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top 20 quick & easy recipes

the editor's best picks
from *Bon Appetit* and *Gourmet*

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The World's Greatest Recipe Collection

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top 20 quick & easy recipes

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introduction

At first glance these recipes may not seem quick or easy, but each of them can be prepared in 45 minutes or less, and they are all delicious!

Inside you'll find simple-to-make sumptuous dinners—from seared salmon on baby spinach to grilled pork chops with sour cherry sauce. We've also included lunches that are tasty but easy to prepare, such as fried fish tacos, and sandwiches, salads, and snacks that can be made lickety-split.

Of course this compilation of quick and easy recipes wouldn't be complete without desserts, so you'll also find two no-bake sweet delights to try.

Thank you once again for joining us as an *Epicurious member*. We hope you enjoy this gift. It's just one more way we'd like to show our appreciation for your support.

Warmly,

The Editor

92% would make again

seared salmon on baby spinach

This recipe can be prepared in 45 minutes or less.

Complete the entrée with a dilled cucumber salad, steamed squash and popovers (from a mix). End with purchased strawberry tarts.

2 7-ounce skinless salmon fillets
2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter
3 large shallots, sliced
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon
3 ounces baby spinach leaves
1/3 cup dry white wine
1/4 cup whipping cream

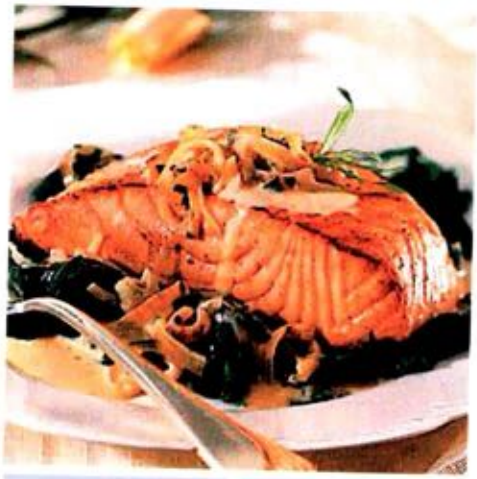
Sprinkle salmon with salt and pepper. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add salmon; sauté until just opaque in center, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer to plate.

Melt 1/2 tablespoon butter in same skillet. Add half of shallots and half of tarragon; sauté 30 seconds. Increase heat to high; add half of spinach and toss 30 seconds. Add remaining spinach; toss until wilted. Divide between plates.

Melt remaining 1/2 tablespoon butter in same skillet over medium-high heat. Add remaining shallots and tarragon; sauté 30 seconds. Add wine and cream and boil until sauce is thick enough to coat spoon, about 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Return salmon to skillet; simmer 1 minute. Arrange salmon with sauce atop spinach.

Serves 2; can be doubled.

Bon Appétit • April 1999



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85% would make again

easy chicken pot pies

For a first course, toss mixed greens with a cider vinaigrette.

1 refrigerated pie crust (half of 15-ounce package), room temperature
2 tablespoons all purpose flour
1 1/2 teaspoons dried rubbed sage
8 ounces skinless boneless chicken breast, cut into 1-inch pieces
1 1/2 tablespoons butter
1 1/3 cups canned chicken broth
1 1/2 cups frozen mixed vegetables

Preheat oven to 425°F. Place crust on work surface. Press out fold lines; pinch to seal any cracks. Cut out 2 pastry rounds to fit top of two 2-cup ramekins. Arrange crusts on baking sheet. Pierce with fork. Bake crusts until golden, about 8 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine flour and 1/2 teaspoon sage in medium bowl. Season chicken with salt and pepper. Add chicken to flour; toss to coat. Melt butter in heavy large skillet oven medium-high heat. Add chicken and any remaining flour to skillet and stir until chicken is brown, about 5 minutes. Mix in broth, vegetables and 1 teaspoon sage. Bring to boil, scraping up any browned bits. Reduce heat, cover skillet and simmer until chicken is cooked through, about 8 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Transfer filling to ramekins. Top with crusts and serve.

2 Servings; can be doubled.

Bon Appétit • November 1995

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spaghetti carbonara

This pasta dish originated in the region of Lazio, not Tuscany. However, it is popular throughout Italy—and America—today.

