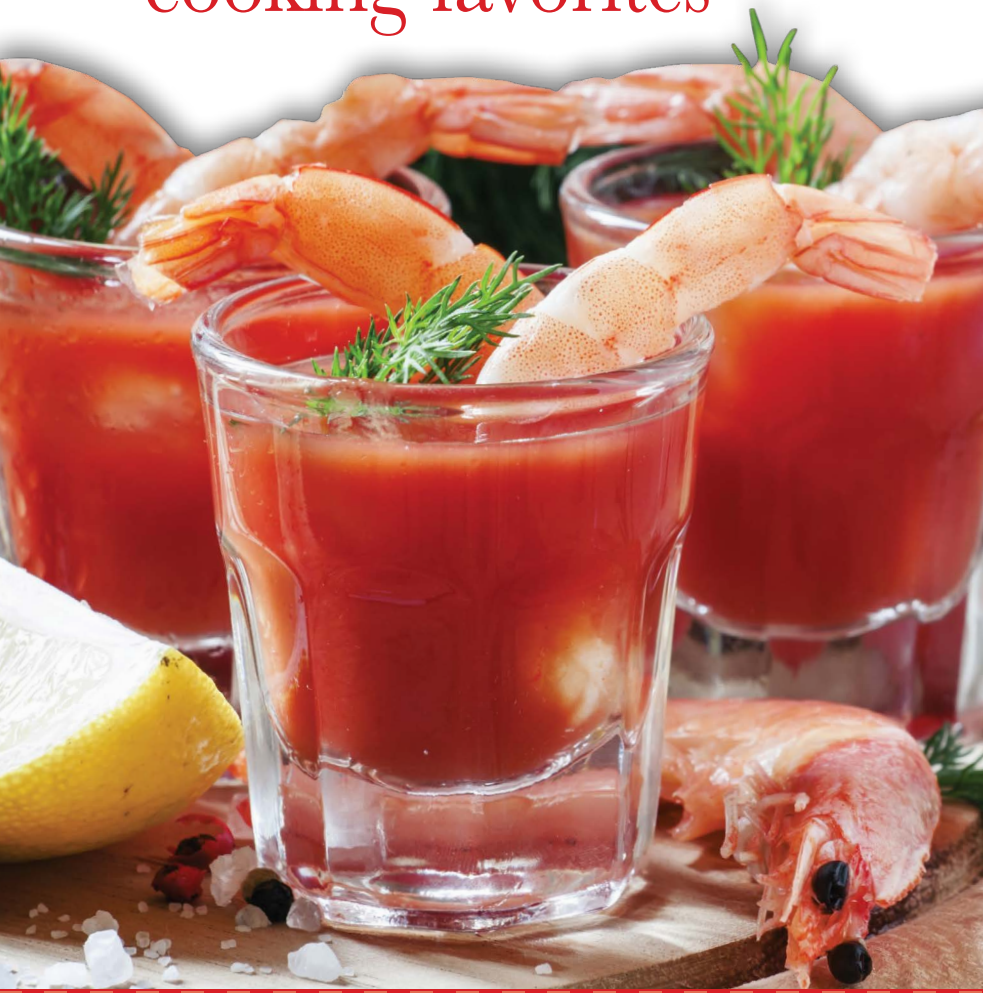
Chef express

NorCal Community Media

holiday cooking favorites



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introduction

Holiday cooking brings warmth, nostalgia, and the opportunity to share comforting, flavorful dishes with loved ones. Among the season's most cherished recipes, certain classics are essential for creating a truly festive spread. Classic Shrimp Cocktail is a beloved starter that's both elegant and simple, featuring tender, chilled shrimp paired with tangy cocktail sauce for a refreshing beginning to the holiday meal.

holiday
cooking favorites

- Holiday cooking is all about creating memorable dishes that bring friends and family together around the table, offering both traditional favorites and indulgent, show-stopping entrees. From grand roasts to festive cocktails, holiday favorites showcase the season's spirit of abundance and warmth. Prime Rib with Au Jus is an exquisite centerpiece, known for its tender, juicy slices of perfectly roasted beef. Paired with a rich, flavorful au jus, it's a classic that impresses with both taste and presentation, making any holiday meal feel luxurious.

- For those who enjoy a culinary masterpiece, Classic Beef Wellington provides a sophisticated option. Encased in flaky pastry and layered with a mushroom duxelles, this tender beef dish combines textures and flavors into a visually stunning entrée. Equally impressive yet lighter, Whole Baked Salmon with Lemon and Dill offers a refreshing alternative, with a delicate balance of citrus and herbs that complements the natural richness of the fish. Baked to perfection, this dish appeals to seafood lovers while adding elegance to any holiday spread.

- For a hearty, comforting addition, Traditional Lasagna Bolognese brings layers of rich Bolognese sauce, creamy, and gooey cheese that satisfy every palate. With its comforting layers of pasta and savory flavors, lasagna is perfect for holiday gatherings where warmth and coziness are the order of the day.

- To complete the feast, a Pomegranate Moscow Mule makes a festive holiday cocktail with its vibrant, jewel-like color and zesty flavors. Combining pomegranate juice, ginger beer, and vodka, this cocktail adds a touch of sparkle to holiday celebrations, providing a refreshing yet festive drink option.

