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**EAT WELL ON \$4/DAY**

**GOOD**

**AND**

**CHEAP**

**LEANNE BROWN**

First, I'd like to thank my husband, Dan. Without him this book would not exist. Thank you also to my wonderful family and friends, who believed in this idea before anyone else. And thank you to everyone who has taken the time to tell me what *Good and Cheap* means to them. I heard from thousands of people throughout the course of creating and distributing this book. The outpouring of love and support I've received is probably enough for several lifetimes. To those who told me this book has given them hope, inspired them, or otherwise brought them pleasure: I don't deserve so much gratitude for so little, but doing work that matters is all I have ever wanted.

Text, recipes, and most photographs and design by Leanne Brown, in fulfillment of a final project for a master's degree in Food Studies at New York University.

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# A Note on \$4/Day

I designed these recipes to fit the budgets of people living on SNAP, the US program that used to be called food stamps. If you're on SNAP, you already know that the benefit formulas are complicated, but the rule of thumb is that you end up with \$4 per person, per day to spend on food.

This book isn't challenging you to live on so little; it's a resource in case that's your reality. In May 2014, there were 46 million Americans on food stamps. Untold millions more—in particular, retirees and students—live under similar constraints.

The costs for each recipe are based on two sources. For the pantry items on the following pages, I collected prices from four grocery stores in Inwood, a relatively low-income neighborhood on the north tip of Manhattan. For specific spices and a wider variety of fruits and vegetables, I looked at online grocery stores or nationwide averages collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The prices for fruits and vegetables assume that they're roughly in season, when you can get the best deals. This means, unfortunately, that you'll pay a lot more if you want to make peach coffee cake in February. I talk more about shopping in season on the following pages.

The estimates are, by necessity, a snapshot of place and time. Costs will vary in other cities, other neighborhoods, even just other stores. Please think of the numbers as a guideline, not a guarantee.

More than in most cookbooks, my recipes are flexible and encourage substitution based on availability, price, and personal tastes. A strict budget requires flexibility and a willingness to say, "that's a good deal this week, so it's what I'll be cooking!" Don't worry, you'll pick up the tricks quickly.

A few recipes call for fancy kitchen equipment, but in my work with low-income families in New York, I've found that items like blenders, food processors, and electric mixers are fairly common. I did not, however, attempt to tackle the very real situation of people who have no kitchen, no equipment, and no space to prepare food. I simply cannot hope to do those issues justice within the bounds of one cookbook. Let's all agree that we need to keep striving to address those other issues that make it difficult for so many people to eat well.



# Tips for Eating and Shopping Well

## **BUY FOODS THAT CAN BE USED IN MULTIPLE MEALS**

Versatile ingredients save meals. If you buy flour, you can make tortillas (p. 137), roti (p. 138), scones (p. 22), and pancakes (p. 18). If you buy yogurt (or make your own), you can have it with fruit (p. 32), make raita (p. 164) and tzatziki (p. 165), or use it in a drink (p. 150). Need I even mention the versatility of garlic or lemons? If you always keep them around, you can make anything else taste fantastic.

## **BUY IN BULK**

Buying larger amounts usually brings the price down. When you're working within a tight budget, you won't always be able to afford to shop for the future, but do it when you can. And, of course, keep storage in mind: If the item will go off before you can finish it, get the smaller size. If you buy versatile ingredients in slightly larger amounts, you'll be able to use them quickly but still make diverse meals.

## **START BUILDING A PANTRY**

If possible—and admittedly this can be difficult for people living on their own—reserve part of your budget to buy one or two semi-expensive pantry items each week. Things like olive oil, soy sauce, and spices (p. 166) are pricey at first, but if you use just a little with each recipe, they go a long way. With turmeric, coriander, cumin, and fresh ginger root, you'll suddenly have a world of flavor on your shelf. In a few pages, I'll suggest specific items to add to your pantry.





# More Tips!

## **ALWAYS BUY EGGS**

With these babies in your fridge, you're only minutes away from a satisfying meal. Scramble an egg with leftovers or drop an egg on top of a salad or a plate of stir-fried vegetables, and deliciousness is guaranteed.

## **BUY EXPENSIVE EGGS IF YOU CAN**

More expensive eggs are usually worth the money—they taste so much better than cheap eggs. Even at \$4 a dozen, you're still only paying 33 cents an egg. Really fresh eggs, like those from a farmers' market, also make a big difference in flavor.

## **BE CAREFUL WITH UNDERCOOKED EGGS**


Very rarely, raw eggs can be infected with salmonella. Many classic recipes, from mayonnaise to eggnog to Caesar dressing, are prepared with raw egg yolk, but technically only a hard-cooked egg is guaranteed to be free of salmonella. Consequently, raw or runny eggs are not recommended for infants, the elderly, pregnant women, or anyone with a weakened immune system.

## **BUY FRESH BREAD**

Try to buy fresh loaves of interesting bread from an independent bakery or the bakery in your grocery store. Although fresh loaves don't last as long as sliced bread, they're much more enjoyable, and you can use the old stuff to make panzanella (p. 49) or croutons or breadcrumbs (p. 146) to top other dishes. Later in the day, many independent bakeries offer deep discounts on bread they would otherwise have to throw out.

