



# **A Life Less Ordinary**

**by Trey Cromwell**





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*by* Trey Cromwell

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# Foreword

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The first time Trey and I stepped into a kitchen together, in October of 2019, we made the best steak either of us had ever tasted. We also created possibly the most decadent hors d'oeuvre selection anyone in our friend group had ever seen, including a tartlet filled with filet mignon tartare and topped with a quail egg yolk, seasoned with fresh herbs from his garden, savory cheesecake stuffed mushroom caps, and the most perfectly balanced prawn spring rolls I've ever had the pleasure of helping to roll.

I had, of course, already sampled his fudge and shortbread and toffee while he was going through the development process a few months before and had been following his culinary exploration on social media from the start; I knew the guy had chops. The way he so naturally took to working in a kitchen alongside someone, however, blew me away. I'd never seen him perform on a stage, and I've seen him juggle exactly once, but if his show was anything like his cooking, he'd have given Penn and Teller a run for their money. That weekend was when I knew Trey was bound to become a force to be reckoned with in the culinary world.

If you had told me back in 2012 that I would one day be helping with a project of this style and personal magnitude for that guy in the white cowboy hat who could supposedly juggle and eat fire pretty well, I probably would have believed you. That's the kind of person Trey Cromwell is: he sets out and he does things and they work because he is so driven to make them work and his world outlook doesn't have room for a path to failure, only different paths to something new.

Now, on his current path, Trey takes a lot of credit for being the reason he's so good at cooking. And he deserves it. But I tend to give myself a little credit as well, when I'm telling the story about how we got to where we are in our friendship today. I like to tell myself I was the real inspiration for his trek into the culinary field, back when he would call me for tips on the finer points of tempering chocolate or how to save a split ganache, shortly after I graduated pastry school.

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When Trey later announced his decision to pursue a culinary education, I took it as a huge victory for the culinary world. I knew that with his heart and determination, he would have the ability to handle any challenge thrown at him, that no amount of book work would slow him down, and that he would show everyone who crossed his path exactly what I see every time we talk.

Trey Cromwell is meant to be so much more than just a fire eater or a computer guy or an astronaut or an archaeologist. He's meant to bring joy that stands up against language barriers and ideological differences, to create experiences that are worth having when everything else is bland and monotonous, to make something as simple as eating or breathing or sitting on a bench into one of the most powerful moments of your life.

That's just the kind of person Trey is.

- *Alyxx Duggins*

Head Chef, Celebration Tea Room

Kissimmee, FL 2020



# Introduction

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**“So you see, we are artist, pirate! More than cooks are we”.**

-Collette, Ratatouille

I don't think you are limited to only one calling in your life. I've been kicking around this planet for 40 years, and many times I've heard people say things like “oh, I think you found your calling”. Usually they say that when their children exhibit talent at something. They'll find out that they're good at, say, painting, or baseball, or whatever, and the parents will usually exclaim “I think you found your calling”. I know mine did. For a long time, I thought that I wanted to be a comic book artist. I drew all the time (and still doodle on things) and read comics like they were going out of style. There were many allowances spent at the comic store, and more than a few weekends spent devouring the stories of superheroes and villains. Then I realized that I can't draw, which kind of puts a damper on a career that involves drawing.

At an early age, I was pretty sure that I wanted to be an archaeologist. I think that came from watching dinosaur specials on television, and many trips to the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. If you asked me now I don't know that I could tell you all the different names of the dinosaurs, but when I was six I could probably recite them in my sleep. I don't remember exactly when the idea that I might dig up bones for a living faded but fade it did. I vaguely remember the typical childhood dreams of astronaut, firefighter, dolphin tender and a host of other vocations along the way. What I wanted to do with my life depended on the day.

There was a brief stint of learning to play the guitar, and I had grand visions of playing in a band, even though I really had no idea what that would entail or even what sort of music I was interested in. Who does when they're thirteen? That faded too, although I remember the experience being enjoyable.

I think we do things to fill in gaps until we hear that magic phrase. In my freshman year of high school I decided that being on the sports teams would lead to the social rewards everyone is looking for in high school. As good as some of the experiences centered around that were, I never felt like it was a calling. When we don't know what direction life will take, I think we look for placeholders that might, in time, become a calling.

When I was fifteen, give or take, I discovered professional magic, and a year later I found the joys of the theatre. Now THERE was a calling! It felt like the world had opened up. That was the first time I had really understood what a calling was. For the next seventeen years I was involved in professional theatre in one form or another. I knew that I was going to get my degree in the subject, and spent five years doing so. I had visions of going to Las Vegas, entertaining every night to a packed house, and maybe I could have.

My senior project at Mary Washington College was something that had never been done there, especially with minimal team, time and budget. It's not as easy as you'd think to produce and stage a full illusion show in the college's main theatre. The end of that particular project is a story in and of itself, but I pulled it off. Graduation came and went, and I packed up and headed to the West Coast, determined to make it as a performer.

California offered a range of opportunities, from the community theatre where I stage managed for a while to the renaissance faires and festivals that provided my living until 2013. I traveled the world (literally) from 2004 until 2013, playing shows big and small, juggling and eating fire and generally doing the kinds of things that give mothers gray hair. Most kids tell their parents that they're going to run away and join the circus and the response is something along the lines of "oh no, don't do that, what are you doing with your life!". When I told my parents that I was, in effect, running away to join the circus the response I got was "go for it!" and I'm grateful to this day that they said that. I'm sure my mother has some gray hairs from watching me shove a flaming torch in my mouth over and over, but hey, that's show business. I'm pretty sure I have some gray hairs from burning the crap out of myself on windy days.

Performing was a good living, mostly. There were difficult things, of course, as with any profession. But for most of that time, I knew that was what I wanted to be doing with my life. And then, suddenly, I didn't know anymore. I don't really know whether it was one large realization or several smaller ones, although I suspect the latter. I saw a lot of performers at the end of their run and didn't want to end up like that. I saw them broken down, still living out of boxes or their cars, going from gig to gig and living hand to mouth. I saw them still camping out with us, doing the same things over and over.

I stopped performing for a living because I didn't want to end up pretending to be a good show. I didn't know what was next, but I knew that something had to change. I spent a while doing various things, none of which seemed like the ideal lifetime career. Then I got the brilliant idea to join the military, thinking that it would lead to a lifetime career, maybe in the Navy, maybe back in the civilian world.

I spent four years aboard a ship, serving as an Information Systems Technician. Fun? Sometimes. It was an educational experience, no doubt. But it never felt like something I wanted to spend the rest of my life doing. It never echoed that feeling that I knew from when I started entertaining. The paycheck was nice, the benefits were nice, but that voice that tells you "this is what you're supposed to do" was noticeably silent. Still, I think it was a good experience. I learned a lot, realized a lot, and did some growing up along the way.

And then I came home, and the question was, “well, what now?”. Do I keep on with IT? For a while that seemed like a good idea, it was stable and there was a good chance of getting work after finishing the degree program. At the same time, I knew it wasn’t that great and shining ideal. While stationed in San Diego, I had started teaching myself to cook some simple things. Partly as a way to relax, partly because it was genuinely interesting. So, I thought well maybe that’s something I’d like to actually learn how to do. Imagine my surprise when all of a sudden, those bells went off saying “hey! This is what you should be doing!”. A year later, I’m working in the industry and studying my way through the Hospitality Management program. What’s the end goal? I don’t know. Sure, I’d like to win the lottery and have my own restaurant, but that’s a ways off. At the moment, learning the real world of the restaurant industry is its own reward. Being able to create food that looks good, tastes good and is appealing to the most people possible is a wonderful thing.

Someone asked recently why I was taking a particular class. The answer came to me when I considered why I love cooking so much. I spent fifteen years travelling the world, talking to as many people as possible. I still love travel, although I’d rather go where I want instead of where someone else wants. More than that, I still love talking to people. They say that math is the universal language, but really, I think there are three. Math, of course, because one and one is always two. Art, because there’s a shared communication even when you’re making line drawings in the sand. Food, because every single one of us has to eat.

There’s a common language in something as simple as making an omelet. Without ever speaking a word, you can talk to someone from the other side of the world. Cooking is, I think, a calling for me because I still want to talk to as many people as I can. The part of me that is still an entertainer hasn’t changed. It’s still a calling, just with a different costume and a different set of props.

So why write this book? Why put together a collection of recipes that are, when it comes down to it, the memories of childhood cooking experiments that may or may not have turned out well (and let’s face it, those memories are from a time when I thought pepperoni and cheese sandwiches were fine dining. I plead the fifth on whether I still eat pepperoni wrapped in a slice of provolone...). Sure, you could say that it’s a class requirement. I think it’s more than that. This is all about memory, and letting those memories survive. These are some of the most vivid things that I remember from childhood. Food is one of the most powerful memories we have, and one of the strongest languages we use to communicate with other people.



Food is, so far, one of those grand things that when you start doing it, you just KNOW. You know things without having to be told them. You know that somehow it feels right to make something as simple as a roast beef sandwich. You know that it feels just as right to put together a risotto that wouldn't look out of place in one of the nicer Sacramento restaurants (ok, maybe it would, but I'm a sucker for flattery, and it seems that my risotto is pretty good).

Is it a calling? I think so. Making good food is something I can see doing until I can't do it anymore. In the time I've been cooking, the experience has been the same as nailing that first test batch of hollandaise sauce. Getting a rich, textured sauce that has perfect color and flavor. Even the mistakes are pretty good, and there have been a few.