- Together, these holiday cooking favorites create a menu that's as comforting as it is celebratory, featuring bold flavors and seasonal flair to elevate every moment around the table, making holiday gatherings truly unforgettable.

Difficulty scale

■□□ | Easy to do

■■□ | Requires attention

■■■ | Requires experience

classic
shrimp cocktail

■□□ | Preparation time: 10 minutes - Cooking time: 5 minutes

ingredients

- 1 lb large shrimp (peeled, deveined, with tails on)
- 1 lemon (sliced)
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 4 cups water
- 1 cup cocktail sauce
- Lemon wedges for garnish
- Fresh dill for garnish
- 6 medium shot glasses

method

1. In a large pot, combine 4 cups of water, the lemon slices, and 1 tablespoon of salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
2. Add the shrimp to the boiling water and cook until they turn pink and are opaque for about 2-3 minutes. Be careful not to overcook.
3. Remove the shrimp with a slotted spoon and immediately place them in an ice bath to stop the cooking process. Let them chill for at least 5 minutes.
4. Drain the shrimp and pat them dry with paper towels.
5. Spoon cocktail sauce into each shot glass, arrange a few shrimp on top of the cocktail sauce, garnish with the dill and lemon wedges.

Serves 6

tip from the chef

Add a skewer of green olives to each glass!

spinach and artichoke dip

■■□ | Preparation time: 10 minutes - Cooking time: 20 minutes

method

1. Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. In a large bowl, combine the spinach, chopped artichoke hearts, mozzarella, Parmesan, cream cheese, sour cream, and minced garlic. Season with salt and pepper, then mix well until fully combined.
3. Spoon the mixture into a baking dish and spread it out evenly.
4. Bake for 20 minutes, or until the dip is hot and bubbly with a golden-brown top. Stir and spoon into a serving dish.
5. Serve warm with chips, sliced baguette, or fresh vegetables for dipping.

Serves 6-8

ingredients

- **1 (10-ounce) package of frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained**
- **1 (14-ounce) can artichoke hearts, drained and chopped**
- **1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese**
- **½ cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **1 (8-ounce) block cream cheese, softened**
- **½ cup sour cream**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **Salt and pepper to taste**

tip from the chef

Garnish with extra canned artichoke hearts cut in half!

pigs in a blanket

■■□ | Preparation time: 10 minutes - Cooking time: 12-15 minutes

ingredients

- 1 package (8 ounces) of crescent roll dough
- 1 package (14 ounces) of mini hot dogs or cocktail sausages
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese (optional)
- 1 egg (for egg wash)
- Mustard or ketchup (for serving)

method

1. Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Unroll the crescent roll dough and separate it into triangles. If using, sprinkle shredded cheddar cheese on the wide end of each triangle.
3. Place a mini hot dog or cocktail sausage on the wide end of each triangle, then roll it up towards the point to enclose the sausage.
4. Beat the egg in a small bowl and brush the tops of the wrapped hot dogs with the egg wash for a golden finish.
5. Place the wrapped sausages on the baking sheet and bake for 12-15 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm with mustard or ketchup.

Serves 4-6

tip from the chef

Enjoy your tasty pigs in a blanket!

truffle
popcorn with parmesan

■□□ | Preparation time: 5 minutes - Cooking time: 10 minutes

method

1. If using popcorn kernels, pop them in an air popper or on the stovetop according to package instructions. If using microwave popcorn, prepare as directed.
2. Once the popcorn is ready, place it in a large bowl and drizzle with truffle oil while the popcorn is still warm. Toss to evenly coat.
3. Sprinkle the grated Parmesan cheese, sea salt, and black pepper (if using) over the popcorn. Toss again to ensure even distribution.
4. Taste the popcorn and adjust the seasoning, adding more salt, pepper, or truffle oil if desired.
5. Serve the truffle popcorn warm in bowls or a large serving dish.

Serves 4-6

ingredients

- **½ cup popcorn kernels (or 1 bag of microwave popcorn)**
- **2 tablespoons truffle oil (or to taste)**
- **½ cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **1 teaspoon sea salt (adjust to taste)**
- **½ teaspoon black pepper (optional)**

tip from the chef

For another delicious popcorn topping use Everything Bagel Seasoning!

avocado
shrimp ceviche

■■□ | Preparation time: 15 minutes - Cooking time: none

ingredients

- 1 lb cooked shrimp, peeled and deveined, chopped
- 1 ripe avocado, diced
- ½ cup diced tomatoes
- ¼ cup finely chopped red onion
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- Juice of 2 limes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Lime slices and parsley (for garnish)
- Martini glasses for serving
- Lime salt for the rim of the martini glasses

method

1. In a large bowl, combine the chopped shrimp, diced avocado, diced tomatoes, red onion, and cilantro.
2. Squeeze the juice of 2 limes over the mixture and gently toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
3. Let the ceviche mixture sit for about 10 minutes to allow the flavors to meld.
4. Salt the rim of each martini glass and fill each martini glass with the ceviche mixture.
5. Garnish with lime slices and parsley.

