

Our Food

Roland Stephen and Holly Brewer

2703 Everett Avenue
Raleigh, NC 27607
(919) 832-7638



Introduction

The reason for this collection is simple. Over the years many people have asked for recipes after eating our food. Having friends at table is, perhaps, our greatest pleasure. If that pleasure may be shared by writing down our favorite dishes, then so much the better. But I do not imagine that these dishes are unique. When I look over these various offerings I am struck by the fact that they are neither exotic, nor, in most cases, very hard to do. Their virtue, if virtue there be, is that they are reliable and have been approved by friends and family on many occasions.

I believe that technique in the kitchen is more important than a recipe. Once you know how to do something, then what combination of ingredients you use is changeable, governed by the market and by your whim. However, most people (including many friends and relatives) like recipes, and so it is in the form of recipes that our kitchen favorites are described below. But these recipes come with a disclaimer. The quantities listed are very approximate. They should work, but trust your own judgement—and your own taste—if it seems to you that any particular requirement is suspect.

I have suggested wine, and on occasion beer, to go with some of the dishes. I hardly know what I am talking about. In general you should decide on what to drink to please yourself, there are no hard and fast rules.

You may make suggestions or complaints, and see the latest version of this collection, at: www2.chass.ncsu.edu/stephen/receipt1.html . A pdf version is available on-line, and I will incorporate changes into it when the spirit moves me.

Good luck, and remember always that food is love, and that our food is no exception.

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* Vegetarian or vegetarian version

Scrambled Eggs

As my friend Howard once said, long ago, scrambled eggs are not the same thing as chopped-up omelette. These eggs must be cooked *slowly*. To feed four (note the smoked salmon version below).

7 Eggs

1-11/2 cups whole milk

1/3 yellow onion, minced

3 tbs butter

2 tbs dried whole thyme

1 tbs dried lavender

Salt and Pepper

Using a heavy skillet or non-stick pan turn the gas on medium-low (Yes, gas is best...) and melt the butter. Add the onion, thyme and lavender (more than you think you will like). Cook slowly, stirring occasionally so that the butter becomes infused with the herbs. Meanwhile, crack the eggs into a large, high-sided mixing bowl and whisk vigorously. The eggs should become smooth and light-yellow in color. Whisk in the milk. Add 2½ tsp of salt (and pepper to taste).

After the onion has been cooking for 4-5 minutes, add the egg mixture to the pan, stirring it with the whisk (a metal whisk on a non-stick pan will ruin it—buy a plastic one which seem to be available in many stores). At this point you may turn up the gas to medium, but you must stand over the eggs and stir them regularly. As soon as the eggs start to thicken at the edge, turn down the gas and stir thoroughly with the whisk. Keep stirring! If the eggs start to thicken too quickly and unevenly, slow down the cooking by moving the pan off the ring and whisking them more quickly. When the overall consistency is the way you like your eggs—then they are finished. Moist is better than dry, in my view.

Enjoy immediately!

If you want to add smoked salmon, first add 1 tbs of fennel seed and 1 clove crushed garlic to the herb mixture. Then, just before the eggs are finished, add smoked salmon (cut into thin strips), folding it carefully into the eggs. (Note you will need to add less salt if you use smoked salmon).

Winter Squash Soup

I like the distinctive taste of South Asia in this soup. I have found no better way to take advantage of all the great squashes that come to market in the fall.

2½ - 3 lbs squash (acorn, butternut, banana etc.) peeled, roughly diced
1 yellow onion, diced
3 tbs medium curry powder
2 tbs grated ginger
2 cloves of garlic, crushed
½ cup rice vinegar
vegetable stock
salt and ground black pepper
2 tbs pickling spice, tied in a cheesecloth bag (hint—use a tea ball if you have one!)
¼ cup mango chutney

Sauté the onion in olive oil for a minute or two, add the curry powder, garlic and ginger (and a little more oil if necessary) and cook on a medium high heat for a minute or two. Add the vinegar, vegetable stock, pickling spice and squash (enough stock to just cover the squash). Add salt and cook until the squash is perfectly tender. Remove the bag of pickling spice, add the chutney, and purée the squash (a hand held blender in the pan is best, but a food processor works well too). Check the seasoning carefully, more salt will probably be required. Serve with plain yogurt, chopped, fresh cilantro, and toasted, seasoned pita bread.

This soup makes a strong beginning to any meal, and should probably be followed by something with just as much character.

Cioppino

This feisty fish stew is first cousin to the seafood pasta also described in this collection, but lighter and with a little more spice. All you need for a perfect, informal dinner is this dish, crusty french bread and a simple green salad. Add spice to suit your taste. Serves 6-8.

