The Best Of Cookography

2007

Our favorite recipes from Cookography.com

By: Luke & Carolyn

The Best of Cookography—2007

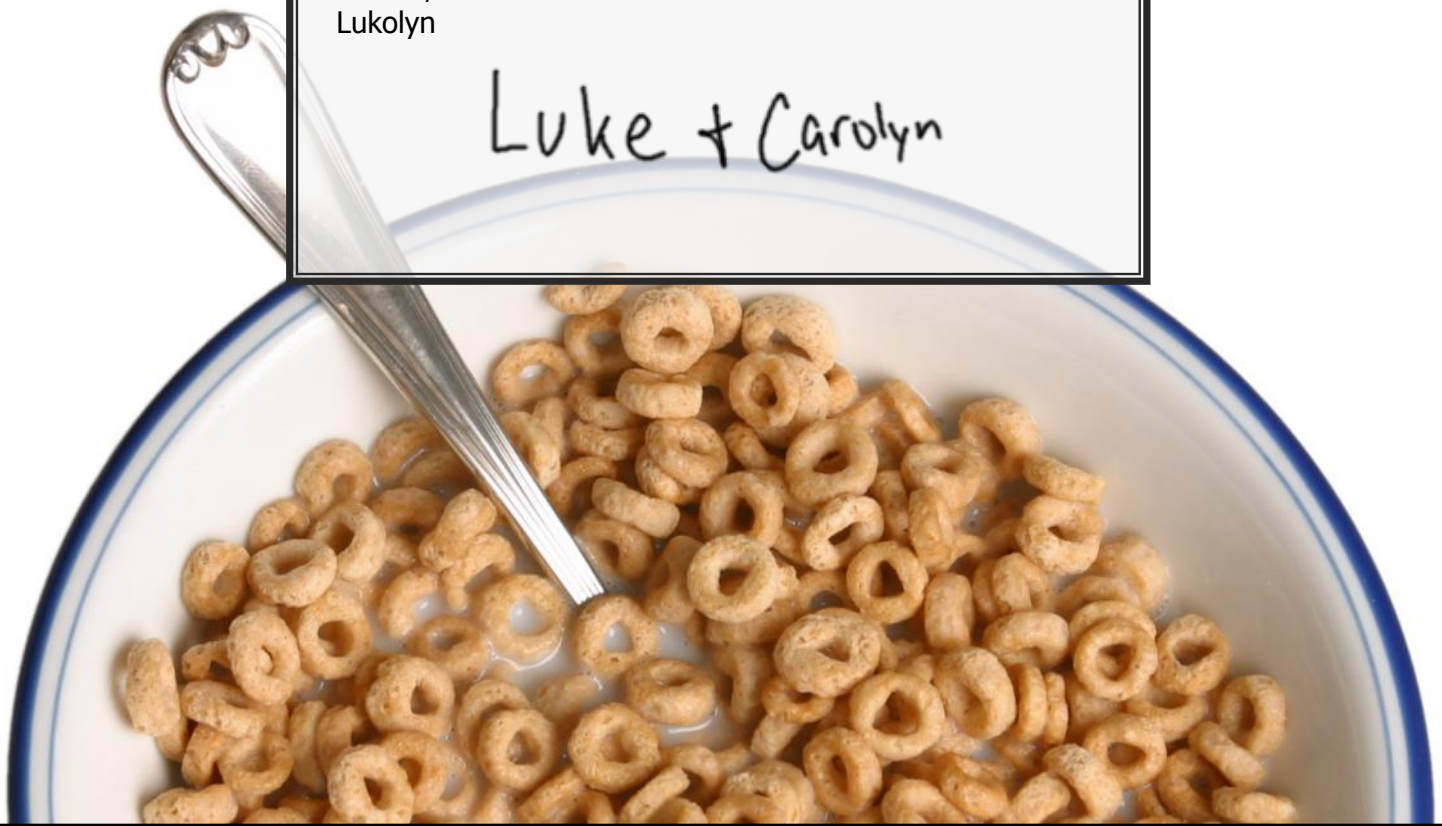
Yes, this is a shameless plug for our website Cookography.com. But if you haven't checked it out, you are really missing out! It's basically a diary of what we eat, complete with photos and recipes. Rarely does a meal go by undocumented. Oh look, here is a picture of Carolyn's Cheerios.