## **DON'T BUY DRINKS**

All the body needs drink-wise is water. Except for milk, most packaged drinks are overpriced and deliver a lot of sugar without filling you up the way a piece of fruit or a bowl of yogurt does. If you want a special drink, make agua fresca (p. 149), a smoothie (p. 150), or tea.



# Pantry Basics

With these commonly available items in your pantry, you can have a wide variety of meals on the table within minutes. Keeping a well stocked pantry is the key to easy, fast cooking at home. When you're living on a budget, building up supplies does take time, but just keep adding each week and you'll get there in time.

## **VEGETABLES**

Vegetables can (and should!) be the base of most meals. Other than greens, which should be used quickly, these can be stored for a few days to a few weeks. Try each vegetable as it hits peak season and goes on sale. garlic, onions, carrots, celery, peppers, broccoli, tomatoes, hot peppers, hardy greens, salad greens, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cauliflower, winter squash

## **FRUITS**

Citrus fruits are cooking essentials and they keep well. The zest and juice can liven up just about any dish and they always make a great dressing. Bananas, apples, and melons are great quick snacks, but try every fruit you can afford! Remember, almost all fruits and vegetables have a season, so savor them at their freshest and cheapest. apples, melons, oranges, limes, lemons, bananas

## **DAIRY**

Butter is just as good to cook with as it is on toast. These are the cheeses I like, but buy what your taste, budget, and local availability allow. butter, milk, yogurt, queso fresco, Romano or Parmesan, sharp cheddar, mozzarella

## **PROTEIN**

Meat isn't the only protein! The items below are cheap, easily stored, and have multiple uses. Be aware that most fish at the grocery store has previously been frozen and was merely thawed for display. There's no harm in buying it frozen and thawing it yourself. eggs, dried beans, lentils, tofu, nuts, peanut butter



# Breakfast

Fast, healthy, and cheap is usually the game plan for breakfast—with as much pleasing flavor as I can manage in my grouchy morning state. Whether you have hours or minutes, there's a great breakfast to be had for little.





**\$2 TOTAL**  
**\$1 / SERVING**

# Broiled Grapefruit

FOR TWO

If your oven has a broiler, this is a fast and fun way to liven up a standard, healthy breakfast of grapefruit. This method produces a hot and sticky treat.

2 grapefruit  
2 tbsp brown sugar  
salt

Turn on the broiler in your oven.

Split a grapefruit in half and place it on a baking tray or in an oven-proof pan. Sprinkle the pink halves evenly with sugar and top with just a tiny bit of salt to bring out the flavor.

Place the grapefruit halves under the broiler until they turn bubbly and a little brown (or even black) around the edges. This usually takes about 3 minutes, but monitor it because every broiler is different. Don't get distracted! Overbroiling ruins a good meal fast.

If you have maple syrup on hand, use it instead of sugar for even more flavor.

This breakfast will make a grapefruit lover out of you!

# Banana Pancakes

MAKES TEN TO FOURTEEN PANCAKES

With the creamy texture and delicious flavor of bananas, these pancakes are stunningly good. You will be seriously popular if you feed these to your family or friends. Another plus: this is a great way to get rid of mushy bananas (that doesn't involve making banana bread).

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 bananas, mashed
- 2 eggs
- 1½ cups milk
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 bananas, sliced
- butter for cooking

In a medium bowl, add the flour, brown sugar, baking powder, soda and salt. Mix thoroughly with a spoon.

In another bowl, add the mashed bananas (or just mash them in the bowl), eggs, milk, and vanilla, then mix. Add the dry mixture from the other bowl into the second bowl. Gently stir it with a spoon until everything just comes together. Tender pancakes come from not over-mixing the batter. If there are still a few pockets of flour, don't worry about it. Let the mixture sit for 10 to 15 minutes.

Place a non-stick or cast-iron pan on medium heat. Once it's hot, melt a small amount of butter, about ½ teaspoon, then ladle some pancake batter into the center of the pan. You can make your pancakes as large or small as you like. A normal amount is about ¼ to ⅓ cup of batter. If it's your first time making pancakes, make them smaller: they'll be easier to flip.

As soon as the batter is in the pan, place 3 to 4 banana slices atop of the uncooked side of the pancake. Once the edges of the pancake start to dry up and you can see the middle start to bubble, flip the pancake over. Cook until it is browned on both sides. Stack the finished pancake on a plate in a warm oven and repeat the above process until you run out of batter.

Serve hot, with butter and syrup.



\$4.80 TOTAL  
\$0.20 / MUFFIN

# Whole-Wheat Jalapeño Cheddar Scones

MAKES SIX

These are delicious for breakfast or with a plate of beans, a pile of vegetables, or alongside a chili or stew. Spicy, cheesy, flaky—these are best eaten straight out of the oven.

½ cup butter  
2½ cups whole-wheat flour  
1 tbsp baking powder  
1 tsp salt  
4 oz sharp cheddar, diced  
1 jalapeño, finely diced  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
½ cup milk

#### EGG WASH

1 egg  
salt and pepper

Place the butter in the freezer for 30 minutes.

