

# Tasty *Marsels*

**Sugar and Spice and All Those Lies—  
Dishes and Inspiration**

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**Evy Journey**

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# Tasty *Morsels:*

Sugar and Spice And All Those Lies—  
Dishes and Inspiration

Evy Journey

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*“In cooking you've got to have a what-the-hell  
attitude.*

”

— JULIA CHILD

Chapter One

# My Love Affair With Food: Beginnings

I remember, as a child, eating dark, fragrant, and sweet rice cake so sticky it stuck to my teeth. I was three years old, and those rolls of black rice became my first delicious memories. Memories of standing past midnight during Christmas season in front of an old church, remnant of four hundred years of Spanish occupation. Salivating as I waited for those rolls to finish cooking.

What, you might ask, was a three-year-old doing out at midnight? Those long-ago days, in that obscure town of the Catholic country where I grew up, midnight mass was an essential ritual of Christmas season for old and young. It lasted nine midnights. For me, the ritual meant a treat after sitting half asleep, leaning on my grandmother, indifferent to words only a few probably fully understood. The mass, I learned later, was in Latin.

Outside the church, a line of vendors hawked midnight snacks. I would pull my grandmother's hand towards the woman selling sticky black rice. I would cup my hands, thrust them toward her before she could coax those purplish black rice rolls out of steaming bamboo tubes sitting over glowing earthen braziers.

She would place the rolls on a leaf of banana square. With a generous pinch of grated fresh coconut and a sprinkle of sugar, she handed them to me with a smile. Nothing, but nothing, can ever duplicate the anticipation, nor the sensation of sinking my teeth, into one of those still hot rolls of black rice, their jasmine fragrance blending with the cool, nutty creaminess of fresh coconut. Rice and

coconut both hinting at the herbal fragrance of the banana leaf.

Deep in those dark rolls of rice were secrets I still had to discover. Secrets revealed to me only after I left that town of magical memories to navigate a much wider world. Memories of those native delicacies have stayed with me, become part of me. Maybe, because of them, I've explored food and eating in places I've traveled. Because of them, I've relished writing food and eating scenes in my fiction. Scenes that suggest little truths about characters, places, and events. Maybe, it's inevitable that they would inspire my novel, [\*Sugar and Spice and All Those Lies\*](#).

I've known the mood changing, even transformative, effect of food [as in the film \*Babette's Feast\*](#), based on a short story by [Isak Dinesen](#)). You might have experienced something like it in a memorable meal you've eaten. If not, I share mine with you through the story of Gina, For her and her mother, creating scrumptious dishes has meant life, but in different ways.

Cooking is Gina's way out of the shackles of a hand-to-mouth existence. A ticket to a world of promise and privilege. For her mother, cooking is life not only because it keeps her family well nourished. It lets her escape the ordinary grinding realities of

each day while she cooks and watches her family eat. Gina and her mother cling to an inherited passion to create something: Food that can make people feel good. That can give meaning to life.

Gina says,

*Mom's dinners have kept our family together.  
How can you take offense or be angry at people  
with whom you've just shared a great meal?*

What more can you ask for in something you consume about three times a day?

*Recipes, Recipes, And More Recipes*

I've cooked many dishes in my books. If I haven't, I've eaten them and I'm at least familiar with them.

It's so easy now to get recipes for almost anything you want to cook that you wonder why you would even bother with a cookbook. A lot of us probably never follow recipes to the letter anyway. I don't.

I happen to have this philosophy about cooking—taste as you go, use what you have. When it comes to savory dishes, I use recipes merely as guides. My taste buds and my olfactories rule. I take chances when I cook so—yes—I'm going to make mistakes. But I'm

also more likely to get what I want and discover something new.

This philosophy is in keeping, with the French style of cooking *au pif* (by the nose). David Lebovitz, former pastry chef at the legendary Chez Panisse, advises in his book [\*My Paris Kitchen\*](#):

*Recipes are guidelines, starting points for cooks to diverge from. Take them in your own personal direction.*

He adds that French cooks never write detailed recipes like we do in this country. That's because they cook *au pif*.

I do follow recipes when I bake—at least when I first try it. But I'm likely to tweak it when I make the recipe again. The gougère recipe below is an example.

Most recipes in this short book are presented in the original version in which I downloaded them from the internet. You'll see their sources when you click on linked recipe titles. But heed Monsieur Lebovitz's advice: Take these recipes in your own personal direction.

## Alain Ducasse's Gougères Recipe

**My Take:** Gina learned to make these from her mother. The recipe is by a famous French chef.

Gougères are cream puffs with cheese. You don't need to fill them.

The traditional recipe uses Gruyère but I've substituted other kinds of cheeses like cheddar and increased the quantity as much as half a cup more. If you use 1½ cups cheese, reduce butter to 6 tablespoons.