Recipe:

1. Add desired amount of Cheerios to bowl.
2. Add milk.
3. Optional toppings – strawberries, blueberries and/or bananas.
4. Serve with orange juice and coffee.

We hope you enjoy these recipes as much as we did. Here's to a happy and healthy 2008!

Cheers,
Lukolyn



Overnight Yeast Pancakes

Nothing says Saturday (or Sunday) Morning like hot pancakes with real maple syrup. All the mixing and pouring and prepping required to make them, however, is kind of a tough task before the coffee has fully kicked in. What if we told you that you could make delicious pancakes that are crisp on the outside and cakey on the inside, and that you could do this without any mixing in the morning?

The answer is yeast pancakes! Instead of using baking soda to make pancakes rise, you can use yeast. Using yeast lets you mix the batter the night before and it can then rise slowly in the fridge overnight. Yeast also gives the pancakes a clean taste and a great texture. You can probably use less yeast than the recipe calls for—you could probably get away with a tsp or so. The current amount works, but you get a mild yeast flavor.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons white sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 1/4 teaspoons rapid rise yeast
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups warm milk
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 1 egg

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl combine flour, sugar, salt, cinnamon and yeast; mix well. Add vanilla, milk, butter and egg; mix until well blended. Cover and place in refrigerator overnight.

2. Heat a lightly oiled griddle or frying pan over medium-high heat. Stir the batter. Pour or scoop the batter onto the griddle, using approximately 1/4 cup for each pancake. Brown on both sides, serve hot.

Heirloom Tomato Salsa

Truth be told, heirloom tomatoes would probably be wasted on a salsa and are not worth the extra cost compared to regular plum tomatoes. Of course this is only true if you don't live next door to a farmers' market where they sell a 3 pound bag of slightly bruised tomatoes for $2. If you can get your hands on this bag of gold, then by all means make this salsa with heirloom tomatoes! If not, regular tomatoes are fine. We used a combination of yellow and red tomatoes – it gave the salsa a great color!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds tomatoes –
  go for whatever is cheap and ripe
- 1 medium red onion
- 1 cup cilantro
- 1 jalapeno
- 1 teaspoon salt + more for taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Core the tomato by removing the brown and white stem parts. Cut off any bad bruises or blemishes. Chop the tomato until it is well diced—think about how you want it to look on your chip. Place the chopped tomatoes in a strainer to drain off some of the juices—no one likes watery salsa!

2. Mince the onion. The pieces should be pretty small; you don't want to get a large bite of only onion. Just keep running your knife through, chopping.

3. Chop the cilantro. Again, you want small pieces.

4. If you want your salsa to have some kick, leave some or all of the jalapeno seeds in the salsa. If not, remove the seeds. Finely dice the jalapeno.

5. Once the tomatoes have drained a bit, it is time to make the salsa. You want to create a balanced flavor, with no one component being too overpowering. Start by adding the tomatoes to a bowl. Next, add the salt and stir. Finally, add half of the diced jalapeno, cilantro and onion. Test!

6. Add more jalapeno, cilantro and onion to build the flavor you are looking for. Let the salsa sit for a little so that everything can meld. The tomatoes will probably produce more juice that can be poured off before serving.

German-style Soft Pretzels

Maybe it is Luke's German background…or maybe it is his love of all things salty, but he loves hot, soft pretzels. Luckily, these pretzels are not too tough to make at home. The following recipe may look long, but it is easier than making bread. We made a batch for an Oktoberfest party we threw and they were a huge hit.

Dunking the pretzels in boiling water gives them their chewy skin. In order to get the nice caramel color, it helps to add baking soda to the water. The baking soda makes the water more basic (the opposite of acidic), which breaks down the starch on the outside of the pretzel and turns it into a sugar that caramelizes when baked. Traditional recipes call for lye, which is a caustic chemical that is dangerous to handle. Pretzels made with a lye bath supposedly have the best texture and the most authentic flavor…it gives it a bit of a tang.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 teaspoon instant yeast
- 1 tablespoon malt powder or brown sugar
- 2 to 3 cups all-purpose unbleached or bread flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup warm milk

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine all of the ingredients in a bowl and mix together until it forms a ball. Start with 2 cups of flour and mix it together until it forms something like a thick batter. Add more flour, 2 tablespoons at a time, until it forms a nice ball that can be kneaded by hand.

