the pressure cooker

1. Pour enough water into the pan of the cooker to cover the number of eggs you plan to cook—2 inches (5 cm) for 12 eggs is usually sufficient. Bring the water to the boil.

2. Meanwhile, wash the eggs in warm water with detergent to remove possible preserving spray from shells and to take the chill off the eggs. Rinse thoroughly. (Do not pierce them.)

3. Remove the pressure pan from heat, gently lower eggs into water, cover the pan, and bring rapidly to full (15 pounds) pressure. Immediately remove pan from heat and let sit under pressure for exactly five minutes.

4. At once release pressure, drain eggs, and cool them in cold water—or iced water.

5. Peel the eggs as soon as possible.

I must admit that my first trial with this method gave me some qualms, but it worked—the eggs peeled beautifully. I kept at it, finding sometimes that the yolks were not entirely set at the very central point, but I never have had any trouble peeling. My last experiment was, I feel, pretty conclusive since I had managed to get some absolutely fresh eggs, laid by the young hens of a retired vicar on Cape Cod, each egg carefully dated on the large end. They were laid on a Sunday, boiled on a Monday,

and that’s about as fresh a dozen eggs as I am ever likely to get. Here are the results:

1. Four eggs cooked by the coddle method (brought to the boil, removed from heat, covered, and let sit for 17 minutes). Two of these simply chilled in cold water—peeled with difficulty. Two of these chilled in iced water for 1 minute, plunged into boiling water for ten seconds, then chilled briefly and peeled—peeled with some difficulty but more easily than the first batch.

2. Four eggs done in the electric egg steamer/poacher. Peeled easily, but seemed a little tough. (And, by the way, mine poaches me a tough egg, too.)

3. Four eggs done in the pressure cooker. Peeled easily, and whites were tender.

Conclusion: The pressure cooker is great for HB eggs!

#### Peeling addendum

Two of my *McCall's* readers suggested a helpful peeling trick: after cracking the shells all over and peeling a circle of shell off the large end, slip an ordinary teaspoon between shell and egg and work it down the egg all around to the small end, manipulating the egg under a thin stream of cold water or in a bowl of water as you go.

*The ugly dark line around the yolk on the left is due to excessive heat—the perfect HB egg is on the right.*



*Don't try to fool a dieter's appetite. Excite it. Beautiful, contrasting, full-flavored, this is food, not fodder; and a little feels like a lot.*



# Lo-Cal Banquet

## Menu

*Angosoda Cocktail*



*Appetizer of Shrimp, Green Beans, and Sliced Mushrooms*



*Chicken Bouillabaisse with Rouille, a Garlic and Pimiento Sauce*



*Steamed Rice*



*Caramel-crowned Steam-baked Apples*



*Suggested wines:*

*A hearty Pinot Blanc or white Châteauneuf-du-Pape*

When you're on a diet, do you feel you "just can't give a dinner party"? Or does it depress you to plan a menu for dieting guests? I sympathize, because "diet food," as such, is dismal food: no fun to plan, no fun to fix. Pure labor in vain. Fake food—I mean those patented substances chemically flavored and mechanically bulked out to kill the appetite and deceive the gut—is unnatural, almost immoral, a bane to good eating and good cooking. I'd rather look at it this way: nothing, except conscious virtue, can mitigate the groaning intervals between a dieter's meals; but why should the meals, too, be a penance? On the contrary. Light food for sharp appetites should stimulate, then satisfy, with calories allotted to bulk and balance and a few strategically disposed—like crack troops—where they'll be most telling: for flavoring, for unctuous or crackling texture, for mouth-filling opulence. The relish of it! Dieters are the best audience a cook ever has, for they savor and remember every morsel.

Of course Paul and I have to diet every now and then. It helps to have happy, busy lives and to get some exercise. Believing in the healthy body's wisdom, that what you want is what you need, we seek variety and practice moderation, eat less and enjoy it more than when we were young string beans. But sometimes we have absentminded or greedy spells, and the day comes when we start planning and get out the old notebook. All right: 1200 calories each per diem. Breakfast, 150; lunch, 200; dinner, 800. Fifty calories are left out, you'll notice; it's our error factor—a small one, since we are faithful about recording every stray bite or sample while cooking. Authorities vary in the calorie amounts they give, so we take the

highest we can find for each item. Better, we think, to deprive than to deceive ourselves; but we soften the deprivation by allotting 100 of our dinner calories to a glass of good wine. It never tastes better!

At parties, we eat a bit of everything, but we are glad of the growing fashion for lighter, more savory menus. More thoughtful planning, more scrupulous preparation, are the modern cook's response to the challenge: make every calorie count. Don't hesitate to invite nondieters to the meal I'm about to describe, or even the lean and hungry young. You can double quantities, add bread or extras like cookies or cakes for dessert for them, or otherwise supplement or vary the menu (see Menu Variations); but it's certainly not necessary. This meal is so delicious, they'll take big helpings and return for seconds; but a moderate portion of each dish, though you'd hardly believe it, adds up to a sensible 678 calories. There's no trick to it, and no secret—only a well-considered application of the simplest principles of sound gastronomy: contrast, balance, beauty, savor, and style.

A subtle appetizer of shrimp, fresh green beans, and thinly sliced raw mushrooms arranged on watercress; a bouillabaisse of chicken, robust and aromatic, heaped on steamed rice and richly enhanced with a Provençal *rouille*; and a fresh, fragrant dessert of apples, steam-baked with wine, lemon, and stick cinnamon, then webbed with glistening caramel—this meal has everything. Everything plus. The ingredients aren't expensive; most of the work can be done in advance; and, since the dishes are all cooked on top of the stove, you won't waste fuel. And finally, the leftovers: delicious, elegant, and infinitely transformable. Sometimes I buy and cook the whole works in double quantities. Why not have two meals for the effort of one?

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#### A Note on Alcohol and Calories:

As opposed to wine, which is a food as well as something to lift your spirits, liquor is full of empty but horribly real calories that don't nourish you. Only the most serious dieters need omit wine altogether, but instead of a cocktail I suggest you try

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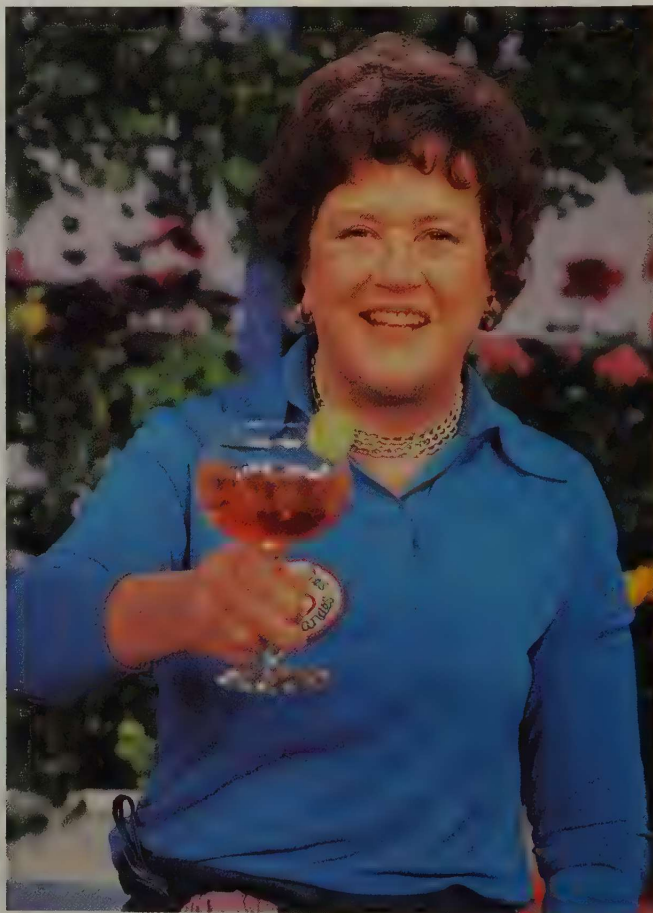
#### The Angosoda Cocktail:

In a large, handsome stemmed glass, place several cubes of ice, dash on a few drops of Angostura Bitters, add a slice of lime, and fill up with sparkling water. The fizz, the rosy color, and the dot of green are attractive, and it tastes like a real drink.

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#### On Wine in Cooking:

Calorie counters can use a lot, and I do. The alcohol, which carries the calories, evaporates away in a moment of cooking. The flavor, now a bit softer and subtler, remains to give your dish complexity and depth of taste that make it more satisfying as well as more delicious.



## Preparations

### Marketing and Storage: Staples to have on hand

Salt  
 Peppercorns  
 Granulated sugar  
 Pure vanilla extract  
 Hot pepper sauce  
 Whole fennel seeds  
 Dried thyme  
 Dried oregano (if you can't get fresh basil) ▼  
 Bay leaves  
 Saffron threads ▼  
 Stick cinnamon  
 Dried orange peel ▼  
 Angostura Bitters  
 Plain canned tomato sauce  
 Long-grain untreated white Carolina rice ▼  
 Onions (ordinary white or yellow)  
 Garlic  
 Fresh bread crumbs (in the freezer;  
 see page 6)  
 Lemons (1)  
 Eggs (1)  
 Canned pimiento  
 Dry white wine or dry white French  
 vermouth  
 Soda water

### Specific ingredients for this menu

Shrimp (24 "large medium") ▼  
 Chicken (two fryers, or 16 pieces of cut-up  
 chicken) ▼  
 Green beans (½ pound or 225 g)  
 Mushrooms (12)  
 Watercress  
 Parsley  
 Leeks (about 4)  
 Tomatoes (about 12) ▼  
 Apples (6, Golden Delicious if possible) ▼

### ► *Remarks:* Staples

*Dried oregano:* substituted for dried basil, because I don't think the latter has much flavor. *Fresh basil:* grow your own if you have a sunny spot; it's incomparable. *Saffron threads:* specified because powdered saffron may not be pure. The real saffron threads, which bear the pollen in a certain kind of crocus, are something of a luxury, but you use them sparingly. And you must, because too much saffron produces a medicinal taste which can't be corrected. *Dried orange peel:* to make your own, using a vegetable peeler take 2-inch-long (5-cm) strips of zest off an orange, let dry for a day or two on paper towels, then bottle—keeps indefinitely. *Long-grain untreated white Carolina rice* (see "Rice Talk," page 63): this is best



for steaming. The plump, nutty-flavored grains of Italian rice will too often degenerate into a gluey mass.

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#### Ingredients for this menu

*Shrimp*: if you're lucky enough to live near the seacoast and to have a trustworthy market, you may be able to get them fresh and alive. Otherwise, your safest bet is to buy them raw in the shell, frozen solid in a block. Keep them that way until ready to cook; then thaw rapidly in lots of cold water and peel as soon as you can detach them from the frozen mass. Devein them: if you see a black line, it's the intestinal vein; you can usually pull it out from the large end without slitting the shrimp. (See "Fish Talk," page 111, for illustration.) *Chicken*: fryers are perfect for the fricassee method, which you employ in making this bouillabaisse. It is easy to cut up your own.

But if you decide on ready-cut chicken, note that thighs are the best buy: they are cheaper than drumsticks and have more flesh and less bone. Before storing or cooking chicken, be on the safe side: rinse with warm water, inside and out, and dry before refrigerating. If you're going to keep it more than a day or two, refrigerate it in a plastic bag set in a bowl of ice cubes which you renew as needed. *Vegetables*: refrigerate unwashed beans in a plastic bag until ready to prepare; mushrooms and leeks ditto. Parsley and cress can be freshened by soaking several hours in cold water. Then drain; shake dry and roll up loosely in paper towels and refrigerate in plastic bags. Be sure your garlic is not dried out. Sniff your bottled herbs and spices for freshness—they should always be kept out of the light. *Tomatoes*: be sure you get in your tomatoes several days in advance to let them ripen properly. (See "Tomato Talk," page 159.) *Apples*: some of the most savory varieties turn into mush when steamed. Depending on where you live, try Golden Delicious, Rome Beauty, York Imperial, Greening, Newton, Monroe, or Northern Spy. The Golden Delicious, available in most regions, is always reliable, and its flavor will be enhanced by the spice and wine; its green-yellow skin is a nice pale topaz after cooking.

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## Appetizer of Shrimp, Green Beans, and Sliced Mushrooms

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*For 6 people*

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1/2 pound (225 g) green beans

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12 large mushrooms

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Fresh lemon juice

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24 "large medium" shrimp

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3/4 cup (1 3/4 dL) dry white French vermouth  
or 1 cup (1/4 L) dry white wine

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1 Tb minced shallots or scallions

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1/2 tsp salt

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1/4 tsp dried dill weed

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Several grinds black pepper

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Watercress or parsley

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Garnish: lemon wedges; small pitcher olive oil

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#### The beans

Several hours or the morning before serving, wash the fresh green beans. Snap off each end with your fingers, pulling down the bean's



seam to remove any lurking string. Plunge the beans into 3 to 4 quarts or liters of rapidly boiling salted water and boil uncovered 5 to 8 minutes (tasting frequently after 5 minutes) until beans are just cooked through. They are done when still a little crunchy and still bright green. (There has been a vogue for describing such beans as “crunchily underdone,” but I do think such terms are used by those who have been brought up on frozen beans, which have no crunch, and little taste either, for that matter. Properly cooked beans are just cooked through; improperly cooked beans are either over- or underdone.) Once the beans are just cooked through, then, drain in a colander, run cold water into the kettle, and dump the beans back in to refresh them and stop the cooking—this also serves to retain their fresh texture and bright green color. Drain again, dry in a towel, and chill in a plastic bag.

#### The mushrooms

An hour before serving, trim the fresh large fine mushrooms, wash rapidly, and dry. Slice thinly and neatly, and toss in a little fresh lemon juice to prevent discoloration. Arrange on a dish, cover with plastic wrap, and chill.

#### The shrimp

Several hours or the morning before serving, simmer the raw peeled shrimp in the dry white French vermouth or dry white wine, minced shallots or scallions, salt, dried dill weed, and pepper. Toss and turn the shrimp in the liquid for 2 to 3 minutes, until shrimp curl and just become springy to the touch. Remove shrimp to a bowl, then rapidly boil down the cooking liquid to a syrupy consistency; pour it back over the shrimp, tossing several times. Chill.

#### To serve

An hour before serving, slice the shrimp in half horizontally—so they will look like more shrimp!—and arrange tastefully, either on individual plates or on a platter, with watercress or parsley, the beans, and the mushrooms. Cover with plastic wrap and chill until dinner time. Pass lemon wedges with the appetizer and a little pitcher of good olive oil for those who are permitted such luxury.

## Chicken Bouillabaisse with Rouille

*Fricassee of chicken with leeks, tomatoes, herbs, and wine, with a garlic and pimiento sauce on the side*

*For 6 people with ample leftovers*

Two 3½-pound (1¼-kg) fryers, or 16 chicken pieces, such as thighs, drumsticks, breast halves

⅓ cup (¾ dL) olive oil

3 cups (¾ L) combination of thinly sliced white of leek and onions, or onions only

3 to 4 large cloves garlic

4 cups (1 L) fresh tomato pulp (about 2½ pounds or 1 kg tomatoes, peeled, seeded, juiced, sliced)

2 to 4 Tb plain tomato sauce, or as needed, for added flavor

½ tsp fennel seeds, 1 tsp thyme, large pinch saffron threads, two 2-inch (5-cm) strips dried orange peel, 2 imported bay leaves

Salt

2 cups (½ L) dry white French vermouth

Pepper

Fresh chopped parsley

#### Preliminary cooking of the chicken

If you are cutting up the chicken yourself, as I like to do, see illustrated directions in *J.C.'s Kitchen*, page 228. Dry the chicken pieces and place with the olive oil in a large skillet or casserole over moderate heat. Simmer about 10 minutes, turning the pieces several times in the hot oil until they stiffen slightly but do not brown. While the chicken is cooking, wash and slice the leeks, peel and slice the onion, and peel and chop the garlic.

When chicken has stiffened, remove it to a side dish, leaving oil in pan. Stir in the leeks, onions, and garlic; cook slowly 5 minutes or so, until fairly soft but not browned. Meanwhile, peel, seed, and juice the tomatoes (see "Tomato Talk," page 159); slice them roughly and fold into the leeks, onions and garlic along with the fennel, thyme, saffron, orange peel, and bay leaves. Taste, and if the tomatoes aren't flavorful enough, add a little tomato sauce as needed. Then salt the chicken on all sides. Arrange in the pan, basting with the vegetables. Cover and cook 5 minutes; turn, baste, cover, and cook 5 minutes more.

🕒 Recipe may be completed to this point several hours or even a day in advance. Let cool, then cover and refrigerate. Bring to the simmer again, covered, before proceeding.

#### Finishing the cooking

An hour before serving, pour in the wine, cover the pan, and simmer 15 to 20 minutes more, basting and turning the chicken several

times just until the pieces are tender when pierced with a fork. Remove chicken to a side dish, tilt pan, and skim off all visible cooking fat; then rapidly boil down cooking liquid to thicken it. Taste very carefully for seasoning, adding salt and pepper to taste. Return chicken to pan, baste with the sauce, set cover askew, and keep warm (but well below the simmer) until serving time. When ready to bring to the table, arrange the chicken and sauce on a hot platter and decorate with parsley. Pass the special sauce (next recipe) separately.

#### Dieting Notes:

To cut down on calories, you can peel the skin off the chicken after it is cooked as described in the preceding paragraph and do a very thorough degreasing of the sauce before boiling it down—even pour it through a sieve, so that you can remove the fat more easily from the liquid. Then return contents of sieve and skimmed liquid to the cooking pan with the chicken.



# Rouille

*Garlic and pimiento sauce. To serve with a bouillabaisse, or with pasta, boiled potatoes or beans, boiled fish or chicken, and so forth*

6 cloves garlic

1 tsp salt

12 large leaves fresh basil (or 1 tsp dried oregano)

1/3 cup (3/4 dL) canned red pimiento

1/3 cup (3/4 dL) lightly pressed down fresh white nonsweet bread crumbs

1 egg yolk

1 cup (1/4 L) olive oil

Freshly ground pepper

Drops of hot pepper sauce

## Equipment

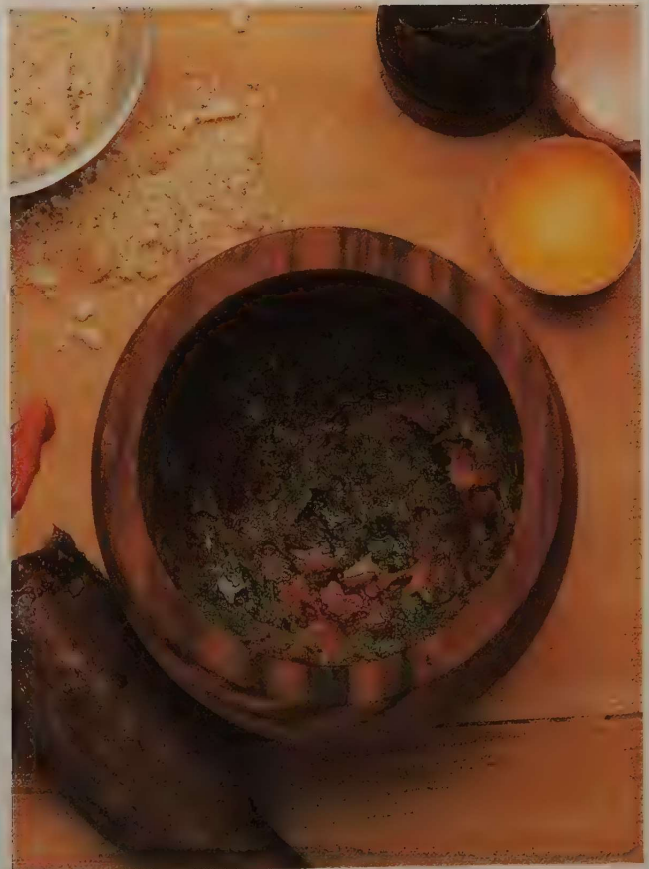
A mortar and pestle are nice, but you can use the bottom of a ladle and a sturdy bowl, which, if not metal, should be set on a mat so it won't crack.

Purée the garlic cloves through a press into a mortar or bowl. Then pound the garlic with the salt into a smooth paste. Pound in the basil or oregano. When the mixture is smooth, add the pimiento and pound again; then add the crumbs, and finally pound in the egg yolk. Switch from pestle to wire whisk and, drop by drop at first, beat in the olive oil until mixture has thickened like mayonnaise, then beat in the oil a little faster to make a quite stiff sauce. Season highly with pepper and hot sauce.

