

CHAPTER

{ 7 }

Sunny Days

I love holidays, and I love snuggling in on cozy days, but in truth, I love sunny days the most. I don't believe you can have too many sunny days in your life. The more the better! A lack of sunshine is one of the reasons we left the beautiful English countryside and moved to the south of France, and the almost constant sun is one of the many reasons I adore California.

Sunny Days are meant for outdoor entertaining. This is when you have your poolside parties, your barbecues, your patio lunches, and your picnics. Being outside allows you to use nature as a backdrop for your décor. Add cut flowers and buds and lots of green to your tables. Put whole fresh fruit in glass bowls. I love to use brightly colored fabrics as an accent. Instead of searching for large pieces to cover an entire table, I use several smaller pieces laid across the table's width. Filmy Indian-inspired prints are especially lovely out-of-doors.

Warm weather also begs for a different menu. The food should be lighter, preferably served cold. The menu needn't be as formal. Instead of splitting courses, allow the food to just flow together. For Sunny Days, I'm giving you all the recipes together for you to mix and match.

J'ADORE PANDORA

I named my daughter Pandora because I just loved the way the name sounded. It's beautiful and one-of-a-kind. . . . just like her! I love her nickname equally as much: Pandy.



RECIPES TO MIX AND MATCH

Papaya with Crab Serves 6

THIS IS ONE OF my favorite dishes. It's so delicious and impressive-looking, perhaps because the papaya is used as a natural bowl. You can't get any more beautiful than nature! Garnish with sliced strawberries.

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| <p>3 ripe papayas
 ¼ cup light mayonnaise
 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary,
 chopped
 ⅛ teaspoon paprika
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 1 pound jumbo lump crab meat, picked
 over for cartilage and shells
 1 large ripe tomato, diced</p> | <p>1. Cut each papaya in half, then cut a strip off the opposite side so the papaya will sit on the plate nicely without rolling around. Scoop out the seeds.</p> <p>2. Mix mayonnaise, lemon juice, rosemary, paprika, salt, and pepper. Carefully fold in crab meat and tomatoes. Scoop into papaya halves and serve.</p> |
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1 PAPAYA, 2 PAPAYA . . .

You'll want a perfectly ripe papaya, nice and juicy. The best way to get a good one is to ask the grocer. Tell them exactly when you want to eat it, and be specific—this Wednesday at 3:30 p.m.—and they'll help you find fruit that will be ripe at that exact time. If you can't find such an expert, look for a papaya that is still firm and green with just some yellow. It should ripen fully in about 2 days just sitting on your counter. Overripe papayas will be all yellow, soft or mushy, and smell sweet. Avoid those. And I always buy 1 more papaya than I'm going to need in case something goes wrong, for instance, if one of them is too ripe.

TO GRILL CHICKEN evenly, cook over medium-hot, not searingly hot, heat. If the fire is too hot, the chicken will burn before it is cooked through. You can also cook the chicken in a broiler for about the same amount of time. Serve with buttered basmati rice; stir in some chopped cilantro or pistachios, if you wish to make it extra lovely.

Chicken Tikka with Fresh Mango Chutney

Makes 6 servings

Chicken Tikka

- 2 cups plain low-fat yogurt
 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 1 teaspoon ground coriander seeds
 1 teaspoon ground ginger
 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
 ½ teaspoon chili powder
 ½ teaspoon salt
 2 ½ pounds boneless and skinless
 chicken breasts

Mango Chutney

- 2 ripe mangoes, peeled, pitted, and cut
 into ½-inch dice
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
 1 teaspoon sugar
 ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
 ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
 Salt, to taste

1. To prepare the chicken, mix the yogurt, garlic, cumin, coriander, ginger, turmeric, chili powder, and salt together in a large bowl. Cut the chicken into 30 chunks about 1½ inches square. Add to the yogurt mixture and stir to coat. Cover and refrigerate at least 3 hours and up to 12 hours.
2. To make the chutney, combine the mangoes, cilantro, sugar, ginger, and cayenne in a medium bowl. Season with salt. Cover and refrigerate for 1 to 2 hours to blend the flavors.
3. Build a medium-hot fire in an outdoor grill. If a charcoal grill, let the coals burn down until they are covered with white ash and you can hold your hand just above the cooking grate for about 3 seconds, about 30 minutes after lighting the fire. If a gas grill, preheat on high, then reduce the heat to medium.
4. Have ready 6 metal grilling skewers. Remove the chicken from the bowl, shaking off the excess marinade. For each serving, thread 5 chicken pieces onto a skewer, leaving a little space between each piece of chicken. (For grilling, metal skewers work better than wooden ones. If you must use wooden skewers, soak them in warm water for 30 minutes, then drain. Cover the exposed "handle" end of the skewer with aluminum foil before grilling, or it will burn, even though it is soaked.) Let stand at room temperature for 15 minutes.
5. Brush the grill grate clean and lightly oil the grate. Place the chicken skewers on the grill and cover with the grill lid. Grill, turning occasionally, until the chicken is cooked through, 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer the skewers to a platter.
6. Serve the chicken hot, with the chutney passed on the side.

YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE FRIENDS

Friendships play an important role in life, and if we can manage to cultivate a handful of really true loyal relationships in our time on this planet then we should be thankful. Over the years, Ken and I have surrounded ourselves with a colorful, eclectic palette of people from all walks of life.

Women especially need good girlfriends. It's been reported that women speak an average of 7,000 words daily compared to men who say only 2,000 (and my husband who uses only 200!) We just can't get the same juice from a man. I'm fairly certain the reason I have never needed therapy is because my friends have filled that gap for me. To have someone you can trust and know they have your interests at heart is a rare find; if you are lucky enough to have people in your life like that, keep them close and nurture the friendship.

The most important things I require in a friend are honesty and heart. And I think I am becoming more discriminating the older I get—I have no inclination to invest in a person that doesn't share the same values or moral compass that I do.

Ken and I have enjoyed a certain serendipity when it comes to finding friends, but in a few instances we have failed. We recently endured a horrific (and sadly very public) experience of failed friendship. We included somebody into the core of our existence, let down our guard, opened our home, and allowed him into our daily lives. We treated him like family for a long time. He was an egregious character masquerading as a man who loved us.

When he betrayed us, it was devastatingly hurtful and made me question my own reasoning. How could I be so naïve? How had I missed the hubris of this man who infiltrated my family? He slowly and insidiously manipulated us, and we were fools to allow him to do so. I now blame myself for not listening to my inner voice, my intuition. He inadvertently had given me so many warnings of the type of person he was capable of being, and I stupidly had ignored them. While at first I felt a gut-wrenching anger, slowly those feelings subsided. As always I started to see the humor in the situation—and I've discovered that nothing annoys your enemy so much as forgiving them!

While Ken and I closed ranks at first, we know we cannot protect ourselves from everything. We will continue to open and share our hearts and souls with strangers, and risk letting down our guard, as the reward of good friendship is well worth it.

THIS SALAD IS SO SIMPLE, yet so flavorful; perfect for a light meal. The juicy sweetness you get from the fresh peaches served with the saltiness of the prosciutto is an utter delight. The honey chili dressing adds a yin and yang that tickles the taste buds. If you have time and want to really enhance the flavor profile, grill the peaches beforehand. You can also substitute any stone fruit—apricots, plums, nectarines—for the peaches.

Pandora Salad

Makes 6 servings

Honey Chile Vinaigrette

¼ cup rice wine vinegar
3 tablespoons honey
1 garlic clove, minced
¼ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

6 cups coarsely chopped mâche,
butter, or Bibb lettuce
3 ripe yellow peaches, each pitted,
halved, and sliced into 8 wedges
1 ½ cups (6 ounces)
shredded mozzarella cheese
3 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto
½ cup packed fresh mint leaves

1. To make vinaigrette, process the vinegar, honey, garlic, and cayenne pepper in a food processor or blender. Gradually add the olive oil until smooth and thickened. Season with salt and pepper.
2. To serve at the table, put the salad greens in a large serving bowl. Drizzle with the vinaigrette and toss. Arrange peach slices over the top, then sprinkle with the mozzarella. Drape prosciutto slices evenly over the peaches. Sprinkle with the mint.

Note: To serve in individual portions, toss the lettuce with vinaigrette in a large mixing bowl. Divide salad amongst 6 dinner plates. Arrange 4 peach slices on top of each salad, topped with ¼ cup of mozzarella. Drape each with an equal amount of the prosciutto. Sprinkle with the mint.

LAMB'S LETTUCE

If you've never had mâche lettuce, you must find it and try it. You will thank me for it. It's been popular in France for centuries, but is only just making its way over here. Also called corn salad, field lettuce, lamb's lettuce, and lamb's tongue (because it looks like little lamb tongues), its smallish, oval leaves have a sweet, slightly nutty flavor. Sweet and slightly nutty—like a lot of my *Housewife* friends. You can see why I might enjoy it!