Serves 4-6

tip from the chef

Serve each martini glass on a small plate with tortilla chips and avocado slices!

sweet potato
casserole with marshmallows

Preparation time: 15 minutes - Cooking time: 45 minutes

method

1. Place the cubed sweet potatoes in a large pot, cover with water, and bring to a boil. Cook for 15-20 minutes until tender. Drain and let cool slightly.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Mash the sweet potatoes in a large bowl. Add the sugar, melted butter, milk, vanilla, and salt. Mix until smooth.
3. Spread the sweet potato mixture evenly into a greased 9x13-inch baking dish.
4. Sprinkle mini marshmallows evenly over the top of the sweet potato mixture.
5. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until the marshmallows are golden brown and the casserole is heated through. Serve warm and enjoy!

Serves 6-8

ingredients

Sweet Potato Base:

- **4 large sweet potatoes (about 3 lbs), peeled and cubed**
- **½ cup granulated sugar**
- **¼ cup unsalted butter, melted**
- **½ cup whole milk**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **½ teaspoon salt**

Topping:

- **1 cup mini marshmallows**

tip from the chef

Add pecans for added flavor!

roasted
brussels sprouts with bacon

■□□ | Preparation time: 10 minutes - Cooking time: 25 minutes

ingredients

- 1.5 lbs Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 4 slices of bacon, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste

method

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. In a large bowl, toss the halved Brussels sprouts with olive oil, salt, and pepper.
3. Spread the Brussels sprouts on a baking sheet in a single layer and sprinkle the chopped bacon evenly over the top.
4. Roast for 20-25 minutes, stirring halfway through, until the Brussels sprouts are tender and caramelized and the bacon is crispy.
5. Remove from the oven and serve immediately while hot.

Serves 4

tip from the chef

Add chopped onions before roasting and sprinkle with parmesan cheese before serving!

herbed stuffing

■■□ | Preparation time: 15 minutes - Cooking time: 45 minutes

method

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Spread the cubed bread on a baking sheet and toast in the oven for 10-15 minutes until slightly crisp.
2. In a large skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and celery and sauté for 5-7 minutes, or until softened.
3. In a large bowl, combine the toasted bread cubes, cooked vegetables, fresh herbs, salt, and pepper. Pour in the broth gradually, mixing until the bread is moistened but not soggy.
4. Spread the stuffing mixture evenly in a greased 9x13-inch baking dish.
5. Cover with foil and bake for 25 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for an additional 15-20 minutes, until the top is golden brown.

Serves 8

ingredients

- **1 loaf (16 oz) crusty bread, cubed (about 10 cups)**
- **½ cup unsalted butter**
- **1 large onion, finely chopped**
- **2 celery stalks, diced**
- **2½ cups chicken or vegetable broth**
- **2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley**
- **1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage**
- **1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme**
- **½ teaspoon salt**
- **¼ teaspoon black pepper**

tip from the chef

Serve warm alongside your favorite holiday dishes!

garlic and chive
hasselback potatoes

■□□ | Preparation time: 10 minutes - Cooking time: 50-60 minutes

ingredients

- 4 medium russet or Yukon Gold potatoes
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- Cooked bacon cut into small pieces

method

1. Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C) and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Wash and dry the potatoes. Using a sharp knife, make thin slices across each potato, about 1/8-inch apart, being careful not to cut all the way through.
3. In a small bowl, mix 4 tablespoons melted butter, 2 tablespoons olive oil, and 4 minced garlic cloves. Place the potatoes on the baking sheet and brush them generously with the garlic butter mixture, making sure it gets into the slices. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Bake the potatoes for 50-60 minutes, basting with more of the butter mixture every 15-20 minutes, until the potatoes are crispy on the outside and tender on the inside. During the last 15 minutes of cooking put the bacon pieces in between some of the slices of the potatoes.
5. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with chopped fresh chives. Serve warm and enjoy!

Serves 4

tip from the chef

Top with shredded cheddar cheese during the last 10 minutes of baking and serve with a side dish of sour cream!

maple balsamic
roasted beets

■□□ | Preparation time: 10 minutes - Cooking time: 40-45 minutes

method

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C) and line a baking sheet with parchment paper or lightly grease it.
2. In a large bowl, toss the sliced beets with 2 tablespoons olive oil, 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, and 1 tablespoon maple syrup. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Spread the beets in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet. Roast for 40-45 minutes, stirring halfway through, until the beets are tender and caramelized.
4. Check the beets for doneness with a fork they should be easily pierced. Remove from the oven.
5. Transfer to a serving dish and garnish with sea salt and rosemary. Serve warm.

Serves 4

ingredients

- **4 medium beets, peeled and cut into slices**
- **2 tablespoons olive oil**
- **2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**
- **1 tablespoon pure maple syrup**
- **Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **Sea Salt and rosemary for garnish**

tip from the chef

For a colorful dish add carrots to step 2!

zesty
lemon-parmesan broccoli

■□□ | Preparation time: 5 minutes - Cooking time: 10 minutes

ingredients

- 1 large head of broccoli, cut into florets (about 4 cups)
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Zest and juice of 1 large lemon
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons fresh mint leaves (for garnish)

method

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the broccoli florets and blanch for 2-3 minutes, until bright green and slightly tender. Drain and rinse under cold water to stop the cooking process.
2. In a large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium heat. Add the blanched broccoli and peas and sauté for 3-4 minutes, until lightly browned and tender.
3. Remove from heat and add the zest and juice of 1 large lemon. Toss to coat and season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Sprinkle ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese over the broccoli and toss until well combined.
5. Transfer to a serving dish and garnish with chopped fresh mint leaves if desired. Serve warm.