9 bacon slices, chopped
1 tablespoon butter
1/2 cup whipping cream
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
4 large egg yolks
12 ounces spaghetti
Additional grated Parmesan cheese

Combine bacon and butter in heavy large skillet over medium heat. Sauté until bacon is brown and crisp. Using slotted spoon, transfer bacon to paper towels and drain. Whisk cream, 1/2 cup grated cheese and egg yolks in medium bowl to blend; whisk in 2 tablespoons drippings from skillet. Set cream mixture aside; discard remaining drippings.

Cook pasta in large pot of boiling salted water until just tender but still firm to bite, stirring occasionally. Drain pasta and return to same pot. Add cream mixture to pasta. Toss over medium-low heat until sauce cooks through and coats pasta thickly, about 4 minutes (do not boil). Mix in bacon. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Divide pasta among 6 plates. Serve, passing additional cheese separately.

Makes 6 first-course servings.

Bon Appétit • May 2000

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80% would make again

roast cornish game hen with spicy fruit salsa

Mashed sweet potatoes and sautéed green beans make colorful companions. Key lime pie is a refreshing way to wrap up.

3/4 cup bottled fruit salsa
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme
1/2 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
1 tablespoon olive oil
3/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1 1 3/4-pound cornish game hen, split in half along backbone

Preheat oven to 450°F. Mix first 3 ingredients in medium bowl. Transfer 3 tablespoons salsa mixture to small bowl and stir in oil and allspice. Place hen halves on rack set on baking sheet. Sprinkle with salt and pepper; brush with oil mixture. Roast until juices run clear when thigh is pierced, about 25 minutes. Transfer hen halves to plates. Spoon remaining salsa mixture on top.

2 servings; can be doubled.

Bon Appétit • January 2000

shrimp, vegetable and cashew stir-fry

1/4 cup cornstarch
2 egg whites
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 pound uncooked large shrimp, peeled, deveined
3 tablespoons peanut oil
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped garlic
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped peeled fresh ginger
1 1/2 bunches broccoli, cut into florets
2 carrots, thinly sliced on diagonal
1/4 cup cashews
1/4 cup purchased teriyaki sauce
3 tablespoons dry sherry
1/4 teaspoon (or more) dried crushed red pepper
1 1/2 cups long-grain rice, cooked

Whisk cornstarch, egg whites and salt in large bowl until smooth. Add shrimp; toss to coat. Let shrimp stand at room temperature 20 minutes.

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in large wok or heavy large skillet over medium-high heat. Add shrimp, garlic and ginger and stir-fry until shrimp is cooked through, about 2 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer shrimp to plate. Add remaining 1 tablespoon oil to wok. Add broccoli and carrots and stir-fry until vegetables are crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Add cashews, teriyaki sauce, Sherry and 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper and cook 1 minute. Return shrimp to wok and stir-fry until coated with sauce and heated through, about 1 minute. Season with salt and additional crushed red pepper, if desired.

Spoon shrimp and vegetable mixture onto platter. Spoon cooked rice around edge of platter and serve.

Serves 4.

Bon Appétit • November 1994

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super-fast spinach, pesto and cheese lasagna

It's little wonder that lasagna became the informal party dish of the fifties and sixties-it can be assembled ahead of time, it freezes well, and it is a delicious and inexpensive way to feed a crowd. In this contemporary-and meatless-version, "no-boil" noodles eliminate a step, and bottled pasta sauce stands in for homemade.

3 cups ricotta cheese
1 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
1 large egg
2 10-ounce packages frozen chopped spinach, thawed, squeezed dry
1 7-ounce package prepared pesto
4 cups bottled chunky pasta sauce
12 no-boil lasagna noodles from one 8-ounce package
2 cups grated fontina cheese

Blend ricotta and Parmesan in medium bowl. Season cheeses with salt and pepper; stir in egg. Blend spinach and pesto in another medium bowl.

Brush 13x9x2-inch glass baking dish with oil. Spread 1 cup pasta sauce in prepared dish. Arrange 3 noodles side by side atop sauce. Spread 1 1/4 cups ricotta cheese mixture over in thin layer. Drop 1/3 of spinach mixture over by spoonfuls. Repeat layering with sauce, noodles, ricotta cheese mixture and spinach mixture 2 more times. Top with remaining 3 noodles and 1 cup sauce.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cover lasagna with foil. Bake 35 minutes. Uncover; sprinkle with Fontina cheese. Bake lasagna until heated through, sauce bubbles and cheese on top is melted, about 15 minutes longer. Let stand 10 minutes.