Turn the oven to 400 °F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, or lightly grease the pan if you don't have the paper.

In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, and salt.

Prepare your jalapeño and cheese. Cutting the cheese into cubes rather than grating it means you'll have pockets of gooey cheese that contrast nicely with the scone. If you want the spice of the jalapeño, leave the seeds and membrane; if you like it milder, remove them and chop up only the pepper itself.

Remove the butter from the freezer and grate it directly into the flour mixture. (Use a cheese grater—it's the best way to break up butter without melting it.) Using your hands, gently squish the butter into the flour until everything is incorporated but not smooth. The chunks of butter will create flaky scones. Add the jalapeño, cheese, eggs, and milk to the bowl, then use your hands to gently mix everything until it just comes together. It will probably be a little shaggy, but that's just fine.

Sprinkle flour on a clean countertop and dump the dough onto it. Gently shape the dough into a disc about 1½" thick. Cut the dough into six triangles, like a pizza, and move them to the cookie sheet.

In a small bowl, gently beat the egg for the egg wash. Brush it over the scones, then sprinkle salt and pepper over each one. Bake for 25 minutes or until the scones are golden brown.



\$3.60 TOTAL  
\$0.30 / BAR

# Egg Sandwich with Mushroom Hash

FOR TWO

Egg sandwiches are a mainstay of every corner deli in NYC, and for good reason: they're cheap and easy, fast and delicious. I knew I had to include one when Charlene, one of my early supporters, asked for a recipe with eggs and mushrooms. (I'm thankful she did! Because I don't really like mushrooms, they're scarce in this book, even though plenty of people love them.) Like most sandwiches, this recipe is really flexible. In particular, you can change the hash to use whatever you have around. Sad leftovers can take on new life when turned into a hash and matched with the rich fattiness of a morning egg.

2 tsp butter  
1 small potato, diced  
½ lb mushrooms, sliced  
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
2 eggs  
salt and pepper  
2 rolls, 2 English muffins,  
or 4 slices of bread

#### ADDITIONS

tomato, sliced  
avocado  
cheese

#### VARIATIONS

potato and onion  
potato and pea  
collards and bacon  
zucchini  
chorizo and green chili

Melt half the butter in a pan on medium heat, then throw in the potato and cook for 5 minutes, stirring minimally. Season with salt and pepper. Add the mushrooms and garlic, as well as a splash of water if the potatoes are getting stuck to the pan. Cook for another 5 minutes, until the mushrooms are brown and have shrunk down.

Test the potato by piercing one piece with a fork. If it goes through easily, you're done. If not, cook for a few more minutes. (The smaller the potatoes are chopped, the quicker they'll cook.) Taste and adjust the seasoning to your preferences.

Melt the other teaspoon of butter in another pan on medium heat. Crack the eggs into the pan and dust with salt and pepper again. Salt and pepper are critical to these ingredients, so don't worry about overdoing it.

If you like your eggs sunny-side up, place a lid over the pan to ensure the whites will cook through without making the yolks hard. Once the whites are no longer translucent, take them off the heat.

If you like eggs over-easy (my favorite), wait until the yolks are cooked but still look runny, then flip each egg with a spatula and let the other side cook for about 15 seconds. That'll get your whites fully cooked, but keep the yolks runny—the best. If you prefer hard yolks (please no!), then cook for a little longer.

Toast the bread or bun, then assemble it into a sandwich, using any condiments you like. Way better than what you'll find at the corner deli.



**\$0.25 TOTAL**  
**\$0.13 / SERVING**

**BREAKFAST**  
**28**

**IDEAS**

# Oatmeal

This basic recipe can be dressed up in so many ways, you'll never get bored. Oatmeal makes a hot and comforting breakfast; it'll give you energy for a great morning. It's also extremely inexpensive, so you can spend a bit more on lunch and dinner.

1 cup rolled oats  
2 cups water  
¼ tsp salt

In a small pot, add the oats, water and salt. Place it on medium-high heat, just until the water comes to a boil. Immediately turn the heat to low and place a lid on the pot. Cook for 5 minutes, until the oats are soft and tender and most of the water has cooked off. You can add more water if you like your oatmeal smooth and thin, or use slightly less if you want a thick oatmeal.

This is just the basic recipe; several ideas for how to make it your own follow on the next pages. Whether it's milky and sweet or savory and salty, I'm sure you can find a favorite way to enjoy a hot bowl of oats in the morning!