Serves 4

tip from the chef

Serve with lemon wedges on the side!

parmesan
truffle mac & cheese

■■□ | Preparation time: 10 minutes - Cooking time: 25 minutes

method

1. In a large pot, cook the elbow macaroni according to package instructions until al dente. Drain and set aside.
2. In the same pot, melt 2 tablespoons of butter over medium heat. Add 2 tablespoons of flour, whisking continuously for about 1-2 minutes until it forms a paste (roux).
3. Gradually whisk in 2 cups of milk and bring to a simmer, stirring until thickened (about 5 minutes). Stir in 1 ½ cups shredded cheddar cheese and ½ cup grated Parmesan until melted and smooth.
4. Add the cooked pasta to the cheese sauce. Stir in 1-2 tablespoons of truffle oil and season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Transfer to a greased baking dish, sprinkle with breadcrumbs (optional), and bake at 350°F (175°C) for 10-15 minutes until bubbly and golden.

Serves 4

ingredients

- **8 ounces elbow macaroni (or your choice of pasta)**
- **2 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- **2 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **2 cups milk**
- **1 ½ cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese**
- **½ cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **1-2 tablespoons truffle oil (to taste)**
- **Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **¼ cup breadcrumbs (optional, for topping)**

tip from the chef

Serve warm and enjoy this rich and creamy Parmesan Truffle Mac & Cheese as a side dish with all your favorite holiday dinners!

roast turkey
with sage and onion stuffing

■■□ | Preparation time: 30 minutes (plus time for turkey to thaw if necessary) - Cooking time: 3-4 hours (depending on turkey size)

ingredients

For the Turkey:

- 1 whole turkey (12-14 pounds)
- ½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 cups chicken broth (for basting)

For the Stuffing:

- 1 loaf of day-old bread, cubed (about 8 cups)
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons fresh sage, chopped (or 1 tablespoon dried sage)
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1-2 cups chicken broth (to moisten)

method

1. In a large skillet, melt ½ cup unsalted butter over medium heat. Add the diced onion and garlic, cooking until softened (about 5 minutes). Stir in the chopped sage, thyme, and parsley. In a large bowl, combine the sautéed mixture with the cubed bread, adding enough chicken broth to moisten. Set aside to cool.
2. Preheat the oven to 325°F (165°C). Remove the turkey giblets and rinse the turkey inside and out, patting dry with paper towels. Rub the softened butter all over the turkey and season generously with salt and pepper.
3. Fill the turkey cavity with the prepared stuffing, packing it loosely. Tie the legs together with kitchen twine and tuck the wing tips under the body.
4. Place the turkey on a roasting rack in a large roasting pan. Pour 2 cups of chicken broth into the bottom of the pan. Roast in the preheated oven, basting every 30 minutes with the pan juices, until the internal temperature of the turkey reaches 165°F (74°C) (approximately 13-15 minutes per pound).
5. Once cooked, remove the turkey from the oven and let it rest for at least 10-15 minutes before carving.

Serves 8-10

honey-glazed ham

■■□ | Preparation time: 15 minutes - Cooking time: 1.5 to 2 hours

method

1. Preheat your oven to 325°F (165°C). Place the ham on a roasting rack in a large roasting pan.
2. In a small saucepan, combine 1 cup honey, ½ cup brown sugar, ¼ cup Dijon mustard, ¼ teaspoon ground cloves (if using), and ¼ teaspoon black pepper. Heat over medium heat, stirring until the sugar is dissolved, and the mixture is smooth. Remove from heat.
3. Using a sharp knife, lightly score the surface of the ham in a diamond pattern, making shallow cuts about 1 inch apart. This allows the glaze to penetrate better.
4. Brush half of the honey glaze over the ham, making sure to get it into the scored cuts. Tent the ham loosely with aluminum foil and bake in the preheated oven for about 1.5 to 2 hours, or until heated through (about 15 minutes per pound).
5. Remove the foil during the last 30 minutes of cooking, brushing with the remaining glaze every 10-15 minutes. Once done, let the ham rest for about 15 minutes before slicing. Serve warm.