Makes 8 servings.

Bon Appétit • September 1999

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beef paillards with watercress and herb salad

The greens in this recipe are inspired by Vietnamese-style herb salads.

Active time: 20 min • **Start to finish:** 20 min

2 (6-oz) filets mignons (beef-tenderloin steaks; 1 1/2 inches thick)
1 1/2 teaspoons fresh lime juice
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
2 cups small watercress sprigs
1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves
1/4 cup fresh mint leaves
1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Accompaniment: lime wedges

Cut each filet horizontally (across the grain) into three equal pieces. Gently pound filets between sheets of plastic wrap to 1/4-inch thickness using a flat meat pounder or a rolling pin.

Whisk together lime juice, olive oil, and salt and pepper to taste, then toss with watercress, cilantro, and mint.

Pat 2 paillards dry and season with salt and pepper. Heat 3/4 tablespoon of vegetable oil in a 10-inch heavy skillet over high heat until just beginning to smoke, then sauté paillards, turning once, 1 minute for medium-rare. Transfer to a plate. Dry and season remaining paillards and sauté in same manner with remaining oil.

Top paillards with salad.

Makes 2 servings.

Gourmet • April 2001

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provencal chicken breasts with rosemary orzo

Can be prepared in 45 minutes or less.

3 whole boneless chicken breasts with skin (about 2 1/2 pounds), halved
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup dry white wine
2 large garlic cloves, minced
white part of 4 leeks, halved lengthwise, sliced 1/4 inch thick crosswise, washed well, and drained
2 cups chicken broth
1 28- to 32-ounce can whole tomatoes, drained and chopped
1 teaspoon freshly grated orange zest
1 cup drained niçoise or kalamata olives

Accompaniment: rosemary orzo

Pat chicken dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. In a large heavy flameproof casserole heat oil over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking and brown chicken in 2 batches, transferring with tongs as browned to a large plate.

Add wine to casserole and boil, scraping up browned bits, until almost evaporated. Add garlic, leeks, broth, tomatoes, zest, and chicken with any juices accumulated on plate and simmer, covered, turning chicken once, until chicken is cooked through, about 15 minutes. Transfer chicken to a platter.

Add olives to tomato mixture and boil sauce until thickened slightly. Season sauce with salt and pepper and serve with chicken and rosemary orzo .

Serves 6.

Gourmet • June 1995

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grilled pork chops with sour cherry sauce

3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
3 tablespoons sugar
3/4 cup dry red wine
1/4 cup minced shallot
1 3-inch cinnamon stick
1 cup chicken broth
1 pound sour cherries (about 3 cups), pitted
1 tablespoon cornstarch dissolved in 1 tablespoon cold water
2 teaspoons fresh lime juice, or to taste
8 1-inch-thick boneless pork chops
vegetable oil for rubbing chops

In a heavy saucepan boil the vinegar with the sugar over moderate heat until the mixture is reduced to a glaze. Add the wine, the shallot, and the cinnamon stick and boil the mixture until it is reduced to about 1/4 cup. Add the broth and the cherries and simmer the sauce for 5 minutes. Stir the cornstarch mixture, add enough of it to the sauce, stirring, to thicken the sauce to the desired consistency, and simmer the sauce for 2 minutes. Discard the cinnamon stick, stir in the lime juice and salt and pepper to taste, and keep the sauce warm, covered.

Pat the chops dry with paper towels, rub both sides of each chop with the oil, and season the chops with salt and pepper. Grill the chops on an oiled rack set 5 to 6 inches over glowing coals for 6 to 8 minutes on each side, or until they are just cooked through. Transfer the pork chops to a platter and spoon the sauce over them.

Serves 8.

Gourmet • July 1993

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parmesan-coated turkey cutlets

Active time: 20 min • **Start to finish:** 20 min

1 1/4 lb turkey breast cutlets, halved crosswise if large
2 large eggs
1 tablespoon water
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
3/4 cup finely grated parmigiano-reggiano (1 1/2 oz)
2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley or basil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
2 tablespoons olive oil

Accompaniment: lemon wedges

Gently pound cutlets between 2 sheets of plastic wrap with a flat meat pounder or a rolling pin until 1/4 inch thick.

Whisk together eggs, water, salt, pepper, cheese, and parsley in a shallow bowl (batter will be thick).