You can make a lot of these and freeze them after baking to serve another time.



Ingredients

1/2 cup water

1/2 cup milk

1 stick (4 ounces) unsalted butter, cut into  
tablespoons

Large pinch of coarse salt

1 cup all-purpose flour

4 large eggs

3 1/2 ounces shredded Gruyère cheese (1 cup),  
plus more for sprinkling

Freshly ground pepper

Freshly grated nutmeg

## How To Make It

Step 1: Preheat the oven to 400°. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. In a medium saucepan, combine the water, milk, butter and salt and bring to a boil. Add the flour and stir it in with a wooden spoon until a smooth dough forms; stir over low heat until it dries out and pulls away from the pan, about 2 minutes.

Step 2: Scrape the dough into a bowl; let cool for 1 minute. Beat the eggs into the dough, 1 at a time, beating thoroughly between each one. Add the cheese and a pinch each of pepper and nutmeg.

Step 3: Transfer the dough to a pastry bag fitted with a 1/2 inch round tip and pipe tablespoon-

size mounds onto the baking sheets, 2 inches apart. Sprinkle with cheese and bake for 22 minutes, or until puffed and golden brown. Serve hot, or let cool and refrigerate or freeze. Reheat in a 350° oven until piping hot

Notes: When making the choux pastry, it is important to be sure that each egg is fully incorporated into the batter before adding the next. Don't worry if the batter separates and looks curdled at first. Keep beating, and it will come together nicely.

## Siu Mai

**My Take:** Gina's mother is half-Chinese and Gina talks about the Chinese snacks her mother used to make. Though she doesn't mention a specific dish, here are two that are typically served and easy to make. I do some variation of this particular recipe and top each piece with two or three peas.



### Ingredients

6 ounces shrimp

1/2 cup peeled water chestnuts

1 pound ground pork

2 tablespoons light soy sauce

1 1/2 tablespoons Shaoxing rice wine

- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped ginger
- 1 green onion, finely chopped
- 1 egg white, lightly beaten
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 30 square or round egg dumpling wrappers

### How To Make It

1. Peel and devein the shrimp, squeeze out as much moisture as possible and then roughly chop.

2. Blanch the water chestnuts for 1 minute, drop into cold water and then roughly chop.

3. Combine the shrimp, water chestnuts and the remaining filling ingredients (everything except the wrappers) in a large bowl and stir until well-combined.

4. Place 1 tablespoon of filling in the center of each wrapper. Form a circle with your thumb and forefinger and shape the dumpling, so that it forms a fat cylinder with an open top. Pat the top and bottom of the dumpling to create flat surfaces on either end.

5. Steam the dumplings standing up in bamboo steamers on top of oiled paper punched

with holes for 15 minutes. Serve with soy sauce or chili sauce for dipping.

## Shanghai Style (Lumpia) Spring rolls

Growing up, what we called Shanghai fried spring rolls used fresh raw ground pork or beef rolled up like cigars. Today, I make a batch and freeze them. When it's time to serve, I take the number I need, set my fryer to 350<sup>o</sup>, and dunk them in deep fat while still frozen. After five minutes, they come out brown, crisp and crunchy with moist filling.

Serve with a mix of vinegar, sweet chili sauce, and a touch of of soy sauce.



This is how I often make this dish:

### Ingredients

#### Filling:

2 lbs. fresh (not previously frozen) ground pork

1/2 cup green onions, chopped fine  
1 cup shredded or finely diced carrots  
1/2 cup onion, finely diced  
1 egg beaten  
1 tablespoon soy sauce  
1 tablespoon minced garlic  
1/4 cup minced cilantro  
Salt and pepper to taste

50 pieces Spring roll wrappers

3 to 6 cups cooking oil

How To Make It

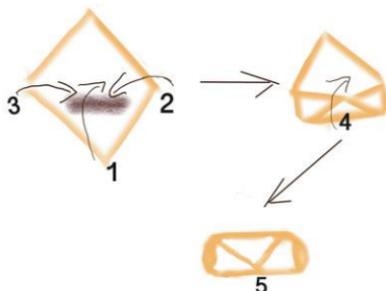
I whirl all the vegetable ingredients in a food processor. You can chop them by hand.

In a mixing bowl, combine all ingredients except for the wrappers. Stir together until well combined.

Wrap about 1 1/2 tablespoons of the pork mixture in a spring roll wrapper. Do this by placing one corner of the wrapper laid out towards the edge of the table. Spread the filling to 3 to 4 inches long, placing it at an angle to the corner of the wrapper and parallel to the table edge.

Roll the shorter triangular end of the wrapper next to you around the filling. Fold the two

triangular edges at both ends of the mixture over it and roll the wrapped mixture all the way to the other end of the spring roll wrapper. You will have a roll about the diameter of a cigar.