I have some vain hope that you, the reader, might make a couple of the recipes in this book and think to yourself "hey, that's pretty good, I might make that again when the in-laws come over". Maybe you'll make it more than a couple of times, maybe you'll even consider a recipe or two to be among your favorites. Honestly, I'll never know if you do or not, and it doesn't matter to me.

This book turned from a project into something more. It became a way to preserve the things I remember, the food memories, and pass them on. It became a way to remind myself of the early beginnings of my food memory, and how that affected the rest of my life. One of the sources I used for writing this, the Better Homes Junior Cookbook, has stayed in my memory for 34 years. Are the recipes in it good? Well... no. They're for children. . I like to think that my taste in food has evolved a little in the time between when I first read that book and now (but I'm still a sucker for diners, there's just something wonderful about them).

The recipes I've included all have a story that goes with them. For one reason or another, they remind me of a point in my life. You might call them chapters in a story. Some came earlier, like the cinnamon sugar that I remember my Dad putting on toast in the mornings. Some are from later on, like the Delmarvelous Fried Chicken. That's the best fried chicken in the world, by the way. Sadly, the restaurant it comes from isn't there anymore, but that's the thing about memories, they don't really ever go away.

The real goal, I think, is to share that story. To maybe encourage someone who reads this to go out and cook something, or fix a network server, or juggle knives for a living. It doesn't really matter what you do as long as you love doing it. Do it for as long as you can, wring every single drop of enjoyment you can out of whatever it is that you decide makes you happy. Listen to that little voice that tells you "this is what you're supposed to do". Don't be afraid to fail at it, because you will. Probably a lot. Then, almost without noticing it, you'll start doing it right. Then you'll do it right more often. Pretty soon, you might not even remember doing it wrong. That's when you start showing someone else how to do it so that they can spend some time getting it wrong. Presto, you just shared the story that I started here. And that, dear reader, is the real meaning of a calling.

*Trey Cromwell*  
Sacramento, CA 2020



# Chapter 1

## Breakfast is My Favorite!

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# Maybe A Little Important...

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**“Life, within doors, has few pleasanter prospects than a neatly arranged and well provisioned breakfast table”.**

-Nathaniel Hawthorne

**B**reakfast is in the top three things that I absolutely love to prepare. Whether I’m making something just for me on a quiet morning, or making a full meal for a houseful of company, I always enjoy breakfast. By the way, breakfast is totally not just for breakfast anymore. There are nights when all you want is a good omelet, stuffed with cheese and vegetables and oozing out the ends. Pair it with biscuits and gravy, or some good thick toast and real Irish butter, and you get both a heart attack and an experience that’s not to be missed.

Here’s the thing though, it’s HARD. Making breakfast is unlike making any other meal in the day. With breakfast, it has to be good, it has to be hot, it has to come out fast and it has to be the same every time. Your family will forgive you if everyone’s biscuit isn’t sauced in precisely the same way every weekend, but you and I both know the opinion that really matters. It’s yours. If you’re anything like me, it’s a point of pride that everyone’s biscuit looks exactly the same, everyone’s eggs are done the same way, and every omelet that comes sliding out of that pan could be a twin to the one before it. It’s HARD.

But it’s rewarding. The joy of seeing breakfast coming out all on time, perfectly cooked, is something I don’t think gets equaled with other meals. The rewards for making lunch or dinner are different, but there’s not that sense of urgency and payoff that you get with breakfast.

I hope you enjoy the recipes here. Breakfast is something that I came to appreciate late in life, but I have vivid memories of childhood breakfast. The sound of my Dad making scrambled eggs is something I will never ever forget. The cinnamon sugar shaker that I used to help fill when I was three is something I consider a family heirloom.

Technique is key. It’s important to understand how things go together, even when you’re working with simple ingredients. Fill an omelet with tastes that don’t work and you’re going to have a rough time of it. Knowing what elements work with each other will let you create masterpieces.

# Biscuits

Biscuits are amazing for so many things. Biscuits and gravy is one of my favorite breakfasts ever, and so easy to make! By themselves, or topped with some good Irish butter, biscuits can set you up for the whole day. Look in the recipe notes for some ideas on how to jazz up your biscuits!

Yield
10 3" Biscuits

Ingredient	Amount
All Purpose Flour	20 oz
Whole Milk	13.75 oz
Butter (cold)	7 oz
Baking Powder	1 oz
Sea Salt	0.4 oz



Biscuits with Kerrygold butter and strawberry jam

1. In large mixing bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together flour, baking powder and salt.
2. Cut cold butter into 1/2" cubes.
3. Blend butter with a pastry cutter or by hand into the flour mix. Butter should be pea sized after being cut in.
4. Add milk slowly until a shaggy dough forms.
5. Turn dough onto a floured surface and knead until the dough just comes together.
6. Roll dough gently until about 3/4" thick.
7. Cut out biscuits using a metal or nylon cutter in desired size.
8. To use up dough scraps, push them together and fold three times, then gently roll back out to 3/4" thick.

9. Place biscuits on baking sheet lined with parchment about 1/4" apart.
10. Brush biscuits with egg wash, bake at 375°F for 9-15 minutes depending on size. Biscuits should be golden brown on top and dry on the sides.

### **Recipe Notes**

These biscuits are great for a variety of uses. Breakfast, sandwich biscuits (make them a little larger and a little thinner), or my favorite, biscuits and gravy. For variety, try adding herbs into the dough. Rosemary works very well, and makes an incredible breakfast sandwich with sausage and scrambled eggs!



# Cinnamon Sugar Topping

This is a great topping for many things. When I was a kid, my Dad used to let me help him make this, and he would put it on toast in the mornings for my brother and I. When I use this now, it's an instant reminder of those days.

Yield		
4 oz of topping		

Ingredient		Amount	
Sugar		3	oz
Ground Cinnamon		1	oz



My Dad’s cinnamon sugar topping

- 1. Combine cinnamon and sugar in medium bowl.
- 2. Whisk until thoroughly mixed.
- 3. Transfer to shaker, sprinkle onto warm buttered toast.

### Recipe Notes:

For variation on texture, try using superfine baker’s sugar instead of table sugar.

# French Toast

French toast is one of the things I love doing for brunch, especially when I have company. It's simple, tastes wonderful and can make any meal into something fancy. As with a lot of breakfast items, it's all about what you do with it. French toast benefits from powdered sugar, good quality butter, fruit toppings and good old maple syrup.

Yield
approx. 8 slices (adjust based on need)

Ingredient	Amount
French bread loaf or your favorite kind of bread	1 loaf
Heavy cream or half-and-half	1/4 cup
Eggs	9 tbsp (3 eggs)
Baker's sugar	1 tbsp
Cinnamon	1 tsp
Nutmeg	1/2 tsp

1. Whisk together eggs, cream or half-and-half, cinnamon, nutmeg and sugar.
2. Slice bread into desired thickness if using a whole loaf.
3. Heat griddle or skillet over medium high heat.
4. Soak each slice in the egg mixture for approx. 30 seconds a side
5. Lightly oil griddle or skillet, place each slice on hot surface.
6. Let cook until golden brown, flip each slice and continue cooking until uniform color on both sides.
7. Remove from heat, plate and serve immediately.



French Toast made with fresh French bread







# Pancake Batter

Pancakes, like waffles, are a wonderful starting point when planning breakfast for either yourself or a group. The ideal pancake should be light and fluffy, moist but not soggy, with a very slightly crispy edge. Pancakes can be very simple, topped with butter and syrup, or highly personalized, topped with fresh fruit, whipped cream, chocolate chips, almost any variety of toppings. Be creative!

Yield
Approx. 12 pancakes (depending on size)

Ingredient	Amount
AP Flour	1 1/2 cup
Milk	1 1/2 cup
Sugar	3 tbsp
Unsalted Butter	3 tbsp
Vanilla	2 tsp
Baking powder	1 1/2 tsp
Sea Salt	1/2 tsp
Eggs	6 tbsp (2 eggs)



Pancakes with Maple Syrup

1. Whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer or large mixing bowl.
2. In separate bowl whisk together the milk, butter (this can be substituted for 1/4 cup vegetable oil), eggs and vanilla.
3. Pour milk mixture over dry ingredients and mix until combined.
4. Ladle 1/3 cup of batter onto hot, greased griddle or frying pan (cast iron or non-stick works well for this).
5. Cook until top of each pancake is bubbled and the underside is lightly browned.
6. Flip pancakes and cook until both sides are golden brown.
7. Remove from griddle and serve immediately, or hold in warm oven, covered, until service.

# Scrambled Eggs

Scrambled eggs are one of those food memories that I carry with me, 35 years later. I can still hear the sound of my Dad making them in the kitchen of our old house. It's been one of the points of pride of my culinary career that I can recreate that sound, a fork beating eggs in a bowl. Scrambled eggs are a great starting point for so many things, get creative!

Yield	
1 serving (adjustable)	

Ingredient	Amount	
Fresh eggs	9	tbsp (3 eggs)
Heavy Cream or Half-and-Half	2	tbsp
Sea salt	1/2	tsp

1. Whisk eggs until well beaten.
2. Mix in cream or half and half, salt and whisk until combined.
3. Heat 8" nonstick pan over medium heat.
4. Lightly oil pan with neutral oil.
5. Add egg mix to pan, immediately stir to form curds.
6. Cook to desired firmness. Remove from heat and serve immediately.

## Recipe Notes:

Eggs, especially scrambled eggs, should be part of a larger overall dish. For breakfast, I like to add them to a plate with toast, bacon and hash browns. By themselves, you can add in all kinds of things, from fresh herbs to cheese to breakfast meat and make scrambled eggs stand out.



