

FRESH AND PUCKERY LEMON SAUCE

MAKES 1½ CUPS

2 small Meyer or regular lemons

1 small shallot, finely chopped

Kosher salt

⅔ cup extra-virgin olive oil

**⅔ cup coarsely chopped parsley
or mint**

2 teaspoons runny honey

Freshly ground pepper

Here is a sauce for my fellow lemon lovers, who crave sinking their teeth into lemon wedges even though they know it could ruin their enamel. Using an entire lemon—skin, pith, and flesh—gives this sauce its tangy, bright, floral scent and lots of texture. The pith will lend some bitterness, but it's offset by the honey. It's a tad abrasive, but I wouldn't have it any other way. Feel free to change up the ingredients: Swap the ground pepper for a dried or fresh chile.

Trim and discard the knobby ends from the lemons (they're tough). Quarter each lemon lengthwise to get four wedges. Using a chef's knife, cut out the core and seeds. Thinly slice each wedge, including the pith and peel, then finely chop everything into bitsy pieces smaller than the size of a pea. You should end up with a messy pile of chopped lemon, with no large chunks remaining.

Scoop up the lemon mess and juices from the cutting board and transfer to a medium bowl. Add the shallot and a pinch of salt and let sit for 10 minutes to soften the shallot. Stir in the olive oil, parsley, and honey. Season with more salt and a few turns of pepper to taste. The sauce should be boldly lemony and tangy. The sauce keeps, covered and refrigerated, for up to 3 days.

WAYS TO USE

Stir into yogurt for a tangy dip.

Toss with just about any roasted veg.

As a marinade for fresh cheese, such as feta.

On top of braised meat or a rich stew.

Spoon over Butter-Slathered Whole Fish with Jammy Fennel (page 265).

TANGY MUSTARD DRESSING

This is my house vinaigrette. It's Frenchy, overly mustardy, garlicky, and the closest I'll get to a simple vinaigrette. (Simple isn't any fun, is it?) I prefer the pungency that garlic brings to the dressing, but you could use a small, finely chopped shallot or a sprinkling of chives instead.

MAKES 1½ CUPS

1 garlic clove

1 small lemon

¼ cup Dijon mustard

¼ cup red wine vinegar

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper

Using a Microplane, finely grate the garlic clove into a medium bowl. Finely grate the zest from the lemon into the bowl, then halve the lemon and squeeze about 2 tablespoons lemon juice into the bowl, catching any seeds with your other hand. Add the mustard and vinegar and then whisk in the olive oil until smooth and creamy. Season with salt and plenty of pepper. You want to taste a slight pickle. The vinaigrette keeps, covered and refrigerated, for up to 3 days. Bring to room temperature before using.

WAYS TO USE

Drizzle over warm boiled and mashed potatoes. As a dressing for blanched leeks or asparagus. Spoon over slow-roasted salmon. Toss with Parmesan-Kale Chip Salad (page 147).

ANYTHING PICKLES

This is all you need to make homemade pickles of any kind. We're not sanitizing jars and going full pioneer here. This brine is a simple ratio of water, vinegar, salt, and sugar, which I use as my go-to method for quick pickling any kind of sturdy vegetable. Because these are not fermented pickles, they don't develop that funky flavor but they are faster to make and only require a day or two of curing before snacking.

MAKES 2 QUARTS

1¾ cups water

1¼ cups unseasoned rice vinegar

2 tablespoons kosher salt

2 teaspoons granulated sugar

2 pounds vegetables (such as whole kirby cucumbers, sliced red onions, small peeled carrots, cauliflower florets, and whole chiles—the possibilities are truly endless)

In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the water and vinegar. Whisk in the salt and sugar and bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally, until the granules have completely dissolved (this will happen quickly), about 3 minutes.

Pack your prepped veg into two 1-quart jars with lids. Pour in the hot brine, making sure your veg is properly submerged in the brine and leaving ½ inch of headspace between the liquid and the rims of the jars. Let the jars cool for 1 hour at room temperature.

Screw on the lids and place in the fridge to chill and cure for 2 days. Do your best and be patient—wait the 2 days before snacking and using. I promise the wait will be worth it. Quick pickles keep for up to 1 month—they have a shorter lifespan than their fussy peacocking counterparts—but I have a thing for acid, so mine rarely last more than a week.

GO PICKLE

Giardiniera-Style Pickles: Replace the rice vinegar with red wine vinegar. Once the salt and sugar dissolve, add 1 teaspoon dried oregano, 1 garlic clove (smashed), and 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil.

Lemon-Fennel Pickles: Substitute white wine vinegar for the rice vinegar. Once the salt and sugar dissolve, add four 2-inch strips of lemon peel to the brine along with 1 teaspoon fennel seeds.

Spicy Turmeric Pickles: Once the salt and sugar dissolve, add 1 teaspoon coriander seeds, 1 teaspoon cumin seeds, ½ teaspoon ground turmeric, and 1 small chile to the brine.

Torshi (Persian Pickles): Replace the rice vinegar with apple cider vinegar. Once the salt and sugar dissolve, add 2 garlic cloves (thinly sliced), 2 teaspoons dried tarragon, 1 teaspoon dried mint, and ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes to the brine.

WHAT MAKES THE BEST PICKLE BRINE

- I've eaten—and made—a lot of pickles, and here's what I've learned makes the best ones.
1. Go heavy on the acid: I prefer a brine that is almost equal parts vinegar to water.
 2. Your brine needs to be seasoned properly for taste, but the salt also acts as a preservative. If you ever see a pickle recipe with 3 cups of brine and less than 1 tablespoon of salt, look the other way.
 3. Sugar should provide balance to your brine rather than sweetness. (I'll admit this is personal preference, as I don't care much for sweet pickles.) Keep it minimal.
 4. Boiling your brine dissolves the sugar and distribute the ingredients evenly, making a tasty bath for whatever you're pickling. Do the right thing and start by simmering.
 5. Adding your ingredients to the hot brine will briefly cook them, but they will retain their crunch. If you add your ingredients to a cooled brine, they'll take an extra day or two to become tasty and soak up the seasoning.
 6. This may go without saying, but: Whatever you choose to flavor your brine (spices, herbs, garlic . . .) will flavor the ingredient(s) you're pickling. So, if you don't like fennel seeds, you're probably not going to start liking their flavor in your pickles.

TURMERIC AND BLACK PEPPER- CITRUS DRESSING

You know those tiny jars of “tonics” at fancy gyms, made with berries that you’ve never heard of and a ton of ginger and cayenne, that cost \$8 a swallow? I decided to make my own tonic that acts as a dressing, but I would gladly drink it on its own. (Yes, I’m aware there is ½ cup of olive oil in this recipe. I’m still sticking with my statement.)

MAKES 1 CUP

½ cup fresh lemon juice
2 teaspoons runny honey
2 teaspoons peeled,
finely grated ginger
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt
Freshly ground pepper

In a medium bowl, combine the lemon juice, honey, ginger, and turmeric and whisk to blend. While whisking continuously, stream in the olive oil until the dressing is smooth and assumes a color that makes you feel healthy. Season with salt and add as little or as much pepper as you like. The dressing keeps, covered and refrigerated, for up to 2 days. Bring to room temperature before using.

WAYS TO USE

As a marinade for grilled chicken legs or quick-cooking steaks, such as skirt or flank.
Toss with shredded cabbage and radishes for a citrusy slaw.
As a dressing for a grain or lentil salad.
Spoon over Fat Pieces of Citrus with Avocado and Caramelized Dates (page 128).

CRUNCHY THINGS

Crunch should disrupt a dish, in a good way. You fool the palate for a moment and then you go back to the regularly scheduled programming—say, the creamy soup beneath. I use nuts and seeds as well as fried shallots or garlic, for texture. But it's not enough to throw a seed on a dish. I also use crunch toppings to add flavor. Like pistachio zatarar with sumac, salt, and thyme. Breadcrumbs crisped up with anchovies. A sesame and chile-salt mixture you can jar and stash for months. And frizzled shallots that get lightly pickled—for pucker and crunch. You'll see more crunch toppings in other recipes (I could fill a book with them), but I constantly rely on the ones in this section.

PISTACHIO ZA'ATAR

Each component in za'atar is essential: the sesame adds crackly nuttiness; the dried herbs give a floral, woody flavor; and the sumac brings that distinct tanginess. No two batches of za'atar are ever the same because everyone has their own ideal proportions of ingredients. And because the quality can vary, I tend to make my own.

My blend is a fresher version of the classic, using fresh thyme or oregano in place of dried. If you're adamant about using sesame seeds, go ahead, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup in place of the pistachios. If you want to make this into a pourable condiment, submerge the za'atar in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil, which I love slicked onto hot bread. Make this the day you use it.

MAKES ABOUT $\frac{1}{2}$ CUP

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup toasted pistachios,
walnuts, or almonds (see
page 24), finely chopped

2 tablespoons chopped thyme
or oregano

2 teaspoons ground sumac

2 teaspoons finely grated
lemon zest

Kosher salt

In a small bowl, combine the nuts, thyme, sumac, and lemon zest. Use your fingers to mix, making sure the lemon zest is evenly distributed and doesn't clump. Season with salt and set aside until ready to use.

WAYS TO USE

As a crunchy potato topper (za'atar fries are a thing).

On top hard-roasted veg, like carrots, brussels sprouts, or cauliflower.

Stir into yogurt as a savory dip.

Sprinkle over big, juicy wedges of summer tomatoes.

Spoon over Sweet-and-Sour Caramelized Squash (page 166).

COCONUT AND FRESH CHILE CRISP

This is a dry, crispy topping inspired by Filipino condiment palapa but, well, it's not palapa, which has more of an oily-crisp consistency. It's sweet and toasty, yet spicy and crunchy, and somehow brings some excitement to anything it's sprinkled on. I favor unsweetened coconut flakes (preferably without the dark, but you can use grated coconut as well, it will just take less time to cook. If you're lucky enough to get your hands on freshly grated coconut, you get a gold star.

MAKES 1 CUP

2 tablespoons virgin coconut oil
or extra-virgin olive oil

2 small serrano or bird's eye chiles,
thinly sliced

1 cup unsweetened
coconut flakes

1 teaspoon finely grated lime zest
Kosher salt

In a small skillet over medium heat, warm the coconut oil. Drop the chiles and coconut flakes into the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until the coconut is golden brown in spots, toasty, and smells sweet, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat and stir in the lime zest. Season with a bit of salt and give the pan a shake.
Let cool completely. Transfer to an airtight container and store in a cool place for up to 2 days.

WAYS TO USE

On top of crispy roasted broccoli:
Sprinkle over slow-roasted salmon.
As a textural topping for Masoor Daal with Salty Yogurt (page 240)
or Perfect Cauliflower with Spicy Coconut Crisp (page 191).

SWEET AND TOASTY NUTS

These are exactly what they sound like. No candy thermometer needed. No need to make caramel or turn on the oven. When cooked down, the water in the honey starts to evaporate and the sugar crystallizes and clings to the nuts. A sweet little revelation. No need to thank me.

MAKES 1 CUP

**1 cup raw pecans, walnuts,
or cashews**

**2 tablespoons runny honey
or maple syrup**

1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Kosher salt

In a skillet over medium heat, combine the nuts, honey, and pepper. Cook, stirring constantly, until the honey reduces and crystallizes around the nuts, 5 to 8 minutes. They will look darkened and smell toasty and extra nutty. Remove the skillet from the heat and immediately season the nuts with salt. Transfer to a small, shallow bowl and let cool before breaking into large pieces or coarsely chopping. Transfer to an airtight container and store in a cool, dark place for up to 2 days.

WAYS TO USE

As a snack, obviously.

Sprinkle over cut-up stone fruit and torn burrata for a savory fruit salad.

Add crunch to a sweet roasted veg, like carrots, squash, or sweet potatoes.

In Super-Crunchy Celery Salad (page 135).

Garlicky Breadcrumbs: Crush 3 garlic cloves and drop them into the skillet with the oil (sans anchovies). Cook the garlic until just golden, about 3 minutes. Pluck out and discard the garlic. Proceed as directed.

Lemony Anchovy Breadcrumbs: Once the breadcrumbs are almost finished cooking, stir in 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley and 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest. Proceed as directed.

BREADCRUMB BONUS

Sprinkle over sautéed garlicky greens.
 Top a soft-boiled, over-easy, or poached egg—any egg, really.
 Add crunch to a pot of beans with or without a spoonful of oil.
 Sprinkle over Fall-Apart Caramelized Cabbage Smothered in Anchovies
 and Dill (page 184).
 Scatter over Little Gems with Green Goddess Yogurt and Tangy Shallots
 (page 144).

WAYS TO USE

In a skillet over medium heat, warm the olive oil until it looks shiny. Add the anchovies and, using a wooden spoon, stir them around until they've broken down and have speckled the oil, about 3 minutes. Add the breadcrumbs and continue cooking, stirring until the crumbs are deeply golden brown and getting real toasty, another 5 minutes. Don't worry if the breadcrumbs are a little uneven in color—it adds character and they're going to taste amazing. Transfer the breadcrumbs to a small bowl and season with salt and pepper while still warm. Use right away or cool completely, cover, and store at room temperature for up to 1 day.

MAKES 1 CUP
 3 tablespoons extra-virgin
 olive oil
 4 oil-packed anchovies, drained
 1 cup panko breadcrumbs
 kosher salt
 Freshly ground pepper

After working in restaurants, I was so used to making my own breadcrumbs in the oven on a baking sheet. The problem is, you have to keep pulling the tray out of the oven and giving the crumbs a stir. I still have a few burn scars from that routine. The stove-top method is faster, and you get the added bonus of smelling the crumbs as they become toasty in the oil. Just stay attentive while making these. They can go from perfect to burned while you glance at your phone one more time. . . .

**ANCHOVY
 BREADCRUMBS**

FRIZZLED PICKLED SHALLOTS

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

**¼ cup sherry vinegar
or red wine vinegar**

**2 tablespoons low-sodium
soy sauce**

**4 large shallots, sliced into
thin rings**

**⅓ cup neutral oil
(such as grapeseed)**

¼ cup all-purpose flour

¼ cup finely ground cornmeal

Kosher salt

This showstopper of a topping was first introduced to me at now-closed Fung Tu, which was on the Lower East Side in New York City. The chef, Jonathan Wu, regularly blew my mind, and I was devastated when the restaurant closed. Jonathan marinated shallots in a mixture of black vinegar and sherry vinegar, then dredged and fried them. They were puffy and addicting, like Funyuns. I went with one vinegar for my version and added soy sauce to give them another salty layer.

In a medium bowl, mix together the sherry vinegar and soy sauce. Add the shallots and let sit for 20 to 30 minutes to lightly pickle. Drain and discard the liquid and pat the shallots dry.

Pour the neutral oil into a skillet and place over medium heat. While the oil heats, in a shallow bowl (a pie pan also works well), whisk together the flour and cornmeal to combine. Dredge the shallots in the flour mixture, shaking off the excess coating. Line a plate with a paper towel (to soak up the excess oil, so skip using a kitchen towel this time).

Test the oil by dropping in one shallot slice. If the oil is ready, tiny bubbles will form around the edges of the shallot right away (if they don't, wait a minute and try again). Working in batches, add the shallots to the oil and fry, stirring occasionally. The tiny bubbles will form more rapidly. When the bubbles subside, that means moisture from the shallots has been drawn out, and they'll get deeply golden and crisp after about 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the fried shallots to the prepared plate and season with salt while still hot.

Let the shallots cool completely. Transfer to an airtight container and store at room temperature for up to 3 days.

WAYS TO USE

As a crispy topping for salads.

Sprinkle over nearly any egg.

Scatter over a stir-fry or noodle dish.

As a garnish for Ginger Chicken and Rice Soup with Sizzled Black Pepper (page 244).

Scatter over Black Pepper and Ginger Asparagus Stir-Fry (page 158).

A FEW GREEN SAUCES

Another green sauce? (Go ahead, you can roll your eyes.) Never enough green sauces! The sauces in this section get their green factor from a variety of herbs, so there's a freshness that'll wake up whatever they're dressing. The green tahini is loose and thin—use it generously. The zhoug is thick and potent—you only need a spoonful. And the salsa verde is somewhere between the intensity of chimichurri and herby potato chips; it's absolutely incredible on a perfectly basted steak.

HOT GREEN TAHINI

This is the most versatile condiment in the book. It can be a dip, a sandwich spread, a marinade for chicken, a salad dressing, you name it. Important to note: You can't dump everything in a blender here and call it a day. The tahini will aerate and get too thick and pasty. Blend the garlic-lemon-oil mixture and then stir in the tahini for a luscious consistency. And be flexible. You could use only parsley instead of a combination of herbs. And you could slip in some anchovies, never a bad idea.

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

**2 serrano or jalapeño chiles,
coarsely chopped**

2 garlic cloves, crushed

**2 cups mixed tender fresh herbs
(such as parsley, mint, and dill)**

2 large lemons

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

½ cup tahini

Kosher salt

In a blender, combine the chiles, garlic, and herb leaves. Finely grate the zest of one lemon into the blender jar, then halve both lemons, squeeze out and measure ½ cup juice, catching any seeds with your other hand, and pour in the juice, along with the olive oil. Blend until mostly smooth; a few flecks of herbs are okay. Pour the herb oil into a medium bowl, then whisk in the tahini until smooth. Season with salt to taste. This keeps, covered and refrigerated, for up to 4 days. Bring to room temperature before using.

WAYS TO USE

Marinate a roast chicken (great decision).

As a dressing for leafy salads (works well for Bibb, cabbage, chicory, and iceberg).

As a dip for crunchy veg or flatbread.

As a spread on sandwiches.

The Yemenite condiment zhoug (pronounced "zoog") has many variations, and although the green version is the most popular, it can also be red. No matter the color, it should be brilliantly hot. If you want a mild sauce, that's not zhoug. I make this in a mortar and pestle but you can also chop everything into almost a powder (I'm kidding! . . . kind of), but I'll look away if you need to pull out the food processor. It's a thick, powerful sauce, so although this recipe yields just ½ cup, a dab goes a long way.

MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP

- 1 garlic clove
- Kosher salt
- 2 serrano or jalapeño chiles, finely chopped
- ¼ cup finely chopped parsley
- ¼ cup finely chopped mint
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

In a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic a few times. Add a pinch of salt, then continue to mash the garlic until it turns into a paste. Add the chiles and keep mashing until they have mostly broken down and your paste has taken on a greenish hue. Add the parsley and mint and get into the groove, mashing and stirring, back and forth, until the herbs have bruised and slightly darkened. Stir in the coriander, cumin, olive oil, and lemon juice to get a thick green paste and then season with salt. Get a taste by dipping your pinkie into the sauce. Wait 15 minutes and taste again. See how the flavor transformed? Patience. Use the zhoug soon after you make it.

WAYS TO USE

Pop spoonfuls onto hummus. Dab onto scrambled or fried eggs. Drop a spoonful into a pot of beans.

CRISPY HERB SALSA VERDE

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

½ cup neutral oil
(such as grapeseed)

1 cup sage leaves

½ cup rosemary leaves

1 small garlic clove, finely grated

½ cup finely chopped parsley

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 teaspoons red wine vinegar

Kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper

I can't tell you how many times I burned the sage and rosemary when I was learning how to make this salsa years ago. That's why I make you fry the herbs separately here. Serve it over a fatty braise, to which it will add a touch of texture and green brightness.

Line a large plate or baking sheet with a paper towel. Set the plate next to the stove and grab a slotted spoon or spider spatula. You'll be frying, with no time to walk away from the stove, so you need your station all set up before you start.

Pour the neutral oil into your smallest saucepan and place it over medium heat. When the oil begins to look glossy, after a few minutes, drop the sage leaves into the oil and fry until the sizzling subsides, 30 to 40 seconds. Using the slotted spoon or spider, scoop the sage from the oil and place it on a cutting board. Repeat with the rosemary leaves, using the same oil and transferring the rosemary to the cutting board when done. Remove the saucepan from the heat. Let the oil cool and then discard.

Chop the sage and rosemary. In a medium bowl, combine the garlic, parsley, olive oil, vinegar, and herbs. Season with salt and pepper. The salsa verde keeps, covered and refrigerated, for up to 2 days. Bring to room temperature before using.

WAYS TO USE

Spoon over torn burrata (with some toasted bread).

Spoon over a roasted starchy winter veg, like squash or sweet potato.

For dipping boiled, creamy potatoes.

Spoon over a steak; see A Proper Steak (Plus Brown Butter-Fried Onion Rings), page 298.