2. Either use an electric mixer to mix the dough for 5 minutes or remove it from the bowl and knead it by hand for 5 to 10 minutes until the dough begins to get smooth and satiny.

3. Letting the dough ferment can give the pretzels a little extra flavor, but it can be skipped and they will still taste great. If you are going to ferment the dough, return

the ball of dough to a clean, greased bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and set it aside to rise until it has doubled in size, approximately one hour. De-gas the dough gently before moving on to the next step.

4. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. In a wide and shallow pan bring a quart of water to a simmer, and then add 4 tablespoons of baking soda. The water should be deep enough so that a pretzel can be fully submerged.

Shaping & Baking

1. Cut the dough into 6 pieces. Roll each one into a short log, cover with a towel, and let the dough relax for 5 to 10 minutes. After it has relaxed you should be able to roll it out and stretch it again fairly easily.

2. Place a rope of dough on the work surface in front of you. Form the dough into the shape of a pretzel by looping the two ends in to the center of the rolled out dough and crossing them over each other. Apply a little bit of pressure to make the loops stick together, but not too much because you don't want them to flatten out. You can use a dab of water to help make the ends stick.

3. After shaping the pretzel, carefully use a spatula to transfer it to the boiling water. Dunk it in the water, completely submerging it, for 5 seconds. The pretzel should begin to float towards the end.

4. Transfer the pretzel onto a lightly oiled cookie sheet (we used a silicone baking mat). Sprinkle with Kosher salt. You can also make cinnamon sugar flavored pretzels.

5. Once you have finished shaping all of the pretzels, place the cookie sheet in the middle rack of the pre-heated oven.

6. Bake the pretzels for 12-14 minutes until they are a dark golden brown.

Spicy Green Bean Salad

When summer rolls around and all the BBQs start, we make our famous spicy green beans. The dish balances the sweetness of the beans with a smoky, spicy sauce. It is best made with fresh green beans, they are nice and crisp, but frozen green beans can be used too. Frozen might be the way to go if the "fresh" beans are not looking so fresh and crisp. This recipe would also work with asparagus or yard-long beans.

This past summer, we made these beans for a BBQ at our place…and ramped it up a bit to roughly 4.5 pounds of beans. What can we say, we found a good price on beans! Everyone really liked them and the recipe seems to scale up pretty easily. The ONLY drawback with this recipe is that it takes a while to take off the beans' stem and tip and cut them all to size…this is actually what you will spend most of the cooking time doing. Keep at it though—having them the same size will make sure all the beans cook to the same doneness. If you are a wimp, you can reduce the amount of chili flakes and oil.

INGREDIENTS

Dressing

- 1 green onion (white part only), minced
- 2 1/2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 4 teaspoons sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil (any oil without a lot of flavor)
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon cornstarch mixed with 1 1/2 teaspoons water
- 1/2 teaspoon dried red chili flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon chili oil (important ingredient, don't leave out)

Beans

- 1 pound green beans
- 4 cups water

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine dressing ingredients in a bowl. Set aside.

2. Remove the ends of the green beans (and string if they are very stringy). Cut beans diagonally into 2-inch pieces.

3. Bring water, salt and oil to a boil in a medium-size saucepan. Blanch beans in boiling water for 6 to 8 minutes. (Keep tasting beans—you want them to be tender, but still a little on the crunchy side. Of course, preferences may vary).

4. Rinse beans under cold water; drain well. You can even stick them in a salad spinner for a bit.

5. Bring dressing to a boil over medium-high heat in a pot or pan big enough to hold all the green beans. Cook, stirring until dressing thickens slightly. Add beans to dressing, tossing to coat the beans.

6. Cover and refrigerate. Serve cold.

Oven Fries

Making oven fries is a quick and easy way to cook up tasty root veggies. We have tried this basic recipe with carrots, potatoes and sweet potatoes – with great results every time! The cook times will vary based on the veggie and the size of the cut, but the basics are the same. The photos here are from when we tried this with purple potatoes. They taste the same as fingerlings, but are purple! If you are going for normal potatoes, russets are the best. Peeling the russets is recommended, or else they taste more like baked potatoes than fries. You probably don't need to peel thinner-skinned potatoes. No matter what veggie you use, it is important to make the slices or wedges even-sized and not too thick so that all of the pieces will cook at about the same rate.