Dad's Scrambled Eggs



# Waffles

Waffles are a classic breakfast dish, and have almost unlimited potential to put your own signature on. These waffles should be light, fluffy, with just a hint of crunch to them. I use a commercial waffle iron, to take the guess work out of deciding when the waffle is ready, but method is up to you. Try mixing in some nuts, cinnamon, raisins, fresh fruit or chocolate chips for a delicious twist on this classic.

Yield
Six 8 inch waffles

Ingredient	Amount
AP Flour	1 3/4 cup
Milk	1 1/2 cup
Eggs	9 tbsp (3 eggs)
Unsalted Butter, melted	8 tbsp
Baking Powder	1 tbsp
Sugar	1 tbsp
Sea Salt	1/2 tsp



Waffles with Irish Butter and Maple Syrup

1. In bowl of stand mixer or large mixing bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, sugar and salt.
2. In separate bowl, mix eggs, melted butter and milk.
3. Pour wet ingredients over dry ingredients, mix until just combined. Batter should look pebbly.
4. Ladle 1/2 cup of batter onto hot, greased waffle iron (or more, depending on size of waffle iron). Cook until waffle is golden brown.
5. Remove waffle from iron, garnish and serve immediately or hold covered in warm oven until service.

## Recipe Notes

The basic waffle recipe, like the basic pancake recipe, is a great starting place to create a delicious breakfast dish. Try garnishing with fresh fruit, whipped cream and cinnamon sugar (see recipes in this section), maybe a caramel sauce. Or, simply top with good quality butter and maple syrup. The possibilities are endless!







# Chapter 2

## Somebody Call Lunch!

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# Not Just For Lunch Anymore

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**“Some weasel took the cork out of my lunch!”**

-W.C. Fields

**L**unch is one of the greatest services ever, because almost anything goes. Burgers? Great. Pizza? Outstanding. Chinese? Absolutely. Lunch encompasses the best of a lot of different food genres.

One of my favorite things to have for lunch is dim sum, wandering San Francisco's chinatown and trying things as they catch the eye through a window.

The recipes in this section are stepping stones, and can be expanded and adapted in any number of ways. When you're making burgers, what can you put on them to make it stand out?

Tacos are the ultimate expressive lunch meal. There are more kinds of tacos available in restaurants that I can count, and each one the signature meal of the house. When I was stationed in San Diego, tacos were available in every other shop, to say nothing of Old Town. To be fair, they were all really good.

Lunch is simple on the outside, but is also all about flavor. A burger that doesn't explode with flavor will not keep your customers coming back for more.

My best advice for lunch service is to use the best, freshest ingredients. Make every single thing you serve the highest quality possible.

My second best advice for lunch is to have fun with it. Lunch is chaotic, but can be great fun, slinging sandwiches across the pass, frying chips or chicken fingers, folding tacos with unique ingredients inside a fluffy tortilla.

Going on Mr. Fields' advice, take the cork out of your lunch, and wash it down with your favorite meal. Then take a nap, you've earned it.



# Burger Buns

Burgers are the quintessential American dish. Growing up, burgers were a treat, especially when grilled outside on Summer evenings. This is the best recipe I’ve found for the buns, which can make or break a burger. Slightly sweet milk dough with a good crumb for a wonderful base for the bacon cheeseburger recipe that follows. It’s slightly complicated, but worth it!

Yield
8 buns (depending on size)

Ingredient	Amount	
<u>Tangzhong (Milk Roux)</u>		
Whole Milk	4	tbsp
AP Flour	2	tbsp
Water	2	tbsp
<u>Dough</u>		
AP Flour	2 1/2	cups
Whole Milk	1/2	cups
Butter (softened)	3	tbsp
Sugar	2 1/2	tbsp
Yeast	1	tbsp
Sea Salt	1	tsp
Eggs	3	tbsp (1 egg) + 1 yolk



Japanese Milk Dough Buns

(Recipe Instructions on Next Page)

### **To Make The Tangzhong:**

1. Combine the water, flour and milk over medium low heat.
2. Whisk everything together over the heat until the mixture thickens. The tangzhong should have the consistency of thick paste, but not be clumpy.
3. Remove from heat. Whisk for another 30 seconds to make sure all ingredients are combined, then set aside.

### **To Make The Dough:**

1. Heat the milk to 95°F.
2. Sprinkle in the yeast and a pinch of sugar. Let the mixture sit for 5 - 10 minutes until a foam develops on top.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer with the dough hook attachment, combine flour, sugar and salt.
4. On low speed, slowly add the milk and yeast mixture, then the tangzhong mixture, then the egg and the extra yolk.
5. Add the butter, a small cube at a time, until it is fully incorporated.
6. Knead for 5-6 minutes until dough is smooth, elastic and uniform.
7. Turn dough out into a lightly oiled bowl. Cover and place somewhere warm.
8. Allow dough to rise until doubled, about 1 - 1.5 hours.
9. Turn dough onto floured surface and knead 3 or 4 times to punch down dough.
10. Cut dough into eight equal size pieces. Form each piece into a ball.
11. Place the dough balls onto a sheet pan and cover. Allow to rise for 30 mins or until almost doubled.

12. Pre-heat oven to 375°F.
13. Brush each bun with egg wash or butter.
14. Bake for 16 - 18 minutes until golden brown but not crispy.
15. Remove from oven, cool completely on a wire rack.

### **Recipe Notes:**

These buns are great, and can take any number of mix-ins. I've added dill, mozzarella shavings, all kinds of things to these to make for a taste experience. As well, they can be the perfect buns for sliders. To turn the recipe into slider buns, follow exactly but cut the risen dough into smaller pieces. Form each into a ball and place them into a casserole dish for the second rise. Bake them at the same temperature but for about 12 - 15 minutes until they are just brown. The residual heat of the casserole dish will make sure that they are done all the way through.



# Bacon Cheeseburgers

The best bacon cheeseburger I ever had was in the U.S. Virgin Islands. 30 years after the fact, I still remember the taste of that burger, the way the bacon looked, the atmosphere of the outdoor patio we ate on. Burgers are always good, and bacon just makes them better.

Yield
4 Burgers

Ingredient	Amount
Thick Cut Bacon	1 lb
Burger Patties (see recipe pg. 31 )	4 patties
Burger Buns (see recipe pg. 27)	4 pcs
Lettuce or mixed greens	2 cups
Tomato (sliced)	1 large
Cheese (sliced)	4 oz
Dill Pickle (fresh, sliced)	4 oz



Havarti Cheeseburger on Milk Dough Bun with Dill Pickles

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Arrange bacon in half strips on a broiler pan.
3. Cook bacon until crispy, about 20 minutes.
4. Combine one patty, one bun, 2 strips of bacon, one slice of cheese and lettuce, tomato and pickle to make one burger.
5. Serve hot with French fries or salad.



# Best Ever Tavern Burger

The patty of a burger is a thing of beauty. Combined with the bun recipe that follows this one, add some good thick cut bacon and the result is nothing short of amazing.

Yield
4 1/4lb patties

Ingredient	Amount
Lean Ground Beef	1 lb
Shallot (diced)	3 tbsp
Egg	3 tbsp (1 egg)
Sea Salt	2 tsp
Garlic Powder	1 tsp
Pepper (white or black)	1 tsp
Parsley (fresh, minced)	1/2 tsp



Hand Formed Burger Patties

1. In large mixing bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer with the paddle attachment, combine ground beef, shallot, egg, garlic powder, salt and pepper.
2. Mix on low speed until the egg is well incorporated and mixture sticks well together.
3. Add parsley and mix until just combined.
4. Form mixture into 1/4 lb balls and flatten or, if using a burger press, set to 1/4lb and fill appropriately.
5. Grill patties until juices run clear and internal temperature is 160°F (depending on desired doneness). Remove from fire and serve.



# DelMarvelous Fried Chicken

This comes from a restaurant that is now sadly closed. Libby's in Delaware was a great family place, and this was the jewel of their menu. It takes some time to prepare, but it's worth the prep time for this delicious take on fried chicken.

Yield		
4 servings		

Ingredient		Amount
Boneless Breast Fillet	4	Fillet
Vegetable Oil For Frying	1	quart
Bread Crumb Coating		
Panko Bread Crumbs	2	cups
AP Flour	1	cup
Sea Salt	1	tbsp
White Pepper	1	tsp
Onion Powder	1/2	tsp
Garlic Powder	1/2	tsp
Egg (beaten)	3	tbsp (1 egg)
Marinade		
Buttermilk	2	cups
Sea Salt	1	tsp
Pepper (black or white)	1/2	tsp



DelMarvelous Fried Chicken with Ranch Dipping Sauce

(Recipe Steps on Next Page)



1. Combine buttermilk, salt and pepper in a container and marinate the chicken for at least 4 hours or overnight in the refrigerator.
2. Mix together the bread crumbs, salt, pepper, onion powder and garlic powder.
3. Beat the egg thoroughly with 1 tbsp of water.
4. Slice each chicken breast into 3 approximately equal strips (this is optional, Libby's used to serve the whole piece)
5. Using the three pan method, dredge each piece of chicken in flour, then coat in egg, then cover with bread crumbs. Use pressure to slightly flatten the piece of chicken and ensure that it is completely covered in bread crumbs.
6. Chill coated chicken pieces 30 mins or freeze if not using immediately.
7. Heat oil to 365°F in large pot or deep skillet. Carefully slide each piece of chicken into the hot oil. This will cause it to bubble and froth some, so I recommend using a spider or tongs. Do not drop the pieces in, this can cause hot oil to splatter everywhere.
8. Fry until the coating is dark brown and crispy.
9. Using a spider or tongs, remove chicken from oil and set on paper towels to drain.
10. Serve hot.