● May be made a day or two in advance. Refrigerate in a covered container; remove and let come to room temperature an hour before serving.

## Remarks:

This redolent sauce, named for its rich rust color, is high in calories; but even a small dollop adds a voluptuous texture and hearty flavor to a serving of the bouillabaisse. I find it more satisfying to take one piece of chicken, rather than two, and enjoy it with the *rouille*.



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## Steamed Rice

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For 4½ cups

1½ cups (3½ dL) plain raw white rice

2 tsp salt

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In a large pot, bring 6 to 8 cups (1½ to 2 L) water to rolling boil, add rice and salt, and boil 7 to 8 minutes, or until *al dente*. Test by biting a grain. It should have a tiny hard core. Drain in a colander, and rinse under cold running water to remove all traces of starch—which would make the rice gummy.

🕒 Rice may be cooked ahead to this point even a day in advance, and its final cooking finished later.

About 15 minutes before serving, set colander of rice over a kettle of boiling water (bottom of colander should not rest in the water). Cover colander with a lid or a clean towel and steam just until rice is tender. Toss it once or twice to be sure it is steaming evenly. Do not overcook: ends of rice should remain rounded (splayed-out ends declare rice to be overdone).

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## Caramel-crowned Steam-baked Apples

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1 cup (2 dL) white wine, or half wine or dry white vermouth and water, or water only

2 tsp pure vanilla extract

½ lemon

6 cooking apples (Golden Delicious or others that will keep their shape)

4 or more Tb sugar

Maraschino cherries

½ cup (1 dL) sugar

3 Tb water

Stick cinnamon

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### Equipment

Get a steaming rack, now available almost anywhere. It's perfect for most fruits and vegetables, though not for rice. The kind I like doesn't work for pudding, either, since it is lifted out of the pot by a vertical center handle. It's made of stainless steel and consists of a round perforated bottom dish standing on folding legs an inch or so high. Hinged around the circumference of the disk is a series of perforated flaps that fold inward for storage and outward, against the edge of the saucepan, when the steamer is in use.

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Into a saucepan large enough to hold steamer and apples comfortably with a cover, put the liquid, vanilla, cinnamon, and several strips of



lemon peel, adding water if necessary so you have  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cm) liquid in the pan for the steaming operation. Wash and core the apples, and peel half the way down from blossom (small) end, dropping peel into saucepan with steaming-liquid—to give added flavor and body to it for later. Place steamer in pan and the apples, peeled ends up, upon it. Squeeze the juice of the half lemon over the apples, and sprinkle on as much sugar as you think appropriate for the apples you are using. Bring to the simmer, cover the pan closely, and regulate heat so that liquid is barely simmering—too intense a steam will cause the apples to disintegrate—and keep checking on their progress. They should be done in 15 to 20 minutes when you can pierce them easily with a small knife.

① Apples may be cooked a day or more ahead and served cold.

Set the apples on a serving dish or on individual plates or bowls. Remove steamer from pan; boil down the cooking liquid rapidly until lightly syrupy, sweeten to taste, and strain over the apples. Decorate each with a maraschino cherry.

#### The caramel

Shortly before serving, prepare a caramel syrup. Bring  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (1 dL) sugar and 3 table-

spoons water to the boil in a small, heavy saucepan, then remove from heat and swirl pan until all sugar has dissolved and liquid is clear—an essential step in sugar-boiling operations, to prevent sugar from crystallizing. Then return to heat, bring again to the boil, cover, and boil rapidly for a minute or so until bubbles are large and thick, indicating that liquid has almost evaporated. Remove cover and boil, swirling pan gently by its handle but *never never* stirring, until syrup turns a nice, not-too-dark caramel brown. Immediately set bottom of pan in cold water and stir with a spoon for a few seconds until caramel cools slightly and begins to thicken. It should ooze off the spoon in lazy, thick strands. This is important, because if you put it on the apples too soon, when it's too hot or too thin, it'll just slide off onto the dish. Rapidly decorate the apples with strands of syrup dripped over them from tip of spoon, waving it over them in a circular spiral to make attractive patterns.

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#### Remarks:

To clean the caramel pan and the spoon easily, simply fill pan with water and set to simmer for a few minutes to dissolve all traces of caramel.



## 🕒 Timing

This is an easy menu, and you can be leisurely getting most of it done ahead. If you want to do as much as possible in advance, start by deciding to serve the apples cold. Then look at the recipes for suggestions and for the point marked 🕒. For this menu, you can start as much as two days ahead of time.

There's only one last-minute job: as your guests sit down to their appetizer, turn on the heat under the rice for its final steaming.

Half an hour before serving the main course, finish simmering the chicken.

An hour before your guests arrive, take the *rouille* from the refrigerator, but don't give it a final stir until it has reached room temperature. Slice limes for your Angosoda Cocktail, and place in a covered dish.

About two hours before the party, arrange the appetizer on a large platter or individual plates, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate. Chill white wine if you're serving it.

Several hours—but not the day—before, accomplish the second stage of the *bouillabaisse*, that of boiling down the sauce, tasting and correcting the seasoning. Wash, blanch, drain, and dry green beans. Clean and slice mushrooms, toss in lemon juice to keep white, and chill. Prepare and chill shrimp. Make a caramel sauce, let cool a bit, and decorate the apples.

Still on the day of your party, start cooking chicken.

A day or so before, you can steam the apples and start the rice.

The *bouilla*-“base,” the concentrate of vegetables, herbs, and wine, though better flavored if made with the chicken in it, can in fact be made well in advance. It doesn't hurt to cook the vegetables the day before you make the “base.” Keep them covered and chilled.

The *rouille* actually tastes better if you make it a day before serving and let its flavors marry in the refrigerator.

## Menu Variations

The *appetizer* could be varied by substituting asparagus tips for the beans, or fine small spinach leaves for the cress, or almost any shellfish for the shrimp. Raw bay or sea scallops may be marinated in fresh lime juice and seasonings, which delicately cook them—see the *seviche* on page 183. Green beans and mushrooms on cress, without shellfish, are delicious, perhaps with cherry tomatoes and a scattering of finely chopped chives or scallions.

The *bouillabaisse*, as you know, is most familiar as a hearty soup containing a mixture of fish. In this more condensed form, which of course you eat with a fork, you could exchange chicken for a firm-fleshed fish, for scallops, or for salt cod (but allow time to freshen it). It makes a grand main dish for vegetarians if you use chunks of presalted, sautéed eggplant instead of chicken; or else one of the bulkier pastas, like *rotini* and *rigatoni*. Only steamed rice is a proper complement to the *bouillabaisse*, so I have no alternative to suggest.

The *dessert* can be made with pears instead of apples. It can be lightened by omitting the caramel, or enriched by passing, separately, a bowl of custard sauce or lightly whipped cream.

*Rigatoni (left) and rotini.*



## Leftovers

*Rice:* if you have extra, make a cold rice salad, or serve it in a soup, or use it to thicken a sauce *soubise*. As for the *bouillabaisse*, you can reheat it, and it will still be delicious. But I love it cold as a luncheon dish. If I plan on that, I usually pull the skin off all the chicken pieces (don't like cold chicken skin!), then arrange the chicken in a nice serving dish and spoon the sauce over. After chilling, the sauce jells; before serving, I remove any surface fat and sprinkle a bit of fresh chopped parsley over all. Delicious just as it is, or arranged on a bed of lettuce and decorated with black olives. The rice could even accompany the chicken again as a cold salad.

Here's another idea I developed after the television show, when I had quantities of chicken in *bouillabaisse* to play with. After reheating batches of it twice, serving it cold once, and still having more, I decided to purée the sauce in a food processor. It turned into a kind of horrid pudding, so I simmered it with a cup of chicken broth and tried to strain it, with no success. Then I thought of my trusty potato ricer. I lined it with a double thickness of washed cheesecloth, filled it with a ladleful of my rosy pudding, gave it a squeeze, and out came a savory, translucent, satiny rose liquid which I spooned over my chilled and peeled chicken and chilled again. A happy discovery.

*The rouille* will keep for a week or more and is delicious as a spaghetti sauce, with boiled or broiled fish or chicken, with boiled or baked potatoes, or stirred into a minestrone-type soup.

*The apples* are excellent cold, and will keep several days refrigerated in a covered dish. Or you may slice the flesh and serve with a fruit sauce (frozen raspberries, thawed, puréed and strained, are good, though rather high in sugar). To make more juice, simmer a fresh apple with a cinnamon stick, a slice of lemon, and an ounce or so of vermouth, then strain.

## Postscript

Here's your calorie count. I put it last so as not to deter nondieters from trying this excellent meal—for the bald numbers are so shockingly low you may not believe, before tasting, that I have been talking about real food all this time.

Salad of shrimp, green beans, and sliced mushrooms	66
Chicken bouillabaisse (2 sauced pieces)	250
<i>Rouille</i> (1 tablespoon)	75
Steamed rice (1/2 cup)	100
1 apple with syrup and caramel crown	187

The ingredients  
(calories per 3 1/2 oz or 100 g):

Raw shrimp	91
Cooked green beans	25
Raw mushrooms	28
Watercress	19
Fryer, light meat with skin, without	120, 101
dark meat with skin, without	132, 112
Olive oil	884
Leeks	52
Onions	38
Raw tomatoes	22
Tomato sauce	39
Bread crumbs	392
Egg yolk	348
Cooked rice	109
Raw apple	117
Sugar	385
Wine, dry, sweet	85, 137
Gin, rum, vodka, whiskey (80 proof)	231
Beer	42

The calorie counts are those given in an excellent handbook by Bernice K. Watt and Annabel L. Merrill, *Composition of Foods: Raw, Processed, Prepared* (Agriculture Handbook No. 8, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., revised December 1963). For sale from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Price: \$2.35, domestic postpaid, or \$2.00, GPO Bookstore.

*Beautiful ingredients prepared with loving care but little effort: this simple menu is an example of the wisdom and sane good taste of civilized cookery.*



# Informal Dinner

## Menu

*Asparagus Tips in Puff Pastry, Lemon Butter Sauce*



*Casserole Roast of Veal with Carrots and Celery Hearts  
Wok Sauté of Grated Zucchini and Fresh Spinach*



*Floating Island*



*Suggested wines:*

*A light white wine with the first course, like a Chablis, Chardonnay, or dry Riesling; a red Bordeaux or Cabernet Sauvignon with the veal; a Champagne or sparkling white wine with the dessert*

“Love and work,” said Sigmund Freud when somebody asked him what he thought were the most important things in life. Not much work goes into cooking the ingredients for this simple, beautiful dinner. But in choosing them you acknowledge your guests’ love of perfection and exercise your own.

You could spend half the money this menu demands and create a meal twice as impressive. There are several such menus in this book, and very good they are, too. But if your trusted butcher lets you know that he has been able to procure a veal roast of impeccable quality, wouldn’t you plan to share it with friends who will appreciate its rarity? Wouldn’t you go to market that morning for the freshest vegetables, imagining which ones would contribute to the flavor of the meat?

This serene, unpretentious perfection in dining is, indeed, the reward of love, expressed by care and respect for your guests and for the food you offer them. And if veal really is too expensive for you—or impossible to come by—try one of the less luxurious meats suggested in Menu Variations; the substitutes are perfectly suited to this kind of cooking method and will have a fine harmony of flavors.

A casserole is a very comfortable kind of informal cooking. You simply brown the meat, briefly blanch the vegetables, and put them all together with butter and seasonings. Then when you’re ready to roast, you stick the casserole in the oven and let it cook quietly by itself, once in a while basting the meat and vegetables with their communal juices while you go about other things. The fresh, slightly crunchy spinach and zucchini, only lightly cooked at the last minute, will complete a pretty plateful and make a salad unnecessary.

What's a Chinese wok doing at this very traditional meal? Improving it, that's what, and reminding us not to be pedantic... but you could use a frying pan.

The main course doesn't include rice or potatoes, but it doesn't need to if you serve a loaf of French bread. And you may not even need that because of the appetizer. These crinkly little puff pastry "rafts" are all the rage these days in France; but puff pastry was never an everyday item there, any more than here, until recently. With a new fast method (page 98), puff pastry dishes are almost effortless, once you get the habit of making a batch of dough at intervals and cutting some of it into handy little rectangles to await your convenience in the freezer. Asparagus, formerly such a luxury, is available here from February through June at gradually decreasing prices. You need only three or four spears per person. Peel them, of course, or the dish is hardly

worth presenting. And, to round out the delicate contrast of texture and flavor, whisk up a last-minute little sauce.

Be careful the butter doesn't overheat; be careful the asparagus doesn't overcook; be careful your oven thermostat is accurate. Cooking, I do strongly feel, expresses love more by fastidious everyday care than by festival bursts of effort. The effort, when you come to the dessert, can be left to your heavy-duty mixer. If you had to do this by hand, it would indeed be heavy duty.

Floating island, as the French do it, is a meringue soufflé about the size of Australia, floating on a sea of pale gold custard sauce. I like to serve it in archipelago form, cut into Greenland-size chunks. Don't be daunted at this point by the word "soufflé," in case you aren't yet confident with them: this meringue is so foolproof you can unmold it any time, or even put it in the freezer. The custard sauce, too, can be made well in advance, and it is very easy, provided you give it the few minutes' close attention (to prevent its curdling) that this lovely satiny confection deserves.

"Make every meal an occasion" sounds to me like "Live each day as though it were your last"—just plain overwrought. People do preach it, but does anyone practice? Not me! But to love your art as well as your audience does seem to make for pretty good living, day by pleasant day.



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## Preparations

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### Recommended Equipment:

A wok is not essential for the zucchini and spinach dish, just an attractive option. But I would not tackle 12 egg whites without a big electric mixer and an appropriate bowl (see recipe).

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### Marketing and Storage:

#### Staples to have on hand

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Salt  
 Black and white peppercorns  
 Cream of tartar  
 Pure vanilla extract  
 Fragrant dried tarragon  
 Light olive oil or fresh peanut oil ▼  
 Granulated sugar  
 Optional but recommended: superfine granulated sugar

Butter ( $\frac{3}{4}$  pound or 350 g)  
 Milk (1 pint or 2 cups or  $\frac{1}{2}$  L)  
 Eggs (13 or more, depending on size)  
 Onions (2)  
 Lemons (1)  
 Puff pastry (from the freezer)  
 Shallots or scallions  
 Dry white French vermouth  
 Optional: dark Jamaica rum or  
 bourbon whiskey

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#### Specific ingredients for this menu

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Boneless roast of veal (3 pounds or  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  kg); please read the recipe before marketing  
 Fresh pork fat (or beef fat) ▼  
 Fresh asparagus (18 to 24 spears)  
 Fresh celery hearts (3 to 6 whole)  
 Fresh carrots (6 to 8 or more)  
 Zucchini (6 medium-size)  
 Fresh spinach ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 pounds or  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 kg)  
 Optional: heavy cream (2 to 4 Tb)  
 Optional: sprinkles for meringue (see recipe)

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► **Remarks:**  
Staples

*Fresh peanut oil:* Peanut oil can get rancid, so sniff yours before using.

**Ingredients for this menu**

*Fresh pork fat:* "Barding" fat, to cover a lean roast, is not always sold; so whenever I see some I buy it and freeze it. And I trim scraps of extra fat off pork roasts before cooking, and save them. If the strips you buy are too thick, place between sheets of wax paper and pound with a rubber hammer, rolling pin, or bottle to flatten them out. You can substitute fat trimmed from a beef loin or rib roast; it does the work, although not as neatly since it shrinks and tends to break as it cooks.

## Asparagus Tips in Puff Pastry, Lemon Butter Sauce

*Petites Feuilletées aux Asperges, Sauce  
Beurre au Citron*

*For 6 people as a first course*

18 to 24 fresh asparagus spears (depending on size)

2 to 3 Tb butter and 1 Tb minced shallots or scallions

Salt and pepper

6 puff pastry rectangles about 2½ by 5 by ¼ inches or 6½ by 13 by ¾ cm (the recipe for French puff pastry is on page 98)

Egg glaze (1 egg beaten with 1 tsp water)

Lemon butter sauce

2 Tb fresh lemon juice

3 Tb dry white French vermouth

Salt and white pepper

1 stick (115 g) chilled butter cut into 12 fingertip-size pieces



### The asparagus

Trim ends off asparagus spears and peel from butt to near tip to remove tough outer skin. Choose a deep skillet or oval flameproof casserole large enough to hold asparagus flat; fill with water and bring to the rolling boil, adding 1½ teaspoons salt per quart or liter of water. Lay in the asparagus, cover until boil is reached, then uncover and boil slowly just until asparagus is cooked through—5 to 8 minutes or so, depending on quality (eat a piece off the butt end of one to make sure). Immediately remove the asparagus and arrange in one layer on a clean towel to cool. Cut the tip ends of the spears into 5-inch (13-cm) lengths; save the butt ends for a salad.

🕒 May be cooked in advance. When cold, wrap and refrigerate.

Just before serving (and when the following pastry is baked and ready), melt 2 to 3 tablespoons butter in a frying pan large enough to hold the tips in one layer, add the shallots or scallions and cook for a moment, then add the asparagus tips, shaking pan by handle to roll them over and over to coat with butter; season lightly with salt and pepper and roll again.

### The puff pastry rectangles

Preheat oven to 450°F/230°C. About 15 minutes before serving, arrange the pastries (still frozen, if you wish) on a baking sheet and paint the tops (not the sides) with egg glaze; in a moment, paint with a second coat, then make decorative knife cuts and crosshatchings in the surface. Immediately bake in middle level of oven for 12 to 15 minutes, until pastries have puffed up and browned and the sides have crisped.

🕒 May be baked somewhat ahead and left in turned-off oven, door ajar—but the sooner you serve them the more tenderly flakily buttery they will be.

### To serve

While they are still hot, split the pastries in half horizontally, arrange 3 or 4 hot and buttery asparagus spears on the bottom half, their tips pecking out one of the ends, spoon a bit of the following sauce over the asparagus, cover loosely with the top, and serve at once.

*Lemon butter sauce:* an informal *beurre blanc* (which takes only 3 to 4 minutes to make; if you are not familiar with it, I suggest you do so just before serving since it is tricky to keep). Boil the lemon juice, vermouth, and ¼ teaspoon salt slowly in a small saucepan until liquid has reduced to about 1 tablespoon. Then, a piece or two at a time, start beating in the chilled pieces of butter, adding another piece or two just as the previous pieces have almost melted—the object here is to force its milk solids to hold in creamy suspension as the butter warms and softens, so that the sauce remains ivory colored rather than looking like melted butter. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

🕒 Sauce can be held over the faint heat of a pilot light or anywhere it is warm enough to keep the butter from congealing, but not so warm as to turn the sauce into melted butter. However, if this happens you can often bring it back by beating over cold water until it begins to congeal and cream again.

### Remarks:

Jacques Pépin, the able French chef and teacher based in Connecticut, has another version of the sauce where you bring 2 tablespoons each of lemon juice and water to the rolling boil and rapidly beat in 1 stick (115 g) of soft butter in pieces; bring the sauce to the rolling boil again for a few seconds, turn into a sauce boat, and serve at once. It produces the same effect of a warm creamy liaison of butter, rather than melted butter.

*Puff pastry rectangle before and after baking.*



# Casserole Roast of Veal with Carrots and Celery Hearts

## *Rôti de Veau Poêlé à la Nivernaise*

A fine roast of veal of top quality has no pronounced flavor of its own and no natural fat to keep it moist while it is cooking. I therefore like to tie my veal roast with strips of fat and to roast it slowly in a covered casserole with herbs and aromatic vegetables. As it cooks, the aroma of its savory companions seeps into the meat and the meat itself flavors the vegetables, both exuding a modicum of fragrant juices which combine to make a spontaneous sauce.

