

"A baking Zen priest after our own heart!"—O, *the Oprah Magazine*

❁❁ THE COMPLETE ❁❁

Tassajara Cookbook



Recipes, Techniques, *and* Reflections
from the Famed Zen Kitchen

OVER 300 VEGETARIAN RECIPES

Edward Espe Brown

The Complete
TASSAJARA
Cookbook

Recipes, Techniques, and
Reflections from the Famed
Zen Kitchen

Edward Espe Brown

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

John David Simpkins



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for my daughter

LICHEN

*Loving you at first glance,
and wishing you health and happiness,
joy and well-being.*

Cooking is not a mystery.
The more heart we put out
the more heart we put in.
To bring cooking alive
we give our life. Giving
our life willingly we don't
get put out.

Washing cutting cooking cleaning,
finding ways to give life to our
life.

Not knowing already how and
what to do,
practice feeling it
out of what is not known
through the warmth and anxiety,
not sticking to a particular way,
insisting it is the only way,
open to feeling out what is

possible,
what gives life to our life.

To feel out our left hand, our back,
our toes,
to feel out our breathing, our
movements, our stance,
to savor the taste of a radish or a
fresh fig,
this is our freedom, this is our
wisdom—
Spirit moves.
The mystery is that it is possible to
do
what we don't know how to do.

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PREFACE

PUTTING TOGETHER *THE COMPLETE TASSAJARA COOKBOOK* HAS been quite the adventure in time travel, as the materials that make up this current volume go back thirty-five years to the first edition of *Tassajara Cooking*, and twenty-two years to the original edition of *The Tassajara Recipe Book*. Materials from *Tomato Blessings and Radish Teachings* (published in 1997) fill out these pages. As *Tassajara Cooking* and *Tomato Blessings* have been out of print for a number of years, I am delighted to have found a new venue for sharing these

writings.

Much of my initial cooking and writing developed out of my experiences at Tassajara—a Zen retreat center in the Santa Lucia mountains of California where I was the head cook and baker for two and a half years. During this time I came to see my task as empowering people to cook, not just to follow recipes, but to cook—to see, smell, taste, touch, and to know one's experience closely enough to act on it, to bring forth food. While I now find the early writing in *Tassajara Cooking* to be rather immature—and I have rewritten most of it!—the basic principles still seem apt and relevant: placing emphasis on awakening one's own capacity to respond to circumstances; to be inspired by the

ingredients; to know for yourself what's what; to go beyond getting it right; to making food alive with *your* aliveness.

One Zen admonition has it that, “to give instructions is like gouging a wound in good flesh.” Let your innate capacity flourish! And so I wrote *Tassajara Cooking* largely without recipes in the usual sense, listing ingredients without listing quantities. The basic instruction for each recipe was, you *can* do it, go ahead. One friend was so enthusiastic, saying that she had always wanted to cook like that, using what is on hand—but that when company was coming she would still get out a “real cookbook.”

After reviewing the material in *Tassajara Cooking*, I realized that thirty-five years ago there was no mention of

balsamic vinegar, goat cheese, sun-dried tomatoes, red bell peppers. Times have changed. Not that more people are cooking—there are probably fewer—but those who are cooking have a larger palette of ingredients to choose from. And so many more fresh greens: arugula, dinosaur kale, mesclun salad mix, fresh basil, thyme, chives, oregano—a great delight for those of us who love live flavors.

Since writing *Tassajara Cooking* I came to have a greater appreciation of the virtue of recipes—not that you have to follow them exactly, but hey, here's something that works, something you could try, something you could build on. Following recipes can add to your repertoire of possibilities, and you grow

as a cook. Out came *The Tassajara Recipe Book*, recipes collected from several years of (many people!) cooking for visitors during the summer guest season at Tassajara. While *Tassajara Cooking* was more about a day-in, day-out approach to cooking, *The Tassajara Recipe Book* was more about tried-and-true standards.

The Tassajara Recipe Book also had some poem-like writings expressing facets of Zen teaching. Similar to my understanding of cooking—work sincerely and offer what you have to offer—I have offered these somewhat unpolished efforts at expressing possibilities for deepening awareness. And these poems have carried over to the new book. If they touch you, fine, and if not, hey, find something that

does. To be touched you need only give your bright, warm-hearted awareness to something—the world is full of things that will light up with your clear attentiveness.

The third book, which has largely found its way into *The Complete Tassajara Cookbook*, is *Tomato Blessings and Radish Teachings*, which appeared after a long labor in 1997. With forty-five stories and one hundred recipes I consider it my best book, as it recollects more than thirty years of Zen practice and cooking—(again I am so pleased to have much of this material back in print!). This is not writing that conveys the illusion that you, too, could become masterful at cooking (if you just do what I tell you to do). Instead I convey that if you have the heart for it, while you work on cooking, cooking will

work on you, and refine you, so that you come out of the fire even more large-hearted.

Many of the recipes in *Tomato Blessings* are simple and carefully crafted, and I talk about what I consider to be the five flavors and three tastes that characterize all foods. In my cooking classes, students inspired by my talk will ask me, “where are you getting this?” The answer is, “I taste things carefully.”

The essays in *Tomato Blessings* helped to inspire the critically acclaimed movie *How to Cook Your Life*, made by the German film director Doris Doerrie, who said, “Ed, let’s make a movie about Zen Master Dogen’s *Instructions to the Cook*.” She had highlighted all the stories in the book that she wanted me to

articulate in my teachings for the film. Bless her heart—Doris is a remarkable person—and most of the essays used in the movie are included in this book.

By compiling the unique aspects of these three books into one volume, I hope to present a complete approach to cooking—one that gives you recipes to follow, and also allows you to experiment, explore, and reflect upon the joys of cooking, as well as the value of being transformed in the process.

Of course, these books would never have come about if it weren't for Tassajara and all the people practicing there over the years. As I write this I am poignantly aware that Tassajara itself just escaped the flames of the basin fire in Big Sur. It's been three or four weeks since

the fire first started from lightning storms, and many people worked extremely hard putting in sprinkler systems, foil wrapping, fire breaks, and toward the end there was an evacuation notice which five people decided not to heed. I was so grateful and relieved when I heard that they had decided to stay put, and “meet the fire.” And this morning hearing the news that most of Tassajara survived, I burst into tears. I hadn’t realized the depth of my concern and worry for the welfare of this sacred spot in the depth of the Los Padres National Forest.

Innumerable beings have brought us this food and the culture of cooking. Let’s share it warmly with one another.

Blessings,

Edward Brown
Inverness, California
Summer 2008

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS BEGIN AND END WITH EXPRESSING BOUNDLESS love and gratitude for my Zen teacher Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, who met me face to face, and inspired a whole generation of Zen companions who grew up with me. We meditated together breathing, worked together laboring—it's as though our bodies are intermingled. I wouldn't be here without you. "Thank you," does not begin to say how much I owe you my life.

Acknowledging my father Frank who in his way set me on the path: "Be warned and understand truly there are two fishes

swimming in the sea, the vastness of which no man can describe, but the sages say the two are one, they are one yet they are two.”

Acknowledging my mother Frances who died shortly after my third birthday: how tender and how true you've always loved me.

Acknowledging my mother Anne who came into my life at age seven: a librarian, lover of drama and writing, you knew I could do it.

Acknowledging my publisher Shambhala: including Sam Bercholz who originally saw the promise of *The Tassajara Bread Book* (and turned me into an author). Hazel Bercholz who continues to reinvision the original vision of Shambhala. Peter Turner who voiced to

me his conception of this three books in one. And most of all my thankfulness for Jennifer Brown who has been simply an excellent editor: patient, deft, and accurate in turning these bits and pieces of three books into a coherent whole. I know it's working when I almost always say about her edits, "Yes, of course, let's do that."

Acknowledging Doris Doerrie, who made a movie *How to Cook Your Life* featuring my teaching. To be the object of Doris' interest and attention was to be exceptionally well valued, exceptionally well received. Such a confirmation of my life's work.

Acknowledging with warm-hearted gratitude John David Simpkins for his illustrations and Wendy Bernal for taking most of the photos that became the

instructional illustrations.

My current writing venue has been an incredible gift and blessing provided by Marj Stone, my dear landlady, mother of five daughters—I am honored to feel like a son—and to have a haven to write.

The sky—clear blue, foggy gray, puffy white clouds; the sun—yellow, orange, glowing pink; the ridges and beaches; waters of the bay and the ocean: I wouldn't be here writing without you. My gratitude.

And acknowledging my innumerable readers for their appreciation and devotion—thank you. To your joy and well-being.

INTRODUCTION



I WAS TWENTY WHEN I STARTED COOKING FOR MYSELF IN A thirty-nine dollars a

month flat on Byington Street in San Francisco. My girlfriend Judith and I shared one bedroom and Bob rented the other bedroom—there was also a living room—so each of us paid thirteen dollars a month for housing. While the site of the flat is now somewhere in the middle of a vast Safeway parking lot and while, sad to say, I haven't seen Judith in about forty years, I am still cooking and eating, sharing food with family and friends.

In a life of change, food and cooking are still bringing joy and sustenance into my world. In 1965 I got out a friend's copy of *The Macrobiotic Cookbook* by George Oshawa and began cutting up vegetables; now I am making up recipes and writing them down. We keep doing different things, or the same things

differently. As growing beings our taste and aesthetic develops and changes. Our interest shifts, the focus is refined.

Cooking those macrobiotic-inspired dinners I became engrossed with vegetables, curious to see the inside of a green pepper, enthralled by the white “tree” which came into view when cutting open a purple cabbage, the burst of aroma from the newly cut surface of a yellow onion. And I studied for the fun of it. At the thrift store I’d bought a set of beige-brown soup-sized wooden bowls and another stack of bowls coated with Day-Glo enamels: candy-apple red, metallic silver, emerald green, brilliant lavender. Which cut-up pieces of which vegetable went in what bowl? The orange of carrot in the enamel green or the simple wood?

The off-white of onion slices in the buffed silver or the intense lavender?

Cutting open the vegetables left me awestruck. Where did all these things come from? Why are they the way they are? And how is it that I am here with them, resonating in harmony and well-being? And no, I didn't need scientific answers—I wanted poetry, like Rumi, who said, “What was said to the rose that made it bloom is being spoken here in my heart now.” Cutting open the vegetables I found something inside: presence, awesome spacious presence. How do people not notice this?

At that time I was already wondering how to convey this to people—that the spiritual world is right at hand; that food is precious, and we are precious beings;

that hearts can delight in cooking. Over the years I have endeavored to share this with a wide audience. Of course cooking is about getting it right, making food that is edible and delicious, but more than this cooking is about awakening your innate capacities for living in the fullness and vitality of the present, touching and being touched by life itself. Again, to quote Rumi, “What else would human beings want?”

When I was working on *The Tassajara Bread Book* in 1969, my friend and Sensory Awareness teacher Charles Brooks said, “Ed, why are you working on another cookbook? We need more cooks, not more cookbooks.” And I tried to tell him, “Charles, that’s what I am trying to do with my cookbooks—teach people to

cook.”

And this seems so rare, that we could encourage each other to know and trust our inherent good-heartedness and our capacity to sense and know for ourselves, to respond, offering our sincere effort. This becomes a major life undertaking, as mostly people understand that if you want to do something, you get a recipe for how to do it so that it will come out right (and you will not have to struggle). You follow the directions, you do what you are told, and things will come out the way they should. While I have been encouraging people to wake up, to taste and smell, to learn and know for themselves how to cook.

Things come out the way they do, not because you were doing what you were

told, but because you gave your attention to the ingredients, and to the process. Not everyone will want to learn to cook like this, but for those who do, the experience is liberating, energizing, invigorating. Do people have any idea how annoying and challenging it is for a cook to start using scales and measuring spoons instead of hands, and to look at clocks instead of the food? What's actually needed to create a "recipe" when the deeper, truer recipe is like Zen Master Tenkei saying, "See with your eyes, smell with your nose, taste with your tongue . . ." You create the recipe by living it.

In this book I want to encourage your creative capacities, so while I am offering you specific recipes, I am also providing you with very simple recipes (which do

not give quantities) and also general layouts for how to make a soup or prepare a salad. Of course the explicit recipes will be useful, but I also want you to know that you can learn to cook by giving your attention to the ingredients and to the activity. I am aiming to give you enough structure so that in the process of cooking you can be learning to trust your observations and perceptions—and still end up with a delicious dish. You can also delight in using your consciousness to inhabit new physical movements: cutting, washing, examining, mixing, folding. With practice you can make yourself at home in the physical experience of cooking so that there is an invigorating flow of energy, rather than the solidified drudgery that marks much of our lives.

I want you to know that cooking is not just working on food, but working on yourself and working on other people. It's working on how you work. Cooking as self transformation, rather than the magical process that appears on TV shows, where everything is prepped ahead of time. You watch the show and it looks as though cooking does not involve work, effort, time but is performance, show . . . a great recipe. Everything just comes together—and it takes no time to bake. Put it in the oven . . . take it out . . . its ready! The real magic is that you could grow kind, generous, and larger-hearted in the process of preparing food—because you give your heart to the activity. You are realizing yourself by realizing food. Instead of looking good, you are becoming

you. You realize that it's OK to struggle sometimes, and that struggle can turn into food. I've wanted people to recognize that much of cooking, perhaps most of it, is work, plain old-fashioned work—doing something with your hands. And what a blessing that is to do something with your hands! I know I'm going against the grain here in a culture which has de-valued working, and elevated deals and sales, savvy manipulations and lordly takeovers—don't get your hands dirty, leave the work to others. As a culture we've largely forgotten the benefits of work, and have so little appreciation for hands and what they are capable of doing.

So I have wanted to explain that work is not just work, something you have to do to get paid, something you do to get it out

of the way, but something that is the way: the way to be more intimately involved in life, the way to be more intimately human, awake and alive to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables; the way to connect with this world with this life. And I am not sure that it is possible to teach this. But I endeavor to point out that you could be studying how to use your hands, studying how to do any particular task so that it is easy and enjoyable, so that your body has rhythm. How did work get to be so alien to people that we would no longer understand the joy and fulfillment and satisfaction of hands touching and doing. The difference between *chore*—where you are repeating an activity over and over, while telling your self it is boring—and *joy*—when you are studying, feeling,

sensing the way—is the difference between being alienated and making yourself at home.

Even to say this is probably to discredit the capacity of chores to awaken bliss and well-being. Clearly joy can be there in the chore of tending to the everyday affairs which nourish life. Please, go right ahead. Enjoy yourself. Offer your effort.

I know that when I started cooking, I thought that I could gain love and approval by being a good cook. Over time that seemed less and less relevant—I was cooking to express my love, giving it all away. Cooking became an opportunity for the depth of my love to surface and become manifest. Certainly we love our family, our friends, and with cooking we give it color and flavor, body and taste.

We make it edible and not simply abstract. Instead of staying in your head, the love flows and becomes embodied in food. And we share it with one another.

Finally, you will discover that much of cooking is studying how you study best: what works for you, and what doesn't; what is useful, what isn't. I'm guessing that you will find out that fiascoes come with the territory, and also you'll discover that you can do what is inconceivable. See what guides your study and your learning.

Blessings on this food. Thank you for your effort.

October 2008

PART ONE

Understanding the Basics (So You Can Improvise from the Start)



Entering the Kitchen



WHAT BRINGS US TO THE KITCHEN IS HUNGER, HUNGER FOR food, hunger to feed others. What brings us to the kitchen is love, conviviality, connection—we're finding a place at the table of life. No simple matter to bring forth food, no

simple matter to receive nourishment. Beginning where we are, utilizing our gifts, working with our hindrances, the way to be a cook is to start cooking.

You may be worrying about how the food will turn out, believing that the results have to be just right, measuring up to some imagined or ingrained taste. You may stress that your food is “not good enough” and that it will reflect poorly on you, and that you are only as good as your last *performance*. As long as you are busy giving out grades, there’s no help for it, so go ahead, give the critic a rest, begin and continue: with yourself, with others, with the vegetables. Begin and continue with what is in front of you.

Focusing your attention and making a wholehearted effort will not guarantee

success, but in your heart you'll know you've given your heart. And when you are quiet and still inside, you'll know that your *original* self-worth is not something which can be measured, increased or decreased. You learn what you can by following recipes and listening to advice, and you go your own way.

You go ahead and offer yourself, entering each activity thoroughly, freshly, vitally. There is completely no secret: simply plunging in, allowing time, making space, giving energy, tending each situation with warm-hearted effort. The results will follow, because you are working at it, working it out. Studying closely, you realize that everything is helping: the spoon, the knife, the carrots, the hunger; broken plates and broken

plans. Carrying on through the sometime drudgeries and heartaches, you are realizing what brought you into the kitchen: food, nourishment, joy, intimacy, ever larger-hearted.

GIVING YOURSELF PERMISSION TO COOK

Who says you can't cook? I give you permission. You can look with your eyes and feel with your hands, smell with your nose and taste with your tongue. You can think and create, be inspired, or stumble along. You keep finding your way.

Some years ago a couple of friends thought they would make a series of videos of me teaching cooking classes and

talking about Zen. However, when we did a sample video, I came across rather woodenly, so we shelved the idea. Turns out I am camera shy. In the meantime my would-be producers had written a fundraising letter promising, “Ed Brown will teach even inveterate meat eaters how to produce vegetarian masterpieces.” I begged to differ.

“Excuse me,” I said, “but that’s just the point. I am not going to teach people how to produce vegetarian masterpieces, as though there were no reason to cook unless they could make a masterpiece. I want to encourage people simply to cook, to be willing to cook ordinary food they find enjoyable to eat. I’m trying to remove the pressure people feel to produce masterpieces or ‘don’t even bother.’”

Since the project was shelved, we didn't need to rewrite the letter.

You can learn many things about cooking, about ingredients, cutting, combinations, and procedures, but even more fundamentally you can learn to act on your own experience, outside of recipes, relying on your innate capacity to taste and sense and decide for yourself what you like. By this I do not mean following your instincts, which seems to me a rather amorphous concept, but being present, carefully observing the obvious, acquainting your palate with your palette.

When I helped Deborah Madison write *The Greens Cookbook* we worked very hard to produce a well-crafted manuscript. She edited the recipes on which I worked, and I edited her recipes.

Then the two of us went through all the material together, and finally we went through the whole manuscript with a cookbook editor, checking everything: Does Parmesan have a capital “P” every time it is used? Is that “4” or “four”? We thought we had a highly polished draft, so we were dismayed when the manuscript came back with numerous pink press-apply labels sticking out the right side.

Where we had written, “Cook the onions until they are translucent,” the little label would read, “How long?” Where we had written, “Season to taste with vinegar,” the question was, “How much?” Deborah and I were pretty frustrated and annoyed because we were trying to teach people to COOK!, not by following directives but by paying attention to the

process. We were giving out visual and sensory cues, not times and amounts. Are you going to cook by looking at the food or by looking at the clock?

Finally we came to a recipe in the pasta section where we had written, “Cook the vegetables until they are as tender as you like,” and our editor asked, “How long? How do we know?” We threw up our hands. “If you don’t know what you like, who does?” we raged at the heavens, or “Establish a standardized ‘chew’ which you will use to test whether or not something is ‘tender,’ then place food in mouth and apply standardized ‘chew.’ If standardized chew manages to divide food in mouth, call that ‘tender,’ say you ‘like it’ by definition.”

But clearly there is no definitive

answer. You just have to wing it and feel for yourself. You're the expert on whether or not you like something. You have eyes and ears, a nose and a mouth, likes and dislikes (which can be revised sometimes). You can learn to trust your own taste, which will change and develop, get tired or be stimulated, as you go along.

More than twenty years ago *The Wall Street Journal* printed a couple of articles about food. The first, called "Even Canned Corn Stumps Modern Cook," said that the Pillsbury Company had tried taking the directions off of its canned corn but got so many calls from consumers wondering what to do, that it put the directions back on. The directions read: "Put corn in saucepan on heated burner."

I thought that was pretty funny, and I was laughing when I told the story to a friend of mine, forgetting that her husband does most of the cooking in their house. “But Ed,” she protested, “I’m like that. Do you drain the corn or not?”

She is an incredibly creative and productive artist and an amazingly good-hearted friend, and I cannot believe that she is as clueless as she makes it sound, but when it comes to something as esoteric as canned corn, you better hope her husband is cooking.

Accompanying the canned-corn article was one headlined “How Much Will People Pay Not to Cook? Plenty.” This piece pointed out that people will pay three to five times as much money for prepared foods as for the plain

ingredients, even for something quite simple like scalloped potatoes. This basic fact explains why turning raw materials into “product” (being a manufacturer) is a much more lucrative business than producing the raw materials (being a farmer). The real work that farmers are doing is not as highly valued as manufacturing.

Personally I do not understand how people can afford all these “value-added” products. Maybe I just don’t work hard enough at earning money, but I find the work of handling the ingredients themselves to be quite satisfying. This is why I am so pleased when I receive a letter from someone who senses the liberation in learning a basic cooking skill. One reader wrote to tell me that he

felt as though he had completed a rite of passage: “Since I have learned to make bread from your book,” he said, “I feel as though I have re-owned my life from corporate America.”

We all have the capacity to re-own our life. We are wonderfully capable of finding out how to live in a way which is nourishing and satisfying. Thank you for your effort.

So I'd like to share with you some of the things I've found useful in the craft of cooking, things that you may also wish to study and practice—remembering that you are also welcome to find your own entryways into cooking. One thing pivotal for me has been discovering the joys of working with a sharp knife.

HANDLING A KNIFE

If you're interested in preparing vegetables with some proficiency, get a good knife, keep it sharp, and learn how to use it. An inexpensive paring knife, although it's better than nothing, will not do a good job in general kitchen use. The knife you see in most of the pictures in this book is a Japanese vegetable knife. This is, simply, a fantastic knife for cutting vegetables, because it is made solely for that purpose. With a very narrow, very sharp blade, it can knife through vegetables and cheese, whereas a chef's knife is a bit more V-shaped for slicing the flesh of meat. Still, a chef's knife, with its curving blade, will make an excellent alternative. Chef's knives come in several

lengths, but seven inches is plenty long enough for home use.



Nowadays both of these knives are made so that they do not stain when cutting foods with high acid content, such as oranges and tomatoes. While some people value a serrated stainless steel blade for cutting bread and, at times, tomatoes, I use my Japanese knife for this as well—with one knife I can cut everything but bone.

Utilizing a sharp knife (and a cutting

board) allows you to cut vegetables into a variety of beautiful shapes. The cut surfaces also release flavor, allow for quicker cooking, and make for easier chewing. So aesthetically, there will be attractive colors and shapes, and the flavors will be brighter and fuller.

Before moving on to the detailed instructions for working with a good kitchen knife, I'd like to say a few words about liberating your hands. Our hands love to handle things, to do things: knead bread, caress cheeks, dig with a shovel, fiddle with wiring, pluck guitar strings. Hands that are idle grow restless and bored and, worse perhaps, begin to feel useless and unappreciated. It's not the body that's weak, but the mind. Hands love to do what hands can do, but the mind

often says, “No, you can’t. I don’t feel like it.” The hands are ready, the mind is reluctant.

Although techniques for cutting are described and pictured below, you may find that the best way to learn is to practice putting your awareness in your hands and feeling what the hands are actually doing. When you do this your hands become more alive, and you’ll notice that the hands do well when you are not telling them what to do, but letting them feel out for themselves what seems like a good way to do something and letting them try various ways and methods. Hands like that. They don’t appreciate being bossed around.

Hands have amazing intelligence, so while they are cutting, the eyes do not

necessarily have to be directing every movement. About a third of the sensory neurons running from the body to the brain come from the hands, and about a third of the motor neurons spreading from the brain to the body go to the hands. That's a tremendous amount of potential intelligence, which you activate by allowing your hands to feel out what to do instead of telling them what to do.

Over time you can learn to trust that your hands know really well how to be hands. Your eyes can relax and work in harmony with the hands.

Letting your hands find out how to be hands is vitally important—it is a form of liberation. Then they can resume their natural responsiveness to things and with it their energy, joy, and vitality. Their

inherent love and helpfulness emerges. When the hands are happy, that can make a being pretty happy, too.

FINDING OUT HOW TO CUT

To become proficient at cutting will require study and—like learning to play a musical instrument—patient, on-going practice. You sharpen your mind to keenness, just as you would the knife. Find a cutting surface that is at a comfortable height (usually just below the level of your forearms when your elbows are bent at right angles). And you'll also need an adequate cutting board—I still prefer wood, although you may find plastic suitable. For a while, white plastic cutting boards were being touted as cleaner and

more hygienic than wood, but more recent studies have shown that wood actually harbors fewer bacteria. Those made of good-quality hardwoods will not gouge or splinter, and will be easy to clean. Periodically I scrub mine with soap and water, rinse, dry, and occasionally soak with mineral oil.

I am going to describe a rather detailed approach to cutting, so please don't worry about trying to follow every detail. Even though you don't cut exactly according to these instructions, you may get an idea of some new possibilities to try out. As you try things out giving attention to your hands, you can study the difference between what is familiar and what is truly easy. This is an important point as what is truly easy may initially feel awkward, as

it is unfamiliar.

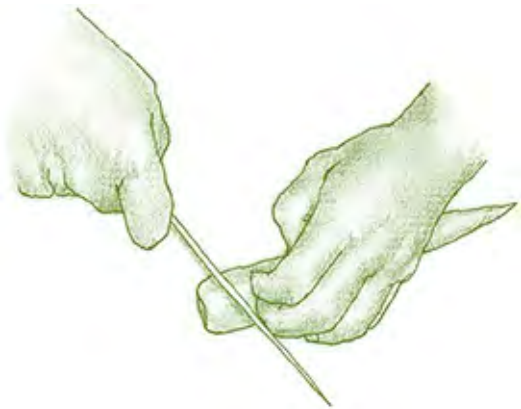
We are usually pretty handy with our dominant hand and awkward with the other, so the key to fast, efficient, effortless cutting is to develop the capacity of the nonknife hand to hold, manage, and manipulate the vegetables while it guides the knife with the last knuckle of its middle finger. The dominant hand just cuts. See what you can find out.

The Nonknife Hand

A pivotally important point is how you hold your nonknife (left, if you are right-handed) hand: Each and every fingertip is curled slightly back, carefully, mindfully, continually tucked back so that no fingertips are left sticking out straight where the knife can find them—ouch! And

you can use the last knuckle of the middle finger of the nonknife hand to guide the knife—the side of the knife blade rests against that knuckle and cuts where that knuckle is. People watching me do this ask, “How can you do that? Aren’t you going to cut yourself?”





The flat side of the knife is not going to cut anything, no matter how much it rubs against your knuckle, so the key to avoid cutting yourself is not to lift the cutting edge of the knife above your knuckle. Above the vegetable, OK, but not above the knuckle. Observe, study.

The thumb and last finger are often used to grip the sides of the vegetable, while

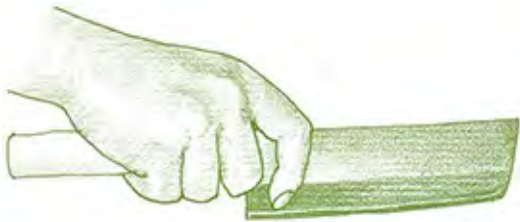
the other three fingers are curled, resting on top. The last knuckle of the middle finger will be the principle guide for the knife, so that knuckle is the farthest extension of the nonknife (usually left) hand.

Your cutting hand is just going to cut cut cut, always guided by the last knuckle of the middle finger of the nonknife hand. The nonknife or guiding hand walks back along the vegetable, the knife following, moving over just as far as the retreating knuckle: it is the nonknife, guiding hand which can learn to move back just the right distance to determine the width of the cut piece. Relaxed eyes! If you want thin slices your guiding hand moves back just a little; if you want thicker pieces your nonknife hand moves back farther between

strokes of the knife. Your nonknife hand guides. Your cutting hand just cuts. Especially when cutting leafy greens, parsley, green onions and so forth, the nonknife hand is also used to keep the ends together in a position to be cut.

Holding the Knife





The knife is held with the thumb and first finger gripping the sides of the blade, just past the handle. The remaining fingers grip the handle. Try it. A slight motion of the fingers and wrist controls the blade's movement. (This is one example of what might feel awkward at first), but this way of holding the knife has at least two distinct advantages over holding the knife by the handle (often with the index finger sticking out on top of the blade): One is that the knife cannot unexpectedly twist in your hand (you are gripping it on both

sides of the blade), and the other is that moving your hand forward on the knife—gripping it on the blade (like “choking up” on a baseball bat or a hammer)—gives you greater facility. Smaller movements of the hand and arm make bigger movements of the knife. Once you get used to it, you’ll never go back.





With knife in hand there are various possible strokes, and there are some principles that are applicable to all of them: Hold the blade perpendicular to the cutting surface, in a comfortable position

in front of you. For the most part you'll be cutting straight down (with some back and forth), so diagonal slices are made by holding the vegetables at an acute angle to the knife, not by changing the knife's position (last illustration).

Probably the single most useful skill to learn in cutting vegetables is using the knife as a saw as well as using it as a chisel, which is what most people tend to do. Using the knife as a saw means moving the knife forward and backward, rather than only chopping straight up and down. Using a chisel (or a chisel-like approach) takes a tremendous amount of energy—a solid blow of the hammer on the end of a chisel or forceful downward pressure on the knife handle. In comparison sliding a saw (or a knife)

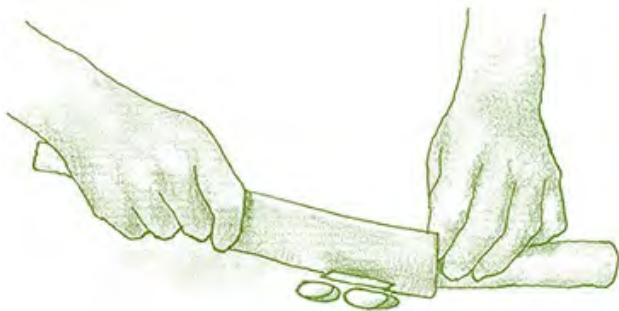
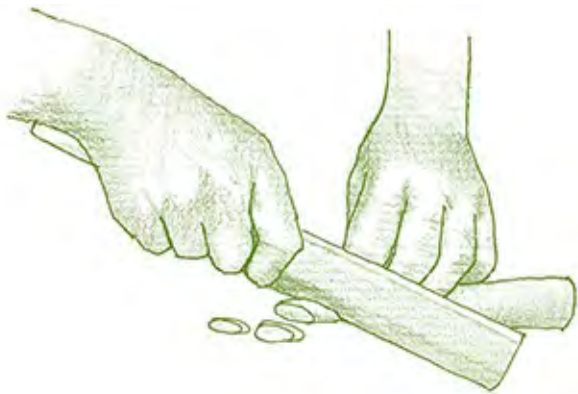
back and forth is restful and easy. You allow the sharpness of the blade to work for you—by sliding it across the vegetable. To combine the sawing motion with the chopping down motion will be the most effective.

Two Ways to Slice

STROKING DOWN AND TOWARD YOU

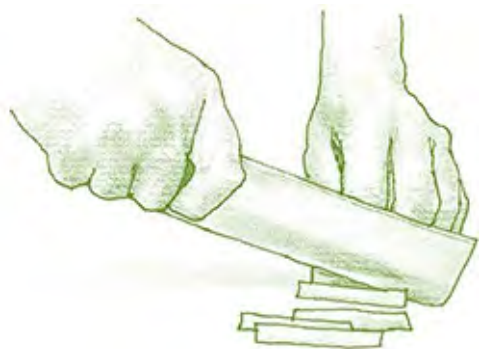
Here's how it works. To cut a diagonal slice of carrot, for instance, hold the tip of the knife on the counter with the cutting edge poised above the carrot (well below the knuckle of your left hand). Stroke down while also moving the knife *toward* you—you've cut a slice of carrot. Now what? Most people want to pick the knife *up*, completely off the table. Then, sure

enough, the knife is poised above the carrot *and* above your knuckles. This is hazardous! Don't do it. *Leave the tip of the knife on the counter* after making the cutting stroke, and slide the knife back into position just above the carrot, well below your knuckle. Cut again, bringing the knife down while you are also sawing toward you. As long as you don't raise the cutting edge of the knife above your knuckle, there is no way to cut yourself, and your nonknife hand can guide the knife.



STROKING DOWN AND AWAY FROM YOU

Cutting in this manner is the classic way to use a French knife, and it is especially useful when the vegetables are lower to the table (cutting potato rounds into french fry strips as opposed to cutting potatoes into rounds). Again place the tip of the knife on the counter with the blade poised above the ingredients to be cut (the tip in this case is closer to the carrot than in the cut shown above), and make the cutting stroke by pushing the knife down while sawing *away* from you. Then return the knife to its raised position, keeping the tip on the table. Cut again, making the stroke down while sawing away from you.



A Third Way to Slice

This method of slicing (using a sawing motion) most resembles chopping. Poising the knife above the vegetable with its cutting edge parallel to the cutting board, you cut, not just down, but forward and down. Or you can cut down while slicing toward you. The stroke down and forward is shown here cutting a beet into slices. Or for larger ingredients, say, slicing a potato, you can start by cutting forward and down, and continuing down and slightly toward you—a circular feeling.

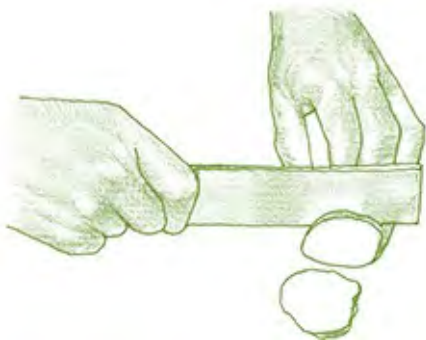
I've wanted to give you some essential cutting suggestions here; more detailed cutting instructions for specific vegetables are included in the chapter on "Working

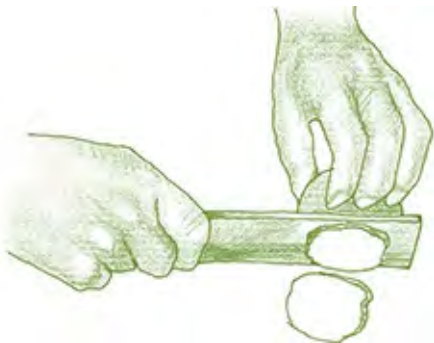
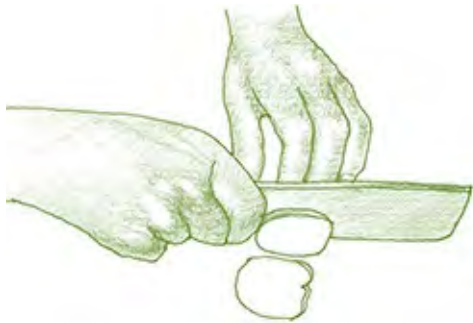
with Your Ingredients,” so check that out as well if you are interested in working on your cutting skills.

The pictures show my accustomed way of cutting, based on my experience of what works well for me. My experience is that slicing down and away (with the tip of the knife on the table) works well with smaller (narrower) things. As the size increases, I find that I prefer to cut slicing down and toward me (again with the tip of the knife kept on the counter). For instance, I may slice down and away when cutting the flat pieces of carrot into matchsticks and down and toward me when cutting a whole carrot stick into rounds or ovals. (And for ingredients which are even higher off the table, using the method shown here for beets and

potatoes.) At first your cutting hand will be very speedy, but slow it down to the pace set by the guiding nonknife hand. Cut steadily, evenly, rhythmically, letting speed come with practice. Feel what your hands are feeling. You can study for yourself what works well for you, while giving yourself an opportunity to try out learning some techniques you've never done before.







The trick is to be willing to try, not to heed that voice which says: “This is too hard” or “I could never cut like that!”

Give your hands a chance to realize themselves, to actualize the activity of cutting.

Mincing

To mince fresh herbs, pitted olives, citrus peel, or nuts, this is the basic procedure: With the ingredient on the counter in front of you, position the knife crosswise in front of you and stabilize the tip of the blade with your nonknife hand. You can do this by placing the fingers of your nonknife hand out flat on top of the knife blade, or by gripping the blade near the tip between thumb and first finger. With the blade stabilized by the nonknife hand, use the knife hand to chop, “walking” the knife away from you between chops, and then back toward you. Slightly tilting the top of

the knife in the direction of the “walk” seems to help. Stop periodically and scrape the pile back into place. (This is illustrated in the piece on [garlic](#). See also [mincing parsley](#).)

CARE AND FEEDING OF KNIVES

I love cutting vegetables, and part of the reason I love cutting vegetables is because I have sharp knives. When I have to work with a dull knife, I find that cutting vegetables is tiresome and tedious. I want to go on loving to cut vegetables, so I go on sharpening my knives. Also I know to take my knives with me if I am going some place where I might be asked to cook, because most kitchens do not have sharp knives.

Knives remain dull because the activity of sharpening is considered to be dull. And the duller the knives become, the more work is required to resharpen them. It's easier to sharpen a sharp knife than a dull one, not just because it's less work but because the knife has not lost its "definition" of sharpness.

Most of the sharpness of knives comes from sharpening them, rather than how you use them, so if you sharpen your own knife you get to make the rules about how to use it. Now I know that to keep a knife in good shape, I need to be cautious about how I use it. I know, for instance, how I ruined one of my knives by using it to cut up an old Styrofoam cooler that wouldn't fit into the trash can until I sawed it into smaller pieces. That's pretty obvious. Yet what

about pushing cut pieces of vegetable to the side—some people consider that this action dulls the knife.

Personally I would find it terribly annoying to have to put down my knife and pick up some other implement to push the cut pieces aside. So after I have done some cutting, I put the cutting edge of the knife flush against the cutting board and push the cut pieces to the side to make more space to cut. Or I use the knife to scrape the cut pieces into a bowl. Simple. My knife is sharp because I sharpen it.

When you sharpen your own knife, you get to use it the way you want to use it. When someone else sharpens your knife for you, he or she makes the rules. In professional kitchens each cook has his or her own knife, and one takes care of one's

own sharpening.

Sharpness starts with making your mind sharp. This means approaching the activity of knife-sharpening with some keenness, which will include focus, steadiness, investigation, energy, exactness, patience, concentration. To achieve sharpness, you steadily and energetically focus your attention on the activity, investigating how to do it, examining the results, adjusting your effort, patiently persevering, focusing

Sharpness takes time and steady awareness, or the hands will waver. Observing various indications, listening to the sound of the knife on the sharpening stone, sensing with your hands the subtle changes—this is sharpness. If a knife is really dull, working on it for a

concentrated ten minutes a day for a week will probably be more effective than one unfocused hour. Cultivate your sharpness over time, and the results will follow. Knives will cut easily and effortlessly.

Instructions are below.

Sharpening

Dull knives make cutting difficult. Also they can be more dangerous than sharp ones. More pressure must be exerted when using them, hence less control is possible—the added force is easily put into cutting the cook as well as the vegetable. A sharp knife, on the other hand, cuts cleanly and readily, so you don't end up hacking away at things and having the knife bounce off the vegetable and into your hand.

THE STONE FOR SHARPENING

Since various knife sharpening gizmos are self-explanatory, the sharpening instructions here concentrate on how to use a flat sharpening stone. The advantage of working with a stone is that you can sharpen the knife at the angle you choose. Working with such a stone is a fine way to sharpen your mind as well as the knife.

Several kinds of stones are available. In addition to oil stones and water stones, there are also sharpening systems with diamond grit embedded in the metal. (I still use water with these.) Oil stones, often called Carborundum, generally come with two grits bonded together—a coarser one for rougher work and a finer side for most use. Water stones are available from specialty shops and woodworking

catalogues—800 to 1000 grit is good for the fine Japanese vegetable-cutting knives. Both of these stones are about 8" by 2½" by 1".

OIL

Use a light machine oil with the oil stone, say 3-In-One. Vegetable oils will gum up the stone and make it useless. The oil suspends the minute metal filings, keeping them from filling up the grit of the stone. Be moderate with the oil, but not stingy, and wipe the stone dry (I usually scrub it first) so that it doesn't get gummy.

WATER

Soak the water stone in water ahead of time, and then keep some water handy to

sprinkle on the stone to keep it wet.

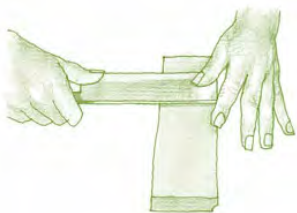
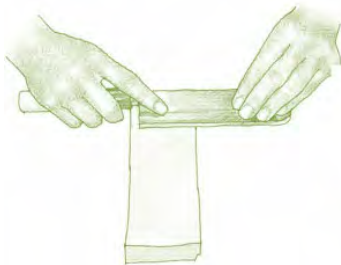
How To Sharpen

The Japanese vegetable-cutting knife works best with a very sharp edge—a lengthy bevel tapers down to the cutting edge—so when sharpening this knife for vegetable cutting, keep the angle between blade and stone at about 5 degrees, see [illustrations](#). (The classic chef's knife bevels in more abruptly at the very edge, and is generally sharpened at more of a 35-degree angle.) I know this is hard to picture but you are aligning the flat sides (or bevel) of the cutting edge with the stone. On the Japanese knife the grinding process will leave a shiny strip about an eighth of an inch wide along the side of the blade at the cutting edge—all the way,

evenly. If there are scratch marks farther up the sides of the blade, the knife has been held too flat against the stone. If there is a burr along the edge (moving the flat of your thumb up toward the edge, you find a slight ridge there), you have been sharpening the knife at too high an angle.

Sharpening is a matter of touch and personal style, but if you haven't sharpened knives before, here's a technique to get you started: Have the stone (oiled or watered) on a steady surface at a comfortable working height. Place the edge of the knife against the surface of the stone at a shallow angle (see [How to Sharpen](#) for instructions about angle) and begin "slicing" the top of the stone—very thin slices! The classic method for doing this is by drawing the

length of the knife across the surface while also moving it from one end of the stone to the other end. The upper two illustrations shown here demonstrate moving the knife away from you on the stone. (Another option is moving the knife in small circles on the stone.) After you have made a number of sharpening strokes on one side of the blade, turn the blade over and bring it back toward you, again making a number of strokes (see the [lower two illustrations](#)). Continue working patiently and carefully on both sides of the knife for several minutes.



With a large knife (rather than a paring knife) it will be easier to use both hands, moving the blade with the cutting hand on the handle and applying pressure with the nonknife hand toward the end of the blade.

Use enough pressure to keep the edge firmly in contact with the stone. Sharpening is much more a matter of time and patience than of force (and most importantly, holding the knife at the appropriate angle in relation with the stone). Remember too, that dull knives will take much longer to sharpen than those touched up regularly. To check on your progress, hold the knife in front of you with its edge up, so that the light catches the very edge. Move the edge back and forth in the light. Any bright spots? A sharp edge will reflect practically no light, while a reflection shows a flatness. If there are “flats,” sharpen some more, concentrating on those spots. You can also refer to the beginning of this section to check on what to look for when

sharpening one of the Japanese knives.

Caring for Knives

It will be to your, and your knife's, advantage not to leave it lying about, especially not amongst all the other clutter in the sink or in a drawer where you can't always know when you're about to come up against its sharpness, and where the edge will be quickly lost knocking against other hard objects. There are various kinds of knife racks which keep knives sharp and out of harm's way. Also, no time or energy lost looking. It's right there.

Clean knives carefully before putting them away, using a sponge or scrub pad and dry them off. You cherish the knife with care and attention, and when you

cherish the knife you cherish yourself.

EQUIPMENT

We've talked a lot about knives, sharpening, and cutting, and there is a great array of other equipment available for kitchen work. I find a few items particularly useful. So I want to tell you about them, even though I tend to skip over the equipment sections when I read cookbooks. Over time you will discover which items make all the difference for you between drudgery and joyful endeavor.

Electric Coffee Mill or Spice Grinder

Using an electric mill to freshly grind your

herbs and spices provides more intense, immediate flavors. The spices in those jars that have been on the shelf for longer than you can remember have no flavor left in them.

This alone can make a tremendous difference in your cooking, as you can grind cumin, coriander, or fennel seeds; cinnamon, cloves, allspice, or anise; cardamom; and dried chilies. I also use my coffee mill to grind nuts and sesame seeds into meal for use in sauces and desserts. Occasionally I even use it to grind lemon or orange peel, stripped from the fruit with a vegetable peeler, into zest.

I recommend an electric coffee mill rather than a spice grinder because the spice grinders have a less sturdy construction, which is not nearly so

functional—what’s the point? And if you also like to grind your own coffee, I suggest you get two coffee mills, so that the coffee flavors do not ruin the flavor of the spices and vice versa. (I prefer Krups by the way.)

Heat-Resistant Rubber Spatulas

The ones I used to use were made by Rubbermaid, and they have become an endangered species, because cheaper, less useful spatulas have flooded the market. “Heat-resistant” means they can be used to clean out a hot pan or pot, or to stir things, like garlic and ginger for instance, off the bottom of the pan when cooking. They are firm enough to apply pressure for scraping and flexible enough to bend around between avocado flesh and peel, so that

the flesh pops out whole and beautiful.

Spatulas that are not truly heat-resistant—and some manufacturers have the audacity to say “heat-resistant” and in smaller print: “Caution: will melt if in contact with hot metal”—are often of such flimsy construction as to be useless for scraping.

The Rubbermaid heat-resistant rubber spatula used to be in all the supermarkets, and now I am lucky to find them at all! The problem seems to be that people tend to choose a useless rubber spatula for half the price rather than one that is truly useful. Yet once people at my cooking classes realize how handy they are, they become converts. Now I go to the large home supply stores for these spatulas—not Rubbermaid, but five to six dollars

apiece, not eighteen to twenty dollars like you find at the kitchen boutique stores.

Immersion Blender

A caterer friend gave me her old Cuisinart when she upgraded to a Super-Pro. I found it quite useful at times for blending soups and making multiple batches of tart dough. Still, I have a minimum of counter space, and mostly the Cuisinart sits on the bottom shelf out of the way. Now I don't even know where it is.

For blending I turn to my immersion blender, which is also known as a “blender-on-a-stick.” It is quite practical and effective for most uses, as you can plug it in and then immerse it in soup or sauce to blend, without having the additional dirty food processor, bowls, or

pots to be cleaned. It is also easy to rinse off. Braun makes the one I use, which comes with a convenient wall mount.

Nonstick Frying Pans or Skillets

I resisted Teflon for a long time but now have a couple of pans I use for making crepes. (If you use this kind of pan for crepes, you will find the heat-resistant rubber spatula helpful for lifting the edge of the crepe. Some of my pans are seriously scratched from cooking classes where students tired of using the spatula and switched to metal implements.)

In the last few years I have finally invested in some heavy-duty nonstick frying pans with little circular ridges. They are fabulously useful—for frying potatoes, if nothing else, as well as for

heating leftovers. With a small amount of water and a cover, leftovers can be quickly heated and then turned right out of the pan (if you use a heat-resistant rubber spatula, anyway). A microwave? Where would I put it and what is so convenient? And tell me again, just *what* is it doing to the food?



Pressure Cooker

I find a pressure cooker very useful for cooking beans, as this method takes a third to a quarter of the time that cooking in a regular pot takes. I also use mine for artichokes and beets.

Wooden Items: Cutting Boards, Bread Boards, Salad and Chopping Bowls, Spoons, and So Forth

Wood is alive—it absorbs and loses moisture, air, oils. With too much, or the wrong kind of, washing it will dry out and crack. Dish washing machines leave them more worn. Soaking wooden implements in water can lead to rotting wood. On the other hand, with too little washing the wood will become gummy with a residue of oil and food particles. Wiping wooden

bowls with a damp towel is often recommended, but I have found it useful to rinse with warm water, or to scrub with a dish soap, and then wipe dry.

Food particles and oil will inevitably build up on cutting boards, and then a vigorous cleaning is in order. I like the green frizzy cleaning pads preferably on the back of a sponge to clean these surfaces, and vinegar, which has a mild bleaching effect, can be used in the scrubbing. For foaming action, sprinkle on some baking soda and then scrub with vinegar. Rinse thoroughly and wipe dry. Again, a mild dish soap can be very effective as well.

Wooden implements can be periodically oiled. Scrub off the residual build-up, let dry, and then apply light

mineral oil sparingly, rubbing it in. (Vegetable oils will become rancid in the wood, and linseed oil isn't very good for you.)

Metal Pans: Cast-Iron Skillets, Woks, Cookie Sheets, Bread Pans, and Other Baking Pans

Many baking pans today are “pretempered” or have a nonstick coating; however, cast-iron skillets and other untempered metal utensils require the proper care to keep them from rusting, and also keep food from sticking. Here are the main points: If new, or newly cleaned with soap or scouring, these implements should be “tempered,” a process whereby a couple of layers of vegetable oil are

cooked onto the pan. To temper, warm the pan on top of the stove or in a 300° oven for five minutes. Rub on the oil thinly and evenly, and then bake in a 300° oven for twenty minutes, so that the oil is baked on. Repeat the application of oil, and then the baking.

Proper cleaning will keep this coating intact and will help to preserve pretempered utensils. Don't use the super-abrasive scouring pads when washing. Instead I prefer the white frizzy backing on the sponges which are mildly abrasive compared to the green backing. You can also use a brush or a plastic scouring pad to dislodge the food particles. If necessary, these implements can be soaked and then wiped or brushed clean.

Should a pan lose a significant portion

of its oil coating, or get a gummy build-up on top of it, it is time for a thorough cleaning with soap, and then retempering.

First Aid

I take Band-Aids with me to all cooking events, as many people keep empty boxes in their medicine cabinets, thinking that they have Band-Aids on hand.

I also keep a couple of Chinese herbal remedies close by. Yunnan Paiyao is an excellent and effective Chinese herbal remedy for helping wounds heal. It helps to stop bleeding and prevent bruising and swelling. Friends and I have had great success with it, so I keep it on hand for any knife wounds. It is also a recommended aid for recovery from surgery or for fingers smashed in car

doors. It's available from Chinese herbal stores and often from Chinese groceries, and it's also starting to appear in natural food stores. I found out about Yunnan Paiyao when I worked in a Chinese medicine clinic for a year.

Perhaps you already have a favored burn ointment, but I use a Chinese herbal burn ointment called Chin Wan Hung. We use this now at Tassajara as well. In a pinch you can also use honey.

CARING FOR YOUR KITCHEN

All students should be like milk and water. We are all friends from our past lives.

—SUZUKI ROSHI

Cooking makes cleaning possible, cleaning makes cooking possible. It's all part of working with the world around us, so that we live in health and harmony with our surroundings, and nourish ourselves and one another. To encourage us be good friends and companions with ourselves and with others, with rice and cabbages, with pots and pans, here are some guidelines you may wish to follow—you'll see, the world responds positively to your care.

Clean as you go.

Handle knives with care, clean and replace them in the knife rack after use.

Sponges will be drier and more free of mold if you rinse them and wring them out after use. (This seems like a no-brainer to me, but I have found that most people

cannot be bothered. Go figure.) Keep a set of extra sponges for the floor and spills on the stove, and your dish and counter sponges will stay cleaner.

The towels will stay useful if you fold and hang them up, and if you wash them when dirty, or before. Use the dish towel for dishes, and have another for face and hands.

The counter will be available for further use if you wipe it after using it, and scrubbing from time to time will help preserve it. (Oil from time to time.)

Sweep and mop the floor, and it will smile back at you. Get into the corners, and when you're done, stand the broom on end or hang it on a hook. (Otherwise the bristles are all going to lean over.) After cleaning a greasy floor, sprinkle some salt

if it's still slippery and then sweep some more.

Keep finding ways to use scraps and trimmings, making some stock. Keep finding ways to use the leftovers.

Clean the sinks! Clear the drains!

Be friends with your friends.

Learning to Cook



VEGETABLES MAY BE COOKED SEVERAL POSSIBLE WAYS, OR combination of ways. Studying how each cooking method affects the flavor of vegetables is well worth your attention. Then you can better decide how you wish to cook something.

Sautéing (along with oven roasting) gives vegetables a sweeter, nuttier, toastier flavor, as cooking in oil over high heat converts more of the starches into sugars and some of the sugars caramelize. This is related to why people generally prefer french fries to boiled potatoes, and why so much of Chinese cooking involves stir-frying in a wok: preferable flavors and texture.

Steaming (along with blanching) gives vegetables a cleaner, lighter taste more distinctly like the vegetable being cooked.

The flavor of “clean and refreshing” is an excellent contrast to the richness of foods cooked in oil.

Here are my definitions.

SAUTÉING

I use this word to mean frying vegetables in oil, usually over high heat. Technically, the vegetables are being *sautéed* only if they are dry and each piece has continuous, or at least frequent, contact with the bottom of the pan. If the vegetables are piled up, the ones on top are steaming.

One way to sauté is a variation of the Chinese stir-frying technique: First the pan is heated, then oil is added. A little oil will go a long way here because the hot

pan thins it out. Salt is sprinkled on the oil and roasted momentarily before the vegetables are added. The vegetables are tossed and stirred, so that each piece is coated with the salted oil and none burns. The hot oil and the heat of the pan will work to seal in the juices of the vegetables, but at the same time the salt will be drawing out some moisture from the interior of the vegetable, giving each piece a moist juiciness.

Sautéing is often a first step in combination with steaming, simmering or baking. (You can also sauté in oil without the salt.)

Fry or sear: This is the same as sautéing, or stir-frying, without the stirring or tossing. Some browning is meant to take place. For this method, though, no salt

is sprinkled on the oil.

Sauté-steam: This combination of techniques works well with medium-sized pieces of almost any vegetable, especially those which need added moisture, such as peas. The vegetable is first sautéed, as above, for three to four minutes, then a small amount of liquid—water, stock, wine, soy sauce, vinegar, lemon juice, or a combination—is added and the pan covered with a close-fitting lid. When the liquid is boiling, often immediately, turn the heat down low enough so that the vegetables don't burn while they're steaming. The steaming finishes the cooking in just a few minutes, as quickly as a minute or two, possibly in five to six minutes.

Sauté-simmer: The vegetables are

sautéed for three to four minutes, and then put in a simmering liquid for further cooking, either immediately or later. The simmering part will finish the cooking in a few minutes, a longer time if the liquid needs to be heated. The preliminary sautéing gives the vegetables a toasted, nutty flavor, and total cooking time is less than for straight simmering. This is often useful for vegetable soups.

One way to cook vegetables ahead of time and still have them come out well is to put sautéed vegetables in sauce over low heat, or if nearly done, to put the vegetables with sauce in a double boiler, or in a slow oven.

Sauté-bake: Vegetables may be first sautéed and then put in a baking dish in the oven to complete their cooking. With

some liquid and a lid, the vegetables can steam in the oven. (See “[Roasting or Baking](#)” for more information.) The baking part is likely to take at least fifteen to twenty minutes. The sauté-bake is another suitable way of getting vegetables prepared before the last-minute rush.

SIMMERING OR STEWING

This means that the vegetables are cooking in a liquid in which just a few bubbles are popping to the surface here and there. It is more gentle than boiling, where the whole surface is rolling.

BOILING (OR BLANCHING)

The vegetables cook in boiling water, or possibly a stock. The water or stock is salted, perhaps one-half teaspoon salt to one quart liquid, and heated to boiling. Then the vegetables are added, the pot covered, and the heat left on high until the liquid returns to boiling—although sometimes you may wish to remove the vegetables before the water reboils (I think of this as blanching). This very light cooking can be useful for vegetable salads or simply a crunchier texture and brighter colors than the longer cooking.

If you are cooking the vegetables for a longer period of time, turn the heat down once the water reaches a boil and continue cooking at a gentle rather than raging boil. The vegetables will be best if they are taken out when verging on tenderness,

rather than after they are tender (or beyond!—not so pleasant, those acrid, gummy, dish-water flavors) as they will continue cooking even after being removed from water. Classically, once the vegetables are removed from water, they are put into ice water to stop the cooking. I find it adequate to drain them, and then spread them out on a dish towel on the counter for a few minutes.

Removing the vegetables (or pasta) from the water: Initially I would pour the vegetables and water into a strainer or colander set over another pot. This saves the water for other cooking endeavors. (And if the strainer sits above the level of the still-hot water, the vegetables will stay hot for five or eight minutes, covered.)

Then I discovered Japanese and

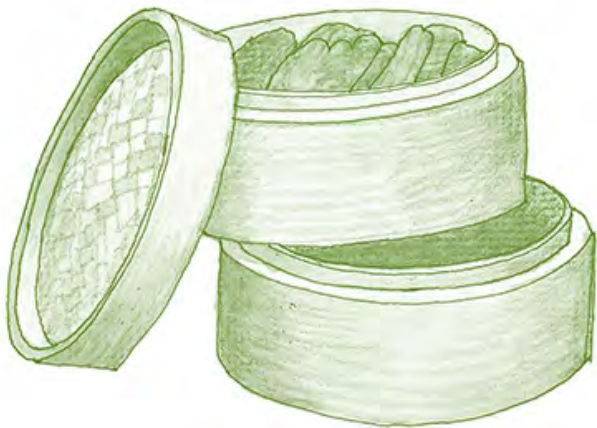
Chinese strainers, that do not have the little hooks to fit over the sides of the pot and their handles can be bent at right angles to the bowl of the strainer. Put it into the water, scoop out the vegetables. You don't have to pick up a heavy pot of scalding water, you just scoop out the vegetables, and the water remains ready to use for boiling other ingredients. Western style strainers are more awkward to use in this fashion—you don't have to believe me, you can try it for yourself, and you'll find that you need another spoon to toss the vegetables into the strainer before lifting it out.

Boiling vegetables is considered wasteful of nutrients and flavor unless the cooking liquid is saved and reused. Adele Davis, who wrote about healthy cooking,

bet that not one family cook in a million saves the liquid, but I personally know several who do, including one whose family drinks it for juice.

STEAMING

The vegetables cook in steam if they are above a steaming liquid in a closed pot. They will be steaming only slightly if the pot is open and the steam is escaping. The steaming liquid can be vegetable juices, stock, or water. The vegetables are above the steaming liquid if they are on top of other vegetables, or if they are on a rack made of metal, or perhaps bamboo.



Sprinkling salt on the vegetables once they are in the steamer or on top of the other vegetables will help the flavors blossom.

ROASTING OR BAKING

Cooking in the oven used to be called *baking*, but people running restaurants realized that food tasted better when it was *roasted*. More specifically, all the other techniques of cooking can happen in the oven, as well as on top of the stove. If a potato is cut into pieces, tossed with oil, and baked, it amounts to being oven-fried or roasted. (Roasting the oil-tossed vegetables on parchment will ease cleanup.) Vegetables in a covered baking dish with a small amount of liquid will be steaming, while those submerged in liquid will be simmering or boiling in the oven.

An oven is quite useful for keeping food hot or reheating, and this will keep the top of the stove less cluttered and busy at the last minute.

GRILLING

I discovered charcoal-grilled vegetables while working at Greens Restaurant in San Francisco in the early eighties. Deborah Madison, the founding chef at Greens, had been inspired to grill vegetables while cooking for Nancy Wilson Ross at her summer home in the Adirondacks, and she specified that the kitchen at Greens should include a charcoal grill, even though we would not be serving any meat. What a simple, yet brilliant concept: apply traditional cooking methods to vegetarian cuisine.

To get their charcoal going, restaurant grills often employ a gas hose, which is quite effective. At home I have employed a charcoal chimney to excellent effect. To

fire up the cylindrical metal device, newspaper is inserted in the bottom and the charcoal goes on top. Use the one sheet of newsprint the instructions suggest, as the “two is better” approach means the paper won’t have enough air to burn. I have also started a fire using paper and kindling on the lower grate and put the charcoal on the upper grate. Once this starter charcoal is going well I dump it onto the bottom grate and add more charcoal. Portable gas grills can also be used with quite excellent results.

Long-handled tongs will make this job a lot more doable, and you may also want to keep a good hot-pad glove handy.

OTHER FOOD PREPARATION NOTES

Aside from cooking methods, here are some miscellaneous cooking notes which may be of interest.

Using Salt

Using salt requires a special note. For one thing people's taste varies. When I eat out, particularly at restaurants, I encounter too much salt for my taste—I taste *salt* and not the inherent goodness of the ingredients.

Here is my approach (and as always I encourage you to find your own way): I salt lightly, especially to begin with, and then taste carefully for the levels of sweetness, tartness, and pepper. Salt is a seasoning that can be over-relied upon to the neglect of other elements. After addressing all the other elements, then I check again for salt . . . maybe, a pinch.

Most cooks find that having an open dish or bowl of salt allows you to use your fingers and get just the amount you want (where a shaker is more haphazard—how much is coming out?). A small pinch, large pinch, or several pinches comes readily to hand.

Salting Vegetables

Salt draws the liquid out of vegetables, and this has several possible uses: it softens (useful for some raw vegetable salads), preserves (pickles), and, as in the case of eggplant, mellows. When a moderate amount of salt is used, the (salty) liquid can be left in or drained off for other uses. (Although not with the bitter liquid from eggplant.)

The first way of salting is to cut up the

vegetables and sprinkle them with salt, just about as much as if you were going to eat them. Then squeeze the ingredients with both hands for several moments. Once the ingredients are glistening with water, you're good—and they're good. My young friend Javier Cabral calls this “hand-frying.” I especially love this technique for certain vegetable salads, principally kale and cabbage salads.

The second method involves using some pressure after you've done the salting and the squeezing. With the vegetables in a bowl, put a small plate or bowl on top of the vegetables, with a weight on top of that. (The weight can be a stone, a heavy pot, a large jar of peanut butter.) This is arranged so that as the vegetables soften and condense, the plate

with the weight pushes farther down. There pressure is an added help to salt and time.

This is something of a pickling technique. The vegetables are usually salted for one-half hour to several hours, the liquid drained off, and the vegetables seasoned.

Crushing Herbs



Fresh herbs are wonderful, but I haven't always found myself next door to an herb garden, so I've often made do with dried

herbs. (When I do use fresh herbs, I prefer to add them toward the end of the cooking.) Dried herbs come either whole or ground. Ground herbs get stale faster than whole dried herbs, so I prefer to use whole dried herbs by crushing them between the palm of one hand and the fleshy part of the other. I find the crushed whole dried herbs have more flavor. A mortar and pestle is also good for crushing herbs, and it is an effective way to crush and grind seeds used for seasoning, such as cumin, anise, fennel, coriander, and cardamom, but as noted previously an electric coffee mill may also be utilized for this purpose—and for small amounts, a chef's knife is excellent.

Dissolving Cornstarch

If you wish to thicken liquids with cornstarch (especially useful in Chinese cooking), here's how it works.

One teaspoon of cornstarch will thicken a third of a cup of liquid. One tablespoon of cornstarch thickens a cup of liquid. Here is how it is done: The cornstarch is dissolved in a small amount of cold water, since if it meets directly with hot liquid, lumps will form. Cornstarch does its thickening when the liquid containing it is boiled. Have the main body of liquid boiling, and then pour in the dissolved cornstarch, stirring immediately. Right away the cornstarch cooks and thickens. No problem. The problem, if there is one, is that cornstarch very quickly begins to settle, so if it doesn't cook upon being added to the boiling liquid, keep stirring

until it does. Also be sure to stir up the dissolved cornstarch just before adding it to the hot liquid.

FINISHING TOUCHES: THE USE OF GARNISHES

I have observed that garnishes often make the difference between an ordinary dish, and one that is appetizing and flavorful. The garnish provides not only the final dash of color, but also some element of tart or pungent, earthy or vibrant flavor. Here are some initial notes that you can supplement through your own observation.

If you do nothing but garnish every dish, your cooking will change overnight.

Fresh Green Herbs

Parsley, thyme, lemon thyme, lime thyme, marjoram, oregano, mint, basil, cilantro, and tarragon—these are the ones I use the most. I also include green onion or chives in this category. Aside from basil, cilantro, and tarragon, these herbs grow in my garden most of the year, ready for use, a few steps out the door.

I find that fresh herbs are most aromatic and effective applied to a dish at the end, as a garnish, either minced or as whole sprigs. These are not just appetizing additions but are considered in Chinese medicine and Western herbal lore to be excellent digestive aids that work by counteracting the sluggishness that can follow eating. Even Peter Rabbit knew

that: being too full (and fat) to fit under the gate, he went back for some parsley to assuage his feeling of heaviness and indigestion.

I write more about herbs in “[Root, Shoot, Flower, and Fruit](#),” but for now I would like to mention that I much prefer flat-leaf (Italian) parsley to the crinkly leaf varieties, as it is easier for me to mince, feels more pleasant in the mouth (when whole pieces are added to salads), and has (for me) a more complex and dynamic flavor. Consequently, I call for it in most all the recipes, but as my friend Kay said when she was trying out recipes, the crinkly kind works too.

Pestos or Other Herbal Mixtures

A classic pesto is made with fresh basil,

Parmesan cheese, walnuts, olive oil, lemon, garlic, and salt. I use the term *pesto* to refer to any number of pureed herbal mixtures, which basically I make to taste, using fresh basil, cilantro, or tarragon. I also vary the pesto by using grated Asiago, choosing among a variety of ground nuts, and using lime or orange for the citrus. I may puree them or I may leave them chopped or minced. If I want a fresher, less oily flavor, I blend the herbs with orange juice and shallots, lemon peel, salt, and pepper.

Citrus Peel

Tartness is an important flavor component which often needs accentuating. Citrus peel can work well for this. I remove the colored part of the rind with a vegetable

peeler, then cut it into [thin strips](#) or [mince](#) it.

Roasted Chopped Nuts or Seeds

I use primarily almonds, walnuts, and sesame seeds for this, but occasionally pine nuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, cashews, pecans, and hazelnuts. The nuts or seeds are roasted in a 350° oven for eight minutes or in a (dry) skillet on top of the stove until they are fragrant, then served sliced or chopped as necessary.

Grated Cheese

Though I love cheeses, I've cut back on my use of them in recent years, finding that I have better energy when my consumption

is moderate. I still keep a block of Asiago cheese in my refrigerator, which I can grate freshly to provide a cheese garnish.

Grated cheese can be the white of Jack, Muenster, or fontina; the orange of cheddar; or the yellow of Gouda or Edam. It also provides depth or richness to a dish, with its high amounts of butterfat and its earthy flavor characteristics.

I also enjoy provolone because of its slightly smoky flavor, and Bruder Basil, which is an excellent smoked cheese.

The last time my daughter Lichen returned from France she brought a dozen glorious cheeses, but that is not a matter of garnishes. Then I get some decent bread, some sweet butter, an everyday French red, perhaps some radishes or apple slices, and call it dinner.

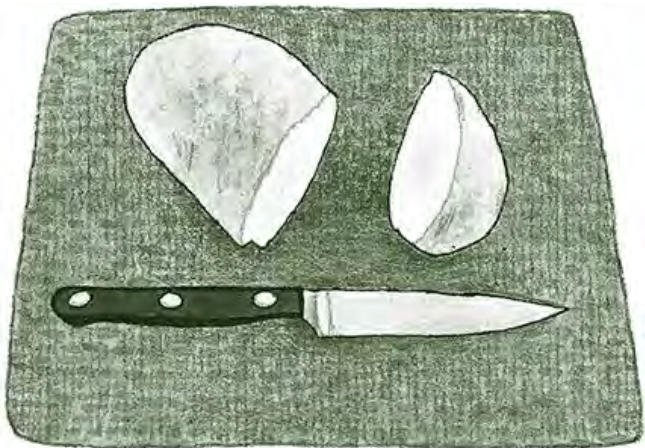
Olives, Capers, and Sun-Dried Tomatoes

I tend to have these items around as they keep fairly well and can add color and strong flavor elements to a dish. There are so many fine olives these days, including niçoise, kalamata, and oil-cured. To pit the olives I smash them with the flat side of a knife to loosen the flesh before removing the pits. I find pizzas and pastas, especially, enhanced by these ingredients, but cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, and other greens can also benefit. Keep them in mind. Sometimes I get the dried rather than oil-packed [sun-dried tomatoes and plump them](#) in hot water before using.

A significant aspect of cooking is studying which differences make a difference, or

which differences make *all* the difference, whether it is cooking methods, use of fresh or dried herbs, or inspired garnishes. As a cook you can study the ingredients and how the methods of preparation and use of seasonings make the dish distinctive, whether in terms of color, flavor, or texture. Investigating the unique contribution of each element will help you bring out the best in your cuisine.

Working with Your Ingredients



FOOD DOES NOT HAVE TO BE ELABORATE.

IN FACT SIMPLE preparations can be genuinely delicious. However, preparing things simply is deceptively difficult, since there is no way to hide any oversights. Care and attention are crucial.

When food is always fancy or elaborate, then fanciness becomes quite ordinary, and we forget the plain, full-natured, actual taste of things. Living in a world of created taste, we think that we can make everything suit our fancy. We reject foods that do not suit our cultivated taste, which gets increasingly particular the more we cater to it. Soon enough we have quite a low level of tolerance, of willingness to experience the unfamiliar. When we are open to ordinary goodness, not always comparing a particular taste with what we are used to, then we can

experience and appreciate the actual taste of things. Though the taste is not like we thought it would be, the flavor comes home to our hearts.

When I was young, I couldn't stand eating vegetables. The very sound of the word evoked something frightfully distasteful. "At least *try* it" was always the command, on occasion reluctantly obeyed. I mainly ate frozen peas and frozen green beans. Then in eighth grade a girl made a show-and-tell salad with sour cream and basil dressing, and I started eating lettuce. When I was in high school, my mother cooked cabbage with wine, and I started eating cabbage. Since then my vocabulary of edible vegetables has increased enormously. Only brussels sprouts give me pause, but I cook and eat

them anyway—occasionally.

The recipes in this chapter have very few measurements. Essentially I am crediting everyone with an ability to sense things for themselves. The size of vegetables varies, appetites vary, tastes vary. Numbers can be fairly arbitrary. If you like onions, put more in; if you don't like carrots, use less. "Spinach with Onion and Carrot" could be "Onion with Carrot and Spinach" or "Carrot with Spinach and Onion."

Vegetables can be cooked much more precisely by taste and experience than they can by numbers. You know how full the salad bowl needs to be to serve everyone, which bowl (or combination of bowls) needs filling in order to make a vegetable dish. Cook more when it's a dish you and

your family just love and can't get enough of. Cook less when it's a dish that people aren't so fond of, or perhaps one that you're trying out for the first time.

You're the cook. What I call cooked may be someone's half raw. It's a tentative designation. What I call overcooked may be someone's favorite way of preparation. Don't cook for me, cook for yourself, and for those who will be eating.

VEGETABLES

Whatever is done will not make a cucumber more of a cucumber or a radish more of a radish. What is done may make a vegetable more suitable to some particular taste—that's the ordinary way,

to see what taste we want. But why not “ask” the cucumber, why not “ask” the radish? What is the taste it would like to express? Welcome it into your mouth, into your experience: *ask* and *listen*.

Practicing Zen with Vegetables

Nowadays we are often advised to eat the best, to enjoy the freshest. And we shop for only the finest. I guess I’m in another school. My Zen teacher, Suzuki Roshi, would buy the worst-looking vegetables. “Who will use them if I don’t?” he would ask. The grocery clerk would try to dissuade him, “Wouldn’t you like something fresher?” When his wife joined him here in America from Japan, she wouldn’t let him go shopping anymore.

It’s an ancient Zen tradition, not wasting

anything, including leftovers: we understand that the way you treat one thing is the way you treat everything, so study carefully how to use the moment, before discarding it: “Do not see with ordinary eyes. Do not think with ordinary mind.”

Especially when I began cooking at Tassajara in 1967, using what came to hand was pivotally important. Essentially we had no refrigeration. What we had was old-fashioned insulated walk-ins without any compressors, so we would open the walk-in doors at night to let in the cool air, and then close them in the morning. Menus came from what was in the garden and what was at hand—rather than the fantasy realm of “you can have what you want when you want to have it.” (Yes, and you can lose connection with Source and

Sustenance and deplete natural resources relentlessly and unnaturally.)

My next-door neighbors still remember (as do other friends) when I first came to cook at their house, and they exclaimed, “We have nothing to eat.” After I made them a fine meal culled largely from their refrigerator, they said that I should have a TV show called, *This Old Food*, where I would go to people’s houses and cook what’s there.

So here is a guide to utilizing what can be utilized.

Take a look at what needs to be used. Glean from the garden and keep in mind what’s in the refrigerator. Start with the oldest vegetables before they are “gone.”

When are the vegetables still good? Vegetables are still good up to, but not

including, the point at which they become rotten. If parts of the vegetables are still in good shape, the slimy or rotten portions can be removed. Greens are on their way when yellow. These are vegetables at their worst. Before they reach that point they can still go into a bean soup, or perhaps be cooked and blended and then put in soups, or served with a complementary (cover-up) sauce. Vegetables on the edge of oblivion have often been noted to add a marvelous, distinctive taste to casseroles, soups, and mixed vegetable dishes. Play it by nose. I just used some old beet greens (sorted through) with a bit of onion, some chopped olives, balsamic vinegar, and honey. So good. Turning what at first glance appears distasteful into something

nourishing.

The next class of vegetables are those wilted or limp from loss of water. These too can still be used. They will need little doctoring other than the addition of some form of liquid—perhaps simply blanching will suffice, or a sauce, a dressing, or a light soup. In this way limp vegetables often make do for nearly any use. Cutting the tops off root vegetables will help keep them firm and fresh.

When vegetables are in their prime, consider doing as little as possible. Consider letting them be what they are—expressing themselves fully—rather than making them into something else. Hopefully, the simple recipes that follow will prove a guide for doing just this.

Of course, once in a while vegetables

do become un-eatable. Careful planning and consideration can keep such loss to a minimum, but when it occurs, please give the vegetables back to Mother Earth, via a compost pile. Sometimes, even botched cooking must end up there, but when is a dish really botched? Here's the recipe for some of the finest greens I ever ate.

Smoked Greens

I don't necessarily recommend that you try to duplicate this recipe, but maybe you will sometime without even trying. (I did this just the other day, making some smoked lentil soup.)

Greens

Lemon butter

Oil

Salt

We cooked the greens in a wok, the concave Chinese frying pan, over a high flame. They were briefly forgotten about until—"Oh no! They're burning!" Complete dismay in the kitchen—forty people waiting for supper—what to do to make do? The blackened greens stuck to the bottom of the pan, and out came the rest, to be served with lemon-flavored butter. Everyone wondered, "How did the greens get this wonderful smoked flavor, as though they'd been cooked with a flavorful ham bone?" *C'est la vie.*

Then all of those blackened leaves had to be cleaned out of the pan.

Carrots

Though common and ordinary, carrots are also versatile, inexpensive, and too often neglected. They can be prepared deliciously by themselves, and add sweetness and color when grated in salads, combined with other vegetables, or added to soups.



Carrots are used here to exemplify several possible vegetable cuts. Any one shape can be done in different sizes. I almost never peel carrots, but scrub them thoroughly and then cut off the stem and

root tail—just barely. You needn't toss away extra half inches of carrots every time you cut. Engage your mind in the activity.

ROUNDS, OVALS, AND JULIENNES

Once you have trimmed off the ends, the cutting can start at either end of the carrot. You can use the tip-of-the-knife-down stroke, slicing down and toward you, or one of the up-and-down chopping cuts (see illustrations in [Stroking Down and Toward You](#) and [A Third Way to Slice](#)). The latter is particularly effective at the carrot's thick end. (If you are using a curved chef's knife rather than the Japanese vegetable knife, you will often find the down-and-away cut useful (see illustrations in [Stroking Down and Away](#)

from You).

For rounds, the cut is made straight across the carrot, and for ovals the cut is made diagonally across the carrot—keeping the knife in the same position as when cutting straight across, but changing the angle of the carrot (see [illustrations](#)).

To make juliennes, I like to cut the carrot into ovals, then cut the ovals crosswise into short julienne pieces. (See below for the more traditional way of cutting julienne pieces or “matchsticks.”)



HALF MOONS

Cut the carrot in half lengthwise. Slice crosswise.

SECTIONS, STRIPS AND MATCHSTICKS

For sections, cut the carrot crosswise at even intervals. Sections can then be cut lengthwise into strips. (The illustration shows how it is sometimes useful to hold the vegetable with your thumbnail while making the necessary cuts.) The strips may be cut lengthwise into short matchsticks. (the illustrations in [Stroking Down and Away from You](#) show the tip-on-the-table slice, away and down to cut strips into matchsticks.)



DICING

I like to cut the carrot first into lengthwise slabs, perhaps a quarter of an inch wide. When cutting the carrot lengthwise, you may find it useful to hold the carrot with your left (nonknife hand) thumbnail. Then you can cut lengthwise (about a quarter inch wide) into matchsticks. The matchstick pieces can be diced by cutting them crosswise.

CHINESE ROLLING CUT

Start by making a diagonal cut—cut straight down with the knife nearly parallel to the carrot. Then roll the carrot slightly away from the knife. Make the next diagonal cut at about a forty-five-degree angle to the first cut. After each

diagonal cut the carrot is rotated by “walking” your fingertips. The cut surface which was perpendicular to the cutting board, now angles up toward the left. The new cut will intersect the plane of the preceding cut. These pieces can be made large or small, fatter, thinner, longer, shorter, depending on the angle of the carrot in relation with the knife. These pieces are attractive and sauté well, bouncing easily around the skillet, whereas rounds and ovals will often stick together, not allowing for a true sauté.





Carrot Salad

Find out how satisfying carrots can be, salt bringing up the flavors, lemon and honey accentuating their sunny brightness. Green of some sort—say parsley, green onion, or fresh tarragon—would be a welcome complement as well.

Carrots

Salt

Lemon juice

Honey (optional)

Green to garnish (optional)

Wash and grate the carrots, or cut them into ovals and then into thin strips. Sprinkle with salt and squeeze in hands. Add lemon juice and possibly honey. Mix well.

Garnish with green, if you have it and would like.

VARIATIONS

- Add raisins or dates, nuts, and apple.
- Add raw turnip, green onion, and toasted seeds or nuts (cut into small pieces). Earthy and chewy

brightened with the lemon and honey.



Breakfast Carrots

Just carrots cooked with oil and salt. Without fancy ideas in mind, they taste pretty fine. Good anytime.

Carrots

Oil

Salt

Water or stock with ginger (optional)

Nuts, seeds, or wheat germ (optional)

Wash and slice carrots in rounds or ovals, or use the rolling cut. Stir-fry for 3 to 4 minutes, until the sizzling quiets down. Add some water and grated ginger if using it, put on a close fitting lid and turn the heat down moderately low. Cook about 4 to 6 minutes with the lid on. Are they done? Salt to taste. When the breakfast carrots are ready, you might add toasted nuts or seeds, or maybe wheat germ.

Carrots Sautéed and . . .

Curried with pineapple, banana, or poppy seeds.

Glazed with butter and choice of sweetening.

Seasoned with allspice, caraway, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, pepper, basil, mint, parsley, tarragon, or thyme (no, not all of them).

Onions



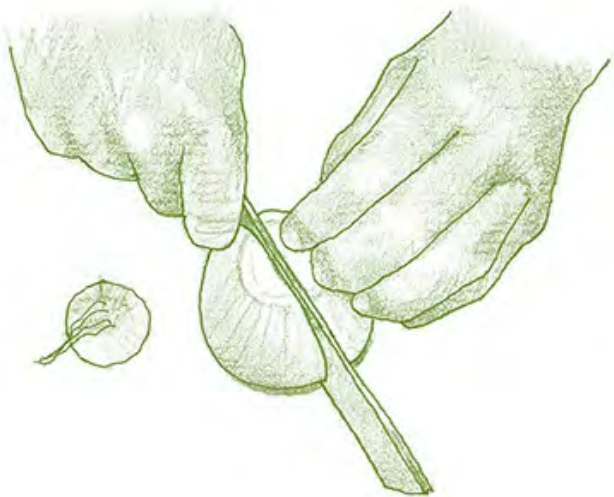
Onions! Magic beyond compare, especially when sautéed, onions transform the single note melody of other ingredients into full-bodied chords—the flavors broaden and deepen, and you find yourself saying, “Yes, let’s eat.” Onion goes with almost anything including watermelon: it picks up tired dishes, sweetens greens,

beefs up sauces, zests salads. But consider who is being served. Raw onion in particular does not suit everyone's taste. To cope with this I cut the onion pieces very finely—or make [pickled onions](#) (which are milder). (And—doctor I am not—onions are not what causes indigestion, though they are fragrant enough to be what you smell when you have it and burp.) The cooking time for onions can vary a lot: a longer cooking will bring out their sweetness and “meatiness”—imagine onion soup! Cooked onions lose their overwhelming sharpness, and become quite compatible with other vegetables. Starting a mixed vegetable sauté with onions brings out the depth of all the flavors excellently.

The fleshy concentric layers of the

onion are covered with a skin which is papery and inedible. Like potatoes, onions may be baked in their skins, but usually the onion is peeled prior to cooking or eating. To remove the skins, first trim off both top and bottom ends of the onion. Place the onion on one of its flat surfaces and cut it in half. Peel the layer of papery skin off the onion. If one particular layer shares some fleshy part and some paper part, it's usually best to remove it entirely, although some smaller paper skin patches may be pared off. Now the onion—halved and peeled—is ready to be sectioned, sliced, diced, minced, or grated.







Crying time. It'll help to peel all the onions first, and then start cutting, as the cut pieces may then be placed in a covered container off to the side rather than under your nose. Tear remedies include a wooden match between the teeth (OK to chew), and chewing on a piece of raw onion or bread. Many people feel that onion skin is one vegetable trimming

which is not especially good in stock.

SLICED ONIONS

Place the peeled half onion flat side down, slice (or chop) parallel with the axis (see illustrations in [Stroking Down and Toward You](#), [Stroking Down and Away from You](#), and [A Third Way to Slice](#)). When you have sliced about two-thirds of the onion half, tip over the remainder and continue slicing on the uncut surface. A final picture here shows how the remainder of the onion half can be held for the last few cuts, balanced against the first finger and held in place with the thumb. The knife can be guided by the thumb knuckle. This is quite a useful grip to know in cutting many different vegetables—sometimes it will be easier

to turn the vegetable around before continuing to cut (cutting radishes into rounds for example), whereas with the onion you can simply tip it over and continue cutting.



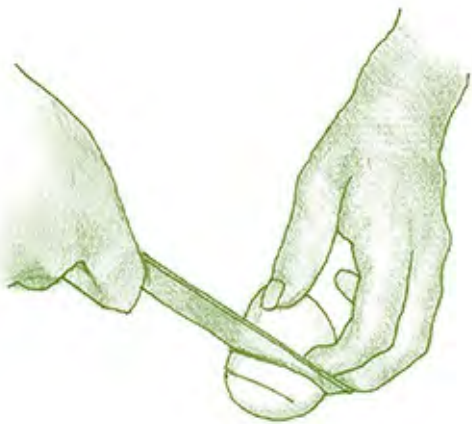


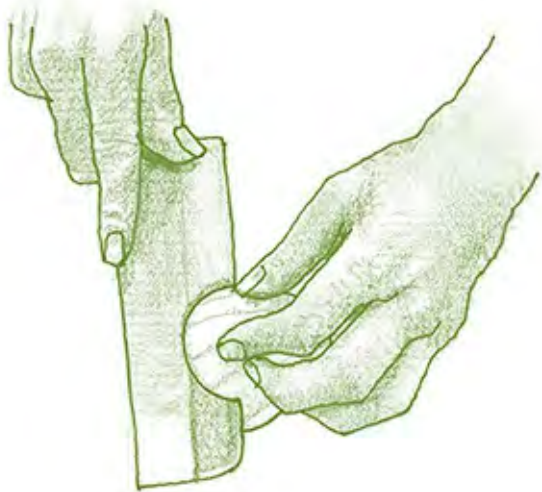


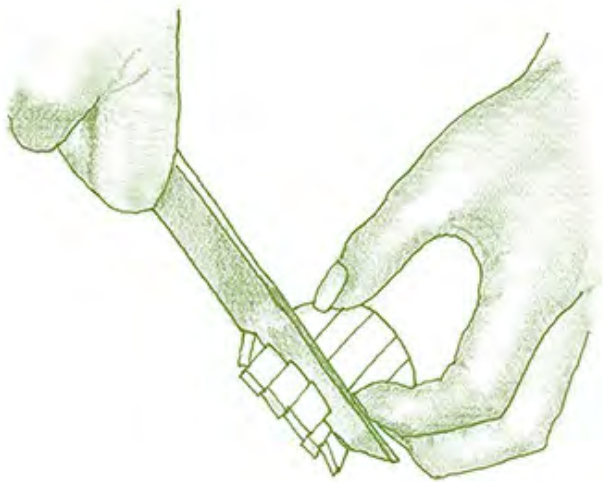
DICED ONIONS

To dice the onion, begin with the halved onion, placing it flat side down, root end to the left (if right-handed). Leave the root

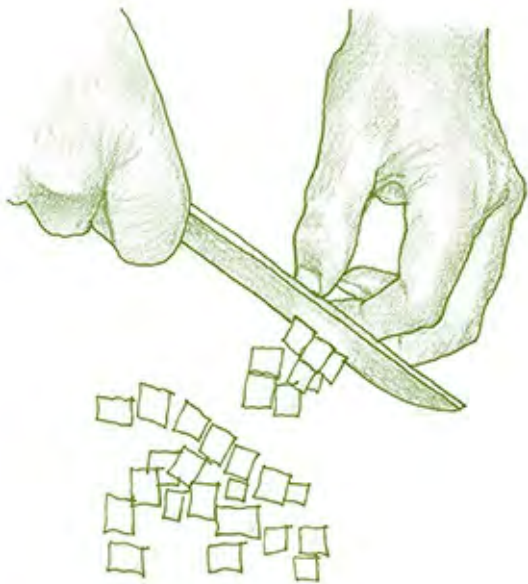
end intact when cutting. Cut straight down and through, parallel with the axis and at appropriate intervals. Then make a couple of cuts with the knife parallel to the tabletop. Again, leave the left end intact. When cutting horizontally, use a *gentle sawing* motion so that the knife doesn't suddenly cut through to your fingers. Now cut straight down across all the cuts you have made. Isn't it helpful to have pictures? Tip over the intact part. Section it, turn ninety degrees, and dice.











MINCED ONION

To start with, dice the onion as finely as you can. This gives a head start on the

mincing.

Sautéed Onions

Sautéed onions are simply classic. I think it was M. F. K. Fisher who remarked that if you've been home alone all day and haven't done much in the realm of house cleaning or laundry washing, have some onions sautéing when your partner comes home, and all will be well. The fragrance in the air says, "Welcome home, honey, you are in for something delicious."

Onions

Olive oil

Salt

Soy sauce (optional)

Balsamic vinegar (optional)

Slice, dice, or section the onions. Heat a sauté pan, add a thin layer of oil (and a sprinkling of salt), and sauté the onions from 3 to 5 minutes. Allow longer cooking time for bigger onion sections. The onions will first turn translucent, and then begin to brown. (A sprinkling of soy sauce or balsamic vinegar will accentuate the flavors and add to the earthy brownness.)

VARIATIONS

- Steam 5 to 10 minutes longer, seasoning with salt, pepper, or soy sauce.
- Add 1 or 2 other vegetables and continue the sautéing for 2 to 3 minutes before steaming to

complete the cooking.

- Add the sautéed onions to a sauce or soup.
- Add the sautéed onions to grain, bean, egg, or cheese dishes.

Baked Onions

These come out very sweet, mild, and succulent.

Onions

Balsamic vinegar

Salt

Pepper

Preheat oven to 375°. Bake the onions in their skins like potatoes for 50 to 60 minutes, depending on size. Having a bit

of water in the bottom of the pan will make cleaning easier, as the onions release sugary juices which will caramelize in the pan. Onions may also be skinned, then quartered or chunked, and baked in a small amount of water and/or oil. After baking, marinate with some balsamic vinegar, salt, and pepper. As for baking with skins on or off, both have their virtues—partly having to do with presentation.

Green Onions

Known as green onion or scallion, this is the slender long one with a white root end and slightly spreading green top. In most grocery stores these onions will be chopped down to 12 or 15 inches, as the upper greens wilt. All of this onion is

good—mild yet zippy. The green as well as the white can be cut finely for salads, or in longer sections for cooking. Particularly when sliced diagonally, the green pieces make an excellent bright green alternative to a parsley garnish. To prepare, first wash, then cut off the roots and break off all wilted green stalks.



SLICING GREEN ONIONS

To slice the onions, grip them with the left

hand; thumb and last finger on the sides, then other fingers curled on top. Keeping the tip (or curve) of the knife on the table, the cut is made by pulling the knife down and toward you. (This is the most thorough way to cut green onions.) The table-hugging tip cuts through all of the onion at some point, so that there is no chain of onion slices hung together where they were incompletely cut. Cutting on a long diagonal will make attractive ellipses of green as you see in miso soup in Japanese restaurants. Green onions can be used to decorate and season vegetables, grains, potatoes, eggs, cheese, soups, salads, main dishes—anything. Yes, I've even had them finely cut with oranges and watermelon.



Leeks

Leeks, yet another form of onion, look like large scallions. Mild and sweet, they are frequently used in potato soups and quiches. Though some cooks use just the white part as it has a milder flavor, we use the whole plant, prepared and sliced like scallions in narrow slices. The thin slices will make for easier chewing. Before cutting the narrow slices crosswise, I tend to cut the leek lengthwise and then wash out the dirt between the layers. Another option is to wash the slices after you have cut them.

Leeks vary from baby, a fat-pen size (serves two per person), to extra large, an inch and a half in diameter (each one serves 3 to 4 people)—please consider

this if you are getting confused about quantities.



Simply Leeks

As the leeks are not cut thinly crosswise here, this preparation is best with tender small leeks rather than the giant 12 to 15 inchers.

Leeks

Butter

Water

Salt

Pepper

Cut off the tips of any wilted leaves, leaving 4 to 6 inches of green. Trim the roots. Cut in half lengthwise and wash between the layers. Melt the butter. Place the leeks flat side down and cook for a couple of minutes. Then add some water (cover the bottom of the pan), salt, and pepper. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Check periodically to make sure there is still liquid in the pan. Using a white wine in place of water or adding a touch of lemon juice will enliven the flavors.

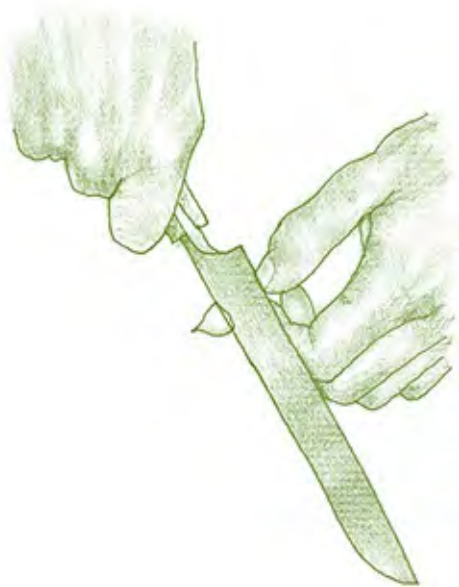
Garlic

The subtle, intoxicating, and invigorating flavors of garlic are at their peak when you prepare it freshly—rather than using garlic previously peeled, minced, powdered, or preserved.



MINCING GARLIC

Mincing garlic rates a special note, since it is done so often. I've developed a method of mincing the garlic where I rely on my Japanese vegetable-cutting knife. For me, it's simple and effective, and saves dirtying other implements, such as a garlic press. To use the garlic, separate the cloves from the head. I like to get the peel loose by placing the flat of my knife on the garlic clove and tapping it with the fist of my other hand. Or if the cloves are larger, simply cut them in half lengthwise. Follow this up by removing the papery skins.





The key for mincing garlic is getting it started. On the TV show *Yan Can Cook*, I think I have seen Martin Yan demonstrate pressing the flat of the knife on the garlic clove and giving it a good wallop with his left hand to smash the clove. Then it can be minced.

I prefer to chop the clove of garlic into thin slices with the *back* of my knife first,

and then mince. People love this method when I demonstrate it. The keys are to hold the knife with the cutting edge directly up (upside down); position the clove of garlic close to the near edge of the cutting board; hold the garlic clove firmly in your left hand; and then, with the back tip of the knife on the counter, lever the back of the knife down onto the clove of garlic, cutting and mashing a section off the edge. Repeat until the clove is “preminced,” then mince it more thoroughly. If this doesn’t work for you, get a garlic press, macerate the clove in a mortar and pestle, or chop it as you please.

Ginger Root

Ginger root is used in several recipes, as

it is a pungent bright element much like garlic which can enliven a variety of dishes. I have fabulous bamboo ginger graters, but you can also grate it on a regular cheese grater. In my rustic cuisine, I leave the peel on.

Potatoes

Potatoes are marvelously soft, smooth, filling. Especially after a steady diet of brown rice back in the 1960s at Tassajara, potatoes were always a treat: mellow, earthy, soft. If you want to know how I messed up by serving impenetrable baked potatoes, see “[Potato Fiascoes](#).”

We always eat potatoes with the skins—even mashed potatoes are good with flecks of skin. Scrub before cooking.

CUTTING POTATOES

Cutting into chunks: First cut in half lengthwise. Place these halves cut side down and cut them lengthwise once or twice. Then section the potato crosswise into chunks.

Cutting into rounds: Use the chopping cut, down-and-away continuing down-and-toward. (See the illustration in [A Third Way to Slice.](#))



Cutting into sticks (french fries): First cut into rounds. Then cut the rounds crosswise into sticks.

Home-Fried Potatoes

Simple—and simply delicious.

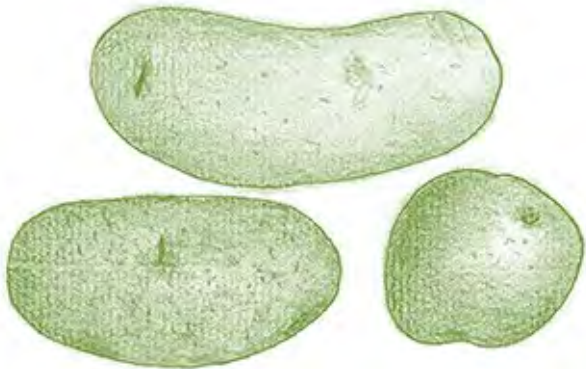
Potatoes

Butter

Salt

Pepper

Wash the potatoes and cut them into narrow strips, or grate. Smaller pieces will cook more thoroughly and fry more quickly than larger ones. Use a generous amount of butter. Fry on gentle heat, until the potatoes are brown on the outside and soft on the inside (flip or turn over from time to time). Season. The pan can be covered so that the potatoes steam as well as fry. Open and turn over the potatoes regularly. Butter seems to work better than oil for keeping the potatoes from sticking to the pan.



Oven-Fried Potatoes

This is a good recipe to know about. These potatoes can come out well browned without the fuss of french-frying. Works for me—I don't want big pans of hot oil in my kitchen.

Potatoes

Oil

Salt

Preheat oven to 425°. Cut the potatoes into rounds and the rounds into french-fry shapes. Toss with a bit of oil to coat and then put the sticks on baking sheets, more or less one layer thick. Bake for about 40 minutes. Turn with a spatula 2 or 3 times. Sprinkle with salt. Try one. Bake longer if necessary. These are best when served straight from the oven.

Potato halves can be baked in the same way. Cut in half lengthwise. Place cut side up on baking sheet. Brush with oil, sprinkle with salt, bake. You may also put sliced or grated cheese on top for the last 5 minutes although they are amazingly

good when served plain.

Baked Potatoes

Baked potatoes uplift heaven—is that possible? A food of the gods, maybe it's all the butter and other accompaniments. You'll have to figure out which of these you'll want to use, with the list below giving you something of a head start.

Potatoes (russets are the standard for this)

Butter or oil

Accompaniments (see below)

Preheat oven to 375° to 400°. Wash the potatoes, dry them, rub on butter or oil. Bake for an hour or until fork-piercing

tender. The bigger the potato the longer the baking time.

Here are some possible accompaniments: Butter, salt, and pepper; grated cheese; sliced green onions; or how about cilantro and salsa? Nut butter or nut butter sauces, sour cream, yogurt, (vegetarian) bacon bits. I don't know—look in your refrigerator: olives, capers, green goddess dressing, what's in there?

Mashed Potatoes

The best mashed potatoes bring to mind the sublime—the earth-bound potato raised from the ground to heavenly silky smoothness. Oh let's . . .

Potatoes

Water

*Milk, buttermilk, or sour cream, or
rice or soy milk*

Butter

Salt

Pepper

Garlic (optional)

Cut the potatoes in halves or thirds and cook them in lightly salted water until tender. Drain off the water and save it for soup. Mash the potatoes, mixing in the milk, buttermilk or sour cream—possibly some butter or a nondairy alternative. Season with salt and pepper. Do you like garlic? It's fantastic in mashed potatoes.

VARIATIONS

- Mix in grated cheese or sprinkle it on top.
- Mix in cashew or walnut pieces. They'll blend right in with the skins.
- Consider also sautéed mushrooms, parsley, green onion, diced and sautéed onion, celery, carrot, green pepper, cooked peas, or corn kernels. Not all of these for goodness sake, just something for a bit a contrast.



Potato Salads

I suggest dressing potato salads with mayonnaise or with an oil-and-vinegar dressing. Putting on the dressing while the potatoes are still hot helps them soak up all the flavors.

Potatoes

Choice of dressing: oil and vinegar or mayonnaise with mustard, curry, tarragon, and/or marjoram, vinegar and sugar

Choice of vegetables and other ingredients: grated carrot, sliced celery, hard-boiled egg, grated cheese, minced onion, sliced green onion, parsley, black olives, pimento, dill pickle, sliced radishes, fresh basil

Cut the potatoes into cubes and blanch until tender (6 to 8 minutes). Remove and drain. Mix in a liberal amount of dressing, seasoning the dressings to your taste. (You can also look in the section on [salad dressings](#).) Chill the dressed potatoes. Prepare the other ingredients (not too

many) and mix them in also. Some of the optional ingredients can be saved for garnishing, especially the grated cheese and the fresh herbs.

Yams and Sweet Potatoes

Even more than potatoes, yams and sweet potatoes are favorites of ours. Deep yellow-orange with sweet, rich flavor, they can be cooked in the same way as potatoes, although the seasoning may vary. In the recipes that follow, the names “yams” and “sweet potatoes” are used interchangeably. (Yams to me have the brick red exterior with the somewhat darker orange-yellow interior. Sweet potatoes have the more beige exterior and somewhat lighter interior.)

Home-Fried Yams (or Sweet Potatoes)

The orange earthiness of the yams is accented with the slightly bitter earthiness of the roasted seeds. Add a touch of orange juice or minced peel to brighten or lift the flavors.

Yams or sweet potatoes, sliced

Oil or butter

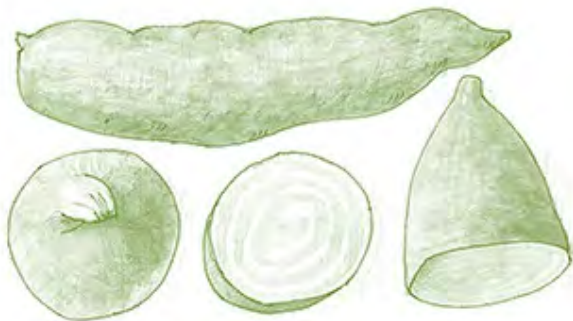
Salt or soy sauce

Sunflower or sesame seeds, roasted

Cut and fry these like the regular home fries above. Once the yam slices are soft, add soy sauce and sprinkle generously with roasted sunflower or sesame seeds.

VARIATION

For Onion Home Fries, fry the yams with sliced onions. May be served with yogurt.



Just Yams and More

Yams baked in water have a mellow succulence. Dark greens wilted in butter and/or a salad complement this nicely.

Yams

Water

Salt

Preheat oven to 375°. Scrub the yams, cut in halves or thirds crosswise. Then in quarters lengthwise. Arrange in a baking dish with a quarter inch of water on the bottom. Cover and bake until soft, about 40 minutes.

VARIATIONS

- Brush the yams with oil and bake, as in oven-fried potatoes.
- Bake the yams in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of equal parts melted butter and orange juice. Baste several times.

Mashed Yams

These mashed yams can be served on their own or layered in a casserole—see one suggestion below.

Yams

Butter

Orange rind, grated (optional)

Boil or bake the yams. Mash them with butter, salt, and pepper. Mix in the orange rind, and add cinnamon for seasoning. Serve.

VARIATIONS

- Layer in casserole with diced onions and mushrooms, orange slices, banana slices. (No, not the

mushrooms and bananas together, they are by themselves with the yams, or with the onions, and some orange juice.) Dot the top with butter and bake up to half an hour at 350° to heat.

- Mash the yams with tahini (sesame butter), sprinkle tossed sesame seeds on top.

Sprouts

Sprouts can be started at any time of the year from beans, grains, and assorted seeds, including alfalfa, fenugreek, radish, mustard, sesame and sunflower. The little shoots are literally bursting with energy, as well as vitamins and protein. Crisp with moisture, they are also tender without having to be cut up. Growing them at

home, which isn't difficult, produces the freshest vegetable available.

Most easily sprouted are mung beans (which produce the well-known "Chinese bean sprout"), alfalfa and fenugreek seeds, and lentils. Oats, wheat, and rye are fairly easy to grow, but their taste doesn't appeal to everyone. Soybeans can be sprouted if the nonsprouting beans are carefully sorted out as the sprouting progresses.

Sprouting seeds need to be kept in a dark, moist, warm environment. First soak the seeds overnight. Drain off the water and reserve it for some other cooking use. Then put the seeds into a wide-mouthed jar. Leave the end open, or cover it with cheesecloth or some other material which lets air in and out. Place the bottle on its

side and keep it in a dark, warm place—in a cupboard or simply covered with a towel. To keep the seeds moist, rinse them once a day: cover the seeds with tepid water, swish the water gently around, then pour it through the cheesecloth or into a strainer. If the seeds are actually in water (after the initial soaking) they will tend to rot rather than sprout, so drain off the rinsing liquid thoroughly. Seeds can also be sprouted in a tray, plate, bowl, or crock. Cover with a lid to keep moisture from evaporating. Pour the rinse water off through a strainer. Another method for sprouting is to put paper towels under and over the soaked seeds in the tray. Keep moist and out of the light. This method may take a little longer, but rinsing is not necessary.

Before eating, if the sprouts are put in the sunlight for several hours, they will turn green, which means that chlorophyll and vitamin C are present.

Seeds take from three to five days to sprout. Alfalfa sprouts are at the peak of their nutritional value when they are one inch long, but they can be eaten when they're several inches long, and even after the first leaves appear—"alfalfa lettuce."

Lentil sprouts peak at two inches, soy and mung bean sprouts at three inches.

Homegrown mung bean sprouts are darker than the commercial variety, which are chemically bleached.

For eating, grain sprouts are best when equal in length with the grain. Larger grain sprouts can be chopped or used in breads.

If the seeds don't sprout, it may be that

the particular batch of seeds is old, defective or sprayed.



Sprouts are tasty and refreshing when eaten raw. They can be added to any salad, centered in a clump or tossed in with everything else. They also add a moist, light quality to sandwiches. Only

bean sprouts are really suited to cooking. The others, being very delicate, can stand only brief cooking—add them at the end—in the last two minutes for soup or as a garnish for soups or mixed vegetable dishes.

ALFALFA SPROUTS

Very popular in salads and sandwiches, these make an excellent side dish as well. Lemon juice sweetened with honey dresses them adequately.

Alfalfa-Banana Sprouts with Nuts

If you're looking for a more substantial side dish or salad, try this.

Alfalfa sprouts

Banana

Lemon juice (optional)

Walnuts

Mash the banana to make a dressing for the alfalfa sprouts. Thin and season with lemon juice if necessary, then mix it with the sprouts and walnut pieces (which could be roasted).

VARIATIONS

- Add sliced apples and raisins.
- Use fenugreek sprouts in place of alfalfa sprouts.
- Use other nuts or seeds in place of walnuts.

Stir-Fried Bean Sprouts

A straight-forward dish with optional seasonings in the variations.

Bean sprouts

Celery

Mushrooms

Oil

Water or stock

Salt

Soy sauce

Slice the celery and the mushrooms. Stir-fry them in oil for about 2 minutes before adding the sprouts. Stir to mix, add some water or stock and a bit of soy sauce. Cover and steam a couple of minutes. Adjust seasoning and serve.

VARIATIONS

- Bean sprouts, onion, and celery.
- Sprouts, peppers, and carrots.
- Sprouts, asparagus, and mushrooms.
- Season with grated fresh ginger (as you like it) or garlic (to taste), a few pinches of sugar, spot of vinegar, and a few drops of dark sesame oil.

LENTIL SPROUTS

For a two month period during one winter several years ago the fourteen-mile dirt road into Tassajara was washed out (see [“Finding Out That Food is Precious”](#)). That provided quite an incentive to conserve food and to use things

efficiently. Everything was at a premium. That's when we first started sprouting seeds. Two cups of lentils became over a gallon of sprouts. We had them almost every day for lunch, by themselves or mixed with wild greens: curly dock, miner's lettuce, chickweed, shepherd's purse. Arugula or a baby lettuce mix would be excellent alternatives. Equal amounts of vinegar and honey dressed the salads, except on occasion when a few lemons or oranges would show up. Living with some limitation like that, everything was delicious. Maybe with other things available lentil sprouts aren't quite that good, but I am still fond of them.

Lentil sprouts, somewhat heftier than mung bean sprouts, may require slightly longer cooking, but the same recipes can

be followed. One combination to try is with onions and roasted sunflower seeds, seasoned with soy sauce and ginger.

Cabbage

Like any vegetable, cabbage is what you make it. Don't boil it down to mush and don't serve it with overly sweet mayonnaise. When raw, I find it best sliced quite thinly and given a little salt to start with. Cooked, it is good sautéed or lightly steamed. Raw cabbage has a natural peppery or slightly hot taste, which is vigorous and refreshing, that can be accented with the seasoning. Red cabbage is somewhat more pungent than green, and lends coloring to green salads or mixed vegetable dishes. Chinese cabbage (also known as *hakusai*, or *nappa*) has a very

mild flavor and is quite juicy and tender—
a marvelous ingredient for a fresh-tasting
salad.



CUTTING CABBAGE

To prepare, remove the outer wilted or dirty leaves. Wash these and use them for stock, or if in good shape cut and prepare with the remainder of the cabbage. To slice the cabbage, first cut it in quarters lengthwise through the core. Holding the quarter at an angle with the cut surfaces facing up, cut out the core.

Remove a few inner layers of the cabbage, place them flat on the table, and then slice thinly crosswise. Place the remainder of the cabbage leaves on the counter—I often do it in two batches—inner side down (to help flatten it out), and slice thinly crosswise. If necessary to have the cabbage leaves lay flat, cut them in half crosswise first, and then place the inner side down and slice thinly. Cut into larger wedges or cubes for steaming or

soups.







Thin-Slice Cabbage Salad

Can you cut the cabbage as thin as you can without cutting yourself or taking forever? This is what makes the dish. So simple, so delicious.

Cabbage

Salt

Honey or sugar

Vinegar or lemon juice

Cut the cabbage in thin slices. If you have some question about how to do this, see the above instructions for cutting. Sprinkle with a couple pinches of salt and squeeze in your hands, this way and that, until

some moisture begins to come out of the cabbage. If this isn't happening after a minute or so, add a little more salt and work it some more. Add sweet (honey, sugar) and sour (vinegar, lemon juice) to brighten the flavors. Taste before and after the addition to notice the difference.

VARIATIONS

- Add carrots cut into 1- to 2-inch matchstick pieces and finely minced parsley to the cabbage and work them in. Add a bit more salt if necessary. Add the sweet and sour as above and garnish with roasted nuts or seeds, if you like.
- Add your choice of celery and turnip, green onion, zucchini, cucumber, asparagus, green or red

pepper, or any other vegetable that you can slice thin.

- Add some heat—pungency—with minced garlic, and/or grated fresh ginger, and/or red pepper.
- Once the cabbage is salted add some sliced apple or pear—or raisins or sliced dried apricots—along with roasted nuts or seeds.

Sautéed Cabbage

For my taste a very light cooking leaves the cabbage perky and live-tasting. See what you discover.

Cabbage

Oil

Salt

Water

Cut the cabbage fairly thinly. Stir-fry a couple of minutes until the cabbage wilts slightly. Add some water (or white wine) along with a little salt, put on a lid, and steam briefly.

VARIATIONS

- Add roasted sunflower seed or sesame seed—or black sesame seeds!
- Add Parmesan cheese, grated.
- Add soy sauce, garlic, and ginger.

Tomato-Sautéed Cabbage

Food is so delicious, especially when you haven't filled up on chips and dip. Take this dish with cabbage brought more fully alive with the red summery fruit of tomato, the grassy green pungency of the onion or parsley. Cook it a short time and the tomato pieces will retain their shape and fresh-flavor. Cook it longer and you will have cabbage with tomato sauce—you may want to add some dried herbs (especially thyme and oregano)!

Cabbage

Tomato

Green onion or parsley

Oil

Salt

Slice the cabbage into about 1-inch

squares. Section the tomatoes and slice the green onions. Stir-fry the cabbage for 3 or 4 minutes, add the onions and tomatoes (along with a little salt), cover, and cook just a couple of minutes, until the tomatoes are hot.

Red Cabbage and Apple

This is more or less a traditional Northern European dish, that here is prepared without the meat juices.

Red cabbage

Apples

Brown sugar

Vinegar

Salt

Pepper

Cut the cabbage into fairly large wedges. Slice the apples. Sauté the cabbage for several minutes before adding the apples. Then sprinkle on equal amounts of brown sugar and cider vinegar, making it sweet and sour to taste. Salt and pepper lightly. Cover, cook for 5 to 8 minutes, and serve.

VARIATION

Bake in a covered baking dish for 30 minutes or more at 375°. You may want to try adding a sprinkling of sherry to sooth its nerves. When baked the dish will be quite a bit limper than the unbaked version.

Celery

Celery is notably stringy, crunchy, crisp, but it can also be a tender and luscious green with no strings attached. Used primarily as an accompaniment, celery attractively greens and complements cauliflower, potatoes, squashes, soups, casseroles, and salads. But like carrots and onions, celery can also be a main ingredient. Celery leaves are very much edible and, when finely chopped like parsley, add seasoning. Especially in salads, celery is best when cut thinly, prettiest when cut in boomerang shape. The thinner the celery is cut, the less string there is and the more easily it is chewed.

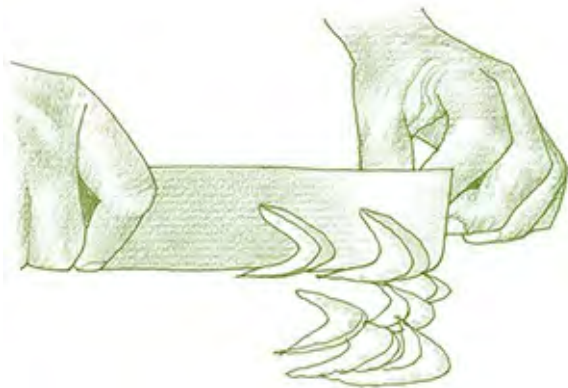
CUTTING CELERY

To prepare the celery, break off individual stalks and wash them carefully,

rubbing thumbs up and down the interior surfaces. Place celery stalk with leaf end to the right and cut off side branches. (Chop these separately.) Turn bottom end to right and trim off the end of stalks. When you cut the celery into thin slices, the strings of the celery stalks are cut into short pieces as well, which make the celery easy to chew. Here are two ways to do it.

To cut boomerang pieces: Hold the stalk (or stalks) on its edge and cut on a diagonal.

To cut comma pieces: Let the stalk (or stalks) lie flat and cut on a diagonal.



Orange-Celery Salad

What makes this salad exquisite for me is slicing the celery thinly into beautiful shapes. (See above.) Then the vibrant stalkiness of the celery lends a touch of ground to the fruit—while still being easily chewable: flash of color, flash of flavor.

Celery

Oranges

Apple

Salt

Honey (optional)

Lemon juice (optional)

Spearmint leaves (optional)

Wash the celery and trim off the leaves.

Hold the stalks on their edges and cut into thin pieces diagonally. Add salt lightly. Cut the peel off of the orange and cut in rounds or half rounds. Wash and quarter the apple. Cut out the seeds, and cut in slices. Mix all together. Need anything else? (You may enjoy some honey and lemon juice for instance, or some spearmint leaves.) Sprinkle chopped celery leaves on top.

Quick-Fry Celery

A quick sauté will do wonders for most any vegetable. Celery is no exception—so go ahead and surprise yourself with how good this is. Splurge with some gratings of fresh black pepper.

Celery

Oil

Salt or soy sauce

Slice the celery and stir-fry in oil (and salt) until tender. Sprinkle on some soy sauce, if you'd like a different sense of salt.

“Fancy” Boiled Celery

What makes this “fancy” is the use of butter and cream. If you are not eating dairy, I would suggest the options of roasted cashews or cashew butter thinned with water.

Celery

Butter

Cream or milk

Salt

Pepper

Cut the celery in boomerangs. Boil in a covered pot with just enough water to cover the celery. When tender, pour off the water and save for stock. Then add a touch of butter and cream or milk, along with salt and pepper to taste.



Mushrooms

Mushrooms aren't really vegetables, of course, they're fungi, which grow from rot—turning it into something edible. Some mushrooms, shiitake for one, are considered to do the same in the body, reducing cancerous growths. I think most vegetarians must grow to love mushrooms, especially if they were once meat eaters, as mushrooms have something of a meaty quality: dried mushrooms in particular have something of the chewiness of meat.



Nowadays there are many mushrooms readily available: most commonly the generic whites, the brown field mushrooms, fresh shiitakes, and portobellos. As with other ingredients, I tend to keep it simple—I have neither the

cabinetry for storage nor the wherewithal to track everything—so I mostly stick to the brown field mushrooms and the fresh shiitakes.

The price per pound for mushrooms looks high, but there are a lot of mushrooms per pound and, like garlic, a little can go a long way. A few mushrooms can be a good addition to almost any vegetable dish. I think I've had mushrooms with every vegetable except beets. Plus, there are mushroom sauces, mushroom soups, mushroom stuffings, and mushrooms stuffed.

Mushroom lovers insist that mushrooms not be washed—especially the wild ones—but, if anything, simply wiped with a damp towel. Still, I prefer to give them a quick bath, lightly rubbing the tops with

my thumbs. (I like to determine these things from my own experience, and hey, I've done taste tests and can't say that I notice a distinctive taste difference between the washed and the wiped. Appearance-wise, the wiped-by-hand ones definitely look more attractive. Go figure—or observe for yourself.)

Mushrooms can be sliced using the chopping cut, down and slightly toward. If the stems have darkened with age, they can be trimmed off and discarded. (The stems of fresh shiitakes need to be cut off and discarded as they are not chewable.)

Mushrooms don't require much cooking. They brown in just three to four minutes and steam to perfection in five minutes. When added to soups at the last minute they bob handsomely on the

surface. Mixed into potato dishes, grain dishes, stuffings, or casseroles, the mushrooms can cook for a more lengthy time and their flavors will permeate the dish.

Mushroom sauce can be made by adding sautéed mushroom slices to a [white](#) or [brown sauce](#). Mushroom soup can be made by thinning the mushroom sauce with hot milk to soup consistency.

Sautéed Mushrooms

Sautéed mushrooms can be served on their own or used to garnish other vegetable dishes. They can also be added to grain, bread cube, or potato stuffings. The hearty flavors and deep brown colors can make

this a striking accompaniment, so give it a consideration when otherwise at a loss of what else will complete a meal.

Mushrooms

Oil or butter

Salt

Pepper

Parsley, minced or green onion, finely sliced (optional)

Slice or quarter the mushrooms. Cook them in butter or oil, 3 to 4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with minced parsley or green onion.

VARIATIONS

- Add some roasted, chopped nuts. I especially like walnuts with

mushrooms.

