Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home

JULIA CHILD and JACQUES PEPIN

U.S.A. $40.00
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The companion volume to the public television series *Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home*

Two legendary cooks, Julia Child and Jacques Pépin, invite us into their kitchen and show us the basics of good (mostly French) home cooking.

What makes this book unique is the richness of information they offer on every page, as they demonstrate techniques (on which they don't always agree), discuss ingredients, improvise, balance flavors to round out a meal, and conjure up new dishes from leftovers. Center stage in these pages are carefully spelled-out recipes flanked by Julia's comments and Jacques's comments—the accumulated wisdom of a lifetime of honing their cooking skills. Nothing is written in stone, they imply. And that is one of the most important lessons for every good cook.

So sharpen your knives and join in the fun as you learn to make . . .

- *Appetizers*—from traditional and instant gravlax to your own sausage in brioche and a country pâté
- *Soups*—from New England chicken chowder and onion soup gratinée to Mediterranean seafood stew and that creamy essence of mussels, billi-bi
- *Eggs*—omelets and "tortillas"; scrambled, poached, and coddled eggs; eggs as a liaison for sauces and as the puffing power for soufflés
- *Salads and Sandwiches*—basic green and near-Niçoise salads; a crusty round seafood-stuffed bread, a lobster roll, and a *pan bagnat*
- *Potatoes*—baked, mashed, hash-browned, scalloped, soufflé, and French-fried
- *Vegetables*—the favorites from artichokes to tomatoes, blanched, steamed, sautéed, braised, glazed, and gratinéed
- *Fish*—familiar varieties whole and filleted (with step-by-step instructions for preparing

(continued on back flap)

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BY Julia Child AND Jacques Pépin

WITH David Nussbaum

PHOTOGRAPHS BY Christopher Hirsheimer

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Julia's Introduction

JACQUES AND I HAD A LOT OF FUN DOING THE TELEVISION SERIES THAT WAS THE inspiration for this book, and we have enjoyed doing the book together, but separately—each of us voicing our individual opinions. What has especially interested me in our joint culinary exploits is the tremendous differences between the top-of-the-line professional chef and the serious home cook. The professional, in a wildly busy first-class restaurant, has to do everything as fast and as efficiently as possible yet keep up the strict standards of fine cooking. The home cook is not under those imperatives.

A perfect example is the cutting up of a whole chicken. Jacques can do it in just a few seconds, literally. I have loved seeing Jacques on the same program with Martin Yan, the wonderfully able Chinese TV cook, teacher, and author. Jacques and Martin have a running contest when they are together, vying with each other as to who is the fastest at cutting up a chicken. They go at it with such flashing speed that you, as audience, can barely follow the movements. I, the home cook, on the other hand, go at it with reasonable speed but leisurely. I really love to cut up meat and poultry, and especially chickens. I lift up the knee on one side of the chicken and cut around its skin from vent to small of back. I bend the knee down to the work surface, popping open the ball joint at the back, then I carefully and neatly scrape off the oyster-shaped nuggets of dark meat above and below that joint, and finally I pull the leg-thigh down tailwise and free. That's a nice, reasonably stylish way to go about it, and it takes a good minute. The whole chicken probably takes me five minutes, but I don't have to hurry and I'm having a good time.

However, that would never do in a restaurant. No! Speed is of the essence. As a pro you peel asparagus fast, using the most efficient maneuvers. You aim for the same effectiveness when puréeing garlic or cutting an orange into segments, as well as seeding tomatoes, dicing an onion, and so forth. Home cooks have so many useful techniques to learn from observing the professionals, but we don't have to proceed at their gallop. It's the way to go about things professionally that we want to learn. The more of these good methods we can absorb and put into daily practice, the better and happier we'll be as cooks.

Obviously I learned a great many things working with Jacques, and he learned a thing or two from me! How to remove the leaves from an artichoke bottom without losing any of the meat, for instance! Techniques, however, are not our sole object here. What we both want to show in these programs and in this book is our approach to cooking. Food is not only our business but our greatest pleasure, and we think its preparation should be a joyful occupation. Of course, cooking with two is far more lively than cooking alone, but when you know pretty well what you are doing, the food itself is your companion.

Back to basics—that's how to begin, and it doesn't take too much wit to learn. When you know how to sauté your meat so it browns rather than steams, you're cooking. What's difficult about that? You heat the pan, you dry the meat, you don't crowd it into the pan, and

you're browning it. Is that difficult? No! But you do need to absorb the simple facts of how to do it by watching the steps on the screen or reading about them. When you know how to peel, seed, juice, and dice a tomato, you are on the road to making a fast, chic little fresh tomato sauce for this evening's pasta. When you can fearlessly boil up a sugar syrup into caramel, as described here, you're ready to turn that to use in everyone's favorite caramel flan. As soon as we show you how to master the few tricks to the beating of egg whites, the next step can be a chocolate soufflé to celebrate your spouse's birthday. Understanding egg yolks will make you a master of hollandaise sauce, and that along with understanding how to poach an egg will give you Eggs Benedict for Sunday brunch. So it goes, a step or two at a time, and pretty soon they'll call you an accomplished cook.

This is the kind of knowledge we are giving you here—the basics of fine food that looks good, tastes the way it should, and is a total pleasure to eat. We have enjoyed cooking for you, and we wish you

Toujours Bon Appétit!

Julia Child

Jacques's Introduction

FOOD, FOR ME, IS INSEPARABLE FROM SHARING. THERE IS NO GREAT MEAL UNLESS it is shared with family or friends. Likewise in the kitchen. If the process of cooking is to "transform nature into culture," as Lévi-Strauss says, then the greatest satisfaction is to undergo that experience with friends. Sharing recipes, trying out new ideas, tasting together while bantering with one another and enjoying a bottle of wine, always produces the greatest meals.

The cliché of the jealous, secretive cook who conceals his recipes and his techniques from other cooks makes for good talk, but I have never found this to be true. Granted, there may be a few bad apples here and there, but on the whole, most cooks—professional or otherwise—are very sharing and giving. According to George Bernard Shaw, "there is no love sincerer than the love of food," and that love of cooking and of eating is forever present and part of the essence of the true cook. Nothing is more gratifying for a cook than to see people enjoying their food.

At the same time, it is true that if you put two cooks together in the same kitchen, there will be some conflict, dissension, or difference of opinion, because if cooks are among the most giving people in the world, they are also among the most stubborn and inflexible. All this is often for the better, however, because ingredients are relatively limited. A chicken is a chicken is a chicken, but it can be sublime although very different, depending on whether it was prepared by an Indian, French, Italian, Russian, German, or Chinese cook, and that goes to the core of personal interpretation.

I would paraphrase Brillat-Savarin's famous aphorism "You are what you eat" with "You are what you cook." Whether you want to be or not, you are "in" the food you prepare. In the hands of five different cooks, the same recipe for a simple roasted chicken will produce five different results. The bird may be more cooked, less cooked, overly browned, excessively spicy, or too bland—each dish will reflect the character, nature, and mood of the cook.

To learn, to give, and to share with friends in the kitchen is indeed gratifying and joyful. It is in that spirit of friendship that Julia and I decided to meet in her kitchen and to share our experiences with our television audience. We agree about some dishes and disagree about others, but always in a spirit of camaraderie and curiosity. The fascinating part of cooking is that there is invariably another way of doing a particular technique or preparing a recipe that makes it better, or at least different. You are always an apprentice, and the learning is continuous if you keep an open mind.

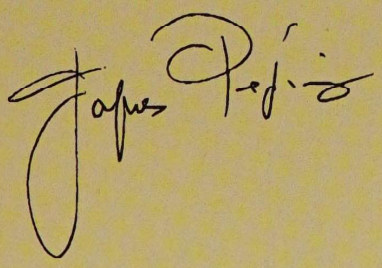
The shows and this companion book were not created as they usually are. For all of my previous television series, the recipes were completed when we started taping the shows. Whether or not they were followed exactly is debatable, but the basic structure of the shows—which is the recipes—was all set. So the shows evolved in an orderly manner from these recipes within the precise amount of time allotted to me by the producer. But that was not the case when Julia and I did our series together. We had no recipes, just a lot of ideas.

For people like us who love to cook, it is easier, more fun, more exciting, and more rewarding to cook without any recipes. Ingredients were there for Julia and me to transform into dishes, and this is what we set out to do with gusto on these shows. We had nothing written down, no rehearsals, just a thematic division of food, having decided that one show would cover poultry, another fish, another salads, and so on. While it may be a bit more stressful to cook this way, it is more natural to develop ideas and discuss them with the food in front of you—you can let your mood lead you and pull out of the ingredients the taste that you may be craving on that particular day. I may have thought one day that I had a great idea, only to find out that Julia had the same or a better idea, and I learned from this.

The hardest and most frustrating part of this process, in my opinion, was for our writer, David Nussbaum, who had the difficult and confounding job of extrapolating the recipes we created on the spur of the moment during the taping of the shows and organizing them in a form that would make sense to the reader. But, for Julia and me, the taping was great fun. We had our little disagreements—I like kosher salt, she doesn't; I like black pepper, she likes white pepper—but these are relatively superficial differences. On the whole, we agreed as to what is important: taste over appearance, simplicity in recipes, using the proper techniques, using the best-quality ingredients, following the seasons, keeping an open mind to new food preparations, and, of course, sharing both wine and food with family and friends.

We agree that no recipes are written in stone, and as we created dishes *à l'improviste,* or on impulse, we both knew that if we did them again, we would probably make changes. It is in this spirit of flexibility and fun that I would like you to look at the series and use this book. Try to keep an open mind, to take what you need from our recipes and make them your own by adding your own favorite seasonings or creating your own variations.

Especially remember that eating, as well as cooking, should be pleasurable and guiltless. To paraphrase Voltaire, try to imagine how tiresome eating and drinking would be if God had not made them a pleasure as well as a necessity. So, share our recipes with friends and family. If you do, I am sure that you will enjoy them in a deeper way, and we will have achieved what we set out to do with each of our shows: to welcome you to our kitchen and to share and enjoy our food with you.



Preface by David Nussbaum

COOKING AND WRITING ARE ACTIVITIES THAT MOST OF US USUALLY ENGAGE IN alone. Yet, just as the *Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home* programs demonstrate so memorably that cooking with another person can be creative and productive, this book represents a collaborative writing effort. My role has been twofold: to formulate workable recipes for the dishes that Julia and Jacques cooked when they taped the show, and to gather background and explanatory information to accompany the recipes.

For both of these efforts my primary resource was the original uncut videotape of the shows. Though I usually worked by myself, I was never alone. For nearly a year, I have had Julia and Jacques with me on the TV screen next to my computer—live on tape, as the saying goes. When I shopped for recipe test ingredients, I picked out fish or produce with their voices in my head. As I cut up ducks and folded soufflés, mental images of their movements guided my hands. Occasionally, virtual companionship became real company when I met with one of them to discuss the dishes and the recipe drafts.

Each of them thoroughly reviewed and revised the recipes after I had formulated and tested them, rewriting whenever necessary to more accurately reflect their cooking. (In some instances, the procedures were changed from what was done before the cameras.)

This book presents recipes for all the dishes that Julia and Jacques prepared during the taping sessions. As some have been edited from the final TV programs, owing to time constraints, these will be fresh discoveries for those viewing the *Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home* series. The book also includes recipes for the dishes that Julia and Jacques created together for two PBS specials, *Cooking in Concert*. Finally, there are a number of recipes here that were never made before cameras, but have been contributed by Julia and Jacques specifically for the book.

Acknowledgments

WRITING A BOOK CAN BE A FAIRLY SOLITARY ACTIVITY—EVEN A COOKBOOK, where you are literally cooking what seems like endless meals for yourself or one or more indulgent friends. In contrast, hosting a television cooking series involves a collaboration of many, not unlike the running of a great restaurant. As a permanent record of what transpired in our *Cooking at Home* public television series, this companion cookbook brings a seriousness of purpose, depth, and durability to the project that television alone does not seem to carry. Certainly, this was a project of great collaborations, something that neither of us would, or could, ever embark upon without an enthusiastic and strong team.

Therefore, with deep appreciation, we'd like to acknowledge the ongoing creative enthusiasm of Geof Drummond, president of A La Carte Communications, who sowed the seeds of this Julia and Jacques partnership five years ago, and produced the first of our *Cooking in Concert* duets, performed in the Tsai Philharmonic Hall in Boston. Geof has continued to work with us both as a friend and as a producer. On the book side, we want to thank Judith Jones, our editor at Alfred A. Knopf. From the beginning, Judith has been a source of inspiration, an insightful cheerleader, and an unwavering upholder of what sometimes feels like a bygone standard of excellence. David Nussbaum has done a remarkable job of translating what happened spontaneously on camera into workable recipes, as well as collating our notes and comments and ideas for variations that make cooking more challenging and creative. Together, Judith and David have turned our planned improvisations among friends in the kitchen into a unique, original, and, we hope, inspiring book for home cooks.

Supporting them have been Nat Katzman, Geof's partner at A La Carte; Bruce Franchini, our longtime director; Kimberly Nolan, our organized line producer; our good friends Susie Heller and Chris Styler, culinary producers; Herb Sevush, video editor culinaire; Linda Schwartz, recipe tester; and Carole Goodman and Christopher Hirsheimer, this book's visionary designer and glorious photographer, respectively. Would that a CD of the music John Bayless composed and performed for our series were included with each book . . . like a glass of champagne to start off a meal. In spite of often being forced to fly through culinary fogbanks, they have managed to make us look good not only in the kitchen but on screen and in print as well. Our entire crew on the TV series numbered more than twenty-five, and we make a great bow of gratitude to each of these talented professionals.

Projects like this can easily take on a temporal importance and urgency that eclipses the rest of your life. As always, our office and home support teams, Stephanie Hersh in Cambridge and Norma Galehouse and Gloria Pépin in Connecticut, helped maintain our "day jobs" while we pursued this great adventure.

Lastly, no project of this magnitude can happen without the support of friends and sponsors. This is particularly true on public television, where we have been cooking cumulatively for more than fifty years. Cooking on public television has mirrored, and perhaps led to, the growth

and appreciation of the culinary arts in America, and we are proud to have been associated with it. Our underwriters, who made this series possible, were Kendall-Jackson Vineyards and Winery, a company exemplifying the remarkable growth of California wines to a level and quality as good as any in the world; Land O'Lakes butter—*"la cuisine au beurre est toujours la meilleure,"* and that's true here in America as well; Eatzi's Markets and Corner Bakery, new ventures in bringing chef-prepared foods and baked goods made from the freshest ingredients to the American table; Farberware Millennium, a longtime supporter of quality cooking shows with products serious cooks can use, and afford to buy; and Oxo, whose kitchen tools utilize great design without forgetting what they—and we, the cooks—are there to do: cook. We'd also like to thank the following friends for supporting our production with great products, produce, and warm wishes: A. Russo & Sons, Banana Republic, Boston Botanicals, Bourgeat, Boyajian, Clear Flour Breads, Cuisinart, D'Elia Kitchens, Flowers by Joanne Yee, KitchenAid, Le Creuset, Lunt Silversmiths, R & M Ostrich, Reynolds Metals, Schreibman Jewelers East, Shreeves, Williams-Sonoma Copley Square, Wüsthof-Trident.

Merci beaucoup, Bon Appétit, and Happy Cooking!
Julia Child & Jacques Pépin

JULIA AND JACQUES
cooking at home

APPETIZERS

WE BEGIN OUR RECIPES—AND OUR CONVERSATION ABOUT FOOD AND COOKING—WITH A few choice morsels. We hope you will do the same. Even a small serving of any of these appetizers will do just what the term implies—get the juices and the talk going, and focus everyone's attention where it belongs, on the pleasures of the table.

In selecting what to serve, there is the practical consideration of timing. You need to get started five days ahead if you choose Julia's traditional salmon gravlax cured with dill and cognac, or Jacques's truffled homemade sausage in brioche, or country pâté with veal and pistachios. Although there is relatively little work involved, they are made in stages and need several days to develop their full flavor.

However, we also have instant versions of gravlax and salmon tartare. Mussels or shrimp in bowls of fragrant broth need only brief cooking. Oysters or clams on the half-shell are easy to prepare once you get the hang of opening them in seconds—we show you how—and are served with sauces that take a minute.

You'll find other ideas in the "Salads and Sandwiches" chapter, such as Celery Root Rémoulade, traditionally served in France as a first course, or a sandwich like Pan Bagnat or Seafood Bread, which, cut in bite-size pieces, make fine hors d'oeuvre.

Julia

The only painless way of opening oysters I know of is to pick out each oyster at the market yourself. Choose only those with just enough of a gap at the hinge end so that you can take a beer-can opener, pointed end up, and just be able to force it into the gap. To open the oyster (see photos), you hold it curved side down on your work surface with one hand, force the beer-can opener into the gap with the other hand, bear down hard on the opener's handle, and up pops the hinge end of the top shell. Then take your sharp little knife and scrape down the inside surface of the top shell. Twist it off, and loosen the oyster where it is attached to the bottom shell. Some stylish operators then turn the oyster over in its bottom shell, to make a more handsome appearance.

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Holding the oyster curved side down on the counter, insert the beer-can opener into the gap at the hinge end.

Press down on the opener to force the shells apart.

Oysters and Clams

For those who love them, there's no finer appetizer than a perfectly fresh raw oyster or clam, right from the shell, with a swallow of its natural briny juices. A platter of them on the half-shell is also one of the simplest appetizers to serve. Follow the photos and explanations in the recipe here, and practice a few times, and your shucking skill should develop rapidly. Be sure to use a pot holder or a thick, folded kitchen towel or napkin to protect your hands against a knife that might slip.

Oysters and clams need little embellishment. Some connoisseurs insist on quaffing them with no interfering flavors whatsoever, but others want lemon wedges for squeezing on a few drops of juice, while still others will go for one or both of the two zesty condiments given here, Mignonnette Sauce and Horseradish Cocktail Sauce. See also the sidebar on cocktail breads on page 6.

Oysters and Clams on the Half-Shell

Yield: 4 first-course servings

A dozen or more fresh, scrubbed, well-chilled oysters, or 2 dozen fresh littleneck or other small clams (or a combination of oysters and clams)
Lemon wedges
Mignonnette Sauce for Oysters (page 7)
Horseradish Cocktail Sauce for Clams and Shrimp (page 6)
Black bread and butter (see sidebar on next page)

Special equipment

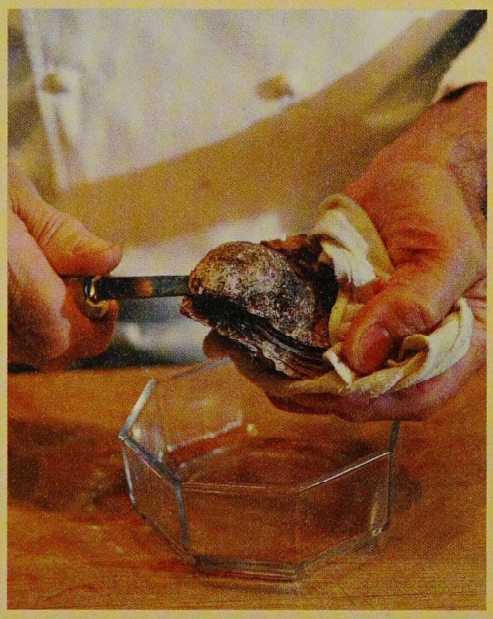
A sturdy, pointed-tip oyster knife, a towel or pot holder, and a can opener for opening oysters; a small, sharp paring knife for opening clams; oyster forks (optional) or a spoon (Julia's husband, Paul, ate his oysters with a spoon); a serving platter or bowl (it's nice to line it with seaweed, crushed ice, or rock salt, to hold the open shells level without spilling their juices, but not necessary if everything is cold)

Hold the oyster in the towel or pot holder firmly in the palm of one hand, protecting your hand with the towel. Insert the tip of the knife into the hinge at the pointed end of the oyster, as shown in the photo, then pry the shells apart. Remove the top shell, and slide the blade underneath the oyster to free it from the abductor muscle that attaches it to the shell.

Open the clams, following the photos. Serve the oysters and/or clams right away, with lemon wedges, ramekins of mignonnette or cocktail sauce, oyster forks if you wish, and buttered black-bread slices.

Jacques

When opening oysters and clams, I like to work over a bowl or plate to catch the juices, should any spill from the shells. Then, if you are serving them on the half-shell, you can spoon the juices back into the shell. And if you are shucking them for cooking in chowders or sauce, you can collect the juices in the bowl, strain them, and add to the dish.



Holding an oyster in a towel over a bowl, insert the tip of your knife into the hinge at the pointed end of the oyster and pry it open.

I open oysters with a thick, sturdy oyster knife, and clams with a paring knife. Oysters can be very tightly closed, and you may find that you can't open them at the hinge. In

(continued on page 7)

Julia (continued from page 4)

This beer-can opener system was uncovered by my producer of the old *French Chef* TV series, Ruth Lockwood, who lived on Cape Cod during the summer. Her Yankee oysterman taught her how, and she, in turn, taught me. It works!

After struggling with oysters yourself, it's always a revelation to watch the pros at an oyster bar, such as at the Plaza in New York City, for instance, or at Grand Central Terminal. It is so effortless. Pick an oyster up in your bare hand and give it a side swipe with your knife, and the oyster is opened in less than a second.

Julia on Cocktail Breads

In the deli section of most markets you can find the perfect breads to go with oysters, clams, smoked salmon, cheeses, and other appetizer titbits. The foot-long loaves I usually find are of remarkably good quality and are neatly presliced into 2¼-inch squares about ¼ inch thick. They come in sourdough rye or pumpernickel, and since they keep well for a week or more I always keep a handy handful in my refrigerator, as well as a whole loaf or two in my freezer. I mix a little Dijon-type mustard and horseradish into my butter or mayonnaise and spread it ever so neatly on the bread. It is a wonderfully convenient "aid to hors d'oeuvre" to have always there ready to use.

Jacques's Horseradish Cocktail Sauce for Clams and Shrimp

This zesty sauce gets its heat from Tabasco and horseradish, and you may add more of both to taste. I prefer fresh horseradish root for its intense flavor. Bottled horseradish is also fine, but you will need to use more. If you can find fresh horseradish in the market, remove the tough outer skin from a small length of the root with a vegetable peeler, and grate (don't shred) the amount you want, on an ordinary box grater. Wrap the remaining root and store in the refrigerator.