Repeat until the pork mixture is used up. Lay each roll with the loose end down.

Heat the oil to 350° in a deep fryer. At this temperature, it takes five to 6 minutes to fry a roll to a crisp golden brown.

Drain the rolls by letting excess oil drip back into the fryer before placing them on paper towels. These are best eaten hot, maybe within half an hour of frying. They will stay crisp longer than that.

# Cooking As High Art, Eating As Sensuous Experience: Food in Fiction

In the film [\*Babette's Feast\*](#), a highly-gifted chef schooled in cooking as high art escapes war-torn Paris. She finds herself living in gentle servitude to two good and pious but dour, nearly joyless, sisters.

With no inkling who Babette is, the sisters instruct her on preparing their diet of long-simmered dried fish. Definitely not cooking as

high art and probably offensive to the talented chef. Babette says nothing and does not show off what she knows. Until she wins money in a lottery.

She doesn't take the money to live a little more luxuriously elsewhere. Instead, she spends it on the makings of a feast that she prepares with much care. The feast is an unexpected gift to the people of this cold and gray seaside village. It's nothing like they had ever known and something they'll never forget.

I have watched this film a few times, mostly for its memorable dinner scene. The expressions and comments of diners show them clearly savoring the dishes, allowing tastes to linger sensuously on their taste buds. No one rushes to gobble up dishes. Instead, diners pause and pay attention. The dishes fill them with wonderment.

The sumptuous dinner does much more than celebrate food's appeal to the senses. Depending on their orientation, readers/writers have interpreted Babette's Feast in religious, artistic, or psychological terms (for example, [this article by Priscilla](#)

[Ferguson](#)). This is a beautiful food film. Watch it.

I've found myself replaying the dinner scene in *Babette's Feast* at dinners we've had at a Michelin-starred restaurant in our area. Only, my version of it is more intense and full of happy surprises: The Feast we partake of, after all, is real and not vicarious.

The menu at this place is inventive. The chef includes uncommon ingredients used in uncommon ways. Once seated, diners have to put their fate in the chefs' hands. You don't get a printed menu (you do get one with the bill). You learn what you'll have next when the server brings and describes each dish.

Someone who prefers to make their own choices or isn't [adventurous about food](#) may balk at this practice. In fact, you do have some choice—first, when you decide to dine there, and when you inform the restaurant about diet restrictions at the time you reserve a place. Restrictions can include ingredients you can't tolerate for reasons of health, culture, and preferences.

At one dinner, chefs prepare cod as a confit (simmered in virgin olive oil). As you eat it,

something saltier comes after the milder taste of the tender moist cod. Your plate reveals this black sauce underneath, just enough of it to complement the taste of the fish and please the eye with contrasting colors. Very yin-yang! The chef is a master at layering flavors.

I love to eat and consider myself a fairly adventurous cook so I ask what went into the black sauce. The server smiles and says, "Black garlic and squid ink." I'm no stranger to squid ink and have had it in many dishes including a delicious spaghetti in ink sauce at a bar in Venice. Served in a small enough amount to tease your palate as well as your prejudices about food, you may wonder why you ever shuddered at the mere thought of eating squid ink.

The whole dinner unfolds in the manner of a full course French menu, You get small servings of amuse bouche, fish and meat courses, palate cleansers and dessert.

Each dish is a symphony of flavors, textures, and colors, with unexpected twists and ingredients. For instance, a very light bay leaf mousse spooned over a mélange of variously textured citrus. Or tiny slices of sweet tart red beets on top of melting cauliflower puree.

Or baby shrimp fragrant with pea tendrils, chrysanthemum, and rhubarb.

The chef sometimes surprises with a dish. One meat course of roasted heritage chicken breast has tiny slices of black trumpet mushrooms on top. Underneath the two small pieces of breast is something with a different texture and intenser flavor. You don't see it right away since it offers no contrast in color.

All I can think of as I take a bite is that it's delicious, and its flavor evolves to its fullness as you chew. I think, at first, from its taste and texture, that it's some kind of mushroom. But the server says, "Duck's tongue." Again, I'm no stranger to tongue. I've eaten pastel de lengua, a sort of meat pie in which beef tongue is the main ingredient.

But I'm askance at the idea of duck's tongue. How many ducks would it take to fill a spoonful? A beef's tongue could feed several but it seems decadent to kill many ducks for one bite. This sounds crazy, of course, but our food prejudices are often that way.

I thoroughly enjoy the one or two pieces of duck's tongue the chef snucked under the chicken breast. But I am not about to go to a

Chinese restaurant where I believe it's a delicacy, and order a plate of it. My prejudice does endure. But a couple blended creatively and deliciously—awesome!

