

MATT AND LINDA MOREHOUSE

# CAST IRON CUISINE

FROM BREAKFAST TO DESSERT



*Grandma's  
Skillet Reborn*

*Cast Iron Cuisine  
from Breakfast to Dessert*

**Grandma's Skillet Reborn**

**by**

*Matt and Linda Morehouse*

**Published by  
Paradise Cay Publications, Inc.  
Arcata, CA**

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**Printed in the United States of America**

**First Edition**

**ISBN 978-939837-84-6**

**Published by Paradise Cay Publications, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 29, Arcata, CA 95518-0029**

**800-736-4509, Fax 707-822-9163**

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# Introduction

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First let us say what this book is *not* about. It is not a fast food book aimed at the soccer mom who needs to throw a meal on the table in half an hour (although a few recipes *do* serve that purpose). It is not a low-calorie, low-fat, “heart-healthy” cookbook (though efforts *have* been made to reduce fat, salt, and sugar content because that’s just the smart thing to do). It is not an organic cookbook (though if you *want* to spend your money on organics it will not ruin any recipe).

This book *is* a compilation of hearty, time-tested, family-pleasing recipes that go well in a rustic environment but can still grace your formal city-home dining room. Most ingredients are commonly found at your local grocery store or in the fields, forest, and streams close by. A few more exotic ingredients, such as Sap Sago cheese or Mexican chocolate, etc., add such a distinctive flavor edge that they are worth acquiring from a specialty shop or from the online sources cited in Resources.

Most of the recipes in this book we have either created ourselves or significantly adapted from their traditional versions. The few that we have presented as we encountered them, we have attributed to their authors, where known.

This book is for the experienced family cook. We assume that you are familiar with the basic cooking methods; consequently, we do not explain in detail such processes as braising, sautéing, and the like. However, we do go into considerable detail discussing such processes as aging red meat and making stocks, which can provide that flavor edge that lifts a dish from the salubrious into the sublime.

Some of these recipes require four days from start to finish (thereby giving a new meaning to “slow food”); however, with the exception of making stock, no recipe requires more than one hour of total hands-on time.

All recipes that require long preparation times *can* be made more quickly, but there will be some significant

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loss of flavor. You *can* go to the supermarket, buy a cut of beef, and make, the very same day, a pot roast that will satisfy and nourish your family and guests. But it will not bear the inimitably dusky, intensely carnal flavor of the pot roast made from aged beef and homemade stock, the one we designate as Noble Pot Roast. You just have to taste this dish to believe it, and having tasted it, we guarantee the flavor will linger in your memory.

With the exception of the salads (which have been included for their flavor and texture contrast and because they're what we set on our own table), all these recipes can be made using cast iron cookware—indeed, the flavor of most dishes is enhanced thereby.

Cast iron cooking has been around since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when cast iron was first smelted in China. New cast iron cookware is readily available, though we find it less user-friendly than the fine old pieces that have been seasoned through years and years of use and loving care.

There is a fine sufficiency—nay, a plethora--of antique and new ironware available on eBay at

surprisingly reasonable prices. The best pieces come from the nineteenth century American foundries such as Griswold, Volrath, Wagner, etc., and can still be found at garage sales and flea markets. (See Cast Iron Care, following two pages.) They are worth seeking out, for you will soon become attached to your cast iron ware—especially your lidded skillet—and will consider it your best friend in the kitchen.

The recipes in this book are merely representative of what can be done in cast iron; this is by no means an exhaustive, encyclopedic work. It is an honest transcription of the meals that have nourished our families and guests for many years, occasionally garnering high praise and requests for recipes. When that happens now, we will simply hand them this cookbook.

—Matt and Linda Morehouse

**Important Note:** It's a wise strategy to read each recipe in its entirety at least twice before beginning the dish, to avoid surprises.

## Choosing and Caring for Cast Iron Ware

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Cast iron ware is our “go to” choice for just about all cooking in the kitchen as well as over the campfire. We have one Griswold #8 (affectionately called Grizzly Eight) with lid at home and one at the ranch. Of *all* our kitchen appliances, they are the most used.

Here are some of the dishes we like to cook in the Grizzly Eight: Chicken Marsala, Short Ribs of Beef, chunks of stew meat (beef, lamb, venison, goat, whatever), hash brown potatoes, Creekside, and Mountain Bread. We always bake our pies, even our cookies, in cast iron.

A cast iron Dutch oven is especially good for pot roasts, for it will produce a moist and tender meal every time. (For pot roasts, we favor a 7-bone chuck, but just about any of the shoulder cuts will do. Avoid the more expensive cuts, as they don’t have enough fat to make a good pot roast.) The pot roast can either be cooked on top of the stove or in the oven; in the oven is actually better, for the heat surrounds the Dutch oven.