*For 6 to 8 people*

A 3-pound (1¼–1½ kg) boneless roast of veal, of the finest quality and palest pink (see notes on veal at end of recipe)

Strips of fresh pork fat (or beef fat) to tie around roast (about ⅛ inch or ½ cm thick and enough to cover half of the roast)

Light olive oil or fresh peanut oil, for browning meat

3 to 6 celery hearts

6 to 8 or more carrots

1 medium-size onion, sliced

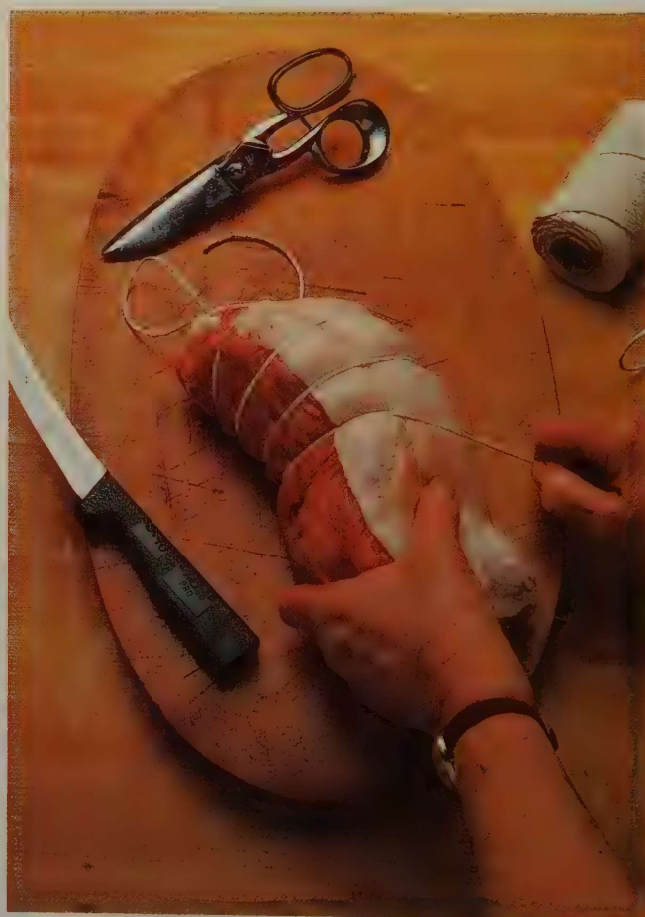
Salt and pepper

1 tsp fragrant dried tarragon

2 Tb melted butter

### Equipment

White butcher's string; a heavy covered casserole or roaster just large enough to hold meat and vegetables comfortably; a bulb baster; a meat thermometer



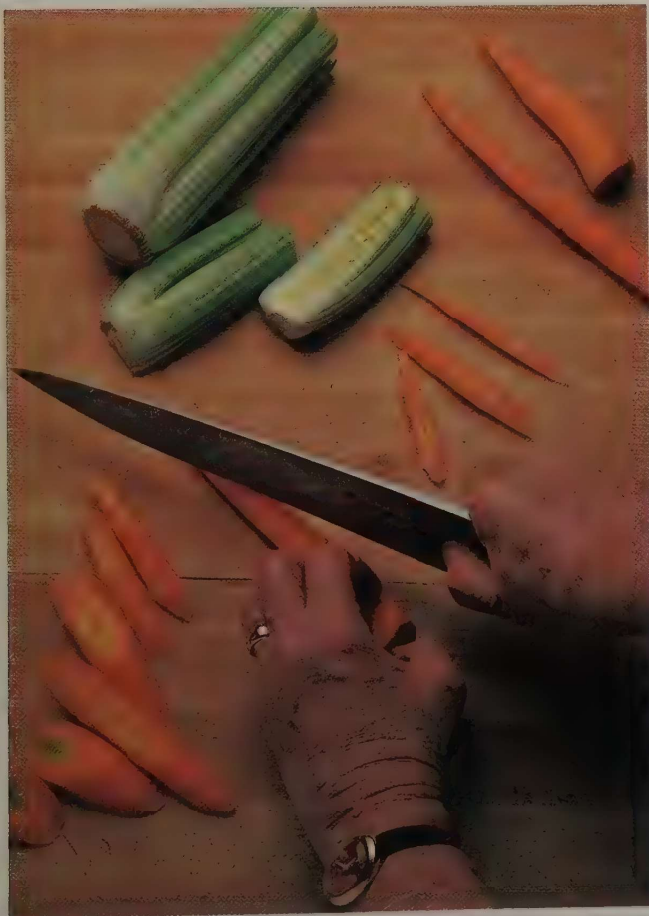
### Preliminaries to roasting

Dry the veal in paper towels and tie the fat in place over it so you have strips on both top and bottom of veal. Film a frying pan or bottom of casserole with oil and brown the meat slowly over moderately high heat. Meanwhile cut the celery hearts into 5-inch (13-cm) lengths and reserve tops for another recipe. Trim celery roots, being careful not to detach ribs from them and trim any bruised spots off ribs. Cut into halves or thirds lengthwise and wash under cold water, spreading ribs carefully apart to force sand and dirt out from around root end. Set aside. Peel the carrots and cut into thickish bias slices about 2½ inches (6½ cm) long. Drop both celery and carrots into a large pan of boiling salted water and blanch (boil) for 1 minute; drain.

### Arranging the casserole

If you have browned the meat in the casserole, remove it and discard browning fat. Strew the onion slices in the bottom of the casserole, season the veal with a good sprinkling of salt and pepper, and place in casserole, a fat-stripped side up. Sprinkle on half the tarragon, and arrange the celery hearts on either side of roast. Sprinkle hearts with salt and a pinch of tarragon, then strew the carrots on top, seasoning them also. Baste with the melted butter.

🕒 Casserole may be arranged several hours before roasting.



### Roasting the meat

Roasting time: 1¼ to 1½ hours

Preheat oven to 350°F/180°C. About 2 hours before you wish to serve (reheat casserole on top of the stove if you have arranged it ahead), set casserole in lower-middle level of preheated oven. Roast for 20 minutes, then rapidly baste meat and vegetables with accumulated juices (a bulb baster is best for this) and turn thermostat down to 325°F/170°C. Baste every 20 minutes, and when an hour is up begin checking meat temperature. Meat is done at 165–170°F/75–77°C.

🕒 May be roasted somewhat ahead but should be kept warm; set cover slightly askew and keep in turned-off oven with door ajar, or over almost simmering water, or at a temperature of 120°F/50°C.

### Serving

Slice the veal into thin, even pieces and arrange down the center of a hot platter, with the carrots bordering the meat and the celery hearts ringing them. Baste meat and vegetables with a little of the casserole juices. Spoon accumulated fat off remaining juices, correct seasoning, and strain into a hot sauce bowl.

### Notes on Veal:

Veal is the meat of a young calf, and the best or Prime quality comes from an animal 10 to 12 weeks old that has been fed on milk or milk by-products. It is of the palest pink in color and has both texture and flavor—although the flavor of veal is never robust, like that of lamb or beef. Such veal is very expensive indeed but produces beautiful boneless cuts of solid meat from the leg (such as the top round) and from the loin and rib. Younger and less expensive veal, which should also be of the palest pink in color, is usually too small to furnish top or bottom round cuts, so one should take the whole leg and either roast it as is or have it boned and tied.

## Wok Sauté of Grated Zucchini and Fresh Spinach

*Sauté de Courgettes, Viroflay*

In this attractive combination, the fresh spinach gives character to the zucchini, and the zucchini tenderizes the bite of the spinach, while a little onion lends its subtle depth. Although you can cook it all in a frying pan, the wok is especially successful here.

*For 6 people*

6 medium-size zucchini

Salt

1½ to 2 pounds (¾–1 kg) fresh spinach



---

2 to 3 Tb light olive oil or fresh peanut oil

---

3 to 4 Tb butter

---

1 medium-size onion, sliced

---

Pepper

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#### Equipment

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A food processor (optional) for grating the zucchini—or the coarse side of a hand grater; a wok (also optional), preferably with stainless-steel or nonstick interior so that spinach will not pick up a metallic taste

---

Trim off the ends and scrub the zucchini under cold water, but do not peel them. Grate either in a processor or through a hand grater and place in a sieve set over a bowl; toss with a teaspoon of salt and let drain while you trim the spinach.

Pull the stems off the spinach and pump leaves up and down in a basin of cold water, draining and repeating process if necessary to be sure spinach contains no sand or dirt. Drain in a colander.

🕒 May be prepared several hours in advance; refrigerate if you are not proceeding with recipe.

When you are ready to sauté, heat 1 tablespoon of oil and 1½ tablespoons butter in the wok (or frying pan). When butter has melted, add the spinach (if spinach is dry, add also 2 to 3 tablespoons water). Toss and turn for 5 minutes or so, until spinach is wilted and just cooked through, then remove it to a side dish. While spinach is cooking, by handfuls squeeze the juices out of the zucchini and set on a plate. When spinach is done and out of the wok, add more oil and butter and the sliced onion. Toss and cook for a minute or two, then add the zucchini, tossing and turning it for several minutes until just tender. Press any accumulated liquid out of spinach, and toss spinach with

zucchini, tossing and turning for a minute or two to blend and heat the two vegetables together. Taste carefully for seasoning, adding salt and pepper as needed, and you are ready to serve.

🕒 Most of the cooking may be done in advance, but in this case cook the spinach and set aside, then cook the zucchini until almost tender; finish the cooking just before serving, then add the spinach, tossing and turning for a moment or two.

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#### Remarks:

You could add several tablespoons of heavy cream near the end of the cooking, or enrich the vegetables with more butter at the end of the cooking. Alternatively, you can cook with oil only, or use less of the amounts of both butter and oil specified in the recipe—that is the versatility of cooking in a well-designed wok.

*Pulling the stems off spinach leaves.*



*Squeezing the juices out of grated raw zucchini.*



# Floating Island

*Ile Flottante—A giant meringue soufflé floating on a custard sea*

Here is a dramatic yet light and lovely cold dessert that is simplicity itself to make when you have a well-designed electric mixer that will keep the whole mass of your egg whites in motion at once, so that you get the lightness and volume egg whites should produce.

*For 6 to 8 people*

1 <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cups (3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> dL) egg whites (about 12)

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp cream of tartar and 1/16 tsp salt

1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cups (3 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> dL) sugar (preferably the very finely granulated or instant kind)

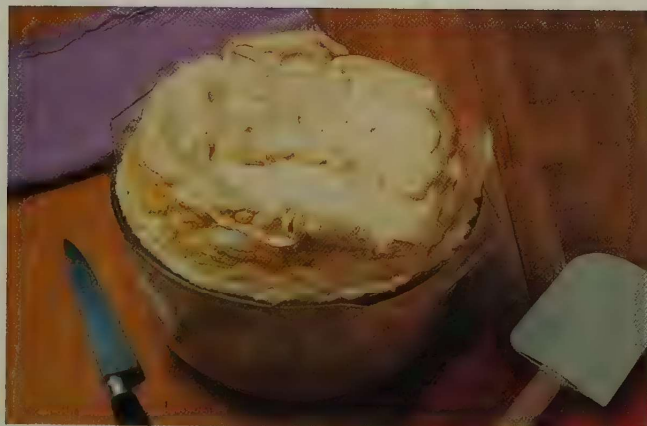
2 tsp pure vanilla extract

3 cups (<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> L) Custard Sauce (see notes at end of recipe)

4 to 5 Tb decorative sprinkles for top of meringue, as suggested in Serving paragraph below (optional)

## Equipment

(Besides the mixer): a 4- to 5-quart (4- to 4 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-L) straight-sided baking dish or casserole, interior heavily buttered and dusted with sugar; a round flat platter for unmolding



## Cautionary remarks

Be sure that your egg-beating bowl and beater blades are absolutely clean and dry, since any oil or grease on them will prevent the egg whites from mounting. Also, because you are separating so many eggs, it is a good idea to break the whites, one at a time, into a small clean bowl and add each as you do it to the beating bowl; then if you break a yolk, it will ruin only one egg white, not the whole batch (since specks of egg yolk can prevent the whites from rising). Finally, chilled egg whites will not mount properly; stir them in the mixing bowl over hot water until the chill is off and they are about the temperature of your finger.

## The meringue mixture

Preheat oven to 250°F/130°C. Start beating the egg whites at moderately slow speed until they are foamy. Beat in the cream of tartar and salt and gradually increase speed to fast. When the egg whites form soft peaks, sprinkle in the sugar (decreasing speed if necessary) by 4-spoonful dollops until all is added, then beat at high speed for several minutes until egg whites form stiff shining peaks. Beat in the vanilla. Scoop the meringue into the prepared baking dish, which should be almost filled (but do not worry if dish is only three-quarters full—it makes no difference).

## Baking the meringue

Immediately set the dish in the lower-middle level of your preheated oven and bake 35 to 40 minutes, or until the meringue has souffléed (or risen) 2 to 3 inches (5 to 8 cm) and a skewer plunged through the side of the puff down to the bottom of the dish comes out clean. If necessary, bake 4 to 5 minutes or so more—a very little too much is better than too little. Remove from oven and set at room temperature for 30 minutes or until cool; it will sink down to somewhat less than its original volume, and will eventually shrink from sides of dish. When cool, cover and refrigerate.

① May be baked several hours or even a day or two in advance; may even be frozen.

### Serving

(You may unmold it onto a round platter, pour your custard sauce around, and serve as is, or use the following system.) Run a thin knife around edge of dish to detach meringue, then push the whole meringue gently with a rubber spatula all around to make sure bottom is not sticking. Turn a flat round dish, like a pizza pan, upside down over baking dish and reverse the two, giving a slap and a downward jerk to dislodge meringue onto round dish. Pour a good layer of custard sauce into a round platter, cut large wedges out of the meringue with a pie server, and arrange in the custard. Just before serving, sprinkle the meringue wedges, if you wish, with pulverized nut brittle, crumbled macaroons, toasted ground nuts, or something like the baked meringue-nut layers of a Los Gatos Gâteau Cake (page 11).

### Custard Sauce:

You will need about 3 cups ( $\frac{3}{4}$  L), using the general outline of the recipe on page 73, with 6 egg yolks,  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  dL) sugar,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups ( $3\frac{1}{2}$  dL) milk,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons pure vanilla extract, plus an addition I like with this dessert—3 to 4 tablespoons dark Jamaica rum or bourbon whiskey—and 3 to 4 tablespoons unsalted butter beaten in at the end.

## Timing

When we're "just family," or have invited guests to dine informally, we often eat in the kitchen so that last-minute jobs don't interrupt the conversation. With this menu, which does involve some final touches, we'd surely eat there. Before sitting down, one must turn the asparagus in butter; and, since the little sauce is tricky to keep warm, it's a good idea to make it at the last minute. And the spinach and zucchini dish is at its best if you finish its cooking, a matter of moments, just before eating it. The veal and vegetable platter takes only a minute to arrange, so do it on the spot.

The puff pastry is best when just baked, which takes no more than 15 minutes. I'd remove mine from the freezer and slip it into the preheated oven just about halfway through our apéritifs or cocktails.

Otherwise, this meal puts only slight demands on your time. Two hours before dinner, start cooking your casserole. You can arrange it in the morning; and that's when, ideally, you'd shop for the freshest asparagus, spinach, and zucchini. You can boil the asparagus then and precook the wok vegetables.

Both the custard sauce and the meringue, though the latter looks so ethereal, can be made and refrigerated a day or so ahead, and the puff pastry dough, any time at all.



## Menu Variations

*The appetizer:* Inside a hot split piece of puff pastry, you can place a creamed shellfish mixture, sauced wild mushrooms or chicken livers, or—using the butter sauce—substitute peeled broccoli flowerets for the asparagus, or spears of peeled and seeded cucumber cooked in butter with chopped shallots and herbs. Instead of pastry, you can use hard-toasted bread (*croûtes*), and a nice way to make them crisp and rich is to butter sliced crustless bread on both sides and bake till golden in a moderate oven. Or hollow out two-finger-thick rectangles of unsliced white bread, butter tops, sides, and insides, and brown in the oven for *croustades*.

*The casserole roast:* A boned loin of pork roast works beautifully in this recipe, as does a boneless half turkey breast. Though the slices will be inelegant, you can keep that lovely veal flavor by using a cheaper cut, boned and rolled. Or substitute a boneless cut of beef; but use only meat of roasting quality, like *filet*, sirloin strip, or extra-fine rump.

For aromatic vegetables which will hold their shape and color, think of such roots as onions, turnips, rutabaga, celery root, or oyster plant to combine with the likes of fennel, leeks, or endive. These flavors are strong, so adjust your herbs accordingly.

*The wok sauté:* For something leafy and green combined with something soft and succulent, one could substitute very young beet or turnip greens, young dandelion leaves, kale, or stemmed chard for the spinach; and for the zucchini, summer or pattypan squash, pumpkin, cucumber, or slivers of white turnip, which are remarkably good with spinach.

*The dessert:* The American form of floating island has little islets of meringue poached in milk afloat on a custard sauce flavored with vanilla only. I wouldn't use any custard-and-meringue variant involving cake or pastry, since it would be a little heavy, considering the pastry appetizer; but that still leaves a vast range, from the elegant sabayons (of which Zabaione Batardo Veneziano on page 205 is a

cousin on the Bavarian cream side). There are mousses and flans and unmolded custards, simple cup custards baked or boiled; and you could even bake a meringue case with a custard filling and decorate it with fruit. You can make a charming fruit soufflé by adding a thick purée of fruit like prunes or apricots to the meringue mixture, in the proportion of 1 cup (¼ L) purée to 5 egg whites; this, of course, you serve hot. And there are many delicious cold "soufflés."

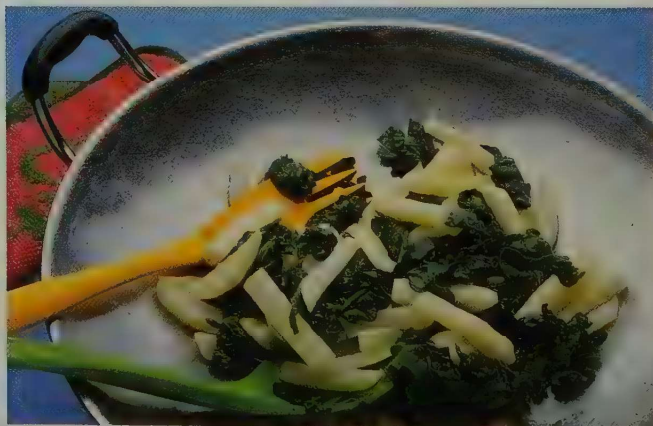
## Leftovers

*The casserole:* The leftover vegetables, and all the juice, will be good additions to a soup. Cold sliced veal is excellent with a piquant sauce; add any scraps to a creamed dish.

*The wok sauté:* One delicious by-product is the bright green juice extracted from the zucchini by the grater. If you add it to a soup, be careful with salt, as it contains a lot. Any leftover cooked zucchini and spinach would also be good in a soup; or use it as filling for omelets or quiche.

*The dessert:* You can refrigerate any leftovers and serve again the next day. Extra custard sauce can be frozen and is wonderful on all kinds of puddings, particularly Indian (see page 72). Or you can stir in any leftover sprinklings, add chopped nuts and chopped candied fruit, and freeze, for a sort of biscuit tortoni. Extra baked meringue is pleasant with a fruit sauce—raspberry, for instance.

*Wok sauté of spinach with turnips.*



## Postscript

The French are given to classifying everything, usually on a scale of grandeur. In ascending degrees, cooking is divided into *la cuisine bonne femme* (goodwife), sometimes also termed *paysanne* or peasant; next step up, plain family cooking, or *la cuisine de famille*; then *la cuisine bourgeoise*, or fancy family cooking; and, finally, great, or high-class, cooking, *la grande* or *la haute cuisine*. The differences are not easy to define.

Perhaps some examples will help. If you have had dinner at midday and now make your supper on a hearty potato-and-leek soup taken with chunks of bread and a local wine and followed by a bowl of cherries, you are eating goodwife or peasant style—which I love to do. If your idea of a Sunday lunch is a starter of sliced tomatoes *vinaigrette*, then roast garlicky leg of lamb with green beans cooked in lard, then cheese, then perhaps an apple tart from the baker's, that's family cooking. Bourgeois cooking—a bit more sophisticated and expensive, but not showy and never eccentric—is exemplified by the menu in this chapter. Grand, or classy, cuisine really means the cooking of great chefs and grand restaurants: with its hierarchy of foundation stocks and sauces and flavored butters, its complexity, and, occasionally, its emphasis on display or on rare ingredients.

