

The Best of Cookography



Our favorite recipes from 2008
By: Luke & Carolyn

May we present the 2nd Annual edition of Best ofCookography. Inside you'll find a recipe for curried chickpea salad (Carolyn's obsession of the year) and a recipe for pickled zucchini (Luke's obsession of the year - pickling anything and everything). Thanks to all our loyal cookography.com readers...it's been a good year!

We hope you enjoy these dishes as much as we did. Here's to a happy, healthy and tasty 2009!

Cheers,
Lukolyn

Luke & Carolyn



Baked Eggs

The inspiration for this dinner (or breakfast) came from some posts we saw on baked eggs, coupled with a severe case of the lazys. Baked eggs can be made lickity split and, more importantly, don't require much thinking. For our version, we went with bacon, cheddar and tomato as the toppings. You could probably come up with tons of other combinations. Visit cookography.com for other baked egg recipes.

Baking an egg is pretty simple. There are two things to remember: 1) placing the ramekins in a hot water bath while they cook in the oven helps the eggs cook evenly and 2) the egg white will never set firmly; judge doneness by waiting for the egg whites to turn white or opaque. Placing the ramekins in a boiling water bath can be a pain—and this is supposed to be an easy dish—so don't worry about it if you don't want to.



Baked Eggs

Ingredients:

- 4 eggs
- Butter
- 10 grape or cherry tomatoes
- 2 bacon strips
- A good hunk of grated cheese, such as cheddar
- Smoked paprika

Tools:

- 2 ramekins or other oven proof dishes

Directions:

1. Pre-heat the oven to 375 degrees. Grease each of the ramekins with butter.
2. Cook the bacon strips on the stove. Once the bacon is nicely browned, remove, blot off excess grease with paper towels and chop into small pieces. Divide the bacon between the two dishes. (Add a little extra to the dish you know will be yours. If you are not sure, don't risk it.)
3. Cut the tomatoes in half and divide among the dishes. Sprinkle with a little bit of salt.
4. Grate the cheese into each dish and then crack two eggs into each dish.
5. Sprinkle ~ 1/8 teaspoon of smoked paprika on top of each dish along with a pinch of salt and a grind or two of pepper.
6. If you are using a water bath, bring 2 cups of water to a boil in a kettle. Place both ramekins

in a high-sided, oven proof baking pan. Place the pan on the middle rack of the oven and then pour in the boiling water.

7. If you are not using a water bath, place both ramekins on a baking sheet and then into the oven.
8. Cook until the egg whites turn opaque, roughly 15 to 20 minutes. It could be less depending on your toppings, so start checking after 10 minutes. The eggs may not set firmly, but will be custard like.
9. Enjoy!



Curried Chickpea Salad

Carolyn is a big fan of Devon and Blakely, a lunch spot in Washington, DC that serves lots of different soups and salads. One of her favorite side salads is Channa, which is chickpeas baked with olive oil, curry, cilantro and caramelized onions.

We set out to try to recreate the salad. A quick Google search resulted in a recipe for curried chickpea salad. The salad turned out great, and it was pretty close to the Devon and Blakely recipe but not exactly the same. The quest lives on, but we have found a great recipe in the process!

This recipe calls 1 teaspoon of cayenne pepper, which is a lot. Seriously. However, it does not end up tasting too spicy. We happened to have whole cloves on hand. That is just because we tried making mulled cider once. Most normal people don't have this though. Sub in some ground cloves instead, maybe 1/4 teaspoon or so. The cloves really add a lot to the flavor, so don't forget them.



Curried Chickpea Salad

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 medium onions, minced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 teaspoons fresh ginger root, finely chopped
- 6 whole cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- Salt
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 2 (15 ounce) cans garbanzo beans, drained and washed
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 cup chopped fresh cilantro

Directions:

1. Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat, fry onions until tender.
2. Stir in garlic, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, cumin, coriander, salt, cayenne, and turmeric. Cook for 1 minute over medium heat, stirring constantly.