### **Recipe Notes:**

The key to this is to get a good thick coating on the chicken and to make sure that the breadcrumbs are well seasoned. Frying until dark brown seems like it cooks for too long, but the chicken should still stay moist while the crust fries. The chicken goes very well with a ranch dipping sauce, or honey mustard.







# Tacos

Tacos are an all time favorite of mine. I think my first memory of tacos was at a place called Taco Laredo in Springfield, VA. They were absolutely not what you'd call good tacos, but to a six year old, they tasted amazing. Tacos are a great versatile meal. Try adding all kinds of toppings, from vegetables to guacamole and of course, salsa.

Yield
10 tacos

Ingredient	Amount	
Ground Beef	1	lb
Sour Cream	1	pkg
Shredded Cheese	10	oz
Tomatoes (diced)	10	oz
Taco Seasoning (see recipe, pg. 37)	5	tbsp
Vegetable Oil	2	tbsp
Flour Tortillas (see recipe pg. 36)	10	

1. Heat a large non-stick skillet over high heat.
2. Add the taco seasoning to the ground beef and brown.
3. Mix constantly, ensuring uniform size of the crumbles. Make sure the seasoning is evenly spread throughout the meat.
4. Remove from heat or transfer to hot holding before service.
5. Assemble tacos with desired ingredients.



Carne Asada Tacos

### Recipe Notes:

This is just the basic recipe for the components of tacos. The real creativity is in what you put on them. Experiment with some higher end ingredients and you could have a culinary masterpiece! Try adding guacamole, or use different proteins and fillings.



# Taco Seasoning

This is a great all purpose seasoning, it'll work on a variety of dishes to give them some kick. Make sure all the ingredients are well blended, the flavor really comes together. The chili powder can be switched for a chipotle or a hotter chile if you need more heat.

Yield		
1/2 Cup of Seasoning		

Ingredient	Amount	
Chili Powder	4	tbsp
Cumin	1	tbsp
Paprika (smoked or sweet)	2	tsp
Sea Salt	4	tsp
Black Pepper	2	tsp
Corn Starch	2	tsp
Onion Powder	1	tsp
Garlic Powder	1	tsp
Oregano	1	tsp
Cocoa Powder	1/2	tsp
Coriander	1/4	tsp



Taco Seasoning

1. Whisk together all ingredients until thoroughly mixed.
2. Use as seasoning for carne asada, taco meat, or sprinkle on a taco salad.

### Recipe Notes

This can easily be used for a variety of applications. Usually, I season burrito filling, using this mix as a dry rub before sautéing. Alternatively, this could be a great way to flavor a southwest inspired soup, stew, chili or salad.



# Tortillas

Tortillas are a wonderful multi-purpose flatbread. Sure, you can use them in tacos, burritos, quesadillas, but they also make a great lunch sandwich. Fill them with mixed greens and chicken salad and you have a perfect on the go lunch sandwich. The thinner the better, and the key with tortillas is to let the dough rest and the gluten relax. That way they'll end up better than restaurant tortillas!

Yield		
Approx. 12 8" tortillas		

Ingredient	Amount	
AP Flour	4	cup
Water (warm)	1 1/4	cup
Shortening	6	tbsp
Baking Powder	1	tsp
Sea Salt	1	tsp



Handmade Flour Tortillas

1. Whisk together flour, baking powder and salt.
2. Mix in shortening, small amounts at a time until it is completely incorporated.
3. Let dough rest for 10 minutes.
4. Divide dough into 12 balls. Dust with flour and press into a disk on a floured surface. If using a tortilla press, place dough ball between a folded sheet of wax paper.
5. Roll dough evenly into a circle 1/8" thick and approx. 8" diameter.
6. Place tortilla in a hot skillet over medium high heat and cook approx. 30-40 seconds (until the dough begins to bubble on top).
7. Flip tortilla and cook the other side for approx. 20 seconds.
8. Remove from heat and keep covered and warm until service.







# Tuna Fish Salad

Growing up, this was a go-to for lunch, or even sometimes dinner. Tuna salad sandwiches were the norm, or eaten straight out of a bowl. For a simple lunch, this can't be beat. Easy to prepare and delicious, try serving it with a salad, chips or crisps, or by itself for an on-the-go snack!

Yield
2 Servings

Ingredient	Amount
Canned Tuna Fish	1 5oz can
Dill Pickle	2 medium
Mayonnaise	3 tbsp
Brown Mustard	1 1/2 tbsp

1. Drain tuna fish.
2. Combine tuna, mayonnaise and mustard in a mixing bowl.
3. Add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Slice pickles into 1/4" slices, then cut each slice into fourths.
5. Mix pickles into tuna.
6. Chill at least 1 hour.
7. Serve as the filling for a sandwich, or as is.

## Recipe Notes:

This is a great quick sandwich filling. Chilling the tuna after preparation makes it better, but if you're short on time, just make the filling and immediately construct sandwiches. It's ideal on toasted bread with some cheese and greens.



Tuna Salad On Sourdough



# Tuna Toast Appetizer

This is really the fancied up version of the tuna fish salad in the previous recipe. I do this on toast squares for a great party snack. The presentation is everything here, the ingredients aren't complicated. Try switching out for good quality bread, cheese and a variety of garnishes.

Yield
5 pieces

Ingredient	Amount
Canned Tuna Fish	1 5oz Can
Dill Pickle	1 Medium
Mayonnaise	3 tbsp
Dijon Mustard	1 tbsp
Soy Sauce	1 tsp
Cheddar Cheese (sliced 3"x3")	5 pieces
Fresh Avocado	1 avocado
Sea Salt	1/2 tsp
White Pepper	1/4 tsp
Sesame Oil	1/4 tsp
Toasted Sesame Seeds	
Fresh jalapeño	1 pepper
White Bread (cut 3"x3")	5 pieces



Tuna and Avocado Appetizer with Fresh Jalapeño

1. Drain tuna well.
2. Combine tuna, mayonnaise, mustard, soy sauce, salt, pepper and sesame oil, mix thoroughly in a mixing bowl.
3. Toast bread, cut into five 3" x 3" pieces (I do this with a square cookie cutter, it makes things much faster).



4. Cut dill pickles into a fine brunoise, mix into tuna salad.
5. Use the same cutter to make five 3" x 3" pieces of cheese (cheddar is the best for this, but you could use any cheese you wanted. A good dill Havarti for example...)
6. Mash avocado, season to taste with salt and pepper.
7. Place cheese onto toast, top with 1oz tuna salad mix, top with a tsp of avocado.
8. Dust with toasted sesame seeds, garnish with a thin slice of fresh jalapeño.



# Chapter 3

## Dinner Is Served

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# Eat Like Kings (Or Queens...)

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**“My doctor told me to stop having intimate dinners for four...unless there are three other people involved.”**

-Orson Welles

A good dinner can be nothing short of magic. Dinner is unlike the fast paced world of making breakfast, more decorative than lunches, and not the exacting science of patisserie. Dinner is where cooking turns into high art. Some of the best restaurants in the world create dishes that are so cutting edge, they defy description.

Whether you're cooking at home or in a restaurant, dinner service is where imagination plays a huge part. What flavors blend together? What ingredients are on hand that can be turned into a masterpiece?

Dinner can be as intimate as two, or a large party. Timing and practice are the keys to get things out all together. Sometimes, simpler is better. If you're planning a dinner party, mise en place will be a huge advantage to your preparation. Dinner recipes have a little more flex than some, but make sure you have the essential pieces of the ingredient list on hand and prepared.

The recipes in this section aren't particularly complicated, I chose them because they have meaning, and are memories of the things we ate growing up. Spaghetti and meat sauce was a staple, and macaroni and cheese is, to this day, one of my favorite meals in the world. I'll eat it in just about any form.

As with so many recipes, what will make these stand out for you is your own twists and additions. Mashed potatoes by themselves are great, but what if you added in some fresh herbs? Presto, the next hottest thing at your dinner parties.

Pizza is, to my mind, one of the ultimate expressions of personal cooking style you can find. Pizza can literally be anything you choose to put on it. The recipe here for crust is easy, and toppings will make it exceptional.

Go forth and plan your next party!

# Herb Baked Chicken

I remember my Mom making this for family dinners as I was growing up. The chicken stays moist in the oven and has a great toasty herb flavor because of the breadcrumbs. This pairs very nicely with mashed potatoes and roasted vegetables, and is a great quick dinner.

## Recipe serves

4 servings

Ingredient	Amount
Thin sliced chicken breast filet	1 lb
Bread Crumbs	2 cups
AP Flour	1 cup
Egg	3 tbsp (1 egg)
Rosemary (fresh, chopped)	1 tbsp
Sea Salt	1 tbsp
Pepper	1 tsp
Garlic Powder	1 tsp

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Mix together bread crumbs, salt, pepper, garlic and rosemary in one pan.
3. Beat egg with a tablespoon of water.
4. Using the three pan method, dredge each chicken filet in flour, then coat in egg and finally coat in bread crumbs.
5. Bake for 15-20 minutes until bread crumbs are toasted and chicken is 165°F internal temperature.
6. Remove from oven and let rest for 5 minutes. Serve with dressed green salad.



Herb Baked Chicken with Green Salad and Green Goddess Dressing



# Crab Cakes with Tartar Sauce

My earliest memories of this dish are from family vacations to the Eastern shore of MD, and the abundance of seafood there. Later in life I learned to appreciate the finer version of crab cakes, but I remember liking them around three or four years old. This is a great quick dish that's not limited to dinner. Crab cakes can be lunch, snack, 3am, breakfast, but should always be accompanied by beer. Cheers!