This amount of sauce is enough for 3 dozen small clams, or 2 dozen cooked shrimp. Simply multiply the recipe if you need more. You can store it in a jar in the refrigerator for several weeks.

Yield: About ⅔ cup

½ cup ketchup
2 Tbs grated fresh or bottled horseradish, or more to taste
¼ tsp Tabasco sauce, or more to taste
1 tsp Worcestershire sauce (Lea & Perrins)
1 Tbs freshly squeezed lemon juice, or more to taste

Stir together all the ingredients in a mixing bowl. Taste and add more horseradish, Tabasco, or lemon juice, as you like. Serve in ramekins to accompany clams on the half-shell or cooked shrimp. Store in the refrigerator.

Mignonnette Sauce for Oysters

Mignonnette is the culinary term for coarsely crushed peppercorns (though it also refers to a small medallion of meat). For the best flavor, crush the peppercorns just before mixing—using a saucepan, as we do for Steak au Poivre (see photo, page 312)—so they release all their volatile oils into the vinegar. If your vinegar seems too harsh after you have mixed the sauce, add a tablespoon or two of red wine to soften the flavor. You can make the sauce a few hours ahead of serving to let the flavors develop; extra sauce can be refrigerated. It is strong—you'll need only a few drops to sauce each oyster.

Yield: About ½ cup

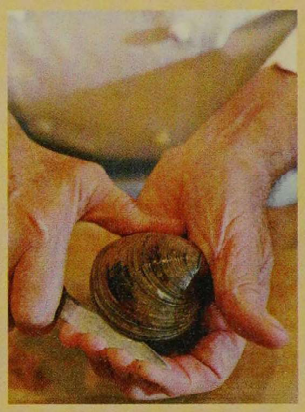
2 tsp whole black peppercorns
1½ Tbs chopped shallots
⅓ cup red-wine vinegar of the best quality
¼ tsp chopped fresh thyme (optional)
A pinch of salt

Crush the peppercorns coarsely with a heavy pan. Scrape the grated pieces into a small bowl or ramekin, add the shallots, vinegar, thyme, and a pinch of salt and stir together. Taste and correct seasonings, if necessary. Serve with oysters on the half-shell.

Jacques (continued from page 5)

that case, insert your oyster knife into the side of a shell to pry it apart, holding the oyster with a pot holder or folded towel. This will always work, but tends to leave shell fragments in the bottom. If you've collected the juices in a bowl, you can rinse the fragments out of the shell, strain the juices, and add a tablespoon back into the shell to serve.

Slide your knife under the top shell to cut the abductor muscle, slide the knife under the oyster to cut the other side of the abductor muscle, then remove the top shell.



Holding the clam in the palm of your hand with the hinge toward you, slide the blade of your knife between the two shells and press, with your fingers behind the blade, so that it slides between the halves and opens the shell. Cut all around to sever any muscles.

Buying Oysters and Clams

In the nineteenth century, when our shorelines were pure and fertile, oysters were plentiful enough to be bought by the barrelful for household use or devoured by the dozens at "oyster saloons" in big cities. Those days are long-gone—oysters today are a relatively expensive treat, most often sold by the pound, or even by the single piece. You will usually get four or five medium-size oysters to the pound—that's the best size for half-shell eating—and you want to serve at least six oysters per person as a first course.

You may find only one or several types of oysters in your market. They develop their distinctive flavor—ranging from mild and sweet to intensely briny—from the beds in which they grow, and are generally identified by their place of origin. Since oysters are harvested wild and farmed in many locales on both coasts, there are myriad varieties in the geographic sense, though only a few scientifically distinct species. Among the most prized, and expensive, if you can find them, are Wellfleet oysters from Cape Cod, Bluepoints from Long Island, Chincoteagues from Virginia, and Olympias from the Northwest. The celebrated flat Belon oyster, originally from the Loire/Brittany region of France, is now being cultivated both in Maine and in the Pacific Northwest.

Clams for half-shell eating are less subtly varied in taste than oysters, but have their own very distinctive flavor—and they're usually easier to open and always less expensive than oysters. Hardshell Atlantic clams are categorized, and named, according to size (though they're all the same species). The smallest clams, called "littlenecks," have sweeter and more tender flesh, the best for eating raw. In some markets, you may find the very smallest ones sold separately as "countnecks"—at a premium price—and slightly larger ones as "topnecks." You can expect to get eight to twelve littlenecks to the pound. The next-larger grouping of clams, medium-size "cherrystones," can also be served on the half-shell. On the Pacific Coast, tender Manila clams and small butter clams are good choices.

Safety. Today's seafood industry has made clams or oysters available in stores almost everywhere, all year round. With active monitoring by health authorities, you can be reasonably confident that any being sold in a reputable market, designated for serving on the half-shell, are safe for raw eating. If you have concerns, ask the store for the certification of inspection. (However, if you gather any kind of shellfish in the wild, on your own, check with local agencies to be sure that they are from unpolluted waters, free of bacteria, and in every respect safe to eat.)

Handling and Storing Oysters and Clams. Hardshell clams and oysters require less cleaning than mussels (page 13), since they usually have little if any sand inside. Give them a good scrubbing under cold water to clean the outside of the shells. If any clams or oysters open, knock them against another and they will close up. If they remain open, or have any trace of an off odor, discard them.

Like all seafood, clams and oysters are best eaten as soon as possible, though both can be stored for several days or a week in a cold part of the refrigerator. Arrange oysters in one layer, resting on their curved bottom shells, so they sit in and retain their liquid; clams can be stored flat in a box or a bowl. Cover both clams and oysters with a damp towel, or seaweed.

Eating Clams or Oysters on the Half-Shell. Take a half-shell with a clam or oyster, and, if you wish, squeeze a few drops of lemon juice or spoon a bit of your chosen sauce on top. Use an oyster fork to lift out the flesh, then sip the juices from the shell—or bring the shell to your lips, tilt it, and slide in the flesh and juices with one slurp.

Opposite: Moules Ravigote

Julia

Moules marinière is the simplest way to enjoy these shellfish. The mussels can be eaten as soon as they open, and their natural juices, with the wine and flavorings, create their own fragrant sauce. Don't add salt, though, since there is plenty in the mussel liquid.

The way to eat this dish is to use the shells. I like to find a nice shell still intact at the hinge, and—after I eat the mussel inside—I use it to pluck out the mussels from the other shells. And you can use an empty half-shell as a spoon for broth, too.

Mussels

A plate of oysters may be an expensive indulgence, but mussels can be had by the dozens at relatively little cost. Cultivated mussels are now available most of the year in markets across the country—and as anyone who's walked along the seashore at low tide knows, bushels of wild mussels are often free for the taking. But you *must* be certain that they are safe to eat. Please read all the important information about handling mussels on page 13.

When cooked *à la marinière*—with white wine and aromatic vegetables and herbs—mussels are a snap to prepare and a pleasure to serve and eat. There's no wrestling with shellfish knives or can openers—after a few minutes of steaming, the shells pop right open, revealing the plump yellow-orange flesh, and spilling their juices into a delicious broth. Heap them into soup bowls for everyone at the table—or one enormous bowl, for greater conviviality—ladle the hot broth over them, and serve with lots of fresh French bread for dunking.

If you want to prepare mussels ahead of time—or if you have cooked mussels on hand, left over from making the classic Billi-bi soup (page 62)—dress them with a piquant sauce and serve as *moules ravigote* (page 12), in colorful cups of radicchio leaves for a first course, or on the half-shell as a party hors d'oeuvre.

The recipes that follow call for 3 pounds, or about 50 medium-size mussels, but you can prepare any amount following these basic methods. You may want to steam a few extra pounds of mussels *à la marinière*—eat a few dozen hot with their broth, and dress the rest with ravigote sauce to enjoy the next day.

Moules Marinière

Yield: 4 first-course servings

3 pounds small to medium mussels, washed thoroughly, beards removed (see page 13)
½ cup finely chopped onions
2 Tbs minced shallots or scallions
1 Tbs butter
2 imported bay leaves
5 or 6 Tbs coarsely chopped fresh parsley sprigs
¼ tsp pepper
1½ cups dry white wine or dry white French vermouth

Special equipment

A large stainless-steel saucepan or enameled (non-reactive) casserole, with a cover; large soup bowls

Put the mussels in the pan, along with the onions, shallots, butter, bay leaves, about half of the parsley, and the pepper. Toss gently to distribute all the flavorings, and pour the white wine or vermouth over.

Cover the pan and bring to the boil over high heat. Cook at the boil for about 2 minutes, occasionally shaking and tossing the pan—holding the cover on tight—to mix the ingredients. Lift the lid and quickly check to see if all the mussels are open. If not, cover and cook for another minute or so.

Lift the mussels from the broth with a slotted spoon and divide among the bowls, discarding any mussels that have not opened. Ladle portions of hot broth over each serving—take care not to scoop any sand from the bottom of the pan—sprinkle on the remaining parsley, and serve immediately, with fresh French bread on the side.

Jacques

It's much easier to clean cultivated mussels, which are grown on nets or wires, than wild ones. The cultivated mussels need only a good rinse or two in cold water and some rubbing to get the sand off their shells.

Both of these recipes are basic procedures that you can vary in many ways. You can flavor the broth for *moules marinière* with all kinds of herbs and vegetables—I sometimes add sliced celery or fennel, and always lots of chopped garlic.

I like garlic in my ravigote dressing too (see next page), and plenty of Tabasco—after all, *ravigoter* means "to invigorate"—but you should follow your own taste. You do want to mix the mussels with the sauce while they are still warm, and let them absorb the seasonings. As you are taking them out of the shells, you may also want to pull off the tough loop of flesh, or mantle, on top of the mussel. This can be quite chewy, especially on large mussels, and it's easy to remove.

Moules Ravigote

If you have leftover cooked mussels, here is a fine way to use them. Otherwise, steam fresh ones as described here. The mussels will release over a cup of flavorful juices—which you can strain and freeze, then use in fish sauces, such as *beurre blanc* (page 233), or soups, such as Mediterranean Seafood Stew, page 58. Serve either as a first course or as an hors d'oeuvre.

Yield: 4 to 6 first-course servings

For the ravigote sauce

- 1½ Tbs minced shallots or scallions
- 1½ Tbs Dijon-style prepared mustard
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, finely chopped or pushed through a sieve
- 2 Tbs chopped cornichons or small gherkin pickles
- 1 Tbs capers
- 1 Tbs chopped parsley
- 2 Tbs chives
- 1 Tbs white-wine vinegar
- 2 tsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 4 Tbs excellent olive oil
- ⅛ tsp salt
- ⅛ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ⅛ tsp Tabasco (optional)
- 1 or 2 cloves garlic, minced (optional)

- 3 pounds small to medium mussels, washed thoroughly, beards removed (see page 13)
- ½ cup water or dry white wine

For serving

- Leaves of radicchio or Boston lettuce
- Fresh chives, for garnish
- Mussel-shell halves, cleaned and separated (optional)

Special equipment

- A 4-to-5-quart stainless-steel saucepan or enameled (non-reactive) casserole, with cover

Make the ravigote sauce first, stirring together all the ingredients in a small bowl. Adjust the seasonings to taste.

To steam the mussels, place them in the saucepan with the water or white wine, cover, and set over high heat. Cook for about 5 minutes, shaking the pan occasionally, until all the mussels have opened. Remove from the heat and let the mussels rest in the covered pan for 5 minutes, then lift them from the pan with a slotted spoon onto a tray or a platter to cool slightly. (Strain the pan juices through a fine sieve, being careful not to include any sand from the bottom of the pan, and freeze to use later for fish soup or billi-bi.)

While they are still warm, remove all the mussels from their shells into a medium-size mixing bowl. Fold the dressing into the mussels until all are well coated. Let marinate in the dressing, and cool to room temperature before serving.

To serve as a first course, form a small cup from radicchio or lettuce leaves on individual salad plates, and mound about ⅓ to ½ cup of sauced mussels in the leaves on each plate. Garnish with a spray of chives.

To serve on the half-shell as an hors d'oeuvre: Line a large platter with lettuce leaves. Nestle 1 or 2 sauced mussels each in clean shell halves, and arrange on the platter in a decorative pattern.

Do-ahead notes

The mussels can be dressed and stored covered in the refrigerator, and served the next day. They will keep a couple of days in the refrigerator; bring them back to room temperature.

Selecting, Storing, and Cleaning Mussels

Safety first: Mussels are easily contaminated by pollution and toxins—never prepare or eat mussels gathered in the wild unless absolutely certain that they are safe to eat. Check with local authorities if you have any doubts.

Commercial mussel beds are closely monitored, and almost any store-bought mussel will be safe to eat. (You may ask the store to show you verification of inspection.)

Make sure that the mussel shells are tightly closed and heavy. If a mussel shell is even slightly open, test it by tapping it against another mussel or touching the meat with a knife point. It should close almost at once; if it doesn't, discard it.

Occasionally, closed shells that appear healthy can be filled with sand or mud. Check unusually heavy mussels by twisting the shell halves in opposite directions. They will pivot open if the mussel has died and been replaced by sand—discard.

Mussels are perishable and should be kept refrigerated, covered by a damp towel, or seaweed. Never set them in fresh (unsalted) water or in plastic. They can be kept for a few days or so, but in general it's best to prepare them as soon as possible.

Soaking: Wild mussels may be quite sandy. Soak them in lightly salted water (about a tablespoon of salt per quart) for an hour or two before cooking and they will expel some of the sand. (Some wild mussels are encrusted with barnacles. If you are serving the mussels in their shells, scrape off any barnacles with a sturdy knife.)

Washing and removing the beard: All mussels must be washed thoroughly. Dump them in a large pan of cold, clean water—or under running water—and rub the shells against each other to remove encrusted sand and dirt, or use a stiff brush. Transfer to clean water and repeat the rubbing process. Cultivated mussels may need only one or two washings. Wild or very sandy mussels should be rubbed in several changes of clean water.

Shortly before cooking, remove the beard—the small tuft of fibers sticking out one side of the mussel shell—by grasping it with your fingers and giving a sharp pull downward. If you are storing mussels, don't clean or debeard them until an hour or two before cooking.

Julia

I am fussy about the dark digestive "vein" in the shrimp—it's ugly, and I always remove it. You can—sometimes—pull the whole strand out without slicing open the back. Look for the dark spot at the large end of the shrimp—this is the end of the digestive tract. Grasp it with your fingers or in a paper towel, and draw it out gently. You may not get all of it, but there may not be a lot to remove either. Not all shrimp have a full digestive vein that you can notice.

Shrimp

You can certainly make a shrimp cocktail fast with the already boiled—and often tasteless—shrimp available at supermarket fish counters, but for a superior version cook your shrimp at home. Here we use the classic method of poaching the shrimp in a *court bouillon,* a flavored broth of wine, water, lemon, and aromatics. The shrimp actually boil for only a few moments, then steep in the liquid, cooking through but retaining firm texture, and becoming infused with flavor.

For a classic shrimp cocktail, you will have to remove the shells and clean the shrimp before cooking, and chill them thoroughly, so they curl elegantly and are ready for dipping into Jacques's Horseradish Cocktail Sauce (page 6). But you can also make a casual first course of warm shrimp still in the shell, served family-style in a big bowl of the *court bouillon.* Everyone at the table can retrieve and shell his or her own shrimp, and dunk them into melted butter with lemon and cracked pepper.

Shrimp are sold in sizes based on the average number in a pound. For either of these appetizers, you want large shrimp—designated as "26 to 30 count"—or the jumbo "12 to 16 count" (sometimes referred to as "U16," which means "under 16" per pound). The jumbos are quite expensive, but they make a meaty mouthful, and there are fewer shells to remove.

Shrimp Cocktail and Cooked Shrimp, Family-Style

Yield: 1 pound of shrimp, serving 4 as a first course

1 pound unshelled shrimp, either large (26 to 30 per pound) or jumbo (12 to 16 per pound)

For the *court bouillon*

1 cup coarsely chopped onions
1 carrot, peeled and sliced into thin rounds (about ½ cup)
4 sprigs fresh thyme
2 imported bay leaves
¼ large lemon, in thin half-round slices
1 tsp whole black peppercorns
⅛ tsp red-pepper flakes (optional)
1 tsp salt
1 cup dry white wine or dry white French vermouth
3 cups water

For serving shrimp cocktail

Lemon wedges
Lettuce leaves
Horseradish Cocktail Sauce, page 6

For serving family-style, shell on

Melted butter
Freshly squeezed lemon juice
Coarsely cracked black pepper
Salt

Preparing the shrimp

For shrimp cocktail, peel the shell off each shrimp, leaving the tail and the adjoining small band of shell attached to the body. With a sharp paring knife, slice lengthwise along the middle of the tail—the outside curve—going only about ⅛ inch deep into the flesh, to expose the thin dark strand of digestive tract (it will vary from pale to black in some shrimp, and will be hardly visible in others). Lift the strand with the tip of the knife

Jacques

At home, I usually cook the shrimp in the shell, then serve them warm in a big bowl of broth. It's not only easier—because you don't have to peel the shrimp ahead of time—but it also allows shrimp lovers, like my wife, Gloria, to munch on the shells, which have lots of flavor. We don't bother to remove the digestive tract when we have shrimp this way—you never taste it, and it's perfectly good protein to eat.

Very often I buy whole shrimp with heads on. (You have to buy more to compensate for the weight of the heads.) They are usually less expensive, and the body gives extra flavor to the meat and the stock.

If you do peel your shrimp before cooking, add the shells to the *court bouillon* to give it better flavor, or freeze them to make stock with later. And you should strain and save your *court bouillon.* I love to make consommé or other soups with it.

and discard. Rinse the shrimp and drain. Peel all the shrimp in the same manner and save all the shells for the *court bouillon*.

For family-style shell-on shrimp, simply rinse them before cooking.

Cooking the *court bouillon* and the shrimp

Put all the *court bouillon* ingredients into a large stainless-steel saucepan, including the shrimp peels if you've removed them. Bring to a boil, then cover and cook 10 to 15 minutes, at a gentle boil.

Add the shrimp—peeled or unpeeled—all at once, stir to mix them into the broth, and bring it back to a boil over high heat. Cover the pan and cook for only 10 seconds, then remove from the heat. Let the shrimp cool in the covered pan of broth, either to lukewarm for serving in the broth, or in the refrigerator, until thoroughly chilled.

Serving the shrimp

For shrimp cocktail, chill the shrimp in the *court bouillon,* then remove them and dry on paper towels. Arrange them all on a platter lined with lettuce leaves—along with lemon wedges and cocktail sauce—to serve as an hors d'oeuvre. For individual servings, stand a rolled-up lettuce leaf in a cocktail or wine glass and hang the shrimp on the edge of the glass (6 or more "large" shrimp or 3 or 4 "jumbo" per serving). Cut the lemon wedges in half crosswise and nestle them between the shrimp. Serve with ramekins of cocktail sauce on the side.

To serve unshelled shrimp, family-style, turn both the shrimp and *court bouillon,* while still warm, into a large serving bowl. Into the melted butter stir fresh lemon juice, cracked black pepper, and pinches of salt, to taste. Provide everyone with a bowl for shrimp shells and a nearby ramekin of flavored butter.

Julia's Colossal Barbecued Shrimp

The bigger the shrimp, the more expensive it is, and the official "colossal" grade is next to the top. "Extra colossal" wins the prize, weighing in at 8 to 10 shrimp per pound. Considering its luxurious price, just 1 per person would be acceptable, and 2 or 3 would be generosity itself. These are butterflied, skewered, turned in a marinade, then barbecued or broiled.

To butterfly the shrimp, cut open the shells starting at the outside of the large ends and going down to the tail. Then with a small, very sharp knife cut through the flesh down to but not through the underside of the shells. Remove the intestinal vein lodged along the outside curve of the flesh. Meanwhile soak 2 dozen long, pointed wooden skewers in cold water.

Prepare the marinade for a dozen colossal shrimp: Whisk 2 tablespoons each of excellent olive oil and fresh lemon juice in a small bowl with ½ teaspoon each of dark sesame oil and soy sauce, plus a little puréed fresh garlic and gingerroot and several grinds of fresh pepper.

Open the shrimp flesh side up and push one skewer through the large ends to hold them open, and a second skewer through the tail ends. Paint the shrimp flesh with marinade and reserve any that is left over. Cover and refrigerate for at least half an hour before cooking.

To broil, start flesh side down for a good minute, then turn flesh side up for 1½ to 2 minutes, basting once or twice with leftover marinade or with olive oil. To barbecue, start flesh side down, basting once or twice, and finish flesh side up.

Salmon

Salmon, as you will find in the "Fish" chapter, is one of our favorite fish for cooking. Its distinctive flavor and moderately firm, rich flesh also make it well suited for curing and smoking, and serving as a cold appetizer. You can of course buy exquisite and expensive smoked salmon from Alaska, Canada, Scotland, and Scandinavia, but with fresh, fine, and reasonably priced salmon now available at most supermarkets, you will enjoy the four methods we give here for curing it in your own kitchen.

Three of these are versions of salt-cured, Scandinavian "gravlax." Julia's dilled salmon is made the traditional way: thick slabs of salmon fillet are coated with salt, sugar, and cognac, then stacked with a layer of fresh dill, and set aside to cure for 3 to 5 days. Then it is sliced paper-thin and served as an hors d'oeuvre, a first course, or a garnish for other foods.

If you've not started your cure days ahead of your party—or if you're having just a few guests—our two gravlax variations produce deliciously seasoned cold salmon, all ready to serve in slices, in a fraction of the time. Julia's Quick Gravlax takes just two hours, and Jacques's "instant" gravlax is ready to eat in barely twenty minutes.

A truly instant salmon appetizer is Salmon Tartare, a lemony mixture of chopped raw salmon, shallots, herbs, and seasonings. It's an excellent way to use the trimmings left from filleting a whole salmon, but you can also buy a small piece of salmon just for this purpose. Spread the tartare on black bread or crackers as a canapé, or, if you have gravlax as well, drape a couple of slices over a mound of tartare for a very special first course.

Jacques

Salt is the principal agent for curing the salmon in all gravlax recipes. It draws out moisture, making it difficult for bacteria to survive, and permeates and flavors the flesh. I prefer to use kosher salt for this process, since the pointed larger segments penetrate the meat and cure more effectively.

