

Thanksgiving 2015

Recipes from Alexandra's Kitchen, www.alexandracooks.com

Butternut Squash Lasagna

3 pounds butternut squash, quartered, seeded, peeled, and cut into 1/2-inch dice (about 9 1/2 cups or less — my 2 lb. 10 oz squash yielded 8 cups of cubed squash)

3 tablespoons grapeseed oil

4 cups milk (2% or whole)

2 tablespoons dried rosemary, crumbled (or a few sprigs fresh rosemary and sage)

1 tablespoon minced garlic

1/2 stick (1/4 cup) unsalted butter

4 tablespoons all-purpose flour

nine 7 x 3 1/2 -inch sheets dry no-boil lasagne pasta (I used Barilla brand)

1 1/3 cups freshly grated Parmesan

1 cup heavy cream

1/2 teaspoon salt

1. Preheat oven to 450°F and oil 2 large shallow baking pans with a tablespoon of oil each.
2. Spread squash on each sheet pan and toss with oil until coated well. Add additional tablespoon of oil if necessary. Roast squash in oven 10 minutes, then season with salt. Stir squash and roast 10 to 15 minutes more, or until tender and beginning to turn golden.
3. While squash is roasting, in a saucepan bring milk to a simmer with rosemary (dried or fresh along with the sage if using). Heat milk mixture over low heat 10 minutes and pour through a sieve into a large pitcher or measuring cup.
4. In a large heavy saucepan cook garlic in butter over moderately low heat, stirring, until softened. Stir in flour and cook roux, stirring, 3 minutes. Remove pan from heat and whisk in milk mixture in a stream until smooth. Return pan to heat and simmer sauce, whisking occasionally, about 10 minutes, or until thick. Stir in squash and salt and pepper to taste. Sauce may be made 3 days ahead and chilled, its surface covered with plastic wrap.
5. Reduce temperature to 375°F and butter a 13 by 9 by 2 inch baking dish. Pour 1 cup sauce into baking dish (sauce will not cover bottom completely) and cover with 3 lasagne sheets, making sure they do not touch each other. Spread half of remaining sauce over pasta and sprinkle with 1/2 cup Parmesan. Make 1 more layer in same manner, beginning and ending with pasta.

6. In a bowl with an electric mixer (or not) beat cream with salt until it holds soft peaks and spread evenly over top pasta layer, making sure pasta is completely covered. Sprinkle remaining 1/3 cup Parmesan over cream. Cover dish tightly with foil, tenting slightly to prevent foil from touching top layer, and bake in middle of oven 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake lasagne 10 minutes more, or until top is bubbling and golden. Let lasagne stand 5 minutes.

Philadelphia Fish House Punch

Bundt pan (or something similar) if you feel like making an ice ring

1 cup sugar
3½ cups water
1½ cups fresh lemon juice (6 to 8 lemons), strained
1 (750-ml) bottle Jamaican amber rum
12 oz Cognac (1½ cups)
2 oz (¼ cup) peach brandy* or ¼ cup Cognac, which is how I always make it now
Garnish: lemon slices

*If you can't find peach brandy, don't substitute peach schnapps, which I have done before — it's surprisingly overpowering. Just use ¼ cup more Cognac. It's delicious made this way.

1. To make ice block, fill bundt pan with water and freeze until solid, about 8 hours.
2. Stir together sugar and 3½ cups water in a large bowl or pot until sugar is dissolved. Add lemon juice, rum, Cognac, and brandy and chill, covered, at least 3 hours.
3. Put ice block in a punch bowl. Top with lemon slices. Pour punch over top.

Red Wine Cranberry Sauce

Yield = 1 ¾ cups

2/3 cup sugar
¾ cup dry red wine
1/2 cinnamon stick (1 1/2 inches)
1 package fresh or frozen cranberries (about 12 oz.)
1 tablespoon slivered tangerine, clementine or orange zest, or more to taste

In a saucepan over moderate heat, combine the sugar, red wine and cinnamon stick; bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for about 4 minutes, stirring

occasionally, until the sugar is dissolved and the wine is reduced slightly. Add the cranberries and zest. Simmer for 10 minutes, or until the cranberries are soft and the sauce has thickened. Serve at room temperature or chilled.