CRUNCHY ROMESCO

This is the only recipe in this book that uses red bell peppers as an ingredient because I only like them when they are roasted to hell and back, transformed into something smoky, sweet, and silken . . . and then blended. This interpretation of romesco is pretty true to the version from Spain's Catalan region, where the sauce originates. But some can veer orange-brown, so I keep the nuts and red pepper base separate, then combine at the last minute, so the nuts retain their crunch and the sauce stays vividly colorful.

MAKES 2 CUPS

1 cup drained jarred roasted red peppers

1 garlic clove, finely grated

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1/3 cup raw hazelnuts, coarsely chopped

1 teaspoon sweet paprika

1/2 to 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes (depending on how spicy you like it)

1 tablespoon sherry vinegar or red wine vinegar

Kosher salt

In a food processor, pulse the roasted peppers until you achieve a saucy (but not smooth!) consistency. Alternatively, you can chop the peppers but they won't be as saucy. Transfer the peppers to a medium bowl and add the garlic.

Pour the olive oil into a small skillet and add the hazelnuts. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until the hazelnuts become golden brown, about 3 minutes. Slide the skillet off the heat and add the paprika and red pepper flakes. Pour the spiced hazelnuts and olive oil into the bowl with the peppers. Stir until well mixed. Add the vinegar and season with salt. Use the romesco soon after you make it.

DO AHEAD

The roasted red peppers and garlic can be prepped up to 2 days ahead. Cover and chill. Bring to room temperature and stir in the spiced hazelnuts and other ingredients before using.

WAYS TO USE

Spoon over cold (or warm) boiled and smashed potatoes.

As a sauce for just about any grilled meat (especially white fish and lamb chops).

As a sandwich spread.

With good oiled and toasted bread.

GARLICKY HOT VINEGAR

This sauce always reminds me of taking the BART train from Berkeley to San Francisco, where my mom worked. During her lunch break, we would frequent a Thai restaurant, called King of Thai, that had bowls of condiments on every table. My favorite was a spicy vinegar with slices of green chile and garlic floating in it. More than a spoonful and the vinegar would ruin any dish, but a few drops would lend brightness, heat, and a sensation that made me go back for bite after bite.

I stick with bird's eye chiles that pack quite a bit of heat but, really, any chile works. You can puree the whole thing for a smooth, thicker sauce, but I prefer the texture you get from the pieces of chile, garlic, and onion.

MAKES A LITTLE MORE THAN 2 CUPS

8 to 10 bird's eye chiles,

stemmed, thinly sliced, seeds

left in (if you're feeling frisky)

4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

½ small red onion, or 1 large shallot,

thinly sliced

4 teaspoons granulated sugar

2 teaspoons kosher salt

2 teaspoons freshly ground pepper

2 cups unseasoned rice vinegar

or distilled white vinegar

Drop the chiles, garlic, onion, sugar, salt, and pepper in a 1-quart jar with a lid.

In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the vinegar to a gentle simmer. Pour the hot vinegar into the jar with the chile mixture and let cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes.

Screw on the lid and refrigerate for at least 1 hour before using, so the flavors can play nice together. The chile vinegar keeps, tightly sealed in the fridge, for up to 3 months.

WARNING: While this vinegar is quite spicy, I promise it has a lot going on besides burn. Give it a chance to interact with different dishes.

WAYS TO USE

Dab over crunchy cucumber and finish with a big pinch of salt.

Sprinkle on any fried savory dish—trust me on this.

For Salt-and-Pepper Crispy Rice with Garlic-Fried Eggs (page 89).

VERY CRISPY GARLIC-CHILE OIL

MAKES 1 CUP

2 teaspoons soy sauce

½ teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon granulated sugar

**¼ cup ground Chinese chile flakes
or gochugaru, or 2 tablespoons
red pepper flakes**

1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

**1 cup neutral oil
(such as grapeseed)**

6 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

**1 tablespoon peeled, finely
chopped ginger**

There is no chance that I'm eating at a Chinese restaurant without a side of la-yu (chile oil). It's the vicious, precious red oil that comes in countless variations, homemade and store-bought. It's commonly served with dumplings or noodle dishes, but it improves everything it touches, like the cucumber salad on page 136.

In its most basic form, chile oil can simply be oil that is heated and poured over dried chiles so their fire and flavor can be fully released. Peanut oil, which has a high smoking point, is most often used to make chile oils but any neutral-flavored oil will work. I tend to change it up a bit with each batch, adding sesame seeds or peanuts, a cinnamon stick or a few star anise pods, a sprinkle of mushroom powder and MSG, but this recipe is the foundation that I always build on. It's up to you to make it your own.

In a small heatproof bowl, stir together the soy sauce, salt, and sugar until mostly dissolved (it will fully dissolve once you add the hot oil). Add the chile flakes and pepper and set aside.

In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine the neutral oil, garlic, and ginger. Cook, swirling the pan occasionally, until most, but not all, of the garlic is lightly golden, 4 to 6 minutes. The garlic will continue to darken once the oil is pulled from the hot stove, so keep an eye on it.

Immediately pour the hot oil over the chile flake mixture and watch it sizzle. The oil will bubble for a few seconds, warming the chiles and extracting their oils and colors. Stir, then let the chile oil cool completely to give the ingredients some time to get to know one another. The chile oil keeps, covered and refrigerated, for up to 1 month; but I promise you'll use it up sooner than that.

WAYS TO USE

Spoon over a jammy, scrambled, or nicely fried egg.

Serve with a perfect pot of steamed rice.

Drizzle over roasted sweet potatoes that have been slicked with a bit of lemony yogurt.

Drizzle over Juicy Chicken Breast and Antipasto Salad (page 270).

CREAMY NUOC CHAM

While this starts by pulling the foundational flavor of nuoc cham—the bold, acidic, spicy Vietnamese sauce—cashews transform it into a deeply toasty, nutty sauce that can turn a mundane, predictable dish upside-down. My nut preference is cashews but this could easily work with toasted peanuts or pecans instead.

MAKES 1½ CUPS

½ cup roasted cashews

⅓ cup water

3 tablespoons fresh lime juice

2 birds eye chilies, chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 tablespoon fish sauce

2 teaspoons granulated sugar

Kosher salt (optional)

WAYS TO USE

Serve with anything you ever grill. Toss over all roasted veg—from broccoli to sweet potatoes. Use as a creamy, spicy salad dressing.

GREEN GODDESS YOGURT

Think of this as a simpler (and healthier) green goddess dressing, which is usually made with mayonnaise or sour cream and plenty of herbs. I go with Greek yogurt instead. Tarragon is essential to me but a combination of herbs, like chives, dill, parsley, and, if you're lucky to find it, chervil, work well and give the dressing its verdant color.

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

2 oil-packed anchovies,
drained (optional)

2 cups mixed tender herbs
(such as basil, dill, parsley, and
tarragon—use your favorites)

½ cup full-fat Greek yogurt

3 tablespoons extra-virgin
olive oil

2 tablespoons red or
white wine vinegar

1 teaspoon finely grated
lemon zest

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper

In a blender, combine the anchovies, herbs, yogurt, olive oil, vinegar, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Add a big pinch of salt and a few cranks of pepper, then puree until smooth and pale green. (You can use a food processor, but the dressing won't be as smooth.) Bring to room temperature before using. The dressing keeps, covered and refrigerated, for up to 2 days.

DO AHEAD

Because the flavor and quality of citrus juice decline when it's stored, give the dressing another squeeze of fresh lemon juice to zhoosh it before using.

WAYS TO USE

As a dip for crunchy veg, like endive, fennel, and radishes.
Slather on sandwich bread (loaded with avocado, cheese, and greens).
As a dressing for a cold chicken salad.

TAHINI RANCH

My affinity for ranch dressing is thanks to my older sister, who showed me the light when we were kids, smothering her pizza with those tiny capsules of takeover Hidden Valley. She's also the reason I listened to Taylor Dayne and loved the movie *Beaches*, but those are stories for another time.

Here, I've adapted that pizza-night ranch to something slightly healthier but just as zesty, using Greek yogurt and tahini. The tahini adds a nuttiness, and the lemon juice, a touch of maple syrup, fresh garlic, and plenty of salt bring the salty-sweetness that we expect from ranch dressing. As salad dressing, I like this to be a bit runny but still able to coat a spoon or a leafy green, as on the Veg Wedge salad (page 148). To use as a spread on sandwiches or as a dip, keep it on the thicker side by omitting the water.

In a small bowl, whisk together the yogurt, tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, maple syrup, garlic, and water until smooth. Season with a big pinch of salt, add more lemon juice if you need more tang, and then taste with a spoon or using your finger. The dressing should be savory, lemony, and so delicious you could eat it with a spoon (or your finger!). The dressing keeps, covered and refrigerated, for up to 3 days; but here's your fair warning: the garlic becomes more potent as it sits.

MAKES 1 CUP

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup full-fat Greek yogurt or sour cream

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup tahini

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, or as needed

2 teaspoons maple syrup

or runny honey

1 small garlic clove, finely grated

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup cold water

Kosher salt

WAYS TO USE

Toss with shredded cabbage for a creamy coleslaw.

Drizzle over roasted sweet veg, like carrots, sweet potatoes, or winter squash. Dress the Veg Wedge (page 148).

Caesar Dressing: Smash 3 anchovy fillets in a mortar and pestle or use the side of the blade of a chef's knife until you have a paste. Stir the anchovy paste into the aioli, along with 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, 2 tablespoons finely grated Parmesan cheese, and 1 teaspoon coarsely ground pepper. If the dressing looks thick, thin it with 1 to 2 tablespoons water. Obviously great on lettuce, Caesar also does wonders for grilled vegetables such as carrots and zucchini.

BONUS AIOLI

While not TRUE aioli, if you want to cut a corner, you can combine 1 cup mayo doctored with 1 tablespoon lemon juice and 1 grated garlic clove instead of making the aioli from scratch.

AIOLI SHORTCUT

Carry on whisking as you continue streaming in the rest of the neutral oil and then the olive oil—you can speed up the pour now—until all the oil is mixed in and the aioli looks luscious and smooth and clings to a spoon. Add the garlic and a few drops of lemon juice and whisk once or twice to incorporate. Taste, season with salt, and give another stir with the whisk. The aioli keeps, covered and refrigerated, for up to 2 days.

Grab a dish towel and get it damp. Roll it up lengthwise and form it into a ring on the counter, then set a deep medium bowl in the ring. This will keep the bowl steady and secure on your work surface while one hand is whisking as the other hand streams in the oil. Add the egg yolk to the bowl and whisk until it turns a shade lighter and you see a few tiny bubbles. That's when it's time to start adding the oils. Slowly drizzle in the neutral oil, just a trickle at first. (If you pour in too much at the start, the egg and oil might not emulsify properly.) Keep adding neutral oil until the mixture starts to look ribbony and pulls away from the sides of the bowl. Your wrist might be tired at this point, but don't worry, you're almost done. The yolk will have begun to reach the point where it has absorbed the maximum amount of oil it can, so add a few drops of water to loosen it.

I think of aioli as the slightly chic cousin of mayonnaise. Its thick, creamy texture and deep garlic flavor get me every time. The technique hinges on emulsifying the egg yolk and oil, which you'll master once you make this recipe. Then you'll realize that everything you cook is improved by a spoonful of aioli. I pair aioli with seafood (see pages 250 and 262), slather it on my Jammy Egg and Scallion Sandwiches (page 86), and stir it into bowls of beans (see page 235) and stews. Thin it with a splash of lemon juice or vinegar, and it becomes a salad dressing. I call for two oils here—a neutral oil as well as an extra-virgin olive oil. This is because using only olive oil can make the aioli taste too peppery, depending on the brand. For the neutral oil, I prefer grapeseed or sunflower oil, but canola oil also works.

Kosher salt

Fresh lemon juice for seasoning

1 small garlic clove, finely grated

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Water, as needed

(such as grapeseed)

½ cup neutral oil

1 egg yolk

MAKES ¾ CUP

THE GREATEST AIOLI

TOUM

Toum is for my garlic lovers, which better be everyone reading this book. It is a Lebanese condiment, found throughout the Levant, that has an intensely pungent flavor and an almost fluffy, cloudlike texture. I've enjoyed toum on so many occasions at shawarma shops, where it gets swiped onto pita stuffed with heavily spiced meat, but I especially love it with crispy potatoes.

MAKES 2 CUPS

4 garlic cloves

2 egg whites

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1½ cups neutral oil (such as grapeseed)

¼ cup cold water

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

Drop the garlic, egg whites, and lemon juice into a food processor. Pulse a couple of times until the garlic has broken down completely and things are looking a little foamy. With the food processor running, gradually stream in half of the neutral oil. Take some time. The oil will emulsify with the egg whites and garlic, and the mixture will start to thicken. Stop and scrape down the sides of the processor bowl with a rubber spatula. Continue to process while gradually streaming in the remaining oil, along with the water to thin things out. The toum is ready when it easily clings to a spoon. Season with the salt and pulse again to combine. Toum keeps, covered and refrigerated, for up to 3 days.

DO AHEAD

Toum loses some of its pizzazz when stored. Add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice to bring it back to life.

WAYS TO USE

Spread underneath or serve on or alongside roasted sweet potatoes. As a marinade for roast chicken (I use ½ cup for a 3½- to 4-pound bird). Serve with Shawarma-Spiced Lamb Chops with Pickle Salad (page 281).

EXTRA-SESAME DRESSING

I want to drench *everything* with this sesame sauce, usually served on the Japanese spinach dish gomae. It has so many things I love. Layers on layers of flavors. Miso and soy sauce add saltiness, each in their own way. Tahini makes the sauce creamy, and the sesame oil brings a potent nuttiness. Then, there are the two types of acidic zing—from the lemon and ginger. It's second nature to me to combine two like-minded ingredients in this way. This sauce is something special.

MAKES ½ CUP

¼ cup tahini

1 teaspoon finely grated

lemon zest

3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

2 tablespoons white miso

2 tablespoons extra-virgin

olive oil

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 teaspoon runny honey

1 teaspoon peeled,

finely grated ginger

1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil

2 to 3 tablespoons water

Kosher salt (optional)

WAYS TO USE

Toss with boiled and drained ramen noodles. Smother torn, roasted sweet potatoes in it. Drizzle it over a pile of sliced cucumbers. For Long Green Beans with Creamy Sesame (page 187).

EGGS IN SPICY TOMATO CURRY

SERVES 4

**3 tablespoons virgin coconut oil
or neutral oil (such as grapeseed)**

**1 or 2 red chiles (such as Fresno
or Holland), halved, seeded, and
thinly sliced**

**1-inch piece ginger, peeled and
thinly sliced**

3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1 teaspoon ground coriander

½ teaspoon ground cardamom

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

2 pints cherry tomatoes

Kosher salt

**¼ cup unsweetened coconut
cream or heavy cream**

4 eggs

**Basil, or whichever tender herb
you like, for scattering**

**Fluffy (and Crisp) Flatbread
(page 111) or a nice store-bought
one, warmed for serving**

Eggs and tomatoes are a pairing found in many parts of the world—and a combination I crave. But unlike, say, shakshuka, I prefer a dish in which the tomatoes don't dominate, and that's where coconut cream comes in. It makes this dish luxurious, saucy, and creamy. Everything is cooked on the stove top, in a covered pan so the eggs steam, which sets the whites and creates a perfectly runny yolk that mixes in with the curry.

In a large skillet over medium heat, warm the coconut oil. Add the chiles, ginger, and garlic and give things a stir until everything in the pan starts to get a little soft but hasn't taken on any color, about 2 minutes. Add the coriander, cardamom, and turmeric and stir so the spices coat everything and become fragrant—this happens in seconds.

Drop the tomatoes into the pan, season with a bit of salt, and let cook, stirring occasionally and squashing the tomatoes, so they burst and release their juices, 12 to 15 minutes. You want the tomatoes to soften so the sauce will thicken. Stir in the coconut cream and give the sauce a taste. It'll probably need another pinch of salt (don't we all).

Using the back of a spoon, make four little nests in the mixture, one for each egg. Crack an egg into each nest and season it with salt. Cover the skillet with a lid (a baking sheet works as well if you don't have a lid that fits) and cook until the egg whites are set but the yolks are still runny, about 3 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat and scatter the basil over everything. Serve the eggs and sauce straight from the skillet with the flatbread to scoop and mop.

KUKU SABZI

When I think about the dishes that have stuck with me for most of my life, kuku is at the top. You'll see other kukus made with potato and scented with saffron and black pepper, a sweet version made with dates and rose petals that is typically eaten for breakfast with bitter bergamot tea, and one made with zucchini and turmeric. To me, kuku sabzi reigns supreme. Packed with an intimidating amount of herbs, it was one of the first Iranian dishes that I learned to cook when I was a preteen. The dish varies depending on which Iranian household you're in. I take a less-is-more approach with my kuku, letting the herbs be the star. Wash the herbs in batches. If you wash them all at once, you might end up with sand and dirt in your kuku.

SERVES 6

- 3 bunches cilantro
- 3 bunches parsley
- 2 bunches dill
- 2 bunches scallions, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon dried fenugreek leaves
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 5 eggs
- ¼ cup neutral oil (such as grapeseed) or extra-virgin olive oil
- Fluffy (and Crisp) Flatbread (page 111) or a nice store-bought one, warmed for serving
- Persian litch pickles for serving
- Yogurt for serving

Trim about 4 inches off the stems of the cilantro, parsley, and dill. You want only the leaves and tender stems. Place about one-third of the herbs in a salad spinner and fill it with cold water. Agitate the herbs with your hands to get rid of any dirt, which will sink to the bottom of the spinner bowl. Lift the basket from the bowl of the salad spinner and dump out the water. Repeat this process until the water is clear, then spin dry and transfer the washed herbs to a large cutting board. Repeat with the remaining herbs.

Grab a large fistful of the herbs and, using your sharpest knife, finely chop. Repeat until you have chopped your whole mountain of washed herbs. You will have about 4½ cups.

Transfer the chopped herbs to a large bowl and add the scallions. Using your fingertips, pinch and grind the fenugreek, sprinkling it over the herb mixture. This really helps bring out the fenugreek's sweet smell and taste. Add the salt, pepper, baking powder, and turmeric. One at a time, crack the eggs into the bowl. Use a fork to break the yolks and then fully incorporate the eggs with the herb mixture. It may seem like not enough eggs, but you want *just enough* to bind the mixture. The batter should be very green and the consistency should be light and airy.

Place an oven rack in the top position and preheat the broiler.

Pour the neutral oil into a 10-inch nonstick skillet and place it over medium heat. When the oil begins to shimmer, give the kuku batter a final mix and then scrape it into the skillet. Using a spatula, spread the batter to the sides of the skillet. Cover and cook, rotating the skillet to ensure it cooks evenly, until the bottom has set and darkened to a very dark green, almost brown, color, 8 to 10 minutes.

Remove the skillet from the heat and remove the lid. The top of the kuku will still be a touch wet but very green. Transfer the skillet to the oven and broil, watching carefully (each broiler's strength is different), until the top is set, about 1 minute. Remove from the oven and slide the kuku onto a platter or cutting board. Slice and serve with flatbread and pickles and yogurt spooned over the top.

FLUFFY PARMESAN SCRAMBLE

There was a point when I ate, more like, six eggs a day instead of four for breakfast, but we don't need to talk about that. I want them scrambled. I want a soft, fluffy consistency. (Some people like them runny and pourable. There's a time and place for that—keep reading.) These scrambled eggs take the opportunity to add fat at every turn because breakfast isn't a time to deprive yourself. The finely grated Parm makes them creamy while the thin prosciutto slices warm and meld with the scramble. Good morning.

SERVES 2

4 eggs

Kosher salt

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

½ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving

4 paper-thin prosciutto slices, torn in half

Plenty of freshly ground pepper

2 to 4 pieces good toast

(optional, but why not?)

Crack the eggs into a bowl and season with about ½ teaspoon salt. Using a fork, poke and break each yolk and then vigorously whisk until smooth and no streaks of white appear. Drop the butter into a medium nonstick skillet and then place it over medium heat. (You don't want to add the butter to a hot pan, otherwise you'll likely end up with overly browned, or worse, burnt butter.) Tilt the pan so the butter coats the entire surface of the skillet. Once the butter begins to foam, add the eggs and let cook without fussing, until they begin to set around the edges and on the bottom. If the skillet is as hot as it should be, this will happen within 20 seconds. Sprinkle the Parmesan over the eggs and use a rubber spatula or wooden spoon to begin pulling the cooked outer edges of the eggs in toward the center of the area you just pulled in. Continue to pull the cooked eggs toward the center. In less than a minute, no more wet spots will spill over and the scramble will have collected into large fluffy curds. Remove the skillet from the heat when the eggs appear 80 percent fully cooked. They will be shiny and a little wet on top but the residual heat will finish cooking them. Divide the eggs between two bowls or plates and drape a few pieces of prosciutto on top. Sprinkle with more Parm and pepper and serve with the toast.