*Do* get a Grizzly (or Dutch oven) with a lid. You want a nice tight seal on all top surfaces. A good lid will not

only fit tightly on all top surfaces, but on its interior face will have some device for returning moisture to the pan: ridges or points on which the steam condenses and drips back into the pan, self-basting the meat. Don’t buy a lid without this feature.

When seeking cast iron cookware, we suggest you look at flea markets, garage sales, and ebay: it will be well worth your time. When looking for used ironware, avoid the newer ones made in Taiwan or China. The OLD American pieces are the best, being more finely milled than anything being produced today—look for the OLD Lodge, the Wagner, and Griswold names.

Follow the instructions for the care of your modern cast iron ware, but here’s how we treat our Grizzly Eights. When you have finished cooking and have removed the food, let the skillet cool, then wipe it out gently with hot soapy water, rinse it well, dry it well, and put it back on the shelf.

Another very effective way of cleaning it, especially if there are particles of food stuck to it, is to throw in about half a cup of plain old table salt and use it as an

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abrasive to scour it with a siderag. Worst case, if food really gets baked on, put it back on the stove with a little water, gently boil it while scraping with a spatula or wooden spoon. A wooden spatula works very well. If you're not going to use it for a long while, apply a light coating of mineral oil and put it away. We like mineral oil instead of vegetable oil or meat oils because it will not turn rancid over a period of time. If you're using it on a daily or weekly basis this isn't necessary.

. As for restoring an old, dirty piece of cast iron you've been lucky enough to find at a flea market or yard sale, here is the advice of Gregory Stahl, founder of the Wagner and Griswold Society:

“There are many ways to resuscitate cast iron that has seen years of abuse. If you are going to clean just a couple of pieces of iron, spray them with EZ OFF oven cleaner, place them in a plastic bag, and seal the bag. Take the item out of the bag after a few days and most of the carbonized material will be easy to remove by scrubbing with hot water and soap. Other

ways to clean involve soaking in a lye bath, using electrolysis, or submitting the ware to the cleaning cycle of your self-cleaning oven. Never sandblast cast iron cookware. Avoid the use of open fires to burn off the old material, as these methods can damage your cookware.

“Once you have the old crud off your cast iron cookware, you'll need to re-season it. There are many ways to season your cast iron. Simply warm your item to 400 degrees in the oven. Remove it and then when it is safe enough to handle, apply a very thin coat of shortening (e.g., Crisco, bacon grease, or the like) and remove all excess. Place the item back in the oven at 375 degrees for one hour and then turn off the oven and let it cool in the oven without opening the door.

“You can also use spray-on shortening, such as PAM. Be sure to only apply a thin coat and then wipe off anything you use to season, otherwise the item will be sticky and blotchy. If you make a mistake, just strip the item again and start over.

“For specific tips, instructions, and a pictorial of how to clean and season your pans, visit the Wagner and Griswold Society website at [www.wag-society.org](http://www.wag-society.org). These friendly members have a forum where you can ask questions and identify your cast iron cookware for free. You might even consider becoming a member of this group to receive their newsletter and participate in their annual conventions.”

Cast iron ware likes to be used frequently; that’s what maintains its seasoning and gives it a special patina. In a well seasoned skillet you should be able to fry an egg with a minimal amount of butter or oil. It should be able to perform as well as any of the modern nonstick pans.

A lot of people say you should not cook acid-based foods—such as tomatoes, lemons, etc.—in cast iron. This is very true if you are cooking in cast iron that has not been properly seasoned, for then your food may pick up a rusty iron flavor. However, once cast iron has been properly seasoned, this is not a problem.



## Breakfasts Plain and Fancy

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Many of these recipes work quite well for lunch--or even dinner. Who says eggs are only for breakfast? (For that matter, who says breakfast must contain eggs?)

Up at the ranch, we never know who might wander in, so we like dishes that can stretch. Our old favorites, **Creekside** and **Joe's Special**, are quite expandable.

And unexpected chores can call a person away just as the meal's ready to be served. If the bear's gonna bite through the water line, he doesn't ask if it's convenient for the residents of the Crow 'n Bear.

