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or Thursday) WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

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INTRODUCTION

If *The Chew* has done nothing else, I hope it's shown that home cooking shouldn't feel like math, it should feel like finger painting. A splash of wine into this, a little extra butter into that, a squeeze of lemon over these... yeah, baby!

Every day I stand in front of the studio monitors and watch *The Chew* as an excited fan. I groove on the beautiful food and the laughs as these easy friends pull a meal together in a few minutes. They inspire me by making it look fun. And useful.

As a below-average cook with above-average ambition, I imagine myself making whatever delicious dish they're making that weekend or, if it's stunningly easy, that night.

It's a seduction of sorts, like this book. Ever since we started the show we have wanted people to swap the stressful idea of "making dinner" for the fun of creating something new for themselves and their family.

If we did it right, this book should have something for every possible kind of home cook, every day of the week.

We also built this book around the rhythm of people's lives. Weekdays are often rushed, but weekends shouldn't be. And if we are cooking for special occasions, we want to show love through care and time spent.

So we put a little fancy weekend stuff like Lobster Thermidor (see page 191), some simple midweek yummys like Chicken Marsala (page 48), the perfect dish for date night, and a recipe for Sunday dinner that will stand the test of time.

As we say on the show, we hope our recipes are just the start. Don't be afraid to get finger painting and make them your own work of delicious art.

—Gordon Elliot



MEXICAN TORTA | BACON PANCAKES WITH MAPLE BOURBON BUTTER
| FRIED CORNISH HENS AND PAN D'ORO FRENCH TOAST | HEIRLOOM
TOMATO AND RICOTTA TART

BREAKFAST + DINNER = “BRINNER!”





Chilled Tomato and Bread Soup

SERVES 8

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 2 MINUTES

INACTIVE COOK TIME: 1 HOUR TO OVERNIGHT | COST: \$

Easy

Opera fans in Italy have been known to throw rotten tomatoes on-stage when they are not pleased with the performance. Before you aim a tomato because of a poorly sung aria, make sure you are not heaving almost-rotten tomatoes, because super-ripe, over-the-hill tomatoes are the basis of one of the favorite quick summertime meals in my home. Toss them into a food processor with day-old bread, salt, herbs, and olive oil, and you have a real Tuscan bread soup. It's flavorful and healthy, so we always keep a big container of it in the part of the refrigerator where we store the stuff we call "Kids Can Eat as Much as They Want, Whenever They Want."

5 pounds very ripe heirloom tomatoes, cored and cut into chunks

3 cups torn-up day-old Italian or country bread

½ cup fresh basil leaves

2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves

Kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

Zest and juice of 2 lemons

2 teaspoons red pepper flakes

4 scallions (whites and about 2 inches of greens), thinly sliced

8 ½-inch-thick baguette slices, toasted

1. In a food processor or blender, blend the tomatoes until smooth. Add the day-old bread, basil, and thyme, and season with salt and pepper. Blend. If too thick, thin with water. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour to chill, but it's even better the next day.

2. In a medium mixing bowl, gently mix the olive oil, lemon zest and juice, red pepper flakes, and scallions together. Season lightly with salt.

3. Divide the chilled tomato soup among eight bowls. Float 1 slice of toast in the center of each bowl. Sprinkle the scallion mixture on top of each toast, and serve.





Grilled Skirt Steak with Cauliflower Hash

2
FER

SERVES 4 TO 6

COOK TIME: 15–20 MINUTES

COST: \$

Easy

Hash is one of those things everyone likes the minute you say the word. “Hot Salad,” which is what hash essentially is, doesn’t sound as laid-back and home-cooking-ish as hash. In the wintertime, when fresh vegetables are in short supply, some late-season cauliflower, potatoes, and kale, plus some take-no-prisoners seasoning, fits the bill for comfort food that is nourishing but not super fattening. The full, funky flavor of skirt steak stands up well to the hearty vegetables, but lamb, pork, salmon, or shrimp also fit the bill. It’s also good all on its own as a vegetarian meal. If you don’t finish all that steak, make yourself a Grilled Skirt Steak Sandwich with Charred Corn Mustard (57).