JAMMY EGG AND SCALLION SANDWICHES

SERVES 2 (BUT YOU CAN EASILY
DOUBLE THE RECIPE)

4 eggs

4 scallions, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon toasted
sesame seeds (see page 24)

2 teaspoons unseasoned
rice vinegar

1 teaspoon soy sauce

1 pinch granulated sugar

Kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper

¼ cup The Greatest Aioli (page 61)
or store-bought mayonnaise

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

4 thick slices white sandwich
bread, brioche, or milk bread

A few things about this sandwich make me happy: Thick slices of squishy white bread, like Japanese milk bread. The vinegary-zingy scallion sauce, which can be doubled and used to make scallion ramen noodles. And the perfectly timed 8-minute eggs (please leave this conversation if you boil eggs longer than 10 minutes).

Pull the eggs out of the fridge to warm up while you do some prep, so they're less likely to crack while boiling. Fill a medium saucepan three-fourths full with water and bring it to a boil.

While the water comes to a boil, in a small bowl, stir together the scallions, sesame seeds, vinegar, soy sauce, and sugar with a pinch of salt and pepper. Use the back of a spoon to smash the scallions against the side of the bowl a bit to get them to break down. Set aside.

In another small bowl, stir together the aioli and mustard. Season with salt.

Fill a medium bowl with ice and add enough water so that the eggs will be submerged. Have your timer ready. Turn down the heat and bring the boiling water to a gentle simmer, then use a slotted spoon to carefully lower the eggs into the water. Boil for 8 minutes *on the dot*. Use the slotted spoon to transfer the eggs to the ice-water bath and let them sit for a minute or so. Then, one by one, whack each egg all over with the spoon and return it to the ice water. Cracking the shells and letting the eggs get one more stint in the ice bath helps loosen the shells from the egg whites, making them easy to peel. Peel the eggs, then slice them crosswise into thick rounds.

Slather the mustardy mayonnaise on all four slices of bread, then top two of the slices with the eggs. Spoon the scallion sauce over the eggs, then top with the remaining bread. Slice—or don't!—the sandwiches however you like, and serve right away.

SPICY, CITRUSY OLIVES

SERVES 6 (OR 4 GREEDY ONES)

1 orange

1 lemon

1 tablespoon coriander seeds

1 tablespoon fennel seeds

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 cups drained unpitted olives
(Castelvetrano, Gaeta, Lucques,
niçoise, and Picholine work well)

1 small handful bay leaves,
rosemary sprigs, or thyme sprigs

2 dried chiles de árbol, or
½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

When I was a teenager, the parents in my neighborhood occasionally hired me to cook for their dinner parties. Looking back, it was the best way to get my feet wet cooking for others in homes that felt safe and encouraging. I would present a few menus for them to choose from, and one of the snacks that always went over well were my “mixed olives,” served warm. I wanted to show guests how good a freshly marinated olive could be—which I knew, from growing up in an olive-heavy Persian household—compared to mushy jarred olives that taste like lake water. I was so adamant about sourcing the best ingredients that I would barely break even, having blown my budget at the market. The compliments from the tipsy adults sipping their vodka martinis were enough compensation for me, at the time.

This is a highly customizable recipe. Sizzle some garlic, add more herbs, add some big chunks of feta or goat cheese. You can swap the spices for your favorites. The main objective is to gently bubble the olives with the flavored oil until their flesh is warmed through. You'll feel like you're in a restaurant. Kind of.

Using a vegetable peeler, work around the orange and lemon to remove wide strips of peel.

Give the coriander seeds and fennel seeds a light crush in a mortar and pestle. You want to break down the spices so they can scent the olives and add a subtle crunch but stay coarse enough that they don't burn.

In a medium pot, combine the olive oil, coriander, and fennel and then place it over medium-low heat. Let the spices begin to sizzle and become fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes, shaking the pot to keep them moving, so they don't burn. Add the olives, herbs, chiles, and citrus peels to the spices and cook, stirring occasionally, until the olives are warmed through, 8 to 12 minutes. The only way to find out if the olives are ready is to try one or two.

Spoon the olives into a serving bowl and serve warm or let them marinate a few hours at room temperature and then serve.

DO AHEAD

The olives can be made up to 5 days ahead and stored in the fridge, covered. Bring them to room temperature before serving.

COMMITTED TO UNPITTED

Yes, pitted olives are convenient, but they become a sad, literal shell of their former selves. The flavors are more intact when the pit is left in the meaty flesh. You wouldn't buy a pitted peach, would you? Exactly.

**NUTS TO
DRINK WITH**

I want a nut mix that goes well with iced tea, beer, a glass of wine, vodka on the rocks, tequila, mezcal . . . you get it. It should be salty, spicy, and a touch sweet. These nuts are heavy on the garlic and salt and fragrant with lemongrass. I don't want candied nuts, which require making a caramel, finding a candy thermometer, that whole operation. I toss them with honey for a balanced sweetness. The key technique is keeping the oven heat low, so the water in the honey slowly evaporates, and all the ingredients stick without burning. When the nuts come out of the oven, squeeze some lime juice over everything and then squeeze the rest into your tequila.

MAKES 3 CUPS

- 2 lemongrass stalks, bottom third only (about 6 inches long), tough outer layers removed, finely chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, finely grated
- ¼ cup runny honey
- 2 tablespoons neutral oil (such as grapeseed)
- 1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
- 3 cups mixed raw nuts (cashews, hazelnuts, and pecans work well)
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt

Preheat the oven to 325°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, combine the lemongrass, garlic, honey, neutral oil, and red pepper flakes and, using a rubber spatula, stir until you have a thick, sticky paste. Add the nuts and sprinkle in the salt. Give the nuts a toss, so each one is happily coated. Spread the nuts on the prepared baking sheet. Toast in the oven for 10 minutes and then toss. Continue toasting until they are golden brown and smell very nutty and garlicky, 10 to 15 minutes. Set aside to cool. If the nuts have formed into clusters, break them apart, but leave one cluster for a lucky someone. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week. There's your snack for the week.

FRESH FRUIT WITH SAVORY SPRINKLES

SERVES 4

**1½ pounds crunchy and/or
fleshy fruit (melons, Asian pears,
your favorite apples, oranges,
pineapple, or mango)**

1 sheet toasted nori

**1 tablespoon toasted
sesame seeds (see page 24)**

**2 teaspoons mild chile flakes
(such as Aleppo), or 1 teaspoon
red pepper flakes**

½ lemon

1 teaspoon flaky sea salt

At my parents' house, every meal began and ended with fruit. My dad would sit at the table peeling, slicing, and seeding. He'd stab a piece of fragrant honeydew, a slightly bruised nectarine, or a crunchy Asian pear and point it at me. I'd reject his offer two or three times before he would implore, "You don't understand; fruit is nature's candy." I'd give in. My mom would sprinkle some salt over the fruit, making it a little more savory, allowing the juices to come through, and convince me to have one more bite.

These days, I need my fruit to be salty and savory. This sprinkle is influenced by my mother's orange wedges with salt, kind of, but also Mexican salt-chile mango, furikake, and my need to dress things up. What can I say—I want to make fruit, fruitier. There's texture, saltiness, brightness. It doesn't need much more.

Cut the fruit into ½-inch-wide wedges, rounds, or however you deem fit. Set them aside while you make the sprinkles.

Tear the nori into small pieces, then pulse in a clean spice mill or blender until finely ground. Pour the nori powder into a small bowl and stir in the sesame seeds and chile flakes. Using a Microplane, finely grate the zest from the lemon half into the bowl, then mix with your fingers so it doesn't clump. Stir in the salt.

Squeeze the lemon over the fruit, catching any seeds with your other hand. Sprinkle the mixture over the fruit and serve.

DO AHEAD

You can mix the nori, sesame seeds, chile flakes, and salt 2 weeks ahead, cover, and store at room temperature. Add the lemon zest right before using.

NOW, ABOUT THAT NORI

I prefer to buy nori sheets untoasted, so I can slowly toast them on the stove, over an open flame, until they've got a slightly emerald-green sheen and give off a briny scent. But just buy them toasted. Then keep the rest of the nori in a resealable plastic bag and use it to make Buttery Nori-Speckled Rice (page 200). Think of it as seasoning and sprinkle it on top of brothy noodles or even fold it into your scrambled eggs.

SMOKY EGGPLANT DIP

Yes, we've got the baba ghanoush essentials here, but what's key is the technique. I broil the eggplant over the stove's flame, rotating every three minutes and watching as it turns darker and darker. It's so satisfying. It completely breaks down into a blackened shell with jammy custard inside, no longer the purple emoji! it once was. (You can also broil or grill it.) Blending the eggplant flesh in a food processor aerates it in a way you couldn't pull off by hand, making it even lighter and more divine. Serve with your favorite snappy veg, flatbread, or as a side to Chile and Citrusy Yogurt-Brined Roast Chicken (page 278).

MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS

2 globe eggplants

(about 1½ pounds total)

3 tablespoons extra-virgin

olive oil

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice,

or as needed

2 tablespoons tahini

Kosher salt

2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1 teaspoon mild chile flakes

(such as Aleppo)

Pomegranate molasses

for drizzling

Place each eggplant on a stove-top gas burner and turn the heat to medium-high. Once the skin begins to char and blacken, after about 3 minutes, use tongs to carefully turn the eggplants at the stem end, making sure you don't puncture the flesh. Continue to cook, turning every 3 minutes, until completely charred and the eggplant has collapsed onto itself, 12 to 15 minutes total. Remove the eggplants from the heat and let cool for 10 minutes. This will allow the flesh inside to steam and become soft and silky.

Halve the eggplants lengthwise and scoop the flesh into a food processor. Add 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, the lemon juice, tahini, and a generous pinch of salt. Pulse a few times until the eggplant has a light, almost whipped, texture. Taste and adjust with more lemon juice and salt.

Transfer the dip to a serving bowl and, using the back of a spoon, make some grooves here and there in the surface. In a small skillet over medium heat, combine the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil and the garlic. Cook, stirring often, until the garlic begins to turn golden and crisp, about 3 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat, stir in the chile flakes, and spoon the mixture over the dip. Drizzle the pomegranate molasses in the grooves of the dip. Looks chic, no? Serve at room temperature.

DO AHEAD

The dip can be mixed up (without the garnish) to 2 days ahead, covered, and stored in the fridge. Just before serving, finish with the garlic-chile oil and molasses.

BORANI AKA THE QUEEN OF ALL YOGURT DIPS

MAKES 2 CUPS

⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil

4 shallots, thinly sliced into rings

Kosher salt

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

**2 cups full-fat Greek yogurt,
labneh, or sour cream**

**1 teaspoon finely grated
lemon zest**

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Freshly ground pepper

**3 tablespoons coarsely
chopped dill**

Borani reminds me of hot hot hot California summer afternoons, my uncle grilling kabobs, mounds of rice, roasted tomatoes, and tubs full of borani that we kept cold in bowls of ice cubes because we made too much to fit in the fridge. Traditionally, borani is a deeply savory yogurt dip with cooked greens and onions. I skip the greens and go for shallots instead, plus a sunny turmeric oil that I drizzle on top.

Like all great yogurt dips, this one needs a good amount of salt to start and then you pick a direction. You can go all kinds of ways: thick and savory, or lighter and thinned with cucumber and lemon juice; textured with chopped raisins, currants, and pine nuts or pistachios; or brightly colored with roasted beets or sweet carrots. There's so much to explore—let this recipe be your starting point. Eat it with crunchy vegetables, Persian rice (see page 202), grilled meats, or whatever's on your plate.

Pour the olive oil into a large skillet and place it over medium heat. When the oil is shimmering, add the shallots, season with salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until they're golden brown and begin to crisp, 4 to 6 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, scoop the shallots onto a small plate, leaving the oil in the skillet. Remove the skillet from the heat. Sprinkle the turmeric over the hot oil and give it a few stirs to bloom and wake up. Set aside.

In your chicest serving bowl, mix together the yogurt, lemon zest, lemon juice, and a big pinch of salt and pepper. Add most of the caramelized shallots to the yogurt (save some for a garnish). Stir and taste. It will be slightly sweet and onion-y from the shallots, creamy (obviously), and very delicious.

Drizzle the turmeric oil over the dip, then scatter the dill and reserved caramelized shallots on the surface. Top with more pepper, if you like, before serving.

DO AHEAD

The dip can be mixed (without the garnish) up to 2 days ahead, covered, and stored in the fridge. Just before serving, finish with the turmeric oil, dill, and caramelized shallots.

BROKEN FETA WITH SIZZLED MINT AND WALNUTS

SERVES 4 (BUT YOU COULD EASILY DOUBLE
THE RECIPE)

1/3 cup raw walnuts, finely chopped
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons dried mint
Kosher salt
Freshly ground pepper
8 ounces feta (I like Bulgarian
or French, but you're more than
welcome to support the Greeks)
or goat cheese
Barbari bread or Fluffy (and Crisp)
Flatbread (page 111) for serving

In Farsi, *noon-o-panir* translates to "bread and cheese," but it's a translation that underlines the experience of noon-o-panir: Typically, it's a snack you put out when you're having a mehmooni (party): bowls of soft, tangy, sheep's milk cheese, typically feta, served with Persian flatbread, like barbari; a platter of raw herbs; and walnuts soaked in salty water to soften and season them. For the perfect loghmeh (bite), tear off a piece of hot bread and fold it around a piece of cheese, a walnut, and a few herbs, and squish everything together. Although you're more than welcome to make your own loghmeh, it's natural for Iranians to want to make the perfect bite for you. Now, allow me. This is a consolidated version of noon-o-panir but, in my humble opinion, it's just as delicious.

Combine the walnuts and olive oil in a small skillet and place it over medium heat. Cook, stirring often, until the walnuts smell toasty and become a deeper golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Watch carefully; this happens quickly. Turn off the heat and immediately add the dried mint and watch it sizzle. Season with salt and lots of pepper.

Break the feta into 1-inch craggy pieces and put them on a platter. Spoon the walnut mixture over; there will be a happy pool of oil surrounding the cheese. Serve with bread to scoop it all up.

WHAT MAKES GOOD FETA

Feta can vary depending on the type of milk (sheep, goat, or cow), origin (Greece, France, or Bulgaria), and the way it's packaged (no negotiation here: It should always come in block form submerged in brine). Don't waste your money on the dry, pre-crumbled stuff. Bulgarian and French fetas are my favorites because they have a creamier texture than Greek feta, which makes them easy to slice into planks without crumbling too much. Bulgarian is saltier than French feta; whereas sheep's milk, the most common feta, is the sharpest. Try cow's or goat's milk feta to taste something milder.

HALLOUMI WITH LEMONY HONEY AND SESAME SALT

SERVES 4

**2 teaspoons toasted
sesame seeds (see page 24)**

½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

Flaky sea salt

½ lemon

3 tablespoons runny honey

**2 (8-ounce) packages
Halloumi cheese**

**3 tablespoons extra-virgin
olive oil, plus more for drizzling**

**1 tablespoon finely chopped
chives (optional)**

Fried cheese is one of life's greatest pleasures, and having experienced many of them, I feel confident saying so. Halloumi, usually a mixture of sheep's and goat's milk, is one of the rare cheeses that can be seared. It gets a deep golden, crackly crust. It oozes, spreads, and loses form. Delicious. It's also incredibly salty. To tame the salt, I add red pepper flakes and honey. The chives are extra, but I am who I am. Eat it while it's hot, as halloumi can get squeaky and rubbery as it sits (I'll still eat it).

In a mortar and pestle, crush the sesame seeds until some of them look powdery; or finely chop them. Scoop them into a small bowl and mix in the red pepper flakes and a pinch of salt. Using a Microplane, finely grate the zest from the lemon half over the bowl. Use your fingers to mix everything together, making sure the zest is evenly distributed and isn't clumpy. Set aside.

Squeeze the juice from the lemon half into another small bowl, catching any seeds with your other hand, and then stir in the honey. Set aside.

Halve each piece of Halloumi on a diagonal. Working with one piece at a time, place the Halloumi, cut-side down, on a cutting board and slice it lengthwise into triangular planks to make eight pieces total. Pat dry with paper towels to remove any excess moisture, so the pieces will brown nicely.

Pour the olive oil into a cast-iron or nonstick skillet and place it over medium-high heat for about 1 minute, until hot. Lay the Halloumi pieces in the oil and cook, pressing down using a metal spatula to make sure the cheese is browning evenly on the bottom. The oil may pop, but don't be afraid. Sear the Halloumi, giving each piece a turn halfway through cooking, until deeply golden brown and crisp around the edges, about 4 minutes on each side.

Transfer the Halloumi to a serving plate and pour on the lemony honey while the cheese is still hot. Sprinkle the spicy sesame salt and chives over the Halloumi. Drizzle with a little olive oil and serve.

FLUFFY (AND CRISP) FLATBREAD

One day, I will nurture my very own sourdough starter, immerse myself in the art of bread baking, and show off my perfectly burnished loaves. Until then, I am going to stick with a category of bread that takes a lot less time and skill (let's be honest). This one is very easy and achieves both fluffy and, yes, crisp textures by letting the dough sit on an oiled baking sheet. It's the optimal blank canvas to dunk in creamy dips, mop any sauces on a plate, or act as a better bed for an avocado.

MAKES 8 FLATBREADS

- ¾ cup warm (but not hot!) water
- 2 teaspoons active dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour, or as needed
- ½ cup full-fat Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons melted butter, ghee, or extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt

Pour the water into a large bowl and sprinkle the yeast and sugar over evenly. Let sit for 10 minutes for the yeast to activate and the surface to become foamy, about 10 minutes.

Add the flour, yogurt, butter, and salt to the bowl and mix until a shaggy dough forms and there are no more dry spots (I prefer to use my hands, but a wooden spoon works). The dough should feel tacky, but not overly sticky and should keep its shape when lifted. If the dough is too sticky, mix in a little more flour a tablespoon at a time.

Cover the bowl with a damp kitchen towel and place in a warm, dry spot to let the dough further hydrate and double in size, 60 to 90 minutes.

Lightly oil a few baking sheets and set aside. Turn out the dough onto a clean surface and divide into eight equal pieces using a knife or bench scraper. Working with one piece of dough at a time, form into balls by pinching and pulling the corners to the center. Roll out each ball into a 6-inch-ish round (no need to make them perfect rounds) about ¼ inch thick and transfer to the baking sheets in a single layer, tipping once so both sides are slicked with oil.

Place a large cast iron skillet over medium-high heat. Working with one dough circle at a time, lay the dough on the hot surface and cook until it starts to look dry around the edges and begins to bubble, about 1 minute. Flip and cook until the other side has blistered in spots underneath, 30 to 40 seconds. Continue to cook, turning often, until puffed and browned in spots on both sides, about 1 minute longer. Transfer to a wire rack to cool or wrap up in a kitchen towel to keep warm until ready to serve.

GARLICKY FRIED TOMATO TOAST

SERVES 2

GARLICKY FRIED TOASTS

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil,
or as needed

2 thick slices crusty whole-wheat
sourdough bread (such as miche,
batard, or even ciabatta)

1 garlic clove, halved

Flaky sea salt

1 garlic clove, finely grated

1/4 cup mayonnaise

1/2 lemon

2 firm but ripe heirloom tomatoes,
sliced into 1/4-inch-thick rounds

2 tablespoons finely chopped

chives, mint, parsley, or tarragon

Chile flakes for sprinkling

Flaky sea salt

Extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling

I want a big, fat, crunchy piece of toast. And the best method for making it that way is to fry it. The bread soaks up the oil and gets a deep char and incredible crunch, and yet retains a cushiony center. I want my slices fat (we're talking 3/4 inch thick) and wide. I have to cut them myself because no pre-sliced bread comes sliced thick enough. The oil needs to get pretty hot, but not smoking, and the bread needs a generous pool of oil to soak up on both sides. It's ready when it's perfectly golden brown all over. That's your base, and there are so many ways to top it (see pages 116 and 118), but one of my favorite versions is this one, which stars summer tomatoes.

Even if you only topped your fried bread with some mayo and tomato slices, it would be terrific, but I add herbs and chile flakes (I can't *not*). One rule: Make this only during the hottest months with peak-season tomatoes. (Pictured on page 117.)

To make the toasts: Pour the olive oil into a skillet large enough to fit both slices of bread comfortably and place over medium-high heat. Once you see that the oil is rippling and funny when you tilt the pan, gently place both pieces of bread in the skillet. The bread should start to sizzle and will soak up the oil right away. Cook, using tongs to press down on each slice occasionally, until they're crispy and just-droppingly golden brown, 30 to 45 seconds per side. If the pan looks dry after you flip the bread, add another tablespoon or two of oil. Using tongs, transfer both bread slices to a cutting board. While the bread is still hot, slide the halved garlic clove over each slice two or three times. The fried bread will start to melt the garlic. Sprinkle with flaky sea salt.