Alice Waters' Potato Gratin

softened butter

1 clove garlic, smashed

3 lbs. red skinned potatoes, peeled (I used about 2 lbs. 10 oz. peeled potatoes)

kosher salt

pepper

fresh thyme sprigs

freshly grated nutmeg (optional, but really nice — I forgot to do this)

1.5 cups (or more or less) chicken stock

1.5 cups (or more or less) heavy cream

1 heaping cup (about 2 oz.) grated gruyère cheese

1/4 cup (less than 1 oz.) grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Rub an earthenware gratin dish (I used a 9×13-inch Pyrex) with smashed peeled garlic and butter.

2. Using a mandoline or knife, cut potatoes 1/8-inch thick and layer overlapping slices in the prepared pan. Season with salt (don't be afraid to use a heavier hand with the salt — potatoes can handle it), pepper, and thyme leaves (no need to chop — just pull and scatter). Lightly grate nutmeg over top — be sure to go light. Make another layer of potato slices and season again in the same manner.

3. Moisten with cream, cream and chicken stock, or milk to the top level of the top layer of potatoes. (I used 1.5 cups each of heavy cream and chicken stock, but I probably could have used more, and you may need more or less depending on the size of the pan you are using.) Sprinkle the top with grated cheeses, and distribute thin shavings of butter (forgot to do this) on top. Bake 45 minutes to 1 hour, checking after 40 minutes or so to make sure the potatoes are not browning too quickly. If they are browning too quickly, cover the pan with foil and continue baking until the potatoes are tender and the top is nicely browned. You can also turn the temperature down to 375°F if necessary.

Sheetpan Stuffing with Brussels Sprouts and Pancetta

Serves 15 to 20

Note: If you don't want to peel the brussels sprouts, you can thinly slice them.

2 large loaves of bread (about 2 3/4 pounds before crusts are removed / 2 pounds once crust is removed)

4 ounces pancetta, diced
8 tablespoons butter, divided
2 cups small-diced onion
2 cups small-diced celery
Kosher salt
1 small bunch sage
½ pound brussels sprouts, stemmed, cored, and leaves separated or shredded*
½ cup Cognac, white wine, or sherry
3 to 4 cups chicken or turkey stock
Freshly cracked pepper
2 eggs

1. Preheat the oven to 275° F. Remove the crusts of the bread. (Discard or save the crusts for breadcrumbs.) Tear or slice the bread into cubes or shards about 1-inch square. Spread bread onto two sheet pans. Place pans in the oven for about 45 minutes, rotating the pans halfway. Set pans aside to cool. Once bread is completely cool, transfer it to one very large mixing bowl or to two large mixing bowls.
2. Meanwhile, place pancetta in a large sauté pan over medium to medium-low heat. Cook until fat is rendered and pancetta is crisp -- adjust the heat as necessary to avoid burning. Transfer pancetta to a plate.
3. Preheat oven to 350° F. Add 4 tablespoons butter to the pan along with the diced onions and celery. Cook over medium heat with a pinch of salt until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the minced sage and the brussels sprout leaves, toss to coat, then transfer contents of the pan to the bowl of dried bread.
4. Add Cognac or wine to pan and cook until it has nearly reduced, scraping up any bits on the bottom of the pan. Add the remaining 4 tablespoons of butter, then scrape the contents into the bowl of bread. Add crispy pancetta bits to bowl, too.
5. Add two cups of stock, a big pinch of salt, and freshly cracked pepper to taste to the bowl of bread. Toss to coat. Taste. Add more salt if necessary -- this is your last chance to ensure the stuffing is sufficiently seasoned before the eggs are added.
6. Whisk eggs with one cup of the remaining stock. Pour into the bowl of bread and toss to coat. Each cube of bread should feel saturated with liquid. There shouldn't be any liquid sitting in the bottom of the bowl, however, but if there is, toss the bread again and let it sit for 5 minutes. If the bread seems dry, add more stock, 1/2 cup at a time.
7. Choose your vessels (see notes above) and grease each lightly with butter. Transfer bread to vessels and cover each with foil. Bake for 30 minutes at

350° F covered with foil. Raise the temperature to 425° F and bake for 10 to 20 minutes longer depending on your oven. If the stuffing isn't browning, you can turn the temperature up to 450° F, just be sure to keep an eye on it -- it will burn quickly. Let rest five minutes before serving.