3. Mix in garbanzo beans and the water. Continue to cook and stir until all ingredients are well blended and heated through.
4. Remove from heat. Stir in cilantro just before serving, reserving 1 tablespoon for garnish.
5. Serve by itself or on top of rice.

Note: The Devon and Blakely salad is served slightly warm, but both salad versions taste great warm or cold.



Pickled Zucchini

The word “pickle” has become synonymous with pickled cucumber, but the truth is you can pickle almost any type of vegetable. Since zucchinis are cheap and plentiful throughout the summer, they are a prime target for pickling. This type of pickle doesn't rely on fermentation for its acidity, like sour pickles, but rather vinegar is used to preserve and flavor the pickles.

This recipe is from the great Zuni Café in San Francisco. We have only been there once and had a great meal, but we didn't get to try any pickles. We also found another Zuni Café recipe for pickles, this time for onions. Based on how well the zucchini recipe worked, we will have to give it a try.

These pickles get their crispness from a soak in a chilled salt brine and their color from turmeric, which is added to the pickling liquid. Turmeric is great at coloring things, so great that you have to be careful. Store the pickles in a non-staining plastic or glass container. If you wear any color other than yellow while making these pickles, do so at your own risk. You have been warned. If you give this recipe a try, however, you will be rewarded with brilliant pickles both in flavor and color.



Zuni Café Pickled Zucchini

Ingredients:

- 1 pound zucchini
- 1 small yellow onion
- 2 tablespoons Kosher salt
- 2 cups cider vinegar
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dry (powdered) mustard
- 1 1/2 teaspoons crushed yellow and/or brown mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric

Directions:

1. Wash and trim the zucchini, then slice them 1/16-inch thick; a mandoline works best. Slice the onion to the same thickness. Combine the zucchini and onions in a large but shallow nonreactive bowl, add the salt and toss to distribute. Add a few ice cubes and cold water to cover, then stir to dissolve the salt. Alternatively, transfer the salted zucchini and onion slices to a Japanese pickle maker and screw down the top; do not add any water or ice cubes.
2. After about 1 hour, taste and feel a piece of zucchini — it should be slightly soft. Drain and pat dry.

3. Combine the vinegar, sugar, dry mustard, mustard seeds and turmeric in a small saucepan and simmer for 3 minutes. Set aside until just warm to the touch. (If the brine is too hot, it will cook the vegetables and make the pickles soft instead of crisp.)
4. Return the zucchini to a dry bowl and pour over the cooled brine. Stir to distribute the spices. Transfer the pickles to a jar, preferably one that has “shoulders” to hold the zucchini and onions beneath the surface of the brine. Tightly seal and refrigerate for at least a day before serving to allow the flavors to mellow and permeate the zucchini, turning them a brilliant chartreuse color.



Green Tomatillo Salsa

This green salsa is a great dish to bring to all those summer parties. It is so good that you will probably start getting invited to even more parties! (Legal Disclaimer: Results may vary, promises made are non-binding.)

Luke has always been both scared of and attracted to tomatillos. They look like small green tomatoes with a papery skin around them. In the Safeway near us in Adams Morgan, they are also pretty cheap. This is a little surprising because they look so exotic. We had a bunch of cilantro to use up so we thought we would give green salsa a try.

We added some lime zest which gave it a lot of flavor. You can leave this out if you want something a little more subtle. We also left the jalapeno seeds out. Leave them in if you want the salsa to have more kick.



Green Tomatillo Salsa

Ingredients:

- 3/4 pounds tomatillo, peeled, washed and halved (remove the stem area if it is large)
- 1/2 small onion, diced
- 1/3 cup cilantro, stems removed, minced
- 1/2 lime, zested and juiced
- 2 jalapenos, halved, stem and seeds removed
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 garlic clove, minced or pressed

Directions:

1. Heat the broiler to high. Place the tomatillo and jalapeno halves skin side up on a foil-lined baking sheet. Broil for about 4 minutes or until the skins of some of the tomatillos and jalapenos have blistered and browned.
2. Place everything in a blender and blend until smooth with only a few chunks remaining.
3. Chill the salsa and enjoy!