Curing thin slices of "instant" gravlax with this method takes only 15 to 20 minutes, and you can make as much as you want, as long as you spread the slices directly on the seasonings, without overlapping them. For individual servings, cure just 2 or 3 slices on small plates, 1 for each person at the table. Then cover the slices with plastic wrap, stack the plates on top of each other, and refrigerate until serving time.

Since I cure the slices with only salt, pepper, and a tiny bit of sugar, I like to put a lot of garnishes on my instant gravlax just before serving. You can be very creative at this point. In the recipe here I suggest shallots, lemon zest, radishes, chives, and walnut oil (diluted with peanut oil to temper its strong flavor). And I garnish the salmon with julienne mushrooms, capers, chopped parsley, basil, and olive oil. You can also use chopped red or white onion, black olives, diced

(continued on page 19)

Julia

I use the traditional seasonings of salt, sugar, and dill, as well as cognac, in both my long-cure and quick gravlax. The proportions are the same—1½ teaspoons of salt and ¾ teaspoon of sugar per pound of salmon. I don't like to use a lot of salt to begin with—you can always add more during the cure if needed. The sugar keeps the salmon reasonably soft; otherwise it tends to stiffen. The cognac, while not essential, adds some pizzazz to the cure.

Following this formula, you can cure any amount of salmon that you want. For a large party, it's as easy to cure two fillets (two halves of a whole salmon) as it is to do one. You'll need only spoonfuls more sugar, salt, and cognac, a few more dill sprigs, and a larger dish to hold the fish. The cure will still take four to five days. With the quick method, you can cut a whole, skin-on fillet into slices—removing them from the skin—season them on both sides as in the recipe, then reassemble the slices on the skin, instead of arranging them on a platter.

Not to worry if you end up with extra gravlax. The long-cured dilled salmon will last for a week—the quick gravlax for several days—and both will freeze nicely. I had never heard of gravlax before I went to Norway in the 1950s, where we lived for two years. At the Grand Hotel in Oslo, we had a memorable lunch at which gravlax was served with creamed potatoes and scrambled eggs. I have been making it ever since.

Julia's Traditional Gravlax

Yield: 2 to 2½ pounds, serving 15 to 20 as an appetizer

One 2½-to-3-pound salmon fillet, skin on, *all* bones removed (as shown on page 219)
1½ Tbs salt, plus more if needed
2¼ tsp sugar
4 Tbs cognac, plus more if needed
Fresh dill sprigs, about 1 cup packed

For serving

Fresh dill and parsley
Cucumber Ribbons (page 23) (optional)
Breads and other accompaniments, as noted below

Special equipment

A glass, enamel, or other non-reactive baking dish to hold the salmon (about 10 inches long); plastic wrap; a plate or cutting board, and 5 pounds to weight it (such as canned goods)

Curing the fillet

Trim the salmon fillet, cutting away any thin, uneven edges and the thin end of the tail. (You can use the fleshy trimmings for Salmon Tartare, page 24.)

Cut the fillet in half crosswise, so you have 2 pieces of the same length and about the same width, and lay them skin down on the work surface.

Stir the salt and sugar together in a small bowl. Sprinkle half the mix

After rubbing the salt and cognac over the fillet, spread sprigs of dill on top.

Set in a baking dish and lay the other fillet on top, aligning the sides.

over each fillet and rub it in with your fingers. Drizzle about 2 tablespoons of cognac over each piece and rub in. Spread the dill sprigs over one fillet, then set it in the baking dish. Lay the other fillet on top, align the sides neatly, and cover with a sheet of plastic wrap (see photos).

Lay a pan or board on top of the fish (be sure it isn't resting on the rim of the dish), weight the top with cans or other heavy objects to compress the fillets, and place in the refrigerator. After one day of curing, remove the weights and top tray, and turn the fish over (so the top fillet is on the bottom), baste with the liquid that has accumulated in the dish, and replace the weights. Turn and baste after the second day, and slice off a sliver of the salmon. Taste, and sprinkle more salt or cognac on the flesh if needed. Cure for another day, turn, and baste once more. After the fourth full day, the cure will be complete and you can serve the gravlax.

Cover with plastic wrap, lay a pan or board on top, and then weight.

Slicing the gravlax

Clean the dill from the flesh of one fillet and wipe dry with paper towels. With a long thin-bladed slicing knife, held at a very flat angle, start slicing a few inches in from the narrow end of the fillet. Cut with a back-and-forth sawing motion, toward the narrow end, to remove a thin slice of fish. Start each succeeding slice a bit farther in from the end of the fillet; always cut at a flat angle, to keep the slices long and as thin as possible. When the blade reaches the skin, shave the slice off—don't

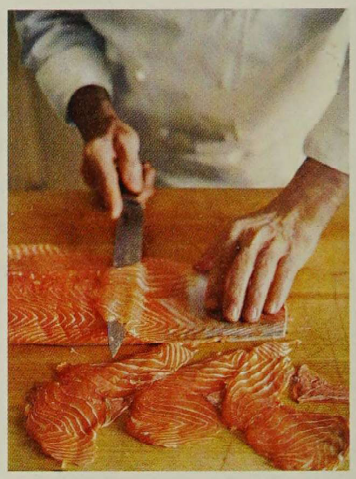
Jacques (continued from page 17)

cucumber tossed with a bit of vinegar—whatever you like and whatever you have available.

I also add many garnishes to the salmon tartare, but in this case there is no actual curing. The fish is essentially raw, although, as in South American seviche, the citric acid in the lemon juice coagulates the protein so the pieces whiten and appear "cooked." For any of these recipes, use very fresh salmon from a reliable fish market.

cut through the skin. You may trim away and discard the dark flesh that was next to the skin. The Norwegians leave it on.

After cutting as many slices as you wish to serve, fold the attached flap of skin over the remaining fish and wrap well in plastic. The gravlax can be stored in the refrigerator for about a week.



With a long, thin-bladed slicing knife held at a flat angle, start slicing with a back-and-forth sawing motion.

Serving suggestions

Serve sliced gravlax as a first course on individual plates, or as an hors d'oeuvre on a serving platter. If the slices are large, you may wish to cut them into smaller, canapé-sized pieces. Garnish individual plates or serving platters with sprigs of dill and parsley, or seasoned Cucumber Ribbons (page 23).

Accompany the salmon with thin slices of dark bread, such as dense European-style rye or pumpernickel, or see sidebar on cocktail breads (page 6). Toasted and buttered slices of brioche, and/or an assortment of crisp rye and wheat crackers, may also be served.

A platter of Julia's Traditional Gravlax

Julia's Quick Gravlax

Yield: 10 to 12 slices, serving 8 or more as an hors d'oeuvre

1 pound salmon fillet, trimmed and boned (pages 218–219)
1½ tsp salt
¾ tsp sugar
1 Tbs cognac, in a small dish, or more if needed
1 bunch fresh, clean dill sprigs

For serving

Cucumber Ribbons (page 23) (optional)
Breads and other accompaniments as noted in preceding recipe

Special equipment

A large serving platter; plastic wrap

Slice the salmon as thinly as possible, as shown in the photo on page 20. You should have 10 or more slices, each about 1½ ounces. Or maybe you can cajole your fish man—the way I do—into slicing the salmon for you.

Sprinkle each slice with a pinch or two of the salt-sugar mix.

Stir together the salt and sugar in a small bowl. Lay all the salmon slices flat on a large cutting board or clean work surface. Sprinkle each slice with a pinch or two of the salt-sugar mix—you should use half the mix, about a teaspoon in all.

Then moisten the slices with cognac, dipping your finger into the dish and rubbing a few drops over the surface of each. When all the slices are coated, turn them over and, after drying your fingers, season the second side evenly with the remaining salt-sugar mix, then rub with cognac.

Chop several of the dill sprigs quite fine, to yield a tablespoon or two. Spread the rest of the sprigs on the serving platter. One by one, arrange the salmon slices flat, in an overlapping pattern, covering the dill. Sprinkle the chopped dill over the slices, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 2 hours. (After 1 hour, taste a small piece of the salmon, and season with more salt, sugar, or cognac if needed.)

To serve, simply uncover the platter. Garnish with cucumber ribbons, if you like, and serve with any of the breads and other accompaniments suggested for Traditional Gravlax (preceding recipe).

Jacques's Instant Gravlax

Yield: 8 to 10 slices, serving 6 to 8 as an hors d'oeuvre, or 4 as a first course

12 ounces salmon fillet, trimmed and boned (pages 218–219)
1 tsp kosher salt
¼ tsp sugar
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper

For garnishing

1 tsp lemon peel in fine julienne strips or shreds (see page 23)
1 Tbs chopped fresh chives
2 radishes, in julienne strips
4 Tbs thinly sliced shallots (4 large shallots)
1 Tbs walnut oil
2 Tbs peanut oil

Lay the salmon slices on top of the platter that you have sprinkled with the salt-sugar-pepper mix.

For serving

Lemon wedges
Cucumber Ribbons (page 23) (optional)
Slices of buttered pumpernickel, brioche, or crackers

Special equipment

A serving platter; plastic wrap

A platter of Jacques's Instant Gravlax

Curing the salmon

Slice the salmon as thin as possible, as shown on page 20. You should have 8 or more slices, each about 1½ ounces.

Stir together the salt, sugar, and pepper in a small bowl. Sprinkle half of the mixture evenly over the surface of the serving platter. Lay the salmon slices flat, on top of the seasonings, *without overlapping.* Sprinkle the rest of the seasoning mix evenly over the slices.

Cover the slices airtight with plastic wrap—pressing the wrap so it adheres to the salmon—and set it in the refrigerator for at least 20 minutes, to cure. (You may keep it refrigerated for up to 24 hours, tightly covered, before garnishing and serving.)

Garnishing and serving

Uncover the platter. Sprinkle the lemon zest, chives, radish slivers, and sliced shallots all over the slices of salmon. Stir together the walnut and peanut oils, and drizzle them over the slices and garnishes.

Arrange the lemon wedges—and cucumber ribbons, if you like—around the edges of the platter. Serve with slices of buttered bread or brioche toast, or crackers, on the side.

Jacques's Lemon Peel Garnish

The yellow layer of lemon peel, also called the "zest," contains the volatile citrus oils and makes a colorful garnish for cured salmon slices, salmon tartare, and many other dishes. Though you can grate the peel (and sometimes your knuckles) on a regular grater, a better method is to remove the zest in long thin shreds using a special "zesting" tool, which has a row of small, sharp-edged holes. Another technique I use frequently is to shave off 2-inch strips of peel, about ½ inch wide, with a vegetable peeler. Stack these on top of each other, then slice the stack crosswise with a sharp knife, into very fine julienne slivers. This will give you several tablespoons of garnish in just a few seconds.

Jacques's Cucumber Ribbons

These thin strips of lightly dressed cucumber are a fine garnish for all of our salmon appetizers.

With a sharp vegetable peeler, remove the skin from a large, preferably "seedless" (or English) cucumber. Then, still using the vegetable peeler, shave lengthwise strips from one side of the cucumber, until you can see the interior layer of seeds. Rotate the cucumber 90 degrees, shave off more long ribbons until you reach the seeds, then rotate and remove strips twice more. (Now you can discard the rectangular center of the cucumber, with all the seeds.)

You should have about 2 cups of ribbons. Season with ¼ teaspoon each of salt, sugar, and freshly ground black pepper, and about 1 teaspoon of white-wine vinegar. Toss to distribute the seasonings.

For more delicate, spaghettilike ribbons, neatly lay 4 to 6 unseasoned cucumber strips on top of each other, then fold or roll the pile over several times, making a many-layered stack. Cut down through the layers lengthwise, every ⅛ inch or so, creating long thin strips, like spaghetti. Loosen the strands gently and season as above.

You can garnish with the ribbons in many ways: lay them flat in decorative, crisscross patterns on serving plates; form them into small mounds and drape them with slices of gravlax, for individual servings; or spread a loose tangle of ribbons into a ring or nest around a platter of gravlax or salmon tartare.

Jacques's Salmon Tartare

Yield: About 2 cups, serving 4 as a first course or 8 as hors d'oeuvre

12 ounces fresh skinless, boneless salmon (including scrapings and trimmings from filleting)
2 Tbs finely chopped shallots
1½ tsp lemon peel in fine julienne strips or shreds (see page 23)
1½ Tbs freshly squeezed lemon juice
3 Tbs chopped parsley
1 Tbs extra-virgin olive oil
¼ tsp Tabasco sauce, plus more to taste
½ tsp salt, plus more to taste
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste

For serving

Thin Cucumber Ribbons (page 23)
1 Tbs chopped fresh chives
Slices of pumpernickel or other black bread, spread with butter or mayonnaise

Cut all the salmon into small (roughly ¼-inch) pieces, and put them in a bowl along with the shallots, lemon peel, lemon juice, parsley, olive oil, Tabasco, salt, and pepper. It is important to cut by hand, because the food processor will purée too fast and make the salmon pasty and mushy. Mix gently and thoroughly. Taste the tartare and adjust the seasonings as you like.

The tartare can be served right away, or refrigerated for an hour or two. (The salmon will whiten, and become opaque, after a few minutes in the marinade.)

To serve as an hors d'oeuvre, pile thin cucumber ribbons on a serving platter, spread them with your fingers into a ring or nest, and mound the tartare in the middle. For first-course plates, make small nests of ribbons and fill each with ½ cup or so of the tartare. Sprinkle the chopped chives over and arrange triangles of black bread, spread with butter or mayonnaise, around the platter.

Sausage in Brioche

Along with its buttery flavor and soft texture, this golden brioche loaf has a treat inside—a homemade sausage, studded with pine nuts and fragrant slivers of truffle. Serve slices of this all-in-one appetizer with cocktails, as a first course, or for a summer lunch.

You can make quick work of both components of the loaf, using a simple technique to shape the sausage by hand and a no-knead, food-processor method for the brioche dough. They can both be conveniently made ahead, with a bit of coordinated planning: the sausage needs to cure for 3 days, or up to a week, in the refrigerator; and the brioche dough will be best if made the night before baking and allowed to rise slowly, also in the refrigerator.

The sausage made here is a variation on the homemade pork sausage, cured and poached, in the "Meats" chapter (page 364). Refer to the more detailed discussion there of meat and seasoning choices, and of shaping the sausage. The black truffles in this recipe add a special (and expensive) fragrant touch to the sausage. If unavailable, you can use pieces of dried cèpes (porcini or king boletus mushrooms), which will also speckle the sausage with black and give it a distinctive flavor.

Jacques

This easily made brioche dough can also be used for encasing other meats, such as pâté. Or you can shape it into a conventional loaf, or even the famous *brioche à tête* shape—with a little "head" on top, made in a fluted mold. But this dough contains less butter, and will not rise as high or be as light as the finest brioche dough, called *brioche mousseline*. Such a dough requires lots of kneading and several periods of long, slow rising at low temperatures, in order to develop the gluten and to absorb a large amount of butter.

Once the dough is wrapped around the sausage, though, it does need a foil collar to maintain the shape during its final rise at room temperature and the first part of baking. Be sure to butter the foil well, so it doesn't stick to the dough, and to remove it after the first 20 minutes of baking, so the sides can brown nicely. The dough will hold its shape at that point without the collar.

Saltpeter, or potassium nitrate, has been used at least since the lMiddle Ages to give meat—from bologna to ham to corned beef to pâté—a beautiful pink color. Salt, in large amounts, will also impart this color, but the end product will be too salty. If no saltpeter is used, the meat will be slightly pink and turn grayish after it's cooked for a while, but the taste will be just as good.

Julia

The combination of meat and bread together makes a very appealing dish, and you can use any kind of homemade sausage.

My food-processor method for brioche dough is a bit different from Jacques's. Though the yeast manufacturers say you can put the dry, rapid-rise type of yeast in with the flour directly, I always "proof" my yeast before adding it to the machine, sprinkling it on warm water with a pinch of sugar to make sure that it gets foamy and is therefore alive.

And while Jacques adds room-temperature butter last, I use cold chunks of butter and cut them into the flour first—before adding liquid—by pulsing with the steel blade. Then I like to let the dough rise at room temperature until doubled, fold it over a few times to deflate, and let it rise again. I find that two rises give the dough more body and flavor.

Jacques's Sausage in Brioche

Yield: 6 to 8 servings as a first course, or 12 or more as an appetizer

For the sausage

- 1½ pounds coarsely ground pork, about 25 percent fat (Boston butt is very good)
- 2½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp sugar
- ¾ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 Tbs white wine
- 2 Tbs pignoli (pine nuts)
- 2 Tbs black truffle, in julienne slivers (or dried cèpes or porcini, in ¼-inch pieces)
- ⅛ tsp potassium nitrate (saltpeter) (optional)

For the brioche loaf

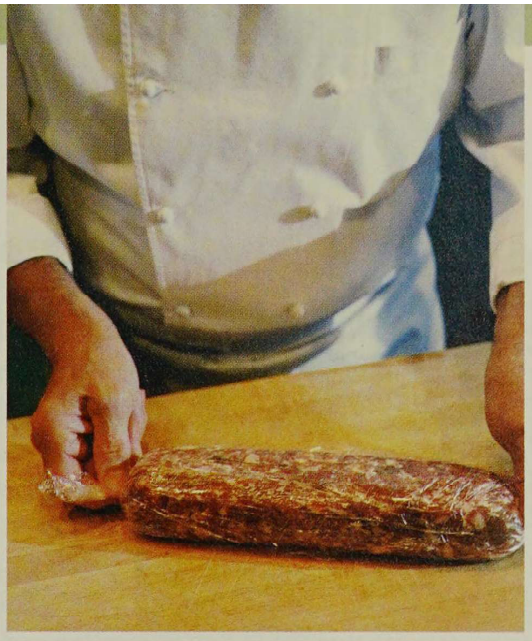
- 1 large egg
- Brioche dough, fully risen, from the following recipe (about 2 pounds)
- Flour for rolling
- Fresh bread crumbs (from 1 slice of white bread, crusts removed, about 2 to 3 Tbs)

Special equipment

Plastic wrap; aluminum foil; parchment paper; a rolling pin; a pastry brush; a large cookie or baking sheet; kitchen twine

Mixing and forming the sausage several days ahead

Tear off an 18-inch piece of plastic wrap and lay it on the work surface, long side in front of you. Put the pork and all the seasoning ingredients (including the saltpeter, if using) in a large bowl and mix together well with your hands.



A smooth, even sausage roll about 12 inches long and 2 inches in diameter

Press the meat together into a rough log shape and place it on the plastic wrap. Fold the wrap over and gently squeeze the meat out to form a thin, even sausage, about 12 inches long and 2 inches in diameter; press firmly to eliminate any air pockets in the meat. Now roll the sausage back and forth under the plastic so it is perfectly smooth and cylindrical.

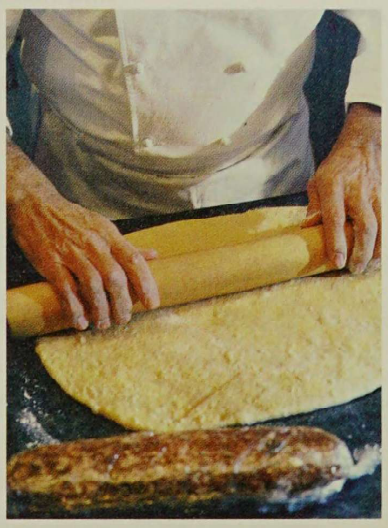
At this point, if you don't want to cure in plastic, simply transfer the sausage to parchment paper. Place the sausage on an 18-inch piece of aluminum foil, and roll it up and seal it the same way. Set the sausage in the refrigerator to cure for at least 3 days, or up to a week.

Forming the brioche loaf

Crack the egg into a small bowl, remove half of the egg white, and beat the yolk and remaining white to make the egg wash. This way you have more yolk in the wash, which produces a deeper, more golden color, while the small amount of egg white will give the glaze a shine.

Unwrap the cured sausage. Center the sausage roll on the floured area of the dough and brush the top lightly with egg wash before sprinkling on a little flour.

Remove the risen brioche dough from the refrigerator and unwrap. Deflate it gently on a lightly floured work surface, press it flat, and sprinkle a bit of flour over the top. With the rolling pin, roll the dough out to about 14 inches by 10 inches (follow photos). (If the dough has risen at room temperature rather than in the refrigerator, you will need more flour when rolling.)



Roll the dough out to about 14 inches long and 10 inches wide.

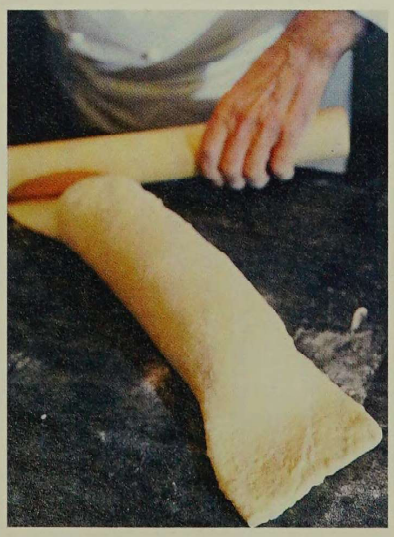
Fold the dough over the sausage.

Brush the center of the dough lightly with egg wash, and sprinkle on a little flour. Unwrap the cured sausage and center it on the floured area of dough, then sprinkle a bit of flour on the top and sides of the meat, to help the brioche stick to it during rising and baking.

Fold the dough over the sausage as shown in the photo, brush with egg wash, and fold in the flaps as illustrated.

Line the cookie sheet with parchment paper, turn the loaf over, and place it on the sheet, with the folds and flaps underneath. Brush the top and sides with egg wash. Score the top with decorative diagonal lines, as illustrated. To release steam, make 3 small vent holes.

Cut a 3-foot length of aluminum foil, fold it in thirds lengthwise to form a band, and butter it well on one side. Wrap the foil loosely around the loaf, buttered side in—forming a collar to maintain the shape as the dough rises. Tie a length of kitchen twine around the foil to keep it in place. Let the brioche rise for about an hour, in a warm place (about 72°F).



Flatten the flaps with a rolling pin before folding them under.

Baking and serving the sausage

Arrange a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 375°F.

When the dough feels spongy and soft, brush the top again with egg wash and sprinkle on the bread crumbs. Place the sheet in the oven (with the aluminum-foil band in place) and bake for about 20 minutes. Remove the sheet (be sure to close the

Score the egg-washed top of the dough with decorative diagonal lines.

oven door) and quickly remove the band, cutting the twine and carefully peeling the foil from around the loaf. Return the loaf to the oven immediately and bake for 25 minutes more, until the loaf is golden and fully baked. Set aside in a warm place and allow it to cool for about 30 minutes before serving.