In a small bowl, mix together the grated garlic and mayonnaise. Squeeze a few drops of lemon juice into the bowl. Set the lemon aside. Slather the mayonnaise over each piece of toast. Shingle the tomatoes over the mayo, covering as much of the toast as possible. Sprinkle with whatever herb you're using, chile flakes, and flaky sea salt. Finely grate some lemon zest from the reserved lemon over. Drizzle with olive oil and serve.

VINEGAR TOASTS

This was a happy accident during quarantine. I made slightly sad but delicious slow-cooked beans (there's a nicer version on page 235), and I needed something to go with them. I fried some toast, stabbed it all over with a paring knife, and then poured in this herby vinegar mixture. I haven't stopped thinking about it since.

SERVES 2

- ¼ cup finely chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped chives, mint, or tarragon (optional; I like two herbs in this, but it's not a must)
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ½ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- Freshly ground pepper
- Kosher salt
- 2 pieces Garlicky Fried Tomato Toasts (see page 113)
- Extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling

Dump the parsley and chives in a small bowl. Add the vinegar, lemon zest, and about 5 cranks of pepper. Sprinkle with salt and stir.

Using a paring knife, stab each slice of fried toast a few times, so the vinegar can really soak in. Spoon the herby vinegar over each slice and drizzle with olive oil. Let the toast sit for a minute or two, then serve. Swear your allegiance to fried bread, am I right?

FAT PIECES OF CITRUS WITH AVOCADO AND CARAMELIZED DATES

SERVES 4

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

6 Medjool dates, pitted and quartered

1 grapefruit

1 orange (navel, Cara Cara, or blood orange)

1 buttery-ripe avocado, halved and pitted

½ small white or red onion, thinly sliced into rings

Flaky sea salt

Freshly ground pepper

⅔ cup Turmeric and Black Pepper-Citrus Dressing (page 40)

I don't think a dish could be more Californian than citrus and avocado on a plate. At Chez Panisse, I witnessed how transformative large pieces of citrus can be to a salad. In the dead of winter, we'd serve thick rounds of grapefruit with roasted beets—*delicious*. Tender spring leeks were dressed up with orange slices and crushed green olives. The pairing that I craved the most, though, was the bright mixed citrus with avocado. The tart, sweet flavors from the citrus would wake up the buttery avocado. I've re-created it here with a fluorescent turmeric dressing that takes it over the top and looks stunning, too. And those dates! Heating big, meaty Medjool dates in a little oil results in this chewy, caramelized butterscotch flavor that will have you thinking, *That Andy boy is clever*.

In a small skillet over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the dates, turning occasionally, until darkened and caramelized in spots, about 2 minutes.

Cut off the ends of the grapefruit and orange, so they can stand upright. Cut away the peels and white pith, doing your best not to slice off much of the flesh. Slice the citrus into rounds or cut around the core, starting at the top, to get gemlike pieces. Pick out any seeds that come your way.

Arrange the citrus pieces and caramelized dates on a platter or plates. Using a spoon, scoop out the avocado flesh in big imperfect pieces and place them over the citrus. Scatter the onion on top. Season everything with flaky sea salt and plenty of pepper. Spoon the dressing over the salad, trying to not stain your shirt, and serve.

SO, YOU GOT LUCKY AND FOUND OTHER TYPES OF CITRUS

If you're using smaller citrus, such as tangerines, clementines, and/or kishu mandarins, use your hands to peel them and don't even bother using a knife to remove their pith, which is thin and not as bitter as grapefruit and orange pith.

POMEGRANATE SPOON SALAD

SERVES 4

- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon runny honey or maple syrup
- Kosher salt
- 1 large or 2 medium pomegranates
- 3 Persian cucumbers, finely chopped
- 1 Fresno or serrano chile, finely chopped, seeded for less heat, or ½ teaspoon chile flakes
- 2 cups mixed herbs (such as parsley, mint, and/or dill), coarsely chopped
- 1 cup toasted walnuts (see page 24), finely chopped

There are two things I look forward to in winter: the best movie releases and pomegranates. I use pomegranates to make a chopped salad similar to those you find across the Middle East and India that usually consist of a combination of finely diced tomato, cucumber, and onion. To me, those ingredients are the definition of a chopped salad—not the salad you stood in a line for as someone guillotined romaine lettuce into bits in a big metal bowl. These salads are based on sturdy ingredients that only get better as they bathe in their own juices.

To make this salad suitable for fall and winter, and slightly more textured than the usual tomato-based chopped ensemble, I swapped in pomegranate seeds for the tomatoes and added toasted walnuts. You'll devour it by the spoonful, the pops of pomegranate and flares of chile igniting your taste buds. No ingredient is filler or floppy. Sorry lettuce, but you're not always needed. This salad is great on its own, but also begs to be paired with rich and fatty mains like the Crushed Orange and Rosemary-Braised Lamb (page 282).

Place the shallot in a medium bowl. Stir in the lime juice, olive oil, and honey. Season with salt and set aside, so the shallot can soften.

Halve the pomegranate crosswise, along the equator. Working over a large bowl, hold a pomegranate half in your hand, cut-side down. Using a wooden spoon, smack the pomegranate skin, which will release the seeds from the shell and into the bowl. Repeat with the remaining pomegranate half. Pick out any pit that may have fallen into the bowl. Add the cucumbers, chile, herbs, and walnuts to the bowl.

Give the shallot dressing another stir before pouring it over the salad. Season with salt and toss with your hands (it'll feel great having all the tiny pieces raining through your fingers). I find that it's near perfect right away, but if you let it sit for 10 minutes before serving, you'll create a pool of spicy, salty liquid you can tip back and drink when the salad is gone.

CHOOSING POMEGRANATES

Back in California, I remember pomegranates growing to the size of softball and being available only in fall, but now you can find them (often already seeded) year-round. I beg you to try to find them when they're in season, typically October to January. There should be all kinds of lumps and bumps where the skin is tightly encasing the seeds inside. The skin should be leathery with a few cracks, which indicates the fruit is ripe, sweet, and ready to burst.

EAT-WITH- EVERYTHING CUCUMBER SALAD

SERVES 4

6 Persian cucumbers, or 1 large English cucumber

Kosher salt

1 small garlic clove, finely grated

3 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar or fresh lemon juice

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 teaspoon granulated sugar

1 teaspoon peeled, finely grated ginger

2 tablespoons toasted black sesame seeds (see page 24), lightly crushed in a mortar and pestle or left whole

Very Crispy Garlic-Chile Oil (page 54) or your favorite chile oil for drizzling (optional)

No matter which restaurant you're in, ALWAYS order the cucumber salad. It's a refreshing palate cleanser and truly goes with everything. Here, the dressing is potent with soy sauce and vinegar, and the cucumbers soak it up. So will you. Now, I'm not a stickler for how *you* cut the cucumbers, but *I* cut them into generous, irregular, angled pieces because I want to experience their snappy texture in every bite. If you're craving a creamy cucumber salad, follow these cutting-and-salting instructions and then top with Extra Sesame Dressing (page 63) and some toasted sesame seeds.

Halve each cucumber lengthwise, then slice on a steep diagonal into 2- to 3-inch pieces, but don't get the ruler out—imperfection is what we're after. Season with salt.

In a large serving bowl, whisk together the garlic, vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, and ginger. Add the cucumbers and toss to coat. Taste a cucumber and see if it needs a sprinkle more of salt. Top with the sesame seeds and spoon over the garlic-chile oil. Give another little toss and serve.

DO AHEAD

The cucumber salad can be made a day ahead and chilled. If you somehow don't eat it all at once, it'll really soak up the dressing and become even more delicious.

CHOOSING CUCUMBERS

I favor Persian cucumbers for their thin skin and tight, crunchy texture. If you're in the peak of summer, look for Armenian cucumbers that have furrowed green stripes or the Japanese variety that tangle and curl like pythons and don't have as many seeds. Please avoid (if you possibly can) the conventional garden cucumber with its thick, waxy skin and seedy flesh that has the texture of Styrofoam.

You can find fennel year-round in most supermarkets, but it's happiest in fall or early spring, when its natural sweetness comes out. Even the shape is different: the farmers' market fennel has flared stalks and is more of a jadeite color, versus the stuff at the grocery store, which is bulbous and pearly white. When you're picking it out, the base should feel dense and tight, and the celery-like stalks should not be visibly dry or brown.

CHOOSING FENNEL

Go ahead and toast your nuts, pit your olives, and slice your cheese a few hours ahead—but don't assemble this salad until you're ready to serve it. The fennel will lose its crucial crispness if you dress it in advance.

DO AHEAD

In a large bowl, combine the fennel, mint, cheese, and vinegar. Finely grate the zest of the remaining half of the lemon over the fennel salad. Halve the lemon and squeeze the juice into the bowl, catching any seeds with your other hand. Drizzle the salad with a little olive oil and season with salt. Toss until every piece of fennel is nicely coated. I like my fennel salad tangy, but you can add another tablespoon of oil if you want it less tart. Spoon the olive relish onto a platter or plates and scatter the dressed fennel over it, trying to make it as architectural as you want (it's okay to play with your food). Serve immediately.

Using the side of a chef's knife or the bottom of a mug, crush the olives. Tear out the pits, leaving the olives a little craggy. Scoop them into a small bowl and add the pistachios, olive oil, and red pepper flakes. Using a Microplane, finely grate the zest of half of the lemon over the olive mixture, season with salt and ground pepper, and set aside. It should look like a chunky relish. If you see brown jagged streaks on the fennel, remove an outer layer. Trim and discard about 1/2 inch from the root end of both fennel bulbs. Thinly slice the fennel bulb crosswise, starting from the base. It doesn't need to be paper-thin. You're going for about 1/4-inch-thick slices. (This would be a good time to use the mandoline you bought.)

1 cup green olives (Castelvetrano and Picholine are my favorites)
 1/2 cup toasted pistachios
 (see page 24), finely chopped
 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil,
 plus more for drizzling
 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
 1 lemon
 Kosher salt
 Freshly ground pepper
 2 fennel bulbs, woody stalks
 and fronds trimmed
 1/2 cup mint leaves, torn if large
 2 ounces Parmesan, thinly sliced
 (about 1 cup)
 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

SERVES 4

FENNEL SALAD WITH SPICY GREEN OLIVES AND CRUSHED PISTACHIOS

This fennel salad is slightly over the top. Do I really need the nuts and the cheese? (Yes, but it's up to you if you keep them.) Is this salad gonna be good if you don't have mint? Yep. Swap Planters cocktail peanuts you found in your pantry for the pistachios? Sure. What if you just use ground pepper and skip the red? Okay. The important step is eating this salad as soon as you dress the fennel. You want that full crunch experience. The crushed green olives should be big and fleshy, like a chunky relish to contrast the icy bite of the fennel. It's baroque and bright and briny. All that acidity in the salad begs to be paired with juicy pork chops (see page 288) or the steak (see page 298).

JUICY TOMATOES WITH ITALIAN CHILE CRISP

The truth is, most tomato salads don't need a recipe. Vinegar, olive oil, plenty of crunchy salt, and call it a day. If you have some herbs on hand, throw those in. What would a tomato salad look like if it deserved a recipe? Something like this. Very savory. Topped with a garlic-chile crisp and dressed with its delicious oil. Anchovies and fennel seeds heighten the tomato's flavor while bringing even more savory undertones. It's spicy, with the chile flakes. This isn't a simple caprese that you whipped up on a summer afternoon. It's still simple but steals the show.

SERVES 4

- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 5 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 4 oil-packed anchovies, drained
- 2 teaspoons fennel seeds, crushed or finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 pounds heirloom tomatoes (any size will do), some sliced and some cut into wedges, or small tomatoes (such as Sungold and/or cherry), some halved and some left whole
- 2 tablespoons sherry vinegar or red wine vinegar
- 1 cup basil leaves
- Flaky sea salt

In a small skillet over medium heat, combine the olive oil, garlic, and anchovies. Cook, stirring often, until the garlic is barely golden and crisp and the anchovies have melted away, 3 to 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and stir in the fennel seeds and red pepper flakes.

Place the tomatoes on a large platter and splash with the vinegar. Spoon the chile crisp over and scatter the basil on top. Finish with plenty of salt and serve.

DO AHEAD

The chile crisp can be made up to 1 week ahead and stored, covered, in the fridge.

LITTLE GEMS WITH GREEN GODDESS YOGURT AND TANGY SHALLOTS

SERVES 4

2 tablespoons extra-virgin
olive oil

½ cup panko breadcrumbs

Kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper

1 medium shallot, thinly sliced
into rings

2 tablespoons red or white
wine vinegar

4 to 6 heads Little Gem lettuce
(about 1 pound total), or 2 large
romaine lettuce hearts

⅔ cup Green Goddess Yogurt
(page 58)

It feels right that the first salad dressing I learned to make was the regal and herbaceous green goddess. It was from a gardening book I had as a kid that featured recipes to go along with the produce you were growing. I was the proud father of a patch of mint (it spreads like a weed once planted), Persian cucumbers, and Early Girl tomatoes, which would all end up as a chopped salad that I'd eat like cereal.

I prefer to keep the typical mayonnaise out of my GG dressing and go with yogurt; this brings creaminess and tang at the same time. Quick-pickled shallots top the salad, and their pickling vinegar goes into the dressing, giving it an allium bite. If you don't have a blender or food processor, you can finely chop the herbs and stir everything together; you'll just have a slightly thicker and less green dressing, but it'll still be delicious. You can also double or triple the recipe and use it as a dip.

In a medium skillet over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the panko and cook, stirring often, so the crumbs toast evenly and turn deeply golden brown, 4 to 5 minutes. Transfer the breadcrumbs to a small bowl and season with salt and pepper while warm.

In a small bowl, combine the sliced shallot with the vinegar, and season with salt and pepper. Give the shallot rings a squeeze to help them start to pickle and set the bowl aside.

Trim and discard the cores from the lettuce heads and toss out any bruised or overly floppy leaves. Separate the leaves from each head. I like leaving the leaves whole to show off their crinkled texture, but if you're using romaine, go ahead and tear them into more manageable bites.

Drop the lettuce into a large bowl, pour in the green goddess yogurt, and season with salt and pepper. Using your hands, toss until each leaf is dressed nicely. Sprinkle with the toasted breadcrumbs and scatter the pickled shallot on top before serving.

USE YOUR HANDS

Your wooden fork-and-spoon salad tossers aren't going to have the sensory feel to know that every nook and cranny of the lettuce, every tip of each leaf, is properly dressed. Using salad tossers risks an over- or underdressed salad. Use your hands and get in there! Then taste the salad before serving and adjust: Add a drizzle more oil, a splash of vinegar, some salt and pepper. For leafy salads, the dressing should never pool at the bottom of the bowl.

VEG WEDGE

Loyalists (to what? Blue cheese?!) will blast me for altering too many parts of the wedge salad with my version, but I'm not sorry. The classic wedge has a few issues. That dressing is always too thick and never properly enrobes the entire salad. The croutons are often stale. The occasional scattering of grape tomatoes always feels like a lazy afterthought that doesn't bring much to the table besides some underwhelming tomato energy. I don't have a problem with the bacon, as long as it's in the form of shards and not bits.

I felt compelled to come up with a recipe that solved my problems with the standard wedge. The cold, crisp, refreshing lettuce doesn't actually need much improving, but cutting it into smaller (read: cuter) pieces allows for more dressing to get between those wavy layers. My dressing is a garlicky tahini-based ranch that has the ideal drizzle consistency.

When it comes to the toppings, I admit that I go extra, and I think it's absolutely worth it. If you omit one or even two of the toppings, I won't be upset because you will still love this salad.

SERVES 4

- 1 head iceberg lettuce
- 1 small lemon
- Kosher salt
- 1 cup Tahini Ranch (page 59)
- 2 small radishes, thinly sliced
- ½ small red or white onion, thinly sliced into rings
- 1 cup torn herbs (such as basil, cilantro, dill, and/or parsley)
- 2 tablespoons mixed toasted seeds (such as poppy, sesame, and/or sunflower)
- 1 teaspoon mild chile flakes (such as Aleppo; optional)
- Flaky sea salt (optional)
- Extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling

Remove any floppy or wilted outer leaves from the lettuce. Quarter the lettuce through the core, then cut each quarter into 3-inch-ish pieces. Arrange the iceberg wedges on a serving platter, pulling apart the leaves slightly, so dressing can easily get in there. Halve the lemon and squeeze its juice over the lettuce, catching any seeds with your other hand. Season each wedge with a bit of kosher salt.

Using a spoon, drizzle the ranch over the lettuce. (You can leave some on the side, depending on how much or how little dressing you want.) Scatter the radishes, onion, and herbs. Sprinkle the seeds, chile flakes, and flaky sea salt over the top. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil and then set out knives and forks and get to it.

BLACK PEPPER AND GINGER ASPARAGUS STIR-FRY

SERVES 4

1 small bunch scallions

1½ pounds thick asparagus

1 tablespoon neutral oil
(such as grapeseed)

2-inch piece ginger,
peeled and finely chopped

Kosher salt

1 tablespoon unsalted butter,
cut into pieces

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon water

Freshly ground pepper

Can we all admit that asparagus can be fussy and, often, overrated? The flaw in nature's design is that the tip cooks before the rest of the stalk. My solution to this problem is to have the whole spears kiss the heat without getting into that unfortunate army-drab territory. Cutting the spears on an exaggerated diagonal also helps the asparagus cook faster. And it looks angular and modern.

With such a delicate, here-for-a-minute ingredient, less is more. I try not to drown it in butter and soy sauce, but those ingredients complement asparagus's sweet green flavor and remind you that life is about balance. Then the ginger and scallion and a tingle of black pepper come in, and it's downright confusing how good this dish is.

Thinly slice the scallions on a steep diagonal, keeping the green parts and white parts separate.

Snap off or trim the woody ends of each asparagus spear, usually about 2 inches from the bottom. Thinly slice the spears on a steep diagonal into about 2-inch-long pieces.

Place a wok or large skillet over medium-high heat for about 5 minutes, so the pan is ripping hot. Pour in the neutral oil and wait until you see a whisper of smoke. That's when you know it's go-time. Add the asparagus, scallion whites, and ginger to the wok. Season with salt and cook, tossing or stirring often, until the asparagus begins to lightly brown around the edges, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the butter, soy sauce, and water to the wok and cook, still tossing, until the butter melts and the sauce coats the asparagus; this happens in seconds. Turn off the heat and add at least five cranks of pepper. Give everything one final toss.

Transfer the asparagus to a platter, scatter the scallion greens on top, and serve.

ASPARAGUS RULE NUMBER-ONE

Do not come around here with that floppy, thin, pencil-size asparagus. The thicker stalks have snap, a sense of freshness. The thin stuff tends to overcook and become flaccid—something you never want in life.

PEAS WITH BIG HUNKS OF FETA AND ZHOUG

Once in your life, maybe twice, buy a bag of fresh English peas, split the pods, and use your thumbs to push out the petit pois. All that work! So little yield! The rest of the time, buy them frozen. Organic frozen peas are picked at their peak freshness and, to me, are more reliable than the fresh ones, which can sometimes be starchy and so hard to find. I like to treat the simple peas elaborately. A spicy Yemeni zhoug for green-on-green intensity, plus big hunks of fatty, salty feta, make this a dish I want to shovel into my mouth with the biggest spoon I own.

SERVES 4

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 large shallot, thinly sliced into rings
2 cups shelled fresh or frozen and thawed English peas
¾ cup water
Kosher salt
Freshly ground pepper
½ cup zhoug (page 49)
4 ounces feta cheese (blotted dry if you have the time)

Pour the olive oil into a skillet and place it over medium-high heat. Add the shallot and cook, stirring now and then, until the shallot starts to soften and get a little browned, 4 to 6 minutes. Add the peas and water to the skillet (or just a splash of water if you're using frozen peas, which are already mostly cooked). Season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until the peas are tender, 4 to 6 minutes for fresh and about 1 minute for ones that have been thawed. Turn off the heat and scrape in the zhoug, stirring until each little pea is flecked with it. Taste a spoonful and adjust the seasoning with more salt and pepper. Spoon the peas into a shallow bowl. Slice the feta into large shards and toss it on the peas before serving.

OTHER PEAS

The sweet English pea is ideal with the extra-hot zhoug, but you can also go with sugar snaps or snow peas (except you're not getting a pass to use frozen for those). Buy them fresh and thinly slice before cooking.