3 tbs clarified butter
1 fennel bulb, sliced
3 tbs minced shallots
2-3 cloves of garlic, crushed
Red pepper flakes to taste
1 tbs dried thyme
Juice of one lemon
1 cup white wine
4 cups fish stock (see the directions for stock in the poached salmon recipe)
1 large can tomato juice (no salt or seasoning)
2 tbs fresh thyme, finely chopped
2-3 tbs fresh oregano, finely chopped
½ cup of finely chopped parsley
2 zucchini, finely diced
1½ lbs fresh seafood (firm fish, shrimp, scallops) roughly chopped
12oz cooked orchiette pasta.

In a large casserole braise the sliced fennel slowly in butter over a low to medium heat. Once it is soft add the shallots, then the garlic, pepper flakes and dried thyme. Before the garlic browns add the lemon juice and wine. (My friend Phillippe Ducroix would add a splash of Pernod first.) Reduce. Add the fish stock. Reduce by a third. Add the tomato juice, thyme, oregano and parsley. Allow the broth to simmer for a minute or two, then check the seasoning—make it a little salty. Add the zucchini and before it becomes soft add the seafood by dropping it in and stirring very gently two or three times (mussels make a nice variation). The seafood will cook quickly—three to five minutes. Before it is finished just turn off the gas and let it sit until ready for service. Fill the bottom of large soup bowls with the pasta and ladle the seafood stew over it.

Why not live dangerously and get out a good California Cabernet Sauvignon?

Garlic Chicken Stew

This one is for garlic lovers, a rich, sweet soup/stew we learned from Mel many years ago (we have to give Mel a credit or she'll drag us into WGA arbitration, although James Beard loved a baked version of this dish). Proof, as if it were needed, that a thigh is a wonderful thing! Serves 4.

3 tbs olive oil
8 chicken thighs, with skin and bones.
Salt, pepper, dried thyme and paprika.
1 small yellow onion, sliced
4 celery stalks, sliced
16-24 cloves of garlic, whole but peeled
2 cups white wine
3 cups chicken stock
½ cup parsley, finely chopped
1 cup basmati rice

Season the chicken thighs thoroughly with salt, pepper, paprika and dried thyme. Brown the thighs in olive oil, skin-side down, in a broad, deep casserole. Place the whole garlic in between the chicken pieces. Use tongs to turn the garlic so that it is evenly browned. Once the chicken skin is very crispy, and the garlic is soft and brown, remove and set aside. Sauté the onion and celery until slightly browned, add the white wine, and then the chicken stock and parsley. Return the chicken and garlic. Let it all simmer for a few minutes, then correct the seasoning—it will probably need more pepper and plenty of salt. Simmer the chicken for at least an hour. Cook the basmati rice in 1¾ cups of water and some salt. Place cooked rice in the bottom of the soup bowls, a thigh or two on top, and ladle the broth over everything.

A crisp Sauvignon Blanc, with plenty of apple, should go well with these succulent thighs.

Rosemary New Potatoes

Uncle Dick liked these potatoes when he came for a visit—they gave him the energy to clean out our garage! An ideal complement for pork or lamb, the sea salt gives the potatoes a tangy crunch that lifts any meal.

2 lbs small new potatoes, quartered

Coarse sea salt

olive oil

¼ cup fresh rosemary, chopped

3-4 cloves garlic, roughly chopped (optional)

salt and pepper

Generously coat a deep casserole with olive oil and place it on a medium heat. Add the potatoes and stir them until they are covered with oil. Leave the casserole uncovered as you cook the potatoes, stirring them carefully every five minutes so that they brown evenly. After 30 minutes or so, sprinkle them with coarse sea salt and add the rosemary and the garlic (if you choose). Continue to brown the potatoes until they are thoroughly cooked. Season with black pepper. The leftovers make a nice addition to any hearty salad.

Tian

Tian, literally, means pie without crust. This delicious potato version was shown to Holly by our friend Laure. Serve it with lamb or serve it for lunch with a green salad, any way it is delicious.

4-5 large russet potatoes, peeled, thinly sliced
1 large yellow onion, very thinly sliced
6-7 tomatoes, thinly sliced
¼ cup fresh thyme, finely chopped
olive oil
salt and pepper

Poach the sliced potatoes in salted water until cooked but still firm. Drain and pat dry. Take a deep, round casserole/soufflé dish and cover the bottom lightly with olive oil. Place a layer of potato slices on the bottom. Drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with thyme and season well. Cover the potato with a layer of tomato slices and onion slices, drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with thyme, and season well. Start again with the potato slices and keep adding layers until all the ingredients are used up (finish with a layer of potatoes). Place the dish into an oven at 375° - 400° F and bake for 45 minutes or more. Serve when cool enough to eat.