- Mix in some sour cream and heat gently.
- Sauté the mushrooms for a couple minutes in a generous amount of butter or oil, sprinkle on small amount of flour. Stir and continue cooking for several minutes. Douse with sherry so that a sauce, but not a soup, results, adding water if you wish to dilute the sherry flavor. Simmer for two minutes or more. (You can also add a touch of sherry without the flour—a little more watery version.)
- Sauté some onion for a couple of minutes before adding the mushroom as above.

ABOUT DRIED MUSHROOMS

I have found dried mushrooms available at Italian groceries (porcinis) and at Asian food shops (shiitakes). Both are prepared in the same way by soaking for thirty minutes or more in warm or hot water.

Be sure to save the water in which the mushrooms were soaked. There will be some dirt at the bottom of the soaking bowl, so after removing the mushrooms, carefully pour off the liquid or strain it through a paper towel. This soaking liquid will be a flavorful addition to the dried mushroom dish itself, or to some other soup, sauce, grain, or casserole dish. After soaking, the mushrooms can be used whole or sliced. The Asian type can be cooked in ten minutes, while the European type takes twenty minutes or more.

Simmer them in the soaking liquid or a sauce. They are a great addition to sauces and soups both for flavor and texture. They are also good in quiche or lasagna.

Parsley

Parsley can be used as an ingredient, a seasoning, or a garnish. It is excellent in soups, especially those which seem overly sweet, like onion, carrot, or yam, as it provides a lemony grassiness that fine tunes the flavors. Parsley sprigs are a famed and overused garnish. Green onion, water cress, green pepper, celery, cucumber, and alfalfa sprouts, artfully sliced and arranged, could all be considered alternatives. Flat-leafed (Italian) parsley has a great flavor and is easier to work with than the curly leaf. I

recommend it.



MINCING

The parsley (or whatever vegetable is to be minced) is first cut as finely as possible right from the start. With parsley, several sprigs can be bunched together. Roll the sprigs up sideways to clump the leaves into a more cutable pile—then it's

helpful to cut off the loose ends and place the main pile on top of them—and then cut finely crosswise. Again the sides are held in with the thumb and little finger, the other fingers bunching together the top. The short down and away cut can be very effective here. If you can do this well, it will take care of the mincing. Otherwise proceed to the second part.

The finely cut pieces may be piled up to be minced. If a curving chef's knife is used, the knife is rocked up and down through the pile. The top edge of the blade is tilted in the direction in which the knife is traveling. Each chop is farther and farther away, or closer and closer, to the person chopping. At intervals the dispersed pile is regrouped for further mincing. If a straight-edged Japanese

vegetable knife is used, the tip can be held down with thumb and first finger on either side of the blade (or between first two fingers with the thumb on top—see also [mincing](#) and [mincing garlic](#)).

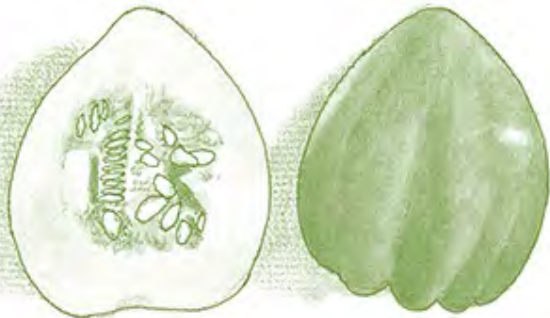




Winter Squash

Winter squashes are harvested in the fall and, if their tough outer skin is intact, they will keep for several weeks or more over the winter. They include banana squash, Hubbard squash, acorn squash, butternut squash, even pumpkin, which makes

heartwarming soup and vegetable dishes as well as pie. Smooth, squashy, and among the most satisfying of wintertime foods, when cooked, these vegetables are like a piece of summer sunshine. They are usually steamed or baked, or a combination of both. If the skin is tough, the squash can be eaten by scooping out the pulp with a spoon. Thinner skins can be eaten. Another alternative is to cut off the skins before or after cooking.



Steamed Winter Squash

Steaming the winter squash brings out its mild mellow goodness. The butter or nut butter gives it richness.

Squash

Salt

Water

Butter (optional)

Nut Butter (optional)

Put about ½ inch of water in the bottom of a pan. Cut open the squash, remove the seeds and cut into serving-size chunks before putting it in the water. Sprinkle on some salt, heat to boiling, then turn down to simmer. Put on a lid and let cook until tender, about 30 to 40 minutes. Serve with melted butter, or mix some of the cooking liquid in with a nut butter, season, and use it as a sauce. A green garnish would provide color and freshness.

Roasted Winter Squash

Roasting the squash will give it a more

robust nutty earthiness. Use the spices and it's almost dessert.

Squash

Oil or butter

Salt or sesame salt

*Cinnamon, nutmeg, or allspice
(optional)*

Preheat oven to 375°. Cut up the squash, remove the seeds, and arrange the pieces in a baking dish. Baste the pieces generously with oil or melted butter; add cinnamon, nutmeg, or allspice to the basting liquid, if you like. Bake for 40 to 60 minutes, depending on the size of the pieces. Baste every 10 or 15 minutes for added moistness and flavor. Season with salt or serve with sesame salt.

VARIATIONS

- Baste with equal parts of oil and orange juice.
- Baste with two parts oil, one part lemon juice, sugar or honey to taste.

Beets

Beets are red, and once they are cut open or cooked, beets will tint everything that comes into contact with them—hands, knife, cutting board; egg whites and potatoes turn pink; even celery and carrots will redden with prolonged contact—a wondrous effect.

Beets have a sweet, earthy flavor, and cooking will bring out their sweetness. Raw beets are occasionally eaten grated

in salad. They taste, quite simply, like dirt, which may not be so bad, but I prefer to cook them first and then grate them. Beet greens, including the red stems, are quite edible, tender, and mild tasting. They can be cooked with the beets or separately as a greens dish. A pound of beets without tops can provide four servings. (In fact this is my standard measure for determining quantities: four ounces of vegetable per person.)



COOKING BEETS

Boiling is the most common method of cooking beets, after which they may be prepared as a beet dish or combined with other ingredients. Scrub the beets as best you can with the root and about one inch of stem attached. Cover or half-cover the beets with salted water, then cover with a lid and simmer until fork-piercing tender—one-half hour or more for smaller beets, up to an hour or more for larger ones. Check from time to time that there is still water in the cooking pot. (Seriously—I have more than once found the beet pot without water.) With a pressure cooker, use just an inch of water and cook twelve to eighteen minutes, depending on size.

When the beets are drained and cool enough to handle, one of the most sensuous

pleasures in cooking awaits: slipping off the skins. A gentle tug dislodges the stems, then, squeezing the beet proper, out pops the bright interior—smooth, slippery, warm, and plump in your hand.

Next, cut the beets in the desired shape: rounds, half rounds, wedges, quarters, or eighths. Notice I do not say cubes: I am not a fan of making beets look like they came out of a machine.

Then, reheat the cut beets with a bit of butter, salt, and pepper. Beyond this you might do the following:

- *Dress* lightly with vinegar or lemon juice. Sweet and sour is classic with beets. Add honey or sugar.
- *Season* lightly with a dusting of

cinnamon and cloves, with garlic, ginger, or a touch of vinegar.

- *Garnish* with minced parsley, thinly sliced green onion, watercress, or perhaps with grated cheese, such as Parmesan or Monterey Jack.

Beets can also be steamed. Cut the stems off about an inch from the beets, then the beet juices will stay inside the beet, and you will have a little handle to start the skin removal later. If they are fresh and in good condition, you can save the the greens to cook later (one recipe here calls for them), but they can also be added to other vegetable dishes or soups, like spinach or chard.

Put the beets in a saucepot with one-

half inch or so of water; it doesn't need to cover the beets. Cover the pot and heat to boiling, then reduce the heat and continue cooking (steaming) until the beets are fork-tender. This will take about thirty minutes, depending on the size of the beets. If the biggest ones are cut in half, they will cook more quickly. Check the pot on occasion to make sure it still has water in it.

Remove the beets from the pot or pan and let them cool for several minutes until you can handle them easily. Remove the stems, and then slip off the skins by hand, as above.

Cut into the desired shape.

Baking the beets will give them a somewhat sweeter, roasted, or grilled flavor. Prepare the beets as for boiling,

leaving on the root and an inch of stem. For larger beets, slice into halves or quarters through the stem and root. Toss with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake at 375° for one half to one hour. Season to taste, sprinkle with balsamic vinegar if you like, and serve. Roast on kitchen parchment to keep the pan cleaner.

Another alternative would be to put the unpeeled beets (with the inch of stalk) in a baking pan with one-half inch of water, and cover with foil or a lid. Bake at 375° until fork-tender, about one hour. As with the steamed beets, wait for them to cool before peeling. Season to taste and sprinkle with balsamic vinegar.

Beets and Greens

I usually find the idea of washing and cutting up the greens for this dish to be somewhat daunting, but the dish speaks for itself: the beets gentled by the greens, the greens made more sturdy by the beets.

Beets

Beet greens

Salt

Pepper, black or red

Green onions or chives (optional)

Boil or steam the beets and cut them as described previously. Cut the greens and stems into 1-inch sections crosswise (and wash). When reheating the cooked beets, add the greens, and a little salt along with

some pepper, cover and steam for a couple of minutes. Then stir the beets and greens together, adjust the seasoning, and continue cooking until done—another 2 or 3 minutes. Garnish with sliced green onions or chives.

VARIATIONS

- For some spiciness, consider adding garlic, ginger, or horseradish.
- For a classic sweet-and-sour effect, add equal amounts of balsamic vinegar and honey.
- For not-so-classic sweet-and-sour effect, add pomegranate vinegar and pomegranate molasses. Awesome flavors!

Radishes

Radishes have a snappy, peppery flavor which is refreshing and palate cleansing. Aside from being served whole, as an appetizer with sweet butter and salt, radishes can be sliced and added to salads: lettuce, cabbage, potato, bean, vegetable, corn. Some people find it is easier to leave the stem and leaves attached when slicing so there is something to hold on to. But after a few slices you can turn the radish around and hold it with your thumbnail. If you want red-tipped radish juliennes, cut into rounds, then cut the rounds crosswise. Another possibility would be to cut the radish using the [Chinese rolling cut](#).



The white radish, known as icicle radish or daikon radish, has a hot taste, so it may be quite a hit in salads, or again it

can be cooked like carrots, to make the flavors milder.

Radish Salad

The fresh goodness of earth, water, sunlight, and sky brought to the table.

Radishes, sliced

Green pepper, slivered

Carrot, grated

Vinegar

Soy sauce

Honey or sugar

Sweeten the vinegar to taste with the honey or sugar and season with soy sauce. Mix with the vegetables.



Radish-Raisin Salad

The sweetness of the raisins with the pungent flavor of the radishes.

Radishes

Carrot

Lettuce leaves (or arugula)

Raisins

Oil

Vinegar

Soy sauce

*Mint, fresh basil, or flat-leafed
parsley (optional)*

Slice the radishes in rounds. Cut the carrot into short matchstick pieces. Tear or cut the lettuce into small pieces. Mix up the dressing—about 2 parts oil and 1 part

vinegar and then soy sauce to taste. Toss everything together. And splurge: garnish with cute little leaves of mint, fresh basil, or flat-leafed parsley.

Turnips & Rutabagas

Is it ruta-BAH-gas or ruta-BAY-gas? They're good either way. Turnips and rutabagas are both root vegetables: the turnip round and white, often with a purplish area on its skin; the rutabaga more oval shaped and orange-brown. When eaten raw they have, as radishes have, something of a peppery, zesty taste. When cooked just to tenderness, their taste is clean, mild, with a slight bite. Cooking to mushiness will draw out the more odorous and penetrating flavors, which is OK, but like well-cooked cabbage, it is

not a taste everyone acquires. Here are several ways to prepare them.

Turnip Pickle

This is a Japanese-style pickle, originally made with seaweed.

Turnips

Salt

Lemon peel and juice

Sugar or honey

Kombu seaweed (optional)

Much like the Thin-Slice Cabbage Salad, here's another recipe that will test how well you're cutting. Wash the turnip and trim off the root and the green at the top. Cut the turnip in rounds as thin as you

possibly can. Half rounds won't have the same wholeness, but they'll do, as far as flavor. Put the slices in a bowl with some salt (about $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon for each medium sized turnip), and salt under pressure (see [Salting Vegetables](#)) for 30 minutes or more. (It can even be overnight.) Meanwhile, peel a lemon with a vegetable peeler and cut the strips of peel into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch squares or narrow crosswise strips. Soak the kombu for 20 minutes and cut it in $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch squares also. If there is a lot of water with the turnips after salting, pour it off and save it for some soup stock. Taste the turnips and rinse off any excess salt. Mix the lemon juice with the sugar or honey to taste, and then toss everything together. The turnip is good by itself after just the salt and the pressing, too. The

pickles will keep.

Turnip Stir-Fry

A natural for those littleish turnips which come with a lot of green.

Turnips

Turnip greens

Olive oil

Salt

Pepper

Ginger, freshly grated

Sugar (optional)

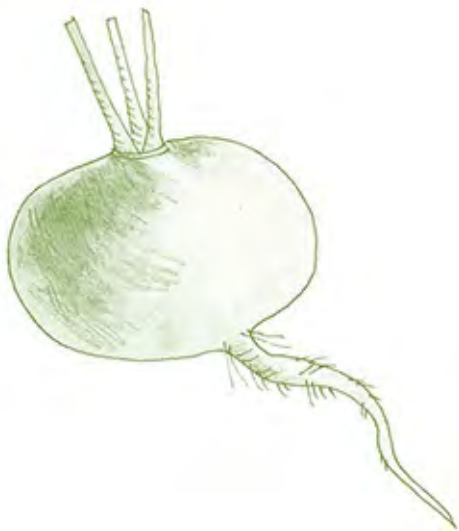
Wash the turnips, then cut in half and slice. Wash the greens, cut in 1-inch sections, and keep them separate from the turnips. Stir-fry the turnips for 3 or 4

minutes in the olive oil. Turn the heat down to medium low, put in the greens, along with the salt, pepper, ginger, and possibly a couple pinches of sugar, and cover. Let it cook for 4 or 5 minutes. Check it once in the meantime. Is it doing OK? Temperature all right? Turnips not quite tender?

VARIATIONS

- Whether the dish is served with or without the greens, grated cheddar cheese may be sprinkled on top just before serving.
- Carrot, turnips, and greens are good together. Start the stir-frying with the carrots for a couple of minutes, then continue as above.
- Use rutabaga instead of turnips.

Onion and celery are good with this. Begin the stir-frying with the onion, then the celery briefly, then continue as above.



Roasted Turnips or Rutabagas

Roasting the turnips or rutabagas does wonders for deepening their flavors, giving them a sense of nuttiness, that you could enhance with some roasted, chopped almonds.

Turnips and/or rutabagas

Olive oil or butter

Balsamic vinegar (optional)

Preheat oven to 375°. Wash the vegetables and cut them into ½-inch chunks. Toss with oil or melted butter. Place on baking sheet or pan and bake for about 40 minutes. May be garnished with grated cheese and/or chopped parsley when serving—or the roasted, chopped almonds

as mentioned above. A sprinkling of balsamic vinegar brightens the flavors.

Greens

This is mainly about chard and spinach, probably the two commonest greens, but what is written here can be applied to most cooking greens. Beet greens (one of the most tender), turnip greens, collard and mustard greens, kale (probably the toughest green) and bok choy are all frequently available. Of these, only spinach is really appetizing when eaten raw, although the others may be thinly sliced and salted as a [thin-slice salad](#).



Greens are slightly bitter or tart, but other flavors can be brought out depending on the way they are prepared. When using

greens, the first decision is how much of the stems to use. With chard I like to cut out the stems using a V cut, and then cut them thinly crosswise about a quarter of an inch wide. With kale, collards, and mustard greens I tend to cut off the fat part of the stems and discard them—or use them to make stock. To cut the leaves I often start by cutting them in half lengthwise, then piling them up and cutting them crosswise into one-inch pieces.

Greens cook down by quite a lot, so to come out with the same cooked volume as with other vegetables, it is necessary to start with three to four times as much raw volume. We have found, however, that people eat about the same amount, by weight, of greens as they would of other vegetables.

When doing a combination vegetable dish with greens, the other vegetables can be stir-fried in the bottom of a larger pot. Then there is plenty of room to add the greens for steaming on top of the other vegetables. Folding over the stir-fried vegetables from the bottom will speed the process.

CHARD AND SPINACH

Spinach greens add a tender meatiness to salads, while chard is tougher and tends to pucker the mouth when eaten raw. Spinach leaves have (mostly) thin, easy-chewing stems, while chard leaves are centered on a broad, stringy white stalk. There is also a spectacularly beautiful chard with leaves centered on a red stalk with red ribs extending out into the green leafiness

and also yellow chard. If prepared by themselves, these greens are probably best steamed or sautéed. Often slightly bitter, all greens can be sweetened when cooked in combination with onions, carrots, bananas, or such, and can be a main dish when cooked with eggs.

Nowadays baby spinach is often available in the produce section, and makes excellent spinach salad. Otherwise the stems of the largest spinach leaves can be removed, and the larger leaves cut into smaller pieces. Used in combination with other salad greens, or used alone, spinach may want a creamy dressing, perhaps some chopped hard-boiled egg, or maybe some grated cheese. Minced onion is good, too, if you and your guests think so. Little chunks of tomato make a bright

addition; sliced pear or apple are complementary and refreshing. Roasted, sliced almonds add a welcome earthiness. I also enjoy spinach salads “wilted” with hot oil.

Steamed Whole Spinach

Spinach is particularly elegant and tasty cooked this way. The funny thing is that most people don't know what it is. I have heard people commenting, “Oh my, how gorgeous—what is it?” One time someone said, “I think maybe it's dandelion leaves.” For such a simple dish the reactions are often astounding. What makes the dish is some careful attention to details.

Spinach

Salt

Melted butter

Lemon wedges

Wash the spinach and, as you do so, make an effort to keep all of the stems going in the same direction. Arrange the spinach in a steamer, again in piles of leaves with stems in the same direction. Sprinkle in a little salt, picking up piles of leaves here and there. Steam the spinach just 2 to 4 minutes. Arrange the spinach attractively with lemon wedges (an extra star if you've taken the seeds out) on a heated serving platter. Spoon some melted butter over the spinach. Serve immediately.

VARIATION

Steam the spinach in a small amount of melted butter with a lid over the pot—the liquid released from the spinach as it cooks will keep it moist.

Sauté-Steaming Greens

Ease of cuisine, that's one of the goals here. Start the greens cooking in the oil, then season and cover to complete the cooking. Black or red pepper, or green chilies, garlic or ginger, vinegars of various flavors (or lemon or lime juice), and soon you have numerous dishes at your command.

Greens

Olive oil

Salt

*Pepper, black or red, or minced green
chilies*

Garlic or ginger (optional)

Lemon juice or vinegar

Once the greens are washed and cut, start the stems cooking in some olive oil (if you are using them). After 1 or 2 minutes begin adding greens, and continue adding as the greens cook down. Sprinkle new additions with some salt and black or red pepper (or other pungent ingredient). Cover and turn the heat down to finish cooking by steaming. Add a bit of lemon juice or vinegar to brighten the flavors.

Greens, Orange and Onion

Once again, steamed greens—only on a bed of carrot and onion, which add a marvelous earthy sweetness to the greens.

Greens

Onion

Carrot

Oil

Salt

Lemon juice (optional)

Wash the greens and cut them in 1- or 2-inch sections. Slice the onion and cut the carrot into small pieces. Sauté the onion for 1 minute, then add stalk pieces and the carrot, continuing to sauté for 3 to 5 minutes. Turn the heat down and add the greens, or as much as will fit comfortably. Sprinkle with salt. Cover and let steam for

1 minute, then open, fold in the greens, adding the rest if they didn't fit at first. Steam another 2 or 3 minutes. Add lemon juice, if you have it.

Greens Get Egged On

The egg can appear or disappear, but in any case the greens become more meaty.

Greens

Olive oil

Salt

Pepper

Eggs

Soy sauce (optional)

Onion or green onion (optional)

Sauté-steam the greens until they're nearly

done. Stir in some beaten egg or eggs. With few eggs and lots of stirring, the eggs will blend in much like a seasoning. With more eggs and less stirring, the effect will be more omelet-like. A little bit of soy sauce can season the eggs. If you like onions, start by sautéing the yellow kind before adding the greens, or sprinkle on some chopped green onion to finish.

Lettuce: Head, Romaine, Boston, Oak Leaf, Red Leaf, Butter

Lettuces includes a wide variety of tender, leafy greens. Head lettuce and romaine are two with crispy-crunchy leaves, while the others tend to have softer, more velvety leaves. There are many exacting prescriptions for turning lettuce into salad.

What follows are some basic principles.

Remembering that the idea is to eat some lettuce, why not just rinse off the earth and serve it? If you appreciate and enjoy lettuce like this, and the other people eating do also, read no further, nothing could be simpler. When one is in the garden this is sweet, savory, redolent eating. In the kitchen though maybe adding a little salt would bring out the flavors. What happens when salt is added is that water is drawn out of the lettuce. It goes limp, loses its crisp. With cabbage this is appropriate, but lettuce leaves, more delicate than cabbage, don't have crisp to spare. The answer to this is get the lettuce coated with oil first (the oil also helps with "mouth-feel"). The salt won't penetrate nearly as fast—and the oil helps

the salt stick to the lettuce. Now the lettuce is rather gummed up with oil. What cuts oil is vinegar. A bit of zing, too, not bad. So that's the basic dressing: oil, vinegar, and salt. Beyond this basic dressing, we can explore ways to further amplify, mollify, pacify. More about that in the salad section. For now let's take care of the lettuce.

WASHING AND DRYING LETTUCE

Dirt is one of the most unappetizing things that could garnish lettuce. It adds a lot of hesitation and reluctance to chewing. Often only the outer leaves of a head of lettuce need washing—these leaves will frequently have some dirt tucked away in their folds or at the base of their stalks, but it is most practical to simply rinse off

all the leaves. Focus some attention and energy on the activity of washing, and it can be a blessing.

It is sometimes recommended to wash each leaf individually under running water, since soaking the lettuce in water will leech out flavor and nutrients. I've never found that this running water method works very well, and it is impractical in any quantity—as well as a waste of water.

Here's what I have found:

Prep the lettuce some before washing. Remove any wilted, yellowed, or slimy leaves and discard. Cut or tear the lettuce into bite-sized pieces. I did say “cut or tear.” Somehow people still think that cutting lettuce is damaging to the flavor—I haven't noticed this—especially now that kitchen knives are made to not react with

the food being cut. But I have noticed that people take a number of leaves at a time and rip the lettuce to shreds (often misshapen pieces) and call it “tearing”—not appetizing in my experience. Not good for the lettuce or its appearance.

Here’s my suggestion:

With romaine lettuce, cut it lengthwise down the rib, and for the largest leaves cut each half again in half lengthwise. Then cut all the leaves crosswise into one-inch pieces. Simple. Elegant. It works.

With other leaf lettuce, make a short lengthwise cut in the stems before tearing the leaves—and I do suggest tearing one leaf at a time. (As with so many kitchen practices, you can always study for yourself what works best for you.) The smaller leaves may be left whole.

Prepping the lettuce before washing makes it easier to clean—and also to dry.



To wash the lettuce immerse it in water. Swish it around and remove to a salad spinner or colander. Spin it dry in the salad spinner—or what I do for myself

when I'm without a spinner, place in a clean dishtowel, hold the corners together and twirl outside. (For larger quantities you'll need an old onion sack. At Tassajara we used an old dryer—on spin without heat. And nowadays you can also purchase a big-bucks “greens machine” for spinning greens or drying off french fries which have been soaking in water prior to frying.)

You can keep the dried lettuce in the refrigerator, covered with a damp towel. But of course the flavors are better when the lettuce is closer to room temperature. Go figure.

Here are some alternatives for dressing a salad.

Two-Step Salad Toss

A simple way to dress a salad on a day to day basis.

Olive or other salad oil

Vinegar or lemon juice

Salt

Pepper

Herbs of your choice (optional)

First toss the salad with oil. Start with a small amount, toss well, and see that each leaf has got some. When the salad is sufficiently oiled, sprinkle on your choice of vinegar or lemon juice, salt, freshly ground pepper, and perhaps dust with herbs, all just to your taste. Toss well. Done properly, there won't be a puddle of

dressing on the bottom of the salad bowl or plate, and the dressing will give a little kick without being overpowering.

VARIATIONS

- Keep cloves of garlic in the salad oil and marinate herbs in the vinegar.
- For an Asian-style dressing, use soy sauce in place of salt, use rice wine vinegar, and add a couple drops of sesame oil along with a sprinkling of sugar.

Lemonade Lettuce

This makes a light, refreshing salad. Maybe a bit unusual at first, but the

sweetened, fragrant lemon leads right into the lettuce-ness of lettuce.

Lettuce

Lemon juice

Honey

Salt (optional)

Sweeten the lemon juice to taste. Mix thoroughly. Dip a piece of lettuce in it to sample. This is a wonderful dressing for wild, edible greens such as miner's lettuce, chick weed, shepherd's purse and curly dock. It can also be made with vinegar and sugar. Add a touch of salt possibly. Toss first with olive oil if you wish.

Nut-Butter Dressing

The earthy oily nut quality can be a grounding element with leafy greens, especially the more sturdy ones, such as spinach, cabbage, and kale. With more delicate lettuces adding toasted nuts or seeds directly seems a useful alternative.

Nut butter

Water or oil

Vinegar

Honey, sugar, or maple syrup

Salt or soy sauce

Pepper, black or red

Thin out the nut butter with some warm water (or possibly some oil). Season to taste with vinegar, sweetening, salt or soy

sauce. Spice it up with some pepper (black or red) or some fresh ginger. Thin more to desired consistency. Yum . . .

Artichokes



Artichokes are one of the most spectacular and aristocratic of vegetables, despite (or maybe because of) the fact that most of it is thrown away. A type of thistle, artichokes are grown in California in an area centering around Castroville, the “artichoke capital of the world.” Artichokes are served whole and the leaves pulled off at the table, dipped in melted butter or sauce, and the fleshy end bitten off. If the artichokes are small, the outer leaves can be removed and the inner portion cooked and served as an “artichoke heart” where the whole thing is eaten—these also come in jars prepickled for use in salads. Whole artichokes are usually boiled or steamed (occasionally baked), while the hearts can also be sautéed, deep-fried, or pickled for salads.

Artichokes are not eaten raw, but may be served either hot or cold.

To wash artichokes, hold them by the stem and swish them briskly up and down in water. Some of the tougher outer leaves may be removed. Cut off the stem flush with the lower leaves. The artichokes can be cooked like this or the top one-quarter to one-third of the leaves may be cut off with knife or scissors. (This removes the thistles which are at the end of each leaf, so that eating the artichoke is easier.) The stem, when peeled, may be cooked and eaten along with the rest.

COOKING ARTICHOSES

Artichokes are usually steamed or boiled, though baking is also a possibility. Slip the washed and trimmed artichokes into

the boiling salted water or arrange in a steamer. If cooking in the liquid, cover, bring the water to a boil and then turn down the heat. Simmer for forty minutes or until the outer leaves may be easily removed. If steaming, the artichokes will probably take from forty minutes to an hour to cook. Check periodically to make sure that there is still water in the lower part of the steamer. Or pressure-cook for 12 to 15 minutes.

Want to dress up the artichokes? One of the easiest things to do is to cut off the upper portion of the leaves so that the tops of the artichokes are basically level. Loosen and spread the leaves apart, then sprinkle herbs between the layers. Use sweet basil, tarragon, thyme, or possibly marjoram or oregano, along with a

sprinkling of salt. The herb's fragrance will penetrate quite well. Another alternative is to season the cooking liquid. For this add the juice of a lemon, some onion and/or garlic, some celery, bay leaves or any other seasoning that you're fond of.

When eating artichokes hot, dip the petals in melted butter or perhaps a seasoned mayonnaise (see [Lemon Mayonnaise](#) and [Mayonnaise with Soy Sauce and Balsamic Vinegar](#)) on their way to your mouth, or take a look at the other suggestions in the Asparagus section.

Asparagus



Fresh asparagus is a wonderful treat, which used to be available for only a short time in the late spring, when the new shoots of the asparagus plant are harvested. The cut end of the shoots may be set in water to help maintain freshness. This stem end at its base is frequently white and tough to chew. The tough part of the stem can be removed by gripping it as close to the end as possible and snapping

it off. The shoot will break right at the tender eating mark. The asparagus is now ready to be eaten raw or cooked whole, boiled or steamed, or to be cut up for sautéing. Cook asparagus only until tender. Anything short of this is tasty too, juicy with a slight crunch. Hot or cold, asparagus is often served with mayonnaise, but there are many other possibilities.

Basic Asparagus

These are some basic options for cooking asparagus with water. Other options for cooking would include grilling, roasting, and sautéing/steaming. Cooking with water will accentuate the invigorating

green-leafy quality of the asparagus.

Asparagus

Water

Salt

*Melted butter and lemon juice or
seasoned mayonnaise*

Prepare the asparagus by snapping off the tough ends. Place in salted boiling water and when the water returns to boiling, turn the heat down so that the asparagus simmers, or steam the asparagus on a metal rack over boiling water. Another method is to tie a bunch of asparagus together with string, and cook all of them together standing on their end in water. If the asparagus is to be served cold, some crispness is especially appetizing, so cook

the asparagus anywhere from 2 to 8 minutes, depending on how much crispness you want. To cool, spread out the asparagus on a large dish towel. Boiled or steamed asparagus is good with melted butter, lemon juice, or a seasoned mayonnaise. One attractive serving arrangement is to put the mayonnaise at one end of a platter, then arrange the asparagus to be swimming toward it.

Lemon Mayonnaise

Taste buds will perk up when the asparagus, as well as the artichokes, are served with this seasoned mayonnaise.

Mayonnaise

Lemon or lime juice

Salt (optional)

Garlic (optional)

Season the mayonnaise to taste with lemon juice. Taste for salt. Add finely chopped or macerated garlic for a poor cook's aioli. Lime juice is also fine.

Mayonnaise with Soy Sauce and Balsamic Vinegar

This mayonnaise recipe also goes well with artichokes.

Mayonnaise

Soy sauce

Balsamic vinegar

Season the mayonnaise to taste with soy sauce and balsamic vinegar.

Asparagus with Guacamole

Deep green and light green blending.

Asparagus
Guacamole

Cook the asparagus as in the basic recipe, and serve with a [guacamole](#) dip.

Basic Asparagus Over Easy

Asparagus can be cut on long diagonals or Chinese rolling cut for sautéing. After it's cut, then it's sautéed.

Asparagus

Yellow onion

Carrot

Oil

Salt

Nuts (optional)

Snap the tough ends off of the asparagus. Then cut in oval shaped pieces (diagonally) about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide, leaving the buds intact at the tender tip end. Slice or dice the onion and cut the carrot in ovals, rolling cut, half rounds, or what-have-you. Sauté the onion for about a minute. Add the carrot and fry this with the onion for a minute or two. Then add the asparagus and a little salt. Toss with the onion and carrot for a minute, then add a small amount of water (or white wine),

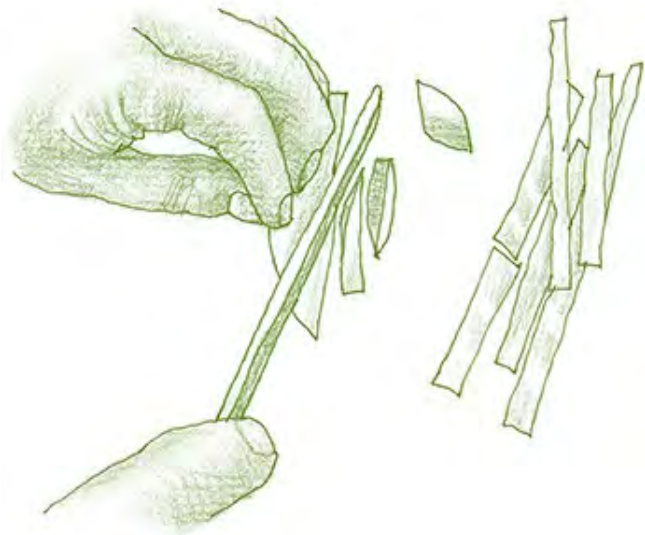
put a lid on, turning the heat down to medium or medium low. Cook for 2 to 5 minutes until tender. (The smaller the pieces, the shorter the cooking time.) For variation, sprinkle with roasted, chopped nuts.

Broccoli

One of cabbage's many cousins, broccoli makes green, succulent eating. The broccoli flowerets extend from a thick main stalk. Both the flowerets and the stalk are edible, but the outside of the main stalk is generally tough and stringy. To use the stalk, cut it loose from the broccoli and trim off the tougher outside layer. Cut as you wish—without the outside layer it's a very tender delicacy.



Cut apart the flowerets into bigger or smaller pieces, as you prefer.





Broccoli will have a more subtle taste, a bright green color, and an especially pleasing texture if it's not overcooked. It has a strong flavor of its own, so it can stand being well seasoned. If the broccoli flowerets have bloomed yellow, the

broccoli is past its peak, and is best served with a hearty sauce or put into soup.

Blanched Broccoli

Many vegetables taste great with butter, lemon, salt, and pepper, and broccoli is certainly one of them. Again the key here is to err on the side of undercooking the broccoli rather than overcooking it. So get the broccoli out of the water while still firm, as it will continue to cook.

Broccoli

Water

Salt

Pepper

Butter (optional)

Cheese, grated (optional)

Lemon juice (optional)

Prepare the broccoli as above, then drop into boiling, salted water. Be sure to turn the heat down after the water returns to boiling. The broccoli will be done in as little as 5 to 6 minutes. Remove from the water when it's still bright green and slightly crunchy. Drain and spread out on a clean dish towel to cool. Serve with butter, salt and pepper, lemon juice, grated cheese, or a sauce.

VARIATION

Steam the broccoli instead of boiling.

Greek Steamed Broccoli

As well as the simpler combination above, I like this combination of flavors, giving the broccoli something of a Greek feeling. It's also a combination good with other vegetables including carrots, green beans, zucchini, and greens.

Onion, sliced

Garlic

Olive oil

Black olives

Broccoli, chunked

Water

Salt

Pepper

*Melted butter with lemon juice
(optional)*

Parmesan cheese, grated (optional)

Sauté the onion and garlic in olive oil. Add the black olives and broccoli, cover and steam until done, about 5 to 6 minutes, adding a little water if necessary to keep from burning. Season with salt and pepper. May also be dressed with lemon butter and grated Parmesan.

Cauliflower

Cauliflower is another member of the cabbage family. Attached to the cauliflower core by short stalks is a sunburst array of white flowerets. This white head is encased in green leaves, which almost universally are severed from the cauliflower before it is sold, but can be used if you wish. Best cooked,

these greens may be cooked with the cauliflower or separately. Wash the greens and cut once lengthwise first, then crosswise in segments, slicing more thinly closer to the core where the center rib is broader.

The tender white of the cauliflower is suitable cooked or raw, unless it's old and getting black spots, in which case it's better cooked.

The sliced flowerets are distinctive and attractive in salads and lightly cooked cauliflower is also an excellent salad ingredient.

When served hot, the cauliflower is most palatable when still slightly crunchy. Longer cooking will make the texture mushy and bring out an odorous, cabbagey taste.

Cauliflower Salad

A delightful switch from all those greens. If the cauliflower is to be cooked, start well ahead of time to give it a chance to cool.

Cauliflower

Water (optional)

Choice of vegetables and other ingredients: grated carrot, chopped parsley, watercress, green onion, celery, pitted olives, sliced tomato or pimento, chopped pickles

Salt

Pepper

Oil and vinegar, or sour cream

Herbs of your choice

Cut the raw cauliflower into small pieces. When using cooked cauliflower, blanch or sauté-steam for just 3 to 4 minutes, so that the cauliflower still has plenty of body and chew left in it. Remove to bowl or tray or spread out on a clean dish towel to cool. Meanwhile cut up the other ingredients you will be using. Prepare an oil-and-vinegar or sour cream dressing and mix it with the salad ingredients, adding herbs of your choice. Leave in the refrigerator (or at room temperature) until serving time. The grated carrot and celery could go in with the cauliflower for the last minute of cooking.



Cauliflower Stir-Fry and Steam

I like this better than straight steaming. Stir-frying it first brings out the nutty quality.

Cauliflower
Olive oil
Salt

Cut the cauliflower into medium to small pieces, making sure the pieces are roughly the same size so that they will cook uniformly. Stir-fry in oil and salt for perhaps 3 to 4 minutes and then, adding a squirt of water, cover and steam for another 4 to 5 minutes until just tender. Check the seasoning and serve. Simple, delicious.

VARIATION

Sprinkle with roasted, chopped walnuts and/or toss in some garlic or ginger toward the end of the sautéing, and then continue on to the steaming.

Orange and Green on White

Grated cheddar melts right into the cauliflower.

Cauliflower

Salt

Pepper

Cheddar cheese

Green onion or parsley

Blanch the cauliflower in boiling lightly salted water for a few minutes until it is as tender as you like. After draining, remove the cauliflower to a serving bowl, season, and sprinkle generously with grated cheese and chopped green onion or parsley.

Avocado

Avocados are so incredibly rich in oils

that they are almost the consistency of butter. This quality sometimes puts people off—the avocado is left on the side of the plate. As avocados ripen, their skins turn from deep green to a dark chocolaty brown. Pick an avocado that gives slightly when gently pressed. (If the avocado is soft when pressed, it is over-ripe.) Often you will need to buy firm avocados and allow them to ripen at home.



Cut the avocado in half lengthwise around the pit. Twist to remove half of the avocado. Whack your knife into the pit and twist to remove it. Pull the pit off of the knife, or, leveraging the pit at the edge of the counter (or the compost bucket), pull the knife off the pit.

To serve whole, sliced, or in chunks, first remove the fleshy fruit from the skin;

gently slip a rubber spatula (or a large metal spoon) between the flesh and the skin and carefully work it around to loosen the fruit. You now have half an avocado intact.

To cut the avocado half into handsome slices, place it flat side down on the counter, and make diagonal slices perhaps an eighth of an inch thick. After each cut, hold the cut piece in place with your left hand, while you lift the knife with your right. This will keep all the cut pieces in place.

When you have finished cutting the half avocado, pick it up, place it on a plate or platter and fan out the slices—elegant. A composed avocado platter appears below and there are several avocado platters later in the book.

Avocado chunks are good in salads, and as a late addition to cooked greens or omelets. If you like avocado you'll find lots of uses.

Avocado, sliced or spread, is excellent on sourdough French bread (or bread of your choice), plain or with lemon juice and salt and pepper. It can be the spread for a cheese, lettuce, and tomato sandwich. I love bringing it along for my picnics at the beach: a make-your-own sandwich affair.









Avocado Composition Platter with Tomatoes

Avocado platters present a fine opportunity for the budding artist within: fanning out the avocado slices, fanning out the tomato slices—perhaps the tomato slices ringed by the avocado slices.

Additional green is always an option.

Avocado

Tomato

Olives

2 parts olive oil

1 part vinegar

Salt

Pepper

Sugar (optional)

Green garnish

Slice the avocados as noted previously and fan out the slices on a platter. Slice the tomatoes and arrange them on the platter as well. Decorate with olives. Combine oil, vinegar (I like balsamic or rice wine vinegar for this), salt, and pepper (and a hint of sugar?), and spoon

over the other ingredients. You're good—so's the platter.

Additional fresh green garnish could be parsley, basil, tarragon, cilantro, thinly-sliced green onion.

Avocado on the Half-Shell

Use half an unpeeled avocado per person.

Avocado, halved and pitted

Lemon or lime, cut in wedges

Salt or soy sauce

Mango or melon (optional)

Arrange the halved avocados on a platter with lemon wedges. Serve with salt or soy sauce handy. Eat with a spoon. Or cut up some mango or melon, mix with the lemon

and a hint of sugar, and mound into and onto the avocado.

Guacamole

Mouthwatering and mouth-filling, guacamole brings tangy flavors along with the rich oily goodness of avocado—and it can be excellently utilized with salads, salad platters, and salad dressings, as well as a dip for chips or vegetables. I also enjoy it as a sandwich spread.

Avocado

Lemon juice or lime juice

Salt

Garlic

Green chili such as fresh serrano or

jalapeño, minced

Onion, minced (optional)

Green pepper, minced (optional)

Tomato, chopped (optional)

Sour cream (optional)

Mash and season the avocado to taste with lemon or lime juice, and then the salt, garlic, and minced green chili. Add optional ingredients if available and desired.

Green Beans, String Beans and Wax Beans

Green beans have a distinctive flavor of *green* and when young and tender, they are simply classic. Younger beans are tender with a smooth green skin and are about the diameter of a pencil. They can be easily

steamed or sautéed. Older beans have a more wrinkled skin, get as big as a finger, and will have many more strings attached. If time is not taken to cut them, they're probably best boiled or stewed. So many of the green beans in the markets used to be monstrous and tough, and needed to be cooked for ages to be chewable, but this has been changing in more recent years.



The bean has a stem at one end and comes to a point at the other. On a young bean only the stem need be removed. You can always try a bean or two to see if the pointed (blossom) end is tender. I've worked at removing the tips both by hand and with a knife. Either way you can be studying how much of the bean to use. You can snap off just the tip or, if the end of the bean feels pretty well dried out, snap off a larger section. Snap the tip off to the side, and if it's attached to some string, draw the end down the side of the bean, removing the string. If part of a bean is moldy, the other sections are nonetheless still good. Cutting green beans in half lengthwise or in long, thin strips adds to their tenderness and flavor. This cut is fairly difficult and time-consuming, so

undertake it only when you have time and energy to spare.

Sautéed Green Beans

A sturdy, yet supple and elegant vegetable, green beans make a reliable companion dish to fill out a meal.

Green beans

Oil or butter

Salt

Water

Use either tender whole beans or cut-up larger beans. Follow the usual method for sautéing. Heat a skillet, add olive oil (and perhaps a sprinkling of salt), and stir-fry the green beans for 4 to 5 minutes, then

cover and steam with a touch of water until the beans are bright green and just tender. If using butter for frying, it's best to have some oil with it and not get the pan too hot. Check the seasoning and serve.

VARIATIONS

- Add some tomato chunks toward the end, and some sliced green onion for garnish.
- Add some minced garlic in there, and a splash of Balsamic vinegar. Oh, and how about some freshly ground black pepper?
- Add roasted, slivered almonds. Mix in half with the green beans and sprinkle the other half on top.

Boiled Green Beans

Boiling the green beans will take care of their toughness. Get them out soon enough and they'll still be bright green.

Green beans

Water

Salt

Pepper (optional)

Butter (optional)

Herbs of your choice (optional)

Olive oil and vinegar (optional)

Prepare the green beans. Put them in the salted boiling water and cook for 6 to 8 minutes. Observe closely, unless you prefer your beans dull and mushy. Have a sample bite and take the beans out when

they're still *slightly* chewy. These beans can be seasoned with butter, salt, pepper, herbs, or go in the direction of olive oil and a splash of vinegar.

Cheese on Beans

Though cheese (and dairy) seems to have gotten a bit of a bad name, I still love it and enjoy sprinkling it on vegetables from time to time.

Cheddar cheese

Green beans, boiled

Salt

Pepper

Grate the cheese or cut it in matchstick pieces. Mix it with the drained green

beans, season to taste and serve. This dish can sit in the oven awhile, especially if the green beans were drained while they still had a bit of crunch left in them.

Sweet Corn

Corn is really a grain, though it is often served as a vegetable. I once stayed with friends in Vermont who had the water boiling while they were picking the corn, so that it would be exquisitely fresh. They ran it into the house, shucking it along the way. Plop, plop, splash, splash! Love that fresh corn—cooked in only two minutes perhaps, so it's still a little nutty, doused with butter, and sprinkled with salt and pepper. We were chomping away at the corn less than ten minutes after it had been separated from its stalk. And you have to

confess, “Corn was never like this. I am in corn heaven.” Most of us don’t live next door to a cornfield, so we’d have a long run to get the corn home. May as well enjoy what we can get. Nearby.



Whether the corn is cooked or raw, the kernels can be removed—and eaten by themselves or added to other vegetable dishes. Lay the ear down flat and cut the corn kernels off the side. Rotate the cob and repeat.

Corn on the Cob

Brilliant yellow sunnyness floods the mouth.

Corn

Water

Salt

Butter

Pepper

Soy sauce (optional)

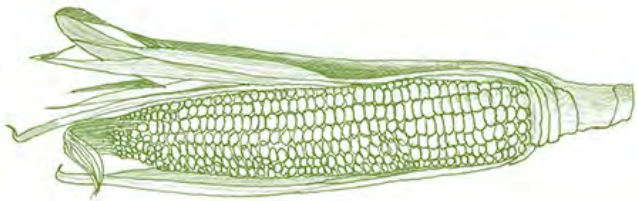
Shuck the corn by removing the leafy wrapping and the thready corn silks. The stem where there's no kernels may be broken off or left on for a handle. The ear may also be broken in half, if you prefer. Drop in salted boiling water and cook 3 to 4 minutes. Pick out the corn with tongs or drain through a colander or strainer. Serve with butter, salt, and pepper. You could also use soy sauce.

VARIATIONS

- The salted boiling water can be half milk, using regular milk or adding powdered. Milk-fed corn.
- Bake the corn: Leave the husks on to retain moisture, and bake for 15 to 20 minutes at 375° to 400°. It's ready when the outer leaves are

beginning to turn brown. Peel back the shucks to use for a handle (country style) or just pull them off. Pull the silks off the end of the ear in a bunch. Serve as desired. This method retains flavor and nutrients lost in boiling.

- Grill the corn: You can leave the husks on, and grill all the way around so that the husks blacken (which gives the corn a smoky flavor). Or you can soak the shucked corn in water, and then grill lightly all the way around. Butter and lime juice . . .



Corn Salad

Cutting the corn kernels off of the cob makes them easier to chew, while still being flavorful. The yellow *fabric* of corn can be dotted with other vegetables.

Corn, cooked

Olive oil

Vinegar

Salt

Pepper, black or red

*Choice of vegetables: red peppers,
tomato, cold cooked beets*

Fresh parsley, basil, or cilantro

Cut the kernels off the cob. Cut other vegetables into salad pieces. Combine 2 parts oil with 1 part vinegar and season to taste with salt and pepper. Garnish with the parsley, basil, or fresh cilantro.

Mixed Vegetables with Corn

The corn contributes sweetness to the other vegetables.

Corn, cooked

*Choice of vegetables: onion, peppers,
zucchini, tomato, green beans
(perhaps something you were*

preparing anyway?)

Oil

Salt

Water

Tabasco sauce (optional)

Basil or oregano (optional)

Pesto (optional)

Cut the kernels off the cob. Slice the other vegetables for sautéing. Stir-fry the onion and green beans, if using them, for several minutes. Add the remaining ingredients and steam for perhaps 5 minutes. Season with Tabasco sauce or red pepper or a bit of dried basil or oregano—or break out your leftover pesto for seasoning.

Cucumber

Cucumber is the smallest, plainest, least

sweet melon. In addition to generic cucumbers there are lemon cucumbers and English cucumbers, all with a fleshy interior covered with a waxy, usually tough exterior. If the skin is bitter, peel the cucumber before serving. Otherwise the peeling is optional, or you can peel it in lengthwise strips, leaving decorative ribs of green peel on the cucumber. Like all melons, cucumbers are mostly water and quite refreshing in hot weather. Frequently pickled, cucumbers can be sweet, sour, dill, or bread 'n' butter. Fresh cucumber is at its refreshing best when served raw—in salads, side dishes and cold soups, but it is also an underrated cooked vegetable.

Cucumbers are usually cut into rounds, but cutting them in lengthwise strips can

be decorative and chunks of cucumber provide something more to bite into and chew.

Since cucumbers have a great deal of water, their flavor will be somewhat more concentrated if the cucumbers are first salted (and drained of excess liquid, see [Salting Vegetables](#)). Sprinkle salt on the cucumbers, weight them, and let stand for 30 minutes or longer. Pour off the accumulated liquid and save it for soup. Taste the cucumbers and if they are too salty, rinse them off before adding the dressing.



You can use the salted cucumbers in the salads below—or simply prepare the salads without salting the cucumbers. See what you think.

Cucumber Salad

Cool and palate-cleansing contrast to other dishes.

Cucumber

Salt

Lime juice

Honey

Tabasco sauce

Cut the cucumber and season to taste with salt. Then dress with lime juice and honey and a sprinkling of Tabasco sauce.

VARIATIONS

- Marinate or dress with sugar, vinegar, and soy sauce.
- Marinate or dress with oil-and-

vinegar dressing.

Cucumber and Cantaloupe Salad

This salad could also be done with just the cucumbers. As usual, fresh green will give the dish a fertile feeling.

Cucumber

Cantaloupe

*Parsley or watercress, chopped
(optional)*

Salt

Fresh mint, cut into strips

Sugar or honey

Lemon juice or lime juice

Slice or chunk the cucumber. Mix with pieces of cantaloupe, add generous amounts of parsley or watercress (if you like them), and season with salt and fresh mint. Add equal amounts of sugar (or honey) and lemon juice (or lime), for additional seasoning, especially if you do not have the fresh mint.

VARIATIONS

- In place of cantaloupe add grapes, sliced peaches, plums, apricots, other melons, or tomatoes.
- Use sliced green onion to season this salad, especially if the fruit is being omitted.
- Add a dressing made of sour cream or yogurt, made tart with vinegar, orange, lemon, or lime.

(You'll need some salt, if you have not presalted the cucumbers.

- Season with salt and pepper, hot sauce, garlic, dry mustard, cumin, or black pepper.
- Season with tarragon, basil, or dill.

Cooked Cucumbers

Cooked cucumbers make for tender eating, especially when you remove the skins and scoop out the seeds.

Cucumbers

Sour cream or cream cheese

Salt

Pepper

Water or stock

*Caraway, chervil, dill, basil, or
tarragon*

Peel the cucumbers, unless you find them tender enough to leave the peels on. Then cut them in half crosswise and quarters lengthwise, and scoop out the seeds with a spoon. Simmer in the salted water or stock until verging on tenderness, about 2 to 3 minutes. Drain them and dress with sour cream or with slightly thinned cream cheese. Season to taste. Caraway and chervil are herb possibilities along with dill, basil, and tarragon. Heat briefly in oven or double broiler if necessary. The cucumbers are also tasty in light soups.

Eggplant



Eggplant has a pulpy white interior covered with a shiny purple skin, which is edible. To prepare, pull or cut off the stem and cut the eggplant in rounds or half-rounds, section like a potato, and cut in chunks or strips.

Eggplant can take some tending. Since it can be bitter, it is sometimes salted and allowed to stand for an hour or more after being cut up so that some liquid is drawn out, giving the eggplant a milder taste (see [Salting Vegetables](#)). After salting, dry the pieces with a paper towel or a clean dish towel. The pieces of eggplant will brown better when sautéed if well dried first. I've found that slicing and roasting the eggplant leaves it tender and mild-flavored without the necessity of salting.

Eggplant is a cook's delight. It is one vegetable that can stand lengthy cooking, and since it sponges up other flavors while keeping its own, it is terrific in stews and gratins. It can be Italian—loving oil, garlic, tomato, and Parmesan cheese. It can also be Asian, benefiting

from soy sauce, ginger or curry.
Sumptuous.

Roasted Eggplant

Roasting the eggplant slices leaves them tender and none too bitter for eating. Simple. Straightforward.

Eggplant, cut in rounds

Olive oil

Salt

Balsamic vinegar (optional)

*Parsley, green onion, basil, or
cilantro (optional)*

Preheat oven to 425°. Slice the eggplant into ¼-inch rounds or ovals. Brush oil on both sides and roast (in a single layer),

turning once or twice. (If you have baking parchment cover the bottom of the baking sheet with it to save on the cleaning later.) Cook until tender—well softened and flexible, melt-in-your-mouth. Sprinkle with salt and perhaps some balsamic vinegar. Give it a green garnish: parsley, green onion, basil, cilantro, if available.

A Simple Ratatouille

This is simple because you just cook it—without salting and draining the eggplant, without skinning and de-seeding the tomatoes. (The tomatoes cook just briefly to heat so the skins don't start to come loose and the seeds don't start to scatter—all right, then?)

Eggplant, chunked

Olive oil

Onion, sliced or diced

Garlic, minced

Green bell pepper, sliced or diced

Tomato, large pieces

Salt

Pepper

Dried oregano

Dried thyme

Parmesan or Asiago cheese, grated

Parsley, green onion, or basil

(optional)

Stir-fry the eggplant—I leave the skin on—in the olive oil for 5 or 6 minutes and remove from the pan. Add a bit more oil and sauté the onion and bell pepper for 3 or 4 minutes. Then add the garlic, a touch

of salt and black pepper, the dried herbs, and cook another minute or so. Add back the eggplant and add a splash of water (or perhaps sherry), and cook covered at a low temperature until all is tender. Add the tomatoes and cook until they're hot. Some green to finish? Serve with grated Parmesan or Asiago.

Peas

I can remember the first time I had fresh peas on the back porch of my aunt's in South Dakota. How wonderful! Opening the pods, running a thumb down the inside—out jumped the peas and the fresh green smells of sun and earth. (And I went on sitting there while the warm summer rain splashed down.) I can't even remember how they tasted, only the joy of discovery,

each pod a treasure house of peas, and how many would there be?

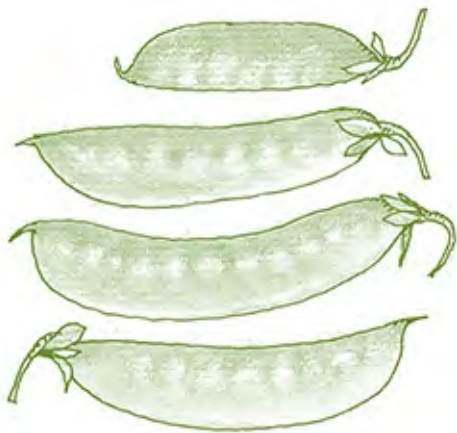


Peas, like beans, need water. They're fairly dry and starchy to start with, but

given a few minutes of cooking, they become moist, brilliant green; delicious by themselves, floating in soups, dotting stews, or in combination vegetable dishes.

SNOW PEAS

These peas are flat and the pod is edible. They are used extensively in Asian cooking for their shape, color, and flavor. Snap off the stem before using and pull it down the side to remove any string you can. Raw, they are suitable for salads, and they can be easily sautéed, steamed, or briefly boiled. Cook lightly! Add to soups just 3 to 4 minutes before serving.



Fresh, Green, and Succulent Peas

Some people knock boiling vegetables,

but with care and mindfulness, the peas can be done to juicy tenderness and you will have some stock for the next pot of soup.

Peas

Water

Butter

Salt

Pepper

Shell the peas, bring the salted water to a boil, and drop the peas in. Leave the heat on high, put on a lid, and stay nearby. The peas will be done in just 3 to 5 minutes. If the water comes back to a boil before the peas are tender, turn the heat down and try a couple of peas. Have a colander or strainer set in a pot for draining, and when

the peas are just on the verge of tenderness, drain them or use an Eastern-style strainer to scoop them out (see [Boiling \(or Blanching\)](#)). To serve, toss with melted butter, add salt and pepper to taste.

Frosted Peas with Green Onion

Funny, peas were the only vegetable I'd eat for a long time, but my (former) father-in-law never liked peas until he ate these.

Peas

Water

Sour cream

Green onion

Salt

Pepper

Thyme or basil (optional)

Shell the peas and cook them as in the preceding recipe. Slice the green onions thinly and mix with the sour cream. When the peas have been drained, mix them with the sour cream and green onions and season to taste with the salt and pepper. This dish may be kept warm in a double boiler for 5 or 10 minutes. A bit of thyme or basil goes well here. It's not the same, but yogurt could be used in place of the sour cream.

Peas Roll in Carrots and Mushrooms

Love the colors so beautifully contrasting: the green peas, orange carrots, and brown mushrooms.

Peas

Carrots

Mushrooms

Oil

Salt

Water or stock

Shell the peas. Wash the carrots and cut in ovals, half rounds, or matchsticks. Rinse and slice the mushrooms. Sauté the carrots for a couple of minutes. Add the mushrooms and peas, sprinkle on salt, sauté another minute or so, and then add a few spoonfuls of water or stock, cover, turn the heat down to medium low. Check

in 3 to 4 minutes. Are they tender? Is there enough water left? Stir and continue steaming a few minutes until the peas are just tender. Stop cooking before their color begins to dull.

Bell Peppers: Green, Red, and Yellow

The shell or pod of the pepper, which encloses the seeds, is the edible part. Red and yellow peppers have become quite popular as they are sweeter and more deeply flavorful than the green ones. Peppers are often added to salads both for their mild bite and their colorful effect. They are frequently cooked with tomatoes and other summer vegetables. Fire-roasted red peppers have become a staple of the new cuisine.

Prepare the pepper by first cutting in

half lengthwise and removing the stem, seeds, and pith from each half. Then knock the open halves on the cutting board so that any stray seeds are dislodged. Remove the seeds from all the peppers you will be using and clean the cutting surface before beginning to slice or chop the peppers.

The pepper halves may be cut in a variety of ways, including lengthwise strips, diagonal strips, diagonal slivers, or wedges. If the halves are again halved, the slivers may be cut more easily. For diced green pepper, cut the strips or slivers crosswise into smaller pieces.



Green Pepper in Salads

Bell peppers are excellent in a number of salads: lettuce, tomato, cauliflower, carrot, cottage cheese, bean, and potato. In salads, peppers are best if they are cut

into thin strips. This leaves them easy to chew, and no one gets too big a piece in one bite.

About Roasted Red Peppers

These are juicy with a sweet smoky flavor, which comes from the skins being blackened before their removal. Roast the red pepper(s) over a gas flame until they are completely blackened, turning with tongs as necessary. If you overdo it, the peppers will turn from black to gray, so don't worry, here's your chance to burn some food on purpose—get them good and black! The peppers can also be blackened over a charcoal grill (blacken all over, as above with the gas flame) or in the

broiler. To blacken in the broiler, place on a baking sheet under the broiler and leave until the tops of the peppers are blackened, perhaps 5 to 8 minutes, depending on the broiler—sometimes in electric-oven broilers this can take 15 to 20 minutes. Turn over and broil the other side until blackened. (Leave whole and the juice will stay inside.)

Place the blackened peppers in a brown paper bag or a covered bowl or pot to steam in their own heat. When cool enough, cut in half, remove core, seeds, and blackened skin—a messy job, but the results are well worth it. I like to do this by first cutting out the core and removing all the seeds. Then I wipe off the counter and lay the pepper down with its black side up and scrape off the black with a

knife. Sometimes it is easy enough to remove the blackened skin by hand. Do not rinse off the blackened skin with water, as this will wash away flavor as well. Keep plenty of damp sponges or towels handy for wiping the counter, the knife, and your hands.

You now have some red pepper “fillets,” which you can cut into strips or squares or blend. With these in your kitchen, you are wealthy and prosperous!

Stewed Red (or Yellow) Peppers

A simple, stunning dish.

Red or yellow peppers

Olive oil

Salt

Garlic

Dried thyme

Water or wine

Slice the peppers into strips about ¼-inch wide. Sauté them in olive oil for 2 to 3 minutes, add the garlic, a sprinkling of salt, some thyme, and cook briefly. Then add a touch of water or wine, cover, and stew slowly (12 to 15 minutes) to succulence. The peppers “melt” during this cooking, and you might too, when eating them.

Tomatoes and Green Peppers

Or if the peppers are red, how about some yellow tomatoes?

Green peppers

Tomatoes

Onions

Salt

Oil

*Seasoning: dried (or fresh) thyme,
oregano, basil*

Cut the peppers into wide strips, wedges, or squares, section the tomatoes into eighths, and slice or section the onions. Sauté the onions for a minute or two, add the peppers, and stir-fry for several minutes longer until they are tender. Then add the tomatoes and seasoning, turning the heat down. Cover and cook for just a

few minutes, until the tomatoes are thoroughly heated. Peppers will stay bright green when given only brief cooking. If you have fresh herbs available, you could use some as a garnish.

VARIATION

If you're using olive oil, season with sweet basil, sage, or thyme. If using corn, peanut, or sesame oil, utilize some fresh ginger and soy sauce. Garlic can be used in either case.

Summer Squash: Zucchini, Crookneck, and Scalloped

Beauteous squashes: straight and deep green, yellow with thin neck spreading to plumpness, pale green, round and

scalloped; they are full of delicate, earthy flavor unless cooked into mushiness—although some people like that too! Quickly stir-fried or steamed, these squashes can stand alone, be lightly seasoned with herbs, or be combined with eggplant, tomato, greens, onions, carrots, or cheese. Raw and thinly sliced, they can make a good addition to salads. Give them a light scrubbing, trim off the ends, and cut according to intended use. The rolling cut is especially good for cooking. To appreciate the mild flavor, season lightly.



Zucchini and crookneck squash can be cut in any of the ways shown for cutting carrots. Scalloped squash (officially cymling, sometimes “Summer”) can be cut in half and sliced like an onion, sectioned like a tomato, or chunked like a potato.

These squashes have a fine, soft crunch

when eaten raw. The larger ones with tougher seeds are usually better cooked. Cut into strips, chunks, or ovals, sprinkle with salt, and toss by hand. For more tang and brightness, toss with lemon juice and lemon peel and sweeten to taste with sugar or honey. Or use a lemon dressing with two parts olive oil and one part lemon along with some black pepper. Arrange decoratively on a plate.

Summer squashes are quite good boiled or steamed if you can get them off the fire before they're mush—just four or five minutes at most, depending on the size. Larger chunks may need slightly longer cooking. Toss with butter, salt, and pepper, or dress with a mild sauce.

Summer squashes can also be baked whole, cut in half, or cut into strips. Brush

with oil. Sprinkling of salt. Twenty minutes at 375° is usually sufficient baking time. Sprinkle with a light vinegar, say rice wine or apple, salt and pepper lightly, and top with grated Parmesan cheese. Layer with tomatoes and cheese? Use on top of your pizza?

Stir-Fried Summer Squash

Squash doesn't have to be all squashed. Lightly cooked, it retains some texture along with a mild earthy flavor.

*Zucchini, crookneck, and/or scalloped
squash*

Oil

Salt

Lemon juice or pear vinegar
(optional)

Wash the squash and cut with the rolling cut if possible. Otherwise cut in rounds or ovals. Then stir-fry for 4 to 5 minutes, put a lid on, and turn the heat down for a minute or two. There will usually be enough water from the squash so that none need be added. Check the seasoning and serve. A splash of lemon or some pear vinegar—just a hint, yes?

Tomatoes

Tomatoes are one of the most versatile, most commercially utilized vegetables, appearing in salads, soups, sauces, paste, and catsup. Their hearty red color and tangy flavor, enlivening and brightening,

top off many a dish. Ripe, unwashed, right off an unsprayed vine: plump, warm with summer sun, fleshy, the tomato almost melts in the mouth, juices rushing out, flooding the palate with uncommon succulence. Anything else is of a lesser magnificence, though excellent for what it has to offer. Tomatoes can stand alone or blend with almost any vegetable.



Generally I like to cook fresh tomatoes as little as possible; I use canned tomato products for making sauces, and now there are very good organic canned tomatoes. Rinse off the tomatoes, trim out the little core, and then cut in segments or slice in rounds. Some people find that a sharp stainless steel knife works well for this, but if I've kept my Japanese vegetable knife sharp, it works fine.

When using canned tomato products, keep in mind that tomato paste is much stronger than tomato sauce or canned tomatoes. Tomato paste usually needs to be diluted with water, while canned tomatoes and tomato sauce are used undiluted. Tomato paste can be added to soups to deepen their color and to lend acidity, or tartness, to their flavor, but

more commonly I prefer to use unseasoned canned tomatoes, either whole or chunked.

When using fresh tomatoes (for soups or sauces), you can easily peel them by first immersing them for ten to twenty seconds in boiling water. Then the skins come right off. (If they don't come right off, then try the boiling water for a longer period.)

Tomato Salad

The simplest tomato salad: tomatoes cut up in a bowl, perhaps some salt at the last minute. For a comparatively more elaborate tomato salad, try this.

Tomatoes

Olive oil

Mild vinegar (rice vinegar for one)

Salt

Sugar (optional)

Fresh basil or tarragon

Slice or section the tomatoes. Arrange slices on a platter and sprinkle on olive oil, vinegar, salt, and herbs for garnish. Put sections in bowl and toss with remaining ingredients. *Be cautious with the salt or add at the last minute* as it will draw water out of the tomatoes and turn the dish into soup.

Baked Tomatoes

Roasting gives the tomatoes a quiet

elegance for a juicy, flavorful side dish.

Tomatoes

Garlic

Olive oil

Parmesan or cheddar cheese, grated

Tarragon, parsley, or fresh basil
(optional)

Preheat oven to 350°. Cut off tomato tops, sprinkle with minced garlic. Drizzle on some olive oil, about a teaspoon per tomato. Bake 20 minutes, removing from oven to baste once or twice. Sprinkle on Parmesan or grated cheddar for the last 5 minutes. These can also be sprinkled with tarragon, parsley, or fresh basil to garnish.

SUN-DRIED TOMATOES

Sun-dried tomatoes have a wonderfully intense, concentrated flavor that is sunny, sweet, and robust, and their chewy texture is reminiscent of other dried fruits: a real pick-me-up for the taste buds. Although common in parts of southern Europe, they are relatively new to the grocery shelves of this country.

Sun-dried tomatoes come two ways: packed in olive oil and simply dried. The ones packed in olive oil are either plain or seasoned, most commonly with garlic and basil. Although I am quite fond of the oil-packed tomatoes, I sometimes buy the plain dried ones because they are often cheaper.

The plain dried ones are too tough to chew, so if I need them immediately I plump them in boiling water for a minute

or so, then drain, cool, and slice or chop. Recently though, I came across a suggestion by Narsai David that worked well when I tried it out.

Plumping Sun-Dried Tomatoes

*3 ounces sun-dried tomatoes, dry
packed*

1 tablespoon vinegar

1 tablespoon wine or sherry

Olive oil

Fresh herbs or garlic

Combine tomatoes, vinegar, and wine in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Set the jar aside for a day or two, inverting periodically. When the tomatoes become chewable, you

can cover them with olive oil and herbs or garlic, to taste. Store them in the refrigerator.

SOME OTHER VEGETABLES

These are vegetables which I have handled very little or those which are fairly uncommon in this country. An increasingly wide variety of vegetables is now available in supermarkets. Even though you don't know of a particular dish using these vegetables, it is still possible to bring some home and try them out: sautéed, steamed, boiled, or baked. Given them a taste. Curiosity helps with the adventure.

What follows are brief discussions of several vegetables, both common and

uncommon, which have not yet been dealt with. Only those vegetables with which I have had personal experience are included.

Burdock Root

Gobo in Japanese. This is a long, slender, brown root vegetable with a rich earthy flavor. *Gobo* should be scrubbed, but needn't be peeled. It is most often cut in slender strips, using the Chinese rolling cut. Being somewhat chewy, it needs about twice as much cooking as carrots do. Sometimes it is boiled for ten minutes before being added to mixed vegetable dishes. Here's a recipe which is one of our favorites.

Kimpira

Burdock root

Carrot

Sesame seeds, roasted

Corn oil

Sesame oil

Soy sauce

Salt (optional)

Wash the vegetables, then cut in long, thin pieces using the Chinese rolling cut. Cover the bottom of a sauté pan generously with oil and heat. Cook the burdock for 4 to 5 minutes, then add the carrot and continue cooking for another 4 to 5 minutes, until the vegetables begin to get tender. Add the soy sauce, cook briefly, and serve garnished with the

sesame seeds. The vegetables will be crisp, with a soy sauce glaze. You may want to add a pinch or two of salt so that you use less soy sauce for a milder flavor.

Celery Root

Also known as celeriac, this root comes from a slightly different variety of celery than the one raised for its stalks. Because of its surface irregularities it is fairly difficult to wash, but you can cut the skin off with a knife. Slice it for sautéing or chunk it for steaming or boiling. Cook it like carrots or turnips. Cooked and cut into matchstick pieces, it can be used as a salad ingredient. You'll find it baked in the [Potato Gratin](#).



Jerusalem Artichokes

These can be cooked like potatoes: sautéed, boiled, baked, deep-fried. They can be mixed with other vegetables and

can be eaten raw in salads. They can be substituted for water chestnuts in Asian cooking.

Jicama

This is a large root vegetable which is imported from Mexico. It can be finely cut for salads, providing a crunchy, juicy, refreshing element.

Parsnips

These are a white root vegetable which, when raw, smell a great deal like carrots. Not so good raw, they can be cooked like carrots or turnips. Here's a recipe which uses both turnips and parsnips:

Parsnips, Turnips, Mushrooms

Autumn flavors with earthy autumn colors.

Parsnips

Turnips

Mushrooms

Olive oil

Salt

Lemon juice

Water

Parsley, minced

Cut parsnips with rolling cut or in ovals. Cut turnips in quarters lengthwise, then in slices crosswise. Slice the mushrooms. Sauté the turnips and parsnips for 3 to 4 minutes, then add a bit of water and lemon juice, and put a lid on so they can steam.

Brown the mushrooms in a separate sauté pan, add to the other vegetables, and stir them up. Are the turnips and parsnips tender? Adjust seasoning. Garnish with minced parsley.

Brussels Sprouts

These aren't sprouts in the same sense as bean sprouts or alfalfa sprouts, but are more like very small heads of cabbage. To prepare them for cooking, remove any outer leaves which are yellow or wilted. The bottom of the core can also be trimmed off. The Brussels sprouts can be boiled whole or cut in halves or quarters lengthwise to be sauté-steamed. In either case, I suggest that they not be overcooked. Here's one recipe.

Brussels Sprouts with Cheese

For me lightly cooking the brussels sprouts brings out a slight nuttiness in the flavor, and the butter and orange soften the cabbagey edge. Cheese works for me, but you could always substitute with some toasted almonds or hazelnuts.

Brussels sprouts

Olive oil or butter

Orange juice

Salt

Pepper

Cheese, grated

Cut the brussels sprouts in halves or quarters lengthwise and sauté them in olive oil or butter for 3 to 4 minutes. Add

enough orange juice to cover the bottom of the pan and a few tablespoons more. Stir the brussels sprouts, cover and simmer for another 2 or 3 minutes. Season with some salt and pepper. Are they tender yet? Sprinkle with grated cheese, perhaps Parmesan or Gouda, before serving.



Sea Vegetables

These are more widely used in the East than in the West, but they are increasingly available in large supermarkets among the imported foods. They are a fine source of trace minerals and a flavorful addition to any diet. The most common varieties are dulse, *hijiki* (or *hiziki*), wakame, kombu, and nori. All of these sea vegetables are excellent used in vegetable, bean, and grain dishes, as well as added to soups. Cooked *hijiki* is also quite good in salads.

NORI

Nori comes in thin sheets. The only preparation required is toasting. Wave the sheets of nori, one at a time, about 5 to 6 minutes above a medium hot burner until

they start to wrinkle. The toasted sheets can then be crumbled for use as a garnish on grains or soups, or sprinkled on salads. They are also used to wrap sushi.

WAKAME AND DULSE

Rinse these once before soaking, then soak for fifteen to thirty minutes until they swell up. Strain and save the soaking liquid—it is full of ocean flavor and nutrition. Wakame has a tough string attached along its length. Even when raw, this string should be soft enough to chew after soaking. If not, pull it off by hand. Lay out strips of soaked wakame or dulse and section into one-inch pieces before using.

HIJIKI

Hijiki tends to be especially gritty, so when rinsing it, pick it off the top of the rinsing water carefully so that the grit stays at the bottom of the bowl. Soak the same as wakame or dulse and then repeat the rinsing process. *Hijiki* comes in small, slender pieces and need not be sectioned before using. You can add it to the [Kimpira](#).

KOMBU

This comes in thick sheets and makes an excellent soup stock. No rinsing or soaking is necessary. A three-by-three-inch piece of kombu will flavor about a quart of stock. After cooking for stock, the same piece of kombu can be cut in strips for addition to the soup or used in [Turnip Pickle](#).

Sea Vegetables with Earth Vegetables

Seaweed cooked by itself makes a potent dish. For a milder dish try this.

Seaweed, prepared as described above

Onion

Carrot

Seaweed soaking water

Soy sauce

Salt

Ginger, grated (optional)

Garlic (optional)

Wash the seaweed and start it cooking while dicing the onion and carrot. Finish preparing the seaweed for cooking. Sauté the onion for a minute, add the carrot and

continue sautéing for 4 or 5 minutes. Add the seaweed and some of the soaking water, cover, and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes. Season with soy sauce, salt, some freshly grated ginger, if it's available, and perhaps some garlic if you'd like it. Keep the seasoning mild if you want to enjoy the ocean flavor. Cook a few more minutes.

Chilies

A whole new world opened up for me when I discovered chilies. Here's how to make your own ground chili, chili flakes, or chili paste.

I use three different dried chilies, which I get from one of the Mexican markets in my area. Curiously enough chilies seem to be known by different names in different places, so I am providing a description

with the name. If this is something that interests you, you can refer to Diana Kennedy's *The Cuisines of Mexico*.

People whose hands are sensitive find it best to wear thin rubber gloves when working with chilies. In any case, wash your hands thoroughly after handling the chilies, so you don't end up with a hot eye or some other body part touched by chili-laden fingers.

CHILI NEGRO

This chili is about six inches long and dark red-brown or black, turning a chocolaty brown when ground. The shape is cylindrical, about an inch across, and the surface is wrinkled. The flavor is distinctly earthy as well as hot.

ANCHO CHILI

Also known as *pasilla* in San Francisco, it is ruby red with a wrinkled skin, is pear- or heart-shaped, is two or three inches wide near the stem end, and tapers to the far end. Ancho chilies generally range from three to five inches in length. The flavor has hints of prune and raisin. Ground, the chili is deep red.

NEW MEXICO (CALIFORNIA) CHILI

With its familiar brick-red color and supple, graceful length, this is the most recognizable dried chili. Generally about six inches long with a smooth-textured skin, this chili has sides that are roughly parallel, tapering toward the tip. The flavor is herbaceous, bell-peppery. When

ground, the chili is brilliantly red. These are called California chilies when they have been grown in California.

Homemade Chili Powder

Take a chili and grind it into a powder, that's the principle. Whereas commercial chili powders are most commonly made with garlic, oregano, and cumin in addition to chili, this is just chili. Then you can add the other ingredients in the amounts you wish to different parts of a dish, or to different dishes within the same meal. Also you may find you prefer a particular chili or combination of chilies. And you can add freshly minced garlic along with freshly ground cumin seed—

more explosive flavors!

Dried chili (chili negros, ancho chilies, or New Mexico chilies)

Preheat oven to 350°. Roast the chilies on a baking sheet for just 3 minutes. The chilies will tend to puff up a bit and become aromatic and a bit drier. More than 3 minutes and the chilies will tend to start burning.

Cool briefly, then cut open and remove the stem and seeds. Grind the flesh in a coffee mill, one you are using to grind spices and not coffee. Sometimes prechopping the chilies with a knife will be necessary so the grinder can do its work. That's it. I store the ground chili in small jars.

Note that ancho chilies are moister than the other two and will not grind as readily into a powder, but will end up in flakes. For most purposes this is sufficient, but if you want powder, you can roast the flakes in a dry skillet over moderate heat and then grind again.

An alternative method of preparing chili powder is to cut the stems off the chilies, chop them coarsely with a knife, and then grind them, seeds and all. After grinding, you can roast the powder in a dry skillet, stirring, for a toastier flavor.

Homemade Chili Paste

Making chili paste instead of ground chili powder is especially useful if you do not

have a convenient way to grind the chili. It can be refrigerated or frozen for later use.

*Dried New Mexico, negro, or ancho
chilies*

Water

Cut off the stems, cut open the chilies, and remove the seeds. Chop each chili into several pieces. Simmer in water over low heat for about 15 minutes. Puree—or scrape through sieve. Ready.

FRESH GREEN CHILIES

I use mostly jalapeños and serranos. Again, great care is urged with the handling of fresh green chilies. These are even more potent than the dried chilies, so especially if your hands are sensitive, it's

best to wear thin rubber gloves when working with them.

One way to chop up the chili is to cut off the stem and then slice the chili crosswise. This will make healthy-sized chunks of chili, which can be quite formidable. My friend Dan Welch once made me a pizza strewn with this coarsely cut green chili, and I nearly died, while gamely assuring him that it was indeed (gasp) delicious.

A second method is to cut off the stem, cut open the chili lengthwise, and remove the seeds and pithy parts from the interior. Using a spoon for the seed removal will save your hands. Then chop or mince to the desired consistency—I prefer rather finely chopped.

A third method, which I use, is to leave

the stem on, and make several lengthwise just-off-center slices to remove the flesh from the inner core of seeds. Then chop or mince the resulting pieces.

FRUITS AND DRIED FRUITS

Fruits are the final results of a plant's labor, accumulations of energy, food for seeds. Some people are fond of fruits and miss them dearly when they're not available, while others seem content without them. They are a deceptively potent food: refreshing, invigorating, cleansing. Best fresh, cool, and raw in hot weather, and hot, thick, and sweet in cold weather. Fruits can start a day, pick up an afternoon, complete a dinner.

Citrus Fruits: Oranges, Lemons, Limes, Grapefruit, and Tangerines

These fruits are noted for their tangy juices and refreshing balance of sweet and sour. Used in place of vinegar in salad dressings, their juice is also invaluable for brightening the flavor of vegetable dishes. They also will preserve the color and freshness of newly sliced apples, peaches, bananas, avocados and other fruits and vegetables which otherwise might brown (oxidize) while sitting out. Soups which are overly sweet or bland can be perked up with lemon or lime juice, or with some grated orange or lemon peel, which is also useful in salad dressings, sauces, and pickles.

Both oranges and grapefruit can be

peeled with the fingers or with a well-sharpened knife. See below.

MAKING LEMON, LIME, OR ORANGE ZEST

The fragrant outer layer of the rind is called zest, and whether it is minced or grated, it will provide a flavorful seasoning for soups, salad dressings, pasta dishes, desserts, and numerous other dishes. Using a grater for this seemed to leave most of the zest in the grater, so now I do it with a vegetable peeler and a sharp knife.

First of all, wash the fruit. If I am uncertain of the source of the fruit (whether it is organic or not), I use hot water to try to remove whatever may have been sprayed on its surface. If the fruit feels really waxy, I pop it in boiling water

briefly.



Using a vegetable peeler, remove the colored outer layer of the peel in strips. Arrange a pile of strips on the counter and cut them crosswise into very narrow strips with quick, down-and-forward strokes of the knife. If you want the peel in even smaller pieces, mince the narrow strips.

ORANGE SLICES OR SUPREMES: PLAIN OR ELABORATED

This is the more or less classical method, which I use for peeling oranges or grapefruit for fresh fruit or salads.

To peel with a knife so that the outside of the orange (or grapefruit) has no white, cut off the top and bottom of the orange with a sharp knife, so that a circle of orange shows. Place the orange flat side down, and then cut off a section of peel, top to bottom, following the outline of the orange. Once you have cut off one section of peel, you can cut off the remaining sections of peel following the line where the orange meets the white. After you have cut off the peel all the way around, turn the orange over and trim off any parts of the peel you may have missed at the other end.

Slice the orange crosswise into rounds, or cut the orange in half vertically first and then crosswise into half-rounds.

The oranges may be served as is, or combined with slices of apple, banana, and/or raisins or date pieces. In the summer, sliced oranges are also wonderful with blueberries and strawberries or other summer fruits. I add a touch of sugar or a couple of spoonfuls of maple syrup.

With a sharp knife and a little more work you can make “supremes,” (something you might consider doing for that special someone on Valentine’s Day or Christmas.) Start by cutting the peel off the orange or grapefruit as in the directions above. Then hold the orange or grapefruit over a bowl to catch the juice,

and cut toward the center along one side of a segment next to the membrane and then along the other side of the segment, so that the segment comes loose from the membrane on both sides. Turn the fruit in your hand and cut on each side of the next segment so that it drops loose. Continue until all the segments have been cut loose. (Squeeze the remains of membrane and orange with your hand for extra juice.)





These may be served as is or sweetened lightly. The orange and grapefruit may be combined, and other fruits may be added. Supremes are also an excellent way to prepare orange or grapefruit for salads.

Orange-Salad with Sprouts

The tender fresh greens of the sprouts meet orange juiciness—refreshing and invigorating.

Oranges (or grapefruit or tangerines)
Alfalfa sprouts

First peel the fruit, then slice or chunk it. Mix it with the alfalfa sprouts, adding a few raisins if it's not sweet enough. This could also be done with [Thin-Slice Cabbage Salad](#) instead of sprouts.

Grapefruit-Avocado Salad

The lively tartness of grapefruit is softened with the oily richness of the

avocado, while the buttery avocado is brightened with citrus.

Grapefruit (or oranges or tangerines)

Avocado

Vinaigrette

Fresh parsley, cilantro, or mint

Peel and section the grapefruit—or cut it in supremes. Cut the **avocado** lengthwise and remove the meat from the skins with a rubber spatula or large spoon. Cut diagonally into strips. Arrange avocado slices and fruit on a platter. Spoon on a vinaigrette of oil and vinegar or oil and citrus (with salt and pepper). Garnish with parsley, cilantro, or mint.

Orange Date Dessert

Simple goodness: orange slices with dried fruit and coconut.

Oranges

Dates

Coconut, shredded

Peel the oranges and slice in rounds. Pit the dates and slice them crosswise. Arrange the orange slices in dessert dishes and sprinkle with the dates and coconut.

VARIATIONS

- Use raisins or sliced figs in place of the dates.
- Use banana rounds or ovals in

place of dates or coconut.

Baked Grapefruit

I guess this sounds unusual to some people, but I grew up with it, as my father loved grapefruit prepared this way with brown sugar.

Grapefruit

Sugar or honey

Preheat oven to 350°. Cut the grapefruit in half and, if you want to, cut around each section to loosen it. Put a spoonful or so of sugar or honey in the middle of the grapefruit halves and bake them face up on cookie sheets for 10 minutes.

Berries, Peaches, Apricots, Nectarines, Plums, Grapes, and Cherries

Most summer fruits have skins which are eaten along with the fruit, though peaches, with their characteristic fuzz, are frequently peeled. To accomplish this, dip the peaches in boiling water for ten seconds, or longer if the peaches are somewhat under ripe. Let them cool slightly and then peel by hand, or use a knife to pull up the skin. Aside from grapes, berries, and cherries, these fruits can all be sectioned by cutting from pole to pole, down to the pit. If necessary, loosen the section from the pit by twisting the knife.

At their best when fully ripe, these fruits can be simply washed and eaten—

it's as though the heavens open. Berries dye the hands red or purple. Peach juice runs down the chin and forearm. Sweet stickiness abounds. On those occasions calling for a bit more civility, try this recipe.



Fresh Fruit Compote

A variety of colors and shapes makes this an engaging dish.

AS AVAILABLE:

Berries

Peaches

Apricots

Nectarines

Plums

Grapes

Cherries

Honey or sugar or maple syrup

Lemon or lime juice

Fresh mint leaves (optional)

Anise seed, freshly ground (optional)

Wash and slice the fruits. If preferred, peel the peaches first. The apricots could be left in halves, the berries or grapes whole. Mix the fruits together. Add equal amounts of sweetening and lemon juice. Garnish with the mint leaves. If you want

a touch of spice, my favorite is anise seed, freshly minced or ground.

VARIATIONS

- Add orange or other fruit juice, fruit wine, sweet vermouth, brandy, or rum for extra juice and flavor.
- Add yogurt and sweetening for a yogurt fruit sundae (chill until time to serve).
- Add to a glass of champagne. Cheers!

Peaches and Cream

Some foods are as good—even better than they sound: peaches! and cream! The

challenge is to find juicy ripe peaches—perhaps a local farmers market.

Peaches

Whipping cream

*Vanilla (or rum, brandy, or fruit
syrup)*

Cinnamon or nutmeg, freshly grated

Peel and slice the peaches. Beat the cream until it is softly fluffy rather than liquidy, but not so much that it gets thick or turns to butter. Flavor it with a little vanilla, rum, or brandy—or a fruit syrup. Arrange the slices in dessert dishes and spoon the whipped cream on top. It doesn't take much—a little goes a long way. Sprinkle cinnamon or freshly grated nutmeg on top of the cream.

VARIATIONS

- Berries, apricots, nectarines, plums, and grapes can replace or complement the peaches.
- Cream cheese can substitute for whipping cream. It's simple and wonderfully pleasing. Leave it out of the refrigerator for a while. Work it with a spoon or fork to soften. Carefully mix in milk a spoonful at a time, until the cream cheese is the consistency of whipped cream. Flavor with vanilla, rum, or brandy. Use as above.
- Top with shaved chocolate, coconut, or chopped nuts.

Pale Green Snow

This grape salad could also be a dessert.

*Grapes, Thompson seedless or
“flame”*

Sour cream

Honey

Vanilla

Nutmeg or cinnamon

Lemon peel, grated (optional)

*Walnuts, roasted and chopped
(optional)*

Remove the grapes from the stems and rinse them off. Sweeten the sour cream with honey and season lightly with vanilla. Add spice (delicately) and possibly lemon peel. Set aside some of the

grapes for a garnish and combine the remainder with the sour cream mixture, along with some walnuts, if you have them. Chill until time to serve, then garnish with the extra grapes.

VARIATIONS

- Use the sweetened sour cream as an excellent accompaniment to the other summer fruits, particularly berries.
- Substitute yogurt for sour cream.



Cooked Summer Fruit

Warm and sweet for breakfast! This is a useful way to prepare fruit which is no longer fresh looking.

Any of the fruits in this section

Water

Sugar or honey

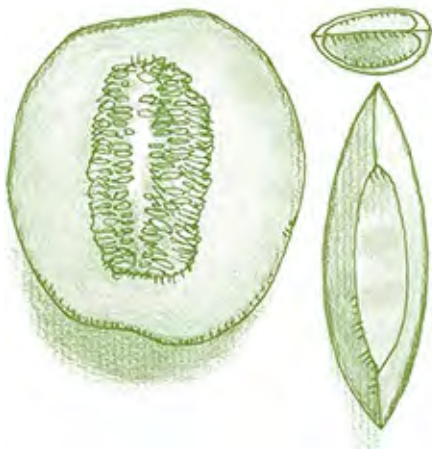
Cornstarch

Wash, trim, and slice the fruit. Place in a pan, add water to cover, and cook over low heat. Sweeten to taste with sugar, honey, or possibly dried fruit. If the fruit seems too soupy, thicken with cornstarch dissolved in cold water. (One tablespoon cornstarch in one tablespoon cold water thickens one cup liquid. Start with a minimal amount, then add more if you want it thicker.) Or leave the juice unthickened if you prefer.

Melons: Cataloupe, Honeydew, Casaba, Crenshaw, Watermelon

Sweet juiciness in frosty pulp. The high

water content of melons makes them the most refreshing of hot-weather fruits, but for the same reason they are not suitable for cooking into sauces or pies. Chill them in the refrigerator, in the creek, or in the shade. Cut out a thick crescent and bite in. Don't you wish your mouth was bigger?



Melon Salad

So refreshing on those really hot summer days, as a salad, a dessert, or a palate-cleansing course.

Melons

Banana, sliced

Grapes

Mint, freshly chopped

Coconut (optional)

Cut open the melons and remove the seeds. Even with watermelon, this isn't too difficult—the seeds run in lines. Cut the skin away from the pulp and then cut the pulp into chunks. (Or use a melon-baller to scoop out rounds of melon.) Fold in the banana and grapes. Season with

mint and top with coconut, if things are going that way.

VARIATIONS

- Add other spring-summer fruits.
- Add lemon or lime juice to bring up the flavors.

Cantaloupe Dreams

Many people like to sprinkle salt on their melon. Here are some other dreams.

Cantaloupe

Lemon juice (or lime)

Raw cashew butter

Cut the cantaloupe in halves or quarters

and remove the seeds. Drizzle on the lemon juice and mound on a spoon or two of the cashew butter.

VARIATION

Use a mixture of yogurt and cottage cheese instead of cashew butter. Mound it up as desired in the cantaloupe. Add raisins, dates, or fig slices or use fresh fruit pieces as a garnish.

Apples, Pears, and Bananas

These fruits are grouped together since they are, aside from citrus fruits, probably the most readily available fresh fruits during the fall and winter.





Pears and apples have crisper flesh than the summer fruits. The skins can be left on, but wash them well. To prepare them, cut in quarters lengthwise and cut out the stems and seeds. Slice the quarters lengthwise or diagonally, and the pieces will have some of the graceful roundness

of the original fruit.

Pears or Apples, Sliced

The citrus brings a vibrancy to the pears and/or apples; the banana slices a sweetness.

Pears or apples, sliced

Orange or lemon juice

Bananas, sliced

Toss the pears or apples with orange or lemon juice. Mix in the banana.

Apple or Pear Salad with Citrus

Sliced fruit along with fruit peeled and sectioned can be surprisingly reassuring—colorful and easy to chew, the flavors blossom in your mouth.

Apples or pears

Grapefruit (oranges or tangerines)

Mint

Slice the apple and section the grapefruit. Mix them together with some mint. Try Pippin apple with white grapefruit, or Red Delicious with pink grapefruit. Oranges or tangerines could also be used. Add a touch of sweetening if you'd like.

Hot Fruit

Cooking the apples or pears with dried

fruit will give the dish a hearty feeling.

Apples or pears

Water

*Dates, figs, or raisins, or sugar or
honey*

Lemon juice or lemon peel (optional)

The fruit can be left in quarters for cooking. Put the cut-up fruit in a couple of inches of water. Add the sweetening: sugar, honey, dates, figs, or raisins. Put on a lid and simmer-steam for 10 to 12 minutes, until the fruit is soft, stirring a couple of times while it's cooking. If it's gotten too sweet, add some lemon juice or chopped lemon peel.

VARIATIONS

- For Apple (or Pear) Sauce, slice the fruit before cooking. When it's soft, mash the fruit or buzz it with an immersion blender.
- Stewed fruit or fruit sauce can be spiced. Cinnamon's probably the best. Add a bit of allspice, cloves, nutmeg, or mace? The following is a variation of this recipe.

Prune-Apple Combo

The prunes give the apples an intense depth of sunny-earthly flavor—and the apples soften the full-bodied flavor of the prunes.

Prunes

Raisins (optional)

Apples, quartered and cored

Water

Ground cinnamon or cinnamon stick

Cook the prunes (and raisins) along with the apples in water to cover for about 30 minutes. Cook longer if you want the prunes or apples softer. Season with cinnamon or cook with a cinnamon stick or three.

Breakfast Banana Split

One of our head cooks, Issan Dorsey, would frequently say, “Let them have banana splits for breakfast.” Here’s what he meant.

Banana

Yogurt or buttermilk

Cottage cheese (optional)

Stewed dried apricots (optional)

Mix sliced bananas with yogurt or buttermilk. Stretch the yogurt with cottage cheese if necessary, or if you like it. Other fruits, most notably stewed dried apricots, can be added. Buttermilk is another option in place of the yogurt.

Fried Bananas

I don't ordinarily think to make this, but when I have bananas cooked this way, I am delighted.

Bananas

Butter or oil

Powdered sugar

Cut the bananas in half crosswise, and then in half lengthwise. Fry in butter or in a generous amount of oil of your choosing. Sprinkle with powdered sugar.

Banana Orange Dessert

In a day of quick foods and quick fixes, again, this dish is an opportunity to find out how satisfying actual food can taste: bananas! oranges! walnuts! coconut!

Bananas

Orange juice or orange supremes

Walnuts, roasted, chopped

Coconut

Slice the bananas and mix them with the orange juice so that they won't darken. Arrange in dessert dishes with chopped walnuts and coconut.

Pineapple, Persimmon, Papaya, and Mango

These refreshing and colorful fruits may be added to any of the raw fruit dishes—or served by themselves. When they are fresh and flavorful, they are decidedly fresh and flavorful.

PINEAPPLE

It will take some cutting to remove the cross-hatching of pineapple peel. And

then the core is usually too tough for eating, so the easiest way is probably to cut the pineapple in half crosswise. Then cut each half into quarters vertically, and cut the core off the side of each quarter. Slice the remainder into chunks.

PERSIMMON

There are two main varieties of persimmon. One is the *fuyu*, which is short and squat. Even when firm, it can be ripe enough to slice for a flash of orange and flavor in salads. (The skin is edible.) The other kind of persimmon is larger and more elongated, and is best eaten when entirely soft. (Otherwise it will be chalky.) Stand the persimmon on its stem, and make perpendicular cuts in the surface of the persimmon. Eat with a spoon or

remove the flesh and combine with vanilla yogurt. Sweet.

PAPAYA

Papaya is so delicious for breakfast on the islands. Cut in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Squeeze on some lime juice. Indulge. Spoon directly into mouth. Savor the goodness.

MANGO

Mango is a fruit I adore, although for some people it can cause skin rashes. I like to cut off the skin all the way around, and then cut off slices of mango fillets, which are a decorative and refreshing addition to avocado platters, Chinese noodle salad, and other salads.

DRIED FRUITS

A source of concentrated, chewy sweetness, dried fruits make excellent snacks (often mixed with nuts or seeds) and good desserts, and combine well with fresh ingredients.

For a few years we were sun-drying our own fruit at Tassajara, since we're lucky enough to have the hot, dry summer weather necessary for this process. The main problem we've had has been raccoons: once an entire rack of drying bananas disappeared.

You'll find many sources of information on home-drying fruits if you look. Some of my friends love their fruit-drying appliances. Remember, though, that home-dried fruit is seldom as plump and moist

as the sulphur-treated kind prepared commercially, though it's certainly more deeply flavored.

Raisins, Dates, and Figs

These are lumped together as the least expensive, most often used dried fruits. There are several kinds of dates, which vary somewhat in size, sweetness, and texture—from almost creamy to fairly chewy. There are basically two kinds of figs available in this country: black mission and various types of “white” figs, most notably Calymirna. Black mission and dried domestic Calymirna figs are usually fairly soft, while imported dried white figs, which often come strung on a twig, are comparatively tough. When sliced figs are called for, use the softer

variety. Here in California, fresh figs are available in the summer season, a sensual delight.

AS A DESSERT

When I have nothing else available, and the occasion calls for a dessert, I put out dried fruits with some lightly roasted almonds, walnuts, or cashews. Cutting the dried fruit makes it more open to being eaten.

AS A SNACK

Serve raisins, dates, or figs with roasted peanuts, pumpkin, or sunflower seeds; walnuts, almonds, or cashews. Skip the chips!

IN SALADS

Dried fruits in modest amounts can complement many kinds of salads: carrot, lettuce, alfalfa sprout, cabbage, cottage cheese, or fruit. If you're using dates or figs, it's useful to slice them first.

IN FROSTINGS OR FILLINGS

Dates or figs are especially suited to this use. Cover them with water and cook until soft. Then mash them into a paste. It's good just like that, or it could be spiced with vanilla extract, cinnamon, orange peel, lemon juice, cloves, or other seasonings.

Prunes, Dried Apricots, Pears, Apples, Pineapple, Bananas, and Coconut

I had my first dried banana two years ago. Talk about a potent, concentrated food! One thing to remember when eating dried fruit is that it's easy to overdo it. Often people who wouldn't consider eating ten plums sit down and eat ten prunes, or they eat two, three, or four stewed dried pears when they wouldn't eat more than one fresh pear. Since dried fruit can have a pretty strong effect, some caution may be necessary.

Stewed Dried Fruit

Prunes are the most frequently stewed dried fruit, but apricots, pears, and apples can also be used. (Carrying dried fruit—to be stewed at camp—is a backpacker's

delight.)

Dried fruit

*Water (enough to cover and then
some)*

Put the dried fruit in a pot and cover with an inch or two of water. Heat to boiling, then simmer until done. Apricots are the quickest, taking about 10 minutes, while pears, prunes, and apples take 20 to 30.

VARIATIONS

- Cut a lemon in quarters lengthwise, then cut crosswise in thin slices. Add these to the stewing prunes.
- Cook several dried fruits together until all are soft.

- Add quartered fresh apples to stewing prunes.
- Use stewed dried fruit for pie and cookie fillings.

Apricot Condiment

Good with rice dishes and curries.

Dried apricots

Banana

Parsley, minced

Mint, minced

Salt

Lemon juice

Cayenne (optional)

Green chili, minced (optional)

Stew the apricots. Mash (at least some of)

the banana, mix in the apricots, and add generous amounts of minced parsley and mint, seasoning with a touch of salt and lemon juice. If you want some heat, add a touch of cayenne or some minced green chilis.

BEANS

Beans. What suffering the word evokes. Beans. When things did not work out: Oh beans! When you went camping. Beans! Still . . . I love them.



Beans are not meat, they're beans: garbanzo (chickpeas), kidney, navy, soldier, white, black, red, and pinto. There are also soy beans—which more commonly appear as soy milk, tofu, or veggie burgers; split pea soup—thick,

green, creamy, and soothing (try it with caraway seeds or with bacon pieces); refried beans—greasy, soft, fragrant, and filling; uncooked lentils—a rainbow of tans and greens—cook into a deep mellow brown with the taste of earthen sunshine.

The overlooked jewels of the vegetable world, beans sell at dirt-cheap prices and are one of the best protein buys around. Beans and greens, beans with grains or nuts, beans with eggs or cheese—all are good protein combinations.

Beans take some getting used to, some familiarity. It's easy to say, "Beans don't agree with me," without having given yourself a chance to agree with them.

Cooking Beans: A Basic Outline

Preparing the beans: One cup of dry

beans makes four average servings, either in a bean dish or in a soup. Spread out the measured beans—a white plate is especially useful for this—so that you can poke through them and pick out any extraneous materials, particularly small pebbles. Garbanzos, azuki, red, and black beans seem to be especially pebble-prone. Besides being a jarring surprise, pebbles are a genuine hazard to the teeth. Unless the beans are unusually dirty, they'll need just one rinsing to remove storage dust. Cover the beans in a pot or pan with water, stir them around by hand and pour the water off. Now the beans are ready for soaking or cooking.

Soaking the beans: Beans absorb water rather reluctantly. Soaking them in water before cooking reduces the cooking time

by thirty minutes if simmering and by five minutes if pressure cooking. Also, it seems good to give the beans several hours to get used to the water before the heat is turned on. Cover the beans with water by a couple of inches when soaking starts. The beans can be soaked overnight or during the day, six to eight hours or longer. In very hot weather, keep the soaking beans in a cool place or they will tend to sour.

Cooking the beans: As a rule, *no salt* is added until the beans are soft, since salt tends to draw the moisture out of foods.

Remember, beans take time, or pressure, to cook.

If the beans are presoaked, pressure-cook as follows:

- Split peas and lentils: ten minutes at 15-pound pressure
- Soybeans: twenty minutes at 15-pound pressure
- Garbanzo beans: twenty-five minutes at 15-pound pressure
- Others: fifteen minutes at 15-pound pressure

If the beans are not presoaked, add five minutes cooking time at 15-pound pressure.

For cooking without pressure, if the beans are presoaked, bring to a boil, then simmer as follows:

- Split peas and lentils: one hour
- Soybeans: two hours
- Garbanzo beans: two and one-half

hours

- Others: one and one-half hours

If the beans are not presoaked, add thirty minutes to these cooking times.

“Others” includes black-eyed peas, cranberry beans, navy (white) beans, red kidney, red, pinto, lima, great northern, pink, black, azuki, and mung beans.

Basic Bean Recipe

Time is the main ingredient here besides the beans—and you can reduce that with a pressure cooker.

Beans

Water

Garlic (optional)

Dried herbs (optional)

Salt

Lemon juice or vinegar (optional)

Prepare the beans for soaking or cooking. Add three times as much water as beans for a bean dish, and five times as much water if making soup. Soak, then cook until tender (times above). For extra flavor cook with some fresh garlic or dried herbs. (Depending on the bean I have especially enjoyed sage, thyme, or oregano—see what you like.) Do not add any salt until after the beans are completely tender. If the beans are simmered rather than pressure-cooked, it may be necessary to add more hot water as the cooking progresses. When the beans are tender, salt to taste. If you are not

using a pressure cooker to cook the beans, you may wish to cook up a double batch and save some for later use. A modest amount of tartness—lemon juice or vinegar—will lift the flavor.

ACCOMPANYING BEANS WITH VEGETABLES

Vegetables go well in the bean pot. Beans and bean water relish the company of onions, celery, and carrots. Here's how the vegetables can be added:

Pressure-cook some diced vegetables with the beans. The vegetables and beans will have about the same taste (having flavored each other) and soft texture.

Sauté the vegetables first and then add them to the cooked or nearly cooked beans. The vegetables will retain some of their original taste and texture. A variation

of this is to add leftover cooked vegetables to the beans.

Simmer the vegetables with the cooking, or cooked, beans for thirty to forty minutes. The vegetables will enhance the flavor of the beans and still retain some of their individuality.

Traditionally, beans are often cooked with bones or seasoned with pieces of meat. But beans have also been known to get mixed up with tomatoes, sweetened with sugar or molasses, and spiced with chili. Here are some combinations and seasonings.

Sweetened Soy Beans

This is the Japanese version of an

American standby.

Soy beans, cooked

Sugar, honey, or molasses

Soy sauce

Salt

Lemon juice or vinegar (optional)

If baking, preheat oven to 350°. Flavor the cooked beans first with the sugar, then with the soy sauce. Add a little salt if necessary. This recipe, as it was originally shown to me by one of my Japanese Zen teachers, used way more sugar and soy sauce than I would ever put in it. For a small side dish these candied beans are a treat, but if the beans are to be eaten in larger amounts, try seasoning them more lightly. Serve immediately, or

let the sweetened beans cook for an additional ½ hour on top of the stove or in the oven. Add a light touch of lemon juice or vinegar if you wish, to help the flavors blossom.

Nut-Buttered Beans

The nut butter makes this a flavorful, hearty, delicious dish. Again, other beans besides soy can be used.

Soybeans, cooked

Peanut butter

Salt (or soy sauce)

If baking, preheat oven 350°. If you started with a cup of dry beans, use about ½ cup of peanut butter. Add a little of the

cooking liquid at a time, mixing well so that the peanut butter becomes a smooth sauce. Add to the cooked soybeans. Simmer on the stove or bake in the oven.

VARIATIONS

- Use sesame butter or cashew, almond, or walnut butter instead of peanut butter.
- Add chili powder, cumin, coriander, garlic, lemon, cardamom. Take your pick, and season to taste.

Chili Beans

Kidneys are the standard bean for this recipe, but soy, garbanzo, pinto, black-

eyed peas, and others can be used.

Beans, cooked

Onion

Green pepper

Olive oil

Chili powder

Garlic (optional)

Ginger root, grated (optional)

Tomatoes, chunked or canned

unseasoned tomato

Cooking liquid (or stock)

Salt

Pepper

If baking, preheat oven to 350°. Dice the onions and green peppers, then sauté them for a few minutes. Add the chili powder, and garlic and ginger if you are using it,

and cook another minute or two. Add the tomato wedges and/or canned tomato, along with some of the cooking liquid. Add the cooked beans and season to taste with salt and red pepper to taste; add more chili, garlic or ginger for additional oomph if you like them. The dish can then simmer or bake for another ½ hour or more.

VARIATION

For a milder dish, season the tomato sauce with salt, pepper, and basil, tarragon, or thyme. Note that *chili powder* is primarily garlic, cumin, oregano, and ground chili. Use your own preparation of these four, as in the following recipe.

Blanco Beans

This is a Tassajara version of refried beans. Pintos are normally used for this recipe, but soy, kidney, garbanzo, and others are good too. Create your own chili powder with red chili, minced garlic, ground cumin seed, and dried oregano. Familiarize yourself with the ingredients as you go.

Beans, cooked

Onions

Oil, for sautéing

Salt

Garlic, minced

*Cumin seed, freshly ground, if
possible*

Dried oregano

Red chili, powder or flakes

Sour cream

*Cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese,
grated*

Slice and sauté the onions, using a generous amount if you like them. When the onions are well cooked, headed toward golden, add seasonings and continue cooking another minute. Mash about half of the beans with the cooking liquid to make a creamy sauce, then add the remainder whole, and mix all the beans in with the onions. Adjust the season adding more salt, garlic, ground cumin seed, oregano, and chili to taste. Five minutes before serving, stir in the sour cream and most of the grated cheese. Let it heat gently. Garnish with the

remainder of the cheese.

VARIATION

Preheat oven to 350° and bake for 20 minutes after the addition of the sour cream and cheese.

NUTS AND SEEDS

Peanuts, almonds, walnuts, cashews, brazil nuts, hazelnuts, and sesame, sunflower, pumpkin, and poppy seeds are for many people (perhaps especially vegetarians) a vital and welcome addition to many dishes. High in proteins, usable fats, vitamins and minerals, eaten raw or roasted, they enrich and decorate cooked vegetables, salads, staples, and main

dishes. Raw nuts, for instance peanuts or sunflower seeds, have a tasty and interesting beanlike quality when added to cooked vegetable or grain dishes, and they are excellent in soups.

Any nuts or seeds—though usually peanuts, cashews, or sesame seeds—can be made into a nut butter by being ground under pressure. The pressure extracts some oil from the nut meal, giving it a buttery texture. If the nuts or seeds are ground without pressure, oil or water can be added to give them a spreadable consistency. For hungry vegetarians, nut butters provide an enjoyable substantial food. They can be served as a spread or diluted for sauces, drinks, and soup bases.

Growing up we chopped nuts in a wooden bowl with a rounded chopper—

that's a thing of the past. Now I chop them with my chef's knife or Japanese vegetable knife.



Roasted Nuts or Seeds

Some people consider that roasting nuts or seeds reduces the nutritional value, and if this is the case, I am willing to sacrifice a

bit for the fragrant aromas and toasty flavors.

Nuts or seeds

Salt (optional)

The roasting can be done in a frying pan or in the oven; preheat the oven to 350°, if that will be your cooking method. No oil is necessary in either case, but can be used. For stovetop roasting, put the nuts in the frying pan over a medium flame. Salt if you wish. Stir fairly frequently for even roasting. If the nuts begin to brown or burn before they are dry, turn down the heat. Unwatched nuts roasting in a skillet are probably the most common burnt item in the kitchen. Turn the heat down low on the nuts, if you want to neglect them, or hey,

set a timer!

For oven roasting, put the nuts on a baking sheet or in a baking pan and roast for 8 minutes. Check and stir after 7 minutes. The nuts or seeds will not reach their full crunchiness until they cool.

Nut Butters

In some ways homemade nut butters are a stop-gap for when a commercial product is not available, but on the other hand you may find them so fresh and flavorful, you want to take a few minutes to manufacture them.

Peanuts, cashews, or sesame seeds
Oil or water

Salt

Raw or roasted nuts or seeds can be used. Grind the nuts once in a hand mill or in a Cuisinart, or grind ½ cup at a time in a coffee mill (which you are reserving for nuts, seeds, and spices). Add oil or water until the nut butter is the consistency you want, and salt to taste.

Nut Milk (Sauce or Soup Base)

This is one way to make nuts go further, and it makes a potent and refreshing beverage. Serve hot or cold. This milk will not be of the white variety found in markets, but will be thick with ground nut

flesh and oils.

*Nuts or seeds for grinding, or nut
butters*

Water

Honey, molasses, or sugar

Salt

Vanilla or almond extract (optional)

Lightly roast and then grind the nuts or seeds. Add water gradually to the ground nuts or the nut butter until the mixture is a drinkable consistency. This can be thick, like a milk shake, or thinner, like milk. (You could also try using a blender or Cuisinart after adding the water.) Sweeten to taste with honey, molasses, or sugar. Does it need a pinch of salt?

If using almonds, a few drops of

almond extract could be added. Otherwise a few drops of vanilla extract can be used to sweeten and flavor.

Note: One-quarter cup of nuts will make nut milk out of 1 cup of water.

VARIATIONS

- Use milk or powdered milk instead of the water. The nut flavor won't be as pronounced, but the protein will be increased.
- This is also the way to go about making a nut sauce or nut soup base. The nut sauce will be thicker and possibly spiced, while the soup base will be thinner, having been mixed with bean or vegetable water.

Peanut Butter Balls

These are easy to make and can be easily varied.

FOR THE COOKIES:

Peanut butter

Honey

Wheat bran, oat bran, or wheat germ

Dry milk (optional)

Vanilla extract

FOR THE COATING:

*Sesame seeds, toasted coconut, or
roasted nuts, chopped*

Mix the ingredients together, except for the coating—so you'll need enough bran or germ to make the mixture stiff and dry

enough to shape into balls, which then may be rolled in the toasted sesame seeds, coconut, or chopped nuts.

VARIATIONS

- Leave the mixture whole in a block, cylinder, or globe and cut pieces off as desired.
- Add dried fruit, nuts, sunflower, or sesame seeds to give more texture and flavor.



Sesame Seeds

Sesame seeds made “Open Sesame” magic words. They come unhulled or hulled, brown or white, as well as a variety which is black. They are expensive if purchased in little boxes or bottles from the spice shelves, but inexpensive when purchased in bulk. Being small and solid, they will pass

through the digestive system intact unless they are ground or well chewed.

Roasted sesame seeds complement carrots, cooked greens, grains, and salads, and when sprinkled on top, they make a decorative and flavorful garnish. [Roast the seeds as you do nuts.](#)

Sesame Salt (Goma Shio)

At Tassajara, *goma shio* is our standard table seasoning, used particularly on cereals, grains, and beans. Many people also like sesame salt with eggs and salads. Use seven or eight parts sesame seeds to one part salt.

Sesame seeds

Salt

Roast the sesame seeds in a skillet or in the oven; preheat the oven to 350°, if that will be your cooking method. Once they have begun to brown, add the salt and continue roasting. The seeds are ready when they can be easily crunched. Test them by taking a few out of the pan and letting them cool enough to chew on. Grind the roasted seeds and salt in a *suribachi*, a grain mill, or in a blender or Cuisinart. Or, again, pulse smaller quantities in a coffee mill reserved for spices and seeds. The seeds should be mostly ground, but some can be left whole. The whole seeds give added flavor when bitten into. Store in a closed container when not in use. Refrigeration

will keep the sesame salt fresher.

VARIATION

Roasted sunflower seeds, whole or ground, can be partially substituted for sesame seeds.

TAHINI AND HALVAH

Two fairly well-known sesame products, aside from sesame oils, are tahini and halvah, which are both made from white sesame seeds. Tahini is a very creamy sesame butter and halvah is a sesame candy.

Tahini Shortbread

These cookie bars are incredibly rich and

smooth.

MAKES ONE PAN, 8 BY 8 INCH

¼ cup butter

1 cup tahini

¼ to ½ cup sugar

½ teaspoon salt

Flour until firm (about 2 to 2½ cups)

Preheat oven to 350°. Cream the butter with the tahini. Add the sugar, salt, and then flour until the mixture is firm, working with your hands at the end. Press the mixture into a pie tin or square pan, making it about ¼ inch thick. It's all right if it doesn't come all the way to the edges. Mark into pieces and cut about halfway through. An almond or walnut can be pressed on top of each piece. Bake for

about 30 minutes, or until the center is firm when gently pressed. Don't wait for it to brown—the shortbread would be overly hard, dry and crumbly.

VARIATION

Use cashew butter or peanut butter.

GRAINS

Grains—brown rice, white rice, wheat, corn, rye, oats, millet, bulgur (cracked wheat), and buckwheat—are seeds, packed with just what seeds need to become plants: a germ from which the shoot will sprout and food for its growth, enveloped in protective husk and bran.

A staple food having a taste which is

plain, earthy, and underappreciated, grains have the capacity to satisfy deep human hunger. However, people's taste for grains varies widely.

People say that creamy smooth oatmeal is "heavenly" or "library paste." About thick oatmeal they say, "You could chew it!" or "You had to chew it!" Cornmeal mush is either their favorite or they can't stand it. Brown rice is a way of life or a poor substitute for bread. Put raisins in the cracked wheat, and you may hear, "How delicious" or "Please, no dessert with breakfast."

Whole grains take a generous amount of cooking and chewing to be eaten. Unchewed whole grains are not digested. Because of the lengthy cooking and chewing involved in eating uncracked

grains, people have discovered alternatives: wheat ground into flour and made into bread and pasta; corn made into polenta; wheat made into couscous. In fact, rice, millet, and buckwheat are the only grains suitable for cooking whole, and of these, buckwheat isn't really a grain (grass seed); it is related to dock and rhubarb, which helps explain why it isn't as tough as the others.

Cooking Whole Grains

Amounts: One cup of whole grain, when cooked, will generally serve four people, although quantities will depend on what else is being served.



Washing the grain: Rinse the grain once in cold water. Stir the water and grain around with your hands to gently loosen the dust and small bits of dirt. Pour out the rinse water through a strainer. If the water appears dirty, rinse again.

Preparing the pot: Rub oil around the

inside of the cooking pot, both the bottom and sides. When you do this for grain and cereal dishes, the grain is less likely to stick and the pot will be much easier to clean.

Basic ways to cook grains: Although the ratio of water to grain and the length of cooking time varies, there are two basic ways for cooking whole or cracked grains. In the first, the grain is combined with cold water, while in the second, the grain is combined with boiling water.

THE COLD-WATER METHOD

Put the cleaned grain in an oiled pot along with salt and water. Cover, bring to a boil (the steam will be escaping from around the sides of the lid), then reduce to a simmer for the duration of the cooking

time. Try not to look in, as precious steam will escape. Listen to the sounds and sniff the air to determine how the cooking is proceeding. When all the water is absorbed, there will no longer be a bubbling sound, but more of a popping or crackling, the sound of the grain toasting—you should be able to smell it—on the bottom of the pan. It is proper for the grain to brown slightly, but it's done before you smell it burning. Open the pot and stir up the grain so that the drier kernels on top are mixed with the wetter ones on the bottom. Cover and let stand a few minutes before serving.

THE BOILING-WATER METHOD

This method starts with hot water and often with hot grain. Start the water

heating and in the meantime sauté the grain, either with or without oil. Oil (or butter) will add flavor. Continue the sautéing to whatever shade of brown you prefer. (The toasting process develops the flavor but destroys vitamins.) Either add the grain to boiling water in a cereal pot, or do the sautéing in the pot, removing it briefly from the flame and then pouring in the boiling water. Use hot pads for this and watch out for the steam. For whole grains, cover the pot immediately after the water is added. Since the grain cooks some when sautéed, slightly less water is necessary to complete the cooking when this method is used.

Rice

Brown rice can be long grain or short

grain, and I prefer the short-grain variety. Like wheat, potatoes, or other staples, rice is such a basic, wholesome food that simply cooking it well will bring out its natural goodness and provide a plain-flavored dish to refresh the palate.

Japanese white rice is washed several times to remove talc, which is used as a preservative, while brown rice is washed more as a precautionary “you-don’t-know-where-it’s-been.”

A pot with a tight-fitting lid is essential for this cooking method. If the lid is dented or the wrong size, excessive steam will escape while the rice is cooking, which means that the rice will need more liquid and/or more time to cook. If the lid does not fit well, cover the pot with foil, and put on a lid to hold the foil in place.

One cup of rice will serve three to four people (or even more people, if the rice is a modest side dish). For brown rice use twice as much water as rice, and a quarter teaspoon salt for every cup of rice. Butter or oil for a touch of flavor and heartiness.

Properly Cooked Brown Rice

All right, all you brown rice fans out there, here is a method that always produces perfectly cooked rice. It works for both short grain and long grain brown rice. You need a pot with a tight-fitting lid and plenty of time to contemplate.

MAKES 2 CUPS OF COOKED RICE

1 cup brown rice

2 cups water

½ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon butter or oil

Rinse and drain the rice, then soak it in the water for 1 hour (optional). Put both rice and water into a heavy saucepan. Add the salt and butter and bring to a boil. Immediately reduce the heat to its lowest setting and cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid. Cook the rice for 45 minutes undisturbed.