Yield		
2 Crab Cakes (1 order)		

Ingredient		Amount
<u>Crab Cakes</u>		
Fresh Lump Crab Meat	7	oz
Panko Bread Crumbs	1/2	cup
Mayonnaise	2	tbsp
Salt	1/2	tsp
Pepper	1/2	tsp
Garlic (minced)	1/4	tsp
Shallot (minced)	1	tbsp
Egg	1	
<u>Tartar Sauce</u>		
Mayonnaise	1/4	cup
Lemon Juice	1	tbsp
Dill Pickle (minced)	2	tbsp
Fresh Dill (minced)	1	tsp
Sea Salt	1/4	tsp
Pepper	1/4	tsp
Hot Sauce	1/4	tsp



Lump Crab Cake with Tartar and Green Onion

(Recipe Steps on Next Page)

1. In a mixing bowl, combine crab mix, mayonnaise, bread crumbs, salt, pepper, garlic, shallot and egg. Do not use a stand mixer as this will make the mix too uniform in texture.
2. Fold all ingredients together until resulting mix is sticky enough to stay together.
3. Form mix into two equal sized cakes, about 2" thick by 2" diameter. If desired, flatten cakes slightly. I recommend using a cookie cutter or other circular mold and pressing mix into the mold just enough so that it stays together, but not enough to make it into paste.
4. Coat each cake evenly in bread crumbs (bread crumbs can be seasoned with salt and pepper or not, as you prefer).
5. Heat a small skillet over medium high heat. Lightly oil pan.
6. Fry each cake until golden brown and crispy. Flip the cakes and fry the other side to the same doneness.
7. For the sauce, combine all ingredients and fold together.
8. Serve on a bed of greens with ramekin of sauce and slices of fresh lemon.



# Macaroni and Cheese (Mom’s Version)

I remember eating this growing up. It’s simple, filling, and tastes great. Over the years I tried to make it for myself, and somehow it never really tasted the same. I’ve tweaked the recipe in the following entries, but this one is the original. To me, this tastes like childhood. Even today, I have vivid memories of preparing this for family dinners, and can still remember the taste.

Yield	
4 Servings	

Ingredient	Amount	
Elbow Macaroni	16	oz
Sliced American Cheese	8	oz



Mom’s Macaroni and Cheese

1. Bring well salted water to boil in large sauce pot.
2. When boiling, add pasta and reduce to simmer.
3. Simmer pasta to desired doneness.
4. Drain pasta, add cheese in slices while pasta is still hot.
5. Stir until cheese is melted and completely incorporated into the pasta.
6. Serve.

### Recipe Notes:

For quick and easy, it doesn’t get much simpler than this. The next recipe is the fancy version of this. A few more ingredients, and some tarting up will turn this from a generic meal into a dinner party star.

# Macaroni and Cheese (Fancy Version)

Making a dish fancy is one of my favorite things about creating a recipe. Starting with something familiar and seeing what can be added to improve the dish. Macaroni and cheese is one of my very favorite meals in the world, and I had great fun creating this upscale version of it.

Yield		
4 Servings		
Ingredient		Amount
<u>Sauce</u>		
Shallot (minced)	1	medium
Garlic	3	cloves
AP Flour	4	oz
Unsalted Butter	4	oz
Heavy Cream	2	oz
Whole Milk	4	oz
Parmesan Cheese (grated)	1	cup
Cheddar Cheese (grated)	1/2	cup
Sea Salt	1	tsp
Pepper	1/2	tsp
Olive Oil	1	tbsp
<u>Pasta</u>		
Elbow Macaroni (or other desired pasta)	16	oz
Sea Salt		



Macaroni and Cheese with Crumb Topping

(Recipe Steps on Next Page)



Ingredient	Amount	
<u>Topping</u>		
White Cheddar Cheese (shredded	1	cup
Butter	2	oz
Panko Bread Crumbs (unseasoned Italian bread crumbs may be substituted	4	oz
Italian Parsley	1	bunch
Sea Salt	1/2	tsp
Pepper	1/4	tsp

### **Crumb Topping:**

1. Combine panko, shredded white cheddar, parsley, salt and pepper in a food processor until the mixture is uniform crumb size (more or less) and thoroughly combined.

### **Pasta:**

1. In well salted water, boil 16oz macaroni to desired doneness.

### **Sauce:**

1. Rough chop shallot and garlic.
2. Heat skillet over medium high heat, add olive oil to hot pan.
3. Sweat shallot and garlic until tender but not browned. When translucent, remove from heat.
4. Mince shallot and garlic until almost the consistency of paste
5. Melt butter in small sauce pot over low heat. When melted, slowly whisk in the flour. The resulting roux should be smooth, not clumpy or burned.
6. Whisk in cream and milk, making sure not to let the milk burn. If the mix gets too hot, it will thicken too much.
7. Slowly whisk in cheeses, allowing each addition to melt thoroughly. Resulting sauce should be thick, but pourable (consistency of lava). If sauce thickens too much, add in whole milk a tablespoon at a time until consistency is back to being pourable.

8. Add salt and pepper. Adjust if necessary.

### **Service:**

1. Plate 4oz of macaroni in oven safe dish.
2. Cover pasta with cheese sauce. Sauce should be enough to coat pasta, but not to drown it.
3. Coat top evenly with the crumb topping.
4. Bake at 375°F for 5 minutes, enough to toast the topping but not burn it.
5. Remove from oven (dish will be very hot!), garnish with fresh scallions and serve.

### **Recipe Notes:**

This is a fairly involved recipe, but with practice it'll come naturally and you'll be able to do multiple steps at once. This is a GREAT version of macaroni and cheese, and will turn dinner from an everyday meal into something fancy. I've had a lot of luck serving this. The flavors of the cheese combine with the seasoning the garlic and shallot give it to produce something extraordinary. The cheeses can be switched for other varieties to produce different flavors. A note though, make sure that you're shredding the cheese off a block, not out of a package of pre-shredded cheese. The reason for this is that pre-shredded is usually coated with potato starch, which will make your sauce grainy instead of velvety and smooth.





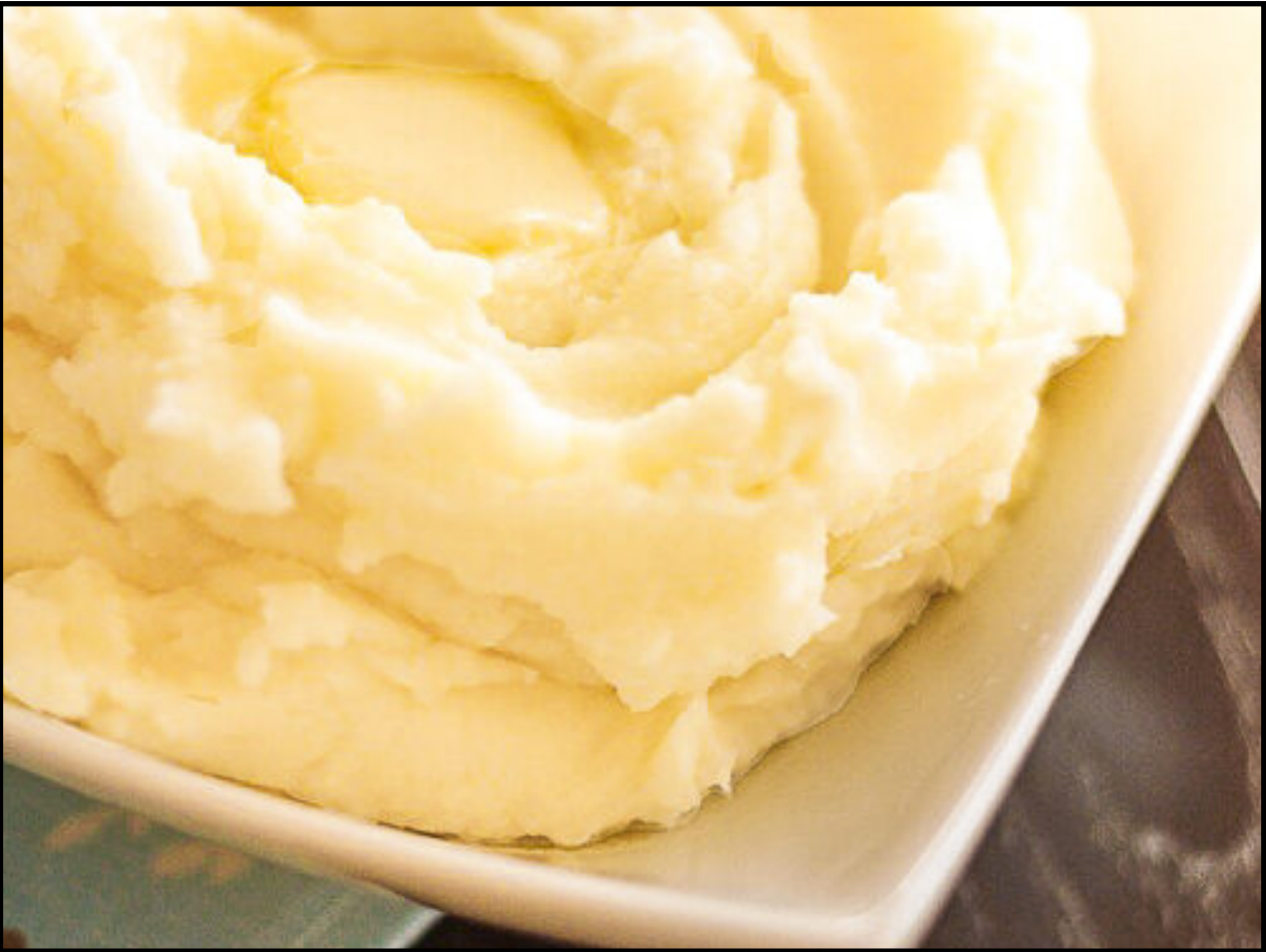


# Mashed Potatoes

Mashed potatoes are one of those things that I remember making as I was growing up. Even then, there was a process, a method that you don't find in instant mashed potatoes. It was and still is a comfort food, something that is simple and so good. Useful for a variety of dishes, mashed potatoes glues, literally, the culinary world together.