There are also some more "advance" techniques you can use to improve texture. The first is to soak the potatoes for 15-30 minutes before seasoning them. For starchy potatoes, like russets, soaking helps remove some of the surface starch, giving the fries a great crust that is not too tough or thick. The other is to cover the baking sheet with aluminum foil for the first 5 minutes of baking. This allows the fries to steam and cook all the way through, without overcooking, and ensures a creamy texture in the middle.

You can also get creative with the flavors and seasoning. The most basic is salt and pepper. Or try garlic and rosemary; pepper flakes and chili powder; lemon zest and thyme. If you want to keep it simple, just add some garlic powder and celery salt.

Although it isn't required, a nonstick baking sheet works particularly well for this recipe. The pan's dark color encourages deep and even browning. Also try to find a pan that is heavy duty. The intense heat of the oven may cause lighter pans to warp.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 russet potatoes (about 8 ounces each), peeled
  (each potato cut lengthwise into 10 to 12 evenly sized wedges)
- 5 tablespoons vegetable oil or peanut oil
- Table salt and ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Adjust oven rack to lowest position; heat oven to 475 degrees. Meanwhile, coat a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet with 4 tablespoons oil and sprinkle evenly with 3/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper; set aside.

   Advance Technique: Place potatoes in large bowl and cover with hot tap water; soak 10 minutes. Drain potatoes. Spread potatoes out on a triple layer of paper towels and thoroughly pat dry with additional paper towels.

2. Toss potatoes with remaining 1 tablespoon oil (and any additional flavorings you wish to add). Arrange potatoes in single layer on prepared baking sheet. Bake until bottoms of potatoes are spotty golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes, rotating baking sheet after 10 minutes. Using metal spatula and tongs, scrape to loosen potatoes from pan, then flip each wedge, keeping potatoes in single layer. Continue baking until fries are golden and crisp, 5 to 15 minutes longer, rotating pan as needed if fries are browning unevenly.

   Advance Technique: Before placing the baking sheet in the oven, tightly cover with foil and bake for 5 minutes. Remove foil and continue to bake as directed.

Roasted Leg of Lamb

with Garlic and Rosemary

Some dishes take a little chutzpah to pull off—large roasts tend to fall into this category. First, buying a large amount of meat usually costs a lot of money. Second, when you make a roast you are usually making it for a lot of people. This means if you mess it up, lots of people go hungry. These are just a couple of reason we had put off trying to roast a leg of lamb.

One day we happened by the meat section of Safeway and a boneless prepared leg of lamb stared back at us with a sale sticker on it. You gotta try everything once, right?

We are happy to report that it was a very big success! The lamb was tasty and tender. We recommend giving this recipe a try. You can get a prepared leg if it is your first time. Not having to trim the leg, remove the bone and tie it back up made it all a lot easier.

INGREDIENTS

- Table salt and ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary, or 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary, finely crushed
- 1 leg of lamb, cleaned, boned and tied
- 2 medium cloves garlic, each peeled and cut lengthwise into 8 slivers
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix 2 teaspoons salt, 2 teaspoons pepper and rosemary in a small bowl.

2. Cut slits into roast with point of paring knife; poke garlic slivers inside. Rub seasoning onto all surfaces of meat, then coat with olive oil. Place leg meat-side up on roasting pan fitted with a roasting rack; let stand for 30 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, adjust oven rack to lowest position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Pour 1/2 cup of water into the bottom of the roasting pan. Roast lamb for 10 minutes.

4. With a wad of paper towels in each hand, turn the leg over. Roast 10 minutes longer.

5. Lower the oven temperature to 325 degrees. Again, turn leg meat-side up and continue roasting, turning leg every 20 minutes until instant-read thermometer, when inserted in several locations, registers 130 to 135 degrees, about 60 to 80 minutes longer. Transfer roast to another pan; cover with foil and set aside in a warm spot to complete cooking and allow juices to reabsorb into the tissues, about 15 to 20 minutes.

6. Remove string from roast and carve. Transfer sliced lamb to a warm serving platter.

Lamb Salad

with Arugula and Gorgonzola

What do you do with the leftovers from making an entire leg of lamb…make lamb salad!