Succotash

The great thing about this simple vegetable stew is that you can have all the ingredients on hand ready for emergencies: frozen baby lima beans, frozen corn and canned whole tomatoes. Furthermore, its delicious! The last time I served it we ran out, which I hate (I always make too much food, partly because I like leftovers, and partly as a result of an unfortunate early life experience at the hands of my step-mother).

½ yellow onion, diced

Red pepper flakes

1 small can of whole peeled tomatoes

1 lb frozen baby lima beans

½ lb frozen corn

Worcestershire Sauce

Brown the onion in a little olive oil, add the pepper flakes and then the juice from the can of tomatoes. Chop up the peeled tomatoes and add them to the pan together with several dashes of Worcestershire Sauce. Throw in the lima beans and the corn, add seasoning, and let it simmer for 20 minutes.

Cabbage and Apples

Something different, but not hard to do. This goes very well with bangers and mash.

Olive oil
2 tbs Caraway seeds
1 head purple cabbage, cored and thinly sliced
4 cooking apples, peeled, quartered and sliced
1 yellow onion, sliced
½ cup cider vinegar
salt and pepper

Heat a little olive oil in a large, heavy pan. Add the caraway seeds and let the oil take up their flavor. Add the onion, sauté until soft, and then add the apples. Sauté the apples for 4-5 minutes, and then add the cabbage, vinegar, salt and pepper. Stir the cabbage thoroughly as it softens. Allow it to cook for at least 20 minutes over a medium-low heat until the cabbage is soft and luscious. Correct the seasoning and serve.

Samuel Adams' India Pale Ale goes best with this (actually, it goes well with anything).

Hearty Ratatouille

Served with Penne Pasta and freshly grated Parmesan, this is a rich, spicy vegetarian dish, heavy with the aroma of thyme, lavender and other herbs. It gets better and better as leftovers, so do what our friend Susan does: make a giant pot and eat well for a week! Yields 8 qts.

2 eggplant (aubergine), peeled and diced
1 large yellow onion, diced
1 large green pepper, diced
4-5 cloves of garlic, crushed
2-3 tbs fresh thyme, finely chopped
2 tbs dried, rubbed lavender
red pepper flakes to taste
8-10 oz field mushrooms, sliced
4 zucchini (courgettes), diced
½ cup balsamic vinegar
1 large can of chopped tomatoes
1 standard can of tomato sauce
8 oz black olives, pitted and chopped
2 tbs fresh oregano, finely chopped
2 tbs fresh basil, finely sliced
½ cup of finely chopped parsley

Sauté the eggplant in a large, heavy saucepan in plenty of olive oil, stirring vigorously. After five minutes add the onion, green pepper, thyme, lavender and red pepper. Continue to sauté vigorously. Once the onion and green pepper begin to brown, add the garlic, then the mushrooms. Let the mushrooms shed their juice and reduce. When the pan is almost dry, add the zucchini and stir steadily. After 4-5 minutes add the vinegar, reduce, and then the tomatoes and the sauce. Finish with the olives, oregano, basil and parsley. (Add more crushed garlic at this point if you like it strong). Let the ratatouille simmer for a while on low heat before you try to correct the seasoning. After that, the longer it cooks the better it gets.

This dish demands a big, fruity Syrah as the perfect compliment.

Isabella's Broccoli and Pasta

This is a basic crowd-pleaser at our house, where broccoli is king. Save the leftovers and re-heat in the microwave—delicious for lunch or dinner. Serves at least 6 people.

½ lb broccoli flowers
3 tbs whole butter
2-3 shallots, minced
3 tbs white flour
2 cups milk
1 cup cheese, grated. A strong, hard cheese—Emmentaler, Asiago etc.
¼ cup parmesan, grated
grated nutmeg, to taste
salt and pepper
3 tbs parsley, finely chopped
1 lb Penne pasta, dried

Cut the broccoli into small florets, and poach in salted water until cooked but still firm. Drain and set aside. Place a saucepan over a medium flame, add the butter and when it has melted add the shallots and then, after a few minutes, the flour. Cook the flour in the butter, stirring with a whisk, until it starts to smell like toast, then add the milk, a little at a time, stirring vigorously with the whisk. Once the mixture thickens nicely, turn down the heat and start adding the cheese, a little at a time, continuing to use the whisk. Once all the cheese has been added, correct the seasoning and add the nutmeg and parsley. Cook the Penne pasta, drain, and in the same pot mix the drained pasta with the sauce and the broccoli. Serve kids first or there will be trouble!

Everyone will be pleased with either hard cider or apple juice as a refreshing contrast to this creamy, cheesy delight!

Wild Mushroom Pasta

This is a particular favorite among the women in our household. Any interesting mushrooms will do, but we prefer shitakes above all others. Serves at least 4 hungry people (it also makes a great appetizer).