FENNEL BURIED IN CREAM

In my professional cooking experience, fennel has been an ingredient that is somewhat polarizing for so many. I fall under the category of, "will eat fennel in any way." I love it raw (see the salad on page 139), roasted until it's almost jammy, or when I get to use up the dill-like fronds and make a green sauce. It's actually a pretty perfect vegetable. It doesn't seem to be the texture that bothers people but, rather, the sweet anise flavor. So I set out to develop a fennel recipe that would unite the haters and the lovers, because we need more unity in the world, and this is my very, very tiny contribution. The results: a dish that falls under the gratin category, a category that has near-universal appeal because, well, to be gratinated is to be covered with buttered crumbs or melted cheese. (How I'd like to be buried when I pass.)

SERVES 4

2 shallots, trimmed and quartered through the root end

4 garlic cloves, smashed

2 cups heavy cream

1 tablespoon thyme leaves, plus more for serving

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper

3 large bulbs fennel

1 ounce Parmesan, finely grated (about 1 cup)

In a small saucepan over low heat, combine the shallots, garlic, cream, thyme, salt, and 1 teaspoon pepper and bring to a simmer. Cook, stirring and watching carefully to make sure the cream doesn't boil over (which happened to me nearly every time when I was testing this recipe), 15 to 20 minutes. You want the shallots and garlic to become soft and jammy. Let cool slightly, then transfer to a blender and blend until smooth.

Place oven racks in the top and center positions and preheat the oven to 350°F.

Cut the tough stalks and the fronds from the fennel. Halve the fennel lengthwise through the core, then cut each half into 1-inch wedges. Put the fennel in a large cast-iron skillet or 2-quart baking dish and pour the garlicky cream over the top (not all of the fennel will be buried under the cream, but that's okay). Bake on the center rack until the fennel is tender, the edges are starting to brown, and the cream has reduced, 40 to 50 minutes.

Remove the skillet from the oven and turn on the broiler. Sprinkle the Parmesan over the fennel and return the skillet to the oven, this time on the top rack. Broil until the top is browned, lacy, crispy, and perfect. Please watch carefully because each broiler is different and I don't know how your broiler works. So it could take as little as 2 minutes or up to 5 minutes.

Pull the skillet out of the oven and sprinkle with some thyme leaves and more pepper. Give it 5 minutes for the hot cream to set and thicken before diving in, but also so you don't burn the roof of your mouth. I'm looking out for you.

DO AHEAD

The gratin can be baked, without the cheese, 1 day ahead. Cover and chill. Bring to room temperature before adding the cheese and broiling.

SWEET- AND-SOUR CARAMELIZED SQUASH WITH PISTACHIO ZA'ATAR

SERVES 4

1 (2- to 2½-pound) winter squash
(such as delicata, honeynut,
kabocha, or red kuri)

4 shallots, skins left on

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil,
or as needed

Kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper

¾ cup red wine vinegar

¼ cup runny honey

3 tablespoons golden raisins

½ cup Pistachio Za'atar (page 42)

Come November and December, when you usually get tired of all the squash, you won't get tired of this. Here's why: The roasted squash gets oh-so-sweet, crisp on the outside, and as tender as butter inside. Then it gets a bit of acid to tame that sweetness, and plenty of texture to keep you guessing with each bite. That's where the agrodolce comes in, a sweet-tangy syrup made with vinegar, raisins, and honey. The fresh za'atar, with pistachios, thyme, sumac, and lemon zest, adds the crunchy texture the dish needs.

Preheat the oven to 425°F.

Halve the squash lengthwise (it'll be training wheels for splitting wood) and use a spoon to scoop out the seeds and any stringy bits. Cut each half into 3- to 4-inch pieces. Halve the shallots lengthwise through the root end.

On a rimmed baking sheet, toss together the squash, shallots, and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and toss once more. Spread out the squash and shallots so they have some room to breathe and get that deep golden brown color underneath. (If they're on top of one another, they'll just steam.) Roast, flipping the squash and shallots after 20 minutes, and continue cooking until nicely browned and tender, 30 to 40 minutes total.

While the squash roasts, in a small saucepan over medium heat, combine the vinegar, honey, and raisins and bring to a simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the raisins have plumped and the mixture has reduced to a syrup, 6 to 8 minutes. The syrup (aka agrodolce) should be thick enough to coat the back of a spoon but not so thick that it doesn't pour off easily.

Arrange the squash and shallots on a platter or large plate and spoon over the agrodolce. Sprinkle the pistachio za'atar on top and serve.

CRISPY MUSHROOMS WITH BUTTERY SOY AND RUNNY YOLKS

SERVES 4

- 1½ pounds mixed mushrooms (I like shiitake, oyster, trumpet, and maitake; but if you find any treaky ones at the farmers' market, go for it)
- ¼ cup neutral oil (such as grapeseed), or as needed
- Kosher salt
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce or tamar
- 2 teaspoons sherry vinegar, or 1 lemon wedge to squeeze over
- Freshly ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped chives
- 1 or 2 egg yolks (from a happy chicken)

I can think of countless ways to celebrate all the mushrooms (minus portobellos), but I figured it's best to focus on the technique that will change the way you cook your mushrooms rather than tailor a recipe to any specific type. What I've learned over the years, working in restaurants and for magazines, is that people get confused by these fungi. I think it's because of their high water content, which makes them tricky to deal with when it comes to browning, plus the fact that they shrink and soak up so much oil when cooked. Should you add more oil? (Maybe a bit.) Do you need to add the mushrooms in batches? (Unnecessary.) *Just let them be.* Yes, they will soak up all the oil at first, but it'll soon release, along with their water and then the process of browning will begin. It takes some patience, but the reward is huge. And don't worry about the barely cooked egg yolk (salmonella usually resides on the shell, not inside the egg). Its richness takes the dish to full-blown indulgence.

Using a kitchen towel, wipe off any dirt from the mushrooms. Give a slight trim to the tough stem ends, or to the base if it's a cluster. Tear or cut into large pieces. They don't need to be all the same size. Preferably they shouldn't be, so your finished dish will have a range of textures.

Set a large cast-iron or stainless-steel skillet over medium-high heat. Add the neutral oil and heat until it gets quite hot, almost smoking. Add the mushrooms (they will pile up), season lightly with salt, and give them a toss until all the oil is absorbed. At first, the mushrooms will steam as they release their water. Cook, without fussing, until the mushrooms have browned deeply underneath and have gotten wonderfully crispy around the edges, 3 to 4 minutes. Using tongs, give the mushrooms a toss or flip and cook until they are deliciously browned, tossing or flipping again, if needed, 7 to 9 minutes more. If the pan looks dry, add another 1 tablespoon oil. Turn the heat to medium and add the garlic, butter, and soy sauce to the skillet. Let the butter melt and foam up (this will happen in seconds) and toss the mushrooms so they soak up the soy butter. Slide the skillet off the heat and add the vinegar. Season with lots of pepper and give the mushrooms a toss once more. Taste and see if they need more salt (the soy will have reduced and concentrated, so likely not, but always good to check). Transfer the mushrooms to a large plate and sprinkle with the chives. Gently nestle an egg yolk or two into the top of the mushrooms to finish the dish (they'll cook *juuuust* a bit from the heat of the mushrooms) before serving.

GLOSSY BARBECUED EGGPLANT WITH PEANUT SALAD

SERVES 4

4 large Japanese eggplants (this is not a time for globe eggplants)

Kosher salt

1/3 cup runny honey

1/3 cup unseasoned rice vinegar

1/3 cup low-sodium soy sauce

3 tablespoons hot chile paste (such as sambal oelek)

2 tablespoons neutral oil (such as grapeseed)

1/2 small white or red onion, thinly sliced into rings

1/3 cup coarsely chopped cilantro

1/4 cup toasted peanuts, with skins or without, or cashews (see page 24), coarsely chopped

1 lime, cut into wedges

Bondage. Leather. Eggplant. Those were the notes I made for myself about this recipe. Not exactly cryptic. When you grill eggplant, it looks like it's wrapped in a leathery, tight casing. There's something kinky about it. Or is it just me?

You'll notice that I am going to ask you to get up close and personal with your eggplant by making slits into its flesh. That's not only for a cool patterned effect. Eggplant is like a sponge and you want the flesh exposed so that the hot, sticky, vinegary glaze can sneak into all the spots and make the eggplant glisten under the spotlights.

Get your grill going to medium heat.

Starting at the base of each eggplant, halve lengthwise through the stem. Score the flesh in a 1/4-inch crosshatch pattern with the tip of a paring knife. (It gives you more control than your chef's knife.)

Place the eggplants on a rimmed baking sheet and sprinkle 1 teaspoon salt onto the cut sides. Let the eggplants rest for 15 minutes, so they soak up the salt and release some of their water.

In a small skillet over medium-high heat, combine the honey, vinegar, soy sauce, and chile paste. Simmer and stir (it'll bubble) until reduced by half (just shy of syrupy), 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer this glaze to a small bowl to cool.

Blot the eggplants dry with a kitchen towel (or paper towel, if you must). It may not look like much water, but it'll make a difference when you're grilling the eggplants. Brush both sides of the eggplants with the neutral oil, then grab the glaze and head to the grill.

Grill the eggplant, cut-side down, until you see the skin beginning to develop a deep burnished color around the edges, about 4 minutes. Using tongs, turn the eggplants over and let the second side cook for 3 to 4 minutes. While the eggplants cook, using a pastry brush, coat the eggplants with some of the glaze (save some glaze for the finish). Squeeze the side of the eggplants with your tongs to check for doneness. They should be squishy and custardy. Turn the eggplants over one more time, so the glaze can caramelize, about 1 minute.

Transfer the eggplants to a platter and drizzle with some of the reserved glaze or serve it on the side. Scatter the onion, cilantro, and peanuts over the eggplants and squeeze a few lime wedges over the top. Serve with the remaining lime wedges on the side for squeezing.

CRISPED POTATOES WITH ROMESCO

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

2 pounds golf ball-size baby
Yukon gold potatoes

Kosher salt

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Crunchy Romesco (page 52)

One night at the dinner table, my boyfriend turned to me out of nowhere and said, "Eh, I don't need potatoes." As if he'd thought it over and decided, if he had to give up one vegetable, it would be the potato. I was appalled. I had some opinions forming about him (which I had kept to myself) and this just added to that. You see, I have never met a potato I didn't like. Thankfully, the comment wasn't prompted by a potato dish I had cooked, or we'd probably have ended things right then and there. But live without potatoes? Never.

The potatoes in this recipe go through a two-step cooking process: boiling and then roasting. Make the romesco while the potatoes cool after boiling. Boiling them first allows the outsides to get soft enough to then become very crisp in a hot oven. The result is out of this world, which, thankfully, isn't running out of potatoes anytime soon.

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

Drop the potatoes in a medium pot and add water to cover by 2 inches, along with a handful of salt (about ¼ cup), and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to maintain a simmer and cook until the potatoes are just cooked through and easily pierced with a paring knife, 10 to 15 minutes (the time will vary depending on the size of your potatoes). Be careful not to overcook the potatoes or they will fall apart when smashed. Drain the potatoes and let cool in the pot.

Using your hands, smush the potatoes so that their skins start to tear and the flesh is slightly exposed. You can flatten them with the bottom of a coffee mug if you must but I'm into adult hot potato fun. Toss the potatoes on a rimmed baking sheet with the olive oil and season with salt.

Roast the potatoes, flipping after 15 to 20 minutes, until they are shatteringly crisp and golden brown, 35 to 40 minutes total. Transfer the potatoes to a platter, dot with the romesco, and serve with more romesco on the side.

DO AHEAD

You can boil the potatoes 1 day ahead and store them in the fridge. They are actually easier to crisp up when cold.

FALL-APART CARAMELIZED CABBAGE SMOTHERED IN ANCHOVIES AND DILL

SERVES 4

1 head basic green or purple
cabbage or fancy savoy

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt

4 oil-packed anchovies,
drained and finely chopped

1 garlic clove, finely grated

1 cup coarsely chopped dill

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup toasted walnuts (see
page 24), finely chopped

2 teaspoons finely grated
lemon zest

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Freshly ground pepper

My love for cabbage runs deep, as deep as my love for Diana Ross's 1983 iconic Central Park concert in the rain (it's a YouTube must-watch). And yet, this recipe was never supposed to be in this book. I did a pop-up dinner one night and, at the last minute, decided to add this dish to round out the menu. The cabbage gets seared hard on the stove top before it goes into the oven to soften to an almost melty texture. While still warm, the cabbage is spooned with an intense garlic-anchovy sauce made with so much dill. The sauce drapes the cabbage and sneaks into its every layer. The dish ended up becoming my favorite one that night. The pistachio cake (see page 319) that I made for dessert was a close second. When you make this dish (not *if*), you'll be shocked that you might eat the whole thing in one sitting.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Halve the cabbage through the core. Cut each half into three wedges, keeping the core intact.

Set a large cast-iron or stainless-steel skillet over medium-high heat. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the olive oil and heat until it is hot and shimmering. Season the cabbage with salt and then place it in the skillet. Cook, using tongs to press down on the cabbage, so it becomes deeply charred and kind of tender (it'll soften more in the oven), 3 to 5 minutes per side. If your skillet isn't large enough to brown all the pieces at once, do it in batches.

Remove the skillet from the heat and carefully cover it with aluminum foil (the pan will be hot!). Transfer the skillet to the oven and roast until the cabbage is very tender, 30 to 40 minutes. When it's ready, a paring knife should slide in and out of the cabbage core like butter.

While the cabbage is in the oven, in a medium bowl, stir together the anchovies, garlic, dill, walnuts, lemon zest, lemon juice, and remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil. Season with salt and plenty of pepper. If you let it sit for 10 minutes, the flavors will soften and meld.

Once the cabbage is done, arrange the pieces on a platter and spoon the sauce all around and between the melty layers. Sprinkle with more pepper and serve.

CHOOSING CABBAGE

Green and purple cabbage are interchangeable here; they're both firm and dense, intensely crunchy, consistent when raw but even better grilled or roasted to death. And cheap! Love 'em. Napa cabbage has a longer ovular shape with a crunchy base and tender leafy tops; I like it for quick stir-fries, or torn up, massaged slightly, and eaten raw. It's juicy and light, not as dense as those other guys. Savoy is harder to find—it's the Cabbage Patch Doll cabbage—with dramatic beautiful leaves straight from a Caravaggio painting. I use it the same way as conventional cabbage, like in this caramelized cabbage recipe. It makes everything you cook worthy of a still-life painting.

LONG BEANS WITH CREAMY SESAME SAUCE

SERVES 4

Kosher salt

1½ pounds green beans or Romano beans (ends trimmed if you feel like it)

¼ cup tahini

1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest

3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

2 tablespoons white miso

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon runny honey

1 teaspoon peeled, finely grated ginger

1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil

2 to 3 tablespoons water

½ cup coarsely chopped cilantro

Freshly ground pepper

In the height of summer, you'll find me picking through the overflowing bean pile at the market. From the sweet haricots verts, which I rarely cook, as they're near-perfect raw, to the reliable green beans, which deserve a kiss of smoke, either blistered in a hot pan or charred on the grill until their once-snappy texture disappears. The wider, flatter Romano, or pole beans are sturdier and beg to be braised until they're nearly falling apart. I always grab a few of each variety whenever I find them.

Here, the beans are simply boiled in what may seem like overly salted water. But trust me, they are only in this salty bath for a few minutes, which will deeply season them and bring out the vibrant green color we're after. Drag them through the creamy sesame sauce—which can be paired with nearly any vegetable: broccoli, carrots, cucumbers, steamed greens, or frozen spinach you forgot in the freezer until just now—and you'll experience them in an entirely new light.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and throw in two large handfuls of salt (about ½ cup). You want the water to be overly salty because this is truly the only chance for the beans to get seasoned deeply. While the water comes to a boil, fill a large bowl with ice and add enough water so that the green beans will be submerged. Set the bowl close to the pot of boiling water.

Drop the beans into the boiling water and cook until they are bright green and tender, 3 to 5 minutes, depending on how thick your beans are. I prefer them on the soft side but not limp. If you like them still a tad crunchy, cook for only 4 minutes. Using tongs or a slotted spoon, transfer the green beans to the ice bath and let them chill out for 10 seconds, which will stop them from continuing to cook and turning to mush.

Drain the beans and lay them out on a clean kitchen towel. You want to get them as dry as possible, so they don't carry water that dilutes the dressing.

In a small bowl, whisk the tahini, lemon zest, lemon juice, miso, olive oil, honey, ginger, sesame oil, and 2 tablespoons of the water until smooth. If the sauce is stiff, stir in the remaining 1 tablespoon water to loosen. Taste for salt; you may need to add just a pinch.

Spoon some of the sauce on a platter. Place the beans onto the sauce and top with more. Scatter the cilantro over, finish with pepper, and serve.

CHARRED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH CREAMY NUOC CHAM

SERVES 4

1½ pounds brussels sprouts

¼ cup neutral oil
(such as grapeseed)

Kosher salt

Creamy Nuoc Cham (page 57)

½ cup coarsely chopped cilantro

A moment of silence for all who have consumed overcooked, boiled, or steamed brussels sprouts. Truthfully, I think the tiniest member of the cabbage family didn't enter my life until I was an adult in New York and every restaurant seemed to fetishize deep-fried brussels sprouts. The key to getting these sprouts perfectly crispy without overcooking them (or buying a deep fryer) is to bake them on the bottom rack of a very hot oven. Then you take them to the point of utter deliciousness (a place worth going) by dousing them with a cashew sauce spiked with fish sauce.

Place an oven rack in the bottom position and preheat the oven to 450°F.

Trim and discard the stem end from each sprout. Halve each sprout lengthwise and place on a rimmed baking sheet. If you find some sprouts to be on the small side, leave them whole so all will cook evenly. Toss with the neutral oil and season with salt. Spread out the sprouts and flip them so that the cut side is facing down.

Roast the sprouts until the tops have puffed slightly and become crisp and deeply brown underneath, 25 to 30 minutes.

Remove the sprouts from the oven and transfer to a large bowl. Pour a few large spoonfuls of the nuoc cham over and give it a lazy toss. Sprinkle with the cilantro before serving. Some bites will be more crunchy and others will be more sauced. Keeps your mouth guessing.

BROCCOLINI WITH WARM ANCHOVY DRESSING

SERVES 4

2 bunches broccolini,
or 2 heads broccoli

Kosher salt

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 large shallot, thinly sliced
into rings

5 oil-packed anchovies, drained

4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1 fresh red chile, thinly sliced

1/3 cup coarsely chopped parsley

2 teaspoons grainy mustard

Freshly ground pepper

Lemon wedges for squeezing

Hear me out on steaming broccolini/broccoli: Hard-roasted broccoli can get stringy, fibrous, and hard to eat. I want broccoli as bright green as the Jolly Green Giant. Steaming not only cooks broccoli fast (remember that steam is hotter than boiling water), but it also softens the broccoli, giving it the ability to soak up flavor, like this dressing with a ton of anchovies, parsley, and whole-grain mustard. This dish is, basically, a better version of the side of broccolini you'd get at an Italian restaurant. The warm anchovy-mustard-parsley situation would also work very well with other leafy green veg, like broccoli rabe, mustard greens, and Tuscan or curly kale. (Note that those greens are less dense than broccoli and will soak up more water during cooking, so squeeze out the water after they've taken a bath.)

Prep your broccolini by trimming off 1 inch from the stems to get rid of the woody ends. If the stalks are on the thick side, halve them lengthwise. If you're using broccoli, trim the ends and peel off the leathery outer layer of the broccoli stems to reveal the more tender inside. Cut the broccoli into 5-inch-ish-long spears (like you're faking broccolini).

Fill a large heavy pot fitted with a steamer basket with 2 inches of water and bring to a boil. Add the broccolini and season with salt. Cover the pot and steam the broccolini until bright green and crisp-tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Using tongs, transfer the broccolini to a platter or plate.

In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine the olive oil, shallot, anchovies, and garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the shallot and garlic are beginning to crisp up and the anchovies have disintegrated, 7 to 9 minutes. Turn off the heat and stir in the chile, parsley, and mustard, which may pop and sizzle. Season with salt and pepper.

Spoon the warm dressing over the broccolini and squeeze some lemon juice over the top, leaving the other wedges for your guests.

DO AHEAD

The broccolini can be cooked and dressed a few hours ahead, then kept loosely covered at room temperature.

PERFECTLY ROASTED BROCCOLI/SO, YOU'RE NOT INTO STEAMED BROCCOLI

Preheat the oven to 425°F. On a rimmed baking sheet, toss the broccolini or broccoli with 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil. Season with salt, making sure everything is evenly coated. Roast, tossing after 10 minutes, until lightly charred on the stems and florets, 15 to 20 minutes total. Proceed as directed.