To serve, slice the sausage in ½-inch-thick slices for appetizer portions—or thicker, if you like—and arrange on individual plates or on a serving platter.

With the point of your knife make 3 vent holes all the way through the dough to allow steam to escape.

Wrap buttered foil loosely around the loaf and tie in place.

Cut slices ½ to ¾ inch thick.

Fast Brioche Dough in the Food Processor

Yield: About 2 pounds of dough

3 cups flour (1 pound exactly)
1 package (2 tsp) dry yeast, quick-rising or "instant"
½ tsp sugar
¾ tsp salt
⅓ cup warm milk
4 large eggs
6 ounces room-temperature butter, in pieces

Special equipment

A food processor

Put the flour, yeast, sugar, and salt in the work bowl of the food processor and pulse briefly to blend. Add the milk and eggs to the work bowl and start processing continuously. Within a few seconds, as the dough forms, drop the butter in piece by piece and continue to process for about 30 or 40 seconds, until the butter is incorporated and the dough is uniformly smooth. It will be soft and slightly sticky. (If it is very sticky, sprinkle on flour by teaspoons only and process briefly.)

Remove the dough from the work bowl and knead it for a moment with your floured hands on a lightly floured surface, to form a ball. Enclose the dough in a clean plastic bag, or put it in a bowl and seal with plastic wrap, and set in the refrigerator to rise slowly overnight. You can use dough after the first rise, or press out the air gently, knead it briefly to redistribute the yeast, and return to the refrigerator (in the bag or bowl) for a second rise. Use the dough as directed in the preceding recipe, straight from the refrigerator.

If you must make the dough for use the same day, remove it from the food processor to a bowl and cover with plastic wrap or a damp towel. Allow it to rise in a warm place for 3 or 4 hours, or until doubled, before rolling.

Julia

There's no reason to be intimidated by the idea of making pâté. You can just think of it as meat loaf—a festive type of French meat loaf with wine and various meats.

Nor should you be afraid of eating pâté. This is a rich appetizer, definitely not a diet dish, and you don't want to eat great big pieces. I find that even a half-slice of this pâté makes a nice serving—and such a modest portion shouldn't worry even those who are concerned about fat. There's no reason not to enjoy pâté, or anything else, if you do so in moderation.

Pâté

A small slice of this pâté presents a mosaic of colors and flavors—slivers of veal, country ham, and chicken liver, pistachio nuts, and bits of porcini mushrooms, all bound together in a moist, savory loaf of ground pork and veal. If you've only sampled this classic appetizer at a good French restaurant, or treated yourself to a slice or two from a fancy *charcuterie,* you will be delighted to find how easy and relatively inexpensive it is to make at home. This recipe gives you a good-sized loaf, providing enough generous slices to serve twenty or more at a big party, to enjoy as a first course for several small dinners, or to indulge in whenever you like. It will store perfectly for a week and a half, though it will likely have disappeared much sooner.

Buying and mixing everything on the long ingredient list constitutes most of your work here—after that, it's a simple matter to form and bake the loaf. Because the pâté needs several days to develop its fine flavor both before and after cooking, you can do the initial mixing on the weekend before you want to serve it, set it aside to marinate, then complete the assembling and the baking to suit your schedule.

A well-seasoned base of ground meat, called the forcemeat, is essential for a good pâté. A country pâté is by definition rather coarse-textured, and you can simply use store-ground pork and veal or turkey for the forcemeat, or grind the meat yourself with a meat grinder or an attachment to your electric mixer. Be sure to use—or ask the butcher to grind—pork with about 25-percent fat content, such as the "Boston butt" from the shoulder.

A country pâté is usually formed and baked in the narrow rectangular mold known as a "terrine," pictured here. Made of earthenware or enameled cast iron—and widely available in kitchenware stores—they are used for many kinds of pâtés and similar molded foods which, like the container itself, are often called terrines. If you don't have one, you can use any loaf-shaped pan or other baking dish. It is also traditional but optional to line the mold with pork fat, either the lacy membrane of abdominal fat known as caul, which you can see in the photos, or thin slices of pork fatback or leaf lard. Caul can be

found at specialty stores and good Italian butcher shops, or your regular butcher can order it. The saltpeter listed in the recipe is also optional. As with our recipes for homemade sausage, this will give a pink color to the pâté.

You do, however, want to serve the pâté with its traditional accompaniments—the small French pickled gherkins known as cornichons, black olives, good Dijon-style mustard, and country-style bread. All kinds of wine go with pâté. At a summer picnic, enjoy it with a dry white wine; at the table, pour a light Beaujolais, or a more pungent Merlot or cabernet sauvignon.

Jacques

There are three things that contribute to a good pâté. First, it has to be very well seasoned. The proportions of salt and pepper and spices might seem high, but the seasoning mellows as the mixture cures, and is muted when the pâté is eaten cold or at room temperature. Second, the forcemeat has to have sufficient fat to stay moist, but not taste overrich. Here, the pork must provide all the fat, because the veal is entirely lean. The Boston butt, or pork butt, is a common cut from the shoulder with the ideal proportion of fat (because it is so moist, it also makes a great roast). Finally, you have to cook the pâté slowly, in a water bath, as we do here. If you cooked it too fast, all the fat would melt out of the pâté, and it would have a dry texture and too much seasoning.

If you follow these principles, you can make many variations on this pâté. Experiment with the spice mix. Instead of the herbs and spices suggested here, you could add others that you like—cumin, coriander, or cinnamon are some that I use. You can vary the kind of wines and other flavorings, and the garnishes. You could leave some of the pork in small chunks and mix them into the forcemeat, or use different nuts. You might layer different kinds of meat strips—use turkey strips instead of veal—and arrange

(continued on page 33)

Country Pâté

Yield: A 6-cup terrine, making 20 or more appetizer slices

For the spice mix

- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 24 allspice berries
- 6 cloves
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp dried thyme

For the forcemeat

- ¾ pound veal shoulder, coarsely ground*
- 2¼ pounds pork shoulder (Boston butt or pork butt), coarsely ground*
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- ⅓ cup chopped shallots
- ¼ ounce dried porcini mushrooms, chopped dry into ¼-inch pieces (about 3 Tbs)
- ⅓ cup pistachio nuts
- ⅓ cup white wine
- 2 Tbs cognac
- 1 Tbs cornstarch
- 1 Tbs and 2 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp saltpeter (optional)

For assembling the pâté

- ½ pound veal shoulder*
- 4 ounces chicken livers, cleaned and trimmed of sinews
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 Tbs cognac
- 6 to 8 ounces caul fat (optional)
- 4 ounces cooked country-ham steak, sliced into long ½-inch-thick strips
- 2 large imported bay leaves
- ¼ tsp fresh thyme

Special equipment

A spice grinder or a very clean coffee grinder; a meat grinder or meat-grinding attachment to an electric mixer; a 5½-cup rectangular terrine or equivalent-size mold or loaf pan; a cover for the terrine or aluminum foil; a roasting pan; a meat thermometer

* You can buy the meats whole and grind them yourself, using the coarse blade of the grinder. For the veal, buy a 1¼-pound piece of shoulder and divide it into ¾ pound for grinding and ½ pound for cutting into strips for layering.

Mixing the forcemeat and the garnishes for marinating

Using the spice grinder or coffee grinder, process the spice-mix ingredients into a fine powder.

Put the ground meats in a large mixing bowl. Add the spice powder, garlic, shallots, mushroom pieces, pistachio nuts, white wine, cognac, cornstarch, the 1 tablespoon of salt, and the saltpeter (if using) and mix well with your hands.

Slice the piece of veal into long strips, about ½ inch thick, put them in a small bowl with the chicken livers, and toss with the 2 teaspoons of salt, pepper, and cognac.

You can now marinate

Drape the caul fat into the mold to cover the bottom and sides completely, with several inches overhanging the outside all around.

both the forcemeat, and the veal strips and livers, in their bowls or other containers. Cover closely with plastic wrap, and let sit in the refrigerator for at least 2 days, or as long as 5 days or a week. Or you can assemble the pâté in the mold before marinating.

Assembling the pâté

Assembling the pâté is the same whether you do it before or after marinating the meat—follow the steps here, or arrange the ingredients as you like, to create an attractive layered pattern when the pâté is sliced.

When the meat is ready to cook, preheat the oven to 325°F.

To line the terrine with optional caul fat, carefully unfurl the lacy sheets—defrost or soften them in tepid water if necessary. Fill the mold, following the photos and captions.

If you did not marinate the component parts of the pâté before assembling it, you should let it marinate now. Cover the assembled pâté tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 3 to 5 days. Before continuing with the recipe, preheat the oven to 325°F and remove the plastic wrap.

Cooking the pâté

Cover the pâté closely with a double or triple thickness of aluminum foil and crimp tightly around the top of the mold to seal. Set the mold in the roasting pan, place it in the oven, and add enough lukewarm water to come halfway up the side of the mold.

Gently press a third of the forcemeat in the bottom of the mold, to make an even layer about an inch thick. On top of the meat, arrange about half of the veal strips end to end, to form 2 evenly spaced rows, running the length of the mold. Press another layer of forcemeat, about ½ inch thick, over the veal, and set the chicken livers in a long row down the middle of the mold, laying some of the ham strips end to end to form 2 rows on either side. Press half the remaining forcemeat over livers and ham.

Make 2 rows of the remaining veal, with a row of the remaining ham in the middle. Press the rest of the forcemeat to cover the meat strips, shaping it to form a smooth loaf, mounded in the middle. Turn the overhanging edges of caul fat to cover the pâté neatly, trimming off any excess.

Jacques (continued from page 31)

them any way you want, to make a design that looks nice when you cut the slices.

We always have pâté at our house around Christmastime. Before the holidays start, I make two terrines just like the one here. Then we have plenty to serve for all the parties and for guests who come by—with the cornichons that Gloria makes every summer. It's fine to serve for 10 days or so. And considering that a slice of pâté like this would cost $15 in a French restaurant—and that there are 20 or 25 slices from each pâté—it's nice to think about the fortune we are saving!

Place the bay leaves on top of the pâté, and sprinkle the thyme over the surface.

Bake for about 1¾ hours, making sure that the water never boils, until the internal temperature of the pâté registers 150° to 155°F on a meat thermometer. (The internal temperature will continue to rise by about 5° after the pâté is removed from the oven.) Check the temperature near the end of the cooking time, without removing the mold from the oven—you can poke the thermometer through the aluminum foil, if using. Lift the mold out of the water and remove from the oven when done. Allow the pâté to cool, still covered. Refrigerate at least overnight, but preferably for 2 days, before serving.

Unmolding and serving

Run a knife around the pâté, against the sides of the mold, and invert over a cutting board or platter so the pâté and gelatinized juices drop out. (Dip the mold in hot water for 30 seconds or so, if the loaf seems stuck.) Scrape away the juices (and save them for stock or soup), and dry the pâté with paper towels. Cut off one end piece of the loaf (save it for yourself), and slice the number of pieces you want to serve, ½ to 1 inch thick. (Wrap the remaining pâté well in plastic wrap, and return to the refrigerator. It will keep for 10 days or so.)

To serve, line a platter or individual plates with lettuce leaves, and arrange the slices on top. Overlap the slices if composing a large platter; a single slice is sufficient for first-course servings. Garnish the platter or plates with black olives and cornichons, and serve with Dijon-style mustard, and crusty bread on the side.

Opposite: Country Pâté

SOUPS

HERE'S A REPERTOIRE OF FRESH VEGETABLE, SEAFOOD, AND CHICKEN SOUPS THAT TAKE only an hour or so—start to finish—and in some cases a good deal less. The selection, though small, offers many choices—rustic or fancy, hot or cold, lean or unashamedly rich, clear or creamy. And each recipe is a model method, which you can adapt in almost endless variation.

Creating a quick soup with great taste is not a matter of tricks, but good techniques, fine fresh ingredients, and attention to seasoning. And whenever possible, you want to give your soups the full flavor of homemade stock. With the recipes here, you can make chicken, fish, or veal stock in large quantity, and freeze it to use when the hour for soup making is at hand. But you don't have to forgo the pleasures of real soup, even if you don't have stock. Our basic leek-and-potato soup, and the fragrant broth made with aromatic vegetables and herbs in our Mediterranean fish stew, both serve as fine soup bases you can make from scratch. And good-quality canned broth is an acceptable substitute when stock is called for, but be sure to adjust your seasonings carefully.

Appropriate kitchen tools—can openers aside—are also important aids to fast soup making. A food processor or a blender is essential, and an immersion blender is quite handy for conveniently creaming and puréeing soup right in the pot. And even though it doesn't whirl at incredible speed, a hand-cranked food mill—the sturdy, stainless-steel kind with different disks—is one of the best devices for making soup with fine texture.

Julia

When you want to give extra flavor and depth to braised onions you simmer them in a flavored liquid, usually a chicken stock. Or you are to make a little sauce for your roast chicken—after you have spooned the fat out of your roasting pan, you pour in half a cup of chicken stock and a bit of wine, scrape the brown roasting juices into the liquid, and simmer them together. There! You have just made one of the essential sauces in good cooking, a "deglazing" sauce, or *petit jus*, a chic little sauce to dress up each serving of chicken. Stocks are essential to sauce making, and, whether plain and fast like this one or fancy like a béarnaise, sauces are essential to good cooking. Without them your food is bland, even institutional, while with them you are really cooking.

We could go at great length into the classic brown stocks and the mother white stocks with veal shanks and necks, marrow bones, all kinds of vegetables, and so forth. These you can find fully explained in your Escoffier. We are talking about good home cooking, where you don't have the time or the need to have these grand masterpieces at hand. However, if you are really passionate about good food, take out your Escoffier and make one of them. Just realizing it's there waiting in your freezer for some special occasion will give you a secret pleasure. It is also part of your continuing food mastery to know how good food is supposed to taste.

Poultry and Meat Stocks

In most home kitchens, stock making is a once-in-a-while affair, usually when we have a nice collection of bones and assorted vegetable trimmings, and a few hours (or less for fish stock) to cook, strain, and reduce them. As you cook your way through this book, we hope, your collection will accumulate (though follow Jacques's suggestion in the sidebar on page 41 to keep it from getting out of hand). Use the basic procedures and formulas presented here, to extract all the flavor from whatever bones and stock ingredients you have and to separate and remove fat and impurities.

Some Uses for Specific Stocks

Each of the following stocks will supply you with a sufficient quantity for use in many recipes throughout the book. The master recipe here is for a simple "white" chicken or turkey stock—this is the one you want to use whenever chicken stock is called for in this chapter. Use the white veal stock for such braises as Veal Roast en Cocotte (page 346) and Blanquette de Veau (page 351). You can make dark stock with poultry bones or beef and veal bones—either type can serve as the "flavorful dark stock" called for in our recipes, as a deglazing or braising liquid. (Or use Julia's Quick Dark Stock—see page 41.)

Julia's Simple Chicken or Turkey Stock—Poultry Stock (Fonds Blanc de Volaille)

Yield: 2 to 3 quarts

You get good flavor out of fresh bones and meat, as well as from bones and scraps from a roast chicken or the remains of the Thanksgiving turkey; a mixture of fresh and cooked is fine. For chicken stock, the older the bird the more character—a stewing hen is ideal. But how often will you find that in your usual supermarket? You will sometimes see packages of necks, and backs, and wing tips. If you do, grab them for your freezer. You will usually have more chance of finding what you want in ethnic markets. Save in your freezer any cooked or raw scraps from chicken and turkey, such as necks, gizzards, hearts, bones, and trimmings. For example, if I am making a quantity of stock and expect to freeze some of it, I wait until I have at least 2 quarts of scraps, then I cook up a batch. However, if I'm roasting or broiling a chicken for dinner, I take whatever little collection of bones and scraps it bequeaths me and let them simmer while the chicken cooks; this will give me maybe only ½ cup, but that's enough for my deglazing sauce, my little jus.

Useful equipment suggested

In addition to a soup pot or big saucepan and cover, you will want a colander, a big strainer, a fine-meshed strainer, and a second and smaller pot or a bowl, preferably stainless steel. A fine-screened skimmer is especially useful here, as is a really big long-handled kitchen spoon.

Simmering the stock

The making of a simple, usable, all-purpose white poultry stock is simple indeed. First wash the raw chicken or turkey pieces—I always rinse them rapidly in hot water. Pull off and discard any loose fat, and turn the pieces into a pot with cold water to cover by 1 inch. Bring rapidly to the boil, and immediately reduce to the simmer—if you keep the stock boiling hard, you will cloud it, and it's worthwhile keeping it clear, just in case you need clear stock. Almost at once gray scum will rise to the surface. Skim it off until it ceases to rise—usually in 7 to

Jacques

In classical cooking, several kinds of "white" and "brown" stocks—made with different kinds of bones and by different methods—are kept on hand for use in specific recipes. Often brown veal stock is further reduced to a thick, syrupy liquid called "demi-glace," which is used as a flavorful but bland base for a variety of distinct sauces. You might use it in one instance to deglaze the roasting pan for leg of lamb, along with red wine. Or another time, use it to deglaze the sauté pan for a *steak au poivre,* with some cognac. The sauces in each case will take on the character of the different meats and flavorings, though they have been made with the same demi-glace.

Though it is so versatile, I don't usually make demi-glace at home anymore—unless I am making a classic dish for some special occasion. Instead, as Julia does, my wife, Gloria, and I always save the juices left over from a veal roast or a roast chicken, remove the fat, and keep them in the freezer. These juices are essentially similar to demi-glace; they have enormous flavor concentrated into small volume, with lots of natural gelatin. And we can use them whenever we need to make a sauce in another dish. In fact, my mother, who is a chef and ran a restaurant most of her life, did exactly the same thing. She was never classically trained and didn't make demi-glace, but would always make great sauces from natural leftover juices.

(continued on page 41)

8 minutes. Set a cover askew over the pot—never cover the pot completely or it will boil and cloud the stock. Simmer slowly, skimming off scum and fat occasionally, for about an hour.

Salt

You will note that no salt has been added yet, because you will be reducing the stock and a normal salting now would make it far too salty later. However, I find it difficult to judge the stock quality when it is unsalted, and I always stir in a very small bit, just enough so that I can taste the stock.

Aromatic vegetables and herbs

When I'm doing a stock just to have one on hand, I add nothing else at all except that little bit of salt discussed above. However, when I am making a chicken soup, or a special sauce, along with my 2 quarts of chicken bits, I'll put in

1 imported bay leaf
A handful of fresh parsley stems
1 cup chopped onion
½ cup peeled and chopped carrot
½ cup chopped celery

Straining and degreasing the stock

Drain the stock through a colander into a saucepan or bowl. Wash out the pot and pour the stock through a fine-meshed sieve back into the pot or a smaller saucepan. The fat will rise to the surface in a few minutes.

Chilling. The easiest way to get rid of the fat, if you are not in a hurry, is to let the stock cool, then chill it and peel the solidified fat off the surface.

Fat separator. Or use a Pyrex fat-separator pitcher with its spout on the bottom. You pour in the stock, let the fat rise to the top, and then pour the clear stock out from the spout until the liquid fat appears in it, at which point you stop pouring.

The endless skim. Or just skim, and skim, and skim the fat off the surface with your big kitchen spoon.

Final fat removal. When all possible fat is to be removed, as for making the clarified stock for an aspic or a consommé, bring the degreased stock to a bare simmer and, off heat, drag pieces of a clean white paper towel over the surface to blot up the fat globules.

Strengthening and flavoring the stock

To intensify flavor, boil degreased stock down rapidly by half or more, until it has developed flavor and strength.

Storing stock

Pour the stock into a container and let cool uncovered in the refrigerator. Then cover and chill or freeze. Warning: never cover a warm stock or it will sour.

White Veal Stock (Fonds Blanc)

Yield: 2 to 3 quarts

Veal stock is particularly good in stews and braises, since raw veal bones have their own special flavor. Furthermore, they are naturally gelatinous (especially the knuckles), meaning that they give a certain body to the stock. Have the bones sawed into 1½-to-2-inch pieces. Since they release loads of scum at first, I always advise that you blanch them before beginning. To do so, bring them to the boil in cold water to cover and skim off the scum as it continues to rise for several minutes, drain, rinse off the scum under cold running water, and return the bones to the pot. Proceed exactly as for the preceding chicken-stock recipe, but veal stock will need about 3 hours of simmering. Add water as needed so the ingredients are always submerged.

Brown Chicken or Turkey Stock

To make a brown stock, simply whack the bones and scraps into pieces 2 inches long, and sauté them with a little vegetable oil in a heavy frying pan until nicely browned all over. Or you can roast meat bones in the oven—but not poultry, because poultry bones burn easily and will give an off taste. For a brown stock, you usually include the aromatic vegetables listed previously, and I always have more success browning the vegetables separately. Then proceed as directed in the master recipe, page 39.

Flavorful Dark Stock

Throughout our recipes, we call for "flavorful dark stock" as a braising liquid, or for deglazing pan juices. Either of the dark stocks in this section—Brown Chicken or Turkey Stock (above), or Brown Meat Stock (page 42)—can be used. If you have no time, make Julia's Quick Dark Stock. But the best solution for the home cook is to keep a good supply of frozen small stocks, sauces, and meat juices, as we describe in our comments here—these are the most flavorful dark stocks of all, and the ones we use.

Julia's Quick Dark Stock

An acceptable substitute for a small amount of stock can be made from a can of beef bouillon, the low-sodium variety. Simmer it for half an hour or so with a handful of diced carrots, onion, and celery, perhaps a tomato, and a little dry white wine or vermouth. Strain, season if necessary, and use in your pan sauce.

Jacques (continued from page 39)

Gloria is usually the one who makes our all-purpose stock. It is basically a "white" chicken stock, but she mixes in some Oriental flavors—she blackens shallots and a piece of fresh ginger on the tip of a skewer directly over the gas burner, and adds these to the liquid, along with a piece of star anise. This gives the stock both a darker color and a slightly exotic flavor. We have this all the time in the freezer too.

Saving Up for Stock

Just as Julia and I do throughout this book, many cookbooks (and chefs on television) tell you to save for stock not only bones but stems of parsley, leek leaves, tomato skins, and the like, and to pack them in plastic wrap for the freezer. This works in theory but it's tedious, and after a while you accumulate seemingly hundreds of small packages with crystallized ice around them. So one day you look inside the freezer and throw them all away.