Asian Tuna Tartare with Salt-and-Pepper Crisps

Makes 6 servings

THIS IS ONE of my favorite dishes at Villa Blanca. Of course, things like this always look so lovely in restaurants, with the salads shaped into precise, professional-looking mounds. But you can do the same at home using a simple trick: a large cookie cutter. Pack the salad in the cutter, then gently lift the cutter off to leave an impressive edible tower on the plate.

18 wonton or gyoza wrappers,
cut into 2-inch circles
Olive oil, for the crisps
¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon
freshly ground black pepper,
plus more to taste
¼ cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
2 tablespoons Asian dark sesame oil
⅛ teaspoon ground coriander
⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
Pinch of ground caraway seeds
Pinch of ground cumin
1 pound high-quality tuna steak, cut
into ½-inch cubes
2 ripe avocados, pitted, peeled, and
cut into ½-inch cubes
2 tablespoons Japanese (masago or
tobiko) fish eggs (optional)
2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds
Microgreens or sprouts, for garnish
White truffle oil, for serving

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 375°F.
2. Arrange the wrappers closely together on a baking sheet, but do not let them touch each other. Brush the wrappers with olive oil. Combine the salt and the pepper and sprinkle over the wrappers. Bake until the wrappers are crisp and golden brown, 6 to 8 minutes. Loosen the wrappers from the sheet with a metal spatula, then let cool completely.
3. Whisk the mayonnaise, lime juice, sesame oil, coriander, cayenne pepper, caraway, and cumin together in a medium bowl. Add the tuna, avocado, fish eggs, if using, and sesame seeds, and gently fold together. Season with salt and pepper.
4. For each serving, place a 2½-inch-diameter (at least 1-inch high) cookie cutter in the center of a serving plate. Spoon one-sixth of the tuna mixture into the cutter and smooth the top with a rubber spatula. Lift off the cutter. Top with microgreens and drizzle with truffle oil. Arrange 3 crisps against the tartare and serve at once.

GYOZA WRAPPERS

Gyoza wrappers are round wonton wrappers, available at Asian markets and many supermarkets. If you can't find them, simply use square wonton wrappers, and cut them into rounds with a 2-inch-diameter cookie cutter.

THIS IS A wonderfully healthy salad that combines the crunch of pine nuts with juicy grilled chicken and “buttery” lettuce. For the sweet corn, you can use freshly cooked, but canned corn will work just as well. You can of course eat the lettuce cups like a regular salad with knives and forks, but it’s also fun to pick them up and eat them with your fingers.

Char-Grilled Chicken Lettuce Cups

Makes 6 servings

3 pounds boneless and skinless chicken breast halves
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 ½ teaspoons salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
¾ cup drained canned or fresh corn
¾ cup finely chopped red onion
⅓ cup pine nuts, toasted (see page 000)
3 heads butter or Bibb lettuce, separated into 18 large leaves
2 ripe avocados, peeled, pitted, and sliced

Lemon Dijon Dressing

½ cup fresh lemon juice
¼ cup sugar
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
1 ½ cups extra virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Position the broiler rack about 6 inches from the source of heat and preheat the broiler. Brush the chicken with the oil and season with the salt and pepper. Broil the chicken, turning once, until lightly browned and an instant-read thermometer inserted through the side of a breast half into the center reads 165°F, about 12 minutes. Transfer to a plate and let cool for 10 minutes. (You can also grill the chicken breasts outside on an outdoor grill directly over medium heat for 12 to 15 minutes.)
 2. To make the dressing, process the lemon juice, sugar, and mustard in a food processor or blender. With the machine running, gradually add the olive oil and process until smooth and thickened. Season with salt and pepper.
 3. Shred chicken using two forks, or your fingers if you feel like getting dirty. Place in large mixing bowl. Add corn, red onion, and pine nuts. Mix with ¾ cup of the dressing.
 4. For each salad, place 3 lettuce leaves on each plate. Fill the leaves with equal amounts of the chicken salad and top with the avocado slices. Pass the remaining dressing on the side.
- Note:** To toast pine nuts, cook them in a small skillet over medium heat, stirring almost constantly, until lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate and let cool completely.

Moroccan Roasted Vegetable and Couscous Salad

Makes 8 to 12 servings

THIS COLORFUL SALAD makes a statement, especially if prepared in a large, clear bowl to show off its layers. Whether you serve it as a side dish at a grilled dinner or as a main course for lunch, it is light but full of flavor.

Dressing

¼ cup fresh lime juice
1 tablespoon tomato paste
2 teaspoons ground coriander seed
2 teaspoons ground cumin
Salt and freshly-ground black pepper
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, plus more as needed
¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup finely chopped fresh parsley

Roasted Vegetable

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for baking sheets
3 garlic cloves, chopped
Two 1½-pound eggplants, trimmed and cut into 1½-inch cubes
3 zucchini, cut into 1-inch cubes
1 each red, yellow, and orange bell peppers, seeded and cut into ½-inch-wide strips
1 large red onion, cut into ½-inch-thick half-moons
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Couscous

One 5-ounce package couscous
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
½ teaspoon salt
1 ½ cups (6 ounces) crumbled rindless goat cheese
1 pint cherry tomatoes, cut into halves
½ cup coarsely chopped pitted kalamata olives
One 5-ounce package mixed spring greens
1 cup fresh parsley leaves

1. To make the dressing, whisk the lime juice, tomato paste, coriander, cumin, and cayenne in a medium bowl. Gradually whisk in the oil, then add the parsley. Season the dressing with salt and pepper, and, if desired, additional cayenne. (The dressing should be spicy, so don't skimp on the cayenne.) Cover and set aside.
2. Position racks in the center and top third of the oven and preheat to 475°F. Lightly oil 2 large rimmed baking sheets.
3. To prepare the roasted vegetables, mix ¼ cup of oil and the garlic in a large bowl. Add the eggplant, zucchini, bell peppers, and onion and mix to coat. Season with salt and pepper. Spread on the baking sheets. Roast, stirring occasionally and switching the positions of the sheets from top to bottom after 20 minutes, until the vegetables are tender and their edges are beginning to brown, about 40 minutes. Let cool.
4. Meanwhile, start the couscous. Bring 2 cups of water, the oil, and the salt to a boil in a medium saucepan over high heat. Add the couscous and stir. Remove from the heat and cover tightly. Let stand until the couscous is tender, about 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork, transfer to a bowl, and let cool. Break up any clumps of couscous with your fingers.

Choose a very large glass bowl to hold the salad, layering the ingredients against the sides of the bowl so they are visible. Spread the couscous in the bowl, and drizzle with a few tablespoons of the dressing. Top the goat cheese, then the tomatoes and olives. Add the roasted vegetables, and drizzle with a few more tablespoons of dressing. In a separate bowl, toss the mixed greens, parsley and remaining dressing, then heap them on top of the vegetables. Serve immediately, being sure to include all of the ingredients in each portion.

GRINDING SPICES
Spices play a big role in my cooking. I use fresh, dried, and ground. But I don't want you to have to buy dozens of bottles of each spice. You can buy just the whole dried spices and grind what you need at home as you need it. To grind them, you can hand crush the spices in a mortar and pestle, or use an inexpensive electric coffee grinder (with a propeller blade, not the burr style) that you have set aside for grinding spices instead of coffee so you don't transfer flavors.



DESSERTS

Strawberry Shortcake Scones

Makes 8 servings

I'VE NEVER MET anybody who didn't love a good scone. (Emphasis on *good* of course; not those dry brick-like ones sold behind too many coffee counters.) And I dare say this recipe will make the best scones you've ever tasted: tender and sweet. I usually make two batches at once—one for Ken and the children to nibble on and one for company. You may substitute a nice fruit liqueur, such as Grand Marnier, rum, or brandy for the water when sweetening the strawberries. The scones can be made up to 8 hours ahead, covered with plastic wrap and stored at room temperature.

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2 quarts strawberries, sliced,
plus 4 whole strawberries for garnish
1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon
granulated sugar, divided, plus more
for topping scones
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour,
plus more for work surface
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
12 tablespoons (1 1/2 sticks) cold
unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
2/3 cup whole milk
2 large eggs
1 cup Whipped Cream (see page 000)

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 425°F.
2. Combine the strawberries, 2 tablespoons of sugar, and 2 tablespoons water in a medium bowl. Set aside to let the strawberries give off some juices, at least 20 minutes and up to 2 hours.
3. Sift the flour, the remaining 3 tablespoons sugar, the baking powder, and salt together into a medium bowl. Add the butter. Using a pastry cutter or two knives, cut the butter into the flour mixture until it resembles coarse crumbs with some pea-sized pieces of butter. Mix the milk and egg together with a fork until well combined. Gradually stir the milk mixture into the flour mixture until just until it forms a soft dough. Do not overmix.
4. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface. Cut the dough into four equal pieces. Shape each into a round about 2 1/2 inches wide and 1-inch thick. Place on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake until well risen and golden brown, 15 to 18 minutes. Transfer to a wire cooling rack and let cool.
5. Split each scone in half crosswise. For each serving, place a scone bottom on a dessert plate, top with a quarter of the sliced berries and cream, add the scone top, and garnish with a whole strawberry. Serve immediately.