In her scholarly *Great Cooks and Their Recipes: From Taillevent to Escoffier* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977), Anne Willan cites Escoffier's turn-of-the-century recipe for Tournedos Chasseur as "a good example of the step-by-step preparation of *haute cuisine*, resulting here in a deceptively simple steak with wine sauce. The recipe requires four basic preparations—stock, demi-glace sauce, meat glaze... and tomato sauce—for the final sauce." *Demi-glace* and meat glaze, as she reminds us, are themselves cooked for hours and are composed of other, still more basic preparations. Nonetheless, the dish is "one of Escoffier's easier recipes for tournedos, with no elaborate garnish."

Cooking of such complexity will rarely be practical at home, though none of the four basic preparations is technically difficult; but other formerly *haute, grande*, and indeed formidable dishes are now perfectly manageable, thanks to the processor, the freezer, etc.

"In reality," wrote Escoffier, "practice dictates fixed and regular quantities, and from these one cannot diverge." He was writing about sauces, of which, in his *Guide Culinaire*, he described 136, not counting dessert sauces. The great codifier put enormous emphasis on correctness, hence predictability. In Escoffier's case, as in politics, his creativity and revolutionary work were succeeded by a long period of gradual rigidification; thirty years after his death in 1935, great chefs were following his dictates everywhere. If you ordered a dish in any great restaurant, you knew by its name precisely what you were getting. If, for instance, your *coulibiac* failed to contain *vesiga*, or a sturgeon's spinal marrow (a minor and almost unobtainable ingredient), then it wasn't *coulibiac* at all, and the chef had scandalously flouted the proprieties.

In the seventies, cooking was released from this straitjacket by the joyously anarchic *nouvelle cuisine*, whose most familiar exponent—to Americans—is Michel Guérard. Best known here for the ingenious diet recipes of *la cuisine minceur*—which is only one aspect of his work—Guérard is a classically trained chef of great sensitivity. His unprecedented combinations and piquant menus have inspired some bizarre travesties; but cooking has been liberated by his daring and original genius. Several of the recipes in this book are *nouvelles* in a restrained way, like the little composed salads which serve as appetizers, or the Choulibiac and the Chicken Melon, both of which, though classical in flavor, are untraditional assemblages.

A natural rightness rather than a pedantic correctness is my goal in cooking. And in composing a menu—or a dish—nobody's codes or classifications have any bearing whatever, so far as I'm concerned. One turns with relief from words to realities.

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*Essay*

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*Four basic types of rice: (clockwise from upper left)  
Carolina long-grain, Italian Arborio, short-grain, and  
converted rice.*



# Rice Talk

Opening my Rice file is like entering the Tower of Babel. So many kinds of rice, so many recipes, so many cooking methods—and so many disagreements, including, as I experiment over the years, those between J.C. Past and J.C. Present. There is universal agreement, though, on the desired end result for general cooking: perfect rice is dry and fluffy, with every grain separate, and feels very slightly resistant to the tooth. If you encounter a tiny hard core, like a grain of sand, when you bite into a kernel, cook your rice a moment longer. If the kernels appear splayed out at each end, the rice has been cooked too long. Better luck next time.

Rice is so widely cultivated on this earth (we eat more of it even than wheat) that a great many types and cooking methods have evolved, adapted to different climates and cultures. But all rice cookery is based on the fact that rice can absorb at least twice its volume of liquid. It may do this before cooking, as in the Persian *chelo* (pronounced like “hello”) with its lovely golden crust: the rice is first soaked for hours, then cooked in butter, without water, in a thick-walled pot. Or the rice may be boiled in a great quantity of liquid; it may be simmered in “just its size” of liquid until all is absorbed; or it may be braised—that is, warmed in oil or butter and then simmered; it may be steamed over (but not *in*) water; or it may be cooked in a combination of liquid and liquiferous substances, like fruits or vegetables.

As it is packaged in America nowadays, rice does not need the preliminary washing always called for in old recipes. This was intended to remove the coating of starch left on the grain after husking, since the starch, combined with moisture, turned into the equivalent of flour paste and made the grains stick gummily together. Brown rice doesn't need washing either: this is rice whose outer hull has been husked, but whose bran coating remains. It is cooked like white long-grain rice but takes

twice as long to become tender. I like it, but its pronounced nutty flavor argues with the more delicate sauces. You may have to resort to a health-food store for brown rice, or to a gourmet-type shop for wild rice (which isn't real rice at all, but a grass).

For rice used as an accompaniment to a sauced dish, or rice which I want to serve cold in a salad, or in fact for 90 percent of the rice that we eat in our family, we buy the easily available white long-grain type grown in the Carolinas. You will find our favorite cooking method on page 44. For rice used as a main dish, as in the Italian risottos and the Eastern Mediterranean pilafs, I like a more absorbent rice and choose a shorter grain when I can get it, though the long-grain type will do. Long-grain is so much the easiest type to get here that most Italian cookbooks published in this country prescribe it. For Italian ways with rice, originally adapted to the delicious plump Arborio grain of the Po river valley, I refer you to Marcella Hazan's *The Classic Italian Cook Book* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976) or to Giuliano Bugialli, *The Art of Fine Italian Cooking* (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Company, 1977).

But for one especially pleasing main dish, the Spanish paella, you really can't use long-

*Brown rice and wild rice.*



grain rice. If you can't find the short-grained Spanish sort, or the fat Arborio, look for the patented packaged rice which is clearly labeled "parboiled enriched long-grain rice." The following recipe suggests an international medley of ingredients and equipment; though you don't have to use an electric wok, it does work nicely, and I'm all for being eclectic. Since a paella is essentially a peasantry family dish—although it is wonderful for a party—you can put into it anything you want as long as you have rice, saffron, garlic, and paprika as your base. The following features shrimp, chicken, sausages, and other easily found ingredients, but it could include rabbit, fish, lobsters, snails, mussels, and even squid.



## An American Paella in a Chinese-Style Electric Wok

*For 8 people*

Adapted from *The French Chef Cookbook* and *From Julia Child's Kitchen*.  
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1 pound (450 g) fresh chorizos or Italian sausages, or fresh pork breakfast sausage

2 Tb olive oil

1 cup (¼ L) each sliced onions and green or red bell peppers

8 or more chicken thighs or drumsticks

½ cup (1 dL) dry white wine or dry white vermouth

3 cloves garlic, minced

4½ cups (1 L) chicken broth

½ tsp saffron threads

1 tsp paprika

¼ tsp ground coriander

1 bay leaf

2 cups (½ L) Italian Arborio rice, short-grain rice, or packaged parboiled rice

16 to 24 raw shrimp in the shell

3 medium-size ripe red firm tomatoes peeled, seeded, juiced, and roughly chopped

2 cups (½ L) fresh shelled green peas or diced fresh green beans blanched (boiled) for 5 minutes in a large pan of water, drained, and refreshed in cold water

1 cup (¼ L) chick peas (garbanzos), fresh cooked or canned

½ cup (1 dL) black olives

2 lemons, quartered

Parsley sprigs

### Equipment

An electric wok or an electric frying pan, a chicken-fryer skillet, or even a paella pan

### Preliminaries with sausages and chicken

Prick sausages in several places with a pin and place in the wok (or whatever you are using) with  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cm) water; cover and simmer slowly for 5 minutes and then drain, discarding liquid. Cut sausages into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch ( $1\frac{1}{2}$ -cm) pieces and sauté in pan with the oil until lightly browned; stir in the onions and peppers. Cover and cook slowly until they are tender. Remove with a slotted spoon, leaving fat in pan. Dry chicken pieces with paper towels, heat fat in pan, and brown chicken on all sides. Drain fat out of pan; add the sausages, onions and peppers, and then the wine or vermouth, garlic, chicken broth, saffron, paprika, coriander, and bay leaf. Cover and simmer slowly 15 minutes—chicken will be half to two-thirds cooked and will finish later, with the rice.

❶ May be cooked in advance; bring to the boil before proceeding.

### Finishing the paella

About half an hour before serving, bring chicken-sausage mixture to the rapid boil. Sprinkle in the rice, mixing it down into the liquid with a spoon. Boil rapidly 5 or 6 minutes, uncovered—do not stir the rice. When it has swollen and begun to rise to the surface, rapidly push the shrimp tail-end down into the rice, strew on the tomatoes, peas or beans,

chick peas, and olives. Again do not stir; simply push these ingredients down into the rice with a spoon. Carefully correct seasoning. Reduce heat and let paella simmer for another 8 or 10 minutes, or more, always uncovered, until rice is just tender—slightly *al dente*. (It is best not to cover pan, but if you feel rice is not cooking properly, cover for a few minutes, sprinkling on a few tablespoons or so of stock or water if rice seems dry; then uncover to finish the cooking).

At the end of the cooking, the rice will have absorbed the liquid. Serve the paella from its cooking pan, and decorate with the lemon quarters and parsley.

### Paella for sharing

Like the dishes on pages 441-455, paella is a fine contribution to a friend's party. Although it may be fully cooked and reheated, it is infinitely better when freshly cooked. I would therefore suggest that you bring the paella to the party with the chicken-sausage mixture done, then add the rice, and finish with the rest of the cooking and the garnish there at the party—and with an electric wok, you can do all of this in public rather than being buried in the kitchen.



*"Love in a cold climate" is the phrase for these hearty, comforting dishes from Down East. Great food when a gale is howling outside.*



# New England Potluck Supper

## Menu

*New England Fresh Fish Chowder*



*Cole Slaw*



*Indian Pudding with  
Vanilla Ice Cream or Custard Sauce*



*Suggested wines:  
Cider, beer, or dry white wine*

You would think every northern region of the world would have a version of New England chowder: salt pork and potatoes and onions are everywhere, to combine with whatever fresh or salt fish—or even vegetables—might be handy. But it isn't so: chowder is as typical of New England as the Down East accent which pronounces it to rhyme with "howdah." Equally typical is Indian pudding, so called because it is based on "Indian Meal," the ground dried corn which the early settlers obtained from the Indians of the Bay Colony.

Born a Californian, I first tasted Indian pudding as an adult. It was made by—of all people—an Armenian chef in a restaurant in Lexington, Massachusetts. I loved that first Indian pudding. It was hearty and rich and elemental, deep in flavor, in texture almost like caramel, and I felt it was born out of a harsh climate and an economy of scarcity. I can't taste Indian pudding without thinking of it simmering all of an iron-hard January afternoon, slowly releasing its comfortable spicy scent into a cold dark little cabin. It must have hit the spot for frozen weary people who'd been hacking all day at the endless forest. Chowder, on the other hand, has a summery quality to me, perhaps because I associate it with July and August in Maine, with salty sun-baked granite around me and the sea crinkling below—and with the knowledge that a pail of

wild berries is waiting in a cool purple cranny in the rocks. But it's a great dish any time, and a hearty one.

The name comes from *chaudière*, French for the big iron cauldron which was an all-purpose cooking vessel in early times. It could be hung from a fireplace crane, or, if of the footed type, be stood in the warm embers. We borrowed a beautiful old one from the ancient Wayside Inn at Sudbury, Massachusetts, for our television show on chowder, as well as showing forth some machines for grinding your own Indian pudding corn. Of course you can make chowder in any old pot, and of course you can buy cornmeal anywhere; it doesn't make much difference. But I wanted to make a point of the earthy, primal simplicity of these great American dishes. There are loads of recipes around for both fish chowder and Indian pudding, and many cooks insist their particular recipes are the only authentic versions; but the ones I'm giving here are the ones I like, so for me they're the best, the most gen-

uine, indeed the only recipes worth cooking. I like my chowder with untraditional trimmings: croutons instead of pilot biscuits, and sour cream and parsley instead of a final blob of butter. My Indian pudding version is severely plain—unusual, though, in that it contains grated apple; but in fact it's a very old version.

It is adapted from the recipe of Lydia Maria Child (no relation to me), an early feminist of stern and rockbound character, who never, I suspect, threw away a scrap of paper or string and whose mission in life was to teach us all how to live sparsely. Her book *The American Frugal Housewife* was first published in 1829, and went through many editions. (A facsimile of the twelfth, published in 1971, is available through the Office of Educational Services, Ohio State University Libraries, Columbus, Ohio 43210.) Mrs. Child's recipe for pudding involves long slow baking and two applications of milk, stirred in the first time, floated on top the second. The result is rich, redolent, and guaranteed to stick to your ribs. There are versions with eggs, or versions cooked quickly; but they don't have that primeval New England Puritan quality that I find so appealing in Lydia Maria Child.

In their journals and in letters home, the settlers gave touchingly fervent thanks for the variety of fish, game, and wild berries they found in New England; but they hadn't much choice of ingredients that kept well. Maybe, if put to it, some good wives occasionally had to use salt pork, onions, and molasses twice in the same meal. Mercifully, we don't, so my excellent recipe for authentic-tasting baked beans, adapted to modern methods, is not suggested for this menu, but placed at a discreet distance, as a bonus.

*Lydia Maria Child.*



# Preparations

## Marketing and Storage: Staples to have on hand

Salt, regular and coarse or kosher (which is optional)

Peppercorns

Herbs and spices: sage or thyme; imported bay leaves; caraway or cumin seed; powdered ginger ▼

Wine vinegar

Mustard (the strong Dijon type; see Remarks, page 6)

Flour

Sugar

Butter

Milk

Eggs

Lemons

Celery, carrots, scallions, purple onion, green pepper

Fresh parsley

### Specific ingredients for this menu

Fish: Several fish frames, if available, for fish stock, or bottled or canned clam juice (16 ounces or ½ L)

Fresh fish (2½ pounds or 1¼ kg), or see recipe for details ▼

Dark unrefined molasses (½ cup or 1 dL)

Pure vanilla extract

Cornmeal (¼ cup or ½ dL), preferably stone ground ▼

Nonsweet white bread, for croutons

Milk (2 quarts or 2 L)

Sour cream (1 pint or ½ L) for chowder and cole slaw

Homemade mayonnaise (⅓ to ½ cup or 1 dL), optional for cole slaw

Fat-and-lean salt pork (6 ounces or 180 g) ▼

“Boiling” potatoes (4 pounds or 1¾ kg)

Onions (1½ pounds or 675 g or 6 medium-size)

Cabbage (1 small-medium)

Vanilla ice cream

Heavy cream

Tart apples (2 medium-size)



► **Remarks:**  
Staples

*Powdered ginger:* you can season Indian pudding with a variety of spices, including cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice—alone or in combination—all of which the Puritans could get from the Caribbean Islands along with their molasses and their rum. But I like ginger alone, mostly for its taste but also for its eighteenth-century association with blue and white jars and the tall ships of the China trade.

**Specific ingredients for this menu**

*Cornmeal:* can be yellow or white, and I prefer it to be stone ground or home ground, although when it is cooked so long and with such strong flavors the regular supermarket kind is permissible. *Salt pork:* since this is an essential chowder ingredient it should be of top quality; I either use my own (page 250), or look and feel around in the supermarket display until I find a nice softish piece, meaning it is quite freshly salted. The blanching of the pork, in the recipe, not only removes excess salt but freshens the taste. *Fish:* certainly the beauty of a chowder resides in the quality of its fish, which must smell and taste as fresh as possible; see discussion in “Fish Talk,” page 111. The clam-juice substitute for your own fresh fish stock is acceptable, although it cannot compare in beauty of taste to the real thing.

# New England Fresh Fish Chowder

*For 6 people, as a main course*

*Either*—2 or more large meaty fish frames (head and bone structure of freshly filleted fish) from cod, hake, haddock, sea bass, or other lean fish (to provide fish meat and fish stock)

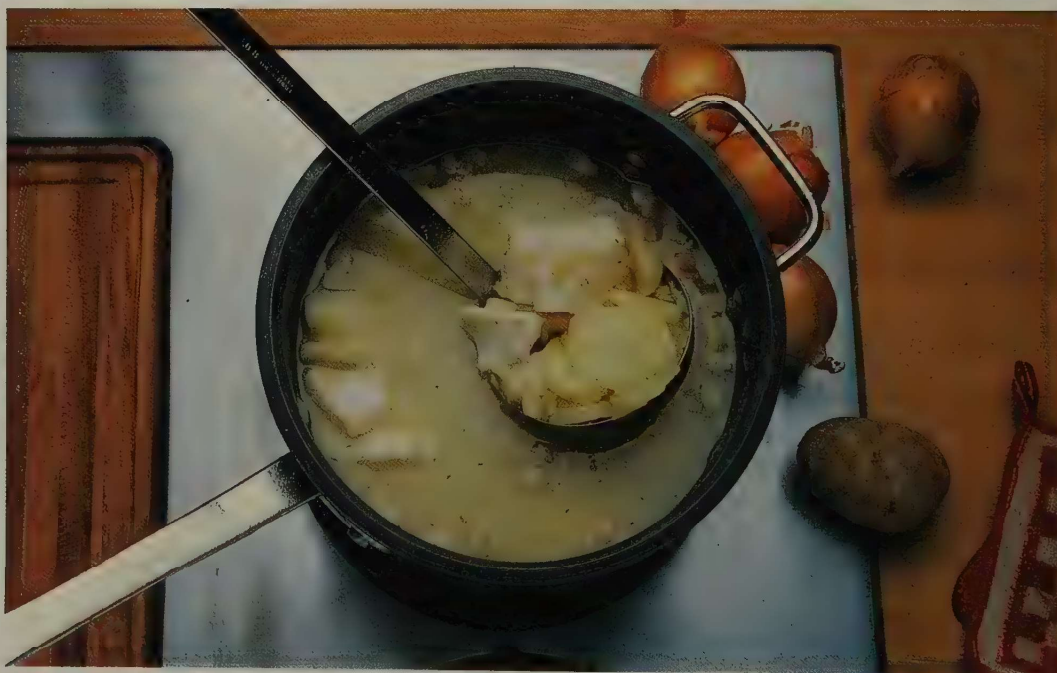
*Or*—2½ pounds (1¼ kg) fresh cod, hake, haddock, or other lean fish fillets, all one kind or a mixture, plus either 4 cups (1 L) fish stock, or 2 cups (½ L) bottled or canned clam juice and 2 cups (½ L) water

6 ounces (180 g) fat-and-lean salt pork (rind off), diced into ¾-inch (1-cm) pieces and blanched (boiled 5 minutes in 2 quarts or liters water and drained)

About 4½ cups (1 L) sliced onions

3 Tb flour (optional, but I like a light liaison here)

About 5 cups (1¼ L) sliced “boiling” potatoes  
½ tsp sage or thyme



2 imported bay leaves  
 ¼ tsp peppercorns, roughly crushed  
 Salt (coarse or kosher preferred) and pepper  
 Fish stock, milk, or water as necessary  
 ½ cup (1 dL), or more, sour cream  
 ⅓ cup (¾ dL) roughly chopped parsley  
 2 cups (½ L) toasted croutons tossed in butter,  
 salt, and pepper

#### Equipment

A pressure cooker, optional

#### Fish stock from fish frames

If you are using fish frames, remove gills (the feathery red tissue) from head and whack fish into pieces that will fit into a kettle; cover with cold water, salt lightly, and boil 3 to 4 minutes or until meat is just cooked on bones. Scrape meat from bones and reserve; return remains to kettle and boil 20 minutes, then strain, discarding bones; this liquid is your fish stock.



#### The chowder base

Sauté the blanched salt pork several minutes in a 3-quart (3-L) saucepan (or bottom of pressure cooker), to brown very lightly and render fat. Stir in onions and cook 8 to 10 minutes, stirring frequently, until tender and lightly browned (or pressure-cook 2 minutes and release pressure). Drain out fat. Stir in optional flour, adding a little rendered pork fat if too dry, and cook slowly, stirring, for 2 minutes; remove from heat. Bring fish stock or clam juice and water to the simmer, then vigorously beat 4 cups (1 L) into the onions and pork; add the potatoes, herbs, and peppercorns, but no salt until potatoes are tender (or pressure-cook 2 minutes, release pressure, then simmer slowly 5 minutes to bring out flavors). Correct seasoning; you wait until now to add salt because salt pork may still be a bit salty, and store-bought clam juice, if you used it, is bound to be.

➊ May be completed in advance to this point; refrigerate, and cover when chilled. Will keep 2 days.

#### Finishing the chowder

Shortly before you are ready to serve, bring chowder base to the simmer. If you are using fresh fish, cut into 2-inch (5-cm) chunks and add to the chowder base along with additional stock, or milk, to cover ingredients; simmer about 5 minutes or until fish is just cooked—opaque rather than translucent and lightly springy. Do not overcook. If you are using cooked fish-frame meat, simply add it when chowder is at the simmer, along with more stock or milk, if you wish; it needs only warming through. Taste carefully and correct seasoning.