Lamb has a pretty strong flavor so you need a salad that can stand up to it. We went with arugula for the greens. Spinach or perhaps something like mustard greens would also work. We added gorgonzola and red onions and kept the dressing simple—a lemon vinaigrette made with lemon zest, lemon juice, olive oil and sherry vinegar.

The results were great! You could also probably swap the lamb for steak. Strong salads can support a strong topping.

Lemon-Parsley Risotto

A lot of risottos are heavy and better suited for winter or fall, but the lemon and parsley in this one make it perfect for spring. Carolyn clipped this recipe out of *Real Simple*. It came out great, and tasted even better the next day!

If you have a good pot that heats evenly, you don't have to stir constantly. We got away with being pretty lazy with the stirring and everything turned out all right. Try giving it a stir every couple of minutes or so. If things start to stick, just stir more often. You can also mix in the parsley instead of just sprinkling it on top.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 cups Arborio rice
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup (4 ounces) grated Parmesan
- Zest of 1 lemon, grated
- 1/2 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. Melt 2 tablespoons of butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 3 minutes. Add the rice and cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes.

2. Reduce heat. Add the wine, and cook, stirring frequently, until the liquid is absorbed. Add the broth, 1/2 cup at a time, stirring occasionally and waiting until it's absorbed before adding more. This should take about 30 minutes total. The rice should be tender but still slightly firm.

3. Remove from heat. Add the lemon juice, salt, pepper, Parmesan, and the remaining butter and stir until the butter is melted. Spoon the risotto into individual bowls and sprinkle with the lemon zest and parsley.

Tortilla Soup

Spicy soups can be very refreshing during the summer. Tortilla soup is smoky from the Chipotle peppers, which also gives it a little kick. We love having this soup with a couple of quesadillas. The soup is light and its spiciness counters the quesadillas perfectly.

This recipe is from America's Test Kitchen. It may looks a little daunting, but it is really easy and comes together pretty quickly. Instead of using fresh tomatoes, I used a 28 ounce can of diced tomatoes.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 split bone-in, skin-on chicken breasts (about 1 1/2 pounds) or 4 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 1 1/4 pounds), skin removed and well trimmed of excess fat
- 8 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 very large white onion (about 1 pound), trimmed of root end, peeled and quartered
- 4 medium cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 sprigs fresh epazote or 8 to 10 sprigs fresh cilantro
- 1 sprig fresh oregano
- 2 medium tomatoes, cored and quartered or a 28 ounce can of diced tomatoes
- 1/2 medium jalapeño chile
- 1 chipotle chile en adobo, plus up to 1 tablespoon adobo sauce
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

GARNISHES

- 1 lime, cut into wedges
- 1 Hass avocado, diced fine
- 8 ounces cotija cheese, crumbled or Monterey Jack cheese, diced fine
- Fresh cilantro leaves

- Minced jalapeño pepper
- Mexican crema or sour cream
- Tortilla chips or strips

DIRECTIONS

1. Bring chicken, broth, 2 onion quarters, 2 garlic cloves, epazote and 1/2 teaspoon salt to boil over medium-high heat in large saucepan. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until chicken is just cooked through, about 20 minutes.

2. Using tongs, transfer chicken to a large plate. Pour broth through fine-mesh strainer; discard solids in strainer. When cool enough to handle, shred chicken into bite-sized pieces; discard bones.

3. Puree tomatoes, 2 remaining onion quarters, 2 remaining garlic cloves, jalapeño, chipotle chile and 1 teaspoon adobo sauce in food processor until smooth. Heat oil in dutch oven over high heat until shimmering; add tomato/onion puree and 1/8 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring frequently, until mixture has darkened in color, about 10 minutes.

4. Stir strained broth into tomato mixture, bring to boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer to blend flavors, about 15 minutes. Taste soup; if desired, add up to 2 teaspoons additional adobo sauce. Add shredded chicken and simmer until heated through, about 5 minutes.

5. To serve, place tortilla chips in bottom of individual bowls and ladle soup into bowls; pass garnishes separately.

Pan-Seared, Thick Cut Steak

We came across this recipe in *Cook's Illustrated* and had to give it a try. The recipe guarantees perfectly cooked, thick cut steaks—a steak with a brown crust and a pink center…and without a gray band between the two.