The Best French Onion Soup

The last recipe we tried for French onion soup was from *Cook's Illustrated*, which came out great. So, when we saw that they had an updated recipe, we had to give it a try. The big change between the recipes was that the updated version calls for caramelizing the onions in the oven rather than on the stove top. This change lets you get a lot more flavor out of the onions and means you don't have to stir the onions every minute. They call this "The Best French Onion Soup," and after trying it, we can't argue!



The Best French Onion Soup

From *Cook's Illustrated*

Note:

For the best flavor, make the soup a day or two in advance. Alternatively, the onions can be prepared through step 1, cooled in the pot, and refrigerated for up to three days before proceeding with the recipe.

Ingredients:

Soup

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 3 pieces
- 6 large yellow onions (about 4 pounds), halved and cut pole to pole into 1/4-inch slices (Make sure you get yellow onions.)
- Table salt
- 2 cups water, plus extra for deglazing
- 1/2 cup dry sherry
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth (They recommend Swanson Certified Organic Free Range Chicken Broth)
- 2 cups beef broth (They recommend Pacific Beef Broth)
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme, tied with kitchen twine
- 1 bay leaf
- Ground black pepper

Cheese Croutons

- 1 small baguette, cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 8 ounces shredded Gruyère cheese (about 2 1/2 cups)

Directions:

For the soup:

1. Adjust the oven rack to the lower-middle position and heat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. Generously spray the inside of a large heavy-bottomed (at least 7 quart) Dutch oven with a nonstick cooking spray. Place the butter in the pot and add the onions and 1 teaspoon salt. Cook, covered, for 1 hour (the onions will be moist and slightly reduced in volume). Remove the pot from the oven and stir the onions, scraping the bottom and sides of the pot. Return the pot to the oven with the lid slightly ajar and continue to cook until the onions are very soft and golden brown, 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 hours longer, stirring the onions and scraping bottom and sides of pot after 1 hour.
3. Carefully remove pot from oven and place over medium-high heat. Using oven mitts to handle pot, cook onions, stirring frequently and scraping bottom and sides of pot, until the liquid evaporates and the onions brown, 15 to 20 minutes, reducing the heat to medium if the onions are browning too quickly. Continue to cook, stirring frequently, until the pot bottom is coated with a dark crust, roughly 6 to 8 minutes, adjusting the heat as necessary. (Scrape any fond that collects on spoon back into onions.)
4. Stir in 1/4 cup water, scraping the pot bottom to loosen crust, and cook until water evaporates and pot bottom has formed another dark crust, 6 to 8 minutes. Repeat process of deglazing 2 or 3 more times, until onions are very dark brown. Stir in the sherry and cook, stirring frequently, until the sherry evaporates, about 5 minutes.
5. Stir in the broths, 2 cups of water, thyme, bay leaf and 1/2 teaspoon salt, scraping up any final bits of browned crust on bottom and sides of pot.
6. Increase heat to high and bring to simmer. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes. Remove and discard herbs, then season with salt and pepper.

For the croutons:

1. While the soup simmers, arrange the baguette slices in a single layer on a baking sheet and bake in a 400-degree oven until the bread is dry, crisp and golden at edges, about 10 minutes. Set aside.

To serve:

1. Adjust oven rack 6 inches from broiler element and heat broiler. Set individual broiler-safe crocks on baking sheet and fill each with about 1 3/4 cups soup. Top each bowl with 1 or 2 baguette slices (do not overlap slices) and sprinkle evenly with Gruyère. Broil until cheese is melted and bubbly around edges, 3 to 5 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes before serving.



