

Here are some of my favorite recipes, including some originals.

Vegetarian lasagne

Lasagne is a simple Italian plural, meaning "layers". I always like to use my own sauce, beginning with about a gallon of whole canned tomatoes (fresh, if in season), which I cook slowly for several hours until they are reduced in volume by half; only at the end do I add olive oil, fresh basil, garlic, and pepper.

The text and precise measurements given here were abstracted from my original freehanded directions by the editors of *Celebrations on the Charles: A Collection of Recipes from the Buckingham Browne & Nichols School*, but the recipe is my own. I don't think I'd use quite so much ricotta.

1 box lasagna noodles
1 quart or more spaghetti sauce
salt and pepper to taste
32 ounces ricotta cheese
16 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded
1 or 2 eggs, lightly beaten (optional)
8 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
1 large zucchini, shredded coarsely
32 ounces spinach, fresh or frozen
1 bunch scallions, finely diced

Cook the lasagne noodles *al dente*, drain, sprinkle with a little olive oil and set aside. Toss the shredded zucchini with a little salt, drain in a colander for 30 minutes, and lightly press out the juice.

If using fresh spinach, wash and remove coarse stems. Wilt with a tablespoon of water over high heat for 1 minute. If using frozen spinach, thaw but do not cook. Squeeze out excess moisture and chop coarsely. Blend chopped spinach with ricotta. For a richer mixture, add 1 or 2 beaten eggs. Add plenty of ground pepper and check for salt.

Preheat oven to 350°. Coat a deep lasagne pan with olive oil and begin arranging the layers: cover the bottom of the pan with some sauce, then a layer of noodles. Spread the zucchini over the noodles, then sprinkle with scallions, then a layer of mozzarella and more sauce, followed by a second layer of noodles. Add the spinach-ricotta mixture and the third layer of noodles. Top with a final layer of sauce and then cheddar cheese.

Cover the pan tightly with aluminum foil and bake for an hour or more, depending on the size and depth of the pan. Uncover and bake another 15 minutes until the top begins to crisp. Rest 15 minutes before serving. Serves 8.

Cholesterol City Chicken Livers

This is much easier to make than *paté de foie gras* and I'm sure it's just as delicious, though hardly healthful. If you have it once a year it probably won't do you any harm. I invented this recipe back in my college days but haven't tried it for over twenty years.

Sauté half a pound of fresh chicken livers (trimmed but left whole) in 2 tbs. butter over medium heat until they change color. Add 1/2 cup dry vermouth or very dry sherry, turn up the heat to medium high, and keep turning the livers over for about 3-4 minutes. Remove the livers from the pan and set aside; add 1/3 cup heavy cream to the pan, reduce for 1-2 minutes over medium high heat, and put the livers back in, turning them for another minute or two. Serve at once over rice or toast points.

Szechuan sesame noodles

This recipe came from Greg Biss, who got it from a Taiwan cookbook. I've had many similar noodle dishes in restaurants but none as successful as this one. You can vary it by diminishing the tahini and adding peanut butter.

Cook up 1 pound of thin spaghetti. (Even better: fresh egg noodles as sold in oriental groceries in plastic bags; they do not need to be cooked but only freshened for a minute or two in boiling water.) Drain, do not rinse. Place immediately in a large bowl with 2 tbs. dark sesame oil; toss with chopsticks or a spaghetti twirler until cool (this can be done more quickly in front of an electric fan, or outdoors on a winter day), dribbling on a little more oil as needed to keep the noodles from sticking together.

To serve: toss together the cool noodles and the following sauce, well beaten:

- 3 tbs. tahini
- 6 tbs. soy sauce
- 1 tbs. (preferably black) vinegar
- 1 tbs. sesame oil
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 3-4 cloves garlic, squished through a garlic press
- 1-2 tbs. grated fresh ginger
- 1 good tbs. Szechuan peppers pounded finely in a mortar
- cayenne to taste

(Instead of sesame oil and cayenne you can use 1 tbs. hot chili oil.)

Garnish with: shredded (cut lengthwise) scallions; chopped peanuts; (optional) shredded cooked chicken.

If you double the recipe, use two pounds of noodles but cut back somewhat on the soy sauce and tahini.

Becca Kirby's soybean chili (vegan)

I clipped this recipe from the New York *Times* nearly 40 years ago. It takes a while to make because of soaking and long cooking, but otherwise is easy.