LISA VANDERPUMP ~ Simply Divine

edit, cut
1 line

DRINKS

Villa Blanca Raspberry Mojito

YOU KNOW I'M PARTIAL to anything pink, but there's truly nothing more refreshing on a sunny day than a raspberry mojito. There's no point in just making one, so I'm going to give you the recipe for a whole pitcher. You may add more sugar to taste. I always make sure to have extra mint leaves and whole raspberries on hand to garnish not only the pitcher, but also the tray I place it on.

1/3 cup fresh raspberries
1/2 cup fresh mint leaves, packed
3 limes, quartered
3 tablespoons sugar,
preferably superfine or bartenders'
sugar, as needed
6 ounces light rum
12 ounces club soda, as needed

1. Muddle the raspberries, mint leaves, and limes in the bottom of your pitcher with a muddler or wooden spoon. Mix in the sugar.
2. Fill a cocktail shaker halfway full with crushed ice. Add rum and shake for 10 seconds to chill. Pour into the pitcher. Add more crushed ice to the pitcher, then fill to the top with club soda.

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Chapter # ~ DESCRIPTION



Pimm's No. 1 Cup Cocktail

Makes 6 servings

WHILE LONG ISLAND has its alcoholic iced tea, Britain has a delicious spirited fruit punch called "Pimm's No. 1 Cup." Pimm's is a party drink, and I often serve it as the "house cocktail," with bottles of Pimm's and soda and bowls of the garnishes to allow guests to make their own. You can also add oranges and strawberries to make a "Garden Party Pimm's," but I prefer it this way.

1 small apple, cored but unpeeled
 1 lemon
 1 Persian or Kirby cucumber,
 scrubbed but unpeeled
 1¼ cups Pimm's No. 1 Cup
 2½ cups lemon-lime carbonated soda
 6 large mint sprigs

1. Cut half of the apple into thick wedges, and the remainder into thin slices. Do the same for the lemon and cucumber. Put the apple, lemon, and cucumber in a large pitcher.
2. Add the Pimm's Cup, then the soda. Stir gently.
3. For each drink, spoon the fruit into a tall glass. Add ice, then pour in the liquid. Garnish with a mint sprig and serve.

A PIMM'S PRIMER

This cocktail can be quite confusing if you don't know the terminology. So let's clear it all up while you're still nice and sober, shall we? Pimm's is a brand of bottled liqueur that is pre-mixed with fruit juices and spices (also called a "fruit cup."). Pimm's No. 1 Cup, the one you'll find most readily in the stores, has a gin base. (Pimm's No. 3 has a brandy base; No. 6 is vodka-based.) To make a Pimm's No. 1 Cup cocktail, you combine Pimm's No. 1 cup, lemon-lime soda, and fresh sliced fruit. (Yes, cucumber is a fruit, darling.)

CHAPTER

{ 8 }

Lazy Days

HERE ARE TIMES, particularly after dark or when the weather isn't cooperating, that you must bring the informal party inside. These I call the "lazy days." Whether you're just having girlfriends over or someone pops by unexpectedly, your meal can still be delightfully easy and simply delicious.

Of course, the presentation should still be beautiful. Any food, no matter how simple, is elevated when served on a lovely plate with fresh flowers. Even peanut butter and jelly would look wonderful with an artful arrangement—cutting the sandwich with cookie cutters and garnishing the plate with fresh fruit and nuts, for example. (Although truth be told, I would never serve peanut butter and jelly at any time to anyone. I could never eat it. We don't mix savory with sweet in one bite in the U.K. It's just not done.)

One of my best tips for entertaining on lazy days is to let your servingware do the work for you. By that I mean let them make such a statement, not much else is needed. For instance, when I'm serving a really simple meal indoors, I always try and use the largest platter I can find. Just one thing done on a grand scale will give you a strong impact.

I have quite a varied collection of pewter bowls, stamped platters, and enormous trays. I purchase them whenever I see them—they're quite rare and so useful. A large platter can be used for a salad, pasta, piles of sandwiches—almost anything. If you don't have a lot of storage room for oversized dishes, pop them under a bed until you need them.

As in food for Sunny Days, the menu needn't be formal. Who knows who might pop by? As in the last chapter, I'm giving you all the recipes together for you to mix and match.

The thing with wine tasting is you don't swallow—you spit. It kind of goes against everything I've ever been taught, really —Lisa Vanderpump





RECIPES TO MIX AND MATCH

Striped Salad with Honey Balsamic Vinaigrette

Makes 6 to 8 servings

I'VE FOUND THAT when I have the girls over, they mostly want to eat just salad. Here is my divine take on a Cobb salad that is sure to impress and easy to assemble. For this to look really good though, you must serve it on as large a platter as you can find. An antique-looking salad bowl big enough to bathe a baby in would be ideal, but even if you only have a flat, rectangular tray, use it. We need a giant canvas for these gorgeous greens.

Honey Balsamic Vinaigrette

½ cup balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons honey
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 cup (4 ounces) crumbled blue cheese
One 15-ounce can corn kernels, drained and rinsed
2 small red onions, diced
¾ cup pine nuts, toasted (see page 000)

1. To make the vinaigrette, whisk the vinegar, lemon juice, and honey in a medium bowl. Gradually whisk in the olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Mix the iceberg and romaine lettuce in a large bowl. Toss with ½ cup of the dressing. Spread the lettuce evenly over a large, deep platter.
3. Arrange the ham in a neat row on top of the lettuce in the center of the platter. Add tomatoes, avocados, eggs, blue cheese, corn, onion, and pine nuts in strips on either side of the ham. Serve with the remaining dressing passed on the side.

YOU CAN OVERCOMPLICATE any recipe, but I don't see the point. I could tell you to grow your own lentils, then pick them, and soak them, but we would be here for weeks! My version uses ready-to-go canned lentil beans (try and find organic), tastes delightful, and any lazy ass can make it! As we did with our soups in Chapter 4 (page OO), serve your guests from a large tureen at the table, and pass around a pretty tray of garnishes: bowls of crushed hot pepper flakes, chopped fresh parsley, crème fraîche, Parmesan cheese, or whatever toppings you have on hand. Since it's hardly any extra work, I like to make twice as much soup as I'll need, and then freeze the extra. That way I have a quick dinner all ready for another Lazy Day.

Lazy Ass Lentil Soup

Makes 6 to 8 servings

2 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
 3 ounces chopped pancetta
 1 medium red onion,
 chopped into half moons
 2 garlic cloves, chopped
 2 quarts packaged organic
 chicken stock
 Two 15-ounce cans lentils,
 drained and rinsed
 One 14-ounce can diced
 tomatoes with juices
 ½ cup hearty red wine, such as Shiraz
 ¼ teaspoon dried crushed
 red pepper flakes
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 Assorted garnishes for serving
 (see above)

1. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the pancetta and sauté until crispy, about 5 minutes. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion softens, about 3 minutes.
2. Add the stock, lentils, tomatoes and their juices, wine, and red pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, and keep warm.
3. Serve the soup hot, allowing each guest to add toppings as they wish.

French Onion Tart

Makes 8 appetizer servings

WHEN I WAS COLLECTING my favorite entertaining recipes, I called Pandora, and she insisted I include this one. Onion tarts are very popular in the south of France, and we all grew quite fond of them when we lived there. The quiche shell is partially baked before adding the filling—otherwise, the bottom crust would be soggy. The pastry is lined with foil and weighed down with pastry weights before baking to keep the sides from falling in. Pastry weights are available at kitchen shops, or you may use dried beans or uncooked rice. (The beans and rice can be stored in an airtight container and reused as pastry weights for a few months.) Serve with a nice wine—like our Villa Blanca Sauvignon Blanc—and your guests will believe you are a posh hostess indeed.

All-purpose flour,
 for rolling puff pastry
 1 sheet (half of one 17.3-ounce box)
 frozen puff pastry, thawed
 6 bacon slices, coarsely chopped
 2 large onions, chopped
 3 large eggs
 ¾ cup whole milk
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground
 black pepper
 ⅛ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
 ½ cup (2 ounces) shredded Gruyère

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 400°F. Lightly butter a 9-inch-square tart pan with a removable bottom.
2. Roll out the puff pastry on a lightly floured work surface into a ⅞-inch thick rectangle, removing the creases in the pastry as you go. Fit the pastry into the tart pan, being sure to fit the pastry into the corners. Roll the rolling pin over the top of the pan to cut off the excess puff pastry. Pierce the bottom and sides of the pastry well with a fork. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and freeze while preparing the filling.