This recipe is pretty much the opposite of a previous one on Cookography. Instead of finishing the steaks in the oven, you start out cooking them in the oven. This allows you to raise the internal temperature of the meat more evenly. When steaks are put in the oven after being cooked on the stove, the exterior is already much hotter than the center. This leads to uneven cooking as the center temperature raises to meet the external temperature. Cooking the steaks in the oven first also dries out the exterior of the meat, allowing for the perfect crust when you sear it later. When you sear the steak first, it is much tougher to get the perfect crust because the steaks continue to release moisture.

This recipe worked out great. It is the perfect way to get steak house like results at home. For slightly thinner cuts, reduce the cook time and go by the temperature of the steak. This method of cooking will produce a bit of smoke, as with any steak recipe, but much less smoke than cooking it entirely on the stove.

Don't be afraid to put a lot of salt on the steak. The meat should be at room temperature when you begin to cook.

Rib-eye or filet mignon of similar thickness can be substituted for strip steaks. If using filet mignon, buying a 2-pound center-cut tenderloin roast and portioning it into four 8-ounce steaks yourself will produce more consistent results. If using filet mignon, increase the oven time by about 5 minutes. When cooking lean strip steaks (without an external fat cap) or filet mignon, add an extra tablespoon of oil to the pan.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 boneless strip steaks, 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 inches thick, about 1 pound each
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

DIRECTIONS

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 275 degrees. Pat steaks dry with paper towel. Cut each steak in half vertically to create four 8-ounce steaks. Season entire surface of steaks liberally with salt and pepper; gently press sides of steaks until uniform 1 1/2 inches thick. Place steaks on wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet; transfer baking sheet to oven. Cook until instant-read thermometer inserted in center of steak registers 90 to 95 degrees for rare to medium-rare, 20 to 25 minutes, or 100 to 105 degrees for medium, 25 to 30 minutes.

2. Heat oil in 12-inch heavy-bottomed skillet over high heat until it smokes. Place steaks in skillet and sear steaks until well-browned and crusty, about 1 1/2 to 2 minutes, lifting once halfway through to redistribute fat underneath each steak. (Reduce heat if food begins to burn.) Using tongs, flip steaks and cook until well browned, 2 to 2 1/2 minutes. Transfer steaks to wire cooling rack and reduce heat under pan to medium. Use tongs to stand 2 steaks on their sides. Holding steaks together, return to skillet and sear on all sides until browned, about 1 1/2 minutes. Repeat with remaining 2 steaks.

3. Transfer steaks to wire cooling rack and let rest, loosely covered with foil, for 10 minutes . Arrange steaks on individual plates; serve immediately.

Key Lime Pie

Key lime pie is a desert that people assume is a lot tougher to make than it really is. In fact, it might be one of the easiest pies out there! The trick to Key Lime pie though is that you can't let on how easy it is to make. We made this once and then everyone wanted us to make it again!

The recipe we used was straight off the back of the Key lime juice bottle. It turned out great so we can't really argue with it. We also used a pre-made graham cracker crust. The only problem we ran into was that the pie crust was larger than it was supposed to be, so the Key lime mixture spread out more than it was supposed to. The lesson is that you should make sure you get a standard size pie crust.

We got a bottle of Key lime juice because we thought having Key limes made a difference, but according to *Cook's Illustrated,* testers actually thought the pie made with Key limes and Persian limes, the limes you find in the supermarket, tasted pretty much the same. That being said, it is probably easier and cheaper to use the bottle juice. I got a bottle of Nellie & Joe's Famous Key West Lime Juice for about $2.50 and it has enough juice to make 4 pies.

INGREDIENTS

- 9" graham cracker pie shell
- 14 ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 3 egg yolks
- 1/2 cup lime juice
- Heaving whipping cream

DIRECTIONS

1. Pre-heat oven to 350.

2. Combine milk, egg yolks and lime juice. Blend until smooth. Pour filling into pie shell and bake for 15 minutes. Allow to stand for 10 minutes and then refrigerate. Just before serving cover with freshly whipped cream.

The Science

The pie we made got great reviews. However, we had to check the "Bible," aka *The New Best Recipes* from *Cook's Illustrated* to see if they had any improvements. They basically have the same recipe except they include lime zest in the filling and they set aside the filling mixture for 30 minutes to let it thicken. They also include some quick instructions for make whip cream from scratch. We did this for our pie and it tasted great.

