

Home Cooking

Chefs who spend their days in busy kitchens share favorite recipes for meals to make at home.

BY ELLEN BIRKETT MORRIS

After a long day in the kitchen, cooking at home may come way down on the list of things chefs want to do. Consequently, families and friends of dedicated cooks may find themselves longing for a meal that doesn't materialize. Will keeping it simple make the task easier? Several chefs offer up their favorite meals, and tell us how they make one more cooking chore a positive pleasure.

Home sweet home

John Ash, a chef, educator and author who divides his time between teaching cooking, promoting organic

viniculture and overseeing the menu of his Sonoma County restaurant, is on the road most of the year. At home on his Northern California ranch he welcomes the opportunity to entertain a few friends or enjoy a simple meal alone. His recipe for cold soba-noodle salad is easy to put together and appeals to kids and adults alike.

"In Japan, cold noodles dressed with a sweet and salty sauce using soy are served everywhere," says Ash. "This recipe transforms that dish into a delicious salad that I often use as a base for grilled vegetables, meat and fish."

COLD SOBA-NOODLE SALAD WITH ORANGE SOY SAUCE

From John Ash:
Cooking One-on-One,
Clarkson Potter (March 2004)

Yield: 6 portions

- 1 lb. soba noodles or other thin noodles
- Olive oil
- 3 cups lightly packed watercress leaves, woody stems discarded
- Orange Soy Sauce (recipe follows)
- Fresh daikon or other radish sprouts for garnish

1) Cook soba noodles in boiling salted water until just done but still firm. Rinse in cold water; toss with drops of olive oil. 2) Arrange watercress attractively on plates; top with noodles. Drizzle with orange soy sauce; top with daikon sprouts.



Ash

ORANGE SOY SAUCE

Yield: 1 1/4 cups

- 5 T. soy sauce
- 1/2 cup fresh orange juice
- 2 T. seasoned rice vinegar
- 2 t. toasted-sesame oil
- 1/4 t. crushed red-chile flakes
- 1 t. peeled, fine-minced ginger
- 1 t. sugar (or to taste)
- 3 t. olive oil

Method: Combine all ingredients in blender; pulse to emulsify and thicken. Adjust seasoning to taste. Store, covered, in refrigerator up to 3 days. If making ahead, sauce may separate; simply pulse again in blender to recombine.

Dining al fresco

In September 1998, Suzanne Goin opened Lucques in West Hollywood, Calif., with partner Caroline Styne. Like many Californians, Goin dines outside

year-round. On her days off, she enjoys cooking simple meals and eating al fresco.

“When I have time off, I take it really easy, relaxing at home, sometimes hanging out with friends, but usually hanging out outside and doing something casual,” says Goin. At dinnertime, she and her husband walk a winding path that ends up at a flagstone patio surrounded by rosemary, sage, lavender and oregano that looks out over Laurel Canyon. With a glass of wine and an amazing view, dinner is a respite from the busy world of the kitchen.

GRILLED WILD SALMON WITH WHITE BEANS, GRILLED BACON AND SALSA VERDE

Yield: 6 portions

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 small sprig rosemary
1 chile d’arbol, crumbled by hand
1 fresh bay leaf
1 cup medium-dice white onion
1/2 cup diced fennel
1 clove garlic, minced (1 t.)

1 T. picked thyme
1 t. fennel seed, ground
1 t. salt
1/4 t. freshly ground black pepper
2 cups dried beans
2 qts. water
2 1/2 t. kosher salt
6 wild-salmon fillets, skin-on
(5 to 6 oz. each)
1/3 lb. apple-smoked bacon,
thickly sliced
1/4 cup sliced opal basil
1/4 cup sliced flat-leaf parsley
1 bunch arugula, cleaned
Salsa Verde (recipe follows)

1) 45 minutes before beginning to cook, light grill. **2)** Heat medium sauce pot over medium heat for 2 minutes. Add olive oil, rosemary, chile and bay leaf. Let aromatics sizzle for a minute in oil; add onion, fennel, garlic, thyme, fennel seed, salt and pepper. **3)** Cook vegetables 8 to 10 minutes until sizzling and starting to caramelize. Add beans, water and kosher salt; bring to a boil. **4)** Cut piece of parchment paper the diameter of interior of sauce pot; cut a hole in center. When beans come to a boil, turn down to barely simmering; place paper over beans. Place lid on pot, slightly ajar. Cook beans, stirring occasionally, for about 1 1/2 hours until

tender. (Beans can be made ahead and stored in cooking liquid.) **5)** When embers are golden, grill bacon for about 4 minutes on each side until crisp but still chewy. Set aside. **6)** Brush salmon with olive oil; season with salt and pepper. Grill to medium rare. **7)** Spoon beans onto large platter. Scatter herbs on top. Place arugula over beans; put bacon and fish on top. Spoon salsa verde over fish.