1½ lb fresh pasta, linguine or fettucine. (Dried pasta will work, but better the fresh stuff in this case)
1 lb shitake mushrooms, thinly sliced (discard the stems when using shitakes)
4 tbs olive oil
2-3 shallots, minced
2 cloves of garlic, crushed
3 tbs of fresh chopped thyme
1½ cups white cooking wine
1½ pts heavy cream
salt and pepper
2 tbs olive oil
chopped Italian parsley

Place a skillet over a medium-high gas. Add 2 tbs olive oil. When the pan is very hot and the oil has begun to smoke, toss in half the shitakes. Stir/sauté vigorously, adding a little of the fresh thyme. When the first batch of mushrooms are browned, set aside and repeat with the remainder. Allow the skillet to cool, add a little more oil and the shallots. Let them slowly brown, adding the garlic after a few minutes. Once the shallots are cooked (clear) return all the mushrooms to the pan, stir/sauté everything vigorously and then add the wine. Reduce the wine until the pan is almost dry, then add the cream and the rest of the thyme. Reduce the sauce steadily until it starts to thicken. Only add salt and pepper to taste once the sauce is at the consistency you desire (I prefer a creamy, relatively thin sauce).

Once you are ready to eat bring a large pot of salted water to a boil (drizzle a little oil in the water). Add the pasta and stir to make sure it doesn't stick together. Drain thoroughly when done (a matter of a few minutes for fresh pasta) and place in a large, deep china bowl. Toss the pasta in olive oil and the chopped Italian parsley. Mound the pasta in the middle of each plate, and spoon the mushroom sauce around it. Offer Parmesan if you like.

Serve with a nice French-style Chardonnay.

Seafood Risotto

People don't like to serve risotto because they see themselves trapped in the kitchen stirring a pot while their guests are having a great time elsewhere. There is a simple solution. Pour champagne in the kitchen, and have the party around the stove—this worked very well at Kate's old house, where the stove was on a central island. Even in our ship's galley at home, cooking among a good humored crowd adds to the fun of this excellent dish. Serves 6-8.

3 tbs extra virgin olive oil
1.5 cups arborio rice
1 tbs dried thyme
3 tbs minced shallots
2-3 cloves of garlic, crushed
1 cup white wine
6+ cups hot fish stock (see the directions for stock in the poached salmon recipe)
2 tbs fresh thyme, finely chopped
½ cup of finely chopped parsley
1½ cups frozen petite peas
1½ lb fresh seafood (firm fish, shrimp, scallops) roughly chopped
2 cups fresh, grated Parmesan.

In a deep, heavy casserole sauté the shallots, dried thyme and rice in olive oil for 3-4 minutes, then add the garlic. Before the garlic browns add the wine. The rice will quickly absorb it. Add the stock, half a cup at a time, stirring the pot slowly but thoroughly. As the stock is absorbed, so add more, without letting the mix become watery. Also add the fresh thyme. After about 15 minutes test the rice—it will probably not be done (i.e. still a little crunchy in the center) but add plenty of salt at this point. Keep testing the rice every few minutes. Just before you think its ready add the peas and parsley. Bring the pot back to a simmer, and as the rice finishes cooking add the seafood, stirring it in very gently. Bring the pot back to a simmer, add stock if the mix is guppy rather than soupy, and then turn off the gas. Serve at once. I prefer not to add Parmesan to the pot, but to grate it and set it on the table for each person to help themselves.

Pinot Grigio is an obvious choice, you can also find Sauvignon Blanc produced in Northern Italy, which is ideal.

Shrimp, Tomato and Basil Pasta

This is a quick, fresh way to serve shrimp. If you like to operate a sauté pan with a bit of panache, then this is your chance. Serves at least 6 people (it also makes a great appetizer).

1½ lb fresh spinach fettuccini
1½ lb large shrimp, peeled
2 tbs clarified butter
2-3 shallots, minced
2 cloves of garlic, crushed
½ lb fresh plum tomatoes, seeded, diced
1 cup fresh basil, thinly sliced
salt and pepper
2 tbs whole butter
3 tbs lemon juice

Place a skillet over a medium-high gas, add the butter. When the pan is hot sear the shrimp very quickly, then add the shallots and garlic. Stir/sauté everything vigorously but briefly, and then add the tomatoes and basil. Continue to sauté until the tomatoes are sizzling hot, then add the whole butter. As soon as the butter is melted, add the lemon juice, sauté some more, very energetically, correct the seasoning and its ready! (Prepare the fettuccini as for the wild mushroom recipe).

A fresh Pouilly Fumé is an ideal complement.

Seafood Pasta

This hearty, aromatic seafood pasta is a loose interpretation of a dish once served to us by John and Jodi. Don't hold back on the saffron! Serves 6-8.