Here's a more practical method: In the freezer, I always have an empty, rinsed-out milk carton. So, when I am working in the kitchen, I keep a bowl in front of me, and I put into it anything that can go in a stock: parsley stems, the seeds and skins of tomatoes, washed leek tops, trimmings from potatoes or carrots, etc. All of this goes into the milk carton. Then, the next time I am making a stock, I simply take the carton out of the freezer, cut off the cardboard, and put the whole frozen block directly into the stockpot. Don't worry about proportions—it doesn't matter.

Julia on Salt and Pepper

I use regular table salt and kosher salt for cooking. I don't go in for fancy salts at all. To me, salt is salt. The prices for some of these "gourmet"-type salts are ridiculous and I don't want to be bothered with three different kinds. There's enough clutter in the kitchen anyway.

Some people say sea salt has more flavor—but if you need more saltiness, I say just add a little more regular salt. I often use coarse kosher salt for soups and stocks, because you can pick it up with your fingers. I do serve it with a boiled dinner, where I want the grains to stand out.

Kosher salt does not dissolve instantly. You might add it to a dish and taste for seasoning, but because it hasn't dissolved yet you think it needs more salt—so you add more and end up with too much.

As for pepper, I use freshly ground white pepper frequently because I do not want black speckles in pale-colored food. As a rule, I use black pepper when it doesn't make any difference—and white pepper when it does.

Brown Meat Stock (Fonds Brun)

Yield: 2 to 3 quarts

For either beef or veal bones, or the 2 combined, the more meat clinging to them the better. Neck and hip are desirable, as well as joints. Raw is best, but cooked bones are usable, too. Arrange them in a roasting pan, in 1 layer if possible, and spread the aromatic vegetables listed on page 40 among and around the bones. You might want to increase the vegetable amounts by half, to accompany 2 to 3 quarts of bones. Roast for an hour or more in the middle third level of a 400°F oven, turning and basting occasionally. You want them well browned but not burned.

Lift the ingredients into your big pot, pour out and discard accumulated fat, and deglaze the roasting pan by pouring in ½ inch of red wine and/or water. Bring to the simmer on top of the stove, scraping up brown bits and coagulated juices from the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon; pour this into the pot with the browned bones.

Also add the following to the pot (again, assuming you have 2 to 3 quarts of bones):

1 medium herb bouquet, tied or untied (see page 351), also including 2 large cloves of unpeeled smashed garlic
1½ cups chopped cored but unpeeled ripe red tomatoes (or half fresh and half canned Italian plum tomatoes)

Brown Lamb Stock

Make lamb stock exactly the same way as beef stock, but because lamb has its own special character it is always cooked separately.

Fish Stock (Fumé de Poisson) and Seafood Stocks

When you are having a fish soup or a special sauce for poached fish, you need a base for it, to give flavor and interest. Ideally this is a fish stock, which is easy indeed to make from the heads, bones, and scraps left over from preparing the fish for market. Use bones and white skin from one kind or a variety of lean fish here, like sole (for an especially high-class stock), halibut, whiting, flounder, cod, hake—no oily fish like mackerel, bluefish, salmon. You might make a good quantity while you are at it, since you can freeze what you don't need.

Yield: 2 to 3 cups

- 2 to 3 pounds (2 to 3 quarts) lean fresh or frozen fish heads, bones, and trimmings
- 1 to 1½ cups thinly sliced onion (1 or 2 medium onions)
- ½ cup or so very thinly sliced celery stalk
- ½ cup or so thinly sliced white of leek (optional)
- A handful of fresh parsley stems (no leaves, which will color the stock)
- About 1 cup dry white wine or ⅔ cup dry white French vermouth (optional)
- ¼ tsp salt (just a little salt at this point)

Jacques on Salt and Pepper

I cook with both kosher salt and regular salt. Because I add salt with my fingers, kosher salt, being easy to grab, is particularly useful. Although it may look like I am picking it up in random pinches, my fingers are differentiating the amount as if I were using a measuring spoon.

In my recipes I specify exactly how much salt I use at each stage, even very small amounts, because it is important to season sufficiently in many situations where you can't "salt to taste"—since the food is still raw and tasting is impossible. I have found that people frequently undersalt at such times. Later on, they know that something is missing but they can't figure out what it is. And then, even if you realize that salt is needed, at this late point in the process—after cooking or at the table—the addition of salt will not have the desired effect of bringing up the other flavors.

All designations here are for conventional salt unless kosher salt is specified. Because the crystals of kosher salt are larger, it has more volume, and a given amount will add less saltiness than the same measure of table salt. So if you want to use kosher salt, you will have to use a bit more. And conversely, if a recipe calls for a certain amount of kosher salt, be sure to use less regular salt—or you will oversalt.

When it comes to pepper, it is always freshly ground black pepper for me. The black speckles in a pale dish don't bother me the way they do Julia. Only the flavor counts, and black pepper, to me, has the best.

Shrimp Stock

Make shrimp stock either in the same way as the chicken stock (page 39)—simmering the shells with onion, celery, leek, and a touch of white wine—or use the lobster system below, first sautéing the vegetables, then adding and sautéing the shells.

Plain Lobster Stock

After a great feast of boiled or steamed lobster, don't throw all those beautiful shells away! Pick them over, discarding any extraneous matter such as the sand-filled stomach sacs from the chests (page 251), and roughly chop them up. Boil them slowly in a big pot of water barely to cover, strain, and there you are. Use some of the stock in the following broth, and save the rest in the freezer for use in fish soups and chowders, and in the Lobster Stew on page 252.

Strew all the above ingredients in a roomy stainless-steel pot and pour in cold water to cover them by ½ inch. Bring to the simmer, skim off the scum which will continue to rise for several minutes, and simmer uncovered for 25 to 30 minutes only—longer cooking does not improve flavor. Strain into a colander set over a stainless-steel saucepan, pressing juices out of ingredients. Rinse out the cooking pot, pour the stock back in, then pour it through a fine-mesh sieve into the saucepan.

Taste very carefully for strength—it will probably need reducing to concentrate flavor. Boil it down uncovered, until it has the flavor you wish.

To store, let the stock cool, uncovered, then cover and refrigerate or freeze.

Variation: Fish Stock Without Fish Frames

Unless you live by the sea, where fish is caught and processed, there is hardly a fish bone to be had in today's markets, except for salmon, trout, and occasionally freshwater fish. Your market buys its fish already boned, filleted, and ready to cook. You can use fish fillets rather than bones if you want to pay the price, or you can use half plain canned low-salt chicken broth and half water, which I have found works very well in giving that little punch of flavor.

Simmer the fish or broth with the other ingredients called for in the basic recipe, and you will have a fine stock if made with fish, a reasonable substitute if made with broth.

A Strong Lobster Shell Broth

So many eaters never touch the little legs and the chests—those treasure chests—with all their good meat. But it's worthwhile sometimes to make a real broth, the way you would prepare the sauce for a lobster *à l'américaine*. Here's a somewhat elaborate method for making a first-class broth to use in lobster dishes, such as a sauté or soufflé.

Yield: 1 cup or so of fine strong broth

1 cup fairly finely chopped onions
½ cup fairly finely chopped carrots
2 Tbs vegetable oil
6 chests from 6 boiled or steamed lobsters (stomach sacs discarded, as on page 251, and the chests halved lengthwise, then roughly chopped)
2 Tbs cognac (optional)
1 small clove garlic, mashed
1 ripe red plum tomato, chopped (or 1 Tbs tomato paste)
½ cup beef broth
1 cup Plain Lobster Stock (see sidebar) or Fish Stock (page 43)
½ cup full-bodied dry white wine or ¼ cup dry white French vermouth (optional)
1 sprig of fresh tarragon or ¼ tsp fragrant dried tarragon
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Sauté the onions and carrots in a small pan with a tablespoon of oil for 5 minutes or so, until tender and beginning to brown. Set aside. Meanwhile, film a 10-inch non-stick sauté pan with oil, set over moderately high heat, and when it is not quite smoking, toss in the lobster chests and pieces. Sauté, tossing, for several minutes, until beginning to brown lightly. Stir in the cooked onions and carrots; then you can pour in the optional cognac and set aflame. Stir in the rest of the ingredients and bring to the simmer. Cover partially and let simmer for 30 minutes. Strain into another saucepan, pressing juices out of ingredients. Taste carefully for seasoning, boiling down to concentrate flavor if necessary. When cool, refrigerate or freeze.

Julia

With all of our soups, a fine strong chicken stock provides the base of flavor. To make sure they are perfectly seasoned, continually taste and adjust your seasonings as you add your ingredients. For my cream soup, only a blender can make the very fine rice purée you want here—a food processor just won't do the complete purée needed to thicken the soup. Some people think they can get along without a blender, but you can't. This is a recipe that proves the point.

Quick Soups with Chicken Stock

Here are several fast versions of homey chicken soups. They will all taste best, of course, with fine homemade chicken stock (page 39).

Julia's creamy chicken soup is made with absolutely no cream—its satisfying, smooth texture comes from a thick purée of cooked rice. With a spoonful or two of sour cream and a sprinkling of chives for garnish—and some good homemade bread—this is hearty enough for a cold-weather lunch.

Jacques's chicken noodle soup has all the taste, texture, and universally curative powers that only this soup can provide. It's teeming with thin angel-hair pasta and lightly flavored with fresh scallions, and once your broth is boiling, it's on the table in less than five minutes.

Julia's Creamy Chicken Soup with Rice

Yield: 6 to 7 cups, serving 4 to 5

6 cups homemade chicken stock, plus more if needed
2 cups very tender boiled white rice, plus more if needed (page 169)
Salt and freshly ground white pepper
1½ cups thinly sliced mushroom caps
6 ounces skinless, boneless chicken breast, sliced into thin julienne strips 1½ inches long (about 1½ cups)
1½ Tbs minced shallots, sautéed in butter until soft

For serving

Sour cream (1 to 2 Tbs per serving)
Chopped fresh chives or parsley

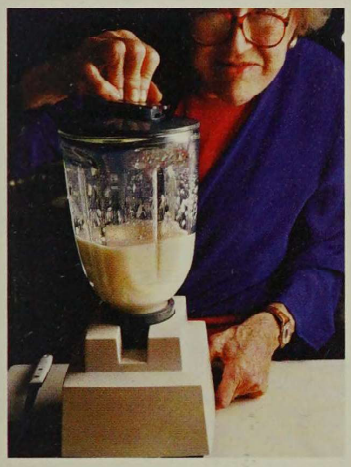
Special equipment

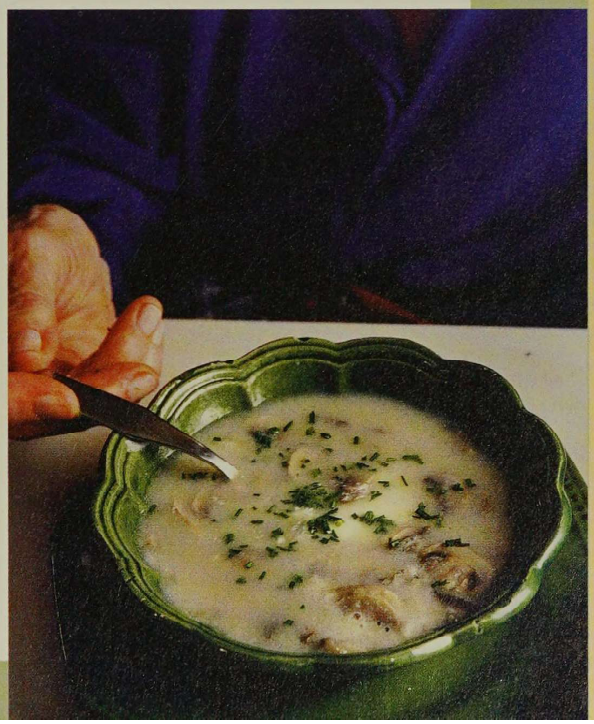
An electric blender; a 3-quart saucepan; a medium whisk

Reserve 2½ cups of stock and heat the rest in the saucepan. Put 1½ cups of the reserved stock in the blender with 2 cups of the very tender cooked rice. Purée together on the highest speed for a minute or longer, until you have a very thick and completely smooth purée. Pour this into the hot stock, rinse the jar with a little more stock, and pour into the soup.

Bring to the simmer, whisking. Simmer for several minutes, allowing the soup to thicken. Correct seasoning. Stir in the mushroom slices, strips of chicken breast, and the sautéed shallots. Simmer the soup for several minutes, to cook the mushrooms and chicken. Carefully correct seasoning again.

Ladle the soup into bowls, spoon on a dollop of sour cream, and sprinkle chives or parsley over the top.





Jacques

My chicken noodle on the next page is the kind of soup that my mother made for me, and that we made for my daughter when she was sick. For this very fast version, I like the kind of thin angel-hair pasta that is dried in little bundles or nests. If you can't find them, you can use any small pasta, such as alphabet noodles. You can also make it different with quick-cooking grain products such as oatmeal, couscous, cream of wheat, or cornmeal grits.

Whatever kind of noodle or cereal you use, scallions add wonderful flavor and look very nice; sliced leeks would be fine too. You could add sliced mushrooms, just as in Julia's creamy chicken soup. Mushrooms that are dark, with open caps, are more flavorful than the firm white ones—and they are often cheaper, too.

Julia's New England Chicken Chowder

A chowder base is a fine start for soups that you can make ahead and have in your freezer. You can serve the chowder as is—a potato and onion soup—or you can simmer whatever else you like in it. Add fish and it's a New England fish chowder; add broccoli or spinach or mushrooms, and so forth.

To make a chowder base for 6, start out by sautéing 4 cups of sliced onions in 2 tablespoons of butter. When tender but not browned, blend in 2 tablespoons of flour and cook slowly for 2 minutes; then remove from heat and blend in, by dribbles at first, 4 cups of warm chicken stock. Add 4 cups of sliced "boiling" potatoes and an herb bouquet (page 351), and simmer 15 to 20 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Taste, and add salt and pepper as needed.

The base is now ready to become whatever you wish. For this chicken chowder, you will want the equivalent of at least 1 boneless chicken thigh or 1 medium boneless chicken breast half per serving. Cut the meat into slivers about ⅛ inch thick and 1½ inches long. Shortly before serving, bring the chowder base to the simmer, stir in the chicken slivers, and simmer just a minute or so, until cooked through. At this point you may want to blend in half a cup or so of sour cream. Taste again for seasoning and stir in about ¼ cup of chopped fresh parsley and/or chives.

Serve in big soup bowls and accompany with pilot crackers or fresh French bread.

Jacques's Chicken Noodle Soup

Yield: About 5 cups, serving 4

- 4 cups homemade chicken stock or low-sodium canned chicken broth
- ¾ cup or so thinly sliced scallions (4 or 5 whole scallions)
- 4 ounces angel-hair pasta, preferably in bundles or nests
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- Salt

Bring the stock to a boil over high heat; add the scallions and the pasta, breaking up the angel-hair "nests" if using, and stir to make sure the noodles separate. Adjust heat to maintain a gentle boil and cook for 4 minutes or more, until the noodles are tender. Add the pepper and the salt to taste (depending on the saltiness of the broth), and serve.

A Richer Variation

Use cornmeal and cream instead of the angel-hair pasta. Put ½ cup of cornmeal in a bowl and pour ½ cup of the hot chicken stock over it, whisking for 4 or 5 seconds until smooth. Now put the moistened cornmeal into the pot of hot broth, add the scallions, and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Add ½ cup of cream, salt and pepper to taste, and warm through.

Opposite: Onion Soup Gratinée

Julia

It is important to cook the onions properly and thoroughly. Start them slowly, cooking them covered until tender, then brown them over moderately high heat. Sometimes I add a bit of sugar to deepen the color, but you must always stir frequently so the onions don't burn. For convenience, cook the onions while you are doing something else at the stove. Then you can put them aside—or even freeze them—and finish the soup later.

In Paris, we used to go to the big open market in Les Halles in the old part of the city at four in the morning, when the day began. Around six a.m., everyone in the market would stop in one of the cafés for onion soup and a glass of red wine. They still do at Rungis, the vast new market outside of Paris. It's cold there in the winter and you need a warm-up.

Onion Soup

A few onions, some excellent chicken stock, and three-quarters of an hour are about all you need to make this delicious soup. Its rich taste and deep color come from the first slow sauté of the onions, which concentrates their flavor and allows their natural sugars to caramelize in the pan. You can serve the soup plain or in the popular gratinée version—baked in a crock and sealed with a thick crust of baguette croutons and Gruyère cheese.

Jacques's Onion Soup Gratinée

Yield: 6 cups, enough for 5 or 6 small crocks

2 Tbs oil
1 Tbs butter
1½ pounds onions, peeled and thinly sliced (about 5 cups)
1 tsp minced fresh thyme sprigs, or ½ tsp dried thyme
½ tsp salt, or more to taste
5 cups hot chicken stock, homemade, or low-sodium canned broth
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper, or more to taste
¼ cup red or white wine (optional)

For each crock of onion soup gratinée

3 or 4 slices of baguette, about ¼ inch thick cut on the diagonal
2 to 2½ ounces Gruyère or Emmentaler cheese, grated (about ¾ cup)

Special equipment

A heavy-bottomed 3- or 4-quart saucepan, with a cover, to make the soup; small (11-ounce) soup crocks or a large crock or heavy casserole for the gratinée version

Set the saucepan over medium-low heat and add the oil and butter. When the butter has melted, add the onions, thyme, and ½ teaspoon of salt and mix together thoroughly. Cover the pan and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. When the onions are quite tender, uncover and raise the heat slightly. Cook for another 20 to 25 minutes, stirring frequently, until the onions are dark brown and have caramelized in the pan. (Lower the heat if the onions are in danger of burning.)

Stir in the hot stock, scraping any crystallized juices from the bottom of the pan, and bring the soup to the boil. Taste and adjust the seasonings, adding salt and ¼ teaspoon of black pepper or more to taste, and wine, if you like. (The amount of salt will vary, depending on the broth.) Cover and simmer for about 10 minutes.

The soup may be served plain or gratinéed, as follows.

For onion soup gratinée

To make croutons, toast a dozen or so baguette slices on a baking sheet in a 400°F oven, until crisp and starting to color, about 10 minutes.

When the soup is ready, arrange the individual crocks on the baking sheet. Put the croutons (whole or broken into large pieces) into the bottom of each crock, and sprinkle about 2 tablespoons of cheese on top. Ladle in a cup or more soup, to fill the crock to the inner rim (about ¼ inch from the top). Heap a large mound of grated cheese all over the surface of the soup, using the rest of the cheese for each crock.

Place the baking sheet in the oven and bake for 30 to 40 minutes, until the cheese is dark golden brown and has formed a crust over the soup. Move the hot crocks carefully onto individual plates and serve.

Jacques

It's easy to vary your onion soup. For more flavor, add a bit of white wine—or red wine, as Julia prefers, which adds some color as well. You can serve it plain, just with croutons. If you don't have small crocks for the gratinée, assemble all the croutons and cheese in one large tureen or casserole, and bake it the same way. (I would not use bowls like those in the photograph on page 49, because they don't have rims to contain the melted cheese, but sometimes you have to make do with what you have on hand.)

The *gratinée lyonnaise,* which we used to make in Lyons, where I come from, is baked in a big crock, with lots of croutons and cheese, so it is very thick and crusty. When it came to the table, we broke a hole in the top crust and poured in an egg yolk whipped with sweet port. Then we'd reach into the hole and stir the wine into the soup. You might try that version too.

Julia

Leeks and potatoes have enough flavor to make a wonderful soup, and I like it made with plain water so nothing interferes with the pristine leek-and-potato flavor. You don't need a recipe for making variations—just play it by ear, blending in other vegetables with the base, such as turnips, broccoli, or spinach. The classic—and particularly attractive—combination is leek and potato with watercress, described on page 56.

To keep my basic soup white—which I like, especially for vichyssoise—I use the white parts of the leek and only the pale parts of the green. Save all the other, dark-green leaves for stock. As for potatoes, you can use a good all-purpose variety, such as a Yukon Gold, but I like russets, the baking potatoes, which have lots of starch. They crumble when boiled, but this is no problem if you are mashing or puréeing the soup anyway. Do not wash the potatoes after you have peeled and cut them into pieces, because you want all their starch to thicken the soup. To keep the vegetables from sinking to the bottom of the soup, I often add a sprinkling of flour to the vegetables as I am sautéing them—the flour thickens the liquid and keeps the vegetables in suspension.

Leek Soup

For the home soup maker, the marriage of leeks and potatoes is a heavenly one. Cooked together in broth or water just until tender, with the simplest seasoning, the two unassuming vegetables have an affinity, yielding a thick, satisfying soup of harmonious flavors and hearty textures.

You can serve leek-and-potato soup straight from the pot with the vegetables in coarse chunks, or enjoy its many easy and delicious variations. Without further cooking, you may change the soup's texture and appearance by mashing, straining, or puréeing it, then subtly enhance it with different garnishes and enrichments. Or set some in the refrigerator, to serve chilled, with a bit of cream, as the famed vichyssoise.

Since there's no one formula for a good marriage, here we give you two different ways of making basic leek-and-potato soup: Julia's recipe uses water and a slight thickening of flour and butter; Jacques's uses chicken stock. Each yields 2 quarts of delicious soup in about 30 minutes, ready to serve right away or to vary to your own taste, following our suggestions on page 56.

Julia's Basic Leek and Potato Soup

Yield: 2 quarts

- 2 Tbs butter
- 3 cups sliced leeks, white and palest green, trimmed and rinsed as shown on page 54 (from 12 ounces untrimmed leeks)
- 1½ cups sliced onions (about 6 ounces, or 2 medium onions)
- 2 Tbs flour
- 6 cups water
- 4 cups peeled, diced potatoes, preferably

russets, cut into 2-inch chunks (about 1½ pounds)
1½ tsp salt, or to taste
½ tsp freshly ground white pepper, or to taste

For serving

Any of the enrichments and garnishes on page 56

Special equipment

A large, heavy-bottomed 3- or 4-quart saucepan with cover

Melt the butter in the saucepan over moderate heat. Stir in the leek and onion pieces to coat with butter, cover the pan, and reduce the heat. Cook slowly, stirring occasionally, for 10 to 15 minutes, until the vegetables are very soft but not colored. Uncover, sprinkle on the flour, stir to distribute it well, and cook for 2 minutes over moderate heat. Remove from heat and let cool for a moment.