CRISPY ROASTED ARTICHOKES

This recipe is loosely inspired by a great Italian dish called *carcioff alla giudia*, in which artichokes get deep-fried in olive oil until they resemble the dried flowers that my sister used to hang on her walls. I wanted to have crispy artichokes while skipping the deep-frying (a New York studio apartment and a pot of hot oil never will seem like a good idea to me). There is some prep involved when dealing with artichokes, which may sound annoying, but once you've done that (I've got you—see the following), it's a matter of oven-steaming the artichokes until they're tender, then tossing them in oil and blasting in the oven until their leaves are as crispy as potato chips. And if that isn't delicious enough, dredge each bite in a spoonful of doctored-up Parmesan mayonnaise.

Place an oven rack in the bottom position and preheat the oven to 425°F.

Working with one artichoke at a time, cut 1 inch from the top of the leaves and ½ inch from the stem. Pluck off the hard green leaves until you get to the pale-golden inner leaves (the tender ones that feel like tulip petals). The stem is a little tough, like a broccoli stem, so remove its outer layer with a vegetable peeler; shave it like a carrot. Split the artichoke in half lengthwise and you'll notice the heart at the base of the artichoke, which is almost-white part, and a deep magenta-fuchsia "choke," which is those spiky bits. Take a spoon and go right above where the heart is and scoop out the bristly purple choke.

Arrange the artichokes in a roasting pan, cut-side down, and throw in the garlic. Pour in ½ to 2 cups water (just enough to come ½ inch up the sides of the artichokes). Tightly cover the pan with aluminum foil, so the artichokes get a nice steam bath. Bake the artichokes until a paring knife slides easily through the center, 15 to 20 minutes. Remove the roasting pan from the oven and crank up the temperature to 500°F (or as high as your oven goes). Slip off the foil, carefully pour out any excess water, and set aside the steamed garlic cloves, leaving the artichokes in the pan. Pour the olive oil over the artichokes and add the thyme. Season with salt and toss gently, so the artichokes are coated in oil. Flip the artichokes so the cut side is facing down again. Roast, uncovered, flipping the artichokes after 10 minutes, until the bottoms are deeply browned and crisp and the tops are golden, 10 to 15 minutes total.

While the artichokes crisp, squeeze the reserved garlic cloves from the skins into a small bowl. Add the mayonnaise, Parmesan, parsley, mustard, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper and stir. Dip in your pinkie and taste. You're excited, right?

Arrange the artichokes in a shallow bowl and serve with the garlic mayonnaise and lemon wedges.

SERVES 4

- 4 large artichokes
- 4 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 thyme sprigs
- Kosher salt
- ¾ cup mayonnaise
- ½ cup finely grated Parmesan
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley or basil
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- Freshly ground pepper
- Lemon wedges, for squeezing

CHELO BA TAHDIG, CONTINUED

MORE TAHDIG AND RICE ADVENTURES

There are endless customizations, and here are several special ones.

Bread Tahdig: Tear 1 large piece, or multiple pieces, of lavash until you have enough to cover the bottom of the pot. Pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup neutral oil into the pot, along with 1 tablespoon of the saffron water. Arrange the lavash on the bottom of the pot, making sure no pieces overlap. Place the parboiled rice on top and continue with the recipe.

Lettuce Tahdig: Tear 4 to 6 pieces of the dark green leaves from a head of romaine lettuce. Pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup neutral oil into the pot, along with 1 tablespoon of the saffron water. Arrange the lettuce leaves on the bottom of the pot, making sure no pieces overlap. Place the parboiled rice on top and continue with the recipe. (This is my favorite.)

Morasa Polo (Jeweled Rice): In a large skillet over medium heat, melt $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unsalted butter with 1 tablespoon neutral oil. Add 1 large onion (diced) and cook until very soft and golden brown. Stir in $\frac{2}{3}$ cup mixed chopped dried fruit (raisins, currants, cherries, and apricots are my go-tos) and $\frac{2}{3}$ cup chopped toasted nuts (pistachios and almonds work best). Toss the parboiled rice with the fruit and nuts. Proceed to steam.

Sabzi Polo (Herbed Rice): Toss the parboiled rice with 2 cups finely chopped herbs (a mix of parsley, dill, and cilantro is my preference) and 1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced. Proceed to steam.

The grains can be cooked 3 days ahead. Let them cool to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate. The salad (without the herbs) can be made 2 days ahead and refrigerated. Assemble just before serving.

DO AHEAD

Add the farro to the olives, along with the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and toss to coat and combine. Taste a spoonful; it should be pretty tasty at this point. Add the zucchini and herbs and toss once more. Sprinkle with more sumac or chile flakes to finish.

Using the side of a chef's knife or the bottom of a mug, crush the olives to break them into large craggy pieces. Toss out the pits. Put the olives in a large bowl and add the onion, vinegar, sumac, and lemon zest. Season with salt and pepper and toss to combine. If you can spare 5 minutes, let the mixture sit so the onion slightly pickles and mellows out.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and throw in a handful of salt (about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup). Add the farro and boil, skimming off any foam that may rise to the top, until the grains are al dente, 25 to 35 minutes, but do take a spoonful and taste a few before pulling the pot off the heat. That is the true way to know when the farro is ready. While the farro boils, in a large skillet over medium heat, combine the garlic and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the olive oil. Cook the garlic, stirring occasionally, until just barely golden brown around the edges, about 2 minutes. Add the zucchini, season with salt, and cook, tossing and stirring occasionally, until the zucchini begins to break down. The pan may feel overcrowded at first, but the zucchini will release its water and start to shrink. Once you notice occasionally, until it becomes very soft and almost jammy, 12 to 15 minutes total. Remove the skillet from the heat, sprinkle in the chile flakes, and toss to distribute evenly.

To go with the grains, I went with a mostly tasteless, watery, somewhat seedy, rarely attractive vegetable: zucchini. I don't *hate* it; I just think we can all agree no one gets very excited for zucchini. With this treatment, however, I learned to kind of, maybe, sort of, love it. Like other vegetables with high water content, you want to get that water out, so they can take on some color (and flavor). But beyond that, I did something you're often told never to do with zucchini: overcook it. It'll break down and start to almost tear and get jammy and a little sweet, while it bathes in garlic sizzled in olive oil.

This salad works with any grain, so use your favorite, speltheads, barley boys, freekeh freaks. I cook them all the same way, like I cook pasta: Fill a big pot with water, bring it to a boil and salt it, then drop in the grains and cook until they're as plumped and chewy as you desire. But remember that, like dried beans, the grains soak up flavor as they cook, so flavor that water as you see fit. Throw in a garlic head, a lemon peel, an onion, a few glugs of olive oil. It's only going to make it more delicious. Nicely seasoned water is a good start.

1 ½ cups farro or spelt
Kosher salt
5 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
3 zucchini or other summer squash, any color, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon mild chile flakes (such as Aleppo), plus more for sprinkling
1 cup green olives (such as Castelvetrano), thinly sliced
¼ cup red wine vinegar
2 teaspoons ground sumac, plus more for sprinkling
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
Freshly ground pepper
2 cups coarsely chopped mixed herbs (such as basil, mint, parsley, and/or tarragon)

SERVES 4

FARRO WITH MELTY ZUCCHINI AND SUMAC

RICOTTA DUMPLINGS

SERVES 4

2 cups full-fat ricotta, drained

**1 cup finely grated Parmesan
(use a Microplane!), plus more
for serving**

1 egg, plus 1 egg yolk

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

**½ cup all-purpose flour,
or as needed**

**2 cups Drinkable Chicken Broth
(page 232) or good chicken stock**

**3 tablespoons cold unsalted
butter, cut into pieces**

**2 tablespoons finely chopped
chives**

Freshly ground pepper

I don't tend to make as much fresh pasta as I used to, but these will scratch anyone's itch for a pasta project. The proper name for these dumplings is *gnudi*, which translates to "ravioli without the wrapper" in Italian. Why isn't the English language as clever?

These little cheesy orbs have been by my side for some time now. Fatty, creamy, light, and bouncy. I learned this recipe from Ignacio Mattos at Estela, who learned it from Judy Rodgers at Zuni Café, who learned it from a chef in Florence, who learned it from god knows where. It goes way back. A mixture of ricotta and flour is shaped into these delicate, but not fragile, pillows.

This is a technique-heavy recipe, so I kept the ingredients minimal. Although this would be a good time to sneak in whatever green vegetables you've got on hand (such as asparagus, green garlic, or peas). A spoonful of pesto stirred into the sauce at the end is also delicious—just try to avoid drowning these beauties in an overly rich meat sauce or a tomato sauce that wants to steal the spotlight.

In a food processor, combine the ricotta, Parmesan, egg, egg yolk, and salt. Pulse until the mixture becomes very smooth and thick. Sprinkle in the flour and pulse just until smooth. Transfer the batter to a medium bowl.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and dust it with flour. (I use a fine-mesh sieve, but you can use your hand.)

From this point you have two choices: Go casual and form the dumplings by the spoonful, or shape them into tiny, delicate, crescent moons. No judgment. It really just depends on how much time you have.

For the easy shaping option: Using two large spoons, shape heaping tablespoonfuls of batter into small mounds and place them on the prepared baking sheet. Dust with more flour.

For the slightly advanced shaping option: Using a large spoon, scoop up about 1 tablespoon of the batter. Scrape the spoon against the lip of the bowl at a 45-degree angle to smooth the mixture. Using the side of your index finger, push the batter off the spoon and let it drop onto the baking sheet, forming a rustic crescent in the process (this may take a few tries). Repeat until you've used all of the batter. Dust the tops with more flour.

Place the baking sheet with the dumplings in the freezer for 20 minutes to firm them up.

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a simmer over medium heat. Once the water is simmering, one by one, add the dumplings and cook, using a spoon to gently turn them over occasionally until they have puffed up, almost doubled in size, and are cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes.

You need crumbly ricotta that's on the drier side. If you can find ricotta that's strained, buy that. If there's liquid in the container, you need to strain it, pressing down with a spatula to express as much liquid as possible (but no need to get out the cheesecloth). And, as with all dairy, always use full fat!

CHOOSING RICOTTA

The dumplings can be formed up to 1 month ahead. After forming them, place the baking sheet in the freezer until they are frozen solid, then transfer them to a resealable plastic bag and store in the freezer. Drop the frozen dumplings into the boiling water and cook for about 6 minutes.

DO AHEAD

While the dumplings cook, in a large skillet over medium heat, bring the chicken broth to a simmer. Once the dumplings are cooked, use a slotted spoon to transfer them to the simmering broth. Add the butter and cook, gently swirling the skillet. Cook until the butter melts and the sauce is slightly thickened, 3 to 5 minutes. Just know this is not the time to toss or stir vigorously. We want those dumplings to retain their shape.

Spoon the dumplings and some of the sauce into shallow bowls. Sprinkle with the chives, pepper, and more cheese and serve.

SPICY CAULIFLOWER RAGU WITH LEMONY BREADCRUMBS

SERVES 4 TO 6

Kosher salt

1 head cauliflower

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,

plus ½ cup

¾ cup panko breadcrumbs

1 teaspoon finely grated

lemon zest

Freshly ground pepper

1 large red onion, or 2 large

shallots, very thinly sliced

6 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

8 oil-packed anchovies, drained

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes,

or 1 red chile, thinly sliced

½ cup tomato paste

1 pound bucatini, spaghetti,

or rigatoni

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

¾ cup finely chopped parsley

I've developed four or five Bolognese variations, and I hold my recipe for classic Bolognese dear to my heart (find it at bonappetit.com). But it's this cauliflower recipe that takes the top spot for me. Breaking the cauliflower into tiny bits in a food processor lets the veg retain its shape while also, somehow, developing an almost velvety texture—not unlike slow-cooked ground meat—as it cooks.

I tend to crave denser pastas to go with the sauce that gets all the yummy things: anchovies, onion, and garlic and a healthy amount of olive oil. A squeeze of tomato paste makes it taste like a sauce that has been bubbling all day.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil, then throw in a handful of salt (about ¼ cup).

Break off the florets from the cauliflower and coarsely chop the stems. In a food processor, and working in batches, pulse the cauliflower until the pieces are the size of lentils (some smaller and some larger ones are fine), transferring the cauliflower to a bowl as you go. (If you don't have a food processor, just finely chop the cauliflower and it'll still be delicious.)

Meanwhile, pour the 3 tablespoons olive oil into another large pot and place over medium heat. Add the breadcrumbs and gently fry, stirring often, until they have become crisp and deeply golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the lemon zest and season generously with salt and ground pepper. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.

Wipe out the pot, pour in the remaining ¼ cup olive oil, and place over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and season with salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion and garlic are almost jamlike, and lightly caramelized, 12 to 15 minutes.

Add the anchovies to the pot and sprinkle in the red pepper flakes. Cook until the anchovies have completely melted into the onion and garlic, about 2 minutes. Pop in the tomato paste and season with salt. Add the cauliflower and cook, stirring, until it has cooked down slightly and begins to stick to the bottom of the pot, 6 to 8 minutes. Season with salt, then keep warm over low heat.

Drop the pasta into the boiling water and cook until very al dente, about 2 minutes less than what the package suggests (it'll finish cooking in the sauce). Just before the pasta is al dente, scoop out 2 cups pasta water. Using tongs, transfer the pasta to the sauce, along with the butter and 1 cup pasta water. Simmer over medium heat, tossing the pasta around, until the sauce has thickened and clings to the pasta, about 3 minutes. If the sauce looks too thick, add more pasta water, 1 tablespoon at a time, to thin.

Turn off the heat, add the parsley, and quickly toss with the tongs to evenly distribute. Divide the pasta among the bowls, sprinkle the breadcrumbs over the top, and serve.

CHICKPEA CACIO E PEPE WITH CARAMELIZED LEMON

SERVES 4 (PLUS, MAYBE, SOME LEFTOVERS,
THOUGH I DOUBT IT)

Kosher salt

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 small Meyer or regular lemon,
thinly sliced, seeds picked out

1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas,
drained and rinsed

1 large shallot, finely chopped

1 rosemary sprig, or 4 thyme sprigs

Freshly ground pepper

1 pound tubular pasta (such as
calamarata, paccheri, or rigatoni)

¼ cup unsalted butter, cut into
small pieces

½ cup finely grated Parmesan
cheese, plus more for serving

There are many recipes for pasta e ceci (aka pasta with chickpeas). The majority that I've encountered are brothy, almost souplike. This recipe emphasizes both the chickpeas and the pasta but is equally comforting and a lot creamier than the usual versions.

Much of the magic of this dish lies in crushing the chickpeas, so they release their starches and transform the pasta water into a creamy sauce. Some of the chickpeas retain their shape, whereas others turn to delicious mush, and the caramelized lemon lends some chewy tang and brings the pasta back to life post-boiling. It's incredibly satisfying. If I still need to convince you to make this, know that it was the first meal that I made for my boyfriend, and he has been attached to me ever since.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil, then throw in a handful of salt (about ¼ cup).

While the water is doing its thing, set a separate large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat and pour in the olive oil. Add the lemon and cook, using tongs to flip the slices until they begin to lightly brown and shrivel up, 6 to 8 minutes. Using the tongs, transfer the caramelized lemon slices to a bowl, leaving the oil in the pot.

Dump the chickpeas into the oil and let them get a little crisp and golden, stirring occasionally, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the shallot and crush the rosemary to release its oil and drop it into the pot. Season with salt and lots and lots of pepper and give everything a stir. Cook until the shallot is beginning to soften, 3 to 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, add the pasta to the boiling water and cook until almost al dente, about 2 minutes less than what the package suggests (it'll finish cooking in the sauce).

Just before the pasta is al dente, scoop out 2 cups pasta water. Add 1½ cups pasta water to the pot with the chickpeas and bring to a simmer, still over medium heat. (This may seem like a lot of liquid, but it will thicken once the remaining ingredients are added.) One piece at a time, stir in the butter until the pasta water and butter have become one.

Using a slotted spoon, transfer the pasta to the sauce. Cook, stirring often and sprinkling in the Parmesan a little at a time. (Don't add the cheese all at once, as that can make the sauce split and turn grainy.) Keep stirring until the cheese is melted and the sauce is creamy and clings to the pasta, about 3 minutes. If the sauce looks too thick, add more pasta water, 1 to 2 tablespoons at a time to thin (but know that saucier is ideal because it will thicken as it cools). Turn off the heat and fold in the caramelized lemon. Sprinkle with an almost ridiculous amount of pepper and more Parmesan before serving.

COOL BEANS

I have cooked countless pots of beans and can safely say they are very difficult to mess up. The only thing that could go wrong is, well, if you don't cook them fully and if you don't add enough salt. No one wants their beans as dense and tasting like nothing. Even if they split and fall apart, it's not the end of the world. Some bean varieties are just more likely to do so.

When it comes to flavoring the beans and their broth, I tend to always add some kind of onion-y thing, fat, salt, and herbs. Other ingredients, like cured meat, tomatoes, and cheese rinds, will only add more flavor, so go ahead and add what you have. Bear in mind that once you have a pot of beans, you can't eat as is, but why stop there? Will it in some hardy greens, like kale or mustard greens, in the last few minutes or serve over fried bread (see page 113) with lots of shaved Parm and olive oil on top.

Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the olive oil to a Dutch oven or large pot and place over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic, cut-side down, and cook until caramelized and golden brown, about 3 minutes. Add the beans, fennel, salami, herbs, lemon peel, remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil, and water to cover by 2 inches. Season with salt and bring to a boil.

Turn the heat to medium-low, and simmer, uncovered, stirring and tasting a bean or two occasionally, until, well, the beans are done. Depending on the size, they can take as few as 50 minutes to $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours (maybe even more!) to finish cooking. The goal is to gently cook the beans so that they plump up, are creamy inside, and hold their shape. If you notice the liquid is reducing and the beans are not done, add more water to keep them submerged.

Taste a spoonful of broth and a few beans. They both should be very delicious. Adjust the seasoning, adding more salt if needed. Ladle the broth into individual bowls and dress with a dollop of aioli, some herbs, a pinch of chile flakes, breadcrumbs, or all of them—however you like—before serving.

WHAT'S ONION SKIN DOING IN HERE?

It's not out of laziness. Keeping the onion skin on is a chef's trick for making a golden-colored broth. Natural food dye, baby.

SERVES 6

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 yellow onion, skin left on, halved

1 garlic head, skin left on,

halved crosswise

1 pound beans white beans

(such as cannellini, corona,

or gigante)

1 small fennel bulb, halved

4-ounce slab salami or mortadella

1 small bunch mixed herbs with

stems (such as parsley, dill, and/

or basil), plus more for serving

(optional)

4 strips lemon peel

Kosher salt

Aioli (see page 61) for serving

(optional)

Chile flakes or freshly ground

black pepper for serving (optional)

Breadcrumbs (see page 45) for

serving (optional)

ASH RESHTEH

SERVES 6 (PERSIANS; 8 FOR PERSIANS)

10 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 large onions, thinly sliced

4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

½ cup dried green or brown lentils,
rinsed

¼ cup dried cranberry or
navy beans, soaked overnight,
and drained

¼ cup dried chickpeas, soaked
overnight, and drained

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

2 quarts water, or as needed

8 ounces linguine

2 bunches mature spinach,
trimmed, coarsely chopped

1½ cups finely chopped parsley

1 cup finely chopped dill

Kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons dried ground mint

⅓ cup full-fat yogurt (not Greek)

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Ash is a category of thick soups in Iranian cuisine and ash reshteh is the most well-known, filled with all kinds of legumes, a mountain of greens, and reshteh, the thin, flat noodles that resemble linguine. Usually, we eat the soup on Charshanbe Suri, also known as the Festival of Fire. It falls on the eve of the Wednesday before Nowruz, the Iranian New Year. On that night, you're supposed to have a bowl of ash reshteh and jump over multiple little fires to get rid of bad spirits. Yes, it works (thanks for asking).

The soup gets garnished with a much-loved Iranian dairy product called kashk (think of it as funky sour cream), along with sizzled mint and crispy onions. Kashk can be assertive. It's more sour and salty than yogurt or sour cream. If you find it, try it, please. But because it's hard to find, I mimicked it with yogurt thinned with lemon juice. The sizzled mint has a toasty, earthy flavor and an emerald-green color. I normally never break my noodles, ever ever ever, but here you do. Iranians don't have patience for long noodles like the Italians do.

In a large pot over medium heat, warm 3 tablespoons olive oil. Add half the onions and all the garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion softens and becomes deeply browned in spots (a few charred spots are welcome), 10 to 12 minutes. Add the lentils, beans, chickpeas, and turmeric and cook, stirring, until the turmeric has coated everything, about 1 minute. Pour the water into the pot and bring to a boil. Then turn the heat to medium-low and let things happen at a gentle simmer, skimming off any foam that may rise to the top, until the beans and chickpeas are halfway cooked (they should still be very al dente), 30 to 40 minutes, but it may take longer depending on the age of your beans and whether or not you soaked them.