½ pound new potatoes, sliced into ½-inch-thick coins

2 pounds skirt steak

Salt

Freshly ground pepper

¼ cup olive oil, plus more to brush the grill

2 tablespoons butter

½ onion, peeled and diced

½ head cauliflower, cut into florets

1 bunch kale, stemmed and cut into ribbons

2 cloves garlic, sliced

1 teaspoon red chili flakes

1 tablespoon fresh rosemary (leaves only), chopped

2 tablespoons parsley (leaves only), chopped

3 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1. Blanch the potatoes in a pot of boiling salted water for 3–4 minutes. Strain and set aside.

2. Preheat a grill or grill pan to medium-high heat.

3. Season the steak generously with salt and pepper. Brush the grill with olive oil. Grill the steak for 4–5 minutes per side, for medium rare, and set aside to rest.

4. In a large skillet or sauté pan, heat the butter and 2 tablespoons of the extra virgin olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and potatoes in a single even layer. Cook until the potatoes have crisped, and then flip to crisp on other side, about 4 minutes per side.

5. Add the cauliflower and cook, tossing to coat and soften the cauliflower. Add the kale and garlic, and toss so the kale begins to wilt. Add the red chili flakes, rosemary, and parsley. Toss to combine, and finish the dish with the red wine vinegar and a drizzle of olive oil. Transfer to a platter to serve alongside the steak.





Perfect Manhattan

SERVES 1

COOK TIME: N/A

COST: \$

Easy

The first time somebody asked me if I wanted a perfect Manhattan, I answered, “Of course.” I mean, who doesn’t want *perfect*? Little did I know that the word *perfect* means that you use equal parts of sweet and dry vermouth. The classic calls for rye, but the bourbon Manhattan has made a run at the Manhattan mixologist’s manual. My advice is try ‘em both and decide. There ain’t no bad option.

Ice

- 2 ounces rye whiskey
- $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce sweet vermouth
- $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce dry vermouth
- 4 dashes angostura bitters
- 1 brandy-soaked or high-end Maraschino cherry, to garnish

1. Chill a martini glass in the freezer.
2. Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Add the rye, vermouths, and bitters. Stir vigorously for 15–30 seconds.
3. Strain the liquid into the chilled glass and garnish with the cherry.

Lara Spencer shakin’ it with Carla during a commercial break.





Scallion Chili Sweet Potato Cake

SERVES 6

COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COST: \$

Easy

This is one of those dishes that I can eat for breakfast, lunch, dinner, or even a snack. Alongside a turkey or a pork roast or a leg of lamb, it's got the flavor oomph to stand up to those major pieces of meat, but it is all light, vegetarian ingredients so it doesn't weigh you down. Take the time to crisp the layers of sweet potato on the top and bottom so you get a firm, crunchy golden-brown effect. Chili and scallions work so well in those scallion pancakes that you get in Vietnamese restaurants, I thought, "Hey, why not with sweet potatoes?" Take it from me—there is no reason why not.

FOR THE SWEET POTATO CAKE

2½-pounds large sweet potatoes, peeled

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

2 Fresno chilies, sliced into rounds

1 cup fresh scallions, finely chopped

Salt

Pepper

FOR THE SALAD

½ cup scallions, sliced, plus more for garnish

1 cup parsley, leaves picked

¼ cup capers

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 tablespoons olive oil

Salt

Freshly cracked black pepper

TO MAKE THE SWEET POTATO CAKE

1. Preheat the broiler to high. Arrange a rack 6 inches away from the heating source.
2. Boil the potatoes for 20 minutes, and let them cool before slicing them into ¼-inch-thick slices.
3. Heat a couple of tablespoons of olive oil in a 6- or 8-inch cast-iron pan over medium heat. Cook the Fresno chilies and scallions for a few minutes, until softened. Remove the mixture from the pan and set aside.
4. Add as many potato slices as can fit in one layer of the pan. Cook for about 3 minutes per side, or until lightly browned. Remove the pan from the heat.
5. Arrange the remaining potatoes into even layers over the crispy potatoes, seasoning with salt and pepper and some of the Fresno chilies and scallions. Press each layer down firmly with the back of a spatula or wooden spoon.
6. Cook the sweet potato cake in the oven and brown for about 3 minutes, or until the potatoes are crispy.