Then, stirring continually, gradually pour in 1½ cups of the water and bring to the simmer. When the liquid is smooth and starts to thicken, stir in the rest of the water, then add the potatoes and season with salt and pepper. Quickly heat the soup to a gentle boil, cover the pan, and lower the heat. Simmer for about 20 minutes, until the potatoes are tender. Correct seasonings.

To serve, mash, blend, or purée the soup to the desired consistency and adjust the seasonings. Garnish or vary the soup with additional ingredients as suggested on page 56.

To store the soup, let cool uncovered, then refrigerate or freeze.

Jacques

There are many ways to vary the look and texture of the soup. If you first cut the leeks and potatoes into small, even pieces, you will have a *potage taillé*—a cut soup—that will cook quickly and won't need any further processing. My favorite form, though, is a purée of leek-and-potato soup—*potage parmentier*—which I make with a hand-cranked food mill. When pressed through the disk with the smallest holes, the purée has a fine texture and any fibers are removed.

The chilled form of this soup, vichyssoise, became famous here in America after it was created by Louis Diat at the Ritz-Carlton in New York City. But I learned it in France, at the Plaza-Athénée, from his brother, Lucien Diat, the chef when I worked there. They came from a small town near Vichy, where their mother used to make the chilled version from leftover potato-and-leek soup.

Thrust the knife into the leek about 2 inches from the root end and slice down through the trimmed green leaves.

Jacques's Method for Preparing Leeks

A member of the aromatic *Allium* family of vegetables—along with onions, garlic, scallions—leeks are considered poor man's asparagus in Europe. Not so here, where they are often expensive and hard to find. But recently leeks have become more readily available at fairly moderate prices.

Almost all of the leek can be used in cooking. Trim the tender white and pale-green parts to use in soups and other dishes, and use the layers of fibrous dark-green leaves in making stock. Leeks are hilled with sand and soil as they grow, so all the layers must be separated and rinsed thoroughly to get rid of the accumulated dirt.

To have enough sliced leeks for our soup recipes here, start with about ¾ pound of whole, untrimmed leeks (1 large or several smaller leeks). If you want to cook only the white parts, as Julia prefers, you may need a bit more.

The prepared leeks

To trim, clean, and slice a leek

Trim off the root end with its beard and discard. Remove the toughest outer layers of the leek. (Save these for stock, unless spoiled.) To get the most tender parts for soup, don't just cut up the white part of leek. Cut off the leaves of each layer at the point where the dark green begins, then, as shown in the photograph, make 2 or 3 slices lengthwise, starting a couple of inches in from the root end, to expose the interior. (Rinse the leek under running water if you are not slicing it into short lengths.)

Slice the split leek crosswise into pieces of any length—you want ½-inch pieces for soup.

To clean, dump all the pieces into a large amount of lukewarm water and stir to separate the layers and rinse off the dirt. Let the dirt settle, then lift the pieces from the water and drain well. (Do not pour the leeks and rinse water through a strainer.)

Jacques's Basic Leek and Potato Soup

Yield: 2 quarts

2 Tbs olive, canola, or corn oil
4 cups sliced leeks, trimmed and rinsed as shown (from 12 ounces untrimmed leeks)
1½ cups sliced onion, 1-inch pieces (about 6 ounces)
6 cups hot chicken stock, homemade, or low-sodium canned broth
4 cups peeled, diced potatoes, 2-inch chunks (about 1½ pounds)
Salt to taste, depending on the saltiness of broth
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper

For serving

Any of the enrichments and garnishes on page 56

Special equipment

A large, heavy-bottomed 3- or 4-quart saucepan with cover

Heat the oil in the saucepan, stir in the leek and onion pieces, and sauté for about 5 minutes over moderate heat, to soften.

Add the chicken stock and potato chunks, and season with salt to taste and the pepper. Bring the soup to a boil over high heat, cover the pan, and adjust the heat to maintain a gentle boil. Cook for about 20 minutes, until the potatoes are quite tender.

Mash, blend, or purée it to the desired consistency and adjust the seasonings. Serve the soup right away, or set aside until serving time. Garnish or vary the soup with additional ingredients as suggested on page 56.

Finishes, Garnishes, and Variations for Basic Leek and Potato Soup

Either of our base soups can be varied as follows:

For different textures For the simplest country-style soup, serve as is, with the chunks of soft vegetables floating in it.

For a more uniform, but still somewhat coarse texture, mash the vegetables right in the saucepan with a wide wooden spoon or potato masher, or blend *very briefly* with an immersion blender.

For a smooth purée, pour the hot soup through a food mill, fitted with the fine disk, set over a bowl. Purée the vegetables into the broth, then stir to blend. (You can also purée the vegetables to desired consistency in batches in a food processor or a conventional blender, or right in the pan using an immersion blender.)

Enrichments and garnishes For a rich finish, stir any of the following into mashed or puréed soup base: 2 or more tablespoons of unsalted butter; ½ cup or more heavy cream or sour cream.

To garnish, scatter any of the following over each serving: buttered croutons (page 108); fronds of fresh chervil; chopped fresh chives; chopped fresh parsley. Or add a spoonful of sour cream or crème fraîche, in a swirl or a mound.

Chilled vichyssoise Finely purée the soup base through a food mill or other appliance, then chill thoroughly. Before serving, stir in ½ to 1 cup heavy cream or a mixture of cream and milk, and a tablespoon or two of chopped fresh chives, and adjust the seasonings. Sprinkle more chopped chives over each serving.

Watercress soup While the soup base is cooking, wash 1 or 2 large bunches of watercress and remove the thick stems. Reserve a few whole leaves for garnishing, and finely chop the rest. When the potatoes are tender, mash them in the pot to make a coarse purée, toss in the watercress, and simmer all together for 4 or 5 minutes. Stir in ½ cup of cream or other enrichment and adjust the seasoning. Serve hot or cold; float a few whole watercress leaves on top of each serving. (If you wish, process the soup to a fine purée after simmering the watercress.)

Other vegetable variations Leek-and-potato soup base can be transformed by the addition of many vegetables, just as with watercress. Among the possibilities are spinach, carrots, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, parsnips, turnips, squash, and pumpkin. If using raw vegetables, chop them fine, add to the simmering soup base, and cook until tender. Cooked vegetables can be puréed with the leek and potato pieces and mixed with broth. Be sure to adjust the seasoning as you add ingredients, and finish and garnish as suggested.

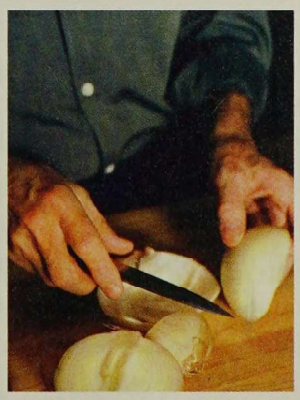
Do-ahead soup Purée the soup base and freeze in small containers. Defrost, heat, and garnish or vary the soup with other vegetables as suggested.

Jacques's Lamb Barley Soup

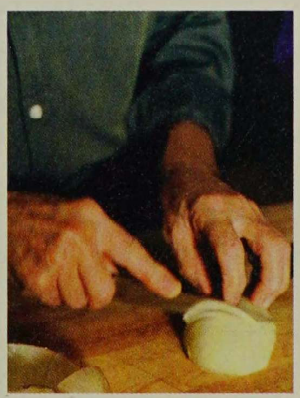
Although this soup can be made with raw lamb bones, my preference is to use the cooked bones (including any leftover juices and pieces of meat) from a roast leg of lamb. This solid, robust soup makes an entire meal when served with crusted bread and a salad.

Yield: About 3 quarts

- About 2 pounds of lamb bones, meat trimmings, and juices from a roast leg of lamb
- 6 ounces (about 1 cup) pearl barley
- 2 cups diced mushrooms (about 6 ounces)
- 1½ cups diced celery stalks
- 1½ cups peeled and diced carrots
- 1 cup diced onions
- 3 cups diced leeks (about 2 leeks washed and diced)
- 1 Tbs salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- 3 Tbs chopped parsley
- Lea & Perrins Worcestershire sauce (optional)



To chop an onion, cut it first in half.



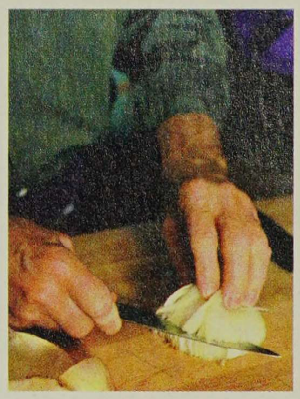
Lay the flat side on a board and cut vertical slices ⅛ to ¼ inch apart.

Place the lamb bones, trimmings, and juices in a large pot with 3 quarts of water and the barley. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, cover, and boil gently for 1 hour. Remove the bones with a skimmer and set aside.

Add the mushrooms, celery, carrots, onions, leeks, salt, and pepper to the pot, bring to a boil, cover, and cook gently for another hour.

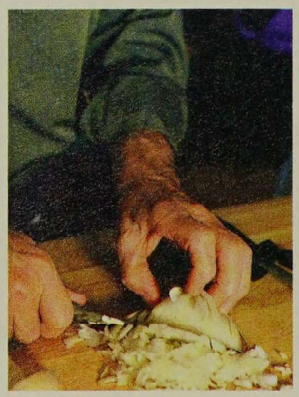
Meanwhile, pick the meat off the bones (I had about 2½ cups) and shred it into ½-inch pieces. Add to the soup as it cooks.

At serving time, add the parsley to the soup and serve. Let the guests sprinkle some Worcestershire in their soup, if desired.



Slice through the onion half horizontally, going from stem end to root end at even intervals.

Bring your knife down sharply and chop through to cut the onion into small pieces.



Continue to slice, moving your fingers holding the onion back after each slice, until you reach the root end.

Julia

The soup base is what really counts here, even more than the seafood that you put in it. You want to develop fully the flavors of all the aromatic vegetables and herbs. I like to soften the onion in the olive oil for a good 10 minutes, add the garlic, tomatoes, and seasonings, and then simmer all for at least 45 minutes. With this kind of flavorful base, you can make a Mediterranean-style fish soup wherever you can get a piece of fish, even in Kansas City. In fact, you really don't need fish—you might just add potatoes to the base and you'll have a fine soup.

I love *rouille* in this kind of soup. I often judge the worth of a cookbook by how it does a *rouille*. It's of prime importance that the garlic be thoroughly puréed, because it's the garlic that starts the emulsion. I like to pound mine into a paste with salt, using my big marble mortar and heavy pestle, the way it's traditionally done in France.

A food processor chops the garlic rather than puréeing it, but Jacques's method of processing the garlic along with the bread and cooked potato works for him. Here the bread, potato, and egg yolk all serve as binding agents, thickening the purée and helping to emulsify the olive oil. I slather a big spoonful of *rouille* on several croutons and place them in the empty soup bowl, then ladle the fish and broth over.

Mediterranean Seafood Stew

Here is a hearty main-course soup in the Mediterranean style—a saffron-tinted broth brimming with fish chunks, scallops, clams, and herbs. Serve it with the strong mayonnaiselike garlic sauce known as *rouille,* which gives it such a great swirl of color and burst of garlic flavor that you'll think you're eating a bowl of bouillabaisse in a bistro in Marseilles.

This is so chock-full of seafood that we call it a stew, but the essence of the dish is a versatile soup base. Plain fish stock, or one of its simple substitutes (page 43), is simmered with the aromatic vegetables and herbs. Then, when you are ready to eat, you add the fish and shellfish for only 3 or 4 minutes of poaching.

In general, fish with lean, moderately firm flesh are the most suitable for this kind of dish, since they will cook quickly and hold their shape. Good choices are cod, halibut, haddock, hake, monkfish, sea bass, and snapper. All kinds of shellfish will be good in this soup base—mussels or oysters cooked in soup until the shells open, just the way the clams are done; or add small shrimp at the very end of cooking, since they need only boil for a few moments to cook through.

You can use just one kind of fish if you like, although Mediterranean fish soups typically contain several varieties, and a mix of seafood looks and tastes appealing. For convenience, buy fish fillets and simply cut them into chunks, or buy whole fish if you want the head and bones for fish stock; use skinless fillets, or leave the skin on, making sure that the scales are removed (to scale, skin, or fillet a fish, see pages 218–219). Of course, you can cook a greater amount of fish and shellfish than specified here if you want to have an even more bountiful stew—the soup base will only become more flavorful as you cook more seafood in it.

Jacques's Mediterranean Seafood Stew or Soup

Yield: About 3 quarts, serving 6 to 8

For the soup

- 1½ pounds fish fillets, a mixture of 2 or 3 fish, or all one kind (see recipe introduction)
- 1½ pounds small clams, littlenecks or cherrystones
- ½ pound scallops
- 3 Tbs olive oil
- 1½ cups chopped onions
- 5 large scallions, white and green parts, thinly sliced (about 1 cup)
- 1 Tbs chopped garlic (2 or 3 large cloves)
- 2 cups fresh or canned tomatoes cored and chopped into ½-inch chunks, with skin, juice, and seeds (about 1 pound of fresh tomatoes)
- 1 cup white wine, like Chardonnay
- 4 cups fish stock (page 43)
- 1 tsp chopped fresh thyme
- ½ tsp salt, or more if needed (varies with saltiness of broth)
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp saffron threads, or less if you wish
- 1½ Tbs chopped fresh tarragon leaves

Jacques

Our soup resembles bouillabaisse—one of the most famous of the Mediterranean fish stews—though it is much simpler to prepare. In Marseilles and other areas, *rouille* (which means "rust," due to its color) is served with bouillabaisse; and saffron is always used in the broth.

Saffron is a flavor that I love. Julia prefers to use just a big pinch in this recipe, but I like to add a greater amount, about 1 teaspoon of saffron threads for this amount of broth. These threads are the dried pistils of the crocus flower, and since it takes about 40,000 crocuses for every pound of saffron, it is easy to understand why this is one of the most expensive spices. Use the finest saffron, from Spain, and add it to the broth for only a few minutes of cooking before you add the fish, to preserve all its flavor.

This soup lends itself to countless variations, in the broth and vegetables as well as in the seafood. As a substitute for fish stock, you can use bottled clam juice, diluted with water; give more flavor to the broth by adding chopped celery, carrots, leeks, mushrooms, or fresh fennel greens, or stir in a small amount of tomato paste. For fish, I sometimes use a lean piece of salmon or a very firm piece of swordfish. The most important thing here is not to overcook the fish. Have everything ready—the croutons, *rouille*, and your guests—before you put the fish in the broth.

For the *rouille*

1 slice firm, home-style white bread
6 to 8 large garlic cloves, peeled
⅓ cup cooked potato (1 small potato)
¼ cup canned pimiento pieces
¼ cup broth from the soup pot
1 egg yolk
½ tsp salt, plus more to taste
⅛ tsp freshly ground black pepper
⅛ tsp cayenne, or more or less to taste
¾ to 1 cup olive oil

For the croutons

24 slices of baguette, about ¼ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

Special equipment

A large (4-to-6-quart) heavy-bottomed saucepan or soup kettle; a food processor

Preliminaries

Skin the fillets if you wish and cut them into even chunks, about an inch thick. (If you want the skin on, make sure it has been scaled.) Scrub the clams and rinse, if necessary. Wash the scallops to remove any sand.

Preheat the oven to 400°F and toast the croutons on a baking sheet until they are crisp and starting to color on both sides, about 10 minutes. Set aside until serving.

Starting the soup base

Heat the oil in the saucepan and stir in the onions, scallions, and garlic. Cook over medium heat until soft, about 5 minutes.

Add the tomatoes, wine, and fish stock, and then stir in the thyme, salt, and pepper. Bring quickly to the boil; meanwhile, taste and adjust seasonings. Cook at a gentle boil for 10 to 15 minutes, partially covered, while you are making the *rouille*.

Making the *rouille*

Tear the bread slice into pieces and put them in the work bowl of the food processor with the garlic cloves. Process until very finely chopped. Add the cooked potato, the canned pimiento, and ¼ cup of broth from the soup pot, and process until completely smooth. Add the egg yolk, salt, black pepper, and cayenne, and process until smooth. With the machine running, pour in the olive oil in a slow, steady stream—taking ½ minute or more—as the emulsion is formed and the sauce becomes completely smooth. Taste and adjust seasonings. Scrape the *rouille* into a bowl.

Finishing the stew/soup and serving

With the soup base at the boil, add all the clams and the saffron and cook for about 2 minutes. Add the fish and the scallops, return to a gentle boil, and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, just until the fish pieces are cooked through and opaque and all of the clams have opened (discard any that remain closed after sitting in the hot broth for several minutes). Stir in the chopped tarragon, taste, and adjust the seasonings for the final time.

Spoon some *rouille* on half of the croutons (or on 2 or 3 per serving). Ladle portions of the seafood and broth into large soup bowls and place some *rouille*-topped croutons alongside each serving—or set them in the broth, if you like. Serve hot, with extra croutons and *rouille* on the side.

Opposite: Mediterranean Seafood Stew

Julia on Soupe aux Moules

Speaking of mussels, their fragrant cooking broth is so very special that I can't resist another recipe—a mussel soup with a julienne of vegetables.

For 6 to 8 servings, prepare Moules Marinière (page 11), remove the meat from the shells, and set aside. Pour the cooking juices (minus any sand) into a quart measure and add fish stock or light chicken broth to measure 4 cups. Put in a 4-quart saucepan 1 cup each of finely julienned carrots, onions, celery, and leeks, fold with 2 tablespoons of warm butter, then add the 4 cups of liquid and simmer until the vegetables are almost tender. Peel, halve, and scoop the seeds out of a large cucumber, cut into fine julienne, and simmer 2 minutes with the vegetables.

Meanwhile make a curry velouté: Melt 2½ tablespoons of butter in a 2-quart saucepan and blend in 2 teaspoons of curry powder and 3 tablespoons of flour. Cook slowly, stirring, for 2 minutes, then remove from heat and let cool briefly. Whisk in 2 cups of hot milk and when well blended bring to the boil over moderate heat, adding salt and white pepper to taste. Pour the velouté into the cooked vegetables and bring to the simmer for 2 minutes, gently blending. Correct seasoning and fold in the mussels.

To serve, heat to warm through, ladle into soup bowls, and top with a spoonful of sour cream and chopped fresh parsley.

Billi-bi

Billi-bi is one of those soups that seduce you the first spoonful you take. It is actually a very simple soup of cream, wine, and the juices of fresh mussels. The shellfish need only a couple of minutes of cooking to release their flavorful essence, and after straining, the soup can be served hot or set aside to chill. Ivory-white and exceedingly rich, billi-bi should be served in small cups or glasses as a luxurious prelude to a special lunch or dinner.

You may recognize this as a variation of the more rustic, brothy appetizer, Moules Marinière (page 11), and you should see the more detailed discussion there about handling and cleaning mussels. As the mussels themselves are not served in billi-bi but remain plump and moist, use them in Moules Ravigote (page 12) as a first course or an hors d'oeuvre.

Jacques's Billi-bi

Yield: About 1 quart, serving 6

3 pounds mussels, washed thoroughly, with beards removed (see page 13)
½ cup chopped onions
¼ cup chopped shallots (3 large shallots)
1 Tbs butter
2 bay leaves
5 sprigs parsley
½ tsp thyme, fresh or dried (optional)
¼ tsp pepper
1½ cups dry white wine
2 cups heavy cream
2 Tbs chopped chives, for garnish

Special equipment

A large stainless-steel saucepan or enameled (non-reactive) casserole, with a cover; a colander set over a large bowl for first straining; a fine-mesh sieve set over another bowl or 2-quart measuring cup for second straining

Mix the mussels in the pan with the onions, shallots, butter, herbs, and pepper and pour the white wine over them. Cover and bring to the boil over high heat; steam will emerge. Cook at the boil for about 2 minutes, occasionally shaking and tossing the pan—holding the cover on tight—to mix the ingredients. Open the cover and check to see if all the mussels are open. If not, cover and cook for another minute or two. (This should take 5 to 8 minutes, total cooking time.)

With the wine still at the boil, pour in the cream. Cover, shake the pot to toss the mussels in the cream, and return to a strong, foaming boil. Cook for ½ minute. Remove from the heat and immediately pour all the mussels and the hot soup through the colander into a large bowl. Shake the colander to drain any juices from the open shells; set aside. (When cool, shell the mussels and save for another dish. Discard any that have not opened.)

Let the hot soup sit in the bowl for a couple of minutes, so any sand can settle to the bottom. Then carefully pour it through the fine sieve (except for the sandy liquid at the end).

You may serve the soup warm right away, or chill it thoroughly. Before serving, stir in the chopped chives. Ladle 4 or 5 ounces of soup into a small cup for each portion.

Jacques

At Le Pavillon, where I was a chef when I first came to this country, the billi-bi was always served cold—but you can certainly serve it warm as well. Because it is so rich, you only want to serve a half-cup or so per person.

It is in fact a famous French soup, but named for an American. One story I have heard says that it was invented for a GI who was in Normandy during World War II, but more historical sources say the soup was created at Maxim's in Paris, much earlier in this century. Different individuals are said to be the namesake for the soup, but in any case we know he was a rich American, and his first name was William.

EGGS

WE BOTH LOVE EGGS AND WE EAT THEM ALL THE TIME. DESPITE THE BAD PRESS THEY received in recent years, eggs are very good for you, perfectly safe when handled properly (see below), and, as always, one of the world's most economical, versatile, and satisfying foods.

They are also fundamental to home cooking. With fresh eggs on hand in the refrigerator, you have the basis for countless quick and varied meals. And cooking eggs will provide some of the most instructive and pleasurable of all kitchen experiences. As you shake and flip them into omelets, bake them into golden, puffy soufflés, or whip them into light emulsified sauces, you have to be in control of rapid and remarkable physical transformations. If you do it right, you will enjoy nearly instantaneous and unfailingly delicious results.

Egg cookery is also important as an exercise in combining tastes creatively. Eggs in any form are better with other foods, and there's no end to the tasty things you can place them on, bury them under, or fill them with. In the recipes that follow, we make many suggestions for sauces, fillings, and garnishes. And since eggs invite improvisation, we hope that you will devise egg dishes using your own ideas and the good food you have on hand.