Watch TV, prepare other dishes for dinner, or do your yoga asanas, but *don't look in the pot*. The rice needs seclusion to turn out properly. To tell when it's done just listen to the pot: no more bubbling, but a subtle, yet distinct crackling or popping sound. The rice on the bottom is

becoming toasted. Leave the pot tightly covered. Just before serving, gently fluff the grains with a fork. If properly cooked and properly eaten (100 chews per mouthful), the brown rice will properly become you.

Pressure-Cooked Brown Rice

This makes the rice so tasty and easy to chew that people usually eat more of it than when it is just plain boiled.

Brown rice

Water (1½ cups for every 1 cup of rice)

Salt

Wash rice. Place all ingredients in

pressure cooker. Cover and heat to boiling. Cook over low heat for 30 minutes. Then bring to 15-pound pressure and cook for 20 minutes more. Remove from the heat and allow to depressurize completely on its own. If necessary, the pressure cooker can be cooled by running cold water over the top. Remove cover and stir thoroughly. Replace cover without jigglers and allow to sit 5 to 15 minutes before serving.

Boiled White Rice

For people who have grown to love it—and I am one of them—the clean flavors are somehow like blue sky: heavenly.

White rice

Water (1¼ to 1½ cups for every 1 cup of rice)

Salt (optional; ¼ teaspoon for every 1 cup of rice)

White rice sometimes comes coated with talc. The talc is not appetizing to bugs and rodents and it's not too good for people either, so that rice needs to be thoroughly rinsed off. It takes 5 to 7 rinsings to remove the talc. The rinse water should be nearly clear after the final rinsing.

The Japanese cook their rice without salt, but some could be added. Cook the same as for [Properly Cooked Brown Rice](#), except that it will take only about 20 minutes of simmering. Be sure to bring the water to a vigorous boil before turning

down to a simmer. All with the lid on. When cooking is finished, open, stir, and fluff. Then let sit with the lid on for a few minutes. Of course a Japanese rice cooker will do this cooking of white rice quite reliably!

Parsley Rice

Even in hot weather this rice looks cool and delicious.

White rice, cooked

Parsley, minced

Butter

Salt

Pepper

Mix a generous amount of parsley with the

cooked white rice so that it is well greened. Serve seasoned with butter, salt, and pepper.

VARIATION

Use bulgur, brown rice, buttered noodles, or spaghetti in place of the rice.

Whole Barley

Prepare this like brown rice, by either boiling or pressure cooking. Whole barley has a rather pleasant chewiness. By itself it is a heavy dish, but its flavor and texture make it an excellent addition to bean dishes, stuffings, and soups. Cook as a whole grain using two parts water to one part barley along with a touch of salt.

Whole Barley with White Rice

The whole barley adds a sturdy texture and earthiness to the heavenly white rice.

Barley

White rice

Water

Use about three parts of white rice to one part barley. Cook the barley as described under “[Cooking Whole Grains](#)” (using two parts water to one part barley). Clean the white rice, combine the cooked barley with the uncooked rice and water, and proceed with the [Boiled White Rice](#) recipe.

VARIATIONS

- Use whole wheat berries instead of barley. Whole wheat berries are extremely chewy and need even more lengthy cooking than barley or brown rice, but the procedure is the same.
- Use buckwheat instead of barley, which will cook in the same length of time as the rice—so that they can be cooked together.

Millet and Buckwheat Groats

Both of these can be prepared by either of the two basic methods described previously, although most people prefer them sautéed first. Use one cup of grain to one and one-half cups water, with a quarter teaspoon of salt per cup of grain. Again, one cup uncooked grain to start

with serves four to six, depending on the rest of the menu. Using the cold-water method, allow 20 minutes cooking time. If sautéed first, simmer for 10 to 15 minutes after adding the boiling water.

Bulgur (Cracked Wheat)

Bulgur is wheat which has been cracked, steamed, and roasted, so it is, in a sense, precooked. It is included here with the uncracked grains, since it is most frequently prepared as a dinner dish rather than a breakfast cereal. Use one part bulgur to one and one-third or one and one-half parts water. Sauté the bulgur first, then boil. Cook like [white rice](#).

Grains with Vegetables

More elaborate dishes will be considered in part two. For now, let's look at simple grain-vegetable combinations. Onions are utilized most frequently because they add a richness and depth of flavor. Celery, green peppers, and carrots are often used in combination with onion.



Onions and Grain

You're winging it here—how much water to add; how long to cook depending on which grain you're using. You could always try the “knuckle method” if you want: the water level is one knuckle (about an inch) above the grain for most every grain, except for brown rice, barley, and wheat berries where the water needs to be two knuckles (about two inches) above the grain. And wondrously enough, no matter what sized pot or how much grain, this method (pretty much) works!

Onion, diced

Oil

Grain

Water, boiling

Salt

Sauté the onion for several minutes in the pot in which you'll be cooking the grain. Remove the onion, add a little more oil, and roast the grain for 5 minutes. Stir in the onions, salt, and add the boiling water. Cover and simmer until well done.

VARIATIONS

- Use celery, green pepper, or carrot along with the onion.
- Season with thyme, basil, and/or garlic.
- Stir cooked vegetables into the grain when it has finished cooking.
- Garnish with grated cheese or chopped nuts.
- Garnish with something green:

minced parsley, cilantro, green onion.

Refried Grains

The grain is completely cooked, then added to sautéed vegetables and fried—an excellent way to use leftover cooked grains, or vegetables for that matter.

Grain, cooked

Onion, diced

Celery, carrot, or green pepper, diced

Garlic, minced (optional)

Ginger, grated (optional)

Eggs

Soy sauce

Green onions, sliced fine (optional)

Nuts (optional)

Cheese, grated (optional)

Not all of these vegetables need be used, perhaps just onion and one vegetable—unless you have readily available leftovers, in which case you're set. Stir-fry the vegetables for 4 to 5 minutes (if raw), adding garlic and ginger, if you're using it, toward the end. Break up the grain and mix it with the vegetables. Continue frying over low heat while stirring and scraping the bottom of the pan. (If necessary to keep from sticking, add some liquid.) When the grain is heated through, season with salt, pepper, and soy sauce. Make a space in the center, drop in an egg or two, and quickly stir in with the grain to scramble and disperse. Garnish

with green onions, nuts, or grated cheese.

VARIATIONS

- Season with thyme, hot peppers, or curry.
- Use leftover cooked vegetables. Cut them up if necessary and add with the cooked grain.
- Use raisins, nuts, diced apple or toasted sunflower seeds instead of vegetables for a sweeter style of refried grain.

Grain Soup

Whole grains can be made into soup with the addition of extra water. You'll need six to twelve parts water to one part grain

to make this flavorful broth.

Grain (rice, barley, buckwheat, or bulgur)

Water

Salt

Oil the pot around the sides and bottom. Roast the grain in a little oil if desired. Add salt and water (larger quantities for thinner soup), bring to boiling, then simmer for 40 to 60 minutes or longer. White rice cooked this way makes a thick, creamy soup base. (For more about grain soups, see the chapter on soups.)

Greek Lemon Soup

I'm not spelling out quantities here, but

one way to finish off a grain soup is with eggs and lemon: so simple, such stunning flavors. My one stipulation: be generous with the lemon juice, say a couple tablespoons per egg, and one egg per person.

Grain

Water

Salt

Lemon juice

Eggs

Prepare the grain and add to the water and salt as described for the [Grain Soup](#). When the grain is thoroughly cooked, beat the eggs in a separate bowl. Whisk the lemon juice and some of the hot soup into the eggs a little at a time until the eggs are

well heated. Then the heated egg mixture can be whisked into the soup. Check the seasoning. Serve immediately—further cooking will tend to cause the eggs to scramble rather than remaining liquid.



Cereals

Grains go through a mill to have their hulls removed. This hulling removes the outermost layer of bran, which is also

known as the chaff. Polishing a grain removes further layers of bran. Hulled grain is milled into cereal or flour. Cereals are coarser, with distinct pieces of meal, while flours are completely ground into a powder. Once grains are broken up or ground in this way, water enters more readily, cooking time is reduced, and chewing is made less arduous. Some grains, especially oats, are rolled, which means they are flattened between rollers. Oatmeal is usually rolled and then further broken up and processed. Grains milled for cereal are often known as creams: cream of wheat, cream of rice, and so on. Flour can also be used to make a very creamy cereal.

COOKING CEREALS

Cereals can be cooked by either of the two processes already described for cooking grains. For cooking cereal, a thick-bottomed pot is preferable, since the mush tends to burn on the bottom otherwise. Cereal cooked in a thin-bottomed pot needs more stirring and a very low flame. In either case, oil the sides and bottom of the pot before adding the cereal and water (cleaning will be easier).

Basic Hot Cereal

A hot breakfast cereal will digest and nourish better than cold processed cereal foods (if I may say so)—and there are so many great choices.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

3½ cups water

¼ teaspoon salt

1 to 2 tablespoons oil or butter

1 cup cereal: rice cream, barley cream, cracked meal, bulgur wheat, buckwheat cream, polenta, or 1½ cups oatmeal or rolled oats)

Start the water heating in a separate pot, while the cereal is being sautéed in the cereal pot. Stir the roasting cereal for even browning, until a pleasing grain aroma greets your nose. Take the pot off the fire, let it sit a minute or two, and then pour into the boiling or nearly boiling water. Use hot pads! Stir briskly, then return to a low flame and continue cooking for 10 to 30 minutes. To keep the cereal

from burning or to thin it out, add additional hot water, and use a flame tamer or very low heat.

Serve with milk and sweetening, possibly yogurt and roasted nuts and raisins—or find some other foods you enjoy to have with the cereal.

VARIATIONS AND ADDITIONS

- Add leftover cooked grains or cereals to the water at the start: brown rice in oatmeal, bulgur in cracked wheat, corn kernels in corn meal, and so forth.
- Add either plain or toasted wheat germ just before the end of cooking, for an even wheatier cracked wheat cereal.
- Add dry milk powder, toasted

sunflower seeds, chopped nuts, and/or nut butters, 5 to 10 minutes before the end of cooking.

- Add raisins, chopped dates, sliced figs, or other dried fruits 5 minutes or more before the end of cooking.
- One suggestion about adding things: Find out if everyone likes it that way. I like each thing separate, so that I can go from one to the other. Served separately, stewed fruit and nuts can be mixed with the cereal or not.

Pasta

Pasta is, for many people, a beloved way of eating grain. Spaghetti, egg noodles, linguine, fettucine, fusilli, rigatoni, ziti, macaroni, lasagna—the assortment of

shapes and sizes is remarkable. The versatility of pasta is easily forgotten. Aside from being served with the usual sauces—frequently tomato or cream—pasta is also excellent in casseroles, soups, and sometimes salads.

Basic Boiled Pasta

For cooking noodles, the directions are on the package, aren't they? One pound serves four to six, generally.

Water, boiling

Salt

Oil, for cooking

Pasta (noodles, spaghetti, lasagne, macaroni, fettucini—any type)

Olive oil or butter

Salt

Pepper

Herbs of your choice

Balsamic vinegar (optional)

Start the water heating, add some salt and a couple spoons of oil, which helps keep the pasta from sticking together. When the water is boiling, fan in the noodles or spaghetti so that they can separate somewhat. Bring the water back to a boil, then reduce the heat so that the water is just boiling.

There is, of course, the 8-minute method for determining when pasta is done, but there are some other possibilities, too. I've heard that some famous restaurants have a spaghetti range:

an empty wall or ceiling at which a string of spaghetti can be tossed. If it sticks to the wall it's done; if not, keep cooking. Many people cook spaghetti al dente—biting a piece between two front teeth to test for proper texture—I take some out and taste it.

When cooked, drain the pasta and save the cooking liquid as you would when cooking vegetables. If you let the pasta sit at this point, it will tend to lump together, so I like to toss it with a little butter or olive oil right away, then let it sit above hot water if it's not be served until later. (Or you may have a sauce or vegetable mixture ready to receive the pasta.) Season with salt and pepper and other herbs of your choice: garlic, fresh basil, or perhaps dried thyme. A sprinkling of

balsamic vinegar is usually invigorating.



DAIRY PRODUCTS

Dairy products have been such an integral part of Western cuisine for centuries—and remain a dietary staple in parts of the world: butter or ghee for cooking and flavoring; cream for richness in soups and sauces; milk for drinking and in cakes;

yogurt, well, for everything.

There are those who question the health benefits of dairy. I'm in the Julia Childs school: while whipping butter into mashed potatoes, she said, "I hear that some of you are not eating butter, well . . . you can always whip in some cream." In any case, you will make your way with dairy as you make your way with other foods as well. I especially savor and enjoy that touch of cream in my morning coffee, eggs cooked in butter, fresh mozzarella with tomatoes, and well-crafted (frequently local) cheeses.

Milk, Buttermilk, Butter, Cream, Sour Cream, Cream Cheese (Neufchâtel), Cottage Cheese, Cheeses, Yogurt

While some people manage to sustain themselves without milk products, others find out that dairy is what makes a vegetarian diet possible and enjoyable—milk on cereal and berries, grilled cheese sandwiches, cottage cheese salads, cheesecake, and whipped cream. Milk products turn up throughout the day and throughout the menu in dressings, sauces, soups, spreads, and desserts.

As a rule, milk products need very little cooking. They tend to brown or burn easily and they frequently curdle (or separate) with heat. The smell of burnt milk is extremely pervasive and not at all appetizing, so be sure to heat or cook milk with a moderate flame. Milk will tend to burn before it gets to the boiling point, and even in recipes which call for boiling, it

needn't really be that hot.



Butter also will burn if it is heated to the same temperatures to which oils are heated for sautéing. Used together with a regular cooking oil, butter can be heated to a higher temperature. Otherwise, cook more slowly when using butter. Unless you are using ghee—where the milk solids have been removed—which keeps

extremely well and can be heated to high temperatures. Cheese does not need cooking. Once melted, it begins to get tough and stringy with further cooking.

Cottage Cheese

This has unexpected versatility and is one of our favorite foods.

Cottage Cheese Salad

Often cottage cheese is served plain with fruit, when there are so many seasoning possibilities. Here it is sweet and sour with lemon and honey, but you can also enjoy a savory combination with herbs.

Cottage cheese

*Choice of one or more: apple, orange,
banana, pear, raisins*

Sunflower seeds

Walnuts

Lemon juice

Honey or sugar

Salt

Sour cream or yogurt (optional)

Dice all the fruit and mix with the nuts and seeds. Season with lemon juice, sweetening, and a hint of salt. Add the cottage cheese. This salad can be made more creamy with the addition of sour cream or yogurt.

VARIATIONS

- Use roasted peanuts as the sole addition to the cottage cheese.

- Use vegetables instead of, or possibly in addition to, fruits. Use diced carrots, onion, green onion, green pepper, celery, or minced parsley. Add lemon juice and possibly raisins and nuts. Tomato wedges could also be mixed in or used to decorate the top.
- Season with some minced garlic and dried dill; some fresh cilantro or basil.
- Use minced parsley, green onion, olives. Sprinkle with paprika.
- Add some blue cheese for flavor.

Ricotta Cheese

This is another inexpensive soft cheese, similar to cottage cheese but with a smoother consistency. It can be used in

place of cottage cheese in any of the preceding recipes.

Sour Cream

An instant sauce for vegetables, salads, potatoes, and noodles, sour cream is also used in several soups—including beet, carrot, yam—to offset their sweetness. Yogurt can replace sour cream, not in terms of calories, but in terms of protein, tartness, moisture.

Cheese

We use mostly cheddar, Monterey Jack, Swiss, and smoked cheese with lesser amounts of Parmesan or Asiago. Many recipes using cheese appear in other sections of this book. If a meal seems to

lack substance or character, cheese is often the answer, completing vegetable, grain, bean, and egg dishes, as well as soups, sauces, and salads. Here are a few recipes not mentioned in the other sections.

Closed-Faced Grilled Cheese Sandwich

The choice of cheese, the quality of the bread will make the sandwich what it is. (And for those of us still eating wheat and dairy, grilled cheese sandwiches still hit the mark.) Several condiments can enliven the sandwich!

Butter or oil

Bread

Cheese

Mayonnaise or mustard (optional)

Dried thyme or oregano (optional)

Fresh basil or cilantro (optional)

Salsa (optional)

Butter or oil the outside surfaces of the bread and put the cheese in between (slather on some mayo or mustard if you'd like). Fry over medium-low heat in a covered frying pan. Turn it over to cook the other side. Sprinkle in some dried thyme or oregano, or add some chopped fresh basil or cilantro. Or open it briefly and spoon in some salsa.

Cheese with Fruit

Dessert or snack. Taste the cheese and fruit carefully to see which combinations you prefer.

Choice of fruit: apples, pears, grapes, oranges, other

Choice of cheese: cheddar, Monterey Jack, Swiss, provolone, Edam, Gouda, cream cheese ball, other

Cut the cheese in slices, sticks, or wedges. Serve the fruit whole with knives for slicing at the table, or preslice the fruit. Apples when crisp and juicy seem to be a refreshing complement to most any cheese. A glass of wine?

Cream Cheese (Neufchâtel)

This versatile cheese product can be used

straight as a spread, thinned as a sauce, or to replace cream in cooking. It is rich in both protein and calories. Neufchâtel is made in the same way as cream cheese, but with milk in place of cream so it has fewer calories. Nowadays many cream cheeses are available without all the added gum.

Cream Cheese Ball or Log

The cream cheese holds the other cheeses and seasonings together.

Cream cheese

Cheese, grated (whatever kind you have)

Blue cheese

Milk

Green onion, chopped

Salt

Pepper

Garlic, minced

Dry mustard

Parsley, minced

*Thyme, oregano, or Herbes de
Provence*

Roasted sesame seeds

Work the cream cheese until it is creamy. Mix in blue cheese and one or more kinds of grated cheese for flavoring. Add a small amount of milk if the mixture gets too thick. Add green onion and seasonings to taste. Shape into a ball (or balls) or a log, and roll in the roasted sesame seeds.

VARIATIONS

- For a dessert version, mix raisins, nuts, chopped dates, and lemon or orange peel with the softened cream cheese. Season with vanilla extract and cinnamon.
- To use as a topping, thin the mixture with sour cream or yogurt. Modify or eliminate seasoning depending on what is to be topped: pancakes, vegetables, salads, grains, grilled cheese sandwiches. This can be heated in a double boiler or over gentle heat. Do not boil, or the mixture will separate.

Yogurt

This is a cultured milk product, which is

easier to digest than milk, and it contains beneficial probiotic lactobacilli that can produce B vitamins in the intestines and promote healthy digestion.

HOW TO MAKE YOGURT

The bacteria in yogurt grow in milk and cause the milk to thicken over a period of three to eight hours. As part of their life processes, these bacteria convert milk sugar into lactic acid. The basic process for making yogurt is to introduce yogurt bacteria into some warm milk and keep the milk warm for several hours until it thickens.

To grow, the yogurt-making bacteria need milk which is at a hospitable temperature, 90° to 120°, or most appropriately, 105° to 110° (barely warm

on your wrist). At higher temperatures these bacteria are destroyed and at lower temperatures they do not grow well, but other bacteria will. Sometimes the milk is first heated to 180° to kill unwanted bacteria, then cooled to yogurt-making temperature. To start the first batch of homemade yogurt, buy a small amount of good-quality *plain* yogurt. Buy one that you like, since the starter will produce yogurt of a similar flavor. After you've made the first batch you can, of course, use some of it to start the second.

What milk to use? We use mostly dry milk to make our yogurt, twice as much as is normally used to make milk for drinking. Concentrated (not evaporated) milk also makes an excellent creamy yogurt, diluted one to one instead of one to

two.

How to keep the yogurt-milk warm until it thickens? There are several ways to do this. The yogurt-cultured milk is kept in covered bottles or pots. These bottles or pots should be thoroughly cleaned and preheated. One way to keep them warm is to place them in warm water over a pilot light on top of a gas stove, or in the oven.

No pilot light? Another way is to heat the oven to 350° for about five minutes, then turn it off and put the yogurt in, padded with towels. If the oven cools off too much, turn it on for a couple of minutes every hour or two. Often a seventy-five-watt light bulb will keep an oven, or a cardboard box, warm enough to culture yogurt. Get a cord with a socket on the end of it, then cut a circular hole in the

box just large enough for the socket to fit into it. When the socket is in place, screw the light bulb in from the inside. If you are using the light bulb in an oven, the oven door should have a good spring, or it may not close well. One more method is to wrap warm milk bottles with towels and put them in a styrofoam ice chest. At Tassajara we put the yogurt bottles in wooden crates, and hang the crates in the hot baths—a perfect 108° temperature. The yogurt loves the baths as much as people do.

Yogurt should thicken completely in, at most, 8 hours. Failure can result from the milk being too hot when the yogurt was added, the mixture not being kept warm enough, the yogurt starter being defective, or antibiotics being present in the milk.

You can try again with the same batch of milk if you heat it slowly to 180° to kill any foreign bacteria, cool to 110°, add some more yogurt, and start over again.

Dry-Milk Yogurt

Note: The more yogurt used in the starter, the tarter the new batch of yogurt will be.

4 cups water, at about 115° to 120°

2½ to 3 cups dry milk

1 to 2 tablespoons yogurt

Mix the water and powdered milk thoroughly together. The mixture should be at about 110°. Mix a few tablespoons of this with the yogurt, then pour the thinned yogurt back into the milk. If not already in

a clean preheated bottle or pot, pour the mixture into same and cover. Set it in the warmed space you have devised for it (see above). Check in three hours, and periodically thereafter. When it has begun to thicken, refrigerate it.

Whole-Milk Yogurt

1 quart whole or skim milk

4 teaspoons yogurt

Heat the milk gently to 180° (little bubbles forming around the sides and bottom of the pot). Pour into the clean bottles and let cool to 110°. Mix a little of the warm milk with the yogurt, then divide this mixture evenly among the bottles. Cover and put in

a warm place. Refrigerate when it begins to thicken.

Eggs

The protein in eggs comes closer to being completely utilizable by the body than that of any other single food. Eggs are extremely versatile and, for many people, nearly indispensable, due both to their high nutritional value and to the fact that they can be cooked in so many different ways. Eggs can be fried, poached, scrambled, boiled, or baked. They can also be added to salads, salad dressings, soups, sauces, casseroles, and desserts. Eggs carry the oil of mayonnaise and the butter of hollandaise.

As a rule, eggs are cooked with moderate heat, so that they will be tender

rather than leathery. When heated too fast in a sauce or soup, eggs will scramble rather than thickening and enriching. If the heat is too high for a custard or meringue, the eggs will harden and “weep” water, rather than being soft and heavenly.

Standard Fried Eggs

Sunny side up, over easy, glorious. If you like your eggs lacy brown, you probably already know how to get them to come out that way. The main difficulty with fried eggs is getting the top of the white cooked without the white becoming leathery and the yolk becoming solid. Start with a moderately hot pan, so that when the egg goes in there is just a slight sizzle and the

white barely bubbles, gradually turning white.

Eggs

Butter or oil

Put a generous amount of oil or butter in a moderately heated frying pan. (Eggs will stick less with butter.) Break the eggs into the pan. If you're cooking more than one egg and you want them done at the same time, break them into a bowl first, then slide them gently into the frying pan together—they can be cut apart later. As they cook, spoon butter or oil on top of them to cook the upper surface. These eggs can also go over easy when they are firm, flipping them boy-scout fashion with the pan or using a spatula. (I use a rubber

spatula with my nonstick pan.) Leave very briefly (half a minute possibly), then flop back and serve.

Steam-Fried Eggs

This is the combination fry-steam method.

Eggs

Butter or oil

Water or stock

Use a modest amount of oil or butter in the moderately heated frying pan. If using butter, wait for it to stop foaming and add the eggs. After the eggs are in, add a tablespoon or two of water, and cover the pan. (If these fried eggs are done on a griddle, an inverted baking pan can serve

as a lid.) Leave on moderate heat. Steam from the water will cook the top of the eggs. Give them a minute or two, then take a peek. The white should be all cooked and the yolk glazed, but still runny.

VARIATIONS

- For pink eggs, use tomato juice instead of water or stock for added flavor, compliments, or controversy. Pink eggs with tomato juice! “Can’t we just have eggs sometimes?”
- Add strips of cheese on top of the frying eggs before the pan is covered.
- Use fried eggs as a topping for grain and bean dishes, or for your huevos rancheros.

Poached Eggs

At best these eggs are tender, plump, and juicy. Not without reason are they the eggs of Benedict. A warning: they can be a headache. Have a dishtowel or sponge, rubber spatula, and a perforated spoon at the ready.

Eggs

Water or stock

Vinegar

Salt

The eggs are cooked in water. Have at least a cup of water per egg, and for every cup add about $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of vinegar and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt. The vinegar is to help keep the egg from spreading out once it's

broken into the water.

Heat water, vinegar, and salt to boiling, then turn heat down to medium low. As soon as the boiling stops, start putting in the eggs, depositing them at the surface as much as possible, rather than splashing them into the water. They should spread a bit, but not all over the place. Let them cook slowly for a minute or so, and then gently loosen the eggs from the pan bottom with a rubber spatula. Cook another 2 or 3 minutes, until they can be lifted from the water without breaking. Try picking them up with the perforated spoon and, if solid enough, remove from the water, then rest the spoon on the folded-up dish towel or clean sponge to allow the excess water to be absorbed. Remove the egg from the spoon to a heated platter. When all the

eggs are on the platter, more water can be absorbed by tilting the platter slightly, and mopping up the water with a paper towel. From there, put the egg onto the toast or English muffin.

Eggs can be cooked this way in soups a few minutes before they are to be served. In that case allow an egg per person, with possibly an extra one for breakage.

Boiled Eggs

Sometimes vinegar is added to the water to keep the egg from spreading if there happens to be a crack in the shell.

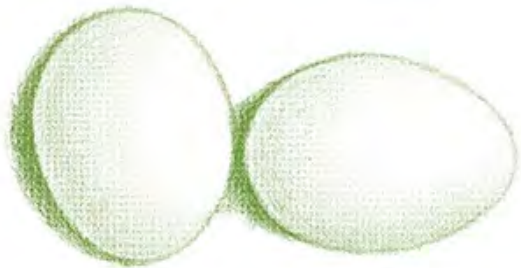
Eggs in shell

Water

Vinegar (optional)

Soft: Bring water to a boil, then turn down to simmering. Put in the eggs for 3 minutes. Remove and drain. Run cold water over the eggs briefly to stop the cooking.

Hard: Put the eggs in cold water with a spoonful of vinegar. Heat to boiling, then cover, turn *off* the heat, and let sit for 6 to 7 minutes for yolks that are orange and slightly moist with the whites solid; 10 minutes for yolks that are yellow and dry. Drain off hot water and add cold water to stop the cooking. Putting the eggs in cold water will also make them easier to peel.



Scrambled Eggs

Scrambled eggs are best cooked with moderate heat, whether cooking them until they are completely dry, or just until they are slightly moist. The eggs go on cooking even when the frying pan is removed from the flame, so for moist eggs remove the pan from the fire before they are done.

Eggs

Salt

Pepper

Milk or water (optional)

Oil or butter

Beat the eggs and season them with salt and pepper. Add a little milk or water (a tablespoon or so per egg), if you like—the eggs will be softer and fluffier. Cook in a well-oiled, moderately hot pan, stirring frequently, and scraping the cooked egg off the sides and bottom of the pan. If you want them smooth, whip with a wire whisk toward the end of cooking.

Omelets

Eggs

Milk or water

Salt

Pepper

Oil or butter

Beat the eggs, add a tablespoon of milk or water per egg, and season them with salt and pepper.

The No-Stir Method: Cook in a well-oiled, moderately hot pan. (Again, eggs will stick less with butter rather than oil.) Pour in the eggs when the butter stops bubbling but is not yet browning, and a “skin” will form right away on the sides and bottom. Let the eggs cook slowly without stirring for a couple of minutes, so that the skin thickens considerably. Lift the edges of the thickened egg and tilt the pan

so that the liquid egg runs underneath. Repeat this process of cooking, lifting, tilting as necessary to complete the cooking of the omelet.

The Constant-Stir Method: This method makes exceptional eggs. Pour the seasoned beaten eggs (with a tablespoon of milk or water per egg) into a well-oiled, moderately hot pan, and do the cooking over low to moderate flame. Stir continuously with a wire whisk. The eggs are meant to thicken gradually without scrambling. When they have gotten quite thick, so that there is a deep furrow following the whisk around, stop stirring and turn the heat up slightly and cook briefly so that the omelet sets.

Adding Vegetables to Omelets or

Scrambled Eggs

Except for very tender vegetables such as tomatoes, avocados, sprouts, and possibly squashes, I prefer to sauté the vegetables before adding them to the eggs. Slice or dice any vegetables you happen to like or have on hand and then sauté them. If making scrambled eggs, add the beaten seasoned eggs to the vegetables and continue cooking as in the scrambled egg recipe. Omelets can be made with vegetables this same way, but the eggs tend to stick to the pan, so I prefer to remove the sautéed vegetables from the frying pan and then get the eggs started on their own—in a clean pan with fresh butter or oil. (This is a bit more work, but the eggs will definitely stick less.) I find this especially helpful for developing the

“skin” of the omelet which can then be lifted to have the uncooked runny egg run underneath. The (still warm) vegetables can go on top toward the end of the cooking.

Adding Cheese to Omelets or Scrambled Eggs

Cheese doesn't need cooking, just melting, so add it toward the end of the cooking. Any grated or dried cheese can be used inside, and cheese in strips or slices can be artfully arranged on top of the omelet.

Cream cheese or Neufchâtel, cottage cheese, or ricotta can also be used. These make eggs wonderfully soft and creamy. Omelets with milk or cottage cheese in them won't become runny if cooked slowly. Faster cooking makes the whey

separate out of the milk or cottage cheese.

Omelets are often folded in half toward the end of their cooking, so that the cheese and vegetables inside heat thoroughly. It also makes the filling a surprise.

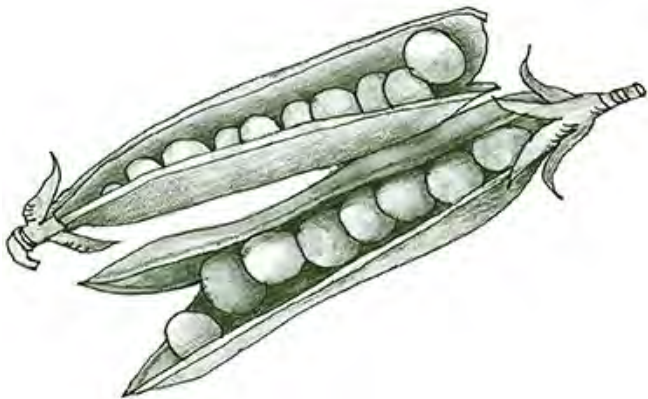
Especially if the omelet is being served for dinner, you can accompany it with a sauce: either plain white, brown, mushroom. or cheese (see the chapter on sauces).

Seasonings for Omelets or Scrambled Eggs

One of the best ways we've found to season eggs is with soy sauce replacing the salt. Herbs to try with eggs include thyme, basil, tarragon, marjoram, oregano. Other seasonings to use in moderate amounts include garlic, curry powder (one

friend swears by her curry powder and Parmesan cheese scrambled eggs), chili, ginger.

Considering the Way We Eat



**THE WAY WE EAT, THE WAY WE DO
ANYTHING, IS AN EXPRESSION of our**

consciousness, an expression of who we are. Thoughts arise about what we'd like to eat; feelings come and go, moving us to choose one food or another; beliefs tell us what's right and what's wrong about our eating habits. As Michael Pollan asks in his book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, how are we going to decide what to eat? Personally I've endeavored to follow (and cultivate or fine-tune) my culinary aesthetic: I taste what I put in my mouth and let it come home to my heart. What is genuinely pleasing or deeply satisfying? Which hungers, if any, are being satisfied? This approach may not be for everyone but I know which foods sing praises and which foods (often manufactured) are mute. Some aisles in the grocery store I've almost never walked down. My approach

to cooking and eating is similar to Thomas Moore's encouragement in his best-selling *Care of the Soul*, to expand your poetic imagination.

Get a book on calorie-counting if you want, but I want poetry when I eat. I want essence, heart. Sorry, but I am not interested in scientific evaluations, in breaking things down into their parts. All of this was confirmed for me in 1988 when I worked for a year with Efrem Korngold and Harriet Beinfield at their Chinese Medicine Works in San Francisco. In traditional Chinese medicine the five flavors have a "systematic correspondence" with the five elements or five phases which also correspond with the five yin organs: liver, heart, spleen, lung, kidney. And guess what? Eating an

aesthetically pleasing array of foods, colors, and flavors nourishes the five organs. I had always thought that eating this way was healthy, but here was a centuries-old tradition that agreed with me. When you taste things carefully, you can learn to trust and develop your food aesthetic.



SEASONAL EATING

Below you'll find a [chart](#) with vegetables grouped first by the season in which they reach maturity, and second by what part of the plant is the edible portion: root, stem, leaves, fruit, or bud. The seasonal classification is a useful reminder to consume foods from closer to home. Although modern methods of production and transportation bring us many more vegetables and fruits from farther away, we are wise to eat local produce as much as possible, as it reduces carbon-footprint costs, supports the local economies of scale, nourishes the body in a sound fashion. (There are certainly a number of good books to study this more if you are interested.) Included as *Year-Round* foods

are those vegetables most readily available, as well as those vegetables maturing in late summer and fall which can be fairly easily kept through the winter.

The *cool weather* vegetables are those which bolt to seed in hot weather. Some areas of California are cool enough in the summer and warm enough in the winter that these vegetables can be grown almost year-round, while other areas may produce one fall crop or one spring crop. Included in this category are some root vegetables, asparagus, all of the bud vegetables, and most of the leafy vegetables. Collard greens, which grow well in hot weather, are included under Greens (cool weather) for cooking purposes.

Grouped as *summer vegetables* are all of the fruit crops, those which form after the flower and which contain seeds and seed food. These vegetables need heat to mature their fruit. Peas, the first of the fruit crops, can't take as much sun as the others. Green beans also come fairly early, and then all the others come in: eggplant, peppers, zucchinis, tomatoes.

Vegetables available at the same time of year generally combine well with each other or make companionable dishes. They will be cheapest and at their best during their prime season. I still can't get my head around buying blueberries from New Zealand in December!

SEASONAL VEGETABLES

	<i>Year Round</i>	<i>Spring and Fall (Cool Weather)</i>	<i>Summer</i>
<i>ROOTS, TUBERS, AND BULBS</i>	Carrot, Onion, Potato, Sweet Potato, Yams, Garlic, Ginger	Turnip, Rutabaga, Radishes, Beets, Celery Root, Parsnips, Burdock Root	
<i>SHOOTS, LEAVES, AND STEMS</i>	Green Onion, Celery, Cabbage, Parsley, Leeks, Cilantro, Chives	Asparagus (spring only), Fennel Bulb, Lettuces, Arugula, Greens: Spinach, Chard, Kale, Mustard, Collards	Basil, Tarragon
<i>BUDS</i>		Broccoli, Cauliflower, Artichoke	
<i>FRUITS</i>	Winter Squashes: Acorn, Hubbard, Banana		Pea, Snow Pea, Green Beans, Tomato, Cucumber, Eggplant, Sweet Corn, Avocado, Bell Peppers: Red and Green, Chilies, Summer Squashes: Zucchini, Crookneck, Scalloped

To think about what part of the plant each vegetable is may help to determine how it can best be prepared. There are exceptions, but root vegetables generally

take the most cooking, and leafy vegetables take the least. Then, too, root vegetables are earthy, leafy vegetables more airy, and fruit vegetables more full of sun: accordingly, heaviness, lightness, or warmth can be added to a dish or meal, and consideration may be given to having some of each at each meal or in the course of a week.

Vegetables are, of course, classified biologically, and occasionally some reference is made to a vegetable's familial relationship in this book. By far the largest family of vegetables is the mustards: broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, turnips, rutabagas, kohlrabi, and mustard greens are all in this family, as are radishes, watercress, and peppercress. These vegetables all

develop a “boiled cabbage” flavor when overcooked. I also find it of interest that asparagus, along with onion, leek, and garlic, is a member of the lily family.

Again my encouragement is that you can learn to trust your heart, your careful tasting, and find out how to enjoy foods which are esthetically pleasing, rather than “correct.”

VISUALIZING A MEAL

Visualizing a dish or a meal means imagining how the various ingredients fit together and whether or not there is a pleasing or appetizing congruence of elements. I find this similar to the Zen teaching: “Let your mind go out and abide in things; let things return and abide in the

mind.” This is not about using fewer ingredients in order to simplify, or adding more elements in order to elaborate. I understand it as connecting or relating intimately, the work of a lifetime, never finished, yet already complete.

To help me visualize, I use both my own division of flavors—into earthy, stemmy, and fruity—and the more traditional listing of five tastes: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and pungent or peppery. Asian cuisines often add a sixth taste to this set, known as “plain.” Incorporating a plain taste can make the organizing principle for a meal fundamentally different.

In my cooking I have tended to move away from the model of Western cuisine, in which the meal is usually structured

around a main event or entrée, with preliminary events leading up to it. Perhaps by definition the warm-up acts are mediocre so that by comparison the main attraction is much more powerful and appealing. “At last,” you say, “something I can sink my teeth into. This was worth waiting for.” Instead of creating a main event I enjoy weaving together more of a fabric of flavors, tastes, and textures.

In some ways this is related to the Asian paradigm of organizing the meal around the plain taste, frequently in the form of rice. Then a meal is like going on various flavorful adventures and then returning home to rice, bread, or a simple grain dish. Home is plain and dependable. Here you can skip the surprises, please.

Home is purposefully bland. From here you can go out and experience something salty, something sweet and sour, something bitter, something hot and spicy, and then return to what is stable, plain, enduring. And the plain provides a counterpoint that highlights the various flavors.

The adventure might also include crunchy, chewy, soft, dry, or juicy; red, green, white, or orange. The menu is not a matter of building up to a main attraction, but of providing a variety of engaging flavors and dishes. Of course you want to eat again in two hours. Your digestive system has not been overwhelmed into sluggishness. Thank goodness.

When you think about it, you can see that the Eastern approach is potentially

much more interesting. Instead of a big piece of meat, with every bite tasting the same, you could have two curries, *raita* (a cold yogurt-vegetable dish), and three chutneys, plus roasted coconut and cashews. Depending on how you combine things, that's more than twenty-seven flavor combinations, and you are just getting started. Every bite of your meal could be different from every other.

Planning menus can be extremely challenging if you are going to worry about whether or not your plan is “good enough.” I say, let the food speak for itself. This is to let the food be food and offer itself—the goodness of the food comes through when you take care of the process.

This also means that you can let the

ingredients inspire you. Seeing what ingredients are there, and dreaming up what to do with them. This is to work with reality rather than trying to imagine an incredible menu and then scurrying around trying to find the ingredients. “Using what comes to hand” is basic to Zen, and besides the ingredients, this includes considering whom you are cooking for, the season, and the weather. You’re also dreaming up what to do with yourself, with your capacity and willingness; what space and time you have available.



Tomatoes
radishes
cherries
chocolate
coffee

You needn't sell yourself short by excluding everything you've never done before or everything you've had trouble with. Endeavor to make an honest assessment of your capabilities and leave room to grow and explore new and

possibly challenging areas. You make an honest effort and offer what you have to offer.

To get you started, here are some examples of simple two (or three) dish menus which I have enjoyed. Bon appétit.

Menu 1

Potatoes Baked with Wine and Cream

*Tomato Salad with Provolone and
Fresh Herbs*

*Asparagus Sautéed with Roasted
Almonds*

Here is a simple dinner I prepared that featured potatoes, tomatoes, and asparagus. We can visualize and examine the various elements and their balance. See what you think.

The red potatoes are baked in a puddle of red wine with salt and pepper. When the potatoes are quite tender, the pan is uncovered, a modest amount of cream is added, and then baking continues (uncovered) until the cream thickens slightly. For visualizing, let's look at the various ingredients and the seasonings: What are the colors, the flavors, the textures? Do they all fit together or not? What is the key to the dish, the pivotal point that makes it what it is?

The potatoes here are smooth and creamy, and this is heightened by the velvety quality of the cream. It's also notably pink (sometimes even purple), with its pink skins and pink sauce, and it has the sweet succulence of baked rather than the sweet dry of fried, which calls for

ketchup. The sweetness of the potatoes is enhanced by the sweetness of the cream and set off by the mild tartness of the wine and the pungency of the freshly ground black pepper. Potatoes baked this way have a marvelous earthiness—the flavor of purified, refined dirt. Can you taste it yet? Do you have it in your mouth? Heavenly.

To complete this picture—but what is a picture painted with flavors? A taste-fest—we will need tart, juicy, refreshing, crunchy, and chewy. We'll want something to cut the butterfat, something to chew, some stem and fruit, some air, water, and sun.

A tomato salad offers tart and palate-cleansing juiciness. Here is the fruit of sunlight, ripe and fleshy, which contrasts

with the more stodgy, earth-bound potato. The tomatoes are graced with fresh herbs, including parsley, scallion, and thyme, as well as with a touch of balsamic vinegar and a hint of olive oil. Thinly cut slices of provolone cheese set off the redness, and its earthiness brings a hint of the first dish to the second.

The tartness of the tomatoes is accented by the vinegar and softened by the sweetness of the cheese: sun-earth, tart-sweet. And the herbs are pungent. Where the potatoes are a solid chord, the tomatoes sing a melody.

The asparagus is stalk, herbaceous and energetic, the green at the interface of heaven and earth. It is robust—the reaching of the potato, the support of the tomato. While sturdy and supple, the

asparagus is also lithe and tender, its flavor bittersweet. Cutting the stalks into long diagonals and then cooking them in olive oil and a bit of butter over high heat brings out more of their sweetness and also preserves some of their crunchiness. Garnishing with some slivered roasted almonds provides added nuttiness, and the short sets off the long. The other dishes being essentially soft, this chewiness becomes an important addition.

A handsome plate: spray of asparagus dotted with almond, mound of potato, spread of tomatoes and cheese. Beautiful colors, pleasing aromas—though completely ordinary, the meal also feels absolutely unique. It's *just this*: not too exciting, not too dull, something with which to connect and resonate.

All this is nothing like mishmash, the practice of adding more ingredients to disguise and cover up a basic lack of attentiveness to the object and its characteristics, an unwillingness to ascertain and harmonize the various qualities. An uncalm mind will be unable to appreciate the virtue inherent in the object. The cook who practices mishmash will not know the Tao of the kitchen.

And so I encourage you to study these foods, to see, smell, taste, and touch these foods, enjoying their infinite characteristics. Enough talk! Let's eat.

Menu 2

Spanish Rice

Refried Pinto Beans

Cilantro Relish

Rice and beans are two foods that tend to bring me down to earth and help me come to my senses: wholesome foods with a gentle and tasty touch of spiciness. The cilantro relish enhances both rice and beans.

Menu 3

White Rice

Tofu with Mushrooms, Carrot, and Spinach

Home cooking is meant to be straightforward and reassuring, for instance white rice, tofu, and vegetables. Fortunately I enjoy the plain flavor of white rice. That and some fresh vegetables, and I am happy. Also, when I eat more lightly in the evening, I sleep

better and wake up truly refreshed. Although this menu is simple, the colors are varied and engaging.

Menu 4

Couscous

Garbanzo Bean Stew with Spinach and Saffron

Cucumber Salad

Cucumber and Yogurt Salad

Shifting cultures here, I welcome you to try this North African–influenced menu with bright colors and flavors. Though freshly grated Parmesan or Asiago cheese is not part of that culture, I still like to serve it on the side. You’ll find the cucumbers—with or without the yogurt—a refreshing, juicy contrast to the rest of the

meal.

Menu 5

*Potato Gratin with Celery Root and
Fennel*

Chard with Lemon and Raisins

Both of these dishes surprise or startle people with how good they are—the Chard with Lemon and Raisins is one of my most requested recipes. Together they have a reassuring quality, as though when you eat them, you belong here, in this place and time: the mellow fragrant earthiness of the baked dish is ground for the five-flavored chard dish. The two dishes work well together and are easy to prepare, yet the flavors are robust and remind me of the sustaining capacity of

earth, air, sun, and water.

Menu 6

Black Bean Chili

Corn Bread

Garden Salad

Baked Goat Cheese

We've been eating black beans for years at Zen Center, often in the form of black bean chili, which is frequently served with corn bread and a green salad. While I don't necessarily always make the whole menu, I certainly enjoy each of the dishes. The spicy chocolaty-brown black beans, the stunning yellow of the corn bread, the tender leafy greens—satisfy both eyes and stomachs.

Menu 7

*Yams Baked with Dried Apricots and
Orange*

*Warm Red Cabbage Salad with Dried
Fruit and Feta*

Here are a couple of recipes inspired by listening to the ingredients. These two fall or winter dishes utilize dried fruits for enhancing the flavor of the main vegetable, a combination I find appealing.

Menu 8

Cheese Quesadillas

Tofu Burritos

These two dishes do not of course make a meal together, although either could be a

light meal or snack, good simple foods to have under your belt.

When you taste foods carefully—both ingredients and dishes—and *catalogue* your experiences, then your tasting notes (mostly unwritten) will begin to inform your menu choices. The world of cooking opens up for you. Blessings. May you nourish yourself and countless others.

PART TWO

The Recipes



Inhabiting Your Kitchen



綿綿密密家風

*Who Knows What Thus
Comes?*

Picking up an onion,
what is it held in hand?
How many dusty miles
and blazing asphalt truckstops,
hidden in darkness, locked in
steel?
How many cups of coffee and
tired-eyed
waitresses greeted the driver?
How many minutes of country
music

and rambling thoughts helped
onion here?

How many days at home, in
ground,
intimately connected, embedded,
nestled unseen, rapt in absorption,
knowing just what to do
with earth and water, sun and
wind,
to make them onion.

That everything thus comes
at once as onion, what
treasure is this dug up?
Who knows what hand holds?

HERE AT THE BEGINNING OF PART TWO I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE you some further encouragements to come to your senses—letting things come home to your heart through seeing, smelling, tasting, touching.

As things come home to your heart, you will feel more at home, and as you make yourself more and more at home in the kitchen, you'll find that you are more willing to cook regularly.

By making a *point* of seeing, smelling, tasting, as you go along, perhaps even *enjoying* your experience, you will be making yourself at home in your body, in this place and time, and you will be making your kitchen more habitable.

Making your kitchen habitable is partly a matter of having the things you need to

do the work that needs to be done, and also my sense is that much of this is related to using your hands, allowing your hands to develop new habits and skills. Here are some examples, besides all the cutting instructions and other suggestions in Part One.

Put salt out in a cup or bowl next to the stove, so that you can reach into it with your fingers, and use your *fingers* to *measure* the salt—a small pinch, a big pinch, and so forth. So much more workable than salt shakers (which clog up and provide unpredictable amounts) and measuring spoons (which clutter the counter and the sink).

Get those funny plastic things off the top of the vinegar bottles and use your thumb

over the top of the bottle to regulate how much vinegar comes out.

Keep a bowl or small bucket for trimmings right there where you are working. Keep a sponge right there for cleaning. Using them and using them often and regularly is another way to let your hands be *handy*.

Keep some peppers handy. I've got a grinder for black pepper right by the stove, as well as jars of ground New Mexico chili and ground chipotle chili—good to go!

Get one of those small wooden citrus juicers—so basic and straightforward—or learn to use your fingers with maybe a fork to juice with. (Start by squeezing the juice and seeds into the

fingers of the opposite hand, so you can catch the seeds and the juice goes through.) You won't have another contraption to clean, and you will probably be more likely to add the pleasing vitality of fresh lemon or lime to your dishes—because your *hands* know *how*.

You may want to use smaller-size containers by the stove for soy sauce and a vinegar or two rather than the full-size, big bottles—maybe one for balsamic (dark) and one for rice wine vinegar (light). Using these turns out to be quite handy, even with the work of refilling them.

When working in restaurants, one basic maxim is to take something with you

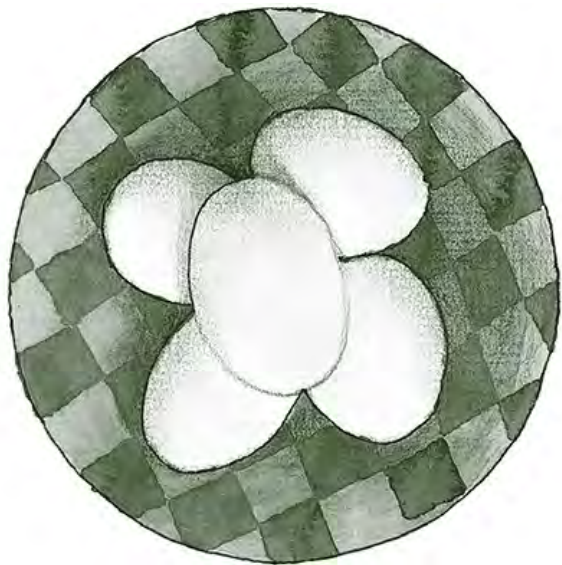
when you go: food from the kitchen to the dining room, dishes from the dining room to the kitchen—so you or someone else doesn't have to make extra trips to get something. (I know it's not the way most people work—I watch—but you could be studying how to work smarter, and not just harder.) Around the house you can apply the same principle: take the trash out when you are going out anyway—and, if you would, take care of the trash by recycling whenever you can.

And excuse me for this last one—I don't want to be a nag—but wring out the sponges after you rinse them out. And you will have way less sour aromas coming out of them. Again, your hands won't mind doing this, it's your mind

that doesn't want to touch things.

Welcome home.

*Eggs, Fruit, Breakfast
Tofu, and Our Latest
Granola*



Working on How I Work

I do this chore
not just to get it
out of the way,
but as the way
to make real
kind connected mind.

May I awaken to what
these ingredients offer,
and may I awaken best I can
energy, warmth, imagination,
this offering of heart and hand.

EVERYBODY KNOWS HOW TO COOK eggs, right? But at Tassajara we had to learn how to cook eggs for 60 to 80 people and have them all simultaneously ready and hot. Given that requirement, we rarely cook poached or fried eggs, though instructions for these are in the preceding section. There are a number of recipes for baked eggs, which are wonderfully adaptable to a variety of seasonings and styles of preparation, as well as one for scrambled eggs. We also make omelets, because we found we could make them on the griddle and then keep them hot and moist in casseroles in the oven. Eggs cooked slowly with moderate to low heat come out tastier since the protein does not “toughen” as it would with higher or more

prolonged heat.

Many people cannot face eggs in the morning or do not wish to do so, so the Scrambled Tofu has become more popular over the years. Our granola continues to be popular as well, particularly as an additional snack in bag lunches.

Baked Eggs

These savory eggs may be baked in a muffin tin or in a shallow casserole. These eggs can be quite pretty, and the combination of the eggs with herbs, cheese, and tomato is flavorful and appetizing.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

Butter

Tomato sauce, ketchup, or hot sauce

8 eggs

Salt

Pepper, freshly ground

Fresh herbs of your choice

1½ cups cheese, grated

Paprika

Preheat oven to 325°. Thoroughly butter 8 depressions in a muffin tin or butter a shallow baking dish. Drop a few spoonfuls of tomato sauce, ketchup, or hot sauce in the bottom of each and crack an egg on top, taking care not to break the yolk—or put the tomato into the bottom of the baking dish with the eggs on top. Lightly salt and pepper. Cover with a good sprinkling of fresh herbs such as

thyme, chervil, basil, parsley, savory, or chives, singly or in combination. (Without the fresh herbs, you could also use dried.) Over that, mound some grated cheese such as fontina, Monterey Jack, or Gruyère, mixed with some cheddar or Parmesan.

Dust with a pinch of paprika and bake for 8 to 12 minutes, depending on how soft or firm you like your eggs—the eggs in the shallow baking dish will probably take longer to bake, about 15 to 20 minutes. Check after 5 minutes to make sure that all the eggs are baking at the same rate and change the position of the pan if there are hot spots in the oven. When they are done to your taste (perhaps the white solid and the yolks still a bit soft) turn the eggs out with a knife, or bring the baking dish to the table, and serve with toast.



VARIATION

If you are cooking fewer eggs for just one or two people, use the muffin tin.

Mexican Baked Eggs

When we make these for breakfast, we often get requests for the recipe. As you can see, they are a variation on the basic Baked Eggs recipe.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 medium-large onion, diced small

2 medium cloves of garlic, minced

Butter for cooking

*1/3 cup canned mild green chilies,
diced small or cut in strips*

*3/4 cup canned whole tomatoes (or
fresh), drained and chopped*

*1 1/2 teaspoons cumin seeds, roasted
and ground*

8 to 9 eggs

Salt

Pepper

1 cup Monterey Jack cheese, grated or

cut in strips

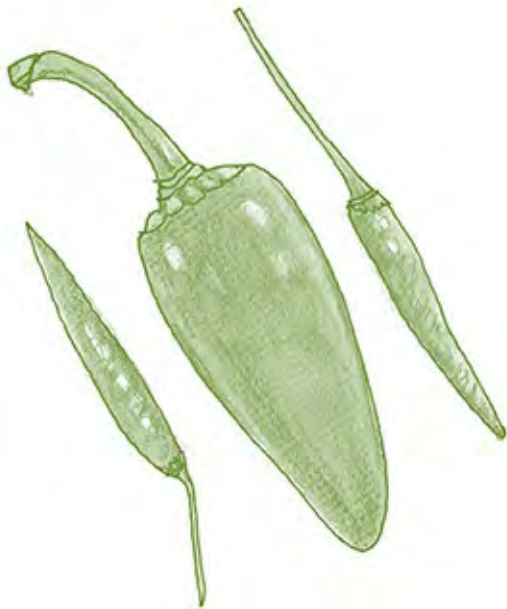
Preheat oven to 350°. Cook the onions and garlic in butter over medium heat. When the onions are soft, add chilies, tomatoes, and cumin. (Ground cumin can also be used. It can still be roasted in a small fry pan, but not to smoking.) Oil or butter a shallow casserole. Pour the sauce into the bottom, then crack in the eggs, keeping the yolks whole. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, and top with the cheese.

Bake for about 20 to 25 minutes. Check frequently after 15 minutes, turning the dish in the oven if necessary to ensure even baking. The eggs change quickly from not quite done to overdone, and they will continue cooking a little after you remove them from the oven. Serve

immediately.

VARIATION

Use a prepared salsa in place of the mild green chilies and the canned tomatoes.



An Egg Conspires

I'm amazed that little things can be so terribly upsetting sometimes. Those little things that only happen when I am incapable of dealing with them, when I am tired, grumpy, or preoccupied. Rushing to prepare breakfast one morning and be on my way, I reach for an egg. I find that it sticks tightly, impeccably, to its cubbyhole in the door of the refrigerator. Gentle repeated efforts fail to nudge it.

I caution myself not to break it while trying to free it, but with my first firm wiggle, the egg cracks. Slime, both clear and yellow, oozes out, heading like water for lower ground—the shelves below filled with their various jars of jam,

mustard, soda, and things long forgotten. What a mess! (But it's so minor . . .) Shall I run out and get a sponge or paper towel, leaving the egg to drool? Or cup my hands to prevent immediate splattering?

A thought arises: "I can't stand it." Avoiding high cholesterol is not the only reason not to eat eggs.

Now, I've gotten accustomed to people being people and to never knowing what stunt they'll pull next: disappear, flake out, flare up, cop out. But for *things* to pull such stunts, at times I find this seriously aggravating, especially when I could use some simple cooperation. I imagine the egg must be conspiring with the refrigerator door to piss me

off.

“He’s really in a foul mood this morning,” whispers the egg to the refrigerator door, “so when he reaches for me, I’ll stick to you, and you stick to me. Then when he tries to remove me, I’m sure to break. That will surely send him over the edge. What fun!” Why, that conniving little egg. What perversity. “Is it that hard,” I demand as though the egg could understand, “to just let go?”

Okay, that mess is finally cleaned up. Guess I’ll use some eggs that don’t somehow have their twisted hearts set on dispersing goo over things. Once the eggs are cooking I decide to add some cheese, but it is wrapped in plastic—impreguably

wrapped. Unassailable. Cheese packages no longer can be opened by hand. I am at a friend's house where the available knife doesn't cut it.

What's wrong with all of you?" I demand. By now I am once again livid. The conspiracy has grown. It is not just eggs and refrigerator doors, but cheese manufacturers, plastic wrapper makers, and the plastic wrapper itself that are conniving to keep me from indulging in the breakfast of my choice. What to do? Ice pick? Screwdriver? Whom or what can I stab? Where do they keep the scissors?

One thing, the egg, comes apart when I want it to stay together. The other, a cheese wrapper, stays

together beyond reason when I want it to come apart. By natural law, these things happen only when we are at our most fragile.

How can we possibly deal with such perverted minds? Nothing—kicks, screams, depression, rage, pleading, wise explanation—seems to adequately communicate to them the necessity of simply *not* behaving that way. They don't seem to grasp the concept that everything could be much more amicable, if they just had more consideration for *me*.

Once I stop to reflect, even a few minutes later, I realize that things don't conspire and come together with the intention of producing anger in me. Talk about stupid and

misguided: How could I possibly attribute such identity and conspiratorial thinking to things? If I think so, I have a mistaken view about the way things behave. Anger feeds well on such mistaken understandings.

Who is it that needs to open up? Who is it that needs to let go? Guess I'd better get started. To dwell in the spirit of peace and harmony means realizing that there is no intelligence at work here plotting how to "get" me, and so no one at whom to get angry.

Breakfast, anyone?



“Sponge Cake” Omelet

There are several secrets to preparing this light, spongy omelet. It all begins with eggs from free-range chickens with their deep golden yolks, rather than the watery,

pale yellow-yolked eggs from chickens locked in wire boxes, unable to move, stuffed with pellets and antibiotics. The other keys are the yogurt, which makes for a fluffier omelet than milk, and having the pan medium hot initially and then turning it down low and covering with a lid.

SERVES 2 PEOPLE, MODESTLY

2 jumbo eggs

2 tablespoons plain yogurt

*¼ cup freshly grated Asiago or
Parmesan cheese*

1 to 3 teaspoons butter

½ teaspoon fresh thyme, minced

Pepper

Whisk the eggs in a bowl with the yogurt and cheese. Let a 6-inch skillet warm up

over medium heat. Add the butter—the lesser amount if the skillet is nonstick. Wait for the butter to stop bubbling, then pour in the egg mixture, cover with a lid, and reduce the heat to low. Check after about 3 minutes, and if the omelet is nearly firm on top, re-cover the pan, and turn off the burner, allowing the omelet to finish cooking from the heat of the pan. Otherwise let the omelet cook a minute or two longer before turning off the heat.

Sprinkle on the fresh thyme and a light grinding of black pepper. Since Asiago cheese is salty, no additional salt is usually needed.

White Wine Scrambled Eggs

The alcohol is cooked out when the wine is reduced, but the eggs are still well flavored. What a delicious surprise the first time you have them.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

½ cup white wine

1 clove of garlic

8 to 10 eggs, beaten

1 tablespoon butter

½ cup Gruyère cheese, grated

¼ cup chives or green onions, sliced

½ teaspoon dried marjoram

Salt

Pepper

Simmer the wine with the garlic until it is reduced to ¼ cup. The garlic can be discarded, or minced and added to the

eggs. Beat the eggs and add the reduced wine (slowly, if the wine is still hot). Cook the eggs in butter over a moderate flame, whisking continuously (more or less). With a slow cooking, the eggs will develop a soft, fluffy consistency.

Once the eggs have started to thicken, add the cheese, herbs, salt, and pepper. When the eggs have become a thick mush, stop whisking and let them sit over a slightly heightened flame until they firm up as much as you want.

Breakfast Custard

Once in a while I have planned ahead and made this breakfast custard the evening before. Then it is ready in the morning to

have with the Flaky Biscuits or the Ginger Muffins. The soft, smooth, light texture of the custard comforts body, mind, and spirit.

SERVES 3 TO 4 PEOPLE

3 eggs

¼ cup brown sugar

1 pinch of salt

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

¼ teaspoon cinnamon

2 cups warmed milk

Pot of boiling water

Preheat oven to 325°. Whisk the eggs. Whisk the sugar, salt, vanilla, and cinnamon into the warmed milk. Then whisk the milk into the eggs, slowly so that the eggs heat gradually.



Pour into four 1-cup baking dishes (or 1 large ceramic or glass baking dish). Place in baking pan, then set in the oven. Pour boiling hot water into baking pan until it is half way up the sides of custard dishes. Bake 50 to 60 minutes or until the custard is firm. Note that the custard will take much longer to bake if you do not preheat

the milk, if you do not start with boiling water, or if you bake it in 1 large dish.

Serve the custard accompanied by fresh fruit, especially summer fruits such as berries, cherries, apricots, plums, peaches, and nectarines, with the larger fruits cut up into slices and sprinkled perhaps with some Rose-Scented Sugar. When served at room temperature rather than chilled, the flavors are more robust, the feeling more soothing.

Tofu Smoothie

Tofu turns out to be amazingly versatile, in this case turning into a flavorful morning shake.

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

1 block tofu, preferably silken

2 oranges, juiced

½ to ¼ teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons maple syrup

2 tablespoons lemon juice

1 banana

Water (optional)

Blend ingredients in a food processor or blender. Adjust seasoning. Thin with water to desired consistency.

VARIATION

Add other seasonal fruit, such as 12 cherries (pitted), 4 to 6 apricots, or ½ cup or more of blueberries, raspberries, or strawberries.

Are You Worth Sliced Fruit for Breakfast?

A cook's sensibility extends beyond food to people and space, so in addition to providing food, a cook could provide others the opportunity to nourish themselves.

At a meditation retreat, I was passing through the buffet line for breakfast, and at the end of the serving table I came to a large bowl of fresh fruit. This is rather common at group gatherings, because it is a convenient way to offer fruit. Nothing is required except washing the fruit and putting it in a bowl. Then people

have the opportunity to choose exactly which fruit they desire.

Peels were piled on the table next to the fruit bowl, and although I could see an occasional apple core or pear stem and a few orange and tangerine peels, mostly what I noticed was a vast mound of banana peels. Most breakfasters were banana lovers. Either that, or they found that peeling a banana was about all the effort they cared to make.

“An orange would be nice, but then I’d have to peel it.” “An apple would be great, but then I’d have to bite and chew it—it would be better sliced.” Lots of bananas get eaten this way. We find out whether or not we are worth the effort it takes to

open, peel, and cut a piece of fruit.

Also, the fruit setup itself was not particularly encouraging. The people who set up the buffet table had placed a rather small plastic cutting board and two small paring knives alongside the large bowl of fruit, hardly adequate for the sixty to eighty people passing through the line. Also, since no provision had been made for the parings, they piled up on the table next to the cutting board and overflowed onto the cutting board itself—not really appetizing! This self-help approach to cooking brings the work of the kitchen and the mess of the kitchen to the dining room. Yet even at this rudimentary self-help level of cuisine, a cook

thinks about ways to encourage people to help themselves, such as putting out a much larger cutting board at which two or more people might be able to work. An adequately sized bowl for parings (or compost buckets under the table) would also be appropriate, since the fruit has peels and skins, seeds and pits, stems and bruises, which need to be discarded.

When we stop to consider the matter, we understand that the fruit is not just there for looks, but for eating. Eating means work, and work with food means trash. We know that, so let's make a place for people to work and a place for the trash to keep the table and work space free of trash.

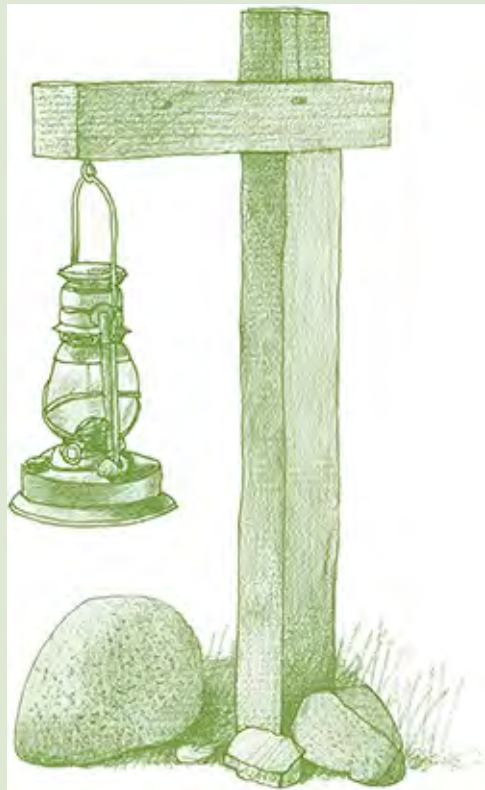
You are *invited* to work, given a place to do it, and the bowl for trash lets you know that you can make a mess (we expect it) and that the work space itself should be left clear, available to the next person for work.

To consider how others will experience the situation expands the mind of a cook. The bountiful opulence of cut fruit, glistening brightly, is much more appealing than whole fruit. At the same time, work requires space and time, and tools. Make it possible and inviting, and all of us are much more likely to do it.

Sometimes we are not sure: “Am I really worth sliced fruit today?” A friend says her mother used to tease her when she did something for

herself: “My, aren’t we feeling good about ourselves today?” Well, I say, “What a fine thing to do!—for yourself or for your loved ones.”

Yes, we are feeling good about ourselves today, and we are worth sliced fruit for breakfast.



Stewed Prunes with Orange and Cinnamon

If we are cooking prunes, we usually cook up extra so that they can be reheated another day.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 orange

1 pound prunes

3 cinnamon sticks

Cut the orange in half, then into slices (peel and all). Place in saucepan with the prunes and cinnamon sticks, and add water to cover. Cook about 30 minutes until the prunes are quite tender, and the

oranges are melting. Delicious!

Warm Pear Slices with Tangerines

I find this combination enjoyable in the autumn or over the holidays, when pears and tangerines are in season.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

4 pears

2 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon sugar

¼ teaspoon powdered cloves

4 tangerines, peeled and segmented

Quarter, core, and slice the pears. (I don't usually peel them unless I am uncertain

about their derivation.) Heat in saucepot with the butter, sugar, and powdered cloves for 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in the tangerines, and let them plump briefly before removing from the heat.

Plumped Apple Slices with Cinnamon

This dish has become a great favorite in my household, perhaps because it is reminiscent of apple pie or apple crisp without all the butterfat—simple, yet simply delicious.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

*4 apples, quartered, cored, and sliced
1 to 2 tablespoons butter*

1 to 2 tablespoons sugar

½ teaspoon cinnamon

Combine apple slices in a covered pot with the other ingredients and heat over medium-low heat. Give it about 10 minutes. Then stir so that ingredients are well combined. See if you like the level of sweetness and spice.



Scrambled Tofu

This is a dish we often serve at guest breakfasts and make regularly for ourselves. It bears some resemblance to scrambled eggs, especially if one adds a

little curry powder or turmeric, which gives the tofu a yellow color. The flavor of the scrambled tofu resembles turkey stuffing, given the thyme, garlic, and diced vegetables. You may also find it quite a satisfactory replacement for eggs.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 blocks of tofu

1 medium yellow onion, diced

Soy or olive oil

1 carrot, diced

1 stalk of celery, diced

¼ cup nutritional yeast

2 cloves of garlic, pressed

½ teaspoon thyme, crumbled

2 tablespoons soy sauce

Salt

Pepper

Green garnish, if desired

Drain some of the excess water by placing the tofu on a slanted surface with a slight weight on top of it. Once the tofu has drained, crumble it into small pieces. Sauté the onions in the oil in a large skillet. When the onions are translucent, add the carrots and continue sautéing. When the carrots are about half-cooked, add the celery, yeast, garlic, thyme, and soy sauce.

Continue cooking until the vegetables are as soft as you want them. Add the crumbled tofu and heat up slowly. (High heat will tend to toughen the tofu and release more excess liquid.) Season with salt, pepper, and additional soy sauce if needed. The green garnish could be

parsley, cilantro, chives, or something else you have available.

Tassajara Granola

An updated version, this granola is made special by the scent of cinnamon and maple syrup.

MAKES 10 TO 12 CUPS

4½ cups rolled oats

3 cups coarsely chopped almonds

3 cups sunflower seeds

1 cup safflower or soy oil

½ cup malt syrup or ¼ cup honey

½ cup maple syrup or honey

1 tablespoon vanilla

½ teaspoon almond extract

1½ tablespoons cinnamon, freshly ground

1 pinch of ground cloves

1½ teaspoons salt

1 cup (or more) of any of the following fruits, cutting the larger varieties into small pieces or bite-sized chunks: raisins, currants, dried apricots, figs, prunes, or dates

Preheat oven to 325°. Put the oats, chopped almonds, and sunflower seeds in a large bowl.

Combine the oil, sweeteners, vanilla, almond extract, spices, and salt. Heat this mixture in a saucepan until it becomes watery. Pour the oil mixture over the dry ingredients, tossing until everything is moistened. Spread the mixture in a large

baking pan or on a cookie sheet. Bake in the middle of oven for about 20 minutes, or until the granola turns golden, stirring every 5 minutes so the mixture toasts uniformly.

Transfer to a large bowl or cool baking pan and toss occasionally until the granola is thoroughly cool and dry. Add the dried fruit and toss to mix. (More than once has someone tried baking the dried fruit with the oat mixture and found the fruit blackened—definitely not recommended.) Store in a tightly covered container.

Breakfast Breads and Pastries



Getting Started

Washing my hands, preparing to
handle food,
I cleanse my mind of same old
thinking,
and offer to lend a hand,
freshly doing each task,
studying, finding out how
consciousness can manifest
the activities of becoming
food.

MOST MORNINGS TOAST WILL DO (and the millet and potato breads will do especially nicely), but sugar and butter are always a big hit for those leisurely mornings spent relaxing and visiting with friends or lingering over the paper. From Grandmother Mary's Coffeecake to the relatively plain Breakfast Bread Pudding, Currant-Cream Scones, and Buttermilk-Bran Bread, the recipes in this section provide a range of sweetness and richness. Gingerbread Pancakes and Multigrain Pancakes—the latter having no eggs or dairy—have become new favorites.

These recipes will take more time than putting some bread in the toaster, but they provide a welcome and generous warmth

and brightness. The yeasted coffeecake, especially, takes some extra time for rising, in addition to the time required for preparation and baking.

May we be generous enough to take that time for one another.

Corn-Sesame Breakfast Cake

This is a somewhat unusual recipe: a corn-bread that is more of a cake with a crust on the bottom. I don't know the real name for it (since I just made it up), but it is adapted from the Turkish Coffee Cake Cookie Bars in *The Tassajara Bread Book*. You probably have not had very many things quite like it. Enjoy.

MAKES 1 (8½- TO 9½-INCH) CAKE

1½ cups unbleached white flour

1 cup corn flour

¼ cup brown sugar

¼ cup white sugar

¾ cup butter

⅓ cup sesame butter or tahini

¼ cup honey

⅓ cup yogurt

1 egg

¾ teaspoon baking soda

Preheat oven to 375°. Combine the flours and sugars, and cut in the butter until it is in tiny lumps. Press about half of this mixture (about 2 cups) into the bottom of an un-greased 9 ½-inch springform cake pan or an 8 by 8 inch baking pan. This will make the crust for the cake.

Combine the sesame butter, honey,

yogurt, and egg. Mix the baking soda into the remaining flour mixture, then add to the combined liquids. Pour into the pan on top of the pressed-down crust. Bake for about 40 to 45 minutes until the center of the cake has risen and is bouncy to the touch. You can also stick in a toothpick and see if it comes out clean.

Grandmother Mary's Coffeecake

Elaine's mother, Gloria, got this recipe from her mother Mary. With a recipe like this, who needs to be inventive? It's a classic, and when you bite into it, you will know why. The three risings help to develop the flavor and texture, so start

early (then go back to bed or to meditation) or plan a late breakfast. But relax—no kneading is required. It also makes, if any is left, terrific toast or French toast.

MAKES 2 9-INCH LOAVES

2 tablespoons active dry yeast

½ cup warm water

1 cup milk

1 cup butter

1 cup sugar

1 teaspoon salt

3 eggs, beaten

4½ cups flour

1 teaspoon nutmeg, freshly grated

1 cup raisins tossed in ½ cup flour

TOPPING:

¼ cup flour

¼ cup sugar

3 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon cinnamon

Dissolve the yeast in the warm water and set aside. Heat the milk with the butter until it melts, and then pour into a mixing bowl. Stir in the sugar and salt. (Set aside one tablespoon of the beaten egg to brush on top later.) Once the mixture is warm, not hot, whisk in the eggs (so they aren't scrambled when added). Test the liquid to make sure it isn't too hot for the yeast—it shouldn't feel hot but slightly warm to the touch (115° or less)—and then add the dissolved yeast.

Stir in the flour, nutmeg, and floured raisins, beating very well and with vigor

for 3 to 5 minutes to make a smooth, shiny, soft dough. Turn the dough out into a clean, lightly buttered bowl. Cover the dough with a damp towel, set in a warm place, and let it rise. Clean up and take a break.

After the dough has risen to double in size, about 45 minutes, fold it down with a spoon, turning the bowl as you go. Cover and let it rise again. Take another break.

After the second rising, about 30 to 40 minutes, turn the dough out onto a floured board and divide it into the number of pieces you want. Knead each piece briefly and shape into loaves. Place each loaf in a well-buttered pan, making sure the dough comes no more than halfway up the sides because this bread rises a lot. Set aside to rise a third time. Preheat oven to 350°.

Work the ingredients of the topping together with your fingers to form a paste. When the dough has risen, brush the top with a little beaten egg, make some cuts in the surface, and cover with the topping. Bake for about 1 hour, or until firm and golden brown.

Thanks, Grandmother Mary.

Blueberry Muffins

These are the famed blueberry muffins formerly made by our Tassajara Bread Bakery in San Francisco—“famed” because popular demand would not allow us to remove them from the daily bakery repertoire. However, the recipe is originally from our friend Kerry Smith and

the Nityananda Institute, which is now located in Portland, Oregon.



Around Thanksgiving and Christmas, we often replace the blueberries with cranberries, in which case you may want to add a bit more sugar to the muffins. Frozen berries need not be thawed ahead of time.

Note: Though we use some whole

wheat flour at Tassajara, our bakery does not use any whole wheat flour in their blueberry muffins—it's all white.

MAKES 18 MUFFINS

1 cup whole wheat flour
2 cups white flour
1/3 cup white sugar
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup brown sugar, plus 1 tablespoon
for topping
peel of 1 lemon, grated
1 banana, mashed
3 eggs, beaten
1 1/3 cup buttermilk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 cup butter, melted

*2 cups blueberries (fresh, frozen, or
canned)*

1 tablespoon cinnamon

Preheat oven to 400°. Line a muffin tin with papers or butter liberally.

Sift the two flours, white sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into a bowl, and then stir in the brown sugar and lemon peel. Mash the banana thoroughly and combine it with the eggs, buttermilk, vanilla, and melted butter. Add the egg mixture to the dry ingredients and stir together with a few quick strokes (about 12 to 14). The batter will be lumpy and streaked with dry ingredients, but it is essential not to overblend, or the muffins will be tough.



Lightly fold in $\frac{3}{4}$ of the blueberries, again with just a few strokes (5 to 6). This will complete the mixing, although some unevenness will remain. If the batter is completely smooth, it's overmixed.

Fill the muffin cups $\frac{3}{4}$ full, put the remaining blueberries on top. Mix the cinnamon and sugar for the topping, and sprinkle it over the blueberries on top of the muffins.

Bake in the center of the oven for 25 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean. If you and your family and friends can't eat all of these muffins in one sitting, share them with the neighbors or pass them out at work. You can also freeze them, but how cold.

Ginger Muffins

Freshly grated ginger—spicy, warming, a good digestive—makes these muffins a distinctive treat. Served with orange

marmalade they taste especially heavenly.

MAKES 12 MUFFINS

1 cup unbleached white flour

1½ cup whole wheat flour

¼ teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

2 eggs

1½ cups plain yogurt

½ cup honey

Zest of 1 orange

⅓ cup canola, safflower, or corn oil

2 tablespoons fresh ginger, grated

Nutmeg

Preheat oven to 375°. Combine flours with salt, baking powder, and soda. In a separate bowl mix together the egg,

yogurt, honey, orange zest, oil, and fresh ginger. Pour wets into dries, and mix with as few strokes as possible (20 stirs is usually about right). I use a rubber spatula for this, so I can get the batter off the sides of the bowl. Overmixing will make the muffins tough.

Grease a muffin tin (unless you have one of those nice, new nonstick ones). Spoon in the batter to near the top of the muffin cups. Grate some nutmeg over the tops of the muffins. Bake for about 30 minutes, until the tops have rounded and cracked and the sides and bottoms have browned. On a recent batch I discovered once again that it is not a good idea to use the bottom rack of the oven, as the bottoms of the muffins will tend to blacken.

Gingerbread Pancakes

These are a tasty treat! Molasses can be strong sometimes, so you may want to use only a tablespoon, especially if it is blackstrap molasses. If you have a mild, pleasant-tasting molasses you could also use it in place of the sugar. In addition to butter and maple syrup, we often have our pancakes with yogurt, roasted pecans, and fresh fruit.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 cups flour

1 tablespoon baking powder

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon dried ginger or 1

tablespoon fresh ginger, grated

¼ teaspoon ground cloves

1 teaspoon salt

2 eggs

2 cups buttermilk

¼ cup molasses

2 tablespoons brown sugar

*¼ cup canola or safflower oil or
melted butter, plus oil for cooking*

Combine flour, baking powder, spices, and salt. In a separate bowl, beat eggs and whisk in the remaining ingredients. Combine wets and dries, mixing well.

Oil a medium-hot griddle or frying pan—water tossed on the surface should jump and spatter—and ladle about ¼ cup of batter onto the hot surface for each pancake. Let the first side cook for 3 to 4 minutes (bubbles form and pop on the top and the shine disappears). Turn once and

cook on the second side briefly to finish. Serve with butter and maple syrup.

Multigrain Pancakes

Though made without eggs or dairy, these pancakes are simply delicious, full of earthy grain flavors. Butter and maple syrup complement them nicely. Okay then, use a nut butter topping, if not using butter.

MAKES 15 PANCAKES

1/2 cup white flour

1/2 cup whole wheat flour

1/4 cup buckwheat flour

1/4 cup fine cornmeal or corn flour

1/4 cup barley flour

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

3 tablespoons canola or safflower oil

1²/₃ cups soy milk

1 tablespoon honey

1 teaspoon lecithin (optional)

Combine all dries in one bowl and all wets in another. (If you have trouble finding fine-ground cornmeal or corn flour, grind coarse corn meal or polenta in a coffee grinder reserved for food and spices.) Mix together thoroughly.

Oil a medium-hot griddle or pan—water sprinkled on the surface should jump and sizzle—and ladle about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of batter onto the hot surface for each pancake. Cook for a couple of minutes on the first side (the upper surface should be

pockmarked with air holes and the lower surface nicely browned). Turn once and cook on the second side briefly to brown.

Buttermilk Pancakes

This is our version of a classic pancake.

MAKES ABOUT 24 PANCAKES

½ cup whole wheat flour

½ cup unbleached white flour

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon baking soda

1 egg

1 cup buttermilk

3 tablespoons melted butter

Sift the flours with the salt and baking

soda. Beat the egg slightly and then mix in the buttermilk and melted butter. Add the liquids to the dry ingredients and stir to combine. Ladle onto a moderately hot griddle or frying pan and take it from there.



Making the Perfect Biscuit

When I first started cooking at Tassajara, I had a problem: I couldn't get my biscuits to come out right. I'd follow the recipe and try variations: milk or water, eggs or no eggs, but nothing worked. I had in mind the "perfect" biscuit, and these just didn't measure up. After several failures, I finally got to thinking, "Right, compared to what?"

Growing up I had "made" two kinds of biscuits: one was from Bisquik, and the other was from Pillsbury. For the Bisquik biscuits, you added milk to the mix and then blobbed the dough in spoonfuls onto

the pan—you didn't even need to roll them out. The biscuits from Pillsbury came in a kind of cardboard can. You rapped the can on a corner of the counter, and it popped open. Then you twisted the can open more, put the premade biscuits on a pan, and baked them. I really liked those Pillsbury biscuits. Isn't that what biscuits should taste like? Mine just weren't coming out the way they were supposed to.

It's wonderful and amazing the ideas we get about what biscuits should taste like, or what a life should look like. Compared to what? Canned biscuits from Pillsbury? *Leave It to Beaver*? And then we often forget where the idea came

from or that we even have the idea. Those (perfectly good) biscuits just aren't "right."

People who ate my biscuits could be extolling their virtues, eating one after another, but for me, they were not "right." Finally one day that shifting-into-place occurred, an awakening: not "right" compared to what? Oh, no! I've been trying to make canned Pillsbury biscuits! Then that exquisite moment of actually tasting my biscuits without comparing them to some (previously hidden) standard: wheaty, flaky, buttery, sunny, earthy, here. Inconceivably delicious, incomparably alive, present, vibrant. In fact, much more satisfying than any

memory, much more delicious than any concept.

Those moments—when you realize your life as it is is just fine, thank you—can be so stunning and liberating. Only the insidious comparison to a beautifully prepared, beautifully packaged product makes it seem insufficient. The effort to produce a life with no dirty bowls, no messy feelings, no depression, no anger is bound to fail—and be endlessly frustrating.

Sometimes when I was cooking, my former partner Patricia would ask if she could help. My response was often not pretty, neat, or presentable. The lid comes right off, and I would explode: “No!” How could an offer

of assistance be so traumatic and irritating? Neither of us could understand why my response was so out of scale, so emotionally reactive. But I suppose it just depends on which biscuit you're trying to bake.

I couldn't get it for the longest time. Finally I realized that I was still trying to make myself into Mr. Perfect Grown-up Man: competent, capable, and superbly skilled, performing every task without needing any help.

Someone's asking, "Anything I can do?" implied that I need help, that I somehow am not competent, independent, and grown-up enough to handle the cooking myself. Ironically, the desperate attachment to being the

perfect grown-up meant being a moody, emotional infant with strange pricklinesses. “How could you think such a thing?” I would rage. “You’ve ruined my Perfect Biscuits. Now leave me alone!”

As a Zen student one can spend years trying to make it look right, trying to cover the faults, conceal the messes. Everyone knew what the Bisquik Zen student looked like: calm, buoyant, cheerful, energetic, deep, profound. Our motto, as one of my friends says, was “Looking good.”

We’ve all done it: tried to attain perfection; tried to look good as a husband, wife, or parent. “Yes, I have it together.” “I’m not greedy or

jealous or angry.” “You’re the one who does those things, and if you didn’t do them first, I wouldn’t do them either. You started it.”

“Don’t peek behind my cover,” we say, “and if you do, keep it to yourself.” Well, to heck with it, I say, wake up and smell the coffee—and how about savoring some good old home-cooking, the biscuits of today?

New Flaky Biscuits

I still love biscuits, and I still love the flakiness which comes from “cutting” the butter into the flour, before lightly mixing in the egg and yogurt. Rolling out the

dough and folding it in thirds also contributes to the flakiness.

MAKES ABOUT 1 DOZEN BISCUITS

1 cup whole wheat flour

1 cup unbleached white flour

¼ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon baking powder

½ cup butter

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

1 egg

½ cup plain yogurt

*Sugar or cinnamon mixed with sugar
(optional)*

Preheat oven to 475°. Combine the flours, salt, soda, and baking powder, and cut in the butter until it is in small lumps. Make a

well in the center and put in the vanilla, egg, and yogurt. Mix these together with a fork, then lightly, minimally mix in the flour. (Overmixing will make the biscuits tough.) Roll out on a floured board to about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. Fold in thirds. Repeat this twice. Then roll out to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thickness, and using a biscuit cutter, glass, or cup, cut into biscuits. Dip the cutter in flour, if necessary, so that the dough will not stick to it. Place the cut biscuits on an ungreased baking sheet. Gather up the remains of the dough (sometimes you can push it together and keep the same layering effect in the dough) and reroll to make more biscuits. Sprinkle the tops with sugar or sugar mixed with cinnamon for a touch of sweetness.

Bake on the top shelf of the oven for 8

to 10 minutes. The biscuits are done when they are brown on the *bottom*. Lift one up to check. Don't wait for them to get brown on top; then they will be too dried out.

Currant-Cream Scones

Made with all-white flour, these scones are light, tender, and flaky. Made with all whole wheat pastry, they have that nutty, wheaty taste, but are crumbly in texture and a little dry. A blend of flours produces the best characteristics of both: the soft, flaky texture of white flour and the taste of whole wheat. The sweetening is limited to the currants and the little sugar in the glaze brushed on top, the assumption being that, once out of the

oven and buttered, these scones will meet with plenty of jam or honey—and plenty of hungry mouths.

MAKES 8 TO 10 SCONES

2 cups all-purpose flour

½ teaspoon salt

2½ teaspoons baking powder

5 tablespoons butter

½ cup currants

2 eggs

*5 tablespoons cream, half-and-half, or
milk*

A few drops of vanilla

Preheat oven to 400°. Sift the flour with the salt and baking powder. Mix in the butter with a pastry cutter, or work it in with your fingertips, until it is spread in

small lumps throughout the flour. Add the currants to the flour-butter mixture.

Beat the eggs, add the cream and vanilla, and set aside 1 tablespoon of this mixture to be used later for a glaze. Pour the rest of it into the flour-butter mixture and lightly toss the ingredients together, first with a fork, then with your hands. Work the dough lightly to bring it together. The dough should have a fairly even consistency but overworking it will make the scones tough and less flaky.

Knead the dough just a few times on a floured board, then shape it into a circle about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, patting the edge with the side of your hand to make it smooth. Mix a little sugar with the leftover egg and cream and brush it over the top. Cut the circle into 8 to 10 wedges. Put the wedges

on an ungreased baking sheet and bake for about 15 minutes, or until they are well puffed and golden brown on top. It is good to eat when salivating—and if you take the time to say grace before eating these scones, you'll be salivating plenty.

Breakfast Bread Pudding

We serve this often, even in the summer months when the Tassajara mornings can be cool and crisp. It makes a warming breakfast that can be served with milk or light cream and accompanied by fresh fruit: raspberries, strawberries, apricots, peaches. If you have some stale (but not moldy) bread around, here's a good way to use it—you end up with a whole pan of

French toast as it were.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

*6 cups bread, crusts removed and cut
into small squares*

6 tablespoons melted butter

½ cup golden raisins or currants

3 cups milk

3 eggs

*2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup
(optional)*

¼ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon nutmeg or cardamom

½ teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon vanilla

2 teaspoons grated orange rind

Preheat oven to 350°. Put the cubed bread in a bowl and pour the melted butter over

it. Toss with the raisins, then place in a well-buttered baking dish.

Beat the milk with the eggs, sweetening (if used), salt, spices, vanilla, and orange rind. Pour the mixture over the bread. If the bread is really spongy and quickly soaks up all the liquid, leaving some bread high and dry, beat up another egg with some milk and add it. Although all the bread cubes need to be soaked, they don't need to be submerged completely.

Cover and bake for 30 minutes. Bake this on the middle to upper shelf of the oven, and if you do not try to speed up the baking by making the oven hotter, you will ensure that the sides and bottom are not baked to a crisp. Remove the lid and continue baking until the top is browned and the custard set, another 15 to 20

minutes. Serve warm.

VARIATIONS

- This can also be a dessert by adding more sweetening to the milk and egg mixture. After baking, a modest amount of liquor of some kind may be poured over it.
- Serve with some whipped cream.

Guest French Toast

Nothing is sacred anymore. French toast used to be French toast. Now it is all jazzed up and we may have to call it California French. Where will it end?

One of our summer guests gave us this

recipe, and now we can't go back to our old one. If you have some leftover slices of [Grandmother Mary's Coffeecake](#) with which to make this recipe, so much the better.

Note: If you do not have orange flower water, omit it. You can, of course, use vanilla extract or other kinds of liquor in place of the sherry.

MAKES 6 TO 8 SLICES

3 eggs

¼ cup milk

1 teaspoon orange flower water

1 tablespoon sherry

½ teaspoon nutmeg

½ teaspoon cinnamon

Grated peel of 1 orange or of 2 tangerines

1 pinch salt
6 slices of bread
Butter for frying

Beat the eggs well. Then add the liquids, spices, grated peel, and salt. Let each piece of bread leisurely soak in the batter on both sides, then fry in butter until golden.

Serve with warm maple syrup or honey, or sprinkled with powdered sugar. Enjoyable as it is, you'll feel better if you do not stuff yourself.

Buttermilk-Bran Bread

Thickly sliced and served with ricotta cheese and honey or cream cheese and

jam, this bread provides a warming and delicious breakfast. Any leftovers make a satisfying snack food with milk or tea.

MAKES 1 9-INCH LOAF

1 cup raisins

½ cup water

¾ cup unbleached white flour

½ teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup whole wheat pastry flour

½ cup brown sugar

¼ cup butter

1 cup buttermilk

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 egg, beaten

1 cup bran

Preheat oven to 350°. Boil the water, cover the raisins with it, and set aside.

In a mixing bowl, sift together the white flour, salt, baking powder, and baking soda. Stir in the whole wheat pastry flour and brown sugar.

Melt the butter, then combine with the buttermilk, vanilla, and egg. Drain the water from the raisins into the buttermilk mixture, stirring to blend. Add the liquids to the dry ingredients and stir them together with about 15 quick strokes. The batter will still be a bit lumpy, but avoid overmixing or the bread will be tough. Fold in the bran and the raisins with a few more strokes.

Butter and flour a 9-inch bread pan and scrape the batter into it. Bake in the center of the oven for about 50 minutes, or until

the bread is brown and springs back when pressed with a finger. Turn out onto a cooling rack and let stand for at least 10 minutes before slicing. Relax and take the time to savor the flavor.

If you'd prefer to make these into muffins, fine. They will bake about 10 minutes faster.

Cardamom-Lemon Soda Bread

Let the fragrant scent of lemon and cardamom fill your kitchen, fill your morning, clear your head. Here's a mouth-watering giant biscuit that will do just that. Serve warm.

MAKES 1 8-INCH ROUND LOAF

1 cup white flour

1 cup whole wheat flour

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon baking soda

1 tablespoon sugar (optional)

*½ teaspoon freshly ground cardamom
seeds or 1 teaspoon already ground
cardamom*

6 tablespoons butter

1 egg

Grated peel of 1 lemon

½ cup buttermilk

1 tablespoon melted butter

Preheat oven to 375°. Lightly butter an 8-inch round cake or pie pan.

Sift the dry ingredients together in a bowl. Using two knives, a pastry cutter, or

your fingers, cut in the butter until it is in pea-size pieces.

Combine the egg, lemon peel, and buttermilk, then add to the flour mixture and stir just enough to combine. Turn the dough onto a floured surface and knead briefly until smooth, just a minute or so at most. Shape into a round, place in the buttered pan, then cut a deep cross in the top. Brush with melted butter. Bake in the center of the oven for 35 minutes, or until golden brown and firm to the touch.



Yeasted Breads



Gifts for All Occasions

Open anytime

A generous, rib-widening breath,
let-go and everywhere all-
pervading,
knot-softening, shoulder-dropping.

Open whenever you'd like.

There's more where it comes
from.

Open anytime

A most-intimate breath,

with nothing better to do
than touch the saddest most
painful places with tenderness
and warmth, places so long
neglected
and hungry for kind attention.

Use often.

Open anytime

A relaxed and settled breath
with nothing better to do
than prepare lettuce and potatoes
to be food for breath.

BREADMAKING HAS A MYSTIQUE AND a romance, so those new to the art are in for a rewarding adventure: hands-on kneading, fragrant aromas baking, delicious eating. While the instructions in my *Tassajara Bread Book* go into much more detail than you will find here, I have included plenty of instructions to get you started. In particular, the first recipe in this section, White Bread with Cornmeal, will take you through the full breadmaking process and will hopefully awaken your love for bread baking, and spark your curiosity to try other breads.

Almost every summer we have a new baker or two joining the Order of Breadmakers. Spending time with flour and yeast and waiting for the dough to rise

are beguiling rituals that grow on you. We've developed a number of recipes and adapted some others so that there is a range of breads presented here: white, wheat, and rye breads, three seed and millet. See what sounds good today, and if you want one that is more quick on the rise, try the Yeasted Cheese Bread or the Focaccia.

One note, mentioned several times since it bears repeating, is not to put the yeast in liquid hotter than 125°: it will not work above that temperature. So the “warm water” in which yeast is dissolved is just slightly warmer than body temperature. The temperature of the water is important, because the yeast that makes the bread rise will be killed if the temperature rises much over 125°.

Conversely, when the water is cooler, it simply means that the bread will rise more slowly. Having the water just about human-body temperature ensures that the yeast will work well. By the way, yeast is about ten times cheaper in bulk at the natural food store than in those little packets—and you want to be sure to get the “active dry baking yeast” and not the “nutritional yeast.”

And again if you're just starting out at bread baking, the most complete instructions are embedded in the White Bread with Cornmeal recipe below.

White Bread with Cornmeal

Once I started making bread, I began

experimenting with putting in rye flour, barley flour, cornmeal, millet meal, and oatmeal to see what happened and how I liked the bread. I love the sunny color and flavor of this bread.

MAKES 2 LOAVES

3 cups lukewarm water (90° to 110°)

2 tablespoons active dry yeast (3 packets)

¼ cup honey

1 cup dry milk

1 cup whole wheat flour

3 cups unbleached white flour

4 teaspoons salt

¼ cup corn oil

3 cups cornmeal

Up to 2 cups additional unbleached white flour

*Egg wash (1 egg + 1 tablespoon
water)*

2 tablespoons poppy seeds (optional)

Put the warm water in a medium-large mixing bowl. If the bowl is ceramic, first preheat it for a couple minutes with a few cups of hot water. Stir the yeast into the water, add the honey and dry milk, then add the cup of whole wheat flour. Don't worry about lumps, because they will disappear in the process. Mix in 3 cups of unbleached white flour to form a thick batter (known as a *sponge*), then beat well with a spoon (about 100 strokes). To *beat* with a spoon means to make small circular strokes in and out of the surface of the batter. Two details often help in doing this: tilting the bowl a bit with the

opposite hand, and holding the spoon closer to the *bowl* of the spoon than the far end of the handle. Beating will help to make the dough elastic. Set aside and let rise 40 minutes.

Fold in the salt and oil. Fold in the cornmeal, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time. To *fold* means to scrape the spoon along the side or bottom of the bowl, and fold the wet dough over the dry dough on top. If you turn the bowl a quarter turn between folds, you will be approximating the action of kneading. After adding the cornmeal, begin folding in additional white flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time, until the dough comes away from the sides and bottom of the bowl. Turn the dough out onto a floured board.

An aside here about process: It's an efficient use of time and effort at this point

to scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl as well as the spoon, and incorporate the scrapings into the dough. At Tassajara we used to have those yellow and red Tuffy scrub balls, and often people cleaning a bread bowl would gum up a Tuffy pad or a sponge with dough, since they had not done the scraping earlier. Yuck! Do the scraping now rather than discard a sponge later. Sometimes it's helpful to dust the bowl or spoon with flour and then use your fingers to rub the dough off.

Knead the dough on a floured board, sprinkling on more flour, as needed, to keep the dough from sticking to the board. Knead for about 6 to 10 minutes, until the dough is smooth. To *knead* means to lift the far side of the dough and fold it in half toward you, then to push down and away

on the dough with the heels of your hands. The dough rolls forward, and the top fold ends up about two-thirds of the way to the far side. Then turn the dough a one-quarter turn, usually clockwise, and repeat the procedure: fold in half toward you, push down and away; turn, fold, push. Kneading is complete when the surface of the dough is smooth and feels like a baby's bottom. Oil a bowl—if you scraped out the mixing bowl, you can use that one—place the dough in the bowl, and turn over once so that the top of the dough is oiled. Let the dough rise for about 50 minutes, until it is doubled in size.

Punch down the dough. To *punch down* the dough means to push your fists into the dough numerous times so that it is thoroughly deflated (although it will not

be as small as it was originally). Let rise a second time for perhaps 40 minutes, until it is doubled in size.

Divide dough in half—often this is done by kneading 4 or 5 times, then turning the dough over and shaping it into a ball pushing your hands under the edges—and then cutting. Shape each piece into a loaf, and place in oiled bread pans—I like the 4½ by 8½ inch pans. The simplest way to shape loaves is to flatten out the dough into a rectangle a bit longer than your bread pan, then roll the dough into a log shape, pinch together any loose ends, and squeeze into the pan with the seams up. Press the loaf down with the backs of your fingers, and then turn over the loaf so the seam is on the bottom.

Preheat the oven to 375°. While the

oven is heating up, let the bread rise in the loaf pans about 20 minutes or so, until again doubled in size.

Mix together the egg and water and brush it on top of the loaves. (You will have more than enough.) Then sprinkle on the poppy seeds. Bake on the middle rack of the oven between 45 and 55 minutes, or until the tops, sides, and bottom are golden brown. Depending on your oven, you may want to move the bread from one rack to another during the baking. On the lowest rack the bread will tend to get overdone on the bottom; while on the top rack the bread will tend to brown on top. Let cool in the pans 5 to 10 minutes before removing from the pans to continue cooling.

Potato Bread

This is Tassajara white bread—and a quite substantial white bread it is, especially when compared to supermarket squish. A favorite, this potato bread makes excellent toast and great sandwiches.

MAKES 2 LOAVES

1 tablespoon dry yeast (about 1½ packets)

1¾ cups warm water

3 tablespoons honey

⅓ cup milk powder

3 cups unbleached white flour

2 to 3 small potatoes, uncooked, or 1½ cups cooked potatoes, mashed

2 teaspoons salt

3 tablespoons corn or safflower oil
3 to 4 cups unbleached white flour
Egg wash (1 egg + 1 tablespoon
water)

Dissolve the yeast in the water along with the honey. Add the milk powder and the 3 cups unbleached white flour. Beat thoroughly (about 100 strokes) to form a thick batter. Cover and set aside in a warm place and let rise for about 45 minutes.

Cook the potatoes. When they are done boiling, remove them from the water and mash well. (We leave the skins on.)

After the batter has risen, add to it the salt, oil, and mashed potatoes. Mix well to blend. Fold in 2 or more cups of flour ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time), turning the bowl a quarter

turn between folds. When the dough comes away from the sides and bottom of the bowl, turn it out onto a floured board and begin kneading. Knead for 5 minutes or so, adding flour as needed to keep the dough from sticking. Place the dough in an oiled bowl, cover, and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 50 minutes.

Punch down and let rise again, until double in size, about 45 minutes.

Shape the dough into 2 loaves, place in oiled pans, and let rise until doubled. Preheat the oven to 350° while the loaves are rising.

Slit the tops, brush with egg wash, milk, or butter. Bake for one hour or until golden brown on all sides.

Millet Bread

Made with whole millet, this bread makes crunchy, flavorful toast. The millet should soak for an hour beforehand, but I include an alternative.

MAKES 2 LOAVES

2 cups whole millet

1¼ cups water for soaking millet

2 tablespoons dry yeast (3 packets)

2 cups warm water

2 tablespoons honey

*3½ cups whole wheat flour (or
substitute 1 cup white for 1 cup of
the whole wheat)*

3 tablespoons corn oil

2½ teaspoons salt

2¾ to 3 cups whole wheat flour

Egg wash (1 egg + 1 tablespoon water)

Soak the millet in the 1¼ cups water for 6 to 8 hours. (To shorten this step to an hour, soak the millet with very hot tap water to soften the millet sooner. Do not use boiling water—this will make the millet too mushy.)

Stir the yeast into the warm water and add the honey. Stir in the 3½ cups of flour and beat thoroughly to make a smooth, thick batter. Let the batter rise for 45 to 50 minutes in a warm place.

Stir in the corn oil, salt, and millet along with any water not absorbed. Fold in 2 to 2½ cups of flour, turning the bowl a quarter turn between folds to approximate the action of kneading. Once

the dough comes away from the sides and bottom of the bowl, turn it out onto a floured board. Knead with the remaining flour—or a little more if necessary—to make a smooth dough. (The millet, though, will keep it from becoming as smooth as it would otherwise.) Clean and oil the bowl and replace the dough in it, turning the dough over once so that the top is coated with oil. Cover and let rise for about 1 hour, or until doubled in bulk, in a warm place.

Push down and let rise again for about 45 minutes, or until doubled in bulk.

Shape into 2 loaves and let rise for about 30 minutes in oiled bread pans. Preheat the oven to 350° while the loaves are rising.

Brush the top with egg wash, if you

want a shiny, golden brown crust. Bake for about 1 hour, or until nicely browned on top and bottom.

Heidelberg Rye

I do not know what makes rye “Heidelberg,” but this rye is light-textured, dark-colored, and half full of rye. Instead of caramel coloring we use cocoa or carob powder to darken it.

MAKES 2 LOAVES

*1 tablespoon active dry yeast (about
1½ packets)*

2 cups warm water

⅓ cup molasses

1 tablespoon cocoa or carob powder

1½ cups rye flour

1½ cups white flour

2 teaspoons salt

2 tablespoons corn oil

2 tablespoons caraway seeds

1½ cups rye flour

1½ to 2 cups white flour

*Egg wash (1 egg + 1 tablespoon
water)*

Dissolve the yeast in the warm water and add the molasses. Stir in the cocoa or carob powder along with the initial amounts of rye and white flours. Beat thoroughly, cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 45 to 50 minutes.

Stir in the salt, corn oil, and caraway seeds. Fold in the rest of the rye flour,

turning the bowl a quarter turn between folds. Fold in the additional 1½ cups white flour, ½ cup at a time until the dough is thick enough to turn out onto a floured board. Knead for several minutes, adding more white flour as needed, until the dough is smooth and resilient. (Rye flour tends to make a dough moist, so do not be surprised if the dough remains wet and slightly sticky even after considerable kneading.) When it is fairly smooth, set the dough in an oiled bowl, cover, and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 50 minutes.

Punch down and let rise again until doubled. Preheat the oven to 350° while the dough is rising.

Shape into 2 loaves, place in oiled pans, and let rise to double in size. Brush

the top with egg wash or water and bake for about 1 hour or until richly browned and solid on top.

Cottage Cheese–Dill Bread

Herbaceous and fragrant this white bread is lightened with eggs in addition to yeast and beautifully flecked with dill weed. Its lightness makes it an attractive appetizer, and its herbaceous quality makes it good with cheeses, soups, and salads. A recipe originally from Kerry Smith and the Nityananda Institute.

MAKES 2 LOAVES

*1 tablespoon active dry yeast (about
1½ packets)*

1³/₄ cups warm water

3 tablespoons honey

2¹/₂ cups unbleached white flour

½ medium yellow onion, diced small

2 eggs, beaten

3 tablespoons corn oil

½ cup cottage cheese

¼ cup dried dill weed

1 tablespoon salt

3¹/₂ to 4¹/₂ cups white flour

*Egg wash (1 egg + 1 tablespoon
water)*

Poppy or sesame seeds

Dissolve the yeast in the warm water and add the honey. Stir in the 2¹/₂ cups unbleached white flour. Beat well with a spoon (about 100 strokes). Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size,

about 45 minutes.



Sauté the onion in oil until translucent. Set aside to cool.

Add the cooled onions to the dough, along with the eggs, corn oil, cottage cheese, dill weed, and salt. Mix well to blend. Fold in up to 3 cups of white flour,

½ cup at a time, turning the bowl a quarter turn between folds. Once the dough comes away from the sides and bottom of the bowl, turn it onto a floured board. Knead for 5 minutes, adding more white flour as necessary, until the dough is smooth and resilient. Place dough in an oiled bowl, cover, and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 40 minutes.

Punch down. Let rise again until doubled.

Shape into 2 loaves and place in oiled loaf pans. Let the loaves rise 25 to 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 350° while the loaves are rising.

Brush tops with egg wash, sprinkle with poppy or sesame seeds, and bake 50 to 60 minutes until top, sides, and bottom of loaves are nicely browned.

Three-Seed Bread

The sesame, poppy, and sunflower seeds complement the nuttiness of the whole wheat flour, which makes for a bread with depths of flavor and enjoyable chewiness. Thanks to Peter Overton, who came up with the original version of this bread.

MAKES 2 LOAVES

2 tablespoons active dry yeast (3 packets)

3 cups warm water

¼ cup honey

1 cup white flour

2 cups whole wheat flour

2 teaspoons salt

¼ cup oil (corn, canola, light sesame, or sunflower)

1/3 cup sunflower seeds

1/3 cup sesame seeds, ground or whole

1/3 cup poppy seeds

3 1/2 cups whole wheat flour

*Egg wash (1 egg + 1 tablespoon
water)*

Poppy or sesame seeds

Dissolve the yeast in the warm water, and mix in the honey, white flour and 2 cups of whole wheat flour. Beat well with a spoon (about 100 strokes) and let rise in a warm place for 45 minutes.

Fold in salt, oil, and seeds. (If you grind the sesame seeds in a clean coffee mill or hand grinder, they will provide more flavor and be easier to chew.) Then fold in whole wheat flour 1/2 cup at a time until the dough comes away from the sides

and bottom of the bowl—probably about 2½ cups of flour. Knead for 5 to 8 minutes, using whole wheat flour as needed to keep the dough from sticking to the countertop—using perhaps an additional cup of flour. Place dough in oiled bowl, turning it over once so the top of the dough is coated with oil. Let rise 1 hour in warm place.

Punch down. Let rise another 45 minutes.

Shape into loaves and place in oiled loaf pans. Brush tops with egg wash and sprinkle with sesame and/or poppy seeds.

Preheat oven to 375°. Let the loaves rise 25 to 30 minutes in pans. Bake 40 to 50 minutes until top, sides, and bottom of loaves are nicely browned.

Homemade Bread Touches My Heart

In the summer of 1955, when I was ten years old, my brother Dwite and I went to visit my Aunt Alice in Falls Church, Virginia. We flew first to Kansas City, and minutes before we landed I threw up, making use of one of those little bags which I had been naively asking about a short time earlier. Airplane rides were a lot bumpier then.

We sat in the plane on the tarmac there in Kansas City, waiting for something to be fixed, sweating in the terribly hot and stuffy confines. Isn't traveling fun? A bedraggled little boy

arrived in Washington, D.C., but was quickly revived by rest and old-fashioned hospitality.

Best of all was the homemade bread my Aunt Alice baked. I couldn't believe how good it was. We'd have it with dinner, and then in the morning we would toast it for breakfast. It was fabulously delicious, especially with the real butter and homemade jams we got to put on it. After the store-bought bread and margarine at home, it was simply to die for. Returning from a day of sightseeing in D.C., we would be greeted with the hearty, earthy, nutty aromas of freshly baked bread.

What I could not understand was why more people were not baking

bread at home, delighting their noses and pleasing their palates. In the stores then, pretty much all you could buy was foamy white bread. When allowed, I would eat the crusts, and then mash the rest of the slice into a marble. Then I had something solid to chew on. Commercial whole wheat breads, if you could find them at all, were dry and comparatively tasteless.

Once I tasted my Aunt Alice's bread I wondered why people put up with the more boring version when they could be having bread which stimulated and awakened previously unknown reservoirs of joy and delight. Well, my thinking may not have been that sophisticated, but I

decided then and there that I would learn how to make bread and that I'd teach others how to make bread. Plus, when I could, I'd get butter to put on it.

When my brother and I returned from our trip, I asked my mom if she could teach me how to make bread. "No," she said, "yeast makes me nervous." The directions in the cookbooks instructed one to "knead" the dough. No, Mom could not show me how to do that either.

Arriving at Tassajara eleven summers later, I encountered fragrant, satisfying bread and two chefs, Jim Vaughn and Ray Hurslander, who could teach me how to make it. When I asked if they

would show me how, they were more than happy to do so. It felt like an initiation. The secrets of how to do something were being shared and passed on. I became a descendant in the lineage of bread bakers.

Jim and Ray, it turns out, had learned to bake bread from Alan Hooker at the Ranch House Restaurant in Ojai, California. Years later, when I was working as a waiter at Greens, Mr. Hooker came to dinner. Afterward I went over to his table, introduced myself, and gave him autographed copies of my books.

“You don’t know it,” I said, “but I’m your disciple.” Even though we had never met, I felt very close to

him. We shared a deep love for wholesome bread, and he had learned this craft, worked at it, and transmitted it, opening a whole new world to me. I felt profoundly grateful and honored to be in his company.

Later I received a letter from Mr. Hooker, thanking me for the books and inviting me to have dinner at his restaurant if I was ever in Ojai. Fortunately, I was able to take him up on his offer, and we had a delightful time. A shared love of bread and baking brought us together.

This is culture, the passing on of how to do something. The shared know-how bridges the generations and gives life to life. Nowadays it is

less obvious what we are passing on, other than how to watch television and walk a supermarket aisle, and what is lost is not just the way to bake bread, but the connectedness with our predecessors, our fellow beings, and the stuff which is our life.

Recently my brother returned from a Fourth of July visit to Washington, D.C., where his oldest son is living with his wife and baby girl. So I felt it was timely to remind Dwite of our earlier trip, when he watched over me and we discovered bread and took in the sights together. “What I remember is the Smithfield ham,” he mused, “but it didn’t change my life.”

The whys and wherefores of hearts being opened is mysterious and

momentous, giving shape to whole lifetimes.

Yeasted Cheese Bread

This bread features cheese grilled into it. Yielding a tender, fragrant, high loaf, this recipe requires no kneading and only one rising, 45 minutes long, so it's fairly quick to make. It can be baked in a ring mold, as a standard loaf, or in muffin tins. This bread is a lovely addition to an otherwise simple supper of light soup, a salad, and fruit (you probably will not want much cheese in the rest of the meal). Any leftovers can provide instant grilled cheese toast or prized croutons for salad.

MAKES 1 VERY LARGE LOAF

*1½ tablespoons of active dry yeast
(about 2 packets)*

1 cup warm water

1 cup milk

½ cup butter, cut into pieces

1 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar

3 eggs, beaten

3½ cups flour

*2 cups Gruyère, fontina, or cheddar
cheese, grated and tossed with ¼
cup flour*

½ cup Parmesan cheese

Combine the yeast and warm water and set aside to dissolve.

Scald the milk, then put it into a large bowl. Add the butter, salt, and sugar.

Whisk in the beaten eggs. Check the temperature of the milk-butter-egg mixture; if it isn't too hot for the yeast—just slightly warm to the touch (115° or less)—add the dissolved yeast.

Using a strong whisk or wooden spoon, beat the flour in vigorously to make a smooth, shiny dough. Thoroughly mix in the cheeses.

Butter or oil a large loaf pan and put in the dough, filling the pan only halfway to the top. Cover the dough and set it aside to rise for 40 minutes. Preheat oven to 375° while the dough is rising.

Bake for about 50 minutes, or until the bread is browned. Serve warm.

Consider using this bread for open-faced sandwiches with herbed cream cheese and tomato slices, garnished with

watercress and/ or freshly grated black pepper, possibly with some avocado, too, sliced or spread.

Overnight Wheat Bread *(Wheat Veneration)*

I love the intense pure wheat flavor of this bread, which is not softened with the addition of milk or sweetener. The flavor of the wheat *blossoms* by letting the dough sit overnight. The bread is reminiscent of sourdough, but you needn't get involved with trying to locate or make a sourdough starter.



For people like me, who are unfortunately not as devoted to baking as we once were, this bread, hearty and fulfilling, makes a satisfying substitute.

MAKES 2 LOAVES

EVENING:

1/4 teaspoon active dry yeast

3 cups whole wheat flour

3 cups warm water

MORNING:

½ cup warm water

1½ tablespoons active dry yeast
(about 2 packets)

2 teaspoons salt

2½ to 4 cups whole wheat flour

In the afternoon or evening: Stir the yeast and flour into the water and beat (short strokes in and out of the batter) about 100 strokes. Cover and set aside until morning. It doesn't have to be kept at any particular temperature.

In the morning: Make sure the ½ cup of warm water is cool enough so that it will not harm the yeast—about body

temperature. Stir in the yeast and let it dissolve, then mix this into the batter from last night. Stir in the salt as well. Fold in about 2½ cups of whole wheat flour ½ cup at a time. Turn out onto a floured board and knead, using another ½ cup or more of flour to keep the dough from sticking. Knead 150 to 300 times. The dough will be smooth and pliable. Set aside in an oiled bowl and let rise 3 to 4 hours.

Shape dough into 2 loaves. I like to make log shapes with diagonal cuts on the surface, but you can bake in oiled loaf pans if you prefer. Place loaves on an oiled sheet pan and brush with water. Let rise about 1 hour. Preheat oven to 375° while the loaves are rising.

Brush the surface once more with water

and bake 45 to 60 minutes until the loaves are browned on top and bottom.

Focaccia: Olive Oil Bread with Fresh Rosemary and Green Olives

I walk out the door of my cottage along the uneven red brick path to the front gate, where the rosemary bush grows. I prune it so that I can continue to open the gate and walk by. Then I come in, mince the fresh herb, and begin the bread.

I often omit the second rising, so that I can have the bread ready sooner. This dough can also be used for making pizza. Because it is so easy to put together—light and supple to handle—it's also my

favorite bread to make for cooking classes.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 cups warm water, under 125°

2 tablespoons active dry yeast (3 packets)

3 tablespoons fresh rosemary, minced

4 to 6 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for glazing

2 teaspoons salt

4 cups unbleached white flour

1½ cups whole wheat flour

Coarse sea salt

Pitted green olives, halved lengthwise

Start with the water, making sure it is not too hot—it will feel just slightly warm on your hand. Stir in the yeast, then the

rosemary, olive oil, and salt. Stir in 1 cup of the white flour and all of the whole wheat flour. Beat about 100 strokes.

Fold in 2 cups of white flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time. Turn the dough out on a floured board and knead for several minutes using up to another cup of flour to keep the dough from sticking. Knead until the dough is smooth and elastic. Let the dough rise for about 1 hour until it doubles in size.

Punch down and let rise another 40 minutes. Divide the dough in half and shape each half into a ball. They can be baked in this shape, but I like to flatten out each ball into a rectangle, then roll it up into a log shape. Then I flatten out the log and make parallel cuts *diagonally* across the loaf, about 1 inch apart, leaving the sides attached, but cutting all the way

through in the middle. I pull the ends lengthwise, so that the cuts are stretched into openings, forming a ladder shape.

Place on an oiled sheet pan, brush the top with olive oil, decorate with a few pitted green olives cut in half lengthwise, and sprinkle with coarse sea salt. (This makes it somewhat reminiscent of a soft pretzel.) Let rise about 20 minutes. Preheat oven to 425° while loaves are rising.



Bake about 25 to 30 minutes until lightly browned top and bottom.

Sun-Dried Tomato Focaccia

Over the years we keep experimenting

with olive oil breads. Here's one of our successes.

MAKES 2 MODEST LOAVES

12 sun-dried tomatoes, dry or oil packed

1½ cups warm water

1 tablespoon active dry yeast (1½ packets)

2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, minced

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon salt

½ cup whole wheat flour

2½ cups white flour

Flour for kneading, as needed

Olive oil

Coarse salt

*Whole cloves of garlic, peeled
(optional)*

Pitted green olives, halved (optional)

Cook the sun-dried tomatoes in the water until quite soft, then blend. Allow to cool to body temperature. (Remove from the pan to a bowl and immerse in cold water to speed the process, if you wish.)

Dissolve the yeast in the sun-dried tomato liquid (once it is cooled), and stir in the rosemary, olive oil, and salt. Mix in the whole wheat flour and 1½ cups of the white flour. Beat well, until elastic. Fold in additional flour, ¼ cup at a time, until the dough comes away from the sides of the bowl. Turn out onto a floured board and knead for several minutes, adding flour just a little at a time to keep the dough from sticking, until it is smooth and pliable. (“Soft as a baby’s bottom” is the

classic description of well-kneaded dough.)