Babette has been reincarnated at this restaurant where chefs treat cooking as high art. Like all gifted artists passionate about their medium, they push cooking as high as they can take it.

*A French Chef Making and Selling Ready-To-Eat Meals*

Though the sensibilities of the film *Babette's Feast* drive the story of *Sugar and Spice and All Those Lies*, writing it came to me as I was leaving a French “deli” we've gone to a few times. The French chef/owner sells ready-to-eat gourmet meals in vacuum-sealed bags you heat in a pot of boiling water. His wife is Chinese, like in the novel.

He doesn't know he's a model for one of my pivotal characters. A character whom the reader never meets but who you get to know through Gina and, of course, through her mother who is the daughter of the French chef. I only hope that, if he ever finds out that I murder him in the story, he'll forgive me.

## **Making Chanterelles in Cream Sauce**

I first tasted chanterelles at a restaurant in the Napa Valley fittingly called Chanterelle, now closed. The dish was simple but so good that I wanted to know how to make it. But at that time, I couldn't find chanterelles in grocery stores. Now, our local grocery sells them in the Fall.

Years later, on a six-month stay in France, I saw them at a farmers' market. There, they're called girolles. I write about this in [An adventurous Foodie in Paris: A Simple Plate of Chanterelles](#).

A pound of girolles goes a long way in both quantity and taste; and this dish is easy and fast to cook—even away from home. And my version includes only four main ingredients, not counting salt, pepper and the oil or butter you sauté them in.

No, I don't give a recipe. Yes, I wing it, but if you have good mushrooms, I think you can't miss on this one. Just make sure to use more chanterelles than onions. Herbs are optional.



## How To Make It

Sauté a thinly-sliced medium onion or two or three shallots in oil or butter until soft and translucent, dump the sliced girolles in, splash that leftover white wine, salt and pepper to taste, and stir as you cook the mixture at high heat until soft and nearly dry, about 5 minutes.

Before serving and with the heat still on, spoon some crème fraîche (or good sour cream with no additives like gelatin) into the mix. Turn off heat.

If you have it and like it, sprinkle a little tarragon, and you're all set.

Chanterelles are meaty mushrooms that can make a vegetarian meal quite special. Place a sunny-side up or poached egg on top and you will

feel like you're eating at a king's table. For meat eaters, we've served this with sausages from a charcuterie. All good on top of couscous or just savor it with a crusty baguette.

## Chicken Pho

**My Take:** I've made some variation on this recipe a few times using beef shanks. In Vietnamese restaurants, pho is often served with very thinly-sliced raw tender beef which cooks in the hot broth. You can omit the fish sauce but certain spices and herbs are a must for authentic flavor—star anise and coriander for cooking the broth and mint, basil (preferably Thai basil), and cilantro as garnishes. I've never used cardamom or goji berries; instead I add whole cloves as suggested by a friend. I've never added sugar to the broth nor used canola oil as a garnish.

The Vietnamese chicken-and-noodle soup called pho is all about the layers of flavor in the rich-tasting broth. The technique here also produces meat that's supremely tender and tasty.

### Ingredients

Kosher salt

One 3½ pound chicken

2 whole star anise

2 cardamom pods

1 teaspoon coriander seeds  
One 2½ inch cinnamon stick  
1 teaspoon black peppercorns  
½ teaspoon white peppercorns  
1 teaspoon goji berries  
2 shallots, halved 1 small onion, quartered  
1 leek, halved lengthwise and cut into  
2-inch pieces  
1 tablespoon crushed rock sugar or dark brown  
sugar

## GARNISHES

6 ounces dried rice noodles  
¼ cup canola oil  
3 medium shallots, thinly sliced (1 cup)  
1 tablespoon Asian fish sauce  
¼ cup sliced scallions  
¼ cup chopped cilantro  
Bean sprouts, basil sprigs, mint sprigs, thinly  
sliced jalapeños and lime wedges, for serving

## How to Make It

Step 1: In a large stockpot, bring 5 quarts of water to a boil. Add 1 tablespoon of salt and the

chicken, breast side down. Place a heatproof plate over the chicken to keep it submerged and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer the chicken for 30 minutes; it will not be cooked through. Transfer the chicken to a bowl of ice water and let cool completely. Drain well and pat dry.

Step 2: Meanwhile, in a large cast-iron skillet, combine the star anise, cardamom, coriander, cinnamon stick, black and white peppercorns and goji berries. Cook over moderately low heat, stirring, until very fragrant, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl.

Step 3: In the same skillet, combine the shallots, onion and leek. Cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until deep golden, about 10 minutes.

Step 4: Remove all of the meat from the chicken and coarsely shred it.