Serves 10-12

ingredients

- **1 fully cooked ham (about 8-10 pounds)**
- **1 cup honey**
- **½ cup brown sugar**
- **¼ cup Dijon mustard**
- **¼ teaspoon ground cloves (optional)**
- **¼ teaspoon black pepper**

tip from the chef

Serve with scalloped potatoes and glazed carrots!

prime rib
with au jus

■■□ | Preparation time: 30 minutes - Cooking time: 1.5 to 2 hours

ingredients

For the Prime Rib:

> 1 (5-6 pound) prime rib roast, bone-in
> 3 tablespoons olive oil
> 4 cloves garlic, minced
> 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, chopped (or 1 tablespoon dried)
> 2 tablespoons fresh thyme, chopped (or 1 tablespoon dried)
> Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

For the Au Jus:

> 2 cups beef broth
> ½ cup red wine (optional)
> 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

method

1. Preheat your oven to 450°F (232°C). In a small bowl, mix together the olive oil, minced garlic, chopped rosemary, chopped thyme, salt, and pepper to create a paste. Rub this mixture all over the prime rib roast.
2. Place the prime rib on a rack in a roasting pan, bone side down. Roast in the preheated oven for 15 minutes. Then reduce the temperature to 325°F (165°C) and continue to roast for approximately 1.5 to 2 hours, or until the internal temperature reaches 130°F (54°C) for medium-rare (adjust cooking time based on desired doneness).
3. Once the desired temperature is reached, remove the roast from the oven and place on a platter. Tent it loosely with aluminum foil. Let it rest for at least 20-30 minutes to allow the juices to redistribute.
4. While the roast is resting, place the roasting pan on the stovetop over medium heat. Add the beef broth and red wine (if using), scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Stir in the Worcestershire sauce and simmer for about 10 minutes. Strain the mixture into a serving bowl or gravy boat.
5. Slice the prime rib against the grain into thick slices and serve with the warm au jus on the side for dipping.

Serves 6-8

roast leg of lamb

with rosemary and garlic

■■□ | Preparation time: 15 minutes - Cooking time: 1.5 to 2 hours

method

1. Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C). Place the leg of lamb on a clean cutting board.
2. Use a sharp knife to make small incisions all over the lamb. Insert the garlic slices and rosemary into the incisions. Rub the entire leg with olive oil, and season generously with salt and pepper.
3. Place the lamb on a rack in a roasting pan. Roast in the preheated oven for 20 minutes, then reduce the temperature to 350°F (175°C). Continue roasting for approximately 1 to 1.5 hours, or until the internal temperature reaches 135°F (57°C) for medium-rare (or adjust for desired doneness).
4. During the last 30 minutes of cooking, baste the lamb with red wine or beef broth every 15 minutes to keep it moist and enhance the flavor.
5. Once cooked to your liking, remove the lamb from the oven and let it rest for at least 15-20 minutes before carving.

Serves 6-8

ingredients

- **1 (4-5 pound) leg of lamb, bone-in or lamb roast**
- **4 cloves garlic, sliced**
- **2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, chopped (or 1 tablespoon dried)**
- **3 tablespoons olive oil**
- **Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **1 cup red wine or beef broth (for basting)**

tip from the chef

Enjoy this flavorful roast leg of lamb, perfect for special occasions and family gatherings!

classic beef wellington

Preparation time: 30 minutes - Cooking time: 40-50 minutes

ingredients

- 2 pounds beef tenderloin (center-cut)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 8 ounces cremini or button mushrooms, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, chopped
- 8 slices prosciutto
- ¼ cup Dijon mustard
- 1 sheet puff pastry (thawed if frozen)
- 1 egg, beaten (for egg wash)

method

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Season the beef tenderloin generously with salt and pepper. In a large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil over high heat. Sear the beef on all sides until browned (about 2-3 minutes per side). Remove from heat and let cool. Once cooled, brush with ¼ cup Dijon mustard.
2. In the same skillet, add the finely chopped mushrooms, garlic, and thyme. Cook over medium heat until the mushrooms release their moisture and become dry (about 8-10 minutes). Let the mixture cool.
3. On a clean surface, lay out the prosciutto slices slightly overlapping to form a rectangle. Spread the cooled mushroom mixture evenly over the prosciutto. Place the beef on top and roll it tightly, wrapping the prosciutto around the beef. Wrap the entire roll in puff pastry, sealing the edges and trimming any excess.
4. Place the wrapped beef seam-side down on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Brush the pastry with the beaten egg. Cut slits in the top of the pastry to allow steam to escape. Bake in the preheated oven for 40-50 minutes, or until the pastry is golden brown and the internal temperature of the beef reaches 130°F (54°C) for medium-rare.
5. Remove the Beef Wellington from the oven and let it rest for 10-15 minutes before slicing. Serve warm with your choice of sides.

Serves 6-8

herb-crusted pork loin

■□□ | Preparation time: 10 minutes - Cooking time: 1 hour

method

1. Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). Place the pork loin roast in a roasting pan.
2. In a small bowl, mix together the olive oil, minced garlic, chopped rosemary, chopped thyme, Dijon mustard, salt, and pepper until well combined.
3. Rub the herb mixture all over the pork loin, ensuring it is evenly coated.
4. Roast in the preheated oven for about 1 hour, or until the internal temperature reaches 145°F (63°C). Baste the roast with pan juices halfway through cooking for extra flavor.
5. Once cooked, remove the pork loin from the oven and let it rest for 10-15 minutes before slicing. Serve warm with your choice of sides.