1 cup dried soybeans
1 cup whole wheat berries
6 cups water
2 tbs. oil
1 tsp. chili powder
1/4 tsp. cayenne
1/4 tsp. oregano
1 clove garlic, pressed
2 onions, chopped
2 jalapeño peppers, fresh or canned, finely chopped
4 fresh tomatoes, chopped
Tamari soy sauce
Cooked brown rice
Chopped scallions

Place the soybeans and wheat berries in a bowl. Cover with water and let soak overnight.

Transfer the soybeans and wheat berries to a heavy saucepan. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer for 3-4 hours or until the beans are nearly tender.

Heat the oil in a skillet and add the chili powder, cayenne and oregano. Cook over medium heat, stirring for two minutes.

Add the garlic and onion and cook five minutes. Add the jalapeño peppers and tomatoes. Bring to a boil. Add to the soybean mixture and continue cooking until beans and wheat are tender.

Season to taste with tamari and serve with brown rice, garnished with scallions.

Serves 10-12.

Brandade de morue (Puree of salt cod with potatoes, olive oil, and garlic)

(abbreviated from Julia Child's adaptation from Craig Claiborne)

Preferably use salt cod fillets, the kind that come in a wooden box, now very expensive (\$8-9 per pound; it used to be considered the cheap food of the poor, hence Shakespeare's "poor-John" in *Romeo and Juliet*). You can also use baccala from the Italian markets, but it requires more soaking. Soak the salt cod in several changes of water, at least four or five, for some 24 hours in the refrigerator. This is called

freshening, by some.

To poach the freshened salt cod:

Boil a cup of water in a large cast-iron pot; add a small onion, peeled and grated or diced, plus 3 whole cloves and a few peppercorns, plus a bay leaf, and simmer for a few minutes. Then add 4 more cups of COLD water and place the cod in it. The heat should be not the highest setting but next-to-highest. Watch carefully as the temperature rises. When the whitish scum begins to rise and the water and cod begin to make gentle bumping motions, the temperature is just right, about 190. DON'T let the mixture boil or the cod will rapidly turn tough, leathery, and dry. Remove the pot from heat and let the cod steep for 10 minutes; then remove the cod with a slotted spoon. (Make sure that the peppercorns and cloves are removed.) It should have little or no salty taste; if it is seriously salty, repeat the simmering process with another batch of water.

To make the brandade:

Bake a large potato (or two medium-large potatoes). Remove the skins (and save them for serving the brandade if you wish); crumble the potato into a large bowl. Heat up the drained cod for a minute or two by stirring it with a wooden spoon in the heavy pot over moderate high heat with 1/4 cup of olive oil; then dump it in the bowl with the potato. Beat up this mixture with a hand-held electric beater, at low speed. Add 2 or more cloves of garlic, mashed through a garlic press. Add approximately 1/4 cup additional olive oil and 1/4 cup milk (or cream if you want it really rich); these should be warmed. Continue beating with the electric mixer, adding more oil and milk, until the mixture is the texture you like. Serve warm on pita segments, toast points, in potato skins, etc. Leftover brandade freezes well. It makes excellent codfish cakes.

Caldeirada (Portuguese Seafood Stew)

adapted from Time-Life "Foods of the World" series

- 1 cup finely chopped onions
- 1/2 cup green pepper, seeded, deribbed, and finely chopped
- 3 medium-sized tomatoes, peeled and finely chopped
- Several cloves garlic, put through a press
- 1/2 tsp. teaspoon salt
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. dried rosemary
- 24 small hard-shelled clams, washed and thoroughly scrubbed (mussels may be substituted)
- 2/3 cup olive oil (preferably Portuguese Saloio or other strong-flavored Iberian olive oil)
- 1 1/2 pounds each of two kinds of firm white fish fillet or pieces (cod, halibut, pollock, bass, red snapper, hake, and cusk are all good; swordfish is also good, but decrease the amount of olive oil)
- 1 1/2 pounds squid, cleaned (octopus may be substituted)
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1/2 cup finely chopped scallions (optional)

In a bowl, combine the onions, green peppers, tomatoes, garlic, salt, pepper, and rosemary, tossing them about with a spoon to mix them thoroughly.