Step 5: Return all of the chicken skin and bones to the broth in the stockpot. Add the pan-roasted shallot, onion and leek mixture and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer over moderately low heat for 1 hour.

Step 6: Stir the toasted spices and goji berries into the broth. Cover and simmer for 1 hour longer. Add the rock sugar and simmer for another 30 minutes.

Step 7: Strain the broth into a large bowl, pressing on the solids; discard the solids. Pour the broth into a clean saucepan.

Step 8: Prepare the garnishes: Soak the noodles in a large bowl of boiling water until pliable, 8 to 10 minutes.

Step 9: In a large skillet, heat the oil. Add the shallots and cook over moderate heat, stirring, until golden brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Using a mesh skimmer, transfer the shallots to a paper towel-lined plate to drain. Let cool.

Step 10: Bring the broth to a simmer. Stir in the shredded chicken and cook until just white throughout, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the fish sauce and season the broth with salt.

Step 11: Drain the rice noodles and transfer to large bowls. Ladle the broth and chicken over the noodles. Top with the scallions and cilantro. Garnish with the crispy shallots, bean sprouts, basil, mint and jalapeños and serve with lime wedges.

## Make Ahead

The poached chicken and finished broth can be refrigerated separately overnight. <

## Ratatouille

**My Take:** We don't see Gina making this. But it's a famous Provençal dish and likely to have been prepared by her mother. You'll find it served, however in Book 1 of my series *Between Two Worlds*. Read more of it below.



Sautéing dried herbes de Provence in olive oil for this vegetable dish awakens their fragrance. You can substitute fresh tomatoes for canned, when in season.

### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. dried [herbes de Provence](#)
- 6 cloves garlic, smashed and peeled
- 2 large yellow onions, quartered
- 1 bay leaf

2 medium zucchini (about 1¼ lbs.), cut into 2 inch pieces

1 medium eggplant (about 14 oz.), cut into 2 inch pieces

1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and quartered

1 yellow bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and quartered

10 whole peeled tomatoes from the can, drained

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 tbsp. chopped fresh basil leaves

1 tbsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

### How To Make It

Heat oven to 400°. Heat oil in a 6-qt. Dutch oven over medium heat. Add herbes de Provence, garlic, onions, and bay leaf; cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft and fragrant, about 10 minutes.

Increase heat to high; stir in the zucchini, eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Uncover pot, transfer to the oven, and bake, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender and lightly browned, about 1 1/2 hours.

Stir in basil and parsley, transfer ratatouille to a serving bowl, and serve warm or at room temperature.

## Mashed potatoes and celery root

Gina's mother serves this on one Thanksgiving. I've made this dish many times because I love celery root. My first exposure to celery root is through a dish ubiquitous at French delicatessens: celeri remoulade. (see [David Lebovitz for more info.](#))

Mashed potatoes and celery root is a dish I just happened to put together one evening. While looking for something to serve as a carb dish, I found that the celery root I bought was a bit too woody for a raw salad. Later, I learned, that other cooks have made this dish. Here's how I prepare mine.

### Ingredients

4 cups celery root, peeled, cut into 1/2-inch pieces

4 cups potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch pieces

4 tbsp butter, cut into pieces

1/2 cup crème fraiche or sour cream

Some milk, as needed

Salt and pepper to taste



## How To Make It

Cook celery root in large pot of boiling salted water 5 minutes. Add potatoes to pot; cook until all vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes more. Drain.

Return vegetables to pot; stir over medium-high heat until water has evaporated or been absorbed, 1 to 2 minutes. Turn off heat; add butter. Mash vegetables until butter is incorporated.

Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup crème fraiche; mash until almost smooth, adding more milk as needed. Season with salt and pepper.

## Chicken with mustard and cream sauce

**My Take:** Gina makes this at a small dinner party for four at her friend Marcia's condo. The recipe below is a variation on one from [saveur.com](http://saveur.com) for chicken in wine sauce. Gina adds shiitake mushrooms during cooking and sour cream just before serving.

### Ingredients

2 tbsp. olive oil

2 lb. chicken thighs and drumsticks

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

4 shallots, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced

3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

½ cup dry white wine

1 cup chicken stock

¼ cup whole grain mustard

1 tbsp. finely chopped thyme

¼ cup good sour cream

2 tbsp. roughly chopped tarragon, for garnish

### How To Make It

Heat oven to 375°.

Heat oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Season chicken with salt and pepper; working in batches, cook chicken, flipping once, until browned, about 10 minutes. Transfer chicken to a plate; set aside.

Add shallots and garlic to pan, cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, 3-5 minutes. Add wine, stock, mustard, and thyme; bring to a boil.

Return chicken to the pan with any juices, cover with a lid, and transfer to the oven. Bake until chicken is cooked through, about 45 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh reads 165°.