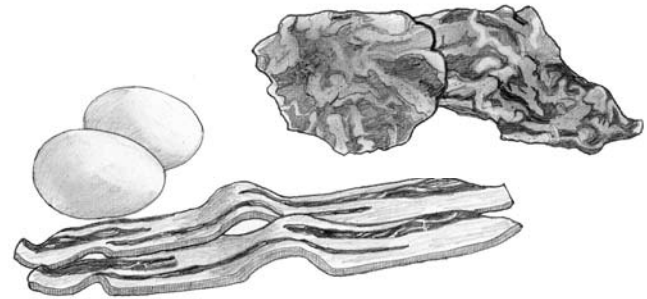
So we doubly appreciate the dish that can wait patiently on the wood stove or in the oven's warming drawer. **Ham and Red-Eye Gravy** is particularly good at that kind of thing.

And speaking of getting called away unexpectedly, it's nice to have something to tuck in your pocket for the hike up to the spring. **Apple Fingers**, **Maple Puffs**, and **Skillet Mango Muffin** fill the bill.

Now, we're a gustatorily open-minded pair. Ingredients such as oysters or lamb kidneys bring us delight, rather than cause us suspicion. So you'll find

here the traditional **Hangtown Fry**, as well as the British breakfast favorite, **Lamb Kidneys and Broiled Tomatoes**.

At first reading, you may be skeptical of some of these recipes, such as **Hummlegum** or **Breakfast Lasagna**. (In the lunch section, **Peanut Butter, Bacon, and Dill Pickle Sandwich** comes to mind.) But try them before you pass judgment. That nobbly pebble in the path just might be a gold nugget.



## Sour Cream Pancakes

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*These light and delicate pancakes have a flavor reminiscent of buttermilk, but with a slightly sweeter edge.*

**2 eggs**

**1 tablespoon olive oil**

**1 teaspoon vanilla**

**3 tablespoons turbinado sugar**

**½ cup light sour cream**

**1 cup flour**

**1 teaspoon baking soda**

**¼ cup dried milk**

**½ teaspoon sea salt**

**½ cup water**

Beat eggs until light and fluffy. Beat in olive oil, vanilla, and sugar and continue to beat until sugar is melted. Add sour cream; beat until mixture is well blended.

Sift flour with baking soda, dried milk, and salt. Add wet mixture to dry mixture, stirring in water until batter is desired consistency. If you like your pancakes

thin, you may need to add a little extra water.

Spoon onto preheated cast iron griddle, turning once when bubbles form. Makes about 24 pancakes of 3-inch diameter.

### **Variation: Honey-Smoked Stacks**

**For each serving:**

**6 sour cream pancakes**

**1 tablespoon softened Neufchatel cheese**

**2 deli slices honey-smoked (or other) ham, warmed**

**3 tablespoons walnuts, chopped very fine.**

Lightly spread cheese on 2 warm sour cream pancakes. Stack pancakes. On top of cheese-spread pancakes place 1 deli slice honey-smoked ham (warmed), then 1 tablespoon walnuts chopped very fine. Stack with another 2 cheesed pancakes, another slice of warmed deli ham, and more walnuts. Top stack with 2 pancakes and a final sprinkling of walnuts. Serve with warmed maple syrup. One full recipe of pancakes serves 4.

## Joe's Special

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*This recipe was created at Original Joe's on Broadway in San Francisco many years ago. Although we did not create it, it so perfectly fits the tenor of this book that we felt we must include it. This makes a hearty breakfast, lunch, or dinner. A simple, complete meal in one skillet.*

**1 pound any lean ground red meat**  
**1 tablespoon canola oil**  
**1 package frozen spinach, chopped (or fresh spinach, chopped, if you have it)**  
**2 medium onions, chopped**  
**6 cloves garlic, crushed, peeled, and diced**  
**½ pound fresh white mushrooms, sliced**  
**4 eggs**  
**salt and pepper to taste**  
**Worcestershire to taste**

In a large cast-iron skillet, brown the meat in oil. While the meat is browning, prepare the frozen spinach according to package directions and drain. If using fresh spinach, simply steam it until it wilts.

Remove browned meat from skillet and set aside. Pour off excess fat from the skillet. Throw in onions, garlic, and mushrooms and sauté until onions are translucent. Throw meat back in skillet.

Add drained spinach and mix well, stirring continually, over medium to low heat.

You are now in a holding pattern if you want to be. Cover, turn heat real low, and make sure everybody's ready to sit down.

Uncover, turn heat to high, and when everything starts to sizzle, crack and throw in the eggs. Turn and stir with spatula until eggs have just set. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, and Worcestershire to taste. Place skillet on table and let everybody dig in.

Serves 4 hungry adults.

Serve with ketchup, Worcestershire, Tabasco, and any other condiments that please your crowd. I have a friend who likes mustard on his.

For variations, see following page.

## *Lunches for Whenever*

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Some lunches you sit down to; others you pick up and go.  
Some lunches you invite guests to; others you eat alone.  
Some lunches can expand into a dinner; others are glorified  
snacks.  
Some are soups, some are sandwiches, some are salads.  
And some are elegant works of art.