Place the clams in a heavy 5- to 6-quart casserole and pour in 1/3 cup of the olive oil. Scatter half of the vegetable mixture over the clams, and add the fish and squid. Spread the rest of the vegetable mixture on top and pour in the wine. Bring to a boil over high heat, and reduce the heat to low. Cover tightly and simmer undisturbed for 20 minutes, or until the clams open and the fish flakes easily when prodded gently with a fork. (Discard any clams or mussels that do not open.)

Add the parsley (and scallions if desired) and simmer for another minute or two.

Serve in soup bowls, with garlic bread. Serves 8.

Scacchi (Layered vegetable dish for Passover; adapted from Carol Field, *Celebrating Italy*)

In my dictionary scacchi means chess. This is a good alternative to lasagne when, as during Passover, noodles are proscribed. The following version is as amended by various hands in 1994 and 1996, with thanks to Paul Bickart, Marcia Reecer, and Justin London.

12 thin matzohs [I used about 9 -- Marcia]

1 tbs. olive oil
1 pound (450 grams) chopped sirloin
salt and pepper

1 1/2 pounds (675 grams) onions, thinly sliced
4 tbs. olive oil*

4 artichokes, cleaned, chokes and fibrous leaves removed, cooked in water with lemon juice, and sliced thin [Prepared as if for making artichoke hearts. Also removed flesh from bottom of fleshy leaves and used that -- Marcia] [Could probably use canned or frozen artichoke hearts -- Paul] [Canned artichoke hearts aren't good for this -- too sour -- but frozen are excellent -- MDeV]

4 tbs. olive oil*
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 tsp. minced rosemary
3/4 tsp. minced sage
1 tsp. salt

2 large bunches spinach (about 1 pound, 450 grams [after cleaning and stemming -- Paul], cleaned, stemmed, and cooked 4 to 5 minutes in a pot with only the water left on the leaves, then squeezed dry

4 tbs. olive oil*

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 peperoncino (dried red chile), seeded and minced

1/2 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg

1/4 tsp. salt

1 pound (450 grams) mushrooms, sliced [cremini are good -- Paul]

4 tbs. olive oil*

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 tsp. salt

6 eggs

1/2 cup lemon juice

1 cup (about) beef broth

Cover the matzohs with water and let sit [briefly! two minutes or less-- MDeV] until wet and almost crumbling. Warm the olive oil and saute the chopped sirloin, stirring, until it is no longer red.

Add salt and pepper. Saute each of the vegetables separately over very low heat: The onions are sauteed alone; the artichokes with the minced garlic, fresh rosemary, sage, and salt; the spinach with garlic, peperoncino, fresh nutmeg, and salt; and the mushrooms with the garlic, added after 3 to 4 minutes, and the salt.

Assembly: Oil a large, deep [important -- Paul] baking dish and cover the bottom with the sauteed chopped sirloin. Cover with a layer of 3 matzohs and cover them with the onions. Layer 3 more matzohs on top, and so on, using the individual vegetables. Finish with vegetables, not matzohs. Beat together the eggs and lemon juice and pour over the top of the mixture, shaking the pan to be sure that the liquid reaches the various air pockets left between vegetables. Pour over enough broth to moisten the mixture well. Cover loosely with foil.

Baking: Heat the oven to 400 F. Bake until the mixture is set and cooked through, about 30 minutes.

Makes 8 to 10 servings. This is also delicious made without meat [says Carol Field; we haven't tried it that way -- Paul].

*You could probably use less olive oil in each of these steps, but we made it with the full amount -- Paul

Dear Paul and Marcia,

Herewith scacchi report. We made it yesterday, having to improvise in several different parameters.

1. We used thick matzot because we had no thin. Because ours was a vegetarian version we put the spinach on the bottom.
2. We had no sufficiently large baking dish, so we used a lasagna pan, large enough to hold two matzot side by side in EACH of three layers. Total 8 thick matzot, including smaller pieces used to fill in along the sides.
3. Frozen spinach works just fine. We used two ten-ounce packages.
4. I used six medium-sized fresh artichokes. It would have been easier if we had quartered them before steaming, so as to remove the choke but still keep the middle leaves without excessive fumbling.
5. It was a mistake to use lime juice: too strong. I would guess that 1/2 cup lemon juice is too much.
6. 1/2 teaspoon of nutmeg is certainly too much. I would think that 1/4 teaspoon is too much.
7. Perhaps a little more sage could be used!
8. Instead of meat stock we used mushroom broth of the kind that comes in a starch cube. It was very flavorful.

Summary of report: a great success. I think we will offer it next year when we go to our friends' seder.