Transfer chicken to a serving platter and keep warm. Return saucepan to stove; bring to a boil. Cook, stirring occasionally, until reduced by half, 8-10 minutes. Stir in sour cream and turn off heat. Spoon sauce over chicken; garnish with tarragon.

## Porchetta

**My Take:** Marcia makes this dish for an intimate dinner with Brent.

I had my first taste of porchetta at a farmer's market in Florence, Italy. Vendors/cooks came in a large truck and set up a table on which they laid out a whole roast pig. They sliced pieces off as you ordered.

You could smell the roast from afar. Redolent with garlic and rosemary, it drew people to the truck.

Many cultures roast pigs—in a large oven, on a spit or, as Hawaiians do, in an imu, a pit dug in the ground and lined with local plant material. The Tuscan version of roast pig is distinguished not so much by how it's cooked but how it's prepared. Adding rosemary and garlic takes it to another plane.

The crisp, salted skin is a main attraction of roast pig and a chewing experience to savor and remember. But to get that crunchy crispiness, you need a young pig.



## Ingredients:

3 tablespoons fennel seeds

8 garlic cloves, mashed into a paste

5 tablespoons finely chopped rosemary leaves

5 tablespoons finely chopped thyme leaves

2 tablespoons kosher salt

1½ tablespoons freshly ground black pepper

1½ tablespoons red pepper flakes

One (6- to 7-pound) boneless pork shoulder

½cup olive oil

4 cups homemade chicken stock or canned chicken broth

2 cups dry white wine

## How To Make It

1. In a small pan or skillet, toast the fennel seeds over medium-low heat until lightly toasted and fragrant, about 3 minutes. Immediately transfer the seeds to a mortar and pestle and pound until finely ground.

2. In a small bowl, combine the garlic, rosemary, thyme, salt, black pepper, red pepper flakes, and freshly ground fennel seeds until really well combined. This is your cure.

3. Pat the pork shoulder completely dry with paper towels. Rub the pork shoulder on all sides with the cure, making sure you season both the inside and outside of the meat. Using kitchen twine, truss the pork shoulder. (This means gently roll the pork and tie it crosswise with pieces of butcher's string at ½ inch (1-centimeter) intervals. Try to keep as much of the garlic and herb rub inside the pork as possible, although if a little filling spills out, it's not the end of the world.)

4. Place the trussed pork shoulder on a large plate or in a baking dish and refrigerate, uncovered, for about 24 hours.

5. Preheat the oven to 450°F (232°C) and position the rack in the middle of the oven.

6. Place the pork in a large roasting pan. Rub the pork all over with the olive oil and add the chicken stock and wine to the pan. Roast the pork, uncovered, until the skin starts to crisp, 25 to 40 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 300°F

(149°C) and continue to roast until the pork is fork-tender, about 3 hours more.

7. Transfer the pork to a cutting board and let it rest for about 30 minutes before carving.

## [Tandoori Lamb Chops](#)

**My Take:** You'll find this dish in *Hello, My Love*. See more below. This recipe comes from Smita Chandra, the best selling author of 3 renowned [Indian cookbooks](#).



An assertive tandoori marinade of red onions, red wine vinegar, yogurt and spices stands up to the bold flavor of meaty lamb chops. The longer you marinate, the better the flavor!

### Ingredients:

1 1/4 lb lamb loin chops (about 6)

1/4 cup diced red onions

4 cloves garlic

1 inch piece ginger

4 tbsp red wine vinegar

2 tbsp each: plain Greek style yogurt, olive oil

1 tsp each: garam masala, ground coriander,  
ground cumin, dried fenugreek leaves

½ tsp cayenne pepper

Salt to taste

Lemon halves for squeezing

### How To Make It

Place lamb chops in deep mixing bowl. Combine all remaining ingredients except lemon halves, in mini blender until smooth. Pour over lamb, toss well to coat. Cover and refrigerate overnight or for at least 4 hours.

Preheat barbecue grill to medium heat. Lift lamb out of the marinade, reserve leftover marinade. Place lamb chops on grill, cover and cook for about 5 – 7 minutes. Baste with leftover marinade and flip chops. Grill for another 5 - 7 minutes or until chops are done to your liking, cooking longer for well done chops.

Serve with a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.

Chapter three

# Spicing Up A Love Story: Delicious Endings

We can't live without it. Yet sometimes, it can be poison.

When we gather together to celebrate or even commiserate, we usually offer food and/or drink. Even at funerals. On first dates, we're likely to take our potential amour to dinner or, at least, meet her for coffee or a drink. Sometimes we binge on food to calm our nerves.

We are what we eat. So, we're told. We often interpret this to refer to our physical health. In a novel, food can do much more. So, when I write novels, I include food/eating scenes. Writing cooking and dining scenes is fun. Better yet, they're a delicious way to help define mood or setting, as well as activity. Even character. They can also draw readers in emotionally.