TO MAKE THE SALAD

7. Toss the salad ingredients together and season with salt and pepper.
8. Cut the potato cake into wedges and serve garnished with the salad and remaining scallions.



Nectarine Blackberry Buckle

SERVES 8

COOK TIME: 40–45 MINUTES

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES

COST: \$

Easy

Okay, to answer the question that is probably on your mind, a buckle is what you call a cross between a cake, a crumble, and a pie. It's fresh fruit in a beautiful cake batter with a crumble top. If you want to do it really old-timey (which is the best way to do anything, in my book), you bake it in a parchment-lined cast-iron skillet, just like they did back in the *Little House on the Prairie* days.

FOR THE CAKE

- 1½ sticks unsalted butter, plus 1 tablespoon for greasing
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- ¾ cup buttermilk
- 5 nectarines, halved, pitted, and sliced
- 1 pint blackberries
- Zest of 1 lemon

FOR THE STREUSEL

- 1 stick butter
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup light brown sugar
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- Pinch of salt

FOR THE WHIPPED CREAM

- 2 cups heavy cream
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

TO MAKE THE CAKE

1. Preheat the oven to 350 °F. Line a 10-inch cast-iron skillet with parchment and grease it with 1 tablespoon of the butter.
2. Melt the remaining butter in a small saucepan over medium-low heat until light brown. Set aside to cool.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon.
4. In another large bowl, whisk together the cooled browned butter and sugars. Then add the eggs, one at a time. Stir in the buttermilk.
5. Add the dry ingredients into the wet. Pour the batter into the prepared pan.
6. In a large bowl, toss the nectarines and blackberries with the lemon zest and arrange them in a single layer on top of the batter.

TO MAKE THE STREUSEL

7. In a medium bowl, combine all the ingredients for the streusel. Mix together to form a crumb. Crumble over the nectarines and blackberries. Place in the oven and bake for 40–45 minutes.

TO MAKE THE WHIPPED CREAM

8. Combine the cream, sugar, and vanilla, and beat until peaks form. Fold in the cinnamon. Serve the buckle topped with whipped cream.



Tip If you can't get to a craft store to buy a foam ring, you can make your own! Create a ring out of pipe insulation tubing by taping the two ends together. You can use something firm like a marker to hold the tube in place while you tape. In no time you've got a foam ring that cost under a dollar!



A wreath full of blessings

And now for one of the most beautiful crafty things I have ever run across. It truly looks like a painstakingly made faux floral wreath, but it's only unused coffee filters, food coloring, and some inexpensive foam piping. It takes a little time to make, but so did the needlepoint that grandmas used to do, so it seems perfect for a Sunday supper like Grandma would make. So start pinning your wreath together, and with each filter, count one of your blessings.

WHAT YOU NEED

Large, shallow bowls

Food coloring

Water

Spoons

Coffee filters

Paper towels

Straight pins

Foam ring or foam piping (see Tip)

Ribbon

HOW TO MAKE IT

1. In the bowls, add food coloring and water, and mix with spoons. Experiment with different amounts of dye to achieve the desired color.
2. Dip coffee filters into the food-coloring mixture and lay them out to dry on paper towels.
3. Once the filters have dried, begin shaping them by pinching the middle of the coffee filter and twisting to make a flower. Put a straight pin through the base of the flower and use it to attach the flower to the ring.
4. Continue creating flowers and pinning around the ring until all of the foam is covered. String a ribbon around the wreath or add a bow for a nice accent.