Here's a little of each of these. Most of them see a cast iron  
skillet at least once.



## Ham and Cheese Skillet Pockets

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*Quick, easy, and tasty: a lunch you can take with you to eat out of hand. Not as messy as a sandwich, either. This recipe serves one; scale up for more servings.*

**For each serving:**

**1 pita pocket (Mediterranean-style bread)**

**3 very thin slices deli ham**

**1 tablespoon Honey Mustard Dressing**

**¼ cup canned sliced mushrooms (or less)**

**¼ cup baby spinach**

**2 very thin slices sweet red onion**

**2 slices Jarlsberg or Swiss cheese (deli sliced)**

Carefully slice open pita pocket, cutting only in a semicircle, not all the way apart. Stack the ham slices and spread with **Honey Mustard Dressing**, p. 112.

On top of the ham, layer the mushrooms, spinach, onion, and cheese. Use a spatula to help you slide this package inside the pita pocket. Be sure all edges of the cheese are tucked inside.

Heat a #5 cast iron skillet until, when you hold your palms over it, it warms them. Do the same with a handled pot of such a size as to fit neatly into the #5. Keep the heat going under the skillet.

Now, with the spatula, slide pita pocket into the hot skillet and immediately top the pita pocket with the bottom of the heated pot, pressing down for about 2 minutes or until cheese is melted. Set aside in warming oven while you prepare the rest of the pockets.

**Variation:**

### Greek Skillet Pockets

Follow same method as Mexican Skillet Pockets (facing page), but fill with 1 cup ground lamb, browned and drained; a thick layer of good hummus, 2 tablespoons pine nuts; 1 tablespoon fresh mint leaves, chopped; and feta cheese, crumbled.

# Cookies Throughout the Day

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*Considering cookie-making, a few words:*

**Keep the process simple.** You don't need a mixer, a sifter, or a lot of bowls to make good cookies. I cream my butter with a kitchen fork, sift dry ingredients with my fingers, and do all my stirring with a wooden spoon. And I use an ulu or a chef's knife to chop nuts (the ulu is more manageable), which simplifies clean-up.

In most cases, one medium-size mixing bowl is all you'll need. If assembly and clean-up doesn't feel like such a chore, you're likely to bake more cookies for your family to enjoy. And if the equipment and the process are kept simple, even kids can get involved in cookie-making.

**Improvise.** You can make distinctive, attractive butter cookies without a cookie press. Just roll the dough between your palms to make little balls, place in an ungreased iron skillet (or on an ungreased cookie sheet), and flatten with the bottom of a tumbler

dipped in whatever kind of sugar or sugar/flour mixture strikes your fancy. Then search your kitchen for whatever will make a distinctive impression on the tops of the flattened cookies. I have successfully used a fork, a potato ricer, a ravioli wheel, and the bottom of a cut-glass tumbler. (Kids will love this part of the process.)

**Strive for the healthful.** We prefer a less-sweet cookie because, to be frank about it, we can eat more of them. Also, a cookie not overladen with sweetener tastes better, to us, as an any-time-of-the-day snack.

With most of these cookies, the flavor tends to build as you chew and then come out, in its full delicious flowering, as an aftertaste that will lead you right back for another. We prefer this dynamic to the highly sugared product that hits you in the face and after one or two (depending upon your susceptibility) sends you into sugar-shock.

Speaking of sugar, you won't find the traditional refined white sugar in our kitchen. Instead, we use raw

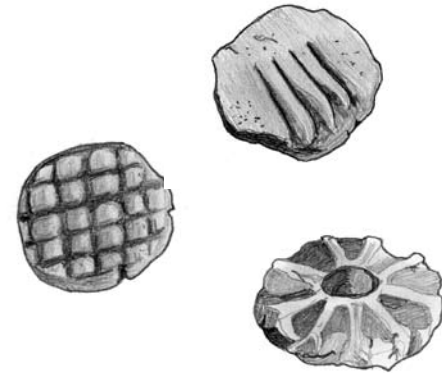
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or turbinado sugar, which hasn't had all the nutrition milled out of it and to us tastes better. Ditto brown sugar: we go for the least-processed product we can find, with the highest content of original molasses remaining from the sugar cane. Again, to our palates it makes tastier cookies. And there's much to be said for barley malt syrup or just plain old molasses.

As for the shortening, I always use a little real butter, for its superior flavor and because I prefer an honest, old-fashioned saturated fat to a synthetic trans-fat. (Needless to say, there is no Crisco or margarine in our kitchen.) But I do cut the amount by half and substitute, for the remainder of the shortening, light sour cream, Neufchatel cheese, or a high-quality olive oil. This strategy reduces calories and boosts flavor.