For instance, in *Hello My Love* ([permafrost on Amazon](#)), Book 1 of the trilogy, *Between Two Worlds*, the main characters reconcile at an Indian restaurant where they order tandoori lamb and mango lassi. Choosing an ethnic eatery offers a glimpse into their personalities—open and exposed to things exotic or often unfamiliar to Americans. It also serves to subtly situate where the story happens (a fairly cosmopolitan city).

Delectable dishes are more prominent in *Hello, My Love* than they are in the 19th-century romance novels it pays homage to. Characterization and plot of *Hello, My Love* borrow from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*.

People In 19th-century England had no movies, televisions, iPads, cellphones, theme

parks, and computer games to entertain them. Their main source for pleasant distraction and socializing were dinners and balls (where food, of course, was often served).

Heroes and heroines of the period often met, talked, flirted, and found themselves falling in love at balls and dinner parties. Tea was also served quite often with little sandwiches and cakes. Tea-drinking and [afternoon tea, in fact, came into fashion in Regency England \(early 1800s\)](#).

As important as such convivial occasions are in those novels, not much is devoted to describing meals served. I only found one such reference in [\*Pride and Prejudice\*](#) and 18 times in N&S, but mostly in relation to making food available for the poor working class.

You'll find many food scenes in *Hello, My Love*. Though lessened in this age of social media, we still meet to socialize and we often eat where we meet. In a middle chapter, Greg and Elise have dinner in an Indian restaurant where she orders a plate of [tandoori lamb](#) and a glass of mango lassi.

As in P&P and N&S, the “attachment” between Elise and Greg develop at dinner parties. At

one dinner to which Greg receives a spur-of-the-moment invitation, Elise's mother serves a [Moroccan tagine](#).

Invited to dine at a little village near Aix-en-Provence in France, Elise and Greg find delectable dishes that include roast and [ratatouille](#) baked in a 7th-century stone oven. At their wedding celebration, the piece de resistance is a sucking pig, roasted for hours to yield crispy skin.

There's always a good cook in my stories, including a mother who only prepares Polish dishes in *Hello Agnieszka* (BTW, Book 2) and the computer nerd hero of *Welcome Reluctant Stranger* (BTW Book 3) who improvises a dish of Indonesian meat balls.

When I ramp up food talk in [Sugar and Spice and All Those Lies](#), it seems natural and inevitable. Gina, the heroine, cooks at a Michelin-starred restaurant catering to a rich and privileged clientele.

In this book, cooking and food is a device to show how the heroine grows. In that sense, food isn't really the focus of the story although there are ample references to it.

Rather, the story shows us how food affects those who make them and those who consume them. It's more about the cook's passion for creating dishes that give pleasure (and life). And more about how we relate to food than how it makes us salivate, lick our fingers, tease our taste buds, or what satisfies our cravings.

I often use this teaser to *Sugar and Spice and All Those Lies: Chanterelles Garnished with Cream and Mayhem*.

It captures both the culinary and crime aspects of the novel.

In the book, Gina's mother is the daughter of a murdered French chef. She inherited her father's passion for cooking and passes it on to Gina. In one scene, she serves her guests gougère and fig tart with almond cream.

I've made both dishes a few times. I first tasted fig tart with almond cream in Paris and has been hooked on it ever since.

## Fig Tart in Almond Cream

I love anything in almond cream. This is a versatile recipe. You can substitute other fruit. I make the tart dough the easy, lazy way:

You can use figs fresh, but you may need to lightly stew others like pears (very good in almond cream).



### Ingredients

Tart Shell:

2 tablespoons sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup ground almonds

1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups flour

6 tbsp butter

1 pinch salt

1 egg

1 tbsp sour cream (or more as needed)

### How To Make It

Throw the first five ingredients into a food processor and whirl until the butter is well incorporated. Then, add the egg and sour cream (or lemon juice) and whirl again until you have a coherent mass. The sour cream helps tenderize the tart shell. Chill.

Use your own techniques if a food processor doesn't do it for you.

#### Almond Cream Filling:

6 tbsp butter, softened

2 large eggs

1 cup almond flour

4 tablespoons granulated sugar

Figs (cut in half, enough to line the tart shell.

Almond extract or vanilla

Apricot jam to brush over the figs when the tart is baked (Optional).

### How To Make It

For the almond cream, whisk together or whirl in a food processor sugar, butter, and almonds until well mixed. Mix in the the eggs one by one.

Roll out the dough on a floured surface and place it in a tart shell.

Spread the almond cream on the bottom of the dough. Place fig halves on top of the almond cream.

Bake for 30 minutes on 350°F. Cool before cutting into wedges.