Place in oiled bowl and let rise in a warm place for 50 minutes or until doubled in size. Punch down and let rise for an additional 40 minutes. (This rising may be omitted if you are pressed for time.) Divide the dough in half and shape into two balls. Flatten each into a rectangle, place a string of garlic cloves down the middle (if you are using them), and roll into a log. Flatten a bit, then cut crosswise diagonals in the tops. If you are not using the garlic, you can cut all the way through, leaving the sides attached, and then stretch out the loaf and place on an oiled baking sheet. Brush the tops with olive oil and sprinkle with coarse salt. Dot with green olive halves (if using

them). Let the loaves rise for 20 minutes. Preheat oven to 450° while loaves are rising.

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, until nicely browned.

Green Salads and Salad Dressings



Browsing in the Garden

Just picked
leaf of lettuce, not cold
and crisp, but throbbing warm
with bitter earth juice,
a wrinkled green and purple
landscape gleaming in sunlight.

In darkness this velvet
flesh meets my teeth
and tongue and cheek,
ever so intimately:
soft persistent crunches

render lettuce speechless.
Our juices mingle,
flow as one the unseen
pathways appearing as mountains
or someone just about to wash a
plate.

HERE WE HAVE, IF I MAY BE SO BOLD to say, one of the great joys of life—salad—offering us what is fully ripe and freshly flavorful, the pick of the fields brought to the table in its prime.

Especially in the heat of summer here at Tassajara, salads are an essential element in most of our lunches and dinners. This section focuses more on salads utilizing garden greens, while the chapter which follows has a wide variety of vegetable salads. Before you get to the recipes, you'll see that I include some of my thinking about what makes a salad a salad: fresh, bright, invigorating; something about the structure or aesthetics of salad making. Some relishes and dressings round out the section.

I confess that one of the best recipes for salad is not included. The best way to make a salad may be to walk through gardens a few steps from home, forget the recipes, follow your nose, and nosh.

Wherever they come in a meal, salads are meant to be refreshing—in appearance, taste, feeling. The green of lettuce says: alive, growing, fresh, vigorous. Not hot, heavy, solid, dense (all delicious in their place!), but a crisp, moist, leafy counterpoint or introduction. Or perhaps it is the tartness of vinegar or citrus that cleanses the taste buds and raises a bright chorus of “Yes!”

First we will look at the basic structure or sensibility of salad making. Following that will be specific recipes.



OUTLINE FOR MAKING SALADS

Salads begin with a main, or *background*, ingredient (which may disappear more and more into the background with the addition of numerous other *foreground* ingredients). This is already a curious point: Is the basic ingredient so lacking that it needs “bullet points” of flavor so that we may overlook it? Is bread just there to carry butter and jam to your mouth?

My suggestion is to honor the

background ingredient as worthy in its own right, and then possibly to complement that (background) ingredient with foreground elements. A few clouds in the azure blue sky show how blue it is; the sound of a bird deepens the mountain stillness.

So let's look at some common background ingredients.

Greens: lettuces, spinach, arugula, cabbage, Chinese cabbage

Vegetables: carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, green beans, asparagus, beets . . .

Potatoes

Beans: kidney, lentil, garbanzo, white

. . .

Grains: rice, bulgur . . .

Pasta

The salad gets its name from this background, or main, ingredient: for instance, “potato salad,” or “green bean and tomato salad.”

Here are some foreground ingredients, which you’ll see that I have categorized.

Onions: yellow or red onion (raw or cooked), [Red Onion Pickle](#), shallots, green onions, chives. (Garlic is more commonly an ingredient in the dressing or vinaigrette.)

Raw vegetables (for flavor, texture, color): radishes, bell peppers, carrots, celery, fennel bulb . . .

Cooked (usually lightly) vegetables: carrot, broccoli, cauliflower, green

beans . . .

Preserved or pickled items: olives, capers, dill or sweet pickles, artichoke hearts, sun-dried tomatoes . . .

Fruits: apples, oranges, pears, persimmon, peach, nectarine . . .

Dried fruits: raisins, apricots, dates, cranberries . . .

Nuts and seeds: walnuts, almonds, hazelnut, sunflower, pumpkin, pine nuts, sesame seeds . . .

Cheeses: Any cheese (grated or sliced) such as Parmesan, cheddar, Monterey Jack, smoked or fresh mozzarella . . .

Again, these foreground ingredients accent or brighten and “accessorize” the main

ingredient: a spinach salad may come with red onion, feta cheese, and kalamata olives; or apple, almond, and shallot could grace its greenness. One considers color, shape, taste, zest. So how each ingredient is cut matters: Are the apples in thin slices or large cubes, or even chopped finely to disappear into the dressing? Are the onions raw, cooked, or pickled? How will it look? How does it taste? What are the textures? Is the chewing a chore or a joy? Does something need cooking? Or chopping? (Cut surfaces release flavor. . . .)

Appearance matters with all food, but with salads especially we aim to provide a dish where the colors sparkle and we sense the freshness of spring and early summer. So consider also how to arrange

the ingredients: All tossed together? An arranged platter? Ingredients in rows or swirls, circles, or layers? Dressing tossed with all the ingredients or delicately spooned over the arranged platter? Something in the middle—a guacamole, say—surrounded by the salad or placed to one side? One basic principle here is that the foreground ingredients tend to disappear to the bottom of the bowl when the salad is tossed, so the simple expedient is to save half or more of these accent ingredients to dot or garnish the surface of the salad, after it has been tossed with the dressing.

Here are some garnishings. Most any of the foreground ingredients work, but especially the following:

Grated cheese

Roasted nuts or seeds

Fresh herbs (or flowers)—particularly parsley, green onion, basil, cilantro, mint (and did you have some little green or flower tucked away in your window box), chervil, nasturtium, calendula, chive blossoms

This brings us to the dressing. Feel out what the dressing might be—open your imagination, dream flavors:

Just salt, oil, and vinegar?

Something creamy?

Honey and lemon?

What are the ingredients in the salad?

What about the rest of the meal?

Mild-mannered or spicy?

Given these choices, now you can jump right in and make yourself a salad—or take a further look at some of the suggestions and specific recipe combinations that follow.

Lettuce Salads

These can be made with just one kind of lettuce—such as romaine, butter lettuce, red leaf—or with a combination of lettuces. Often available in supermarkets is a “spring mix,” a combination of baby lettuces combined with other greens (or red-greens): cresses, radicchio, mizuno, mustard greens—add your own spinach,

arugula, or nasturtium leaves.

Choose a simple dressing from the salad dressings later in this chapter. To maintain the freshness of the greens, toss with the dressing just before serving. For the same reason, mix in the other ingredients at the last moment as well, when assembling the salad (again, reserving half or more of them to garnish the top of the dressed salad).



Salads are tossed so that the dressing which has seeped to the bottom of the bowl is brought to the top and mixed with all the ingredients. Toss thoroughly (and

be somewhat cautious with the amount of dressing used, adding more as needed) so that all the dressing is used and there is not a puddle of dressing left in the bottom of the bowl.

Here are some suggested combinations of foreground ingredients to use with a lettuce salad:

*Tomato wedges and avocado chunks
(possibly with chopped olives and
croutons)*

*Shredded red cabbage and orange or
apple slices*

*Tomato wedges and cheddar cheese
shavings*

*Raisins and toasted sunflower or
pumpkin seeds*

Strips or chunks of (peeled) broccoli

core, sliced sun-dried tomato
Sliced oranges and raisins
Sliced radishes, roasted sunflower
seeds, and parsley
Carrot, apple slices, and roasted
almonds
Cucumber and grated cooked beets
Cantaloupe strips and sliced radishes
Leftover vegetables, cut into salad
pieces
Sliced orange, celery, and walnuts

Keep it simple and distinctive. Consider using the green of leaf and stem; the brightness of flower or fruit; the earthiness of nut, seed, or cheese. One example, for instance, would be greens with orange slices and roasted sesame seeds or greens with a few raisins and toasted sunflower

seeds. Even simpler still: greens, oil (the earth), vinegar (the sky).

Summer Salad Platter

Green peppers

Cucumbers

Tomato

Avocado

Summer squashes

Salt

Pepper

Vinegar or lemon juice

Sugar or honey

Olives, chopped (optional)

Sun-dried tomatoes, sliced (optional)

See what comes your way from the

grocery or the farmers market, from the garden or friends. Pick what you want to use and cut into slices, wedges, sections, strips—making a variety of shapes.

These vegetables can be delicious with just salt and pepper (put the salt on the tomatoes at the very end or it will draw a puddle of liquid out of the tomatoes). Or mix equal parts of either vinegar and sugar, or lemon juice and honey, to make a simple, bright complement—or toss them separately with a dressing, and then arrange on a serving platter. Some chopped olives or sun-dried tomato slices will add color and flavor.

VARIATION

Omit the olives or sun-dried tomatoes in the recipe above and turn it into a “Thai”

salad platter by adding a section of fresh ginger (finely diced, minced, or preserved), roasted peanuts, and a few spinach or lettuce leaves. Garnish with lime wedges. Each person starts with a leaf and makes their own bite of salad using the other ingredients. Add a touch of chili in the dressing, on the vegetables, or on the side.

Garden Salad

This is called “garden salad” because I go out to my garden and pick some greens for salad. Often I get my lettuce starts from Green Gulch, Zen Center’s farm near Muir Beach. Here they have many wonderful varieties of lettuce from seeds that have

been prized and shepherded: Marvel of Four Seasons, Black-Seeded Simpson, Kagraner Somer, Lolla Rosa, Cool Mint Romaine, Red Leaf Romaine, and Red and Green Oak Leaf.

Since I have been growing lettuces in my yard, I find it difficult to buy lettuce. The store-bought heads do not seem to have the hardiness and vigor of the leaves that I harvest by hand. After I have picked an assortment of lettuce leaves, I poke around for what else to add: spearmint, thyme, arugula, parsley, lime thyme, perhaps some baby chard or mustard greens, some calendula blossoms or nasturtium flowers (or leaves).

Nowadays markets frequently have available a mix of fresh greens (often referred to as *mesclun*). Some are better

than others, so you may need to experiment to find out which particular mix you enjoy most.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

¾ pound lettuce of your choice
1 to 2 ounces or more miscellaneous garden herbs or flowers, if available (see the list for [Summer Salad Platter](#) or look in your own garden)

1 shallot, diced, or 1 small bunch chives, chopped

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

Salt

Pepper

1 or 2 tablespoons sesame or sunflower seeds, roasted (optional)

*2 or 3 tablespoons Asiago or
Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
(optional)*

Pick your lettuces and herbs. Wash by immersing in water, then spin dry in a lettuce spinner. Leave the smaller leaves whole, and tear the larger ones into mouth-sized pieces. For this salad I tend not to mince or chop the herbs, but to leave them in whole-leaf form removed from their stems. (Also if edible flower petals are available, save some for garnish.)

Toss the greens with the shallot and olive oil. (If you want the shallot to have a milder flavor, sauté it briefly in the oil.) If everything is not quite moistened enough with the oil, add a touch more. Then toss

with the vinegar and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Garnish with the fresh herbs and flower petals, as available.



Another option would be to garnish the salad with the roasted seeds and/or the

grated cheese. I find the bit of earthiness that they add is grounding and satisfying.

VARIATIONS

- *Garden Salad with Baked Goat Cheese:* Put the dressed greens onto four plates and top each with one of the [Baked Goat Cheese](#) pieces.
- Use 1 tablespoon of rice vinegar and a few pinches of sugar instead of balsamic vinegar.

Five-Element Salad with Spicy Garlic Vinaigrette

I am not a fan of salads that have innumerable ingredients (lettuce, grated

carrot, tomato, mushroom, bell pepper, shredded red cabbage, and so on) as if more made better. Nor do I appreciate salads that are drowned in gloppy dressings so the colors are indistinct anyway. I want the ingredients to fit together with some balance. And the dressing to be of a modest amount that enhances the ingredients rather than overwhelming them.

“Five-element” is my name for a salad I learned about while working at Greens Restaurant. The five elements are lettuce, a fruit, a nut, a cheese, and a wild-card flavor kicker, such as olive, caper, radish, sun-dried tomato, or, in this case, red onion pickle. The dressing should be flavorful and interesting, but usually clear enough to see the colors of the salad. The

variations are endless.

At home I am more likely to prepare a [Garden Salad](#), but occasionally I am more inspired, especially if company is coming. I follow the Chinese principle of having an odd number of ingredients: one, three, five, seven. See how that works for you.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

½ cup [Red Onion Pickle](#)

[Spicy Garlic Vinaigrette](#) or another dressings of your choice

⅓ cup almonds

1 head romaine lettuce, moderate sized (about ¾ pound)

1 apple, a good eating variety such as Fuji, Gala, or Golden Delicious

Juice of 1 orange, preferably navel

½ cup Asiago or Parmesan cheese,

grated freshly, if possible

*1 tablespoon fresh tarragon, minced,
or 2 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley,
minced*

Get the Red Onion Pickles started and make up the Spicy Garlic Vinaigrette or another dressing of your choosing. Roast the almonds in a 350° oven for 8 minutes (or in a dry skillet on top of the stove) until they are crunchy and aromatic. Slice or chop them. Set aside.

Remove the bruised, discolored, or wilted outer leaves from the head of lettuce. Cut the larger romaine leaves in half lengthwise and then crosswise into 1-inch sections. Cut the smaller leaves crosswise into 1-inch sections. Wash and spin dry. Quarter the apple, remove the

cores, and cut into slices. Combine with the orange juice.

All the ingredients may be readied well ahead of time and assembled shortly before serving. The point to notice is that if you toss all the ingredients together, the smaller ones will end up on the bottom of the bowl. Here's how to assemble the salad: Start by combining the apple slices (orange juice and all) with the lettuce and tossing with the vinaigrette. Make sure some apple slices are at the surface. Distribute the Red Onion Pickle over the surface of the salad, then the almonds, the grated cheese, and finally the minced herbs.

Mixed Green Salad with

Grapefruit, Avocado, and Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette

Inspired by a North African recipe, this very pretty and refreshing salad is a marvelous complement to rich dishes. Everything may be prepared hours in advance, with only the slicing of the avocados and tossing of the salad left for the end.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

*5 large handfuls mixed greens
(romaine, spinach, oak leaf, butter,
or red lettuces)*

2 ruby grapefruit

1 to 2 avocados

*Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette or another
dressing of your choice*



Make up the Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette or other dressing of your choosing. Wash the greens, dry them well, then tear into bite-sized pieces. **Cut the peel off of the grapefruits** and cut them into supremes. Shortly before serving, slice the avocados.

Toss the avocado slices and grapefruit

supremes with the dressing, then pour off the excess. Then toss the mixed greens with enough dressing to moisten the leaves but not to leave them dripping. Finally, garnish the dressed greens with the dressed grapefruit and avocado. Spreading the salad out on a platter rather than a bowl will give you more of an opportunity to “paint” with the avocado and grapefruit pieces.

Baby Greens with Nectarines, Goat Cheese, and Fire- Roasted Walnuts

An exciting blend of flavors as well as beautiful colors make this a pleasing salad.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

Tofu Bob's Herb Dressing or Basic Tassajara Salad Dressing

*5-ounce mix of baby greens or your
choice of lettuce*

1 red bell pepper, roasted

3 ounces goat cheese

2 nectarines

2 teaspoons sugar

2 teaspoons lemon juice

½ cup walnuts

1 teaspoon sugar

3 to 4 pinches salt

Prepare the salad dressing. Set aside.

Wash and spin dry the lettuce mix. Roast the red pepper following [the directions](#). Crumble the goat cheese and set aside on a plate.

Wash and slice the nectarines and combine with the 2 teaspoons of sugar and the lemon juice. Roast the walnuts in a skillet over moderate heat, stirring occasionally so they don't burn, until they are toasted and nutty. Add the teaspoon of sugar and a few pinches of salt, and raise the heat. Stir until the sugar melts and coats the nuts lightly. Remove from the pan.

Use a modest amount of dressing to coat the lettuce—you will probably have some left over (it will keep in the refrigerator for a month or more). Toss the dressed lettuces with half of the red peppers, goat cheese, nectarines, and walnuts. Distribute the other half of those ingredients over the surface for decoration before serving up.



Endive Salad with Grilled Figs and Fire-Roasted Walnuts

I make this salad with leftover grilled figs, which have been cooked until they are limp, juicy, succulent, and sweet. Don't light the grill just for this, because you could roast the figs in the oven just as

easily.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

*12 fresh, ripe black mission figs,
grilled or baked*

½ cup walnuts

1 tablespoon white sugar

⅛ teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons lime juice

1 tablespoon honey

*1 or 2 Belgian endives (about 6
ounces)*

Preheat oven to 375°. Grill the figs whole (over charcoal), until they are limp and succulent or bake them for 12 to 15 minutes to sweeten and soften them. Cut the stems off of the figs and slice them in half or quarters lengthwise.

Roast the walnuts in a skillet for 6 to 7 minutes until they're toasty and aromatic. Sprinkle on the white sugar and salt. Cook over moderate heat, stirring, until the sugar melts and coats the walnuts. Remove and set aside. Whisk together the lime and honey.

To arrange the salad, cut off the base of the endive and separate into individual leaves. Place a slice of fig on each leaf and walnuts on the fig. Drizzle the lime-honey over the top. A second method is to slice the endive crosswise into 1/2-inch pieces and toss with the figs and the dressing. Garnish with the walnuts.

Careful Observation of the

Obvious

Some years ago I called up a seed company to place an order. I wanted to get some red clover to use for a ground cover—the stalks of deep-red blossoms are quite splendid. I also wanted some garden netting to cover the seeds to keep the birds off. I ordered some other seeds as well to make up a minimum order and waited.

In a week or so a small box showed up. It didn't appear to be large enough to contain the pound of clover seed or the netting. I wondered how that little box could possibly contain the six by twelve feet of netting I had ordered, let alone

all the seed. Another five or six weeks went by while I waited for my “real” order to come. The box sat on my kitchen counter until finally one day when I had nothing better to do, I decided to open it.

Inspecting each item, I discovered that everything I had ordered was in the box. The netting was wadded up like a down sleeping bag into a compact bundle, and the pound of clover seed was just a fistful. Each seed packet also had a short message: “The Best Teacher of Gardening—Careful Observation of the Obvious.” I had not even gotten out of the house into the garden yet, but the significance of the message was obvious. “Not only gardening,” I

thought, “but cooking too, and . . . opening packages.”

The obvious is what is easiest to overlook: Cookies on the bottom rack of the oven burn sooner than the ones on the top. We think we know that salt is salty and sugar is sweet, but more than one cook has mistaken one white substance for the other. Food heated over time gets cooked, but only careful observation determines the moment it is at its peak of flavor and texture. Vine-ripened tomatoes eaten in the summer sun awaken warm surges of joy and vitality never encountered with tomatoes from the supermarket. What’s important, anyway? Careful observation can determine which

differences make a difference.

At the New England Culinary Institute a young woman asked me for some Zen secrets for dealing with stress. I explained that what I had noticed was that I would get more frantic, more speedy, and more stressed in an effort to catch up with all the things still to be done, and the things I must be forgetting. I wouldn't even take the time to check on what I might be forgetting because then I would be even further behind.

Eventually, though, I noticed what was obvious about this situation. I could only do one thing at a given time. Getting hasty or volatile didn't help me to get that one thing done. Also, worrying about what I still

needed to do was a distraction from doing that one thing. I began making a checklist of what needed to be done, prioritizing it, and then doing the next thing, one after another. “That helped me,” I said.

“That isn’t Zen,” she said. “We do that all the time.”

“Fine,” I agreed, “just keep it up. There is nothing more Zen than careful observation of the obvious. If you keep practicing that, you’ll figure it out, whether it’s how to cope with stress or what to do with a potato.”

Winter Green Salad with Walnuts and Roasted Red

Pepper Sauce

This is an attractive, colorful dish that I often make over the holiday season since it features greens and reds. The roasted red pepper sauce is pooled around the winter greens, which have been lightly cooked to soften and sweeten them.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

*1 head frisse or ½ head curly endive
or chicory*

2 cloves of garlic, minced

¼ cup walnuts, roasted

3 to 4 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

Salt

Pepper, freshly ground

1/3 cup dried cranberries (optional)

Prepare the Roasted Red Pepper Sauce.

Cut the greens first and then wash them. If using frisse, cut the larger leaves into 2 or 3 pieces. If using curly endive or chicory, discard any bruised outer leaves, cut the head lengthwise into quarters, then crosswise into 2-inch sections. Place the greens in a large metal bowl and toss with the garlic.

Chop the roasted walnuts coarsely.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet until it just begins to smoke, then pour it over the frisse while tossing with tongs. Place clumps of greens back into the hot skillet to cook lightly, so they just soften but do not lose their shape entirely. Season with the balsamic vinegar, salt, and pepper. If

you are using the dried cranberries, plump them for a couple of minutes in very hot water, then drain.

To assemble the salad, place portions of the greens on individual plates and surround the greens with Roasted Red Pepper Sauce. Garnish with the walnuts and the cranberries, if using them.

Spinach Salad with Feta Cheese, Red Onions, and Olives

A tangy, dramatic-looking variation on a Greek salad, this dish is nice with a [potato soup](#) or the [yellow pea soup](#). Bold flavors.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

*1 bunch fresh spinach leaves or 1
pound baby spinach*

2 to 3 ounces feta cheese

¼ cup (or more) [Red Onion Pickle](#)

*6 kalamata olives or 12 or more
niçoise olives*

*[Lemon Vinaigrette](#) or another dressing
of your choice*

1 tablespoon fresh mint, minced

Cut the stems off the spinach and immerse the leaves in at least two changes of cold water to remove all traces of sand and fine soil. (This will not be necessary if using fresh baby spinach.) Dry the spinach well in a salad spinner, then (if large) cut into pieces and place it in a salad bowl.

Reserve some of the feta for garnish

and crumble the rest of it on top of the spinach.

Finely dice or slice the red onion (if using it) and reserve some of it or the onion pickle for garnish, and scatter the rest over the cheese.

Remove the pits from the olives by pressing them under the flat of a knife blade, then pulling out the loosened pits. Chop coarsely. (Or use pitted kalamatas.)

Make up the Lemon Vinaigrette or another dressing of your choosing. Pour the vinaigrette over the salad, and toss well. Sprinkle on the reserved feta and onion, then the olives along with the mint on top of the salad.

Wilted Spinach Salads

These wilted spinach salads are fast-to-make and delicious-to-eat (well, especially if the spinach is already cleaned). The light *wilting* of the spinach with the hot olive oil sweetens its flavor—and slightly softens the texture.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 pound spinach

½ onion, diced

¼ cup olive oil

1 cup tomato sauce, canned tomato chunks, or fresh tomato wedges, or

½ cup tomato salsa

Salt

Pepper

Balsamic vinegar (optional)

½ cup grated Parmesan or Asiago cheese

Clean the spinach, tear or cut it into bite-size pieces, and put into a metal bowl. Sauté the onion in the olive oil to soften. Pour the hot olive oil and onion over the spinach and toss with tongs. Taste the spinach, and if it is not cooked enough, press clumps of it back into the hot pan.

If you wish to make the salad warm, preheat the tomato sauce (or tomato pieces) before tossing with the spinach. Check the seasoning for salt and pepper (and possibly some vinegar), then serve garnished with the grated cheese.

VARIATIONS

- Pour the hot oil over the spinach—if it doesn't wilt enough put it back into a skillet to soften further—turning frequently. Use your

resourcefulness to season and garnish: balsamic vinegar, shallots or red onion, feta cheese or goat cheese, olives, salt, and pepper.

- After wilting, toss the spinach with a heated tahini or nut sauce (see the chapter on sauces). Garnish with roasted nuts or seeds.



Spinach Salad with Apples and Almonds

I learned about wilted spinach salads from working at Greens, where we had a fine one with feta cheese, croutons, and kalamata olives on the menu daily. Here's one of my simplified versions. Tossing the spinach with the hot oil softens and sweetens its flavor—which I find deliciously appetizing.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 bunch spinach

½ cup almonds, roasted

Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette

*1 good eating apple, such as Gala,
Fuji, or Golden Delicious*

*1 to 2 cloves of garlic, minced
(optional)*

¼ cup olive oil

Cut off the base of the spinach, then cut the tough stems off the leaves. Wash the leaves thoroughly, then spin dry. Cut the biggest leaves into halves or thirds. Slice the roasted almonds with a sharp knife, or chop briefly in a Cuisinart on pulse, so the almonds do not turn completely to powder.



Make up the Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette (omitting the olive oil).

Cut the apple into quarters and cut away the core. Slice the quarters into thin lengthwise pieces, and toss with the dressing.

Put the spinach in a stainless steel, wooden, or ceramic bowl. (Add garlic if using.) Heat the olive oil in a small pan until it's nearly smoking. Pour over the spinach with one hand while using tongs to toss the spinach with the other. If the spinach is not sufficiently wilted—to your taste—press clumps of it into the hot pan using the tongs.

Toss the spinach with the apples and the dressing. Check the seasoning. Serve on a platter or individual plates and garnish with the almonds.

Arugula Salad with Avocado and Cashew Nuts

Arugula delights me with its *meaty*

tenderness and its pungent flavor of mustard or radish. Here it is offset with the creamy avocado and crunchy cashews.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 bunch arugula

½ cup cashew nut pieces

4 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons balsamic or fig vinegar

Salt

Pepper

1 avocado

Prepare the arugula: cut crosswise into 2-inch lengths and sort out and discard the stems. Wash and spin dry the leaves. Set aside. Roast the cashew nuts in a dry skillet until lightly browned.

Toss the arugula with the olive oil, then

with the vinegar and 2 to 3 pinches of salt. Grate on some pepper. Slice the **avocado into decorative slices** and toss half of them in with the greens. Place the remaining half on top and sprinkle on the cashews. Delicious!

VARIATIONS

- Use 4 to 6 radishes cut into julienne pieces and toasted sunflower seeds in place of the avocado and cashews.
- Use 1 orange, sliced, and toasted pumpkin seeds in place of the avocado and cashews.
- Garnish with 1 green onion, thinly sliced.

SALAD DRESSINGS

Salad dressings are one of those mysterious and alchemical mixtures which can be heavenly and tantalizing, or abysmal. And there are so many prepared commercial dressings, which are passable, but not really bright and alive. Not only a matter of taste, salad dressings say something about lifestyle. In dressing preparation, many rituals are ascribed to: rubbing the bowl with garlic; tossing with oil, then with vinegar; or everything in the blender and “zap!” The simpler the dressing—and many of these recipes are quite simple—the more it depends on the quality of the ingredients: a flavorful balsamic or sherry wine vinegar; or perhaps a delicate rice wine vinegar; a

fragrant, fruity olive oil; fresh garlic rather than powdered.

One's salad dressing matures with one's experience. The dressing can develop, change, or remain the single constant in a life of change. Complex, crafted, laid back, or thrown together—if you want to know about people, check out their salad dressing and how they make it. And you can start by checking out this basic dressing and how it's prepared—and you'll see that once you get started, variations will unfold easily and effortlessly.

Making a large batch—double or more—of salad dressing is a great convenience, and also the flavors have a chance to develop. When the basic dressing is fairly simple, additional

ingredients can be added for variation each time it is used.

When assembling any dressing, season tentatively to begin with, then make sure it's stirred or shaken up and taste test it by dipping in a piece of lettuce or vegetable. More oil, vinegar, or any of the other ingredients can easily be added. See what you like and which flavors you prefer.

The simplest way to change the flavor of the dressing (to blend with or accent the ingredients or the rest of the meal) is to use another kind of vinegar, choosing among balsamic, apple cider, red wine, champagne, pear, blueberry, pomegranate; or use another kind of oil, some walnut or hazelnut oil in place of the olive is a fragrant delight. You can also vary the proportion of oil to vinegar, somewhere

between 3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar and 2 parts oil to 1 part vinegar.

You'll see that this section begins with some general salad dressing instructions, followed by some specific recipes.

Basic Tassajara Dressing

Here's a dressing that is about as basic as you can get. Omit the garlic and you have oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper.

1 clove of garlic, small

1/2 teaspoon salt

3 to 4 tablespoons vinegar (balsamic, sherry, or rice wine vinegar)

3/4 cup olive oil, good and fruity (if it smells like castor oil, it's rancid)

Pepper, freshly grated

Crush the garlic in a press or mash it with a mortar and pestle. Let the garlic, salt, and vinegar sit together in a bowl for at least 15 minutes to get acquainted. Slowly whisk in the olive oil. Make sure it is well mixed. Dress the salad so that it is moistened, but not dripping. Have the pepper mill handy for those who like it.

VARIATIONS

- *Herb vinaigrette*: Add chopped fresh herbs right before serving. (Then they will look fresh, instead of turning gray and slimy.)
- *Mustard vinaigrette*: Add 1 tablespoon or more of prepared mustard to the basic recipe. (Dry

mustard may also be used—a teaspoon or so.)

- *Garlic vinaigrette*: Add an additional clove or two of garlic.
- *Garlic-mustard vinaigrette*: Add an additional clove or two of garlic to the mustard vinaigrette. This strongly flavored dressing is especially appetizing on cold vegetable salads (e.g., blanched carrots, peas, yellow squash, or with cherry tomatoes).
- *Ginger vinaigrette*: Add 1 or more teaspoons of dry ginger powder or 1 or more tablespoons of grated fresh ginger. Substitute soy sauce for some or all of the salt, and roasted sesame oil for some of the oil.

- *Lemon or lime vinaigrette*: Use lemon or lime juice as part or all of the vinegar (along with perhaps a spoonful of honey).
- *Creamy dressing*: Use sour cream as part of the oil. Or add a dairy product, such as thinned cream cheese (or Neufchâtel) a bit at a time to decide what you like, crumbled feta or blue cheese, or perhaps some grated Parmesan.
- Or skip the recipes and do it your way, incorporating the ritual you know.

Herb and Spice Dressing

Here are some further suggestions or

reminders about what might go into your salad dressing once you've gotten started with your basic recipe. Add the herbs or spices in addition to, or in place of, the garlic and mustard. If adding ingredients one at a time and tasting is fun for you (as it is for me) then you will have a fabulous time trying out various options. Not all at once now.

Basic Tassajara Dressing, see above

Sugar or honey

*Dried herbs of your choice: thyme,
marjoram, oregano, tarragon, basil,
dill weed*

*Fresh herbs of your choice (in the
dressing or for garnish): parsley,
mint, basil, cilantro*

Seasonings of your choice: fresh

*minced green chilies, minced olives,
minced or grated onion, and so
forth*

*Spices of your choice: anise, curry,
chili (in place of black pepper),
coriander, cumin, or smaller
amounts of cinnamon, cardamom,
cloves*

The sugar is not necessarily meant to be tasted, but a touch will bring out the sweetness of the lettuce or other salad ingredients.

Again, consider using herbs and spices to complement the rest of the meal as well as the salad.

Tofu Bob's Herb Dressing

There's no tofu in this dressing, nor did Bob like tofu, and now we are not even sure there ever was a Bob, but the card in our recipe file is dirty, greasy, and stained with use. Folks must like it.

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS OF DRESSING

¾ cup cashews, roasted

½ cup olive oil

3 tablespoons cider vinegar

½ cup water

1 small clove of garlic, minced

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon dried dill

1 teaspoon dried chervil

1 teaspoon dried parsley

½ teaspoon dried oregano

¼ teaspoon dried rosemary

¼ teaspoon black pepper

Combine ingredients and blend until smooth. Some cashew chunks are okay. If you blend the cashews first, they will be more smooth. Check seasoning by dipping in a lettuce leaf and tasting, and “consider adding more salt and vinegar,” a helpful cook noted at the bottom of the recipe card. And what else?

The dressing is quite marvelous with a basic lettuce salad with tomato, cucumber, avocado, and green pepper slices.

Foundation Dressing

Here's another example of a sturdy flavorful foundation dressing. My first cooking teacher Jim Vaughn used to say: “If it lacks body, add salt. If it lacks bite,

add mustard. If it lacks flavor, add garlic.” One of the cooks at Tassajara says: “It’s not right if I can taste or feel any one particular ingredient.” Excellent for a variety of salads, you can also create many variations building on this foundation.

2/3 cup oil

1/3 cup lemon juice, freshly squeezed

1/2 teaspoon salt

*1/4 teaspoon black pepper, freshly
ground*

1/2 teaspoon dry mustard

1/2 teaspoon dry powdered ginger

1 to 2 large cloves of garlic, minced

Combine the ingredients, shake or stir thoroughly, taste-test with a piece of

lettuce.

VARIATIONS

- *Herb dressing:* Use olive oil and red wine vinegar. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of dried basil, tarragon, marjoram, or thyme, along with a generous amount ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup or more) of chopped parsley.
- *Spicy or piquant dressing:* Season with Tabasco, coriander, cumin seed, chili powder, or minced green chilis.
- *Green lime dressing:* Make the dressing with lime juice and add chopped or minced parsley, mint, and chopped green onion. Add a small amount of honey for flavor.
- *Sherman dressing:* Season with

curry powder and ground anise seed.

- *Cheese dressing:* Add cream cheese and dill weed. Mix in a blender or soften the cream cheese by adding dressing to it a little at a time. Add blue cheese in small pieces.
- *Fruit salad dressing:* Omit the garlic and dry mustard, but leave in the powdered ginger. Add $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of honey, along with a couple tablespoons of poppy seeds. A small amount of minced or dry onion can also be added (1 or 2 teaspoons—more if it's fresh).

Easy Asian Dressing

For all its simplicity this dressing is nevertheless still quite tasty. Use it on a delicate salad, or to lighten the feeling of a meal which seems heavy.

6 tablespoons olive or light sesame oil
2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
4 teaspoons soy sauce

Combine thoroughly. Taste and adjust ingredients, if necessary.

To See Virtue, You Have to Have a Calm Mind

When I began working as a cook in 1966, I developed a cook's temperament within a few hours. As

the dishwasher, I had been calm and serene, and when the cooks threw an occasional tantrum, I was amused and a bit embarrassed. I had trouble believing that cooks could actually scream as venomously as they did when it was obviously so ineffective in getting results. “That’s stupid and ridiculous,” I would gently remark to myself, while perhaps lifting an eyebrow. Soon enough I ate my words.

Sometimes the people who work with you are too polite to actually confront you about your behavior, but you know for sure that others have noticed when they start having meetings to discuss “What are we going to do about Ed?” Two people

were needed to replace me as dishwasher/baker, but that didn't help me to relax in my new position. "Get these eggs out while they are hot!" I would bellow. After all, shouldn't everything be perfect? And shouldn't everyone be doing his or her utmost and more to make it that way? At the urging of my fellow workers I agreed to make efforts to calm down.

In December of that year, Tassajara was bought by Zen Center. Because I was already a Zen student and had more than two months of experience cooking, I was offered the position of head cook for the new center. I made it up as I went along, and everybody knew that the kitchen

procedures were not very well worked out. But I took refuge in just doing what I was doing. “When you wash the rice, wash the rice; when you stir the soup, stir the soup . . .”

I realized pretty early on what every cook realizes. The food more or less takes care of itself; the people are what's hard. They don't do what you want. They don't behave the way you would like them to behave. They don't treat you the way you want to be treated. They point out your faults . . . over and over again. They won't put up with you and the repertoire of coping behaviors you've worked out. They don't applaud your every move. (For goodness sake, they aren't Mom and Dad. They want *you* to be *their*

mom and dad.) They don't read your mind. Good grief, you have to talk with them.

The women with whom I worked were especially likely to object to my style of management:

“Why are you talking to me like that?”

“Like what?”

“Like you were angry with me about something. What have I done?”

“Look, I'm under a lot of pressure, OK? Can we just concentrate on getting the work done and not analyze every word?”

People sometimes came late to work, took long breaks, and often when I watched them working, they didn't seem to be very present in

their activity. I couldn't tell what they were doing, but the rice would take a long time to get washed. Finally, one day I complained to Suzuki Roshi. I told him all the problems I had with people not behaving the way I thought they ought to behave (if they were really practicing Zen): arriving late, taking long bathroom breaks, gossiping, being absentminded or inattentive. Then I asked him for advice on how to get everyone to work with more concentration and vigor.

He seemed to listen quite carefully, as though he understood my difficulty and was entirely sympathetic. (Yes, you just can't get good help anymore, can you?) When

I finally ran out of complaints he looked at me briefly and then responded, “If you want to see virtue,” he said, “You have to have a calm mind.”

“That isn’t what I asked you,” I thought to myself, but I kept quiet. I gave it some time to turn me around. Was I going to spend my time finding fault or seeing virtue? It had never occurred to me that I could spend my time seeing virtue, but my teacher’s mentioning it made it seem obvious.

Later in our conversation he said, “When you are cooking, you’re not just working on food. You’re working on yourself. You’re working on other people.” Well, of course, I thought, that makes sense.

Without really having any idea how to actually do it, I began trying “to see virtue.” Whenever I found fault with someone, I would remind myself to look again, more carefully and more calmly. I began to recognize people’s basic good intentions, to sense people’s effort, the effort it took even to stand on the spot and be exposed for all the world to see. I would catch glimpses of our shared vulnerability.

It got to be quite laughable at times. Once I asked someone to get eighteen cups of black beans from the storeroom. About twenty minutes later I realized he hadn’t come back. “How difficult can it be to get eighteen cups of beans?” I

righteously raged to myself as I headed for the storeroom. Yet before arriving, I cautioned myself to look for virtue. What was going on? Sure enough, there he was, sorting through the beans, pretty much one by one, making sure that each was not a stone.

I felt a surge of impatience, then I thought, “Well, he is being thorough! He is being conscientious!” I don’t remember what I said, but my response was at least somewhat softened from what it would have been. Something more articulate than “You idiot!” emerged from my lips, and then I explained that he could cover a white plate with beans and easily scan through to check for small

stones. Perhaps the sorting would go a bit more quickly that way.

Ironically, seeing virtue cultivates virtue. If we want to bring out the best in others, it helps to see the best in them. After a while we might even acknowledge the best in ourselves. A lot of struggles were still ahead of me, but over the years I have continued to cultivate my capacity to see virtue. While it's an ongoing challenge, by seeing virtue we can transform ourselves and the world.

VARIATIONS

- Use a different vinegar or lemon juice instead of rice wine vinegar.
- Add ½ teaspoon of sugar.

- Replace a portion of the oil with dark roasted sesame oil.
- Make it zingy with the addition of minced garlic, dry mustard, or grated ginger.

Garlic Vinaigrette

The garlic, while offering its lively vigor on the palate, also gives *body* and helps to pull together the flavors of any salad it graces—a bowl of happiness.

2 tablespoons vinegar

¼ teaspoon salt

*2 to 3 cloves of garlic, pressed or
finely minced*

⅝ cup olive oil

Mix the vinegar together with the salt and garlic, then gradually whisk in the olive oil.

Spicy Garlic Vinaigrette

This could be called a curry vinaigrette, since the same spices are often used in Indian cuisine.

1 teaspoon fennel seed

1 teaspoon coriander seed

½ teaspoon cardamom seed

¼ cup olive oil

3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1 clove of garlic, average size, minced

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon black pepper

Combine the fennel, coriander, and cardamom seeds and grind in a coffee mill or spice grinder. Whisk together with the olive oil, vinegar, garlic, salt, and pepper.

Lemon Vinaigrette

2½-inch-wide strips of lemon peel

1 to 2 tablespoons lemon juice

Pepper, freshly grated

1 clove of garlic, pressed or finely minced

6 tablespoons fruity olive oil

To make the vinaigrette, slice the strips of lemon peel into very fine slivers and combine with the lemon juice, pepper, and garlic in a small bowl.

Whisk in the olive oil. Taste with a leaf of lettuce or spinach (or other salad ingredient) and adjust for tartness if necessary. If you are using this vinaigrette with the [Spinach Salad](#), do not add salt, as the feta cheese and olives are salty. Otherwise whisk in some salt to taste (testing with one of your salad ingredients).



Garlic-Lemon Vinaigrette

2/3 cup olive oil

1/3 cup lemon juice or wine vinegar

2 cloves of garlic, minced

1/4 teaspoon salt

Pepper or one green chili, minced

Combine all the ingredients. Whisk and taste. Like it?

Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette

Fresh lime juice is an underutilized flavor enhancer, while the cumin and coriander seed provide spice and mild pungent qualities.

1/2 teaspoon cumin seed

½ teaspoon coriander seed
Juice of 1 lime (about ¼ cup)
¼ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon honey
¼ cup olive oil

To make the dressing, start by grinding the cumin and coriander in an electric grinder. Combine with the lime juice, salt, and honey.

If you are using this vinaigrette with the [Spinach Salad with Apples and Almonds](#), omit the olive oil. Otherwise whisk in the olive oil and check the seasoning.

Spicy Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette

This vinaigrette adds the spiciness of

mustard, chili, and garlic to the Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette above. Additionally the green onion and cilantro at the end are fresh and lively on the palate.

Grated peel of 4 limes

3 tablespoons lime juice

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon each cumin and coriander seeds, ground in spice mill

½ teaspoon paprika

½ teaspoon dry mustard

1 pinch of chili powder

1 clove of garlic, finely minced or pounded to a paste

⅓ to ½ cup olive oil

1 to 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped cilantro

2 scallions, minced, both green and

white parts

Combine the lime peel, juice, salt, spices, and garlic, and stir to dissolve the salt. Add olive oil to taste (dip in a lettuce leaf and try it), minced scallions, and chopped cilantro. Whisk lightly to combine.

Lime-Cilantro Vinaigrette

Juice and grated peel of 2 limes

*2 teaspoons sherry vinegar or
balsamic vinegar*

2 to 4 tablespoons chopped cilantro

½ teaspoon salt

¼ cup olive oil

¼ to ½ cup sour cream

Whisk together the lime juice, peel,

vinegar, cilantro, and salt. Whisk in the olive oil and then the sour cream. Adjust taste for tartness and salt.

Root, Shoot, Flower, and Fruit

Flavors call out to me. I don't mean out of the blue, but I love to taste things. It's a way of knowing, a way of meeting, also a way of dissolving this too, too solid world. When I taste I go somewhere else, a world without crowds and stress, just you and me, and all the time in the world. I focus when I put something in my mouth. Something inside me melts. I am transported and completely still.

On one hand I simply enjoy, allowing my awareness to resonate with the various sensations. On the other hand, because I work with food, and talk about food and how to work with food, I also want to be able to articulate my experience. For this purpose I use not only the more classical categorization of sweet, sour, bitter, salty, and pungent (or peppery), but also my own set—the *earthy* of root, the *herbaceous* of stem and leaf, the *fruity* or *vibrant* of flower and fruit.

Earth flavors can be deep, woody, smoky, or woodsy. Mushrooms remind me of mulch and meadow, of sojourns in the forest. Grains have a sweet earthiness, ranging in my

experience from the intensely hearty and earthbound buckwheat to the more sunny corn and millet (and their colors correspond).

Bran and germ, like specks of dirt, flavor the more neutral quality of white flour or white rice.

Once I decided to taste plain lentils before all the other vegetables and seasonings were added for soup. Immediately I thought of dirt and fell in love with the earthy flavor, marveling that a growing thing could make dirt so palatable. Yes, beans are in this category.

Potatoes, yams, sweet potatoes, carrots, beets—they are all root vegetables. Washed and scrubbed, and especially when baked, here is

mellow ground, often sweet, occasionally bitter. I feel supported, rooted, nourished: deep red-purple earth, orange-brown ground.

The meat of land animals is largely in this category of earth: meaty, smoky, robust, dense, and chewy. Dairy products, especially cheeses, have earthy characteristics. In France some cheeses are described as “excremental—” or maybe that’s just American-French!

As well as sweet earth, there is also bitter earth: unsweetened cocoa, coffee, tea, nuts. Walnuts, almonds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds—rich, oily, bitter earth.

Leaf, stem, stalk—lettuces, spinach, chard, kale—these flavors

are herbaceous, grassy and green, along with green beans, green peppers, mustard greens, peas. As a group these are not as sweet as the grains and root vegetables. Here more is tart and bitter, pungent and acrid. Asparagus and celery epitomize stalks. Here also are broccoli, cauliflower, and the summer squashes. Tomatoes, although a fruit, seem “viney” and herbaceous rather than flowery or fruity. Eggplant, certainly, and cucumber, too.

These are flavors that move and leap in air and sunlight, flavors that engage the tongue. The effect in the body is also cleansing and invigorating. The body juices flow—

motion that is called life-force blooming, or well-being. Earth by itself, meat and potatoes, will tend to become heavy, slow, at times too damp or too dry, while the flavors of leaf and stem help to regulate and harmonize the flow, draining the damp, moistening the dry, moving what is solid.

Onions and garlic represent a particular or distinctive branch of this category. Raw, and sometimes boiled or steamed, they can have a strong, stimulating pungency. When sautéed or baked they become quite earthy, mellow, grounding—a vital ingredient in so many dishes because they provide a bass note, a stabilizing element, a sweetness

which moderates and enhances the vigorous flavor of *vegetable*. Try, for instance, adding sautéed onion to plain stewed tomatoes (tasting before and after the addition), and notice how the singular note of “tomato” becomes a chord rounder, fuller, more resonant.

Flower and fruit: here is a flash of color, the accent of lemon or orange. Apples and pears, peaches, and plums: the flavors in this category play jazz. There is sweetness and also tartness and color. The flavors *dance*: That layer of raspberry in the chocolate cake, the twist of lemon peel in the espresso.

All those berries in the summertime—the intensely colored

stain-the-counter, dye-the-hands flash of strawberry, blueberry, blackberry. You know that sunlight has brought these to fruition, along with generous amounts of water and some earth. Melons are also in this category, although some which are not so sweet, especially cucumber, have more of the flavors of stem and leaf.

Particular seasonings are also commonly used to add this “high note” or vibrant quality to otherwise pedestrian dishes: vanilla in chocolate chip cookies (all those earthy flavors are suddenly a lot brighter), cinnamon in apple or pumpkin pie, a fresh basil pesto with pasta or pizza.

I distinguish the same trio of flavor

qualities in herbs. Rosemary and sage clearly have woody, resinous characteristics which are most often too overwhelming for leafy greens and other stalky vegetables yet quite suitable for seasoning more earthy ingredients such as grains, beans, and potatoes or Thanksgiving stuffing. Parsley, marjoram, thyme, and oregano are in the midrange of herbs—herbaceous, pungent, bitter—they will “darken” a dish as well as “brighten” it. Parsley for example has a lemony side, but still won’t enliven the way fresh lemon does.

Especially important in my cuisine are the fresh herbs that have flowery, bright, fruity flavors: basil, tarragon, mint, and cilantro. Adding any one of

these makes prosaic ingredients or dishes start to “sing” in the mouth. The taste buds wake up and take note. For this purpose I also use lemon peel or juice, occasionally orange peel, vinegars, or any of an assortment of peppers: fresh green chilies, dried red chili powders, fresh ginger.

Spices fit into these flavor categories as well. For my taste, onion seeds and fenugreek, two spices used in Indian cooking, are the earthiest. Cumin seeds, coriander seeds, and nutmeg are in my middle category, while allspice, cloves, cinnamon, fennel seeds, anise seeds, cardamom, and mace qualify for my vibrant, brightening classification.

Often just a hint of one of these will liven up the flavors of a dish without being recognizable as “cinnamon” or “cloves” unless someone is particularly sensitive. All too often these spices are over utilized, and there is nothing but the flavor of nutmeg in, say, a spanakopita.

Often when planning a menu or wondering what might enhance a particular dish, I turn to this flavor categorization. Could this lettuce salad use something earthy like roasted sesame seeds or grated Parmesan cheese or shall I brighten it with a vinaigrette utilizing anise seeds or cardamom? If the menu is not complete, what is missing—something substantial and chewy

(and earthy) like a wild rice and brown rice pilaf? Something bright, juicy and refreshing? Green leaf or stalk? Within dishes, as well as among them, for me some balance or range is most pleasing.

Naturally, science is finally getting around to studying these things. A friend of mine just told me about the results of a recent study, and guess what! Food that is attractive and pleasing is more nourishing than food that isn't. I've believed that all along. Science, though, isn't sure; it was, after all, a rather small sampling.

Mayonnaise Dressings

Mayonnaise already has the oil and vinegar mixed in—they've been beaten into egg yolks. These dressings have a pleasing, creamy quality, and give salads a medium weight. Though good with lettuce, they are especially suited to potato and other vegetable salads. Start with mayonnaise and season it thusly:

- *Soy sauce mayonnaise*: Season mayonnaise with soy sauce. Curry, ginger, or garlic could be added for spiciness. For tartness, season with balsamic vinegar.
- *Blue cheese mayonnaise*: Season mayonnaise with blue cheese, dry mustard, salt, and pepper. Thin with yogurt.
- *Russian dressing*: Season

mayonnaise with chili sauce, minced peppers and onion, vinegar, paprika, salt, and pepper.

- *Green mayonnaise:* Season with chopped green peppers, green onions, vinegar or lemon juice, garlic, (dry or fresh) tarragon, parsley or watercress, salt, and pepper. Blended avocado or avocado pieces will also contribute green flavor.
- Other seasoned [mayonnaises](#).

Yogurt Dressing

½ cup yogurt

2 tablespoons orange juice

2 tablespoons olive oil

½ teaspoon dried tarragon

Lemon juice (optional)

Salt

Pepper

Mix ingredients thoroughly and season to taste. Use some lemon juice if you'd like more tartness.

Peanut Butter Dressing

½ cup peanut butter

½ cup water

¼ cup finely chopped green onion

1 clove of garlic, minced

1 tablespoon vinegar

*1 teaspoon dry mustard or 2 teaspoons
prepared mustard*

¼ teaspoon thyme

Salt

Mix the water slowly into the peanut butter to soften it, then season with the other ingredients. Add more garlic or mustard to make it more pungent; add more vinegar to bring up the tartness. Add water or oil.

Avocado Dressing

Serve on cabbage salads or with fruit or vegetable platters. This dressing will keep its clear green color for several days in the refrigerator.

1 good-sized ripe avocado, peeled and pitted

*1 small onion (or 1/2 of larger one),
peeled*

1/2 cup sour cream or yogurt

2 tablespoons lemon juice

Black or red pepper

1 squirt of Tabasco

1/2 teaspoon salt

Put avocado in blender or food processor and mix till smooth. Cut the onion into chunks. Add to avocado and blend until smooth. (If you don't have a blender or food processor, you can finely mince the onion and mash the avocado with a fork.) Remove to bowl, and add remaining ingredients. Check or revise the seasoning.

VARIATION

To spice up your avocado dressing, add minced garlic and/or some minced green chilies.

Tahini Dressing

Such a simple way to enjoy the earthy buttery flavor of sesame tahini.

½ cup tahini (sesame butter)

¼ cup lemon juice

½ cup water

Soy sauce

Mix ingredients together and adjust seasoning to taste.

Tahini-Tamari Dressing

Good as a dressing, this also makes a tasty dip for raw vegetables.

½ cup tahini (sesame butter)

½ cup orange juice, water, or oil

3 cloves of garlic, pressed

Soy sauce, to taste

Blend ingredients together until smooth. Adjust seasoning. Thin with additional water, orange juice, or oil to the desired consistency.

Thick Tahini Dressing

The buttery earthy flavor of tahini lends to its use in salad dressings and sauces, so aside from the [Chinese Cabbage Salad](#)

with Orange with which this is recommended, it can also be utilized in place of the Satay Peanut Sauce, or as a sauce with steamed vegetables, such as broccoli.

½ tablespoon lemon or lime juice

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

1 pinch of salt

1½ tablespoons water

Pepper

1 clove of garlic, pressed

1½ tablespoons dark sesame oil

¼ cup sesame butter or tahini

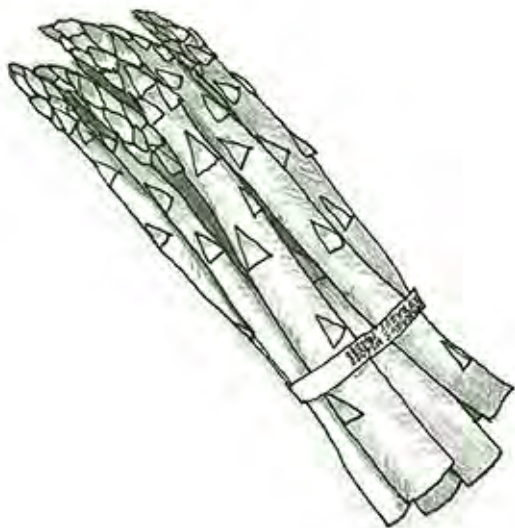
Mix together the first 7 ingredients and set aside.

Blend together the sesame butter and

oil, then slowly whisk in the other ingredients. The dressing should be thick; once it is on the cabbage, it will thin out, as the salt draws water out of the cabbage. (If you are not using this dressing with the Chinese Cabbage Salad with Orange, you may want to thin it out with more water or oil.)



*Vegetable Salads:
Radish, Cabbage,
Tomato, Beet, Potato,
and So Forth*



The truth is you're already a cook.
Nobody teaches you anything,
but you can be touched, you can be
awakened.

When you put down the book and
start asking,

“What have we here?” you come
to your senses.

Though recipes abound, for soups
and salads,

bread and entrées, for getting
enlightened

and perfecting the moment, still
the unique flavor of Reality
appears in each breath, each bite,
each step, unbounded and

undirected.

Each thing just as it is,
What do you make of it?

CAN YOU TELL FROM THE NUMBER of recipes in this section that I love salads? Let me count the ways. My favorite food has shifted from potatoes to arugula. I love the sweet juiciness of Chinese cabbage, the bitter earthiness of kale, the zest of lemon, the mellow brown tartness of balsamic vinegar. Also I love to cut radishes into strips with red on the ends, zucchini into green-tipped pieces. I delight in the invigorating flavor of fresh herbs, not only basil, cilantro, mint, and tarragon, but even flat-leafed parsley. I never seem to run short of ingredients to add—there are so many bright and colorful ingredients to choose from and combine. It's a bountiful universe (well, perhaps not everywhere).

For me this is not about being vegan, or eating raw foods because it's better for you or better for the planet. I taste what I put in my mouth. I savor it. And the world of all these vegetable (and potato and grain and bean) salads is one place that I find pleasure, satisfaction, and well-being—I am fulfilled and not stuffed to lethargy.

The Virtue of Radishes

The simplicity of this recipe is deceptive. Radishes in the supermarket often don't look too happy, and this dish depends on the goodness of the radishes, which probably has more to do with their upbringing than the creativity of the cook. Find radishes that delight you. You might

have to try a farmers market or plant some in your yard or a window box.

Radishes, round and red, white and elongated, or red with white

Sweet butter

Salt

Wash the radishes and remove the largest leaves. Arrange on a platter and serve with butter and salt in little dishes on the side.

This might be accompanied with sparkling cider or the mildly alcoholic French sparkling cider.

Radish and Carrot Salad with Green Bell Pepper

SERVES 2 TO 4 PEOPLE

1 small green bell pepper

10 to 12 radishes

1 large or 2 small carrots, grated

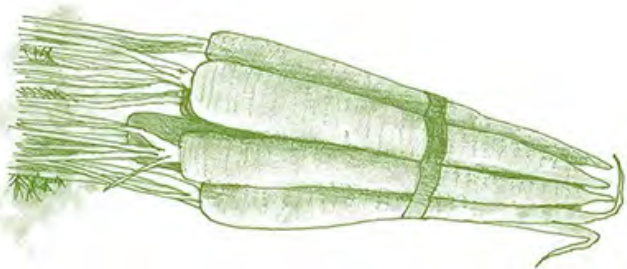
2 teaspoons honey

*2 tablespoons cider, white wine, or
rice wine vinegar*

1 pinch of salt

2 teaspoons dill weed

Cut the pepper in half lengthwise and remove stem and seeds. Slice each half lengthwise into 4 or 5 pieces, then crosswise into thin pieces. Slice the radishes into rounds, then crosswise into red-tipped strips. Combine the peppers and radishes with carrots.



Stir honey into vinegar to dissolve. Toss the dressing with the salad along with a pinch of salt and the dill weed. You're all set.

Radish Salad with Sprouts and Oranges

Even though I like the flavor and texture of alfalfa sprouts, I don't eat them very often, but when I do, this seems to be the main

way I enjoy them—soaked in orange juice. I mention that because not everyone appreciates sprouts, which are seen as being too much like rabbit food—hence, a sproutless variation also follows.

SERVES 3 TO 4 PEOPLE

3 oranges

1 bunch of radishes

3 to 4 ounces alfalfa sprouts

*1 to 2 tablespoons orange marmalade
(optional)*

Balsamic vinegar (optional)

Cut the peel off the oranges, and slice them into rounds or half rounds (see [A Third Way to Slice](#)). Slice the radishes into rounds (and then crosswise into julienne pieces if you would like). Break

up the clump of sprouts into smaller pieces and toss with the oranges and radishes. I like it this way—clean, refreshing flavors with no oil, salt, or pepper.

I usually get navel oranges, which are sweeter than Valencias, so if it turns out that you find the salad too tart, try sweetening it with orange marmalade and perhaps a touch of balsamic vinegar. Drain off some of the juice, mix it with the marmalade, and retoss.

VARIATION

In place of the alfalfa sprouts, use 2 to 3 tablespoons of chives cut into narrow sections or a couple green onions cut into thin pieces. To fill out the bulk of the salad, you may wish to add another

orange. Adding flat-leaf parsley leaves would be another option.

Excellent Apple Salad

One of our cooks at Tassajara describes this salad as so, so, so good. Made without mayonnaise, the salad has clean, refreshing flavors. The fresh mint makes a big difference, and (if you are feeling large-hearted) taking the time to do the variation—blanching the walnuts and removing the skins makes them much less bitter.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

3 Gala or Fuji apples

3 tablespoons lemon juice

*3 stalks of celery, thinly cut into
diagonal pieces*

*1 cup pistachios or walnuts, roasted
and chopped*

½ cup raisins or currants

2 tablespoons honey

*1½ tablespoons sherry vinegar or
apple cider vinegar*

1 to 2 pinches of salt

¼ cup fresh spearmint, minced

Radishes Smile, and All Beings Rejoice

What makes food *food* interests me deeply. Not everything that is edible nourishes the spirit, or soothes our deeper hungers: for food to be food,

it must feed. We all know this, and that each of us is nourished by particular foods. Still, we forget at times that it is not just the food in front of us, but our readiness to receive, to be blessed with food, that allows food to do its feeding.

Some hungers, of course, do not respond to food, yet to eat well—and this needn't be elaborate—means the world cares. Or perhaps more precisely it means that one of the world's myriad creatures—the one who is doing the eating—feels cared for. Which brings us to radishes.

My friends Pamela and Jerry, who had a cooking school in their home, wanted me to meet their friend Robert. At the time Robert was still

involved with his restaurant in San Francisco called Le Trou. Even my daughter, who lived in France for nine years, didn't quite get the name when she came to visit.

“The Hole?” she asked, somewhat baffled.

“Yes, it's short for The Hole-in-the-Wall Restaurant,” Robert explained dryly.

We had picked a date when we could all go to Le Trou, but it turned out to be a night when the restaurant was closed. No problem, we were told. Robert wished to invite us to his house for dinner. Splendid! A cook who will cook even on his day off—I felt honored already. One chef meeting another; what could be in

store?

I decided to be as gracious as my wine cellar would allow, and so I brought along two bottles of ten-year-old California wines. Not knowing the menu I didn't know whether they would be appropriate for the meal, but I knew well enough I had better not count on drinking them that night. Let the chef decide.

After a bit of back and forth on a dimly lit street with tiny numbers on the houses, we found number 300 and rang the doorbell. We were greeted enthusiastically by Robert and escorted up the stairs into warmth and light. Giving Robert the wine, I saw two bottles of twenty-year-old Bordeaux awaited us on the

mantelpiece. “Oh fine, fine,” I exclaimed, “have these another time.” I was thrilled. Robert does have his ways of taking you *in*, making you comfortable and happy.

Already won over, I was still not prepared for the magnificent simplicity of our appetizers. Radishes! Seated at a low table, we came face-to-face with platters of radishes, brilliantly red and curvaceous, some elongated and white tipped, rootlets intact with topknots of green leaves sprouting from the opposite end. It was love at first sight. Gazing at the plenitude of radishes, red and round with narrow roots and spreading stems, I felt a swelling joy.

Perhaps I am unusual: in fact, even for me it was rare to be so awed by radishes. So often one's first response might be more like "Radishes?" or "Radishes, that's it?" or "Radishes, geez . . ." and then perhaps a reminder to "OK, try to be polite." Yet these radishes kept growing on me, as though they exuded happiness.

Next to the platters of radishes were small dishes of sweet butter and salt. I tried a radish, first with salt, then with butter, then with butter and salt, then some plain bites—amazing, four dishes in one. Fundamental goodness, so often elusive, was plain to taste.

Accompanying the radishes was

French sparkling cider, the kind that is mildly alcoholic, slightly bitter, and not especially sweet—its tartness quite refreshing with the peppery crunchy radishes, the creamy butter, and the salt. The radishes also sparkled somehow shining with the gemlike quality inherent in objects which have been removed from dirt and polished. Life reveals its preciousness.

The rest of the meal was excellent: succulent slices of roast lamb, a salad with a curry vinaigrette. The wines were indeed superb, but what remains most vividly in my heart are the radishes.

To be able to see the virtue, to appreciate the goodness, of simple

unadorned ingredients—this is probably the primary task of a cook. When radishes aren't good enough, pretty soon nothing is good enough. Everything falls short. Nothing measures up.

Yet when someone can pick up a radish and be delighted, this is the basis for innumerable dishes. Delight moves through radishes and people alike, letting things speak, perhaps even sing for themselves, bringing out the best at each step. A radish appears, radiantly expressing the radishness of radishes, and all beings benefit.



Slice apples into quarters lengthwise and cut out the cores. Then cut into ½-inch chunks, and toss with the lemon juice. Combine with remaining ingredients, reserving the mint for garnish. Check

seasoning: Salty? Sweet? Sour? Garnish with the mint.

VARIATION

To make the walnuts less bitter, blanch in boiling water for one minute. Then cool and remove skins. Dry and roast in a 350° oven for 15 to 20 minutes or longer to dry them out and lightly toast them.

Pineapple-Jicama Salad with Avocado, Chilies, and Lime

This is a zesty and refreshing salad in hot weather. It can be really mouth-awakening and eye-watering or mildly pleasing, depending on the availability of ingredients and your taste for chilies.

Pineapple you know; jicama you may not know—it is a delightfully crunchy vegetable from Mexico.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

- 3 large leaves Romaine lettuce, sliced into strips, or whole small leaves*
- ½ red bell pepper, cut into thin strips*
- ¼ cup Red Onion Pickle (see below) or ¼ red onion, cut crosswise into thin arcs*
- Cilantro leaves, left whole*
- 1 small pineapple, cut into bite-sized pieces (about 2 cups)*
- 1 cup jicama, cut into thin matchsticks, or 1 apple, sliced*
- 1 poblano chili, cut into thin rings, or 1 green bell pepper*
- 12 sweet-smelling cherry tomatoes,*

cut in half

Fresh green chili (jalapeño or serrano), finely diced (optional)

Lime-Cilantro Vinaigrette or another dressing of your choice

1 to 2 avocados, cut into chunks

Set aside the lettuce and also some of the pepper strips, onions, and cilantro leaves for garnish. Combine the remaining salad ingredients, except for the avocado, in a large bowl.

Prepare the vinaigrette, and mix it into the salad, tossing gently with a large rubber spatula or your hands. Then fold in the avocado chunks.

Mound the salad on a platter, rim the sides with the lettuce, and garnish with the reserved vegetables and cilantro.

Red Onion Pickle

I still enjoy raw onion, but not in the large doses I used to, and over the years I've seen a lot of raw onion left on the side of otherwise empty plates. This has led me to appreciate the mildness of pickled red onion, which can be used for garnishing salads, adding to sandwiches, or enlivening vegetable dishes. They are relatively easy to make and convenient to have available.

FOR 1 ONION

1 red onion (6 to 8 ounces)

Boiling water

½ cup red wine vinegar

Cold water

½ teaspoon salt

Pepper, Tabasco, or red chili, to taste
Dried herbs of your choice (optional)

Cut the ends off the red onion and make a slit up one side, so you can peel back the papery skin and thinnest outer layer of onion. Cut a small piece off of the rounded side so that the onion will have a flat place to sit, then slice it thinly crosswise into rounds. Place the sliced onion in a bowl and cover with boiling water, a cup or two. Let it sit for 5 to 10 seconds, then drain off the water. (Or if you want a stronger onion flavor, place the onion in a strainer and pour the boiling water over and through the onion.)

Add the vinegar and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or so of cold water to cover the onion, along with some salt and your choice of pepper. Let

sit 30 minutes or longer. Drain to use. Or leave in the liquid and store in the refrigerator.

Add dried herbs for some additional flavor if you choose: oregano, thyme, or *herbes de Provence*.

Cabbage Salads

Cabbage is a very versatile for making salads. Here are some suggestions for how to utilize it as a *background* ingredient. (You might also want to refer to the [Thin-Slice Cabbage Salad](#). The [Purple Cabbage Salad](#) is another thin-slice, salted cabbage salad.) Although I sometimes think of cabbage as having a mild flavor, when I taste it carefully I

discover a slightly peppery, *floral* quality. Because raw cabbage is substantial and takes a fair amount of chewing, it is usually “shredded” or cut into very **thin slices**. (“Shredded” is used here as another word for cutting thinly.) Again, following the suggestions will be some specific recipes.

- Shredded cabbage with Monterey Jack cheese chunks and roasted cashew pieces, with an oil-and-vinegar plus honey dressing. Tomato wedges and sprouts could also be added.
- Green cabbage and grated white cheese—Monterey Jack, provolone, or Fontinella—seasoned with some finely diced

onion or thinly sliced green onion. Dress with orange juice sweetened with honey or an oil-and-vinegar dressing.

- Green cabbage with red peppers and roasted peanuts or red cabbage with grapes and walnuts.
- Cabbage with sliced cucumber, cantaloupe, grapes, apple, peach, apricot, or raisins. Use a sour cream or yogurt dressing, or blue cheese dressing.
- Red cabbage with an avocado dressing in the center.
- Chinese cabbage with tomato, avocado, Monterey Jack cheese, cucumber, sprouts, and hard-boiled egg which has been marinated in beet juice, then

sliced, or just a couple of these!

- Chinese cabbage with sliced oranges and green onion or parsley, cilantro, or mint.
- Chinese cabbage with thinly sliced radishes (could be daikon) and cucumber (could be lemon cucumber) and chopped parsley; a dressing of oil, lemon juice, and salt.
- Chinese cabbage with a dressing of dark sesame oil and soy sauce with orange rind and roasted sesame seeds: 6 parts soy sauce to 1 part dark sesame oil. Minced garlic and/or grated ginger would provide accent.

Chinese Cabbage Salad with Orange and Tahini Dressing

Chinese cabbage is tender and mild-flavored with a slight peppery quality, and carries dressings well. I used to think that this was a specialty item, but then I found it in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, and London, Ontario: a cosmopolitan delicacy now found in most supermarkets.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 small or ½ large Chinese cabbage

4 to 5 oranges

Thick Tahini Dressing

¼ cup cilantro, mint, or flat-leafed parsley, whole leaves

Slice the cabbage into quarters and then

into thin strips crosswise or at an angle crosswise. To get the full orange color, [cut the peel off the oranges](#). Cut the oranges in chunks, rounds, or half rounds. Set aside some of the orange for garnish and mix the rest of them in with the cabbage.

Mix together the Thick Tahini Dressing and set aside. The dressing should be thick; once it is on the cabbage, it will thin out, as the salt draws water out of the cabbage.

Toss the dressing together with the cabbage and oranges and garnish with the orange slices. Where is the dark green? Now I want some cilantro, (spear)mint, or parsley on there. If you would rather, go ahead and julienne or mince the greens a bit.

Chinese Cabbage Salad with Garlic Vinaigrette

Aside from the Chinese cabbage, all the other ingredients in this salad are from the West. Again, the cabbage blends in well with the other ingredients.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 small or ½ large Chinese cabbage
1 to 1½ cups Gruyère, Monterey Jack, Gouda, or Edam cheese, grated
½ to ¾ cup pitted black olives, sliced
Garlic Vinaigrette

Slice the cabbage into quarters and then into thin strips crosswise or at an angle crosswise.

Set aside a portion of the grated cheese

and sliced olives, and mix the remainder with the cabbage.

Mix together the Garlic Vinaigrette. Toss it with the salad. Depending on the amount of cabbage you use, you may not need all the dressing. The amount of salt in the dressing is intended to be somewhat smaller than usual because of the salt in the cheese and olives, so check it out. Garnish with the remainder of the cheese and olives.

Chinese Cabbage Salad with Oranges and Mint

Chinese cabbage makes such an excellent ingredient for salads: being moist and refreshing, it makes for tender, easy

chewing. I make this salad quite plain—the dressing is simply the juice of the orange, with a touch of salt—but you are welcome to season it as you see fit. (The [Kim Chee](#) will give you a start on coming up with possibilities.)

SERVES 3 TO 4 PEOPLE

½ small head Chinese cabbage

Salt

3 navel oranges

2 tablespoons fresh mint, chopped

Cut the half cabbage in half and cut out the core. Cut crosswise on the diagonal into fairly thin slices. Put into a bowl, and sprinkle on a bit of salt, perhaps ¼ teaspoon. Work it into the cabbage, gently squeezing with your hands. If the cabbage

is not becoming wet and limp after a minute or so of squeezing, add a pinch or two more salt, and work some more.

Cut the peel off the oranges and then cut the oranges into rounds. Mix together the cabbage, oranges, and mint.

VARIATION

If you do not have fresh mint available, use some minced parsley and a few pinches of ground fennel or anise seed.

*Purple Cabbage Salad with
Mango, Red Bell Pepper,
Smoked Almonds, and
Avocado*

Stunning colors dazzle the eye, vibrant flavors stimulate the tongue, delight flowers. And you can share it with others!

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

*½ head purple cabbage (10 to 12 ounces), **thinly sliced***

½ to 1 teaspoon salt

1 red bell pepper

4 tablespoons lime juice

4 tablespoons honey

1 tablespoon grated ginger

3 green onions, thinly sliced

¼ cup cilantro, julienne or minced

1 mango

1 avocado

½ cup smoked almonds, chopped large pieces

Put the sliced cabbage in a bowl, add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of the salt, and *hand-fry*, squeezing vigorously in your hands, tossing, mixing, squeezing until the cabbage begins to soften and release moisture. Add pinches of salt as necessary, continuing to squeeze and mix, (tasting as you go along so that you do not get too much salt) until the cabbage becomes tender, juicy, and lightly salted.

Cut the bell pepper in half and remove the core, seeds, and pith. Slice each half into 4 pieces lengthwise and then into thin strips crosswise. Mix in with the cabbage by hand. Combine the lime juice and honey and mix into the cabbage along with the ginger. Mix in half of the green onion and cilantro, reserving the other half for garnish.

To prep the mango, carefully slice off the skin all the way around. Stand the mango on its side—the slightly longer side is vertical—and cut off $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch slices until you get to the pit. Turn around and cut slices off the opposite side. Cut the remaining flesh of the mango off the pit as well. Cut the slices as you choose (big or small pieces), and reserving a few pieces for the top, combine the rest of the mango with the salad.

Prepare decorative avocado slices and (again saving a few for the top) fold gently into the salad.

On top sprinkle on half of the almonds, the decorative mango and avocado pieces, the rest of the almonds, the reserved cilantro, and green onion. Let your awareness be quiet enough and soft

enough to receive the blessedness.

VARIATIONS

- Use other cabbages (or kale).
- Use green bell pepper or carrot juliennes or radish pieces in place of the red bell pepper.
- Use lemon or mild flavored vinegar to replace lime juice.
- Use other sweeteners—sugar, for instance, is less floral than honey.
- Add pepper, red or black, or some minced green chilies.
- Use slices of 2 oranges in place of the mango. Or go in a different direction with some strips of sun-dried tomatoes. Hey, how about purple cabbage, green bell peppers, sun-dried tomatoes,

olives, and avocado? (Oh, did you want to use basil now in place of the cilantro? garlic in place of the ginger?)

- And so forth.

Rotten Pickles

Suzuki Roshi once told us a story from his childhood that left a particularly poignant taste in my mouth. Food is not just food. The entire universe comes along with it. Human nature makes its appearance bite after bite.

As a boy of perhaps ten or eleven, Suzuki Roshi had been sent by his father to study with a Zen teacher

who was his father's disciple. There were apparently four or five boys altogether. In the spring they would help their teacher make daikon pickles. The long white radishes would be layered in barrels with salt and *nuka* (rice bran).

We used to make these pickles at Tassajara. The mixture is dry at the outset, but as the barrel sits, salt draws water out of the radishes, moistening the *nuka* and thereby salting the radishes. At least, that's how it's meant to work. The salt acts as a preservative. The rice bran provides flavor and perhaps nutrition.

One year at the temple in Japan, a batch of pickles the boys and their

teacher made didn't quite make it; a number of the radishes developed noticeably "off" flavors, which happens when there is not enough salt. What to do when something doesn't turn out the way it should, the way you wanted, the way you planned? The teacher served them anyway! Perhaps he found this all well and good, but boys will be boys, and the young Suzuki Roshi and his companions refused to eat them. Each day the pickles would be served, and each day studiously avoided.

At last Suzuki Roshi decided to take matters into his own hands. One night he got the pickles, took them out to the far end of the garden, dug a

hole, and buried them. Isn't that what you do with something distasteful? Dig a hole, put the rotten stuff in, and cover it with dirt—a straightforward, elegant solution, returning earth to earth. Let it compost. Keep it covered.

Yet life is not always that simple. The next day the pickles were back on the table! Things you bury don't always stay put. What an unpleasant surprise, and what a sinking feeling to have what you were trying to hide come out into the open. The teacher, however, did not say anything about the pickles having been buried, or whether or not he knew who buried them. He merely stated that those pickles would have to be eaten

before the boys got anything else to eat.

Sometimes we have no choice; we have to taste and digest what we find distasteful. Suzuki Roshi said that it was his first experience of “no-thought,” when the conceptualizing mind stops and one experiences something nonreactively with no added comments. Chew and swallow. Chew and swallow. He could eat the pickles only if his mind did not produce a single thought.

The world itself is swallowed up. For a time the storyline disappears. No more “This is awful,” “How distasteful,” “How unfair,” “What did I do to deserve this,” or even “Yuck,” because then you would

have to spit the pickle out, or choke it up. Just chew and swallow.

We need to be able to conceptualize, to decide what is good to eat and what is not, yet we can suffer a lot by trying to have nothing but delicious experiences. Inevitably we will have to chew on and digest some difficult, painful moments. We've all had our painful experiences: family tragedies, children with cancer, parents or partners with Alzheimer's. And we do our best to chew and swallow.

We would like to say, "Skip the pickles," but this is the great dilemma that life serves up: Not everything is tasty and cooked to perfection, and there is no way to

avoid all that is unpleasant. If we become too finicky and picky, we are unable to eat, to really be nourished by life.

The dirt of our life contains both good and bad, sweet and sour, bitter and pungent. The cook unearths what is there and labors to make it nourishing.



Asian Slaw

With garlic, ginger, and cilantro, this salad has a nice bite. It is an excellent

accompaniment to [Roasted Vegetables with Satay Peanut Sauce](#), but you can probably find other uses as well.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

- ½ small head Chinese (Napa) cabbage, cut thinly (about 4 cups)*
- 1 small red bell pepper, cut into small thin strips (about 1 cup)*
- 3 to 4 scallions*
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated*
- 1 clove of garlic, minced*
- 1 serrano chili, seeds removed and minced*
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar*
- 1 tablespoon dark sesame oil*
- 1 tablespoon honey or sugar*
- Salt*
- Pepper*

*2 tablespoons brown sesame seeds,
roasted*

1/3 cup cilantro, julienne or minced

Cut cabbage into quarters lengthwise and cut out core, then slice the quarters into thin strips. Cut the red pepper in half and remove stems and seeds, then cut again lengthwise before cutting crosswise into very thin strips. Mince the white part of the scallions and cut the green part into thin diagonal pieces.

Combine the ginger, garlic, and serrano chili with the vinegar, oil, and honey or sugar. Toss with the cabbage, red pepper, and green onion. Season with salt and pepper. Taste to see if you would care to adjust the seasoning. Garnish with the roasted sesame seeds and the cilantro.

VARIATIONS

- Use a ½ cup or so of **Red Onion Pickle** in place of scallions.
- Add 1 cup or more of fresh mung bean sprouts in place of some of the cabbage.

Kim Chee

This is a Korean pickle which the Japanese also make. It can be quite strong if you like hot stuff, or made more mild for salad eating.

1 head of cabbage (usually Chinese cabbage)

1½ tablespoons salt

Garlic

Fresh ginger

Sesame seeds, roasted

Red pepper

Cut the cabbage into quarters lengthwise, then into bite-size chunks. Place in a bowl or crock and mix in the salt. Press overnight (see [Salting Vegetables](#)). Pour off the accumulated water the next day and save it for soup. Taste the cabbage and rinse it off if overly salty.

Season to taste with garlic, then with freshly grated ginger. Add some roasted sesame seeds and, at the end, some red pepper to taste. While you can be generous with the garlic and ginger, the red pepper is potent, and its strength comes in the aftertaste, so use a bit of caution there. Taste the pickle as you add

each seasoning so you know what is happening to it—you can make it as strong as you like. After seasoning, the pickle can be stored in glass jars in the refrigerator. The flavor improves with age.

For immediate use, slice the cabbage thinly, salt to taste, *hand-fry* then add the remaining ingredients.

Kale Salad with Radish, Apple, Avocado, and Sunflower Seeds

This kale salad surprises many people with how incredibly tasty it is. The secret is the *hand-frying* with salt—thank you, Javier Cabral, for the terminology—which tenderizes the kale bringing out some of its

juices. The other ingredients may vary, but here is a colorful combination of flavors and textures: fruits, roots, and seeds. The dressing is sweet-and-sour without any oil, so the overall effect is refreshing, bright, flavorful, *and* easy-to-chew. The variations are boundless.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

*12 to 15 leaves dinosaur or other kale
(about a bunch)*

½ to 1 teaspoon salt

4 tablespoons lemon juice

4 tablespoons honey

1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger

Black or red pepper (optional)

1 apple

6 radishes, julienne pieces or rounds

1 avocado, chunks or slices

½ cup sunflower seeds, roasted

Rinse off the kale. Cut crosswise into ¼-inch pieces, including stems if using dinosaur kale. (For the regular kale remove the leaves from the stems before cutting them crosswise.) Sprinkle on a ½ teaspoon of salt to start with, and squeeze vigorously with your hands so that the kale softens and moisture begins to sweat out. Taste carefully, so that you do not add too much salt, but, as needed, add a bit more salt to bring out the moisture, squeezing the kale between additions. Taste . . . already *so* good.

Mix together the lemon juice and honey, and combine with the kale. Taste . . . it's even *better*. Add the fresh ginger and some pepper if you want it. (Stop here, if

you do not have the remaining ingredients!)

Slice the apple into quarters and remove the cores. Cut the quarters in half lengthwise and then slice crosswise into narrow pieces. Gently stir into the kale along with the radishes and avocados. Sprinkle the sunflower seeds on top before serving.

VARIATIONS

- Use other greens, particularly Chinese cabbage, or other cabbages (sliced thinly).
- Use other elements for tartness: lime juice, apple cider vinegar, rice vinegar, pear vinegar.
- Use other sweeteners: sugar, date syrup, pomegranate molasses,

jams or jellies.

- Use in place of apple: pear or orange.
- Add dried fruit: sliced dried apricot, raisins, dried cranberries.
- Use some sun-dried tomatoes.
- Use other seeds or nuts: pumpkin seeds, walnut, almond.
- Add some minced shallot or finely sliced green onion.
- And so forth.

Carrot-Ginger Salad with Golden Raisins and Sour Cream

Use carrots with a sweet, full flavor that are not too woody. These two roots,

carrot and ginger, go well together, and their natural sweetness is enhanced by the raisins.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 cup golden raisins

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated

½ cup sour cream

Rind of 1 lemon, grated

1 teaspoon lemon juice

Salt

4 cups carrots, grated

Cover the raisins with hot water, let stand for 20 minutes to plump them up, then drain, reserving the liquid for soup. Mix the ginger together with the sour cream, lemon rind, and lemon juice, then salt to taste.

Combine the carrots, raisins, and dressing. Toss well. Adjust seasoning, adding more lemon, ginger, or salt as you wish. The raisins should make it sweet enough, but if not, add a little honey or sugar.

VARIATIONS

- Orange juice and rind can also be used instead of lemon.
- Use yogurt in place of sour cream, add a little honey.
- If you like, garnish the salad with some finely sliced scallions or some fresh cilantro leaves.

Avocado Salad with Roasted

Red Pepper Sauce

Vibrant and bright, this salad has the sweet, smoky flavor of grilled red peppers along with the buttery pale green of the avocado.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

2 to 3 avocados at room temperature

Niçoise or other small black olives to garnish



Make up the Roasted Red Pepper Sauce. Spoon out the sauce onto four (to six) individual serving plates. Slice the **avocados**, and fan out the avocado slices on top of the sauce. Garnish with the olives.

Avocado Platter with Nectarines and Roasted Red Pepper

You must have noticed by now that I am a big fan of avocados and roasted red peppers. Here they are combined with nectarines: pale green with orange and brick red; oily smoothness and refreshing juiciness accented with smoky fleshiness.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 roasted red pepper

1 to 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Salt

Pepper

2 avocados

2 ripe nectarines

1/3 cup olive oil

3 tablespoons orange juice

1 tablespoon lemon juice

2 teaspoons honey or white sugar

1 shallot, diced finely

*12 to 15 basil or mint leaves, sliced,
or 2 tablespoons fresh tarragon or
parsley, minced*

Prepare the roasted red pepper, cut it into strips, and season it with the balsamic vinegar, salt, and black pepper.

Prepare the **avocados in decorative slices**. Fan them out on a large serving platter or individual plates. Slice the nectarines. I like to try out different ways of cutting. One interesting way is to leave the nectarine whole, cut round slices off one side, and then the opposite side, then

finish by pushing out the pit and cutting what's left. Arrange the nectarine slices with the avocado. I prefer to pile the red pepper slices in 2 or 3 places, rather than distribute them over the avocado and nectarine. Or another possibility is to have the red pepper in the middle surrounded by nectarine slices, bordered by the avocado slices.

Whisk together the olive oil with the orange juice, lemon juice, honey, and shallots, and spoon it over the avocado and nectarine slices. Sprinkle on some salt and pepper where you think it will do the most good (more on the avocados?). Slice the fresh basil or mint leaves into thin strips (julienne), and scatter them over the top.

VARIATIONS

- Use rice vinegar, sherry vinegar, or champagne wine vinegar instead of the orange and lemon juice.
- Use 8 to 10 sun-dried tomatoes instead of the roasted red pepper. Plump them in hot water if necessary, slice them, and put some dressing on them as well.
- Use mango instead of the nectarine, and either roasted red peppers or sun-dried tomatoes. To cut up the mango, start by paring off the skin. Then, holding the mango on its side, make slices until you reach the pit. Then cut off slices from the opposite side. If you are willing to use odd-shaped

pieces, cut off what's left of the mango flesh and slice it.

Summer Salad with Summer Squash

Fresh flavors, light feeling, bright colors—see what you come up with.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

3 summer squashes (zucchini, crookneck, or scallop)

1 red bell pepper

1 shallot, diced

2 to 3 pinches salt

1 tablespoon rice wine or tarragon vinegar

1 tablespoon sugar or honey

Tabasco

*½ cup grated Monterey Jack or
cheddar cheese*

Play around and find out which way of cutting makes the shapes pleasing. Perhaps the squash could be cut into julienne pieces and the red pepper into short strips.

Combine the squash with the peppers and diced shallot. Sprinkle on the salt and gently work it in with your hands. Season with the vinegar, sweetening, and Tabasco. Garnish with the grated cheese.

VARIATIONS

- For more heat, add garlic; for heat and additional color, add watercress or nasturtium leaves.
- For coolness, add parsley or mint.

- In place of cheese, add roasted seeds or nuts.
- Replace the red bell pepper with 6 to 8 sliced radishes and the cheese with toasted sunflower or pumpkin seeds
- For a bigger, heartier salad slice up a tomato and an avocado and mix along with the vinegar and Tabasco. See if you'd like more salt or vinegar, or perhaps a spoonful of olive oil.

Zucchini Salad

A light blanching of the zucchini, while keeping it fresh, brightens the color and brings out some of the sweetness.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

3 zucchini

1 carrot

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Peel of 1 lemon, grated

Salt

Pepper

½ cup chopped walnut, roasted

*2 tablespoons fresh basil or mint,
julienne pieces or minced*

Cut the zucchini in thin strips or ovals, and cut the carrot into julienne pieces or grate it. Blanch briefly in boiling, lightly salted water, perhaps a minute or two. Remove and drain. Spread out on a dish towel to cool for a few minutes, then combine with the olive oil, lemon juice, and lemon peel.

Season to taste with salt and pepper. Garnish with the roasted walnut pieces and the fresh herbs.

Celebrating Tomatoes!

To celebrate tomatoes keep your eye out for tomatoes worth celebrating—or perhaps nose around for them—whether from the supermarket, a vegetable stand or farmers market, your garden or a friend's. The more flavorful the tomatoes are, the simpler I make the dressing—in this case just vinegar and sugar—so that their unique gifts will not be overshadowed. Similarly, you may want to utilize the milder flavor of the chives rather than the shallot. The Garnished Tomato Platter

recipe that follows provides several possible variations.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 pounds tomatoes

*2 shallots, finely diced, or 1 bunch
chives, sliced in 1/4-inch pieces or
narrower*

1/3 cup rice vinegar

2 tablespoons white sugar

Salt

Pepper

Rinse off the tomatoes and remove any stems. When I have more than one variety, I like to cut them and arrange them on a platter, keeping each kind separate, but you might prefer to mix them. Slice the tomatoes into rounds or cut them into

wedges. Cut cherry tomatoes or Sweet 100s in half, as the cut pieces will be easier to bite into and release more flavor. Arrange on a platter.

Combine the shallots with the vinegar and sugar, and spoon the mixture over the tomatoes. Just before serving sprinkle on some salt and pepper. (Putting on the salt earlier will draw a good deal of water out of the tomatoes and make them soupy.) If using the chives, scatter them over the surface.

Garnished Tomato Platter

Here are some ingredients that might enhance your tomatoes. Choose what you like from among them.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 recipe [Celebrating Tomatoes!](#)

2 to 4 tablespoons olive oil

Fresh garlic, just a hint (if you can't resist)

½ pound fresh mozzarella (or possibly feta), cut into slices or, if using ciliegine, cut into half balls

⅓ cup niçoise olives

¼ cup pine nuts, roasted

1 tablespoon fresh thyme or marjoram, minced

1 dozen basil leaves, cut into strips

The olive oil or garlic can be combined with the dressing to spoon over the tomatoes. The fresh mozzarella (or feta) may be arranged with the tomatoes. The olives, pine nuts, or fresh herbs may be

sprinkled over the top of the tomatoes.



Tomato Salad with Avocado and Black Olives

In the summer I enjoy the combination of

avocados prepared with tomatoes. Here is a sample. There are so many beautiful tomatoes these days, so see what you can find that brings you pleasure: red, yellow, Heirloom, cherry tomatoes—perhaps a variety of colors, although red tomatoes contrast well with the avocado.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 pounds ripe, juicy tomatoes

2 avocados

1/3 cup black olives (niçoise, kalamata, or oil-cured) or 2 tablespoons capers

1/4 cup olive oil

3 tablespoons red wine or sherry vinegar

1 teaspoon sugar

1 clove of garlic, minced

1 bunch chives or 2 green onions

Salt

*½ green chili (serrano or jalapeño),
minced, or 1 green onion (optional)*

*1 to 2 tablespoons fresh marjoram or
oregano, minced (optional)*

Tomato Ecstasy

Almost everyone has the capacity to taste, to discriminate between various flavors, yet having the capacity doesn't mean that people exercise it. One reason it is underutilized is that people tend to be timid about using language to articulate the differences they have noticed—they might be “wrong.” I

find it fascinating how language helps to develop taste. Often, when we cannot put a label on what we've noticed, it loses its significance. Conversely, when awareness has labels to attach to experience, details and nuances are suddenly relevant; they can be tagged.

One example of this is professional tea tasting. According to an article I read, almost anyone with the appropriate training can learn to be a tea taster. Participants at tea-tasting school are given twenty different teas and told, "This is what we mean by 'bright.'" Even though the twenty teas are different, they have this one common characteristic, "bright," which the tasters are

expected to identify. Another twenty teas are “bold” or “smoky,” “chesty” or “full-bodied.” In this way one can learn the requisite language and subsequently be able to pick out the “bright” or “bold” which gives Lipton’s or Twinings its distinctive flavor.

Outside the context of a particular profession with its specific terminology, we are often at a loss. In response to the question “What is the flavor of a tomato?” we are likely to throw up our hands in exasperation and say, “Well, you know, it tastes like a tomato!” as if that explained it, and in our culture it often does. Growers market pale red objects that are shaped like tomatoes but have a

mealy dry texture with the flavor of mildly tart water, and still they make a killing. The buying public doesn't find the distinctions important enough to give them voice.

Our culture teaches us that food is only food, that a tomato is a tomato (no matter how bland and insipid it is), and we learn not to pay attention to what is most important: the essential vibrancy of tomato. When we fail to notice the essential juicy, lush, and meaty vibrancy of tomato, somewhere inside of us our *heart* shrivels up, our succulent fecundity is unrecognized and uncalled for. We too are dry and mealy, and longing for something to break us open and make us feel alive and flowing.

In late summer I go to the Real Foods market on Stanyan Street in San Francisco and I buy tomatoes: beefsteak tomatoes, Golden Jubilee, Lemon Boy, Marvel Stripe, Zebra, Cherokee Purple, green grape, and cherry tomatoes. They often have a dozen kinds or more: red, yellow, orange, purple, and golden tomatoes; some sweeter; some more lemony; some meaty, fruity, herbaceous, or earthy.

I must tell you, there is a tomato-eating ecstasy (and it's completely legal). My mouth explodes with sunlight, water, blue skies, patches of cloud. Birds call and insects hum. Earth—be it red, black, brown, or yellow dirt—as been distilled into

flesh and seed, skin and juice. My body responds and comes alive.

A smile breaks forth. I am home, a place wild and robust. If a tomato can be this fully a tomato, it must be OK for me to be fully me, with all my bugs and weeds and unexplored but fertile mud.

If a tomato is just a tomato, well then, you will never know this ecstasy, and somewhere inside unfulfilled appetites will be aching and yearning to be fed. Tomatoes with no discernible taste, pulpy pink water, will not satisfy this hunger for vigor and vitality. You can taste the difference.

All these tomatoes at Real Foods also have a “family” name, the place

they come from, because that is also what or who they are: Knoll Farm, Full Belly Farm, Webb Ranch, Hungry Hollow, Terra Firma. When Kofi, a yoga teacher friend, came to dinner, he said that when he grew up in Ghana they always knew where the fruits or vegetables were from, this hillside or that valley, and who grew them. It's unavoidably part of the vegetable, part of the fruit. He said that even after years of living in the West he still couldn't understand how we could eat anonymous produce so indiscriminately. Don't we have any sense about these differences?

What is not measurable tends to be overlooked. What is distinctly

human, distinctly individual, unique, alive, and different tends to be unacknowledged, unvoiced. I say, let the tomatoes sing, let them dance, let them do cartwheels in your mouth, let them awaken your heart, your soul, your spirit. Let them speak sermons, soliloquies, and sonnets.

Wash, de-stem, and cut the tomatoes into wedges or rounds (or cherry tomatoes in half). Cut the **avocados** lengthwise, remove the pits, spoon the flesh out of the peels, and cut the flesh into fork-sized chunks. (Make them large enough so that they will not disappear into mush with some gentle stirring.) What do you think? Are you going to pit the olives? Combine

the tomato pieces with the avocado and olives.

Whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, sugar, garlic, and, if using it, the green chili. Toss lightly with the tomato mixture. Cut the chives into ¼-inch sections, or the green onions into thin rounds, using as much of the green as you wish. Just before serving, sprinkle with salt and garnish with the chives or green onion and the fresh herbs, if using.

Tomato Salad with Provolone and Fresh Herbs

SERVES 4 PEOPLE MODERATELY

2 pounds fresh, ripe tomatoes
4 ounces provolone cheese

*3 to 4 green onions (about ½ cup),
thinly sliced (both whites and
greens)*

¼ cup flat-leaf parsley, minced

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 to 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Salt

Pepper, freshly ground

Cut the tomatoes in half vertically. Then cut out the stems and cores, and cut the tomatoes into wedges. Place in a bowl. Cut the provolone cheese into thin strips and mix with the tomatoes. Toss with the green onions, the parsley, the olive oil, and some of the vinegar. Since the salt will draw water out of the tomatoes, wait to add it until right before serving. At that time season with salt, pepper, and perhaps

additional vinegar.

Green Bean and Tomato Salad with Feta Cheese

For many years, big tough green beans called Kentucky Wonder beans were all that was available at supermarkets. Now more tender varieties such as Blue Lake are likely to be carried there.

The back end of vegetable peelers used to have a slot that you could pull green beans through to shred them lengthwise, one by one. That was fun—and made Kentucky Wonders edible. I still like to cut the green beans lengthwise, but I do it by hand with my Japanese vegetable knife—and whatever happened to those peelers

with the little slots?

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

½ pound green beans

1½ pounds flavorful ripe tomatoes

½ pound feta cheese

2 shallots, finely diced or minced

2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

3 to 4 pinches of salt

Pepper

*⅓ cup fresh basil, cut into thin strips,
or 2 to 3 teaspoons fresh thyme or
marjoram, minced*

After washing and trimming off the ends of the green beans—you need only to cut off the stem end—cut the beans in half lengthwise or in 3-inch-long diagonal

strips. This is certainly not an exact procedure, because the beans curve in various directions, but it will allow them to cook more quickly and become more tender, if you do it. (Or simply cook the whole beans.) Steam or blanch the beans until they are tender, about 4 to 5 minutes. Drain.

Cut the tomatoes into quarters lengthwise, cut out the cores, and then cut into wedges. Cut the feta cheese into cubes or strips. Toss the green beans, tomatoes, cheese, and shallots together with the olive oil, then with the vinegar. Before adding salt, check to see how salty the feta cheese is—I get a kind that is fairly mild—then season to taste with salt and pepper. Like more vinegar? Garnish with the fresh herbs.

Corn Salad with Zucchini and Roasted Red Pepper

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 roasted red pepper

2 zucchini

1 ear of fresh corn

Water

Salt

Juice of 1 lemon

2 tablespoons honey

*2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, minced
or julienne strips*

Fresh cilantro leaves, whole

Cut the roasted pepper into strips. Cut the zucchini lengthwise into quarters, then crosswise into 1-inch pieces. Cut the **corn**

[off the cob](#). Blanch the zucchini and corn briefly in boiling, lightly salted water. Remove after a minute or two and drain.

Combine in bowl with the peppers. Dress with the lemon and honey mixed together and the minced cilantro. Garnish with some whole fresh cilantro leaves.

Cucumber Salad

The cool refreshing cucumber can be offered by themselves, or brightened with orange slices and a green garnish.

Cucumbers

Vinegar

Sugar

Orange slices (optional)

Chives or green onion (optional)

*Orange flower water or rose water
(optional)*

Slice the cucumbers and dress simply with vinegar sweetened with sugar (usually about equal amounts). To make it more colorful and appetizing, add a few orange slices, perhaps some chives or green onion. To give it something of a Middle Eastern flavor, add a few drops of orange flower water or rose water.

Cucumber and Yogurt Salad

Cucumber combined with yogurt makes a cooling side-dish, and is used in several traditional cuisines.

Cucumbers

Plain yogurt

Salt

Pepper

Mint, freshly chopped

Slice the cucumbers, then mix all the ingredients together and let chill. The mint gives the salad a Middle Eastern flavor.

VARIATION

For an Indian flavor, use minced green chili, chopped cilantro, and/or ground cumin seeds instead of the mint.

Pungent Cucumbers

The cucumbers and red bell pepper are

very lightly *cooked* making them mellow and receptive to the seasoning. *Pungent* is an accurate designation for this mouth-warming, peppery cucumber salad or relish.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut in half rounds

½ red bell pepper, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon dark sesame oil

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated

1 serrano chili, minced

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 tablespoon sugar

2 teaspoons soy sauce

¾ teaspoon Szechwan peppercorns or black pepper

Mint or cilantro leaves (optional)

Combine cucumber and red bell pepper. Cover briefly with boiling water—for perhaps half a minute—and drain.

Heat oil with ginger and chili, then remove from the heat, and combine with the vinegar, sugar, soy sauce, and pepper. Toss with the cucumbers and red peppers.

Serve immediately or let marinate for up to 6 hours. Serve at room temperature, garnished with the mint or cilantro leaves, if using them.

Melon Platter with Avocado and Fresh Figs

Three of my favorite foods: one beautiful presentation.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE GENEROUSLY

½ cantaloupe or honeydew melon

2 avocados

8 fresh, ripe figs

3 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons rice vinegar

1 teaspoon sugar

⅛ teaspoon salt

*1 shallot, finely diced, or ½ bunch of
chives, finely sliced*

*2 tablespoons fresh mint, cut into thin
strips*

Since I do not have a melon baller, I cut the peel off the melon and then slice it into C-shaped pieces, but if one is available, you could also make melon balls. Prepare decorative avocado slices (see [Avocado](#)). Cut the stems off the figs, and then slice

them in half lengthwise. Arrange the avocado and fruits on a large platter. A general rule of thumb is to begin with the ingredient that is the largest, either the melon or the avocado, and then fill in with the smaller pieces.

Whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, sugar, and salt. If using shallots whisk them in, as well. Spoon the dressing over the avocado, melon, and figs. If you are trying to use less oil, OK, use more vinegar and sugar. If using chives instead of shallots, distribute them along with the mint over the top of the arrangement.

VARIATION

When I don't have figs or a second type of melon to complete the platter, I have found sliced radishes to be an excellent

addition, strewn over the other ingredients.

Melon Salad with Lime and Mint

I make this salad with whatever melon I find available: cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon, casaba, Crenshaw, or sometimes a colorful combination—such delicious refreshment.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

½ pound melon

Juice of 1 lime

*2 tablespoons white sugar or maple
syrup*

Salt

15 to 18 mint leaves, sliced into narrow strips (about ¼ cup)

Cut the melon open and remove the seeds. If using watermelon, remove the seeds while you work with it. Use a melon baller to make melon balls, or cut off the rind, and cut the melon into chunks.

Combine the lime juice and sugar or maple syrup and toss it with the melon, then add a couple pinches of salt. Garnish with the mint leaves. The simplified version, of course, is to slice the melon and serve it with wedges of lime.

Eggplant Salad

Eggplant provides a good basis for olive

oil, lemon, garlic. Tomato pieces and olives dot the eggplant while lemon wedges brighten the borders.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 to 2 eggplants, depending on size, 1 pound or so

5 tablespoons olive oil

¼ cup minced onion

4 cloves of garlic, minced

4 tablespoons lemon juice

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon pepper

1 tablespoon sugar or honey

2 tomatoes, cut into wedges

¼ cup niçoise or oil-cured olives

1 lemon, cut into wedges

Preheat oven to 375°. Smooth (or brush) a

tablespoon of the olive oil onto the eggplant(s) and bake it for 45 minutes to 1 hour, turning about every 20 minutes, until the eggplant is quite softened. Let cool, then cut open and remove the fleshy interior from the skin. Mash the flesh and season with the minced onion, garlic, and 2 tablespoons each of the olive oil and lemon juice. Salt and pepper to taste. Spread the eggplant mixture out on a plate or platter.

Combine with remaining 2 tablespoons each of olive oil and lemon juice with the sugar and toss with the tomato wedges. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Decorate the eggplant puree with the dressed tomatoes and olives. Place the lemon wedges around the sides.

VARIATION

Another flavorful option would be to use leftover eggplant, which has already been cooked and seasoned. In this case the eggplant may not be suitable for mashing, but you can utilize the same seasonings and freshen up the eggplant with the tomatoes and olives. Perhaps a garnish of fresh basil cut into thin strips, as well.

Grilled Eggplant Salad with Roasted Red Peppers

This is a variation on a recipe in *The Greens Cookbook*. People enjoy it so much, you can have up to one eggplant for every two people—that's how good it is. Although basil and arugula are the herb

seasonings that are called for, I have also made this salad using fresh tarragon or cilantro. If arugula is not available, go ahead and use a whole bunch of basil.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 globe eggplants

Olive oil

2 red bell peppers

½ bunch fresh basil

½ bunch fresh arugula

6 cloves of garlic, coarsely minced

2 shallots, finely diced

Balsamic vinegar

Salt

Pepper

Slice the eggplant crosswise into pieces ¼ to ⅜ inch thick. Brush each side with

olive oil. Grill them over charcoal until they are well browned on both sides and bend easily when tested with tongs. (Are you still using that wonderful mesquite charcoal and deforesting northern Mexico? Now you can get Eco Char, which is made from walnut shells.) The eggplant should not be al dente, so if in doubt, take a slice off the grill, cut it open, and try it. When done, set the eggplant aside. (The eggplant slices could also be roasted in a 425° oven for about 40 minutes.)

Cut the red peppers in half, remove the seeds and pith. Cut the halves in half, toss with olive oil, and charcoal-grill, turning occasionally, until the deep red color (and texture) softens, and there are perhaps spots of black. Or oven-roast with the

eggplant. Set them aside. Rinse and spin dry the basil and the arugula. Remove the basil leaves from the stems and cut the arugula into 1-inch lengths.

When the eggplant and peppers are cool enough to handle, cut the eggplant rounds into quarters and the peppers crosswise into ½-inch strips. (If you've gotten large sections of black on the pepper skins or if the skins have blistered, you are welcome to remove the skins before slicing.) Combine the garlic and shallots, and then mix into the vegetables. Toss with the basil and arugula. Season to taste with balsamic vinegar, salt, and freshly ground black pepper.

Mixed Vegetable Salad

As cooks we can often forget that vegetables can be made into a salad by being lightly cooked and dressed with olive oil and vinegar. The resulting dish can be served hot or cold. No single ingredient need be stressed. With some enhancement leftover vegetables become fresh and flavorful. The variations provide a few more suggestions.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

- 1 pound of vegetables of your choice:
celery, carrot, cauliflower,
broccoli, green bean, asparagus,
summer squashes, or lightly cooked
vegetable leftovers*
- 1 yellow onion or red or green bell
pepper*
- 3 tablespoons olive oil*

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Salt or soy sauce

Dark sesame oil or olive oil

Peel of ½ lemon, minced (optional)

Cut the vegetables in small pieces or thin strips, so that they can cook quickly. Dice the onion or bell pepper. (Use more or fewer vegetables keeping in mind that fewer often gives the dish more *definition* and that more can provide a variety of color and texture.) Heat the oil and stir-fry vegetables (including onion or bell pepper) for 3 minutes. Spoon on the vinegar along with a sprinkling of salt or soy sauce. Cover and steam for 1 to 3 minutes. (Keep the vegetables crisp.) Adjust seasoning and serve, or transfer the vegetables to a bowl and let cool.

Sprinkle with dark sesame or olive oil when serving. Lemon zest is called that for a reason—because that's what it provides: some zip.

VARIATIONS

- Minced garlic or grated fresh ginger could provide their usual palate pick-me-up magic.
- A garnishing of olives, capers, or sun-dried tomatoes cut into thin strips gives color and some additional flavor interest.
- Pick another vinaigrette from the salad dressing section to provide additional flavor interest.
- Garnish with julienne pieces (chiffonade) of parsley, cilantro, or basil.



Coming to Your Senses

Back in the sixties at Tassajara our diet was fairly austere. Nowadays we have a “back door café,” where we put out fruit, breads, jams, peanut

butter, and other leftovers for snacking, but in those days our hunger was focused on the three meals. So those few occasions to eat took on great significance. Some of us ate voluminously and ravenously. Especially at lunch a feeding frenzy would often unfold.

A group of us would eat sixteen, eighteen, twenty half slices of bread, the equivalent of eight to ten full slices, and this was not light and airy bread but homemade, chewy, dense bread, plus gobs of spread. And very few people gained weight. Perhaps all those calories got burned up in the frenzy to eat more, although I was working pretty long hours, too.

Plus all this eating was done in

just a few scant minutes. In Zen practice apparently it was not appropriate to savor food or linger over it. Within five or six minutes after we had finished our pre-meal chanting and begun eating, seconds would be served, so after an initial taste of each bowl, a quick decision was needed. “Which bowl do I want more of the most? Oh, oh, here come the servers. Stuff it in.” It was painful to be so driven.

I noticed several things even in those times of seemingly insatiable appetite. Initially during a meal I would be aware of the flavor and texture of foods—the creamy nuttiness of oatmeal, the crunch and earthiness of carrot—and with this

experiencing of the food a wonderfully sweet pleasure arose. Yet as soon as I decided “I want more of that!” the pleasure ceased; the flavor and texture disappeared. All that remained was craving, a focus on “getting more” (receiving seconds), even though I already had “more” right there in my bowl (which I had to get rid of in order to get more).

Since we were sitting cross-legged for our meals, my sore legs were also a pivotal factor. Being absorbed by eating meant that I would be less preoccupied with my aching knees and painful legs, so if anything, I wished that the meal would go faster. I wished that the

pain would go away, that this would all be over. Having food in my bowls and in my mouth to occupy my awareness seemed like a useful way to take my mind off the pain. Isn't that the reason to overeat? To make the pain go away?

Looking back at this I am reminded of James Baraz, one of my vipassana teachers, describing his infant son eating strawberries: if the boy couldn't have both hands full of strawberries while eating strawberries he would start screaming in frustration, even though you could see his mouth was full of strawberries. (He's likely grown out of this by now.)

A little awareness is such a

difficult thing. You see what a fool you are being, yet you continue helplessly in the grip of the same foolishness, but the awareness does not go away. What an embarrassment.

At some point I took a simple, yet momentous step against the current: I would just eat. I would just taste and experience each mouthful, setting aside all considerations of the future and whether it would bring more of the same. When the meal was over, I would have *eaten* instead of having chased after imagined delights, overlooking what was already in my mouth.

Overnight I started eating half as much and feeling more satisfaction

than ever. I learned to ignore all of my scattered-brained objections: “But this is so dumb and boring,” “How will I get more if I don’t rush through what I have?” and “Where’s the fun and excitement of chasing after things?” Still I knew that I didn’t want to end up being at the mercy of my desire, missing out on the pleasures of root, shoot, leaf, and fruit.

Come to your senses. It is not the things of this world, be they chocolate or brown rice, that lead you astray. Losing your way comes from giving no mind to what is present while chasing after imaginary pleasures which are illusive and unobtainable. To wake up is to know

what is already yours.



Beet Salad with Radish and Cucumber

The earthiness of the beets provides a reddish-purple bed for the crisp and refreshing radishes and cucumbers. Each is dressed slightly differently for added interest.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

4 beets, cooked

¼ teaspoon whole anise seed

3 tablespoons olive oil

*1 tablespoon balsamic or sherry
vinegar*

1 teaspoon honey

Salt

*Red pepper (chili flakes, Tabasco, or
homemade chili powder)*

1 cucumber

6 red radishes

*2 tablespoons rice wine or Champagne
vinegar*

1 tablespoon sugar

¼ teaspoon dried thyme

Pepper

*2 to 3 tablespoons chives, thinly
sliced, or flat-leafed parsley,*

julienne pieces

*1 tablespoon minced fresh tarragon
(optional)*

Slice the beets into half rounds or thin wedges. Grind the anise seed in a mortar and pestle, or mince it coarsely with a knife. Toss the beets with the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, honey, and anise seed, and then season to taste with salt and red pepper. Spread out on a plate or platter.



Peel the cucumber and cut into rounds. Slice the radishes into rounds or julienne

pieces. Toss the cucumber and radish with the rice vinegar, sugar, and dried thyme. Season with salt and black pepper. Arrange on top of the beets.

Cut the chives into narrow pieces (or the parsley into julienne strips) and use to garnish the cucumber and radishes. Another option would be to use fresh tarragon to garnish.

VARIATION

Slice up 3 or 4 sun-dried tomatoes to go in with the beets and/or mix a tablespoon of capers in with the cucumber and radishes.

Beet Salad with Watercress

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

*5 to 6 large or 10 to 12 small beets
(about 1 pound)
1 bunch watercress
2 green onions
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
3 tablespoons honey
¾ teaspoon allspice
Salt
Pepper
1 tablespoon olive oil*

Preheat oven to 375°. Baking the beets rather than boiling or steaming them will give them a richer flavor. Leave an inch of stem on the beets and place them whole in a baking dish. Add about ½ inch of water, cover, and bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Remove and let cool, then slip off the stems and skin by hand. Slice the beets

into rounds or half rounds.

Remove any tough stems from the watercress, then wash and dry it. Thinly slice the green onions. Save some of the green for garnish, then mince the rest of the onions, especially the white part.

Combine the vinegar and honey. Use about two-thirds of it to dress the beets, along with the minced green onion. Then season the beets with the allspice, and some salt and pepper. Toss the cress with the olive oil, then with the remaining vinegar-honey mixture and some salt and pepper. Serve the beets and cress side by side and garnish the beets with the remaining green onion slices.

VARIATION

Use 2 to 3 dozen leaves of arugula instead

of the watercress—or what do you have in your garden or refrigerator, calling to you?

Beet Salad with Pomegranate Vinegar and Pomegranate Syrup

The pomegranate vinegar and syrup sneak up on you—what appears to be the same-old deep red-purple beets suddenly *sparkles* in your mouth. You may know, but your guests express astonishment, “what the . . .?” The trick is to locate the pomegranate vinegar and the pomegranate syrup (or pomegranate molasses). Serve with some salad greens on the side if you wish.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

3 to 4 cooked beets

3 tablespoons pomegranate vinegar

*3 tablespoons pomegranate syrup or
pomegranate molasses*

Salt

Red pepper or ground chili

2 tablespoons sliced chives

Slice the beets into half rounds or narrow half wedges. Mix together the pomegranate vinegar and syrup and dress the beets. Taste and add a touch more of the vinegar or syrup if you want. Salt lightly so the flavors come into *focus*, but not so much you taste *salt*. Use a few pinches of red pepper so that the flavors *fill* your mouth, but not so much that the beets are *hot*.

Garnish with the chives.



Potato Salad with Arugula and

Garlic-Mustard Vinaigrette

I make this salad over and over for lunches, dinners, and picnics. People keep asking, “Where did you get the recipe?” (Oh, out of thin air . . . careful observation of the obvious, following my bliss.) The arugula, with its mustardy quality, brightly accents the potato, but if arugula is not available, spinach is a good green, leafy alternative.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 pounds red potatoes

Water

4 large shallots, thinly sliced

4 cloves of garlic, minced

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

½ teaspoon salt

Pepper, freshly ground

*3 tablespoons sherry wine vinegar or
balsamic vinegar*

½ cup olive oil

½ bunch arugula or small spinach

Wash the potatoes and cut into bite-size chunks: halves, quarters, eighths, or more, depending on the size of the potatoes. Cook potatoes in boiling, salted water 6 to 8 minutes until tender. (Personally I am not a fan of those *al dente* potato salads.)

Whisk shallots, garlic, mustard, salt, and several grinds of pepper together with the vinegar in large bowl. Whisk in the olive oil. Drain the potatoes. Toss with the vinaigrette. Cool for 20 to 30 minutes, before adding the arugula.

Cut the stems off the arugula and if the

leaves are large, cut them in half crosswise. (You can cut the whole bunch while it is nicely bound together, then wash and spin dry what you will use.) Fold the arugula into the potatoes. Depending on how hot the potatoes are, the arugula may cook very slightly, soften, and sweeten. The dish can sit a while before serving, if desired. Adjust salt, pepper, and vinegar to taste before serving.

Potato Salad with Corn and Red Pepper

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 ears of corn (about 1½ cups kernels)
1½ pounds red potatoes, cubed

1 red bell pepper

¼ cup olive oil

*4 to 6 green onions, thinly sliced
(white and green parts)*

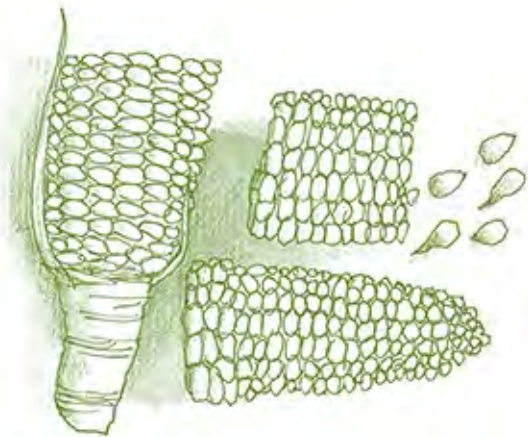
2 to 3 cloves of garlic, minced

2 tablespoons tarragon vinegar

Salt

Pepper

*½ bunch flat-leaf parsley, whole
leaves removed from stems, or 1
bunch of watercress, large stems
removed*



I suggest cutting the kernels off the corn while it is laying flat on the counter (see [Sweet Corn](#)). Cook the potato cubes in lightly salted water until tender, about 7 to 8 minutes. When done to your liking, add the corn for about 30 seconds, then drain (reserving the liquid if you have another use for it).

Meanwhile, cut the red bell pepper lengthwise, then cut it crosswise into thin strips. Sauté the red pepper strips in the heated olive oil for a minute or so, add the green onion and garlic, and continue cooking another minute or two. Combine the cooked peppers (oil, onion, garlic) with the drained potatoes and corn. Season with the vinegar and salt and black pepper to taste. Serve garnished with the parsley or watercress.

Warm Radicchio Salad with Fresh Mozzarella, Avocado, and Fire-Roasted Walnuts

You've never had my warm radicchio salad, have you? The rosy dark lavenders

of the warm radicchio provide a majestic canvas for the white mozzarella, the lemony green of the avocado, the browns of the walnuts, the greens of the garnish. I've never had leftovers of this salad, which I serve on a sky-blue platter.

The bitterness of the radicchio is softened by the light sauté with garlic and the steaming with balsamic, and sets off the oily richness of the other main ingredients. (Adding tomato as mentioned in the variations also softens the bitterness.) This is also a dish I take to (and assemble) at potlucks where it disappears quickly—and provides ample proteins and healthy oils.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

½ cup walnut halves (or pieces)

1 teaspoon sugar

Salt

*8 ounces fresh mozzarella (bocconcini
or ciliegine)*

5 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon herbes de Provence

*1 to 2 heads radicchio (about 12
ounces), the round ones (not
Trevisio)*

1 shallot, finely diced

3 cloves of garlic, minced

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Pepper

1 avocado

2 green onions, cut thinly

12 basil leaves, chiffonade (optional)

Roast the walnuts in a dry skillet until
lightly browned and fragrant (5 to 6

minutes). Sprinkle on the sugar and a pinch or two of salt, and continue cooking so that the sugar melts. Stir (with a heat-resistant rubber spatula) as best you can to coat the walnuts with the melted sugar and salt. Remove immediately to a bowl—and for ease of cleaning, rinse out the pan immediately as well. (This is a modest amount of sugar for sweetening the walnuts, as I am not aiming for nut candy.)

Prepare the fresh mozzarella by having it *luxuriate* in olive oil prior to gracing the salad. If the fresh mozzarella is bocconcini slice it into 1/8-inch rounds. (Cut the ciliegine in half.) Put in a bowl with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and the *herbes de Provence*. If you think about it, turn from time to time.

Prep the radicchio by cutting it into

quarters top to bottom. Cut out the core and lift out half of the leaves. Cut these in half crosswise. Cut the bottom half of leaves in half lengthwise and 3 or 4 pieces crosswise. (Though not exact, the pieces are about the same size.)