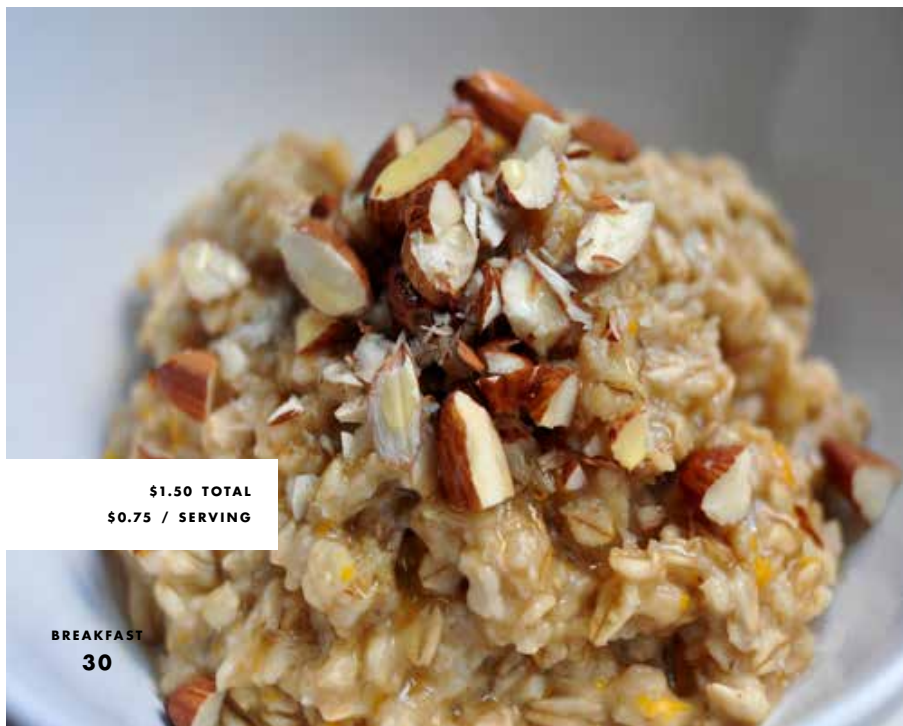
**\$1.50 TOTAL**  
**\$0.75 / SERVING**

**PUMPKIN OATMEAL:** Whisk the pumpkin, milk, and water in a pot. Add the oats, salt, sugar, and spices, but use just  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups water. Cook on medium-low until it bubbles. Turn to low for 5 more minutes. Add syrup or more sugar to taste.

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup canned pumpkin  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk (or almond / soy milk)  
 $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups water  
2 tbsp brown sugar  
1 tsp cinnamon

**OPTIONAL**

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp ginger powder  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp clove powder  
maple syrup



**\$1.50 TOTAL**  
**\$0.75 / SERVING**

**BREAKFAST**  
**30**

**BAKLAVA OATMEAL:** Before cooking the oatmeal as normal, add the cinnamon, orange zest and 2 tablespoons of honey. Once it's cooked, top each bowl with another tablespoon of honey and a tablespoon of nuts.

1 tsp cinnamon  
1 tbsp orange zest, finely grated  
4 tbsp honey  
2 tbsp almonds or pistachios, chopped



IDEAS

# Yogurt Smash!

There are so many types of yogurt in the grocery store: some low in fat and high in sugar, some with cute animal pictures. Some are Greek. Some have chocolate shavings and candy. Some have names like “key lime pie.”

Now forget about all of that. The best value for your money are the big buckets of plain yogurt. The fat content is your choice—just check that it doesn’t contain gelatin and you’re all set. Starting with plain yogurt, you can make super flavors in your own kitchen, where you know exactly what’s going into it.

If you have kids, ask them what flavors they can imagine and go make it! It’s a lot more fun than letting the supermarket choose for you. Try something new and smash it in! Check out the ideas on the adjoining page.

If you want a thicker Greek-style yogurt, all you have to do is strain regular American yogurt through cheesecloth to remove the extra water.


Yogurt’s versatility makes it a great staple to keep in the fridge. Mix it with some of the items you see on the next page or turn it into a savory sauce like raita (p. 164) or tzatziki (p. 165).





# Soup

It's a cliché, but as soon as the weather gets cold, my apartment fills with the smell of vegetables simmering for soup. Vegetable soups are so simple that you can easily invent your own, using the stuff you and your family like. Start with some onion, carrot, celery, maybe a pepper; then add broth and a large amount of, say, spinach, and suddenly you have spinach soup! It's a great way for new cooks to gain some confidence. Just remember to season it enough. Dunk a grilled-cheese sandwich in it and even mediocre soup tastes great.



# Corn Soup

FOR FOUR TO SIX

This thick, sweet, satisfying soup is a favorite of kids and adults. This is wonderful to make at the beginning of autumn when corn on the cob is at its peak, but canned corn can also make it a warm reminder of summer in the depths of winter.

4 cups corn, fresh, canned, or frozen  
1 tbsp butter  
1 onion, finely chopped  
2 sticks celery, finely chopped  
1 green or red bell pepper, finely chopped  
1 small potato, diced  
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 chili pepper, finely chopped (optional)  
1 tbsp cornmeal or flour  
salt and pepper

## CORN BROTH

4 to 8 cobs corn, with corn removed  
2 bay leaves (optional)  
salt

## ALTERNATE BROTH

5 cups vegetable broth or chicken stock

If you're making this soup with corn on the cob, the first step is to make corn broth. If you're using canned or frozen corn, you'll also need chicken or vegetable broth instead. In that case, skip the next paragraph.

To make corn broth, place the cobs and bay leaves in a large stockpot and cover with water. Bring to a boil over high heat, then turn the heat down to medium and let the water boil for about 30 minutes. Taste the broth and add salt and pepper until it tastes lightly corny. Boil it down until you have about 5 cups of liquid. The broth will keep for several months if frozen, or a few weeks in the refrigerator.