Heat 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over moderately high heat until foam subsides. Working quickly, dip 1 cutlet in batter, letting excess drip off, and add to skillet. Repeat with about 3 more cutlets (do not crowd in skillet) and cook, turning over once, until golden and just cooked through, about 4 minutes total. Repeat with remaining butter, oil, and cutlets.

Serve with lemon wedges.

Makes 4 servings.

Gourmet • October 2002

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crispy duck breasts with pear & green peppercorn sauce

1 1/2 pounds boneless duck breast* (4 boneless breast halves, cut from two 5 1/2- to 6-pound ducks)
1 firm-ripe bosc pear
3/4 cup apple juice
1/2 teaspoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons calvados or armagnac
1 tablespoon green peppercorns packed in brine, drained and crushed lightly
1 tablespoon duck or veal demiglace* or 1/2 extra-large vegetarian vegetable bouillon cube
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves or 1/4 teaspoon dried, crumbled

Garnish: fresh thyme sprigs

**available at many butcher shops and specialty foods shops*

Trim excess fat from duck breasts. Heat a 12-inch heavy skillet over high heat until very hot. Pat breasts dry and season with salt. Put breasts, skin sides down, in skillet and reduce heat to moderate. Cook breasts 20 minutes, or until skin is crisp and mahogany-colored, removing fat from skillet as it is rendered with a metal bulb baster (or very carefully pouring it off). Turn breasts and cook about 2 minutes for medium-rare or to desired doneness. Transfer breasts to a plate and keep warm, covered loosely.

While duck breasts are cooking, peel pear and cut into 1/4-inch dice. Pour off all but about 1 tablespoon fat from skillet and sauté pear until lightly browned, about 1 minute. In a measuring cup stir together apple juice and cornstarch. To pear add Calvados or Armagnac. Stir in cornstarch mixture, peppercorns, demiglace or bouillon cube, and thyme and simmer, stirring, 2 minutes, or until slightly thickened.

Serve duck breasts, sliced, with sauce spooned over them and garnish with thyme sprigs.

Serves 4.

Gourmet • November 1994

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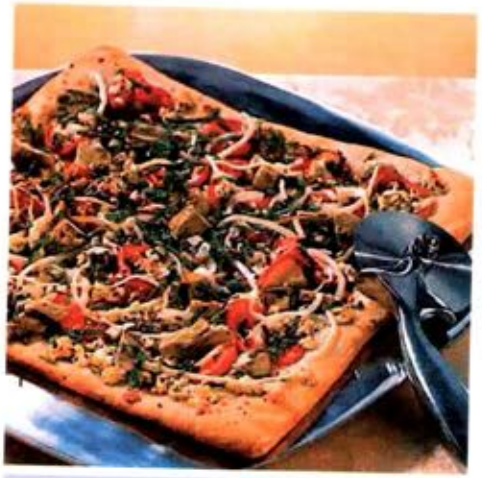
96% would make again

artichoke and feta cheese pizza



With the pizza, serve a green salad tossed with white-wine vinaigrette and pine nuts. Finish with lemon ice cream topped with pureed raspberries.

1 6.5-ounce jar marinated artichoke hearts, drained, 2 tablespoons marinade reserved
1 tablespoon yellow cornmeal
1 10-ounce tube refrigerated pizza crust dough
6 ounces plum tomatoes, thinly sliced into rounds
1 cup crumbled herb-seasoned feta cheese (about 4 ounces)
1/2 medium-size sweet onion (such as vidalia or maui), thinly sliced
2 tablespoons thinly sliced fresh mint

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cut artichokes into 1/2-inch pieces. Sprinkle baking sheet with yellow cornmeal. Unroll pizza crust dough onto prepared baking sheet; press out dough to 11-inch square. Brush dough with 1 tablespoon reserved marinade. Top dough with artichokes, plum tomato slices, crumbled herb-seasoned feta cheese and sweet onion slices. Drizzle with remaining 1 tablespoon marinade.

Bake pizza until crust is crisp and golden, about 15 minutes. Transfer to platter. Sprinkle with mint. Cut pizza into 4 squares and serve.

Makes 2 servings; can be doubled.

Bon Appétit • April 2000

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herbed cheese scrambled eggs on asparagus

Crusty French bread and baked potatoes with butter are terrific alongside the eggs and asparagus. Add a fresh fruit tart from the bakery, and you'll know that this is definitely not breakfast.