Hearty Lentils With Ham

This is a great dish that is perfect for cold weather. Country ham is similar to prosciutto; it is a ham that is salted, then washed and hung to age. It may not be as delicate or nuanced as prosciutto, but it is also not as expensive, so there is no guilt over throwing some into a soup or stew. Country ham gives this dish a ton of flavor and the lentils help it stick to your ribs. You can increase the amount of liquid if you want something closer to a soup. Sweating the lentils when you sauté the onions helps keep them together, maintaining their structure and appearance.



Hearty Lentils With Ham

Ingredients:

- 1 cup dried French lentils
- 1/2 pound country ham
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced
- 1 large onion, diced
- 3 bay leaves
- 3 garlic cloves, minced or pressed
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 3 cups water

Directions:

1. Heat a Dutch oven over medium heat. Once it is hot, add the ham and cook for 2 minutes on each side until brown.
2. Add the onions, lentils and carrots and sauté until the onions become tender, approximately 5 minutes.
3. Add the bay leaves, garlic, thyme, oregano and water into the pot and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and cover, simmering for 30 to 40 minutes until the lentils are tender.
4. Fish out the bay leaves. Remove the ham and cut away the fat, gristle and bones. Dice the ham and return it to the pot.
5. Serve!

Roast Pork Tenderloin

There are so many reason to like this dish:

- Pork tenderloin is relatively cheap (and always seems to be on sale)
- The leftovers are great
- It is a snap to make

We rolled our tenderloins in a spice rub we got at the “Taste of Chicago” event we went to in DC. Any store-bought spice rub should work, or you can improvise and make your own rub. All you really need is some brown sugar, garlic powder, onion powder, salt and pepper. There are probably other bonus flavors you could add in, but this is a solid foundation to start. Whatever you use, just make sure you use a lot. We thought we went a little overboard with the rub, but it turned out great. There is a lot of meat, so you need a decent amount of rub.



The tenderloins we got were a little too big to fit into a pan for browning on the stove, so we cut them in half. Tenderloins are partly covered in a whitish membrane called the silver skin. Try to remove as much of this as possible before cooking. The most important thing to remember: Don't overcook the pork! USDA guidelines call for cooking pork way too long. The tenderloin should still be a little rosy in the center, you don't want it to all be a chalky gray.

Roast Pork Tenderloin

Ingredients:

- 2 pork tenderloins (12-ounces each), silver skin removed
- Table salt and ground black pepper (or some tasty rub)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Directions:

1. Adjust an oven rack to the lower-middle position and heat the oven to 450 degrees.
2. Pat the tenderloins dry with paper towels, then season with salt and pepper (or your dry rub of choice).
3. Heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Brown the tenderloins on all sides, reducing the heat if the fat begins to smoke, about 10 minutes. Transfer the tenderloins to a 13 by 9-inch baking dish.
4. Roast the tenderloins until the thickest part registers 135 degrees on an instant-read thermometer, 10 to 15 minutes, flipping the tenderloins over halfway through the roasting time.
5. Transfer the tenderloins to a carving board, cover with foil, and let rest until the pork reaches an internal temperature of 145 to 150 degrees, 5 to 10 minutes, before slicing into 1/4-inch-thick pieces.

Chicken Under a Brick

Chicken under a brick is a great way to cook a whole chicken on the stove as opposed to in the oven. To get all the goodness you need to butterfly the chicken or “spatchcock” it. Yep, give it a good spatchcocking... which is to half the chicken by removing its backbone. This allows you to flatten the chicken, making it all the same thickness. When you do this, the breast and thigh meat will cook at the same rate. A lot of the fat in the chicken will render out. The chicken will cook in this fat and yummy juices, instead of the dry air of the oven. All that rendered yumminess also crisps up the skin...bonus!

We cooked a rather large bird, roughly 4.3 lbs, however, we would recommend a smaller bird, maybe something closer to 3 lbs as the recipe calls for. Of course we got the bird first and then found the recipe. That’s just how we roll. A smaller bird would be more tender and the meat would be less thick.