Break the linguine in half and add to the pot. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the beans are creamy but still hold their shape and the noodles are tender, 20 to 25 minutes. The soup might look thick at this point, resembling a chili. You want this!

Add the spinach, parsley, and dill to the pot and cook until just wilted and slightly darkened, 4 to 6 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. The greens should have released some water and loosened things up but, if the soup looks so thick that it will be a workout to stir, thin it with more water.

While the soup simmers, pour 3 tablespoons olive oil into a skillet and place it over medium heat. Add the remaining onions and cook, stirring often, until deeply golden brown and jammy, 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer the onions to a paper towel to drain the excess oil and then season with salt.

Carefully wipe out the skillet, return it to medium heat, and add the remaining 4 tablespoons olive oil. Add the mint and cook, stirring often, until the mint oil is fragrant and slightly darkened, about 1 minute. Transfer to a small bowl.

When you're ready to serve, mix the yogurt and lemon juice and season with a big pinch of salt. (It should have the consistency of heavy cream.) Add a spoonful of water to loosen more, if needed.

Divide the soup among bowls and top each with some of the lemon-yogurt, a drizzle of mint oil, and a handful of jammy onions (in that order) to serve.

HOT-AND-SOUR GARLIC SOUP WITH SHIITAKE AND CELERY

SERVES 4

- 1 pound silken tofu
- 3 tablespoons neutral oil (such as grapeseed), or as needed
- 1 pound shiitake, maitake, and/or oyster mushrooms
- Kosher salt
- 8 to 10 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons peeled, finely chopped ginger
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground pepper
- 6 cups Drinkable Chicken Broth (page 232) or good chicken stock
- 4 celery stalks, thinly sliced, plus all the leaves
- ¼ cup unseasoned rice vinegar
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce or tamarind
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- ½ cup coarsely chopped cilantro

This is a tribute to my favorite soup of all time. I love hot-and-sour soup so much that my family has an origin story about it. When my mother was in labor with me, her closest friend brought quarts of hot-and-sour soup to give to everyone in the family who had gathered. They say its scent has stayed with me ever since. Anyway, I wanted this soup to echo those flavors, to be lip-smacking, peppery, hot, and sour. The base is your best chicken broth enhanced with tons of garlic and ginger, while a few teaspoons of pepper bring the heat and rice vinegar brings the sour. Crispy browned mushrooms are for topping—which will make you wonder why you don't garnish every soup you make with them. (For a traditional hot-and-sour soup, I recommend the recipe from *Mastering the Art of Chinese Cooking* by Eileen Yin-Fei Lo. Every recipe in that book is truly exceptional.)

Open the package of tofu and drain off any water. Gently pat the tofu dry, then cut it into 1-inch pieces.

Set a medium pot over medium-high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of into big, craggy pieces. If using shiitakes, remove and toss out the knobby, dense stems. Drop the mushrooms into the hot oil and let them be until they get crisp and brown underneath, about 3 minutes. Season with salt, then give them a toss and continue cooking until they're browned all over and crisp in most spots, another 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer half the mushrooms to a plate and set aside, leaving the remaining mushrooms in the pot.

Add the garlic, ginger, and pepper to the pot. Cook, stirring, until the garlic has slightly softened and some pieces have become toasty and golden, 2 to 3 minutes. If the pot looks dry and some of the garlic begins to stick, that's okay, add the remaining 1 tablespoon neutral oil to loosen things up. Pour in the chicken broth, season with salt, and bring to a boil. Once you see bubbles, turn the heat to medium and bring the soup to a gentle simmer. Drop in the celery (but not the leaves, they come later) and cook until almost tender, about 2 minutes.

Stir the vinegar, soy sauce, and sesame oil into the soup, then turn off the heat and slip in the tofu. Ladle the soup into bowls and top with the scallions, cilantro, celery leaves, and reserved crispy mushrooms to serve.

MY FAVORITE (EASY-TO-FIND) SOY SAUCE

I haven't tried every soy sauce out there, and there are so many varieties, some of which age like fine wines. But the one I buy and use regularly is Gold Mine Natural Food Co.'s nama shoyu soy sauce. Sometimes commercial soy sauce brands have an almost acrid aftertaste and an assertive saltiness. You want sweet, nutty flavor from the soybeans in soy sauce. Nama shoyu has a more equal wheat-to-soybean ratio, which gives it a nuanced, well-rounded flavor that doesn't taste too salty. It isn't labeled "reduced salt," but the sodium content seems on par with other reduced-salt options. Store it in the fridge after opening.



SPICY COCONUT CHOWDER WITH TOASTED GARLIC

SERVES 4

6 garlic cloves, sliced
 2 chiles (such as Fresno, Holland, or serrano), thinly sliced
 ¼ cup neutral oil (such as grapeseed), plus 2 tablespoons
 1 yellow onion, or 2 medium shallots, thinly sliced
 2 lemongrass stalks, bottom third only (about 6 inches long), tough outer layers removed, finely chopped
 2 tablespoons peeled, finely chopped ginger
 kosher salt
 1 pound baby Yukon gold potatoes, sliced into ½-inch rounds
 2 teaspoons ground coriander
 2 (13.5-ounce) cans full-fat coconut milk
 2 cups Drinkable Chicken Broth (page 232) or good chicken stock, or water
 3 baby bok choy, coarsely chopped
 1 tablespoon fish sauce, or as needed
 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice, or as needed
 1 cup coarsely chopped cilantro and/or Thai basil
 Freshly ground pepper

This is a creamy soup that you can easily make vegan (skip the fish sauce and use water). Fill your clam chowder dreams and add 2 pounds of clams before you add the potatoes (fish return them to the pot before serving). Or, you know, make it as-is, which is how I like it. The coconut milk-chicken broth base is fragrant with lemongrass and ginger, the buttery Yukon gold potatoes melt in your mouth and help thicken the soup, and a simple chile oil with toasted garlic tops things off with a bit of flair—and crunch.

In a large heavy pot over medium heat, combine the garlic, chiles, and ¼ cup neutral oil. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the garlic is pale golden and starting to crisp, 2 minutes. Transfer this garlic-chile oil to a small bowl and set aside.

Pour the remaining 2 tablespoons neutral oil into the pot and return it to medium heat. Add the onion, lemongrass, and ginger and season with salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion has softened slightly but has not browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the potatoes and coriander and stir to coat the potatoes with the onion and oil.

Stir the coconut milk and chicken broth into the pot, turn the heat to medium-high, and bring to a simmer. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are very soft and nearly falling apart, 25 to 30 minutes. Grab a wooden spoon and mash down a few of the potatoes to help them release their starch, which will thicken the soup and make it even more creamy. Add the bok choy and simmer until just crisp-tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Turn off the heat and stir in the fish sauce and lime juice. Taste and add more of each, if you'd like.

Ladle the soup into bowls. Scatter the cilantro over the top, drizzle with the reserved garlic-chile oil, finish with a few cranks of pepper, and serve.

CHOOSING COCONUT MILK

The best coconut milk should be unsweetened, without any gums or preservatives. I'm not talking about the stuff in the refrigerated section of the grocery store (that's watered down for coffee and smoothie use). I like Native Forest brand organic coconut milk, which I can always find at Whole Foods and, according to some googling, doesn't use monkey labor (look it up—it's more liquid part of the milk).

GINGER CHICKEN AND RICE SOUP WITH SIZZLED BLACK PEPPER

SERVES 4

4 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs
(about 1½ pounds)

3 tablespoons neutral oil
(such as grapeseed)

Kosher salt

3 scallions, thinly sliced

**1 tablespoon freshly ground
pepper**

6 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

**2 tablespoons peeled,
finely chopped ginger**

½ cup jasmine rice, rinsed

6 cups water

**1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice,
or as needed**

If you're under the weather, with one sip of this soup you'll feel instantly better (or at least fool yourself into thinking that). The broth is flavored simply with chicken, ginger, and plenty of garlic, and the starch from the rice thickens the soup, giving it a creamy consistency without cream. The healthy amount of pepper will open up your sinuses. It's also topped with crispy chicken skin, which is what you *really* need on a sick day. I think the soup is beyond perfect as-is, but if you're a meddler, go ahead and throw in a handful of greens, a jammy egg, sliced sweet potato, or that jalapeño that's getting wrinkly in the produce drawer. Make this recipe your own.

Bear with me here, as I'm about to tell you to rip the skin off those chicken thighs. But first, pat the chicken thighs dry, so it's easier to grip the skin. Peel the skin off each thigh and lay it flat on the bottom of a heavy pot. (Set the naked thighs aside for the soup.) Pour the neutral oil over the chicken skin.

Set the pot over medium heat and allow the chicken skin to gently release some of its fat and shrivel up, 3 to 5 minutes. Continue to cook, flipping occasionally, until the skin is crisp all around and golden brown, another 3 to 5 minutes. Using tongs, transfer the chicken skin to a small bowl, leaving the fat behind. Season the skins with a bit of salt while still hot.

In a medium bowl, combine the scallions and pepper, then carefully tilt the pot with the chicken fat over the scallions and pepper. They will immediately sizzle and the scallions will wilt. Season with salt and stir. Set aside.

Return the pot to the stove and drop in the garlic, ginger, reserved chicken thighs, and rice. Pour in the water, turn the heat to high, and bring to a boil. Season with salt and turn the heat to medium-low. Gently simmer the soup, skimming off any foam that accumulates on the surface, and stirring to prevent the rice from sticking to the bottom of the pot, until the chicken is cooked through and the rice is very tender and has thickened the soup to an almost creamy consistency, 25 to 30 minutes.

Using tongs, remove the chicken thighs and set aside until cool enough to handle. Shred the meat with your fingers or two forks and then return to the pot. Pour in the lemon juice and taste. It should be very chicken-y, with bites of ginger and some brightness. Adjust with salt and more lemon juice, if needed.

Ladle the soup into bowls and spoon some of the scallion oil on top. Use your fingers to crush and scatter the crispy chicken skin over the top for the grand finale before serving.

SCALLOPS WITH GRAPEFRUIT- BROWN BUTTER

SERVES 4

- 16 dry-packed sea scallops
- Kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ¾ cup fresh grapefruit juice
- 1½ teaspoons finely grated grapefruit zest
- 2 small radishes, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon mild chile flakes (such as Aleppo)
- Flaky sea salt

I think one of the most luxurious orders at a restaurant is "I'll have the scallops." You know you've made it when you're saying that. At home, scallops don't need much work to prepare other than a close eye to make sure they don't overcook. You want a sear that gives them a serious crust. My strategy is to place them in the pan in a clockwise formation so you can keep track of when it's time to flip them. The grapefruit-butter pan sauce comes together as you whisk, and a handful of raw radishes brings a fresh, crunchy contrast.

Remove the side muscle from each scallop. (It's the little rectangular tag of tissue on the side of the scallop. It has a slightly chewy texture that some people don't care for.) Pat each scallop dry with a paper towel and season all over with kosher salt.

Pour the olive oil into a large stainless-steel skillet (there should be enough oil to coat the surface of the pan) and place over medium-high heat. Once the oil looks glossy and you see the first wisps of smoke, about 3 minutes, use tongs to arrange the scallops in a clockwise rotation, starting at twelve o'clock. Press lightly but don't move them around; let them be. Watch until you see the edges are getting deeply golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip them over so the other side can brown, another 2 to 3 minutes.

Transfer the scallops to a platter or among plates and set aside. Pour out the excess oil and let the skillet cool off for a minute.

Drop the butter into the skillet and set over medium heat. Once the butter has completely melted, using a wooden spoon, scrape loose any brown bits left over from searing the scallops, which will give the sauce more flavor. After about 1 minute, the butter will smell toasty and will have browned.

Add the grapefruit juice to the skillet and cook, whisking often, until the sauce begins to reduce and thicken, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and add the grapefruit zest and season with kosher salt.

Pour the sauce over the scallops and scatter the radish slices on top. Sprinkle with the chile flakes and drizzle with olive oil. The scallops should be bathing in a pool of citrus sauce and olive oil. Now you know why you've made it.

WHY ONLY DRY-PACKED SCALLOPS?

Salt water-packed scallops have a bouncy texture and can taste a little soapy. Dry-packed scallops will sear better. If the scallops at your shop aren't labeled, ask the fishmonger how they were packed.



SALT-AND-PEPPER COD WITH TURMERIC NOODLES

SERVES 4

- 1 bird's eye, serrano, or Fresno chile, thinly sliced
- 3 garlic cloves: 1 crushed, 2 finely grated
- ¼ cup water
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- ¼ cup neutral oil (such as grapeseed)
- 2 teaspoons peeled, finely grated ginger
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground pepper
- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless white fish (such as cod, hake, or haddock)
- Kosher salt
- 6 ounces dried vermicelli noodles
- 4 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1 cup coarsely chopped dill
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- Fresh herbs (such as mint, cilantro, and more dill) for serving
- Lime wedges for squeezing

FISH, I LOVE YOU

When I visited Hanoi, I only scratched the surface of all the foods I wanted to try. Chả cá là vông was high on my list. Its flavors sounded so similar to ones used in Iran—fish with turmeric and dill—that I wondered how different the Vietnamese dish would taste. At one famous restaurant, this dish is all they serve. I sat down in a dark mahogany chair from where I could see the chefs at work, searing white fish on a tiered metal skillet, adding spices, and finishing it off with scallion greens and dill. But what took it to another place was the nuoc cham, rice noodles, so many herbs, fresh chiles, and ice-cold beer that went with it. My mind was blown.

This is a slight riff on that dish. I still cook the cod with ginger, garlic, salt, and pepper, and the noodles still get flavored with the turmeric (but bloomed in butter). The ginger and ground pepper almost make a crust, so you will cook the first side hard to get it to caramelize.

In a medium bowl, combine the chile, crushed garlic, water, fish sauce, lime juice, and sugar. Stir until the sugar has completely dissolved. (The garlic is only meant to flavor the sauce, so don't let anybody bite into it when you serve.) Taste the sauce—this is your nuoc cham: it should hit on multiple senses. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, stir together 3 tablespoons of the neutral oil, the ginger, pepper, and grated garlic. Slice the cod into about 2-inch pieces, then add to the bowl and season with salt. Using a spoon, toss until each piece is evenly coated. Set aside.

Bring a medium pot of water to a boil. Turn off the heat and drop in the noodles. Give them a stir every minute or so until they've become soft and silky, 4 to 5 minutes but follow the times on the package. Drain and set the noodles aside on a plate. Typically give the noodles a few snips with a pair of shears to tame their wild strands and make them easier to eat. Hold on to the pot for later.

Set a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon neutral oil, and, when the oil is hot, lay the pieces of cod in the pan and fry the fish until lightly golden underneath, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip the fish and then scatter the scallions and dill over and watch them sizzle and wilt rapidly. Don't stir, so that the fish doesn't fall apart, can brown underneath, and cooks through, another 2 minutes.

In the reserved medium pot over medium heat, melt the butter and then add the turmeric. Once the turmeric begins to sizzle, add the drained noodles and toss with tongs until each strand is stained gold and warmed through, about 1 minute.

Set everything out on separate serving plates if you're going family style. Alternatively, divide the noodles among bowls and spoon some fish into each bowl. Tear some of the herbs into pieces and sprinkle over the fish. Spoon the nuoc cham over the fish. Squeeze lime juice over the top. Eat a fistful of herbs between each bite.

MOM'S SALMON

SERVES 4

1 teaspoon saffron threads

Kosher salt

2 tablespoons warm water

2 bunches Swiss chard or other leafy greens (such as lacinato kale)

¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 Meyer or regular lemon, thinly sliced, seeds removed

4 green garlic stalks, halved lengthwise, or 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1½ pounds skinless salmon fillet (preferably center-cut)

⅓ cup coarsely chopped dill

In the '90s, salmon was *the* fish to cook. It was the only fish my mother prepared. It showed up on our dinner table every two or three weeks, always made the same way—under a blanket of dill. Even during Nowruz, the Persian New Year, when Iranians typically eat smoked or fried white fish or white fish with herby saffron buttered rice (see page 202), Mom's salmon always took its place. Salmon has a high fat content and thrives when it's drowned in more fat plus dill and garlic, but feel free to use other herbs, spices, and citrus instead. This low-roasting technique can be used on other types of fish, such as cod or halibut, but there is no substitute for the saffron. That's what makes it Mom's Salmon!

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

In a mortar and pestle, crush the saffron threads and a pinch of salt into a fine powder. Dump the ground saffron into a small bowl and pour in the water. Set aside.

Pull the chard leaves off the stalks. Roughly tear the leaves, set them aside, and finely chop the stalks.

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat ¼ cup of the olive oil. Toss in the chard stalks and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 3 minutes. Add the chard leaves, half the lemon slices, and half the green garlic and stir a few times until the leaves just begin to wilt, about 2 minutes. (They will continue to wilt and cook in the oven. You're just giving them a head start.) Slide the skillet off the heat.

Season the salmon with salt on both sides and lay on top of the chard in the skillet. Pour the saffron water over the salmon and then top with the remaining lemon and green garlic. Scatter the dill all over and pour in the remaining ½ cup olive oil. Transfer the skillet to the oven.

Roast the salmon until it is opaque and easily flakes off with a fork around the thickest part, 25 to 30 minutes. Serve the salmon from the skillet or tear into large pieces using two forks and transfer to your preferred fancy serving platter. Spoon the greens around the fish and bathe both in all the lovely, lemony-scented fat from the pan. Then call your mother and tell her you love her.

GRILLED SNAPPER WITH CHARRED LEEK SALSA VERDE

SERVES 4

2 medium leeks

2 serrano chiles

½ cup finely chopped cilantro

2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

½ cup neutral oil (such as

grapeseed), plus more for rubbing

Kosher salt

2 (1½-pound) whole fish (such

as snapper or small black bass),

gutted and scaled

Thinly sliced red onion for serving

Thinly sliced radishes for serving

Sliced avocado for serving

Corn tortillas for serving

Lime wedges for serving

I won't fool you, grilling a whole fish is a task that can make even a professional cook a bit squeamish. If you have done it before and succeeded, yay for you. If you haven't mustered up the courage to do so or have failed miserably, listen up. You want to stick with fish that are on the smaller size (less than 2 pounds). They're more manageable to work with and easier to flip. No heavy lifting by the grill allowed. Also, and this is just my opinion, I avoid layering all kinds of flavors and spices on the fish until after it has been grilled. I love a sticky glaze and all the spices, but I don't want to risk any moments of stickage or overly burnt ingredients. The skin will show you when it's ready to be flipped and that's when a large metal spatula (the one you might often use for flipping patties) is your friend.

You're using the whole leek for the salsa verde. The dark green leafy parts give texture and the rest of the leeks transform on the grill; becoming almost black and ashy on the outside. But they have the most soft, creamy sweet flesh that goes with the lime juice and chiles.

Preheat your grill to medium-high.

Cut off the dark tops from the leeks. Thoroughly wash the tops and leeks to remove any dirt or sand inside and pat dry with paper towels. Set the tops aside (we're going to use them later). Arrange the chiles and leeks directly on the grill grates and grill, turning with tongs every few minutes, until they are blackened in most spots, about 3 minutes for the chiles and 8 to 12 minutes for the leeks. Transfer both to a rimmed baking sheet and set aside for 5 minutes to cool. Keep the grill on.

Finely chop the reserved dark leafy part of the leeks, the grilled chiles, and the grilled leeks. Drop all of that into a medium bowl and stir in the cilantro, lime juice, and ½ cup of the neutral oil. Season with salt and set this salsa verde aside.

Pat the fish dry with paper towels, season inside and out with salt, and then rub with neutral oil. Now pour some neutral oil into a bowl; grab a few more paper towels, a pair of tongs, a metal spatula, and your fish; and head back to the grill. Using the tongs, dip a paper towel in the oil and clean the hot grill and oil the grates by wiping it on the grates. Repeat twice.

Lay the fish on the grates with the backbones facing you and let cook without fussing with them until you can see that the skin is crisped and beginning to puff up and become charred, 8 to 10 minutes. Using the metal spatula, flip the fish away from you. If the skin is still sticking, it's not quite ready, so just leave it alone for another minute or so and then try again. Once the fish is ready, flip and continue cooking until the second side is crisped and the fish is fully cooked, another 8 to 10 minutes.

Transfer the fish to a platter and serve with the salsa verde, onion, radishes, avocado, tortillas, and lime wedges.

DO AHEAD

The salsa verde can be made up to 1 day ahead, covered, and stored in the fridge. Bring to room temperature before using.