To make the soup, melt the butter in a large pot or Dutch oven on medium heat. Add onion, celery, bell pepper, and potato, then stir. Cover the pot and let everything fry and steam for about 5 minutes.

Take the lid off the pot and add the garlic and chili pepper, if using. Stir the vegetables, using a splash of water or broth to free any that get stuck to the bottom of the pot.

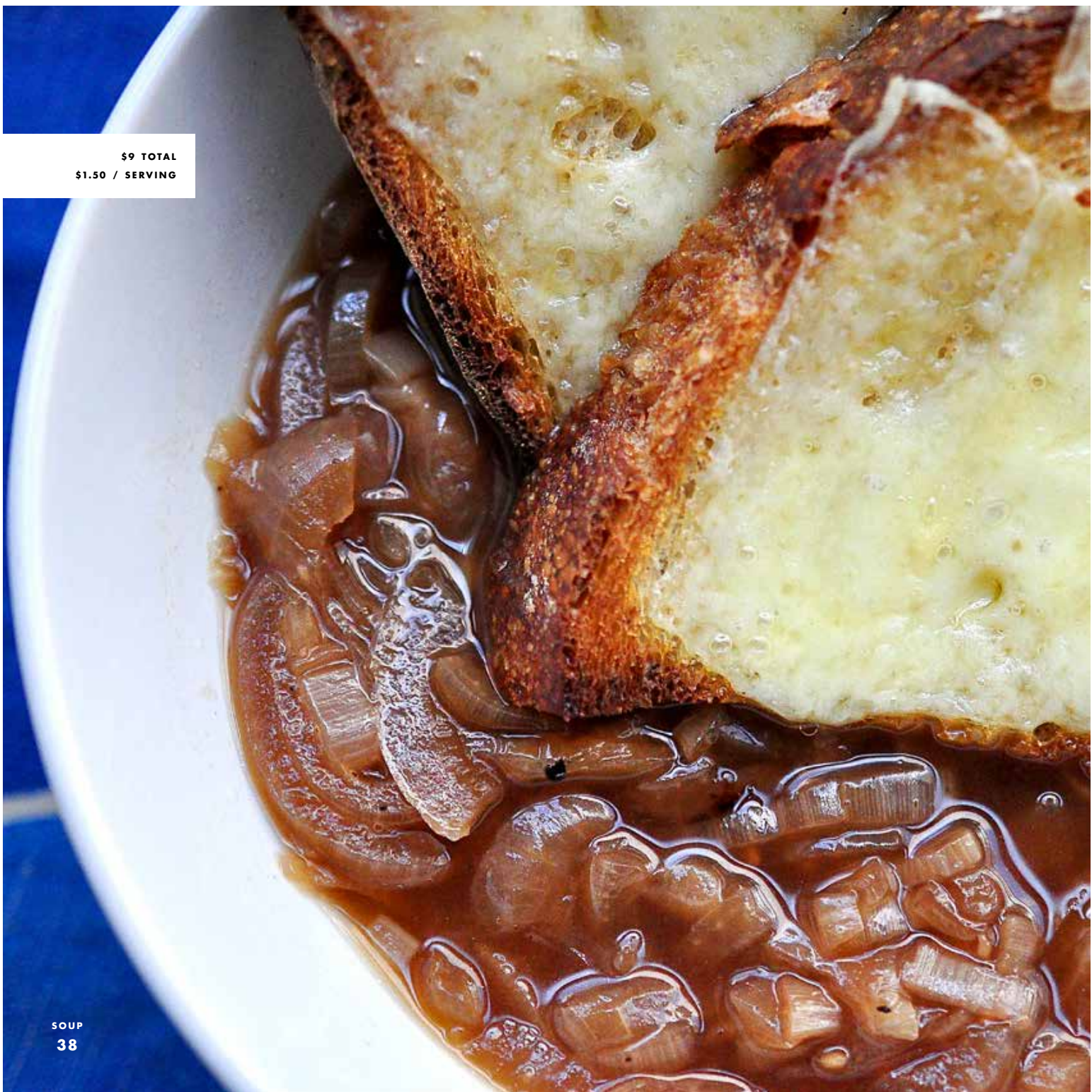
Let the vegetables cook, stirring occasionally, for another 5 minutes. They should be lightly browned and soft, although the potatoes will not be fully cooked yet.

Add the corn and cornmeal or flour to the pot and stir. Cover with about 5 cups of broth and bring to a boil, then turn the heat down to low and simmer for about 30 minutes. The broth will thicken and become opaque.

Add salt and pepper to taste. If you made your own corn broth, you'll probably need at least a teaspoon of salt; if you used store-bought broth, you'll need less.

Serve with a slice of garlic bread or add a hard-boiled egg for extra protein.

\$9 TOTAL  
\$1.50 / SERVING



# Lightly Curried Butternut Squash Soup

FOR FOUR

Squash is almost the perfect vegetable for soup: it's flavorful and has a divinely smooth texture when cooked and puréed. Serve this soup to people who think they don't like squash or curry, and you'll change some minds. You can substitute any winter squash for the butternut; I just like butternut because it's faster to peel and chop than its many cousins.