We had to cook the chicken a little longer since it was bigger. Unfortunately, the breast meat got just a wee bit over cooked. The recipe below says to check the doneness in the thigh meat, but we saw a similar recipe that said to check the breast meat for doneness instead. The recipe also recommends cooking until the thigh meat registers 175 degrees, which is way too long, in our opinion. Last piece of advice, season the chicken under the skin or else all the seasoning will just scorch.



Chicken Under a Brick

Based on a recipe from *Cook's Illustrated*

Ingredients:

- 2 teaspoons minced fresh sage leaves
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- Table salt and ground black pepper
- Whole chicken (3 pounds), butterflied
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Directions:

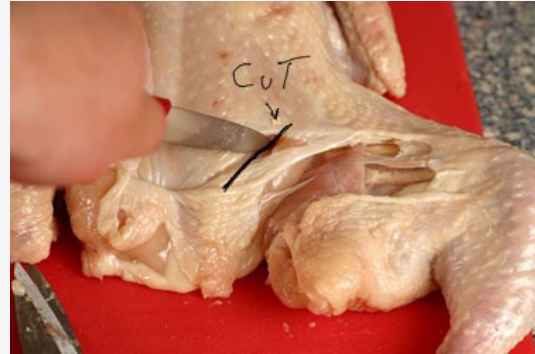
Butterfly the chicken

1. With the breast side down and the tail of the chicken facing you, use kitchen shears to cut along one side of the back bone down its entire length.
2. With the breast side still down, turn the neck end to face you and cut along the other side of the backbone and remove it.

3. Turn the chicken breast side up; open the chicken out on the work surface. Use the palm of your hand to flatten it.
4. *(Optional, this makes for better presentation, but I think it makes it harder to get the chicken all the same thickness)* Make half-inch slits on either side of each breast about one inch from the tip; stick the legs into these openings.
5. *(Optional, we skipped this step but it would be helpful if the thickness were very uneven)* Use the smooth face of a mallet to pound the chicken to approximately even thickness.

Cooking the chicken

1. Mix the sage, garlic, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper in a small bowl.
2. Loosen the skin on each leg and thigh, using the handle of a wooden spoon or use your hand. Rub half of the herb mixture under the skin. Then loosen the skin covering the breast and rub the remaining herb mixture under the skin. Lightly season chicken with salt and pepper. Let stand at room temperature 15 minutes to allow flavors to meld.
3. Heat the oil in a large sauté pan. Cover bottom of a Dutch oven or stock pot that has a diameter slightly smaller than the sauté pan you intend to use with foil and fill with 5 quarts water. You could also use bricks covered with foil. We used our cast iron pan for cooking the chicken; it was made for stuff like this.
4. Once the oil is shimmering, lay the chicken skin side down. Set the Dutch oven (or other weight) on top to hold the chicken flat.
5. Cook over medium-high heat until skin is nicely browned, about 10 to 15 minutes.
6. Remove Dutch oven; turn chicken skin side up. Replace Dutch oven and continue cooking until instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part of the breast reads 165, about 15 to 20 more minutes. (The original recipe calls for cooking until the thigh registers 170 to 175 degrees, but that is too long and the meat will dry out. Most other chicken recipes we found call for cooking the meat to 160 to 165 degrees.)
7. Transfer the chicken to a plate and tent with foil (we reused the foil covering the Dutch oven). Let rest for 10 minutes. Carve and serve.



Crepes Are Easy!

Crepes have traditionally been a “going out food” - food that you think is so tricky that you only get it at restaurants. Deep fried whole fish is another good example of “going out food.” Crepes, however, are surprisingly easy to make and tough to screw up. The only tricky part is flipping them in the pan. About half way through our batch of 12 we had it down to a science and were flipping like pros. Having a long, angled spatula makes it easy to get underneath and ensures that there is enough spatula underneath to support the whole crepe.

We used a 10” non-stick pan and it worked out great. If you want smaller crepes you can use an 8” pan.