1 pound slender asparagus spears, trimmed
1/2 cup creamy garlic and herb cheese (such as boursin)
1 tablespoon minced fresh basil
10 large eggs
2 1/2 tablespoons butter

Cook asparagus in medium skillet of boiling water until just tender, about 3 minutes. Drain; return asparagus to skillet. Mix cheese and basil in small bowl. Whisk eggs in large bowl. Melt 1 1/2 tablespoons butter in heavy large skillet over medium heat. Add eggs; stir until eggs are almost set, about 1 minute. Add cheese mixture and stir until cheese melts and eggs are softly set, about 2 minutes.

Meanwhile, add 1 tablespoon butter to asparagus in skillet and stir over medium heat. Divide asparagus among 4 plates; spoon eggs over and serve.

Makes 4 servings.

Bon Appétit • March 2002

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100% would make again

fried fish tacos

Active time: 45 min • **Start to finish:** 45 min

1 qt vegetable oil
12 to 16 corn tortillas
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons salt
1 cup beer (not dark)
1 lb cod fillet, cut into 3- by 1-inch strips

Accompaniments: shredded lettuce, sour cream, avocado slices, chopped or sliced radish, red or green salsa, and lime wedges

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Heat 1 inch oil in a 10-inch heavy pot (2 to 3 inches deep) over moderate heat until a deep-fat thermometer registers 360°F.

Meanwhile, separate tortillas and make 2 stacks of 6 to 8. Wrap each stack in foil and heat in oven 12 to 15 minutes.

While tortillas warm, stir together flour and salt in a large bowl, then stir in beer (batter will be thick). Gently stir fish into batter to coat. Lift each piece of fish out of batter, wiping any excess off on side of bowl, and fry fish in batches, turning once or twice, until golden, 4 to 5 minutes. Drain on paper towels.

Increase oil temperature to 375°F and refry fish in batches, turning once or twice, until golden brown and crisp, about 1 minute. Drain on paper towels.

Assemble tacos with warm tortillas, fish, and accompaniments.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Gourmet • August 2000

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niçoise tuna sandwich (pan bagnat)

93% would make again

This tuna sandwich is all about olive oil. Use the French stuff if possible; otherwise, any mild olive oil will do—save that fancy super-Tuscan for something else. The tuna and the bread are crucial, too. Forget about tuna packed in water. It's flavorless. You want the kind packed in olive (not vegetable) oil. We thought ortiz's Bonito del Norte, newly exported from Spain, was the closest thing to Niçoise tuna, but it can be tough to find. (We ordered ours from Citarella; 212-874-0384.) Of the brands commonly available in the United States, we preferred Progresso light tuna. Other brands of canned light tuna that we are fond of are Genova and La Giara. This last is very expensive—about $10—and is available at many specialty foods shops and by mail order from Citarella.

1/4 of white onion, thinly sliced
1/8 of a small red onion, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus additional for drizzling
1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar, plus additional to taste
1/4 teaspoon salt, plus additional to taste
black pepper to taste
1 6-ounce can tuna packed in olive oil(see above) including olive oil
lemon juice to taste
2 kaiser rolls, plain
lettuce leaves, combination of boston, green-leaf, or other green leafy lettuce
8 tomato slices
6-8 hard-boiled eggs slices
4 anchovy fillets, drained
niçoise olives
scallions, chopped
radishes, sliced

Combine the red and white onion with 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and several grinds of black pepper in a bowl. Using your hands, mix and squeeze everything together for 5 minutes. (Don't rush through this part; the onions need time to release their juices and mellow.) Work in can of tuna in olive oil, including the oil. Season with fresh lemon juice, red-wine vinegar, and salt, then add pepper to taste.

Cut kaiser rolls in half crosswise and spread each bottom half with lettuce leaves. Use a couple of varieties—whatever looks good—for the difference in texture. On top of each lettuce layer, arrange 4 tomato slices (skip this step if you don't have good—really good—tomatoes on hand). Then add about half the tuna mixture and 3 to 4 slices of hard-boiled egg.

Crisscross each sandwich with 2 drained anchovy fillets and strew with Niçoise olives (pit them if desired), chopped scallion greens, and sliced radishes. Then drizzle generously with more olive oil and top with the remaining kaiser halves, pressing gently but firmly.