No-Knead Thyme Dinner Rolls

Yield = 12 to 16

4 cups (1 lb. 2 oz | 510 g) all-purpose flour, preferably not bleached
2 teaspoons kosher salt
2 teaspoons sugar
2 teaspoons instant yeast or active dry yeast
1 to 2 tablespoons minced fresh thyme leaves
2 cups lukewarm water**
room temperature butter, about 2 tablespoons

** To make fool-proof lukewarm water that will not kill the yeast (water that's too hot can kill yeast), boil some water — I use my teapot. Then, mix 1 1/2 cups cold water with 1/2 cup boiling water. This ratio of hot to cold water will be the perfect temperature for the yeast.

1. If you are using instant yeast: In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, sugar, instant yeast, and fresh thyme leaves. Add the water. Mix until the flour is absorbed. Cover with plastic wrap (or a tea towel that has been run under hot water and squeezed out). Place in a warm spot to rise: Because your kitchen will likely be nice and cozy with all of the cooking going on, you don't need to do the warm-oven rise trick. But for future reference, here is how you can create a warm spot: Turn your oven on (to 350 or so) and then turn it off after 1 minute — this will create just a slightly warm environment to get the bread rising nicely.
2. If you are using active-dry yeast: In a small mixing bowl, dissolve the sugar into the water. Sprinkle the yeast over top. There is no need to stir it up. Let it stand for about 10 to 15 minutes or until the mixture is foamy and/or bubbling just a bit — this step will ensure that the yeast is active. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk together the flour, salt and thyme. When the yeast-water-sugar mixture is foamy, stir it up, and add it to the flour bowl. Mix until the flour is absorbed. Cover with plastic wrap (or a tea towel that has been run under hot water and squeezed out). Place in a warm spot to rise: Because your kitchen will likely be nice and cozy with all of the cooking going on, you don't need to do the warm-oven rise trick.
3. Let dough rise for 1 to 2 hours or more or less. As noted in the post above, you can let the dough rise, and when you see that it has reached the top of the bowl, but you don't have oven space available in the following 20 minutes, punch it down and let it rise again. You can do this as many times as

necessary. Meanwhile, generously butter a 12-cup muffin pan, plus a few ramekins (2 to 4).

4. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Using two forks, punch down your dough, scraping it from the sides of the bowl, which it will be clinging to. (Here is video guidance. You can find more peasant bread-making video guidance at the end of the peasant bread post.) As you scrape it down, turn the dough up onto itself. You want to loosen the dough entirely from the sides of the bowl, and you want to make sure you've punched it down. Take your two forks and divide the dough roughly into 6 portions. Then, using the two forks, scoop up half of each of these portions and plop each into a buttered muffin cup. Repeat with remaining dough. This won't be pretty, but it doesn't matter. Try your best to divide the dough equally, and if you have extra dough, bake it off in the buttered ramekins. Let the dough rise for about 17 to 20 minutes or until it has risen to just above the top of the muffin cups.
5. Bake for 15 minutes. Reduce the heat to 375° and make for 10 to 15 minutes longer. Remove from the oven and turn the rolls onto a cooling rack or directly into a bread basket. Pass the butter.

Buttermilk Biscuits

3 cups (384 g) all-purpose flour, plus more for your work surface
3 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
12 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, diced, plus more for searving
1 1/4 cups cold buttermilk
pure maple syrup, for rubbing the biscuits
nice sea salt or coarse freshly ground black pepper for sprinkling

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and baking soda in a large bowl. Using your fingers, work in the butter just until the mixture turns into coarse crumbs with some pea-size pieces of butter remaining. Using a wooden spoon, stir in the buttermilk just until the dry ingredients are evenly moistened.
3. Turn the shaggy dough out onto a very lightly floured work surface and pat into a 1/2-inch thick rectangle. Fold it in half once so that it's 1-inch thick. Do this three more times to create layers in the dough. Then roll the dough out to about a 1-inch thick rectangle (or large enough so that a 3-inch biscuit cutter can stamp out 6 biscuits) using a lightly floured rolling pin: Place the

pin in the middle of the dough and roll it forward, then put the pin back in the middle of the dough and roll it backward.