Heat the remaining 3 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet, sauté the radicchio with the shallots for perhaps a minute, and add the garlic and a pinch or two of salt. Cook briefly, then add the balsamic vinegar, and continue cooking, stirring until the radicchio is lightly wilted—soft and succulent. Add some black pepper, freshly ground, and check the seasoning. Remove to platter or large plate and spread it out in a thin layer.

Open the [avocado](#) and cut decorative slices. On top of the radicchio position the

fresh mozzarella cheese, the avocado slices, then the walnuts (crumble them apart first if you need to). Garnish with the green onion and, if you have it, the fresh basil.

VARIATION

Add 1 peeled, diced tomato to the radicchio when sautéing, or add 6 sundried tomatoes cut into strips with the garnishings.

Warm Red Cabbage Salad with Dried Fruit and Feta

This recipe takes a California cuisine classic and dresses it up with dried fruit and feta cheese. I enjoy poking around for

what to use, besides the cabbage, in the way of fruit, nuts, and cheese.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

½ cup sunflower seeds

1 teaspoon white sugar

Salt

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 red onion, diced

3 to 4 cloves of garlic, minced

1 pound red cabbage, cut into thin shreds

1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, minced

4 ounces dried fruit (apricot, peach, or pear), stewed and sliced

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

4 ounces feta cheese (sheep's milk)

½ to ¾ cup Parmesan cheese (about 2 ounces), freshly grated

*1 tablespoon fresh thyme, minced, or 2
tablespoons fresh parsley, minced*

Roast the sunflower seeds in a dry skillet for 5 to 8 minutes until lightly browned. Sprinkle on the sugar and a pinch or two of salt. Stir briefly to dissolve the sugar, and then remove from the heat. Get the seeds out of the pan immediately into a bowl, so that they do not stick to the pan as it cools. (Once the seeds have cooled in the bowl, you can break them apart easily.)

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet and sauté the onion for several minutes. Stir in the garlic, cook briefly, and add the cabbage. Stir and cook a couple of minutes, then add the rosemary, dried fruit (if it's soft enough you don't to precook

it), and vinegar. Cover the pan, reduce the heat, and cook for 2 to 3 minutes until the cabbage is as tender as you like.

Stir in the feta cheese, and check the seasoning. Serve garnished with the Parmesan and the thyme or parsley.

Garbanzo Bean Salad with Garlic-Lemon Vinaigrette

This salad sparkles with color and flavor to accent the mellow earth tones of the garbanzo beans. It's a great salad to take in various flavor directions, so in addition to the (humble) Garlic-Lemon Vinaigrette, you could also try out some of the variations.

Garlic-Lemon Vinaigrette

2 cups cooked garbanzo beans

2 stalks celery, cut in thin commas or boomerangs

1 red pepper, cut in thin strips or diced

1 dill pickle, diced or inch-long strips

4 red radishes, juliennes

1 carrot, juliennes

2 tomatoes

2 to 3 green onions, cut to thin pieces

¼ cup parsley, minced

*2 to 3 tablespoons cilantro, minced
(optional)*

Mix up the dressing and combine it with the hot beans, or heat it with the beans for deeper penetration. Some of the beans could be mashed and mixed with the

dressing. Let cool.

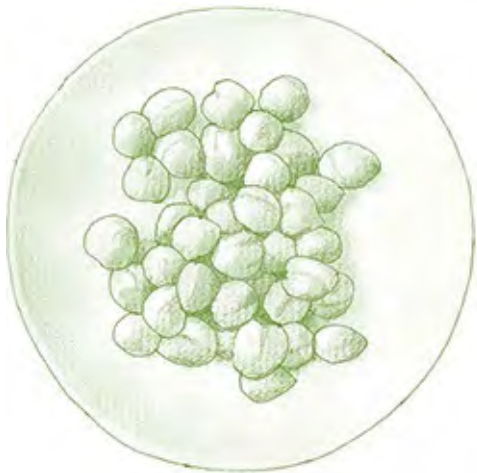
Cut the vegetables into thin, shapely pieces as described, or chop, grate, or mince them, as you wish. Combine with the beans. Cut the tomatoes in wedges, and set them aside for garnishing.

When ready to serve, drain off some of the vinaigrette, and toss with the tomatoes. Mix some into the salad and place the rest on top. Garnish with the green onions and parsley, and/or cilantro, if using it.

VARIATIONS

- Use finely cut green bell peppers, lightly blanched broccoli flowerets, corn kernels, green or black olives, and/or strips of sundried tomato instead of fresh tomato.

- Garnish with grated cheese (Parmesan is good here as usual, but I'd also consider Gouda or provolone) or garnish with toasted nuts or seeds.
- Change the seasonings used in the dressing (refer to [“Salad Dressings”](#)). For a more “Mediterranean” feeling, try dried thyme, oregano, and/or basil; for a “Southwestern” feeling, try red chili, cumin, and dried oregano with a fresh cilantro garnish; for a “Middle Eastern” feeling, try cumin and coriander (freshly ground) with some red pepper and a fresh mint garnish.



White Bean Salad with Olives and Zucchini

The lightly sautéed vegetables add nutty summer flavors and a slight bit of

crunchiness to the soft earthiness of the beans.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

½ cup dry white beans (navy beans)

(about 1½ cups cooked)

4 cups water

1 large or 2 small zucchini

2 shallots

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ large carrot, grated

2 to 3 tablespoons lemon juice

3 ounces niçoise or kalamata olives,

pitted (about ⅓ to ½ cup olive pieces)

1 jalapeño chili, minced

½ teaspoon sugar

Salt

Fresh basil sprigs for garnish

(optional)

If you think of it, soak the white beans overnight. Cook with the 4 cups of water until tender, 20 to 30 minutes if beans are presoaked, about 1 hour if not (or pressure-cook).

Cut the zucchini with the [Chinese rolling cut](#). Mince the shallots. Sauté the shallots and zucchini in the olive oil for a minute or two, then add the carrot. After another minute, add the lemon juice, then remove from the heat.

When the beans are tender—completely!—drain them (reserving the liquid for another use), and combine them with the sautéed vegetables. Add the olive pieces, minced chili, and sugar, then salt to taste. If you want basil, remove the

leaves from the stems, roll a pile of them into a log, and slice crosswise into narrow pieces. Wait for the salad to cool, then mix in the basil. I thought this was also excellent without the basil, but basil is such a big part of summer . . .

Mediterranean Rice Salad

I love finding uses for leftovers, and here's a way to utilize rice, turning it into a sparkling, flavorful salad.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

2 cups cooked rice

1 green pepper

3 tablespoons olive oil

2 cloves of garlic, minced

*2 tablespoons water, white wine, or
dry vermouth*

2 tablespoons lemon juice

*1 tablespoon grated or minced lemon
zest*

1/4 teaspoon dried thyme

1/4 teaspoon dried oregano

*1/4 cup olives (niçoise, oil-cured, or
kalamata)*

1 tablespoon capers

Salt

Pepper, freshly grated

2 tomatoes

3 green onions, thinly sliced

*12 large fresh basil leaves, cut thinly
(optional)*

*1 cup Asiago or Parmesan cheese,
grated*

Cook the rice (starting with one cup raw), if you do not have any leftover.

Dice the green pepper or cut it into quarters lengthwise and then crosswise into thin strips.

Sauté the peppers in the olive oil for 2 to 3 minutes, add the garlic and cook another minute. Mix in the water or wine (cleaning the bottom of the pan) and then combine with the rice.

Mix in the lemon juice, lemon peel, thyme, oregano, olives, and capers, then season with salt and pepper.

Cut off the tops and bottoms of the tomatoes, then cut them in half through the equator, before cutting the halves into wedges. Toss lightly with the rice mixture. Check the seasoning for salt, pepper, lemon, herbs—and adjust.

Garnish with the green onion and basil (if you are using it). Serve with the grated cheese on the side.

Tabbouli Salad

Bulgur makes a wonderful salad with a fragrant wheaty flavor. Part of the convenience of this salad is that the bulgur can simply be soaked before adding the other ingredients. The green of parsley, cilantro, and mint graces the basic recipe, while the variation allows for the addition of cucumber and tomato.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 cup bulgur

2 cups boiling water

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons lemon juice

2 cloves of garlic, minced

*½ teaspoon whole cumin seed, freshly
ground or minced*

Salt

Pepper, freshly grated

2 green onions, minced

½ cup parsley, minced

½ cup cilantro, minced

½ cup mint, minced

*¼ cup pine nuts, roasted, or walnuts,
roasted and chopped*

Soak the bulgur in twice as much water for 5 minutes to 1 hour until it's tender. Drain any water that has not been absorbed and save it for soup or bread. Season with the olive oil, lemon juice,

garlic, cumin seed, salt, and black pepper.

Combine the seasoned bulgur with the green onion and minced greens. (Use more of one of the other greens, if you do not have all three available.) Check the seasoning to see if you want more of anything. Serve garnished with the roasted pine nuts.

VARIATIONS

- Season with fresh basil.
- Add a peeled diced cucumber and/or a diced tomato.

Macaroni Salad with Tomatoes, Bell Pepper, and Red Onion

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

½ pound macaroni or shell pasta

Water

1 red onion (about 6 ounces), thinly sliced

1 green bell pepper, quartered lengthwise, then sliced crosswise

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved

½ tablespoon red wine or balsamic vinegar

½ teaspoon red chili pepper or Tabasco, to taste

Salt

2 tablespoons capers (optional)

Cook the macaroni in boiling salted water until tender. Add the red onion and green bell pepper slices and continue cooking

for another 30 seconds. Drain (reserving the liquid for another use if possible).

Combine with the olive oil, tomatoes, vinegar, red pepper, and salt to taste. If you're in the mood, add some capers.

Soups and Stocks



*The Hidden Path:
Revealed at Last*

Take a look, after all.
Has berating yourself,
being unhappy with yourself and
others,
things and events, produced
happiness
or unhappiness?
With all this criticism,
blame, hurt, fault-finding,
has improvement taken place?
Do you now, at last,

have every reason
to be happy with yourself?
Leave well enough alone.
Appreciate this carrot, cabbage,
cucumber, and cress, this time
with the less than perfect.
The remarkable flavor you have
searched for is everywhere.
Let it come home
to your heart.

SOUPS SATISFY HUNGER WITH THEIR reassuring palatability and nurturing aromas. They are a regular feature of our lunches, along with salads and breads. Soups embody soul.

Traditionally vegetable soups have often been enriched with cream, as it is the classic way to smooth out or soften the flavors and to make soups more silken on the palate. However, without the cream, the vegetable soups will retain more of their essential and vibrant vegetable flavors. “A good cook,” said Zen master Dogen, “should be able to make an excellent soup using just wild grasses as well as one using butter and cream.”

At home, since I don't generally have cream around, I rely on fresh herbs,

judicious use of lemon peel or juice, black pepper, or red chili to enhance flavors. Obviously, this is a good place to develop and trust your own aesthetic, and find out for yourself whether or not you want cream in your soup.

Both general guidelines about soup making and specific recipes are included in this chapter. So if you are making things up as you go along, you will find some pointers to help you wing it with more confidence. If you are more inclined to working with definitive instructions, you'll be happy to see that there are some tried and true recipes.

MUSING ABOUT MAKING SOUP

One of my interests in writing cookbooks

is to demystify the process, and the making of soups exemplifies this. My *getting real* answer to how to make soup is that you cook vegetables and other ingredients in water or a vegetable stock (flavored water). And soups become thicker when you use ingredients that add body: beans, potatoes, winter squashes, grains, or nut butters. Blending the soup or utilizing a flour-thickened sauce will also give the soup a more substantial consistency.

This chapter begins with a section on making vegetable stocks and then continues with some basic information about preparing soup, starting with those with a thinner consistency and then moving on to thicker soups and cold soups. (If you want to go directly to the section on [soup making proper](#).)

Vegetable Stocks

Vegetable stocks give any soup more full-bodied flavor. The stock can come from water saved after cooking vegetables, from rinsing out cooking pots with small amounts of water, from fresh vegetables or from scraps. In my world using-what-comes-to-hand provides unexpected depths of flavor—but there is no recipe for it. Either you study how to possibly utilize the things that appear, or it doesn't interest you, and you make everything from *zero* following the recipe.

Classically, meat stocks utilize the virtue of onions, celery, and carrots, as well as parsley and dried thyme, and with good reason: they round out or enhance flavors. So vegetarian stocks often utilize

the same basics (for the same good reason). And you can vary the stock depending on the soup you are preparing.

Onion or leek, chopped

Celery, chopped

Carrot, chopped

Parsley

Vegetable scraps of your choice

Salt

Pepper

Garlic

Dried herbs of your choice

Water to cover

You can use vegetable ends, tips, tops, trimmings (the outsides of celery root, stalks from fennel bulb), roots, skins; parsley stems, outside cabbage leaves,

mushroom stems, or limp vegetables. *Omit* anything odorous and the parts not really edible, as in onion skins, carrot stems, green pepper centers, and radish leaves. Mushrooms impart a sense of meatiness or *body* to the stock, while onion of some sort, garlic, or ginger will give the stock a definite lift.

Place all the vegetables and vegetable scraps in a saucepan or stockpot and cover with water. Add a spoonful or two of salt (I start modestly with the salt since onion, celery, carrot, and parsley are used to make salt substitutes), a pepper element, perhaps garlic (or ginger), a dried or fresh herbal element.

It's important that the stock simmer rather than boil, so keep an eye on it while it is heating. *Simmering* means a few wee

bubbles are popping gently to the surface—a quiet, subdued leaching process—while *boiling* means that the entire surface is in turmoil, bubbling and frothing. With boiling, vegetables soon release their more rank flavors and aromas—I find it reminiscent of *dish water*—so bring the stock to a simmer and then turn the heat down low enough to keep it there, so that you do not have a harsh-flavored stock.

Let the stock simmer 30 minutes to 1 hour, and then strain out the vegetables, squeezing or mashing out the last juices. Use in place of water for soups, or for cooking vegetables, grains, or beans. If not using immediately, leave uncovered until cool, then cover and refrigerate (or freeze).

A few more notes: I use a little water or

stock to rinse out pots after cooking, which gets a start on the stock and also eases the work of pot cleaning! For convenience you can save trimmings over several days in the refrigerator or freezer.

Mock Beef Stock

This makes an excellent stock and, depending on how you cut the vegetables, quite a beautiful one. So if you take care with the cutting, you may choose to leave the vegetables in the stock, and you will have a surprisingly delicious soup—given that you barely did anything! Removing the vegetables, you will have a well-flavored broth.

MAKES 5 CUPS

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated
3 cloves of garlic, minced
6 sprigs of cilantro, minced finely
½ teaspoon dried thyme
1 bay leaf
2 tablespoons soy sauce
6 cups water
1 onion
1 carrot
2 stalks celery
6 mushrooms

Start the ginger, garlic, cilantro, thyme, bay leaf, and soy sauce heating in the water, while you slice or chunk the vegetables and mushrooms. If you are intending to leave the vegetables in the stock, you might dice the onions, cut the carrot in thin half moons, cut the celery in

thin comma or boomerang pieces, and slice the mushrooms. Add the vegetables to the stock, heat to boiling, and reduce to a simmer for 20 to 25 minutes. Add soy sauce and/or salt to taste.

Soy sauce broths make an especially good base for egg flower soups (see [Adding Eggs](#)). Peas and green onions complement egg flower soup nicely.

Asian-Style Stock

This stock can be used for Asian-style soups and vegetable sautés. We use it in [Tofu-Miso Stew](#). One or another kind of dried mushroom are often available in larger supermarkets. They are also available at Japanese, Chinese, and Italian

food shops. Kombu is a kind of dried seaweed; it is available at Japanese markets and some natural food stores.

MAKES 3 CUPS

1 small onion, sliced

5 or 6 fresh ginger “coins” (1/8-inch crosswise pieces)

3 cloves of garlic, chopped

2 carrots, chopped

1 stalk of celery, coarsely chopped

1 chard leaf and stem, or several lettuce leaves, chopped

3 scallions, sliced

4 dry shiitake or Chinese black mushrooms or 1/2 ounce other dried mushroom

1 6-inch piece kombu, if available

1 6-inch piece gobo (burdock root), if

available, sliced crosswise

1 small handful lentil sprouts or 1

large handful mung bean or

soybean sprouts

4½ cups water

1 teaspoon dark sesame oil

1 tablespoon tamari

Salt

Scrub the vegetables and cut into somewhat narrow pieces. Put all the ingredients except the salt into a pot, bring to a boil, and simmer 25 minutes. (All right, what if you can't get any dried mushrooms? Omit them and keep on cooking. Use fresh mushrooms, which provide some flavor, even though they don't have the intensity of the dried ones.) Remove the (dried) mushrooms and set

them aside for another use. Then strain the stock and boil until it is reduced to 3 cups. Taste for salt and add if necessary.



Mushroom Stock

This flavorful stock can be used advantageously in any number of soups

and sauces. The more mushrooms, the stronger the mushroom flavor will be. Dried mushrooms will contribute a rich, woody flavor. Sautéing the vegetables in advance of simmering in water brings out the sweetness of the ingredients, giving the stock a toastier, nuttier, more robust quality. Mushroom stock freezes well, so make up a larger quantity and freeze some of it for later.

MAKES 8 CUPS

2 tablespoons oil

*4 to 8 ounces fresh mushrooms,
coarsely chopped*

1 onion, sliced

*1 medium potato, washed but not
peeled, coarsely chopped*

1 carrot, peeled and sliced

*4 or 5 cloves of garlic, coarsely
chopped*

1 bay leaf

½ teaspoon dried thyme

1 pinch dried savory

1 tablespoon nutritional yeast

3 quarts water

2 tablespoons tamari soy sauce

10 peppercorns

*½ ounce dried mushrooms, shiitake, or
Italian (optional)*

Salt



Heat the oil in a soup pot and add the mushrooms, onions, potatoes, carrots, garlic, and spices. Cook over medium-high heat for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the yeast and cook another minute or so. Then add the water, tamari, peppercorns, and dried mushrooms. Bring

to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer 45 minutes, by which time the liquid should be reduced by about a third. At the end of the cooking time, taste and adjust with salt. (*Note: Salt becomes more concentrated as the liquid reduces.*)

Pour the stock through a strainer lined with cheesecloth (or simply be careful after straining to pour off the clear liquid, leaving tiny particles behind), pressing down gently on the vegetables to extract their juices. Discard the vegetables. Refrigerate or freeze the stock until needed.

A SOUP-MAKING OVERVIEW: BASIC STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES

To prepare a thin soup, you can begin with water, vegetable stock (see section on [stocks](#)), or possibly tomato juice. Use about 1 cup of liquid per person. Slice, chunk, or dice vegetables: just a few, or up to ½ cup per person. Since the vegetables will be prominent in the watery base, give careful attention to how you cut them. Onion in some form will help to deepen the flavors. You can also add cooked grains or beans in place of vegetables. Add the vegetables to the stock and simmer—don't boil!—just until tender. (That was quick!) Or for a nuttier, richer flavor and faster cooking, sauté the vegetables first, then add them to the stock and simmer briefly. If you want to use noodles or macaroni, cook a modest amount until tender—perhaps twelve to

fifteen minutes—before adding the vegetables.

Adding Vegetables to the Soup

So again, the two ways of adding vegetables to a soup are to put them directly into the water or to sauté them first. (Leftover cooked vegetables may also be added to soup.) Either way, be sure to cut the vegetables into pieces that are spoon-size or smaller. Sautéing the vegetables first greatly reduces the total cooking time and gives them a sweeter, toastier, nuttier flavor.

Sautéed: When sautéing the vegetables, start with the onion, which seems to draw out and unite the flavors of the other vegetables. Along with the other vegetables you can add garlic, ginger,

dried herbs or other seasonings, before continuing the sauté. After several minutes, a few spoonfuls of flour can be added (if your soup base needs any thickening). The flour helps to thicken the soup and to suspend the vegetables. Stir it in and cook it with the vegetables for three to five minutes, and then add everything to the soup base. Put some liquid back into the frying pan and heat gently (and scrap the sides and bottom) to incorporate stray juices, flour, and oil. Add this to the soup.

Raw: Vegetables such as mushrooms, spinach, chard, and peas, which require little cooking, can be kept out of the sauté and added to the soup raw, three to five minutes before serving. The same is true of finely cut or grated vegetables such as green pepper or carrot. When adding raw

vegetables to the soup base, plan on them taking longer to cook than if you sautéed them first, and make a guess how long each ingredient needs to cook. This will depend not only on what ingredient is being cooked, but also on the size of the pieces. Here's an abbreviated rundown for simmered vegetables (for faster cooking, cut into smaller pieces):

- Potatoes, beets, onions: as short as eight to twelve minutes if pieces are small, or twenty-five to thirty minutes when slowly simmering.
- Carrots, broccoli, cauliflower: with high heat perhaps five to eight minutes, with low heat about fifteen to twenty minutes.
- Celery, green beans: twelve to

fifteen minutes.

- Corn, zucchini, cabbage, asparagus: five to six minutes.
- Peas, tomatoes, chard, spinach, green onion, parsley: five minutes or less.

With some attention to length of cooking time, vegetables can retain much of their original taste, color, and texture, as well as flavoring the soup. For vegetable mush, there's nothing to it: just put all the vegetables in the pot at once and boil for an hour or two. (That *was* a joke.)

Some vegetables, though, such as tomatoes or cabbage, can go in early or late with a variety of effects. Keep in mind that potato can be the chunky foreground as well as the mashed

background, and that cauliflower can be the backdrop (when blended) as well as the floating floweret . . . whatever suits the ingredients and the occasion.

Flavor Elements

In seasoning soups it's helpful to remember that fundamental taste elements, such as salt, can be provided by a variety of ingredients. Here's a list to give you the idea:

- For a salt, you can add salt, soy sauce, miso, or grated hard cheese. Also onion, celery, carrot, and parsley will provide saltiness—these ingredients dried provide much of the salt in salt substitutes. Or for instance, if you chopped

some pitted kalamata olives for a garnish, you'd be adding salt.

- For pepper or to make spicy hot, you may add garlic, ginger, black pepper, red or green chilies, Tabasco or cayenne. Some other pungent options are mustard, horseradish, dried oregano, thyme, marjoram, cumin seed.
- For tart or tangy, add lemon juice or peel, orange juice or peel, splashes of vinegar, sour cream, or yogurt.
- For sweet, add sugar or honey; grains or potatoes or other complex carbohydrates.
- For herbs, add fresh parsley, dried or fresh thyme, or marjoram; for especially bright herbs (tart and

tangy, as well as pungent), add fresh basil, mint, cilantro.

Season lightly, starting with small amounts of salt at the beginning, along with moderate amounts of other seasonings. If sautéing the vegetables you can add dry seasonings along with the vegetables. Adjust the seasoning at the end. Fresh herbs are best used as a garnish—or added at the end. They will tend to lose their freshness with cooking.

Spare yourself an overpowering dose of herbs, vinegar, sugar, pepper. What is often missing from any soup is salt, although it can be overutilized to the neglect of other elements. So initially add a modest amount of salt to see what flavors are already present. If it's on the

sweet side, the *remedy* is to make it sweet and peppery or sweet and sour: add pepper, garlic, ginger, or a bit of lemon juice or parsley. Sometimes wine (or tomato) is used for added acidity which will brighten the flavors. The wine can first be reduced on the side, if you didn't add it to the sautéing vegetables. To season a vegetable broth—there's always the list above—add thyme, marjoram, some fresh lemon or lime, some sort of pepper, a fresh herb. Go for it.

Using Soy Sauce and Miso

We use soy sauce and miso often at Tassajara for seasoning both thin and thick soups. Here's how:

Adding soy sauce: This is a matter of taste. With a gentle hand, the soy sauce

does not overpower the flavor of the vegetables, but brings it out. The trick is to add a little salt along with the soy sauce, then the soy flavor does not get too strong.

Adding miso: Miso is a fermented soybean paste, which is easily digestible and which adds protein and other nourishment as well as flavor. Like soy sauce, miso is salty, so if it is relied on to supply all of the soup's saltiness, its flavor will be quite strong, so again light use of salt will be helpful. For four cups of soup broth, start with about three tablespoons of miso. Mix it with a small amount of hot soup to thin it out, then add it to the rest of the soup just before serving. An alternative way is to put the miso in a strainer and, dipping the strainer

into the soup, mix the miso with the soup liquid to sieve it into the soup. Once the miso is added, taste the soup and see whether you want a stronger miso flavor or a touch more salt.

Adding Eggs

There are two ways to add raw eggs to soup: One is the egg-drop, or egg flower, method, and the other is a thorough blending. A third possibility is to poach eggs in the soup.

For egg-drop soup, a light clear broth with or without vegetables is probably best. Just before serving, bring the well-seasoned broth to a gentle boil, and pour in the barely beaten eggs. Stir slightly and watch the eggs puff up and float around in various flowery shapes. This is often used

in soups with soy sauce—the egg contrasts well with the brown-colored stock.

For concealed egg enrichment, beat the eggs and then, just before serving, beat in some of the hot soup a little at a time. When the eggs are thoroughly heated, beat the whole mixture back into the rest of the soup. Further cooking at this time will cause the eggs to scramble. If you don't want this, serve immediately after adding the eggs.

You can also beat soy sauce or lemon juice into the eggs before adding to hot soup. For a more foamy soup, separate the eggs and beat the whites until stiff. Beat hot soup a little at a time into the egg yolks (possibly with soy or lemon) until they are well warmed, and return this mixture to the main body of the soup. Then fold in the

whites.

Enriching Elements

Here's a listing of ingredients which may be utilized to provide an enriching aspect to the soup (in addition to the eggs mentioned above):

Grated Cheese: Swiss, cheddar, Parmesan, Edam, Monterey Jack, and other cheeses can be grated and added to any soup, either garnishing the surface of the soup or disappearing into it. Make the addition just before serving.



Cream: Gently heated cream can be added to the soup just before serving. After adding the cream to the soup, heat it but don't boil. Check the seasoning.

Egg yolks and cream: This is a classic enrichment. Of course it's delicious, but isn't the soup already tasty? Beat the yolks

with the cream, and beat some hot soup *gradually* into them until well heated. Mix everything back into the soup and heat gently, being careful not to boil.

Garnishings

Look at what you have and dream up what to use. Add fresh herbs: especially basil, cilantro, (spear)mint, parsley, chives, or thinly sliced green onion. Spoon on seasoned oils or pestos. Add grated cheeses: especially Parmesan or Asiago. Add vegetables or fruit: radish slices, finely cut spinach or chard, or thinly sliced lemon or orange. Imaginative garnishes are so much fun.

Simple Cabbage Soup

When a recipe calls for cabbage, you can also use broccoli, cauliflower, or brussels sprouts. Remember: for succulent rather than noxious flavors, these vegetables should be simmered rather than boiled as their flavor changes the more they are cooked. So consider whether you are aiming for the light cooking or the longer one.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

4 cups water or stock

1 onion, diced

1 half head of cabbage, cubed

1 carrot, diced

*½ teaspoon celery seed, whole or
minced*

*½ teaspoon caraway seed, whole or
minced*

*½ teaspoon fennel seed, whole or
minced*

Salt

Pepper

2 to 3 mustard greens, finely chopped

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

(optional)

1 tablespoon sugar (optional)

Add the cut-up vegetables and the seasonings to the water or stock and simmer gently for about 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, and add the mustard greens shortly before serving. See how you like the flavors and consider adding the vinegar and sugar—cabbage soups are often made sweet-and-sour. A more intense sweet-and-sour is in the variations.

VARIATIONS

- *Five vegetable cabbage soup:* Add a celery stalk, thinly sliced, and a potato, cubed. Season with garlic and marjoram, basil or thyme. You may need more water!
- *Red cabbage soup:* Use red cabbage instead of green. One simple combination is with onion, using sliced red radishes for garnish. For crisper cabbage, add it in the last 5 to 10 minutes.
- *Main course cabbage soup:* Get out the leftovers. This may turn into a stew. In addition to the onion, carrot, and cabbage, use potatoes, turnip, leftover beans, or grain. Season with garlic, thyme, half bay leaf, powdered clove

(pinch), parsley, and cilantro. Add the onion, carrots, and potatoes first. With about 20 minutes to go, add the cabbage (or broccoli, cauliflower, green beans). Adjust the seasoning. Pass around bowls of sliced hard-boiled eggs, grated cheese, sour cream, and sliced green onion for garnishing.

- *Cabbage borscht*: Season with juice of 1 or 2 lemons and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar or honey in the last 5 minutes. Serve with side bowls of sour cream or yogurt. Vinegar can replace the lemon juice. If it's too sour, add sweet. If too sweet, add more sour.

Sweet-and-Sour Cabbage Soup

Fragrant and pleasing soup, this cabbage soup is light enough to be enjoyed in the heat of the summer, yet hearty enough for cooler times as well. The stock provides much of the intensity and complexity of flavors. Start the stock first and while it is simmering you can work on the soup. The quantities for this soup are larger than for most of the other recipes, so you'll have plenty for the leftovers—or those with hearty appetites. Get out your dark rye bread.

SERVES 6 PEOPLE

FOR THE VEGETABLE STOCK:

1 onion, peeled and quartered

*Trimnings from the cabbage to be
used in the soup*

2 bay leaves

1 carrot, sliced

2 stalks of celery or fennel, sliced

4 sprigs thyme

1 teaspoon fennel seed

1 teaspoon dill seed

½ teaspoon coriander seed

1 teaspoon salt

8 cups water

FOR THE SOUP:

2 tablespoons butter

1 yellow onion, diced

*1 small potato, cut into small cubes (¼
to ½ inches)*

*1 stalk of celery, thinly sliced or
diced,*

1 carrot, sliced into thin rounds, small matchsticks, or diced

½ teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons dill seed

1 teaspoon fennel seed

1 teaspoon coriander seed, pulverized with mortar and pestle

2 cups green cabbage, cut into spoon-sized pieces

2 large ripe tomatoes, peeled and chunked, or 1½ cups chopped canned tomatoes (juice reserved)

8 cups [vegetable stock](#)

2 to 3 tablespoons rice wine or cider vinegar

2 to 3 tablespoons brown sugar

Pepper, freshly ground

¼ cup minced flat-leafed parsley or minced fresh dill, chervil, or

tarragon

Sour cream (optional)

Combine all the ingredients for the vegetable stock in a stock pot. Bring to a boil and then turn heat down to a simmer for 25 to 30 minutes. Strain.

Melt the butter in a large, nonaluminum (if possible) stock pot. Add the onions and cook them over moderate heat until transparent. Add the potatoes, celery, carrots, salt, and herbs. Cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the cabbage, tomatoes, and reserved juice. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add the (7 cups) vegetable stock, bring to boil, and then reduce to simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Taste for salt. Add the vinegar and sugar, starting with the smaller amounts and

adding more of each as needed to balance or enlarge the tartness. Simmer a few more minutes. Serve garnished with black pepper and plenty of the fresh dill or fennel, or with sour cream.

VARIATION

Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or more of diced fennel bulb, in addition to the vegetables or instead of the celery—additional body and flavor.

Breakfast Soup

I've been making this soup most days—for several years now. Some exclaim, "It's not breakfast," but I find it satisfying and soothing, as well as invigorating. I roast some pumpkin or sunflower seeds to have

on the side. Because I use what's around, including leftovers, the soup is different every time—choices and options each step of the way. And today's soup fortifies tomorrow's. Oh, and don't spend all morning on this—you'll miss breakfast.

SERVES 2 TO 4 PEOPLE

½ cup sliced leek (green or white parts) or ½ yellow onion, diced

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ to 1 carrot, cut with the rolling cut, and/or 2 stalks celery, sliced, and/or 6 mushrooms, sliced

2 cloves of garlic, minced (optional)

1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger (optional)

Salt

About 1 cup leftover vegetables or

other suitable leftovers (optional)
3 to 4 leaves of kale, chard, mustard greens, baby bok choy (6 to 8 leaves), or Chinese cabbage, thinly cut (larger leaves cut lengthwise first)
¼ cup sherry wine or dry vermouth (optional) or something else around and open
4 cups water or stock
2 green onions, thinly sliced, or 2 tablespoons minced parsley or cilantro (optional)
Nutritional yeast, at the table
Red pepper or chili, at the table
Soy sauce, at the table

Start the leeks cooking in olive oil over a low flame (so you don't need to watch

them closely while you cut the other vegetables).

Add the carrot, celery, and/or mushrooms and continue cooking, perhaps over somewhat hotter flame. Cook a minute or two and add the garlic, ginger (if using), and a couple pinches of salt, continuing to cook, stirring. Then add the leftover vegetables (if using), the greens, cooking and stirring another minute or so.

Add the wine, if using, and stir to clean off the bottom of the pan. Then add the water. Check the seasoning (although you may have condiments at the table), and add more water if necessary. Garnish with the parsley or cilantro, and serve with the nutritional yeast, red pepper, and soy sauce at the table.

VARIATIONS

- Use other vegetables as well, cut into easily cooked, spoon-size pieces. Add with the carrot (celery/mushroom): celery root, fennel bulb, green beans, red or green bell peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, turnip and other root vegetables, burdock root (start it early).
- Soak some dried mushrooms for a few minutes to flavor the stock and slice to add to soup.
- Use lemon juice or lemon peel to brighten the flavors.

Simple Beet Soup

A very small amount of beets turns cabbage soup into beet soup. So for beet soup you could add beets to any of the soups above. On the other hand this recipe presents a very basic beet soup. Already-cooked beets can go in early or late.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

3 or 4 beets

4 cups water

1 onion, diced

1 tablespoon olive oil

Salt

Pepper

2 tablespoons lemon juice

2 tablespoons sugar or honey

12 to 15 beet greens, cut into spoon-sized pieces

Sour cream, for garnish

Scrub the beets and, leaving the skins on, grate them or cut them into small pieces, then start them cooking in the water. Sauté the onions in the olive oil for a few minutes and then add them to the beets and cook until the beets are tender, about 30 to 45 minutes. Season moderately with salt, pepper, lemon, and sugar. (You could blend the soup at this point if you want it smooth.) Then add the sectioned beet greens. Cook for a couple of minutes more. Garnish each bowl with a spoonful of sour cream (or serve it on the side). Some little croutons seem like they would go well here.

VARIATION

Use any of the vegetable or seasoning combinations listed for [cabbage soup](#),

including the [cabbage borscht](#).



Chard Soup

Deep, dark green, this chard soup is better

blended. See how you like the enrichment with eggs, along with the sour cream garnish.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 bunch of chard (about 1 pound)

2 onions, sliced

3 cloves of garlic, minced

4 cups water or stock

Salt

Pepper

½ cup parsley, minced

2 eggs, beaten

Sour cream or yogurt

Cut the chard once lengthwise, then cut the leaves crosswise in ½-inch sections, and the stalks crosswise in ¼-inch pieces. Sauté the onion until it is transparent, and

cook it an additional minute with the garlic. Add it to the stock along with the chard. Season with salt and pepper, and add the parsley. Simmer 10 to 15 minutes.

Blend well with an immersion blender or Cuisinart. Check the seasoning. Beat some of the hot soup gradually into the eggs, then mix the warmed eggs back into the soup. Serve immediately, accompanied by some sour cream or yogurt on the side.

VARIATIONS

- This soup can be made with spinach, mustard greens, brussels sprouts, cabbage, lettuce, and other vegetables.
- Try seasoning moderately with soy sauce or lemon juice (or some

orange juice). These can be added to the soup or beaten in with the eggs before they are added.

Onion Soup

Thoroughly stewed, the onions in onion soup become mellow and sweet. This version is not complicated, requiring simply some on-going attention to the process.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

4 to 5 medium onions (2½ to 3 cups sliced)

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons butter

4 tablespoons flour

3 to 4 tablespoons sherry wine

(optional)

4 cups water or stock, heated

Salt

Soy sauce

Pepper

Slice the onions thinly and sauté them in the oil and butter until they begin to brown—about 15 to 20 minutes (adding small amounts of water from time to time as necessary to keep the onions from sticking). Sprinkle flour over the onions, mix it in, and cook for 5 or 6 minutes, stirring frequently. (The flour will give added body.) Add the sherry, if using, and then the heated water or stock. Scrape the bottom of the frying pan to incorporate all onion, flour, and caramelized sugars.

Season with the salt and soy sauce, along with the pepper. Simmer for at least 30 minutes to develop the flavor. Onions can be cooked and cooked. Adjust the seasoning to your liking and serve.

Some people feel this soup should be served the day *after* it is made. Then it's "even better."

VARIATIONS

- Add a $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of wine or brandy in place of the sherry after the flour is sautéed.
- Add croutons, which have been sautéed in olive oil and garlic.
- Add grated Parmesan cheese as a garnish.

Tomato-Onion Soup

Tomatoes are like beets. Adding them to a vegetable soup soon makes it tomato soup with vegetables. Tomato sauce, tomato paste, cooked and sieved tomatoes, or fresh tomato sections can all be used to turn cabbage soup into tomato-cabbage soup, spinach soup into tomato-spinach soup. In this case onion soup turns into tomato-onion soup. Knowing that you can add tomato to your soup is a pivotal point. Now you have a use for all the bits and pieces of leftover tomato: sauce, paste, chunks, juice, as well as fresh tomatoes and salsas.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

4 medium onions, sliced

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons butter

2 cloves of garlic, minced

½ teaspoon dried thyme

½ teaspoon dried oregano

Salt

Pepper

1 to 2 cups canned or leftover tomato pieces, paste, or sauce, or 2 fresh tomatoes

4 cups water or stock

2 tablespoons parsley, minced

Parmesan cheese, grated

Sauté the onions in the oil and butter until well softened, perhaps 5 to 6 minutes. Add the garlic and dried herbs along with a sprinkling of salt and pepper and cook stirring another minute. Add the tomatoes

and enough water or stock to keep it liquidy while it simmers for 15 minutes. (There are two options for using fresh tomatoes: One is to blanch them in boiling water for 10 to 15 seconds and then peel before slicing. The other is to cut them into small pieces to start with, so that if pieces of tomato skin come loose, they will be small pieces that are floating around.) Using tomato juice for the stock is another option.

If you want a smooth soup either for appearance or taste esthetics, sieve or blend. In either case add the water or stock to desired thickness. Check seasoning. Garnish with the minced parsley and serve with grated Parmesan cheese.

VARIATIONS

- Use heated milk with cream instead of water or stock. (Probably better if the soup is blended.)
- Season with sugar, basil, salt, pepper, and brandy.
- Sauté celery, carrot, or green pepper in place of some of the onion before adding the tomato.
- Season with basil, either dried or fresh.
- Tomato lends itself to peppery seasonings: black pepper, Tabasco sauce, cayenne pepper, horseradish, chilies (or leftover salsa).

Cauliflower-Tomato Soup with Herbes de Provence

My love for vegetarian soups deepened when I was working at Greens Restaurant, where over the years we made so many excellent soups. Mostly I prefer my vegetable soups without any milk or cream, as then their flavor more clearly expresses the ingredients used. *Herbes de Provence* is a mixture of herbs often including thyme, fennel, rosemary, lavender, and oregano.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

*2 28-ounce cans whole peeled
tomatoes or tomato pieces
1 yellow onion, diced
2 tablespoons olive oil*

2 stalks of celery, diced

2 cloves of garlic, minced

2 to 3 teaspoons herbes de Provence

Salt

Pepper

1 small to medium head of cauliflower

2 teaspoons dried oregano leaves

*¼ cup parsley, minced, or 2 green
onions, thinly sliced, for garnish*

Use plain canned tomatoes rather than one of the preseasoned varieties and blend them. Sauté the onion in 1 tablespoon of olive oil for a couple of minutes. Add the celery and cook another minute or two before adding the garlic, 2 teaspoons *herbes de Provence*, and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Cook another minute, and then transfer to a soup pot with the

tomatoes.

Rinse out the skillet with a small amount of water and add it to the soup to retain the flavors from the bottom of the pan. Clean the skillet so that you can use it to cook the cauliflower.

Cut the cauliflower into spoon-size flowerets. You can also use the stalk by cutting it in half vertically and then into narrow slices. Reheat the skillet, add the remaining tablespoon of olive oil, and start the cauliflower sautéing. After it has cooked for 3 to 4 minutes, add the oregano and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Continue sautéing for another minute or two. Then add a couple of spoonfuls of water, cover, reduce the heat, and cook a few minutes until the cauliflower is just tender—I prefer a bit *nutty*.

Combine cauliflower with the tomato, check the seasoning, garnish, and serve.

Alternatively, you could sauté the cauliflower with the oregano, and then add it to the tomato. The cauliflower will take several minutes longer to become tender in that case.



The Workers Rebel, the Real Work Deepens

After I had been the head cook at Tassajara for a year or so, a kitchen rebellion broke out. At first I couldn't understand why. I was sincere and responsible, I worked hard, and as far as I could tell, I meant well. Yet the crew had decided I was dictatorial, autocratic, and unfeeling. They had gone to the heads of the community and complained about me.

At a meeting to air their grievances, one woman said that I treated everyone as though they were just another utensil in my hand, that I

didn't acknowledge that they too could make decisions involving taste. "It's not as though you are the only one who can cook, you know, but you never let us. You always make all the decisions." She wanted me to understand that there was a pivotal difference between herself and a spatula—she could think, feel, see, taste, and make aesthetic decisions.

Another woman said, "You treat us the same way you treat the bread," and then backtracked briefly, by saying, "Actually you treat the bread pretty well. You treat us *worse* than you treat the bread." Couldn't I be as sensitive to her and her needs as I was with the bread dough?

Later, the director of the

monastery, Peter Schneider, came to talk with me. “You need to give people more responsibility,” he said. “Would you be willing to change the way you do things, or would you like another job?” I felt devastated and humiliated. I couldn’t imagine doing things differently. “Think it over,” he concluded,” and let me know.”

I sat outside in the sun and cried, feeling lost and disoriented. I had done the best I knew how to do, and that was being trashed. I was shocked to learn that people saw me as using them.

Trudy Dixon came over and sat down next to me. Trudy was a senior member of the community whom I respected, and for her to take an

interest in me was a surprise, especially since she was fighting cancer and probably would not live much longer. Yet she took the time to listen to my stumbling account of the situation as well as my bewildered “I just don’t know what to do.”

Her response, “I believe in you,” stunned me. I couldn’t believe it. By now the sun was even more warming, and I was touched that this person who had worked on *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* with Suzuki Roshi would say such a thing. Still, I protested that her faith was probably misplaced, and she simply repeated herself: “I have faith in you.” It made a world of difference.

So I did take some time to think

over what I had been doing. Why was I working so hard, and not really letting anyone help? When I considered allowing others to do more of the cooking, I realized I had been making a tremendous effort to impress and astound people with my cooking artistry. If I let others do more of the cooking, it wouldn't be "mine" anymore, and I would not have the same supposed fame in which to bask. And I wanted to be great. Then people would like me. Then women would love me.

And what difference was that going to make? If I could get others to love me, maybe that would convince me to love myself. Only by this circuitous route was I coming to

notice that I didn't like myself. What a surprise that I hadn't realized it sooner. And then I saw how hard it was to please me. Yes, I would be willing to love the most perfected being ever.

Thus was I caught in my own mistaken effort. Attempting to become perfect enough to be lovable was clearly a useless endeavor. Besides, if my self-esteem depended on accomplishment or performance, then I would only be "as good as my last meal" and would always have to keep surpassing myself in order to earn my own and other people's love. My self-esteem would be inherently fragile.

Besides, who could say for sure

that if someone liked my cooking, that meant they liked me? Quite probably they didn't really know or care about me at all and just wanted my cooking to continue unabated. To paraphrase a Buddhist teaching, "I am not my cooking. My cooking is not me."

If I wanted to like myself, I'd have to go about it more directly and have more compassion for someone rather ordinary with problems: me. That was my work and not the work of the food. Let the food be food, and speak for itself.

Still, if I wasn't going to cook to "prove" anything, why bother? Raising this question brought into focus other threads of motivation:

basic kindness and generosity, the wish for the happiness of all beings. I would cook because I wanted to cook. I would cook because I wanted to offer food, so I could be food.

Green Corn Soup

Marvelous, deep flavors of corn and tomatillos—which are what give the soup a slight green cast. In appearance, tomatillos resemble green tomatoes, but their flavor, which is not nearly so bitter, has a pleasing vitalizing tang.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 pound tomatillos

3 ears white corn

1 ear yellow corn

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 red onion, diced (about 1½ to 2 cups)

1 jalapeño chili, seeded and minced

Juice of 1 lime

Salt

Avocado slices

Cilantro leaves

Roasted red pepper strips, if available

Remove and discard the papery husks from the tomatillos. Rinse the tomatillos and start them cooking in 2 cups of water. Bring to a boil, then let simmer for at least 20 minutes. Remove the husks from the corn and cut the kernels off the cobs. (I suggest doing this with the [corn flat on the](#)

work surface rather than standing on end). Keep the white and yellow corn separate.

Heat a large skillet, add the oil, and sauté the onion for several minutes. Then add the jalapeño and the white corn and continue cooking another 2 to 3 minutes. Add this to the tomatillos and water, and cook 20 minutes.

Remove from heat and blend, using a food processor or immersion blender. Add more water if necessary to give the soup the consistency that you desire, then stir in the yellow corn and cook briefly. Season to taste with the lime juice and salt.

To serve, garnish each bowl with two or three slices of avocado and a few leaves of cilantro. The soup, avocado, and cilantro are three shades of green, so the

roasted red pepper strips make a handsome (and flavorful) additional garnish, if you have them available.

SOUPS WITH A THICKER CONSISTENCY

Here we look at how to make soups with a thicker consistency, first from ingredients themselves: beans, grains, potatoes, winter squashes, or nut butters. And secondly studying those which have a more substantial consistency due to blending the soup or utilizing a flour-thickened sauce.

Basic Bean Soup

If you have some questions about cooking beans, see the beans section. The heartiness of bean soups is particularly satisfying in colder weather, especially since fewer fresh ingredients are available. The variations will give you ideas about how to take a bean soup in various directions.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 cup dry beans (lentils, split peas, navy beans, limas, pintos)

5 or 6 cups water or unsalted stock

1 medium onion, diced

1 cup diced vegetables of your choice: celery, carrot, bell pepper, or another onion

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 cloves of garlic, minced

*½ teaspoon dried thyme or oregano or
herbes de Provence*

Salt

Pepper, black or red chili

¼ cup parsley, minced (optional)

*3 to 4 green onions, thinly sliced
(optional)*

Cheese, grated (optional)

Rinse off the beans. Soak overnight, if possible, then cook until tender—by simmering or pressure cooking. If you want, drain the beans, mash or puree (at least some of) them, and return them to the cooking liquid. (The lentils and split peas will tend to do this for you.)

Sauté the diced vegetables for 3 to 5 minutes, add the garlic, herbs, and a dose of salt and pepper. Cook another minute

and then add them to the beans. (Rinse out the vegetable skillet with a small amount of water, and add to the beans.) Check the seasoning—salt? herbs? pepper?—and simmer until ready to serve. (Once they are thick, bean soups burn easily, so as a rule keep the heat low or use a flame tamer.) Garnish the soup with parsley, green onion, or grated cheese for added flavor, nutrition, or invitation.

VARIATIONS

- Bean soups are especially conducive to using up leftovers (or small amounts of fresh vegetables): add cereal or pasta, cooked vegetables including potatoes (cut up into spoon-size pieces), tomatoes, greens (sliced

thinly or chopped up a bit if previously cooked). If the vegetables need cooking, start them with the onions and allow enough time for them to cook with the beans until they are tender (or precook completely).

- Cook onions with the beans directly—mellow flavors.
- Soy sauce can be used in place of some of the salt.
- Use alternative seasonings: other herbs or spices, lemon, other pepper elements.
- For another approach to bean soup, take any of the dish in the beans section and make it thinner.

Everyday Lentil Soup

This lentil soup exemplifies one version of Basic Bean Soup, so you can see how it works (if you haven't been willing to give it a go). Onion, celery, and carrot *orchestrate* or round out the flavor of the lentils in this soup.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 cup lentils

6 cups water

2 bay leaves

2 cloves of garlic, sliced

4 or 6 cloves, whole

Salt

Pepper

1 onion, diced

2 stalks of celery, sliced or diced

1 carrot, diced

2 tablespoons olive oil

½ teaspoon dried thyme

*½ teaspoon dried oregano or
marjoram*

*¼ cup flat-leafed parsley, thin strips
or minced*

Cheese, grated (optional)

Wash the lentils, add the water, bay leaves, garlic (and possibly the onion), and pressure-cook them for 15 minutes or simmer them for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Once the beans are soft, add the cloves (in a cheesecloth bag or a metal tea caddy if you wish to retrieve them before serving the soup), and season with salt and black pepper.

While the beans are cooking, slice or

dice the vegetables and sauté them for 5 minutes in the olive oil, add the dried herbs, and cook another minute. When the beans are tender (and seasoned), add the sautéed vegetables and adjust the seasoning. Simmer for 15 minutes. Mix in half of the parsley, check the seasoning, and serve garnished with the remainder of the parsley. Serve with grated cheese on the side.

VARIATIONS

- *Lentil soup with lentil sprouts:* Use a cup or so of lentil sprouts in place of, or in addition to, the celery or carrots. Add the sprouts a few minutes before serving.
- *Mint-lentil soup:* Use salt, marjoram, and fresh mint for the

seasoning.

- Add lemon, cut (unpeeled) in eighths lengthwise, then sliced thinly crosswise. Add the lemon to the lentils along with the sautéed vegetables.
- Lentils make an excellent gravy for potatoes—or potatoes can go in the soup. Cube the potatoes and cook them in a cup or two of water while the beans are cooking, then combine. Leftover potatoes, chunked or mashed, can be added. Leftover potato salad doesn't make much of a potato soup, but it's okay in lentil soup. Seasoning can be the same or varied.
- *Split pea soup*: Use split peas instead of lentils. They cook into a

creamy soup base without mashing, pureeing, or blending. Split pea soup is good plain, with the lentil soup seasoning, or any of the following (in addition to salt and pepper): basil or marjoram, caraway seeds, fennel and anise seeds, miso.

- Split pea and lentil soups can absorb a lot of vegetables, seasonings. Greens go well here. Slice them finely and add 3 to 5 minutes before serving.

Lentil Soup with Cumin, Coriander, and Lemon

I made this soup at a cooking class

recently, along with pimento pizza and pear crisp. Several students thought it was the best part of the dinner. Lentils are like that—ordinary yet winsome. See what you think. The instructions also give you the option of sautéing the vegetables or simply adding them directly to the soup.

You can make the soup especially appealing if you grind the seasonings freshly (in a spice grinder or coffee mill), and use a good lemon (organic, if possible, or from your yard).

This is also a fine soup for getting to know the ingredients by tasting carefully before and after adding each one: tasting the lentils, then lentils with vegetables and garlic, then with cumin, with coriander, with lemon, and finally with parsley.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 cup lentils

8 cups water

1 bay leaf

1 medium yellow onion, diced

2 tablespoons olive oil (optional)

2 cloves of garlic, minced

2 stalks of celery, diced

1 teaspoon cumin seed, freshly ground

*2 teaspoons coriander seed, freshly
ground*

Peel of ½ lemon, minced

Salt (optional)

*A few sprigs flat-leaf parsley, minced,
for garnish*

Sort through the lentils for stones or other debris. Place in a large pot, add water and bay leaf, and bring to boil. Reduce heat

and simmer 30 to 45 minutes, until the lentils are soft. The lentils could also be pressure-cooked. Once they are soft, see what they taste like.



If you want the soup to be ready soon, sauté the onion in the olive oil for several minutes, until it is translucent. Then add the garlic, celery, and carrot. Sauté a couple more minutes, then add a bit of

water. Cover, reduce the heat, and cook until tender. Add to the cooked lentils. Season with the cumin, coriander, and lemon peel. Salt may be needed.

For a more leisurely soup, do not sauté; simply add the onion, garlic, celery, carrots, cumin, and coriander to the lentils after they are tender. Continue cooking 30 to 40 minutes, until the vegetables are soft. Add the lemon peel. Before serving, check the seasoning and garnish with the parsley.

Lentil-Tomato-Mint Soup

Lentils can be seasoned any number of ways, and this lentil soup, flavored with tomato and mint, has a delightfully fresh taste, as the mellow earthiness of the

lentils meets the sunlight of the tomato and the invigorating green of the mint.

MAKES ABOUT 10 CUPS

1½ cups lentils

8 cups water or stock (unsalted)

1 bay leaf

½ teaspoon thyme

¼ teaspoon sage

1 large red onion, diced

Butter

Olive oil

2 to 3 stalks of celery, sliced

2 to 3 cloves of garlic, minced or pressed

4 medium to large tomatoes, blanched and peeled, or 1 16-ounce can of tomatoes, drained

2 to 2½ tablespoons fresh mint, cut

into thin strips

Salt

Pepper

Cook the lentils in the water or stock along with the bay leaf, thyme, and sage for an hour or more until the lentils are well softened (or pressure cook for 15 minutes). Sauté the red onion in a little butter and olive oil for a few minutes before adding the celery and garlic. Continue sautéing until the celery softens a bit. Chunk the tomatoes and add them to the vegetables. Simmer for 10 minutes and then remove from the heat.

Add the vegetables to the softened lentils. Season with some of the mint, salt, and pepper, and simmer until serving time. Check the seasoning, and serve garnished

with the remainder of the mint.

Kale and White Bean Soup

Substantial and warming, this soup is especially good when the weather is cool. The assertive strength of the kale contrasts with the creaminess of the beans. Other strong greens—such as mustard, collards, or sorrel—also work well. Spinach and chard tend to be too sweet and mellow to provide a good contrast in this soup.

MAKES 8 TO 10 CUPS

*1½ cups navy beans, cleaned, sorted,
and soaked overnight*

3 quarts water

1 bay leaf

3 to 4 sage leaves, fresh or dried

2 large cloves of garlic, peeled

2 tablespoons butter

1½ cups finely diced yellow onions

1 tablespoon nutritional yeast

1 teaspoon salt

Pepper, freshly ground

*6 to 8 cups kale, stemmed and chopped
to spoon size*

Cream to finish (optional)

Simmer the beans in the water with the bay leaf, sage, and whole garlic cloves until the beans are completely soft, about 2 to 2½ hours or pressure-cook for 30 minutes. Remove ¼ of the cooked beans, puree or mash them in a food mill or blender, then return them to the pot. The puree will give the soup a creamy

background texture.

Heat 1 tablespoon butter in a skillet, add the onions, then cook until transparent. When soft, add the yeast, a teaspoon of salt, and several grindings of pepper. Cook for a minute or two, stirring frequently, before adding to the cooked beans. Rinse the pan with water and add to beans.

Cook the kale in the remaining butter until it is wilted. Combine with the beans and add enough water to bring the volume to about 3 quarts. Bring to a boil and simmer for 1 hour. Check the seasonings and finish the soup with cream, if desired. Enjoy with some dark bread and perhaps a cabbage salad.

Empowering People to Cook

People living together in a meditation community are like rocks in a tumbler. Spinning around and around, constantly bumping into one another, the rocks get worn down, smoothed, polished. Sometimes we would joke about it: “Some say polished, some say ground.” The process itself is not always a pleasant one, but there was no escaping it, no matter how hard we tried. Family life, life in the world, can also polish us—or it can grind us down. Which will it be?

As the cook at Tassajara I started

out thinking that creating delicious food was the most important thing. So I composed the menus, and I decided who did what, and I finished the seasoning on each and every dish. I did things my way, the way they should be done. I was a young, inexperienced first-time manager, no doubt about it: Everybody should work the way I work, do things the way I do them. Wasn't that what being in charge was all about?

After the kitchen rebellion described earlier (see [The Workers Rebel](#)), I felt embarrassed about going back to work there—vulnerable and exposed. Where could I ever be safe? The only safety was to trust in others, to trust in the

life we were living together, trust in being revealed. Some say polished; some say ground.

The more deeply I looked, the more I had to admit the limitations of my efforts. Others had been deferring to me and not really taking responsibility for what happened in the kitchen, because I didn't give it to them. I always had to be there, since others could not function without me. Providing the answers meant I was important. And being indispensable meant I kept pointing out how great I was, how retarded they were. No one could grow. No one really got to develop his or her capacities.

How strangely disillusioning—that being important and indispensable

meant being stuck. Others had been just as snared by the dynamic, yet they had postponed confronting me directly. When they did, not surprisingly, they were angry. After all, they had agreed to making me look good, while disowning their own capabilities.

When I went back to work in the kitchen, I began acknowledging other people's abilities, and letting them make decisions of consequence. I started taking regular days off and turning the kitchen over to one of the other members of the crew, each in turn. I felt an unfamiliar tenderness or compassion, since I knew that despite our best efforts, we can be so easily belittled or dismissed.

Of course as more members of the crew experienced the responsibility of generating meals, they became more sympathetic to what I had been going through. We began to share something: the work of the kitchen, the space of the kitchen, some camaraderie. I stopped feeling so alone and isolated.

Gradually I began to see what I was doing in a new way. Instead of striving so desperately to be indispensable, what I needed to do was train people to cook, train a successor, make myself dispensable.

Encouraging responsibility is often a delicate matter. When I worked at Greens Restaurant many years later, I saw how easily responsibility can be

given and taken back. The expeditor, who garnished and assembled each order, also had the responsibility of seeing that the next day's prep was done. But the head lunch cook would say, "You've got to do the potatoes now." So who's in charge? Who has responsibility? Not letting someone fail takes back the responsibility. To have responsibility means experiencing the consequences of one's actions.

Accountability, I found was different from responsibility. If the head cook had inquired, "How's the prep going? What's left to be done?" then the expeditor would still have had the responsibility but would have been obliged to give an accounting of

how it was going and would probably have realized what remained to be done.

As a cook, I had focused on the mechanics of kitchen work: cutting and scrubbing, organization and menu planning, inventory and ordering. Now I was finding out that empowering people to cook was much more gratifying. Training cooks, finding a successor—that was a goal worth working for. It has turned out to be a wonderfully engaging activity which I have spent years working on—decades, really—and it all came out of people's unhappiness with me. Out of it came cookbooks and managing Greens, cooking classes, and workshops. And

I found that when I empowered people to cook, the food would take care of itself.

May you also awaken in others the thought of baking bread, washing rice, stirring soup, cutting carrots . . . endlessly.

Chickpea and Spinach Soup

Spicy with garlic, chili, and thyme; earthy with chickpeas; tart with spinach; sweet with onions and tomato—this soup has a satisfying range of flavor interest. The ancho chili called for is a large, mild chili with a sweetness reminiscent of prunes. They are occasionally available in large

supermarkets and specialty shops, as well as in Mexican markets.

MAKES 12 CUPS

1½ cups dry chickpeas (garbanzo beans)

1 medium red onion, diced small

1½ teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, coarsely minced, or ½ teaspoon dried thyme

3 to 4 tablespoons olive oil

3 cloves of garlic, minced

1 ancho chili, roasted and ground, or 1 tablespoon chili powder or 1 teaspoon paprika

4 large tomatoes, very ripe, peeled, seeded, and chopped, or 2 cups canned tomatoes, chopped (juice reserved)

1 bay leaf

1 teaspoon salt

1/3 cup sherry

8 cups water, liquid from the chickpeas, a vegetable stock, or juice from canned tomatoes

1 bunch spinach, stems removed and leaves finely chopped (1 pound)

Salt

Pepper, freshly ground

Soak the chickpeas overnight. Cook them with at least 6 cups of water for 3 hours or more until soft (or pressure-cook for 20 to 30 minutes). Be sure *not* to put in any salt until later, after the beans are soft.

Cook the onions and thyme in the olive oil over a medium flame until the onion is soft. Add the garlic, chili (or paprika),

tomatoes, bay leaf, salt, and sherry. Stew for 15 minutes. Add the cooked chickpeas and the 8 cups of liquid. Simmer for 20 to 30 minutes to let the beans absorb some of the flavors. Add the spinach leaves (cut small enough so that they don't dangle out of the spoon when eating) and cook 5 minutes more. Check for salt and add pepper to taste.

Yellow Pea with Cumin and Lemon

The earthy flavor of the peas in this soup is accented with a pronounced lemon flavor and spiced with cumin. Reassuring yet stimulating.

MAKES 8 CUPS

- 2 cups yellow split peas, sorted and rinsed*
- 8 cups water*
- 1 bay leaf*
- 2 tablespoons butter*
- 1 tablespoon olive oil*
- 1 red or yellow onion, finely chopped*
- 1 small carrot, peeled and finely diced*
- 2 stalks of celery, finely diced or thinly sliced*
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced*
- ½ teaspoon salt*
- 3 to 4 teaspoons cumin seeds, ground in a spice mill*
- Peel and juice of 1 to 2 lemons, grated*
- Pepper, freshly ground*
- Paprika*
- Fresh parsley or cilantro, thin strips*

or minced

Bring the peas, water, and bay leaf to a boil. Then simmer until the peas are completely soft, about 45 minutes.

Melt the butter and olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the onions and cook until soft. Add the carrot, celery, garlic, salt, and ground cumin and cook 10 minutes. Add the vegetables to the pea puree and simmer until they are soft. (Rinse out the skillet with a small amount of water, then add the water to the soup.)

Add lemon peel and juice to taste. Check for salt and cumin and add more of each if desired. Finish with black pepper to taste and serve sprinkled with paprika and garnished with the fresh herbs. Try it with Cottage Cheese–Dill Bread and a

Chinese cabbage salad.

Minestrone

I make my minestrone without beef or veal or chicken stock. I think of it as a vegetable soup distinguished by the presence of sautéed onions and garlic, with seasoning by oregano and garnish by Parmesan, and, for goodness sakes, buy yourself a chunk of cheese and grate it at home. The flavors are indescribably superior to those of the stale pregrated cheese that's been sitting around in the refrigerator.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 cup cooked beans or bean soup

(kidney, white, or lentil, or perhaps black, pinto, or garbanzo)

2 to 4 cups mixed leftovers (Don't try to think these up, open your refrigerator: pasta, potatoes, cereal, vegetables, green salads, bread, old dry crusts of cheese.)

1 yellow onion, diced

1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil

2 to 4 cloves of garlic, minced

½ teaspoon or more dried thyme

1 teaspoon or more dried oregano

Tomato paste or other available tomato (optional)

Soy sauce (optional)

Salt

Pepper, black or red

Flat-leaf parsley, minced (optional)

Parmesan or Asiago cheese, freshly

grated

Start by getting all those little containers out of the refrigerator. See what's in them.



Discriminate. Those with visible growth get tossed. Apply the nose test as well to make sure the contents have not soured and are not emitting telltale airplane glue aromas. Why don't we do this more often?

Keep in mind that the quantities listed

are approximations but the beans will help to “beef up” the soup. Leftover cereal, including wheat, corn, or oatmeal, will give the soup more body. Prep the other leftovers by cutting the pasta, potatoes, vegetables, or bread into spoon-size pieces or, if you prefer, by blending them, which is especially good for any green salad. Perhaps some blended and some whole. Place leftovers in a pot with water to cover, and begin heating.

Sauté the onion in a hot skillet with the olive oil. After a minute or so, add the garlic and dried herbs. Cook another couple of minutes, then add to the soup. Rinse out the skillet with a small amount of water and add it to the soup.

Check for color and seasoning. If pale-colored or watery, add some tomato paste,

soy sauce, or both. Season with salt and red or black pepper, or more herbs. The minced parsley added at the end will add color and bring up the flavors. Garnish with the grated cheese—or serve it at the table.

Green Bean Soup with Basil Butter

Green beans, onions, butter, basil—the ingredients are basic, the soup is elixir. Make the basil butter first so it can age a bit. This soup exemplifies one basic way of preparing a vegetable soup: Cook one or more kinds of onion with the vegetable until softened, blend and season. Use an additional flavor element to enhance and

brighten the finish.

SERVES 6 TO 8 PEOPLE

FOR THE BASIL BUTTER:

1 to 1½ cups basil leaves, chopped

¼ teaspoon salt

5 tablespoons butter, softened

Zest of 1 lemon (or peel thinly with vegetable peeler and mince finely)

Juice of 1 lemon

FOR THE SOUP:

1 medium yellow onion, sliced or diced

½ cup scallions (including 4 to 5 inches of the green tops), chopped

4 tablespoons butter

Salt

2 pounds green beans, tipped and sectioned (about 1 inch long)
2 quarts vegetable stock or water
½ to 1 cup cream (optional)
Pepper, freshly ground

Pound the chopped basil leaves in a mortar with the salt to release their flavor. Mix together with the butter, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Cover and set aside to develop in flavor while making the soup. Leftover basil butter can be used with cooked vegetables, potatoes, pasta, or as a spread on bread.

Sauté the onions and scallions in the melted butter over moderate heat. After several minutes, add a sprinkling of salt and continue cooking until they are completely soft. Set aside.

Cook the beans in boiling, lightly salted water until they are bright green and tender. Drain them in a colander set over a pot so you can save the water for the soup. In a soup pot, combine the cooked onions and beans with 6 cups of the cooking water (make sure it's not too salty before you use it). Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer for 15 minutes.

Puree the soup in a blender (or immersion blender) or pass it through a fine sieve. Return the soup to the soup pot, add the cream and more water or stock as necessary to bring the soup to the consistency you want. Taste for salt. Serve each bowl with a spoonful of basil butter and a grinding of pepper.

Carrot Soup with Orange

The carrot provides sweet orange earthiness, the orange offers the sweet-and-tart vibrancy of air, a satisfying harmonizing of flavors. You can play with the pepper—white, black, red, or green chili—and the herbal garnish to give the soup a distinctive quality.

MAKES 8 CUPS; SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

3 tablespoons butter

½ yellow onion, sliced or diced

*White of a leek, coarsely chopped, or
use another ½ onion*

1 pound carrots, peeled and sliced

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon nutritional yeast (optional)

¼ cup fresh parsley, minced

1 bay leaf

1 teaspoon fresh thyme, minced

8 cups water

Peel of ½ orange, finely minced

Juice of one orange

¼ cup cream (optional)

Chervil or parsley, minced

White pepper, freshly ground

Melt the butter in a (nonaluminum) stock pot over moderate heat. Add the onions and leeks and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes. Add the carrots and salt, stir to combine, and cook 10 minutes more. Add the nutritional yeast (if you are using it) and stir another few minutes. Add the herbs and the water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a slow bubbling and cook 25 minutes.

Remove the soup from the heat, liquefy in a blender (or immersion blender) until smooth (then strain through a fine sieve, if you want velvety smoothness). Place the soup back into the pot and return it to the stove.

Add the orange peel, orange juice, and cream, stirring over low heat to combine. Taste for salt. When the soup is hot, turn off the heat, cover and let stand for 15 minutes to allow the flavors to develop. If necessary, reheat to serve. Garnish with fresh herbs and a twist of white pepper.

Basic Grain Soup

Grain soups are very similar to bean soups in their make-up, with grain

replacing beans. Although grains won't mash the way beans will, the longer they are cooked the softer they get, and the thicker the soup becomes—for me a hearty and reassuring pleasure. The basic recipe here utilizes rice with an Asian flavor—the variations give you other options. See what you can come up with.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

½ cup dry grain (white rice, brown rice, or barley) or 1 to 1½ cups leftover cooked grain or cereal

6 cups water or stock

1 yellow onion, diced

8 to 10 mushrooms, halved and sliced

2 heads baby bok choy, thin slices crosswise

3 cloves of garlic, minced

1 tablespoon ginger, grated

Salt

Red pepper or chili powder

Soy sauce

4 green onions, thinly sliced

¼ cup minced fresh cilantro

Cook the washed grain in the water or stock gently for 1 hour or longer. Or if using leftover grains, 15 to 20 minutes will probably do. Add the vegetables about 20 minutes before the end of cooking. Or first sauté the vegetables along with the garlic and ginger for 5 minutes and add to the grain for the last 10 minutes or more of cooking. Season with salt and red pepper, along with a splash of soy sauce. Add the green onions for a minute or two at the end, and garnish with

the cilantro.

VARIATIONS

- Use other grains: buckwheat, cornmeal, bulgur, cracked wheat, oatmeal. Use a more Western herb combination: thyme, sage or rosemary and/or parsley. Brighten with some lemon juice or lemon peel. Use celery, carrot, tomato.
- This soup is an obvious place to use leftover grains. Substitute 1 to 1½ cups of cooked grain for the raw grain. Use somewhat less water unless you find it is all needed.
- Grains can also be used to thicken other soups. Whole grains like barley, brown rice, and wheat

berries will add a certain amount of chewiness, as well as thickening. Replace $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of beans with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of grain, or add it in addition to the beans, and cook as usual.

- *Nut buttered grain soup*: Add $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of nut butter (especially peanut butter or sesame butter) toward the end of cooking. Thin it first with some of the hot soup, then stir it in.

Tomato-Rice Soup with Cheese

This soup can end up being reminiscent of macaroni and cheese or a spaghetti dinner

—again using what's around can provide a one dish dinner.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

¾ cup rice

5 cups water

1 onion, diced

1 tablespoon olive oil

3 cloves of garlic, minced

¼ teaspoon dried thyme

¼ teaspoon dried oregano

*4 or 5 tomatoes or 1 28-ounce can
whole tomatoes*

Salt

Pepper

*¼ pound cheese, grated (cheddar,
Monterey Jack, one you enjoy)*

Start the rice cooking in the water, then

sauté the onion in olive oil for several minutes before adding the garlic and the herbs. Cook another minute or two on low heat (adding water if it starts to stick to the bottom of the pan).

If using fresh tomatoes blanch them 10 seconds in boiling water, cool, and peel. Cut the tomato into small pieces. Or if using the canned tomato, drain off the liquid and add to the onions. Coarsely chop the canned tomato into spoon-size pieces. Add the tomatoes to the onions and cook for several minutes.

After the rice has cooked for at least 30 minutes, add the onion and tomato and continue simmering. Season with the salt and pepper—and see if you want more herbs. Just before serving, stir in half of the grated cheese and use the remainder

for a garnish. So many cheeses are great here—cheddar, Monterey Jack, Colby, fontina, Muenster, something creamy probably, although the dry cheeses, the Parmesans and Asiagos, work as well.

VARIATIONS

- Use minced parsley, green onion, or chives for garnish—or fresh basil, if available.
- *Cream of tomato rice soup*: Cook the rice in 3 cups of water. Add 2 cups of gently heated milk along with the onion and tomato. Season with sugar and basil, along with salt and pepper. For a smoother soup, sieve or blend the onions and tomatoes before adding them to the cooking rice.

- *Easy tomato-rice soup*: Cook the rice in 3 cups of water and, when it is tender, add 1 to 3 cups of heated tomato juice. Add bread cubes (croutons) which have been fried in butter with garlic and oregano.
- *Cornmeal tomato soup*: Use cornmeal in place of the rice. (It will cook faster.) Cut the tomatoes in fat wedges and add them along with diced green pepper about 6 to 8 minutes before serving, so that they retain their brightest color. Season with salt, pepper, thyme, and chili powder. Garnish with minced parsley or sliced green onions, as well as cheese.
- *Barley soup*: Use barley instead of

rice and cook it for 1½ hours. Add sautéed carrot and turnip along with the onion and tomato.

Barley-Mushroom Soup

Wonderfully down-to-earth, this soup is quite simple to prepare. Mostly it just takes time.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

½ cup barley

5 cups water

*1 small red onion (about 4 ounces),
diced*

2 stalks of celery, diced

1 carrot, diced

8 to 10 mushrooms or more (about ½

pound), sliced

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon dried thyme

Pepper

1/3 cup flat-leaf parsley, minced

Cook the barley in the water over moderate heat for 30 to 45 minutes, so that it is well-softened. Add the red onion, celery, carrot, mushrooms, salt, thyme, and some black pepper. Cook an additional 30 minutes for the vegetables to soften. Add more water if needed. Mix in a generous amount of parsley to finish, and check the seasoning before serving. Surprising how delicious.

A Potato Soup to Start With

You can either enjoy the earthy creamy simplicity of the potato soup, or spice it up with the garnish. And especially if you have odds and ends around, keep in mind there are variations.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

4 medium potatoes, about 1 pound

4 cups water

Salt

1 stalk of celery, diced

1 carrot, diced

4 cloves of garlic, minced

½ teaspoon dried thyme

Pepper

1 cup (or more) milk or water

*1 cup grated cheddar cheese, for
garnish*

2 to 3 green onions, thinly sliced, or ¼

cup (sliced) chives, for garnish
Paprika, for garnish (optional)

Scrub the potatoes and cut them into small cubes (which will make for easy mashing later). Cover with the 4 cups water (adding a couple pinches of salt), bring to boil, then simmer until the potatoes are tender—about 20 minutes. Strain off, reserve the cooking liquid, and mash the potatoes (blending may turn the soup gummy).

Sauté the vegetables starting with the onion, then the celery and carrot, along with the garlic and thyme. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes. Then add the mashed potatoes along with the reserved cooking liquid and enough milk (starting with 1 cup) or stock to bring the soup to desired

thickness. (Some cream may also be used here.) Grate in some pepper and taste for salt and herbs. Served garnished with the cheddar cheese, sliced green onions, and a sprinkling of paprika, if available.

VARIATION

- Garnish with a spoonful or two of salsa and some julienne strips of fresh cilantro.
- Garnish with fresh basil or tarragon.
- Garnish with other cheeses and herbs, for instance Monterey Jack (or pepper Jack) and cilantro.
- Replace $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk with buttermilk or yogurt.
- In place of the potato, use sweet potatoes, yams, or winter squash.

Or use cooked potato, yam, sweet potato, or winter squash—less work, cleaner refrigerator.

- Use other vegetables in place of the celery and carrot. Choose 1 cup (or more) diced, sliced, chunked vegetables: celery root, fennel bulb, green beans, peas, mushrooms, spinach, or chard. Vegetables such as peas, mushrooms, spinach, or chard require little cooking and do not need to be sautéed. Add them to the soup 4 or 5 minutes before serving.

Potato Soup with Mustard Greens

Mustard greens add spice and texture to the potato base.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

4 medium potatoes (about 1 pound)

4 cups water

Salt

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon butter

1 yellow onion, diced

*2 cups thinly sliced mustard greens,
spinach, or chard*

3 to 4 cloves of garlic, minced

2 tablespoons flour

1 cup milk

Pepper

½ cup buttermilk, yogurt, or more milk

FOR GARNISH:

1/2 to 3/4 cup salsa

1 cup grated cheddar cheese

1 dozen sprigs fresh cilantro

Cube the potatoes and start them cooking in the water (with a couple pinches of salt). Cut the mustard greens in half lengthwise, then finely crosswise. Sauté the onion in the oil and butter for several minutes, then add the mustard greens and garlic and continue cooking. Start the milk heating gently. Add the flour to the vegetables and cook for 3 minutes, before gradually whisking in the heated milk.

When the potatoes are tender, drain them and reserve the liquid. Mash the potatoes and combine with the reserved liquid and add to the vegetable-milk sauce. Season with salt and pepper and

simmer until serving. Garnish with spoonfuls of salsa, fingerfuls of grated cheese, and a sprig or two of cilantro.

VARIATIONS

- For a smoother soup, add just 1 cup of milk to the onions and mustard greens, then sieve or blend them, before combining with the remainder of the milk and the potatoes.
- Use sweet potatoes, yams, or squash instead of potatoes and the vegetables.
- Try adding grated cheese to the soup. Parmesan or another white cheese can be stirred in for a hidden enrichment (with or without the grated cheddar

garnish).

- Garnish as in the previous recipe: cheddar cheese and green onion or chives.
- Replace the mustard greens with 2 bunches of watercress, cut finely—and use watercress sprigs to garnish the soup.



*The Sincerity of Battered
Teapots*

In the late sixties, when I was working so very hard and struggling to learn how to cook and how to direct the operations of a kitchen, the battered teapots were one of the things that kept me going. Dented and tarnished, they sat on a shelf in the kitchen, ready to be used when called upon. My tired, despairing eyes would wander around the kitchen at all the jars and bowls, pots and utensils which were so much a part of my busy life and finally come to rest on those teapots. How did they do it?

Once they had been new, bright, perfect, a softly lustrous golden tone. Made of polished metal, probably aluminum, they were pleasingly

round and plump, with a long perky spout and a graceful curving metal handle wrapped with bamboo stripping.

The teapots were used several times a day to serve hot water and tea. To see them filled and waiting was a cheery sight, not just because of the hot refreshing liquid stored inside, but because their shape greeted the eye with easygoing ampleness. Nothing pretentious, sleek, or stylish distinguished these teapots, which were always ready and always willing.

Zen offers a simple dictum for how to care for things, how to respect them: Carry one thing with two hands rather than two things with

one hand. The teapots rarely received this respect. Especially once they were empty, people would grab two handles in one hand and two handles in the other, and the teapots would clang their way back to the kitchen.

To practice respect or to care for something or someone intimately takes time, and even spiritually minded Zen students are as much in a hurry as the next person. Instead of dashing to work or school, the Zen student races for time off, a nap, or a hot bath. Teapots become an obstacle between here and rest, so grabbing two pots in each hand seems like a great time-saver.

After a while the teapots reflected

the way they had been treated. Gazing at the teapots on the shelf, I would feel a certain camaraderie: I too am like that—dented, discolored, drained. Yet as I looked I would sense something else: quiet dignity . . . tremendous forgiveness . . . the willingness to go on. “Sweethearts,” I would think, “if you can do it, I can too.” Inspiration comes from the strangest places.

Please do not suppose that I am condoning abuse. It is just that we all get beaten down by life—with disappointments and frustrations, annoyances and fatigue. And somehow we find the strength to continue. And sometimes the courage to change.

Recently my friend Patricia asked me if I knew what *sincere* meant. She had been working endless hours on a figure sculpture, which was to be cast in bronze eventually.

“No,” I replied, “tell me about the meaning of *sincere*.” Her explanation was that the *s-i-n* was like *sans* in French, meaning “without,” and that the *c-e-r-e* meant “wax.” To be sincere is to be without wax, the wax which can be used to cover up all the dents and blemishes, the chips and cracks, all those places we think we need to hide.

To be sincere is to be of a piece—with the imperfections showing. The lines and grooves are part of the beauty. The faults and shortcomings

are part of the sincerity. When it comes to cooking, I put my faith in sincere, honest effort. I am less interested in showy, dramatic results intended to impress and astound than in day-in and day-out cooking. According to an old Chinese saying, “The uses of cleverness are soon exhausted, while the apparently simple is infinitely interesting.”

To be committed to covering up faults is to be continuously anxious that we could be unmasked or seen through. When the imperfections are pointed out, we can become angry or quite discouraged. Yet although we are “up-set,” this removal of wax can also be a relief. Then we don’t have to put all that effort into covering up

anymore. The secret is out.

In one Zen story the student asks the teacher, “How can I attain liberation?” and the teacher responds, “Who is binding you?” The student is said to have had an awakening.

I find that story revealing. I notice how I bind myself at times with demands for perfection and mastery. I tell myself endlessly, “Watch what you say. Watch what you do,” until a kind of paralysis sets in. I withhold love and respect from someone who is dented and tarnished, and even find fault with his efforts to wax things over.

Then I look at the teapots. And I am released.

Beet Soup with Red Potatoes

When people plan to make beet soup, they most often think of borscht. While borschts can be quite excellent, I make another kind of beet soup, one that emphasizes the beetiness of beet. Blended to smoothness, this soup is straightforward, soothing, and brilliantly beet red.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 yellow onion, sliced

2 stalks of celery, sliced

1 carrot, diced

2 medium red potatoes, diced

Salt

Pepper

4 to 6 cups water

2 medium beets, cooked and sliced

OPTIONAL:

Fresh herbs of your choice, minced

Thinly sliced lemon

Orange slices

Fresh mint

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet and sauté the onion for 2 to 3 minutes until it begins to turn translucent. Add the celery, carrot, and potatoes, and continue sautéing, while stirring, for several minutes longer. Then season with salt and pepper, add 1 cup of water, cover, and cook over low heat until very soft, 10 to

15 minutes.

Add the sliced beets and 2 more cups of water, then puree (in a food processor or with an immersion blender) until smooth. Return to the stove and add more water until you have the consistency you desire. Check the seasoning and serve. (It will also keep well and can be easily reheated later.)

Some freshly minced herbs—parsley, thyme, mint, marjoram—could be used as a garnish, or a thin slice of lemon, or both. Sometimes I like to cut the skin off an orange and slice it into thin rounds—one for each bowl of soup and then decorate with a whole mint leaf or two or thinly cut strips of fresh mint. It's such a vibrant presentation!

Potato-Leek Soup

Sautéed bell peppers enhance the reassuring flavors of potato and leek.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

*1 pound potatoes (often 4 potatoes),
cubed*

2 cups water

¼ teaspoon salt

1 to 2 leeks (about 12 ounces)

1 teaspoon dried thyme

Pepper freshly ground

¼ cup flat-leaf parsley, minced

½ green bell pepper

½ red bell pepper

1 tablespoon olive oil

4 cloves of garlic, minced

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

¼ cup fresh basil or tarragon, finely sliced (optional)

Start the potato cubes heating in the water with a pinch or two of the salt. Slice the leek in half lengthwise and wash between layers to remove dirt beneath the surface. Then slice crosswise in 1/8-inch pieces, using both the white and green portions. Add to the potatoes along with thyme, salt, pepper, and parsley. Cook 20 to 30 minutes until vegetables are soft.

Cut pepper halves lengthwise in thirds, then crosswise into thin strips. Sauté for 2 to 3 minutes in olive oil. Add the garlic, and continue cooking another minute or two. Add the vinegar. Cover, reduce heat, and cook until tender. Taste—and add a touch of sugar if it tastes too acidic to you.

Set aside.

Put at least some of the soup through a chinois or strainer, or pulverize with a masher. (Do not use a blender, as this will make the soup gummy.) Add water to desired thickness. Add the pepper mixture and adjust seasoning. Garnish with fresh herbs, if available, or use a sprinkling of dried.

Potato Soup with Caramelized Onions

Simple and soothing, this potato soup is enlivened with well-toasted onions and enriched with cream and buttery croutons.

MAKES 8 TO 10 CUPS

4 cups potatoes (about 1¼ to 1½ pounds), washed and cut into 1-inch pieces

2 yellow onions

2 medium leeks, white part only, or another yellow onion

4 cups water

½ teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ cup milk

½ cup cream (optional)

Fresh chervil or parsley

Pepper, freshly ground

*Fresh herbs of your choice, chopped:
parsley, thyme, basil, tarragon*

½ cup small croutons, fried in butter

Slice 1 of the onions and the leeks, then

place them in a soup pot with the potatoes, water, and salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer uncovered until the vegetables are completely soft, about 40 minutes.

Dice the other onion. While the vegetables are simmering, melt 2 tablespoons butter with the olive oil in a heavy skillet and slowly cook the diced onions until they are caramelized a deep brown, about 20 minutes. Stir frequently so they don't burn.

Press the softened vegetables, now finished simmering, through a chinois or sieve, then return them to the soup pot. (Do not use a blender; this tends to make the potatoes gummy.)

Add the caramelized onions, milk, and cream to the soup. Taste for salt. Thin

with more milk or cream if necessary. Serve the soup with plenty of chopped fresh herbs, coarsely ground pepper, and croutons.

Winter Squash Soup with Apple, Cumin, and Cardamom

Since this soup is received so enthusiastically, I am likely (in season) to include it in cooking classes.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 or 2 winter squashes (about 2 pounds)

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

¼ teaspoon cardamom seeds

1 yellow onion, sliced

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 cloves of garlic, minced
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated
1 apple, cored and sliced
4 cups hot water
1 tablespoon lemon juice
Salt

Preheat oven to 375°. Bake the squash about 1 hour. Allow it to cool, then cut open, remove seeds, and scoop out the flesh.

Grind the cumin and cardamom in an electric coffee mill used for grinding spices. Sauté the onion in olive oil for 2 to 3 minutes, then add the garlic, ginger, cumin, and cardamom and continue cooking another 1 to 2 minutes. Add the apple and 4 cups hot water, along with the

squash. Cook for 10 minutes or so.



When the apple is soft, puree with an immersion blender or in a Cuisinart. Season with the lemon juice and salt to taste, as well as adding more spice if you so desire.

Perfection Squash Soup

Perfection, in this case, refers to a kind of squash, not to the soup. And, although the soup may not be perfect, it is awfully delicious. We grow these squash at our Green Gulch farm. They have a dark green exterior and a sweet, succulent, fine-grained interior. Other squash, especially pumpkin and banana squash, could be used. The cream adds a buttery richness and softens the flavor of the squash. However, it is not essential to the soup, so it can be omitted.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

*2½ pounds perfection squash,
pumpkin, or banana squash (about 8
cups when cubed)*

*2 medium yellow onions, diced or
sliced in medium-sized pieces*

3 tablespoons butter

4 cloves of garlic, pressed

¾ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon dried thyme

2 tablespoons nutritional yeast

4 cups boiling water

½ cup cream (optional)

Salt

White pepper

½ teaspoon fresh thyme

Cut open the squash and remove the seeds. Cut off the skin if it is thick (if it's perfection squash, the skin must be cut off) and cut the squash into chunks. (If you find it difficult to cut open the squash and to remove the skin while the squash is still

raw, you can first steam or bake the squash to soften it. Let cool, then remove seeds and skin.)

Cook the onions on a medium flame in the butter with the garlic, salt, dried thyme, and nutritional yeast. When the onions are completely soft, add the squash and boiling water, using more water if necessary to cover the squash. Simmer until the squash is soft (about 40 minutes). Put the soup through a coarse sieve or liquefy in a blender (or with an immersion blender), and return to the pot. Add water if the soup is too thick. Add the cream and season with salt and white pepper (or black if you prefer). Garnish with the fresh thyme. Serve, savor, enjoy.

Spicy Cashew-Tomato Soup

The nutty sweetness of cashews with the spicy tomato base makes this soup irresistible.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1½ cups cashews

1 28-ounce can of whole peeled tomatoes

1 teaspoon cumin seed

1 teaspoon fennel seed

1 teaspoon coriander seed

1 serrano chili

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 medium yellow onion, diced

3 stalks of celery, diced

2 cloves of garlic, minced

¼ teaspoon salt

Juice of ½ lime or lemon

1 or 2 pinches cayenne (optional)

Curry powder (optional)

½ teaspoon dried basil (optional)

½ teaspoon dill (optional)

*Cilantro leaves or flat-leafed parsley
leaves, for garnish*

Blend cashews with 3 cups of water in a food processor or with an immersion blender. (Smallish chunks will remain.) Blend or chop whole tomatoes with their juice. Grind cumin, fennel, and coriander in an herb mill or clean coffee grinder.

Mince the green chili, being careful not to touch your eyes, mouth, or skin while doing so. (Use plastic or rubber gloves if you are sensitive.) Discard the seeds inside if you want less heat. Wash hands

thoroughly when done.

Heat oil and sauté onion for 3 to 4 minutes, then add celery and continue cooking.



When celery has softened add the garlic, green chili, cumin, fennel, and coriander. Cook another minute or two before adding the tomatoes and cashews. Simmer for 10 to 15 minutes, being careful not to burn the

cashews on the bottom of the pot. Add the lime or lemon juice along with some salt, and adjust seasoning using some of the optional spices if you wish. Serve garnished with the cilantro or parsley.

ON MAKING CREAM SOUPS

When I say “cream soup” here I am referring to a soup which has a thick and “creamy” consistency, whether or not it actually has any dairy cream—and you will see that I list the cream as an optional ingredient, so that you may choose to utilize it or not. Cream soups are often thickened with flour. Milk or cream may or may not be used.

The two cream of vegetable soups which follow are prepared slightly

differently: in the first the vegetables are cooked by themselves and then added to a flour-thickened sauce. In the second recipe the soup is thickened with flour sprinkled directly *on* the vegetables.

Basic Cream of Vegetable Soup Using Cauliflower

This cream of vegetable soup presents one of the basic ways to make a blended, flour-thickened soup. The seasoning with lemon and the fresh tarragon are terrific flavor-brighteners.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 small cauliflower (about 1 pound or, cut-up, about 5 to 6 cups)

1 yellow onion, diced

3 tablespoons olive oil

4 cloves of garlic, minced

½ teaspoon dried oregano

Salt

Pepper

3 tablespoons butter

4 tablespoons white flour

4 to 5 cups (or more) water or stock

1 to 2 cups milk (if using it) including

½ cup cream, possibly

2 tablespoons lemon juice

3 tablespoons fresh tarragon, coarsely

chopped, or other fresh green

garnish

Cut the cauliflower into ½-inch pieces. The soup will be blended later, so the pieces here do not need to be especially

shapely, and for the same reason you can use the core as well as the florets—except for possibly a woody portion at the very base. (Any cauliflower greens can go in there as well.)

Start the onion sautéing in a tablespoon of the oil, and after a minute or so, add the garlic and oregano, cook another minute or so and add the cauliflower, a couple pinches of salt, a dose of pepper, and 1 cup of water or stock. Cover and cook over moderate heat until very tender, about 12 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile you can make up the sauce that will thicken the soup. Begin by heating 4 cups of liquid. Here you can use all water or include some portion of milk if you are using dairy. Melt 2 tablespoons of butter with the remaining 2 tablespoons

of oil, and stir in the 4 tablespoons of flour. Cook for several minutes over moderate heat. Remove the pan from the heat long enough so that the mixture stops bubbling; pour in the heated liquid, and whisk briskly so that it is smooth (scraping the bottom and corners of the pan to incorporate all of the oil-flour mixture). Return to a moderate flame and heat to boiling so that it thickens completely.

Blend the softened vegetables with an immersion blender. (If you were cooking the vegetables in a skillet, you'll probably find it easier to blend if you transfer them to a soup pot first.) Combine the blended vegetables with the sauce. Season with the lemon juice and a tablespoon of the fresh tarragon. Study how you want to finish the

soup—first of all the consistency, then the seasoning. Add water? milk? cream? need salt? pepper? a bit more dried oregano? lemon? Serve garnished with the rest of the tarragon.

VARIATIONS

- Substitute leftover vegetables or those on the limp side as they can readily disappear into this soup as it is blended (or sieved) before being added to the sauce. Use in place of some or all of the cauliflower: celery, carrot, green pepper, mushrooms, broccoli, corn, asparagus, green beans, or other odds and ends.
- *Creamed squash soup*: Use either summer or winter squash in place

of the cauliflower. Sauté-steam it, then mash it and add to the sauce. Season with basil, thyme, or oregano.

- Use other kinds of flour in place of the white wheat flour: whole wheat, barley, corn, rye, buckwheat.
- Use all water or stock (and no dairy) with perhaps a quarter cup of white wine while the vegetable are steaming. If using other vegetables besides the (white) cauliflower, some tomato juice or other tomato product could be substituted. (Cauliflower and tomato would also be fine, if you are okay with pink soup.)
- Use in place of the tarragon: green

onion, chives, parsley, cilantro, watercress, or basil.

- Use a light dusting of nutmeg or mace to season the soup—it's a kind of peppery element which helps *define* the flavors, so when used cautiously the flavors of the soup are enhanced, but you will not taste nutmeg or mace.
- *Spicy cream of vegetable soup:* Use both onions and green peppers and season with additional garlic and some dry (or prepared) mustard.

Alternate Cream of Vegetable Soup Using Cauliflower

Another cream of cauliflower soup. In this version, the cauliflower is stir-fried with the onion and then the flour is cooked with the vegetables (instead of separately to make a sauce). Sautéing the cauliflower gives the soup a nuttier, earthier flavor than the previous recipe. See what you like. Each of these is a good method to know.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 small cauliflower (about 1 pound or, cut-up, about 5 to 6 cups)

1 small leek, narrow slices (1 to 1½ cups)

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons butter

4 cloves of garlic, minced

½ teaspoon dried oregano

Salt

Pepper

4 tablespoons white flour

*4 to 5 cups (or more) water or stock,
heated*

*1 to 2 cups milk (if using it) including
½ cup cream, possibly*

2 tablespoons minced parsley

*½ cup sour cream, yogurt, or grated
havarti or Monterey Jack cheese,
for garnish*

*2 green onions, thinly sliced, or more
minced parsley, for garnish*

Cut the cauliflower into small pieces about ½ inch on a side. In this case you can also use the core (which is often discarded as its shape is not *fitting* with the florets)—as the soup will later be

blended. Start the cauliflower sautéing with the leeks in the oil and butter. Sauté over fairly high heat to develop the earthy, nutty flavors, adding the garlic, oregano, some salt and pepper after a few minutes. After letting the flavor elements cook in for another minute, add the flour and continue cooking over more moderate heat for 4 to 5 minutes. (You'll be able to see that the flour is browning.) Remove from the heat and whisk in 3 cups of the water. Heat to boiling so that the liquid thickens.

Consider how you would like to finish off the soup, adding a cup or two of milk (including some cream possibly) or adding more water or stock. Add the minced parsley and see how you like the seasoning: salt? pepper?

Serve garnished with sour cream or

yogurt (a bit of *tartness*) and sliced green onions. Or dot with a bit more minced parsley.

VARIATIONS

- Utilize any of the variations in the above cream of vegetable soup recipe.
- Use other pepper elements: red pepper, chili, green chili.
- *Cream of mushroom soup*: Use a generous amount of mushrooms ($\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 pound), along with some onion for flavor and a little carrot or celery for color. Chopped olives can garnish this soup. Brandy can flavor it.



Cream of Spinach Soup

This cream of spinach soup is an incredibly lush green with an equally

succulent flavor of spinach. When it's this good, we do well to simply share the goodness with others—without trying to improve it.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 bunch of spinach (about 1 pound)

1 onion, diced

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons butter

2 cloves of garlic, minced

4 tablespoons flour

2 to 3 cups water or stock (heated)

Salt

Pepper

2 tablespoons minced parsley

2 cups milk or more

Sour cream or yogurt, for garnish

Clean the spinach: cut off the large stems and wash the leaves. Sauté the onion for several minutes in the oil and butter, until it softens. Cook an additional minute with the garlic. Add the flour and cook it for several minutes, then remove the pan from the heat and whisk in 2 cups of the heated water. Return to the heat and add the spinach, salt, pepper, and chopped parsley and continue cooking to wilt the greens. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Puree with an immersion blender (or Cuisinart), then add the milk (if using dairy) or more water to desired thickness. Heat and adjust the seasonings, bringing up the salt and pepper. Serve garnished with sour cream or yogurt.

VARIATIONS

- Use lettuce, chard, mustard greens, cabbage, brussels sprouts instead of the spinach.
- Add 1 or 2 eggs for enrichment (see [Adding Eggs](#)).
- *Cream of carrot soup*: Use grated carrots instead of the spinach. Use buckwheat flour, if you like it. Season this soup with a bit of thyme or sage. Wheat germ is good here, too.
- *Cream of tomato with mushrooms*: Use onion and mushrooms for the vegetables. In place of the milk, use tomato juice. Season with basil or tarragon in addition to salt and pepper.
- *Cream of onion with cheese*: Use 4 to 6 onions. Sauté for 15 minutes

before adding the flour. Season with added garlic and some fresh or powdered ginger. Add grated cheese just before serving.

Spinach or Chard Soup

How wonderful can spinach or chard taste? Make this soup and find out: liquid greenness, sun and sky, earth and water. You cannot see the cheese when the soup is finished, but it adds a depth or meatiness to the flavor. The soup is blended, so the stems can be left on the spinach or chard—if cut small. Although most any cheese will go well in this soup, stay away from the most stringy, like mozzarella. Some Parmesan, Asiago, or

Romano makes an especially welcome addition.

**MAKES 8 TO 10 CUPS; SERVES 4 TO 6
PEOPLE**

*1½ to 2 gallons fresh spinach or
chard, washed and lightly pressed
into a measuring cup*

2 small yellow onions, sliced or diced

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ teaspoon salt

*2 medium cloves of garlic, pressed or
minced*

3 tablespoons nutritional yeast

*2 cups vegetable stock or water,
boiling*

½ to 1 cup cheese, grated

Salt

White pepper

Fresh basil (optional)

Wash the spinach or chard very well, making sure no grit remains. (This may require a couple of rinsings.) Although you needn't destem the spinach or chard, it helps to cut it crosswise into 1/4-inch or smaller pieces.

Sauté the onions in the olive oil for a few minutes until they turn translucent. Add the salt, garlic, and nutritional yeast, and continue cooking another 5 minutes. Add the greens and cover to steam them until they are wilted, stirring occasionally. Add the boiling stock or water, and simmer until the greens are soft, including the stalks.

With a blender or immersion blender, blend the soup to an even consistency,

return to the stove. Add the grated cheese. (We use up a lot of odds and ends of cheese with this recipe—all those dried-up edges or older ends can be grated into the soup.) Use more cheese if it is mild, less if it is sharp. Season with salt and white pepper. Fresh basil makes an excellent garnish.

Cream of Lettuce Soup

Lettuce soup, though a bit unusual, makes a tasty, light, delicately flavored dish. Leftover salads—as well as the overly large outer leaves which are not the tenderest for serving raw—can turn into another meal.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 or 2 heads of lettuce (red leaf or butter, something flavorful, about 1 pound)

1 small leek (white and green parts), thinly sliced, (about 1 cup)

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons butter

2 cloves of garlic, minced

4 tablespoons of flour

3 to 4 cups water or stock, heated

Salt

Pepper

1 cup milk

½ cup cream

FOR GARNISH:

¼ cup diced tomato

¼ cup chopped olives

¼ cup sliced chives or green onion

2 tablespoons olive oil

Cut off the base of the lettuce and discard. Cut the rest of the leaves in spoon-size pieces, and wash them. Sauté the leeks in the oil and butter for a couple minutes, and then add the garlic. Cook for another minute, and sprinkle with the flour. Cook 4 to 5 minutes to let the flour cook (if you keep the flame low the flour will not brown).

Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in 3 cups of the heated water or light stock. Return to the heat and add the lettuce and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Gently cook several minutes to soften the lettuce. Puree with an immersion blender (or Cuisinart). Check out the taste. One cup of milk and ½ cup of cream will help

soften the flavors. (If you are not using dairy, the garnish will help to moderate the flavor.) Adjust the seasoning.

To assemble the garnish, mix together the tomato, olives, onion, and olive oil—and then season with salt and pepper. Garnish the soup with this mixture or serve it on the side.

VARIATIONS

- Use croutons as an alternative garnish. Toast 1 cup of bread cubes in 2 tablespoons butter (with a clove or two of minced garlic if you would like).
- Use leftover salad (dressing and all) to replace some of the lettuce.
- Use julienned fresh basil in place of the onion in the garnish.

Nondairy “Cream” Soup

Here is a cream soup recipe made with soy milk instead of dairy milk. Delicately flavored with a lighter feeling than ordinary cream soups, it is nonetheless nourishing and satisfying. Prepared in a few minutes—you're ready to eat.

MAKES 8 CUPS

*2 medium carrots, grated or
matchsticks*

3 stalks of celery, thinly sliced

Oil for sautéing

3 tablespoons soy oil

¼ cup whole wheat pastry flour

7 cups soy milk

2 teaspoons soy sauce

Salt

Pepper

Green onions or chives

Sauté the vegetables until they are soft. Heat the soy oil in a saucepan and add the flour to make a roux. Cook 4 to 5 minutes to toast the flour so that it has a nutty flavor. Whisk in the heated soy milk. Do not boil the soup after this. Keep it on low heat.

Add the sautéed vegetables and the soy sauce. Do not add more than the 2 teaspoons of soy sauce or the soup will curdle. Season with salt and pepper. Sliced scallions or chives make an excellent garnish.

ON MAKING COLD SOUPS

Many of the preceding soups are suitable for serving cold, as well as hot. What follows are three ways by which soups can be adapted for serving cold: (1) adding milk or cream, (2) adding salad dressing, (3) making sweet-sour.

Finding Out That Food is Precious

Food is precious. We don't always remember until not much is left. Then it is obvious. Food is an everyday matter, until it disappears. Then we know it's terribly important. The simplest dishes can be divine. The fact that they are even there is providential.

During the winter of 1969 at Tassajara, we found this out. We hadn't stocked up as well as we might have with grains, beans, seeds, nuts, dried fruits, and canned goods, so when the rains came we were ill-prepared. And the rains did indeed come—torrentially. Tassajara Creek, which is placid in the summertime, swelled so that it roared through the canyon.

At the baths, the stream rose a good ten feet or more and threatened to flood into the bathhouse. Perhaps that was the year the bridge to the baths was swept away, and someone climbed a tree that arched across the creek and dropped down to the baths. (We later installed a rope bridge.)

It's all rather fun and exciting, grand and dramatic, as long as one is dry and has enough to eat. When one starts going hungry, then the constant, pulsating, throbbing surge of water is no longer thrilling but takes on ominous qualities. What are we up against?

News came back that the fourteen-mile dirt road to town was no longer passable. About two miles up the road from Tassajara a huge mud slide had deposited a rock the size of a small cabin on the road, and nearby runoff had washed out a tremendous gully about six feet deep directly across the road. Not that we were accustomed to going out to the movies anyway, but we did depend

on the road for food supplies. Farther up the ridge, the road was impassable with snow and fallen trees.

We became foragers. Four people went out each day to pick the wild miner's lettuce and curly dock, which were plentiful because of the precipitation. At lunch, after the wheat flour for bread was gone, I began to serve white rice watered down to make a kind of gruel or congee. With it we would have a soup made with what we could find—perhaps a few beans or yams—and a miner's lettuce salad. Dinner would be brown rice with some steamed curly dock.

Once or twice we managed to get

food in. After the county road crew had cleared the snow and fallen trees, a truck would come as far as it could, and we would drive up the road as far as we could, and then “ferry” food by hand or wheelbarrow over and around the various obstacles. Then the road became impassable again.

The food staples were stored in a room overlooking the creek, and sometimes I would look from one to the other: A few meager bags and tins of food staples, a magnificent surging of water. “This,” I would think, “these few bags, is all there is. We could actually run out of food.” Would we have to abandon Tassajara and hike out? We did have

a large sack of whole wheat berries left over from our failed efforts to grind our own flour, so I began cooking them and adding them to the rice gruel at lunch. With spring we began adding lavender-colored lupine blossoms to our miner's lettuce salad and sprouting some alfalfa seeds that we had discovered.

When the road remained impassable, we arranged for a helicopter to deliver food to Church Creek Ranch, which was about a three-hour hike, eight miles away. We trekked over and then back, our packs laden with groceries, some of which we wouldn't have ordered but ate anyway: Jiffy peanut butter, Mary Ellen jam, Wonder bread. We had

these fantastic giant gems called oranges. We had cauliflower and broccoli, cheese and nuts, onions and garlic; we feasted.

Not so long after that the road crew, which had been waiting for dry weather to stabilize the hillside, came in and cleared the road, dynamiting the giant boulder that had blocked the way. We'd survived an unusual winter.

Later that spring, the toilet in the dormitory backed up, and Reb, our plumber (who later became one of our abbots), was asked to investigate. Opening up the drain line, he discovered that it was blocked with undigested, intact whole wheat berries. Live and learn.

How clever of the ancients to grind the wheat and make it into bread and pasta. How less than clever of modern man to use it to clog plumbing.

We ate simply. We may have lost weight, but we got by. Looking back now I can't remember any complaints. Complaints often come with affluence, when the choices being made are not bringing as much joy and satisfaction as they "should." During a time of lack, the fact that there is food is enough. Complaints can also come with comparison, when some group of people has more or better than you do. When everybody is in it together, we weather it together—no complaints.

May we and all beings enjoy the blessing of this food we share.

Adding Dairy Products

Perhaps these soups are good because we associate dairy products with coldness. Start with a potato soup, split pea soup, a squash soup, a sweet potato soup, which can be leftover. If you are making it from scratch, make it thicker than usual so that it can stand being diluted with milk or cream. You may or may not want pieces of cooked vegetables floating in the smoothness of these soups.

Milk, cream, yogurt, sour cream, and buttermilk can all be used in cold soups. Buttermilk or yogurt adds a flavorful tartness to these soups. Chill the base

soup, then add the milk. (Nut milks can also be used.)

Adding Vegetables

The same vegetables can be used as for hot soups. Vegetables, cooked as usual, can be pureed or left in small pieces.

Raw. Diced or finely sliced raw vegetables can be added for chewing interest and fresh flavor. Onions, green or red peppers, cucumbers are often used for this purpose.

Seasonings

Use the same as for the hot soup, or take your pick of garlic, dill, thyme, pepper, basil, dry mustard, lemon peel.

Garnishings

Use green onion, parsley, cucumber, chopped hard-boiled egg, fresh basil, or mint.

Yogurt Soup

This cold soup can also be made starting with yogurt and milk, buttermilk and milk, yogurt and buttermilk, or even homemade yogurt which didn't thicken. Add raw, freshly diced or minced vegetables—onion, celery, peppers, cucumbers, parsley, summer squashes, watercress. Season with garlic, dill, possibly lemon juice, as well as salt and pepper. Chill and serve.

Cool Green Soup

One of the blended green soups can be utilized as a base for this cool green soup—a refreshing treat in hot summer weather.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

Cream of Spinach Soup or Cream of Lettuce Soup

1 to 2 cups sour cream, yogurt, buttermilk, milk, or cream

Salt

Pepper

Garlic, minced (optional)

Dried thyme or dill (optional)



POSSIBLE GARNISHES:

Chopped hard-boiled egg

Sliced green onions or parsley

Cucumber, small dice

*Red bell pepper, finely diced or
minced*

Radishes, julienned pieces

Prepare the Cream of Spinach Soup or Cream of Lettuce Soup, leaving out the dairy for the time being. After pureeing, allow the soup to cool.

Add 2 cups or more of sour cream, yogurt, buttermilk, milk, or cream. Adjust the seasoning: salt, pepper, garlic, thyme, and dill. Or if re-serving one of the soups cool, adjust the seasoning—usually cool soups need more seasoning to taste flavorful. Also consider adding a bit more dairy which also benefits the flavor of a cold soup.

See what you might like to use among the possible garnishes. Use them to

garnish the soup or pass dishes of them at the table. (The finely diced or minced red bell pepper would definitely brighten the surface.)

VARIATIONS

- Use sorrel (sour grass) or Swiss chard to replace the spinach or lettuce.
- Use a touch of lemon juice or minced lemon peel to lift the flavors.

Gazpacho

So fresh and invigorating, a cool liquid salad, emboldened with garlic and tomatoes—gazpacho can have the texture

of finely minced vegetables, or they can be blended to near smoothness. See what you like. The ingredients list is divided into main ingredients and those that provide the “salad dressing” and seasonings.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

FOR THE SOUP:

2 cups tomato juice, or 1 16-ounce can (unseasoned) stewed tomatoes, blended

2 to 3 fresh tomatoes

½ green bell pepper, finely diced

1 small cucumber, finely diced (the regular probably need peeling first)

4 to 5 red radishes, julienne strips

4 green onions, thinly cut or minced

½ stalk of celery, finely diced

¼ cup minced parsley

FOR THE DRESSING:

⅓ cup olive oil

*2 to 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar or
sherry wine vinegar*

3 to 4 cloves of garlic, minced

½ teaspoon salt

Pepper

Tabasco (optional)

Avocado slices, for garnish

*¼ cup fresh basil, thinly cut, or 2
tablespoons fresh tarragon, minced,
for garnish*

If you have some very ripe, juicy, flavorful tomatoes, you can use them in place of the tomato juice or canned

tomatoes—otherwise the juice or canned tomato makes an excellent base for the soup. For the tomatoes, cut a thin piece off the top and bottom and cut out the core. Slice top the bottom into 8 wedges, lay them flat, and cut thinly crosswise. Combine with juice or canned tomato, if using it. Now is a good time to blend the soup, if you would like a smooth base with the remaining vegetables in pieces.

Add the finely diced bell pepper, cucumber, radishes, green onion, celery, and parsley. If you are interested in flavors and which ingredient does what, add the dressing ingredients one at a time and taste what each one does: the oil, vinegar, salt, garlic, some pepper. Decide if you want the extra heat of Tabasco or more black pepper. Assess the texture and

perhaps give it a couple moments of blending, leaving some texture (or blend to smoothness). Adjust the seasonings, including the oil and vinegar. If you like garlic, use it freely in this recipe. Garnish with slices of avocado, along with the fresh basil or tarragon which will really help the flavors to *pop*.

VARIATIONS

- Use other vegetables which are edible raw—carrot, summer squashes, cabbage, say. Shallots would be a great onion alternative.
- If you like grains or beans served this way, add a moderate amount of either, cooked. Among others, rice, bulgur, garbanzo beans, and lentils are all adaptable to this

recipe.

- Diced green chilies and fresh cilantro would take it in another very enjoyable direction.

Fruit Soup

This is one of the most requested recipes of the guest season. At midday in the hot, dry Tassajara Valley, cold fruit soup is deliciously refreshing, always a pleasure. A variety of fruit juices and pureed fruits make up the base with cut fruit added to bob and float, and appear at the bottom. Simple . . . and the possibilities are endless, so experiment with what's in season, and what's in your heart and mind, remembering that you don't have to have

all of the ingredients and can use what's at hand.

MAKES ABOUT 8 CUPS

FOR THE STOCK:

1 cup cranberry juice

1 cup apple juice

½ cup orange juice

*½ cup coarse-cut seeded watermelon,
blended*

½ cup strawberries, blended

½ cup coarse-cut peaches, blended

1 cup bananas, blended

¾ cup lemon or lime juice



FOR THE SOUP:

½ cup strawberry halves

½ cup watermelon chunks

½ cup seedless grapes

½ cup peach slices, halved

½ cup pineapple chunks

½ cup cantaloupe balls or chunks

½ cup honeydew balls or chunks

OPTIONAL:

Sugar or honey

Juice of 1 lemon

*¼ to ½ cup white or red wine, sake, or
champagne*

¼ teaspoon cinnamon

⅛ teaspoon cardamom

*Fresh mint leaves, cut into thin strips,
for garnish*

Combine ingredients for the stock, adding ingredients to taste. If possible, start early, as the flavors improve as the concoction sits. Season as you wish adding honey or sugar for sweetness, lemon for tartness, and a touch of alcohol or spice for flavor.

Add the cut fruit. After making melon

balls, any melon remnants can also be pureed. Garnish with the thin strips of fresh mint.



*Sauces, Spreads,
Butters, Chutneys, and
Relishes*



No Measuring Up

Now I take time
to peel potatoes, wash lettuce,
and boil beets, to scrub floors,
clean sinks, and empty trash.
Absorbed in the everyday,
I find time to unbind, unwind,
to invite whole body, mind,
breath, thought, and wild impulse
to join, to bask in the task.
No time lost thinking
that somewhere else is better.
No time lost imagining

getting more elsewhere.

No way to tell this moment

does not measure up.

Hand me the spatula:

now is the time to taste what is.

SAUCES UTILIZE A VARIETY OF INGREDIENTS, not only butter and flour, but tomatoes, peanuts, mayonnaise, and chilies as well. What a delight—moistness and flavor to bathe the dry and the chewy. Both soothing and exciting, reassuring and invigorating, sauces can shift a dish from the everyday to the heavenly. Some of the sauces go well with a particular dish: for example, the Nut Loaf Sauce with the Cheese and Nut Loaf recipe, and the Satay Peanut Sauce with the Roasted Vegetables recipe. Of course, there's ample opportunity for you to discover other uses.

This section also includes chutneys, spicy little somethings, and tasty additions to brighten your taste buds, and seasoned

butters to invigorate your meal-time, as well as a couple spreads to make your sandwiches more appealing. See what inspires you. Some basics begin the chapter and specific recipes follow.

ABOUT SAUCES

Flour Sauces

The basis of a white sauce is butter-flour-*milk*, while the basis of a brown sauce is a butter-flour-*stock or water*. Every added ingredient changes the name of the sauce, if you're keeping track in French.

The *thickness* of the sauce is determined by the ratio of flour to liquid:

- Thin: 1 tablespoon flour to 1 cup liquid
- Medium-thick: 1½ tablespoons flour to 1 cup liquid
- Thick: 2 tablespoons flour to 1 cup liquid
- Very thick: 3 tablespoons flour to 1 cup liquid
- Beyond the realm of sauce—pudding: 4 tablespoons flour to 1 cup liquid

Flavoring the Sauce

White and brown sauces can be flavored with vegetables, especially onion, garlic and mushrooms, with wine, lemon juice, and with a variety of herbs and spices. Go easy on the seasonings until you get a feel for how each ingredient flavors the sauce,

and also a taste for the cumulative effect of the additions.

Herbs: Often one, possibly two or more in combination: thyme, sage, marjoram, oregano, basil, tarragon, chervil, dill, savory. A bay leaf can be put in the heating liquid. I most commonly use dried herbs in the sauce with fresh herbs used as garnish, though fresh herbs may also be utilized in the sauce directly. What's most helpful here for your education as a cook is to taste carefully before and after you add herbs (or spices), and begin to *notice* a n d *catalogue* mentally what you experience.

Spices: Often one spice is used at a time, sometimes two or more may be used in combination: dry mustard or powdered ginger add *heat*; a few pinches of cumin

or coriander contribute *pungent*; mace or nutmeg offer a touch of *nutty*; fennel or anise seed have notes of licorice. Again, taste carefully and catalogue mentally what you note.

Wine: Dry white wine, sherry, dry vermouth, brandy. Use as a seasoning or (dry white wine especially) to replace some of the liquid in a brown sauce.

Tang: Lemon juice, lime juice, a few drops of vinegar.

Vegetables: Dice and sauté onion, carrot, celery, green pepper, or minced garlic before adding to the sauce. Mushrooms, sliced and sautéed, provide their robust flavors and chewiness. Tomato paste can be added without prior cooking, though more customarily tomatoes make their own sauce.

Cheese sauce: White sauces or brown sauces become cheese sauces with the addition of grated cheese. I tend to add the grated cheese shortly before serving, as it needs only to melt. Use up to an ounce of cheese to a cup of sauce. Since cheese has some salt in it, add only a little salt until the cheese has been added. Seasoning with dry or prepared mustard, a pinch or two of mace or nutmeg (be moderate) gives cheese sauces some definition. Other seasonings for cheese sauces are garlic, ginger, an herb.

Cream sauce: White sauces or brown sauces become cream sauces with the addition of cream.

Herbed white sauce: Put a bay leaf in heating milk. Season the thickened sauce with thyme, nutmeg (modest!), and garlic.

Mushroom sauce: Add sliced mushrooms to the simmering sauce (brown or white) five minutes before serving. Season with lemon juice and minced onion.

Mushroom cheese sauce: Season with brandy, dry vermouth, or sherry. Add the grated cheese as usual, just before serving.

Herbed wine sauce: Make one-third of the liquid in a brown sauce dry white wine. Season with rosemary, dill, tarragon, garlic, lemon juice, in addition to salt and pepper.

White Sauce

A white sauce with its soft flavors and

silky texture can be just the thing to complement well-flavored (and colorful) vegetables, crepes, timbales, and other dishes. It's a good one to know, for its ease and its versatility—the many options above. (I much prefer the butter flavor in this sauce.)

MAKES 2 CUPS

3 tablespoons butter or mild-flavored oil

3 tablespoons flour (white, rice, barley, or corn)

2 cups milk

Salt

White pepper

Heat the milk to scalding. Cook the flour in the butter (or oil) for just a few minutes,

so that the flour is not raw tasting, keeping the heat low so that the flour does not brown (and discolor the sauce). Remove the pan from the stove and wait for the *roux* (butter and flour) to stop bubbling. Pour in the boiling or near-boiling milk. Watch out for the steam!

When it stops steaming, whisk briskly. Use a spoon or spatula to scrape out the corners of the pan so that all the flour-oil mixture is incorporated into the water. Then put it back on the heat and let the sauce simmer for several minutes. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

VARIATION

Additional options for modifying or seasoning white sauces are listed above.

Fragrant White Sauce

Here is a specific version of the [White Sauce](#).

MAKES 3½ CUPS

3½ cups milk

4 tablespoons butter

4 tablespoons flour

Salt

Pepper

Nutmeg

Start the milk heating. Melt the butter in a saucepan, and stir in the flour to make a roux. Cook for several minutes over moderate heat, taking care not to let the flour brown (if you want your sauce to be white). Remove from the heat and wait for

the roux to stop bubbling, then pour in the hot milk and stir with a wire whisk.