➋ May be completed, chilled, then brought to a simmer again just before serving. Or you may keep the chowder warm for 20 minutes or so, loosely covered and set on an electric hot plate.

#### To serve

Ladle into wide soup plates, top with a dollop of sour cream, a sprinkling of parsley, and a handful of croutons.

## Cole Slaw

For a low-calorie version, simply omit the mayonnaise and/or the sour cream (the liquid from the vegetables makes a natural dressing). Or, as a compromise, include the sour cream but pass a bowl of mayonnaise separately.

- 4 cups (1 L) thinly shredded cabbage
- ½ cup (1 dL) each diced green pepper, diced celery, grated carrot, minced scallions or purple onion
- 1 small apple, grated
- 3 Tb fresh minced parsley
- 2 Tb each wine vinegar and fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tb Dijon-type prepared mustard
- 1 ½ tsp each salt and sugar
- 2 pulverized imported bay leaves
- ½ tsp caraway or cumin seed
- ⅓ to ½ cup (¾ to 1 dL) homemade mayonnaise, or sour cream, or a mixture (optional)

Toss together the cabbage, vegetables, apple, and parsley. Combine the other ingredients to make dressing; toss with the cabbage mixture, taste carefully, correct seasoning, and toss again. Taste again; cover and refrigerate for several hours.

## Indian Pudding

*For about 6 cups, serving 6 to 8 people*

Cooking time: 5 to 6 hours

- ¼ cup (½ dL) cornmeal, stone ground recommended
- 2 cups (½ L) cold milk, regular or low-fat
- 2 to 3 Tb butter or chopped fresh beef suet
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp fragrant powdered ginger
- Scant ½ cup (1 dL) excellent dark unsulphured molasses
- 1 tart apple, peeled, cored, and coarsely grated (scant 1 cup or ¼ L)
- 1 cup (¼ L) additional milk
- To serve with the pudding: vanilla ice cream, or lightly whipped and sweetened cream, or Custard Sauce (see recipe), or heavy cream and sugar

### Equipment

Corn grinder (see right)



Place the cornmeal in a heavy-bottomed 2-quart (2-L) saucepan and with a wire whip gradually beat in the milk. (Old recipes say to sprinkle cornmeal into boiling milk; do it this way if you prefer, but I find no need for it.) Set over moderately high heat and add the butter, salt, ginger, and molasses. Bring to the boil, stirring and beating with a wire whip to be sure all is smooth, then add grated apple. Boil 10 to 15 minutes, stirring frequently, until you have a thick, porridgelike mixture. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F/180°C.

➊ This preliminary cooking may be done ahead; set aside or refrigerate, and bring to the boil again before proceeding.

Turn the hot pudding mixture into a buttered 2-quart (2-L) baking dish and set uncovered in the middle level of the preheated oven for 20 minutes, or until bubbling. Stir up the pudding, blend in ½ cup (1 dL) additional milk, clean sides of dish with a rubber spatula, and turn oven down to 250°F/130°C. Bake 1½ to 2 hours longer.

Stir up again as before, and pour over surface of the pudding the remaining ½ cup (1 dL) milk, letting it float on top. Continue baking uncovered another 3 to 4 hours; the top will glaze over.

➋ If you are not ready to serve by that time, cover the pudding and keep it warm, but not too hot or it will dry out.

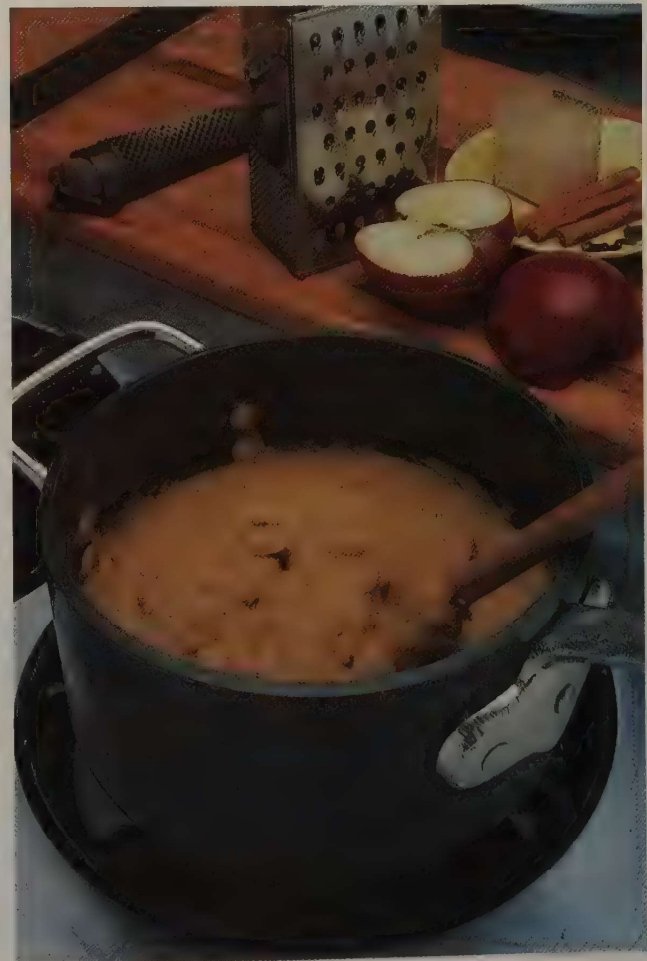
Serve the pudding (which will look like a very thick caramel-brown sauce) warm, with the ice cream, whipped cream, the following sauce, or cream and sugar passed separately.

### Custard Sauce (optional):

*For 2 cups or ½ liter*

Gradually beat 5 Tb sugar into 4 egg yolks and continue beating until mixture is pale yellow and forms the ribbon. By dribbles beat in 1 cup (¼L) boiling milk. Set over moderately low heat and stir slowly with a wooden spoon, reaching all over bottom of pan and watching carefully as mixture slowly thickens: at first bubbles will appear on surface, and as they begin to disappear custard is about to thicken; a wisp of steam rising from the surface is another indication. Stir more rapidly, and as soon as custard lies in a creamy layer on the back of the spoon, it is done. Immediately remove from heat, stirring vigorously to cool. Beat in a tablespoon of unsalted butter and tablespoon of pure vanilla extract. Serve hot, warm, or cool.

➌ May be made a day or two in advance and reheated carefully by stirring over hot water. May be frozen.



## 🕒 Timing

There is only one last-minute job in this menu: adding the fish to the chowder 5 minutes before you serve it. That's for A-Plus results. But there are alternatives, none of which gets less than A-Minus. You can keep chowder warm; you can reheat it; you can make the "base" 2 days in advance. Note—start early if you are using the salt fish suggested in the following variations: 2 or 3 days to soak a whole fish, depending on its size; 24 hours or more for packaged salt cod; a few hours for chopped or shredded salt cod.

Cole slaw must, of course, be made and chilled in advance: anywhere between a few hours to 2 days.

Indian pudding is prepared half a day before serving, since its cooking time is 5 or 6 hours. It can, of course, be made in advance and reheated over hot water; but then you will probably lose the glazed crust because you will need to stir it as it warms.

## Menu Variations

*The chowder:* Using the traditional chowder base of salt pork, onions, and potatoes, you can vary the recipe in a number of ways. You might like to use frozen fish or soaked salt codfish instead of fresh fish, with a fish stock. Vegetarians could make a hearty main course of corn chowder, using butter for salt pork and fresh cream-style grated corn (see "Dinner for the Boss," page 127). I wouldn't use such delicate, expensive shellfish as lobster or crab; but

you could have scallops or mussels, and certainly clams. For mussels or steamer clams, because they can be terribly salty I always soak them an hour or more in several changes of cold water. Then steam them open with  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cm) water in a covered kettle; the steaming liquid becomes the chowder stock, and the shellfish meat, now fully cooked, goes into the finished chowder. Since hard-shelled clams can be tough, I steam them open, chop the meat, and cook it until tender with the pork and onions. As to other chowder systems, some cooks thicken their chowders by running one-quarter of the cooked potatoes through the blender with a little stock and returning them to the pot before the fish goes in. Some garnish chowder with extra bits of fried salt pork, chips of onions fried till dry and brown, or chopped chives. It's all good, and, providing you stick to the traditional base, it's all chowder.

*Cole slaw:* This splendid stuff has almost as many variations as it does aficionados, as a tour through the basic cookbooks amply illustrates. There's another good cole slaw, based on my friend Avis DeVoto's version, in *J.C.'s Kitchen*.

*Indian pudding:* "Maybe it's sacrilege," says Anthony Athanas of the Boston waterfront restaurant Anthony's Pier Four, "but we use raisins." For a light, eggy Indian pudding, you couldn't do better than his:  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (1 dL) light cream is brought to the simmer in a double boiler with 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups (6 dL) whole milk; you then add 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons cornmeal and 4 tablespoons granulated sugar, whisking as you go, and let simmer while you beat together 3 "extra-large" eggs, 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons brown sugar, 4 tablespoons molasses, a good pinch each cinnamon and ginger, a pinch nutmeg, and a small pinch salt. Add the heated milk and cream, blend completely, and stir in 5 tablespoons raisins; then pour into a baking dish, set in a pan containing 1 inch (2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cm) boiling water, and bake for 2 hours at 400°F/200°C.

## Leftovers, or: Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without

*Fish chowder:* A completed chowder is good reheated and maybe frozen (once). In some thrifty New England households, part of the liquid is drained off and the solids are topped with buttered crumbs and baked until golden brown. The “base,” with the stock added or not, is versatile indeed (see Menu Variations) and may be frozen. Extra fish stock, well strained and frozen, is a kitchen staple for sauces and soups. A very Yankee way of using extra cooked fish is to moisten it with cream or with a “cream” sauce (as they call it although it’s usually creamless; the French would call it

*Fish cakes and baked beans with English muffins.*



*béchamel* if the liquid is milk, or *velouté* if it is stock) and bake it topped with crumbs or pastry; “fish pie” is a Sunday-night staple Down East, and very good if you add a bit of crab or lobster, dry Madeira, and a speck of nutmeg. Leftover salt cod and potatoes make deep-fried fish cakes (eaten with baked beans on Sunday morning), or, mixed with thick white sauce and crumbed, it becomes fish croquettes. If you made your chowder with smoked fish, it’s not far to finnan haddie for a second round. If you used clams, and have a few too many, steam extra raw soft-shelled ones and eat with melted butter; or steam open the hard-shelled type, chop the meat and mix with crumbs, season highly, stuff in the shells, and bake. Or save the soft-shelled type, which, raw and unopened, keep for 3 days in the refrigerator, and use them in the paella on page 64. (Steamer clams have rubbery black necks, which make them unappealing raw.) I really don’t see much future (except reheating) for the remains of a corn chowder; but extra raw cream-style corn (see “Dinner for the Boss,” page 133) is a treasure not to be wasted.

*Cole slaw:* A completed cole slaw will keep for several days, though you will want to drain its accumulated juices after a while. You wouldn’t want to shred extra cabbage unless you planned to use it soon, because the cut edges wilt, though iced water helps. Cabbage wedges, however, are integral to a New England boiled dinner. Quickly boiled, shredded cabbage is nice with butter and a few caraway or poppy seeds. Braised, with chestnuts or apples, or with sausage and salt meat (as in a *choucroute garnie*), it is delicious. You can bake it with tomato sauce, or with cream or cheese or bits of ham or bacon; you can stuff a strudel with it; or, perhaps best of all, you can combine it with leeks and potatoes for a hearty peasant soup. Or you can save a few outside leaves and stuff them (see *Mastering I*).

*Indian pudding:* It can be eaten cold or it can be reheated—best done in a double boiler.

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## Postscript: Another way to bake beans

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A few summers ago a friend of ours on the coast of Maine dug a deep hole in his back yard and lined it with big round rocks. Then, one early morning, he built a fire in it and let it smoulder for several hours, raked coals out from the center, and put in a big iron pot filled with pork and beans. He raked the coals back over the pot, piled seaweed on top, and covered that with a canvas tarpaulin which he anchored in place with more big round rocks. In a few hours we could smell those beans cooking, and at 7 o'clock in the evening he unloosed the tarp, raked the seaweed and coal ash from around the pot, and lifted it out, its hoop-shaped handle grasped by a hook-and-pulley contraption he had constructed over the bean hole. We sat out on the grass, in a circle, while he lifted the lid to release the aroma of those slow-cooked beans with the flavor of onions, molasses, and pork baked right into them. They were almost crusty although surrounded by thick juices, and we ate them with great helpings of cole slaw and homemade rye bread.



I thought to myself at the time that I loved the idea of the bean hole, and I loved the beans that came out of it, but why wouldn't an electric Crock-Pot give the same effect? While not quite the same, as I found from experiment, it does produce an easy-cooking meal of pork and beans, and to make things even more untraditional I precooked the beans in a pressure cooker. Anyway, as with a fish chowder, there is no set recipe for baked beans, from Fannie Farmer, Mrs. Rorer, Lydia Maria Child, and on up to the old Boston restaurant of Durgin Park. All the recipes have beans and pork, of course, but in differing quantities; some have molasses, or brown sugar, or even honey or maple syrup. Others include mustard, and vinegar, and tomato, while some have no onion at all, and so forth. I have therefore seasoned my beans to my own taste, which means more onions than usual, a little garlic, herbs, molasses, tomato, and mustard.

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### Manufacturing Notes:

The Crock-Pot, I find, is slow on cooking raw vegetables; thus I recommend precooking the onions separately with the pork before adding them to the beans. The beans themselves need precooking before they go in, and if they are not quite soft enough beforehand they may remain a little too crunchy even after several hours of crockery. As to the pork, I prefer to blanch it before cooking, to get rid of its salt; otherwise it can oversalt the beans. And whether or not to leave the pork whole or sliced is up to you; I like it cut into strips so that it distributes its considerable charms throughout the beans. Finally, if you don't have a Crock-Pot, just cook the beans in a casserole or bean pot in a 275°F/140°C oven, and if you've no pressure pan for the precooking, simmer the soaked beans in an open pot.

# Baked Beans or Boston Baked Beans or Pork and Beans

*For about 2 quarts baked beans, serving 6 people*

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1 pound (450 g) small white beans
6 cups (1½ L) water (more if needed)
8 ounces (225 g) fat-and-lean salt pork (rind included)
2 cups (½ L) diced onions (2 medium-size onions)
2 large cloves garlic, minced or puréed
¼ cup (½ dL) each: dark molasses, plain tomato sauce or purée, and Dijon-type prepared mustard
1 Tb minced fresh ginger (optional)
1 imported bay leaf
½ tsp dried thyme, or mixed herbs such as Italian or Provençal blend
1½ tsp salt

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## Quick soaking and precooking of the beans

Toss the beans in a sieve and pick over carefully to remove any tiny stones (I found 14 in a box of beans the other day!), rinse under cold water, and place in pressure pan (or saucepan) with the 6 cups (1½ L) water. Bring rapidly to the boil and boil uncovered exactly 2 minutes; remove from heat, cover pan, and let sit exactly 1 hour. Then cover with lid and pressure valve and bring rapidly to full pressure for exactly 1 minute; set aside for 10 minutes, then release pressure (or simmer an hour or so in partially covered saucepan until beans are almost tender when you eat several as a test).

**The pork, onions, and other ingredients**  
Meanwhile cut the salt pork into slices (including rind) ¾ inch (1 cm) thick and, if you wish, cut the slices into sticks; drop into 2 quarts (2L) cold water and simmer 10 minutes, then

drain. Sauté for several minutes in a heavy-bottomed 10-inch (25-cm) frying pan until they start rendering some fat, then fold in the onions. Cover and cook over moderately low heat for 10 minutes or so, stirring up several times, until onions are quite tender but not browned. While onions are cooking, measure out the rest of the ingredients into the Crock-Pot (or a 3-quart or 3-L casserole).

## Assembling and baking the beans

When the beans are done, drain them in a colander set over a bowl, and turn them into the Crock-Pot (or casserole), folding them together with the pork and onions and other ingredients. Pour in bean-cooking juices just to level of beans, adding additional water if you need more liquid. Cover Crock-Pot and set at “high” until contents are bubbling, usually 30 minutes, then cook at “low” for 6 to 8 hours, or until you feel the beans are done. (Or set casserole of beans in a 350°F/180°C oven for ½ hour or until bubbling, then turn oven down to 275°F/140°C and bake for 6 to 8 hours.) As they cook, the beans turn a brownish red—a more pronounced color in the oven than in the Crock-Pot—and the various flavors meld themselves into the beans while the juices thicken; their point of doneness is up to you.

● May be baked several days in advance; let cool uncovered, then cover and chill. Reheat to bubbling either in Crock-Pot or in a casserole in a 325°F/170°C oven, and if they seem dry, add spoonfuls of water.

*An exquisite and fanciful luncheon menu for your most sophisticated acquaintances, under the Sign of the Smiling Fish.*



# VIP Lunch

## Menu

*Apéritif: Kir au Champagne—Champagne with black currant or raspberry liqueur*



*Choulibiac—Fillets of sole and mushrooms baked in choux pastry*



*Watercress Salad with Endive and Cucumbers  
Melba Toast or Toasted Pita Bread Triangles*



*Sorbet aux Paires—Fresh pear sherbet*



*Suggested wines:  
A fine white Burgundy or Pinot Chardonnay*

This luncheon menu is elegant but not fussy, unusual but not eccentric, and eminently suitable for those occasions when you want to offer a charming surprise either to distinguished guests, or to friends well-versed in cookery who enjoy innovative food and good wine. The main course, the Choulibiac, is so spectacular a dish in both its composition and its presentation that it needs nothing accompanying it. I follow it with a bit of greenery, and then end the meal with fresh pear sherbet—a delight of the purest and most refreshing kind. Therefore I serve no first course, and offer only a glass of chilled Champagne before the meal. To give a stylish and colorful touch, Paul adds a few drops of black currant or raspberry liqueur to each glass.

Such a creation as the Choulibiac was unthinkable in all but the grandest houses and greatest restaurants until a few years ago, when the invention of the food processor brought such culinary fantasies right to the ordinary kitchen's doorstep. Almost anyone now may produce with ease many a classical preparation of the *haute cuisine* (such as a velvety, airy mousse of fish, which once took hours of labor with mortar and pestle, then beating over constantly renewed bowls of ice, then forcing the mixture through hair-fine sieves). In addition, the basic elements are easily available. So the modern cook's imagination is freed to devise original and fanciful assemblages like the Choulibiac.

In its rococo style, it is almost a playful dish. Even its name is a pun on the Russian *coulibiac*, an envelope of brioche pastry stuffed with salmon, mushrooms, and *kasha*... and a very good dish, too, though a heavy one in comparison to this. The Chouli-

biac is so much lighter because it rests on a giant crêpe rather than on a layer of brioche dough, and it is encased in the thinnest possible cloak of *choux* or cream puff pastry—just enough to protect its overall inside covering of fish mousse, under which rest layers of the freshest of sole fillets interspersed with wine-flavored minced mushrooms.

What you present to your guests as the finished dish is a plump golden-brown pillow topped with a fat flirtatious fish, wearing such a broad smile that one knows he is proud to have become a Choulibiac. When sliced it is dark brown, white, and daffodil yellow—the

layering of mushroom *duxelles*, fish fillets, and fish mousse. Each serving is surrounded with a beautifully buttery yellow sauce.

After the salad, the silver-white pear sherbet seems to capture with icy intensity the flavor and perfume of a ripe pear at its fleeting peak. You can't always count on having perfect pears ready for a given day, and, if you do find some, you can't keep them. But this simple, artful recipe does seem to preserve their indescribable taste intact. You may discreetly enhance it with a touch of Williams pear brandy, which is sold by a few knowing shops to connoisseurs. (It comes with a plump pear lolling about in the bottle. When the pear tree buds, the bottle is slipped over a choice twig and acts as a little private greenhouse for the fruit which ripens inside it, and which will flavor the spirit.)

It seems a bit pedestrian, perhaps, for me to remind you that most of the elements of this meal—except for the final assemblage and baking—can be prepared long in advance, that it requires no novel or difficult techniques, and that it is not particularly expensive. Like so many delightful examples of the rococo, it is simply a happy combination of tried-and-true basic components; and, like them, it is sound and practical. It just happens to be great fun, too.