We got 12 crepes out of the batch we made. We ended up making both savory (ham and cheese, recipe follows) and sweet crepes (chocolate and banana), and even had some leftovers that we put in the fridge and used later.



Crepes

From *Cook's Illustrated*

Ingredients:

- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup whole milk
- 6 tablespoons water
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon table salt
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus extra for brushing pan

Directions:

1. Mix all of the ingredients in a food processor or blender until a smooth batter is formed, 3 to 4 seconds.
2. If you want to make a very tender crepe, transfer the batter to a covered container and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. You can leave the batter in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. When you are ready to begin cooking, gently stir batter if the ingredients have separated.
3. Heat a non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Brush the pan bottom and sides very lightly with the extra melted butter. The butter should sizzle when it hits the pan. When the butter stops sizzling, pour the batter into the pan. For an 8 inch pan, use 2 1/2 tablespoons of batter (fill a 1/4 cup measuring cup just over half way). For a 10 inch pan, use a full 1/4 cup of batter.

4. When pouring the batter, tilt the pan down and slightly to the right. Tilt the pan slowly, in counterclockwise motion, until a thin, even crepe is formed. Cook until the bottom is spotty brown, loosening the crepe from the pan side with a table knife or rubber spatula to check for doneness. This should take 30 seconds to 1 minute. Flip the loosened crepe quickly with fingertips or spatula and cook until spotty brown on other side, about 30 seconds longer.
5. Place cooked crepe on plate and repeat cooking process with remaining batter, brushing pan as necessary, every two to three crepes.

Crepes can be wrapped in plastic and refrigerated up to 3 days or frozen for up to 2 months.



Ham & Cheese Crepes

Savory crepes make an awesome sandwich. This recipe calls for cooking the crepes in the oven, which gets the outside of the crepes nice and crispy. With the melty cheese and salty ham, it is an irresistible treat. The best part is that everything can be prepared ahead of time and then just popped in the oven or toaster oven, whenever a tasty treat is needed. We would recommend a cheese that has a bit of character and is a good melter, such as Swiss or Emmentaler.

Follow this dish up with some sweet crepes, such as chocolate and banana, for dessert.



Ham & Cheese Crepes

Ingredients:

- 4 10" crepes
- 8 slices of deli ham
- 8-12 slices of cheese

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. Place the ham and cheese on one half of a crepe. You should have enough cheese to cover that one half.
3. Fold the crepe in half, and then in half again. Repeat for the three remaining crepes.
4. Place the crepes on a baking sheet and cover with aluminum foil.
5. Cook the crepes for 15 to 20 minutes, until the cheese has melted.

Peanut Butter Chocolate Bars

If you like chocolate (who doesn't?) and if you like peanut butter (ok, some people might not), then you'll love these peanut butter chocolate bars! A friend made them for a 4th of July party, and everyone at the party asked for the recipe. So, now it is our turn to share it with you.



Peanut Butter Chocolate Bars

Ingredients:

- 1 box yellow cake mix (no pudding)
- 1 cup chunky peanut butter
- 1 stick butter
- 2 eggs
- 1 12 ounce package semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 tablespoon butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups unsalted peanuts, chopped

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Line a 9 x 13 baking pan with foil (leave some hanging over the edges, making handles) and spray with Pam.
2. For the crust: melt butter. Combine cake mix, peanut butter, melted butter and eggs with a mixer on low speed for 1 minute.
3. Set aside 1 1/2 cups of the mix for the top.
4. Pour remaining mix in pan and push down with fingers to make bottom layer.
5. For the filling: melt chocolate chips, butter and milk either in the microwave or on the stove using a double boiler. Stir frequently to make sure it doesn't burn. Stir in vanilla.
6. Pour over crust. Top chocolate layer with remaining crust mix, crumbled. Top with chopped peanuts. (Note: 1 1/2 cups might be too much. You might be able to get away with 1 cup.)
7. Bake 30 to 35 minutes. Let cool. Cut and serve. (After cutting, bars can be refrigerated to set the chocolate.)