ALL SORTS OF SHAPES

I like to bake my French Onion Tart in a 9-inch-square pan because it makes the tart easy to cut into bite-sized (well, perhaps two-bite) servings. You can also use a 14 x 5-inch rectangular tart pan. If baked in a 9-inch-diameter round pan (you might not need all of the custard filling), it's best to slice the tart into wedges and serve on a plate with mixed greens.

3. Cook the bacon in a large skillet over medium-high heat, stirring often, until crisp and browned, about 8 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to paper towels. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons of the fat from the skillet.
4. Add the onions to the skillet and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, stirring often, until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and let cool until tepid. Stir in the bacon. Whisk the eggs, milk, salt, pepper, and nutmeg together in another bowl. Set aside.
5. Meanwhile, line the pastry with aluminum (or aluminium) foil to protect from becoming too crisp. Fill with pastry weights, and place the pan on a baking sheet. Bake until the edges are lightly browned and set, 12 to 15 minutes. Remove the baking sheet and pan from the oven. Lift off the weights and remove the foil. Pierce the pastry with the fork again, return to the oven, and continue baking until the pastry is beginning to brown, about 5 minutes more. If the pastry puffs too much, just pierce it with the fork. Remove from the oven.
6. Sprinkle the cheese over the pastry. Scatter the onion mixture over the cheese, then pour in the custard, being careful not to overfill the pastry. Carefully return to the oven (if the custard spills under the pastry, it will be hard to remove the tart from the pan) and bake until the filling is evenly puffed and golden brown, about 30 minutes. Let cool in the pan for 5 minutes. Remove the sides of the pan. Cut into 24 rectangles. Serve warm or let cool to room temperature.



VILLA BLANCA WINES

One of the first things Ken and I did when we decided to open restaurants in California was to seek out a local vineyard to bottle our own wines. You may have seen us on the show travelling up to Summerland for a tasting. Villa Blanca wines are our restaurant's house wines, and they will be available at stores nationally later this year.

As you probably know by now, I am very visual, and our wine had to represent the feeling of Villa Blanca—elegant, yet relaxed, European, yet accessible. I designed the bottle with a unique hand-dipped top and the Villa Blanca crest on the front. It's simple, but looks fabulous on the table.

We currently have a very smooth Cabernet Sauvignon; a crisp Sauvignon Blanc; a newly-introduced Pinot Noir; and my personal favorite, a Rosé. Rosé is not as popular in the U.S. as it is in Europe, but I aim to change that. I am a strong advocate of Rosé. There is nothing better than a chilled Rosé at lunch or on a summer evening. Many Rosés I find too sweet, but the Villa Blanca Rosé is made from the Grenache grape. It's simply perfect; people go crazy for it.

WE WERE ALL sitting down one day before Villa Blanca opened trying to name our dishes. We were throwing out suggestions for this delicious, but dead easy pasta. We wanted a word that would describe how beautiful it was, and "Lolita," a term we'd all heard to describe a beautiful, tempting woman, came to mind. Like a beautiful woman, simplicity is what makes this pasta super sexy and beautifully delectable, so it remained.

Pasta Lolita Makes 4 to 6 servings

1 pound spaghetti
 3 tablespoons extra virgin-olive oil
 ½ cup minced red onion
 3 garlic cloves, minced
 2 boneless and skinless chicken breast halves, cooked and shredded
 4 ripe plum (Roma) tomatoes, seeded and chopped
 ⅓ cup pine nuts, toasted (see page 000)
 1 cup dry white wine
 1½ cups packaged organic chicken stock
 2 packed cups baby spinach
 ⅓ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the spaghetti and cook according to the package directions until al dente. Do not overcook the spaghetti, as it will be cooked in the sauce.
2. Meanwhile, as soon as the pot goes on to boil, start the sauce. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the red onion and garlic and reduce the heat to medium. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent, about 4 minutes. Add the chicken, tomatoes, and pine nuts. Cook until the tomatoes give off some juices, about 1 minute.
3. Add the wine and bring to a boil. Cook until the wine is evaporated to a few tablespoons, about 10 minutes. Add the stock and simmer for 5 minutes.
4. Drain the spaghetti well. Add to the chicken mixture, along with the spinach and Parmesan cheese. Stir over medium-low heat until the spinach is wilted, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Serve in bowls, with additional Parmesan cheese passed on the side.

THIS WONDERFUL, nutritious, vegetarian pasta has a pesto-based sauce. When we added it to the menu at Villa Blanca, we named it after the city that invented pesto: Genoa, Italy.

Spaghetti Genovese

Makes 4 to 6 servings

3 fingerling potatoes, cut lengthwise,
and then into 1/2-inch-thick slices
6 asparagus spears,
woody ends trimmed, cut on a diagonal
into 1/4-inch-thick slices
3 ounces (about 1 1/2 cups) haricot
verts or small thin green beans,
ends trimmed
1 pound spaghetti
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1/3 cup minced red onion
2 garlic cloves, minced
3/4 cup dry white wine
1/2 cup packaged organic chicken stock
1/3 cup pine nuts, toasted
(see Note OOO)
6 red teardrop or cherry
tomatoes, halved
1 cup Easy Peasy Pesto Sauce
(see page OOO)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Freshly grated Parmesan cheese,
for serving

1. Bring a large saucepan of lightly salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the potatoes and cook until barely tender, about 8 minutes. Use a wire sieve or slotted spoon to transfer the potatoes to a colander. Rinse with cold water, drain again, and transfer to a bowl.
2. Add the asparagus to boiling water and cook until crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Use tongs to transfer the asparagus to a bowl of cold water.
3. Add the green beans to boiling water and cook until crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Drain in a colander, and rinse under cold water. Pour the asparagus into the colander to drain.
4. Meanwhile, bring a new pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the spaghetti and cook according to the package directions until al dente.
5. As soon the pot goes on to boil, start the sauce. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onions and garlic and reduce the heat to medium. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent, about 4 minutes. Move the onion mixture to one side of the pan. Add the potatoes to the empty side and cook until lightly browned. Add the asparagus and green beans and cook, stirring often, until heated through, about 2 minutes.
6. Add the wine and bring to a boil over high heat. Simmer until the wine has reduced to a few tablespoons, about 5 minutes. Add the stock and simmer for 5 minutes. Add the pine nuts.
7. Drain the spaghetti and return to the cooking pot. Add the vegetable mixture and the pesto. Toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper. Serve in bowls and top with the tomato halves. Serve hot, with the Parmesan passed on the side.

Easy Peasy Pesto Sauce

Makes 3 1/2 cups

IF YOU'RE IN a pinch for time or feeling extra lazy, there are plenty of wonderful pre-packaged pesto sauces. However it's really quite an easy sauce to make, it fills the kitchen with lovely smells, and tastes so delicious fresh! Give it a try, and I promise you won't go back to jars.

2 packed cups basil leaves
1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 cup pine nuts, toasted (see page
OOO)
3 garlic cloves
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more
as needed
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Fit a food processor with the metal chopping blade. Add the basil, Parmesan, pine nuts, and garlic and process until ground into a thick paste. With the machine running, gradually add the olive oil until absorbed into the basil mixture. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Transfer to an airtight container. Pour enough oil over the top of the pesto to cover. Refrigerate for up to 1 month. Bring to room temperature and stir before using. Before storing, add enough oil to recover the pesto.



DESSERTS

Brandied Fruit Coulis

Makes 8 servings

I JUST ADORE homemade fruit sauce poured over fresh ice cream or a slice of cake. And it's such a forgiving recipe: you can use almost any fruit you have on hand—fresh, just past fresh, or canned—in any combination that suits you. Place a ladyfinger or digestive biscuit—you call them chocolate cookies in America, I call them delicious no matter where I am—in a bowl, top with ice cream, and ladle the warm fruit coulis over the top. Divine!

One 20-ounce can pineapple chunks
in pineapple juice

One 12-ounce can peaches in juice

3 cups sliced fresh
strawberries, divided

1 cup fresh blueberries

¼ cup orange juice

¼ cup sugar

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

¼ cup peach-flavored brandy

Ladyfingers or digestive biscuits

Crème Fraîche (see page 000)
or vanilla ice cream, for serving

1. Drain the pineapple and peaches, reserving the juices. Cut the peaches into bite-sized chunks. Transfer the pineapple and peaches to a bowl and set aside.

2. Combine the juices, 2 cups water, 1½ cups of sliced strawberries, blueberries, orange juice, sugar, and lemon juice in a medium nonaluminum saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the blueberries are tender, about 10 minutes.

3. Stir in pineapple, peaches, and the remaining 1½ cups strawberries. Serve warm over ladyfingers or digestive biscuits with crème fraîche.