While there is an essential simplicity to all basic egg preparations, each kind requires careful attention and delicate touches, and—as we find when we cook together—there's even more than one way to poach an egg. Through the parallel recipes and illustrated techniques in this chapter, we share the different methods we have learned and developed over the years. We hope you will try them all.

Julia on Egg Safety

Raw eggs can contain harmful bacteria, especially salmonella, but since the salmonella scare some years ago egg producers, distributors, and markets have cleaned up and modernized their egg facilities, and the danger now is minimal if you are careful. Whether or not to eat uncooked eggs is entirely up to you, the consumer. This applies to soft-boiled and scrambled eggs, poached eggs, the coddled egg that goes into Caesar salad, hollandaise sauce, mayonnaise, etc.—some of the most loved foods in the general repertoire of good things to eat.

As for me, I am an enthusiastic egg person, and eat all of the above with greatest pleasure. But I am careful to buy refrigerated eggs at markets that in turn buy their eggs from producers who keep their eggs refrigerated at all times. Bacteria multiply at room temperature, but are quiescent when chilled. Here are some egg safety rules:

Never buy unrefrigerated eggs.

Never buy cracked or dirty eggs.

When you go shopping, never let eggs sit in your warm car; bring along a thermal container and ice pack.

When you come home, refrigerate eggs at once.

Never let raw eggs or uncooked egg mixtures sit about in the kitchen; keep them chilled until you are about to use them.

Scrambled eggs on a buffet—I'm wary of these.

Julia

One of the best reasons for making an omelet is that it is really fun. As you follow the instructions here, don't worry about having an impeccably symmetrical omelet roll onto your plate. It is all right to neaten it up before serving, or cover flaws with a well-placed sprig of parsley.

Successful omelet making—especially for a crowd—depends on your being prepared for the rapidity of the cooking: you want to have everything at hand, including your beaten eggs, already seasoned; butter; your serving plates (warm, not hot); and any fillings (warm as well) or decorative garnishes.

A key to making my omelet successfully is adding the eggs at the right moment. Watch the butter carefully as it melts and foams—you don't want the eggs to go in until the bubbles begin to disappear and before the butter browns. They should sizzle as they go into the pan. But watch, too, that the pan is not so hot it browns the eggs before the omelet is done. Actually, a good omelet is barely browned.

Classic Omelets

Here are, perhaps, the most exciting and satisfying few seconds of cooking that you will find in this book. A classic omelet not only tests your kitchen prowess, but gives you a delicious main course—for breakfast, lunch, or dinner—in a matter of minutes.

In fact, with the two methods we give here, you will have *two* classic omelets in your repertoire. The slight differences in our techniques yield quite distinct omelets—one pale yellow, with a soft, creamy inside, and the other tinged golden brown, with an interior of thick moist curds.

The details of both techniques are illustrated by the accompanying photo sequences. You might want to master Julia's style first, as it is a bit easier, and then move on to Jacques's method, used here for a plain omelet and his Mushroom Omelet, which scrambles sautéed mushroom right into the eggs.

Omelets are useful, not only because you can make them quickly, but because they taste so good with dozens of different garnishes and fillings. See our recommended Fillings for Omelets (pages 70–71), but look first in your fridge for savory leftovers—a small amount of cooked spinach, perhaps, or a slice of ham—to chop up and tuck into your omelet.

A note on pans: Omelet making has become much simpler in recent years, with the availability of high-quality, non-stick frying pans. We both recommend a sturdy ten-inch (top diameter) pan, with a long handle and slanting sides, as illustrated in the following pictures, for making the two- or three-egg omelets in these recipes. While we learned our techniques with traditional French iron or steel pans, they need special curing and treatment. Unless you use and season an iron pan frequently, an omelet can easily stick in it, while the non-stick pan is all ready to use.

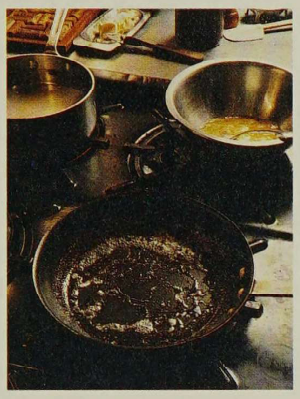
Julia's Classic Omelet

Yield: 1 omelet, serving 1

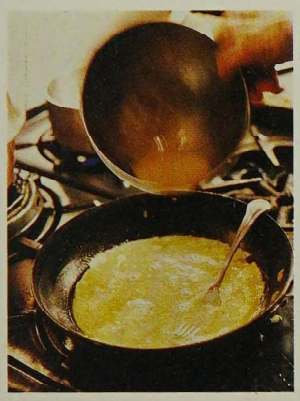
2 or 3 large eggs
A big pinch of salt and 2 or 3 grinds of pepper
1 Tbs unsalted butter

Special equipment

A non-stick frying pan 10 inches top diameter; a table fork; a rubber spatula; a warm but not hot serving plate



Wait until the butter foaming subsides before pouring the eggs into the pan.

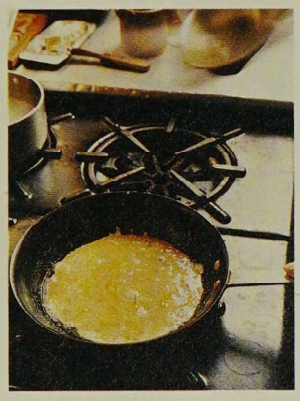


Pour the eggs in.

Crack the eggs into a bowl, add salt and pepper, and beat just to blend yolks and whites. Set the pan over high heat and add the tablespoon of butter. As the butter melts and begins to foam, swirl to film bottom and sides. Wait until the foaming begins to subside, then pour in the beaten eggs all at once.

Let settle for 4 to 5 seconds, then start shaking and swirling the pan as the eggs sizzle and start to set. Continue for 10 seconds or so, loosening the cooked curds from the pan and swirling the uncooked egg around them, until everything has started to thicken. If you are using a filling, quickly spoon it across the center of the eggs.

Now give the pan a series of short, sharp jerks—pulling it straight toward you—to shift the eggs to the far edge of the pan. The omelet will start rolling over on itself. (If any eggs



Let the eggs settle a few seconds, then shake and swirl the pan.

Jacques

With my technique, you will make the kind of omelet you would be served in a three-star restaurant. It is very tender, with moist small curds, and a perfectly pale-yellow skin. This is the omelet I learned as a young chef in Paris, but in most French homes, omelets are more like Julia's, with a larger, thicker curd and a slightly browned exterior. I like both kinds—I find they actually have a different taste—and I encourage you to enjoy both techniques.

In the classic method, you must move rapidly. First, to avoid any browning, add the eggs to the butter when it is just foaming. Then cook the eggs quickly, over high heat, scrambling them as fast as you can to break up the curds.

Next, you must tilt the pan so that most of the eggs gather at the lower edge, leaving only a thin skin covering the pan bottom—don't let the eggs set in one thick layer that you roll up like a carpet.

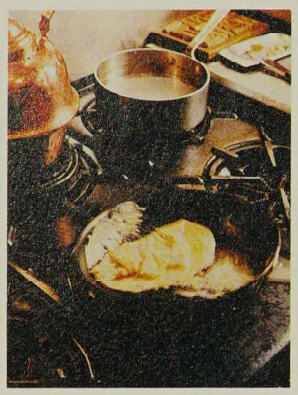
As you practice this method, you will be able to form the pointed ends of the omelet right in the pan, and it will roll out onto the plate in perfect shape. Of course, you can lay a piece of plastic or a clean towel over the finished omelet and press it into better shape—which is what apprentices do before the chef comes to inspect their work.

are stuck to the middle or side of the pan, push them into the mass of eggs with a fork.)

Make a fist with your free hand and rap sharply on the lower end of the handle to complete the roll.

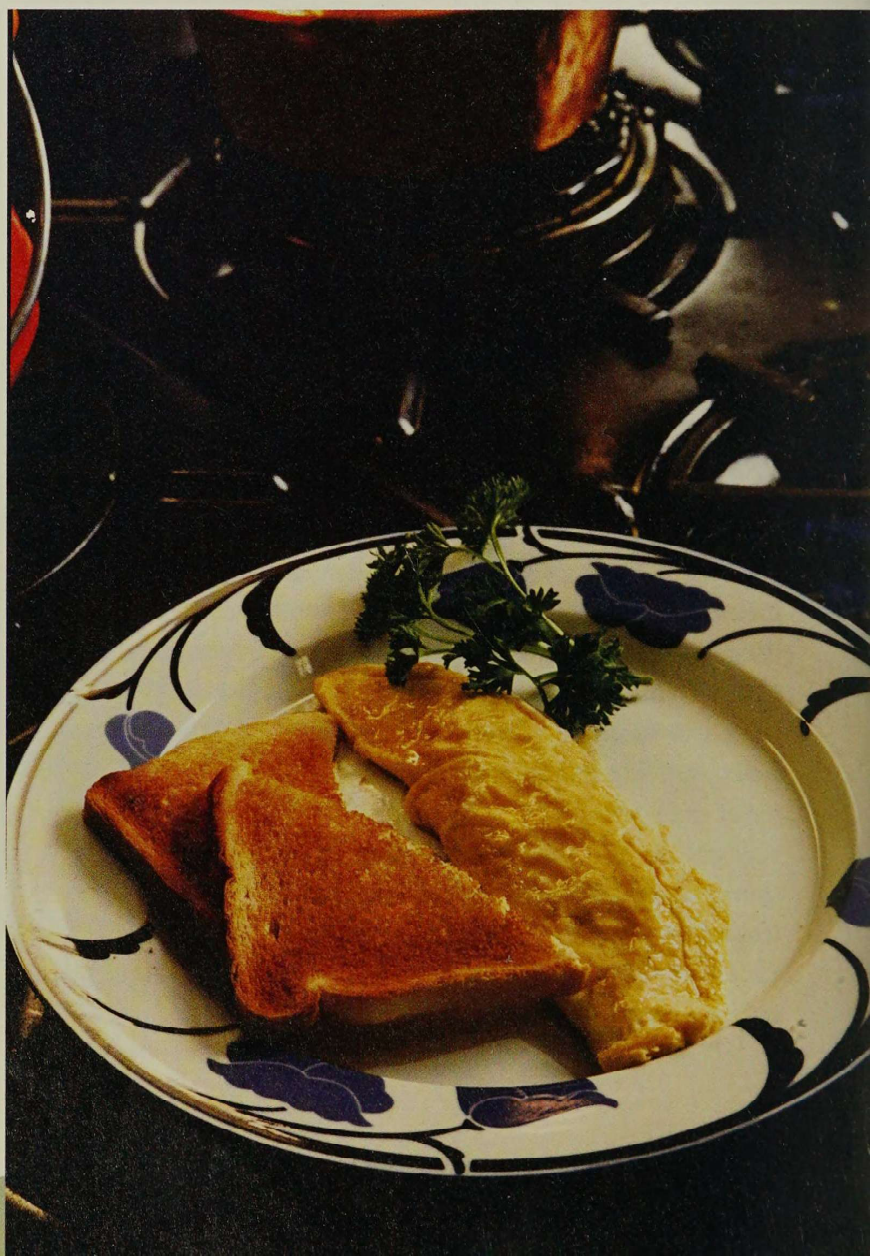
To flip the omelet out of the pan, switch your grip on the handle, allowing you to tilt the pan all the way up and over—see photo on page 70. With your other hand, hold a warm serving plate against the edge of the pan, right under the omelet. Invert the pan to turn the omelet onto the plate, smooth side up.

Neaten the shape of the omelet, if necessary, using your two hands or a spatula. Garnish as you wish and serve immediately.



With a few sharp jerks, pull the pan toward you to shift the eggs to the far side of the pan.

After the omelet rolls over onto itself, use a fork to nudge any stuck bits of egg into the mass at the far end of the pan.



When the omelet has been inverted onto the plate, neaten and garnish with toast (or any other garnish).

Jacques's Classic Omelet

Yield: 1 omelet, serving 1

3 large eggs
⅛ tsp salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 Tbs unsalted butter

Special equipment
A sturdy, non-stick frying pan, 10 inches top diameter

Crack the eggs into a bowl, add the salt and several grinds of pepper, and beat well with a fork or whisk, to blend thoroughly the yolks and whites. Set the pan over medium-high heat with the butter, swirling as it melts to coat the pan bottom and sides.

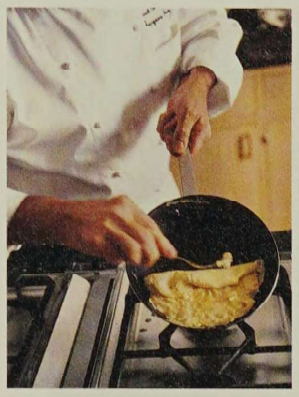
When the butter is foaming, add the beaten eggs all at once. Immediately start shaking the pan with one hand; at the same time, rapidly stir the eggs with a fork held flat in your other hand. Shake and stir continuously for about 15 seconds, quickly scraping any cooked egg off the bottom and sides with the fork and breaking it up into very small curds.

While the eggs are still quite moist, lift the handle and tilt the pan so the loose eggs gather at the lower edge, leaving only a thin cooked sheet of egg over most of the pan bottom.

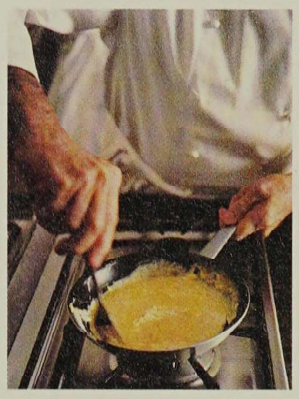
Loosen the edges of this thin layer with the fork, then flip and fold it over, starting near the handle, so it partially covers the moist mass of eggs—see photo. Quickly spoon any filling across the middle of the folded eggs, and press in gently.

Now with the heel of your free hand rap lightly on the lower end of the handle, which will shift the omelet against the far edge of the pan, so it starts curling over on itself. With the fork, fold this curling edge in toward the center of the omelet, covering any filling, and forming an oval with pointed ends.

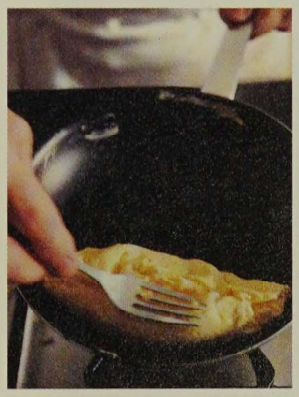
Now switch your grip on the handle, allowing you to tilt it all the way up and over—see photo on page 70. Quickly tap the bottom of the pan on the work surface, to loosen the omelet. With your other hand, center a warm serving plate



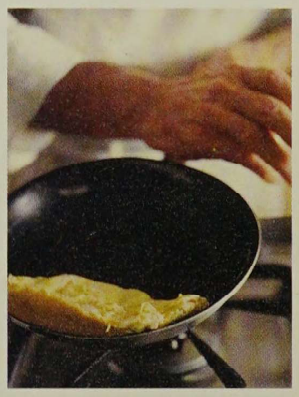
Tilt the pan so the loose eggs gather at the far edge, nudging them with your fork.



Rapidly stir the eggs with a fork while shaking the pan with your other hand.



With a fork, fold the curling edge in toward the center and press to shape an oval with pointed ends.



Rap lightly on the handle to shift the omelet over onto itself.

Fillings for Omelets

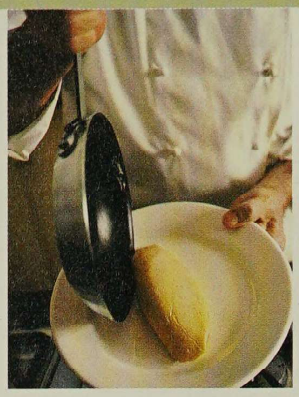
Both of our omelets can be filled while they are cooking in the pan, just before rolling, as shown in the photo sequences. Have your filling warm and ready since you don't want to overcook the eggs. The filling can also be added after the omelet is on the plate: cut a long slit in the top, open the slit to expose the soft center of the omelet, and spoon in the filling.

A classic omelet can be filled with ⅓ to ½ cup of any filling you choose. Try the ones suggested here or create your own.

"Grandmère" filling: Sauté equal amounts of chopped onion, small cubes of potato, and diced country ham (or bacon or pancetta) in butter or oil, with seasonings to taste, until the potatoes are cooked and the mixture is lightly browned.

Crouton garnish: Drop these crisp tiny croutons into a finished omelet after it is on the plate. To make, cut home-style white bread into ¼-inch cubes and toss with butter, or peanut or corn oil (about 1 tablespoon oil per cup of bread cubes). Bake on a sheet pan in a 400°F oven, shaking occasionally, until golden brown all over. For more details, see the discussion of croutons on page 108.

Pipérade filling (page 74): This can be used in rolled as well as flat omelets.



Invert the pan to turn the omelet out onto a plate.

Jacques's Classic Omelet (continued)

under the edge of the pan, then invert the pan to turn out the omelet, smooth side up.

Neaten the shape of the omelet, if necessary, into a narrow, symmetrical oval with tight pointed ends. Garnish as you wish and serve immediately.

Jacques's Classic Mushroom Omelet

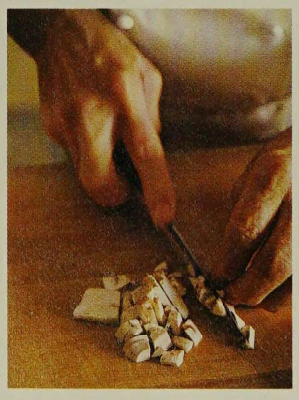
Yield: 1 omelet

Slice the mushroom dome into thin even pieces.

3 large eggs
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 medium mushrooms, unblemished
2 Tbs or so unsalted butter
Sprigs of parsley

Beat the eggs well with ⅛ teaspoon of salt and grinds of pepper.

Slice off the cap of each mushroom at the very top of the stem, so it is a solid dome with a flat bottom; then slice both "domes" vertically into thin semicircles. Use only the most uniform center slices—you should have about 10. Finely dice the stems and trimmings of the caps so you have about 2 tablespoons of very small mushroom pieces.



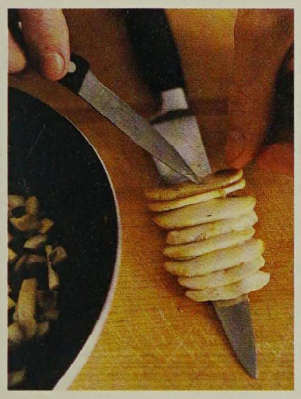
Chop the stems and trimmings into small pieces.

Melt a tablespoon of the butter in the omelet pan over medium-high heat, add the mushrooms, both slices and pieces, and a pinch of salt. Sauté for ½ minute or so, tossing the mushrooms in the butter, just until they start to color and soften. Remove the pan from the heat, pick out the slices,

Sauté the slices on one side of the pan and the pieces on the other.

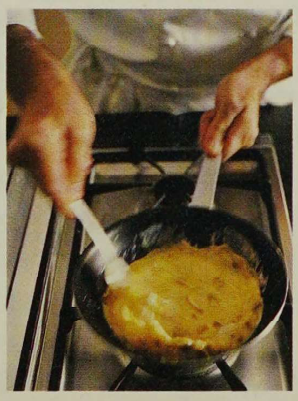
and lay them, overlapping, on the flat blade of a large knife. They should form a neat row, about 3 inches long.

Return the pan to the stove with the small mushroom pieces. Add the remaining tablespoon of butter and heat the pan again, swirling to coat the sides and bottom. When the butter is foaming, add the eggs and start shaking the pan, at the same time scrambling the mushroom pieces into the eggs with a fork. Follow Jacques's Classic Omelet technique, as shown in the photos, to cook and form the omelet.

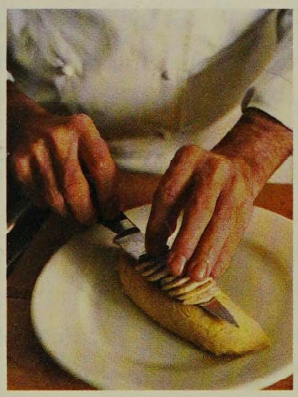


Extract about 8 of the mushroom slices from the pan and line them up on the flat blade of a large knife.

As soon as the omelet has been turned out on the plate, lay on top, lengthwise, the knife blade with the mushroom slices. Gently pressing the row of slices with the fingertips of one hand, withdraw the knife blade, leaving the garnish centered on the omelet. Arrange sprigs of parsley at the two ends of the omelet and serve immediately.



Shaking the pan, scramble the mushroom pieces into the eggs with a fork.



After you have turned the omelet out onto the plate, gently press on the row of mushrooms with your fingertips, withdrawing the knife so that the mushrooms slip off and line up neatly on top of the omelet.

Mushroom duxelles: Chopped mushrooms sautéed in butter with shallots and seasoning—plain or simmered with a little cream (page 183).

Cheese: 2 to 3 tablespoons rather coarsely grated Swiss cheese, folded into omelet.

Fines herbes: 1½ tablespoons chopped parsley, chives, tarragon, and chervil, beaten with the eggs to start. Garnish with a sprinkling or small branches. This is the classic fines herbes combination, but if you don't have all of these herbs use at least two of them.

Creamed spinach (page 196) **or broccoli** (page 191): Cooked, chopped, seasoned, and simmered in a little cream and butter. Either folded in or spooned into slit top.

Chicken livers: Cut into strips and sautéed 1 minute in a little butter. Insert into slit top.

Creamed lobster or crab (page 93).

Elizabeth David's Omelet

England's revered culinary authority Elizabeth David, whose books on Italian and French food revolutionized British cooking in the 1950s, presented another omelet theory. For the tenderest omelet, she advises, don't beat the eggs furiously. In fact, don't beat them at all. Simply stir them with a fork so they are barely blended. It works! Now you have three very different aspects of egg blending, which give three subtly different results.

Presentation of Omelets

Breakfast omelets may be served practically as is, with sprigs of parsley or watercress. Luncheon omelets need more attention. Whatever you choose as a garnish or accompaniment, have it ready at hand so that you can arrange it rapidly on the plate after the omelet has landed. Here are some suggestions in addition to the preceding filling ideas.

Toast points: Freshly toasted rectangles of excellent white bread or brioche, buttered and cut into triangles or the "Lion's Tooth" Croutons (page 337).

Provençal Tomatoes (page 210), or Sautéed Small Tomatoes (page 209).

Hash-brown Potatoes (page 158), or potatoes sautéed with leeks, as for the "Tortilla" omelet, page 74.