SALSA VERDE

1 t. fresh marjoram or oregano leaves
1/4 cup mint leaves
1 cup tightly packed flat-leaf parsley leaves
1 garlic clove, peeled
1 T. capers
1 anchovy packed in salt (rinsed, cleaned)
3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Method: With mortar and pestle, gently pound herbs in batches until almost puréed. Work in some olive oil. Remove herbs to bowl. Pound garlic and anchovy to a paste; remove to herb bowl. Gently pound capers until crushed; add to bowl. Add remaining oil; taste for balance.

Cooking with the grandkids

Robert H. Kinkead Jr., chef/owner of Kinkead’s in Washington, D.C., who also owns and operates Colvin Run Tavern in Tyson’s Corner, Va., enjoys cooking at home, a renovated barn in the Virginia countryside. He and his wife, Dianne, often host parties, from lavish formal dinners for 12 to casual cookouts. The only thing Kinkead enjoys more than hosting friends is cooking with his three grandchildren—all under the age of 9—on visits from their home in Italy. During those visits, Kinkead

and the grandkids can be found in the kitchen, cooking pasta.

“Learning to cook dried pasta properly is one of the most important and well-used cooking skills one can acquire,” says Kinkead. “It will serve you in great stead throughout your life.”



Kinkead

Home Cooking

CAVATAPPI WITH SAUSAGE, MUSHROOMS, GARLIC, SAGE AND CREAM

*Yield: 4 main-course portions;
6 first-course portions*

2 cups veal or beef stock
4 or 5 large dried-porcini slices
1 lb. sweet Italian sausage with fennel
3 T. olive oil, divided
2 T. butter, divided
4 large porcini (frozen can be used)
18 medium button mushrooms, washed, quartered (about 1½ lbs.)

4 garlic cloves, minced
¼ cup Madeira
2 cups heavy cream
4 sage leaves, chiffonade
1½ lbs. cavatappi or other high-quality dried pasta
Salt and pepper
3 T. Parmigiano-Reggiano

1) In small saucepan, bring stock to a boil; add dried porcini. Simmer 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from heat; let steep until mushrooms soften. Strain stock; reserve. Chop refreshed porcini. 2) Cut membrane off sausages; crumble by hand. Slice fresh porcini; reserve. In heavy-sided sauté pan over medium heat, add 2 T. olive oil. Cook sausage until brown. Drain off

fat; reserve cooked sausage meat. 3) Wipe out pan; add 1 T. olive oil and 1 T. butter. Over medium heat, sauté fresh porcini and button-mushroom quarters. When starting to brown, add garlic and remaining butter; cook until browned. Deglaze with Madeira; transfer to saucepan. Add porcini-flavored stock and chopped rehydrated porcini; reduce by half. Add cream; reduce until starting to thicken. Add sausage, sage and salt and pepper to taste. 4) Cook pasta in large pot of boiling salted water to al dente, about 11 minutes. Drain, leaving 1 T. of cooking water in pot; return pasta to pot.

Going organic

Amy Scherber owns Amy's Bread in Manhattan, which delivers breads and rolls to more than 200 restaurants and stores in New York daily and has expanded into three retail cafes. When Scherber is really hungry and in the mood for something



Scherber

healthy—and doesn't want to spend much time in the kitchen—she makes steamed vegetables with chickpeas, pasta and tahini sauce.

"The ingredients in this dish are items that I always have on hand in my cupboard and refrigerator. That way, I can make it whenever the mood strikes," she says. "I almost always use all-organic ingredients for the meal. Different vegetables work fine for the recipe, and I usually have something seasonal on hand."