3 tbs clarified butter
3 tbs minced shallots
2 cloves of garlic, crushed
1 tbs dried thyme
1½ cups white wine
½ oz saffron
2 cups fish stock (see the directions for stock in the poached salmon recipe)
1 regular can crushed tomatoes
1 pint fresh cream
2-3 tbs fresh thyme, finely chopped
1 tbs fresh dill, finely chopped
½ cup of parsley, finely chopped
1 cup frozen petite peas
1½ lb fresh seafood (firm fish, shrimp, scallops) roughly chopped
1 lb dried linguine

In a large casserole sauté the shallots in clear butter for a minute or two, then add the garlic and dried thyme. Before the garlic browns add the wine and the saffron. Reduce slowly. Add the fish stock. Reduce by a third. Add the cream, crushed tomatoes, fresh thyme, fresh dill and parsley. Allow the broth to simmer for a minute or two, check the seasoning (make it a little salty) and then let it simmer for at least 20 minutes. Use some corn starch if you want the sauce just a little tighter (see the wedding chicken recipe). Add the peas, bring the sauce back to a simmer and add the seafood by dropping it in and stirring very gently two or three times. The seafood will cook quickly—three to five minutes. Before it is finished just turn off the gas and let it sit until ready for service. Place the cooked linguine in bowls before ladling the seafood sauce around it, or just dump the pasta into the seafood sauce and serve with gusto!

This deserves a good white Bordeaux or perhaps one of those Semillion-Chardonnay blends from Australia.

Gnocchi with Prosciutto, Butter and Sage

One of Holly's favorites, it reminds her of a delightful dinner in Lugano. Just don't overcook the gnocchi. Cut out the prosciutto if you want a vegetarian version. The pecorino adds a nice tart taste. Feeds 3-4 people.

16 oz fresh gnocchi (frozen work well, make sure they are 100% potato flour)
3 tbs clarified butter
2 oz of minced prosciutto
2 tbs shallots
3 tbs of finely chopped sage
Grated pecorino

Drop the gnocchi into a deep pot of rapidly boiling salted water. Strain as soon as they float to the surface. Turn them out onto a thick towel and pat dry. Drop the minced prosciutto into a hot skillet with the clarified butter. Sauté vigorously. Add the shallots, then the gnocchi, sauté for a few minutes, then the sage and lots of fresh ground black pepper. Sauté for a few more minutes and then toss in a large serving bowl with the pecorino. Eat *immediately*.

A fresh Sauvignon Blanc from France will offer a nice contrast.

Pasta Putanesca

This is the epitome of a hearty Italian pasta (a fairly spicy version). Your whole house will be drenched by the aromas coming out of your kitchen. This will drive your guests wild and even madden your neighbors. To feed 4-5 hungry people.

1 lb dried penne pasta
a lb pancetta/wood smoked bacon
½ large yellow onion, finely chopped
4 cloves of garlic, crushed
2 oz anchovy fillets
1 teaspoon of red pepper flakes
2 tbs capers
4 oz black olives, chopped
1 cup of red cooking wine
1 small can of crushed tomatoes
1 small can of tomato sauce
Fresh oregano, basil, rosemary and Italian parsley (finely chopped)
2 tbs olive oil

Dice the pancetta and place it in a heavy, deep skillet over a medium flame. Let it cook slowly but thoroughly, rendering most or all of the fat. Set the cooked pancetta aside and pour off the fat so that only about a tablespoon remains. Add the olive oil, onion and pepper flakes. Cook the onion over a low to medium flame, adding the anchovies and garlic after a few minutes. When the onion is beginning to brown, add the wine and let it bubble in the pan for a few minutes. Finally, return the bacon to the pan and add all the other ingredients. Stir it all thoroughly, turn the gas down low and let it simmer for at least 30 minutes. Check for seasoning. Many of the ingredients have salt in them (Dried, salted anchovies and capers are best) but you may still need to add some more. Add black pepper too, if you like, the red pepper has a slightly different, less sweet taste.

Once you are ready to eat bring a large pot of salted water to a boil (drizzle a little oil in the water). Add the pasta and stir vigorously to make sure it doesn't stick together. Stir a couple of times as the pasta cooks to make sure it isn't clumped together. Drain thoroughly when done and place in a large, deep china bowl. Add the sauce (or most of it—save some for left-overs!) and toss it all together. Place the bowl and a dish of grated Parmesan on the table, and stand back.....

Poached or Pan-Fried Salmon with White Wine Cream Sauce

This is a dinner party favorite—the pan-fried version in its spicy crust never fails, while the poached version is nice on a hot summer evening (I am still a legend in Sharon Gillerman’s family after giving directions for the poached version!). Use wild salmon only. I serve it with basmati rice and asparagus or a simple green salad.