4. Using a lightly floured 3-inch round cutter, cut out the biscuits (in one motion — do not twist the cutter), as close together as possible, and transfer to the prepared baking sheet leaving 2 inches between them. Gently pat the dough scraps together (do not overwork the dough), reroll and cut out more biscuits. (Note: You could just cut the rectangle into 8 squares, which will leave you with no scraps to reroll.)
5. If you have time, put the baking sheet in the refrigerator and chill the biscuits for at least an hour before baking — they will be flakier. (Skip this step if you don't have time.)
6. Preheat oven to 425°F.
7. Use the back of a spoon to rub the biscuits lightly with maple syrup and sprinkle with salt or pepper to taste.
8. Place the biscuits in the oven and immediately turn the temperature down to 400°F. Bake the biscuits until they're risen and golden, 15 to 20 minutes. I get the best results baking these on the top rack of my oven, but every oven is different, so play around with what works best with your oven. Serve warm, with butter.

Basic Apple Pie

Yield = 1 pie

2 rounds pie dough (recipe below)

10 apples, whatever you like, Fuji, Cortland, Honey Crisp, Granny Smith

3/4 cup to 1 cup sugar

1 teaspoon cinnamon

a grating of fresh cloves (optional)

zest of one lemon (optional)

juice of one lemon

2 tablespoons tapioca (the minute kind) or flour

2 tablespoons butter (cold or room temperature)

1 egg mixed with 1 tablespoon cream for the egg wash (use whatever egg wash you like)

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F with racks in the lowest part of the oven. Line the bottom of your oven with foil to catch spills. If you have a pizza stone or Steel, place it in the oven. Peel the apples and cut into large chunks. Place in a large bowl and toss with the 3/4 cup of sugar, the cinnamon, the cloves (if using), the zest (if using), the juice of one lemon and the tapioca. Set aside.

2. On a lightly floured work surface, place one pie dough round in the center. Roll it out into a circle two inches larger in diameter than your pie plate. Fold the circle in half and in half again. Place in your pie plate and unfold. Press down gently so that the dough fits into the corners. Place pie plate in the fridge while you roll out the second round. Roll the second round out in the same fashion, making it a touch larger in diameter than the first round if possible.

3. Taste an apple. If it doesn't taste sweet enough, add the remaining 1/4 cup sugar and toss. Dump the apples into the center of your pie plate, using your hands to keep as many apples from tumbling out as possible. Cut the butter into small cubes and scatter them over the apples. Lay the second round of pie dough over top. Using scissors, trim the overhanging dough and set aside. (Wrap these scraps into a ball to make cinnamon snails or an apple galette.)

4. To crimp the edges together, lay two fingers a finger's-width apart from your right hand below the edge of the dough. Gently press down with your left finger in between the two fingers. Move two fingers' width to the right and repeat — your left-most finger on your right hand will reinforce the impression made by the right-most finger from the first crimp — there is no possible way this is making sense. I'll try to video document this soon. You'll figure it out once you get going. Or just crimp the edges together however you wish. It all tastes the same in the end.

5. Brush the entire surface of the dough with the egg wash. Make slits using a sharp paring knife all over the surface.

6. Bake for 20 minutes at 425°F. (If using a stone or Steel, you might consider lining it with parchment paper. Reduce the temperature to 350°F and continue baking until golden all over, anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour longer depending on your oven. I have been baking them closer to 30 minutes at 350°F, but aunt Marcy, the expert, bakes them longer, so use your judgement.

Pie Dough:

Yield = Two 9-inch rounds

As noted above, you can use any pie dough you like. This is the one I use for everything: galettes, tarts, etc. Tart dough can be made up to a week in advance and stored in the fridge or made weeks in advance and stored in the freezer.

2½ cups (11.25 oz | 320g) all-purpose flour

2 T. sugar

½ tsp. table salt

16 T. (8 oz | 227g) unsalted butter

½ C. + 2 T. (4 oz | 114 g + 1 oz | 28g) ice water

In a large bowl, whisk flour, sugar and salt together (or pulse in food processor). Cut butter into flour and using the back of a fork or a pastry cutter, incorporate butter

into flour mixture until butter is in small pieces. (If using food processor, pulse at 1-second intervals until butter is the size of peas.) Add ice water and continue to stir with fork until mixture comes together to form a mass. Add more ice water if necessary, one tablespoon at a time. Gently form mass into a ball, divide in half, flatten each half into a disk and wrap each disk in plastic wrap. Chill until ready to use.