Yield	
6 Servings	

Ingredient		Amount	
Russet Potatoes	3	lbs	
Sea Salt	3	tbsp	
Unsalted Butter	1/2	cup	
Cream Cheese	1/2	cup	
Milk or Heavy Cream	1/2	cup	
Pepper	1/2	tsp	



Creamy Mashed Potatoes

1. Peel potatoes if desired (either peeled or not, wash thoroughly). Cut into 1/2" slices.
2. Add the 3 tbsp of salt to 2 quarts of water (adjust if necessary to cover the potato slices) and stir until dissolved. The water should taste like sea water. If necessary, add salt by the tsp.
3. Add potatoes and bring to boil.
4. Boil potatoes for approx. 15 minutes until easily pierced with a fork.
5. Drain potatoes, reserving a few tbsps of the water in the pot.
6. Add butter, cream cheese and milk or cream to the potatoes. Optionally, add minced shallot, fresh garlic or dill for a different flavor.



7. Mash potatoes, using either a hand masher or the paddle attachment of a stand mixer. If using a mixer, beat for 3-4 minutes until potatoes are smooth and fluffy. If adding garlic or herbs, make sure they are completely incorporated.

### **Recipe Notes:**

Mashed potatoes are essentially a vehicle for butter and salt. Make sure you salt the water well when boiling, the potatoes will absorb that salt and retain a great flavor. Dill makes a great add in for mashed potatoes, as does fresh garlic, or a handful of shredded cheese. These potatoes are very versatile, and can be served on their own or as accompaniment to any number of main dishes.

Additionally, the mashed potatoes can be mixed with 1/4 cup of AP flour and formed into potato croquettes. After mixing with flour, roll a golf ball size portion in bread crumbs and fry in canola oil until golden brown.

# Meatloaf (Junior Cookbook Version)

This recipe comes from the Better Homes and Gardens Junior Cookbook. I first got it when I was 6 or 7, and I have fond memories of making this for family dinners. There was a fair bit of supervision, I'm sure, but I remember it tasting good. With some simple substitutions, this can easily be turned into an upscale version. Using real mashed potatoes (see recipe pg. 53) will improve the dish immeasurably.

Yield	
6 servings	

Ingredient	Amount
Lean Ground Beef	1 1/2 lbs
Instant Mashed Potatoes	4 servings
Rolled oats	1/3 cup
BBQ Sauce	1/3 cup
American Cheese	3 slices
Salt	1/2 tsp
Pepper	1 dash
Egg	3 tbsp (1 egg)



Image courtesy of Better Homes and Gardens Junior Cookbook

1. Pre-heat oven to 350°F.
2. In large mixing bowl, combine beaten egg, oats, bbq sauce, salt and pepper, mixing well.
3. Add the ground beef and mix well until sauce is incorporated.
4. In a 13 x 9 x 2 baking pan, form the meat mixture into a rough loaf shape.
5. Bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes.
6. Drain the fat out of the pan.



7. Spread mashed potatoes in a thick layer over the meatloaf, as if icing a cake. Cover the meatloaf completely.
8. Return pan to the oven, bake for 15 minutes.
9. Remove from oven, lay the cheese slices on top and serve.

### **Recipe Notes:**

While I have fond memories of this, I read it now and shudder a little. Childhood memories are like that, we remember them fondly but on further reading I just want to make this better. I think meatloaf is one of those classic American dishes, and is very easy to turn this dish into a fancy menu item. By substituting some simple ingredients, as you'll see, it becomes immeasurably better.





# Pizza Crust

This is a wonderful, yeasty crust that is a perfect base for your favorite pizza. Pizza is all about the toppings, but a good crust gives you a solid foundation for the toppings to be the star of the show. You'll find my recipes for sauce and for a basic pepperoni pizza next.

Yield
1 10" medium crust pizza

Ingredient	Amount
AP Flour	4 servings
Yeast	1 tsp
Salt	1 1/2 tsp
Warm Water	3/4 cup



Hand Stretched Pizza Crust

1. Sprinkle yeast into the warm water (water should be  $\sim 110^{\circ}\text{F}$  -  $115^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) with a pinch of sugar to activate. Let sit until foamy on the surface of the water (about 10 mins). This can be done directly in the bowl of a stand mixer.
2. Combine salt and flour into the yeast and water. Using the dough hook attachment, mix and knead dough until the flour is completely incorporated and the dough is smooth and elastic.
3. Lightly oil a bowl and form dough into a ball. Place dough into oiled bowl, cover and place out of drafts in a warm place (the oven with the light on is ideal for this. To ensure heat and humidity, place 3 cups of boiling water under the bowl inside the oven. Let rise until doubled, 1 - 1.5 hours.
4. Turn dough out onto lightly floured surface. Working from the center, gently press the dough outward, maintaining a rough circle, or throw dough until it has reached a 10" diameter. Place dough onto pizza pan and create a rolled edge (see picture) if desired.

## Recipe Notes:

For a thicker crust, or a larger pizza, multiply recipe by 1.5. Ideally, your pizza pan should be perforated to allow crust to bake all the way through. To keep crust from sticking if not using a perforated pan, either lightly oil pan or scatter some semolina on pan before baking.

# Pizza Sauce

Pizza sauce is an important component, and this is a great basic sauce. Stock will give the sauce a richer flavor, but water will work as well. You can adjust the seasonings to your taste, but don't leave out garlic! Channel your inner Emeril Lagasse and it will make your sauce explode with flavor.

Yield
1 1/2 cups of sauce

Ingredient	Amount
Tomato Paste	1 6oz Can
Vegetable stock or water	1/2 cup
Minced Garlic	1 tbsp
Sea Salt	1 1/2 tsp
Black Pepper	1/2 tsp
Oregano	1 tsp



Tomato Pizza Sauce

1. Over medium heat, whisk together tomato paste and stock or water until thoroughly combined.
2. Add salt, pepper, oregano and garlic.
3. Simmer sauce for 15 minutes to allow flavors to blend completely.
4. Adjust seasonings.



# Pepperoni Pizza

Pepperoni pizza is one of those things that makes an impression on you. When it's good, it's really good. When it's not good, well, it's still pretty good. Pizza is good at all hours of the day and night. I remember having cold pizza for breakfast, which some people don't understand. Pizza is great for a family meal or for parties. No wonder it's one of the most popular foods ever. Try switching out the toppings to put your own mark on it.

Yield
1 10" pizza

Ingredient	Amount
10" Pizza Crust (see recipe pg. 57 )	1 Crust
Pizza Sauce (see recipe pg. 58 )	1/2 cup
Thin Sliced Pepperoni	6 oz
Mozzarella Cheese (shredded)	8 oz



Thin Slice Pepperoni Pizza with Mozzarella and Hand Stretched Crust

1. Pre-heat oven to 500°F.
2. Place crust onto non-stick pizza pan or, if not using a non-stick pan lightly oil and scatter semolina (see crust recipe).
3. Spread sauce evenly over crust, stopping 1/4 inch short of the edge of the crust.
4. Scatter mozzarella cheese evenly over sauced crust, making sure there are no clumps.
5. Spread pepperoni evenly over surface of pizza.
6. Bake pizza for 10-12 minutes or until crust is firm and browned and cheese is melted.
7. Let cool for 5 minutes, slice and serve.







# Spaghetti Bolognese

I remember my grandparents making this when we visited their house, it's one of my earliest childhood memories. I can still remember the flavor that the green pepper gives this spaghetti, combined with the richness of the sauce. It's easy to switch out vegetables in this, such as zucchinis or onion in place of the shallot. Spaghetti is a great starting point, see what you can do with it!

Yield	
6 servings	

Ingredient	Amount	
Ground beef	1	lb
Spaghetti Pasta	1	lb
Stock or water	1 1/2	cup
Tomato Paste	6	oz
Minced Garlic	3	tbsp
Green Pepper (medium dice)	1	
Red Pepper (medium dice)	1	
Shallot (large, brunoise)	1	
Sea Salt	2	tbsp
Black pepper	2	tsp
Oregano	2	tsp
Bunch Basil, chiffonade	1	tsp
Optional: Italian Sausage	1/2	lb
Olive Oil	2	tbsp



Spaghetti Bolognese

(Recipe Steps on Next Page)

1. Heat oil in large sauce pan
2. Add green and red peppers and shallot. Sweat until translucent.
3. Add crushed tomatoes and juice, mix thoroughly.
4. Add tomato paste and stock, mix until well blended.
5. Add basil, garlic, oregano, salt and pepper.
6. Bring to simmer.
7. In large skillet, brown ground beef and sausage (if desired).
8. Add ground beef and sausage (if using) to tomato sauce. Adjust seasonings and simmer for 10-15 minutes until flavors are well blended.
9. While tomato sauce is simmering, cover spaghetti pasta with hot, salted water and bring to boil.
10. Cook pasta to desired doneness, drain and combine with sauce. Serve immediately.