Mint Gin and Tonic

Makes 1 serving

THERE IS NOTHING easier than a gin and tonic (except perhaps a vodka and tonic, which I also adore—simply substitute the gin for vodka), and nothing more refreshing. You must use truly bitter tonic water (stay away from the fizzy soda—the best brands are sold in single-serving-sized bottles), and serve in a nice, cold glass.

2 ounces London dry gin
½ fresh lime
6 mint leaves
Tonic water

1. Fill an 8-ounce highball glass with ice cubes. Add gin. Squeeze lime juice into glass. Add 4 mint leaves. Stir carefully.
2. Fill glass with tonic water. Add 2 mint leaves to top.

NO-MORE-MALARIA COCKTAIL

The gin and tonic has a fascinating history. It was invented in the eighteenth century as a means to get the British living in India to drink tonic water. Europeans were especially susceptible to malaria when they arrived in Asia, and back then tonic water had large amounts of quinine in it—good for fighting malaria, bad for the taste buds. To counteract the bitterness of the tonic water, the Brits added gin. No one complained further.

CHAPTER

{ 9 }

Darling Days

here's nothing more precious than creating a special occasion for or about children—and you certainly don't need to spend \$60,000 to do it! I have thrown the most elegant baby showers, birthday parties, and even play dates that were both kid- and wallet-friendly.

I recently threw a shower for a dear friend of mine who was expecting twins: a boy and a girl. I gave her a pink-and-blue themed tea party. It was very little work, but very pretty. We had finger sandwiches, champagne, and English tea of course. Everyone got to take a teacup home as their guest gift filled with a small bag of chocolates. I adore teacups—almost as much as I love shoes! I am always on the lookout for beautiful cups and saucers, especially at flea markets and vintage shops, because they make such lovely gifts. They needn't match; in fact, I like it better when they don't. Comparing teacups and their different patterns and designs becomes a conversation starter for your guests.

Another baby shower I hosted was called "An Afternoon to Remember." Aside for covering the tables with baby blanket fur, the highlight was the music. I downloaded 15 of my friend's favorite classic songs—by Ella Fitzgerald, Harry Connick, Jr., and the like—and we had them playing throughout the party. The CD made a lovely present for her to remember the event.

Generally gatherings to celebrate little ones include presents. Of everything you do, make sure the gift table is done up beautifully as it will be one of the first things people see and the centerpiece of the party. Cover it with cut fabric that matches your theme, and decorate with teddy bears and books interspersed with little vases of flowers. I do believe you

TWO BITES

In any shape, the tea sandwich should ideally be two bites. A whole day's calories for some *Housewives* I know. . . .

should allot time for the presents to be opened in front of everyone. A lot of the pleasure people get when giving gifts comes from seeing the recipient's face when she opens it. Don't deny them that.

The key to darling days is to make everything in miniature: tiny tasters, mini desserts, and of course finger sandwiches. There are any number of combinations of tea sandwiches you can make, but here are my favorites.

TEA SANDWICHES



Before I give you my filling recipes, let's talk about how to properly assemble a tea sandwich. Even the most delicious sandwich will be passed over if it doesn't look divine. There are no rules for the contents: you may spread almost anything inside a tea sandwich, sweet or savory (except maybe peanut butter and jelly, or if you do, I'm not eating them!); you can mix and match fillings with whatever type of bread you prefer; and you can and should be as creative as possible when arranging them. The sky's the limit. Really push yourself to try something new. It's certainly small and inexpensive enough that you needn't fear a costly mistake, and you just might discover you have a petite gift!

-----TYPES OF TEA SANDWICHES -----

As I mentioned, you can really put anything you'd like inside a tea sandwich: a single layer of jam, flavored cream cheese, cold meat, roasted vegetables, or a creamy salad. You can be as simple as you'd like, or elegant: sliced cucumbers to caviar, anything's allowed!

For me, the bigger decision is how I'm going to present each sandwich. You can cut small squares or simple shapes with a knife, use a cookie cutter to punch out anything from a circle to a flower, or serve them open-faced. No matter which cut you use, here are my top tea sandwich tips:



Use frozen bread. It cuts nicely, and won't scrunch up when you add the spread. Don't worry; it will defrost naturally in less than 30 minutes.

If you are cutting shapes by hand with a knife, first remove the crusts from the bread, then assemble your sandwich on whole pieces of bread. Top it with a second slice before you cut into smaller sizes. This will give you a clean, matched edge on all sides.

If you can, ask your baker to slice a whole loaf in horizontal rather than vertical slices for you. You'll get more surface area and less waste that way. Slices 1/4 inches thick are ideal.

Don't toss the extra bread scraps! You can freeze them for future bread crumbs, stuffings, to plump up a meatloaf, or to create a delicious bread pudding.

To keep sandwiches you've made ahead of time from drying out, cover them loosely with waxed paper, then gently lay a damp kitchen towel over them before sticking them in the refrigerator.

-----DARLING SANDWICH IDEAS -----

Vary the Shapes

I think small rectangles look rather nice all lined up on a pretty platter, but I wouldn't want all my sandwiches to look the same. Triangles are always elegant. You can use flower shapes, then cut a smaller flower window in the top bread to show a peek of the filling below—very pretty. I've also used a solid bottom and crossed two thin strips on top to make a little "X" kiss shape.

EDIBLE FLOWERS

As you know, I love flowers, and I decorate desserts with them quite a bit. If you want to garnish individual portions with edible flowers, you can grow them yourself, get them from a grocer or nursery that sells labeled edible flowers, or even order them online "crystallized"—covered with sugar that makes them last for up to a year.

Vary the Bread

Using all white bread is far too boring. I like to use different flavored and different colored breads as well. Or mix them up on the same sandwich. You can get a nice effect using a darker color bread on the bottom and a lighter on top, especially if you lay them out like a checkerboard.

Choose a bread with a “tight crumb,” that is, one that doesn’t have big holes. If you use a bread that is too holey, the filling will fall out of the sandwich.

Your baker can also dye bread for you. I had some bread made pale blue for a baby boy shower—not all the bread, just mixed in here and there for fantastic visual impact.

Edge Your Sandwiches

Rolling at least one of your sandwich shapes in a chopped color or texture will add to the entire presentation. Spread a thin layer of plain yoghurt around the edges, then roll the sandwich in chopped nuts, poppy seeds, or finely diced parsley.

Garnish Your Sandwiches

Top a few sandwiches with a toothpick speared with a bright red grape tomato or olive. Fresh greens and herbs like parsley or rosemary also look lovely sitting on top.

You can be as simple as you
like, or elegant . . . —*Lisa Vanderpump*

Open Faced Art

If you’ve got the time and want to get really creative, I urge you to try decorating some open-faced sandwiches. Start with an even layer of cream cheese on the bottom slice. (Use plain white for some, and colored for others.) Then cut vegetables or fruits into paper-thin

slices. Use a small knife to par them down even more. Cucumbers make lovely strips. Layer the slices on a slight overlap. Place seeds or spices in decorative rows around them.

It can be as simple as just edging the sandwich—or you might unleash your inner Picasso and make diagonals, ocean waves, even initials. Fresh green herb leaves can be flattened and pressed onto the sandwiches in different patterns: try flat Italian parsley, mint leaves, fresh dill, tarragon, chives that can be bent into really nice shapes—really anything edible that is pleasing to the eye. Strawberries, thin slices of red pepper, or red caviar can add another dimension of color. And nothing beats edible flowers: pansies, snapdragons, violas or orchids. Just make sure they are pesticide free and meant for eating!

Pinky's Homemade Strawberry Cream Cheese

OF COURSE I HAD to give you my own recipe for strawberry cream cheese since it's pink and tastes far better than anything you could buy in the store.

One 8-ounce package
cream cheese, softened
1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar
1 cup fresh strawberries, hulled

Mix all ingredients in a blender or food processor until smooth. You can also substitute 4 tablespoons of strawberry jam for the fresh strawberries and sugar.

CHILD-FRIENDLY TEA SANDWICHES

I find that the guests even on darling days celebrating children are usually adults, but you might want to have some child-friendly sandwich offerings as well. Anything in a recognizable shape or given a fun name is sure to be embraced by a child. In Britain, we make it a habit of cutting our regular children's sandwiches into 1-inch thick strips, rather than just cutting them diagonally. We christen the strips "soldiers," and the children gobble them up. You might also try matching the shape of the sandwich to the filling inside. For instance, an apple shaped sandwich might have a fruit filling. And nothing is cuter than tuna fish sandwiches cut like little fishies.

Prosciutto Tea Sandwich with Fig Butter

Makes about 20 tea sandwiches

I LOVE THIS flavor combination: the wonderfully salty smoked prosciutto with the sweet fig and Russian black bread.