Serves 6-8

ingredients

- **2 to 3 pounds pork loin roast**
- **2 tablespoons olive oil**
- **3 cloves garlic, minced**
- **2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, chopped (or 1 tablespoon dried)**
- **2 tablespoons fresh thyme, chopped (or 1 tablespoon dried)**
- **1 tablespoon Dijon mustard**
- **Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

tip from the chef

Serve with mashed potatoes, gravy, corn and a side of applesauce!

whole baked
salmon with lemon and dill

■□□ | Preparation time: 15 minutes - Cooking time: 25-30 minutes

ingredients

- 1 whole salmon fillet (about 3-4 pounds), cleaned and scaled
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 lemon, sliced
- 1 bunch fresh dill, chopped (about ¼ cup)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 4 cloves garlic, minced (optional)
- Rosemary sprigs for garnish
- Lemon wedges for garnish

method

1. Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or aluminum foil for easy cleanup.
2. Place the salmon on the prepared baking sheet. Drizzle olive oil over the fish and season with salt and pepper.
3. Place lemon slices and fresh dill on top of the salmon. If using, add minced garlic for additional flavor.
4. Bake in the preheated oven for 25-30 minutes, or until the salmon flakes easily with a fork and reaches an internal temperature of 145°F (63°C).
5. Remove the salmon from the oven and let it rest for a few minutes. Serve warm, garnished with additional fresh dill, rosemary sprigs and lemon wedges if desired.

Serves 6-8

tip from the chef

Serve with grilled baby potatoes and lemon dill sauce!

traditional
lasagna bolognese

■■□ | Preparation time: 30 minutes - Cooking time: 1 hour

method

1. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion, garlic, carrot, and celery. Sauté until the vegetables are softened, about 5 minutes. Add the ground beef and pork, cooking until browned. Stir in the crushed tomatoes, red wine (if using), oregano, salt, and pepper. Simmer for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. In a bowl, mix the ricotta cheese, 1 cup of mozzarella cheese, grated Parmesan cheese, and the egg. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). In a baking dish, spread a thin layer of Bolognese sauce on the bottom. Layer 4 lasagna noodles over the sauce, followed by half of the ricotta mixture, a third of the remaining Bolognese sauce, and a sprinkle of mozzarella cheese. Repeat the layers once more, finishing with the remaining noodles and Bolognese sauce on top. Sprinkle the remaining mozzarella and Parmesan cheese.
4. Cover the baking dish with aluminum foil and bake for 25 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for an additional 15-20 minutes, or until the cheese is bubbly and golden.
5. Remove the lasagna from the oven and let it rest for about 10-15 minutes before slicing. Garnish with fresh basil leaves if desired and serve warm.

Serves 6-8

ingredients

For the Bolognese Sauce:

- **2 tablespoons olive oil**
- **1 onion, finely chopped**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **1 carrot, finely chopped**
- **1 celery stalk, finely chopped**
- **1 pound ground beef**
- **1 pound ground pork**
- **1 can (28 ounces) crushed tomatoes**
- **½ cup red wine (optional)**
- **1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- **Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

For the Lasagna:

- **12 lasagna noodles (Oven Ready)**
- **2 cups ricotta cheese**
- **2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese**
- **1 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **1 egg**
- **Fresh basil leaves (for garnish, optional)**

stuffed
pumpkins with wild rice

■■□ | Preparation time: 15 minutes - Cooking time: 1 hour

ingredients

- 2 small pumpkins
- 1 cup wild rice
- 2 cups vegetable broth or water
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup mushrooms, diced
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup walnuts or pecans, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Roasted peanuts for garnish (optional)
- Pomegranate seeds for garnish (optional)

method

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Cut the tops off of the pumpkins and scoop out the seeds. Place the pumpkins on a baking sheet, brush with olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Roast in the oven for about 30-35 minutes, until tender.
2. While the pumpkins are roasting, rinse the wild rice under cold water. In a saucepan, bring the vegetable broth (or water) to a boil. Add the wild rice, reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for about 45 minutes, or until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed.
3. In a skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté for 3-4 minutes until softened. Add the garlic and mushrooms, cooking for another 5 minutes until the mushrooms are tender.
4. In a large bowl, combine the cooked wild rice, sautéed vegetables, dried cranberries, chopped nuts, dried thyme, salt, and pepper. Mix well to combine.
5. Once the pumpkins are done roasting, remove them from the oven. Fill each pumpkin with the wild rice mixture. Return to the oven and bake for an additional 10-15 minutes until heated through. Garnish with peanuts and pomegranate seeds if desired and serve warm.

Serves 2

lamb shanks
with pomegranate glaze

■■□ | Preparation time: 15 minutes - Cooking time: 2 hours

method

1. In a large Dutch oven or heavy pot, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Season the lamb shanks with salt and pepper. Add them to the pot and sear until browned on all sides, about 5-7 minutes. Remove the shanks and set aside.
2. In the same pot, add the chopped onion and garlic. Sauté until the onion is translucent, about 3-4 minutes.
3. Add the pomegranate juice, honey, balsamic vinegar, and broth to the pot, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom. Stir in the chopped rosemary.
4. Return the lamb shanks to the pot, ensuring they are submerged in the liquid. Add the carrots and shallots and bring to a simmer, then cover and transfer to the preheated oven at 325°F (165°C). Cook for 1.5 to 2 hours, or until the lamb is tender and easily pulls away from the bone.
5. Remove the pot from the oven and transfer the lamb shanks, carrots and shallots to a serving platter. Skim any excess fat from the surface of the sauce and simmer it on the stovetop until slightly thickened, about 10 minutes. Pour the pomegranate glaze over the lamb shanks and garnish with pomegranate seeds and fresh parsley, if desired.