Return to the heat and cook, stirring, until the sauce thickens. Season with salt and pepper, and a few scrapings of nutmeg, without adding so much that all you can taste is nutmeg. A tiny amount of nutmeg will bring up the flavors of the sauce. Remove from heat.

Brown Sauce (or Gravy)

The brown sauce or gravy is a good one to know, especially since it is so versatile. Often made with meat drippings, the sauce can also be more intensely flavored with onion, garlic, mushrooms. Otherwise much of the flavor comes from the stock

(and possibly one of the darker flours or perhaps some nutritional yeast).

MAKES 2 CUPS

3 tablespoons butter or oil

3 tablespoons flour

*2 cups water or vegetable stock, could
include $\frac{1}{3}$ cup dry white wine*

Salt

Pepper

Heat the water or stock to boiling. Cook the flour in butter or oil for several minutes, so that the flour is lightly browned. When the flour has cooked sufficiently, remove the pan from the stove and wait for it to stop bubbling. Pour in the boiling or near-boiling liquid. Watch out for the steam!

When it stops steaming, whisk briskly. Use a spoon or spatula to scrape out the corners of the pan so that all the flour-oil mixture is incorporated into the water. Then put it back on the heat and let the sauce simmer for several minutes. Season lightly with salt and pepper.



The butter or oil serves two purposes: dispersing and suspending the flour

particles until they have cooked in the liquid, and adding body and flavor to the sauce.

VARIATION

- Use other flours for distinctive flavor: whole wheat, rye, barley, buckwheat, or corn flour.
- Additional options for modifying or seasoning sauces are listed in [Flavoring the Sauce](#).

Nut Loaf Sauce

We often serve this with the [Cheese and Nut Loaf](#), though its sweet nuttiness, somewhat reminiscent of meat gravies, also goes well with green leafy vegetables

such as chard, kale, mustard greens, and spinach. If you are unfamiliar with nutritional yeast, begin with the smaller amount. As you can see, this is a brown sauce fortified with mushroom stock, nutritional yeast, and sherry, as well as seasonings.

MAKES 2½ TO 3 CUPS

*2 to 2½ cups mushroom stock,
vegetable stock, or water*

2 to 4 tablespoons nutritional yeast

¼ cup unbleached white flour

*5 tablespoons light sesame or light
olive oil*

1 tablespoon butter

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

Pepper, freshly grated

*1 large clove of garlic, pounded to a
paste or put through a press
1/4 cup sherry*

Put the stock on to heat so that it is boiling when needed.

Toast the yeast and flour in a heavy saucepan, stirring over medium-low heat until fragrant and lightly browned. Add the oil and butter and stir to mix thoroughly. Remove from heat. Slowly whisk in 2 cups of the boiling stock, return to heat, bring to boil, then lower the heat and simmer gently for 20 minutes.

Add the soy sauce, mustard, pepper, garlic, and sherry. Cook for another 5 minutes. If necessary, thin with additional stock. Taste for salt. Adjust other seasonings as desired.

Tassajara Vegetable Sauce

This sauce is an example of how to vary the basic White Sauce or Brown Sauce—adding sautéed vegetables and herbs.

MAKES 3 CUPS

2 cups White Sauce or Brown Sauce

½ onion, finely diced

½ stalk of celery, finely diced

½ carrot, finely diced

¼ teaspoon dried thyme

¼ teaspoon dried sage

1 clove of garlic, minced (optional)

2 tablespoons parsley, minced

Make up the White Sauce or Brown Sauce. Sauté the diced vegetables, add the dried herbs along with the garlic (if

using), and cook another minute. Add to the simmering sauce. Season with the minced parsley and check for salt and pepper.

Tassajara Brown Gravy with Mushrooms

This brown gravy is a favorite for mashed potatoes, and other roast potato or yam dishes. It also complements roast vegetables.

MAKES 3 CUPS

2 cups water or vegetable stock (could include 1/3 cup dry white wine)

1 yellow onion, finely diced

3 tablespoons butter or oil

4 mushrooms, half slices

2 cloves of garlic, minced

3 tablespoons flour

Soy sauce

Salt (optional)

Pepper

Ginger, freshly grated (optional)

Dark sesame oil (if available)

Start the water or stock heating. Sauté the onion in the butter or oil for several minutes until translucent, add the mushroom and garlic and cook another minute. Then mix in the flour and cook over moderate heat for several minutes until well browned. Remove from the heat, pour in the heated liquid, and whisk to smoothness. Return to low heat, and season first with soy sauce and then with

salt, if necessary. Add the pepper and/or fresh ginger to taste and, just before serving, a few drops of dark sesame oil.

Sauce for Chinese-Style Vegetables

This sauce is a straightforward way to season—and sauce—a vegetable dish as you go along—giving it a Chinese or Japanese flavor. The quantities are adequate for vegetables for four people. The garlic, ginger, and red pepper could already be in the vegetables or they could be added with the sauce.

Cornstarch is sometimes used to thicken pies and fillings. It is also useful in thickening vegetable dishes which have

excess liquid, including many Chinese vegetable dishes. Since cornstarch is the finest version of corn flour, cornstarch sauces are in reality a special example of flour-thickened sauces. Other flours, or arrowroot, could be used in place of cornstarch. (See instructions for [dissolving cornstarch](#).)

MAKES ½ CUP

¼ cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 tablespoons sugar or honey

*1 to 2 cloves of garlic, minced
(optional)*

*1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
(optional)*

Red pepper (optional)

Salt, if needed

1 teaspoon cornstarch

2 tablespoons water

Combine the soy sauce with the vinegar and sugar. Sauté the vegetables (you are using) with the garlic and ginger (more can be added later) and cook for 3 or 4 minutes. Add the soy sauce mixture to the vegetables, cover and simmer-steam until the vegetables are nearly tender (checking every couple minutes). Meanwhile dissolve the cornstarch in the water, and when the vegetables are nearly tender, add the dissolved cornstarch and cook, stirring, to thicken. Check the seasoning: salt? pungent—garlic, ginger, red pepper? sweet? sour?

Sweet-and-Sour Sauce

This sweet-and-sour sauce makes a potent sauce for fried noodles or fried rice, eggplant, and vegetable burgers. Also a good dipping sauce for grilled vegetables. Some tomato juice in the beginning makes a good basis (and bright color) for the sauce.

¾ cup water, stock, or tomato juice

*¼ to ⅜ cup sugar, honey, molasses, or
brown sugar*

¼ cup vinegar

*1½ tablespoons cornstarch dissolved
in ¼ cup cold water*

Soy sauce

Pepper, Tabasco, or red chili

Garlic (optional)

Ginger (optional)

Dark sesame oil (optional)

Heat the water, stock, or tomato juice with the sugar and vinegar. Bring to a boil, then stir in the dissolved cornstarch. Season with soy sauce and pepper or Tabasco sauce. Add the other seasonings if you like.

VARIATION

As usual, sautéed vegetables can be added. Cut the vegetables in small pieces or mince them. Sauté briefly in oil before adding to the sauce. Add the vegetables either before or after thickening the sauce. Carrots, green peppers, and pineapple chunks make excellent additions to sweet-and-sour sauces, as do onions.

Dried Mushroom Sauce

This can be served with many dishes, for instance greens, asparagus, snow peas, broccoli, onion, eggplant, green beans, carrots, or some combination of these.

MAKES 2 CUPS

10 to 12 dried mushrooms

2 cups water, for soaking (and sauce)

1 tablespoon oil

3 green onions, thinly sliced

2 teaspoons grated ginger

Soy sauce

Salt

2 tablespoons sherry or sake

Sugar (optional)

Balsamic vinegar (optional)

1 tablespoon cornstarch dissolved in 1

tablespoon cold water

Soak the mushrooms for 30 minutes, and reserve the soaking liquid. Cut the soaked mushrooms in strips. (If using dried shiitakes, first cut off the stems and discard.)

Stir-fry the mushrooms for 2 minutes in the oil, then add the green onions and ginger and cook an additional minute. Mix in the reserved liquid and heat, then simmer gently for several minutes. While simmering, season with soy sauce (along with a touch of salt), sherry or sake, and possibly a spoonful of sugar and vinegar. With the mixture bubbling, briskly mix in the cornstarch which has been dissolved in the cold water. Recheck the seasoning.

Everyday Tomato Sauce

Tomato sauces are so simple to prepare it's difficult to imagine how impoverished we've become that this know-how and can-do has been largely lost—and we spend money on canned and bottled products that largely taste canned or bottled. Just sautéing your own onions and garlic freshly will make your home a culinary sanctuary. And you might find enjoyment in working out the seasonings for yourself—suggestions below.

MAKES 3 CUPS

1 yellow onion, diced

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 cloves of garlic, minced

¼ cup dry white or red wine (optional)

1 28-ounce can unseasoned whole tomatoes, chopped with juice added back

Black pepper, red pepper (chili), or cayenne

Sugar

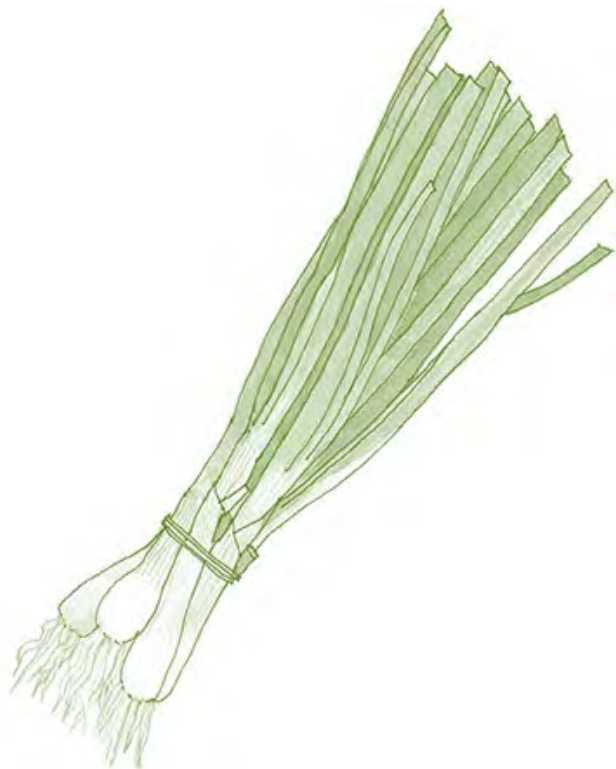
¼ to ½ teaspoon dried thyme, marjoram, oregano, and/or basil

1 to 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, basil, mint, and/or cilantro

Dice the onion and sauté it in the olive oil for several minutes, then add the minced garlic for an additional minute. Add the wine (if using) to the sautéed onions and garlic, then add the canned tomatoes along with the liquid, rinsing out the can with a bit of water to get all of it.

Use pepper for heat and fullness of

flavor in the mouth. Sugar if you wish. The dried thyme, marjoram, oregano, and basil are all somewhat pungent/peppery elements. Add a little at a time and taste to see how the flavor shifts. The fresh herbs (minced or julienne strips) will give the sauce a brighter and fresher flavor—add them at the end. I am not a fan of long-cooked sauces, so I don't make them, but give it a go if you wish. Usually that means utilizing dried herbs. (As a general rule, use only one among the basil, mint, and cilantro, though any of them will go with the parsley.)



Nurturing the Heart

One of the primary ways we connect with each other is by eating together. Some of the connection happens simply by being in the same place at the same time and sharing the same food, but we also connect through specific actions, such as serving food to one another or making toasts: “May I offer you some potatoes?” “Here’s to your health and happiness.” Much of our fundamental well-being comes from the basic reassurance that there is a place for us at the table. We belong here. Here we are served and we serve others. Here we give and receive

sustenance. No small matter.

I found that serving food in the meditation hall at Tassajara was an extremely powerful practice—powerful because it was a deeply intimate activity. Taking place in silence, the basic transaction of serving food is brought to life, so that the subtle inner workings become apparent. The mind of the server and the mind of the recipient are transparently revealed—you don't have to be a genius.

Suzuki Roshi often said that when we all sit in the same posture, as we do in meditation, it is easy to tell the differences between people. Sure enough, serving one person after another, the flavor of each was

apparent: anxious, greedy, calm, respectful, angry, fatigued. We were all so nakedly revealed for what we were. And people receiving their food could tell the mind of the server: at ease or awkward, nervous or composed.

Suzuki Roshi's mind was unique, vast and spacious rather than small and petty. He seemed to be neither scheming to produce particular results nor struggling to avoid other outcomes. His movements were ordinary and unremarkable, yet he was vitally present and precisely responsive. Without rushing or being hasty, he would have his bowl in exactly the right spot to receive the food, to receive me. Over and over

again, when I served him he was like this. A wave of tenderness would come over me: He was just there, ready to be with what came.

Once, in the question-and-answer ceremony after *sesshin* (a week of intensive meditation), someone asked Suzuki Roshi what he felt when she was serving him food. Yes, I thought, what is on his mind at that time? “I feel like you are offering me your most complete love, your entire being,” he answered, and I knew it was true, because that’s what I was doing when I served him, and I knew he was receiving me thoroughly and wholeheartedly, without reservation, I felt healed each time I served him.

It wouldn’t last long, though. As I

proceeded down the row after serving the Roshi, my more ordinary mind would return, and I'd become progressively speedier, running a silent critical commentary; "Can't you get your bowl out here more quickly?" "Where's your mind anyway?" "Do you have to be so greedy?" "Stop being so picky." I had something to criticize about everyone except Suzuki Roshi.

A part of our training was learning to move energetically, the Japanese Zen ideal of movement with vigor and enthusiasm. So I would try to serve as many people as I could as quickly as possible, which is not the same, you might note (as I was studiously not noting), as being polite

or gracious. Basically, I would be racing the server on the other side of the meditation hall to see who could finish first.

The people being served tended to get in my way and not cooperate as effectively as they might to see that I got down the row quickly. Once in a while I would remind myself to try to see virtue. “Calm down,” I’d tell myself, “don’t be in such a hurry to get to the end of the row.” Yet this was difficult because I prided myself on being the fastest server.

I wasn’t happy being caught up in this obsession, but I didn’t know what to do. Then one day I had a sudden inspiration: “Why don’t I treat each person as though he or she

is Suzuki Roshi?" Is there fundamentally a real difference between people, or are there just these differences that I make up and believe are important? Isn't everyone basically worthy of respect and careful attention? Why don't I treat everyone as if she is Suzuki Roshi, because each person *is*, at some level, Suzuki Roshi. I saw that I could bring the same state of mind I brought to serving the Roshi to serving each person: the same respect, courtesy, tenderness, and patience.

Doing this was difficult at first. By the second or third person after the Roshi, my habitual mind was back in play, but gradually I slowed down. I

don't know if anyone noticed a difference—no one commented to me about the change—but I felt lighter and more connected, not only to others but also to my own being. The fact that I was no longer belittling and demeaning others meant that some part of me could relax and be at ease as well, no longer in fear of being attacked. To honor the person being served is to grow larger-hearted and honor oneself as well.

I have kept up this practice for many years now, so that even when I became a waiter at Greens I continued to make this effort to serve each person as I would serve Suzuki Roshi. I did my best not to get involved with who was who, how

people behaved, or how they “deserved” to be treated based on how they treated me. I say a prayer: “Here is your food, my heartfelt offering for your well-being. May your heart be at peace, and may you grow in wisdom and compassion.”



Herbed Tomato Sauce

Tomato sauce is so simple to make and so delicious. This is especially true now that Muir Glen makes terrific organic canned tomato products. The legendary versatility of tomato sauce makes it suitable for pizzas, pastas, vegetables, and soups. This one has some dried herbs along with red wine, and a fresh herbal finish.

MAKES 2 CUPS

1 28-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 yellow onion, diced

2 cloves of garlic, minced

½ teaspoon dried thyme

½ teaspoon dried basil

½ teaspoon dried oregano

¼ teaspoon black pepper

½ cup red wine

¼ teaspoon salt, if necessary

Vinegar

*1 tablespoon of parsley or basil,
minced (optional)*

Blend the tomatoes with their liquid in a food processor or with an immersion blender, or drain and reserve the liquid, chop the tomatoes with a knife, and recombine with the liquid.

Heat oil in a saucepot and sauté the onions for several minutes, then add the garlic, dried herbs, and black pepper. Reduce heat and cook another minute or two, then add the wine and let it cook

down some.

Add the tomatoes. Check seasoning. Salt to taste and use a dash or two of vinegar to bring up the flavors. To thicken, let it cook down. To thin, add water or perhaps more wine. Add the fresh herbs right before serving, if you are using them.

Basic Nut Sauce

Rich with oils and proteins, nut sauces make a meal more hearty when served with grains, pastas, or vegetables. I have especially enjoyed nut sauces with roast vegetables including turnips, carrots, parsnips and fennel; with lightly blanched vegetables including broccoli and cauliflower; and grilled vegetables—I'm

picturing those beautiful skewers of corn sections, peppers, onion, and mushroom. They also mix into noodle and grain dishes to good effect. And easy to make, if you have a nut or seed butter to start with.

MAKES 2 CUPS

1 yellow onion, diced

1 tablespoon oil

3 cloves of garlic, minced

*1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated
(optional)*

*½ cup nut butter (peanut, sesame,
tahini, cashew, walnut, almond)*

¾ cup water or stock

*¼ cup orange juice or 2 tablespoons
lemon juice (optional)*

Salt

Red pepper

Soy sauce and/or miso

Vinegar

Spices of your choice: cumin,

coriander, cardamom, nutmeg, mace

*Dried herbs of your choice: thyme or
sage*

*Parsley, cilantro, watercress, arugula,
or green onion, for garnish*

Sauté the onions in oil for 5 or 6 minutes, adding the garlic and/or ginger the last minute.

Thin the nut butter gradually with the liquid (adding more if necessary) before adding it to the onions. Simmer the mixture on low heat. Season with salt and red pepper (amount will vary depending on if it's red chili, cayenne, or Tabasco sauce). If seasoning with soy sauce and/or

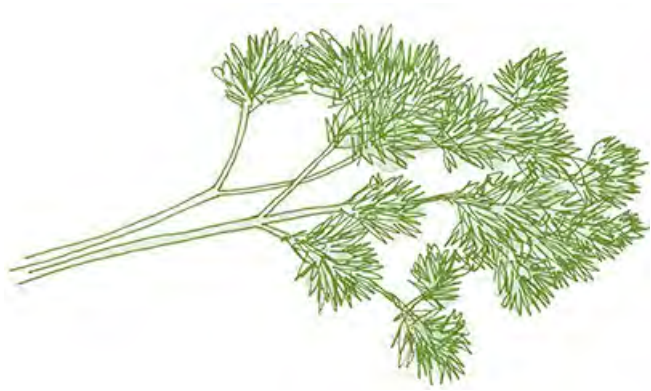
miso, add salt very lightly until you have added the soy.

Nut sauces seem to welcome hot and spicy seasonings, so in addition to the garlic, ginger, red pepper, you are welcome to try out a pinch or two of the more peppery spices as you choose. Add enough that the sauce “expands” on your palate, but not necessarily so much that you taste the ingredient added. See if you want to try some dried herbs as suggested. Garnish with parsley, cilantro, peppery cresses, arugula, or thinly sliced green onion.

VARIATIONS

- Mix in whole or chopped nuts.
- Nut butters can also be used to flavor white or brown sauces.

- Sprouts, due to their moist freshness, are also a complementary garnish for nut sauces, which tend to have a dry feeling.



Satay Peanut Sauce

For those who can still eat peanuts this sauce is quite a treat. The recipe is a bit large for home-cooking in order to accommodate a whole can of coconut milk. (What were you going to do with the other half a can?) We enjoy it with the [Roasted Vegetables](#), and it is nice to have around in the refrigerator to inspire old vegetables—it will keep for a couple of weeks or more.

MAKES 3 TO 4 CUPS

FOR THE RED CHILI PASTE:

*2 tablespoons ancho chili powder or
other ground chili*

2 tablespoons oil

*1 shallot, minced (about 3 to 4
tablespoons)*

4 to 5 cloves of garlic, minced
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated
2 to 3 pinches salt
½ teaspoon soy sauce

FOR THE SAUCE:

1 cup vegetable stock or water
¾ cup peanut butter
1 14-ounce can coconut milk
2 tablespoons tamarind liquid or 1
tablespoon honey with 3
tablespoons lemon juice
¼ cup brown sesame seeds, roasted
and ground
Salt
1 teaspoon lime zest
3 tablespoons cilantro, minced

To prepare the red chili paste, heat the

chili powder in the oil until fragrant. Then combine with the remaining ingredients.

Heat the stock, then add a little at a time to the peanut butter to thin it. Return to the stove over low heat. Add the coconut milk, tamarind, ground sesame, and the red chili paste from above. See if it needs salt—most peanut butter already has plenty. Be careful not to overheat. The peanut butter burns easily. Do not boil. When ready to serve, add the lime zest and cilantro.

Cream Cheese Sauce

If you enjoy and tolerate dairy, this sauce is easy to prepare and conveys a mellow depth of creaminess, bringing even

everyday vegetables such as onions, carrots, and celery to celebrity status. Its fairly mild flavor suits it to more delicately flavored vegetables including zucchini and other summer squashes, and it also has the virtue of readily taking on the flavors of its vegetable companions.

MAKES 1½ TO 2 CUPS

*8 ounces cream cheese or Neufchâtel
cheese*

*½ cup (or more) of hot water, warmed
milk, or vegetable cooking liquid*

*1 to 2 tablespoons of lemon juice or
dry white wine*

Salt

Pepper

Dried or fresh herbs of your choice

Soften the cream cheese or Neufchâtel by mashing it with a fork or spoon. Gradually mix in the liquid (adding a bit of lemon juice or wine to flavor) bringing the cheese to a sauce consistency. Season with salt and pepper and perhaps an herbal supplement, and that's it. Heat gently in a double boiler so that it doesn't boil or separate.

Serve with grains, noodles, or vegetables, or add it to them for baked dishes.

Tartar Sauce with Fresh Basil

We use this primarily with our [Tofu Cutlets](#), but also sometimes as a sandwich spread. The exact proportions on this are

not so precise; it is largely a matter of taste how much of each ingredient you use.

MAKES 2 CUPS

1 cup mayonnaise

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

2 tablespoons red onion, minced

*2 tablespoons pickles, minced (sweet
or dill)*

2 tablespoons green olives, minced

*2 tablespoons capers, chopped
(optional)*

*¼ cup fresh basil, finely sliced and
chopped*

Wine vinegar or lemon juice

Start by mixing together the mayonnaise and mustard. Add the minced and chopped ingredients, using less of any one you have

your doubts about. Omit the ones you do not have. Add wine vinegar or lemon juice to taste—probably a tablespoon or two.

An Offering

What is it that brings people back, again and again, to the task of feeding, whether the work be a drudgery or a joy? Back to dreaming up what to cook and how to cook it? Back to agonizing over or delighting in what to serve. And back to wondering whether the results are praiseworthy and whether those eating are sufficiently appreciative of all the sacrifice?

Years ago at Tassajara, we had a festive picnic in the early afternoon. I remember walking over the hill to the Horse Pasture. A great deal of effort had gone into the preparations, and people ate eagerly and with gusto. Walking in the fresh air stimulated our appetite for good food, laughter, gaiety, companionship.

Sometimes one attains, for a few moments at least, a heavenly state: sunshine, grasses, wild flowers in bloom, the fleeting and buoyant fragrances of spring, and food. Without having to do a single thing food appears, miraculously, as though borne on the wind. Even before the wish is made, everything is there.

As often happens when things, both pleasant and painful, come unasked for people did not think to say *thank you*. Joy, ease, well-being arose, and everyone was replete and sated, and not especially interested in lining up to thank the cooks, the gods, or Divine Providence. Oh well. The euphoria of the cooks (well, at least this one) on a bright spring afternoon was edged with bitterness: maybe next time we won't work so hard if you cannot express more appreciation.

Later in the afternoon I was back in the kitchen at the appointed time. No one else appeared. The other cooks had joined in the general day off, ignoring the well-known dictum

that cooking never stops, the kitchen never closes. Even though we'd had a large picnic lunch, people would be expecting a little something when the dinner bell rang.

Unthanked, and now abandoned by my crew, I had little sympathy for what anyone might be expecting. I was, after all, expecting gratitude and plaudits. I was expecting assistance. If you're not going to notice that I'm cooking, let's see if you notice that I'm not. Why don't I disappear? That will show them.

But will it? What will it show them? I fear they will not understand that it's all their fault for not thanking me enough. Before I can get out of the kitchen, further reflection sets in. Do

I just give to get? That's not really giving, then, that's called buying; and trying to work a favorable deal, that's called bargaining. I want to be more generous than that. I want to really give, no strings attached.

Could I do this, no strings attached? Just cook, and let it go at that? I began sorting through the leftovers. Dinner at the usual time.

The cook's job is to embody generosity, just as it is the work of the people eating to be grateful, even if wordlessly. Still cooks survive better when they focus on their own endeavor and don't try to tell others how they are supposed to react. Cook, and let it go at that. To wit, a story.

In our meditation tradition we have a custom which for many years I found peculiar—offering food to Buddha. Before breakfast and lunch the cooks make up a small tray of food. In its way it is rather cute, suggestive of dollhouse cuisine. Food is put delicately into each little dish, and then a miniature spoon and chopsticks are set ready to use.

When I was cooking, I found this rather annoying. Wasn't I busy enough serving food to the community without having to serve food to someone who's not even going to eat it? You have to be kidding. Whatever is the point?

Later, when I collected the uneaten food, the Buddha didn't say anything

about liking this or not liking that, no “Loved the seasoning on the carrots.” No, the Buddha just goes on sitting there completely unconcerned. Good food the Buddha doesn’t praise. Bad food the Buddha does not complain about. Not a word escapes his lips just as no food escapes his bowls. “How inane,” I thought.

When Jakusho Bill Kwong came to visit the first summer I was cooking at Tassajara, I watched him make up the offering tray. Jakusho teaches now at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, and he had been the cook at Zen Center when I first arrived. I could not believe how polite and respectful he was while putting food into those tiny bowls: careful,

sincere, unhurried, as though serving the most honored of guests. “Please, try this. I’m sure you’ll like it.” How sweetly he served the food which was to be uneaten and unremarked upon.

Perhaps twenty-five years later it occurred to me that serving food to Buddha in this fashion was utterly profound: This is the way to cook. Cook the food and serve it. Bow and depart. You’ve done your part. Offer what you have to offer, let go, and walk away.

That’s the end of it. How the guests receive it is up to them.

Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

The flavor of the roasted red peppers is so marvelous just as it is that I tend to season the sauce rather mildly, but suit yourself. You can add more of the seasonings if you wish.

MAKES 1½ TO 2 CUPS SAUCE

3 red bell peppers

1 medium clove of garlic, minced

2 to 3 pinches salt

2 to 3 teaspoons balsamic vinegar

2 to 3 teaspoons olive oil (optional)

Pepper, freshly ground

Roast the peppers over a gas flame until they are completely blackened. Then cool in a brown paper bag or covered

container, and remove the core, seeds, and blackened skin. (If necessary, see the [more complete instructions](#).) Cut into a few pieces and puree in a Cuisinart or blender (or mince finely by hand). Take this opportunity to taste the remarkable flavor of roasted red pepper before adding the other ingredients.

Season with the garlic, salt, and vinegar. To really know for yourself what flavor each one contributes, add one at a time and taste after each one. You may want to add some olive oil to round out the texture and flavor. Finish the seasoning with a few grindings of black pepper.

Salsa de Mancha Manteles

We tend to think that Maria Linde created this sauce when she was one of the guest cooks. Intensely flavorful with ground roasted almonds and sesame as well as some chocolate, it is excellent with the [Cheese Enchiladas](#) or with tostadas.

MAKES 3 CUPS OR MORE

8 New Mexico chilies (the common dried red chili about 6 inches long and 2 inches wide)

3 cups water

1/4 cup raisins

1/4 cup almonds, roasted and ground

2 tablespoons brown sesame seeds, roasted and ground

1 tablespoon olive or corn oil

1 small clove of garlic, minced

1 ounce of dark chocolate (semi-sweet)

or unsweetened)

A pinch or two of cinnamon

½ to 1½ teaspoons sugar (optional)

½ teaspoon red wine vinegar

Salt

Tomato paste (optional)

Preheat oven to 350°. Remove the stems from the chilies (and for a milder sauce discard the seeds inside), and then cook them in the water for 15 to 20 minutes before blending. Blend in the raisins.

Roast the almonds and sesame seeds in the oven for 8 minutes and then grind them, using a clean electric coffee mill or hand grinder. (You may have to prechop the almonds.) Heat oil, add garlic, and cook very briefly—for perhaps 10 seconds—then add the blended chilies and

the nut pastes. Add chocolate and cinnamon, then sugar if necessary (partly depending on the amount of sugar in the chocolate). Season to taste with the vinegar and salt. If the sauce is too thick or too spicy, add tomato paste and/or water to taste.

Ancho Chili Sauce with Roasted Garlic

Baking gives the garlic a mellow quality in this sauce, while oregano makes the flavors more vibrant and alive. Notice also what happens when the small amount of vinegar is added. I think the flavors are brightened—but use a very small amount.

MAKES 4 CUPS

1 head of garlic (2½ to 3 ounces)

1 28-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes

About 3 tablespoons [ancho chili powder](#)

About ¼ teaspoon dried oregano

About ¼ teaspoon balsamic or other vinegar

Salt (optional)

1 pinch of sugar (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350°. Roast the garlic. There are two ways to do this. I usually separate the cloves and bake them (unpeeled) on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, but another great way is to cut off the very top of the garlic head, brush the head with olive oil, and bake.

When the garlic is quite soft and

spreadable, about 25 to 35 minutes, remove from the oven and let it cool. Now remove the garlic paste from the skins. I open each clove and remove the pasty insides. If you have baked the garlic with the top cut off, you should be able to squeeze the roasted garlic out the end of each clove. (It's sometimes useful to keep a bowl of water nearby to rinse your hands, as they can get quite sticky.)

Blend the tomatoes, or coarsely chop them, and prepare the chili powder, if you have not already done so. Try the tomatoes, then add chili powder to taste, starting with perhaps 2½ tablespoons. Puree the roast garlic with some of the sauce, then add it to the full pot. Taste and notice what you will: I call it a “deepening.” The sauce has a denser,

sweeter, heavier quality.

Next, add the oregano and notice what it does. I aim to bring up the flavors without making the sauce taste like oregano. Next, add the vinegar, and assess once again. Start with smaller amounts first and see what you notice. Do you want more of anything? Any salt needed? The pinch of sugar will smooth things out.



Tomato-Chili Sauce with Roasted Sesame

Roasted, ground sesame seeds enrich this sauce. The fresh cilantro brings up the spiciness and awakens the taste buds. In Mexican cooking, a sauce with ground nuts or seeds is known as pipiano. This one is quite simple—partly so you can taste the “earth” of sesame, the “vibrancy” of cilantro.

MAKES 4 CUPS

¾ cup brown sesame seeds or pumpkin seeds

1 28-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes

3 to 5 tablespoons [New Mexico red chili powder](#)

2 to 3 tablespoons cilantro, minced or

cut into thin strips

¼ teaspoon balsamic vinegar

Salt (optional)

You may want to treat this as a cooking class and a chance to educate your palate by adding one ingredient at a time and tasting before and after each addition.

Preheat the oven to 350°. Roast the sesame seeds for about 8 minutes until they are aromatic and crunchy (or toast in a dry skillet on top of the stove). Let cool a few minutes, then grind in a coffee (or spice) mill.

Blend the tomatoes or chop them coarsely, and start them heating on the stove. Prepare the chili powder. Mix the chili into the tomatoes starting with 3 tablespoons and adding more to taste. Add

the ground sesame seeds, which will give the sauce a toasty nuttiness. Now stir in the cilantro (starting with the smaller amount), taste, then add the vinegar. Want more of anything? Do you sense it needs salt?

Dark Tomato Sauce with Chili Negro and Cocoa

This is my bare-bones version of a mole sauce, using unsweetened cocoa. More than just earthy, this sauce is distinctly *dirty*. The touch of cinnamon makes the flavor sparkle just a bit. See what you think.

MAKES 4 CUPS

1 28-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes
*2 tablespoons **chili negro** powder*
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa
1 small pinch of cinnamon
¼ teaspoon balsamic vinegar
Salt (optional)
2 to 3 pinches sugar (optional)

Blend or coarsely chop the tomatoes with the juice in which they are packed and start it heating. Prepare the chili negro powder, and add it to the tomatoes to taste, starting with 1 tablespoon.

Add the unsweetened cocoa, again to taste (dark, earthy), and then the cinnamon, so that a little spiciness emerges, (but not so much that you taste *cinnamon*). Then add the vinegar to see what that does. See how you like the sauce. Consider whether

or not you might like a bit of salt or sugar. Or perhaps more chili now that everything else is in there.

Spicy Tomato Sauce

The sautéed onion and garlic in this sauce deepen or round out the flavor of tomato. The acidity of the wine has an effect similar to that of the vinegar in the two preceding recipes: The flavors become brighter. The herbs contribute flavor complexity and help to liven up the sauce, especially the fresh mint or basil. See what you think.

MAKES 4 CUPS

1 28-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 yellow onion, diced

2 to 3 cloves of garlic, minced

½ cup red or dry white wine

2 tablespoons parsley, minced

*¼ teaspoon dried thyme or 1 teaspoon
fresh thyme, minced*

*Cayenne pepper, Tabasco, or red chili,
to taste*

Salt

Olive oil (optional)

Sugar (optional)

*2 tablespoons minced fresh mint, fresh
basil, or fresh cilantro*

Blend or chop the canned tomatoes, juice and all, and start the mixture heating. (If you are chopping the tomatoes by hand, strain off and reserve the juice, chop the

tomatoes, then recombine.) Once the tomatoes are warmed up some, see how they taste.

Heat a skillet, then add the oil and let it heat. Sauté the onion for 2 to 3 minutes, then add the garlic and sauté for another minute or two. Add to the tomatoes and taste what happens.

Pour the red wine into the still greasy, oniony skillet, and let it cook down by half while scraping the bottom of the pan to incorporate the caramelized sugars. Then add the wine to the sauce, and taste what that does. Add the parsley, then the thyme. How is it? (Cayenne pepper varies greatly in how hot it is), so add a pinch or two or more until the sauce is as hot as you wish.

The canned tomatoes are often well

salted, so you may not need any more, but see what you think. Next, season with perhaps a dollop or two of vinegar to bring up the flavors. To thicken, let it cook down. To thin, add water or perhaps more wine. Add the fresh herbs: mint, basil, or cilantro, right before serving, if you are using them.

By now you should have some sense of the contribution each ingredient is making, so you can consider what if any adjustments you would like to make. (You might also consider a spoonful of fragrant olive oil or a pinch of sugar.)

VARIATION

If fresh mint, basil, or tarragon is unavailable, try adding $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon *herbes de Provence* or a pinch or two of ground

anise seed.



Feeling Your Way Along

Finding out how to cook or how to

work with others is something that comes with doing it, feeling your way along. And the more you master your craft, the more you know that the way is to keep finding out the way, not by just doing what you are already good at, but by going off into the darkness.

My teacher, Suzuki Roshi, once emphasized this point during a week of intensive meditation. “Zen,” he said, “is to feel your way along in the dark, not knowing what you will meet, not already knowing what to do.”

“Most of us don’t like going so slowly, and we would like to think it is possible to figure everything out ahead of time, but if you go too fast

or are not careful enough, you will bump into things. So just feel your way along in the dark, slowly and carefully,” and he would gesture with his hand out in front of him, feeling this way and that in the empty air.

“When you do things with this spirit, you don’t know what the results will be, but because you carefully feel your way along, the results will be okay. You can trust what will happen.”

Following the week of meditation, at the ceremony where all the students ask the teacher a question, I walked forward with my hand outstretched, investigating the air. “Feeling our way along in the dark,” I began, “and now that *sesshin* is

over, can we have a party?”

“If you really do it with that spirit, then it will be OK,” he answered. I bowed and said, “Thank you,” and started to leave, but then his voice began again. “The most important point,” he said and paused, while I came to a complete stop, focusing intently on what he would say, “is to find . . . out. . . .” Again he paused as I awaited the conclusion. “What . . . is . . . the most important point.”

He had drawn it out so I was hanging on every word: To find what? To find out what? To find out what is what? And then he hadn't really told me the most important point, only he had. I was momentarily disappointed: “But I thought you

were going to tell me the most important point.” Then I felt a kind of joy or elation: “Yes, I could be finding out what is the most important point.”

So I began investigating what is the most important point. One day I would feel it was sincerity, but other days it might be gratitude, equanimity, or letting go. Moments of experience seemed to brighten: tasting intently, speaking kindly, slowing down, being present, finding pleasure and ease in the work of cooking. Each important.

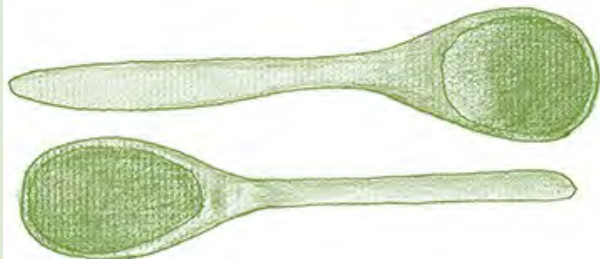
Adverse situations also became occasions for trying to find the most important point. When things are not working, what's important then?

Compassion, patience, good-heartedness, not being so hard on yourself, clarifying your innermost request and acting on it? One thing after another seemed pivotal.

Finally, after some years of study, I concluded that the most important point is to be finding out what is the most important point. Doing that, after all, had given me a focus beyond the urgencies of everyday life, a focus which made it more possible to extract the nutritive essence from each experience.

Discovering how to cook or how to plan menus; learning how to adapt to space limitations and time restrictions, how to handle ingredients—all these were feeling

my way along, finding out what is the most important point.



Garlic Butter Enhanced

A classic on French bread, that can also go on vegetables and grains, or be the final enhancing garnish on soups.

4 tablespoons of unsalted butter

5 to 6 cloves of garlic, minced

Salt

1 to 2 tablespoons lemon juice

(optional)

Dried thyme or oregano (optional)

Melt the butter. Add the garlic and cook it lightly. Add a pinch or two of salt and taste with a piece of bread or vegetable. Try out the touch of lemon juice to make it even a bit more bright and alive. A sprinkling of thyme or oregano to make it “almost pizza.”

Ancho Chili–Lime Butter

Corn-on-the-cob never tasted better than

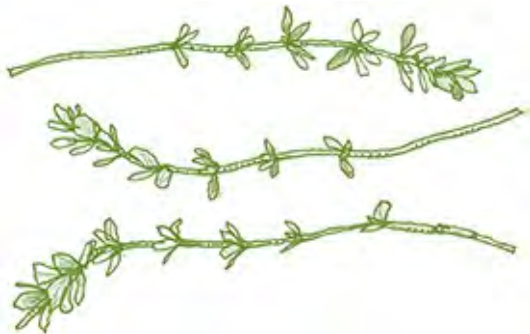
with this seasoned butter, whether the corn comes out of the water or off the charcoal grill. People keep asking for the recipe—now you have it!

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

*2 to 4 tablespoons **ancho chili** powder
or another chili*

2 to 4 tablespoons fresh lime juice

Salt



Melt the butter and season to taste with the chili powder and lime juice, adding salt as needed.

Honey Butter

Whether or not you are out of syrup, here's a terrific alternative for topping pancakes.

1 part butter

1 part honey

Orange rind (optional)

Heat the honey and butter together. It can be seasoned with orange rind. Pancakes!

Baked Goat Cheese

This baked goat cheese is an excellent way to complement the [Garden Salad](#) or to turn everyday vegetable dishes into more hearty courses (see variations for more suggestions). I like to keep a package of fresh goat cheese available in the refrigerator, as there are now many fine fresh California goat cheese producers, along with the imported French ones. This is a soft cheese with a charming, mild flavor which can be crumbled or spread, or in this case, baked.

SERVES 2 TO 4 PEOPLE

*1 5-ounce package of goat cheese
(chèvre)*

1 teaspoon olive oil (optional)

2 teaspoons fresh herbs, minced

(parsley, thyme, oregano) or dried
herbes de Provence

Preheat oven to 350°. Divide the goat cheese into 2 to 4 portions and shape them into small patties. Coat with olive oil if using it, then roll in the herbs. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 5 minutes. Serve on the dressed salad greens or cooked vegetables.

VARIATIONS

- I also like rolling the goat cheese patties in roasted sesame seeds or roasted, chopped almonds or walnuts. So good!
- For a light entrée, serve on a bed of salad greens, or over other vegetable dishes, possibly the

Broccoli with Olives and Lemon
or Beets and Beet Greens with
Red Chard. It seems especially
good with greens, fresh or cooked.

Herbed Feta-Ricotta Spread

We put out a generous assortment of spreads and other sandwich-making ingredients for our guests who wish to prepare their own bag lunches. This is one of our favorites. It will keep in the refrigerator for a couple of weeks.

MAKES 2 CUPS

1 cup ricotta cheese

¾ to 1 cup feta cheese, crumbled

1 tablespoon olive oil

¼ cup fresh parsley, minced

*1 tablespoon fresh chives or scallions,
minced*

1 teaspoon fresh dill weed, minced

Salt

Lemon juice

Combine the cheeses with the olive oil, parsley, chives, and dill weed. Mix well. See if you would like a touch of salt (the feta is often quite salty) or lemon juice.

Almond Paté

This savory, flavorful nut paste claims the distinction of being possibly the most requested recipe during guest season. We use it as a sandwich spread and it's great

to serve with fresh celery or fennel, or as a spread with crackers. Try this paté as a filling for mushrooms or as a “nut chutney” for grains or vegetables.

MAKES 1 CUP

1 cup minced onion

1 tablespoon butter

½ teaspoon freshly ground cumin

½ teaspoon savory

½ teaspoon herbes de Provence

1 cup raw almonds, ground fairly fine

*½ cup plus 2 tablespoons bread
crumbs, toasted in the oven*

2 tablespoons freshly minced parsley

1 teaspoon tamari

1 small clove of garlic, minced

Salt

Pepper, freshly ground

*2 to 4 tablespoons mayonnaise or sour
cream*

Lemon slices

Cook the onions in the butter over low heat with the cumin, savory, and *herbes* until they are soft. Scrape the onion mixture into a bowl. Using your fingers, work in the almonds, bread crumbs, parsley, tamari, and garlic. Taste (adding more of the parsley, tamari, or garlic as you choose) and season with salt and pepper.

Gradually mix in the mayonnaise or sour cream until the mixture holds together. Shape it into a log or press it into a serving dish and garnish with overlapping slices of lemon.

Mint Chutney (or Salsa)

Mint grows profusely at Tassajara, and in this chutney it's invigorating. Serve with Indian or Mexican dishes, or simply on the side to brighten rice or other grain or bean dishes.

MAKES 1 CUP

2 tablespoons red onion, minced

2 jalapeño chilies, seeded and minced

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated

1 tablespoon lemon juice

*2 tablespoons light sesame, peanut, or
olive oil*

2 tablespoons water

1 cup fresh (spear)mint, minced

Sugar

Salt

Combine onions, chilies, ginger, lemon juice, oil, water, and mint. Season with sugar and salt to taste.

Tamarind-Date Chutney

For this dish you'll need to find some tamarind. Use the tamarind concentrate, if you can get it, since it is all cooked, strained, and ready to use. Lemon can be substituted for the tamarind, if you can't find it.

This chutney could be served with Indian food, and what is left over will keep well in the refrigerator. It is also great on honeydew melon.

½ cup tamarind concentrate or the

juice and minced peel of 1 lemon
½ cup water
2 tablespoons molasses
¼ cup honey
Juice of 1 lemon
1 or 2 pinches of ground cumin
½ pound pitted dates
Fresh mint

Combine the tamarind, water, molasses, honey, lemon, and cumin and taste. Is it OK so far? Place in a pot and cook with the dates over low heat until the dates can be mashed and stirred in. Adjust the seasoning if needed, especially the ratio of sweet and sour. Garnish with fresh mint.

Cilantro Relish

This is intended as an accompaniment for [Spanish Rice](#) and [Refried Pinto Beans](#). Serve on the side and let people use it to garnish either or both dishes.

MAKES $\frac{3}{4}$ TO 1 CUP

1 bunch of cilantro

2 shallots, minced

1 clove of garlic, minced

2 tablespoons lemon juice

1 pinch of salt

1 pinch of sugar

Rinse off the cilantro and spin it dry. I try to keep the bunch together, so that it can be easily minced. Roll the bunch into a log shape and cut into narrow strips

crosswise. (Or cut the cilantro into 1-inch pieces and put in food processor.)

Combine the cilantro with the other ingredients and adjust seasoning.

Apple-Radish Relish

The fresh flavors of sky, sunlight, earth, and water bring *goodness* to the table in this simple relish. Apples, radishes, and organic dried apricots are usually in my house—with the fresh mint out in the yard, so this can be a quickly made accompaniment to potatoes, grains, or pastas; salads or vegetables. The fruit of apple and apricot, fresh and dried, meet the earth of radish—pulled together with the leaf of mint.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

2 apples

8 to 10 red radishes

*12 to 15 dried apricots (nonsulphured,
organic if possible)*

3 tablespoons lime juice

3 tablespoons honey

A touch of salt

*2 to 3 tablespoons chiffonade mint
leaves (spearmint)*

I like to cut the ingredients into fairly small pieces—but you may choose to have larger pieces. Here's how I do it. Quarter the apple and remove the cores. Slice in half lengthwise and then into crosswise pieces. Slice the radishes into rounds, then into julienne strips. Slice the apricots into strips.

Mix together the lime juice and honey. Combine with the other ingredients. See if you'd like a touch of salt—but keep it light.

Mix in some of the mint, and sprinkle the rest on top.

VARIATIONS

- Add a teaspoon or two of grated ginger.
- Add a pinch or two of spice: anise seed, cardamom, freshly ground (without adding so much that you lose the pure flavor of goodness).
- Use orange slices or raisins.
- Use fresh tarragon in place of the mint.
- And so forth.

Grain, Bean, Potato, and Vegetable Dishes



An Ordinary Day

To realize true nature,
study the body and mind of
Reality.

Will you have this body and mind?
these grains and beans?

Will you settle for this body and
mind?

these vegetables and fruits?

This body!

This mind!

The body and mind of Reality
are not different than this

body and mind right now,
but to know it fully,
examine and investigate,
actualizing it through and through

—

in the kitchen and out
and about.

What we really want
waits within
the ordinary.

PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON COOKING vegetables, this section is in a sense the heart of the book, finding a way to bring out the sacred that is implicit in ordinary onions, beets, and carrots; green beans and red peppers. For someone who barely ate vegetables while growing up, this has turned into quite the adventure, finding ways to prepare vegetables so that I savor and enjoy eating them! Such an interesting turn, to work on new ways of bringing out the best in things, rather than forever keeping one's distance and staying within a limited menu of the tried-and-true.

You'll find recipes for Simply Spinach as well as Spinach Goes Bananas with Sesame or Cashews. In other words some dishes honor the basic integrity of the

vegetable and other dishes demonstrate their versatility: sometimes we enjoy being alone, sometimes we appreciate company. It's a world replete with the sweet of sugar and dates, the sour of lemon and vinegar, the pungent of garlic, ginger, and peppers, the salt of olives, the bitter of sesame. Flavors abound as you give yourself and vegetables the opportunity to become fully manifest.

Also in this section is a small sampling of grain, bean, and potato dishes.

Blessings.

Corn Bread

We often serve this with [Black Bean Chili](#).

½ cup coarse cornmeal (polenta)

1½ cups white flour

4 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

½ cup sugar

1 cup milk

3 eggs, beaten

⅓ cup melted butter

Preheat oven to 375°. Mix together the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar in one bowl. Combine the milk, eggs, and butter in another. Fold together the wets and dries, mixing just enough to combine, leaving perhaps even a few dry places. Overmixing will make the corn bread tough. Scrape batter into a greased 9 by 13 inch baking pan. Bake for 25 to 35 minutes until the middle rises and the top

is cracking here and there.

Let cool briefly and then cut into squares to serve.

Sage Biscuits

We have begun making these to use as a topping for the [Tofu-Miso Stew](#), but they are equally good replacing grains or potatoes at dinner, or accompanying a salad at lunch.

MAKES 12 MODEST-SIZE BISCUITS

2 cups white flour

1½ teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

⅓ cup oil or butter, melted

1 egg, beaten

½ cup milk

¼ cup fresh sage, minced

Preheat oven to 475°. Sift together flour, baking powder, and salt, and place in mixing bowl. Combine oil, egg, milk, and sage in a separate bowl. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients and add the wets. Combine with fork, just until mixed.



Cover a baking sheet with parchment or grease it lightly. Spoon dough onto baking sheet or roll out on a lightly floured countertop and cut into rounds with a biscuit cutter or floured glass. Bake 8 to

12 minutes on top rack of oven, until the bottoms are browned.

Bulgur Pilaf with Vegetables

Enjoy the grainy toastiness of wheat with flecks of colorful vegetables and mushrooms. The mushroom stock intensifies the flavor in this recipe adopted from Madhur Jaffrey.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

FOR THE MUSHROOM STOCK:

3 cups water

*1 small handful of dried mushrooms
($\frac{1}{2}$ ounce) or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh
mushrooms*

2 cloves of garlic

*Cleaned stalks of mushrooms (caps
used in pilaf)
½ onion, sliced*

FOR THE PILAF:

*4 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 cup red onions, diced
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup thinly sliced mushroom caps
½ cup carrots, diced, or ½ cup
pimento, well drained and diced
2 cups bulgur*

Combine ingredients for the stock and bring to a boil, reduce to simmering for 30 minutes. Strain before using.

Heat the oil in a heavy 2 quart pot with a lid. Add the onions and the salt. Sauté until the onions are just beginning to get

tender. Add the mushrooms and other veggies and sauté for another minute or two. Add the bulgur. Stir and sauté until the grains are well coated with oil.

Add the 2½ cups of stock and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce the heat, and simmer for 25 minutes. Turn off the heat. Allow to set for 20 minutes. Serve hot.

Couscous

Couscous is a grain product made from semolina wheat—sweet with a nutty flavor and easily chewable. Suzy Benghiat, in her book *Middle Eastern Cooking*, says that “Some people—though certainly not North Africans—cook couscous like the rice for pilaf, but it does

not give the lightness that real connoisseurs demand.” I love this fine book, and I recommend it if you are in the demanding school (and even if you are not).

However as I am neither a North African nor a real connoisseur, I offer you the following recipe, which is the epitome of simple and quick. Couscous is available in packages at the supermarket or in bulk at natural food stores.

Most often the couscous is served with a stew of some sort—for instance, the [Garbanzo Bean Stew](#).

SERVES 3 PEOPLE

1¼ cups water

1 pinch of salt

1 cup couscous

Heat the water to boiling in a saucepan for which you have a tight-fitting lid. Add the salt, stir in the couscous, cover, and turn off the heat. Let sit 5 minutes, then stir or fluff with a fork, cover, and let sit until served—up to another 10 minutes or so.

Fried Rice

Sautéed onion and garlic will help most any leftovers. The old saw is that if the housewife had not done any dinner prep all day, she was advised to have onions sautéing when her husband got home. Here fresh ginger is used as well.

In this recipe the vegetables are fried, and not the rice, which is steamed. Still it goes by the common name of “fried rice.”

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 yellow onion, diced, or 1 leek (white and pale green parts)

1 to 2 tablespoons sesame or olive oil

2 stalks of celery, diced

1 carrot, diced, or some leftover vegetables, diced

2 to 4 cloves of garlic, minced

1 to 2 tablespoons fresh ginger, grated

About 2 cups cooked brown or white rice or other grain (groats, millet, cracked wheat)

Soy sauce

Salt

Black or red pepper

1 or 2 eggs (optional)

3 to 5 green onions, thinly sliced

Slice the onion or leek and then sauté it in

hot oil for a minute or two. Add the celery and carrot and continue to cook, stirring. When the celery and carrot begin to soften add the garlic and ginger, and cook for another minute. If using leftover vegetables, cook the garlic and ginger with the onions, then add the vegetables. If the vegetables begin to stick to the pot add a bit of water to loosen.

Add the rice, and stir to combine. Add 2 to 4 tablespoons of water, cover, and heat over low flame heat—a few minutes will do. Season with soy sauce, salt, and pepper—black or cayenne, or Tabasco or chili. If adding egg, beat first, then stir in and cook briefly before serving. It will pretty much disappear but gives the dish a heartier feeling. Garnish with the green onions.

Spanish Rice

Excellent with the Refried Beans (below) and the [Cilantro Relish](#).

SERVES 4 PEOPLE MODESTLY

1 cup long-grain white rice

*½ medium red onion (about 3 ounces),
diced*

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ green bell pepper, diced

1 clove of garlic, minced

¼ teaspoon salt

*1 16-ounce can whole tomatoes
(plain), with its liquid*

Roast the rice in a dry skillet over moderate heat, stirring as needed, until it appears toasted and is fragrant.

Sauté the onion in olive oil for a minute, then add the green pepper, garlic, and salt. Cook another minute or two.

Coarsely chop the canned tomato and, if necessary, add water to make 2 cups. Add it to the onions and peppers and stir to get the juices off the bottom of the pan. Combine this mixture with the rice, and cook in a covered pot about 15 minutes until tender. Open the pot and stir, then cover and let sit a few minutes before serving.

Refried Pinto Beans

Creamy bean and cheese heaven.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE MODESTLY

*1 cup dry pinto beans, soaked
overnight, if possible*

4 cups water

1 tablespoon dried oregano

*1 medium yellow onion (about 8
ounces), diced*

1 tablespoon olive oil

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 to 2 tablespoons red pepper or chili

*2 teaspoons cumin seed, freshly
ground*

½ teaspoon salt

½ cup plain yogurt

*4 ounces Monterey Jack cheese (or
equivalent), grated*

1 teaspoon red wine vinegar

Cook the pinto beans in the water with the dried oregano. If you have soaked the

beans they will cook in about half the time, perhaps 45 to 50 minutes. With a pressure cooker the beans will cook in 20 to 25 minutes. Without a pressure cooker and without soaking, they will take a good 1½ hours. As the beans cook, make sure they remain covered with water.

Sauté the onion in the oil for a minute or two. Add the garlic, chili, cumin, and salt, and continue cooking another minute or so. Set aside.

When the beans are soft, drain them, then puree with an immersion blender, adding back as much liquid as you need to give the beans a thick, creamy consistency (blend as much or as little as you like so that the beans have some texture). Add the onion and seasonings, and cook a few minutes over moderately low heat.

Stir in the yogurt and cheese. Add the vinegar and check the seasoning, especially for salt, vinegar, oregano, and degree of pungency. You can always add more ground chili or a pinch or two of cayenne pepper to make it hotter.

When You Wash the Rice, Wash the Rice

When I arrived in April 1967 to undertake my role as head cook of the newly founded Zen Mountain Center at Tassajara Hot Springs, I soon became acquainted with the food habits and rituals of the residents. The center had not yet officially opened, but about twenty-

five people were already living there. During my first meal preparation, someone informed me, “We do not use salt in the cooking.”

I was stunned. I couldn't imagine such a thing. “You don't use salt?” I stammered. No, of course not. The custom was explained to me as though I was from another planet, as though it were the most obvious thing. “We don't use salt in the cooking because salt is bad for you. Everyone eats too much salt.” This explanation didn't explain anything to me.

Arbitrary rulings are pretty common in community life everywhere. Someone knows what is right for everyone else, and although

the rationale is vague and incoherent—conveying no real information—the authority wants you to go along with it (for your own good).

I found the idea of not using salt upsetting and disconcerting, but not being particularly adept at negotiation or inclined to throw my weight around, I went along with it until I had a chance to consult with Suzuki Roshi, our Zen teacher. These are, after all, the kinds of matters that can be easily resolved by higher spiritual authority.

“What shall I do?” I asked him. “Everybody has all these different ideas.”

“Different ideas? Like what?”

“They don’t want me to use salt.

They say it's bad for you," I told him.

"You are the head cook," he said "you can use salt if you want." The things a Zen teacher has to clarify. I was relieved. I wanted everyone to be happy and to agree, but they didn't. I didn't want to side against anybody, but the Roshi's authority settled it for me. I could use salt.

Then I asked the Roshi if he had any advice for me as the cook. His answer was straightforward and down to earth: "When you wash the rice, wash the rice; when you cut the carrots, cut the carrots; when you stir the soup, stir the soup."

"OK," I decided, "I'll make those words my life." They became a life jacket, the proverbial Buddhist *raft*:

something which keeps you afloat, even when you are going under.

Some of my companions complained about missing meditation or lectures in order to prepare meals or to clean up after them. They seemed to think that Zen was happening somewhere else, and that we kitchen workers were missing out.

I would remind myself what our teacher had said, that work was also spiritual practice, another opportunity to see into the nature of things. I decided that I would prove it was true, that I would work as though it was indeed spiritual work. I didn't know any better. And still don't.

So I worked hard. I worked at

washing the rice when I washed the rice, cutting the carrots when I cut the carrots, scrubbing the pots when I scrubbed the pots. Complaints, fatigue, daydreaming, obsessive thinking—everything was met with a kind of admonition, a kind of reminder: “Just do it. Do what you are doing.” I tried in a simple, direct, awkward way to be present, to see the rice with my eyes, to feel the rice with my hands, to have awareness in the movement of my arms. It certainly wasn’t glamorous, and nobody said, “Why, thank you so much.” Instead of doing one hundred thousand prostrations, I’ve handled one hundred thousand vegetables

Day after day I put my awareness

into activity, trying to find out how to cut vegetables, mop floors, clean sponges. I held the knife this way and that, trying out various cutting motions. Feeling my hands, I sought to use them more effectively and proficiently.

Overlooked details of activity would burst into my awareness. While intent on cutting, I would hear the knife clatter carelessly onto the table. Not just cutting the carrot took attention, but picking the knife up, putting the knife down, wiping the knife, cleaning the knife, sharpening the knife, storing the knife.

I noticed that I needed to develop a more relaxed form of concentration. I would be

concentrating so hard on cutting something that the smallest interruption—“Where’s more salt?”—“What shall I do next?” would be shattering. My awareness would have to be more resilient than that, less brittle—focused, but willing to be interrupted and responsive to the next moment, whatever it turned out to be.

My awareness was also too narrowly focused within my body: while my hands and arms were actively engaged, my shoulders were aching with stiffness. I would have to let my awareness spread out, encompassing shoulders, back, stomach, hips, legs, feet, as well as hands and arms.

Anyone can do this kind of work. Whole worlds come alive. Entering into activity you find the world appears vivid with spinach, lettuces, and black beans; with cutting boards, baking pans, and sponges. You let go of the imagined and hypothetical so that awareness can function in the world of things. Where previously you may have hesitated or waited for the world to provide entertainment or solace, here you enter a world vibrant with the energy and devotion flowing out of your own being.

Food appears.



Fabulous Black-Eyed Peas

Utilizing garlic, ginger, and lemon, this dish is a simple way to brighten black-eyed peas. It is also quite suitable for black beans and lentils.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1½ cups dry black-eyed peas

5 cups water

2 yellow onions, diced, or 2 medium leeks (1 large), washed and sliced

3 tablespoons olive oil

3 cloves of garlic, minced

1½ tablespoons fresh ginger, grated

2 teaspoons dried oregano

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon pepper

Zest of ½ lemon

Juice of ½ lemon

*Monterey Jack or smoked mozzarella
cheese, grated (optional)*

Pressure-cook the peas in the water for 15 minutes, or cook them in the water for 1½ hours, until tender. (If you have presoaked the peas, cooking time will be reduced to perhaps 45 minutes.) Do not add salt until peas are completely softened. Black beans will take longer to cook.



If using leeks, first trim and discard outer dry or limp leaves, then cut lengthwise and wash, rinsing between layers of leek. Then cut into slices about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and sauté the onion and/or leeks. After several minutes add garlic, ginger, oregano, salt,

and pepper, and continue cooking another minute or two.

Drain the cooked peas, reserving the liquid, and add them to the onions. Add back desired amount of bean liquid. Finish the peas with the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil and the lemon peel and juice. Check the seasoning, especially the levels of salt, pepper, and lemon. Serve with grated cheese mixed in or on the side, if you desire.

Garbanzo Bean Stew with Spinach and Saffron

This stew has few ingredients and a delicate flavor. If you would like a more complex dish, consider adding any or all

of the following: tomatoes, cumin seed, ground chili, oregano. See what you think.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 cup dry garbanzo beans, soaked overnight or during the day, if possible

6 cups water

1 yellow onion, sliced

1 tablespoon olive oil

3 cloves of garlic, minced

1/3 teaspoon saffron threads

Salt

Pepper

1 bunch spinach (about 1 pound)

Rinse off the beans, then soak them in 6 cups of water overnight or during the day, or the cooking time will be a good deal

longer. Cook in the same water until the beans are tender, about 1 hour or so. Bring the water to a boil, and then reduce the heat so that the water bubbles slightly. I leave a lid on the pot, somewhat ajar. Alternatively, the beans can be pressure-cooked for 30 minutes.

If you are like me, and have neglected to soak the beans, allow up to 2 hours cooking time for the beans to become tender. Check the beans periodically to make sure there is still enough water to keep the beans covered. Garbanzo beans seem to take longer to become tender than any other bean—I don't know why.

Sauté the onion in the olive oil in a large skillet until it is soft and translucent. Add the garlic and cook another minute or two. Then put in the cooked beans along

with the bean broth (unless it seems excessively soupy). Add the saffron threads and a mild amount of salt and black pepper. Let it stew.

With spinach I take a little extra time and cut off all the large stalks at the base of the large leaves, then I cut off the root at the bottom of the stalks. Next I sort out any usable small leaves from among the stalks before discarding them.

Wash the spinach by immersing in plenty of water, and cut crosswise into 1-inch pieces. Add the spinach to the beans and onions, cover with a lid, and cook a minute or two until the spinach wilts. Check the seasoning and serve.

Black Bean Chili

This is a simplified version of the recipe in *The Greens Cookbook*—more like what I do at home. Try it with the [Corn Bread](#) and the [Garden Salad](#).

SERVES 3 TO 4 PEOPLE

1 cup dry black beans, soaked overnight, if possible

1 bay leaf

2 teaspoons cumin seeds

2 teaspoons dried oregano

¼ teaspoon cayenne

2 to 3 tablespoons [ground chili](#)

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 small or 1 large yellow onion, diced or sliced

2 cloves garlic, chopped

¼ teaspoon salt

16-ounce can unseasoned tomatoes,

chopped

1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar

2 tablespoons cilantro, minced

*4 to 6 ounces Bruder Basil or other
smoked cheese, grated, for garnish*

Sprigs of cilantro, for garnish



Sort through the black beans so that you

can remove any small stones. (Black beans are notorious for this.) Soak the beans in water overnight or during the day. I usually use the soaking water to cook the beans, but you can drain that liquid if you like and replace it. Some people think that the beans will produce less gas, if the water is replaced.

Cover the beans with 2 inches of water and cook with the bay leaf about 30 to 40 minutes if you have soaked them and about 75 to 90 minutes if you have not, until they are completely tender. (Or you can pressure-cook them for 30 minutes.)

Grind the cumin seeds, combine with the oregano, cayenne, and ground chili, and roast in a dry pan for several minutes over moderately low heat until fragrant, stirring as necessary.

Heat the oil in a saucepan, and sauté the onion for a few minutes until it becomes translucent. Add the garlic, seasonings, and salt and continue cooking another 2 to 3 minutes over low heat. If the mixture begins to stick, add some water from the bean pot (or some of the tomato juice). Add the tomatoes and cook until heated through, stirring the seasonings off the bottom of the pot. Add to the beans once they are tender. Adjust seasoning, adding the vinegar and anything else to spice it up to your liking.



The *Greens* version makes a fine presentation which calls for Muenster cheese in the bottom of each bowl, then the chili, and finally sour cream, green chilies, and cilantro on top. At home I am more likely to garnish with the grated smoked cheese and a few cilantro springs.

Black Beans with Garlic and Cumin

Simple goodness: black beans, onion, garlic, cumin.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE GENEROUSLY

1 cup dry black beans

5 cups water

1 tablespoon whole cumin seed

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 yellow onion, diced

4 cloves of garlic, minced

Salt

Sort through the beans, removing any stones, and then put the beans in a pot with the water. Let them soak overnight or for several hours during the day. Cover and

heat to boiling, then reduce the heat to low, so that the water continues to bubble slightly. I peek inside now and again to make sure the water is bubbling and that there still *is* water. The beans will cook in about 45 minutes, or you can pressure-cook them in 25 to 30 minutes. Since I usually do not remember to soak the beans ahead of time, I just cook them endlessly, about 2 hours. They should be soft through and through.

Grind the whole cumin seeds in a spice mill or extra coffee grinder. Heat the oil in a skillet and sauté the onion for several minutes before adding the garlic and ground cumin. Cook another minute or so. Once the beans are cooked, add the onions to them. Put a few spoonfuls of water in the bottom of the skillet to rinse out those

good flavors, and add to the beans. Season with salt.

Sesame Soybeans

Some more down-home cooking, this is a recipe that we prepare for ourselves in the winter. Though not a guest season recipe, sesame soybeans are much requested. Students say, “You’re going to put in sesame soybeans, aren’t you?” So, for all of you mountain yogis and aspiring mountain yogis, here it is.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1½ cups soybeans

Water

¾ cup sesame butter (tahini)

Soy sauce

Salt

Pepper

Soak the beans in water overnight. Drain off (but reserve) the water. Measure 4 cups of water, including the soaking water, in which to cook the beans. Simmer the beans for 3 hours or pressure-cook them at 15 pounds pressure for 30 minutes. Make sure the beans are quite soft. Drain off the cooking liquid and reserve it.

Thin the tahini with some of the cooking liquid, and add this to the beans. Add more liquid to bring the beans to the desired consistency. Season with soy sauce, salt, and pepper.

Potatoes Roasted with Garlic and Rosemary

This is my version of what has become a nouveau classic potato dish.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 pounds red potatoes

1 head of garlic

*4 to 6 4-inch sprigs of fresh rosemary
or summer savory*

Olive oil

Salt

Pepper

Preheat oven to 400°. Wash the potatoes and cut them into large chunks. The smallest ones (golf-ball size) may be left whole. Otherwise, cut them into halves or

quarters. Peel the garlic and cut the largest cloves in halves or thirds. Cut the rosemary into 2-inch pieces.

Combine the potatoes, garlic, and rosemary in a bowl. Toss with 1 to 2 tablespoons of olive oil, then place in an oiled baking dish. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, cover with a lid or aluminum foil, and bake 45 minutes to 1 hour. Leaving the foil off for a few minutes toward the end will help the potatoes brown.

Potato Fiascoes

When I was the head cook at the Tassajara Zen community in the late sixties we ate a lot of brown rice. About a third of the residents were

followers of Zen macrobiotics and believed that short-grained brown rice was the perfect food. Chewing each mouthful of rice fifty to one hundred times was considered a meditation in and of itself.

While macrobiotics actually has little to do with Zen, and while I was not an adherent of this diet, I was obliged to cater to those who were, as they were loud and impassioned about eating the correct foods. They used to say that if one followed the proper diet, then one would feel peaceful and happy. Apparently this was true, because when they didn't have their proper food, they were outraged. Eventually our eating habits broadened, but meanwhile we

lived under the tyranny of this diet plan. Twice during the brown rice era I tried cooking potatoes, and both times were failures. What did I know about cooking potatoes?

Once for the last dinner of a *sesshin*, our week of intensive meditation, I thought I would cook something special—namely potatoes. After three months of brown rice, the thought of potatoes was pretty exciting. I could imagine just how delicious those baked potatoes would be, especially with some butter and sour cream. Nothing to it, right? You just put them in the oven and bake. Simple.

I wanted very much to delight everyone who had been diligently

practicing meditation, to treat everyone to what in the eyes of our macrobiotic contingent was a forbidden fruit. “Deadly nightshade family,” they would say, as if that explained why potatoes were unacceptable. Also I had heard that our teacher, Suzuki Roshi, loved potatoes. Unfortunately, the great feast turned into the great fiasco.

We filled the ovens with potatoes. I think we had washed them and rubbed butter on them. I was thrilled. The potatoes were baking, and I thought that one and a half or two hours was plenty of time, but I found out it wasn't. Twenty minutes or so before mealtime, we opened the ovens to check and realized the

potatoes were not getting baked. My spirits dropped. We turned the ovens up full blast, but it was too little too late.

Under everyday circumstances, one simply apologizes and delays the meal. In the restaurant business one might offer complimentary wine, but in the Zen tradition, when the bell rings, the food is served. Period. Meals are never late. No excuses, no delays. Certainly for the meditators it is quite reassuring. When the time comes for dinner, dinner comes. The cooks, especially the head cook, take on all the pressure and anxiety of making sure the food is ready. You do your best under the circumstances.

I have since discovered that in

certain other spiritual traditions, when the food is ready, the bell is rung. That way the anxiety is shared. “So the food’s not ready. That’s not a problem for you, is it? You’ll hear the bell when it’s ready.” But this was Zen.

The potatoes never got baked. I had neglected to take into account how much an oven cools off when a large quantity of food is added. It can take 1 hour just to get the food up to oven temperature, let alone cook it. Also I have since learned that ovens heated with propane don’t get as hot as those with natural gas or electricity. I kept thinking that maybe the potatoes wouldn’t be that bad, but they were.

When we had finished cooking, we would put on clean aprons at the last minute and go to the meditation hall to serve the meal. Sweaty and frazzled from cooking, we would try to calm down, to settle and collect ourselves in the few moments before we would be entering the meditation space.

During serve-up, the anticipation built up. Glorious baked potatoes. Eager eyes and noses prompted the thrusting of eager bowls to receive generous helpings of potatoes. With serve-up complete, dining commenced. For our meals in the meditation hall we use a set of eating bowls that comes with a spoon and chopsticks, and from the back of the meditation hall I watched with

fascination and dread as Suzuki Roshi's spoon bounced off his potato.

The man was intrepid though, and he had done plenty of stonework in his time, so he proceeded to make a row of holes with his chopstick, and then chisel off a piece of potato using the end of his spoon. He did what he could to eat his potato.

As this comic scene unfolded, I was devastated, yet I had to carry on. I don't recall what happened to all those hunks of potato, if they were eaten, collected, or disposed of with the wash water. We had pots to wash and the kitchen to clean before I could fall apart. But I surprised myself by not falling apart all that

much, because I knew that I had made a good effort.

Sometime later I apologized to my teacher Suzuki Roshi, who shrugged. He always made me feel good about myself. Potatoes might mock my effort, but he knew my heart.

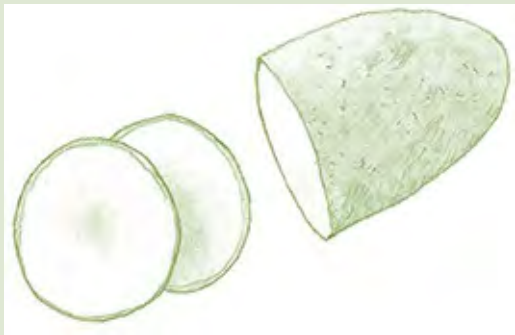
The next *sesshin* I decided to try again. This time I planned to serve mashed potatoes, and get them cooked well ahead of time. Only when we were putting the potatoes into the wooden rice bowls for serve-up did I begin to sense that a different kind of disaster was in store. The buckets just weren't very full. Once again I had made a miscalculation. We didn't have nearly enough.

Potatoes, it turns out, are like eggs. When they are mashed they don't look like much. People who will eat only one or two eggs fried, poached, or hardboiled, will happily indulge in a three-egg omelet, and if the eggs are scrambled, some people will eat four or five. A big potato doesn't look like much when it is mashed.

The meditation hall was buzzing. Those being served first insisted on having their bowls heaping full of potatoes. The servers were trying to conserve their supply of potato, and in silence would anxiously glance down the row at all the people who remained to be served, attempting to indicate their dilemma to the early recipients, but it didn't work. Those

at the ends of the rows got little spoonfuls. (Nowadays, we know for the cook to announce ahead of time: “Please accept small portions of the potatoes, so that everyone can be served.”)

The hall swarmed with emotion: bitterness, greed, joy, passion, resentment. The potatoes wreaked havoc. I think we heated up some leftover brown rice for seconds, but the damage had been done. When it comes to food, people want a full bowl, by golly, regardless of how little that leaves for others a few steps away. Another low point to add to the highlights of my cooking career.



Oven-Fried Potatoes

This is as close as I come to making french fries, because I can't remember the last time I filled a pan with fat to fry something. This method is much more relaxing and takes less attention than deep-frying. Compared to the roasted

potatoes above, these will come out dry and crisp rather than moist and creamy.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

2 pounds red potatoes

2 tablespoons olive oil

Salt

A few drops of cider vinegar

Preheat oven to 425° or 450°. Slice the red potatoes into rounds about a ¼ inch thick, then cut the rounds crosswise into strips—like french fries! Place in a bowl and toss with the olive oil to coat. Spread out on one or more baking sheets, sprinkle with salt and bake for about 45 minutes, turning every 15 to 20 minutes, so that they become browned on various sides. Longer baking will tend to brown the outside of

the potatoes, but too long and they will become dried out. Remove from oven and serve, sprinkled with more salt and perhaps a few drops of cider vinegar.

Potatoes Baked with Wine and Cream

This is a recipe to take your time with. It's so very easy yet so delectable, and the important factor is time. You start the potatoes baking, and because the rest of the menu (if you are using the suggestions in [Menu I](#)) has a short preparation time, you can go out shopping, watch TV, read a book, or arrange for a leisurely session of lovemaking. Meanwhile the potatoes will take care of themselves.

In the end the potatoes will be creamy, mellow, smooth, melt-in-your mouth. This is really the kind of dish for which you don't have to measure anything, but I went to the trouble of measuring everything to give you an idea.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

2 pounds red potatoes (about 10 medium-size)

1 head of garlic (perhaps 25 cloves)

1½ to 2 cups red wine

Salt

Pepper

¼ cup cream

Chives, thinly cut (optional)

Preheat oven to 375°. Wash the potatoes and cut them into chunks. (Usually it will

do to cut the potato in half and each half into 4 pieces.) Peel the garlic and cut the largest cloves in half. Place the potatoes and garlic cloves in a casserole dish or baking pan. Pour in the wine so it comes about halfway up the potatoes. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cover. Bake.

Bake for a good 1½ hours or longer. If it ends up being 2 hours, that's fine too. If you are around and think of it, you can stir the pot now and again, enjoy the developing bouquet, and return it to the oven, making sure there is still some wine in the bottom of the pan. If not, add some more.

After at least the minimal 1½ hour baking, stir the potatoes and add the cream. Uncover, and continue baking another 15 to 20 minutes while you

prepare the rest of the menu.

That's about it. Oh, you might check the seasoning and add a grinding of black pepper. Garnishing with chives is brilliant. Most important though, allow your awareness to savor the potatoes and be soothed and delighted.

Note: These potatoes are also good with [Spinach Goes Bananas](#).

Potato Gratin with Celery Root and Fennel

I like the word *gratin* here better than *casserole*. This is a dish that sneaks up on you. How did it get to be this good? I just put three ingredients in the oven . . . Try it with [Chard with Lemon](#).

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

3 to 4 red potatoes (about 1½ to 2 pounds)

1 small celery root (about 1½ pounds)

1 large fennel bulb or 2 smaller ones (about ½ pound)

6 to 8 cloves of garlic

Olive oil

1 tablespoon fresh thyme, minced, or 1 teaspoon dried thyme

Salt

Pepper

Fresh thyme leaves, minced, for garnish

Preheat oven to 375°. Cut the potatoes into eighths or smaller. Rinse any excess dirt off of the celery root, and then trim off the skin and rootlets all the way around. Cut

into quarters and then crosswise into slices about $\frac{1}{3}$ inch wide. Cut the stems off the fennel (sweet anise) bulb, but save the soft feathery leaves. Cut the bulb in half, then crosswise into slices. Mince the leaves. Peel the garlic cloves and slice into halves or quarters.

Oil a baking dish or pan, and put in the cut vegetables along with the thyme, salt, and pepper. (I tend to layer the ingredients: potato, celery root, fennel bulb.) Cover and bake for 75 to 90 minutes until the vegetables are very tender. Wonderful. Garnish with the minced green of the fennel and some fresh thyme, if available.

Yams Baked with Dried

Apricots and Orange

The three shades of orange color and flavor blend together. These colors are also delightful with the lavender purples of the [Warm Red Cabbage Salad](#).

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

4 ounces dried apricots

1½ pounds yams (perhaps 2 large or 3 to 4 smaller ones)

Grated peel of 1 orange

Juice of 2 oranges

Salt

Preheat oven to 375°. Cover the apricots with water and cook them in a covered pot over moderately low heat until they are tender, perhaps 10 minutes. Slice them

into strips.

Cut the yams crosswise into 1-inch sections. (Large yams may be cut in half lengthwise first.) Place in a baking dish or pan with the apricots and their cooking liquid, the orange peel and orange juice. Sprinkle on some salt. Cover and bake for about 45 to 50 minutes, until the yams are tender. Check them after 25 minutes and if the yams are still in a puddle, you might leave the cover off the last 15 to 20 minutes to let them dry out.

Ginger Asparagus

Some people find that grating ginger can be a bit of a challenge. One simple aid is to grate it *unpeeled*. If you manage to find

one of the traditional bamboo *washboard* ginger graters from China, that will make the grating easy and straightforward. Otherwise I use a regular cheese grater rather than one of the ceramic ginger graters with its tiny pointless knobs.

Ginger, like asparagus, has the flavor of *spring*—but it's also a bright and lively flavor with other vegetables when asparagus is not available: broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, chard, what-have-you.

SERVES 2 TO 4 PEOPLE

1 pound asparagus

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated

Salt

Touch of lemon juice or rice vinegar

Snap off the tough ends of the asparagus by hand. See if you can feel where the tough end snaps off pretty easily, indicating that the remaining stalk of asparagus is fairly tender.

Cut the asparagus diagonally into 2- to 3-inch pieces. Preheat a skillet. Add the olive oil, then the asparagus, and cook, stirring or tossing over high heat for a minute or two. Then add the ginger and salt, and continue cooking another couple of minutes. Taste to see how you like it.

To complete the cooking add a spoonful or two of water along with a touch of lemon juice to the pot, cover, lower the heat, and cook until tender. Check the seasoning.

Pan-Grilled Asparagus

High heat gives the impression of having *grilled* the asparagus: smokey, earthy, roasted sweetness. You'll need a cast iron fry pan or a pan that fits in your broiler.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 pound asparagus

1 tablespoon sesame or olive oil

Coarse sea salt

Juice of half a lime or wedges of lime

Snap off the tough ends of the asparagus. Heat your cast iron skillet until it is near smoking (or if it starts smoking, remove from the heat briefly), then add the oil and the asparagus (in a single layer)—you may need to do 2 batches. Roll the asparagus

back and forth a bit as you cook over high heat for 3 minutes. Cover with a lid and let it rip. Open every minute or so to toss around some—for about another 3 minutes. Lightly sprinkle on some of the coarse sea salt (or save to put on with the lime juice later) and cook until as tender as you like (if it's not there just yet).

Squeeze on the lime juice for serve-up or serve with lime wedges for individual squeezings at the table (and get the salt on there if you haven't already). Alternatively, toss with the olive oil, sprinkle on some of the coarse salt, and broil 4 to 8 minutes, turning from time to time.

Asparagus Sautéed with

Roasted Almonds

The nuts, crunchy and slightly bitter, *ground* the asparagus.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

¼ cup almonds

2 pounds asparagus

1 tablespoon olive oil

Several pinches of salt

½ teaspoon lemon peel, grated

Roast the almonds in a 350° oven for 8 minutes until toasty, or in a dry skillet over moderate heat. Let them cool, then slice them. (Almonds already slivered often taste slightly stale to me.)

Snap off the tough ends of the asparagus by hand. Then cut it into 3-inch-long

diagonal strips. Heat a large skillet and add the olive oil and a sprinkling of salt. Sauté the asparagus for 2 to 3 minutes. Taste, then cover and cook over low heat until tender enough for your taste. (The moisture in the asparagus is probably enough to keep it from burning: if in doubt add a spoonful or two of water before covering. The asparagus should still be bright green.

Toss with the lemon peel, check the seasoning, and serve, garnished with the almonds.

Drunken Cabbage

This is a bare-bones recipe, so if you want to add garlic, ginger, red pepper,

herbs, spices, it's OK, as long as you feel your own way along and do not count on me to tell you exactly what to do.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 small head of green cabbage (12 to 16 ounces), sliced in shreds

1 cup white wine

Salt

Pepper



Heat a large skillet, add the olive oil, then the cabbage, and sauté for 2 or 3 minutes, stirring. Then add the wine and season with salt and pepper. Cover and steam a few minutes until the cabbage is tender. Check the seasoning. That's it.

VARIATIONS

- Before adding the cabbage, sauté

some sliced onion and carrot for a fuller-tasting, more colorful dish. Garnish with parsley, green onion, or cilantro.

- My former editor, Jisho, suggests adding chenin blanc for a light, clear flavor or pink zinfandel for a sweeter finish.

Red Cabbage with Sake and Green Onions

I find the flavors of this variation to be quite enjoyable.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

6 to 8 green onions

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 small head of red cabbage (12 ounces), sliced in shreds

2 teaspoons fresh ginger, grated

1 cup sake

Salt

Pepper

Slice the green onions on fairly thin diagonals, setting aside the dark green parts to add later. Heat a skillet, add the oil, then the whites and pale green parts of the onion. Cook for a minute or so and add the cabbage. After another minute, add the ginger. Stir-fry for a couple of minutes, then add the sake and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Cover, lower the heat, and cook until fairly tender. Add the dark green of the green onion, and let it get limp. Check the seasoning and serve.

Tofu Cabbage Grill

This side dish is one of our favorites, as it offers hearty flavors.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 block of tofu (14 to 18 ounces)

*½ large or 1 small head of cabbage
(green, red, or Chinese)*

2 large or 3 small cloves of garlic

Fresh ginger, a thumb-sized chunk

1 tablespoon sesame oil

Soy oil

Soy sauce

*3 green onions, thinly sliced, or ¼ cup
fresh cilantro, minced*

Press and drain the tofu, then cut it into chunks. Cut the cabbage into shreds.

Mince or press the garlic, grate the ginger, and mix these two with the sesame oil.

Fry the tofu in soy oil (or other light oil) on a fairly high heat to brown it. Add the ginger-garlic paste and continue frying another minute or so. Remove from the pan. Rinse with a small amount of water and reserve. Re-oil the pan and cook the cabbage over moderate heat until done. Add the tofu. And the reserved liquid.

Season with soy sauce, adding more ginger or garlic to taste. Serve when everything is hot, garnished with the fresh green onion or cilantro.

*Becoming Intimate with
Your Ingredients*

Sometimes I wonder just how strange I am. Or are other people just as strange in their own way? Then again perhaps it's not really so strange to be having conversations with fruits and vegetables in the grocery store. How else can a person decide what foods to bring home? Doesn't it make sense to get to know them first? Putting food into our mouths is clearly one of the most intimate things we do. The stuff is going to become flesh and bone, thought and dream. I wouldn't want to get intimate with just anything.

Planning what to eat can be trying. Open a cookbook; close it. Think of something to eat; worry if it's good enough. Do the same old thing, tried

and true. No, too boring. Try something new. No, too stressful. What turns out to be most helpful for me is to open the refrigerator or to look in the garden. Then I head for the store and see what talks to me, and what I want to have a relationship with.

Picking out what food to bring home is a mysterious business, about as easily explained as how one finds partners and friends. Sometimes we love food immediately without ever asking why—the way I took to my daughter, whom I hadn't even met until she was born. Now that's pretty amazing—to love someone so completely, regardless of how she looks, sight unseen, without even

getting to know her. But mostly I'm a bit more cautious. I want to know what I'm getting myself into (or what's getting into me).

The type of conversation the food strikes up says a great deal about the nature of the prospective relationship. The supermarkets are full of packages that stand around looking pert, handsome, or sexy, and whisper, "Buy me, buy me, buy me." If you agree, quiet approval and reassurance are in store: "You won't be sorry." "My, don't you look classy being seen with me?"

It's another story though, if you ask why you would want to buy them. The beautiful packages say, "I'm quick, I'm easy . . . I'm quick, I'm

easy.”

“Quick? Easy?”

“Sure, you won’t have to relate to me at all. You won’t have to think, feel, decide, or sense anything. Just put me in the oven or the microwave, and I’ll be there for you.” No problem. Use me and abuse me.

If you hesitate, things can turn ugly: “What’s wrong with your taste, bozo, don’t you know something good when you see it?” “What, you can’t afford me? Are you sure you really belong here?”

With other foods, especially in the produce department, the pitch can be animated: “Hey dude, how you doing? Listen up, fella, you want to hear a great idea for salad? I’m dying

to get together with that endive across the aisle. Help a fella out, would you? Man, we would dance and sing for you.”

“Yeah, well, I was looking for a quiet evening.”

“No problem, tone things down with the dressing.”

“Okay, you’re on.”

Perhaps the yams notice how tired you are: “Been a long day has it? Well hanging out here in the supermarket getting squeezed isn’t so hot either. How about if we stew together?”

The conversations are give and take instead of clever putdowns. These are foods that wouldn’t mind if you touched them, felt them, smelled

them—foods that will engage you and bring out the best in you. These are foods that acknowledge and respect you as a whole person, and not just as someone who has money to burn and won't be any trouble.

So when you're in the store, listen up and don't be afraid to have your say for fear of spoiling a tantalizing relationship. Do it with your mouth closed though; otherwise people might think you're strange.



Green Beans with Sesame Paste and Garlic

A recipe developed by Mary Mocine, we keep making it because of how often we hear the word *delicious* in its company.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

3 tablespoons brown sesame seeds

*1 tablespoon black sesame seeds (or
another tablespoon brown)*

1 pound green beans

*2 tablespoons peanut, light sesame, or
olive oil*

2 tablespoons black mustard seeds

3 cloves of garlic, minced

2 tablespoons fresh ginger, grated

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Salt

Pepper or cayenne

2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, minced

Roast the brown and black sesame seeds separately, reserving the black sesame seeds (or extra tablespoon of the brown sesame seeds) for garnish. Grind 3 tablespoons of the brown sesame seeds in a clean coffee grinder or spice mill.

Wash and trim the green beans, and cut them into 1-inch sections. Blanch in boiling, salted water for several minutes until nearly tender; remove and drain. Heat the oil, add the black mustard seeds, and cover the pan while the seeds pop. Add the garlic and ginger, stir, and add the green beans along with one or two tablespoons of water. Add the ground sesame seeds and lemon, and season with

salt and pepper. Cover and heat. Garnish with the cilantro and reserved whole black sesame seeds.

Green Beans Roasted with Garlic

Why didn't mom bake them like this? Succulent fragrant flavors of green bean and garlic oven-roasted with olive oil and salt. Simple and simply delicious, especially if you have some tender green beans.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 pound green beans

12 cloves of garlic

2 tablespoons of olive oil

Salt

Preheat oven to 450°. The work here is prepping the beans and the garlic. Trim or snap off the stem end of the green beans, and leave them whole. Peel the garlic and mince coarsely. Toss the beans with the olive oil, then the garlic and a sprinkling of salt. Spread out on a baking sheet and roast until tender, 18 minutes, give or take. Rush to the table for this.



“Chinese” Cauliflower

This cauliflower is about as “Chinese” as chop suey. I liked it so much I asked Iva for the recipe.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 head of cauliflower, cut into small

flowerets

2 tablespoons butter

Salt

Szechwan pepper

White pepper

*1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, minced
(optional)*

*Fresh thyme, chives, or parsley,
minced (optional)*

Sauté the cauliflower in the butter in a large skillet over moderately high heat for a few minutes. Add the salt, the Szechwan pepper, and white pepper. (You might want to add a spoonful of water or lemon juice.) Put on a lid, reduce the heat, and let it steam until done. Serve garnished with the fresh herbs.

Broccoli with Olives and Lemon

The olives and lemon give this dish something of a Mediterranean feeling.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 head of broccoli

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 red onion, sliced

3 cloves of garlic, minced

1 teaspoon sugar

Juice of ½ lemon

Peel of 1 lemon, minced

Salt

Pepper

12 kalamata olives (about 1½ to 2 ounces), pitted and minced

Top the broccoli and cut it into fork-size pieces. Cut the tough skin off the stalk and then cut the stalk into fork-sized chunks. Many people consider this tender inner portion of the stalk to be the best part. Give it a try.

Heat the oil in a skillet and sauté the red onion for 2 to 3 minutes. Then add the garlic and the broccoli along with the sugar, and continue sautéing for another minute or two. Add the lemon juice and peel and, if the vegetables begin to stick, a small amount of water. Sprinkle on some salt and pepper, cover, and cook over moderately low heat until tender, about 6 to 8 minutes. I like the broccoli when it is beginning to get tender and is still bright green. Stir in the olives and continue cooking until just heated. Check the

seasoning. If you find the lemon too strong, you can always use less, or add a bit more sugar.

Sautéed Zucchini

When I prepare sautéed zucchini, I would rather not have zucchini mush. I prefer it tender, but somewhat al dente. That to me is the secret of the dish.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1½ pounds zucchini

2 tablespoons olive oil

Salt

*½ teaspoon dried basil, oregano, or
thyme (optional)*

1 tablespoon fresh parsley, thyme, or

basil, minced (optional)

Trim off the ends of the zucchini, and cut them in **Chinese rolling cut** (pencil-sharpening) style. Each cut piece will have some dark green from the outside of the zucchini and two cut surfaces. These cut pieces sauté better than rounds cut directly crosswise, because they do not stick together the way rounds do.

Heat a large skillet until it is quite hot—drops of water sizzle when scattered in the pan. Add the olive oil and a sprinkling of salt, then the zucchini, and stir-fry over high heat. Taste after 2 to 3 minutes, and add more salt if necessary. Then add one of the dried herbs, if using them. Cover the pan, reduce the heat, and let the zucchini steam another minute or two until tender.

Garnish with the fresh herbs, if using them.

Simply Spinach

After I had been cooking for a year, I tried to find out how to prepare spinach, simply spinach. I found recipes for spinach quiche and spinach pie, all very well and good, but what if I just want spinach? I was at a loss for what to do. One recipe said to fold the leaves in half and pull the big stems off the back of the leaves. We tried this, but with four cases of spinach to prepare we didn't get very far before someone suggested that the stems were not that tough. Sure enough, they are not too tough to eat, but the dish is more delicate

if you remove the largest stems.

I find this plain spinach to be a good accompaniment to potato or polenta dishes.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 bunch of spinach (about 1 pound)

2 tablespoons butter

Salt

2 tablespoons sesame seeds, roasted

A thorough cleaning of the spinach is vital. I start by cutting the clumps of spinach crosswise at the base of the larger leaves and sectioning them into 2-inch lengths. Then I take the stems and cut them crosswise about an inch above the roots. This allows me to sort out the smaller leaves interspersed among the stems.

Wash the leaves by immersing them in large amounts of water. When the spinach is really dirty, two rinsings may be necessary. Set the leaves aside in a colander to drain.

Melt the butter into a saucepan and layer in the spinach, sprinkling each layer moderately with salt, then cover, and cook over moderate heat. The water on and in the spinach is enough to keep the spinach from burning on the bottom of the pot, but if you are nervous, add a touch more. The spinach will wilt down in 2 to 5 minutes. Check the seasoning and serve garnished with the roasted sesame seeds.

VARIATION

If you want to embellish Simply Spinach further, you might consider a touch of

vinegar or lemon juice, black or red pepper, or curry spices.

Spinach Goes Bananas with Sesame

This dish astonishes with how the two main ingredients appreciate each other. Enjoy it especially with the [Potatoes Baked with Wine and Cream](#). This is no longer Simply Spinach but it starts out that way.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 pound spinach

*¼ cup brown sesame seeds or ½ cup
cashew pieces*

2 tablespoons butter

Salt

4 bananas, thick 1/2-inch slices

Start out as for [Simply Spinach](#), washing and prepping the spinach and roasting the sesame seeds or the cashew pieces. Melt the butter in a saucepan or skillet and start some of the spinach cooking with a sprinkling of salt. As the spinach cooks down, add more spinach and light sprinklings of salt. Covering the pan with a lid will encourage the spinach to steam and “melt down.”

When the spinach has *melted* add the banana slices, which have been sliced thickly so they will not disappear into goo. Stir in the banana slices and cook briefly, just to heat them thoroughly but not to cook. Serve garnished with the sesame

seeds or cashew pieces.

Chard with Lemon and Raisins

A chard dish eloquent with the five flavors: salt, the sweet ripeness of raisins, the sunny vibrancy (tart) of lemon, the pungent of pepper (ginger or green chili in the variation), the bitter of the roasted pine nuts. You could also understand this as the grassy leaf flavor of chard brightened with the flowery fruit of lemon and raisin, deepened with the earthiness of the nuts. Once you get the concept, many variations present themselves.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 bunch chard

1/8 lemon

*1 small leek, thinly sliced, or 1
medium yellow onion, diced*

1/4 cup pine nuts

1 tablespoon olive oil

1/3 cup raisins

Salt

Pepper

Wash the chard and cut the stems crosswise into narrow pieces. Cut the leaves in half, then crosswise into 1-inch pieces. Cut off the ends of the wedge of lemon, and then cut crosswise as thinly as you can, peel and all. Slice the white part of the leek and as much of the green as you would like to use, and wash the slices to remove any dirt beneath the surface.

Toast the pine nuts in the oven or on top

of the stove until browned (see [Roasted Chopped Nuts or Seeds](#)). Be careful not to burn them.

Sauté the leek slices (or onion) in the olive oil for 2 to 3 minutes. Reduce the heat, and add the chard, lemon, and raisins along with a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Cover and cook until tender. Garnish with the roasted pine nuts.

VARIATIONS

- Season with grated ginger or minced green chilies, along with the salt and pepper.
- Use other dried fruit, especially dried apricots.
- Use other roasted nuts or seeds, especially roasted, chopped almonds or pumpkin seeds.

Mushrooms with Bok Choy

Bok Choy, a leafy green with fat white stalks, is commonly used in Chinese cooking. It has a slight mustardy quality along with mild characteristics of cabbage. Here it is combined with mushrooms and onions for a spicy, substantial vegetable dish. You can also substitute an equivalent amount of baby bok choy, which has become more common in supermarkets.



SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 head bok choy (12 to 14 ounces) or 6 to 8 heads baby bok choy

8 ounces mushrooms, sliced (including some fresh shiitake, if available)

2 teaspoons fresh ginger, grated

2 tablespoons sherry

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1 teaspoon sugar

1/8 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon peanut or olive oil
2 medium yellow onions, sliced
4 to 6 cloves of garlic, minced

Cut off the base of the bok choy, then wash the leaves. Cut the larger greens off the stalks and cut them in half lengthwise. Then cut the stalks and greens crosswise into ½-inch pieces. If using fresh shiitake mushrooms, cut off and discard the stems before slicing. Combine the ginger with the sherry, soy sauce, vinegar, sugar, and salt.

Heat a large skillet (or wok) and add the oil. Sauté the onions and mushrooms for several minutes over high heat until the mushrooms have softened and browned. Add the garlic and cook another minute. Then add the bok choy and the ginger

mixture. Cover the pan and reduce the heat. Cook several minutes. Uncover and stir every minute or so until the white of the bok choy is tender. Check the seasoning and serve.

Tasting the Fruit of the Vine

When I worked at Greens Restaurant I was invited to join a wine-tasting panel. Once a month or so, we would get together, sit down at lunch, and taste six to nine different wines with foods from our Greens menu. We had quite an enjoyable time, and I recall those afternoons with fondness and pleasure.

Our tasting panel included Dick Graff, who had started Chalone Winery; Alice Waters of Chez Panisse; Shirley Sarvis, who conducted food and wine tastings; Bob Finnigan, who wrote a food and wine review; Barbara Barnhardt, who worked in Dick's office; and several of us on the Greens staff, usually a couple of managers and one or two of the cooks: Deborah Madison, the founding chef, or Jim Phalan, her assistant. When I went to my first tasting I was in awe of my companions and nervous about whether or not I would be credited with having good taste. I needn't have worried.

We would taste each wine without

food and then each wine with each dish. If you wanted to, you could spit out the wine you had tasted in a paper cup, but still being fairly young I just drank everything. After each taste I would make some notes, and with no formal wine-tasting vocabulary, I would just make it up: sharp, acidic, fruity, straw, varnish, spring flowers, heavy, light, robust, thin, asphalt, bell-like. I didn't have a twenty-point system or a hundred-point system. I just tasted and came up with whatever words I could. (What Thomas Moore in *Care of the Soul* calls expanding your poetic awareness.)

Besides making tasting notes we would rank the wines in our order of

preference. Afterward we would total the numbers, and then unveil the bottles to see which was which and how we had ranked the wines. What surprised and delighted me was that there wasn't a *right* answer. The experts did not agree; I was entitled to my opinion. Taste was a matter of taste.

After we had removed the wines from their brown bags, we discussed them, and I would have the opportunity to hear what words others used to describe the wines. Gradually my vocabulary, and my ability to distinguish flavors, increased.

After a while I was asked to be the wine buyer and was given the

responsibility of organizing the tastings. I soon found that most of the wines salespeople brought to the restaurant as samples did poorly in our tastings and that I had to track down the good wines for myself. Once I did that, and the wines were of generally recognized high quality, then the results of our tastings were more variable than ever.

One tasting was particularly illuminating, since every one of the zinfandels tasted was ranked first or second by one taster and eighth or ninth by another. Each wine was well made, with good balance and no obvious flaws. Still one person would comment with distaste that a particular wine tasted like straw,

while someone else would say how pleasant he found that same quality, so reminiscent of the dry California hillsides in summer with their scattered oak trees and late afternoon sun. One person's delight in the fruitiness of a wine was another's *Kool-Aid*.

I found that the words I used to describe the flavor of various wines could be divided into the same three main groups that I used earlier to describe foods: earthy, herbaceous, and fruity. For me this categorization has become quite useful and evocative, corresponding to the three main parts of plants: roots, stems and leaves, flowers and fruits. And I use it now in reference to wines as well

as to foods.



Carrots with Roasted Sesame Seeds

I find that carrots can be a delicious

accompaniment when cut up and stir-fried. Here they have a light sweet-and-sour seasoning with some toasted sesame seeds.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE GENEROUSLY

2 tablespoons sesame seed

1 pound carrots

1 to 2 teaspoons oil

Juice of 1 lemon

2 tablespoons honey

Salt or soy sauce

Roast the sesame seeds in a dry skillet until they are fragrant and crunchy. Cut the carrots into julienne strips (see [Carrots](#)). Heat a skillet, add the oil, and sauté the carrots for a couple of minutes. Add the lemon and honey, and cook, covered, over

moderately low heat until tender. Season with salt or soy sauce. Sprinkle the sesame seeds over the carrots and serve.

Sweet-and-Sour Dinner

Carrots

Carrots turn surprisingly elegant when given proper attention and companionship—this recipe has dried fruit to provide the sweetness.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

6 to 8 carrots (about 1½ pounds)

½ cup pitted date pieces or raisins

2 tablespoons olive oil or butter

Salt

2 tablespoons lemon juice

*½ cup roasted almonds, walnuts,
hazelnuts, or sesame seeds, chopped
(optional)*

Wash and cut the carrots: perhaps rolling cut or juliennes. Section the dates. Heat the oil or butter in a skillet, and cook the carrots for several minutes to arouse their aroma. Give them a few pinches of salt and add the date pieces and lemon juice along with a spoonful or two of water. Cover and cook over low heat until tender. Serve garnished with the roasted nuts.

Beets and Beet Greens with Red Chard

Beets with beet greens is pretty basic—a dish with integrity and character. I appreciate its fundamental nature, and I find the combination with red chard quite pleasing. However, if red chard is not available, you are certainly welcome to do without it, and increase the quantities of the other ingredients.

SERVES 3 TO 4 PEOPLE

Greens of 2 beets

½ bunch red chard (or the whole bunch if beet greens are not available)

2 medium to large beets (or more smaller ones), cooked

1 tablespoon olive oil or butter

1 red onion, sliced

Salt

Red chili powder, cayenne, or black pepper

Juice of ½ lemon or rice vinegar

Rinse off the beet greens and the red chard. Beet greens tend to be especially sandy, so immersing them in a sink or bowl of water will be efficacious. Slice the beet greens crosswise into 1-inch sections, including the stems, which become surprisingly tender when cooked. Cut the stems of the chard crosswise into ¼-inch pieces. Cut the largest chard leaves in half lengthwise, then all the chard crosswise into 1-inch sections. Peel the cooked beets and cut them into wedges.

Heat a large skillet with the olive oil, and then sauté the red onion for several

minutes. Add the chard stalks and continue cooking a few minutes longer. Then add the beets, beet greens, and chard leaves. Sprinkle with 2 or 3 pinches of salt and ½ teaspoon or more of chili powder—be much more modest if you are using cayenne pepper. Cover with a lid, and cook over moderate heat until the greens are tender, 3 to 5 minutes at most. Season with the lemon juice, adding a little at a time, and see how you like it.

Baked Beets with Dried Cranberries and Sun-Dried Tomatoes

This recipe turns out to be alchemical, which is to say that the flavors unite and

blend in a surprising way. Dried cranberries (which are somewhat sweetened or they would be really tart) are becoming widely available.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

12 to 15 sun-dried tomatoes

½ cup dried cranberries

5 to 6 beets

Peel of half an orange, grated

Salt

Preheat oven to 375° or 400°. Place the sundried tomatoes in a saucepan, cover with water, and cook several minutes. Add the cranberries for 30 seconds at the end. Drain and reserve the liquid. Slice the sun-dried tomatoes into narrow strips.

Trim the stems off the beets and place

them in a baking dish with the water from the sun-dried tomatoes (or add enough water to fill up the pan $\frac{1}{4}$ inch). Cover the pan and bake for 1 hour or more until they are fork-tender. Remove beets from pan and allow to cool enough so that you can remove the skins, roots, and stems (see [Beets](#)). Then cut up the beets and put them back in the baking dish with the tomatoes, cranberries, orange peel, and a touch of salt. Reheat in the oven before serving, 20 to 30 minutes.



VARIATION

If using sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil, slice them into narrow strips. Plump the dried cranberries with boiling water to

cover for a few minutes, and then use this water for the baking.

Baked Vegetable Platter

The plan is simple: Cut the vegetables into large pieces, toss them with a small amount of olive oil and salt, and bake them. The list of vegetables is rather basic, so you could substitute with what you have on hand or what is in season.

1 yellow onion

2 carrots

2 to 3 red potatoes

1 red pepper

2 stalks of celery

Several cloves of garlic (optional)

1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil

A few pinches of salt

Pepper

*2 to 3 teaspoons or more balsamic
vinegar or lemon juice*

Fresh parsley or thyme, chopped

Preheat oven to 400°. For baking it's a good idea to cut the pieces into fairly large-size chunks, since thin slices will dry up and get overly crisp in baking. Peel the onion and cut each half into 3 or 4 wedges. Wash the carrots and cut them into 2-inch sections, and if some sections are quite fat, cut them in half. Cut each potato in halves or thirds, and each of these into quarters. Cut open the pepper, remove the core and seeds, and cut each half into 5 or 6 pieces. Bend back the

wide end of the celery stalks, so that when the end breaks off you can use it to pull off some of the strings. Then cut the celery stalks into 2-inch pieces. If desired, add 2 or 3 garlic cloves per person, leaving the peel on. Place all the vegetables in a bowl and toss with the olive oil and a few pinches of salt.

Place vegetables on an oiled baking sheet, and bake for about 45 minutes. Basically you can just leave them alone, but it's also enjoyable to check them now and again, especially since they just might need tossing and turning (depending on how your oven is treating them). When tender, remove to a casserole or serving platter. Toss with the balsamic vinegar (or a touch of fresh lemon juice), check the seasoning—black pepper could also be

good—and garnish with the fresh herbs.

VARIATION

- For longer cooking, use yams, sweet potatoes, winter squashes, white radish (daikon), turnip, eggplant, fennel instead of the vegetables above.
- For shorter cooking, add summer squashes, cauliflower, broccoli, mushrooms for the last 25 minutes of cooking time.

Summery Baked Vegetable Platter

Baked vegetable dishes make for easy-does-it cooking—at least one dish in the

meal not requiring attention and fiddling relieves a lot of pressure. This dish is no exception, and eggplant tastes great when roasted.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 globe eggplant (or 4 Japanese eggplants)

2 fennel bulbs

2 red bell peppers

2 to 3 tablespoons of olive oil

Salt

2 tablespoons tarragon vinegar

1 tablespoon white sugar

*¼ cup fresh basil, cut into thin strips
(chiffonade)*

Preheat oven to 425°. Cut the stem off the eggplant and a small piece off the

opposite end, removing mostly skin. Slice the eggplant into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch rounds (or ovals). Brush each side with olive oil, and spread out on a baking sheet. (If concerned about cleaning, use a piece of kitchen parchment on the bottom of the pan.)

Cut the stalks off of the fennel bulbs, as well as a thin slice off of the base. Then slice the fennel diagonally into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick pieces. Cut the red peppers in half lengthwise, remove the stem, seeds and pith, and cut into 5 or 6 wide strips.

Toss the fennel and pepper pieces with olive oil and a sprinkling of salt, and spread out on a baking sheet. Roast the vegetables for about 40 minutes until very tender, turning from time to time—or at least turning the eggplant once.

Remove the vegetables to a platter,

combine the vinegar and sugar, and spoon it lightly over the roast vegetables. Taste to see if there is enough salt. Serve garnished with the fresh basil strips.

Baked Onions with Balsamic Vinegar

Balsamic vinegar, now quite popular, is a full-flavored, dark, intense, well-aged vinegar. In this recipe, it provides the finishing touch to onions that are sweet, soft, and mellow from a lengthy baking. We often serve this as a side dish to pasta. The recipe is about as simple as can be, but it takes a while, so, if possible, bake the onions a day ahead.

EACH ONION SERVES 1 OR 2 PEOPLE

Red onions, large but not gigantic
Balsamic vinegar

Preheat oven to 400°. Line the bottom of a baking sheet with foil to catch the drippings (or put a rack in a baking pan with water underneath as you would meat). Bake the whole unpeeled onions for 1½ hours or until they are completely soft and limp.

Let cool enough to peel, cut off the ends, and remove the skin. Prepare to give the onions their balsamic bath. Cut the onions in half, nestle them into a high-sided casserole or baking pan, and cover with balsamic vinegar. (After use, the vinegar can be kept and reused once it has been strained through a double layer of

cheesecloth or a coffee filter.) Let the onions marinate for at least 1 hour before serving.

Baked Tomatoes with Herbs

This simple and straightforward recipe is as good as the tomatoes. The bright red, plump tomatoes bring a bounteous feeling to the meal.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

4 good-sized, flavorful tomatoes

Olive oil

Dried marjoram

Dried basil

2 cloves of garlic, minced (optional)

Salt

Pepper

1 tablespoon fresh basil, minced or strips

Preheat oven to 350°. Remove the stem and core of the tomatoes and cut them in half equatorially. Slice a thin round off the top or bottom (depending) of the tomato halves so that they easily sit up. Place on a baking sheet (covered with kitchen parchment). Brush the surface with olive oil, then sprinkle on the dried herbs, the minced garlic (if you are using it), and the salt and pepper. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes until aromatic and slightly softened. Put on the fresh basil right before serving.

Simple Mixed Vegetable Grill

on Skewers

The possibilities for vegetables on skewer are limitless, but this recipe is simple, with good colors and minimal preparation.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

12 medium-large mushrooms (fresh shiitake mushrooms are excellent for this)

1 green bell pepper

18 cherry tomatoes

1 cup olive oil

½ cup balsamic vinegar or rice wine vinegar

2 tablespoons soy sauce

6 cloves of garlic, chopped

1 teaspoon sugar

¼ teaspoon salt

Pepper

6 8-inch skewers

Wipe off the mushrooms with a damp cloth or paper towel. Cut the pepper in half lengthwise and remove the stem, seeds, and pith. Then cut the pepper in half crosswise, and these pieces in thirds. Rinse off the cherry tomatoes and remove the stems.

Combine the oil, vinegar, soy sauce, garlic, sugar, salt, and pepper for the marinade and let the mushrooms and peppers sit in this for 1 hour, give or take. Drain off and reserve the marinade, and put the vegetables on 6 skewers—the green and red are particularly good next to each other.

Grill over charcoal for 3 to 5 minutes, turning over occasionally, until the corners of the peppers are browned and the tomatoes are blistered. Serve as is, or drizzle some of the marinade over them. (These could also be broiled for several minutes, turning once for even cooking.)

Entrées with a Crust



Heaven and Hell
(Adapted from a
Japanese folk tale)

Contrary to popular belief
the tables of Hell are laden
with the most exquisite dishes of
food.

Whatever you could possibly
desire:

soups, salads, stews, sauces,
curries

if you want, fruits, succulent meats

(grilled to order), pastries, ice
cream.

The single unusual factor being
that
one must eat with a fork three feet
long.

Holding it close to the tines you
could manage
to eat, but when you do so, a
demon immediately
slaps you (or pokes you with his
fork),
and says, “Hold it at the other
end!”

So getting the food on the fork up
to your mouth
is quite impossible, alas, though an
abundance
of delicious food is readily

available.

In heaven the situation is exactly
the same:

same long tables covered with
tasty dishes,

same long forks. The only
difference in heaven

is that the people feed the person
sitting

across the table from them.

THE ENTRÉES WITH A CRUST INCLUDE entrées with cheese: pizzas and cheese pies—all dishes that have a festive, fun, and celebratory feeling. And, it turns out, these home-grown beauties are fairly simple to prepare. (Even I can make them!)

The pizzas go from Greek to Mexican and nouvelle California—throw in some goat cheese and zucchini. There is also a wonderful calzone or fold-over pizza. All of these are so flavorful and fulfilling that I never find myself stewing, “Where’s the meat?”

Dairy, including cheese, is not so fashionable anymore, and more people are turning it down for soy products and rice dreams (another set of issues); however, I

for one am still enjoying cheeses and cheese dishes, still making pizzas, still laughing and crying.

What is known as *quiche* in some circles, we call *pie* or *tart*. I cannot remember why we took up this form of inverse snobbery. Maybe it is so we would not be labeled *quiche eaters*. In any case, these recipes are devised to have particular flavor impact, whether it is from cumin seed or smoked cheese.

PIZZA-MAKING RUMINATIONS

The first time I offered to make pizza for my former companion Patricia, she said that pizza often gave her heartburn, and she didn't care for it that much anyway. I replied that she hadn't yet had my pizza.

Soon she was a convert.

Making pizza can be quite enjoyable, partly because of the creative potential. Here are some of the possibilities and some of the “secrets.”

Precook most vegetable toppings. When baked, the pizza crust will brown and the cheese will melt without the vegetables on top cooking much.

Precooking is especially important if the vegetable is, say, eggplant, which is one of the few vegetables I prefer cooked to complete softness—doesn't everyone? I say this because I was served pizza with almost raw eggplant at one of those chic restaurants that all the critics fawn over. After attempting to remedy the situation, our trying-to-be-helpful waitress returned to our table chagrined and said, “The

cooks say that's the way the dish is made." Well, not in my kitchen. (And we haven't returned to that stylish restaurant either.)

Also, some toppings, notably mushrooms, can release a fair amount of liquid during baking if they are put on raw, which can make the pizza too wet. Cooking the vegetables beforehand also provides an opportunity to season them, so these pizza toppings could just as well be a vegetable dish and vegetable dishes could be pizza toppings.

A few vegetables may be put on without cooking: fresh tomatoes, and, sometimes (if the audience doesn't mind), bell peppers or onion.

Use some intense flavor elements to give the pizza some pizzazz: garlic,

olives, capers, roasted red peppers, green chilies, red chili, ginger, sun-dried tomatoes, thinly sliced lemon or lemon peel, fresh and dried herbs. These can be mixed in with the vegetables or strewn over the surface of the pizza.

Garnish the pizza *after* baking. This is especially important. Then the aromatic flavors of freshly grated Parmesan or Asiago cheese and fresh herbs are enhanced by the heat. If the Parmesan cheese and herbs are put on earlier, then much of their flavor is left in the oven.

Use flavorful cheeses (provolone, smoked, Gouda, Monterey Jack, pepper Jack, Muenster, goat cheese—the list could go on and on) in place of the standard generic mozzarella. For my taste, it makes pizzas much more interesting.

I read in *The Wall Street Journal* that Poland is taking to pizza, but one problem they have is that there is a shortage of mozzarella cheese, so they improvise, using cheese that is available. Apparently the Italians sometimes criticize them, saying that they do not understand the concept that one function of the cheese is to be gooey and hold the toppings in place.

I haven't found this to be a problem, except when I do not use any cheese. Also I tend to use a modest amount of cheese on my pizzas, because otherwise there can be an extravagant amount of oily goo in any particular bite.



Here are some pointers about making the dough and rolling it out.

I now make a fairly basic olive oil bread for my pizza dough. If you are so

inclined, you can experiment to find out if there are other doughs that you like. For instance, some cooks like to add a small amount of cornmeal to the dough or to sprinkle it on the pizza pan before putting the dough on it.

I am fussy about rolling out the dough, because I am not a fan of “cardboard” crusts. As far as I can tell, pizza doughs are made with basically good ingredients, and become dry and pasty on the palate, because they are rolled out on an excessively thick mound of white flour. A perfectly fine dough now has a thick coating of dry flour on it, which will not be appetizing. (Sometimes this is done—and works quite well—because the well-floured pizza is slid off of a pizza peel into an extremely hot wood-fired oven,

and the crust toasts beautifully.)

I encourage people to dust the counter with flour by tossing a small handful of flour up (not down) and out across the surface. First shape the dough into a ball, then dust the counter and position the dough. Flatten out the ball by hand to start with, and then turn it over, so that there is a thin coating of flour on top.

Now roll out the dough, working the rolling pin from the center to the edge in various directions. If the dough starts to stick, stop rolling, pick up the dough, and dust the counter again. Turn the dough over when you put it down again, and recommence rolling. Picking up the dough gives it a chance to relax, making it easier to roll out further.

When the dough is repositioned after a

fresh dusting, this is also a good time to reshape it by hand into something more closely resembling a circle (if that has started to be a problem). Once the dough is the size of the pizza pan, pick it up and place it on the pan, which doesn't need greasing.

I put the toppings out to the very edge of the pizza so there is no "crust" for people to discard. This makes the pizza feel especially ample and generous. If you make the pizza in this style, you do not need to do the showy thing of tossing the pizza in the air. (Oh, go ahead.) The dough is tossed after it is rolled out in order to stretch it thinner in the middle of the circle while leaving it thicker at the edge. Between stretches the circle of dough is tossed in the air to rotate it.

Use a pizza stone if you own one. I don't have one of these anymore, and I seem to get by without it. These stones work best if they are preheated in the oven, which means you will also need a *pizza peel*, which is like a wooden pizza shovel. The pizza is assembled on the peel and, yes, with loads of flour underneath, so that when ready it can be slid off the peel onto the hot stone. That's a trick right there! At its best this makes a wonderfully toasty, nutty crust, marvelously crisp.

Pizza Dough

This version of pizza dough uses whole wheat flour as well as white flour. You could also make pizza using the recipe for

Focaccia.