4 tablespoons unsalted butter,
softened
20 slices Russian black bread,
crusts trimmed
4 tablespoons fig preserves
8 slices prosciutto, thinly sliced
3 cups baby spinach

1. Butter 10 bread slices. Spread with a thin layer of the preserves. Divide the prosciutto and spinach evenly over the slices.
2. Butter the remaining bread slices. Place, buttered sides down, on the prepared slices to make sandwiches. Cut as desired.
3. Transfer to a platter, cover loosely, and refrigerate until ready to serve, up to 4 hours.

----- VARIATION -----

Open-Faced Alternative

You could also serve this as an open-faced sandwich. Spread butter and fig preserves on bottom slice of bread. Layer prosciutto evenly in one thin slice. Trim to shape with a sharp knife. Garnish with baby spinach, an asparagus tip, or a rosette of very thinly sliced melon held on with a dollop of plain cream cheese.

Chicken Salad Tea Sandwiches with Toasted Almonds

Makes about 3 cups salad, 20 tea sandwiches

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup (about 3 ounces) natural sliced almonds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mayonnaise
 2 medium celery ribs, finely chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup seeded and finely chopped green pepper
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped yellow onion
 1 teaspoon Hungarian sweet paprika
 2 cups finely chopped cooked chicken
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 20 slices sourdough bread, crusts trimmed

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spread the almonds on a baking sheet. Bake, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, about 8 minutes. Let cool. Finely chop the almonds. Spread the almonds on a plate.
2. Mix the mayonnaise, celery, green pepper, onion, and paprika in a medium bowl. Add the chicken and mix again. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or preferably overnight.
3. Using a cookie cutter about 2½ inches in diameter, cut out 40 decorative shapes from the sliced bread. Spread about 2½ tablespoons of the chicken filling on 20 of the bread slices, and top with the remaining slices. Press the top of each sandwich slightly so the salad peeks out from the sides. Roll the edges of each sandwich in the almonds. Transfer to a platter, cover loosely, and refrigerate until ready to serve, up to 4 hours.



Smoked Salmon Tea Sandwiches

Makes about 12 tea sandwiches

½ cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh dill
1 tablespoon finely chopped shallot
1 tablespoon drained and rinsed nonpareil capers
2 teaspoons prepared horseradish
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
12 slices pumpernickel bread, crusts trimmed
8 wide, thin slices smoked salmon

1. Mix the mayonnaise with dill, shallot, capers, and horseradish in a small bowl. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Butter half of the bread slices. Top with the mayonnaise mixture and the salmon. Butter the remaining bread slices. Place, buttered slices down, on the prepared slices to make sandwiches. Cut as desired.
3. Transfer to a platter, cover loosely, and refrigerate until ready to serve, up to 4 hours.

Dilled Egg Salad Tea Sandwich

Makes 2 cups egg salad, 16 tea sandwiches

YES, I AM GIVING you instructions on how to hard-boil an egg. Don't take offense; I'm sure you're naturally great at it. But for a perfect egg salad, we need perfectly cooked eggs. Green-ringed yolks would never do!

6 large eggs
⅓ cup mayonnaise
1 medium celery rib, finely diced
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh dill, plus 16 small dill sprigs for garnish
1 tablespoon finely chopped shallot
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
16 slices white bread, crusts trimmed

1. Place the eggs in a medium saucepan and add enough cold water to cover. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Remove from the heat and cover the saucepan. Let stand for 15 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the eggs to a bowl of ice water. Let cool. Crack and peel the eggs under a thin stream of cold running water. Chop the eggs.
2. Mix the mayonnaise, celery, chopped dill, shallot, and mustard together in a medium bowl. Add the eggs, mix again, and season with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours, or preferably overnight.
3. Using a cookie cutter about 2½ inches in diameter, cut 32 decorative shapes from the sliced bread. Spread each with about 2 tablespoons of egg salad, and top with the remaining slices. Transfer to a platter, cover loosely, and refrigerate until ready to serve, up to 4 hours. Just before serving, top each sandwich with a dill sprig.



DESSERTS

A darling day would not be complete without platters of tiny cookies and pastries for dessert. You can purchase gorgeous cookie trays with great variation at any grocery, so here are two uniquely British darling desserts.

Shortbread Cups with Chocolate Cream

Makes 3 dozen

THESE ARE PRETTY as a picture, and not difficult to make—if you have nonstick mini-muffin pans and a little wooden gadget called a tart tamper to help shape the dough into cups. You can find the tamper at kitchenware shops or online.

Shortbread Crust

1½ cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons white rice flour
or cornstarch
⅛ teaspoon salt
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
½ cup confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Filling

1 tablespoon plus 1½ teaspoons
all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon plus 1½ teaspoons
unsweetened cocoa powder,
preferably Dutch processed
¾ cup heavy cream
12 tablespoons (1½ sticks) unsalted
butter, at room temperature
½ cup confectioners' sugar,
plus more for garnish
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
36 fresh raspberries

1. To make the crust, sift the flour, rice flour, and salt together into a bowl. Beat the butter and confectioners' sugar together in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on high speed until light in color and texture, about 2 minutes. Beat in the vanilla. Gradually stir in the flour mixture. Gather the dough up into a thick disk, wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate until chilled, about 2 hours.
2. Position racks in the center and top third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray 3 mini-muffin pans (preferably nonstick) with nonstick spray. Roll the dough into 36 equal balls. Press each ball of dough into the bottom and sides of a mini-muffin cup. (If you have a wooden tartlet tamper, use it to press the dough into the cups.) Pierce the dough with a fork and freeze for 15 minutes.
3. Bake for 10 minutes. Remove the pans from the oven and quickly pierce with a fork to deflate the puffed cups. Return to the oven and continue baking until the cups are golden brown, about 10 minutes longer. If the pans are nonstick, the baking time may be a little shorter because the dark pans absorb the oven heat and bake the crusts more quickly than shiny pans. Let cool in the pans for 5 minutes. Carefully remove the cups from the pans, transfer to a wire cake rack, and let cool completely.
4. To make the filling, whisk the flour and cocoa together in a small saucepan. Whisk in a few tablespoons of the cream to dissolve the flour and cocoa and make a paste, then whisk in the remaining cream. Whisk over medium-low heat until thick and boiling. Transfer to a small bowl, press plastic wrap directly on the cocoa mixture surface to keep a skin from forming, and cool completely.
5. Beat the butter, ½ cup confectioners' sugar, and vanilla together in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on low speed until combined. Increase the speed to high, beat in the cooled cocoa mixture, and beat until light and fluffy, about 1 minute.
6. Transfer the cocoa filling to a pastry bag fitted with a ½-inch-wide fluted pastry tip. Pipe the filling into the cups. (Or, simply spoon the filling into a 1-gallon plastic food storage bag, snip off one corner of the bag about ½ inch from the point, and use as an impromptu pastry bag. It isn't as decorative, but it works.) Top each with a raspberry, sift confectioners' sugar on top, and serve.

MALTESERS SUNDAES

Ice cream brings out the darling in everyone, doesn't it? Especially sundaes. In Britain, Maltesers are chocolate-covered malted milk balls with a honeycombed center. What makes these special is how I present them. Serve scoops of rich vanilla ice cream in tall sundae glasses. Then spoon homemade hot fudge sauce at the table for your guests. Finally, pass around several silver trays with little teaspoons and bowls of toppings: mini candies, crushed pretzels, chopped nuts, fresh fruit, Whipped Cream (see page OOO), and of course whole and crushed malted milk balls!

Homemade Hot Fudge Sauce

Makes about 2 cups

STORE-BOUGHT SAUCE just doesn't compare to homemade hot fudge sauce—come to think of it, I might consider this a pantry staple! And it's so easy to make! This recipe is almost impossible to mess up, as you don't have to melt any sugar and risk burning it, or even use a double boiler.

One 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
 ½ cup (3 ounces) high-quality semisweet chocolate chips
 4 tablespoons (¼ cup) unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
 [½ teaspoon vanilla extract]

1. Combine the condensed milk, chocolate chips, and butter in a heavy-bottomed, medium saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the chocolate is melted. Remove from the heat. Stir in the vanilla. Serve warm.


 DRINKS

Raspberry Pomegranate Lemonade

Makes 8 servings

1 cup sugar
 ¾ cup fresh or thawed frozen raspberries
 1 cup pomegranate juice
 1 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
 (about 8 lemons)

1. Bring the sugar and 1 cup of water to a boil in a small saucepan, stirring until the sugar dissolves to create simple syrup. Remove from the heat and let cool completely.
2. Purée the raspberries in food processor or blender. Strain through a fine mesh sieve to remove the seeds.
3. Mix the raspberry purée, cooled simple syrup, pomegranate juice, and lemon juice in large pitcher. Add 6 to 9 cups cold water depending on how strong you like your lemonade. Serve over ice.