Light sour cream and Neufchatel cheese (which tastes and handles just like cream cheese but with one-third less calories) both convey a subtle cheesecake-type flavor that plays off especially well against dried fruits and nuts. They also provide essential calcium, so you can prescribe yourself a cookie now and then without feeling guilty.

These are the kinds of cookies you can proudly present in a tin at Christmastime, but they are also the kinds to slip by the dozen into the bib of your overalls, to sustain you through a long day on the tractor.



## Ginger Sandies

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*These slightly crumbly cookies have a delicate crunch. They're probably too fragile to travel well, but since they disappear so quickly, we may never find out.*

**8 tablespoons butter**

**8 tablespoons olive oil**

**½ cup brown sugar**

**2 eggs**

**2 cups flour**

**4 tablespoons dry milk powder**

**2 teaspoons baking powder**

**3 teaspoons lime juice (can use lemon)**

**⅔ cup candied ginger, chopped fine**

**⅔ cup walnuts, chopped fine**

Cream butter, beat in olive oil a little at a time, beat in brown sugar, beat in eggs.

Sift flour, powdered milk, and baking powder together; add to batter and stir to mix well. Add lime juice; mix until well blended. Add ginger and walnuts. Stir to mix.

Drop by heaping tablespoonsful into well-seasoned, ungreased iron skillets (two 12" skillets will accommodate the batch), or use nonstick cookie sheets if you don't have skillets. Cookies will spread out to about a 3" diameter as they cook, so leave at least 1" space between them.

Bake for 30 minutes at 350°. These aromatic drop cookies will be an even, medium brown on the bottoms and edges, but only lightly browned on the tops. Remove cookies from iron skillets or cookie sheets and allow to cool on rack. Makes 32–36.



## Chocolate Mint Surprise

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*The surprise ingredient here is jicama, which lends a crunch without skewing the peppermint flavor, as nuts might. These make a lovely accent to your cookie jar, though they're a little intense to eat all day long. As a dessert they make a nice accompaniment to vanilla flavored frozen yogurt or ice cream.*

**¾ cup jicama, minced**  
**crème de menthe to cover jicama, about ½ cup**  
**1 stick butter**  
**4 tablespoons olive oil**  
**½ cup turbinado sugar**  
**¼ cup Dutch baker's chocolate (cocoa)**  
**2 teaspoons peppermint extract**  
**1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour**

Place minced jicama in a tall, narrow mug. Pour over the jicama enough crème de menthe to cover. Set aside for at least an hour, to give the jicama time to absorb the color and the flavor of the liqueur. Drain; reserve liqueur.

Cream butter, then beat in olive oil a little at a time. Add sugar and cocoa, beating thoroughly after each addition. Add 1 tablespoon of the reserved crème de menthe. Add peppermint extract; beat to blend. Now add drained jicama and mix well.

Stir in flour and mix thoroughly, allowing no flour to remain on bottom or sides of bowl.

Take up by tablespoons, rolling between palms to form balls. Place balls on ungreased cast iron skillet (or standard cookie sheet), leaving an inch on all sides. Flatten with the floured and sugared bottom (to prevent sticking) of a tumbler bearing an interesting pattern.

Bake in preheated 350-degree oven for 18 minutes. Remove skillet from oven and let cookies cool in skillet for 15 minutes before removing to rack for final cooling.

Makes 24.

## *Side Dishes: Starches and Vegetables*

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Even meat-and-potato people need a little something on their plates beside the beef or chicken.

In addition to filling up the belly, a carefully chosen starch or vegetable can extend, point up, ameliorate, or sustain the flavor of the entrée.

For instance, the brisk crispness of **Chayote Squash and Fennel** makes a fine counterpoint to the dusky **Savory Tender Goat**.

The right starch can cradle or soak up a delicious sauce as adroitly as mashed potatoes cosset a fine gravy.

**Wild Rice Casserole** is delightfully graced by the port wine reduction sauce of **Lamb and Bamb**.

Some starches prepared for dinner can hold over as the foundation for a fine breakfast.

Consider how **Creekside** builds upon **Cabin Fried Potatoes**.

And some dishes start out with beans or peas and just grow from there, as **New Year's Peas** tends to morph into a full-fledged lunch dish.

So here's our tribute to the magical vegetable kingdom.

Root, leaf, seed, and stem, we thank you.