## Goat cheese cake

**My Take:** I first had a slice of this cheese cake at a museum restaurant. Since then, I've made it using this recipe. The cake comes out high and puffy and collapses as it cools. One thing I've noticed, though, is that moister goat cheese will make the cake fall more. It remains light even so.

Marcia prepares this goat cheese cake to serve at the dinner for four at her condo.



### Ingredients

12 ounces mild fresh goat cheese, softened

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup granulated sugar

1 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon minced lemon zest

- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 6 large eggs, separated
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3 cups mixed fresh berries, such as blueberries, raspberries and quartered strawberries
- Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

## How To Make It

Preheat the oven to 350°. Butter a 9-inch round cake pan and dust with granulated sugar, pouring off the excess.

In a medium bowl, combine the goat cheese with the granulated sugar, lemon juice, lemon zest and vanilla and beat at medium speed until smooth. Beat in the egg yolks, 2 at a time, incorporating them completely before adding the next batch. Beat in the flour at low speed.

In another bowl, using clean beaters, beat the egg whites until firm but not dry. Beat one-third of the whites into the goat cheese mixture, then gently fold in the remaining whites. Spoon the batter into the prepared pan and bake for about 40 minutes, or until a skewer inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

## Caramelized walnuts

**My take:** I love caramelized walnuts. This recipe is a relatively easy way of making it. I do mine by caramelizing the sugar on top of the stove, then tossing in slightly toasted walnuts. The latter part of my method requires attention because sugar burns easily at this stage. I sometimes sprinkle a little salt for salted caramelized walnuts.

### Ingredients

Nonstick vegetable oil spray

½ cup sugar

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1 ½ cups walnuts

### How To Make It

Preheat oven to 325°F. Line heavy rimmed baking sheet with foil. Spray foil with nonstick spray. Combine sugar and vinegar in small saucepan. Stir over medium heat until sugar dissolves, about 3 minutes. Add nuts; toss to coat. Transfer mixture to baking sheet.

Bake until nuts are deep brown and syrup thickens and coats nuts, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Cool completely on baking

sheet. Break nuts apart. (Can be made 2 days ahead.  
Store airtight at room temperature.)

## Bittersweet chocolate cookies

**My Take:** When she visits Gina at the high-rise apartment Leon gave her ,Marcia brings a batch of bakery-bought cookies. Is it on purpose that they're bittersweet chocolate cookies?

I've never made these. I will, though, one of these days. I love the pairing of hazelnut and chocolate. And I won't coat them with powdered sugar. Why mask the inherent bitterness of chocolate with too much sugar?



### Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 sticks (1 cup) unsalted butter, softened

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1 large egg

1 teaspoon vanilla

5 oz fine-quality semisweet or bittersweet chocolate (not unsweetened), finely chopped

1/2 cup hazelnuts or sliced almonds, finely chopped (not in a food processor)

1 1/2 cups confectioners sugar for coating

## How To Make It

Whisk together flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt in a bowl until combined.

Beat together butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer at medium-high speed until pale and fluffy, about 2 minutes in a stand mixer (preferably fitted with paddle attachment) or 4 minutes with a handheld. Add egg and vanilla, beating until combined.

Reduce speed to low, then add flour mixture and mix until combined well. Add chocolate and nuts and mix until just combined. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and chill dough until firm, about 30 minutes.

Put oven racks in upper and lower thirds of oven and preheat oven to 325°F.

Roll 1 scant tablespoon of dough into a 1-inch ball, then flatten slightly with palm of your hand to form a third of an inch-thick disk and coat with confectioners sugar. Make more cookies in same manner, arranging them 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets.

Bake cookies, switching position of sheets halfway through baking, until they puff up and tops crack slightly, 8 to 10 minutes total, then transfer with a metal spatula to racks to cool completely. Recoat cookies with confectioners sugar.

Cooks' note: Cookies keep, layered between sheets of wax paper or parchment, in an airtight container at room temperature 1 week.

**Act out your food in fiction fantasies. Eating (and cooking) can be an adventure you may never forget.**

Bon Appetit!  
And Thank You For Reading

If you haven't read [\*Sugar and Spice and All Those Lies\*](#), check it out [on Amazon](#) and other book sellers.

Curious about the type of women's fiction I write? Read more at [Evy Writes](#).

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Evy Journey tries to define contemporary multicultural women in her books. She has a psychology Ph.D. that focused on the effects of stereotype attributions (race, class, ability, effort) and other cultural factors on how we learn things.

Website: <https://www.evyjourney.com>

Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/thoughtfulromreaders.love.food/>

Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Thoughtful-Womans-Romance-Novels/382436745126631>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/eholychair>

Google+:

<https://plus.google.com/u/0/114463670905127750149>

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