Serves 4

ingredients

- **4 lamb shanks (about 1.5 pounds each)**
- **2 tablespoons olive oil**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **4 cloves garlic, minced**
- **2 chopped carrots**
- **2 shallots cut in quarters**
- **2 cups beef or chicken broth**
- **1 cup pomegranate juice**
- **¼ cup honey**
- **2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**
- **1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped (or 1 teaspoon dried)**
- **Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **Pomegranate seeds and fresh parsley for garnish (optional)**

herb and garlic
crusted cauliflower roast

■□□ | Preparation time: 15 minutes - Cooking time: 45-50 minutes

ingredients

- 1 large head of cauliflower
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, chopped (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Pomegranate seeds and chopped parsley for garnish

method

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C) and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Remove the leaves from the cauliflower and trim the stem, ensuring the head can stand upright. Place it on the prepared baking sheet.
3. In a small bowl, mix together the olive oil, minced garlic, chopped thyme, rosemary, parsley, salt, pepper, and lemon juice until well combined.
4. Brush the herb and garlic mixture all over the cauliflower, making sure to coat it thoroughly, including the underside.
5. Roast in the preheated oven for 45-50 minutes, or until the cauliflower is tender and golden brown. Let it cool for a few minutes. Garnish with pomegranate seeds and chopped parsley before serving.

Serves 4-6

tip from the chef

Enjoy this flavorful and impressive Herb and Garlic Crusted Cauliflower Roast, perfect for a vegan main dish or side!

duck breast
with cherry-port sauce

■■□ | Preparation time: 10 minutes - Cooking time: 25 minutes

method

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Score the skin of the duck breasts in a crosshatch pattern, being careful not to cut into the meat. Season both sides generously with salt and pepper.
2. In a cold, oven-safe skillet, place the duck breasts skin-side down. Turn the heat to medium and cook for about 6-8 minutes, allowing the fat to render and the skin to become crispy. Once golden brown, flip the breasts over.
3. Transfer the skillet to the preheated oven and roast for about 6-8 minutes for medium-rare doneness (internal temperature should reach 135°F or 57°C). Remove from the oven, cover with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes.
4. While the duck rests, pour off excess fat from the skillet, leaving about 1 tablespoon. Add the cherries, port wine, balsamic vinegar, honey, and thyme (if using) to the skillet. Bring to a simmer and cook for 5-7 minutes, or until the sauce has thickened slightly.
5. Slice the duck breasts against the grain and plate them. Drizzle the cherry-port sauce over the top and serve immediately.

Serves 2

ingredients

- **2 duck breasts (about 6-8 ounces each)**
- **Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **1 cup pitted cherries (fresh or frozen)**
- **½ cup port wine**
- **1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar**
- **1 tablespoon honey**
- **1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves (optional)**

tip from the chef

Serve with mashed potatoes and glazed carrots!

mushroom
and chestnut wellington

■■□ | Preparation time: 20 minutes - Cooking time 40-50 minutes

ingredients

- 1 sheet puff pastry (thawed if frozen)
- 1 pound mushrooms, finely chopped (such as cremini or button)
- 1 cup cooked chestnuts, finely chopped
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, chopped (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 egg (for egg wash) or non-dairy milk for a vegan option

method

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and garlic, sautéing until softened (about 3-4 minutes). Add the chopped mushrooms and cook until all moisture is evaporated and the mushrooms are golden brown (about 10 minutes). Stir in the chopped chestnuts, thyme, Dijon mustard, salt, and pepper. Remove from heat and let cool slightly.
3. Roll out the puff pastry on a lightly floured surface to smooth out any creases. Place the cooled mushroom and chestnut mixture in the center of the pastry, forming a log shape.
4. Fold the pastry over the filling, sealing the edges by pinching them together. Place the seam side down on the prepared baking sheet. Brush the top with beaten egg or non-dairy milk for a vegan option.
5. Bake in the preheated oven for 30-35 minutes, or until the pastry is golden brown and puffed. Remove from the oven and let it cool for a few minutes before slicing.

Serves 4-6

tip from the chef

Enjoy this delicious Mushroom and Chestnut Wellington, perfect as a hearty vegetarian main dish!

classic eggnog

■■□ | Preparation time: 15 minutes - Chilling time: At least 2 hours

method

1. In a medium bowl, whisk the egg yolks and granulated sugar together until smooth, creamy, and slightly pale. This mixture should form ribbons when dripped from the whisk.
2. In a saucepan over medium heat, combine the whole milk, heavy cream, and ground nutmeg. Stir constantly until the mixture is hot but not boiling (about 165°F or 74°C). Remove from heat.
3. Slowly add a small amount of the hot milk mixture to the egg yolk mixture, whisking continuously to prevent the eggs from curdling. Gradually add the rest of the milk, whisking all the while. Pour the combined mixture back into the saucepan.
4. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens slightly and coats the back of a spoon (about 170°F or 77°C). Do not let it boil. Remove from heat and stir in the vanilla extract and alcohol (if using). Pour the eggnog into a large pitcher or bowl and refrigerate for at least 2 hours to chill.
5. If you prefer a lighter and frothier eggnog, beat the egg whites with an electric mixer until soft peaks form. Gradually add the powdered sugar and continue beating until stiff peaks form. Gently fold the whipped egg whites into the chilled eggnog just before serving.
6. Pour the eggnog into glasses, garnish with an extra sprinkle of ground nutmeg, cinnamon sticks, anise star, and serve chilled.