## Easy Cauliflower Slightly Mejicana

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*Colorful as well as flavorful, this dish brings a touch of fiesta to your table. Don't throw away the leftover nopalitos and tomatoes. Use them to combine with browned ground beef and some **Garlic Black Beans** for a quick, tasty, mild chili.*

- ½ medium onion, chopped small dice**
- 1 clove garlic, crushed and diced**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 cup Mexican-style tomatoes with chiles**
- ¼ cup canned nopalitos (cactus)**
- 1 large head cauliflower with all its leaves**

In a #8 cast iron skillet (for which you have a lid), over medium heat, sauté onion and garlic in olive oil until onion is translucent. Add canned Mexican-style tomatoes (along with can juices) and canned nopalitos. Stir to blend.

Cut cauliflower florets away from head and set aside. Trim cauliflower leaves away from head, preserving as much of the green material as possible. Line a serving

bowl with these leaves. You are creating a green nest in which to present the cauliflower and tomatoes.

Add florets to skillet with the tomatoes and nopalitos. Cover the skillet and steam vegetables over medium-high heat until cauliflower is fork-tender but not all limp and soggy.

Remove vegetables, place in cauliflower nest, and turn up heat under the juices remaining in the skillet. Cook, stirring, until juices are reduced to about ¼ cup. Pour over cauliflower. Serve hot. Serves 4.



## *Dinners, Slow and Fast*

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As we mentioned in the Introduction, some of these recipes require four days from start to finish, but let that not dissuade you: no meat recipe requires more than one hour of total hands-on time.

All meat recipes that require long preparation times *can* be made more quickly, but there will be some significant loss of flavor. You *can* go to the supermarket, buy a cut of beef, and make, the very same day, a pot roast that will satisfy and nourish your family and guests. But it will not bear the inimitably dusky, intensely carnal flavor of the pot roast made from aged beef, the one we designate as Noble Pot Roast.

These days we've been enjoying grass-fed beef and experimenting with goat, that low-cholesterol, high-flavor, biblical meat. The goat in particular benefits from long, slow cooking, but if you have no Dutch oven, do not despair: your countertop slow cooker will take over where your skillet leaves off.

Still, there are times, at the end of a hectic day, when life's urgencies demand that you put together a meal *right now*. Be not dismayed: these pages contain many a recipe to swiftly satisfy your hungry crew.

After all, one of us has been a single father, a sailor, and a mountain man. He knows from many years of experience how to whip up a tasty meal in a hurry.



## Adzuki Beans, Sausage, and Polenta

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*For this dish, make your usual amount of polenta in your usual manner. After you have spread it over the mixture in the loaf pan, you should have plenty left over for polenta hash or grits. This is not at all a fancy dinner, but it is hearty, satisfying, and different enough to be intriguing*

**1 cup adzuki beans (or any other small red beans)**  
**2 quarts cold water**  
**2 tablespoons canola oil**  
**1 large Italian sausage, about ¼ pound**  
**¼ cup Marsala wine**  
**2 tablespoons sun-dried tomatoes, chopped fine**  
**polenta enough to cover cast-iron bread loaf pan**  
**2 tablespoons Gorgonzola or other stinky cheese**

Throw adzuki beans into water. Bring to boil; simmer until just barely *al dente*, 30 minutes to an hour or so, depending on age and composition of beans. Drain, reserving bean stock. This is very flavorful stock, which you will probably want to add to your other concoctions.

While the beans are simmering, in a cast iron skillet heat canola oil to almost smoking. Brown the whole Italian sausage. Deglaze the pan with Marsala. Remove sausage from skillet, slice diagonally, and set aside.

Pour beans into a cast iron loaf pan. (If you don't have a cast iron loaf pan, you can use any other loaf pan.) Lay sausage slices on top of beans. Pour deglazed liquid over all. Sprinkle chopped sun-dried tomatoes over. Pour polenta over to fill pan. Place in preheated 325-degree oven for about 1 hour. Remove from oven. Set on cooling rack for half an hour so juices can resorb.

Directly before serving, sprinkle Gorgonzola and ½ tablespoon chopped dried tomatoes over the top. Put under broiler for maybe 5 minutes or so. Keep a close eye so it doesn't scorch.

Serve on warm plates. Serves 2 with leftovers. You can double this if you have 2 loaf pans.

**Variation:** Kick up the interest by substituting hot Italian sausage and adding a few guajillo chiles. Serve with Tabasco.