Hot Mint Tea

Makes 3 to 4 servings

HOT MINT TEA is very popular in Morocco, which in turn is a popular destination spot for Brits (and New York *Housewives* apparently). I highly encourage you to grow your own mint. It does well outdoors even after a harsh winter, but can also thrive inside on a sunny window sill. And it's great to have on hand for both cooking and garnishing.

⅓ cup firmly packed fresh mint leaves,
 plus extra leaves for garnish
 1 bag green tea
 ⅓ cup sugar
 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1. Wash the mint leaves. Bring 1½ cups of water to a boil in a large saucepan. Add the tea bag and sugar. Remove from heat and stir well. Cover and let steep for 1 hour. Remove and discard tea bag.
2. Add lemon juice and 1½ cups water. Return to a boil. Remove from heat. Serve hot. (Leftovers can be cooled and served over ice as a wonderful iced tea.)

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE. . . .

When I am cooking, my children are like bees to a honey pot, trying to scrounge a piece here or taste something there. With my spoon at the ready, I threaten to swat their precious hands as soon as they venture near. Now that they are older, they still hover, but with the intention of not just eating but taking all the leftovers. I am constantly replenishing the Tupperware in my cupboard!

CHAPTER

{10}

Chubby Days

ALWAYS LAUGH WHEN I see “skinny” this and “skinny” that. You can’t be on a diet all the time! And why should you be? I absolutely hate this national obsession with looking like a toothpick. There’s nothing natural about it. Or sexy for that matter. Just ask most men: would you rather shag a bony thing that seems as if it might break or do you prefer luscious curves? I promise you I know the answer. Skinny is not all it’s cut out to be.

Shall I starve myself to look so thin that I haven’t the energy to enjoy my life? And then drug myself just to be able to get out of bed? I can’t say that sounds like much of a life to me.

Having owned restaurants for so many years, I have a deep appreciation for food. I’m not sure I could shake it if I tried. And I don’t know too many skinny chefs—nor would I want to eat at their establishments! Perhaps my round bottom is to thank for my culinary success!

And so I present to you: Chubby Days. Decadent dishes for those days when you just don’t give a damn.

Now, before the nutritionists of the world get their knickers in a twist, I am not suggesting you eat like this all day every day. To do so would be just as bad for your body as starving yourself. It’s that balance we must find. I am a huge advocate of healthy eating. I don’t put processed or fast food junk into my body. And I make no secret of the fact that it is much harder to maintain your weight the older you get. I could enjoy far more chubby days when I was younger. But as long as you are sensible about eating, get enough exercise—at least half an hour of something vigorous five times a week—and minimize your carb intake at night, and relax, you will be fine!

So that being said. . . pass me another cookie.



MAIN COURSES

Bangers & Mash

Makes 6 servings

IT DOES SOUND rather naughty, and can look a bit naughty when you're eating it, I'll admit (I shiver to think how Taylor would eat them after her cotton candy exhibition), but bangers and mash are simply a mildly seasoned sausage served with mashed potatoes. I urge you to find a proper Cumberland sausage. There's nothing like it in the world. You can buy them online at www.britishbacon.com. Your local butcher might make bangers, which are both a generic name for sausages and a particular type of mild sausage.

2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
 12 link pork sausages, such as Cumberland or breakfast sausages (about 1½ pounds total), each pierced once with a fork
 2 shallots, sliced
 1 garlic clove, minced
 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 3 cups apple cider
 Mashed Potatoes (see page 000)

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 350°F.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a large, ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and cook, turning occasionally, until browned, about 5 minutes. Transfer the sausages to a plate.
3. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and the shallots to the skillet. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook, stirring often, until the shallots soften, about 2 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until it is fragrant, about 30 seconds. Sprinkle in the flour and stir well. Stir in the cider and bring to a simmer. Return the sausages to the skillet and cover.
4. Bake for 20 minutes. Uncover and bake until the gravy thickens and the sausages are cooked through, about 5 minutes.
5. To serve, spoon the mashed potatoes onto plates. Add the sausages and top with gravy.

BANG, BANG

We call sausages "bangers" in the U.K. because in the past, when the skin shrunk as you cooked them, they did explode on occasion. It was quite common during World War II because extra water was added to sausages due to meat being rationed. Thankfully, bangers today are made with high-quality meat so it's not a fear.

DESSERTS

Spotted Dick

Makes 6 to 8 servings

FROM BANGERS TO DICK, you're starting to think you bought a different kind of book, aren't you? Spotted Dick is in fact a traditional English steamed pudding (where the pudding is steamed in a special mold called a "pudding pot" over simmering water on the stove) with dried fruit. The dried fruit bits are the "spots," but I can't vouch for how the word "dick" got associated with a pudding. Some food historians believe it was a muddling of accents from "pudding" to "puddick." Others say that "dick" was a name for cheese in the 1800s. In any case, I think you'll agree it is quite delicious. Pudding pots for steaming aren't found as readily in stores here in the States as they are in Britain, but you don't need one for my recipe, as I like to bake mine as a roll.

Filling

Unsalted butter or vegetable shortening, for the foil
 ½ cup seedless raisins
 ⅓ cup packed light brown sugar
 ¼ cup dried currants
 ¼ cup chopped dates
 Grated zest of 1 lemon
 1 teaspoon apple pie spice or ¼ teaspoon each ground cinnamon, ground cloves, ground allspice, and freshly grated nutmeg

Dough

1½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling out dough
 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
 ½ teaspoon baking powder
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 8 tablespoons chilled vegetable shortening, cut into ½-inch pieces
 ½ cup whole milk

Custard Sauce

2 cups whole milk
 6 large egg yolks
 ½ cup granulated sugar
 ¾ teaspoon vanilla extract



1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 350°F. Tear off an 18-inch-long sheet of aluminum foil, and butter the foil.
2. To make the filling, combine the raisins, brown sugar, currants, dates, zest, and spices in a small bowl.
3. To make the dough, sift the flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, and salt together into a medium bowl. Add the shortening. Using a pastry blender or two knives, cut in the shortening until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs with some pea-sized pieces. Stir in the milk to make a soft dough. Gather up the dough in the bowl.
4. Place the dough on well-floured work surface and dust the top with flour. Roll out into an 8 × 12-inch rectangle, with the long side facing you. Spread the dried fruit filling over the dough, leaving a ½-inch border of dough at the top. Brush the exposed dough with cold water. Starting at the long end near you, roll up the dough and press the long seam closed. Place the foil next to you, buttered side up. Using a long metal spatula as an aide, transfer the roll to the center of the foil. Bring up the foil to loosely enclose the roll (it should not be tightly wrapped), and crimp the packet closed. Transfer to a baking sheet.
5. Bake until the roll has risen and lightly browned (carefully open the foil to check), about 1 hour.
6. Meanwhile, make the custard sauce. Place a bowl with a wire sieve near the stove. Heat the milk in a heavy-bottomed, medium saucepan over medium heat until small bubbles appear around the edges. Remove from the heat. Whisk the egg yolks and sugar together in a heat-proof bowl until pale and thick, about 1 minute. Gradually whisk in the hot milk, then return to the saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon (and being sure to get into the corners of the saucepan), until the custard reads 185°F on an instant-read thermometer and is thick enough to lightly coat the spoon. (If you run your finger through the custard on the spoon, it will cut a swath.) Immediately strain the custard through the sieve into the bowl. Stir in the vanilla. The sauce can be served warm or chilled. To chill quickly, place the bowl in a larger bowl of icy water, and stir often.
7. Unwrap the roll (watch out for steam), and cut crosswise into thick slices. Transfer each slice to a bowl, add the custard sauce, and serve warm.

QUICK CUSTARD

If you're crunched for time, and if your market carries it—look in the International or British section—you can whip up a quick custard using a packet of Bird's Custard Sauce. Or, if it's the holiday season, store-bought eggnog makes a lovely substitute.

Millionaire's Shortbread

Makes 24 bar cookies

AS IF BUTTERY SHORTBREAD wasn't delicious enough, in Britain we've gone and topped it with *dulce de leche* and chocolate. It's almost as rich as Andy Cohen. Almost.