### **Recipe Notes**

This is a very versatile, adaptable recipe. Try adding mushrooms, or fresh zucchini for more vegetable content and bright colors. This can be made as spicy or mild as desired by adding a few crushed red peppers to the sauce. For garnish, try using a few fresh basil leaves and some grated Parmesan cheese. For service, this goes very well with bruschetta or garlic bread.



# **Chapter 4**

## **Life Is Uncertain, Eat Dessert First**

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# Let Them Eat Cake!

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**“We must have a a pie. Stress cannot exist in the presence of a pie”.**

-David Mamet

I started my culinary adventure by learning to make dessert. Ben & Jerry’s ice cream made a bumper sticker at one point with the saying “life is uncertain, eat dessert first”. I’ve never forgotten that, and confections are my first love.

Everything sweet, sticky, chocolaty, full of caramel and marshmallow and love appeals to me. I don’t remember exactly when I first saw Gene Wilder’s genius portrayal of Willy Wonka, the reclusive candy maker and probably wizard. There’s a purity of technique in making desserts that you don’t always find in other cooking. Where cooking is art, baking is science, and you know almost immediately if something is wrong.

On the other hand, there’s a joy in seeing a perfect batch of toffee cooling in its mold, in a cake that rises just the way you want, in a batch of cookies that are the simplest thing in the world to make but bring joy to everyone who eats them.

Dessert has limitless potential. A chocolate cake by itself is, honestly, boring. A chocolate cake covered in buttercream

with intricate piping and some decorations becomes a thing of beauty.

I’d rank dessert on par with breakfast in terms of difficulty. Dessert is beautiful, and delicious, and HARD. It takes practice, and there are going to be failures. I’ve had some spectacular failures (no, I’m not including pictures of those). None of the recipes I’m including are particularly difficult on their own, but they’ll take some practice to get exactly right, and to put your own spin on them. Dessert is a highly personal endeavor, and you should leave your own mark on the confections you make.

Dessert is messy, gooey, chaotic and wonderful. When your desserts come out well, it’s an amazing success. When they don’t, it’ll seem like the world has come crashing down, but keep going, you’ll get it. We all start with some fallen cakes, but they still taste good.



# Buckeyes

My wife showed me these shortly after we met, making them for a party we were having. I've never forgotten that taste, and we've made them ever since. For a great quick sweet treat, these no bake cookies are perfect. Simple ingredients, and a snap to make. The only caveat with these is not eating the dough straight out of the mixing bowl! I use these for parties and catered events alike.

Yield	
Approx. 4 dozen cookies	

Ingredient	Amount	
Creamy Peanut Butter	1	lb
Powdered Sugar	1 1/2	lbs
Unsalted Butter (melted)	1/2	cup
Chocolate (good quality, melted)	1 1/2	cups



Buckeye Cookies

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer or large mixing bowl, cream the peanut butter and melted butter together.
2. On medium low speed, add in the powdered sugar a half cup at a time until it is fully incorporated. Resulting dough should hold together and be tacky but not overly sticky.
3. In small saucepan, melt the chocolate over very low heat.
4. Roll heaping tablespoons of the peanut butter dough into balls. If dough is too sticky, add powdered sugar one tablespoon at a time until the dough is workable.
5. Dip each dough ball in the melted chocolate, or pour over dough balls on a rack (see above picture).
6. Chill for 30 mins and then enjoy!

# Buttercream Frosting

Cake frosting is a taste that everyone remembers from their childhood. Store bought, made from scratch, it doesn't matter. Cake frosting, or cupcake frosting, is one of those memories that stays with you, and comes back every time you have a slice of cake, or a perfectly frosted cupcake. This frosting is perfect for almost any application and can be altered to be any flavor you want.

Yield
Approx. 5 cups of frosting

Ingredient	Amount	
Unsalted Butter	1	lb
Confectioners Sugar	4	cup
Vanilla	1	tsp
Salt	1/2	tsp
Cream / Milk	As needed	

1. Cream butter in electric mixer for ~3 minutes, until pale yellow and fluffy.
2. Add sugar cup by cup, beating after each cup to incorporate.
3. Add vanilla and salt, mix well.
4. Add any flavorings desired, beat until incorporated.

## Recipe Notes

This frosting lends itself very well to adding in flavors. I've done this with fruit flavors, Oreo cookies, basic chocolate and vanilla. Your imagination is the only limit in what you can do with this frosting. Scale to what kind of cake you're making. Generally, one batch will do the crumb and final coat for an 8 inch round cake.



Vanilla Buttercream Frosting



# Chocolate Cake

I remember making chocolate cake as a child, making various cakes with my parents. When I was six, our neighbors used to trade cakes back and forth with us, specifically German Chocolate Cake. Combined with the buttercream frosting, this cake is versatile, delicious and suitable for occasions from birthdays to holidays.

Yield		
1 8" x 3" round cake		

Ingredient	Amount	
Flour (All Purpose)	1 3/4	cup
Vegetable Oil	1/2	cup
Milk	1/2	cup
Sugar	2	cup
Cocoa Powder	3/4	cup
Eggs	2	----
Baking Soda	1 1/2	tsp
Baking Powder	1 1/2	tsp
Vanilla	2	tsp
Boiling Water	1	cup

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Combine dry ingredients in bowl of a stand mixer or a large mixing bowl if mixing by hand.
3. Add remaining ingredients except for boiling water. Beat for ~2 mins.
4. Add in boiling water, beat. Batter will be thin.
5. Pour batter into greased cake pan.
6. Frost with buttercream icing of any variety. Pictured above is chocolate buttercream, but any flavor can be substituted.



Chocolate Cake with Chocolate Buttercream Frosting

7. Bake for 35-45 mins or until a cake tester comes out clean. Cake should start pulling away from the sides of the pan when it is done.
8. Let cool in the pan for 5 minutes, then transfer carefully to wire rack to cool completely.
9. Cover with buttercream frosting (pg. xxx) of any variety. Pictured above is chocolate buttercream, but any flavor can be substituted.

### **Recipe Notes**

This cake is perfect for a variety of applications. The basic recipe makes enough batter to fill an 8” x 3” round pan. For two 8” x 3” round cakes, multiply by 1.5. For a half sheet, double the basic recipe.







# Chocolate Chip Cookies

Chocolate chip cookies are one of those desserts that I can't remember the first time I had, but seems like it was there since the beginning. I remember making chocolate chip cookies with my mother at no more than five or six years old. When I make them today, they taste exactly the same. I take these cookies to dinners, events, almost anything. Try adding some ice cream to make a great dessert!

Yield
Approx. 3 dozen cookies

Ingredient	Amount	
All purpose flour	2 1/4	cup
Unsalted Butter (or shortening)	1	cup
Light Brown Sugar (packed)	1	cup
Granulated Sugar	1/2	cup
Eggs	2	----
Milk Chocolate or Semi-sweet chocolate chips	2	cup
Sea Salt	1	tsp
Baking Soda	1/2	tsp
Vanilla Extract	2	tsp

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Whisk together flour and baking soda.
3. Cream butter and sugars in the bowl of a stand mixer.
4. Add salt, vanilla and eggs, beat until combined.
5. Add flour mixture, chocolate chips, beat until well combined.



Chocolate Chip Cookies



6. Using a 1 oz. portion scoop, drop level scoops of dough onto a lightly greased cookie sheet (or sheet pan lined with parchment)
7. Bake 12-14 minutes until golden brown.
8. Let cool 5 minutes in the pan, remove to wire rack to cool completely.

### **Recipe Notes:**

Cookies are a great starting point to create all kinds of fancy desserts. They're great by themselves, but see what you can do by adding ice cream, or frosting, fresh fruit or decorations to make them into something special. This recipe lends itself well to additions like walnuts to give your cookies a different flavor. For a double chocolate cookie, try adding 2 tablespoons of a high quality cocoa powder (I recommend Callebaut dark cocoa powder).





# Filled Cupcakes

This is another recipe from the Better Homes Junior Cookbook. I have a memory of making these for my class at school, but I think I didn't appreciate them fully. These are good on their own, and a starting point to tweak the recipe by adding things here and there. The actual cupcake and the filling are flexible, and can be changed at will.

Yield
12 Cupcakes

Ingredient	Amount
Softened Cream Cheese	3 oz
Sugar	3/4 cup
Walnuts (chopped)	2 tbsp
Vanilla	1/2 tsp
AP Flour	2/3 cup
Cocoa Powder	1/4 cup
Baking Powder	1 tsp
Unsalted Butter	1/4 cup
Egg	3 tbsp (1 egg)
Whole Milk	1/2 cup

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and 1/2 cup sugar until light and fluffy.
3. On low speed, add the egg and vanilla until well combined.
4. Mix in the flour, cocoa powder and baking powder.
5. Mix in the milk slowly and beat on medium speed until the batter is smooth.



Cream Cheese Filled Cupcakes

6. In separate bowl, mix together the cream cheese, 1/4 cup of sugar and the chopped nuts. If desired, add a splash of vanilla to this mixture. You can also add other flavors like hazelnut, coffee or fruit.
7. In a muffin pan, line each cup with a paper or silicone wrapper. Add about a tablespoon of cupcake batter into each cup.
8. Add one teaspoon of the cream cheese and nut mix into each cup and fill with the chocolate batter until the cups are about 2/3 full.
9. Bake for 20 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean.
10. Remove from oven and cool on a wire rack.

### **Recipe Notes:**

On their own, these are great cupcakes. Filled cupcakes have enjoyed something of a resurgence lately, especially due to programs such as Cupcake Wars on the Food Network. Making this recipe exactly will turn out delicious cupcakes, but it could easily be altered to another flavor cupcake with another filling. Try adding a different nut or adding flavoring such as raspberry, strawberry, strong coffee or peanut butter to the cream cheese filling. Extract flavors are easy to find. Use a teaspoon or two of flavoring, depending on how strong you want the filling to taste.