1 butternut squash  
or other winter squash  
1 tbsp butter  
1 medium onion, diced  
1 green bell pepper, diced  
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 tsp cumin powder  
1 tsp coriander powder  
1 tsp turmeric powder  
1 tsp cayenne pepper  
1 can coconut milk  
3 cups water  
salt and pepper

**OPTIONAL**

sour cream  
scallions  
fresh cilantro

To prepare the squash, peel off the tough skin with a potato peeler. Cut the squash in half lengthwise with a sharp chef's knife, then scoop out the seeds and gloop. (You can save the seeds for a tasty snack later, if you like: just clean the gloop off, then toast them.)

Next, slice off the stem and very bottom of the squash and throw them away. Take each half of the squash and place it face-down on a cutting board. Chop each into ½" slices, then turn each slice into cubes.

Put a large pot or Dutch oven on the stove on medium heat. Melt the butter and let the pot get hot. Add the onion, pepper, and garlic, then sauté for two minutes.

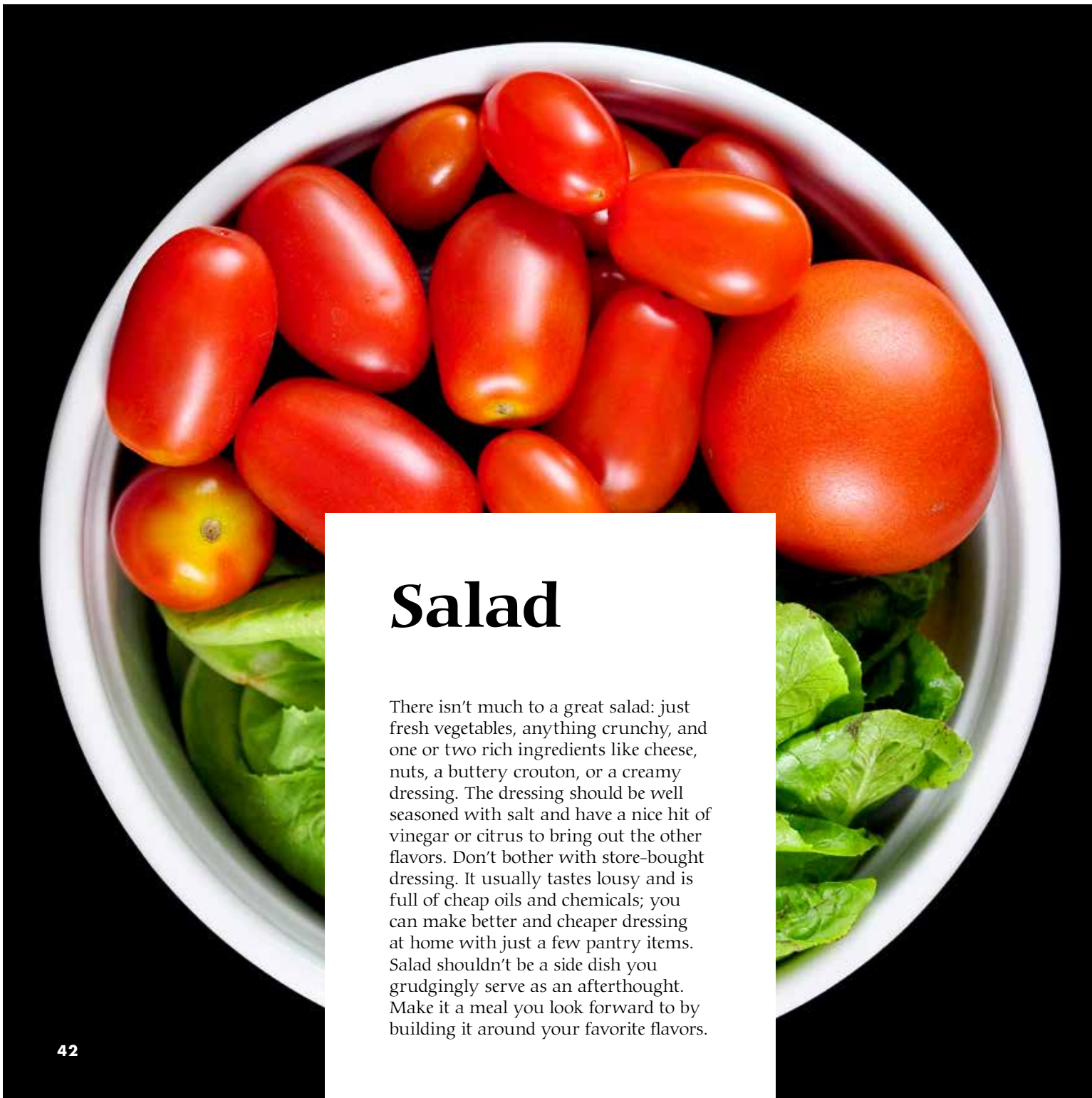
Add the cubed squash and spices and stir it all together. Put a lid on the pot and let it cook for another two minutes. Add the coconut milk and water and stir.