Serves 6-8

ingredients

- **6 large egg yolks**
- **¾ cup granulated sugar**
- **2 cups whole milk**
- **1 cup heavy cream**
- **½ teaspoon ground nutmeg (plus more for garnish)**
- **½ teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **¾ cup bourbon, rum, or brandy (optional)**
- **4 large egg whites (optional, for a frothier texture)**
- **2 tablespoons powdered sugar (for sweetening the egg whites, if used)**
- **Cinnamon sticks and anise star for garnish**

peppermint
hot chocolate

■□□ | Preparation time: 5 minutes - Cooking time: 5 minutes

ingredients

- 2 cups whole milk (or your preferred milk alternative)
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ½ cup semisweet or dark chocolate chips (or chopped chocolate)
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2-3 tablespoons granulated sugar (adjust to taste)
- ½ teaspoon peppermint extract (or more, to taste)
- Whipped cream (for topping)
- Crushed candy canes or peppermint candies (for garnish)
- Chocolate shavings or mini marshmallows (optional, for garnish)

method

1. In a medium saucepan, combine the whole milk and heavy cream. Heat over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is steaming but not boiling.
2. Reduce the heat to low and add the chocolate chips, unsweetened cocoa powder, and granulated sugar. Whisk continuously until the chocolate melts and the mixture is smooth and well combined. Make sure there are no lumps of cocoa powder left.
3. Remove the saucepan from the heat and stir in the peppermint extract. Start with ½ teaspoon, taste, and add more if you'd like a stronger peppermint flavor.
4. Pour the hot chocolate into mugs. Top with a generous swirl of whipped cream and sprinkle crushed candy canes or peppermint candies on top. Add chocolate shavings or mini marshmallows for extra indulgence if desired.

Serves 2

tip from the chef

For an extra decadent treat, add a splash of chocolate liqueur or more melted chocolate.

pomegranate
moscow mule

■□□ | Preparation time: 5 minutes - Cooking time: none

method

1. Fill a traditional copper Moscow Mule mug (or a regular glass if you prefer) with crushed ice. This keeps the drink cold and refreshing.
2. Pour 2 ounces of vodka over the ice, followed by 2 ounces of pomegranate juice and ½ ounce of freshly squeezed lime juice. Give it a gentle stir to combine the flavors.
3. Slowly pour 4 ounces of chilled ginger beer over the mixture. Stir gently again to ensure everything is well mixed, but don't overdo it to keep the fizz intact.
4. Add a generous handful of fresh pomegranate seeds to the mug for a pop of color and texture. Place a lime wedge or slice on the rim, and tuck in a few fresh mint leaves for a fragrant finish.

Serves 1

ingredients

- **2 ounces vodka**
- **2 ounces pomegranate juice (fresh or store-bought)**
- **½ ounce freshly squeezed lime juice (about ½ lime)**
- **4 ounces ginger beer (chilled)**
- **Fresh pomegranate seeds (for garnish)**
- **Lime wedges or slices (for garnish)**
- **Fresh mint leaves (for garnish)**
- **Crushed ice**

tip from the chef

For an extra-cold drink, chill your copper mug in the freezer for a few minutes before preparing the cocktail.

maple bourbon smash

■□□ | Preparation time: 5 minutes - none

ingredients

- 2 ounces bourbon
- 1 ounce pure maple syrup (adjust to taste)
- ½ ounce freshly squeezed lemon juice (about ½ lemon)
- 1-2 dashes of Angostura bitters (optional, for depth of flavor)
- Fresh mint leaves (about 4-6 leaves, plus extra for garnish)
- Ice cubes
- Club soda or sparkling water (for topping)
- Lemon wedges or slices (for garnish)

method

1. In a cocktail shaker, add 4-6 fresh mint leaves and 1 ounce of pure maple syrup. Gently muddle the mint leaves with a muddler or the back of a spoon to release the mint's flavor, being careful not to tear the leaves too much.
2. Add 2 ounces of bourbon and ½ ounce of freshly squeezed lemon juice to the shaker. If you like, add 1-2 dashes of Angostura bitters for extra complexity. Fill the shaker with ice and shake well until the outside of the shaker feels cold, about 15-20 seconds.
3. Fill a rocks glass with ice and strain the mixture into the glass. If you like your drink a bit more diluted and effervescent, top it off with a splash of club soda or sparkling water.
4. Garnish the drink with a fresh sprig of mint and a lemon wedge or slice. You can also add a small drizzle of maple syrup on top for a touch of sweetness.
5. Serve immediately and enjoy your Maple Bourbon Smash, a perfect blend of warm, rich, and refreshing flavors!

Serves 1

tip from the chef

The Maple Bourbon Smash is a cozy yet refreshing cocktail, ideal for sipping during the fall and winter months or at any festive gathering. The combination of rich bourbon, sweet maple syrup, and aromatic mint makes it a crowd-pleaser.

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