# German Chocolate Cake

When I was five or so, our neighbors would trade cakes back and forth with us. I remember baking German chocolate cakes with my Mom, then walking them down the street in a cake carrier that is probably older than I am now (but, as far as I know, still exists). Flavors of coconut make this cake truly something special.

Yield
3 1/4 cups of Frosting, enough to cover 1 chocolate cake

Ingredient	Amount	
Frosting		
Sugar	1	cup
Heavy Cream	1	cup
Egg Yolks	3	large
Unsalted butter	1/4	cup
Sweetened Dried Coconut	1 1/3	cups
Pecans (chopped)	1 1/3	cups
Cake		
1 Chocolate Cake, 8" x 3" (see recipe pg. )	1	round



Frosted German Chocolate Cake

## Make the Frosting

1. In saucepan over medium heat, combine sugar, heavy cream, egg yolks and butter. Stir until well combined.
2. Bring to a bare simmer. Do not boil mixture, or it may burn. Stir constantly to make sure it doesn't burn.
3. Let mixture thicken to the consistency of thick paste.
4. Stir in the coconut and pecans. Incorporate fully and then remove frosting from heat to cool.

### **Chocolate Cake:**

Make the 8” x 3” chocolate cake as described in the recipe on pg. xx. When the cake is cooled, use a serrated knife or a cake leveler to make sure the cake is flat on top. Divide cake into at least two layers, then chill in the freezer for 15 minutes.

### **Assembly:**

1. Place cake board onto a decorating turntable.
2. Put a dab of frosting in the center of the cake board and lay down the bottom layer of the chocolate cake.
3. Using an offset spatula, spread the frosting in an even layer over the top of the layer. Make sure the icing is level, more or less.
4. Place the second layer onto the icing and repeat the frosting technique from step 3.
5. If using more than two layers, repeat the icing steps until you have laid all the layers and iced the top one.
6. Optionally, use the remaining icing to apply a layer around the sides of the cake. Chilling the cake between laying the layers and icing the sides will make this easier. Apply a thin crumb coat, chill the cake for 15 minutes, then apply the finish layer of icing (see recipe notes for more on this).

### **Recipe Notes:**

Traditionally, a German chocolate cake is not iced on the sides, but growing up I remember them being iced. The decoration and icing work is the key to making this cake stand out. The flavor is wonderful, coconut and butter and chocolate mixing together into a glorious whole. Using a large tip, you can add decoration with a piping bag and some toasted pecans. Otherwise, slice and enjoy!



# Pie Crust

Pie Crust is half of the equation of any pie. Combined with the right filling, this can be a thing of beauty. This recipe comes from a good friend, and I've used it for many things. I'm including a companion recipe for a pecan pie, which harkens back to my childhood.

Yield	
Two 9" Pie Crusts	

Ingredient	Amount
AP Flour	3 cups
Sea Salt	1 tsp
Sugar	2 tsp
Unsalted Butter (cold)	1 cup
Apple Cider Vinegar	1 1/2 tsp
Iced Water	8 tbsp



Plain Pie Crust

1. Whisk together flour, salt and sugar in a mixing bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer with the dough hook attachment.
2. Cut the chilled butter into 1/4" cubes. Using a pastry cutter, incorporate the butter into dry ingredients until it is pea sized. Alternatively, this can be done in a food processor with the dough blade and setting.
3. Add ice water and apple cider vinegar and mix on low speed. The dough should be moist but not sticky, and should stay together when a piece is squeezed in the hand. If it does not stay together, add ice water a tablespoon at a time.
4. Remove dough and divide in half. Form each half into a rough disc and wrap in plastic.
5. Chill the dough for at least an hour in the refrigerator, or overnight if not using immediately. Dough can be frozen, but bring back to a chill before using. Dough should be smooth and workable, even when cold.

## Recipe Notes:

This crust also works for non-savory pies. If you're using the crust for, say, a quiche or a meat pie, just omit the sugar and keep everything else the same. The trick is to not overwork the crust when you're rolling it out. Be gentle with the rolling pin, or it will end up tough.

# Pecan Pie

Pecan pie is one of those things that I remember from holidays growing up. My Dad used to make it for us, and there’s a singular taste to it that stays with you. This is a wonderful gooey, sticky custard topped with rich pecans. Combined with a flaky crust and it’s a pie that will be a winner every time you make it.

Yield		
One 9” pie (about 8 slices)		
Ingredient	Amount	
<u>Crust</u>		
1/2 Pie Crust Recipe (see pg. 77)		
<u>Custard</u>		
Sugar	1	cup
Eggs	9	tbsp (3 eggs)
Light Corn Syrup	1	cup
Unsalted Butter (melted)	5	tbsp
Sea Salt	1/2	tsp
Vanilla	1	tsp
<u>Topping</u>		
Pecans	2	cups
Unsalted Butter (melted)	2	tbsp
Brown Sugar	1	tbsp



Pecan Pie

(Recipe Steps on Next Page)



### **Make the Crust:**

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Prepare a half amount of the pie crust recipe on page 77 if only making one pie, or full amount if making two pies. Pecan pie is traditionally a single crust.
3. Roll the dough gently on a floured surface, keeping a rough circular shape. Dough should be thin, and should stretch to drape into the pie pan with some falling over the edge.
4. Fold excess crust neatly underneath to make a uniform edge, then either flute or mark with a fork.
5. Bake for 15 minutes, using pie weights or dry beans on a parchment paper to keep crust weighted. Remove from oven and keep warm. Leave the oven on.

### **Make the Topping:**

1. Melt 2 tbsp of butter in a microwave or stovetop.
2. Brush the pecans with the melted butter, giving each a light coating.
3. Toss the buttered pecans in the brown sugar until each has a light dusting.
4. On a silicone baking sheet, toast the pecans in the oven for 10 minutes at 375°F until the brown sugar is caramelized and the pecans are slightly toasted.

### **Make the Custard:**

1. Whisk together the butter, sugar and eggs in a mixing bowl.
2. Add in the corn syrup, salt and vanilla, whisk vigorously until mixture is well combined.

3. Pour the custard mixture into the pie shell. Mixture should come almost to the rim of the pie pan.
4. Float the toasted pecans on top of the custard mixture.
5. Bake at 375°F for approx. 35 - 40 minutes until the custard does not move when gently shaken and appears solid. The pie should form a sugary crust on top and be golden to dark brown. Be careful that the crust does not burn (having a thick layer from folding the excess crust under will help with this).
6. Remove pie from oven and allow to completely cool.

### **Recipe Notes:**

The caramelizing of the pecans and the forming of the crust is the key to this pie. The custard will thicken as it cooks and will continue to thicken as it cools for a few minutes. While there are many steps, it's not an overly complicated pie to make, but is a hit anytime. It's best served with vanilla ice cream or a spoonful of whipped cream and a steaming cup of coffee.







# Afterword

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A project on the scale of this requires a huge amount of time and effort. Not just the writing, the editing, the format, the photography. You also have to make sure that the recipes work, that they are cookable.

Otherwise, what's the point?

I never really thought “oh hey, I’m writing a book” until it was almost finished. Sure, when we got the project, I realized that the words “write” and “book” were in the guidelines, but I guess it didn’t really hit home the magnitude of what I was doing.

This is lasting. Not the book itself, although I guess there’s some small hope that copies will float around for a while. But the meaning, that’s the important part. The very fact that some of these recipes might keep going is what made all the effort worthwhile. That maybe somebody is going to have dinner one night and think to themselves, “yum, Mom’s mac and cheese. I could eat this forever”. I’ll never know it, and honestly I’d rather just believe that it’s true. Doesn’t actually matter whether it’s true or not, I’ll believe it. Pride? Maybe.

With the finish of this, I can’t imagine not having written it. Maybe not now, but someday, this book would have come into being. Who knows, maybe there’ll be a volume two one day.

I’ve made all the recipes in this book. They work. They taste good. Some are easy, some are a little more complicated. But all of them share one quality: they’re memories. They’re things that defined my childhood, and continue to rattle around in my head to this day. I’m pretty sure I’ll never stop refining them, adding a pinch of this, a dash of that. Recipes are always a work in progress, however many times they get set down on paper.

Anthony Bourdain said in his book *Medium Raw* that food is all about communication. I think he’s right, making good food is an extended love letter to the people who eat it. We may never see them, we may never meet them, but we have a connection nonetheless. The people who eat your food love you for it, and you can’t help but love them back for eating it. That’s the truth.



# About The Author

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Trey Cromwell has been an ice cream artiste, a traveling performer and a United States Sailor, among several other lifetimes.

Abandoning a normal life for a life less ordinary at an early age, Trey has made several careers out of being off the beaten path. Most recently, Trey has begun through the culinary program at American River College, and intends to stay in the industry after graduation.

Trey has built Cromwell & Hastings Confectioners out of the knowledge from the culinary program, combined with a healthy dose of Internet research. Through the generosity of people like Roxanne O'Brien and Alyxx Duggins, Trey has expanded his skillset to include the savory side as well as the sweet side.

Trey's website, [www.cromwellandhastings.com](http://www.cromwellandhastings.com), offers high quality sweets and treats. Dedicated to local source products and sustainable business, Cromwell & Hastings Confectioners brings you the best every time.



**AS MY IRISH FRIENDS SAY,  
“EAT, DRINK, AND BE  
MERRY”.**

**FIN**