## Savory Tender Goat, Venison, or Any Other Tough Meat

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*This recipe can also be made in a slow cooker on your kitchen counter. It produces a savory, tender concoction, especially when made with goat or mutton.*

**2 pounds goat, mutton, venison,  
or any other tough meat**  
**salt and pepper to taste**  
**2 tablespoons canola oil**  
**12 garlic cloves, mashed**  
**1 medium onion, chopped**  
**1 green pepper, chopped**  
**¼ cup sundried tomatoes**  
**12 peppercorns**  
**1 bay leaf**  
**mayacoba beans (optional, see page 85)**  
**bean water (optional)**

Cut meat into slices, cubes, or steaks 1" thick. Sprinkle with salt and pepper; dry completely on paper towels.

In a cast iron Dutch oven, brown the meat, in small batches, in canola oil, setting aside pieces as they brown.

After all the meat has been browned and set aside, throw into the Dutch oven 12 or so garlic cloves that have been mashed; one medium onion, chopped; and one green pepper, chopped. Brown, adding more canola oil if necessary.

Remove vegetables from Dutch oven. Deglaze the Dutch oven with water or wine, any kind. Put everything back in Dutch oven, then throw in sundried tomatoes, peppercorns, and bay leaf. Add water or wine to cover halfway, put the lid on, bring to boil, then take heat back down to a very low simmer. Simmer slowly on stove or in the oven until meat is tender, 2 to 4 hours, checking meat occasionally with a fork.

Remove from oven; pull the meat out with pluckers and set aside. Strain the stock (throw away the vegetables or feed 'em to the chickens; they've done their job) and skim off excess fat or pour stock into a gravy grease separator. Pour degreased stock back into the Dutch oven, add 2 cups or so of the water that the beans have cooked in (see recipe below), and cook on top of stove until volume has been reduced by one-half.

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Put cooked beans in serving dish (see recipe below), arrange the meat on top, and pour the reduced stock over. Serves 4.

## Savory Mayacoba Beans

**2 cups dried Mayacoba beans or baby limas**  
**2 quarts warm water**  
**1 teaspoon salt**

Soak beans in warm water for 2 hours. Add salt, bring to rapid boil, reduce to a slow simmer with lid on. Cook to taste. Strain the beans. Pour 2 cups bean juice into Dutch oven with stock from meat. Reduce by half.

Very nice with cubed, steamed, salted and peppered

**Chayote Squash and Fennel** (page 58).

Serve with **Whole Wheat Mountain Bread** (page 121).

**Banana Kiwi Salad** makes a nice accompaniment (page 104).

This makes a lovely dinner. Each of the dishes plays nicely against the others.

If you like the flavor of goat cheese, chances are you'll like goat meat. Elderly lamb (mutton to the Brits) is a passable substitute, but we feel that "the real thing" is best. Try a Mexican market and ask for chivo (**chee-vo**). They'll wonder how you found out.

## Palate-Cleansing Salads

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*A word about dinner salads, as we see them:*

Here is your opportunity to balance the dusky, carnal flavors of Matt's meat dishes with a bright, sparkly palate-cleanser. In our opinion, these composed fresh-fruit salads need no dressings, for we consider them all the more appealing if you let the flavors of the fruits, nuts, and greens speak for themselves.

However, if a naked salad seems to you somehow unfinished, consider topping everything with a discreet drizzle of a low-fat fruit-flavored yogurt. Piña colada, lemon burst, or key lime pie are the flavors we favor. Or for an offbeat surprise, try dabs of peanut satay sauce, or **Honey Mustard Dressing**.

It's true that composing a dinner salad takes more work than assembling a compendium of greens and goodies in one large bowl. It's true that composed salads take up refrigerator space in multiples limited only by the number of your dinner guests. And it's true that separate, composed salads demand their own living room on your dinner table.

But consider them an opportunity to creatively complement the flavors of the meat entree. Look upon them as your artistic signature upon the dinner, as distinctive and colorful as the table you so carefully set. See them as a chance to add wit and whimsy to your meal.

You may not need a separate dessert; just save your salad for the end of the meal, in the Continental fashion, as we do.

"Oh, what a pretty salad!" your guests may exclaim. And they'll know it was made just for them.



## Orange Avocado Pinwheel Salad

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*Quick, easy, colorful, and tasty, this is the composed salad I turn to most often.*

**For every 2 salads:**

**fresh mixed spring herbs**

**1 large navel orange, peeled and separated into segments**

**1 ripe avocado, peeled and sliced vertically**

**4 cubes candied ginger, cut fine**

**1 tablespoon slivered almonds (optional)**

Strew each plate with a bed of mixed herbs.

On each plate lay half of the orange segments; shape them in a pinwheel fanning out from the center. (You'll usually have five for each plate.)

Cut the avocado into as many vertical slices as you have orange segments. Distribute in the spaces between the fanned-out orange segments so that orange alternates with avocado.

Scatter cut ginger over all. Top with slivered almonds if desired. Serves 2.