## Preparations

Choulibiatic is not a recipe I would attempt at all without a food processor. One could do it, of course, spending several hours mincing acres of mushrooms, grinding the fish, beating over ice—but not me! I'd pick another recipe, and I have made suggestions for variations and alternatives in Menu Variations later in the chapter. And you do need an ice-cream maker with dasher for the sherbet.

### Marketing and Storage: Staples to have on hand

Salt  
 White peppercorns ▼  
 Nutmeg  
 Mustard, the strong Dijon type (see Remarks, page 6)  
 Olive oil and cooking oil  
 Optional: semisweet chocolate (4 ounces or 115 g); unsweetened chocolate (1 ounce or 30 g)  
 Sugar (instant superfine useful but not essential)  
 Instant-blending flour ( $\frac{1}{3}$  cup or  $\frac{3}{4}$  dL), useful but not essential ▼  
 All-purpose flour  
 Milk  
 Heavy cream (1 to 2 cups or  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  L)  
 Butter ( $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 pound or 225 to 450 g), depending on the way you make the sauce for the Choulibiatic)  
 Eggs (8 "large")  
 Lemons (4)  
 Shallots and/or scallions  
 Onion, carrot, celery stalk, and imported bay leaf—for fish stock  
 Wines and liqueurs: dry white French vermouth and Cognac

### Specific ingredients for this menu

Coarse salt (2 pounds or 1 kg) for freezing sherbet  
 Sole fillets (about 2 pounds or 900 g, 16 skinless and boneless pieces about 9 by 2 inches or 23 x 5 cm) ▼  
 Halibut fillets or additional sole ( $\frac{1}{2}$  pound or 225 g) ▼  
 Fresh fish trimmings (enough to make about 2 cups or  $\frac{1}{2}$  L), for fish stock ▼  
 Fresh mushrooms (1 quart or 10 ounces or 285 g)  
 Cucumbers (2)  
 Watercress (2 or 3 bunches)  
 Belgian endive (3 or 4 heads)  
 Fresh parsley (1 bunch)  
 Optional: fresh dill weed (a stalk or two; see Remarks, page 96)  
 Optional: cherry tomatoes (about 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  dozen), for salad  
 Melba toast (page 124) or toasted pita bread triangles (page 203)  
 Pears (5 or 6 ripe, full-of-flavor) ▼  
 Pear liqueur (Eau-de-Vie de Poire Williams recommended)  
 Champagne (1 bottle)  
 Crème de cassis or liqueur de framboise ( $\frac{1}{4}$  bottle black currant or raspberry liqueur)



► **Remarks:**  
Staples

*White peppercorns:* not always to be found on supermarket shelves, these can be had bottled at specialty shops. White pepper, used in most fish dishes or white sauces, is the mature pepper berry with its husk rubbed off; black is the dried immature berry. *Instant-blending flour:* the patented granular type, which is so useful for crêpes; if you can't find it, use regular flour in the recipe, as indicated.

**Ingredients for this menu**

*Fish:* see "Fish Talk," page 111, for details. *Fish stock:* to make the sauce for the Choulibiac; or use a hollandaise sauce, as described on page 171 (but you will probably want to omit the *béchamel* stabilizer needed for that Breakfast Party holding operation). *Pears:* most pears as you buy them are not fully ripe, but some, if they were picked when immature, will never ripen. Therefore, look for firm flesh that has just begun to soften. The best pears for your sherbet are full-flavored varieties like Bartlett (buy when turning yellowish or rosy), or Anjou or Comice (buy yellow-green). Be careful there is no weakening of the flesh near the stem (an indication the pear is immature); avoid wilting or shriveling flesh, dull skin with no gloss, and spots on the sides or at the blossom (large) end of the fruit. Ripen for a few days at room temperature in a closed paper bag or a ripening device (the purpose of either is to trap the harmless—indeed benign—ethylene gas exuded by ripening fruit). A nearly ripe apple or tomato, enclosed with your pears, will hasten the work. When perfectly ripe, the skin color is yellower or rosier and the pear is very fragrant. At this point, chill if you can't use at once; but don't wait long.

# Choulibiac

*Fillets of sole baked with mushrooms  
and fish mousse in a choux pastry crust*

This free-form rectangular structure built upon a giant crêpe is an elegant creation and definitely *grande cuisine*, but parts of it may be assembled bit by bit, as you have time—and as you will see from the following recipe.

*For a rectangular Choulibiac about 12  
by 5 by 2½ inches (30 x 13 x 6½ cm),  
serving 6 to 8 people*

**Batter for Giant Crêpe**

Baked in an 11-by-17-inch (27-x-42-cm)  
jelly roll pan, nonstick if possible

⅓ cup (¾ dL) Wondra or instant-blending  
flour, or all-purpose flour

½ cup (1 dL) milk

1 "large" egg

1 Tb cooking oil

½ tsp salt

**Pâte à choux**

*About 3 cups (¾ L), for fish mousse and  
for encasing Choulibiac*

1½ cups (3½ dL) water in a heavy-bottomed  
2½-quart (2½-L) saucepan

6 ounces (1½ sticks or 180 g) butter, cut into  
½-inch (1½-cm) pieces

1½ tsp salt

1 cup (¼ L) flour (measure by scooping  
dry-measure cup into flour and sweeping  
off excess)

6 "large" eggs

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**Filling ingredients**


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16 skinless and boneless sole fillets (each about 9 x 2 inches, or 23 x 5 cm), or about 2 pounds (900 g)

½ pound (225 g) skinless and boneless halibut, or more sole fillets

1 cup (¼ L) heavy cream, chilled

1 quart (10 ounces or 285 g) fresh mushrooms

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**Miscellaneous**


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Several shallots and/or scallions

A little Cognac and 3 Tb dry Port or Sercial Madeira

Salt, freshly ground white pepper, ground nutmeg

4 or more Tb butter (for greasing pans, sautéing, etc.)

4 funnels made of aluminum foil (twisted around a pencil), ⅓ inch (¾ cm) in diameter and 1 inch (2½ cm) long

Egg glaze (1 egg beaten with 1 tsp water in a small bowl)

3 cups (¾ L) white wine sauce (next recipe) or hollandaise, page 171, to serve with the Choulibiac

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**Equipment**


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You need a sturdy, level jelly roll pan, preferably with a nonstick surface. An old battered pan is going to produce an uneven crêpe since the batter is spread so thin—there may even be areas that are not covered, while other areas, where the batter settles, will be too thick. Also, your oven must be absolutely level. If you don't have reliable equipment, make two large, thin crêpes in your biggest frying pan, then piece them together to obtain approximately the dimensions called for in the final assembling.

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**The giant crêpe**

Place the flour in a mixing bowl and beat in the milk, egg, oil, and salt; let rest for 10 minutes. Meanwhile preheat oven to 400°F/200°C, smear jelly roll pan with a tablespoon of soft butter, roll flour in it, and knock out excess. Pour crêpe batter into pan to a depth of about ⅛ inch (½ cm), and set in lower level of oven for 4 to 5 minutes, until batter has set. Then place pan 4 to 5 inches (10 to 13 cm) under a medium-hot broiler element to brown top of crêpe slowly and lightly—it will seethe and bubble a bit as it browns but do not let it overcook and stiffen. Remove from oven and with a flexible-blade spatula carefully loosen crêpe all around from edges to center of pan. If it sticks, it has not cooked quite long enough; return to lower level of oven 2 to 3 minutes more. Slide crêpe off onto a cake rack.

🕒 You may roll crêpe, when cool, between two sheets of wax paper and refrigerate, or wrap airtight and freeze.

**Seasoning the fish fillets**

Mince enough shallots or scallions to make 3 tablespoons and set aside in a small bowl, reserving half for the mushrooms later. Choose a rectangular or oval dish 10 to 12 inches (25 to 30 cm) long, sprinkle 1 teaspoon shallots on the bottom, and arrange over them a layer of overlapping sole fillets; season lightly with salt and pepper, a sprinkling of minced shallots or

scallions, a few drops of Cognac, and continue with the rest of the fillets, making probably three layers in all. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate. (Set over ice if wait is more than a few hours.)

#### The *pâte à choux*

Bring the 1½ cups (3 ½ dL) water rather slowly to the boil with the cut-up butter and the salt. As soon as butter has melted, remove from heat and immediately dump in all of the cup (¼ L) of flour at once, beating vigorously with a portable mixer and/or wooden spoon. When smooth, set over moderately high heat and beat for several minutes until mixture begins to film the bottom of the pan—indicating excess moisture has boiled off.

When using a food processor, scrape hot paste into machine, activate it, and break in 5 eggs rapidly, one after the other, then stop the machine. (Do the same if you have a table model mixer, beating just until each egg is absorbed before adding the next. By hand,

make a well in center of hot paste in saucepan, then beat in 5 eggs one by one with either a portable mixer or a wooden spoon. Break sixth egg into a bowl, blend yolk and white with a fork, and how much to add to the paste depends on its thickness—it should just hold its shape in a spoon. Beat in as much of the final egg by droplets as you judge safe, remembering the more egg the more the pastry puffs, but you don't want the batter to thin out too much.)

Remove ½ cup (1 dL) of the *choux* pastry to a medium-size metal mixing bowl and reserve for fish mousse, next step. For the food processor, scrape paste back into the saucepan, and do not wash out processor; simply replace blade; cover pastry with plastic wrap, set in a pan of warm but not too hot water, and hold for final assembly.

#### The fish mousse

Set the reserved bowl of *choux* pastry in a larger bowl with a tray of ice cubes and water to cover them, and stir several minutes with a wooden spoon to chill; leave over ice. For the food processor, cut the halibut and one of the sole fillets into ½-inch (1½-cm) pieces and place in the processor with the cold *choux* paste, ¾ cup (1¾ dL) chilled cream, ½ teaspoon salt, several grinds white pepper, and a big pinch nutmeg; activate the processor for about a minute, until the fish is ground into a fine paste. If still stiff, beat in more cream by dribbles—mousse must be just firm enough to hold its shape for spreading; scrape out of food processor into *choux*-paste bowl; do not wash processor; simply replace blade and use for mushrooms, next step. (Lacking a processor, put fish twice through finest blade of meat grinder and beat resulting purée into the *choux* paste over ice; then, with a portable mixer, beat in the seasonings and, by dribbles, as much of the cream as the mixture will take and still hold its shape.)

Cover bowl with plastic wrap and, still over ice, refrigerate.



❶ Or cover airtight and freeze if wait is longer than 12 hours.

### The mushroom duxelles

Trim the mushrooms, wash rapidly, and if you are using a food processor, chop by hand into 1/2-inch (1 1/2-cm) pieces, then mince 1 cup (1/4 L) at a time in the processor—flipping it on and off every second just until mushrooms are cut into 1/8-inch (1/2-cm) pieces; otherwise mince by hand with a big knife. To extract juices, either squeeze in a potato ricer or twist by handfuls in the corner of a towel. Sauté in a frying pan, in 2 tablespoons hot butter and 1 tablespoon minced shallots or scallions until mushroom pieces begin to separate from each other—4 to 5 minutes over moderately high heat, stirring. Season lightly with salt and pepper, pour in 3 tablespoons Port or Madeira, and boil down rapidly to evaporate liquid. Scrape the *duxelles* into a bowl and reserve.

❷ If done in advance, cool, cover, and either refrigerate for up to 4 or 5 days, or freeze.

### Assembling the Choulibiac

Spread the giant crêpe, browned side down, on a buttered baking sheet (nonstick if possible)

and trim off any stiff edges with scissors.

Spread 1/3 of the fish mousse in a rectangle about 12 inches (30 cm) long and 5 inches (13 cm) wide down the center, and over it arrange 1/2 of the fish fillets, slightly overlapping. On top of that spread 1/2 of the mushroom *duxelles*, then the rest of the fish fillets and remaining *duxelles*. Beat any fish-seasoning juices into reserved mousse, spread mousse over top and sides of fish structure, then bring the ends and sides of the crêpe (cutting out the corners) up over the fish. Trim off excess crêpe, leaving a side edging on top of only 1 inch (2 1/2 cm). Reserve 1/2 cup (1 dL) or so of pastry for final decorations; then, using a flexible-blade spatula dipped in cold water, spread 1/8 inch (1/2 cm) *choux* pastry evenly over top and sides, masking the structure completely. Poke holes 1/8 inch (1/2 cm) across and 1/2 inch (1 1/2 cm) deep, angled toward center of structure, in the lower part of each of the four corners, and insert buttered foil funnels (to drain out any juices during baking).

❸ Refrigerate the Choulibiac if you are not continuing—but plan to bake it within a few hours.



**Final decorations and baking**

Baking time: about 45 minutes

Preheat oven to 425°F/220°C and set rack in lower-middle level. If *choux* pastry has cooled and stiffened, beat over hot water to soften and warm to tepid only; spoon it into a pastry bag with ½-inch (1½-cm) cannulated tube. Paint Choulibiatic with a coating of egg glaze, then pipe *choux* pastry decorations onto it—such as the fanciful outline of a fish with mouth, eyes, fins; or a zigzag border all around the edges and a number of rosettes on top. Glaze the decorations, and the rest of the pastry, with two coatings of egg.

Immediately set in oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes at 425°F/220°C, or until the pastry top has begun to brown and to puff slightly; turn thermostat down to 375°F/190°C and continue baking another 20 min-

utes or so. Choulibiatic is done when you begin to smell a delicious odor of pastry, fish, and mushrooms, and, finally, when juices start to exude onto baking sheet. (Pastry will not puff a great deal, just slightly.)

Plan to serve as soon as possible, although the Choulibiatic will stay warm in turned-off oven, door ajar, for 20 to 30 minutes—the longer it sits the more of its vital fish juices will exude. Loosen bottom of Choulibiatic carefully from pastry sheet, using a flexible-blade spatula, and slide it onto a hot platter or a serving board.

To serve, cut into crosswise pieces from one of the short sides and surround each portion with sauce—either the following, which can be made well ahead, or hollandaise (see page 171).



**Sauce Vin Blanc:***White wine velouté sauce**For about 2 1/2 cups*

If you plan on this sauce for the Choulbiac, save out 5 to 6 tablespoons of the *choux* pastry (scrapings from the pastry bag, for instance), and the sauce is practically made, except for the white-wine fish stock. Here's how to go about it, in a rather free-form way.

2 cups (1/2 L) fresh fish trimmings (or extra sole or halibut)

1 small onion, chopped

1/2 carrot, chopped

1 small celery stalk, sliced

8 to 10 parsley stems (not leaves)

1 imported bay leaf

1 cup (1/4 L) dry white French vermouth

1 cup (1/4 L) water

1/2 tsp salt (and more as needed)

5 to 6 Tb ready-made *choux* pastry in a bowl

About 1 cup (1/4 L) milk

About 1/2 cup (1 dL) heavy cream

White pepper

Drops of fresh lemon juice

Softened unsalted butter, as your conscience permits

Simmer the fish trimmings or fish with the vegetables, herbs, wine, water, and 1/2 teaspoon salt for 20 to 30 minutes; strain, then boil down rapidly to 1 cup. Gradually blend into the *choux* pastry, pour into saucepan and simmer, thinning out as necessary with spoonfuls of milk and cream. Sauce should coat a spoon lightly; season carefully with additional salt, pepper, and drops of lemon juice.

① If made in advance, clean sauce off sides of pan and float a spoonful of cream over surface to prevent a skin from forming. Bring to the simmer before proceeding.

Just before serving, taste again carefully for seasoning, then remove from heat and beat in softened butter by spoonfuls. (Just a spoonful or two will enrich the sauce nicely, but you may beat in as many more, almost, as you wish, as though you were making a hollandaise.)



# Watercress Salad with Endive and Cucumbers

The salad should really be served after the Choulibiac, but this depends on your table and service arrangements. Whether to serve it on a platter or in a big bowl, or arrange each serving individually—which can be very attractive—is also a matter of your choice and facilities. Pass the Melba toast or pita separately. For recipes, see page 124 for Melba toast and page 203 for homemade pita.

*For 6 people*

2 or 3 bunches watercress, depending on size

2 cucumbers

3 or 4 heads Belgian endive

1 tsp Dijon-type prepared mustard

1 Tb fresh lemon juice

4 to 5 Tb best-quality light olive oil or salad oil

Salt and pepper

Fresh minced dill weed or parsley, halved cherry tomatoes (optional)

Trim off tough stems from watercress, wash the cress, spin dry, and wrap loosely in a clean towel; refrigerate in a plastic bag. Peel the cucumbers, slice thin, and refrigerate in a bowl of salted water; drain thoroughly and dry in a towel before serving. Separate the leaves from the central stems of the endive and refrigerate in a damp towel and plastic bag. Place the mustard, lemon juice, and oil in a screw-topped jar, season with salt and pepper, shake to blend, taste, and correct seasoning.

At serving time, toss each ingredient separately in a little of the dressing (well shaken first), correct seasoning for each, and make your arrangement. One I like is to place the endives first, like the spokes of a wheel, then make a bed of cress, and a topping of cucumber slices. (You may also like a sprinkling of fresh minced dill or parsley tossed with your cucumbers, and a few halved cherry tomatoes placed around for color.)



# Fresh Pear Sherbet

*For about 1 quart*

5 or 6 fine ripe pears, to make about 2 cups (½ L) purée

2 lemons

¾ cup (1¾ dL) sugar—instant superfine, if possible (for fast dissolving)

1 egg white

3 to 4 Tb best-quality white pear liqueur, such as Eau-de-Vie de Poire Williams (optional but highly recommended)

## Equipment

A dasher-type ice-cream freezer; crushed ice; coarse salt; a vegetable mill or food processor for puréeing pears

*Note:* I have tried this sherbet in machines other than the old-fashioned dasher type, and have not been pleased with the results, which are not as smooth. The non-dasher ice-tray method is unsatisfactory, since the sherbet needs beating. I am sure the one-unit freezer-dasher luxury priced electric machine would do a beautiful job.

Wash the pears and lemons. Grate the rind of 1 lemon into a large mixing bowl, and strain the juice of both (or 4 tablespoons) into the bowl. Quarter, peel, and core the pears, and cut into chunks; toss, as you do them, in the bowl with the lemon and a sprinkling of the sugar. (Lemon and sugar prevent the pears from darkening, and you want to keep them white.) Immediately the pears are prepared, purée them with the lemon juice, adding the rest of the sugar and puréeing until you are sure all sugar granules have dissolved completely. (Test by tasting.) If you used a food processor for puréeing, add the egg white to the container and purée a moment more. Otherwise, beat the egg white in a small bowl until it forms soft peaks and fold into the pear purée.

Prepare ice-cream freezer, using 1 part coarse salt to every 4 parts crushed ice. (The salt lowers the temperature of the ice. And it is important that the ice be finely crushed: if you use cubed or coarsely chipped ice, the salt slips down to the bottom and will have no freezing effect.) Pour pear purée into freezing container; if you are using it, stir in the pear liqueur only at the last moment, so that it hasn't time to darken the pears. Freeze the



sherbet, which will take about 25 minutes; then pack it in a sealed airtight container and store in the freezer for at least 4 hours to cure. (Sherbet does not develop its full flavor until it has cured.) Set in refrigerator for 20 to 30 minutes before serving to let it soften.

① Sherbet may be made several days in advance, although it gradually loses its freshly made texture and develops crystals that make it less smooth—in that case you could let it soften, and freeze again in the ice-cream machine.

A pretty way to serve this sherbet is to spoon it into goblets and stick a chocolate heart in each helping.

#### To Make Chocolate Hearts:

Melt 4 ounces (115 g) semisweet and 1 ounce (30 g) unsweetened chocolate: break it up into a small saucepan, cover and set in a larger pan of boiling water, remove from heat and let sit 5 minutes or so, until soft; then stir up to make a smooth shining mass. Remove pan from heat and stir with a wooden spoon until bottom of pan is almost cold to your hand. Then spread an even  $3/16$ -inch ( $3/4$ -cm) layer on wax paper over a baking sheet and let cool until it clouds over and is almost set. Press heart designs into chocolate with a small cookie cutter (or outline hearts in the chocolate with the point of a small knife), and peel paper and surrounding chocolate from each heart. Store on wax paper in refrigerator or freezer, and handle with wooden or rubber-covered tongs.



## ⌚ Timing

Despite its elegant character, this is not a tricky meal. Just remember to put the sherbet in the refrigerator to soften before you sit down to lunch or before the salad course, depending on whether your guests are lingerers or gobblers. The Choulibiac will stay warm for almost half an hour in the turned-off oven, though it does exude juice. (Incidentally, if it does, add the juices to your sauce.) Ideally, you'd start baking it when you fix the salad, about 15 minutes before your guests come. You can assemble it first thing in the morning and refrigerate it until time to bake. Also during the morning, make its sauce, chill your wine, and prepare your salad ingredients.