Salmon, boneless, filleted, butterflied (*darne de saumon*) Don’t hold back—if its good salmon cut nice large pieces, 7-8 oz.

Breading mix

2 cups bread crumbs

½ cup flour

½ cup corn meal

Spices to taste: cayenne, paprika, dried thyme, dried marjoram, fennel seed, salt, black pepper.

Dish of milk

Dip two pieces of salmon in the milk. Coat thoroughly in the breading mix. Pan-fry in 3-4 tbs of vegetable oil at high heat in a heavy skillet. Cook on one side for 4-6 minutes, then turn carefully and brown the other side. When finished place both pieces on a rack in a warm oven to hold. Repeat as necessary.

Fish stock/poaching liquid

2-3 lbs fish bones, trimmings (no skin), shrimp shells etc.

½ yellow onion, coarsely chopped

4 sticks celery, coarsely chopped

1 lemon

2 cups white wine

1 tbs black peppercorns, crushed

2 tbs dried thyme

2 bay leaves

1 gallon cold water.

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Place all the ingredients in a pot, and slowly simmer for 1 hour. Strain back into the pot and reduce by 50%. Pour into a broad, low pan, add plenty of salt. Heat until it is almost boiling. Add the pieces of salmon and reheat again until almost boiling (bubbles form on the bottom but do not rise). Allow the salmon to poach for 8-12 minutes (depending on thickness). Lift out the salmon, pat dry, and place on rack in warm oven until service.

White wine cream sauce

3 Shallots, minced
2 cloves of garlic, minced
1 tbs butter
2 cups white wine
½ pint of heavy cream
2 tbs of fresh thyme, finely chopped
2 tbs of parsley, finely chopped
salt and ground pepper

Cook the shallots and garlic in the butter until the shallots are soft and translucent. Add the wine and reduce. When the pan is almost dry add the cream, thyme and parsley. Reduce to desired thickness, correct the seasoning. If you like a fresh taste, add some fresh squeezed lemon to the sauce just before service.

This salmon is a great opportunity to get out a serious white Burgundy, or perhaps a Chardonnay from New Zealand or Chile (but not too much oak).

Chicken and Peppers

This is an economical but hearty chicken dish, ideal for a crowd. It goes well with just about anything, and the leftovers freeze very nicely. Use the best black olives you can find (for example kalamata olives). Serves 6-8.

3 tbs olive oil
2 fryers, each cut into eight pieces (not including the neck and backbone)
Salt, pepper, dried thyme
1 large yellow onion, sliced
2 large green peppers, sliced
4 cloves of garlic, crushed
1.5 cups red wine
2 large cans diced tomatoes
1 regular can tomato sauce
Worcestershire sauce
1 can black olives, drained, pitted and chopped
2 tbs fresh thyme, chopped
3 tbs fresh oregano, chopped
3 tbs fresh basil, sliced
1 cup parsley, finely chopped

Season the chicken pieces thoroughly with salt, pepper, and dried thyme. Brown them in olive oil in a deep casserole. Once the chicken seared all over, remove and set aside. Sauté the onion and peppers until thoroughly soft, add the garlic, and before it browns add the red wine. Reduce. Then add the tomato products, Worcestershire sauce (to taste) olives and fresh herbs. Let it simmer for a few minutes, then correct the seasoning. Return the dark meat to the pot and simmer (covered) on a low heat for at least 45 minutes, then add the breast pieces and let simmer for another 20 minutes. Get out big bowls and plenty of candles, place the pot in the middle of the table and eat family-style. Potatoes, pasta, rice or bread all go well.

A great opportunity to drink that cheap Chianti lurking in your wine rack.

Wedding Chicken

Long ago we offered Pat, a family friend, wedding chicken for dinner. She thought that the name described an exotic recipe, in fact it referred to some leftovers in the freezer from our wedding. Here is the recipe, a reliable favorite. Serves 6-8.

6 tbs clarified butter
1½ lbs of boneless chicken breast, cut into strips.
2 tbs dried thyme
1 lb of sliced field mushrooms (shitake mushrooms are even better)
3 tbs minced shallots
2 cloves of garlic, crushed
2 tbs fresh thyme, finely chopped
1½ cups white wine
2 cups chicken stock (just use the canned stuff, check for msg)
1 cup cream
½ cup of finely chopped parsley
2 tbs corn starch

Place the chicken strips in a bowl and add a little oil (olive or vegetable), dried thyme and salt and pepper. Mix it up so the chicken is coated. In a large casserole sauté the chicken in small portions in the clarified butter on a high heat (add butter a little at a time). Remove and set aside when brown on the outside, but before fully cooked. Next sauté the mushrooms, in two batches, on a high heat. Set aside. Then sauté the shallots for a minute or two on a lower flame, add the garlic and fresh thyme. After a couple more minutes add the white wine and reduce. Add the chicken stock and reduce by a third. Add the cream and the parsley. Simmer for a minute or two. Mix the corn starch with a couple of splashes of water, use it to thicken the sauce to taste. Return the chicken and mushrooms to the pot, simmer for a few minutes and correct the seasoning (plenty of black pepper works well). Stir in the parsley. Serve with rice or egg noodles.