Cook's Illustrated also has an interesting bit explaining the science behind why Key Lime pie thickens. The thickening action is the result of the high acidity of the lime juice and the unique properties of sweetened condensed milk. The acidity of the lime juice causes the protein in the egg yolks and the condensed milk to coil up and bond together. If this was done with normal milk, it would simply curdle. Condensed milk is made by boiling off most of the water and then adding sugar. The added sugar separates the protein strands, preventing them from bonding too tightly and becoming curdled. Since most of the excess water was removed when the milk was boiled it becomes much thicker and stiffens. This recipe is a little more complicated, but gives you that nice green filling.

INGREDIENTS

- 9" graham cracker pie shell

Lime Filling
- 4 teaspoons grated lime zest
- 1/2 cup strained juice, from 3 or 4 limes
- 4 large egg yolks
- 14 ounce can sweetened condensed milk

Whipped Cream
- 3/4 cup chilled heavy cream
- 1/4 cup confectioners' sugar

DIRECTIONS

1. Whisk the zest and the yolk in a medium non-reactive bowl until tinted light green, about 2 minutes. Beat in the condensed milk, then the juice. Set aside at room temperature to thicken for about 30 minutes.

2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

3. Pour the lime filling into the crust; bake until the center is set, yet wiggly when jiggled, 15 to 17 minutes. Let the pie rest on a wire rack until room temperature. Refrigerate until well chilled, at least 3 hours.

4. Up to 2 hours before serving, whip the cream in a chilled bowl with an electric mixer until very soft peaks can be formed. Add the confectioners' sugar 1 tablespoon at a time, continue whipping to just-stiff peaks are formed. Apply topping using a spatula or piping bag.

Lemon-Anise Biscotti

We have never really made pastries, but we were thumbing through our favorite cook book, *The New Best Recipes* from *Cook's Illustrated*, and came across a recipe for biscotti that looked both easy and yummy. Biscotti are traditional Italian anise/licorice flavored cookies. They are hard because they get baked twice. This, along with their assertive flavor, makes them ideal for dipping in coffee or tea.

You'll often see biscotti going for about $2 in coffee shops. After you give this recipe a try you will realize that this is ridiculous. Biscotti don't require a lot of work or fancy ingredients and one batch makes a lot of cookies. This is a good recipe that is easy to make, tasty and the final product comes out looking pretty professional!

The eggs are the only moisture in the recipe, so be sure to use fresh eggs for the best possible flavor and texture. Also, anise is strong and a little goes a long way. If you are not a fan of licorice flavor you can probably get away with adding less than 1 tablespoon.

If you plan on eating the biscotti plain and not dipping them in coffee you should bake them for less time during the second bake. Two or three minutes on each side should be enough to put a crust on the cut side but not long enough to dry them out all the way. This means they will not last as long, but they will be so tasty that it won't be much of a problem.

Finally, don't mix the dough/batter too much. The more the batter is mixed, the stronger the matrix of flour proteins becomes. This results in a chewier, tougher texture. Mix the wet and dry ingredients together and blend them until they have just begun to combine…then STOP! Don't worry about getting things perfectly combined and smooth, there can be lumps and a little unincorporated flour.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 3-4 dozen

- 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

- 1/4 teaspoon table salt
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon anise seed

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix first three ingredients together in a small bowl.

2. Whisk sugar and eggs in a large bowl to a light lemon color; stir in next 3 ingredients. Sift dry ingredients over egg mixture, then fold in until dough is just combined.

3. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Halve dough and turn each portion onto an oiled cookie sheet covered with parchment. Using floured hands, quickly stretch each portion of dough into a rough 13-by-2-inch log, placing them about 3 inches apart on the cookie sheet. Pat each dough shape to smooth it. Bake, turning pan once, until loaves are golden and just beginning to crack on top, about 35 minutes.

4. Cool the loaves for 10 minutes; lower oven temperature to 325 degrees. Cut each loaf diagonally into 3/8-inch slices with a serrated knife. Lay the slices about 1/2-inch apart on the cookie sheet, cut side up and return them to the oven. Bake, turning over each cookie halfway through baking, until crisp and golden brown on both sides, about 15 minutes. Transfer biscotti to wire rack and cool completely. Biscotti can be stored in an airtight container for at least 1 month.