Bring the soup to a boil, then turn down the heat to low and let it cook for about 30 minutes, or until the squash is tender.

Once the squash is tender, taste the soup and add salt and pepper as needed. Soup usually needs a fair bit of salt, so be generous.

If you have an immersion blender, you can purée the soup in the pot. If you have a normal blender, wait until the soup has cooled before transferring it to the blender. Purée until smooth, then taste again and add any more salt and pepper it might need.

You can enjoy the soup as-is or serve it with another drizzle of coconut milk or a dollop of sour cream, plus some chopped scallions or cilantro.



## Salad

There isn't much to a great salad: just fresh vegetables, anything crunchy, and one or two rich ingredients like cheese, nuts, a buttery crouton, or a creamy dressing. The dressing should be well seasoned with salt and have a nice hit of vinegar or citrus to bring out the other flavors. Don't bother with store-bought dressing. It usually tastes lousy and is full of cheap oils and chemicals; you can make better and cheaper dressing at home with just a few pantry items. Salad shouldn't be a side dish you grudgingly serve as an afterthought. Make it a meal you look forward to by building it around your favorite flavors.



# Kale Salad

FOR TWO, OR FOUR AS A SIDE

This kale is treated like romaine lettuce in a Caesar salad. The bitterness of the greens is delicious alongside the rich, fatty dressing. You could also use Swiss chard. If you're worried about the raw egg yolk in the dressing, feel free to omit it.

1 large bunch kale  
2 cups bread cubes  
2 tbsp butter (more as needed)  
salt and pepper  
Romano or Parmesan,  
freshly grated

#### DRESSING

1 egg yolk, raw, from a  
high-quality fresh egg  
2 tsp lemon juice  
2 tsp Dijon mustard  
1 clove garlic, finely grated  
(optional)  
1 anchovy, finely chopped  
(optional)  
3 tbsp olive oil  
salt and pepper





Smaller potatoes are best, but whatever you've got will be fine! If you're using very large potatoes, chop them into halves or quarters to speed up the cooking—or dice them into bite-sized pieces if you're really in a hurry. Otherwise, keep the potatoes whole.

Cover the potatoes with water in a large pot with a lid. Bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat, then turn the heat down to medium and set the lid askew so that steam can escape.

After about 25 minutes, try piercing the largest potato with a fork. If the fork pierces the potato easily, it's fully cooked. If not, boil for 5 more minutes. It's fine if they're a little overcooked, but undercooked potatoes are awful.

Drain the water. Once the potatoes are cool enough to handle safely (but still warm), roughly chop them into bite-sized pieces, if you haven't already.

In a large bowl, mix the olive oil, citrus juice or vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper. Whisk it briskly until the liquid is blended. If you don't have a whisk, simply whip with a fork.

Throw the potatoes into the bowl and stir to coat them in the dressing. Add a generous amount of salt as you stir. Potatoes are very bland without salt! Then let them marinate for 10 minutes.

Chop a handful of scallions and sprinkle them over top. Toss the salad once more, then taste and adjust the salt, pepper, and vinegar as you see fit.

This keeps very well and travels nicely to a picnic or potluck. Have fun!

# Ever-Popular Potato Salad

FOR FOUR

I developed this salad because I'm not a big fan of mayonnaise-based potato salads. This is really the simplest thing: just potatoes in a regular vinaigrette. You can add all kinds of extras to it to make it more festive, but people always rave about the salad as is. The secret is that potatoes actually have really nice flavor—all you have to do is season them properly. Let potatoes be potatoes, no need to hide 'em!