Sautéed Mushrooms in Cream (page 205).

A little salad of green leaves, with halved and seasoned cherry tomatoes.

Julia's Tomato Garnishes (page 215).

Two Flat Omelets

In America, we usually think of omelets as rolled and folded into oval shapes, with the filling inside, as in our classic methods. But in many cuisines they are made more like pancakes, the eggs allowed to set in the bottom of the pan, and presented as a large golden disk, usually serving several people.

The two flat omelets here reflect both the cooking of Spain and its influence on southern France. In the first, the colorful sauté of onion and pepper strips—known in France as pipérade—is also typical of the Basque region in Spain. The vegetables are cooked right into the eggs. Slices of unsmoked cured ham, similar to prosciutto, are often added as well.

Our second flat omelet is a large, thick disk called a tortilla in Spain (it has nothing to do with the flour and/or corn tortilla of Mexico) and reminiscent of a frittata, which can easily serve four people. For this, a dozen beaten eggs are poured around sautéed potatoes and leeks in the pan, then allowed to set and brown in the oven. The leeks will float to the top of the eggs, making a nice surface pattern. You may serve it warm, but in Spain this "tortilla" is more commonly cooled to room temperature, and enjoyed as *tapas* in small, appetizer-size slices, with a drizzle of excellent olive oil.

You can serve both omelets with either side up, sliding them out of the pan, or inverting them onto a plate. Just before removing them—or before you try to flip the omelet with pipérade—pour a little oil around the perimeter and shake the pan a bit to make sure the eggs don't stick.

Jacques's Flat Omelet with Pipérade

Yield: 1 flat omelet, serving 2

4 large eggs
¼ tsp salt
Freshly ground pepper
1 Tbs or more olive oil
1 cup Pipérade filling (recipe follows)
2 pieces thinly sliced prosciutto, 5 or 6 inches long (optional)
Sprigs of parsley or other garnish

Special equipment

A non-stick frying pan, 12 inches top diameter

Crack the eggs into a bowl, add salt and several grinds of pepper, and beat well to blend.

Set the pan, with about 2 teaspoons of oil, over medium-high heat; add the pipérade, swirl the pan to spread the vegetables and distribute the oil, and heat until sizzling.

Pour the eggs into the pan and begin stirring the eggs and vegetables continuously with a fork, occasionally shaking the pan. Cook for about ½ minute or more, stirring, shaking, and scraping the sides of the pan to draw the cooked eggs into the center.

When all the eggs have started to thicken, clear the eggs from the sides of the pan with the fork, and stop stirring. (If using prosciutto, press a piece flat on each half of the moist eggs.) Cook for another ½ minute or so, until the bottom is fully set. At the same time, drizzle a teaspoon or two of oil around the outer edge of the eggs and then swirl the pan to make sure the omelet can slide easily.

Flip the omelet over with a quick toss of the skillet (or slide it onto a flat plate and invert back into the pan, top side down). Cook the second side for a half-minute or so to set. If flipping is too hard, place the omelet under the broiler for 45 seconds to 1 minute to set the top. Slide the omelet onto the serving plate—or invert so the prosciutto slices are on top. Garnish with parsley sprigs, and serve immediately.

Jacques

In southwestern France, we often made flat omelets like these, using olive oil rather than butter. The pipérade can be used as a conventional omelet filling in a classic-style omelet, but when cooked with the eggs, it's an omelet Basquaise. (It's also quite similar to what we call a Western omelet here in America.) My mother frequently made thick potato omelets like the tortilla, but she would invert it from the pan and serve it hot.

You will find that the sautéed potatoes and leeks for the tortilla are perfectly cooked and quite delicious before you pour in the eggs—and there's nothing to stop you from preparing and serving them on their own.

Pipérade

Yield: About 2 cups, enough for 2 large flat omelets

2 Tbs olive oil
1¼ cups sliced onion (in ¼-inch-thick slices)
2½ cups sliced bell peppers of different colors (¼-inch-thick strips)
½ cup diced tomatoes
1 tsp chopped garlic
¼ tsp salt or more
Freshly ground pepper

Sauté the onion slices in the olive oil for 2 to 3 minutes over medium heat, to soften. Stir in the peppers, tomatoes, garlic, salt, and pepper to taste and sauté 6 to 8 minutes more, tossing occasionally, until the peppers are just tender.

"Tortilla"—Spanish Omelet with Potatoes and Leek

Yield: A 10-inch omelet, for 4 servings

1 medium leek, trimmed of tough green parts, split lengthwise and well rinsed (see page 54 on preparing leeks)
2 medium potatoes (about 10 to 12 ounces), Yukon Gold or other all-purpose variety
1 Tbs unsalted butter
2 to 3 Tbs olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
A dozen large eggs
Drops of Tabasco sauce
4 to 5 Tbs chopped onion
1 tsp minced garlic
Olive oil, extra-virgin, for serving

Special equipment

A non-stick frying pan, 10 inches top diameter, or a sauté pan with ovenproof handle; a round serving plate

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Slice the leek lengthwise into narrow strips and cut again crosswise into ¼-inch pieces (to make about 1 cup total).

Peel the potatoes and slice crosswise into thin slices, no more than ⅛ inch thick.

Set the skillet over medium heat with the butter and 1 tablespoon of olive oil. When the oil is sizzling, put the potato slices in the pan and spread them out, flipping and turning them to coat evenly with oil. Season with ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper and cook

for about 7 minutes, turning occasionally. The slices should be barely soft and still intact; if still firm, cover the pan and cook for 2 to 3 minutes more.

Meanwhile, crack the eggs into a large bowl, season with ½ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon pepper, and drops of Tabasco to taste, and whisk until well blended.

When the potatoes are just tender, scatter the leek, onion, and garlic over the slices and toss to mix. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring and tossing, to soften all the vegetables.

Pour the beaten eggs all at once over the potato mixture. Allow to set in the pan for about a minute, then stir the eggs and vegetables together gently, and continue to cook over moderate heat, until the eggs have begun to solidify, about 3 minutes. Lower the heat if eggs are cooking rapidly.

Place the pan in the oven and bake 6 to 8 minutes. The eggs will be fully set, slightly puffed, and shrinking from the sides of the skillet. Remove to the stovetop—remember the handle is hot!—and set over medium heat for a minute or two to brown the bottom. While cooking, drizzle a spoonful or so of olive oil all around the outer edge of the omelet, and swirl the pan gently to loosen it.

Slide the cooked omelet out onto the serving plate, to present the top side with the vegetables visible (or invert onto the platter to show the browned bottom).

Serve immediately, or, for a Spanish-style tortilla, cool to room temperature, drizzle extra-virgin olive oil over the top, and cut into wedges.

Julia

Eggs scrambled by my method ought to resemble a soft, broken custard: lumpy, moist, and glossy. You must cook the eggs very slowly, over low heat, always scraping the pan with a spatula, just until they are thickened, but still visibly soft. At this point you have to remember that the eggs are still cooking in the hot pan. You prevent them from stiffening by folding in the little bit of beaten egg you have held back.

Scrambled Eggs Two Ways

It is fascinating that our two versions of scrambled eggs are so different. We use exactly the same ingredients, yet our slight variations in cooking technique produce eggs with distinctive texture, appearance, and even taste. They are both quick to prepare—even the slower-cooked eggs take barely three minutes—so you could easily sample the two side by side.

Both scrambles, you will find, are soft and creamy. For breakfast, accompany the eggs simply with toast or English muffins, or be more elaborate and serve with slices of gravlax (pages 18 and 21), or smoked salmon, bacon, ham, or sausages. For a more substantial lunch dish, serve your scrambled eggs inside a ring of Sautéed Diced Tomatoes (page 78), topped with fresh herbs and a scattering of crunchy croutons (page 108).

The basic recipes that follow are for one serving; double or triple the ingredients for multiple servings, using a larger pan.

Julia's Way

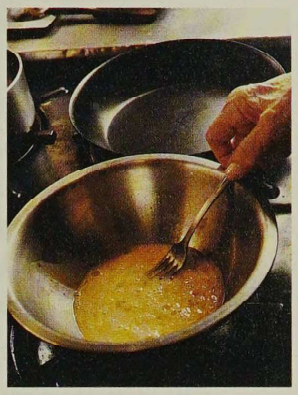
Yield: 1 serving

2 or 3 large eggs
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 Tbs or more unsalted butter
Heavy cream (optional)

Special equipment

A non-stick frying pan, 10 inches top diameter; a straight-edged wooden spoon or a rubber spatula

Crack the eggs into a bowl, add big pinches of salt and pepper, and beat with a fork, just to blend. Over low heat, melt a tablespoon of the butter in the frying pan, enough to film the bottom and sides, and then pour in all but 2 tablespoons of the eggs.

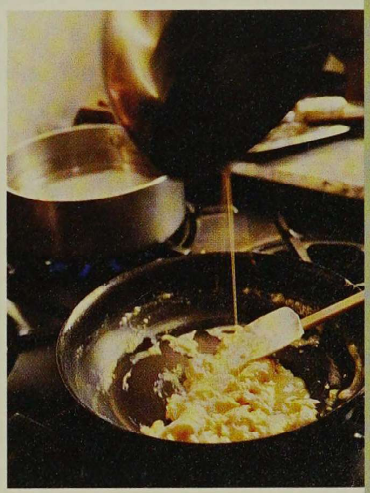


Mix the eggs.

Cook the eggs over moderately low heat, stirring rather slowly and scraping the bottom of the pan with the spatula. They will gradually begin to coagulate after a minute or two; keep scraping the bottom clear to draw in the uncooked eggs. When almost entirely thickened into soft, custardy lumps, after 2 minutes or so, remove from the heat and fold in the reserved 2 tablespoons of eggs. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Fold in another teaspoon or two of soft butter, or a dash of cream, if you wish.

Quickly scrape the eggs onto a warm plate (not hot) and serve immediately with a garnish of your choice.

Stir the eggs rather slowly, scraping the eggs from the bottom of the pan with a spatula.



When thickened into soft lumps, pour in the reserved uncooked egg, then fold it into the scrambled eggs.

Jacques

The purpose of scrambling eggs in a saucepan is to produce the smallest curds possible, and to cook them quickly, before they are toughened by the heat. You need to have a pan with high sides and a small bottom surface, so you can whisk the curds, breaking them up and moving them off the bottom. In a sense this is the opposite of an omelet, where you want a large bottom surface, to form the skin. And though it's not as fast as an omelet, you have to be on the ball. The eggs must still be very soft and loose when you take the pan off the heat.

In France, scrambled eggs like these would be served as a lunch dish, with a garnish like cooked fresh tomatoes, as detailed on page 78. If you want to surround the eggs with such a garnish, the easiest way is first to mound the tomatoes in the center of the plate, then spread them out into a ring, and spoon your eggs in the middle.

Julia on Cooked Fresh Tomatoes for Eggs

Fresh tomatoes can be cooked as a tasty and colorful garnish for soufflés, poached eggs, and omelets as well as these scrambled eggs. While the two preparations are similar, they produce different textures. The Sautéed Diced Tomatoes start with Tomates Concassées, already peeled, seeded, juiced, and chopped into pieces (page 243), and cooks these only briefly to keep the chunky consistency. In contrast, the Tomato Coulis is puréed in a food mill, giving it the thick, somewhat grainy texture characteristic of fruit and vegetable coulis. (Because it is puréed, you don't need to peel or seed the tomatoes.)

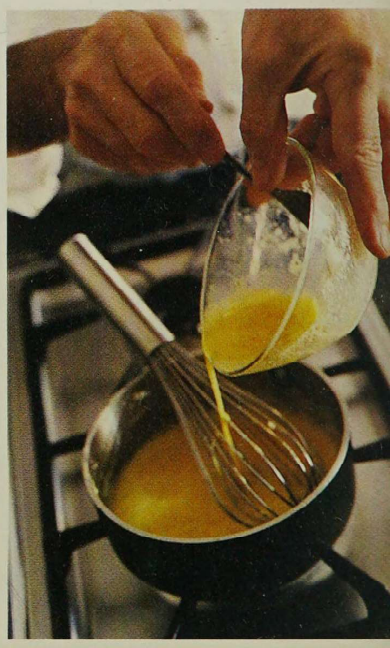
Jacques's Way

Yield: 1 serving

2 or 3 large eggs
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 Tbs or more unsalted butter
1–2 Tbs heavy cream

Special equipment

A 2- or 3-quart heavy saucepan; a medium wire whisk

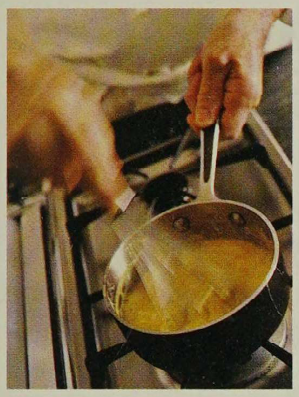


When the butter foams, pour in the eggs.

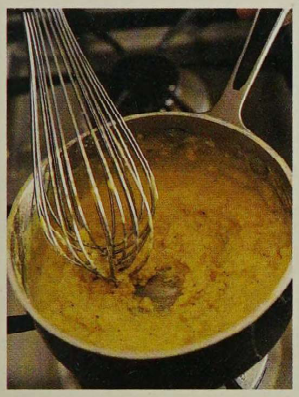
Crack the eggs into a bowl, add ⅛ teaspoon each of salt and pepper, and beat thoroughly with the whisk. Place the saucepan with a tablespoon of butter over medium heat, swirling to film the bottom and sides. When the butter foams, pour all the eggs into hot pan and immediately begin stirring with the whisk, clearing the thickening eggs from the sides and bottom of the pan and breaking up any lumps. Be sure to run the whisk around the bottom corners to dislodge any egg that may stick there.

Cook for a minute or slightly more, steadily whisking, until the eggs are uniformly thickened but still quite soft, with very small and creamy curds.

Remove the pan from the heat, whisk in another spoon of butter and 1 or 2 tablespoons of cream, and quickly spoon the eggs into a soft mound on a warm plate. Serve immediately with a garnish of your choice.



Whisk steadily, clearing the eggs from the bottom and sides of the pan and breaking up any lumps.



Remove from the heat when the eggs have thickened and formed soft, small, creamy curds.

Sautéed Diced Tomatoes

Sauté ¼ cup of chopped onion (with a dash of minced garlic, if you like) in a couple of teaspoons of olive oil until soft. Add one cup of *tomates concassées* (page 243); season with salt and pepper and cook over medium-low heat just until soft and fragrant; add a bit of water if they become dry.

Tomato Coulis

Sauté ¼ cup of chopped onion (with a crushed, unpeeled garlic clove, if you like) in a couple of teaspoons of olive oil until soft. Chop 1 large or 2 small tomatoes into 1-inch pieces—about 2 cups—and add to the onions. Season with salt and pepper and cook for 12 to 15 minutes. Push the thickened tomatoes through the medium plate of a food mill to make the coulis. Serve warm.

Spoon the eggs onto a bed of Sautéed Diced Tomatoes.

Julia

It is good to see that my favorite perforated-metal egg-poaching cups are again available at specialty stores. In recent years, when people seemed so afraid of eating eggs, the cups became hard to find. I strongly recommend using them, as they will hold any egg in a neat shape, even an old one, and you don't need vinegar in the poaching water.

Give the eggs a 10-second boil in the shell before poaching. This slightly firms the outer layer of the egg white, and helps them hold their shape when cracked into the water. (Prick the large end of the eggshell with a pushpin before this brief immersion to allow the air in the shell to escape.)

Like Jacques, I almost always poach my eggs ahead of time and store them in ice water. But don't cover the bowl or a sulfury odor and off flavors can develop.

Eggs Benedict certainly qualifies as an American classic. This delicious combination of poached egg, thin sliced ham, and hollandaise sauce has been popular since it was invented at Delmonico's in New York a century ago. But I prefer rounds of toasted brioche as a base; English-muffin halves too often are tough to saw through. I also recommend warmed slices of black truffle—if you are lucky enough to have one on hand—as a crowning touch.

Poached and Coddled Eggs

Whether simply set on buttered toast, or dressed up with sauces and truffles, a perfectly poached egg is a lovely creation—a shivering oval of just-set white enclosing a soft, runny yolk. Yet, for all its delicacy of taste and appearance, it is also a surprisingly sturdy and versatile item, convenient to cook ahead—even a couple of days ahead—and reheat, and easy to combine with other foods.

Here we each offer our method for poaching eggs—one "free-form" and the other using metal poaching cups. Both will help you meet the major challenge of poaching, which is to keep the eggs together when they've been dropped into simmering water, so they cook into a compact oval. Fresh eggs are essential, as older eggs have thinner whites, which tend to drift away from the yolk, forming strands and irregular shapes. In our comments, we explain the important techniques and touches that will keep your eggs tender and shapely.

We also include a method for the poached eggs' cooked-in-the-shell counterpart—the coddled egg or *oeuf mollet* (*mollet* means "soft" in French). When peeled, a coddled egg retains its perfect shape, but has the same soft-cooked consistency as a poached egg. And it can be chilled, stored, reheated, and served in the same convenient way.

You can use either style of egg in the two dressy dishes that follow, Julia's classic Eggs Benedict and Jacques's colorful presentation of eggs, creamy carrot sauce, and fresh asparagus. You will find more good ways to match soft-cooked eggs with attractive complements in the sidebar on page 82.

Jacques's Poached Eggs

Yield: 4 poached eggs, serving 2 or 4

2 Tbs distilled white vinegar per 2 quarts water
4 large eggs, the fresher the better

Special equipment

A shallow saucepan or a high-sided sauté pan, about 8 inches across, nonstick preferred; a slotted spoon or a strainer; a clean kitchen towel

Fill the pan with water to a depth of 2 inches or so, add the vinegar, and bring to a slow boil.

Rapidly crack and open each egg into the water, holding the shell as close to the surface as possible. The eggs will cool the water; adjust the heat to maintain a slow simmer. After a few moments, when the whites have just begun to set, drag the back of the slotted spoon gently across the top of the eggs, to move them off the pan bottom so they don't stick. Cook the eggs for about 4 minutes, adjusting the heat as necessary.

To test for doneness, lift 1 egg from the water with the slotted spoon and press both white and yolk. The whites should feel fully set but not too firm, and the yolks very soft. Poach longer for firmer eggs.

When set the way you like them, remove the eggs from the saucepan with the slotted spoon or strainer and immerse them in a bowl of warm tap water to wash off the vinegar. Set the spoon on a clean towel (or folded paper towels) for a moment to remove excess water, and serve eggs immediately.

Do-ahead notes

To chill and store poached eggs, immediately plunge the hot eggs into a large bowl of ice water to stop the cooking. When cool, trim off any uneven strands of egg white with a paring knife. You can keep the eggs submerged in the uncovered

Jacques

While most eggs in the markets are reasonably fresh, I find that organic eggs, from free-range chickens, have a stronger albumen that won't thin out in the poaching water. But I always use several techniques to maintain the shape. The pan must have sufficient water so that the eggs will be completely submerged at all times and the water must remain at a gentle simmer, so that turbulence will not disturb them. And I use vinegar, since the acid helps to thicken the whites.

Chilling and storing the eggs in ice water has many advantages. You can poach them hours or even days ahead of time, and then quickly reheat them before serving. The water also rinses off any traces of vinegar and keeps the eggs suspended, so that they do not break open under their own weight. If you chill the eggs, you should trim off any uneven strands of egg white before serving—and decide which side will make the best presentation.

Oeufs mollets are a nice alternative to poached eggs, and they are cooked and used in almost the identical manner. You don't need vinegar in the water, but you must make a hole in the large end of the shell to allow the air inside to dissipate before it expands and breaks the shell. To make peeling easier, I crack them gently as soon as they are cooked, then immerse them in the ice water to chill. Holding them under cold running water will also aid peeling.

Ideas from Julia on Poached Eggs

Just as a pastry chef builds scores of distinct desserts from a few basic cakes, fillings, and icings, you can use poached or coddled eggs as a building block in your kitchen improvisations, setting them on bread and vegetable bases, and topping them with different sauces and garnishes. Here are a few suggestions for combining them with other recipes from this book, and you will think of many more.

With duxelles (page 183): As in the Benedict, spread a brioche round, or a toasted English muffin half, with the *duxelles*, then top with an egg and Hollandaise (page 96).

Try the irresistible luncheon dish with which I lured prospective hosts for my cooking classes (page 182), using Cooked Artichoke Bottoms (page 181) as the base and Béarnaise Sauce (page 99) as the crowning touch.

With creamed spinach (page 196): Use the spinach as a bed for the eggs or as a middle layer on toast.

In a big baked potato (page 148): Pop open the hot potato as usual, butter well, and drop in your poached egg. Sprinkle parsley on top.

As a surprise in a soufflé: Set 3 or 4 chilled, poached eggs in a soufflé mold or gratin dish, and ladle over them Jacques's or my basic soufflé mixture (pages 89, 91). Bake as directed; the eggs will still be soft inside. A bed of creamed spinach in the bottom of the soufflé dish would be nice.

bowl of water, refrigerated, for up to 2 days, if you change the water every day.

To reheat

Bring a pan of water to a gentle simmer; with a strainer or a slotted spoon, lower 1 chilled, poached egg at a time into the water and heat for about a minute. Lift out, drain on a clean towel, and serve.

Julia's Poached Eggs

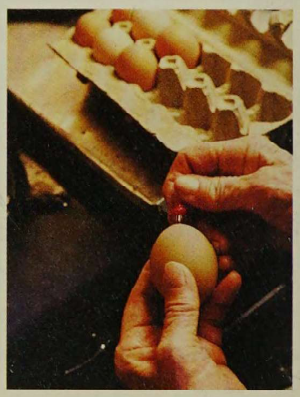
In my method, you crack the egg into an egg poacher—a perforated-metal oval egg-shaped container set in simmering water. The egg takes on the oval poached-egg shape.

Yield: 4 poached eggs, serving 2 or 4

4 large fresh eggs

Special equipment

4 egg poachers; a saucepan at least 3 inches deep and large enough to accommodate the poachers; a strainer



Prick the large end of each egg, going through the shell and into the body of the egg.

Set the egg poachers in the pan and measure in enough water to cover them by ½ inch. Remove the poachers and bring the water to the boil. With a pin, prick the large end of each egg—going through the shell and into the body of the egg—then place in a strainer and lower into the boiling water. Submerge for exactly 10 seconds and lift out. Now set the poachers in and reduce the heat to a simmer.