You can make the sherbet several days beforehand; you can make and freeze the crêpe, the fish mousse, the *duxelles*, and the chocolate hearts any time; and the *choux* pastry will keep 2 or 3 days in the refrigerator—but remember to reheat it just to tepid, beating it over hot water, so that it will be soft enough for easy spreading.

## Menu Variations

*Choulibiac*: You can omit the *choux*-paste envelope and the giant pancake, and simply pile and bake fish fillets, layered with fish mousse, on a bed of *duxelles*. The dish is done when the fillets begin to shrink and exude juice (which you drain off—it's easy with a bulb baster; you rapidly reduce the juices and add them to your sauce). Or you can roll the fillets around the mousse, poach them in wine and fish stock on the bed of *duxelles*, reduce this liquid, and turn it into a sauce. *Mastering I* and

*J.C.'s Kitchen* both contain classic dishes of fillets of sole with mushrooms; there are fish-and-mushroom soufflés; and the combination is excellent in a *vol-au-vent* case. Or—but this is really an alternative, not a variation—you could return to the Choulibiak's Russian ancestor and make a *coulibiak*; there is a home-style version of that in *The French Chef Cookbook*.

*Pear sherbet*: If you can't obtain first-rate pears at their peak of flavor, pick another fruit for this recipe, like fresh peaches or pineapple, or canned apricots. Or try the non-cranking sherbet recipes in *Mastering II* and *J.C.'s Kitchen*.

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## Leftovers

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You can keep opened *Champagne* in its original bottle. Just look around for a patent metal Champagne cork that clamps on the top of the bottle and keeps in the fizz; store the bottle in the refrigerator.

*The Choulibiak* can be reheated in foil, but be sure to serve it with sauce, either the *Vin Blanc* or a *hollandaise*. You could serve leftovers as a cold first course or as another luncheon dish if you scrape off the *choux*-paste covering and the *crêpe* bottom; mask the fish attractively with a sour cream sauce or home-made mayonnaise lightened with sour cream or minced cucumbers. Or you could chop or purée the remains and stir them into a cream of

fish soup, a cream of celery soup, or a leek and potato soup, adding more cream or sour cream as need be.

*Fish sauce* can be frozen and mixed into a new sauce, or stirred into a fish soup as a special enrichment.

*Leftover salad* is leftover salad, to my mind, and has little charm for me except possibly at breakfast the next day, or washed off immediately and chopped up for addition to a vegetable soup of the *minestrone* type.

*The sherbet* can be refrozen. See notes about this at the end of the recipe.

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## Postscript: On playing with your food

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Some children like to make castles out of their rice pudding, or faces with raisins for eyes. It is forbidden—so sternly that, when they grow up, they take a horrid revenge by dyeing meringues pale blue or baking birthday cakes in the form of horseshoes or lyres or whatnot. That is not playing with food, that is trifling.

“Play” to me means freedom and delight, as in the phrase “play of imagination.” If cooks did not enjoy speculating about new possibilities in every method and each raw material, their art would stagnate and they would become rote performers, not creators. True cooks love to set one flavor against another in the imagination, to experiment with the great wealth of fresh produce in the supermarkets, to bake what previously they braised, to try new devices. We all have flops, of course, but we learn from them; and, when an invention or a variation works out at last, it is an enormous pleasure to propose it to our fellows.

Let's all play with our food, I say, and, in so doing, let us advance the state of the art together.



*A gorgeous spread for people you really want to see; and a revolutionary method to make puff pastry an everyday staple.*



# Cocktail Party

## Menu

*Ham Pithiviers, a puff pastry tart*



*Puffed Cheese Appetizers*



*Gravlaks, dilled fresh salmon*



*Minimeatballs*



*Peking Wings*



*Oysters and Clams*



*Stuffed Eggs*



*Buttered Radishes*



*Suggested wines:*

*Red and white wine, your usual bar set-up,  
and a special cocktail: A la Recherche  
de l'Orange Perdue*

Cocktail parties aren't what they used to be, and that's all right with me. Goodbye to boozing and starving and crowding and screaming, to five-to-seven and six-to-eight, to the sudden exodus, to the ruined parlor; and goodbye, above all, to that day-after-Christmas feeling, when you realize you never had a minute with the people you most wanted to see. And welcome, with three loud cheers, to easy evenings of good wine and good food and good friends.

We like to give our guests a *spread*. I hate it when people get hungry after a couple of drinks and charge out somewhere to supper before I even get to see them. So Paul and I set out plates and forks and napkins as a hint to stay; and I serve a great big puffy something I baked specially, and something fishy and fresh, and lots of good hearty treats on the side: chicken wings and oysters and clams and stuffed eggs, and meatballs and rabbit food. And peanuts too. Of course we serve the usual drinks—including at least one of Paul's special inventions—but our friends mostly prefer wine for a long evening, so we have plenty of that.

In line with the good new custom of more cheer for fewer people, we give our parties in the kitchen, right in the heart of the house. People can't come into a kitchen and not relax. And we've gotten bored anyway with "Queen Anne in front and Mary Anne behind": the parlor gussied up with coasters and teeny napkins while frenzy reigns out back. Yes, there's some mess. Puff pastry means crumbs and shellfish mean shells. We just line a couple of wastebins with plastic bags which we replace as they fill up and hoist out the back door.

Paul had the thought of making a big wood frame lined with heavy plastic (with a

drain for drips) for the cold things. We heap it with ice and set it right on the stove top, where it looks bounteous. We flank it with hot dishes on an electric tray, and use cutting boards to serve a couple of ham Pithiviers tarts, high as hassocks and light as clouds. They're not much work, if you make your puff pastry in advance and do it the fast new way. Puff pastry can be your best friend too, and if you've not yet mastered it, bear in mind three great truths. Don't be afraid of it. Keep it cold. And finally, don't fight it: rest it often, just as you would a fussy baby.

That big slab of fish on the ice mound is *gravlaks*, salmon rubbed with salt, bedded on dill (and spruce twigs if you have them), anointed with Cognac, weighted down, and macerated in the refrigerator for three or four days at least. It's an exquisite preparation, fresher and more delicate than smoked salmon but not raw-tasting (for the salt "cooks" it). I first sampled *gravlaks* in Oslo when Paul was Cultural Attaché at the American Embassy. The salmon was served with scrambled eggs and creamed potatoes as a main course. Delicious! But I also like it for cocktails served with buttered pumpnickel.

Spicy things are nice with cocktails, too, and I always like something hot, so we make minimeatballs of ground beef mixed with a bit of pork sausage for richness, as well as a delightful, vaguely Oriental preparation of chicken wings. Radish roses with little top-knots of sweet butter, stuffed eggs flavored with lemon and anchovy and topped with enormous capers the size of fat peas, and peanuts, of course. Without peanuts, it isn't a cocktail party.

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## Preparations

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### Recommended Equipment:

You'll want plenty of beer can openers, oyster knives, and paring knives for the shellfish, and something you can make a bed of ice in: a giant bowl, a washtub, or a deep tray. Or, if you have two sinks, use one for the purpose, as we do our vegetable sink.

A proper rolling pin is essential for puff pastry, one at least 16 inches (40 cm) long. If yours is too short, you're better off with a broomstick. (See the recipe for details and illustrations.) A pastry marble, cut to fit your refrigerator shelf, is most desirable if you are going in for any serious pastry making. (Look in the Yellow Pages under Marble or Tombstones; the seller will cut one to size for you.) A heavy-duty electric mixer is the way to lightning-fast puff pastry; but, if you do it by hand, don't use a pastry blender for the new method. It cuts the butter too fine. Pleasant but nonessential aids are a roller-pricker and a large ravioli cutting wheel.

A pastry bag with two cannulated (toothed) tubes, one medium sized for the eggs, one tiny for the radishes, will prettify them.

An electric warming tray and a couple of portable cutting boards are a great help in serving, as are two or three wastebins with plastic trash bag liners for the debris.

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### Marketing and Storage: Staples to have on hand

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Salt  
 Peppercorns  
 Granulated sugar  
 Orange bitters  
 Bottled sweetened lime juice  
 Hot pepper sauce, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce  
 Capers  
 Orange marmalade  
 Oregano or thyme  
 Italian seasoning (an herb blend)  
 Mustard, the strong Dijon type (see page 6)  
 Tomato purée or sauce, canned

Olive oil or fresh new peanut oil (see page 52)  
 Garlic; shallots or scallions  
 Beef stock or bouillon, frozen or canned  
 Fresh bread crumbs (in the freezer; see page 6)

Wines and liqueurs: dry white French vermouth, Cognac, orange liqueur

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**Specific ingredients for this menu**

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Boiled ham (6 ounces or 180 g per Pithiviers)

Center-cut fresh salmon and/or other fresh fish (5 pounds or 2½ kg per recipe *gravlaks*) ▼

Fresh pork sausage meat (4 ounces or 115 g per recipe meatballs)

Lean ground beef (1 pound or 450 g per recipe meatballs)

Chicken wings (24 per recipe)

Small amounts (optional): fermented dry black Chinese beans; dark sesame oil; dried Chinese mushrooms; fresh or pickled ginger—for chicken wings ▼

Mayonnaise, anchovy paste, curry powder, and/or other items for stuffing hard-boiled eggs

Pumpnickel bread

Peanuts and/or various nuts, to serve with drinks

Heavy cream (4 Tb per Pithiviers)

Eggs (3 per Pithiviers, 1 for the meatballs, plus however many you wish for stuffed egg recipe)

Cheese for grating—Cheddar, Swiss, Parmesan or a combination of all three (1 pound or 450 g at least; to be used for cheese appetizers and 6 ounces or 180 g per Pithiviers) ▼

Unsalted butter (2½ pounds or 1125 g for puff pastry, plus butter for pumpnickel bread, radishes, and other purposes)

Cake flour, plain bleached (1 cup or 140 g per puff pastry recipe)

All-purpose flour, unbleached (3 cups or 420 g per puff pastry recipe) ▼

Lemons (4 per chicken wing recipe, plus those needed for serving oysters and clams, drinks, etc.)

Limes, for drinks

Oranges (1 per apéritif recipe for 6 people)

Parsley and/or watercress, for decoration

Fresh or fragrant dried dill weed and, if available, spruce branches for *gravlaks* ▼

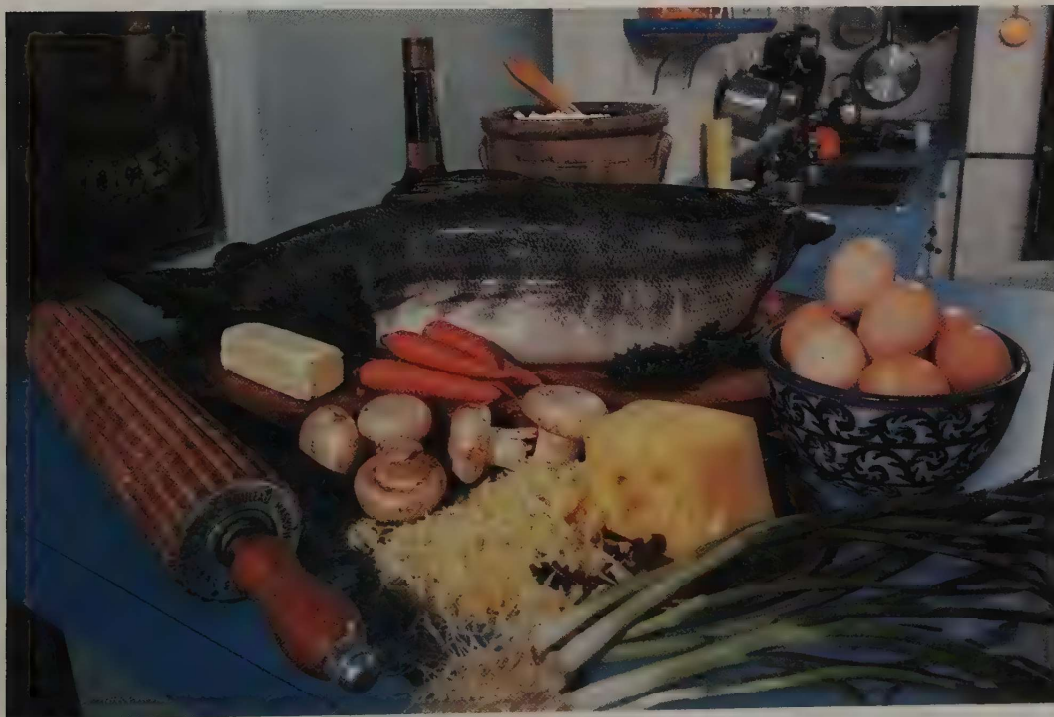
Radishes

Oysters and clams ▼

Ice cubes for drinks, and crushed ice for shellfish

Red wines, white wines, and dark Jamaica rum

Other drinks for your usual bar set-up



### ► *Remarks:*

*Fresh fish:* be sure to buy the fish for your *gravlaks* well enough ahead—see recipe for details. *Fermented dry black Chinese beans and dark sesame oil:* obtainable in Chinese and Japanese grocery stores and many fancy food stores; good items to know because they add a very special flavor to all kinds of dishes, not only chicken, but shrimp, fish, and so forth. No reason to confine them to Oriental cooking. *Dried Chinese mushrooms:* you need only 2 or 3 of these pungent mushrooms to give a fine mushroom flavor to many a dish; soak them in warm water until they have softened, and if the stems remain tough, cut them off and discard them. Then slice or chop the mushrooms and use like fresh mushrooms. *Ginger:* fresh gingerroot is to be had in many supermarkets these days. You can freeze it and grate or slice it—still frozen—into whatever you are cooking, using just what you need and storing the rest in the freezer. Pickled ginger, put up in brine and usually vinegar, keeps for months in the refrigerator; you can normally find it in Japanese and Chinese grocery stores. *Cheese for grating:* I find it a very good idea to grate up leftover hard cheeses like Cheddar, Swiss, and Parmesan and to package them together in a plastic bag or container in my freezer; I always have cheese on hand, then, and none is wasted. *Unbleached all-purpose flour:* essential, in my experience, for puff pastry, since bleached flour makes a tough pastry and is also hard to roll out; if your market doesn't carry unbleached flour, look for it in health food stores. *Dill weed:* fresh dill is always preferable to dried when you can find it, and you can store it in your freezer: stem it, wash and dry it thoroughly, then chop it fine and pack it in small parcels for freezing. This works with chives too. The secret is to exclude all moisture and air before freezing. Sometimes you can find fragrant dried bottled dill weed; smell it before using to be sure it is full of flavor and aroma. *Oysters and clams:* see "Fish Talk," page 111, for details, including a clever way to open oysters.

## A Preamble to French Puff Pastry—made a new fast way

The most marvelous of all doughs, to my mind, is French puff pastry, the pastry of a thousand leaves that puffs up in the oven as it bakes because it is made of many many layers of paper thin dough interspersed with many many layers of butter. It is light as air, flaky, tender, buttery, and so good to eat just of itself that it hardly needs an accompaniment. It not only makes *vol-au-vent* pastry cases and patty shells, but all manner of tarts and cookies, cheese and ham concoctions, dessert cakes, and so forth. For a cocktail party it is practically a must, and, since you can prepare it months and months ahead, you could even consider it a staple ingredient to have on hand in your freezer. Once made, it can quickly be turned into a spectacular, like the ham Pithiviers to serve at this party—shown below just out of the oven.

I must admit to having spent years and years on puff pastry, starting out in Paris way back in the early 1950s. I learned to make it in the classical way, where you start with a flour-water dough that you spread out into a thick pancake and fold around an almost equal amount of butter. Next, you roll that out into



a long rectangle and the butter follows along inside the dough. Then you fold that into three, like a business letter, and roll it out again. All the time the butter is extending itself in layers inside the dough, and every time you fold it those layers triple in number until by the sixth roll-and-fold you have 729 layers of butter between 730 layers of dough.

All this manipulation gives the dough a heavy workout, which is fine when you have flour with a low gluten content, like French flour. But when you are working with regular American all-purpose flour, which has a relatively high gluten content, the dough becomes rubbery, refuses to be rolled out, and you have to let it rest and relax until you can continue. My French colleague Simone Beck and I almost gave up on *pâte feuilletée* with American flour until I happened to be doing a television show on entertaining at the White House, and their then pastry chef, Ferdinand Louvat, produced some splendid *vol-au-vent* structures. He used all-purpose flour, he told me, but for every 3 parts all-purpose flour he put in 1 part cake flour; the cake flour lowered the gluten content and made the dough easy to handle.

That was our first breakthrough, and the recipe for classic puff pastry using that formula is in Volume II of *Mastering*. The second breakthrough is an entirely new way of making the pastry, suggested by a reading of *La Cuisine de Denis* (ed. Robert Laffont, Paris, 1975). Instead of forming the dough into a package encasing a mass of butter, you break the butter up into large pieces the size of lima beans and mix them with the flour, salt, and water; then you form this messy-looking mass into a long rectangle, patting and rolling it out. You fold it into three, roll it out, fold it again, and it begins to look like dough. After 2 additional turns it is smooth and fine; you then rest it 40 minutes and it is ready for its final 2 rolls and folds and its forming and baking. Now puff pastry can be made in an hour, rather than the 3 or 4 hours usually necessary for the classical method using all-purpose flour.

Because the butter is in large lumps, they form themselves into the required layers as you proceed to roll and fold the dough. You can see from the illustrations that the puff pastry rises dramatically as it should—just as much if not more so than the classical puff pastry. In fact, since experimenting with this new system I've not gone back to the old method at all.

#### Puff pastry proportions

Proportions for the new fast puff pastry are 5 parts butter to 4 parts flour—the large amount of butter necessary because you have to flour the dough more as you roll it than in the old method. These amounts easily translate into metrics as 125 grams butter for every 100 grams flour. In cups and spoons they approximate:

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1 cup (5 ounces or 140 g) flour as follows:
3/4 cup (3 1/2 ounces or 105 g) unbleached all-purpose flour, and
1/4 cup (1 1/4 ounces or 35 g) plain bleached cake flour
1 1/2 sticks plus 1 Tb (6 1/2 ounces or 185 g) chilled unsalted butter
Scant 1/2 tsp salt
1/4 cup (1/2 dL) iced water

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#### Hand versus machine

I like to make my pastry in a heavy-duty electric mixer with flat beater, using 4 cups of flour and ending up with a goodly amount of dough. It does not work well in a food processor, because the butter becomes too much broken up and the pastry does not puff dramatically. Mixing by hand works out nicely, but be sure not to soften the butter too much; cut it into 1/2-inch dice, then rub it with the flour between the balls of your fingers until it is broken into thickish disks, like fat cornflakes. The water goes in after the butter and flour have been mixed together, making a very rough, barely cohesive mass.

# Fast French Puff Pastry

## *Pâte Feuilletée Exprès*

For one 9-inch Pithiviers and 36 or more cheese appetizers; or for a rectangle of dough some 36 by 12 by 1/4 inches (90 x 30 x 3/4 cm)

Note: Measure flour by dipping dry-measure cups into container, then sweeping off excess even with lip of cup; no sifting necessary.