STEAMED VEGETABLES WITH CHICKPEAS, PASTA AND TAHINI SAUCE

Yield: 3 portions

6 to 8 oz. (dry) organic whole-durum-wheat pasta, such as rigatoni, penne or spaghetti
3 T. toasted pumpkin seeds for garnish (optional)
½ small organic onion, minced

1 garlic clove, minced
1 t. extra-virgin olive oil
4 medium organic carrots cut in ¾-in.-thick pieces
1 to 2 stalks organic broccoli cut in 1-in. pieces
⅓ bunch organic collard greens, tough stem tips removed, cut in 1- to 1½-in. pieces
⅓ bunch organic kale, tough stem tips removed, cut in 1- to 1½-in. pieces
1 15-oz. can organic chickpeas
⅔ of 16-oz. package of organic tofu (optional)
1 T. extra-virgin olive oil
3 T. sesame tahini
½ to 1 t. toasted-sesame oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

1) Fill 2-qt. saucepan with cold water; bring to a boil. 2) Toast pumpkin seeds lightly in sauté pan over medium heat; remove from pan. 3) Place onion and garlic in small sauté pan with 1 t. olive oil. Add 1 to 2 T. of water and pinch of salt. Place over low heat to slowly

sweat onion and garlic; stir occasionally. **4)** Place 1 in. cold water in 4-qt. pan that holds large steamer basket. Cover; place over medium heat; bring to a boil. **5)** Place carrots in steamer when water begins to boil; season with kosher salt to taste. Cover; steam for 1 to 2 minutes. **6)** Season boiling water with kosher salt. Add pasta; cook 8 to 10 minutes. **7)** Drain chickpeas; add to onions and garlic; season lightly with

salt and pepper. Add a little vegetable steaming water. If serving with tofu, slice into 3 pieces and place in pan with chickpeas; season with salt and pepper. **8)** Add broccoli and collards to steamer with carrots; season with salt. Cover; steam vegetables 3 more minutes. **9)** Add kale to steamer basket; season; cover. Steam vegetables 2 to 3 more minutes to al dente; remove steamer basket from pot; turn off heat.

10) Drain pasta; return to pan. Toss with 1 T. olive oil. **11)** Place $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable cooking water in small pot over medium heat. Add sesame tahini; stir with fork or immersion blender to smooth out; season to taste with salt and pepper. **12)** Divide pasta among 3 bowls. Top with chickpeas, tofu and vegetables; drizzle with sauce; sprinkle with a few drops of toasted-sesame oil. Garnish with toasted pumpkin seeds.

Hands-on cooking

At Charlie Trotter's namesake restaurant in Chicago, the chef/owner is almost always on the job. But when Trotter takes time off, he tries to spend as much of it as possible with his 13-year-old son, Dylan. Like most kids his age, Dylan can be a picky eater, so Trotter puts together recipes that fit Dylan's tastes and give father and son a chance to cook together. Like many of his dishes on the menu at Charlie Trotter's, this dish—a sushi roll that substitutes crispy chicken breast for raw fish—is Asian inspired. The hands-on preparation of the sushi rolls is fun for all ages.

"After you master the art of rolling your own *maki* rolls, you can fill them with any of your favorite foods, such as tuna, crab, smoked salmon or vegetables," Trotter says. "This way, the whole family can customize their rolls."

DYLAN'S CHICKEN MAKI ROLLS

Yield: 4 rolls

1 t. wasabi powder
2 T. mayonnaise
2 t. water

2 cups cooked sushi/sticky rice, cooked to package directions without added sugar or vinegar, at room temperature
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ T. sugar
2 T. rice-wine vinegar
4 sheets nori (dried pressed seaweed)
2 T. cilantro leaves
4 (6 in.) red-bell-pepper sticks

4 (6 in.) avocado slices
1 breaded chicken breast, cooked, cut into 8 thin strips about 6 in. long by $\frac{1}{3}$ -in. thick
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ponzu sauce

1) Place wasabi powder, mayonnaise and water in small cup; stir until smooth. **2)** Place room-temperature rice, sugar and rice-wine vinegar in small bowl; stir gently until mixed. **3)** Lay sheet of *nori* on bamboo *maki* roller; place $\frac{1}{2}$ cup rice on *nori*; spread flat with hands, leaving 2-in. border at top. **4)** Spoon 2 t. wasabi mixture on rice; sprinkle a few cilantro leaves horizontally in center. Lay 2 chicken strips, 1 red-bell-pepper stick and 1 avocado slice over cilantro. **5)** Using *maki* roller, carefully roll up *nori* sheet, creating firm, smooth roll; moisten border to create seal. Repeat to make 4 rolls. **6)** Slice *maki* rolls into $1\frac{1}{2}$ -in.-thick pieces; serve with ponzu sauce.



Trotter

Ellen Birkett Morris is based in Louisville, Ky.