Chardonnay or even a cold, dry Riesling goes well with this creamy delight!

Sausage and Peppers

Get fresh Italian pork sausage from a butcher or upscale super-market. (I prefer hot sausage, of course, but Holly prefers sweet—just make sure that it has plenty of fennel seed in it.) As with ratatouille, it gets better and better as leftovers. This recipe feeds 4-5 people.

1 lb fresh Italian sausage, poached and sliced.
3 tbs virgin olive oil
1 large yellow onion, sliced
1 large green pepper, sliced
1 large yellow pepper, sliced
3-4 cloves of garlic, crushed
2-3 tbs balsamic vinegar
1 large can of chopped tomatoes
2-3 tbs fresh oregano, finely chopped
2-3 tbs fresh basil, finely sliced
1/2 cup of finely chopped parsley

Poach the sausages in a pot of water with salt and a splash of vinegar. Drain, cool, and slice length-ways and then across (thin slices). In a heavy saucepan on a medium-high heat sauté the onions and peppers in the olive oil until soft. Add the sausage slices and the garlic and sauté vigorously. After five minutes add the vinegar, tomatoes, oregano, basil and parsley. Again, as with the ratatouille, let it simmer on low heat before correcting the seasoning. Penne pasta is fine, but fresh fettucine is best! Serve with parmesan.

Syrah or Merlot works well with this dish.

Chicken and Sausage Jambalaya

There are many ways to make a good jambalaya, and anyone from Louisiana will have strong views on the subject. I make no special claims for this version except that it is relatively simple and uses Basmati rice, my favorite. Serves 6-8.

3 tbs olive oil
1 lb fresh andouille sausage
1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breasts, diced
1½ tbs dried fennel seed
red pepper flakes (to taste)
2 tbs dried thyme
2 tbs dried basil
1 large yellow onion, diced
6 celery stalks, diced
1 large green pepper, diced
4 cloves of garlic, crushed
1 cup white wine
Worcestershire sauce
1 bay leaf, crushed
½ tsp cloves
2 cups Basmati rice
3 cups chicken broth
1 cup parsley, finely chopped

Poach the sausage in salted water until firm, cool then slice and dice. Season the chicken pieces thoroughly with salt, pepper, and dried thyme. Brown them in olive oil in a deep casserole, remove and set aside. Sauté the onion, celery, peppers, dried herbs and red pepper until the vegetables are thoroughly soft, add the sausage and garlic, and before the garlic browns add the white wine, Worcestershire sauce (to taste) cloves and bayleaf. Reduce. Then add the chicken, rice and broth. Bring to a boil and stir thoroughly once, place a lid on the casserole and put it in the oven at 375° until the rice is fluffy (perhaps 25 minutes). You can just as easily simmer this on the stove top with a close fitting lid. Once finished, stir in the parsley, scraping up all the stuff stuck to the bottom (the best bit). Get out a giant platter, heap it up with steaming piles of jambalaya, and serve family-style.

A good Cabernet from Chile or Argentina will stand up well to this dish.

Stuffed Boneless Pork Roast with Collard Greens and Madeira

Mashed potatoes go well with this dish, made with as much butter and garlic as reasonable! The recipe serves a minimum of six hungry people, although the quantities are approximate.

1 boneless pork loin (2+ lbs)
¼ lb ground pork.
1 cup plain bread crumbs
½ cup of dried apricots/cherries/cranberries marinated in Madeira
½ cup of toasted pistachios/pecans/walnuts
½ yellow onion
2 whole eggs
3 oz of prosciutto
½ stick of butter
3 cloves of garlic
3-4 sprigs of fresh rosemary
12 large fresh spinach leaves
2 heads of collard greens
2 cups of Madeira

Wash the collard greens, strip off the stems, and slice into ribbons (chiffonade). Braise the greens (probably not all at once unless you have a really big pan) in whole butter, seasoning with salt and pepper. Line the bottom of a heavy baking dish when they are wilted (5 minutes).

Chop the prosciutto and rosemary coarsely, place in food processor, and purée with the garlic and butter. Chop the half onion finely, and gently braise it in a pan with the butter mix for 5-7 minutes (this will smell *really* good!).