MAKES 2 8-INCH PIZZAS OR 1 11-INCH PIZZA

2 teaspoons active dry yeast (1 packet)

½ cup warm water

1 good pinch of sugar

½ teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons olive oil

½ cup whole wheat flour

½ to ¾ cup white flour

Flour for kneading

Dissolve the yeast in the warm water (less than 115°) with the sugar. Set aside in a warm place until the mixture turns bubbly, about 10 minutes. Stir in the salt, olive oil, and whole wheat flour, and beat well with a spoon. Fold in white flour until the dough comes away from the sides of the

bowl.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured board—cleaning out the mixing bowl and adding the odds and ends—and knead until smooth, adding flour as necessary to keep the dough from sticking. Coat the mixing bowl with a little olive oil, and return the kneaded dough to the bowl. Turn the dough over once so the upper surface is coated with oil. Cover with a damp towel. Let the dough rise in a warm place for about 30 minutes or until doubled in size, while you are preparing other ingredients. If not yet ready for the pizza dough, punch it down and let it rise for another 20 to 25 minutes. (If you want more instructions about making a yeasted dough, you can find them in [White Bread with Cornmeal](#).)



Turn out onto a floured board, knead briefly, and divide in 2 pieces. Roll out or stretch each piece into a circle 8 inches in diameter. (The rolling out or stretching is easier if the dough sits a few minutes after division.) Place on baking sheets or on individual pizza tins.

Pizza Venezia

Usually a pizza has its ingredients distributed evenly over the surface, so that each slice is the same, but this pizza has a variety of toppings each of which is put in its own area, making it something of a work of art. The arrangement is not supposed to be done with straight lines but rather with whimsy: roasted red peppers conjoin with mushrooms or asparagus; carrots are flanked by zucchini or eggplant. When the pizza is sliced, each piece is different.

This recipe involves making six different toppings, but you are certainly welcome to see what you have available in the way of leftovers to get you started, or make fewer toppings but *more* of the

ones you do make. See “[Pizza-Making Ruminations](#)” for general advice on preparing pizza.

Since people’s appetite for pizza varies enormously, you will have to decide for yourself how many people an 11-inch pizza will serve—or how many 11-inch pizzas you will need to assemble.

MAKES 1 11-INCH PIZZA

1 batch [Pizza Dough](#) (see recipe)

4 cloves of garlic, minced

5 tablespoons olive oil

1 Japanese eggplant (4 to 6 ounces)

1 zucchini (4 to 6 ounces)

1 [roasted red pepper](#)

6 to 8 ounces mushrooms

Salt

Pepper

8 ounces asparagus
1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
1 carrot
2 teaspoons horseradish
½ cup green onion (white and green parts), sliced
Balsamic vinegar
Lemon juice or rice vinegar
2 shallots, sliced
4 ounces cheese, grated (Monterey Jack, pepper Jack, Gouda, provolone, mozzarella, Muenster)

OPTIONAL:

8 to 12 cherry tomatoes, cut in half
6 kalamata olives, pitted and chopped
1 to 2 teaspoons capers, drained
2 teaspoons grated lemon peel
1 tablespoon fresh thyme, minced

Preheat the oven to 400°. Start the Pizza Dough, and set it aside to rise.

Combine the minced garlic with 3 tablespoons of the olive oil. Cut off the ends of the eggplant and slice it in diagonal pieces between $\frac{1}{8}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick and 3 inches long. Cut the zucchini the same way. Place the slices on an oiled baking sheet and brush the tops with olive oil as well. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until the zucchini is tender, and remove it. Continue baking 15 or 20 minutes, until the eggplant is tender. Set the vegetables aside in separate bowls. Turn up the oven to 525°.

Slice the mushrooms and sauté them in a tablespoon of the olive oil for a few minutes, then add a spoonful of the minced garlic (from the garlic and oil mix) and a

touch of salt. Continue cooking several minutes longer, until the mushrooms are well browned. If there is extra liquid, remove the mushrooms and cook the liquid down until it is syrupy, then add it back to the mushrooms. Season with pepper.

Snap the tough ends off the asparagus, and then cook it, whole or sliced with the ginger. Cut the carrot diagonally into ovals. If you enjoy cutting, slice the ovals into strips. Sauté the carrot in 1 to 2 teaspoons olive oil over high heat for a couple of minutes, then add the horseradish, green onion, and a pinch of salt. Cook another minute or two, then cover, turn off the heat, and let the carrot steam.

Before assembling the pizza, do some

seasoning: Sprinkle the eggplant with about 2 teaspoons of balsamic vinegar, some salt, and pepper. Sprinkle the zucchini with a touch of lemon juice, if it's handy, or some rice vinegar, salt, and pepper. You can leave the roasted red pepper in big pieces or cut it into slices. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, a teaspoon of the garlic oil, and a touch of balsamic vinegar.

Roll out the pizza dough into a circle about 11 inches in diameter and about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick. Place on a pizza baking pan of the same size (or larger). Since I do not like to see people discarding pieces of my crust, I prefer not to make a rim of dough at the edge of the pizza. Instead I spread the toppings all the way to the outer edge.

First spread out the remaining olive oil

with the garlic. Then distribute the sliced shallots and the grated cheese. Now put each topping in a particular area on the pizza. Notice which colors might go well together. If you are at a loss, put the toppings in pie wedge areas or in strips across the pizza.

If using the tomatoes, olives, and capers: Top the eggplant and zucchini with the cherry tomato halves. Top the carrots with the chopped olives. Sprinkle the capers where you want them, perhaps with the asparagus and/or the zucchini.

Ready to bake! Bake on the top shelf for 12 to 15 minutes, until the bottom of the crust is browned. Remove pizza from the oven and garnish with the lemon peel and fresh thyme. Since I do not have a pizza cutter, I slide the pizza off the pan onto the

counter or a cutting board and cut it into slices. Then I put the slices on a platter (or cutting board) to serve. Accompany with freshly grated Parmesan or Asiago and red pepper flakes on the side, if you have them and like them.



Goat Cheese–Zucchini Pizza

Goat cheese has come a long way to have made it to a Buddhist meditation center in

the California wilderness. We do keep up on the latest fads—the edible ones anyway. A wonderful combination of flavors make this pizza disappear fast.

MAKES 2 8-INCH PIZZAS

1 batch [Pizza Dough](#)

3 tablespoons fruity olive oil

1 clove of garlic, minced

½ cup red onions, thinly sliced

1½ cups mozzarella cheese

*2 medium or 1 large tomato, sliced
equatorially*

*1 cup zucchini, finely grated, salted,
and pressed*

1 cup goat cheese

*½ cup basil, sliced in thin fine ribbons
(chiffonade)*

Salt

Pepper

Preheat oven to 400°. Roll out the pizza dough. Mix the oil and garlic together. Brush generously on the pizza dough, saving some to brush on, or spoon over the top after baking. Separate the red onion slices and spread them out over the pizza. Spread the mozzarella evenly over the red onions. Lay the tomato slices on the cheese.

Squeeze the zucchini in a cheesecloth or a clean dish towel to remove excess liquid. (The zucchini, grated, has been lightly salted, then placed in a bowl or colander, with some weight on top of it. The salt and pressure draw water out of the vegetable. It's then squeezed as dry as possible. see [Salting Vegetables](#).) Spread

the zucchini over the tomatoes. Dot the goat cheese over the tomatoes, zucchini, and mozzarella.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until the crust is brown. You can use a metal spatula to check the underside of the pizza. Remove from the oven. Brush lightly with the garlic oil, especially around the rim. Sprinkle with the basil chiffonade. Lightly salt and pepper.

Pizza Mexicana

This recipe is originally from Greens, our restaurant in San Francisco. Hot, spicy, well seasoned, it is definitely pizza, but not one you'll find in Italy. Sometimes it's called "Spaghetti Western."

Chipotle chili peppers are jalapeños which have been dried and smoked. Very hot and very tasty, they are available in cans. There is no real substitute for chipotle peppers, but some alternatives are listed.

MAKES 2 8-INCH PIZZAS

1 batch [Pizza Dough](#)

¼ cup chipotle “puree” (see instructions below), hot sauce, ketchup spiked with Tabasco, or a layer of diced green chilies

¾ cup Muenster cheese, grated

¾ cup cheddar cheese, grated

½ cup Monterey Jack cheese, grated

1 small red onion, sliced into thin rounds

2 ripe tomatoes, cored at the top and

sliced equatorially

*1 red or green bell pepper, cored,
seeded, and sliced into thin rounds*

*1 tablespoon olive oil, plus extra for
the crust*

*1 clove of garlic, finely minced or
pressed*

Pepper, freshly grated

*1 ounce Parmesan cheese, freshly
grated*

1 tablespoon fresh marjoram, minced

2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, minced

Preheat oven to 450°. Roll out the pizza dough.

To make the chipotle puree, take one chipotle pepper and mince or puree very finely. Thin to spreading consistency by mixing in olive oil until you have a ¼ cup.

Spread the puree evenly over the pizza rounds. Sprinkle the Muenster, cheddar, and Jack cheeses on top of the puree. Arrange the onions, tomatoes, and peppers on top of the cheese. Combine the olive oil and garlic. Drizzle it over the vegetables. Salt and pepper lightly.

Bake the pizza in the upper third of the oven for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the crust is brown and crisp around the edges. Remove from the oven, sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese and herbs, and brush the edges of the crust with olive oil. Serve immediately—with cool liquid refreshment handy.

Tassajara Calzone

The recipe for this fold-over pizza originally came to us from our friends at Chez Panisse. Ours doesn't have any meat (what's that?), but smoked cheese gives it a cured flavor and the vegetables provide something to bite into. This is such a succulent, juicy, flavorful pizza, how could anything be better, except as a little change of pace once in a while. After all, if you eat the same thing all the time, it begins to taste like brown rice. Here, there's something new in each bite.

MAKES 1 LARGE CALZONE; SERVES 1 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 batch [Pizza Dough](#)

1 small red onion, finely chopped

4 cloves of garlic, minced

1½ cups ricotta cheese

½ cup feta or goat cheese, crumbled

*½ cup smoked, Monterey Jack, or
Gruyère cheese, grated*

*½ cup Parmesan or Asiago cheese,
grated*

*1 tablespoon freshly chopped herbs
(thyme, rosemary, marjoram, basil)
or ½ tablespoon dried herbs*

*1½ cups (combined) zucchini, grated,
salted, pressed, and squeezed (see
[Goat Cheese–Zucchini Pizza](#));
carrots, peeled, grated, or finely
chopped; green or black olives,
pitted, sliced, or chopped; sun-dried
tomatoes, diced or strips*

Salt

Pepper

2 tablespoons olive oil, plus extra

1 small clove of garlic, pressed or

minced

*Egg wash (1 egg + 1 tablespoon
water)*

Sage leaves (optional)

Preheat oven to 425°. Start the pizza dough and set it aside to rise while working on the rest of the ingredients.

Sauté the onions and garlic in olive oil until the onions are soft. If fresh herbs are not available, add the dried herbs to the cooking onions. (The fresh herbs are added uncooked later.) Mix the cooked onions and garlic with the cheeses, the assortment of raw vegetables, olives and tomatoes, and the fresh herbs. Salt and pepper to taste.

Roll out the pizza dough into a circle about 12 inches in diameter and place it

on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper or foil. Combine garlic and oil. Brush the dough with the garlic oil, leaving a 1-inch rim unoiled. Brush this rim with water.

Place the filling on one half of the oiled dough and fold over the other half to make the calzone. Pinch the rims together and then fold the rims in half to seal. Crimp the sealed edges with a fork. Poke the surface all over with a fork to make air holes. (Yes, even calzone needs to breathe.) Brush the dough with egg wash. Decorate with the sage leaves, if you wish. Brush more egg wash over the leaves so they will remain in place. Bake for about 25 minutes or until golden brown. Serve whole to enjoy its beauty. Then, cut into slices.



Greek Pizza with Spinach, Feta, and Kalamata Olives

MAKES 2 8-INCH OR 1 11-INCH PIZZA

1 batch [Pizza Dough](#)

3 to 4 cloves of garlic, minced

¼ cup olive oil

½ bunch spinach (about ½ pound)

*Peel of ½ lemon, slivered, minced, or
grated*

Salt

Pepper

1 small red onion, minced

*1 to 1½ cups mozzarella (4 ounces),
grated*

4 ounces feta cheese, cut into strips

*½ cup kalamata olives, pitted and
chopped*

*¼ cup Parmesan or Asiago cheese,
finely grated*

2 tablespoons fresh parsley, minced

*1 teaspoon dried oregano or 1
tablespoon fresh oregano, minced*

Preheat oven to 500° or 550°. Prepare

pizza dough and set aside to rise. Combine garlic and olive oil. Clean the spinach, remove the large stems, and cut the biggest leaves in half.

Heat a couple of teaspoons of the garlic-oil in a skillet and add the spinach. Cover and cook down, adding the rest of the spinach if you were not able to fit it all in. Drain, reserving the liquid for stock or another vegetable dish. Season with the lemon peel, salt, and pepper; be cautious with the salt as the olives and cheese will provide more.

Roll out the pizza dough for two 8-inch or one 11-inch pizza, and place it on a round pizza pan. Brush with the remaining garlic oil and spread the onions on top. Distribute the mozzarella cheese. Arrange the spinach, feta, and chopped olives on

top of the mozzarella.

Bake on the top rack in a very hot oven about 8 to 12 minutes, until the cheese is melted and the bottom of the pizza is browned—you'll have to lift it to take a peek. Remove from the oven. Garnish with the Parmesan or Asiago cheese, the parsley, and the oregano. Cut with a pizza cutter, or slide out of the pan onto a cutting board and use your handy, dandy sharp knife.

VEGETABLE PIES AND QUICHES

Savory pies and quiches harken back to an era when people were not filling up on chips and dip. In other words, these dishes *honor* your appetite with beautifully presented food.

Pastry Dough for Savory Dishes

When well prepared, this dough is flaky, tender, and buttery. The little pieces of butter provide the flake, so it is essential that the butter remain cold and lumpy throughout the process rather than becoming soft and mixing in with the flour and water. This is accomplished in various ways: using chilled or frozen butter, using ice water, mixing lightly, and chilling or freezing before baking.

MAKES 1 PIE SHELL (BOTTOM ONLY)

¾ cup white flour

½ cup whole wheat flour

¼ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon sugar

¼ teaspoon paprika

½ cup butter

2 to 4 tablespoons ice water

Preheat oven to 375°. Mix together the dry ingredients. Cut in the butter with a pastry cutter or two knives. (Or, you can try freezing the butter and then grating it into the flour. You will still need to cut it in some with a pastry cutter.) The mixture will look like coarse cornmeal in color and texture.

Add the cold water a tablespoon at a time, mixing lightly with a fork or your hands, using just enough water to form a dough that holds together when you squeeze it in your hands, and the mixture

comes together to form a ball. Excess water will make the dough tough—as will excess mixing, so handle as little as possible, but use some pressure to bring the dough together at the end.

Place the ball of dough into a plastic bag and flatten it into a disc. Refrigerate for 30 minutes or so. (It will keep longer if you're not planning on using it right away.)

When ready to bake, dust a countertop with flour and roll out the dough into a round. Shape the dough into a pie pan. If baking without a filling, place in preheated oven while the dough is still cold. Bake about 20 to 25 minutes until lightly browned.

An Adventure in Dining Out

When I went to some cooking classes given by the “great chefs” of Szechuan, one thing that stayed with me was a description of the two most important points in Chinese cooking, although I couldn’t help thinking there was something missing in the translation. The first principle was to visualize the dish: these are the ingredients; these are the seasonings; this is what makes the dish what it is. The second was referred to as *timing*, but I think that what was meant was *execution* or *enactment*.

That description seems rather good to me. Part of cooking is conception, visualization, dreaming, imagination, creativity. The other part is work: attention, care, skill, thoroughness, actually handling the stuff which is food. To wit, a story.

Many years ago I went out to dinner with three friends. We drove many miles to eat out at a cooking-school restaurant, and we arrived hungry and in eager anticipation of a fine meal. The restaurant felt warm and inviting, and after being greeted hospitably we were escorted to an upstairs table. In buoyant spirits we ordered a bottle of champagne and perused the menu.

Our education in the two

principles of Chinese cuisine commenced with the first dish to arrive at our table: a cream of mussels soup. The first bite was delicious. By the third spoonful the excessive amount of salt was painfully distasteful. Four of us, hungry as we were, couldn't finish a single serving of this soup.

Floating in the bowl was a large crouton topped with grated cheese. "Perhaps," we conjectured, "the crouton is meant to be an antidote to the excess salt." Wrong. The crouton with its grated Italian cheese was saltier than the soup. Someone's *timing* had been off, or perhaps their attention or taste buds. We weren't sure.

We turned our attention to the Salmon Bouillon, which made its appearance with a sprig of dead parsley floating on its surface. We knew the parsley was dead because it was bobbing belly up and floundered this way and that. Once we removed this unappetizing specimen the soup turned out to be delicious. Conceptual flaw we decided. Paper-thin slices of lemon or strands of zest might have been an alternative, or perhaps narrow shreds of seaweed, delicate dark green ovals of scallion or tiny rounds of chives. We let it go, and awaited the main course.

All the entrées were well conceived and so smoothly executed

that I cannot recall them in the slightest. Since all of them were indeed suitable and satisfying, we decided to order for the table the one entrée that none of us had dared to try: Lobster Poached in Sauterne and Cinnamon. Frankly, this just hadn't sounded appetizing to any of us, but what did we know? Perhaps it was a classic combination of which our unschooled intelligence was unaware. Perhaps a mysterious alchemy took over the ingredients producing an inconceivable delicacy.

The lobster arrived, and each of us took a bite. We had been right in our initial reaction: Bad Idea. One of my companions described it as lobster in Maypo syrup. Once he said that, the

idea stuck: Lobster in Syrup did nothing for the lobster.

By now we had had another bottle of wine or two in addition to the champagne, so we proceeded in high spirits, determined not to be dismayed by anything strange still to come. Following the entrées, the most beautiful—ever!—carefully arranged salads arrived. Smaller leaves had been artfully placed face up inside larger ones, while calendula petals and pistachios dotted the surface along with fresh herbs. We felt grateful and delighted that someone would do this for us, until the first bite produced a sensation of grittiness between the teeth and around the tongue as did

every succeeding bite of that stunning salad. Someone had been negligent in washing the lettuce. A simple thing, making all the difference in the world.

We were curious to know what had happened, so we asked the waiter, who returned to inform us that it was the end of the semester, and all the cooks were out on the veranda drinking champagne and congratulating one another.

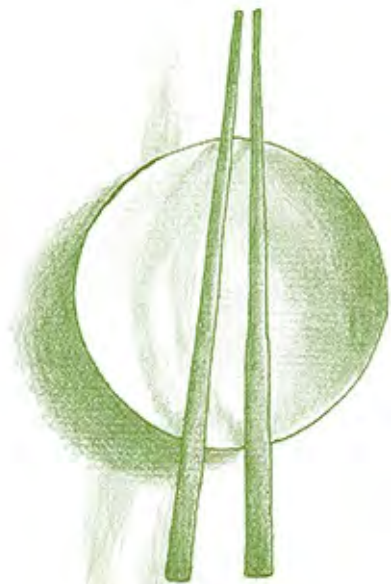
Next came dessert. When we decided we would like a dessert wine, we could not resist trying an Australian one the waiter described as salty. We wondered what he could mean, until we actually tasted it: salty, a dessert wine that was salty.

That was decidedly strange, but we hoped the desserts would bring atonement.

My genoise, thin slices of cake layered with buttercream, looked simply marvelous. Reverently I picked up my fork and gently moved to cut off the tip of the wedge of cake. Nothing happened, so I pushed down harder and harder until the cake sprang up at acute angles on either side of the fork vigorously forming a “V” shape. The cake was impenetrable by fork. We asked for steak knives, and over espressos and cappuccinos we admitted our ignorance. We didn't know how a dessert wine could be salty or why a genoise became cardboard. We

didn't know if there had been a conceptual mistake or a flaw in executing the idea. We did know that we had had a thoroughly entertaining and enlightening evening.

When the check came, our waiter was not off in the slightest.



Cabbage Pie

I've enjoyed this fragrant pie more than once in the Tassajara dining room, savoring its herbaceous qualities. This is a covered pie, so the recipe calls for a double recipe of the Pastry Dough.

MAKES 1 PIE

2 batches [Pastry Dough for Savory Dishes](#)

6 cups cabbage, shredded

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon butter

1 medium red onion, diced (about 1½ cups)

3 cloves of garlic, minced

1 teaspoon coriander seed, freshly ground

1 teaspoon dried dill weed
2 tablespoons parsley, minced
1 tablespoon fresh sage, minced or 1
teaspoon dried
1 tablespoon fresh thyme, minced or 1
teaspoon dried
1 or 2 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
(optional)
Salt
Pepper
1 or 2 eggs, beaten

Preheat oven to 375°. Make the double batch of the Pastry Dough, dividing the dough into two balls. Place in separate plastic bags and flatten into discs. Refrigerate until needed.

Blanch the cabbage in boiling, salted water for 1 minute. Drain and press to

remove excess liquid, reserving it for soup stock if you wish. Heat the oil and butter together and sauté the onion for several minutes to soften. Add the garlic, coriander, and dill, and continue cooking another minute or two. Combine with the cabbage and add the parsley, sage, thyme, and chopped egg, if you are using it. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Roll out one of the discs of dough on a lightly floured counter, so that it forms an oval shape. Place on a baking sheet and brush the top with some of the beaten egg. Save a little of the beaten egg to brush on the top piece of dough, and add the rest to the filling. Put the filling on the dough so that it forms a rectangular mound.

Roll out the second disc of dough on a lightly floured counter so that it forms

another oval. There are various options here for sealing the dough, but one handsome presentation is to make the second piece of dough just about the size of the mound, and fold up the long sides of the bottom layer and pinch them together with the top. Repeat this with the short sides, so the pie is all closed up. Brush with the remaining beaten egg. Bake 30 to 40 minutes until the dough is golden.

Cumin, Cheese, and Onion Tart

Mild cheese accented with well-roasted onions and cumin, this dish sings sweet and pungent. Cream added to the eggs makes the custard smooth, fine-textured,

and rich. If you prefer, however, you can use all milk.

MAKES 1 9-INCH TART

1 batch Pastry Dough for Savory Dishes, baked

1 yellow onion, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon butter

2 teaspoons freshly ground cumin seeds, pulverized in a spice mill

Water

3 eggs

½ teaspoon salt

1 cup milk (partially cream?)

⅔ cup grated Monterey Jack cheese

1 teaspoon whole cumin seeds

Pepper, coarsely ground

Preheat oven to 375°. (And prebake the

pie shell.) Cook the onions slowly in the butter with the ground cumin until soft and thoroughly cooked, about 25 minutes. Boil some water and add a few spoonfuls from time to time to facilitate the cooking and to prevent the cumin from burning. The onions should be nicely caramelized, brown, and sweet.

Whisk the eggs and salt until light, then add the milk (and cream) and whisk to combine. Spread the cheese in the prebaked shell, then layer on the onions and scatter the whole cumin seeds on top. Sprinkle with pepper to taste. Pour the egg mixture on top. Bake in the upper third of the oven until the custard is set and the top is golden, about 40 minutes. Remove the tart to a rack and let cool 5 to 10 minutes before serving. This allows the flavors

time to develop.



Tassajara Smoked Cheese and Spinach Pie

Adapting an old favorite, we have added smoked cheese to give this pie a flavor reminiscent of bacon. The spinach lends a contrasting color and flavor.

MAKES 1 9-INCH PIE

1 batch Pastry Dough for Savory

Dishes

Dijon mustard

½ cup grated Cheddar cheese

½ cup grated Parmesan, Asiago, or Romano cheese

½ cup grated smoked cheese

1 small bunch of spinach (about 2 cups washed and cut) or ½ package frozen spinach, thawed

1 cup mushrooms, sliced

1 tablespoon butter

3 eggs

½ cup milk

½ cup cream or an additional ½ cup milk

Tabasco sauce (optional)

Note: If you do not happen to have mushrooms, add an additional egg and another ¼ cup each of milk and

cream to the custard.

Preheat oven to 425°. Brush the uncooked pie shell generously with the Dijon mustard and sprinkle the cheeses evenly over the mustard. Cut the stems off the leaves of spinach, and slice the leaves in strips ¼ inch wide. Sauté the mushrooms in the butter over moderate heat for 3 to 4 minutes and add the spinach. Continue cooking until the spinach has softened. Spread the mushrooms and spinach on top of the cheese. Beat the eggs in a bowl and whisk in the milk, cream, and a touch of Tabasco. (You can use all milk, if you prefer.) Pour over the vegetables.

Bake for 15 minutes at 425°, then lower the heat to 300°. Continue baking for 25 to 30 minutes, until a knife inserted in the

center comes out clean. Remove from the oven and let stand 5 minutes before slicing.

Half-and-Half Pie Crust

Half white and half whole wheat flour, half butter and half oil. This is another option for entrée crust along with the [Pastry Dough for Savory Dishes](#).

MAKES 2 MEDIUM-SIZED PIE CRUSTS

1 cup whole wheat flour

1 cup white flour

¼ teaspoon salt

⅓ cup butter

⅓ cup corn oil

5 tablespoons cold water

Preheat to 375°. Sift flours and salt together. Cut in the butter. While stirring with a fork, add the oil, and then the water a little at a time. Tossing like a salad, by hand, mix quickly into a ball. If it doesn't quite shape up, add a sprinkling more water. Divide in two. Roll out on a floured surface with a floured rolling pin till $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, and place in two pie tins without stretching the dough too much. Flute the edges. Make fork marks on the bottom and sides, brush with beaten egg if you like, and bake for 5 to 10 minutes, unless a recipe calls for a *fully* baked crust, then about 30 to 35 minutes.

This dough is easy to handle. All whole wheat or all white flour doughs are more difficult to handle, and white flour dough usually needs refrigeration for 1 hour

before using.

A Basic Quiche

Let them eat pie! Not a bad idea, as long as you're still eating eggs and dairy, and if you are not, I'm sure there are ways to make quiche without them (see someone else's cookbook). A slice of quiche, perhaps some salad, call it a light meal. In this basic quiche recipe I'm endeavoring to give you a number of options for how to proceed. Then you can incorporate your leftovers, and clean out your refrigerator if you are so inclined—while preparing a wonderful meal.

½ batch [Half-and-Half Pie Crust](#),

partially baked

1 medium yellow or purple onion, 1 medium leek, or several green onions

1 tablespoon olive oil or butter

2 cloves of garlic, minced

1 pound sliced vegetables of your choice: mushrooms, spinach, chard, cauliflower, broccoli, zucchini, green beans

Salt

Pepper

Lemon juice

Dried or fresh herbs of your choice

3 eggs

1 cup milk

Nutmeg, cumin seed, and/or fennel seed

4 ounces grated cheese (Swiss,

cheddar, Monterey Jack, Parmesan)

Preheat oven to 350°. Cook the onions in butter or oil for a couple of minutes. Stir in the garlic and the rest of the sliced vegetables along with a sprinkling of salt, pepper, and possibly lemon juice or (feeling inspired?) some other seasoning. Cook, covered, over moderate heat until the vegetables have softened slightly and have begun to release their moisture—about 5 minutes. Drain off the excess liquid and use it to replace some of the milk. (If there's more than half a cup, boil it down to reduce the amount and strengthen the flavor.)

Beat the eggs with the milk (and excess vegetable liquid), adding some pepper and a hint of nutmeg or perhaps the

pleasantness of cumin or fennel. Mix in the vegetables, then pour into the partially baked pie shell. Top with the cheese. Bake, in the upper part of the oven, for 30 to 40 minutes, or until puffed and browned.

VARIATIONS

- For an extra-hearty quiche, use thinned cream cheese, ricotta cheese, or cream instead of the milk.
- *Tassajara quiche*: In addition to onions and another vegetable, use 2 dozen well-roasted chopped almonds.
- *Cheese quiche*: Omit the vegetable entirely, add another egg and use ½ pound or more grated cheese

(one kind or a combination). Bake 15 minutes at 400°, then 10 to 15 minutes at 300°.

- *Hand quiche*: Again, using what comes to hand, a quiche can be made by adding the eggs and milk to almost any combination of leftovers, including grains, beans, noodles, spaghetti, vegetables. Study, investigate, utilize—this can be so *handy*.

Mushroom Quiche

This mushroom quiche follows the format above utilizing mushrooms for the primary vegetable. If you enjoy mushrooms, you know they contribute earthy, woody

flavors with some reassuring chewiness.
See what you think.

*½ batch [Half-and-Half Pie Crust](#),
partially baked*

1 onion, sliced

2 tablespoons olive oil and/or butter

1 pound mushrooms, sliced

3 cloves of garlic, minced

Salt

Pepper

½ teaspoon dried thyme

1 teaspoon lemon juice

2 tablespoons port wine or sherry

2 tablespoons parsley, minced

3 eggs

1 cup milk

Red pepper (optional)

1 cup Swiss cheese, grated

1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 375°. Sauté the onion in butter or oil for a couple of minutes. Add the sliced mushrooms and continue cooking for several minutes, then add the garlic and season with salt, pepper, thyme, lemon juice, and wine. Cook, covered, over moderate heat for a few more minutes, then uncover and raise the heat to boil off some of the excess liquid. Mix in the parsley and set aside.

Beat the eggs and milk together with their seasoning. Stir in the vegetables and their juices. Pour everything into the partially baked pie shell, top with the cheeses, and bake until slightly browned on top—30 to 40 minutes.

VARIATIONS

- Use other seasonings—ginger or dry mustard, for instance, provide a bit of bite.
- Use other vegetables in place of the mushrooms: chard, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, squashes, celery, green pepper, carrots, peas—any vegetable. When using chard, spinach, or collard greens, wilt the greens briefly in butter until they become soft. Once they are drained, clump them together and slice them, including the stalks, thinly. Use this extra liquid to replace some of the milk.

CREPES

Crepes are extraordinarily versatile, as they can be filled with a variety of ingredients, singly or in combination. These two recipes are more complex, but you are welcome to use what *comes to hand*.

Mushroom Crepes with Mushroom Sauce

Make the crepes first, then the filling, then the sauce. When all the ingredients are ready, then you can do the final assembly and serve-up. Though not as simple as rolling up some handy ingredients, this dish makes a lovely presentation.

Nowadays a wide range of mushrooms seems to be readily available. Here in the markets in California are fresh shiitake mushrooms, portobellos, brown field mushrooms, and oyster mushrooms in addition to the generic white mushrooms. I enjoy using some of these more flavorful and chewy mushrooms in combination with the more common, less expensive variety. With the shiitake and portobello mushrooms, remove the stems before slicing.

MAKES 12 OR MORE 6- TO 8-INCH CREPES

FOR THE CREPES:

2/3 cup unbleached white flour

1 1/3 cups milk

2 eggs

A touch of salt

A touch of butter

FOR THE FILLING:

1 pound mushrooms, sliced

2 tablespoons butter

6 cloves of garlic, minced

A few pinches of dried thyme

Salt

1 medium yellow onion, diced

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 tablespoons parsley, minced

A few pinches of dried basil

*6 green onions, green parts only,
thinly sliced diagonally*

Pepper

FOR THE SAUCE:

6 green onions, white and pale green

parts

2 stalks of celery, finely diced

2 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon olive oil

Salt

2½ tablespoons white flour

2 to 2½ cups milk

*½ pound fresh shiitake or cultivated
mushrooms, sliced*

1 tablespoon olive oil

Pepper

To make the crepes, put the flour, milk, eggs, and salt in a bowl and whisk until smooth, or close to it. (I have yet to find tiny lumps a problem.) Use a smooth-surfaced, nonstick frying pan, 6 to 8 inches in diameter. Usually a medium to medium-high flame works best, but you can adjust

it as you go. Put the pan over the flame and let it heat up. I usually butter the pan the first time around, and then after that, only as necessary. Have the pan hot enough so that a few drops of water sizzle when tossed into it.



To start the crepe, pick up the pan with one hand and pour in about 3 to 4

tablespoons of batter with the other hand. Immediately swirl the batter around in the pan so that it completely coats the bottom. Two to three tablespoons of batter will make 1 6-inch crepe, 3 to 4 tablespoons will make 1 8-inch crepe. Extra batter may be poured off, back into the main batch. Holes in the crepes may be filled with spots of batter or left for decor. Let the crepe cook for 45 seconds to 1 minute on the first side. Wait for it to show browning around the edges. This is a great time to use a heat-resistant rubber spatula: I get the edge of the crepe up with the spatula, and then pull it up the rest of the way and turn it over by hand. The second side finishes in about 15 seconds, since it doesn't need to brown. Finished crepes may be piled up on a plate. Be patient

with the crepe making; you may be eating a few imperfect ones before they start coming out well. If using butter in the pan, the crepes will not brown evenly, while those made without butter will brown rather thoroughly.

To make the filling, sauté the mushrooms in the butter for 3 to 4 minutes—you may need to do this in two batches—until the mushrooms have started to brown, then add garlic, thyme, and a couple pinches of salt. Cook another few minutes, until the juices have come out. Set aside. Sauté the onion in the olive oil until softened, and then add the parsley and basil. Combine with the mushrooms and drain, reserving the liquid (which I call *mushroom elixir*) for the sauce.

To make the sauce, trim the green

onions, removing the rootlets and any wilted or limp stalks. Cut thinly, reserving the greens for garnish. Sauté the whites and pale greens of the onion along with the celery in the butter and olive oil. When softened add a sprinkle of salt and the flour to make a roux. Cook 5 to 6 minutes over moderate-low heat, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, add milk to the reserved mushroom elixir to make a total of 2½ cups of liquid. Heat in a saucepan. When the flour is cooked, remove the roux from the fire, let the bubbling stop, then pour in the heated milk and whisk to combine. Return to moderate heat and cook until thickened, whisking occasionally. Sauté the shiitake mushrooms in the olive oil until browned. Add to the sauce. If

necessary, thin with more milk. Season with salt and pepper.

Preheat oven to 400°. For assembly and serve-up, place a crepe on the counter with the smooth brown side down, and spread some filling across the middle. Roll up each crepe around the filling and place in an oiled pan. (To get a neat crepe package, fill the crepes “burrito style”—put a mound of filling across the middle of the crepe. Shape it into a log by holding the near and far side of the crepe and rocking. Then fold the right and left edges of the crepe over the ends of the filling, and holding them there, roll the crepe up. It’s all easier than it sounds in writing!) Brush the tops of the crepes with milk or water, and bake for 12 to 15 minutes right before serving up.

To serve, ladle about ½ cup of sauce onto individual plates, and place a crepe or two on top. Garnish with the sliced green onions and freshly ground pepper.

VARIATION

If you want to make the Mushroom Sauce for other dishes, use 2½ cups of milk instead of the cooking liquid from the mushrooms.

Chili Crepes with Goat Cheese Filling

This dish is unusual in that the crepes are made with ground chili as well as flour. One way to serve these colorful crepes is on top of the [Black Beans with Garlic and](#)

Cumin. The four main ingredients of commercial chili powders—chili, garlic, cumin, and oregano—are here divided among the different elements of the dish: The chili is in the crepes; garlic and oregano are in the goat cheese filling; cumin and garlic are in the black beans should you decide to serve the crepes over them. This is an excellent presentation as the creamy goat cheese contrasts well with black beans. Another option would be to add some cumin to the goat cheese filling, and serve the crepes with one of the **chili sauces**.

If serving the crepes with the bean dish, start by cooking the black beans since they take the longest. While the beans are cooking, make the crepes and the filling.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE GENEROUSLY

FOR THE CREPES:

2 eggs

1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup milk

*3 to 4 tablespoons unbleached white
flour*

*$\frac{1}{3}$ cup ground *ancho chilies* or other
chilies*

A pinch of salt

Butter (optional)

FOR THE FILLING:

*10 ounces goat cheese (*chèvre*)*

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk

1 tablespoon dried oregano

*$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cumin seed, ground
(optional)*

2 teaspoons lemon peel, grated or

finely minced

2 cloves of garlic, minced

2 shallots, finely diced, or 3 to 4 green onions

Salt

Fresh cilantro

To make the crepes, whisk together the eggs, milk, 3 tablespoons of flour, the ground chili, and the salt. If the mixture seems too thin at some point, add the extra tablespoon of flour. This will partly depend on the size of the eggs you are using.

Heat a 6- or 8-inch crepe pan (or something nonstick) over medium-high heat until drops of water sizzle and jump about. For the first crepe I use a bit of butter to coat the bottom of the pan, even if

I am using a nonstick pan. Use about 3 tablespoons of batter per crepe—you may need a bit more for the larger pan.

Holding the pan in one hand, pour in the measured amount of batter, and immediately tilt the pan this way and that, so that the batter coats the bottom of the pan. Cook until the top is dry and full of air holes (a minute or so), then turn and cook briefly on the second side. Remove to a plate. (The crepe instructions in the [Mushroom Crepes](#) recipe are somewhat more complete.)

Continue cooking crepes until you have used all the batter. After the first one, the pan is “seasoned,” and you can usually make several more without any additional butter. The first 1 or 2 crepes may not turn out very well while you are getting the

heat adjusted and becoming familiar with the procedure. Keep trying. The crepes may be piled up on the plate. Hopefully, you have ended up with 6 or 8 usable crepes, depending on their size.

Preheat oven to 375°. Combine the goat cheese with the milk so that it is softened, and then mix in the oregano, cumin (if using), lemon, garlic, and shallots. If shallots are not available, you could thinly slice and sauté 3 or 4 green onions. Season to taste with salt. To assemble the crepes, place each crepe with its more beautiful side down on a counter, arrange a log of goat cheese filling across the middle of it, then wrap the crepe around the filling. If necessary, portion out the goat cheese so that you have enough for all the crepes. Place the crepes on a baking

sheet, and brush them with a little milk or water so they will not dry out. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes right before serve-up to warm them up.

If serving with black beans, ladle some black beans onto individual plates, place a crepe or two on top, and garnish with cilantro leaves. Beautiful. Or if serving with one of the chili sauces, ladle some of the sauce on the plate, place a crepe or two on top and garnish with the cilantro leaves.

Tofu Entrées



Feeding All (Without Stress)

Who breathes an enjoyable breath while hard at work knows riches that money does not bring. Yet we knot our breath and work under stress. What hunger is this we feed?

If we were to eat half as much meat,
drink half as much liquor, then everyone could eat well,
worldwide.

Yet we feed the stress we build,
and overlook the price we pay.
Animals we pen and cage: no
fields for these four legs, no
earth to peck, no dawn of day, no
dawdling in midday heat, no rest
of darkness. What kind of life
is this? They too grow stress,
impulse to move and graze is
caged,
all this pent-up in meat we eat,
yet we do the same to ourselves,
battling to succeed.
May we let up, step in open space,
free from our own imprisoning,
making wise and proper use of
structure,
fulfilling heart's desire.

TOFU IS THE JAPANESE NAME FOR bean curd, and, over the last twenty-five years, it has come a long way: all the way into supermarkets and corner groceries. Tofu burgers, garden burgers, and various kinds of marinated tofu are also available. As you will see in the recipes, tofu has also been adapted to Western as well as Thai cuisine. What started out in miso soup and vegetable stir-fries has gotten into Mushroom Tofu Stroganoff and Tofu Pad Thai. High protein, low calorie, easy to digest, tofu can be prepared in a number of delicious and satisfying ways.

All of the recipes use firm rather than soft tofu (soft will not hold together in cooking). Most of the recipes call for the tofu to be *drained and pressed*. The idea

is to remove excess liquid from the tofu, which allows it to hold together better in cooking and to absorb flavors better. Here is how it is done: Cut the block of tofu into three or four slabs of equal thickness and place them on a slanting surface, usually a cutting board or baking tray. Place another cutting board or tray on top of the tofu to apply a slight pressure to help squeeze out the liquid. (A bit of weight on the upper tray will speed the process.) Let the tofu drain for twenty to thirty minutes, if you have the time. Then it is ready to go.

Marinated Tofu

This marinade is the secret ingredient for

unblinding tofu. (Of course nowadays you can purchase a variety of seasoned tofu at the supermarket.) We use this recipe to marinate tofu before charcoal-grilling it at our restaurant, Greens, in San Francisco. At Tassajara we use it for the Grilled Marinated Tofu.

MAKES ENOUGH TO MARINATE 2 BLOCKS OF TOFU

2 blocks of tofu (14 to 18 ounces each)

½ ounce dried mushrooms

1 cup water

2 teaspoons dried oregano

2 cloves of garlic, pressed or pounded

½ cup fruity olive oil

½ cup sherry wine vinegar or red wine vinegar

½ cup red wine

½ cup soy sauce (tamari, if possible)

1 pinch ground cloves

½ teaspoon salt

Some twists of black pepper

Drain and press the tofu to remove excess water. Simmer the mushrooms in the water for 15 minutes. Toast the oregano in a small frying pan over a medium flame until it becomes aromatic (without burning). Combine the remaining ingredients, adding the oregano when it is ready. Then combine with the simmering mushrooms. Bring to a boil and simmer a couple minutes longer.

Cut the tofu into 4 slabs. Pour the hot marinade over the tofu slabs. Marinate for at least 2 hours, preferably overnight, in the refrigerator. The tofu can marinate

several days. If the tofu was reasonably fresh and fairly dry when it was marinated, the marinade can be boiled, strained, and kept refrigerated for reuse.

Grilled Marinated Tofu

Once the tofu has been marinated—at least a couple of hours—this dish is simple and quick to prepare. As you can see from the variation, sesame oil is not essential; the dish can be flavored in a variety of ways.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 block of [Marinated Tofu](#)

2 to 5 teaspoons light sesame oil

3 to 5 teaspoons dark sesame oil

2 medium yellow onions, sliced

½ pound mushrooms, sliced

Tamari sauce

Salt

Pepper

2 cloves of garlic, finely minced

Water

Bread crumbs, flour, or cornmeal

Green onions, sliced thinly

Remove the tofu from the marinade and drain it on a cutting board, propped up at a slant, while you slice and cook the mushrooms and onions. Heat about 1 teaspoon each of both oils in a large skillet. Add the onions to the hot oil and sauté over high heat until they begin to brown. Add the mushrooms, sauté another few minutes, then add a tablespoon of tamari and immediately turn down the

heat. Add salt and pepper and the garlic.

Boil some water and add it in small increments when the pan seems dry, so that the water immediately bubbles and begins to reduce, leaving a glaze as it does so. Continue adding and reducing until the onions and mushrooms are cooked, then set them aside on a warm plate. Add another few teaspoons of both oils to the skillet.

Cut the tofu into fork-size chunks. Coat the chunks with crumbs or flour or cornmeal and roast in the hot oil until the tofu is warm inside and brown outside. Add the onions and mushrooms and make sure everything is hot before serving. It can be kept hot, or can finish heating, in the oven if you have other preparations to make. Garnish with green onions.

VARIATION

Use the same ingredients and method as above but use a light and fruity olive oil instead of the sesame oils and some fresh marjoram and thyme with the onions and/or in the breading. The flavor will be completely different. Serve with freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

Tofu Cutlets

No longer does tofu have to be bland and plain! Here's a dish that makes a substantial, flavorful, appealing meal of tofu. Be sure to use firm tofu; the softer varieties will tend to fall apart.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1½ blocks (24 ounces) firm tofu

1½ teaspoons dried thyme

1 teaspoon dried savory

2 teaspoons dried basil

2 teaspoons dried marjoram

*1 cup bread crumbs, lightly toasted in
the oven*

1 cup Parmesan cheese, finely grated

½ teaspoon salt

Pepper, a generous grinding

2 eggs

Safflower or other light oil for frying

Lemon wedges, for garnish

Tartar Sauce with Fresh Basil

Press and drain the tofu. Crush the herbs between your fingers or in your palms to release their fragrance. Combine them with the bread crumbs, cheese, salt, and

pepper in a pie plate. Break the eggs into another pie plate and beat lightly with a fork.

Slice the drained tofu into strips or squares about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick and 3 inches long ($\frac{1}{2}$ by $\frac{1}{2}$ by 3 inches for strips—like fish sticks). Heat the oil (a good $\frac{1}{8}$ inch) in a large, heavy skillet until the surface shimmers (350° on a deep-fry thermometer). Adjust the heat to medium-low so the temperature does not rise higher. Dip the pieces of tofu in the egg, then into the crumbs, coating both sides thoroughly. Dip the same piece twice in the egg, then the crumbs, for heavier breading. The breaded tofu can be arranged on a plate or in a pan, so you can finish the breading before you start the frying.

Fry the coated tofu in the oil until browned on both or all 4 sides, about 2 to 3 minutes per side, then drain on paper toweling. Serve immediately with a slice of lemon and Tartar Sauce with Fresh Basil. If you have other last minute preparations, the fried tofu sticks can be placed in a casserole dish and kept warm in the oven for a few minutes before serving.

VARIATION

Replace $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the bread crumbs with fine cornmeal.

Tofu Teriyaki Gratin

This casserole with bright flavors and

aromas is simple to prepare, but the tofu needs to be marinated a day ahead of time. Since the dish is fairly juicy, it is excellent served over plain rice or noodles.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

FOR THE MARINADE:

2 blocks of firm tofu (14 to 18 ounces each)

1 cup soy sauce

½ cup sake or white wine

½ cup sugar or part honey

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated

6 cloves of garlic, crushed or pressed

¼ cup sesame oil

1½ teaspoons dry mustard

FOR THE CASSEROLE:

- 2 blocks of firm tofu, marinated overnight in the teriyaki marinade (see above)*
- 2 medium-large onions, cut in quarter moons*
- 2 tablespoons light sesame or olive oil*
- 2 bell peppers, cut in strips (could be 1 red and 1 green)*
- 2 cups mushroom halves*
- 6 medium tomatoes or 4 large tomatoes, cut in wedges (or half wedges)*
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced*



Slice, press, and drain the tofu, then cut it into pieces about 1 by 1 by 2 inches. Combine all the remaining ingredients for the marinade in a saucepan and heat to boiling, then simmer for 10 minutes. Pour the hot marinade over the pressed and drained tofu. Once the mixture has cooled, place it in the refrigerator and let it marinate overnight. The tofu can marinate

several days. If the tofu was reasonably fresh and fairly dry when it was marinated, the marinade can be boiled, strained, and kept refrigerated for reuse.

Preheat oven to 350°. Sauté the onions in a tablespoon of the oil for 1 to 2 minutes, then add the peppers and continue sautéing for about 5 minutes. Remove from the pan. Drain and reserve the liquid. Sauté the mushrooms in the remaining oil for 3 to 4 minutes. Remove, drain, and reserve the liquid.

To assemble the casserole, layer as follows: tofu, onions and peppers, tomatoes, tofu, onions and peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes. Combine the reserved juice from the onions and peppers and mushrooms with an equal or greater amount of the teriyaki marinade

and add it to the casserole. Add at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup altogether. Bake uncovered for about 45 minutes, until heated through. Sprinkle on the sliced scallions to garnish and cover during the last 5 minutes of baking.

Baked Tofu

Use with [Tofu Pad Thai](#) or serve on its own. Easy to prepare when you are willing to spend a few minutes of time rather than the money to buy flavored tofu.

SERVES 3 OR 4 PEOPLE

1 block of firm tofu (14 to 18 ounces)

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon rice vinegar

1 tablespoon honey

½ teaspoon red chili powder
1 teaspoon dark sesame oil
2 to 4 tablespoons cilantro, basil, or
flat-leafed parsley, chiffonade
(optional)

Preheat oven to 400°. Cut tofu into ½-inch slices and drain. Cut crosswise or diagonally into strips about ¼ to ⅜ inch wide and 2 to 3 inches long. Combine soy, vinegar, honey, chili, and dark sesame oil, and toss with the tofu. Drain and reserve the liquid.

Cover a baking sheet with parchment paper or foil. Bake the tofu for 30 to 45 minutes (or longer if you want it drier). Turn every 15 minutes or so. Use in Tofu Pad Thai with the reserved liquid or, if serving on its own, add back the reserved

liquid, check seasoning, and garnish with cilantro leaves, basil, or parsley.



*Eating Just One Potato
Chip*

Years ago at a meditation retreat we had an eating meditation. Raisins were passed out. We were encouraged to help ourselves to a small handful, “but don’t eat them yet!” I sighed. I am not thrilled with this kind of exercise. I prefer to have these experiences on my own, instead of having them spoonfed to me.

We were instructed to look at the raisins, to observe their appearance, to note their color and texture, “but don’t eat them yet!” I supposed it could be worse, like “ready now, one, two, three, open your heart to the raisins.” Next we were invited to smell the raisins, and, finally, after a suitable interval allowing time for the aromas to register, we were

permitted to put the raisins in our mouths, “but don’t chew them yet!”

By now I was feeling annoyed and increasingly aware of an urge to smash something. “Leave me alone,” I complained (loudly to myself). “Let me eat, for goodness’ sake.” To have your act of eating abruptly arrested is upsetting and disturbing. Get something tasty in your mouth, and your teeth want to close on it. But *wait!* We were then instructed to simply feel the raisins in our mouth, their texture, their presence. We were obliged to note saliva flowing and the impulse to chew.

At last we were permitted to culminate the act of eating. The raisins could be chewed. More

juices flowed. The sweet and the sticky were liberated from their packets, “but don’t swallow yet!”

“Be aware of your swallowing. See if you can make your swallowing conscious.” Some people, I guess, just have a knack for knowing how to take all the fun out of things. This noting and observing, attending and awakening certainly doesn’t leave much opportunity for joyful abandon, but I’ll always remember those raisins.

Indeed, I thought of them when I taught a workshop on Zen and psychoanalysis with Andre Patsalides, a Lacanian psychoanalyst. We called the event “Eating Orders and Disorders.” Andre explained that

in cultures where eating rituals were widespread, people experienced few eating disorders. Conversely, we see that ours is a culture with few eating rituals and numerous disorders. Many families, perhaps twenty-five to thirty percent, almost never eat together, according to many reports. The refrigerator, freezer, and cupboard are full of each family member's favorites, which can be microwaved when each one wishes, maybe between TV shows. And now studies are showing that children growing up in families that eat together are more likely to do well in school and have fewer substance abuse problems.

It's the American dream, the

American way: freedom, disconnection, food as product, food as fuel, never having to interact. The basic rule, of course, is to not pay very close attention to the stuff—food, sitcom, people, or game show—coming into your awareness and then to be just a bit baffled as to why you feel so undernourished in the midst of all this plentitude, but on with the show.

I wanted to lead our workshop in an eating meditation, but hey, I thought, let's get real. Let's skip the raisins and meditate on eating just one potato chip. Then I thought we could go on to oranges, my concession to wholesome, and conclude with Hydrox cookies. I

picked Hydrox because I had heard they were the “kosher Oreos” (no pig fat, I guess).

Since I didn't want to parcel out the instructions as they had been given to me, I laid out the whole deal at the start: Pay attention—no, that's give your attention, allow your attention to come to the potato chip and be as fully conscious as you can of the whole process of eating just one potato chip. Just one! So you had better pay attention.

When I announced our potato-chip-eating meditation, I was greeted with various gripes, taunts, and complaints: “I can't eat just one.” “That's ridiculous.” “You're going to leave us hanging with unsatisfied

desire. How could you?” Nonetheless I remained steadfast in my instructions and passed around a bowl of potato chips, urging each participant to take just one. When everyone was ready we commenced. “Instead of words,” Rilke says in one of his sonnets, “discoveries flow out astonished to be free.” And so it was.

First the room was loud with crunching, then quiet with savoring and swallowing. When all was fed and done, I invited comments. Many people had been startled by their experience: “I thought I would have trouble eating just one, but it really wasn’t very tasty.” “There’s nothing to it.” “There’s an instant of salt and grease, and then some tasteless pulpy

stuff in your mouth.” “I can see why you might have trouble eating just one, because you take another and another to try to find some satisfaction where there is no real satisfaction to be found.” “If I was busy watching TV I would probably think these were great, but when I actually experience what’s in my mouth it’s kind of distasteful.”

That one potato chip even surprised me, the experienced meditator, with its tastelessness. Now I walk past the walls of chips in the supermarket rather easily without awakening insidious longings and the resultant thought that I really ought to deny myself. I don’t feel deprived. There’s nothing there worth having.

And this is not just book knowledge. I *know* it.

The oranges were fabulous, exquisite, satisfying. The reports were: “Juicy . . . refreshing . . . sweet . . . succulent . . . rapturous.” About half the participants refused to finish the Hydrox cookie. One bite and newly awakened mouths simply bid the hands to set aside what remained: “This we know to be something we do not need, desire, want, or wish for. Thanks anyway.”

The ritual of eating attentively in silence put everything in order.

Ceremony for Eating Just One Potato Chip

Bets have been made. Challenges

have been laid. You've been told you can't do it. You've never dared to try, but here's the secret. Taste. Taste what you put in your mouth. Experience it!

The potato chip is already manufactured and is always "ready for you" (waiting perhaps innumerable eons for this opportunity), so concentrate on preparing the other ingredients: To strengthen and focus the concentration, eliminate all the most obvious distractions: TV, radio, stereo, reading material (especially *People* magazine and the daily newspaper), talking, shopping, driving. Concentration is to be applied to the potato chip and only to

the potato chip. No dip allowed. You are encouraged to be seated and not to have a drink in the other hand.

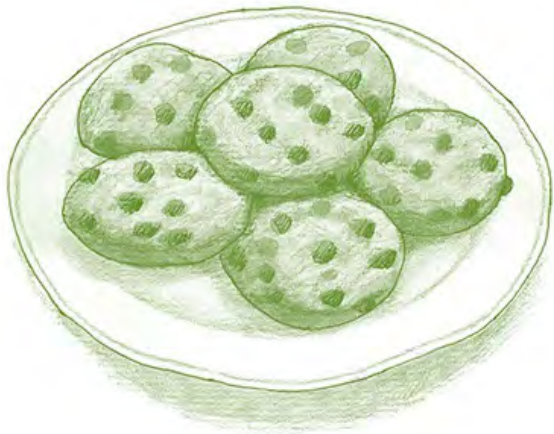
Attention is to be attuned to what is actually present moment after moment. “Attuned” because attention is often turned toward what is wished for or feared and frequently glosses over the actual experience. Refine or focus the attention by pointing out what is to be attended to: how the chip feels in the hand, how the chip looks in the hand, the smell of the chip, the intention to place said object in the mouth, how the chip feels in the mouth, how the chip tastes (moment after moment!), how the chewing sounds, and, carefully now, the sensations of swallowing.

Mindfulness is to be “whipped up” or aroused, as it tends to save itself for things more important than chips. Remind yourself that eating a potato chip with mindfulness is vitally important. To be mindful means that the experiences attended to actually make an impression.

One way to arouse mindfulness is to practice making notes about what you are going to tell your grandchildren about this particular potato chip: “beige . . . greasy between the fingers . . . exquisite curve . . . cute ruffles . . . urge (like a fire flaming to life) to place in mouth . . . feel with tongue . . . *powerful* crunch . . .” and so forth. But please, don’t take my word for it. Find your

own words.

Got your ingredients together?
Seated? Undistracted? Focused?
When you are ready you may pick up
and eat (better yet, savor) that one
potato chip. Get everything you can
out of that chip, because it's the only
chip in the entire universe.



Tofu Pad Thai

This is a fun dish with many options: pile the peanuts and other ingredients on top or

serve them on the side, to give people more choice.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 recipe [Baked Tofu](#) or 1 block (12 ounces) commercial marinated baked tofu

4 ounces dry sen lek noodles (rice noodles) soaked in water for 20 minutes until soft, then drained

6 to 8 ounces mung bean sprouts

2 green onions, cut in 1-inch pieces

1½ tablespoons sugar

3 tablespoons soy sauce

3 tablespoons lemon or lime juice

1 teaspoon ground red chili or red pepper oil

1 tablespoon miso

¼ cup [Red Onion Pickle](#) (optional)

3 tablespoons oil

1 clove of garlic, minced

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated

1 egg, beaten

*¼ to ½ cup peanuts, roasted and
chopped*

*6 red radishes, cut into slices or
juliennes (optional)*

*1 dozen sprigs of cilantro, leaves
stripped*

1 lemon or lime, cut into wedges



Prepare the Baked Tofu or cut commercial marinated baked tofu into strips. Soak the noodles. Some rice noodles need to be boiled briefly—check the package. In any case the noodles should be firm, not mushy. Rinse in cold water and drain well

before stir-frying. Rinse the bean sprouts to freshen, and drain. Combine half of the sprouts with noodles and green onion. Combine sugar, soy, lemon or lime juice, red chili, and miso (and Red Onion Pickle if you are using it).

Heat the oil, add the tofu, toss, then add garlic and ginger. Cook briefly. Add noodles and the sprouts and green onion mixture. Stir well. Add the liquid mix (along with any reserved liquid from Baked Tofu). Stir to combine. Stir in the egg, and cook briefly. Cover and cook over medium-low heat, stirring every minute or two, until hot.

To serve, put plain sprouts on platter and serve the Pad Thai on top or to the side of the sprouts. Garnish with peanuts, radishes (if using), and cilantro leaves (or

serve them on the side). Serve lemon or lime wedges on the side.

Tofu-Miso Stew

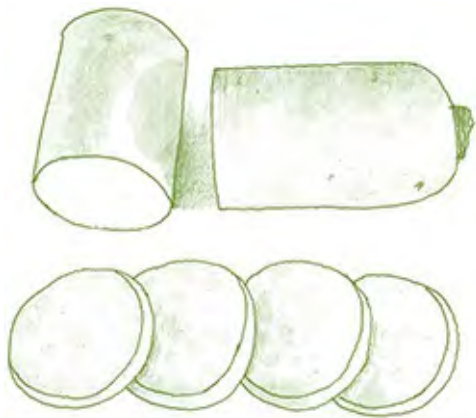
This stew can be a hearty, satisfying, one-bowl meal in itself. Another option would be to prepare it with the [Sage Biscuits](#)—see the variation that follows. Or, it could be served with brown or white rice, or buckwheat noodles. A green salad—or perhaps the [Asian Slaw](#)—would be a refreshing contrast in color, flavor, and texture.

Preparation is in three parts: the stock, the vegetables for stewing, and the sauce. Although it may appear complicated on paper, one step leads to another and the

whole dish is completed in about one hour.

The dark sesame oil called for provides a smoky, nutty flavor, but the dish can be made without it. It is available at natural food stores, Japanese or Chinese markets, and some supermarkets.

Miso is a bean paste (with high protein content) made from soy beans. Excellent as a seasoning, it has been making its appearance in some supermarkets, as well as in Asian food markets and natural food stores.



Note: The amounts for the vegetables are approximate, which gives you the freedom to vary quantities as you find useful.

SERVES 6 PEOPLE

FOR THE STOCK:

1 batch Asian-Style Stock

TO BEGIN THE STEW:

- 2 medium onions, cut in wedges*
- 2 tablespoons dark sesame or soy oil*
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and roll cut into 1-inch pieces*
- 2 celery ribs, cut on the diagonal into ½-inch pieces*
- 1 6-inch piece of gobo (burdock root), scrubbed well and roll cut, or matchsticks (optional)*
- 2 cups fresh mushrooms, halved, quartered, or left whole, if small*
- 1 yam (about 1½ cups), cut into quarters lengthwise and then into ½-inch sections*
- 1 cup turnip or daikon, cut like the yam (optional)*
- 1 medium potato (about 1 cup), scrubbed and cut like the yam*

(optional)

5 cloves of garlic, coarsely minced

1 inch of fresh ginger, finely grated

FOR THE SAUCE:

*¼ cup barley, whole wheat, or white
flour*

5 tablespoons dark sesame oil

2½ cups of the stock, heated

*5 tablespoons red miso mixed with ½
cup stock*

Soy sauce to taste

TO COMPLETE THE STEW:

3 tablespoons dark sesame oil

3 tablespoons light sesame oil

*1 block firm **tofu, pressed, drained,**
and cut into ½-inch cubes*

4 to 6 scallions, including the crisp

green tops, cut into 2-inch lengths
Fresh cilantro
Chinese pepper (Szechuan pepper) or
black pepper

Make up the Asian-Style Stock. After 20 minutes, pull out the dried mushrooms, remove the tough stems (if any), cut the caps into thick slices or quarters, and set them aside.

You needn't use all the vegetables listed, so see what you have on hand or readily available and pick 5 or 6 of the vegetables to use in the dish.

Cook the onions in the sesame oil in a large, heavy-bottomed stew pot over moderate-high heat. Stir frequently and continue cooking until they start to brown, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add the remaining

vegetables (of your choice), garlic, ginger, and the reserved mushrooms (if you were using them) from the stock. Stir to coat evenly with a thin film of oil. Salt lightly, cover with a tight-fitting lid, then reduce the heat to low. Check occasionally to make sure there is enough liquid in the bottom of the pot so that the vegetables do not burn. Add a little stock or water if necessary.

Proceed to make the sauce. Toast the barley flour in a dry saucepan over moderate heat until fragrant, stirring frequently to prevent scorching. Add the sesame oil, stir to blend thoroughly, and then slowly whisk in the stock. Simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally to produce a medium-thick sauce. Remove from heat and add the diluted miso. Season with soy

sauce. Add the sauce to the stewing vegetables and stir gently to combine. The stew may seem somewhat dry at this point, but the vegetables should continue to release their juices as they cook. Return lid to the pot and continue to simmer on low heat.

Heat 2 tablespoons of each oil in a skillet or wok until hot. Add the tofu and sauté over moderate heat until lightly golden. Combine the tofu with the stewing vegetables.

Add the remaining oil to the skillet and sauté the scallions just until their fragrance blooms. Stir them gently into the stew, taking care not to break the tofu. Continue cooking until all the vegetables are tender, perhaps another 10 minutes. Garnish with cilantro and Chinese pepper.

If you can get it, the Chinese pepper is exquisitely aromatic. Otherwise, make use of what you have.

VARIATION

Tofu-Miso Stew with Sage Biscuits: Make sure the completed stew is hot from cooking on top of the stove, place it in a casserole dish, and cover the top with unbaked [Sage Biscuits](#). (You may have extra biscuit dough, which you can bake separately.) Bake for 15 to 20 minutes in a 375° oven until the tops are browned.

Alaskan Tofu

The student who came up with this recipe came down from Alaska, hence the name.

The flavors, however, are closer to Provence.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

FOR THE CASSEROLE:

*1 block of tofu (14 to 18 ounces),
pressed and drained*

1½ cups yellow onions, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup sliced red bell peppers

*2 healthy pinches each of dried
marjoram and thyme or 1
tablespoon or more of chopped
fresh herbs*

*1 to 1½ cups sliced mushrooms, ¼
inch thick*

*1½ cups coarsely grated fontina
cheese*

½ cup pitted and chopped Greek olives
¼ cup minced red onion
1 cup diced green bell pepper

FOR THE SAUCE:

2 tablespoons fruity olive oil
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar or
balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons mirin (Japanese cooking
wine) or white wine
1 heaping tablespoon red miso
1 tablespoon tamari
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon pressed or pounded garlic



Preheat oven to 350°. Cut the tofu into 1-inch cubes, layer in a heatproof casserole or baking pan, then bake for 20 minutes. Drain any liquid released by the baking and set the tofu aside in the casserole.

Leave the oven on.

Sauté the yellow onions in the olive oil over medium-high heat until lightly browned. Add the red peppers, herbs, and mushrooms. Stir to mix, then reduce the heat to low and let the vegetables cook undisturbed until soft.

Combine the sauce ingredients in a small bowl and add to the cooked vegetables. Cook briefly to heat through, then remove the pan from the heat. Toss the cheese, olives, red onions, and green peppers in the casserole with the tofu. Add the cooked vegetables and sauce and stir gently to mix. Cover and return the casserole to the oven to bake until bubbling, about 30 minutes. Serve with brown or white rice.

Mushroom Tofu Stroganoff

This juicy, succulent, satisfying tofu dish is one of our most popular offerings. Serve it over rice or egg noodles.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 block of [Marinated Tofu](#)

1 tablespoon olive oil

5 tablespoons butter

1 large yellow onion, diced

1 pound mushrooms (regular button, or part oyster mushrooms, or fresh shiitake, if available)

2 teaspoons minced garlic

1 cup mushroom or vegetable stock

1 teaspoon paprika

2 teaspoons nutritional yeast

1 pinch dried thyme or 1/2 teaspoon of

fresh thyme, minced

1 tablespoon tamari or soy sauce

Salt

Pepper, freshly ground

½ cup dry sherry or red wine

1½ cups sour cream

Preheat oven to 350°. Drain the marinated tofu on a slanted board while you gather and prepare the rest of the ingredients. Cut the tofu into strips or cubes and bake for 20 minutes or so. Remove and set aside.

Heat 1 tablespoon each olive oil and butter in a 12-inch sauté pan. When the oil/butter is hot, add the onions. Sauté them on a high heat until they begin to brown, then turn down the heat and cook the onions carefully until they begin to caramelize, stirring frequently. This will

take about 15 minutes. They should be soft. While they are cooking, slice the mushrooms about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, chop the garlic, and warm the stock.

Mix the garlic, paprika, nutritional yeast, and a pinch of dried thyme (or the $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of fresh minced thyme) into the cooked onions.

Melt the remaining 4 tablespoons of butter in another skillet and brown the mushrooms, then add the tamari, and season with salt and pepper. Once the mushrooms have browned, add the tofu and the sherry or wine, and let bubble and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes. Add the heated stock to the sour cream. Once the mushrooms have cooked, add the diluted sour cream to the pan. Cook until the sauce is hot and reduced to the thickness

you want. Aim not to boil the sauce for too long or the sour cream will curdle. Check the seasonings and serve over rice or twisted egg noodles.

Tofu with Mushrooms, Carrot, and Spinach

To make this dish you do not really need all the ingredients, but the colors are more decorative if you use them all. Tofu usually comes in two varieties: firm and soft. For this recipe the firm tofu is best, as the soft will crumble and fall apart when stir-fried.



SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 small red onion, sliced

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated

*1 large carrot, cut into ovals or ovals
cut into strips*

Salt

6 to 8 mushrooms, sliced

*½ block firm tofu (about 8 ounces,
plain or seasoned), cut into cubes
6 to 8 ounces spinach or chard, cut
into 1-inch pieces*

Soy sauce

Water

Heat the olive oil in a skillet and then sauté the onion for a couple minutes. Add the garlic, ginger, carrot, and a sprinkling of salt. Reduce heat and continue cooking for another 2 to 3 minutes. Add the mushrooms and stir to combine, then add a couple spoonfuls of water, cover, and cook over low heat until the carrots are soft. Add the tofu and spinach, cover, and cook to heat and wilt the spinach. Season lightly with soy sauce.



Tofu Burritos

Burrito restaurants—*taquerias*—have

become much more common in California than they used to be, so it has encouraged us to make more burritos at home, too. It's also a way I use up leftovers. Often when eating this dish, I feel valued and cared for. Food can do that, yes? As much as I might wish that chips could do that for me, they don't.

MAKES 6 BURRITOS

8 to 10 ounces tofu

½ tablespoon cumin seeds

1 tablespoon oil (or ghee)

1 small to medium yellow onion, diced

1 clove of garlic, minced

1 teaspoon [ground chili](#)

2 stalks of celery, diced

1 small green bell pepper, diced

1 carrot, diced

1 tablespoon parsley, minced

2 teaspoons dried oregano

1 avocado

*6 regular-sized flour tortillas (not the
gigantic ones)*

Salsa

Crumble or mash the tofu and place in a strainer to drain off excess water.

Roast the cumin seed in a dry skillet over moderate heat until it is toasty and fragrant. Grind in a spice mill or an extra electric coffee grinder.

Heat a large skillet, add the oil, and sauté the onion several minutes until it is translucent. Add the ground cumin, garlic, and ground chili, and cook another minute or so. Mix in the celery, bell pepper, carrot, parsley, and oregano. Cover,

reduce the heat to low, and let the vegetables steam until they are tender. If the pan is unduly dry, add a spoonful or two of water to help with the steaming. Once the vegetables are cooked, add the tofu and herbs, and cover to heat.

Cut open the [avocado](#), remove the pit and skin, and cut it into slices.

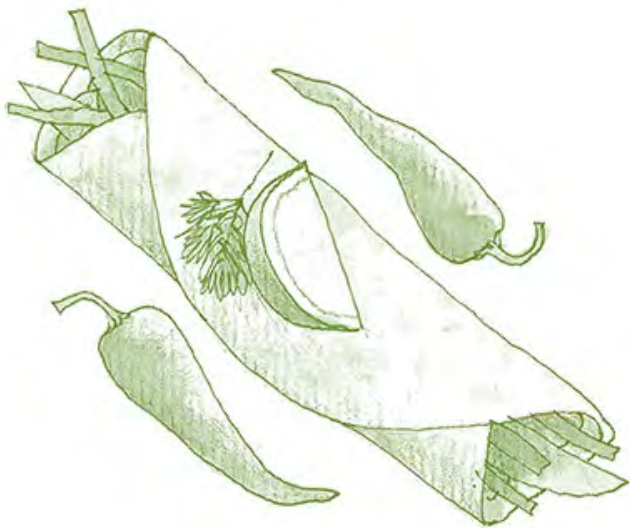
To make the burritos, first heat the tortillas one at a time in a large skillet. Some people like to fry the tortillas in a spot of ghee or oil, but I just heat them in a dry skillet.

Place the warmed burrito on a counter-top and spread a portion of the filling across the middle, leaving the ends clear. Add 2 or 3 slices of avocado and a portion of salsa. If necessary, pick up the near side and far side of the burrito to

help the filling form into a log shape across the middle. Then spread open on the counter, fold in both ends first, then fold the near side over the filling, and continue rolling the burrito over to enclose the filling. Place in a baking pan or another skillet for reheating, if necessary.

VARIATION

Burritos can be an excellent buffet meal. Along with some heated tortillas (a stack in foil in the oven works well), you can have bowls of rice, beans (black bean or pinto), salsa (perhaps both mild and hot), grated cheese, shredded lettuce, fresh cilantro, avocado slices or guacamole, sour cream. People come through and assemble their own burritos.



Other Favorite Entrées



And Still We Cook

Any moment, preparing this meal,
we could be gas thirty thousand
feet in the air, soon
to fall out poisonous on leaf,
frond, and fur. Everything
in sight would cease.

And still we cook,
putting a thousand cherished
dreams on the table, to nourish
and reassure those close and dear.
In this act of cooking, I bid
farewell.

Always I insisted you alone were
to blame.

This last instant my eyes open
and I regard you with all
the tenderness and forgiveness
I withheld for so long.

With no future
we have nothing
to fight about.

May all beings be happy, healthy,
free from suffering!

THIS SECTION, WHICH INCLUDES THOSE recipes that did not fit into the other entrée sections, is comprised of substantial, full-flavored dishes, often with cheese (yes, even the pasta has a cheese garnish). These are not dishes to leave you feeling hungry, except for the most inveterate carnivore. Let's eat!

When I look over the list, I see a wide assortment, including a couple of egg dishes, two polenta dishes, a pasta, a potato casserole, a moussaka, a tortilla casserole, and one of our instant "classics": Cheese and Nut Loaf. I can't help it, I am impressed: we eat well . . . not bad for an isolated Zen mountain meditation center with spa. Yet, the true test is not my rambling thoughts, but your

mouths and stomachs. How is it out there in the wide world?

Scalloped Potatoes with Smoked Cheese

These potatoes can be beautifully complemented by a cool puree of apples and pears or, in the fall, quince. The combination of the smoky flavor, the richness of the cream, and the perfume of the quince, makes for a perfect autumn supper.

SERVES 6 PEOPLE

3 tablespoons butter

1 clove of garlic, crushed under the broad side of a knife

1 cup Gruyère cheese, grated
½ cup smoked Gouda, smoked
mozzarella, or Bruder Basil cheese,
grated

2 pounds russet or red potatoes

Salt

Pepper, freshly grated

2 cups milk

1 cup cream mixed with 1 tablespoon
flour

½ cup bread crumbs

Preheat oven to 375°. Coat the bottom and sides of a shallow 3-quart casserole liberally with a tablespoon or so of the butter. Rub the garlic into the butter, then mince or press it into the melted butter that is poured over the top later. Combine the two cheeses. Wash the potatoes, without

peeling, and slice them into even rounds, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick.

Arrange a layer of potatoes in the casserole, add salt, pepper, and half the cheese. Repeat once more, then finish with a layer of potatoes prettily overlapped on top. Salt and pepper the top layer.

Heat the milk and pour it over the potatoes, followed by the cream and flour mixture. Scatter the bread crumbs evenly over the surface. Melt the remaining butter (with the pressed garlic), and drizzle it over the bread crumbs. If bread crumbs are too much of a chore (as they are for me sometimes) sprinkle on some grated Parmesan cheese in their place. Bake until the cream and milk are absorbed and the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, about $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours.



Cheese and Nut Loaf

A vegetarian meat loaf, this dish is rich and filling. Though well loved even in the summertime, it is even better in cold weather, and its delicious festiveness makes it a dish that often appears at our Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners. Serve with [Nut Loaf Sauce](#), [mushroom gravy](#), or

a béchamel (see the [Fragrant White Sauce](#)).

MAKES 1 9-INCH LOAF

2 tablespoons butter or oil

1 onion, diced in ¼-inch pieces

1½ cups chopped mushrooms

2 cloves of garlic, minced

1 small green pepper, cut into small squares

1 teaspoon each dried thyme, savory, and marjoram

½ teaspoon dried sage

Salt

Pepper, freshly ground

1½ cups cooked brown rice

1½ cups walnuts, ground or finely chopped

½ cup cashews, ground or finely

chopped

4 eggs

1 cup cottage cheese

3/4 pound grated cheese: cheddar,

Gruyère, fontina, smoked;

individually or in combination; no matter which you choose, include some Parmesan!

1/4 cup mixed fresh parsley, oregano, and/or thyme, minced

Preheat oven to 350°. Heat the butter or oil in a skillet and cook the onion until it begins to soften. Add the mushrooms, garlic, green pepper, dried herbs, and a little salt and pepper. Then cook until the mushrooms and peppers are soft. Place the cooked vegetables in a large bowl, add all the remaining ingredients, and mix well.

Check the seasoning. Leave it a bit undersalted at this point because the saltiness of the cheeses will become more apparent later.

Line the bottom and sides of a 9-inch bread pan with two crossed rectangles of baking parchment or foil, leaving about 3 inches overhanging on each side. Liberally butter the lined pan, including the ends. Put the cheese and nut mixture in the pan, rap the pan sharply on a counter once or twice to get rid of air bubbles, then smooth out the top with a spatula or spoon. Fold the overhanging paper over the top.

Bake for about 1 hour, until firm to touch. Remove the pan to a cooling rack and let it sit for 5 to 10 minutes. Pull the paper back from the top of the loaf, and

turn it out onto a serving platter. Garnish with vegetables, or tomatoes, or spoon gravy around the sides. Garnish with perhaps some grated cheese over the top and/or some sprigs of fresh herbs or a sprinkling of minced parsley.



Spring Vegetable Timbale

Fresh vegetables baked in an egg and

cheese custard, timbales have a surprising elegance. They are easy to prepare, yet sustaining and satisfying to eat. This one is bejeweled with many colors, which come into view once the timbale is sliced. A vegetable white sauce makes an excellent accompaniment to the timbale.

Since the timbale is essentially a vegetable custard, it is essential to bake it in a *water bath*, where the baking dishes (or serving dishes) are surrounded by water in a larger pan in the oven. Baking in the water bath gives the timbale a softer smoother texture than baking directly in the oven.

**MAKES 1 9-INCH LOAF OR 4 TO 6
RAMEKINS; SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE**

1 large leek (primarily the white part)

or 1 medium onion

Butter

1/4 cup white wine

1/2 cup mushrooms, thinly sliced

Salt

Pepper

1/2 cup fresh peas

*1/2 cup asparagus tips and thinly sliced
stems*

*1/2 cup carrots, cut into matchsticks,
then cubes*

1/2 bunch spinach (about 1 cup)

1 1/4 cups milk or light cream

3 tablespoons butter

*5 tablespoons dry bread crumbs, made
from white bread*

5 eggs

1/2 teaspoon salt

White pepper

*1 cup grated Gruyère, fontina,
Monterey Jack, or muenster cheese*
*2 to 3 cups white sauce (see [White
Sauce](#) or [Fragrant White Sauce](#))*
Minced parsley or other fresh herb

Preheat oven to 325°. Slice then dice the white part of the leek. Wash the pieces well to rid them of sand and then dry as you would lettuce. Cook slowly in butter until soft. The white wine can be added while the leeks are cooking, and reduced.

Remove the leeks, add another dollop of butter, and cook the mushrooms with a little salt and pepper on low heat until they are soft.

Blanch the peas, asparagus, and carrots in boiling salted water until they are barely cooked—still somewhat firm.

Drain in a strainer set over a pot to save the cooking liquid. Rinse the vegetables in cold water to stop the cooking. Allow to drain, or dry on a towel.

Remove the stems from the spinach, cut the leaves into narrow strips, and blanch them briefly in the boiling salted water. Rinse in cool water and set aside to drain, squeezing most of the moisture out with your hands. The cooking liquid and the juices from the spinach can be saved for stock or soup.

Heat the milk or cream with the butter until it is melted and the milk is quite warm.

Prepare the loaf pan by buttering liberally and then lining with bread crumbs (which are great, but not essential). Alternatively you can use 4 to 6

individual ceramic ramekins or ceramic tea cups (each 3 to 4 ounces). Beat the eggs with the salt and a touch of white pepper and gradually whisk in the milk. Add the vegetables and cheese and any remaining bread crumbs. Taste and adjust salt and pepper if necessary. Pour into the prepared pan. Place the pan (or ceramic ramekins) in a larger baking pan with 1 to 2 inches of near-boiling water. (You can put the pans in the oven and then pour the water in.)

Bake for 50 to 60 minutes or until the timbale is firm in the center and golden on top. The individual ramekins will bake in 10 to 20 minutes less time.

While the timbale is baking prepare one of the white sauces.

Let the timbale rest a few minutes

before removing from the pan or individual dishes. Place whole on a serving platter with sauce underneath. Or slice before serving, put down the sauce first and the slices on top so the colors show. If you are using the individual baking ramekins, you can assemble individual servings. Ladle some sauce onto the plate, loosen the timbale around the edges with a rubber spatula, and ease out (upside down) on top of the sauce. Garnish with parsley or other fresh herb.

VARIATIONS

- Make the timbale with just one vegetable, although the onion is a particularly zesty and flavorful ingredient to include in addition.
- Use other combinations of

vegetables: chard, potatoes, corn, peppers.

- *Chawan mushi*: Leave out the dairy products. Make the custard with eggs and the juices of the cooked vegetables and the cooking liquid. Omit the cheese. Season with soy sauce. Prepare the vegetables as above and follow the same procedure for baking, although it probably will not slice well. It is usually baked (or steamed, actually) in small ceramic or ovenproof cups.

Cheese Quesadillas

I used to make these sometimes when my

daughter Lichen was hungry—the corn flavor in the tortillas is such a great complement to the cheese, and add some cilantro and salsa?—Sweet!

MAKES 1 QUESADILLA

1 corn tortilla

2 ounces cheese (Monterey Jack, provolone, Muenster, Gouda, or whatever you have)

1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, minced or chopped

1 to 2 tablespoons salsa (optional)

4 to 5 slices of avocado (optional)

Heat the tortilla in a dry skillet, slice the cheese, and arrange it on half of the tortilla, along with the cilantro. Fold over the other half of the tortilla and cook over

moderate heat. After 30 seconds or so, turn over the tortilla and cook until the cheese is melted.

Open the quesadilla and put in some salsa and avocado slices, if you like.

Make some more of them.

Burrito with Leftovers

This is such an easy, delicious, and quick way to make a meal. Take some leftover beans, grains, and/or vegetables and add some green chilies or salsa, some avocado or cheese.

MAKES 1 BURRITO

1 cup leftovers (grains, beans, cooked vegetables or vegetable salads,

pastas, potatoes)

1 flour tortilla

*Chili of your choice: fresh green chili,
minced; **dried red chili powder**; or
canned green chilies, diced
(optional)*

Salsa (optional)

Avocado (optional)

*¼ cup grated cheese (any kind,
whatever's handy)*

If there are large pieces of vegetable among the leftovers, you can always chop them up somewhat. Smaller pieces will mix with the other ingredients more easily. Heat up the leftovers you'll be using in a small (preferably nonstick) skillet, covered with a lid, over moderate heat. If the leftovers are dry, add a spoonful or

two of water, so that the ingredients don't stick to the bottom of the pan while they are steam-heating. Depending on what you have around or might like, spice up the leftovers with your choice of chili, salsa, or both.

In a separate skillet you can be heating the tortilla. Sometimes I sprinkle the cheese directly onto the tortilla so that it melts while the tortilla is heating. Then put the tortilla on the counter and place the filling across the middle, leaving a bit of space at both ends. Add the avocado here if you are using it.

Pick up the near and far edge of the tortilla, and rock the ingredients into a log shape across the middle. Then release those edges, and with the tortilla out flat, fold the right and left ends of the tortilla

up and slightly over the filling. Then roll up the burrito starting at the near edge. If you are making several, set them in a baking dish or skillet to reheat, if necessary. Otherwise, arrange on a platter or individual plates for serve-up.

Cheese Enchiladas

Here's a simple, hearty enchilada to go with the Salsa de Mancha Manteles or one of the red chili sauces.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

Salsa de Mancha Manteles or other red chili sauce (see Ancho Chili Sauce, Tomato-Chili Sauce, Dark Tomato Sauce, or Spicy Tomato

Sauce)

½ yellow onion, diced

Olive oil

*8 ounces Monterey Jack cheese,
grated*

*½ cup pitted olives, chopped
(optional)*

*2 ounces canned green chili, minced
(optional)*

12 corn tortillas

Sour cream

Cilantro leaves

Preheat oven to 375°. Prepare the Salsa de Mancha Manteles or one of the red chili sauces.

Sauté the onion in a couple of teaspoons of olive oil, and set aside to cool. Then combine it with the grated cheese and

lightly mix in the olives and/or chilies, if you are using them. Put a half cup or so of the salsa in the bottom of a 9 by 13-inch pan or flat casserole dish, and spread some more on a plate.

Heat each tortilla in a dry skillet or with a touch of olive oil, so that it is pliable. Dip both sides in the sauce on the plate and then arrange a log of cheese filling down the middle of the tortilla. Lift the opposite sides and rock the tortilla to compact the filling. Then roll the near side over the cheese, and continue rolling so the seam is on the bottom. Place on top of the sauce in the baking dish. Repeat with the remaining tortillas, arranging them next to each other in the baking dish. Do not stack them more than one layer deep.

Cover the tops of the enchiladas with

any remaining sauce. Bake to heat for 10 to 12 minutes, or perhaps longer if you made these up well ahead of time and the sauce has completely cooled. Serve garnished with the sour cream and cilantro leaves.

Chili Rellenos Soufflé

This soufflé is good served with a fresh, spicy salsa (the red sauce from the [Tortilla Casserole](#), for instance), or one of the red chili sauces (see [Ancho Chili Sauce](#), [Tomato-Chili Sauce](#), [Dark Tomato Sauce](#), or [Spicy Tomato Sauce](#)). The soufflé itself is elegantly simple. Of all of our soufflé dishes, this one works time and time again. The soufflé is aromatic

with a reddish-golden hue. And the cheese-stuffed chilies hidden on the bottom make a delightful surprise.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

FOR THE CHILIES:

*6 large fresh or canned poblano
(green) chilies*

*1½ to 2 cups coarsely grated
Monterey Jack, cheddar, or
mozzarella cheese*

FOR THE SOUFFLÉ:

2 tablespoons butter

*1 cup minced green onions, both green
and white parts*

¼ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon paprika

1 teaspoon chili powder

2 tablespoons flour

1 cup milk or light cream

*¾ cup grated Monterey Jack, cheddar,
or mozzarella cheese*

3 eggs, separated

*2 to 3 tablespoons fresh herbs
(parsley, cilantro, oregano)*

Red chili sauce (see [Ancho Chili Sauce](#), [Tomato-Chili Sauce](#), [Dark Tomato Sauce](#), or [Spicy Tomato Sauce](#))

Preheat oven to 325°. Roast the fresh chilies directly over a flame until the skin is completely charred. (The canned chilies are ready to be stuffed.) Put them in a covered bowl (or jar with lid) to steam for 15 minutes, then remove the skin,

rinse, and blot dry. (If you are using canned chilies, rinse them well in several changes of water, then dry.) Pull out the seeds by removing the stem with a small knife and pulling the seed cluster free. Stuff the chilies loosely with the cheese, then lay them side by side in a buttered 2-quart casserole.

Melt the butter in a saucepan and cook the green onions over a low heat until they are soft. Add the salt, paprika, chili powder, and flour. Continue to cook over low heat for 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Whisk in the milk gradually and continue to cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce thickens. Remove the pan from the heat, then stir in the cheese. Beat the egg yolks in a small bowl, and gradually whisk in a cup or so of the sauce to warm them. Then

return the egg mixture to the sauce and stir until blended. Taste and adjust with extra salt or chili powder if required.

Beat the egg whites until stiff. Then, fold them into the sauce along with the fresh herbs. Pour the mixture over the chilies and bake until the soufflé is puffed and nearly set, about 40 minutes. Serve immediately—accompanied with one of the red sauces.

Moussaka

This wonderfully aromatic vegetarian interpretation of the traditional Greek eggplant gratin provides a bountiful dinner. Three parts are assembled in the final casserole: the eggplant, a tomato

sauce, and a white sauce. It's worth the effort and nothing is complicated about the preparation.

Note: Start the navy beans for the tomato sauce in advance of the other preparations.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE GENEROUSLY

FOR THE BEANS:

2/3 cup dry navy beans

1 1/2 quarts water

1 bay leaf

3 to 4 sage leaves

4 cloves of garlic

FOR THE EGGPLANT:

2 eggplants (1 to 1 1/4 pounds each or 2 to 2 1/2 pounds total)

Olive oil

Salt

FOR THE TOMATO SAUCE:

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium onion, chopped

2 large cloves of garlic, minced

½ teaspoon dried Greek oregano

½ teaspoon paprika

½ teaspoon cinnamon, freshly ground

1 good pinch ground clove

½ teaspoon salt

½ cup chopped fresh parsley

*2 cups ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded,
and chopped, or canned tomatoes if
good fresh ones aren't available*

¾ cup red wine

FOR THE WHITE SAUCE:

1/3 cup cream

1 1/2 cups milk

1 1/2 tablespoons butter

1 1/2 tablespoons flour

2 egg yolks

1/3 pound ricotta cheese

1 cup grated Parmesan Reggiano

Nutmeg

Salt

White pepper

Start the navy beans cooking in the water with the bay leaf, sage leaves, and 4 cloves of garlic. Cook for 2 to 2 1/2 hours, or pressure-cook for 12 minutes.

Preheat oven to 425°. Slice the eggplant in pieces 1/2 inch thick, layer them in a colander, and salt each layer. Press down the salted slices using a plate with a can

of olive oil on it (or some other arrangement your kitchen provides). Let this sit until the bitter juices pebble the surface of the eggplant—about 30 minutes. Rinse the eggplant and pat it dry. Brush both sides with olive oil and bake until browned. The bottoms will brown first, in 10 to 15 minutes. Turn the pieces over and bake another 10 minutes until the second side is done. Reduce the heat to 375°. Set aside the eggplant. (I also often do this without the preliminary salting—simply slice, oil, and bake.)

Start the tomato sauce. Heat the olive oil and cook the onions and garlic over a medium-low heat until the onions begin to soften. Add the dried herbs, spices, salt, and parsley, and continue to cook until the onions are completely soft. Add the

tomatoes, wine, and cooked beans, bring to a boil, then lower the heat and cook slowly until the sauce is thick. Taste and adjust the seasonings, as you choose.

Combine the milk and cream for the white sauce and heat. Melt the butter in a sauté pan, add the flour, and cook for 5 minutes. Whisk in the warm milk-cream mixture. Stir until the sauce is thickened and cook over low heat for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and whisk it slowly into the egg yolks. Add the ricotta and half the Parmesan cheese. Season carefully to taste with modest amounts of nutmeg, salt, and white pepper.

To assemble the Moussaka, cover the bottom of a 3 quart gratin dish with a shallow layer of the tomato/navy bean

sauce. Over that, set half the eggplant, salt and pepper, and the reserved $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of Parmesan cheese. Distribute the remaining tomato sauce over the entire surface. Cover this with the remaining eggplant, salt, and pepper, then pour the white sauce over the top. Bake for 40 minutes to 1 hour, until the top is set and browned. Remove from the oven and allow to rest 20 minutes before serving.

ABOUT CASSEROLES, STEWS, AND PAN-FRIES

For several weeks when I was first cooking I made casseroles almost every day. It was how Tuesday's dinner became Thursday's lunch. After packing away the

leftovers from dinner, we waited a day before turning them into another meal. As this was such a basic and essential aspect of my culinary training, I continue to be surprised at how little intelligence is applied to using up what is left. Cookbooks continue to describe how to make great dishes (and what—you throw away anything left over?) People at home can imagine microwaving, and that's about it. So this section speaks to this issue: how to make delicious use of what has remained uneaten. (And so much effort, as well as both material and human resources, has gone into making food; just a bit more can bring it to the table a second time.)

While the emphasis here will be *casseroles*—those foods baked in oven-

proof dishes which are also suitable for serving at the table, I would also like to give you a sense of how to turn casseroles into stews or stir-fries. One note here is that this style of cooking has become somewhat dated—it hasn't been fashionable to be *frugal* or *cheap* or even to *notice* how much gets discarded. Ah, well. As using up leftovers is a great love of mine, I will share some of the secrets with those of you who might be interested.

One aspect of any dish is its ingredients and their seasonings, while another is their presentation. The casserole takes care of this second aspect, as the ingredients are assembled in their straight-to-the-table baking dish. One way is to mix everything together, adding moisture if necessary, season, and put in the oiled

dish, pot, or what have you. Smooth out the surface and then apply a topping: a layer of cheese, bread crumbs, chopped nuts or minced parsley—a *shepherd's pie* uses mashed potatoes. The casserole topping creates an element of suspense and, hopefully, delighted anticipation as to what's inside of them. Bake.

A second way is to build up the casserole in layers. Usually grains, beans, pasta, or potatoes are put on the bottom, so that they soak up the flavorful juices from above. On top of these comes a layer of vegetable(s), with possibly soup, sauce, tomatoes, or other liquid added for the necessary moisture. Then it is topped as before. In either case some distinctive flavor elements are necessary to bring aromas into the air, the nose, the heart.

Casseroles dry out as they bake, so having sufficient moisture content is an essential aspect. Again this can come from water, soup, milk, egg with milk, sauces, soups, vegetable juices, or juicy vegetables, especially tomatoes. The casserole has the proper amount of moisture if it is slightly mushy, like (cooked) cereal.

The possibilities for what's inside the casserole are limitless. Grains, beans, and pastas need to be precooked. Potatoes and vegetables may be raw or precooked depending on whether or not the dish will be baking long enough to cook them.

A casserole can be assembled well in advance. If all or most of its ingredients are cold, the casserole will take a good hour at 350° to 375° to get piping hot

through and through. If its ingredients are hot already, the casserole can still easily stand 20 to 30 minutes in the oven. If it is to bake for more than 20 to 30 minutes, make sure that the casserole has plenty of moisture—those crisped noodles are painfully tough to chew. Baking the casserole covered will keep the dish more moist.

Especially if several dishes are being prepared, getting at least one of them into casserole form will allow more time and space to get the other things ready. You are welcome to create other names for your casserole, though it's best to avoid "mystery" or "surprise." "Gratin" is a good one, as well as "stew." For that you will need more liquid—you can't stew something without a flavorful liquid, or a

liquid that becomes flavorful from the stewing.

And I mentioned pan-fries or stir-fries: starting with the vegetables that need cooking, adding the grain, beans, cooked noodles, or leftover vegetables along with liquid—finishing with a garnish. When you use your imagination, you will find various ways of putting the ingredients together to get them to the table.

Face-to-Face Encounter

Cooking is often a struggle. Anyone who has done it, whether professionally or for a family, knows. We always find more last-minute things to do than we

anticipated. Everything is happening at once and needs attention. Will people like it? When I was cooking on a schedule, almost every meal prep went down to the wire: Would we make it? If I had extra time, I would start dreaming up more inventive things to do, including more elaborate garnishes to enhance the dishes. All the available time would be used.

Some days were more stormy than others. In my early years at Tassajara I would often work ten to twelve hours a day, as well as attend morning and evening meditation. For a while we even did “kitchen *zazen*”—an extra period of meditation in midmorning just for the

kitchen staff who had missed the second period of morning meditation in order to prepare breakfast. As the head cook I would work ten, twelve, fourteen days in a row. At least once I worked a month straight through. I didn't know any better.

My mental state was quite volatile at times, and I had little equanimity. I had *gone under* long before, without even realizing I was under. Being overwhelmed had become normal.

When one describes mind as space, then thoughts, feelings, emotions come as clouds, wind, rain, thunder. I didn't experience many sunny days, but one day Suzuki Roshi came to the kitchen and cleared things up. I was deeply involved in a

task at the main work table, struggling to do what I was doing, while also striving to keep track of everything that needed to be done, as well as wrestling with that voice that persists in taunting, “You’re never going to make it.”

In the midst of this raging torrent I became aware of another voice quietly calling my name: “Ed?” At first I thought I might be hearing things. I don’t know how long that voice was saying “Ed?” before I finally realized that Suzuki Roshi was standing in the doorway, calling to me. Although he was calling my name, I wasn’t sure that he meant me, because his tone of voice was calling out to the kindest, most

compassionate person you could ever hope to meet, while I was stormy, dark, and intense.

Whom could he be calling? Several moments of befuddlement followed before I realized he was calling *me*. That good-hearted, spacious-minded person was me, and suddenly a sweet radiance permeated my body. The storm clouds vanished. The air became clear and sparkling as it does after a rain. I knew I was also this person I had never met before as well as the person struggling. He asked me about some mundane matter. Although I was attentive, I was also stupefied.

We never know how or when we will meet ourselves. We are always

on the lookout for someone or something to introduce us to our more inward being, our original, bright, not-mixed-up nature. Though that clear nature can't be sustained—we are sure to have recurrent difficulties—once we know it, then the ongoing daily drama loses some of its luster as the basis for establishing self worth. We realize we don't have to identify with our problems as the limit of who we are.

For the most part I continued being a person possessed—someone who wanted to be known as the best cook, the greatest Zen student. However, no one seemed to be paying much attention, and now it didn't seem quite so important. In some

fundamental way I knew I was OK.

The things that happen to us aren't the end of the world. We don't have to identify with each success or failure in the kitchen (or out) as the basis of our self-esteem. "Big mind," the Roshi would say, "is always with you, always on your side."



Basic Recipe for Casseroles

This outline of the structure and assembly of a casserole will perhaps inspire you with the confidence to give it a try. Use at

least one cup of ingredients, other than liquid, per person.

Start with what you have, work with it—the lists below give you some possibilities of what to look for—and how to proceed.

START WITH:

Cooked grain: rice, cracked or bulgur wheat, barley, noodles, spaghetti, potatoes . . .

Cooked beans: soy, lentils, white, kidney . . .

Cooked or semi-cooked vegetables: onion, celery, carrot, cabbage, eggplant, green beans, asparagus, squashes . . .

ENHANCE WITH FLAVORFUL

INGREDIENTS:

*Sautéed onion, garlic, red or green
bell pepper wake the taste buds
Mushrooms or tomato provide body
and depth of color
Nuts offer rich oily flavors with a
touch of bitter
Sun-dried tomato strips, chopped
olives, capers
Dried fruit*

MOISTEN (AS NEEDED) WITH:

*Water, stock, cooking liquid, soup
Tomato sauce or slices
Milk, sour cream, or yogurt
White sauce or brown sauce
Egg beaten with milk or stock*

SEASON WITH:

Salt

*Pepper, red pepper or chili, minced
green chili*

Dried herbs

Spices

Garlic, ginger, mustard

*Italian seasoning (garlic, thyme,
oregano, possibly fresh basil, and
Parmesan cheese)*

*Mexican seasonings (garlic, cumin
seed, red chili, oregano, and
cilantro)*

*Asian seasonings (garlic, ginger,
green onion, red pepper, dark
sesame oil, and cilantro)*

*Middle-Eastern seasonings (garlic,
cumin seed, coriander, and fresh
mint)*

AND POSSIBLY TOP WITH:

Grated cheese

Bread crumbs

Ricotta cheese (flavored with salt and pepper, lemon, and/or herbs)

Chopped nuts



Preheat oven to 350° to 375°. See what you have available to start with—and sense which ingredients you can imagine will work well together. Consider using one or more of the *flavorful* ingredients, especially if the original dishes were fairly plain. Envision what you might use for added moisture, possibly a leftover soup or sauce. Then invite a seasoning combination to come to mind, possibly one of the recognizable (traditional) combinations.

Decide if you want to mix the liquid together with the assembled ingredients until they are the consistency of cooked cereal, or pour the liquid over the top of the layered ingredients: layering will give you a somewhat more elegant presentation where you season the different layers

differently and the dish has a kind of order to it. Mixing together is probably more useful when there is a grain, pasta, or potato as the primary ingredient, which will have just a few additions along with the sauce.

Once you settle on the structure and the seasoning, you can fill in the blanks: sautéing onions and garlic, completing the seasoning, assembling the ingredients, whatever needs to be done.

Top with grated cheese, bread crumbs, chopped nuts. Bake, covered, for 1 hour if the ingredients were cold, or for 20 to 30 minutes, or longer, if the ingredients were heated.

If topped with cheese, remove the lid for the final 5 or 10 minutes to brown slightly. The casserole may be removed

from the oven 5 to 10 minutes before serving time—the dish will cool slightly while its contents remain hot.

Lentils with Onions and Cheese

These lentils are a baked bean dish exemplifying the concept of “casserole” or “stew.” As this recipe is so basic, you can check around to see what other vegetables or grains might be added.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

2 onions, sliced or diced

1 tablespoon olive oil

Salt

Pepper

Thyme and/or oregano

3 to 4 cups cooked lentils

Water or stock (optional)

4 ounces cheddar cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 350°. Sauté the onions for several minutes until they are transparent, and season moderately with the salt and pepper, thyme and oregano. Continue to cook another minute before combining with the lentils, and then bring up the seasoning if necessary. Rinse out the pan used for frying the onions with a small amount of water and add it to the beans. The dish needs to be well-moistened to prevent drying out while baking, so add water or stock if necessary.

Put the beans in an oiled casserole dish and top with cheese. If the beans were

cold, bake for 1 hour, covered except for the last 5 to 10 minutes. If the beans were hot, they may be baked for 15 to 20 minutes—which means that heating the lentils on the stove before baking will shorten the overall cooking time.

VARIATIONS

- Dice a red or green pepper and sauté with the onion. Minced garlic is another possibility.
- Add minced lemon peel and/or lemon juice ($\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 lemon).
- Add celery, carrot, mushrooms, and/or greens. Slice and sauté with the onions.
- Use other kinds of cheese instead of cheddar.
- Add a layer of sliced tomatoes or

seasoned tomato sauce on top of the bean and onion mixture. Top with cheese.

- Instead of lentils, use other precooked beans, cooked barley, rice, bulgur, or add potatoes, green beans, asparagus, eggplant, summer or winter squash. (The vegetables need to be precooked—possibly leftovers.) Bake for about 30 minutes.
- For *Onion Lasagna* sauté 8 to 10 small to medium onions, sliced. Omit the beans and, after seasoning the onions, layer them into the casserole with sliced tomatoes and cheese. Finish on top with a layer of more tomato and cheese. Bake 15 to 30 minutes to

heat thoroughly or longer if the ingredients have cooled.

Bulgur Pilaf

Bulgur lends itself well to the flavors of dried fruit and nuts. Again this exemplifies how a casserole may be constructed, using bulgur as the main ingredient. Keeping it fairly simple, the nutty, earthy bulgur is deepened with the sautéed onion and celery, and enhanced with the sweet summery fruit of raisin along with the slightly bitter oily nuts.

SERVES 3 TO 4 PEOPLE

2 to 3 cups cooked bulgur (a cup or so dry)

1 onion, diced

*1 to 2 stalks of celery, sliced thinly or
diced*

1 tablespoon olive oil

*½ cup lightly roasted nuts (almonds,
walnuts, peanuts or cashews),
coarsely chopped*

½ cup raisins

Water or stock

*Salt, pepper, thyme, coriander, and/or
cloves (optional)*

*2 to 3 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
and/or 1 to 2 tablespoons lemon
juice (optional)*

Bread crumbs or chopped nuts

Parsley or cilantro, chiffonade

Preheat oven to 350°. Cook the bulgur wheat if it is not something you have left

over. Sauté the onion and celery in the olive oil for 3 to 4 minutes and add them to the bulgur wheat, along with the nuts and raisins. Add liquid to give the mixture a moist consistency. Season carefully to taste, being especially moderate with the powdered cloves. The ginger and/ or lemon will brighten the dish considerably. Put in greased casserole and top with the bread crumbs or nuts. Bake up to 1 hour to heat thoroughly. Serve garnished with the parsley or cilantro chiffonade.

VARIATIONS

- In place of bulgur, use precooked cracked wheat, white or brown rice, millet, couscous, or even some leftover cereal.
- In addition to, or in place of, the

vegetables that are listed, use green pepper, carrot, green onion, peas, apple; sliced dates or dried apricots in place of raisins.

- Alternate seasonings are thyme, sage, garlic, rosemary, cinnamon (light). Or ginger and ground coriander seed.
- Topping may be omitted, or it may be sliced oranges.
- Try sweet potato with ingredients listed, or with pineapple, nuts, cinnamon, lemon peel.
- With regular potatoes, omit sweet items and use onion, peas, celery, and nuts.

Eggplant–Tomato Sauce

Casserole

Call it Moussaka if that sounds better! Again a dish that can be quite simple or one that can be used to incorporate various leftovers. See what you have available and dream up what to do.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

*2 cups Herbed Tomato Sauce or
Everyday Tomato Sauce*

1 eggplant

3 to 4 zucchini

3 to 4 tablespoons olive oil

½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 375°. Make the tomato sauce first, following one of the recipes listed.

Cut the stem off of the eggplant, along with a thin piece of skin from the opposite end. Then slice into pieces about 1 by ½ by 2 inches. Cut the zucchini into quarters lengthwise and then about 2 inch lengths. Aim to make the pieces of each vegetable similar in size without getting too fussy.

Start the eggplant pieces sautéing in olive oil for 4 to 5 minutes. Then add the zucchini and sauté for another 3 to 4 minutes. Add the tomato sauce and simmer until the eggplant is completely tender.

Place in greased casserole. Top with the grated cheese. If the ingredients are still hot, bake for 10 to 12 minutes to melt the cheese. If the ingredients are cooled down, cover and bake for 1 hour (removing the cover the last few minutes). May be served hot or cold.



VARIATIONS

- Instead of zucchini, use other summer squashes, carrots, green beans, cabbage or sweet corn kernels. Or use leftovers!
- Add mushrooms to the tomato sauce.
- Use other (or additional) seasonings: garlic, thyme, and tarragon; parsley, cumin, and

oregano.

- Use other cheeses: cheddar, Monterey Jack, Edam, Gouda, cottage, ricotta, etc.
- Instead of, or in addition to, eggplant and zucchini, use noodles, potatoes, grains, beans, or some of that stale bread cut into cubes and toasted lightly in butter and garlic.

Poached Egg Casserole

This casserole is very similar to the preceding recipe—vegetables with tomato—but with the delightful addition of eggs.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 onion, sliced

2 tablespoons olive oil

*2 green or red bell peppers, medium
diced*

*½ head of cabbage, cut into thin
shreds*

3 cloves of garlic, minced

*3 to 4 tomatoes, peeled, cut into
chunks or wedges, or 1 cup tomato
sauce*

Salt

Pepper

2 tablespoons parsley, minced

½ teaspoon dried thyme

4 to 6 eggs

½ cup grated cheddar cheese

Preheat oven to 375°. Start the onions frying in the olive oil, then add the

peppers and cabbage. When these have softened, add the garlic and tomatoes and cover; cook gently for another couple of minutes. Season with salt and pepper, parsley and thyme, and place in a greased casserole.

Make 4 to 6 hollows in the surface and break an egg into each. Sprinkle with the grated cheese—design the cheese around the eggs if you'd like—and bake until the eggs set, about 10 to 15 minutes. Be sure that the other ingredients are hot before baking, since they won't heat through in the time it takes for the eggs to set.

If you make this casserole ahead of time, heat, covered, in the oven for 30 to 40 minutes before adding the eggs and cheese. Then bake another 10 to 15 minutes, as above.

VARIATIONS

- Use other vegetables instead of, or in addition to, the onions, peppers, and cabbage: green beans, peas, carrots, asparagus, greens. Cut them finely and add to the sauté.
- Tomato sauce can be used instead of tomatoes.
- The eggs could go in hollows of precooked spaghetti, noodles, grains, beans. (Remember to have plenty of moisture when you're baking!)



Rice with Cheese and Milk

Macaroni and cheese, with rice instead.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

2 cups milk

2 cups cooked rice

Salt

Pepper

2 cups cheddar cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 375°. Heat the milk to scalding and mix it with the rice. Season with the salt and pepper and then mix in half of the grated cheese. Place in a greased casserole, top with the remaining cheese, and bake, covered, for 35 to 40 minutes, then bake uncovered for another 5 to 10 minutes.

VARIATIONS

- Use macaroni (or other pasta) in place of the rice!

- Use 1½ cups milk and 1½ cups cooked cereal in place of the 2 cups milk.
- Add a layer of vegetables on top of the rice and milk before the cheese is added: sautéed onions and mushrooms, leftover vegetables.
- Use part milk and part ricotta cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, sour cream, cream cheese or cream.
- Season with garlic, parsley, marjoram, basil, thyme, or oregano, or with dry mustard or nutmeg.
- Rice absorbs a lot of liquid. If using something which does not absorb as much liquid, use less

milk.

- Sliced raw potatoes can be used. Use one medium potato per person. Slice and layer in casserole with sautéed onion and some of the grated cheese, sprinkling salt and pepper on each layer. Pour on the heated milk and top with remainder of the cheese. The milk should just cover the potatoes. Bake, covered, at 400° for 40 minutes—a form of scalloped potatoes.

Sauced Potato Gratin

Smooth, creamy feeling with the sauce and cheese blanketing the potatoes—definitely

a comfort food.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

4 medium potatoes

2 onions

3 cups seasoned [White Sauce](#), warmed

½ cup grated Monterey Jack cheese

Green onion, sliced thinly

Preheat oven to 375°. Cut the potatoes into thin rounds and the onions into thin slices. Place in buttered gratin dish (or casserole) and pour the (warm) white sauce over. Cover and bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour, or until the potatoes are tender. Uncover, add the cheese, and bake 5 minutes longer. Sprinkle with sliced green onion and serve.

VARIATIONS

- Use a brown sauce or nut sauce instead of the white sauce.
- Garnish with chopped, pitted olives.
- Sprinkle with paprika.
- Instead of raw potato, use mashed potato, sweet potato, cooked grains, beans, noodles, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, carrots, green beans, asparagus, mushrooms. If using spinach or other greens, wilt them in butter first, then cut finely and place in casserole with the onions. Most vegetables, other than (the raw) potatoes, will only need to bake for about 30 minutes.

Bulgur-Tahini Casserole

This recipe is quite similar to [A Basic Quiche](#), except that there is less egg and milk in proportion to the other ingredients. Therefore, the egg and milk make an inconspicuous background. Adding one or two more eggs and two or three times as much milk will make a more quiche-like casserole (without the crust).

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

- 3 cups cooked bulgur (about 1 cup dry) 1 onion, diced*
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced*
- 1 tablespoon olive oil*
- 1/3 cup tahini or peanut butter*
- 1/2 teaspoon salt*
- 2 eggs, beaten*

¼ cup milk

Preheat oven to 350°. Cook the bulgur if it is dry to start with—or seek out another cooked grain to use. Sauté the onion with the garlic until translucent—or longer, until browned. Mix onions with the remaining ingredients and put in a buttered casserole. If the wheat was hot to start with, bake for 20 minutes. If it was cold, bake 50 minutes to 1 hour or until it is thoroughly heated and the eggs have thickened.

VARIATIONS

- Add grated cheese, mixed in or on top.
- Use stock or tomato juice instead of the milk.

- Omit the eggs and add more liquid.
- Use grated potato, grated carrot, diced onion. Check after 30 minutes of baking.
- Instead of or in addition to onion, use leeks, green peppers, peas, tomatoes, or celery and carrot. Add these vegetables either finely cut (grated) or sautéed first.
- Instead of bulgur, use cooked rice, barley, millet, buckwheat, cooked beans, mashed potatoes, or a vegetable: asparagus, green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, or chard.

Sautéed Cabbage “Lasagna”

While noodles are more commonly layered with tomato and dairy in lasagna, cabbage makes an excellent alternative—lower carbohydrates and hearty flavors. Again, you'll see that other ingredients could also be utilized, for instances you can use eggplant, zucchini, and red peppers and call it Moussaka.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 small head of cabbage (about 1 pound), cut into narrow strips

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon butter

3 cloves of garlic, minced

Salt

Pepper

2 cups ricotta cheese

3 eggs

½ cup milk

1 batch [Everyday Tomato Sauce](#)

*3 ounces cheese, grated (about 1 cup),
take your pick*

2 tablespoons parsley, minced

Preheat oven to 375°. Sauté the cabbage in the oil and butter for several minutes. Add garlic along with salt and pepper. Cook until the cabbage is limp. (Maybe sprinkle on a little white wine and cover to help it along.)

Mix ricotta with eggs and milk until creamy. Season with salt and pepper to taste (garlic powder optional). Make up the [Everyday Tomato Sauce](#).

Layer the casserole dish first with cabbage, then the ricotta mixture, then tomato sauce. Usually there is enough to

do this 3 times, ending with the tomato sauce. Bake for about 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending how hot the ingredients are to start with. Then sprinkle on the grated cheese (mozzarella, cheddar, Parmesan—I also like provolone) and bake for an additional 5 minutes.

VARIATIONS

- Instead of ricotta cheese, use cottage cheese or grated cheese, with or without the egg and milk. (The tomato sauce should provide plenty of liquid).
- Use sliced tomatoes instead of tomato sauce. Cabbage, grated cheddar, sliced tomatoes, and seasoning is simple and delicious—though you could season the

cabbage with one or more of the dried herbs appearing in tomato sauce: thyme, oregano, basil.

- Add layers of vegetables, especially if using sliced tomatoes instead of tomato sauce: sautéed onions, sliced mushrooms. Layer on top of the cabbage or in between layers of cabbage.
- Roast slices of eggplant, along with zucchini, and red pepper to layer in place of the cabbage—moussaka.
- Instead of cabbage, use cauliflower leaves, collard greens, spinach, chard, eggplant, summer squashes, broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, green beans. Cook the tougher greens in boiling water for

2 to 3 minutes rather than sautéing.

- Instead of cabbage, use lasagna noodles or other pasta. Cook them until just tender and toss with olive oil before completing dish.



The Trouble with Thinking

During a week-long period of intensive meditation practice, I had my first opportunity to meet with Suzuki Roshi in a formal interview. I was making every effort to practice meditation the way I thought it was supposed to be practiced. I wanted something to show for my effort. Perhaps I could attain a state of “not-thinking” or a “calm mind.” Perhaps I could attain “true realization.” These sorts of attainments would certainly be better than making a lot of money or gaining other kinds of success or fame, wouldn’t they? Well, I thought so.

The problem was I wasn't getting anywhere. Try as I might to concentrate on my breathing, I found I was almost constantly engaged in thinking: planning, remembering, evaluating, assessing, a perpetual sorting out of how I am doing, where I am now, where I need to get to, how to get there.

So when I went to speak with Suzuki Roshi I did not have any *thing* to show for my efforts. I felt humbled and somewhat frustrated and discouraged. What would the master think of this poor excuse for a Zen student? I wanted him to like me, but I didn't see how he could. I certainly didn't. There wasn't much to like as far as I could tell. I entered his cabin

and performed the required half-prostration bows, not directly to him, but toward the altar with its Buddha image, candle, and burning incense.

I bowed forward, kneeled, touched my head and forearms to the floor, and then raised my hands, palms upward. He corrected the way I was positioning my hands during the prostration: “When you lift your hands from the floor, hold them flat,” he explained, gesturing, “as though you were lifting the feet of the Buddha. When you cup them like that, it feels as though you are trying to grasp something and being greedy.” His voice was pleasant and matter-of-fact.

OK, I thought, I can do that. It was

a relief to have something to work on, something to keep in mind, and he had shown an interest in my practice! Still I felt flustered and not particularly comfortable in his presence.

Then I sat down on the cushion opposite him, crossed my legs, and adjusted my posture. I didn't know what to expect, or what was expected of me, so I just sat there quietly facing him. The world turned. I don't think he had the slightest thought about my attainment or lack thereof. He seemed contained, quiet, and alert in repose. I began to relax. Finally after a few minutes, he inquired, "How's your meditation?"

"Not so good," I replied.

“What’s not so good?” he asked.

“I can’t stop thinking,” I lamented.

“Is there some problem with thinking?” he questioned, and right at that moment when I looked directly for the problem, I couldn’t actually find it. I felt relieved and lightened, but I wasn’t ready to admit I couldn’t find the problem. Besides, didn’t he and the other teachers keep instructing us to follow the breath rather than think?

“When you sit zazen, you are not supposed to think,” I explained.

“It’s pretty normal to think,” he stated, “don’t you think?” His way of speaking was so innocent of attack: not contradicting, not belittling, not finding fault.

I had to admit that thinking was pretty normal. “But we’re not supposed to think, are we?”

“The nature of mind is to think,” Roshi explained. “The point of our practice is to not be caught by our thinking. If you continue to practice, your thinking will naturally change. Sometimes it will stop. Your thinking will take care of itself.”

Reassured I continued to sit quietly, again waiting to see what would happen. The room was still and peaceful. After awhile the Roshi’s voice was there again. “What is it you want most of all?” he asked.

A word came to me instantly, but I hesitated, and stopped to think it

over. Was it really the answer, really what I wanted? Was it right? Was it good enough? Nothing else came to mind, so at last I voiced it: “The Truth.”

I felt awkward saying it, uneasy admitting it, but there it was, “the Truth.” Yet the Roshi’s silence, the silence of the room swallowed it up. There was a lot of room to grow in that silence.

After a while he said, “Please continue your practice.” We bowed to each other. The interview was over.

I left feeling relieved, overjoyed, and eager to go back to sitting meditation. I was relieved that my teacher had not criticized me or

condemned me for what I viewed as my poor practice; overjoyed that he actually seemed to appreciate my efforts; eager and willing to return to the meditation hall and try some more.

Meals I prepare do not always come out as well as I would like, and I can be critical or judgmental but also I know not to worry too much about my thinking. I can appreciate my ongoing effort and return to the kitchen. My wish to nourish and feed myself and others sustains me.

If you have a similar wish to offer sustenance, I hope you will find ways to act on it. What you think one way or another about being a good cook or a bad one is of little concern.

Once you acknowledge it, your wish
will fulfill itself.



Cabbage Lasagna

I do not recall where I originally got the idea for this, but I make it periodically with ingredients I happen to have around. It is easy to prepare and surprisingly delicious. Most recently, I made this with some leftover Ancho Chili Sauce and two cheeses my daughter Lichen had brought back from France: Le Frommage Basque and Chaource. Fantastique! Here's the picture—another chance to feel your way along.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 small head of cabbage (about 1 pound)

2 quarts water

1 teaspoon salt

1 pound fresh tomatoes or 2 cups

Herbed Tomato Sauce or a

combination of the two
6 ounces cheese (something good for
melting)
1/3 cup Asiago or Parmesan cheese,
grated
1 tablespoon fresh thyme or parsley,
minced

IF USING FRESH TOMATOES:

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
2 cloves of garlic, minced
Salt
Pepper
1 teaspoon herbes de Provence or 1/2
teaspoon dried thyme with 1/2
teaspoon dried basil

Preheat the oven to 375°. Start the water boiling. Cut the core out of the cabbage

and peel off the individual leaves. If they do not come loose readily, put the head of cabbage in your heating water for a minute or so, then remove to a bowl where it can drain and you can pull off the leaves. Do this as necessary. The alternative is to cut the cabbage lengthwise into quarters, and then cut out the core. This is easier, but results in the drawback of many more smaller pieces of cabbage.