Makes 2 sandwiches.

Gourmet • February 2001

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guacamole

Can be prepared in 45 minutes or less.

2 plum tomatoes
2 firm-ripe california avocados
2 tablespoons minced red onion
3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1 teaspoon minced garlic

Quarter tomatoes, discarding seeds, and chop. Halve and pit avocados. Scoop avocado flesh into a bowl and mash. Stir in tomatoes, remaining ingredients, and salt and pepper to taste.

Makes about 2 cups.

Gourmet • January 1998

sweet potato latkes

Active time: 30 min • **Start to finish:** 30 min

1 lb sweet potatoes, peeled and coarsely grated
2 scallions, finely chopped
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
3/4 cup vegetable oil

Stir together potatoes, scallions, flour, eggs, salt, and pepper.

Heat oil in a deep 12-inch nonstick skillet over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking. Working in batches of 4, spoon 1/8 cup potato mixture per latke into oil and flatten to 3-inch diameter with a slotted spatula. Reduce heat to moderate and cook until golden, about 1 1/2 minutes on each side. Transfer latkes with spatula to paper towels to drain.

Makes about 26 pancakes.

Gourmet • December 2001

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spinach salad with oranges and warm goat cheese

94% would make again

Active time: 20 min • **Start to finish:** 20 min

3 small navel oranges
6 oz fresh mild goat cheese (preferably in log form)
1/3 cup pecans (1 1/2 oz), finely chopped
1 teaspoon whole-grain mustard
1 teaspoon white-wine vinegar
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
pinch of sugar
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 lb spinach, trimmed
1 small red onion, sliced into thin rings

Cut peel and white pith from oranges with a sharp small knife. Working over a sieve set over a bowl, cut orange sections free from membranes, letting sections drop into sieve.

Cut goat cheese into fourths and pat each portion between your hands to form a disk. Pat pecans all over each disk to coat. Bake on a small baking sheet in middle of oven until heated through, about 5 minutes.

Measure out 1 tablespoon orange juice from bowl and whisk together with mustard, vinegar, salt, and sugar in a large bowl. Add oil and whisk until blended.

Add spinach, onion, and orange sections to dressing and toss well. Season with pepper. Divide among 4 salad plates and carefully transfer 1 goat-cheese disk to each salad.

Makes 4 (first-course) servings.

Gourmet • January 2001

toblerone dark chocolate honey-almond fondue

Cheese fondue originated in Switzerland, but chocolate fondue was a New World recipe created in 1964 by Konrad Egli, a Swiss-born chef working at New York's Chalet Swiss restaurant. Zurich's Toblerone chocolate works well in the dish, because its honey-nougat blend echoes the honey and almond flavoring that are also in the recipe.

6 tablespoons whipping cream
3 tablespoons honey
2 3.52-ounce bars toblerone bittersweet chocolate or 7 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
1 tablespoon kirsch (clear cherry brandy)
1/4 teaspoon almond extract
Assorted fresh fruit (such as whole strawberries, 1-inch-thick slices peeled banana, peeled pear wedges and orange segments)

Bring cream and honey to simmer in heavy medium saucepan. Add chocolate; whisk until melted. Remove from heat. Whisk in kirsch and extract. Pour fondue into bowl; place on platter. Surround with fruit. Serve with skewers.

Serves 4 to 6.

Bon Appétit • December 1997

oatmeal date cookies

This recipe can be prepared in 45 minutes or less.

1 1/4 cups packed pitted dates (about 10 ounces)
1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter
3/4 cup packed light brown sugar
2/3 cup all-purpose flour
3/4 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 1/2 cups quick-cooking rolled oats

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Coarsely chop dates. In a 3-quart saucepan melt butter over low heat and remove pan from heat. Add brown sugar, stirring until smooth, and sift flour, baking soda, and salt over butter mixture. In a cup lightly beat egg and stir into flour mixture with vanilla, oats, and dates until combined well.

Onto 2 large ungreased baking sheets spoon slightly rounded tablespoons dough about 2 inches apart. Roll dough into balls with floured hands, returning to sheets. Bake cookies in upper and lower thirds of oven, switching position of sheets halfway through baking, until golden brown, about 18 minutes total. Transfer cookies to racks to cool. Cookies keep in an airtight container about 1 week.

Makes about 24 cookies.

Gourmet • December 1998