3 cups (420 g) unbleached all-purpose flour

1 cup (140 g) plain bleached cake flour

6 1/2 sticks (26 ounces or 735 g) chilled unsalted butter

1 1/2 tsp salt

1 cup (1/4 L) iced water

### Equipment

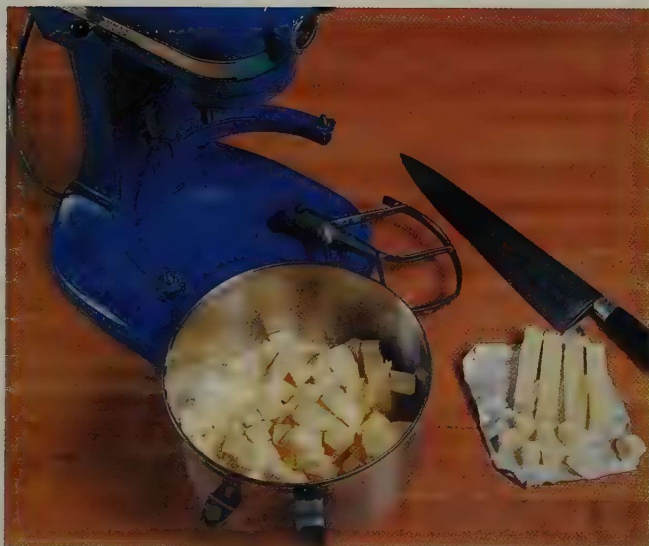
A heavy-duty electric mixer with flat beater (useful); a 1 1/2-by-2-foot (45-x-60-cm) work surface, preferably of marble; a rolling pin at least 16 inches (40 cm) long; a pastry sheet (for lifting and turning dough) about 10 inches (25 cm) wide; a pastry scraper or wide spatula; plastic wrap

### Mixing the dough

Place the flour in your mixing bowl. Rapidly cut the sticks of chilled butter into lengthwise quarters, then into 1/2-inch (1 1/2-cm) dice; \* add to the flour—if you have taken too long to cut the butter and if it has softened, refrigerate bowl to chill butter before proceeding. Add the salt. Blend flour and butter together rapidly, if by hand to make large flakes about an inch in size. By machine the butter should be roughly broken up but stay in lumps the size of large lima beans. Blend in the water, mixing just enough so that dough masses roughly together but butter pieces remain about the same size.

### The first 4 turns

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured work surface, as illustrated in the first picture on the right. Rapidly push and pat and roll it out into a rectangle in front of you—12 to 14 inches for 2 cups of flour, about 18 for 4 cups (30 to 35 cm and 40 to 45 cm). It will look an awful mess! Lightly flour top of dough and, with pastry sheet to help you, flip bottom of rectangle up over the middle, and then flip the top down to cover it, as though folding a business letter. Lift dough off work surface with pastry sheet; scrape work surface clean, flour the surface lightly, and return dough to it, settling it down in front of you so that the top flap is at your right. Lightly flour top of dough, and pat, push, and roll it out again into a rectangle; it will look a little less messy. Fold again into three as before—each of these roll-and-fold operations is called a “turn.” Roll out and fold 2 more times, making 4 turns in all, and by the last one the pastry should actually look like dough. You should see large flakes of butter scattered under the surface of the dough, which is just as it should be. With the balls of your fingers (not your fingernails) make 4



\*If you have bought the kind of butter that seems soft and sweats water when you cut it, that means it is inferior quality and will not make this puff pastry rise as it should. In this case you eliminate the extra moisture by first kneading it in ice water and then squeezing in a damp towel to remove excess water. Then chill.

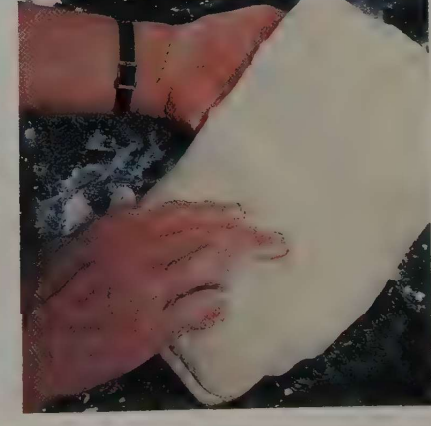
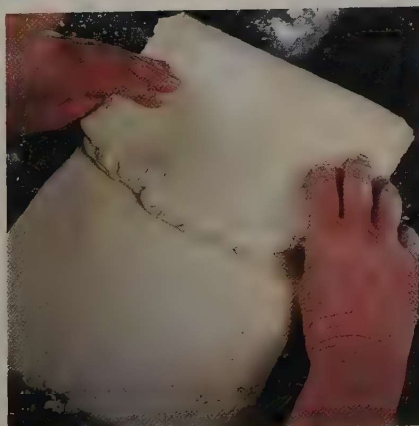
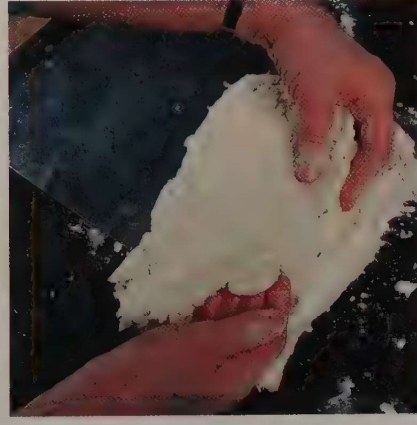
depressions in the dough to indicate the 4 turns, as I've done in the final picture below—just in case you go off and forget what you've done.

#### Finishing the dough—the 2 final turns

Wrap the dough in plastic, place in a plastic bag, and refrigerate for 40 minutes (or longer) to firm the butter and relax the gluten in the dough. Give the dough 2 more turns, beating it

back and forth and up and down first if chilled and hard. Let dough rest another 30 minutes if it seems rubbery and hard to roll; then it is ready for forming and baking.

❶ Dough may be frozen after the first 4 turns, although it is easier to complete the 6 of them before freezing. It will keep, wrapped airtight, for months. Defrost overnight in the refrigerator, or at room temperature.



# Ham Pithiviers

*Puff pastry tart with ham filling*

*For a 9½-inch (24 cm) tart serving 8 to 10 generously, or 20 cocktail bites*

**⅔ previous puff pastry (cut after rolling out, as described in this recipe)**

**6 ounces (180 g) best-quality boiled ham**

**2 Tb butter**

**2 Tb minced shallots or scallions**

**2 egg yolks**

**¼ cup (½ dL) heavy cream**

**Drops of Worcestershire sauce**

**Drops of hot pepper sauce**

**Freshly ground pepper**

**6 Tb freshly grated Parmesan, Swiss, and/or Cheddar cheese**

**Egg glaze (1 egg beaten with 1 tsp water)**

## Equipment

(In addition to items suggested for puff pastry recipe above): a baking sheet, round nonstick pizza tray recommended; a roller-pricker, or two table forks; a pastry brush

## The ham filling

Cut the ham into thin irregular slices about 1 by 1 by ⅛ inches (2½ x 2½ x ⅓ cm) and sauté briefly in the butter with the shallots or scallions, just to warm through thoroughly. Remove from heat. In a small bowl, beat the egg yolks with the cream; stir this mixture into the ham along with drops of Worcestershire and pepper sauce and freshly ground pepper to taste. Warm over low heat, folding the ham into the sauce, until it thickens but does not boil. Set aside to cool and thicken even more. It should be cold when it goes into the Pithiviers.

🕒 Filling may be prepared in advance and refrigerated.

## Forming the dough

Roll the dough (the whole of the recipe) out into a rectangle about 18 by 9 inches (45 x 20 cm) and cut into thirds crosswise; refrigerate 2 pieces, wrapping and storing one of them for another use. Roll remaining piece, which will be the bottom of the tart, into a square 12 inches (30 cm) to a side; using a pie plate or cake pan to guide you, cut a 9½-inch (24-cm) disk out of the center of the dough. Remove surrounding dough and set on a bake sheet for reconstituting later. Lightly fold disk in half



and set upside down on dampened baking surface. Roll out second piece of dough to a thickness of slightly more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cm)—it must be this thickness to puff dramatically—and cut it into a disk the same size as the first. Refrigerate it along with the surrounding dough pieces from both disks.

🕒 Dough disks may be formed and stored in the freezer.

#### Assembling the Pithiviers

With the balls of your fingers, push and pat bottom disk of dough out onto its baking surface to make an even circle slightly larger than your cutting guide. With a roller-pricker or two forks, prick dough all over at  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch ( $1\frac{1}{2}$ -cm) intervals, going down through dough to pastry sheet to keep this bottom layer from rising too much. Form the ham into a round cake, about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 5 inches (12 to 13 cm) across—layers of ham interspersed with

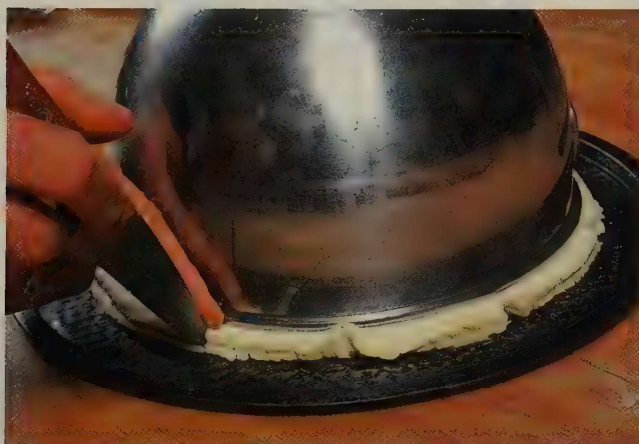
sprinklings of cheese— and place in the center of the dough. It is important to leave a 2-inch (5-cm) border of clear dough all around the ham to prevent leakage of filling during baking. Paint border of dough with cold water, and immediately center top layer in place, stretching gently as necessary. With a sharp-pointed knife, make a little hole  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cm) wide in the center of the dough, going down into the filling, to allow for escaping steam during baking. Then, with the ball of your first three fingers, firmly press the two pieces of dough in place all around. (Dough should probably be chilled at this point, but if it is still firm, proceed to the scalloped edging described in next step, then chill it.)

🕒 May be wrapped airtight and frozen at this point, or after its scalloped edging. May then be decorated and baked, still in its frozen state.



### Decorating the Pithiviers

Preheat oven to 450° F/230°C, and set rack in lower-middle level. Make a scalloped edging around the Pithiviers as follows: set an upturned bowl slightly smaller than the Pithiviers over it, and use it as a guide in cutting 2-inch-wide (5-cm) scallops all around the circumference; decorate their edges all around by pressing upright lines against them with the back of a knife. Just before putting it in the oven, and after making sure top of dough is chilled and firm, paint the top with a film of egg glaze; then wait a moment and paint with a second film of glaze. Finally, with the point of a small knife, cut decorative lines 1/16 inch



(1/4 cm) deep in the top of the dough. A typical pattern is curving lines from center to edge, like the spokes of a wheel; or trace 4 long ovals from center to edge with straight line down the center and shallow crosshatch marks in between.

### Baking, holding, serving

Baking time: 45 to 60 minutes

Immediately set the Pithiviers in the preheated oven and bake for about 20 minutes, until it has puffed and is beginning to brown nicely—it should rise dramatically, to a height of at least 2 inches (5 cm). Turn oven down to 400°F/200°C and bake 20 to 30 minutes more, watching it does not brown too much—cover loosely with foil if it does, and turn thermostat a little lower if you think it necessary. Baking takes longer than you might think, since all the pastry layers should cook and crisp. The Pithiviers should be done when the sides feel quite firm; to be sure, turn oven off and leave the Pithiviers in for another 10 to 15 minutes. You may keep it in a warming oven or on an electric hot tray for an hour or more, but the sooner you serve it the more tenderly flaky and delicious it will be. To serve, with a serrated knife simply cut into wedges like a pie.



# Puffed Cheese Appetizers

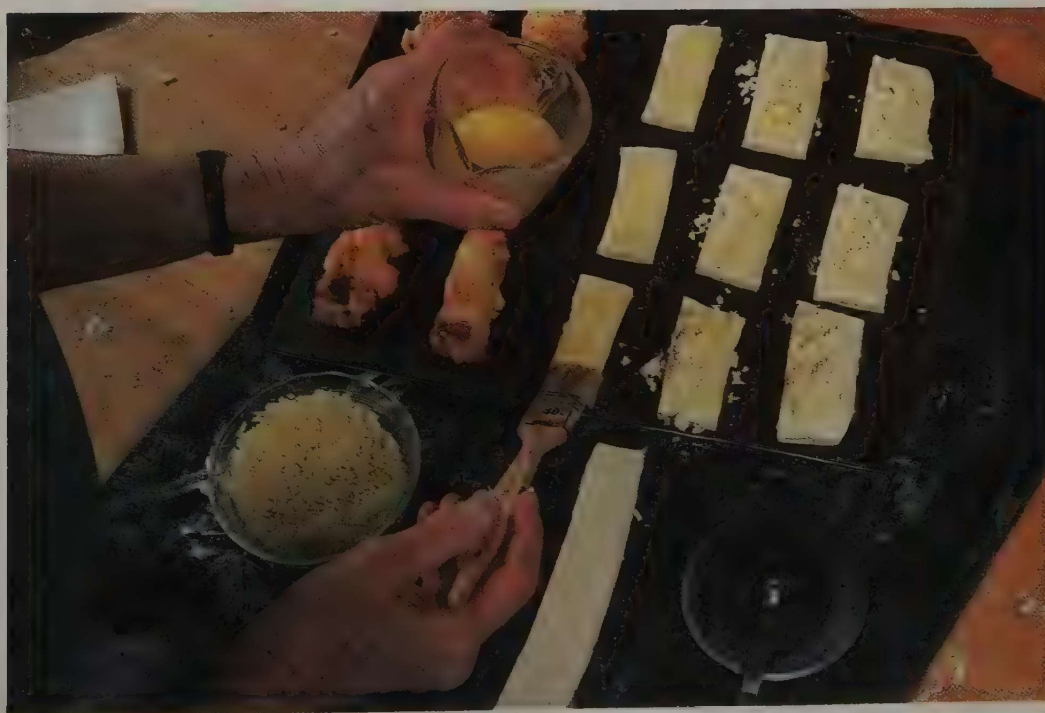
## *Reconstituted leftover puff pastry dough*

You can easily turn the fresh leftovers of your unused dough back into first-class puff pastry as follows: keep the bits and pieces all in one flat layer and glue them together by wetting the edge of one piece with cold water, laying the edge of another piece on top, and so on until you have made a patchwork mat of dough. Roll it with your pin, and give it 2 turns (rollings and foldings into three). If you want to use it plain, give it 2 more turns, but to transform it into cheese appetizers, roll it out into a rectangle, and for a piece 12 by 14 inches (30 x 35 cm), spread about 4 tablespoons grated cheese across the middle. Flip bottom of dough over to cover it, spread more cheese on that upturned portion, and flip the top third of the dough over to cover it. Repeat with another roll-out and cheese fold-up, then roll out the dough into a rectangle slightly thicker than ¼ inch (¾ cm). Cut into strips 2 inches (5 cm) wide—if too narrow the appetizers will topple

over as they rise in the oven. Then cut into lengths 3 inches (8 cm) long and set on a bake sheet.

● May be wrapped and frozen at this point.

Just before baking, preheat oven to 450°F/230°C, paint tops of pieces with egg glaze, and sprinkle on a layer of grated cheese. Bake about 15 minutes, until appetizers have puffed and browned. Best kept warm until serving time, but they can be frozen and reheated, still frozen.



# Gravlaks

*Dilled fresh salmon (or sea bass)*

*For a 5-pound center cut of fish, boned (thus in two large halves or fillets), with skin intact*

Spruce branches (if available)

2½ Tb salt and 1¼ Tb sugar mixed in a small bowl

Large bunch fresh dill weed, or 1½ Tb fragrant dried dill weed

4 to 5 Tb Cognac

Equipment

A porcelain, enamel, or glass dish, just large enough to hold fish comfortably; wax paper or plastic wrap; a plate or board that will just fit inside dish; a 5-pound (2-kg) weight



Rub fingers over the flesh to locate any bones that may still remain; salmon fillets often have small bones running slantwise from top to bottom of the thick side of the flesh. Remove with pliers.

If you have fresh spruce, cut enough twigs to cover the bottom of the dish and arrange a layer of fresh dill on top. Lay one fillet of fish skin side down in the dish and the other skin side down on your work surface. Rub the flesh sides of each fillet with the salt-and-sugar mixture and the dried dill if you are not using fresh. Sprinkle on the Cognac. (If you are using fresh dill, arrange a layer over the fish in the dish.) Place second fillet over first, flesh to flesh, but reversing its direction so that the thick or backbone part of the second fillet is resting against the thin or belly part of the first. Cover with more fresh dill and spruce twigs if you have them. Spread paper or plastic over the fish and the plate or board, and weight. Refrigerate for 2 days, basting with liquid in dish two or three times. After 2 days, taste by slicing a bit of fish off; add a teaspoon or so more salt if you feel it is not salty enough, and perhaps a sprinkling of Cognac. Reverse the fish so bottom fillet will be on top and return to refrigerator with board and weight for another 2 to 3 days, making 4 to 5 days in all. Taste carefully; the fish should now be ready to eat.

To serve

Set a fillet skin side down on a board and with a very sharp, long knife, start 4 to 5 inches (10 to 13 cm) from larger end of fillet and make paper-thin slices toward the tail, with your knife almost parallel to the board.

Remarks:

For a quicker cure, 3 to 4 days at most, you may slice your fish before curing and arrange in slightly overlapping layers, lightly salted and dilled, until the dish is full. Cover, weight, and refrigerate as before.

🕒 Dilled fish will keep for 10 days to 2 weeks under refrigeration.

# Minimeatballs

*For 40 to 50 meatballs about 1 inch (2½ cm) in diameter*

**½ cup (4 ounces or 115 g) pork sausage meat**

**2 cups (1 pound or 450 g) lean ground beef**

**1 egg**

**⅔ cup (1½ dL) fresh nonsweet white bread crumbs soaked in 5 Tb dry white French vermouth**

**2 cloves garlic, puréed**

**8 drops hot pepper sauce**

**2 tsp soy sauce**

**1 tsp salt**

**8 grinds black pepper**

**½ tsp oregano or thyme**

**Flour (for dredging)**

**Serving sauce**

**1 cup (¼ L) beef stock or bouillon**

**1 tsp soy sauce**

**2 Tb Dijon-type strong prepared mustard beaten to blend with ½ cup (1 dL) dry white French vermouth**

**Salt, pepper, and oregano or thyme**

**2 Tb tomato purée or sauce (optional)**

Beat meat, egg, crumbs and seasonings together, using a food processor if you want a very smooth mixture. Roll gobs into balls 1 inch (2½ cm) in diameter; roll lightly in flour, and arrange in one layer in a lightly oiled baking dish or jelly roll pan. Bake in a preheated 450°F/230°C oven in upper-middle level, 7 to 8 minutes, turning once or twice, to brown nicely and just to stiffen. Drain in a sieve or a colander. Boil down the ingredients for the sauce until lightly thickened, carefully correct seasoning, and fold in the minimeatballs.

At serving time, reheat and place in a casserole on an electric warming device, or in an electric frying pan on lowest heat. Have a jar of toothpicks close by.



# Peking Wings

*Sautéed chicken wings with Oriental overtones*

24 chicken wings, folded akimbo

4 lemons

4 thin slices fresh or pickled ginger (optional)

2 Tb soy sauce

½ cup (½ dL) olive oil or fresh peanut oil

1 tsp dark sesame oil (optional)

1 tsp thyme or Italian seasoning

4 large cloves fresh garlic, puréed

½ tsp cracked peppercorns

Salt and pepper

Fresh minced parsley (optional)

Optional Oriental touches, to be added to pan after chicken has browned

2 Tb fermented dry black Chinese beans

Handful of dried Chinese mushrooms, softened in warm water, stemmed, and sliced

## Marinating the chicken

Dry off the chicken in paper towels and place in a stainless steel bowl. Zest 2 lemons (remove yellow part of peel with a vegetable peeler), and cut zest into julienne (matchstick) strips along with the optional ginger. Add both to the chicken as well as strained juice of 2 lemons, the soy sauce, 4 tablespoons oil, the optional sesame oil, the thyme or Italian seasoning, the garlic, and the peppercorns. Turn and baste the chicken. Marinate for 2 hours or longer in the refrigerator, turning and basting several times. Just before cooking, scrape marinade off chicken and back into bowl. Pat chicken dry in paper towels.

## Cooking the chicken

(The wings are first browned, then simmered in their marinade liquid.) Film a large frying pan with oil and heat to very hot but not smoking; then brown on all sides as many chicken wings as will fit easily in one layer, remove, and brown the rest. When all chicken wings are browned, lower heat and return them to pan with the marinade ingredients and optional black beans and mushrooms; cover, and simmer. Meanwhile slice remaining lemons thin; carefully remove seeds. After 10 minutes, turn the chicken and baste with the accumulated juices; spread the lemon slices over the chicken.

① You may complete the recipe to this point, uncover the chicken, and set aside until 10 minutes or so before you wish to serve.

Continue cooking the chicken slowly 8 to 10 minutes longer, or until tender when pierced with a small knife; baste several times during this final cooking. Correct seasoning; if you wish, sprinkle parsley over the chicken, and the wings are ready to serve. Transfer to an electric heating device (or an electric frying pan) along with the cooking juices and keep over low heat.