In a large mixing bowl combine the ground pork, nuts, breadcrumbs, cooked onion and chopped dried fruit. Add the two eggs and mix thoroughly, seasoning well with salt and pepper. Test the stuffing by browning a small nugget in the pan in which you cooked the onion. It should be fully seasoned, moist and firm. Add some broth and melted butter to the mix to make it sweet and moist...

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Butterfly the pork loin—that is, slice it carefully down one side *almost* all the way through so that it can be easily spread open on the cutting board. Season the inside of the pork with salt and pepper. Blanch the spinach leaves in boiling water until wilted, (1-2 minutes only) pat dry and cover all the inside of the pork. Take the stuffing and form it into a rough sausage down the middle of the pork. Wrap the pork loin around it and tie it back together (butcher's string, any old knot, every 2 inches). Season the outside of the pork and place it on top of the wilted greens. Splash the Madeira over the pork, and place in an oven preheated to 375°. As an additional treat wrap the stuffed loin in whole slices of prosciutto. This will look great and add flavor and juiciness to the roast juicy

The pork should take between 45 minutes to an hour. Make sure the greens underneath don't dry out—add more Madeira if necessary (and add some to the cook while you are about it). As soon as the loin seems to be firm but springy take it out of the oven and let it rest for 20 minutes.

Serve in fairly thin medallions, arranged on the greens in a mound in the middle of the plate. Pour a little of the juice from the pan on each piece just before service....

Enjoy!

Although this is a winter dish, the wine shouldn't over-power it. Merlot or Pinot Noir should be fine.

Lamb with Port and Wild Mushrooms

We often serve roast lamb in our house, but that hardly requires a recipe. Just stuff it full of garlic and anchovies! Instead, here is a rich *mélange*, quick to prepare, perfectly suited to the Rosemary New Potatoes included in this collection.

3 tbs olive oil
1 small, boneless leg of lamb, cut up for stew
Salt, pepper, and dried thyme
16 oz sliced mushrooms (shiitake, oyster, chanterelle or perhaps—oh joy!—morel)
3 tbs shallots, minced
3 cloves of garlic, crushed
1 cup cooking port (ruby)
2 tbs fresh thyme, finely chopped
2 tbs fresh sage, finely chopped
1 pint of cream
8 oz snow peas, julienned

Make sure the lamb has as much fat removed as possible. Rub the pieces with oil, salt, pepper and dried thyme. In a heavy pan quickly sauté the lamb in small portions over a high flame. Set aside. Add oil and quickly sauté the mushrooms in the same way. Set aside. Turn down the gas and cook the shallots and garlic, adding the port just as the garlic browns. Return the mushrooms and their juice to the pan. Reduce. Add the cream and fresh herbs. Reduce slightly and correct the seasoning. Return the lamb to the pot and add the snow peas, simmer for a minute or two and the dish is ready to go.

Serve a serious red wine, perhaps a Shiraz-Cabernet blend from Australia, or an equally muscular blend from the Rhone.

Pot Roast

We use a pressure cooker for this hearty offering—we can't bear to wait any longer than necessary to tuck in. It yields lots of thick sauce which is ideal with mashed potatoes.

2½ - 3 lbs chuck roast
1 large yellow onion, finely diced
3 large carrots, finely diced
4 stalks of celery, finely diced
3 cloves of garlic, crushed
salt and ground black pepper
2 tbs dried thyme
2 tbs dried oregano
3 tbs pickling spice, tied in a cheesecloth bag (hint—use a tea ball if you have one!)
1½ cups red wine
Worcestershire sauce
1 large can of chopped tomatoes

Cover the chuck roast liberally with salt, pepper and dried thyme. Brown on all sides in a heavy casserole at high heat (using olive and/or vegetable oil). Set the roast aside and sauté the onion, carrot, celery and dried thyme. After about five minutes, or when the vegetables begin to brown, add the garlic. Before the garlic browns add the wine, the bay leaf and the oregano. Reduce. Add the tomatoes and Worcestershire sauce (more is better, of course!). Simmer for five minutes and check the seasoning. Add salt if necessary.

Return the roast to the pan, immerse it in the sauce as deeply as possible, cover firmly and place in the oven or on a low flame. Let it cook for 3+ hours, or until you can stand it no longer (1 hour should do it in a pressure cooker). Carefully lift out the beef, set on a serving dish, remove the bag of pickling spice and purée the liquid and vegetables in the sauce pan (a hand held blender straight into the pan is best, but a food processor works well too). Cover the beef in the thick sauce, putting more in a jug to be served on the side. Broccoli or winter greens go well with this, but the sauce is so rich that no other vegetables are really necessary.

This recipe is a great opportunity to drink a hearty zinfandel, or perhaps a good Australian cabernet/shiraz blend.