## *Desserts in Irons*

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You don't associate desserts with cast iron? You're in for a surprise.

A good old #8 skillet can handle everything from the plebian  
(a deep-dish **Mountain Apple Pie**)  
to the patrician (**Stanford Cheesecake**)  
and a lot of confection territory in between.

You've never seen chocolate cake in a corn-stick pan?  
Check out **Chocolate Pine Cones** for a change of pace.  
And cast iron bread loaf pans are perfect for **Pan de Tres Leches**.

I wouldn't worry too much about appearances.  
There's something flagrantly self-assured about bringing cheesecake to the table  
in a cast-iron skillet.

"That's the way we do it around here," I always tell 'em.

## Limón Colada #2

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*This tastes like key lime on the bottom, cheesecake on top.*

**6 tablespoons butter**

**30 vanilla wafers**

**½ cup slivered almonds**

**1 cup sweetened baking coconut**

**2 eggs**

**1 cup sweetened condensed milk**

**zest and juice of 2 limes**

**1 pint light sour cream**

**5 heaping tablespoons powdered sugar**

**1 tablespoon dark rum**

**2 ripe kiwis**

In a small skillet, melt butter over very low heat. When melted, set aside to cool. Meanwhile, put vanilla wafers in a small Zip-loc bag and roll with a rolling pin until they are fine crumbs. In a small mixing bowl, chop slivered almonds. Add coconut and chopped almonds to the Zip-loc bag with the vanilla wafer crumbs. Mix well. Pour this mixture into the skillet with the melted butter

and stir with a fork to distribute butter evenly. Spoon mixture into pie plate and pat it gently over bottom and sides, as you would a graham cracker crust. Set aside.

Beat eggs until light and fluffy. Continue beating as you add condensed milk. Grate the rind of the lime and add to the egg and milk mixture, stirring to blend. Slice the lime or lemon in half and extract the juice (you can do this with an old-fashioned juicing tool suspended over the mixing bowl). Blend juice into egg and milk mixture. Beat by hand for two minutes; the mixture will begin to coddle and become custard-like.

Pour custardy mixture into pie plate. Bake in preheated 425 degree oven for 13 minutes or until crust is brown and custard has set. Remove from oven and cool 10 minutes. Lower heat in oven to 350 degrees.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl beat sour cream; stir in sugar and then stir in rum.

Pour over custard layer. Return to 350 degree oven for 5 minutes. Remove, cool on rack, then refrigerate for 2 hours. Top with slices of kiwi, refrigerate another hour. Serve cold. Serves 8 to 12.

# Dog Treats

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When we're baking or cooking, let's not forget our furry friends. There's something satisfying about baking a doggie treat yourself, rather than bringing home store-bought dog biscuits.

Besides, this is a wonderful opportunity to use those excess fats you've cut away or drained from your meats: bacon drippings, chicken fat, meat fat—all are wholesome ingredients that can nourish your pets.

And if you're unsure of your ability to invent a baked product, consider this: your dog is going to be far less critical of the finished product than your spouse might be. So go ahead and give your imagination full rein.

There are two basic strategies for turning scraps and staples into tasty dog treats. Consider that you're either making a pie dough or else you're baking biscuits or a cake. For dry, hard, traditional "dog biscuits," bake in a slow oven for a long time. Biscuits such as you'd eat yourself, go in the oven hot and fast. "Cakes" are somewhere in the middle. Now go out and create something.

## Molasses Doggie “Doughnuts”

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*These have a soft, chewy, almost cakey texture perfect for elderly dogs. If you want a hard, crunchy texture, reduce the amount of baking powder and bake at a lower temperature for a longer time. They're not as sweet as the amount of molasses might suggest; try one yourself and you'll see.*

**2 eggs**

**2 tablespoons rendered chicken fat, softened at room temperature**

**¼ cup molasses**

**2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour**

**2 teaspoons baking powder**

Beat eggs until fluffy. Beat in chicken fat, then beat in molasses a little at a time. Mix well.

Sift flour with baking powder. Add to wet mixture and stir thoroughly.

Turn out dough onto lightly floured board and knead until all flour is incorporated and dough is silky, about 3 minutes. Roll out with rolling pin to a uniform

¼-inch thickness. Cut out pieces with a doughnut cutter or cookie cutter.

Place doughnuts and holes in well-seasoned cast iron #8 skillet or on a lightly greased cookie sheet. For a soft, chewy texture, bake in preheated 350-degree oven for 20 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean. Remove skillet from oven; remove doughnuts and holes to a rack to cool.

Makes 10 doughnuts and holes, enough to just fill the #8 skillet.