Ronnie Hollingsworth's Most Excellent Squash Pie

Yield = 1 pie

for the dough:

2½ cups (11.25 oz | 320g) all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon sugar
½ tsp. table salt
16 T. (8 oz | 227g) unsalted butter
½ C. + 2 T. (4 oz | 114 g + 1 oz | 28g) ice water

for the pie:

1 medium butternut squash, about 2.5 lbs (mine was 2 lbs. 10 oz.) or enough to yield
2 to 3 cups of purée
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
3 eggs, beaten
¾ cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ginger (I omitted because I didn't have it)
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground or powdered nutmeg
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves (didn't have, so omitted)

1. Make the dough: In a large bowl, whisk flour, sugar and salt together (or pulse in food processor). Cut butter into flour and using the back of a fork or a pastry cutter, incorporate butter into flour mixture until butter is in small pieces. (If using food processor, pulse at 1-second intervals until butter is the size of peas.) Add ice water and continue to stir with fork until mixture comes together to form a mass. Add more ice water if necessary, one tablespoon at a time. Gently form mass into a ball, divide in half, and flatten each half into a disc.

2. If you are making a pie immediately, roll out one disc, place in a 9-inch pie dish and chill until ready to use. Wrap remaining disc in plastic wrap and refrigerate or freeze until ready to use.
3. Meanwhile, halve and clean the butternut squash, rub the flesh lightly with olive oil, and bake at 400°F on a parchment-lined baking sheet, until very soft, about an hour (but start checking after 45 minutes). When cool enough to handle, scoop out the flesh, add the remaining ingredients and pulse with an immersion blender or transfer to a food processor or blender until smooth – don't skip the puréeing step.
4. Meanwhile, blind bake the crust: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Lay a sheet of parchment over pie dough, fill it with pie weights or dried beans, and bake for 15 minutes. Remove parchment and beans and bake for 5-10 more minutes until just barely golden.
5. Add squash mixture to shell and bake at 375°F for 40 to 60 minutes, depending on your oven and how much squash purée you ended up using, until the center is barely set. Check after 20 minutes, and if it looks as though the crust is browning too quickly, reduce the temperature to 350°F. (You can cover the edges with foil wreath if you feel like it, too.) Let cool completely before serving.

Chez Panisse Almond Torte

1¼ cups sugar
⅞ cup (7 oz./200g) soft almond paste*
1 cup (2 sticks) softened unsalted butter
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/8 tsp. almond extract (optional)
6 eggs
1 cup (4.5 oz/130g) flour
1½ tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. salt
powdered sugar for dusting

*First of all, be sure to buy almond paste versus marzipan, which are often placed next to each other in the baking aisle. Second, the recipe in Chez Panisse Desserts calls for 8oz of almond paste, but we have always just used one of those tubes that usually weighs 7oz. If you don't have a scale and can't find a 7-oz tube of almond paste, measure out the 7/8 cup, but don't pack it too tightly.

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Beat the sugar with the almond paste until the almond paste is in fine pieces. Or, better, pulverize it in a food processor. Beat in the butter and the vanilla, then cream the mixture until it is light and fluffy. Beat in the whole

eggs, one at a time — the eggs should be at room temperature — beating well after each addition so the eggs are thoroughly mixed in.

2. Mix the flour, baking powder, and salt, and beat in just until thoroughly blended.
3. Butter a 9-inch springform pan and turn the batter into it, smoothing the top evenly. Bake for 1 to 1¼ hours (mine baked for 1¼ hours) or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean and the center feels springy when you push it gently.
4. Let cool for about 20 minutes before releasing the sides of the springform pan.

Orange and Olive Oil Cake

Yield = One 9-inch cake or six 4-inch cakes, Serves 10-12 people

Butter for greasing the pan

1½ cups all-purpose flour

½ tsp. baking powder

¼ tsp. baking soda

pinch of salt

2 eggs

1¾ cups sugar

2 tsp. grated orange zest

2/3 cup freshly squeezed orange juice (the juice from about 2 oranges)

2/3 cup olive oil

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Butter a springform pan (or pans) or a 9-inch cake pan. (If using a cake pan, place a round of parchment paper in the bottom of the pan.)
2. Whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt.
3. With an electric mixer, beat the eggs until blended, then gradually add in the sugar, beating until thick. The mixture will be pale yellow. In a separate bowl, whisk the zest, juice and oil. Add to the egg mixture in thirds alternating with the flour mixture.
4. Spread batter into pan and bake for about 50 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool on rack for 15 minutes.
5. Sift confectioners' sugar over top before cutting and serving.