SEARED SQUID WITH JUICY TOMATOES AND PISTACHIO DRESSING

SERVES 4

2 garlic cloves, finely grated

5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

1 pound cleaned squid bodies and tentacles

1 small shallot, finely chopped

1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

2 tablespoons pistachios, finely crushed or chopped

Kosher salt

12 ounces small to medium tomatoes, halved or quartered

1/3 cup oregano leaves

Chile flakes (your favorite kind), for sprinkling

Aioli (see page 61) for serving (optional)

I want you all to be cooking more squid at home. It's sustainable, cooks quickly, is versatile (it's good grilled, braised, and, obviously, fried), and also happens to be delicious. I love squid prepared all the ways, but the easiest (and most delicious) is dressed in olive oil with plenty of garlic and then seared hard. The trick when cooking is to sear the squid in batches since it will release some liquid at first, but the liquid will eventually (I promise) evaporate and a nice, caramelized exterior will form.

For the dressing, try to chop the pistachios finely so that they thicken and integrate into the sauce and are not just a crunchy addition. Tomatoes up to medium size will work, as long as they're super-sweet and in season. As with 99 percent of my seafood recipes, I want a ton of puckery citrus, so I make the dressing mostly out of lemon zest and juice. Aioli is not a must but, damn, it takes this dish over the edge.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the garlic and 3 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the squid and toss to coat in the garlic oil.

In a large bowl, stir together the shallot, lemon zest, lemon juice, pistachios, and remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil. Season this pistachio dressing with salt and set aside.

Set a large cast-iron skillet over high heat for 5 minutes. You want it roaring hot to quickly cook the squid. Working in batches (do not overcrowd the pan; I also like to keep the bodies and tentacles separate because they often cook at different rates), arrange the squid in the pan and cook, turning occasionally, until lightly charred in spots and cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer the squid to a cutting board and cut the tubes in half or in rings. Season with salt.

Add the tomatoes and oregano to the bowl with the pistachio dressing and season with salt. Give the tomatoes a toss and arrange on plates or a large platter and top with the squid. Drizzle with more olive oil and sprinkle with chile flakes. Serve with aioli on the side, if you like.

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1 pound cleaned squid bodies
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1 teaspoon finely grated
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2 tablespoons pistachios,
finely crushed or chopped

Kosher salt

12 ounces small to medium
tomatoes, halved or quartered

1/3 cup oregano leaves

Chile flakes (your favorite kind),
for sprinkling

Aioli (see page 61) for serving
(optional)

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Add the tomatoes and oregano to the bowl with the pistachio dressing and season with salt. Give the tomatoes a toss and arrange on plates or a large platter and top with the squid. Drizzle with more olive oil and sprinkle with chile flakes. Serve with aioli on the side, if you like.

BUTTER- SLATHERED WHOLE FISH WITH JAMMY FENNEL

SERVES 4

3 large fennel bulbs

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil,

plus ⅓ cup

Kosher salt

2 teaspoons fennel seeds

6 tablespoons unsalted butter,

at room temperature

3 garlic cloves, finely grated

2 (1-pound) whole branzino,

small black bass, or trout,

scaled and gutted

¾ cup Fresh and Puckery

Lemon Sauce (page 36)

You can smear a whole chicken with butter, so why not fish? Let's face it, the crispy skin is more important than the silky flesh inside, but that's crucial, too, and cooking fish in the oven, as I do with this recipe, makes it easy to have both. Please don't be afraid of cooking a whole fish. There are two reasons to do it: (1) It's cheaper than fillets. (2) You get tons of crispy skin. Money in the bank! The fennel seeds in the butter perfume the fish while the butter browns. Why aren't we doing this all the time?

Place an oven rack in the bottom position and preheat the oven to 425°F.

Trim and discard the long stalks and fronds from the fennel bulbs, then trim each root end and remove any outer layers that look a little brown. Sit the fennel bulbs upright and cut it into about ½-inch-wide planks. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet and pour in the ¼ cup olive oil. Season with salt and toss until each piece is coated. Spread out the fennel planks so they have room to brown rather than steam (which happens when they're all piled up). Roast the planks until they have formed a golden brown crust underneath, 12 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a mortar and pestle, crush the fennel seeds until finely ground, or pulse in a spice mill or finely chop using a chef's knife. Options! Put the butter, garlic, and ground fennel in a small bowl and, using a fork, mash and mix up everything.

Place the fish on a cutting board and pat dry thoroughly with paper towels. Smear the fennel butter all over the skin and dot a few pieces inside the tummies. Season the fish generously inside and out with salt.

Remove the fennel from the oven and flip each plank. Scoot the shrunken and caramelized fennel pieces to the corners of the baking sheet and lay the fish in the center. Roast the fish until it is opaque and flakes when pressed gently with a fork, and the other side of the fennel has become soft and jammy, 15 to 18 minutes.

Using a metal spatula, transfer the fennel and the fish onto a large platter. Spoon some of the lemon sauce over the fish and serve the rest alongside.

SPICY CHICKEN AND TOMATO CONFIT

SERVES 4

4 whole bone-in, skin-on chicken legs or 2½ to 3 pounds bone-in, skin-on drumsticks and thighs

Kosher salt

1 pound small tomatoes, halved lengthwise

3 shallots, skins left on, halved lengthwise

2 garlic heads, unpeeled, halved crosswise

1 lemon, quartered and seeded

8 jarred Calabrian chiles, or 3 fresh red chiles, halved lengthwise

4 rosemary sprigs

1½ cups extra-virgin olive oil

Sherry or red wine vinegar

for splashing

It makes sense to me that the little gay boy who loved to cook had a fascination with the term *confit*. It's French (which I thought sounded fancy) and, although it was originally a method for preservation, now it's a lesson in excess—and how luxurious that can be. Chicken legs cook slowly in a bath of olive oil until they develop a shreddy, barely-able-to-hold-on-to-the-bone texture. The other ingredients added to the mix benefit from all that fat as well. Shallots and garlic become sweet and jammy. The lemon perfumes the oil while becoming so soft you could eat the whole fruit. The chiles add a zap of heat. And those tomatoes, well, they're perfect. They shrink up, forcing their sugars to concentrate, giving them a juicy jamminess you won't forget.

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

Season the chicken all over with salt and let sit for 15 minutes for the salt to absorb.

Put the chicken into a 9 by 13-inch baking dish or a shallow braising dish. Scatter the tomatoes, shallots, garlic, lemon, chiles, and rosemary around the chicken; things will likely be very snug and that's more than okay. Pour in the olive oil so everything is mostly submerged in the fat.

Place the baking dish in the oven and roast the chicken until the meat is almost falling off the bone, the tomatoes have shriveled up, and it smells very delicious, 1½ to 2 hours. Let cool for 10 minutes.

Scoop up about 3 tablespoons of the oil from the baking dish, pour it into a large well-seasoned cast-iron or nonstick skillet, and place over medium-high heat. Using tongs, transfer the chicken legs to the skillet, skin-side down, and cook, pressing down on the legs and moving the skillet around so the skin browns evenly, 2 to 3 minutes.

Transfer the legs to a large plate or platter. Using a slotted spoon, scoop the goodies from the baking dish, including some of the oil, and add to the chicken on the platter. Splash a tablespoon or two of vinegar over everything and serve.

DO AHEAD

The chicken can be cooked a few hours, or even 1 day, ahead. It's very delicious at room temperature.

GOOD FAT

The schmaltzy leftover fat can be strained into an airtight container and refrigerated for up to 1 month. Use it to fry up some eggs, crisp up potatoes (see page 180), or fold into a pot of rice.

TANGY POMEGRANATE CHICKEN

SERVES 4

4 whole bone-in, skin-on chicken legs, or 2½ to 3 pounds bone-in, skin-on drumsticks and thighs
Kosher salt

1 tablespoon neutral oil
(such as grapeseed)

1 yellow onion, finely chopped

1 cup raw walnuts,
coarsely chopped

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¾ cup water

½ cup pomegranate molasses

¼ cup fresh lime juice

1 large handful herbs (such as basil, cilantro, and/or dill)

MEATY THINGS

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

Pat the chicken dry with paper towels, season all over with salt, and let sit for 10 to 15 minutes for the salt to absorb.

Pour the neutral oil into a large ovenproof skillet and place over medium-high heat. Lay the chicken legs in the skillet, skin-side down, so they are snug and lying flat. Cook, using tongs to press down on the chicken, so the skin makes contact with the bottom of the pan to encourage browning, until the legs are surrounded by their own fat and the skin underneath is deeply browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a plate, skin-side up, leaving that golden chicken fat behind.

Let the skillet cool for a few minutes, then return it to medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring and scraping any brown bits that may have stuck to the bottom of the pan, until the onion is lightly charred around the edges, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the walnuts and continue to cook until they smell nutty and the onion is deep golden brown in most spots, another 3 to 5 minutes. Sprinkle in the turmeric and cinnamon and stir, so the spices can bloom.

Pour the water, pomegranate molasses, and lime juice into the skillet and season lightly with salt. Nestle the chicken back into the skillet, skin-side up, and spoon some of the sauce over each leg. Transfer the skillet to the oven, uncovered, and bake the chicken legs until the sauce has thickened and the flesh is begging to be torn away from the bone, 50 to 60 minutes. Scatter the herbs on top, or on the side, of the chicken legs and serve.

Fesenjan is a controversial Persian stew. (Maybe, I guess, they all are?) Whether you make it sour or sweet is the biggest point of contention. For me, it shouldn't be sour and it shouldn't be sweet. It should be perfectly both, and with a little tingle. Walnuts, pomegranate molasses, and chicken are the core trio (hundreds of years ago that meat would have been peacock). My fesenjan recipe will be in my Persian cookbook one day, along with all of my other Persian secrets, but for now, here's more of a chicken praise with a good amount of atypical lime juice, all inspired by fesenjan but definitely not a version of it—not at all.

PORK CHOPS WITH TOASTED GARLIC AND SPICY CAPERS

SERVES 4

1 teaspoon granulated sugar

4 (1½-inch-thick) bone-in
pork rib chops

Kosher salt

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,
plus ⅓ cup

¼ cup capers, drained and rinsed

4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

¼ cup coarsely chopped parsley

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

I don't have the patience to brine pork chops. I want them the second that I get home from the store with the groceries. One key to that crust you dream about is adding a little sugar, a trick I picked up at *Bon Appétit* (thanks, Chris Morocco). Another key is to keep flipping them as they cook, so they don't get a chance to overcook. Once the chops are good to go, let them rest and make a crispy, crunchy pan sauce-slash-warm vinaigrette to spoon over them—generously. (And, say your chops do overcook because, hey, it happens, the warm vinaigrette will restore some moisture.)

Sprinkle the sugar evenly over the chops, then season them all over with salt. Let the chops hang out for 20 minutes at room temperature, or chill in the fridge, uncovered, for up to 24 hours.

Place a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Rub the chops with the 2 tablespoons olive oil, making sure they are completely coated. This ensures the pork chops will brown while minimizing the smoke that'll come from the skillet.

Place the pork chops in the skillet and sear them (it helps to use tongs to press down on the meat, so it makes direct contact with the surface of the hot pan, and cook) without moving the meat around, until golden brown in spots, 2 minutes. Flip the chops and continue to sear, pressing down, so the other side becomes similarly golden brown, another 2 minutes. Keep flipping and cooking the chops for 1 minute per side, until they have taken on a deep golden brown and caramelized color and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center of the thickest chop reads somewhere between 130° and 135°F, 6 to 8 minutes, depending on the thickness of the chops. Turn the pork chops upright and sear all along the fat cap until crisp, about 1 minute.

Transfer the pork chops to a cutting board and let rest for 10 minutes while you make the sauce. Carefully wipe out the skillet. Pour the remaining ⅓ cup olive oil into the skillet and place it over medium heat. Add the capers and cook, swirling the pan often, until some of the capers begin to look like they're about to bud like a flower, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the garlic and continue cooking until pale golden and the capers have crisped up, about 2 minutes more.

Transfer the crispy bits and hot oil to a medium bowl and stir in the red pepper flakes. Then stir in the parsley and vinegar. Taste the sauce. The capers will have added their brininess, but you'll likely need another pinch of salt.

Cut the meat away from the bone, then slice it against the grain into ½-inch-thick pieces. Transfer the meat (and, for drama, the bone!) to a plate, spoon on the crispy caper garlic sauce, and serve.

PEACH AND BLACKBERRY CRISP WITH CINNAMON CRUNCH

A crisp is the ultimate dessert for people who claim they don't bake because it's impossible to mess up. I like mine with a good amount of crumb on top, in this case, inspired by Cinnamon Toast Crunch ("the taste you can see"). For extra crunch, I throw some panko in with the flour, but you could use nuts, oats, or whatever makes you happy. The berries and peaches break down and turn into luscious pie filling, and if you don't like my combo of peach and blackberries, use 3 to 4 pounds of whatever fruit you want.

SERVES 8

CINNAMON CRUNCH

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup panko breadcrumbs

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed light brown or granulated sugar

$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon kosher salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled

3 pounds ripe peaches, pitted, cut into 1-inch-thick wedges

12 ounces blackberries

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar

2 tablespoons cornstarch

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Cold heavy cream or ice cream for serving

To make the Cinnamon Crunch: In a medium bowl, combine the flour, panko, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt and stir to mix. Drizzle in the melted butter and work it with your fingers or a fork until there are no dry spots remaining and the mixture looks very crumbly but can hold together when squeezed. You'll have crumbs that are as small as sand and larger ones that are about the size of a quarter. Set aside in the fridge.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In a large bowl, toss together the peaches, blackberries, granulated sugar, cornstarch, lemon juice, and vanilla.

Pour the fruit mixture into a 12-inch cast-iron skillet or a 3-quart baking dish. Scatter the Cinnamon Crunch over the top. Bake until the crisp is lightly browned and the filling is bubbling around the edges, 30 to 40 minutes. Let cool slightly.

Put a generous scoop of the warm crisp in individual bowls, top with a spoonful of fresh cream or a scoop of ice cream, and serve.

APPLE AND TAHINI GALETTE

SERVES 8

GALETTE DOUGH

1½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling out

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

¼ teaspoon kosher salt

¾ cup cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes

4 to 6 tablespoons ice water

TAHINI FRANGIPANE

⅓ cup tahini

3 tablespoons granulated sugar

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature

1 egg

¼ teaspoon kosher salt

APPLE FILLING

2 pounds tart, crunchy apples (such as Honeycrisp or Pink Lady), cored, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon cider vinegar or white wine vinegar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

3 tablespoons granulated sugar

Granulated sugar for sprinkling

Heavy cream for brushing

SWEET SPOT

I'll take apple galette over apple pie any day of the week. The proportion of thinly sliced apples to flaky crust is perfect, and what takes the top is a tahini frangipane. We don't drop the word *frangipane* into conversation very often, do we? It sounds fussy, I know. But it's really just a matter of mixing ground nuts (or, in this case, ground seeds) with sugar, butter, and egg until it's smooth and fluffy. Spread that on the bottom of the galette crust, place apples on top, and revel in the savory, nutty flavor contrasting with the sweet apples. Serve with barely sweetened whipped cream, crème fraîche, or ice cream, if you like, but I think it's perfect on its own.

To make the dough: In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, and salt. Dump in the butter and get your hands dirty; toss the pieces of butter so that they're lightly coated in the flour, separating any pieces that may have stuck together. Work your way around the bowl, smushing each piece once with your fingers. It's so satisfying! Don't overthink it, you just want the butter flattened like little coins coated with flour. Don't wash your hands yet.

Drizzle 4 tablespoons of the ice water over the butter-flour mixture. Rummage your hands through the mixture to combine the wet and dry ingredients. The dough may seem dry at first but it will turn into a very shaggy mass. Use your palms to knead the dough together to form a ball with no dry spots. I find it easier to do this in the bowl rather than on a work surface. You may need to drizzle in an additional tablespoon or two of the remaining water to help the dough come together but, even with the additional water, it won't be smooth or shiny.

Wrap the dough with plastic wrap and use your hands to flatten and shape into a round disk about 1 inch thick. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to overnight. The dough will hydrate while it chills.

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Lightly flour a work surface.

Unwrap the dough and place it on the work surface. Flour your rolling pin and strike the dough with it a few times. The weight of the rolling pin will help flatten the dough. Starting from the center, roll out the dough, flipping it after three or so rolls to prevent it from sticking to the surface. (I think of it as a clock, so after I've rolled to nine o'clock, then twelve o'clock, and then two o'clock, I flip it.) Keep rolling until you have a roughly 14-inch circle. Gently gather both ends of the dough and lift and transfer to the prepared baking sheet. Cover loosely with the plastic wrap and return to the fridge to chill.

CONTINUED

ORANGE BLOSSOM PANNA COTTA WITH HONEY'D STRAWBERRIES

SERVES 6

- 2¼ teaspoons (1 envelope) powdered gelatin
- 3 tablespoons water
- 3 cups heavy cream
- ½ cup runny honey, plus 1 tablespoon
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1½ cups labneh or full-fat Greek yogurt
- 4 teaspoons orange blossom water
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 pound strawberries, hulled and quartered
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

SWEET SPOT

Panna cotta is such an easy dessert once you pick up a box of gelatin at the supermarket. I wanted to mimic my favorite flavor of White Moustache yogurt (called “kiss”—seek it out) by dropping in a bit of orange blossom water and labneh for tang. It's really simple to macerate strawberries (that means letting them sit in sugar to make their own syrup) and dizzle that on top. All of this looks and sounds fancier than it is, which is why I love it. Plus, it's easy to prepare ahead for a crowd. Just make sure the panna cotta is barely set; you want a good amount of jiggle. (Don't we all?)

In a small bowl, stir together the gelatin and water. Let stand for 5 to 10 minutes to allow the gelatin to hydrate and get jelly-like. Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, combine 1 cup of the cream, the ½ cup honey, and salt and stir gently until the honey has dissolved and you see no streaks, 2 to 3 minutes. Don't let the cream come to a simmer, which will kill the gelatin and we're not about murder here. Turn off the heat and gently stir in the softened gelatin, making sure it has completely dissolved.

In a large bowl, whisk the labneh, orange blossom water, vanilla, and remaining 2 cups cream until smooth. Gently whisk the gelatin mixture into the cream mixture. The texture will be silky, smooth, and pourable, like very thick cream.

Divide the panna cotta mixture into small bowls, cute cups, and/or ramekins; set on a tray; and refrigerate until set, at least 2 hours or up to 2 days.

At least 20 minutes or up to 3 hours before serving, in a medium bowl, toss together the strawberries, lemon juice, and remaining 1 tablespoon honey. Set aside to macerate, tossing whenever you feel like it, until the strawberries soften and their juices have formed a glossy syrup.

When ready to serve, spoon the strawberries over the panna cotta.

DO AHEAD

Panna cotta can be made (without the strawberry topping) up to 3 days ahead, covered, and refrigerated until ready to top and serve.

CRISPY PLUM AND PISTACHIO CAKE

SERVES 8 TO 10

- ½ cup shelled pistachios or blanched almonds
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup unsalted butter, cubed at room temperature, cubed
- 1 egg
- ½ cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 pound plums, pitted and torn or sliced
- 3 tablespoons turbinado sugar (optional)

This is a mash-up of two cakes that I love: Lindsey Shere's famous almond cake from *Chez Panisse Desserts* and Marian Burros's equally famous plum torte from the *New York Times*. Shere's cake comes together quickly and easily in the food processor; Burros's plums into a spongy, moist cake base. My spin adds a quick homemade pistachio flour that turns this cake into a distant relative of the two. It's nutty and fragrant while the deep-purple plum slices bake into shiny gems and sparkling turbinado sugar makes the crust crackly. A half cup of buttermilk adds tang while tenderizing the cake crumb. This isn't a show-off cake—I'm not about that—but it's so delicious it deserves to sit at the center of the table.

Lightly butter and flour a 9-inch springform pan. Tap out any excess flour and line the pan with parchment. (You can use a cake pan if you don't have a springform pan; but if you do so, leave an overhang with the parchment paper so you can easily lift out the cake.)

In a food processor, combine the pistachios and 1 tablespoon granulated sugar and pulse until they are a beautiful green sandy texture. Add the butter and remaining sugar and pulse until fully incorporated. Add the egg, buttermilk, and vanilla and pulse again, scraping down the sides once or twice with a rubber spatula. Until the mixture is smooth.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Add half of the flour mixture to the batter and pulse a few times. Add the remaining flour mixture and pulse until smooth. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth out the surface with the spatula. Lightly press the plums into the batter and place in the fridge to chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Scatter the turbinado sugar over the batter. Bake the cake until the edges are deeply golden brown and a paring knife inserted in the center comes out clean, 45 to 50 minutes. Set the pan on a wire rack to cool for 5 minutes before slicing and serving.

DO AHEAD

The cake can be made up to 3 days ahead. Let cool completely, cover tightly, and store at room temperature in a cool place.