12 tablespoons (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus more for the baking pan
¼ cup sugar
1½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for the baking pan
Pinch of salt
One 14-ounce can *dulce de leche*, warmed until spreadable
10 ½ ounces (three 3.5-ounce bars) semisweet or bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
1 ½ teaspoons vegetable shortening

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 350°F. Lightly butter a 9-inch square baking pan. Line the bottom and 2 sides of the pan with an 18-inch long strip of aluminum foil, letting the excess foil hang over the sides. Lightly butter the foil. Dust the inside of the pan with flour and tap out the excess flour.
2. Beat the butter and sugar together in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on high speed until light in color and texture, about 3 minutes. With the mixer on low speed, add the flour and salt and mix until the dough clumps together. Press firmly and evenly into the pan. Pierce the dough all over with a fork. Bake until the shortbread is lightly browned, about 25 minutes. Cool in the pan on a wire rack for 20 minutes. Freeze until chilled, about 30 minutes.
3. Spread the dulce de leche over the shortbread layer. Freeze until the dulce de leche is set and chilled, about 20 minutes.
4. Melt the chocolate and shortening together in the top part of a double boiler set over very hot, but not simmering, water, stirring occasionally. Pour the melted chocolate over the dulce de leche, smoothing with a metal spatula. Let the chocolate layer set at room temperature.
5. Lift up on the foil "handles" to remove the pastry from the pan in one piece. Using a sharp, thin-bladed knife, cut into 24 equal bars.

DULCE DE LECHE

I won't have you making anything from scratch that takes a terribly long time or is overly complicated, and dulce de leche is one of those things. *Dulce de leche*, which means "milk candy" in Spanish, is nothing more than milk that has been slowly heated until it is sweet, thick, and a rich caramel brown. Look for jars of it at specialty food stores like Williams-Sonoma or in the Latino food aisle of many supermarkets. Edit, need to cut 2 lines.

English Sticky Toffee Pudding

Makes 9 servings

THIS IS ONE of the desserts Villa Blanca is famous for. Even though it's called a "pudding" it's not the creamy American dessert—it's really a cake with a warm toffee sauce. And it tastes like melted heaven on a plate.

Cake

¾ cup pitted and chopped dates
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 cup plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour, plus flour for the baking dish
1 teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
¾ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Toffee Sauce

1 cup packed light brown sugar
8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut into tablespoons
½ cup heavy cream
Whipped Cream (page 000)

1. To make the cake, about 1½ hours before serving, combine the dates and baking soda in a small bowl with 1 cup boiling water. Let cool, about 1 hour. (The baking soda soak softens the tough date skin; don't skip this step.)
2. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 350°F. Butter and flour a 9-inch-square metal baking dish, tapping out the excess flour.
3. Sift the flour, baking powder, and salt together. Beat the butter and sugar together in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on high speed until light in color and texture, about 3 minutes. Beat in the egg and vanilla. Reduce the mixer speed to low. Gradually add the flour mixture and beat until combined. Add the cooled dates with their soaking liquid and fold together until the batter is smooth. Scrape into the baking dish and smooth the top.
4. Bake until the cake is springs back when pressed in the center, about 35 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, make the toffee sauce. Bring the brown sugar, butter, and cream to a boil in a heavy medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring often to dissolve the sugar. Reduce the heat to medium and cook at a brisk boil, stirring often, until lightly thickened, about 8 minutes. Remove from the heat. The sauce will cool but remain warm from the saucepan's residual heat.
6. Remove the cake from the oven. Position the broiler rack about 6 inches from the source of heat and preheat on high. Spread ½ cup of the toffee sauce over the top of the cake. Broil until bubbling, about 30 seconds. Remove from the broiler and let stand for 5 minutes.
7. To serve, cut the cake into 9 equal pieces and transfer each piece to a bowl. Top each with a portion of the remaining toffee sauce and a spoonful of whipped cream. Serve warm. Edit, need to cut 1 line

MARTINIS

I'm not even going to tell you why I've listed martinis in this chapter. It's better you don't know; you'll never enjoy one again. But since we are celebrating the good life, I assure you, there's no better way.

White Chocolate Martini

Makes 1 serving

For a really spectacular visual effect (although you can serve this ungarnished and be equally satisfied), swirl circles of chocolate syrup into the glass before you pour in the martini. Garnish with a dark chocolate rod.

1½ ounces vodka
1 ounce white chocolate liqueur
1½ ounces heavy cream

1. Fill a martini shaker halfway with ice cubes. Add the vodka and shake vigorously 10 times.
2. Add the white chocolate liqueur and cream. Shake 10 more times. Strain into a chilled martini glass.

PROPER MEASURING

At a bar, you may see the bartender "free pour" cocktail ingredients without measuring, but that kind of precision comes with much practice. At home, to be sure that you get the same delectable results every time from your cocktail-making, use a jigger. This measuring tool, which looks like two differently sized cones attached at their bottoms, comes in a variety of size combinations, but the 1 ounce-1½ ounce combination is the most useful for most single-drink recipes.



IT'S BECOME QUITE fashionable to rim martini glasses with sugar or even bits of candy. If you'd like, rub a cut strawberry around the rim of your glass to moisten it, then dip in a small plate of rimming sugar—pink sugar will look lovely.

Strawberry Martini

Makes 1 serving

2 large fresh strawberries
2 ounces vodka
1 teaspoon crème de cassis or black
currant liqueur
1 teaspoon fresh lime juice
1 teaspoon sugar, preferably superfine
or bartenders' sugar

1. Muddle 1 strawberry in the bottom of your cocktail shaker with a muddler or wooden spoon. Add 2 or 3 ice cubes. Add vodka, crème de cassis, lime juice, and sugar. Shake for 10 seconds. Strain into a chilled martini glass.
2. Cut remaining strawberry at the tip and set on the edge of the glass.

MODERN MUDDLERS

If you often crush fresh fruit for drinks or desserts, a muddler is a wonderful addition to your kitchen tool drawer. Traditional muddlers are rounded wooden sticks (I understand Jamie Oliver uses the end of a rolling pin as his muddler, but try as I might, I can't seem to get mine to fit into a glass, though a wooden spoon does work well. . . .) but modern muddlers are much, much better. Made of steel and grippable rubber, they have jagged little teeth on the bottom that help rip fruit into juicy pieces rather than just flattening them to death. You can find them at kitchen stores or online for around \$15.

Dirty Martini

DO I EVEN have to tell you I like my martinis dirty? Well, sometimes anyway. . . .

You can use the olive brine from a jar of olives as your olive flavoring, but then your olives will shrivel up, won't they? I prefer to buy a bottle of olive juice (which is what the label says although it is really brine) specifically for making dirty martinis, and putting my olives away wet.

¼ ounce dry vermouth

2 ounces gin

1 ounce olive juice

3 pimento-stuffed green olives

1. Pour the vermouth into a chilled martini glass. Swirl to coat the inside of the glass, then pour out the vermouth.
2. Fill a martini shaker halfway with ice cubes. Add the gin and olive juice. Shake 4 to 5 times. Strain into a chilled martini glass. Spear the olives onto a cocktail stick and add to the martini.

ICE COLD

Martinis must be served in an ice-cold glass. Pop your glasses and your martini shaker in the freezer for at least a half hour before you plan on mixing drinks.

EXTRA PUDDING DROPPER



I didn't want to leave you dirty, and I am quite open about everything, so I'll admit I do have a secret "skinny" recipe of my own. If I've had too many Chubby Days in a row, I use a Chinese-based soup to help me drop some of the extra "pudding" (a lovely nickname we have for "fat" in Britain). It's dreadfully simple and very delicious. It takes only 10 minutes to go from start to your table. (Leaving you plenty of time to run to the gym!)

Baby Bok Choy Soup

Makes 1 big serving

TO SAVE TIME, add the food to the saucepan in the order given so one thing cooks while the next ingredient is being prepped. This is just my basic recipe; feel free to add and subtract to your heart's content. A teaspoon of minced fresh ginger and a chopped garlic clove are nice additions, as are sweet corn or sliced water chestnuts. I sometimes use butterflied shelled shrimp instead of the chicken. A handful of cooked thin noodles or a big spoonful of cooked rice are also good, but don't cook them directly in the broth, or they'll make it cloudy and too thick. Add these towards the end of the cooking time to be sure that the chicken is cooked.

1¾ cups packaged organic
chicken stock

1 tablespoon dry white wine

1 teaspoon soy sauce

Pinch of crushed hot red pepper flakes

One 5 to 6-ounce boneless and
skinless chicken breast half

1 baby bok choy

1 scallion, trimmed

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Combine the stock, ¾ cup water, wine, and soy sauce in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat.
2. While the broth mixture is heating, cut the chicken against the grain into very thin (less than ⅛-inch-thick) slices. Add to the broth mixture and let it continue heating.
3. Cut the baby bok choy in half crosswise. Cut out the thick triangular core. Place the halves cut sides down, and cut crosswise into very thin slices. Add to the heating broth.
4. Cut the scallion crosswise into very thin rounds and add to the heating broth. Let come to a full simmer. Season with salt and pepper. Pour into a very large bowl and serve hot.

A FOND FAREWELL



I HOPE YOU'VE enjoyed my little book as much as I've enjoyed writing it for you. It gives me great pleasure to serve good food to good people, and I know you'll enjoy these recipes for many years to come.

If you ever find yourself in Beverly Hills, please drop by and say hello at Villa Blanca. You'll find Ken, Giggy, and myself there most days. . . . and nights. And we would very much love to see you.