Once all the individual leaves have been removed, salt the water lightly—using perhaps a teaspoon's worth—and blanch 6 or 8 leaves at a time for about 1 minute. Remove with tongs or a strainer, and drain. Set aside. (It will be a bit more lasagna-like if you cut the cabbage into inch-wide strips.)

If using fresh tomatoes, cut them

crosswise into slices and season them with the balsamic vinegar, garlic, salt, pepper, and herbs. (The Herbed Tomato Sauce will already be seasoned.) Grate the cheese (or possibly slice it). I tend to have provolone, Gouda, goat, feta, or possibly Monterey Jack around. Perhaps you prefer mozzarella, fontina, Gruyère, Emmenthaler, or cheddar.

Use a 2-quart casserole if you have one, or a 9 by 13 by 2-inch baking pan, preferably glass-bottomed, as aluminum will react with the cabbage and the tomato. Line the bottom of the pan with a layer of cabbage and distribute a few tomato slices or about $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of sauce on top of the cabbage—you will not be covering the cabbage completely. Then distribute about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the cheese—again

you will not be making a complete layer. Repeat the layering: cabbage, tomato, cheese, until all the ingredients are used. Distribute the Asiago or Parmesan cheese on the top. Bake uncovered for about 30 minutes until it is bubbling hot. Remove and garnish with the thyme or parsley.

Almost Soufflé

Here is a casserole made just with moistening. Though nearly a soufflé, it is much easier to make. The Almost Soufflé may be served with a sauce: tomato, mushroom, white, or brown; or a salsa or relish.

SERVES 6 PEOPLE

6 eggs

1 cup milk

1 tablespoon flour

¼ teaspoon salt

Pepper

Preheat oven to 350°. Separate the eggs. Whip the whites until they are stiff. Beat the yolks with the milk, flour, salt, and pepper. Fold in the whites, and turn into a greased pie tin or casserole dish. Bake until the eggs are set, about 20 minutes.

VARIATIONS

- Add ½ cup or more grated cheese to the yolks.
- Layer the bottom of the casserole with sautéed vegetables: mushrooms, zucchini, broccoli,

others. I imagine sautéed red peppers would be a delicious *find*.

- Season with basil, thyme, or tarragon.
- Sweeten with strawberry preserves. (Hold the broccoli and other vegetables . . . or would that be a new taste sensation?)

Tortilla Casserole

I do not know if this is really a genuine Mexican recipe, but it is hot and colorful—and delightfully extravagant, not dollar-wise, but bounteous-feeling. A red sauce, a green sauce, beans, cheese, tortillas, and chilies assemble in a kind of Dagwood sandwich.

Both the beans and the red sauce call for roasted cumin seeds and roasted oregano, so you can roast them at the same time, but note, the cumin gets started before adding the oregano.

Serrano chilies are fairly small and cylindrical (about 1½ to 2 inches long and ⅜ inch in diameter). The seeds are the hottest part, so be careful while handling (some people use rubber gloves). If you want *hot*, leave the seeds in.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

FOR THE BEANS:

*½ cup dry black beans or pinto beans
or 2 cups cooked beans*

2 cups water

Salt

¼ teaspoon cumin seed, roasted and ground

¼ teaspoon oregano, roasted

½ teaspoon paprika

¼ teaspoon canned chipotle peppers, finely minced, or garlic and red pepper

FOR THE RED SAUCE:

1 medium yellow onion, sliced

2 cloves of garlic, minced

Oil

1 or 2 serrano chilies, seeded, coarsely minced, or red or cayenne pepper

2½ cups tomatoes, quartered, or 1 28-ounce can of tomatoes, unseasoned

½ teaspoon cumin seed, roasted and ground

½ teaspoon oregano, roasted and powdered

Salt

Pepper

FOR THE GREEN SAUCE:

1½ cups tomatillos

1 medium red onion, sliced

1 clove of garlic, coarsely minced

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 serrano chili, seeded and coarsely minced

4 to 5 sprigs cilantro leaves, minced

⅓ cup water (cooking liquid from the tomatillos)

Salt

FOR ASSEMBLING:

12 corn tortillas

Corn oil

2 cups mild cheddar, grated

1 cup Monterey Jack cheese, grated

½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated

1 4-ounce can green chilies, diced

1 cup sour cream or crème fraîche

12 sprigs of cilantro

As always, you might check your refrigerator to see if you have any leftover Black Beans with Garlic and Cumin or some Refried Pinto Beans. Otherwise sort through the beans and remove any small stones or foreign matter. Rinse them off and cook with the water for 2 hours, or pressure-cook at 15 pounds pressure for 25 minutes. Drain and reserve excess water. Partially mash the beans, adding the reserved water as needed to make the

beans creamy. Salt to taste and add the seasonings. Although there is no real substitute for chipotle peppers, you can try some garlic or red pepper to make the beans spicier.

For the red sauce, sauté the onions and garlic in the oil for a few minutes. Add the chilies and continue frying for a couple of minutes. Add the tomatoes and seasonings. Simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. If you want a smoother sauce, it can be sieved or blended.

For the green sauce, remove the husks from the tomatillos and cover with water. Simmer until soft but not mushy—8 to 10 minutes. Drain off and reserve the cooking liquid. Sauté the onions and garlic for a few minutes, and then continue sautéing with the chilies. Add the cooked

tomatillos, the cilantro, cooking liquid (as needed), and salt. Simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Blend or sieve for a smoother sauce. (You can also buy a green taco sauce made with tomatillos if you cannot get fresh tomatillos. It is also sometimes possible to buy “peeled green tomatoes” which are already-cooked tomatillos.)

Preheat oven to 350°. Fry the tortillas in hot oil very briefly, 5 to 10 seconds a side. Drain on paper towels. Oil the casserole dish and assemble as follows (read the list from the bottom up—starting with “4 tortillas” and ending with “½ the cheddar”):

½ the cheddar

½ the red sauce

½ the beans

4 tortillas

Monterey Jack and Parmesan cheese

All the green sauce

Green chilies

4 tortillas

½ the cheddar

½ the red sauce

½ the beans

4 tortillas

Bake for about 30 minutes if the sauces are warm; longer, if they are cold. It does not need more cooking, just thorough heating. Put the sour cream or crème fraîche on top at serving time. And garnish with some whole cilantro leaves.

Polenta and Mushroom Gratin

Polenta must be one of the most delicious ways of eating corn. Add mushrooms and cheese, and the corn is raised to even greater heights.



This is a four-part recipe, but the procedures are straightforward, the results gratifying. First, the polenta is cooked, and while it cools and sets, the mushrooms are sliced and cooked. Their liquid, if any, is reserved for the third

part, the cream sauce. The fourth step is assembling the gratin; this can be done hours in advance of the final baking.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

FOR THE POLENTA:

1 tablespoon butter

5 cups boiling water with a pinch or two of salt

1½ cups coarse cornmeal

FOR THE MUSHROOMS:

2 tablespoons each butter and olive oil

1 pound mushrooms, sliced ¼ inch thick

½ ounce dried Italian, Japanese, or Chinese mushrooms, soaked and sliced (optional)

2 cloves of garlic, minced

Salt

Pepper, freshly grated

*1½ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves,
chopped, or ½ teaspoon dried thyme*

FOR THE CREAM SAUCE:

2 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons flour

*Mushroom juices, from above, plus
enough milk or light cream to make
2 cups*

Salt

Pepper, freshly grated

Nutmeg, freshly ground

FOR ASSEMBLY:

*½ cup Parmesan cheese, freshly
grated*

*1 cup fontina, Monterey Jack, or Swiss
cheese, grated*

*Fresh parsley, chervil, or marjoram
and thyme, minced*

Preheat oven to 350°. Melt the butter in the boiling water, then whisk in the cornmeal. Lower the heat and cook for 5 to 8 minutes, stirring continually. The mixture will be very thick. Pour the polenta into an ungreased bread pan or cake tin, smooth the top, and then set aside to cool. (For this style of polenta I do not find it crucial to do a lengthy cooking.)

Heat the butter and olive oil in a skillet until hot. Add the mushrooms, toss to coat, then reduce the heat. If dried mushrooms—soaked and sliced—are being used, they can be added at this time. Add the

garlic, salt, pepper, and thyme. Cook until the mushrooms release their juices. Drain and reserve the juice, and set the mushrooms aside.

Melt the butter for the cream sauce in a saucepan over low heat. Add the flour and cook for about 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and whisk in the liquid. Then continue to cook, stirring, until the sauce thickens. Season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Cook over low heat for 10 minutes, stirring. Be moderate with the amount of nutmeg; the flavor can be overwhelming.

Lightly oil a baking dish (8-inch baking dish for a 2-layer gratin or a large, flat baking dish for a single layer gratin). Turn out the polenta and slice it into pieces $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. Pour a little cream sauce

in the bottom of the baking dish and arrange half the polenta slices on top. Over this distribute half the mushrooms, half the Parmesan and fontina cheese, a good grinding of pepper and half the remaining sauce. Layer in the rest of the polenta and the remaining ingredients in the same order, ending with the sauce. Cover and bake for 30 minutes, or until the gratin is bubbling hot. It will take longer if the ingredients have all cooled. Remove the lid and bake another 5 minutes. Serve with a fresh green garnish.

Polenta-Eggplant Gratin

I have always found this dish exciting and stimulating, especially with a good Pinot

Noir. The polenta provides a welcome earthiness in contrast to the herbaceous qualities of the eggplant and tomato sauce and the richness of the cheese. There are several parts to the recipe, but nothing very mysterious or complex. It takes a while, but it is time giving life, time well offered.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

FOR THE POLENTA:

1 cup coarse cornmeal (polenta)

3½ cups water

1 pinch of salt

*⅓ cup fontina, Monterey Jack, or
Swiss cheese, grated*

*⅙ cup smoked cheese, grated (or more
of above)*

1 to 2 tablespoons butter

FOR THE TOMATO SAUCE:

1 medium red onion, diced

olive oil for frying

2 cloves of garlic, pressed or minced

½ cup red wine

*2 16-ounce cans of tomatoes, chunked
or chopped with liquid added back*

Salt

Pepper

2 tablespoons fresh basil, chiffonade

FOR THE EGGPLANT:

*1 eggplant, cut into fork-size chunks,
or 4 Japanese eggplants, cut into ¾-
inch-thick slices*

Olive oil

Salt

Oregano, dried or fresh

FOR ASSEMBLY:

*1 cup fontina, Monterey Jack, or Swiss
cheese, grated*

*½ cup Parmesan, Asiago, or Romano
cheese, grated*

Preheat oven to 350°. Bring the salted water to a boil and whisk in the corn meal. Once it returns to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 5 to 8 minutes, stirring. The mixture will be quite thick. Stir in the grated cheeses and butter. (This is a good use for pieces of dried cheese that are no longer good for eating fresh. Some smoked cheese adds a marvelous touch here, but it is too strong to use straight.) Pour out into a pan about 1 inch

thick and cool completely.



For the tomato sauce, sauté the onions in the olive oil until soft. Add the garlic and continue cooking a couple minutes.

Add the red wine and stew a few minutes while stirring. Add the tomatoes and simmer for a good while: 12 to 15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Stir in the fresh basil.

Brush the eggplant slices with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and oregano. Bake until soft, about 45 to 50 minutes. Turn the slices over after about 25 minutes.

Cut the cooled polenta into chunks. They can be whatever size you want. Assemble the ingredients in a large casserole in layers: sauce, polenta, eggplant, cheese, sauce, polenta, eggplant, sauce, cheese; or a more simple arrangement: sauce, polenta, cheese, eggplant, sauce, cheese. Bake covered until everything is hot, about 45 minutes. Uncover the last 5 minutes to brown the

top slightly.

Polenta Mexicana

My friend Dan Welch started the Spaghetti Western Café when he lived in Santa Fe. I am uncertain whether or not it had a specific location, but for a while his passionate energy went into Italo-Ranchero cooking. He knows about empowering himself to find his own way.

Polenta Mexicana is clearly in that vein—something Italian converted to Mexican. I encourage you to check it out. For this dish, I pour the cooked polenta into a muffin tin to make decorative rounds for serving—one of the keys to polenta is to make an attractive presentation.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

3½ cups water

⅛ teaspoon salt

1 cup coarse cornmeal (polenta)

1 batch of a [tomato-chili sauce](#)

½ red bell pepper

3 ounces (orange) cheddar cheese

*3 ounces Monterey Jack or Muenster
cheese*

*2 ounces canned whole green chilies,
cut in strips*

*½ cup Parmesan or Asiago cheese,
grated (optional)*

*1 tablespoon fresh marjoram or
oregano, minced, or several sprigs
of cilantro or flat-leaf parsley.*

Heat the water to boiling, add the salt, then slowly whisk in the coarse cornmeal

so that the water keeps boiling. Lower the heat and continue cooking and stirring with a whisk for perhaps 6 to 8 minutes until the mixture is quite thick. I let it go at that, rather than cooking for the more traditional 30 minutes, which is more important if you want to serve pillowy, soft polenta straight from the pot.

Get out a muffin tin with deep forms, and distribute the polenta among the muffin cups. (It is not necessary to grease the tin.) When the polenta has cooled, run a knife around the edges to pop the polenta “muffins” out of the tin. While the polenta is cooling, prepare one of the tomato-chili sauces.

Preheat the oven to 375°. Cut the red pepper into strips, blanch them in boiling, lightly salted water for a minute, and

drain. Slice the two cheeses into strips. To prepare for serving, ladle a cup of the sauce into a 9 by 13 by 2 inch baking pan and heat the rest of the sauce separately on the stove. Place the polenta *muffins* on top of the sauce, and drape the cheese, red pepper, and green chili strips on top of them. Bake covered until hot, about 25 to 30 minutes. To serve, ladle $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the sauce onto individual plates, and place 1 or 2 polenta muffins on top of the sauce. Garnish with the Parmesan cheese, if using, and fresh herbs.

Roasted Vegetables with Satay Peanut Sauce

Roasting vegetables brings out their

sweetness and gives them a succulent nutty flavor. Here it is served with the Satay Peanut Sauce. The combination is good with plain buttered noodles or rice on the side. Although the recipe calls for a curry marinade, the vegetables are quite good with just the balsamic vinegar (or lemon), salt, pepper, and fresh herbs.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

1 batch [Satay Peanut Sauce](#)

*2 pounds vegetables of your choice:
eggplant, fennel bulb, red or yellow
onions, mushrooms, zucchini or
crookneck squash, red, yellow, or
green bell peppers*

3 tablespoons olive oil

Salt

1 tablespoon curry powder

2 tablespoons olive oil

¼ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

*2 to 3 tablespoons fresh parsley,
cilantro, and/or basil, minced*

Preheat oven to 425°. Make the Satay Peanut Sauce first or prepare it while the vegetables are baking.



Wash the produce and cut it into large pieces for baking. If the pieces are too small they will shrivel away in the drying heat of the oven. The eggplant can be cut

into $\frac{1}{4}$ - to $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch slices; the peppers into 6 pieces, the fennel bulb into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch pieces; the onion peeled and sectioned into eighths; the mushrooms left whole or cut in half depending on size; the squash cut in quarters lengthwise. Put the vegetables in a large bowl and toss with 2 tablespoons of olive oil and a sprinkling of salt (reserving the rest of the measured amount for the marinade). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or foil, and spread out the vegetables.

Most of the vegetables can bake for about 30 minutes. The mushrooms and squash could be done a bit sooner, perhaps in 20 minutes. You may want to keep them separate and remove them earlier than the rest. After 10 to 15 minutes, check the vegetables and turn

them over and continue baking.

Prepare the marinade, combining the curry powder with the olive oil, soy sauce, vinegar, and salt. Toss with the baked vegetables. This may be served at room temperature or reheated later. To serve, ladle the peanut sauce onto plates or a serving platter, arrange the vegetables on top, and garnish with the fresh herbs.

Multicolored Pasta and Vegetables with Dry Vermouth

This pasta dish is not only colorful and flavorful—the corkscrew pasta comes in a mix of egg, spinach, and beet—but also comparatively low in calories since it utilizes dry vermouth for the sauce rather

than olive oil or cream.

People seem to have the capacity to eat varying amounts of pasta. In most cases a quarter pound per person makes quite a generous serving, depending, of course, on what else is on the menu.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

3 to 4 quarts water

1 pound mixed vegetables of your choice: carrots, green beans, mushrooms, celery, bell peppers of various colors, asparagus

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 small yellow onions, diced

4 cloves of garlic, minced

1 cup dry vermouth

Salt

Pepper, freshly ground

1 pound rainbow corkscrew pasta
¼ cup fresh herbs of your choice,
minced: parsley, thyme, marjoram,
chervil, and/or basil

A few drops of lemon juice or balsamic
vinegar (optional)

6 sun-dried tomatoes, plumped and cut
in thin strips

½ cup or so Parmesan or Asiago
cheese, freshly grated

Start the water heating to blanch the vegetables and cook the pasta. Choose a combination of vegetables that is colorful or what you enjoy or have available. Cut them into fork-sized pieces, generally narrow strips between 1 and 2 inches long. Green beans can be “French-cut” in long diagonals or cut in half lengthwise,

the carrots julienned. The exception is the mushrooms, which might better be left in good-sized chunks.

Heat the olive oil in a skillet large enough to hold all the ingredients. Sauté the onions a few minutes until they are translucent. Add the garlic and let it cook briefly before adding the mushrooms (if you are using them). Let them cook and release their juices, then add the vermouth, and continue cooking to reduce the liquid by half. Set aside.

Add 2 to 3 teaspoons of salt to the cooking water, and when it is boiling, blanch the other vegetables individually, cooking each one until it is as tender as you like. (I do green beans about 3 minutes, carrot slivers about 1 minute, bell pepper strips about 1 minute.)

Remove from the water with a slotted spoon or strainer and set aside. The cooked vegetables may be added to the large skillet, if it is off the heat.

Once the vegetables are blanched, start the pasta cooking. When the pasta is nearly cooked, start reheating all the vegetables in the skillet with the onions and vermouth. When it is tender, drain the pasta and combine it with the vegetables. Add about half the fresh herbs, then season with a few drops of lemon juice or balsamic vinegar to brighten the flavors. Little salt may be necessary considering that the sun-dried tomatoes and grated cheese are yet to come and both of these provide salt, but see what you think by tasting, and grind in some black pepper.

Garnish with the sun-dried tomatoes

and the remaining herbs and serve. Pass the grated cheese separately, so that all the splendid colors may be enjoyed before they are engulfed with cheese.

Secrets Rarely Revealed: The Pots Come Clean

When I had the opportunity to work in the kitchen at Tassajara Hot Springs in May 1966, I didn't hesitate. Compared to the study of logic and statistics, psychology and sociology, which I was pursuing in college, the idea of a life of cooking had its appeal. I had gotten an A on my paper about alienation and anxiety, and I was just as alienated

and anxious as ever. That spring, book learning didn't seem worth much, whereas cooking seemed so real and practical, down-to-earth and enjoyable. At Tassajara—still a resort owned by Bob and Anna Beck—I started as the dishwasher, cleaning all the pots and pans, mixing bowls, and utensils as well as all the dishes. The dishes I'd wash by hand before placing them in racks to go through a machine that gave them a sterilizing rinse. I figured out several things rather quickly to make my job easier. I felt mellow and competent. I worked by myself, did things my way, got them done, went swimming, and lay in the sun. Life was beautiful.

The things I learned about washing

dishes and cleaning pots were simple enough, but since then I've noticed how often people do things the hard way. I find it a mystery. In washing more than a few dishes one point is pivotal: sort the dishes as early as possible in the process. Curiously, the dishwashing machine is the slowest part of the activity in a commercial setting; a person racking and unranking the dishes can work faster than the machine. So the secret of washing dishes is to make the machine work more efficiently by putting more dishes in the rack each time through the machine. At home the same principle applies: sorting and stacking the dishes will greatly aid the dishwashing process, whether

one is doing them by hand or trying to fit dishes into a dishwasher.

Often people's inclination is to grab the dishes as they come in and pile them onto the racks or into the sink without sorting them. Yet the dishes are going to have to be sorted sooner or later, since they go back on the shelves stacked in piles of the same size. When the dishes are sorted first, they stay sorted the rest of the way through the process; the dish rack can be filled fuller; and, once they are dry, the dishes can be stacked much faster: zip, zip, zip.

Another advantage of sorting the dishes first is that it keeps space clear for more dirty dishes to come in, which otherwise might pile up in

awkward places and spill, crash, obstruct. Why make things so difficult?

At Tassajara the setup for cleaning the pots and other kitchen items included a counter where the dirty items were placed, a double sink for soapy water and rinse water, and some slatted shelves for draining things. Another sink nearby contained a large cone-shaped sieve, so that waste could be poured into it and drained, leaving solid matter to be discarded. This proved to be extremely useful.

Having worked in a great number of kitchens, I have noticed that people rarely understand what is pivotal in pot washing, but the

fundamental secret is to keep the wash water clean! When the soapy wash water is permeated with minestrone soup, pan drippings, and salad dressing, it will make things dirtier (certainly greasier) than they were, and you will find the work aesthetically displeasing and unappetizing.

I cannot think of a single good reason to do that to yourself when a simple and elegant solution is at hand, which, with marvelous coincidence, also solves a second pot-washing annoyance. When big pots and pans are washed in a big sink of soapy water, they can't really be scrubbed effectively, because everything is bobbing around in the

water, and endlessly bending over the sink can give you a backache.

So, prerinse and prescrub everything on the *solid* counter next to the sink (or even on the floor if you are faced with a really giant pot) and then pour this particle-enriched water through a cone sieve, preferably set in a separate sink. Alternatives to the sieve-in-a-sink approach are to have a spritzer nozzle that can be used to spray things off or a garbage disposal. Once the pots and pans are “clean,” they are ready to be washed and rinsed. This part goes really quickly; you race right through it; and you have saved yourself from washing everything in soup.

Okay, so I was a brilliant dishwasher. I worked hard, learned to bake bread as well, and felt calm and serene. When the cooks screamed or threw fits (which was comparatively rare), I'd shake my head. "What's their problem?" I'd wonder. "If I was a cook, I'd never behave like that!" About halfway through the summer one of the cooks quit, and I was offered his job. Within two or three days I too was screaming at times. The cool dishwasher was transformed into a hot-under-the-collar cook. "Cook's temperament" comes with the territory.

Mustard Butter Pasta with Broccoli

This has become our standard summertime pasta, with a flavor as bright as the colors. The pasta and vegetables cook together before being tossed in the mustard butter. The recipe is adaptable to a wide range of vegetables.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

5/8 cup butter (may be part olive or soy oil)

4 tablespoons Dijon mustard (or your favorite)

2 cloves of garlic

2 tablespoons parsley, well minced

2 tablespoons chives, finely sliced, or green onion, sliced and minced

Salt

Pepper

1 tablespoon oil

*2 cups broccoli, cut into small
flowerets*

¾ pound fettucine or linguine

Set out the butter early to soften up. When it's soft, blend in the mustard. Slice the garlic and pound it in a mortar with a healthy pinch of salt. When it is fairly pulpy, add the parsley and chives (or green onion) and continue pounding for a short while to release their flavors. Blend this mixture into the butter, along with a few twists of black pepper.



Use a large pot to boil a generous amount of water with a teaspoon of salt and a tablespoon of oil. Fan the pasta into the boiling water. If you are using fresh pasta, add the broccoli at the same time. When using dried pasta, add the broccoli during the last couple of minutes of cooking. As soon as they are done, scoop out the pasta and the vegetables with an oval strainer, or drain in a colander.

Put the pasta and broccoli in a 12-inch skillet, allowing some of the water to dribble in with it. Add the prepared butter and, over moderate heat, toss the pasta with tongs until it is evenly coated. Keep the heat low enough that the butter does not bubble or fry—that will change the flavor. Check the seasoning and add salt and pepper if necessary.

VARIATIONS

- Use small flowerets of cauliflower instead of the broccoli. For additional color and flavor, use some carrot cut into matchsticks.
- Use zucchini or crookneck squash, cherry tomatoes, peas, carrots. Cut the squash into 2-inch sections and then lengthwise into strips. Cut the

carrots into matchsticks and the cherry tomatoes in half. Cook the squash, peas, and carrots with the pasta as in the basic recipe. Add the tomatoes with the mustard butter when tossing in the skillet.

Mushroom Filo Pastry with Spinach and Goat Cheese

Filo pastries are wonderfully festive, and even given the amount of work involved, they go a long way, so I have made this dish on several occasions for benefit meals.

SERVES 6 TO 8 PEOPLE

½ pound filo pastry

¾ cups pine nuts

1 large or 2 small leeks (white and pale green parts)

½ pound spinach

½ pound mushrooms, perhaps fresh shiitake or portobello as well as cultivated mushrooms

1 tablespoon butter

3 cloves of garlic, minced

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon fresh thyme, minced, or 1 teaspoon dried

1 tablespoon fresh marjoram, minced, or 1 teaspoon dried

Salt

Pepper

¼ cup white wine

4 to 5 ounces goat cheese (chèvre), crumbled

½ cup ricotta cheese

2 eggs

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

4 tablespoons olive oil

24 whole cloves

*12 sprigs of flat-leaf parsley or fresh
thyme, rosemary, or marjoram*

Preheat oven to 350°. Thaw the filo pastry (which usually comes frozen and folded up). Remove ½ pound by unfolding the pastry sheets and cutting them in half. Refold and repackage the unused portion and refreeze or refrigerate. (While the filo is thawing, you can be working on the rest of the recipe.)

Roast the pine nuts for 6 minutes. Then chop them coarsely. Raise the oven temperature to 375°. Slice the leeks, then

wash them by immersing in water and drain. Cut off the large stems of the spinach and cut the leaves crosswise into 1-inch lengths. Wash the leaves with plenty of water to remove all the sand and silt, and drain or spin dry. Slice the mushrooms, removing and discarding the stems of the shiitake or portobello mushrooms.

Heat a large skillet, add the tablespoon of butter, and sauté the mushrooms. After a couple of minutes add half of the minced garlic and continue cooking until the mushrooms brown. Remove from the pan and set aside. Clean out the pan (with a couple spoonfuls of water to add back later), reheat, add the tablespoon of olive oil and sauté the leeks for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the other half of the garlic, the thyme,

rosemary, and marjoram, and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Cook another minute or two. Add the white wine (and deglazing liquid) and continue cooking until the wine reduces by half. Return the mushrooms, add the spinach, and cook, covered, until the spinach wilts. Check the seasoning. Remove the vegetable mixture to a bowl and add the goat cheese, ricotta, and eggs—check the seasoning. Melt the un-salted butter with the olive oil.

Assemble the filo pastry in a 9 by 13 by 2 inch baking pan. Trim the sheets of filo pastry so that they will fit in the pan: The sides of the pan angle apart, so make the sheets closer to the size of the top of the pan rather than the bottom. Those at the bottom can come up the sides a little.

Layer 7 to 8 sheets of filo pastry into

the pan, one at a time, brushing each layer with the butter and olive oil mixture, and sprinkling with a scattering of pine nuts. Spread the filling on top of the upper layer. Top the filling with the remaining layers of filo pastry, brushing each with the butter/oil and sprinkling each with pine nuts (until they are gone).

Using a sharp knife, cut the filo pastry into 12 squares. Then cut the squares in half diagonally. Place a whole clove in the middle of each triangle. Bake until the top is well-browned, about 40 minutes or so. Serve 1 or 2 squares per serving, garnished with a sprig or two of fresh herbs.

Radiatore with Mushroom,

Almonds, and Goat Cheese

Radiatore are little “radiators,” which are marvelous for soaking up flavor. If unavailable, pick another kind of pasta with lots of surfaces, like fusilli (spirals). For mushrooms I like to use a combination of cultivated white mushrooms and fresh shiitake or portobello or, if they show up as a gift from someone, I include chanterelles or morels.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

2 quarts water

¾ cup almonds (4 ounces)

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 medium-small red onion (about 6 ounces), sliced

¾ pound mushrooms, sliced

3 cloves of garlic, minced

8 ounces radiatore or other pasta

½ cup sherry

Salt

Pepper, freshly ground

1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar

*3 to 4 ounces goat cheese (chèvre),
crumbled*

¼ cup flat-leaf parsley, minced

*3 to 4 ounces Parmesan or Asiago
cheese, freshly grated*

Start heating the water in which to cook the pasta. Roast the almonds on top of the stove in a dry skillet or in a 350° oven for 7 to 8 minutes until browned and crunchy. Slice or chop or use the Cuisinart on pulse briefly.

Heat the olive oil in large skillet and

sauté the onion for a couple of minutes, then add the mushrooms and garlic and continue cooking. This is probably a good time to start the pasta cooking. Once the mushrooms are cooked, add the sherry and let it cook down. Season the mixture with salt, pepper, and balsamic vinegar.

When the pasta is cooked, drain it in a colander, and add it to the skillet along with the almonds and goat cheese. Mix well and adjust the seasoning. Garnish with the parsley, and serve the grated cheese on the side.

Mushroom-Ricotta (or Tofu) Lasagna

Preparing the lasagna will probably take a

good 1½ to 2 hours, but you will have a generous amount of flavorful, heart-warming food to show for it.

A friend's lasagna took even longer, so she served the appetizers and side dishes, and then invited her dinner guests back for lunch the next day. The main course was excellent. Alternatively the lasagna may be made up well in advance, then baked before serve-up. Also, it refrigerates and freezes well.

You will need about a pound of pasta. This recipe calls for generic lasagna noodles, but if you want to buy or make fresh pasta sheets, please do. *The Greens Cookbook* has two fine recipes. The fresh pasta does not need to be precooked, but if it is, your lasagna will attain even higher, more heavenly states.

SERVES 8 OR MORE PEOPLE

3 to 5 quarts water

1 pound lasagna noodles

3 to 4 tablespoons olive oil

2 yellow onions, diced

3 stalks of celery, finely diced

Salt

Pepper

½ cup dry sherry

¾ pound mushrooms, sliced

3 to 4 cloves of garlic, minced

⅓ cup parsley, chopped

1 teaspoon dried thyme or 1½

tablespoons fresh thyme, minced

1 pound ricotta cheese

2 teaspoons dried marjoram or 2

tablespoons fresh marjoram, minced

Peel of 1 lemon, chopped

2 teaspoons capers, chopped

¼ cup pitted olives, chopped

1 egg

1 batch [White Sauce](#)

*2 cups Parmesan or Asiago cheese
(about 5 ounces), freshly grated*

1 batch [Herbed Tomato Sauce](#)

Flat-leaf parsley

Preheat oven to 375°. Heat the water to boiling, add a tablespoon of salt, and 2 or 3 tablespoons of olive oil. Cook the noodles until they are tender, perhaps 7 to 10 minutes. Drain the noodles and rinse them in cold water to stop the cooking and to keep them from sticking together. Drain again, then spread them out individually on clean dish towels so they will be flat when you are ready to use them.

Heat 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil in a

large skillet and cook the onion until it is translucent, about 3 to 4 minutes. Remove half of the onion, and set aside to add to the ricotta filling later. Add the celery to the cooking onions along with a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Sauté over high heat for another couple of minutes, then cover and cook over lower heat until the celery is tender. Remove from heat and set aside.



Use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the sherry to deglaze the pan; pour off and save. Reheat the pan, add another 1 to 2 tablespoons of olive oil and sauté the mushrooms. After a minute or two add the garlic, parsley, thyme, and a touch of salt and pepper. Cook until the

mushrooms are browned, then add both sherries (fresh and from deglazing). Let the sherry cook down by half, then add to the onion-celery mixture, and check the seasoning. Set aside.

To make the ricotta filling, combine the ricotta with the reserved onion, as well as the marjoram, lemon peel, capers, and olives. Season with salt and pepper as needed, then mix in the egg. Set aside. Prepare the White Sauce.

For the final assembly, butter a 9 by 13 inch baking pan, and ladle $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the White Sauce over the bottom. Cover the bottom with a layer of lasagna noodles. Coat the noodles with a few spoonfuls of the sauce, then add half the mushrooms and half the grated cheese. Next, put in a layer of noodles, a touch of the White

Sauce, and half of the ricotta filling. Repeat the layering: noodles, sauce, mushrooms, cheese; noodles, sauce, ricotta. Arrange a final layer of noodles on top, and pour over the last of the White Sauce, so that the whole lasagna (especially the last layer of noodles) is well moistened. Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Uncover and continue baking for another 10 minutes (as long as the top is still moist). More grated cheese could go on top. While the lasagna is baking, prepare the Herbed Tomato Sauce, if you have not already done so.

Cut the lasagna into squares. For serving, ladle $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the Herbed Tomato Sauce onto individual plates, place a square of lasagna on top of the sauce, and garnish with several sprigs of

parsley.

VARIATION

To make this without dairy, you can use a [nut sauce](#) instead of the White Sauce. Substitute drained, crumbled tofu for the ricotta, and perhaps some roasted, chopped walnuts or almonds for the Parmesan.

Potato Cakes

SERVES 3 OR 4 PEOPLE

4 medium potatoes

*2 tablespoons wheat bran, wheat
germ, or oat bran*

1 egg

Salt

Pepper

½ cup grated or minced onion

2 tablespoons parsley, minced

½ teaspoon baking powder (optional)

Leaving the peels on, wash and grate the potatoes, and then mix them with the remainder of the ingredients. Add an extra egg if the mixture is too stiff, and add more bran or germ if the mixture is too wet. Forming these into patties may be difficult. An alternative is to drop scoops of the mixture into a hot, oiled frying pan, flattening them with a spatula. Get them fairly thin (½ inch or less) so that the potato will cook through. Fry over moderate heat until brown on both sides. Serve hot, with cold applesauce, the [Apple-Radish Relish](#) or [Cream Cheese](#)

Sauce.

VARIATIONS

- Some mashed potato could be substituted for the raw potato, either in part or entirely.
- Add other vegetables: celery, carrot, mushrooms. The carrot and celery will cook best if they are grated or presautéed. Since mushrooms cook more quickly, they can be sliced or minced and added raw.

Soyburgers

SERVES 3 OR 4 PEOPLE

1 onion

1 carrot

2 stalks of celery

1 tablespoon olive oil

3 cloves of garlic

*2 cups cooked soybeans, mashed or
blended*

1 cup cooked rice

Salt

Pepper

½ teaspoon dried thyme

½ teaspoon dill weed

2 eggs

½ cup rolled oats or wheat germ

Cut the vegetables very finely—mince or grate. If diced in larger pieces, sauté them first along with the garlic. Combine the vegetables with the soybeans and rice and season with the salt, pepper, and herbs.

Then mix in the eggs and rolled oats. Add more wheat germ or rolled oats if the mixture is not yet stiff enough to make into patties.

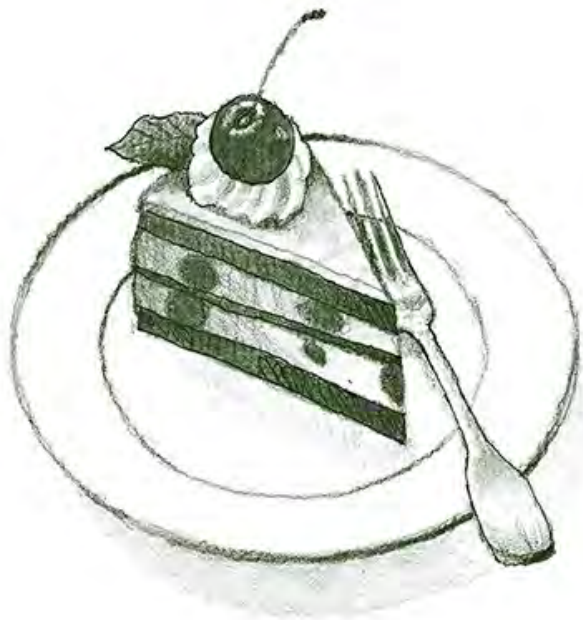
Fry on both sides until well browned. The patties could also be baked or broiled—turn once and brown on both sides. Serve with a white or brown sauce. Or mustard, ketchup, mayonnaise, and a bun.

VARIATIONS

- Lentils and barley make a particularly good combination, replacing the rice, and *Oatmeal Soyburgers* are surprisingly tasty.
- *Sunburgers*: Use 3 cups of sunflower seed meal, either purchased or home-ground. Mix the meal with grated or sautéed

onion, salt and pepper, and enough egg to hold the mixture together. Mighty delicious burgers! These could also be held together with mashed beans or potatoes.

Desserts



Through the gray rain
I see cormorants lining the pier
their tails resembling long black
top coats reaching down to the
ground—
is it the height of fashion or
disturbed
adolescence? Through the
splattering
of water spotting the window I
count in twos
and threes—more than a hundred.
They're sitting out the storm
in the middle of the storm.
How often we keep raging
while all the while a haven awaits.
It just takes sitting there,
breathing.

Perhaps dessert is like the
savasana of a meal,
when finally we can rest in the
sweetness.

A fork-full of chocolate mocha
cake:

still, floating, letting-go,
as the so-solid sensations of body
can no longer be found, weight
falling away, spirit roaming, life is

...

good. Remember?

The berry patch by the pond near
the rope swing? Grapes on the
bench

at the playground? Baking home-
made

cookies with mama: all that mixing
and shaping, and finally

a chance to clean
the bowl.

“WHAT DO YOU THINK,” SUZUKI ROSHI asked, “that you can add cream and sugar to everything to make it taste the way you want it to?” No, not really, desserts do not a diet make, nevertheless, they have a place in our hearts and at the table.

When I think about desserts I often think first of fruit crisps. My favorite dessert at YMCA camp, years later I was delighted to find out how to make them. I love the buttery sweetness and juicy vitality.

These days many people think that butter and sugar are unhealthy, but I still believe in old-fashioned desserts. Thoughts can rigidify into hard and fast rules, creating a regimen that doesn't leave much room for enjoyment and satisfaction. I would rather be flexible and

keep finding out for myself what truly nourishes me and what doesn't. Returning to my own experience and learning from it how various foods affect me is an engaging and absorbing activity, whereas trying to impose someone else's thinking or scientific findings on myself ends up being stultifying and at times demeaning. Who is telling whom what? In Zen sometimes we say, "Don't put another head over your own head." I think that also means to "use your head" to find your way.

I don't have dessert that often—who can *afford* the added body dimensions? But when I do, fruit crisps still bring me great pleasure, and I feel warm and thankful. I am also grateful for cakes and cookies, fruit and custard.

See what you like. There's plenty here to choose from.

Sour Cream–Poppy Seed Cake

A tender, moist cake that was one of the all-time favorites at our Tassajara Bread Bakery in San Francisco. We got the recipe originally from our friends at the Nityananda Institute, which is now located in Portland, Oregon—wonderful people. Serve plain, dusted with powdered sugar, or frosted with cream cheese icing. It's also good with ripe, red strawberries and whipped cream or [Vanilla Crème Anglaise](#).

MAKES 1 8-INCH LOAF

½ cup butter

¾ to 1 cup sugar

3 egg yolks

1 teaspoon vanilla

*1 cup all-purpose flour or cake flour,
sifted before measuring*

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon baking soda

½ cup sour cream

3 egg whites

⅓ cup poppy seeds

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter and flour an 8-inch tube pan.

Cream the butter and sugar until fluffy, beat in the egg yolks one at a time, and add the vanilla. Sift the flour, salt, and baking soda together and fold them into the butter mixture alternately with the sour

cream.

Beat the egg whites until they form stiff peaks, then fold gently into the batter. Fold in the poppy seeds, then pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake in the center of the oven until the top is brown and firm to the touch and a toothpick comes out clean when inserted in the center, about 45 minutes.

Mocha Cake with Mocha Icing

Otherwise known as Allen's Groovy Chocolate Cake (which appropriately dates the supposed originator), this cake, with remarkable flavor and texture, also has ease of mixing in its favor. The instructions are not classic, but they seem

to work well.

MAKES 2 FROSTED, 8-INCH LAYERS

4 ounces unsweetened chocolate

½ cup unsalted butter

1 cup strong coffee (could be decaf)

2 cups white flour

2 cups sugar

¼ teaspoon salt

1½ teaspoons baking soda

1 cup yogurt

1 teaspoon vanilla

2 eggs, beaten

unsweetened cocoa

1 batch [Mocha Icing](#)

Preheat oven to 350°. Melt chocolate and butter with coffee over double boiler or very low heat. Set aside to cool. Sift flour

together with sugar, salt, and baking soda. Pour chocolate mixture into the dries and mix well. Add yogurt and vanilla, then mix in eggs. This makes a really liquidy batter.

Butter 2 8-inch cake pans and then dust them with unsweetened cocoa. Pour the batter into the 2 pans, and bake for 30 to 35 minutes. Rotate the pans from front to back or side to side midway through to ensure even baking. When done, the cake will have risen in the middle and pulled away from the sides of the pans. A toothpick inserted in the center will come out clean.

Let sit in the pans for five minutes, then turn out onto cake racks to cool. Spread the Mocha Icing on the top and sides of the cake.

Mocha Icing

MAKES ENOUGH TO ICE THE TOPS AND SIDES OF 2 8-INCH CAKES

6 ounces semi-sweet chocolate

½ cup strong coffee (could be decaf)

6 ounces unsalted butter, softened

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Warm the chocolate and coffee in a small, heavy saucepan over low heat—just until the chocolate melts. Stir frequently to avoid burning. When melted, pour into a bowl and beat in the butter, a little at a time. As the frosting cools it will thicken to spreading consistency. Mix in the vanilla extract.



Spread on top and sides of the cake. Give the cake away to a friend, and know the joy of chocolate generosity. Perhaps a piece of it will come back.

Hazelnut-Chocolate Cake

Chocolate cake is not one of my personal

favorites generally, but here's another chocolate *fantasy*, with hazelnuts. Check the ingredients on the chocolate chips, so you know you are not getting an imitation of good quality. I prefer them to have cocoa or chocolate rather than "flavor," butter rather than a partially hardened vegetable fat, and actual vanilla rather than something ersatz.

MAKES 2 8-INCH CAKES

FOR THE CAKE:

Butter

Unsweetened cocoa

1½ cups hazelnuts

*1¼ cups good quality semisweet
chocolate chips*

½ cup unsalted butter, softened

½ cup sugar

3 eggs, separated

¼ cup unbleached white flour

FOR THE GLAZE:

¾ cups hazelnuts (reserved from cake recipe), roasted and skinned

¾ cup semisweet chocolate chips

½ cup unsalted butter

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter 2 cake pans and then dust them with unsweetened cocoa. Toast the hazelnuts for 8 minutes, cool, and remove skins (as best you can). Set aside ¾ cup for the glaze. Finely grind the remaining ¾ cup of nuts into a fine powder, using a food processor or clean coffee mill. Melt chocolate in double boiler (or chop into small pieces and melt

in saucepan over low heat, stirring) and cool.

Cream butter with sugar, then beat in yolks one at a time. Beat in chocolate and ground hazelnuts. Beat the egg whites until they form soft peaks, and fold half of the egg whites into the batter. Then stir in the flour and fold in the remaining egg whites.

Pour into the 2 prepared baking pans. Bake for about 30 minutes, until firm—a toothpick inserted in the center should come out clean. Let cool before coating with glaze.

To prepare the glaze, chop the reserved hazelnuts. Melt chocolate and butter together over very low heat (or in double boiler), until just melted. Coat the cake with the glaze and let it cool. Cover with the chopped nuts, pressing them into the

sides with your fingers.

Orange-Raisin-Walnut Cake

Scented, fruited, nutty, this cake is reminiscent of carrot cake (without the carrots). The orange syrup provides an unusual moistness and an appealing fragrance, especially if you add one of the final optional (alcoholic) ingredients—and saves having to think about frosting or icing.

MAKES A 1-LAYER, 8-INCH CAKE

Butter

1 cup raisins, plumped in hot water

½ cup walnuts

Zest of 1 large orange

½ cup butter

¾ cup sugar or brown sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

2 large eggs

2½ cups flour

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon salt

1 cup buttermilk

Juice of 1 large orange

4 tablespoons honey

Orange flower water

*Rum, Curaçao, or Grand Marnier
(optional)*

Preheat oven to 300°. Butter and flour an 8-inch cake pan and line the bottom with parchment paper or foil.

Grind the raisins, along with the walnuts and orange zest (which can be

removed in strips with a vegetable peeler), in a food mill or blender to make a coarse puree that retains some texture. (It may be necessary to use a little of the juice if the mixture is too dry.) Alternatively, mince coarsely by hand with a sharp knife.



Cream the butter and sugar together until they are light. Add the vanilla and beat in the eggs, one at a time. Combine

and sift the flour, soda, and salt. Alternating with the buttermilk, blend the dry ingredients into the butter-sugar mixture, until all are incorporated. You will have a smooth, thick batter. Fold in the raisin-walnut mixture and then pour the batter into the pan. Tap once or twice on the counter to settle the batter then bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour, or until the cake is firm to the touch.

When the cake is done, remove it from the pan and peel off the baking parchment. Turn out the cake upside down onto a serving plate and let it cool while you make a syrup of the orange juice and honey. Boil the two together and flavor with a little orange flower water, if you have it—or season with one of the optional liquors. Brush all the syrup over

the top of the cake. It will sink into the cake and make it very moist. Alternatively, you could simply soak the cake with a little rum, Curaçao, or Grand Marnier—if you keep such things around. Spoon on a shot or two. Give the cake a taste. Use care when transferring the cooled cake to a cake plate—perhaps a few wide spatulas would help.

Fresh Ginger Gingerbread

With its marvelous blend of spices, this well-spiced cake makes a great dessert that can finish off a dull, drab dinner with a flavorful burst of enjoyment. And if you don't know how to make a dull, drab dinner, you can serve the gingerbread to

finish off an exciting, seasonal dinner with a flourish. You can't go wrong!

MAKES 1 8-INCH CAKE

¾ cup white pastry flour or all-purpose flour

¾ cup whole wheat pastry flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

¾ teaspoon freshly ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg

¼ teaspoon ground cloves

¼ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon mustard powder

1 pinch of cayenne

1 pinch of pepper

¼ cup butter

¼ cup brown sugar

*3 tablespoons fresh ginger root,
peeled and grated finely*

½ cup molasses

½ teaspoon baking soda

¾ cup boiling water

¼ teaspoon baking soda

2 eggs, beaten

Preheat oven to 350°. Sift together all the dry ingredients, except the brown sugar and baking soda. Cream the butter and sugar together and add the ginger. Beat the molasses and the ½ teaspoon baking soda together until the color lightens and little bubbles form. Combine the boiling water and the ¼ teaspoon baking soda. Mix the molasses a little at a time thoroughly into the butter-ginger-sugar mixture. Add the dry ingredients alternately with the boiling water-soda, beginning and ending with the dry ingredients.

When this is finished, fold in the beaten eggs. Pour the batter into a thoroughly buttered and floured cake pan and bake for 30 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean. Serve with piles of softly whipped cream, or generous scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Apple–Walnut–Sour Cream Bread

This is a tender, golden brown loaf, best made in the fall when new crop apples and fresh walnuts are at their peak. Known as a dessert bread, this could also be served with a special holiday dinner. Serve with cream cheese or a buttery cheese like St. André or Brie.

MAKES 1 9-INCH LOAF

½ cup butter, plus extra butter for the pan

½ cup brown sugar

2 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

1 cup sour cream

2 cups chopped apples

½ to 1 cup chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter and flour a 9-inch bread pan.

Cream the butter and sugar until fluffy. Add the eggs and vanilla and beat until

smooth. Sift the dry ingredients together and, alternating with the sour cream, gently fold them into the butter-egg mixture. The batter will be very thick, but avoid overworking it.

Fold in the apples and walnuts. Spread the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top. Bake for 1 hour, or until the top is firm to the touch and a deep golden brown. Allow the bread to cool at least 10 minutes before slicing.

Fig Bread

This sweet, rather cakelike bread is one of our regular luncheon desserts or tea snacks. We leave the figs whole, to appear as tasty slabs once the bread is

sliced, but they could be sliced into rounds.

MAKES 1 MEDIUM LOAF

1 cup apple or orange juice

*1½ cups mission figs, destemmed but
left whole*

¼ teaspoon salt

¼ cup butter

2 eggs

⅓ cup sugar

½ teaspoon vanilla

*1 teaspoon lemon or orange rind,
grated*

1¾ cups pastry flour

½ teaspoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon baking soda

Preheat oven to 350°. Heat the juice

almost to boiling and pour it over the figs, salt, and butter in a mixing bowl. Stir to melt the butter and set aside in the refrigerator to cool.

Beat the eggs, then beat in the sugar, vanilla, and fruit rind. Stir this into the well-cooled (room temperature) fig mixture. Sift the flour together with the baking powder and baking soda. Mix into the wet ingredients with a minimum number of strokes.

Grease and flour a medium-sized loaf pan, pour in the batter, and bake for about 1 hour, until a toothpick comes out clean.

Quick Vegan Spice Cake

Easy to mix, a soft crumb, good spiciness,

what's not to like? This cake has no eggs, no dairy.

MAKES 1 8-INCH CAKE

1½ cups unbleached white flour

¾ cup sugar

¾ teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon nutmeg

¼ teaspoon cloves

⅓ cup melted coconut oil

*1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar or
raspberry vinegar*

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 cup cold water

Powdered sugar

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease and flour an 8-inch cake pan.

Sift dry ingredients together. Combine coconut oil with vinegar, vanilla, and water. Stir together with a few (about 20) quick strokes. Do not overmix.

Pour into prepared pan, and bake for 30 to 35 minutes until the edges pull away from the sides of the pan and the center of the cake springs back to touch—also when a toothpick comes out clean. To serve, sprinkle with powdered sugar.

Coffee-Almond Butter Cookies

The coffee flavor comes as a surprise in what is already an excellent almond butter cookie.

MAKES 2½ DOZEN COOKIES

1 cup unsalted butter

¾ cup brown sugar

4½ teaspoons instant coffee

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon almond extract

1 cup almonds, finely chopped

*½ cup semisweet chocolate, cut into
various-sized pieces smaller than
the intended size of the cookies
(optional)*

2 cups all-purpose flour

Preheat oven to 350°. Cream the butter and sugar together, then mix in the coffee, salt, and almond extract. Fold in the almonds, chocolate (optional), and then mix in the flour.

Roll the dough into 1-inch balls. Flatten with a glass or the heel of your palm.

Bake for 15 minutes or until they are lightly browned.

Wishful Thinking Fails Again

Once during a cooking class I found myself holding a pan of biscotti in one hand while I opened the door of the oven with the other. Since the top shelf of the oven was occupied by a pan of lasagna, I aimed the biscotti for the unoccupied bottom shelf. “Let’s get these cookies baking,” I thought. However, a second thought followed quickly after the first: “If you put them on the bottom shelf, they’re going to burn.”

What to do? There ensued a lively inner monologue enumerating the necessary steps: Close oven door, find somewhere to put biscotti down, open oven door, remove lasagna, find place to put lasagna, move top shelf up one notch, move bottom shelf up one notch, replace lasagna, close door, get biscotti, open door, place in oven, close door. What a nuisance. It hardly seemed worth it.

“Forget it,” I thought. “Let’s get on with it. They’ll be okay this time.” In they went.

These are a cook’s famous last words: “This time they’ll be okay.” Sure. This time the oven will understand how awkward and inconvenient it is for me to do all that

switching, placing, lifting, reaching, and it will go out of its way to accommodate me. The oven will make a special effort not to burn the cookies to compensate for my not making a special effort to arrange things differently. This time, undoubtedly, the oven will be forgiving and make allowances for my laziness. Only this time the cookies burned on the bottom.

Once I used some vanilla sugar at a friend's house to make a birthday cake for my father. At least I thought it was vanilla sugar, since it was a white granular substance with a vanilla bean in it, and when I dipped my finger in it and licked, it tasted like sugar. Yet tasting the cake batter

after creaming the sugar with the butter and adding the eggs, I found it extremely salty. And going back to the jar with the vanilla bean, it tasted like salt. Big surprise!

Not wanting to waste the butter and eggs, I decided to go ahead and finish making the cake, thinking rather wishfully that maybe it wouldn't be so bad once all the flour and milk and seasoning was added. It was. Yet my wishful thinking continued: "Maybe it won't be so bad after it's baked." It was. It was really bad, not at all what a cake should be. That was a strange birthday celebration.

The ability to believe in wishful thinking right up until you smell the

smoke or taste the cake is really a wonderful trait in many ways—naive, trusting, childlike—but the food may be an uncustomary and undesirable shade of brown or black. The taste may bring tears to the eyes.

Although I still find it painfully annoying at times, the universe (including ovens and other cookware) does not arrange itself to pick up after me. Things are the way they are, regardless of how I would like them to be. If anything, it seems that the universe is conspiring to wise us up to our own wishful thinking. Would you wish it to be any other way?



Oatmeal Shortbread

With a delicate caramel flavor and a substantial texture worthy of lingering over, this shortbread proves easy to make

—and not so difficult to eat either.

MAKES 1 9-INCH ROUND

1 cup butter, softened

2/3 cup brown sugar

2/3 cup rolled oats

1 cup all-purpose flour

Preheat oven to 300°. Put all the ingredients in a bowl and work them together with your fingers until you have a soft, uniform dough, using another tablespoon or two of flour if necessary so that it is not sticky. Press the dough into a 9-inch pie pan, mark the edges with the tines of a fork, and score deeply so that it will be easy to cut into pieces. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes until firm and *only* lightly browned. Be careful not to overbake or

the shortbread will be hard.

Following the score lines, slice the shortbread into wedges while still warm.

Pecan Dreams

This is a recipe from Brian's sister's friend's mom, and who knows where before that. This is the way cookies were meant to be before we worried about butter, sugar, white flour, salt, and whether or not the nuts were rancid. If you can get by that without drinking the rum and vanilla extracts, you've got yourself a cookie; otherwise, just dreams.

MAKES 3 DOZEN 1-INCH COOKIES

1 cup butter

½ cup sifted powdered sugar

2 teaspoons vanilla

2 teaspoons water or rum

½ teaspoon salt

2 cups sifted all-purpose flour

2 cups pecans, finely chopped

Sifted powdered sugar, for garnish

Preheat oven to 325°. Cream the butter and powdered sugar until fluffy, then beat in the vanilla, water or rum, and salt. Stir the flour into the butter mixture, then add the pecans, and stir to make an evenly textured dough.

Roll the dough into 1¼-inch balls and place on an unbuttered cookie sheet. Bake in the upper third of the oven for 20 minutes. Remove the cookies to a cooling rack to firm. While still warm, roll the

cookies in the powdered sugar. Remember, “no sugar, no enlightenment,”—don’t let the cookies sit around too long.

VARIATION

Use walnuts or almonds in place of the pecans.

Brian’s Chocolate Chip Cookies

You’ve had Toll House, Famous Amos, and Mrs. Fields. And among all these, you probably have your favorite. Here is ours (for now). Three things distinguish this cookie: a touch of molasses, some instant coffee, and chocolate cut to bits. (The

kitchen staff at our farm, Green Gulch, is going through a whole book of chocolate chip cookie recipes and compiling rankings, but Brian's cookies have yet to be rated.) The chocolate pieces can range in size from powder and crumbs to pieces as large as a shelled almond (anything smaller than the intended size of the cookie). If you use preformed chocolate chips, the cookie will not be the same.

MAKES 4 DOZEN COOKIES

1 cup butter, softened

2/3 cup brown sugar

2 eggs

2 teaspoons vanilla

2 teaspoons molasses

1 teaspoon instant coffee, finely powdered

1 cup white flour, unbleached
1 cup whole wheat pastry flour or
additional white flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
2 cups walnuts, finely chopped
14 ounces semisweet or bittersweet
chocolate, chopped or cut into
pieces

Preheat oven to 375°. Cream the butter until free of lumps, then add the sugar, and cream until fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, the vanilla, molasses, and coffee. Beat well. Sift the dry ingredients together and mix them in. Fold in the walnuts and chocolate pieces.

Form into balls 1 inch in diameter, place on a buttered and floured cookie

sheet. Flatten slightly, then bake for 12 minutes, or until lightly browned underneath.

Glazed Cream Cheese–Lemon Cookies

These lemony delights are a good cookie to serve with tea or with a fruit dessert such as [Gingered Figs](#).

MAKES 3 DOZEN 1-INCH COOKIES

FOR THE COOKIES:

¾ cup butter

⅓ cup cream cheese

¾ cup sugar

1 egg

1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
2 cups all-purpose flour
Walnuts or almonds, finely chopped

FOR THE LEMON GLAZE:

3 to 4 tablespoons lemon juice
1 cup sifted powdered sugar
½ cup finely chopped walnuts or almonds

Preheat oven to 375°. Cream the butter, cream cheese, and sugar until fluffy, then beat in the egg, lemon peel, and lemon juice. Sift the dry ingredients together and gently mix them into the butter mixture. Refrigerate the dough for at least 1 hour—

this makes shaping the cookies easier.

Roll the dough into balls about 1 inch in diameter and place them on an unbuttered cookie sheet. (For a nicely rounded cookie, leave the dough in balls; for a thinner cookie, flatten the dough with the bottom of a glass dipped in sugar.) Bake in the upper third of the oven for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the bottoms and edges of the cookies are light brown. Transfer the cookies to a rack, let cool briefly.

To make the glaze, stir the lemon juice into the powdered sugar—it should have the consistency of thick cream. Pour the glaze in a shallow dish to make it easy to dip the cookies. Dip the cookies in the glaze and dust with finely chopped walnuts or almonds while the glaze is still soft. The nuts don't have to be set in place

before the kids can try one—especially if they've been helping. And in this case, being a kid has no age limit.

Date and Pecan Confection

Here is a rich, moist, cookie-like confection that Brian dreamed up. Great for people with allergies to wheat, butter, or eggs, and great for those without allergies, too—this sweet tastes delicious to any tongue.

Note: If you don't have orange flower water, add ½ teaspoon of either orange peel or lemon peel, or omit.

MAKES 30 1½-INCH COOKIES

1 cup pitted moist dates

2 cups pecans, finely ground
1 teaspoon orange flower water
30 pecan halves
Powdered sugar (optional)

Preheat oven to 325°. Roughly chop the dates. Then, using the back of a wooden spoon or your fingers, mix the dates with the ground pecans and the orange flower water until a dough is formed.

Roll the lumps of dough between your palms into walnut-size balls, place on an unbuttered baking sheet, then press a pecan into the center of each. (These cookies will not spread when baking so they can be placed close together.) Bake in the upper third of the oven for 12 to 15 minutes or until the bottoms are lightly browned. Serve plain or dusted with

powdered sugar.

Thumbprints

Tasty and substantial, these *thumbprints* combine the virtues of earthy almonds and oats with the sunlight of jam—and they have no eggs and no dairy.

MAKES 3 DOZEN COOKIES

2 cups rolled oats

1 cup almonds

½ cup flour

¼ teaspoon salt

½ cup maple syrup

½ cup canola oil

*A few tablespoons raspberry jam or
other jam*

Preheat oven to 350°. Briefly chop the rolled oats in a food processor or a clean coffee mill, until a coarse meal. Grind the almonds into meal. By hand combine the oats with the almonds, flour, salt, maple syrup, and oil.

Shape into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch balls—this will be easier if your hands are wet. Put balls near each other on a greased cookie sheet. Use your thumb to make an indentation and put $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of jam in each one. These cookies may also be made larger, but the smaller size makes for a tasty morsel. Bake for about 12 to 15 minutes, or until lightly brown on the bottom, taking care not to overbake.

Mystery Bites

A holiday favorite in my family; even now I am sometimes inspired to bake these—it's traditional! My mom still has the recipe on a 3-by-5 card brown with age. I substitute butter for the original vegetable shortening.

MAKES 2 TO 3 DOZEN

½ cup butter

*1 cup plus 2 tablespoons unbleached
white flour*

1½ cups brown sugar

2 eggs

½ teaspoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

½ cup shredded coconut

1 cup chopped walnuts or almonds

Preheat oven to 350°. Cut the butter into 1 cup of the flour and ½ cup of the sugar with 2 knives or a pastry cutter until mealy. Press into the bottom of an 8 by 8 inch baking pan. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes until aromatic and the dough has begun to pull away from the sides of the pan—it does not need to brown.

Beat the eggs, and then mix in the remaining 1 cup of sugar, 2 tablespoons of flour, the baking powder, salt, and vanilla extract. When this is well mixed, fold in the coconut and nuts.

Spread over the bottom layer, and return to the oven. Bake an additional 25 to 30 minutes until the top is firm and dry. Allow to cool, then cut into squares.

Enjoying Your Food

At my Saturday meditation retreats, when we break for lunch, I often tell people, “Please enjoy your food.” All morning I have been offering various instructions in sitting and walking meditation, and by lunchtime we have also had an hour of yoga with further directives, so I may leave it at that. I don’t want eating to be another chore or yet another place to worry about whether or not you are doing it *right*. We do enough of that already, so I want to invite people to simply “please enjoy your food.”

Occasionally I might say a bit

more, although I don't want people trying too hard to have fun. I explain that enjoying our food is very important, because through enjoyment we are connecting to the world, to one another, to our inner being. When you enjoy your food you will be happy and well nourished by what you eat.

Sometimes I also explain to people that by enjoying their food, they will naturally find themselves practicing meditation. They will be paying attention to what they are eating, noticing flavors and textures and nuances of taste, because to enjoy something you need to experience it.

Also they will have to stay

present, because if they get carried away by greed, they will miss what they are eating in the present while thinking about the future possibilities. Entering into full enjoyment, they will be relaxing and opening their hearts to the food, not worrying about good and bad or right and wrong. The question of “how well am I doing this practice” will not come up.

Mostly I think it's better to say as little as possible. Then enjoying your food may be the best meditation you do all day. It takes care of itself without your having to try too hard.

Following the path of pleasure is deep and profound and richly rewarding. Sometimes people

complain that it doesn't work that way and that one needs discipline and restraint ("or I'd be a blimp!"). That's nonsense the way it's usually understood, implying that one's inherent being lacks wisdom or any sense of beauty and consequently needs to be kept in line and tamed.

Most of the problems that arise in the pursuit of pleasure are due to lack of devotion—not being fully enough committed to pleasure. Which bite of chocolate cake is no longer pleasurable? Which swallow of wine brings you down instead of up? Sure, restraint is needed, but it comes after pleasure or along with pleasure, not before and in place of pleasure.

When pleasure or enjoyment is

forbidden, then we look for stupor or unconsciousness, which is the closest we can get to relief from the insane drive to discipline and restrain and the overriding admonition not to have any fun.

Please enjoy your food.

Chocolate-Walnut Cookies

This Chocolate-Walnut Cookie is ethereal—it simply melts in your mouth—due to the added oil content of the walnuts. I could not believe how good these were the first time I tried them.

MAKES 3 DOZEN OR MORE COOKIES

*¾ cup unsalted (sweet) butter,
softened*

½ cup white sugar

1 egg

*4 ounces unsweetened baking
chocolate, melted and cooled*

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 cup finely ground walnuts

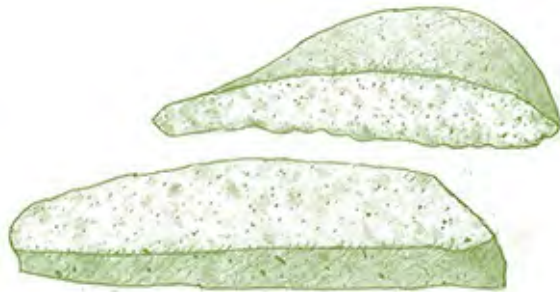
1 teaspoon baking powder

2¼ cups unbleached white flour

Preheat oven to 375°. I usually just dump everything into the bowl and mush together with my hands, but if you want . . . Cream the butter and blend in the sugar. Mix in the egg, beating well, then the chocolate, vanilla, and nuts.

Combine the baking powder with the flour, then mix into the other ingredients.

The dough should be dry enough to shape into balls with your hands without too much sticking to your fingers and wet enough that it does not crumble apart. If necessary, add more flour to make it drier. Add a spot of water or a bit more butter to moisten.



Roll the dough into balls the size of walnuts and place about 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Press them flat

with a cookie stamp, a glass, or teacup. Flour the bottom of the pressing implement if it is sticking to the cookies. Bake for 8 minutes. They are done when the top of the cookies are cracked, and the bottoms slightly browned. Better when not overbaked.

Once-Baked Biscotti

Bis is the word for “again,” indicating that these cookies are twice-baked, but I much prefer them once-baked. Perhaps we should call them uns-cotti. Even once-baked they keep well, and are quite pleasant with tea or coffee. This recipe uses anise seed and fresh orange peel in place of orange and anise extracts to make

the flavors brighter and fresher.

MAKES 4 DOZEN OR MORE

1 cup unsalted (sweet) butter, softened

2 cups white sugar

2 eggs

2 tablespoons anise seed or 2

teaspoons anise extract

Peel of 2 oranges or 1 tablespoon

orange extract

3 cups unbleached white flour

1 cup whole wheat flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

Preheat the oven to 350°. Cream the butter and sugar together, then beat in the eggs. Mince the anise seed with a knife, or blend in a spice mill. Remove the orange peel with a vegetable peeler, then chop it

or cut it into thin strips. Add the seeds and peel to the creamed mixture. Mix the flours together with the baking powder, and combine well with the creamed mixture.

Divide the dough into 4 pieces and shape each one into a log about 12 to 15 inches long. Put 2 on each of 2 baking sheets, and bake until the bottoms are browned and the top surfaces are cracked, about 20 to 25 minutes. The logs will have flattened out sideways. Let them cool a few minutes and then cut crosswise into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch pieces.

If you insist on a second baking, place the biscotti on their sides in a 300° oven until they dry out, about 10 to 15 minutes. Once the biscotti are completely cooled, they may be stored in a tin.

Blueberry Crisp

Fresh, ripe berries in the summertime are one of nature's remarkable blessings: plump and succulent, with intense, concentrated flavors—a soothing sweetness combined with a bracing tartness. I'm less interested in berries out of season, shipped halfway around the world or canned or frozen.

Often I have fresh berries for breakfast or dessert with a sprinkling of sugar and perhaps a few drops of balsamic vinegar, but they make for a quickly prepared crisp as well. Here's the story.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

12 ounces fresh berries (blueberries, blackberries, ollaliberries,

raspberries)

*2 tablespoons maple syrup, honey, or
sugar*

2 tablespoons water

2/3 cup unbleached white flour

*1/3 cup white sugar or [Rose-Scented
Sugar](#)*

1 small pinch of salt

1/3 cup unsalted (sweet) butter

Preheat oven to 375°. Place berries in an 8- or 9-inch round baking dish or ceramic casserole with the maple syrup and water. I use a touch of water here for added juiciness.

Combine flour, sugar, and salt, and then cut in the butter with 2 knives or a pastry cutter. Distribute the topping over the berries and bake for 35 to 40 minutes,

until the top is browned and the juices from the berries bubble up.



Peach or Nectarine Crisp

Peaches in season are a luscious and sensuous treat, but nectarines make a good substitute.

SERVES 6 TO 8 PEOPLE

*4 to 6 peaches or nectarines,
depending on size*

Juice and grated peel of 1 lemon

1 teaspoon cinnamon

*½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg or
¼ teaspoon mace*

⅔ cup brown sugar

1 cup whole wheat flour

2 to 3 pinches of salt

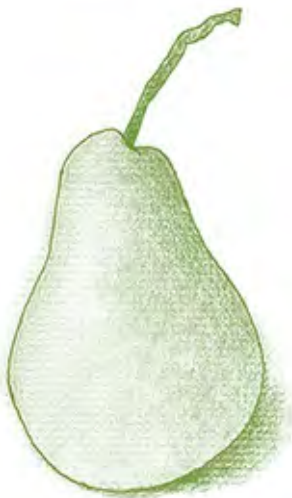
½ cup unsalted (sweet) butter

*Whipped cream or ice cream
(optional)*

Preheat oven to 375°. Put the peaches in

boiling water for 10 to 30 seconds to loosen the skins, so that they may be peeled easily—the nectarines do not need peeling. Remove from the water, drain, peel, and cut into slices. Toss with the lemon juice and peel, cinnamon, and nutmeg, and arrange in a 9 by 13 inch baking pan.

Combine the sugar with the flour and salt and cut in the butter with a pastry cutter or 2 knives. Distribute the topping over the peaches. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until the peaches are fork-tender. Serve warm with a dollop of whipped cream or a scoop of ice cream as desired.



VARIATIONS

- *Peach crisp*: I also like the peach crisp with 1 teaspoon allspice instead of the cinnamon and nutmeg.

- *Pear crisp*: Use 4 to 6 pears instead of the peaches, and ¼ teaspoon of freshly ground cardamom in place of the nutmeg.
- *Apple crisp*: Use 4 to 6 pippin, Granny Smith, or other baking apples instead of the peaches with the same combination of spices (or 1 teaspoon cinnamon).

Rose-Scented Sugar

An excellent secret addition to fresh fruit desserts. One of the roses in my garden is especially fragrant, and the aroma of the rose is what makes the sugar what it is. I first came across this item at some cooking classes with the master chefs of

Szechwan. I don't know how they make it, but this is what I do.

MAKES 4 TO 6 CUPS SUGAR

3 to 4 roses

4 to 6 cups sugar

Find some aromatic roses. Remove the petals. Layer the petals in a jar with the sugar. Cover.

Leave covered for 2 to 3 days or longer. Check the aroma. The sugar will absorb much of the moisture in the fresh flower petals. Then, if the jar is kept closed, the flower petals will begin to rot. So after a few days, when the sugar is wet, you have a choice: Remove all the flower petals, or leave the lid off the jar for some days to let the sugar dry out a bit.

Then it can be left covered and the petals removed later.

Peach or Apricot (Summer Fruit) Crisp

Summer fruit can be so sensual, intense, and intoxicating. It's hard to go wrong making a simple fruit crisp to honor the season.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

1 pound cherries, blueberries, or other summer fruit

1½ pounds peaches and/or apricots or nectarines

¼ cup sugar

¾ teaspoon dried powdered ginger

*1 teaspoon anise seed, freshly ground
or minced*

Zest of one lemon, minced

½ cup unsalted butter

1 cup flour

½ cup sugar

2 or 3 pinches of salt

Preheat oven to 375°. Wash and pit the cherries. You may use a cherry pitter, or flatten them with the side of a knife to make the pit accessible for removal. If using peaches, blanch them in boiling water for 10 to 15 seconds, so that the skins are easy to slip off. Slice the peaches and apricots or nectarines, and combine this fruit with the cherries or blueberries, the ¼ cup of sugar, the ginger, anise seed, and lemon peel. Place in a 9

by 13 inch baking pan or flat casserole.

Cut the butter into the flour, sugar, and salt, using a pastry cutter or two knives, until the mixture resembles coarse cornmeal. Distribute it over the fruit, and bake for 45 to 50 minutes or until the crumb topping has browned slightly and the fruit is fork tender. Serve with ice cream or whipped cream, if you desire. Or simply a spoonful or two of cream!

Berry (or Nectarine) Lemon Pudding

Fruit on the bottom with a lemony pudding cake topping make this a simple and simply delicious dessert.

SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE

*1 pint blackberries, blueberries,
raspberries or 2 cups sliced
nectarines, apricots, or peaches*

2 tablespoons sugar

2 eggs, separated

1 teaspoon lemon zest

3 tablespoons lemon juice

1½ tablespoons flour

1 pinch of salt

⅓ cup sugar

1½ tablespoons butter, melted

½ cup whole milk

1 tablespoon tapioca

Powdered sugar

Preheat oven to 325°. Rinse the berries and drain, or slice the larger fruit if you are using it. (If using peaches, blanch for

10 to 30 seconds and peel before slicing). Combine with the 2 tablespoons of sugar and let the flavors develop while you prepare the pudding topping.

Whisk egg yolks with lemon zest and juice. Whisk in flour, salt, and sugar until smooth. Whisk in butter and milk. Beat the egg whites until firm and gently fold them into the yolk mixture. Lightly combine the tapioca with the summer fruit.

Place the fruit in a buttered casserole and pour the batter over the top. Bake until the pudding is lightly browned and cooked through (well raised in the middle), about 45 to 50 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature, dusted with powdered sugar.

VARIATIONS

- Add 1 teaspoon rose water or

orange water to the fruit for additional flavor.

- Use rolled oats in place of the tapioca.

Lemon Pudding Cake

Fragrant and light on the palate, this cake possesses a tart refreshing flavor. The combination of pudding and cake is appealing and enjoyable, the best of two worlds in one. I like it so much—the creamy, lemony, brilliant yellow is both soothing and vitalizing—that I sometimes use it in cooking classes. Instead of fruit on the bottom as in the previous recipes, you can serve stewed fruit on the side.

SERVES 6 PEOPLE

3 tablespoons butter

1 cup sugar

Grated peel of 4 lemons

5 egg yolks

6 tablespoons all-purpose flour

5 tablespoons lemon juice

1½ cups milk or light cream

5 egg whites

⅛ teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 350°. Cream the butter, sugar, and grated lemon peels together. Then add the yolks, one at a time, beating well after each addition. When all the yolks are incorporated and the mixture is smooth and light, stir in the flour, alternating with the milk and lemon juice. Beat the egg whites and salt until stiff peaks are formed and fold into the batter.

Bake in an 8-inch baking dish or individual cups set in a [water bath](#) for 45 minutes, or until the top is golden brown and set. Serve with sweetened whipped cream if desired. I also enjoy this with stewed fruit, especially dried apricots.



Prayer Helps

Throughout the day I offer many

prayers as the occasion arises: “May you be happy, healthy, and free from suffering.” “Just as I wish to be happy, may all beings be happy.” “May you enjoy vitality and ease of well-being.”

I am not asking for everything to be better, or for all your dreams to come true, but given that things are as they are and go as they go, I wish for your well-being and happiness in the face of all the changing circumstances. Things quite likely will not go ideally or according to plan, so I wish for the growth of buoyancy, flexibility, and resiliency. I wish for the nurturing of generosity and tolerance. Not by design, but something shifting *inside*.

In the context of Buddhism I do not see prayer as necessarily directed toward a supreme being or higher power. Rather, I see it as a clarification and expression of true heart's desire, or what my teacher Suzuki Roshi called innermost request.

What is it we really want? To know and act on true heart's desire or innermost request usually involves unearthing, sifting, and sorting. Speaking it can help to reveal and clarify it.

Each day I offer a prayer before meals. I like using an ecumenical expression: "We venerate all the great teachers and give thanks for this food, the work of many people and

the offering of other forms of life.” There are many possibilities: “May this food bring us health, happiness, and well-being.” “Just as we have enough to eat today, may all beings have enough to eat.” “May this food nourish us (me) body, mind, and spirit.” It could be as simple as “Blessings on this food,” or “We thank Thee for this food.”

To have food on the table is truly a blessing, and one’s life can change profoundly by acknowledging one’s gratitude and appreciation. If you use your verse whenever you eat, even when snacking—it can be silent or spoken—it will help bring you into the present and will have a tremendous effect on how you

receive your food and assimilate it. Acknowledging the blessedness of food is also acknowledging your own blessedness, your own capacity to nourish other beings as well as your self.

Nourishment comes from receiving food (or any experience), fully taking it in, assimilating what is useful, and letting go of what isn't. In Buddhism what comes into our lives is called dharma, or teaching. In Christianity all that we receive can be viewed as a gift from God. Gratitude is called for: "We give thanks for this food, this 'teaching,' this 'gift.'"

Lately I have been reading Larry Dossey's *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of*

Medicine. Dr. Dossey is a physician who began incorporating prayer into his practice of medicine after reviewing scientific studies that demonstrated its effectiveness. He found the evidence for the efficacy of prayer to be simply overwhelming, even though this is one of the best-kept secrets in medical science.

What he points out is that prayer works regardless of religious background or belief. Also, it turns out that the most powerful prayer is not one that aims for any particular result, but one that is more all-encompassing: “Thy will be done,” or “May the best results occur.”

Along with a blessing or grace before meals or snacks, other eating

rituals can be beneficial. *Ritual* in this sense could include sitting down at a table to eat, rather than eating standing up, walking, or riding in an automobile. Another is to turn off the TV and radio and to eat in the company of family or friends, or to focus solely on eating rather than eating and reading, or eating and talking on the phone.

Each of us can determine which rituals are most helpful. In this sense ritual can be seen as ways to do things that help to heighten or deepen awareness. Noticing tastes, physical sensations, feelings, thoughts, and moods will *inform* or *enlighten* the food choices we make, and our capacity to be nourished by the food

we are eating. Giving our attention to the experience of eating is powerful, whether we are eating wholesome foods or unwholesome foods, or are overeating.

Ritual, prayer, your innermost request—please find your own way to bring yourself to your meal, to sitting down at the table and taking the time to eat and nourish yourself.

Melon Balls in Lemon-Ginger Syrup

A refreshing and colorful summer dessert.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

2 cups water

1 cup sugar

Peel of one lemon

1 ounce fresh ginger

1 small cantaloupe or other melon

*Cherries, raspberries, peaches,
apricots, or nectarines (optional)*

2 pods of cardamom

1 or 2 pinches of cinnamon

Salt

Combine water and sugar in saucepot. Over medium heat, bring to simmering. Strip the yellow of the peel off the lemon with a vegetable peeler, and cut the strips into narrow shreds. Add to the syrup. Trim the peel off the ginger, slice thinly, and cut the slices into strips. Add to the syrup. Simmer the syrup for 15 to 20

minutes with the lemon and ginger.

Cut the cantaloupe in half and scoop out the seeds. Use a melon baller, if you have one, to make decorative melon balls. Alternatively, cut the peel off the back of the melon and cut the flesh into chunks. A few cherries, raspberries, or peach / apricot / nectarine slices will make a beautiful addition.

Finish the syrup by adding the spices. Break open the cardamom pods, remove the dark seeds, and chop them with a good kitchen knife. Add seeds and cinnamon to the syrup, and pour the syrup over the fruit. Let marinate until serving, chilling if you prefer. Sprinkle on a touch of salt, if that's how you are used to eating melon.

Lime Cream and Strawberries

Don't look for the cream to be green. You have to add food coloring for that. Still, the deep red of the berries and the off white of the cream are an elegant combination, and the flavors offer a delightful interplay of sweet, tart, and the velvety butterfat. What could be better?

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

3 egg yolks

5 tablespoons sugar

1 cup half-and-half (or cream)

*Peel of 1 small lime, zested or finely
minced*

1 pint strawberries

2 tablespoons sugar

Juice of 1 to 2 limes

½ cup whipping cream

Beat the yolks and the 5 tablespoons of sugar together until light and lemon colored.



Heat the half-and-half with the lime peel. Gradually whisk the heated cream into the yolks to warm them. Then, return

this *custard* to the fire and cook gently—all the while continuing to whisk—until it coats the back of a spoon. Do not boil. It will still be liquid, but thickened slightly. (If it goes too far and scrambles, toss the mixture in the Cuisinart.) Strain out the peel and chill.

Rinse the berries and either dry them on toweling or let them drain for a while in a colander. Remove the stems (the end of a vegetable peeler is good for this). Slice them if they are large or leave them whole if they are small. Sprinkle the berries with the sugar and toss them with the lime juice. Refrigerate.

Before serving, whip the cream so that it softly peaks. Fold it into the custard. Divide the berries into serving dishes and spoon the lime cream over them. Or, put

the lime cream in dishes and divide the berries over the dishes. Contemplate your good fortune to be enjoying berries and lime cream. Let your compassion know no bounds.



Vanilla Crème Anglaise

A classic custard cream for fresh fruit, simple cakes, or poached meringues, Vanilla Crème Anglaise can be either poured on top or served underneath the dessert in a pretty pool.

MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS

5 egg yolks

¼ cup sugar

2 cups light cream or milk

*1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, or 1
teaspoon vanilla extract*

In a large bowl, beat the yolks and sugar until pale yellow and fluffy. Combine the cream or milk and vanilla in a saucepan and heat to simmering. Then gradually whisk the milk mixture into the bowl with the egg mixture.

Return the hot liquid to the saucepan. Then cook over low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spatula until the custard is thick enough to coat the back of the spatula (180° on an instant reading thermometer). While heating the custard, do not let it boil.

Immediately pour the custard into a bowl. Scrape the little seeds out of the vanilla bean and add the pods to the custard. Allow to cool completely, then strain through a fine sieve.

Persimmon Cream

This is a sensual, simple dessert. Serve it chilled, with a crisp walnut cookie (a variation of [Pecan Dreams](#)). Use the large

American persimmons, not the smaller Japanese persimmons which can be eaten while still crisp. The persimmons should be deep orange with black splotches and so soft they practically fall out of their skins. Estimate $\frac{1}{2}$ cup persimmon puree per person.

Ripe, soft persimmons

Powdered sugar or honey

Heavy cream

Marsala (optional)

Remove the skin from the persimmons and whisk the pulp lightly to break it up, leaving some texture. Add powdered sugar or honey as needed to bring up the flavor of the fruit. Using 1 part cream for every 4 parts persimmon, estimate the

amount required and whisk the cream briskly until stiff. Flavor the cream with Marsala if you wish, then fold it into the persimmon. Do not blend it completely; leave streaks of cream throughout. Mound into dessert bowls and chill. Serve with 1 or 2 walnut cookies.

Gingered Figs

An intense fruit dessert, Gingered Figs are warming and vitalizing in the cold months before the fresh fruit arrives.

SERVES 4 PEOPLE

½ pound dried mission figs

1 ounce peeled fresh ginger, thinly sliced (about two thumbs' worth)

2 cups water

½ cup honey

Sour cream and grated lemon peel

Discard the knobby stems of the figs. Rinse and put the figs in a saucepan with the ginger, water, and honey. Bring to a boil, then simmer over low heat until the figs are soft and the liquid has thickened to a dark syrup, about 25 minutes. Chill and serve cold with the sour cream flavored with a bit of grated lemon peel.



AFTERWORD

Gratitude for Cooks



Washing this Pot

Washing this pot,
metal returns to metal,
flowers brilliant and shining.
In heart work
arms, fingers, toes,
feelings, thoughts, breath,
and pot flower together.
The body sparkles with the flow
of fresh creek water splashing
over and around the rocks,
everywhere reflecting trunk,
branch, leaves, sky.

May all beings flower
in the brightness and clarity
of this heart working.

KNOWING THE LABOR AND ATTENTION THAT GO INTO COOKING, I feel an abiding gratitude for cooks, both those close and near and those far and wide; for all those who shop and wash, cut and grind, bake and sauté; and also for those who plant, hoe, and harvest. I extend this gratitude to cooks throughout time, an ancestral lineage coming down through the centuries: those who know which mushrooms are which and how to cure olives; those who fry, and those who stir.

Over the centuries such a tremendous effort has been made, endless hours of patient and impatient toil, the proverbial hunting and gathering, digging, skinning, shelling, all of which has brought us here today. Our bodies have fed on oysters and

clams, pumpkins and corn, deer and quail, creatures and plants we might no longer recognize, but even more intimately our bodies have been fed by countless unacknowledged labors.

During hours and days in sun and rain, hands have become frozen, dried, cracked, lined, so that we may eat, so that we may drink. Looking at your hand, you may catch sight of this, but especially in old, well-used hands you see this, you know this: These hands have worked. They are knowing hands; they know how to cut grapes from the vine, how to rig the fishing line. The aged aunts' hands in Venice know how to flick gnocchi curls from the mass of dough, and the women laugh as our hands, which are so clever in their own way, fail to display the same

easy dexterity.

Sometimes when we are quiet we feel it in our hands, feel it in our bodies, that effort and toil, that resourcefulness and resoluteness which has brought us here. Our bodies, our beings are full of it, replete with it. We aren't here by chance. Innumerable beings worked their hearts out to bring us here. The body is not just made of skin and bones and tissue, but is also made of this effort and caring of past generations.

Cooks everywhere embody this tradition and transmit this body to us. We arrive in this moment. Gratitude pours forth.

The Chinese Zen master Yueh-shan expressed his life like this: “Awkward in a hundred ways, clumsy in a thousand,

still I go on.”

Thank you for your sincere efforts. I wish you good health, happiness, and well-being.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I HAVE BEEN FASCINATED BY WRITING ABOUT FOOD EVER SINCE I started reading M. F. K. Fisher, who Bennett Cerf said, “writes about food as others write about love, only better.” I was ten or eleven years old, home sick with the flu. *The Gastronomical Me*, *How to Cook a Wolf*: the titles alone had always attracted me, though I had no idea what “gastronomical” was or even how to pronounce it. And I could not understand why anyone would write a whole book about cooking wolves when their meat was not available in the supermarket. I read about a world in

which food and cooking were integral to the fabric of daily life, not something to take time out for, to get out of the way, or just to fuel up on. Food was life. Life was food. Eating peaches could remind you of your father's love and humanity. M. F. K. Fisher spoke to me.

Still, I was mostly intimidated at the prospect of cooking—until I started having dinner parties. Entering what appeared to be the mysterious, foreign, secret, complex, and demanding world of cooking, I soon realized that a cook just applies heat over time. Things cook. You go along for the ride, sharing the driving.

I followed recipes and discovered that cooking was fun: the colors, shapes, aromas—an ever-changing canvas unfolding in the kitchen that only the cook

can appreciate. And I enjoyed the companionship and conviviality. After a while, I looked in books less and started imagining more, daydreaming in flavors.

In 1967 I became the head cook at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. I wanted to be famous, loved, and venerated. People mostly liked the food, but their liking did not seem to carry over to me. They said I was arrogant, bossy, short tempered, and a know-it-all. It took some convincing, but I finally had to admit I needed to work on myself, to work on how I worked and how I lived.

Over the years, when I have asked cooks at Zen Center what is the most difficult part about cooking, almost invariably the answer is: the people, having to work with others, having to

work with yourself. The food takes care of itself.

So I remain convinced that the best cooking does not depend on anything more special than the willingness to do the work of putting yourself on the line, on the table. You get to know the ingredients, within and without, and how changeable they are, and put them together for everyone to see and, even more revealing, to taste.

At the Zen Center in San Francisco, I have been guest manager, head of the meditation hall, head resident teacher, president, chairman of the board. I find it a great irony: going to the mountains to attain true realization and becoming an executive officer in a huge “corporation.” At Greens, our restaurant in San

Francisco, I was busboy, dishwasher, waiter, host, cashier, floor manager, wine buyer, manager.

But none of this explains the real work. “My job,” I’ve said in response to people’s queries, “is to be happy. Others may be more naturally happy, but I have to work at it.” It’s good work and always available. Though the pay is not always so great, you are rewarded with friends and food and places to stay.

I want people to be happy. I want all beings to be happy. Not the happy of getting what you imagined wanting, but the happy of kind mind, joyful mind, big mind; the happy of a day focused and absorbed in the vastness, a day of tending, of attending—“You have to be present to win!” Jack Kornfield reminds us—the

happy of being with, not being boss, of greeting, meeting, receiving . . . and resonating.

I am still visiting Tassajara for a month or so each summer, leading workshops on Zen and Cooking and Zen and Baking. To have someone cook for me is always a blessing and a joy, so especially when I sit down to eat at Tassajara I feel welcomed and cared for. There's a place for me at the table, and miraculously (I'm not in the kitchen) food appears.

I wish our world was not so busy, that more people would make or find the time to cook, to touch and taste, sense and breathe. "Make or find the time" already reminds me that *time* is *choice*, and that we find time to cook when we choose to cook. This choosing to be present in the

midst of our life nourishes the fundamental well-being of ourselves and others.

I can be reached through my Web site, www.peacefulseasangha.com, or by writing to me c/o Shambhala Publications, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02115.

ABOUT TASSAJARA

TASSAJARA IS AN ISOLATED, NARROW VALLEY AT THE END OF A fourteen-mile dirt road that winds three thousand feet up into the mountains and down. The road passes madrone, buckeye, oak, pine, ferns, brush, manzanita, yucca, and, at the crest along the ridge, looks east to the Salinas Valley, west to the Coast Range. Along here, there are evenings when the moon is rising in the east while the sun sets in the west. If not really spectacular, these mountains are rugged and wide ranging. Driving the road takes fifty minutes to one hour, so when you get to Tassajara, you

feel relieved to have arrived somewhere at last.

News does not always reach here right away. No television, no radios; any newspapers are at least a day old. Big news comes by phone if the phone is working and if somebody hears it ringing and answers it. Formerly a single wire strung to trees made the connection—most of the time, and now a radio phone does the same.

Tassajara is a Zen Buddhist meditation center, open to visitors in the summer.

The autumn, winter, and spring months are a time of solitude, of retreat, with thirty to fifty residents, and no visitors. Each day seeking the way to live fully, seeking the way to untangle the tangle within and without, seeking how to realize

and express the deepest truth in everyday ways—while following a schedule with meditation, study, and work.

In summer months, May through Labor Day, we open our gate to visitors, accommodating the public with overnight facilities and three family-style vegetarian meals daily. We cook for seventy to eighty guests and sixty students or more daily. We have been at it since the summer of 1967.

Guests traveling the long road find themselves remote and distant from the anxieties and turmoil of the daily grind. They can relax and let be, enjoy the sun and water, the swimming pool and swimming hole downstream, the hot baths upstream along with the steam rooms. A hot springs resort since the 1880s,

Tassajara's baths utilize water preheated nature's way deep beneath the surface, and piped through fissures to catch basins, holding tank, and finally to the baths. Luxurious. No need here to do, to accomplish, to produce—it is enough to walk, to read, to breathe easily and rest assured, and, of course, to eat.

For our guests we want to cook something special, something delicious, something to dream about. Not everything can be absolutely fabulous, but the most frequent comment—"I ate too much"—indicates that the food is very good. Perhaps the food is that good. Still, the fresh mountain air helps, the hot baths help, and the relative absence of snack foods must help. As an old German saying has it, "Hunger is the best cook," so if you

want people to love your food, then take them for a walk in the woods first and skip the peanuts.

What makes food special is what goes into the cooking. What goes into our cooking is generosity more than genius, kindness more than creativity. We labor. What makes food—and everything else—special is the everyday caring, considerate effort. No one works this way for pay. We work this way because we want to make our best effort. Engaging, awakening activity springs up, is summoned, called forth, invited—the guests are waiting.

None of our staff is professional, including the cooks. We do not live and work here to make a living, but to fulfill our lives. We have been drawn to the

mountains, drawn to meditation, drawn to a life we create and share together.

The cook's day begins early, long before the sun clears the nearby ridge. Before 5:00 A.M., usually struggling to become vertical, to reach consciousness, to shake off sleep, the cook rises. Light, aside from the stars and moon, is from kerosene lamps and lanterns. Outside, the mountains, trees, rocks appear a shadow world without color. The cool air activates the lungs and draws out sleep. The day, like the people not fully awake, walks in slippers. One's thoughts grow so loud in this stillness; it is like someone speaking right inside your head.

The most striking sound is wood on wood, intermittent, the signal for people to gather, for meditation, or whatever it is

we do, sitting quietly together on black cushions. Breathing. Facing the wall, coming to grips, getting a handle on what it is like to be alive and somewhat awake in the early morning. Tassajara is a peaceful place, a safe place to unwind, to “take off the blinders, and unpack the saddlebags,” to make yourself at home with yourself. Settling into the depths. Falling right through the depths. Awakening in the moment. How is it, after all?

While sitting quietly, a cook might visualize how the food was, how it could be, and how to remain composed in the midst of cooking, how to be unfazed and not frazzled, or fried. Entering a universe of imagined tastes and smells where dreams speak to the tongue, a cook might

roam and wander to return at last to the fresh, inspiring taste of mountain air.

You're invited to join in.

Tassajara can be reached through the San Francisco Zen Center Web site, www.sfzc.org, or by writing to Tassajara, 39171 Tassajara Road, Carmel Valley, California 93924.

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Radiatore with

grains. *See also specific grains*

Basic Grain Soup

Grain Soup

Onions and Grains

Refried Grains

with vegetables

Granola, Tassajara

grape dessert

grapefruit

Apple or Pear Salad with

Baked Grapefruit

Grapefruit-Avocado Salad

Mixed Green Salad with

Gravy (Brown Sauce)

green beans, string beans, wax beans

Boiled Green Beans

Cheese on Beans

Green Bean Soup with Basil Butter

Green Bean and Tomato Salad with
Feta Cheese

Green Beans Roasted with Garlic

Green Beans with Sesame Paste and
Garlic

Sautéed Green Beans

Green Corn Soup

green onions, scallions

Frosted Peas with Green Onion

Red Cabbage with Sake and Green
Onions

green peppers. *See also* bell peppers

Radish and Carrot Salad with
in salads

green sauce, for Tortilla Casserole

greens. *See also specific greens*

Greens, Orange and Onion

Greens Get Egged On

Sauté-Steaming Greens

Winter Green Salad with Walnuts and

Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

grilling, basic technique

guacamole

Asparagus with Guacamole

basic recipe

Half-and-Half Pie Crust

Hazelnut-Chocolate Cake

Herb and Spice Dressing

herbs

hijiki

Homemade Chili Powder

Honey Butter

honeydew. *See melons*

Hubbard squash. *See* winter squash

icings, glazes, and sauces

Crème Anglaise

for Hazelnut-Chocolate Cake

Mocha Icing

Persimmon Cream

Jack cheese

Jerusalem artichokes

jicama

Pineapple-Jicama Salad

using

kale

Kale Salad

Kale and White Bean Soup

kidney beans, in chili

Kim Chee

Kimpira

kitchens and kitchen equipment

cleaning up

equipment overview

first aid

knives

making comfortable

kombu seaweed

lasagna. *See* pasta

leeks

Potato-Leek Soup

Simply Leeks

lemons

Berry (or Nectarine) Lemon Pudding

Broccoli with

Cardamom-Lemon Soda Bread

Chard with

Garlic-Lemon Vinaigrette

Glazed Cream Cheese–Lemon
Cookies

Lemon-Ginger Syrup

Lemon Mayonnaise

Lemon Pudding Cake

Lemon Vinaigrette

Lemonade Lettuce

Lentil Soup with
Yellow Peas with

lentils

Everyday Lentil Soup

Lentil Soup with Cumin, Coriander,
and Lemon

Lentils with Onions and Cheese

Lentil-Tomato-Mint Soup

lettuce

Cream of Lettuce Soup

Lemonade Lettuce

lettuce salads

Potato Salad with Arugula and Garlic-
Mustard Vinaigrette

Two-Step Salad Toss

Warm Radicchio Salad

limes

Ancho Chili–Lime Butter

Lime Cream and Strawberries

Lime-Cilantro Vinaigrette

Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette

Melon Salad with

Pineapple-Jicama Salad with

Spicy Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette

Macaroni Salad with Tomatoes, Bell
Pepper, and Red Onion

mango

Purple Cabbage Salad with

using

Marinated Tofu

marjoram, as garnish

Mashed Potatoes

Mashed Yams

mayonnaise. *See* salad dressing

melons

Cantaloupe Dreams

Melon Balls in Lemon-Ginger Syrup

Melon Platter with Avocado and

Fresh Figs

Melon Salad

Melon Salad with Lime and Mint

menus, sample

Milk, Rice with Cheese and

millet

Millet Bread

mincing, basic technique

Minestrone

mint

Chinese Cabbage Salad with

Lentil-Tomato-Mint Soup
Melon Salad with
Mint Chutney (or Salsa)

miso

in soup

Tofu-Miso Stew

Mocha Cake with Mocha Icing

Moussaka

mozzarella cheese, in radicchio salad

muffins

Blueberry Muffins

Ginger Muffins

Multigrain Pancakes

mung beans

sprouting and using

Stir-Fried Bean Sprouts

mushrooms

Barley-Mushroom Soup

cream of tomato soup with

Dried Mushroom Sauce

Mushroom Crepes with Mushroom
Sauce

Mushroom Filo Pastry

Mushroom Quiche

Mushroom Stock

Mushroom Tofu Stroganoff

Mushroom-Ricotta (or Tofu) Lasagna

Mushrooms with Bok Choy

Parsnips, Turnips, Mushrooms

Peas Rolled in

Polenta and Mushroom Gratin

Radiatore with

Sautéed Mushrooms

Tassajara Brown Gravy with
Tofu with

Mustard Butter Pasta with Broccoli

Mustard Greens, Potato Soup with

Mystery Bites (cookies)

nectarines. *See also* summer fruits

Baby Greens with

Berry (or Nectarine) Lemon Pudding

Peach or Nectarine Crisp

Neufchâtel. *See* cheese

Nondairy “Cream” Soup

nori

nuts. *See also* butters *and specific nuts*

Basic Nut Sauce

Cheese and Nut Loaf

Nut Loaf Sauce

Nut Milk (for sauces or soups)

Nut-Butter Dressing

Nut-Buttered Beans

Roasted Nuts or Seeds

Oatmeal Shortbread

olives

Broccoli with

Greek Pizza with
Olive Oil Bread with
Spinach Salad with
Tomato Salad with
White Bean Salad with

omelets. *See* eggs
onions

Baked Onions

Baked Onions with Balsamic Vinegar
cream of onion soup with cheese

Cumin, Cheese, and Onion Tart
green onions, scallions

Greens, Orange and Onion

Lentils with

Macaroni Salad with

Onion Home Fries

Onion Soup

Onions and Grains

Potato Soup with

Red Onion Pickle

Sautéed Onions

Sea Vegetables with Earth Vegetables

Spinach Salad with

Tomato-Onion Soup

oranges

Banana Orange Dessert

Carrot Soup with

Chinese Cabbage Salads with

Greens, Orange and Onion

Orange and Green on White

Orange Salad with Sprouts

Orange-Celery Salad

Orange-Date Dessert

Orange-Raisin-Walnut Cake

Radish Salad with

Stewed Prunes with

Yams Baked with

Oven-Fried Potatoes

pancakes

Buttermilk Pancakes

Gingerbread Pancakes

Multigrain Pancakes

pan-frying, basic technique

Pan-Grilled Asparagus

papaya

parsley

Parsley Rice

parsnips

Parsnips, Turnips, Mushrooms

pasilla

pasta

Basic Boiled Pasta

Macaroni Salad with Tomatoes, Bell
Pepper, and Red Onion

Multicolored Pasta and Vegetables
with Dry Vermouth

Mushroom-Ricotta (or Tofu) Lasagna

Mustard Butter Pasta with Broccoli
Radiatore with Mushroom, Almonds,
and Goat Cheese

peaches. *See also* summer fruits

Peach or Apricot (Summer Fruit)

Crisp

Peach or Nectarine Crisp

Peaches and Cream

peanuts, peanut butter

Peanut Butter Balls

Peanut Butter Dressing

Satay Peanut Sauce

pears

Apple or Pear Salad with Citrus

Hot Fruit

Pears or Apples, Sliced

Warm Pear Slices with Tangerines

peas

Fresh, Green and Succulent Peas

Frosted Peas with Green Onion
Peas Rolled in Carrots and
Mushrooms

Yellow Pea with Cumin and Lemon

pecans

Date and Pecan Confection

Pecan Dreams

Persimmon Cream

pesto

pickles

Kim Chee

Red Onion Pickle

Turnip Pickle

Pineapple-Jicama Salad with Avocado,
Chilies, and Lime

Pinto Beans, Refried

pizza

Goat Cheese-Zucchini Pizza

Greek Pizza

Pizza Dough

Pizza Mexicana

Pizza Venezia

Tassajara Calzone

plums. *See* summer fruits

poaching eggs. *See* eggs

polenta. *See also* corn

Polenta Mexicana

Polenta and Mushroom Gratin

Polenta-Eggplant Gratin

pomegranate vinegar, for beet salad

poppy seed cake

potatoes

Baked Potatoes

Beet Soup with

Home-Fried Potatoes

Mashed Potatoes

Oven-Fried Potatoes

Potato Bread

Potato Cakes

Potato Gratin with Celery Root and
Fennel

Potato Salad with Arugula and Garlic-
Mustard Vinaigrette

Potato Salad with Corn and Red
Pepper

Potato Salads

Potato Soup to Start With, A

Potato Soup with Caramelized Onions

Potato Soup with Mustard Greens

Potatoes Baked with Wine and Cream

Potatoes Roasted with Garlic and
Rosemary

Potato-Leek Soup

Sauced Potato Gratin

Scalloped Potatoes with Smoked
Cheese

pressure cookers

provolone cheese, tomato salad with
Prune-Apple Combo

prunes

Prune-Apple Combo

Stewed Prunes with Orange and
Cinnamon

puddings

Berry (or Nectarine) Lemon Pudding

Breakfast Bread Pudding

Lemon Pudding Cake

pumpkin. *See* winter squash

Quesadillas, cheese

Quiche, Basic

Radiatore with Mushroom, Almonds, and
Goat Cheese

Radicchio Salad, Warm Fresh

Mozzarella, Avocado, and Fire-

Roasted Walnuts

radishes

Apple-Radish Relish

Beet Salad with

Kale Salad with

Radish and Carrot Salad with Green

Bell Pepper

Radish Salad

Radish-Raisin Salad

raisins, currants

Carrot-Ginger Salad with

Chard with

Currant-Cream Scones

Hot Fruit

Orange-Raisin-Walnut Cake

Radish-Raisin Salad

ratatouille

red cabbage. *See also* cabbage

Red Cabbage and Apple

Red Cabbage with Sake and Green Onions

red chili paste

Red Onion Pickle

red peppers. *See also* bell peppers

Avocado Salad with

Corn Salad with

Grilled Eggplant Salad with

Potato Salad with

Purple Cabbage Salad with

Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

roasting

red sauce, for Tortilla Casserole

Refried Grains

Refried Pinto Beans

relishes. *See* chutneys, relishes, salsas

rice

Boiled White Rice

Fried Rice

Mediterranean Rice Salad

Parsley Rice

Pressure-Cooked Brown Rice

Properly Cooked Brown Rice

Rice with Cheese and Milk

Spanish Rice

Tomato-Rice Soup with Cheese

Whole Barley with

ricotta cheese. *See* cheese

roasting, basic techniques

romaine lettuce

rosemary

Olive Oil Bread with

Potatoes Roasted with

Rose-Scented Sugar

rutabagas. *See* turnips, rutabagas

rye bread

saffron, in garbanzo bean stew

Sage Biscuits

Sake and Green Onions, Red Cabbage
with

salad dressings. *See also* salads

Avocado Dressing

Basic Tassajara Dressing

Easy Asian Dressing

Foundation Dressing

Garlic Vinaigrette

Garlic-Lemon Vinaigrette

Garlic-Mustard Vinaigrette

general information

Herb and Spice Dressing

Lemon Mayonnaise

Lemon Vinaigrette

Lime-Cilantro Vinaigrette

Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette

Mayonnaise with Soy Sauce and

Balsamic Vinegar

mayonnaise variations

Nut-Butter Dressing

Peanut Butter Dressing

Spicy Lime-Cumin Vinaigrette

Tahini Dressing

Tahini-Tamari Dressing

Thick Tahini Dressing

Tofu Bob's Herb Dressing

salads

Arugula Salad with Avocado and
Cashew Nuts

Asian Slaw

Avocado Salad with Roasted Red
Pepper Sauce

Baby Greens with Nectarines, Goat
Cheese, and Fire-Roasted Walnuts

Beet Salad with Pomegranate Vinegar
and Pomegranate Syrup

Beet Salad with Radish and Cucumber

Beet Salad with Watercress

Cabbage Salads

Carrot-Ginger Salad with Golden
Raisins and Sour Cream

Cauliflower Salad

Celebrating Tomatoes!

Chinese Cabbage Salad with Garlic
Vinaigrette

Chinese Cabbage Salad with Orange
and Tahini Dressing

Chinese Cabbage Salad with Oranges
and Mint

Corn Salad

Corn Salad with Zucchini and Roasted
Red Pepper

Cottage Cheese Salad

Cucumber and Cantaloupe Salad

Cucumber and Yogurt Salad

Cucumber Salad

Eggplant Salad

Endive Salad with Grilled Figs and
Fire-Roasted Walnuts

Excellent Apple Salad

Five-Element Salad with Spicy Garlic
Vinaigrette

Garbanzo Bean Salad with Garlic-
Lemon Vinaigrette

Garden Salad

Garnished Tomato Platter

Grapefruit-Avocado Salad

Green Bean and Tomato Salad with
Feta Cheese

green peppers in

Grilled Eggplant Salad with Roasted
Red Peppers

Kale Salad with Radish, Apple,
Avocado, and Sunflower Seeds

Kim Chee

Lemonade Lettuce

lettuce salads

Macaroni Salad with Tomatoes, Bell
Pepper, and Red Onion

Mediterranean Rice Salad

Melon Platter with Avocado and
Fresh Figs

Melon Salad

Melon Salad with Lime and Mint

Mixed Green Salad with Grapefruit,
Avocado, and Lime-Cumin
Vinaigrette

Mixed Vegetable Salad

Orange Salad with Sprouts

Orange-Celery Salad

Pineapple-Jicama Salad with
Avocado, Chilies, and Lime

Potato Salad with Arugula and Garlic-
Mustard Vinaigrette

Potato Salad with Corn and Red
Pepper

Potato Salads

Pungent Cucumbers

Purple Cabbage Salad with Mango,
Red Bell Pepper, Smoked
Almonds, and Avocado

Radish and Carrot Salad with Green
Bell Pepper

Radish Salad

Radish Salad with Sprouts and
Oranges

Radish-Raisin Salad

raisins, dates, or figs in

Red Onion Pickle

Spinach Salad with Apples and
Almonds

Spinach Salad with Feta Cheese, Red
Onions, and Olives

Summer Salad Platter
Summer Salad with Summer Squash
Tabbouli Salad
Thin-Slice Cabbage Salad
Tomato Salad
Tomato Salad with Avocado and
Black Olives
Tomato Salad with Provolone and
Fresh Herbs
Two-Step Salad Toss
Warm Radicchio Salad with Fresh
Mozzarella, Avocado, and Fire-
Roasted Walnuts
Warm Red Cabbage Salad with Dried
Fruit and Feta
White Bean Salad with Olives and
Zucchini
Wilted Spinach Salads
Winter Green Salad with Walnuts and

Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

Yogurt Dressing

Zucchini Salad

Salsa de Mancha Manteles

salsas. *See* chutneys, relishes, salsas

salting vegetables. *See also* vegetables

Satay Peanut Sauce

saucés. *See also* chutneys, relishes, salsas

Ancho Chili Sauce with Roasted

Garlic

Basic Nut Sauce

Brown Sauce (Gravy)

cream sauce

Cream Cheese Sauce

Dark Tomato Sauce with Chili Negro

and Cocoa

Dried Mushroom Sauce

Everyday Tomato Sauce

Fragrant White Sauce

Herbed Tomato Sauce

mushroom

Mushroom Sauce

Nut Loaf Sauce

Nut Milk for

red and green sauces

Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

Salsa de Mancha Manteles

Satay Peanut Sauce

Sauce for Chinese-Style Vegetables

Spicy Tomato Sauce

Sweet-and-Sour Sauce

Tartar Sauce with Fresh Basil

Tassajara Brown Gravy with

Mushrooms

Tomato-Chili Sauce with Roasted

Sesame

White Sauce

sautéing, basic technique

scallions. *See* green onions, scallions
Scalloped Potatoes with Smoked Cheese
scalloped squash. *See* summer squash
Scones, Cream-Currant
scrambled eggs. *See* eggs
sea vegetables, types of
Sea Vegetables with Earth Vegetables
searing, basic technique
seeds

Carrots with Roasted Sesame Seeds

Corn-Sesame Breakfast Cake

Green Beans with Sesame Paste and
Garlic

Roasted Nuts or Seeds

Sesame Salt (Goma Shio)

Sesame Soybeans

Spinach Goes Bananas with Sesame
sprouting

Tahini Dressing

Tahini Shortbread

Thick Tahini Dressing

Three-Seed Bread

Tomato-Chili Sauce with Roasted
Sesame

simmering, basic technique

slicing, basic technique

Smoked Cheese, Scalloped Potatoes with
snow peas

soups

Alternate Cream of Vegetable Soup
Using Cauliflower

Barley-Mushroom Soup

Basic Bean Soup

Basic Cream of Vegetable Soup/Using
Cauliflower

Basic Grain Soup

Beet Soup with Red Potatoes

Breakfast Soup

Carrot Soup with Orange

Cauliflower-Tomato Soup with
Herbes de Provence

Chard Soup

Chickpea and Spinach Soup

cold soups, techniques

Cool Green Soup

Cream of Lettuce Soup

Cream of Spinach Soup

cream soups, techniques & variations

dried mushrooms in

Everyday Lentil Soup

Fruit Soup

Gazpacho

Grain Soup

Greek Lemon Soup

Green Bean Soup with Basil Butter

Green Corn Soup

Kale and White Bean Soup

Lentil Soup with Cumin, Coriander,
and Lemon

Lentil-Tomato-Mint Soup

Minestrone

mushroom

Nondairy “Cream” Soup

Nut Milk for

Onion Soup

Perfection Squash Soup

Potato Soup to Start With, A

Potato Soup with Caramelized Onions

Potato Soup with Mustard Greens

Potato-Leek Soup

Simple Beet Soup

Simple Cabbage Soup

Spicy Cashew-Tomato Soup

Spinach or Chard Soup

stocks for

Sweet-and-Sour Cabbage Soup

Tomato-Onion Soup

Tomato-Rice Soup with Cheese

Winter Squash Soup with Apple,
Cumin, and Cardamom

Yellow Pea with Cumin and Lemon

Yogurt Soup

sour cream

Apple-Walnut-Sour Cream Bread

Carrot-Ginger Salad with

Sour Cream-Poppy Seed Cake

soy sauce

soybeans. *See also* tofu

Sesame Soybeans

Soyburgers

Sweetened Soy Beans

Tahini-Tamari Dressing

Spanish Rice

Spice Cake, Quick Vegan

spinach. *See also* greens

Chickpea and Spinach Soup

Cream of Spinach Soup

Garbanzo Bean Stew with

Greek Pizza with

Mushroom Filo Pastry with

Simply Spinach

Spinach or Chard Soup

Spinach Goes Bananas with Sesame

Spinach Salad with Feta Cheese, Red

Onions, and Olives

Steamed Whole Spinach

Tassajara Smoked Cheese and

Spinach Pie

Tofu with

Wilted Spinach Salads

split peas, cooking

“Sponge Cake” Omelet

spreads. *See also* butters; sauces

Almond Paté

Baked Goat Cheese

Cream Cheese Ball or Log

Herbed Feta-Ricotta Spread

Spring Vegetable Timbale

sprouts

squash. *See* summer squash; winter squash

steaming, basic technique

stewing, basic technique

stir-frying, basic techniques

stocks

Asian-Style Stock

Mock Beef Stock

Mushroom Stock

Vegetable Stocks

Strawberries, Lime Cream and

sugar, rose-scented

summer fruits. *See also specific fruits*

Cooked Summer Fruit

Fresh Fruit Compote

Pale Green Snow

summer squash

Goat Cheese-Zucchini Pizza

Sautéed Zucchini

Stir-Fried Summer Squash

Summer Salad with

White Bean Salad with

Zucchini Salad

sun-dried tomatoes. *See* tomatoes

Sunflower Seeds, Kale Salad with

Radish, Apple, Avocado, and

sweet potatoes, yams. *See* yams

Sweet-and-Sour Cabbage Soup

Sweet-and-Sour Dinner Carrots

Sweet-and-Sour Sauce

Tabbouli Salad

tahini (sesame paste)

Bulgur-Tahini Casserole

Tahini Dressing

Tahini Shortbread

Tahini-Tamari Dressing

Tamarind-Date Chutney

Tangerines, Warm Pear Slices with

Tartar Sauce with Fresh Basil

Tassajara Brown Gravy with Mushrooms

Tassajara Calzone

Tassajara Dressing, Basic

Tassajara Granola

Tassajara Smoked Cheese and Spinach
Pie

Tassajara Vegetable Sauce

teriyaki marinade

Three-Seed Bread

Thumbprints

tofu. *See also* soybeans

Alaskan Tofu

Baked Tofu

Grilled Marinated Tofu

Marinated Tofu

Mushroom Tofu Stroganoff

Mushroom-Ricotta (or Tofu) Lasagna

Scrambled Tofu

Tofu Burritos

Tofu Cabbage Grill

Tofu Cutlets

Tofu Pad Thai

Tofu Smoothie

Tofu Teriyaki Gratin

Tofu with Mushrooms, Carrot, and
Spinach

Tofu-Miso Stew

tomatoes

Baked Beets with

Baked Tomatoes

Baked Tomatoes with Herbs

Cauliflower-Tomato Soup with

Herbes de Provence

Celebrating Tomatoes! salad

cream of tomato soup with mushrooms

Dark Tomato Sauce with Chili Negro
and Cocoa

Eggplant-Tomato Sauce Casserole

Everyday Tomato Sauce

Garnished Tomato Platter

Green Bean and Tomato Salad with
Feta Cheese

Herbed Tomato Sauce

Lentil-Tomato-Mint Soup

Macaroni Salad with

Spicy Cashew-Tomato Soup

Spicy Tomato Sauce

sun-dried

Sun-Dried Tomato Focaccia

Tomato Salad

Tomato Salad with Avocado and

Black Olives

Tomato Salad with Provolone and
Fresh Herbs

Tomato Sauce for Moussaka

Tomato Sautéed Cabbage

Tomato-Chili Sauce with Roasted
Sesame

Tomato-Onion Soup

Tomato-Rice Soup with Cheese

Tomatoes and Green Peppers

Tortilla Casserole

turnips, rutabagas

Parsnips, Turnips, Mushrooms

Roasted Turnips or Rutabagas

Turnip Pickle

Turnip Stir-Fry

Vanilla Crème Anglaise

vegetable pies and quiches

Basic Quiche, A

Cabbage Pie

Cumin, Cheese, and Onion Tart

Half-and-Half Pie Crust

pastry dough for

Tassajara Smoked Cheese and

Spinach Pie

vegetables. *See also* vegetables, mixed
and specific vegetables

with beans

with grains

in omelets

preparing, general techniques

in sauces

in soups

vegetables, mixed

Baked Vegetable Platter

Basic Recipe for Casseroles

Bulgur Pilaf with Vegetables

Mixed Vegetables with Corn
Multicolored Pasta and
Roasted Vegetables with Satay Peanut
Sauce

Simple Mixed Vegetable Grill on
Skewers

Simple Ratatouille, A
Spring Vegetable Timbale
Summery Baked Vegetable Platter
Vegetable Stocks

vinaigrettes. *See* salad dressings

Vinegar, Balsamic, Baked Onions with

wakame

walnuts

Apple–Walnut–Sour Cream Bread
Baby Greens with
Banana Orange Dessert
Chocolate-Walnut Cookies

Endive Salad with
Orange-Raisin-Walnut Cake
Warm Radicchio Salad with
Winter Green Salad with

water baths

Watercress, Beet Salad with
watermelon. *See* melons

wheat, cracked (bulgur)

Wheat Veneration

white beans. *See* beans

White Bread with Cornmeal

White Sauce

Whole-Milk Yogurt

Winter Green Salad with Walnuts and
Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

winter squash.

Perfection Squash Soup

Roasted Winter Squash

Steamed Winter Squash

Winter Squash Soup

yams, sweet potatoes

Home-Fried Yams (or Sweet
Potatoes)

Just Yams and More

Mashed Yams

Yams Baked with Dried Apricots and
Orange

Yellow Pea with Cumin and Lemon

yellow peppers. *See* bell peppers

yogurt

Dry-Milk Yogurt

Whole-Milk Yogurt

Yogurt Dressing

Yogurt Soup

zucchini. *See also* summer squash

Corn Salad with

Goat Cheese–Zucchini Pizza
Sautéed Zucchini
White Bean Salad with
Zucchini Salad

Also available: The Tassajara Bread
Book

"The bible for bread baking" — *Washington Post*

The Tassajara Bread Book



Edward Espe Brown

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