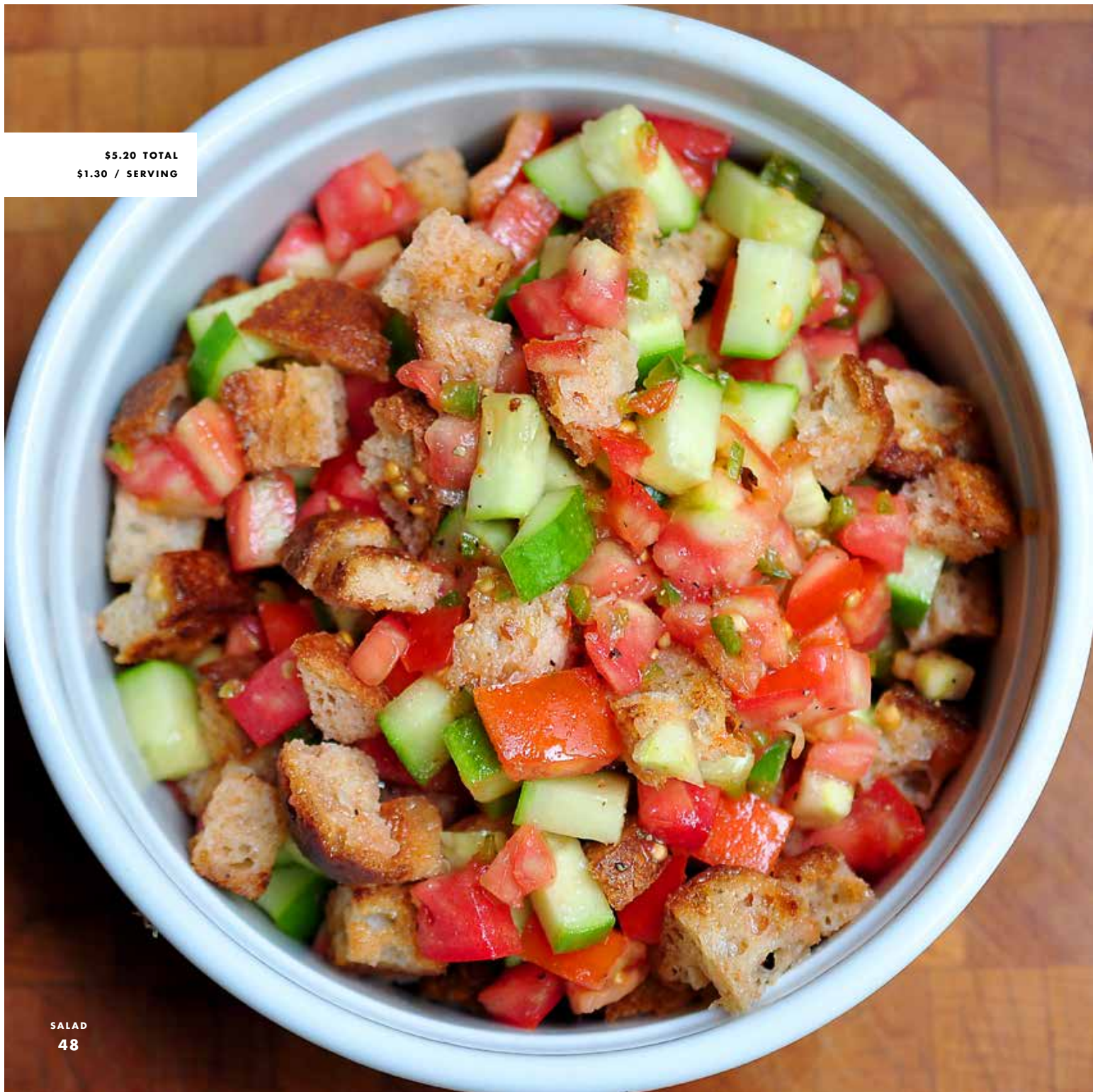
If you have leftover roasted potatoes or other root vegetables, the same idea works great. Just skip the cooking part and go straight to the dressing.

2 lb potatoes  
2 tbsp olive oil  
2 tbsp lemon juice, lime juice, or vinegar  
2 tsp Dijon mustard  
salt and pepper  
scallions

## ADDITIONS

fresh dill, chopped  
fresh parsley, chopped  
paprika  
fresh chillies, finely chopped  
pickles, finely chopped

\$5.20 TOTAL  
\$1.30 / SERVING



# Cold (and Spicy?) Asian Noodles

FOR FOUR

On a hot day, this is all I want to eat. Cold but spicy food is refreshing and delicious in the summer. If you have some spice oil on hand, be sure to add it. It's amazing in this.

12 oz dried spaghetti, soba,  
or any Asian noodles  
2 tbsp soy sauce  
1 bunch scallions, chopped  
1 cucumber, finely chopped  
salt and pepper

#### ADDITIONS

spice oil (p. 162)  
peanut sauce (p. 161)  
grated carrot  
shredded cabbage  
bean sprouts  
hard-boiled egg  
chopped tomato

Prepare the noodles according to the package instructions. Rinse them under cold water and put them in a colander to drain.

Put the noodles in a bowl and add the soy sauce, spice oil if you have it, scallions, and cucumber (and any other additions). Mix it all together with a fork or a tongs. Taste it and add salt and pepper or more spice oil as needed.

Let the noodles sit in the fridge for about an hour if you can. The flavors will mingle and become more intense.

Think of this as a recipe that you can really make your own. Use whatever sauce or dressing you like and whatever vegetables you have around, or just a few scallions.



# Taco Salad

FOR TWO

This salad is a great use for leftover beans (or pulled pork)—crunchy, fresh, yet satisfying enough to be a whole meal. I like to make taco salad in a week where I've made a large batch of beans and I'm craving something fresh.

- 4 cups lettuce, chopped
- 1 cup beans, pulled pork, or ground beef
- 2 small tomatoes, chopped
- ½ cup corn, canned or fresh
- 2-3 scallions, finely chopped
- 1 cup tortilla chips, roughly crushed
- sharp cheddar or queso fresco, for sprinkling

#### DRESSING

- ¼ cup sour cream or yogurt
- juice of one lime
- salt and pepper

#### ADDITIONS

- cucumber
- jalapeño
- bell peppers
- grated carrots
- salsa (p. 163)

Mix up the dressing and taste it. Adjust the salt, pepper, and lime to your liking.

Mix the other ingredients in a large bowl. Pour the dressing over just before serving and toss to coat the salad evenly. Eat immediately, maybe with a few extra tortilla chips on the side.



**\$3.20 TOTAL**  
**\$0.80 / SERVING**



The bitterness of broccoli is delicious next to the sweet tartness of apples. Plenty of crunch, too!

- 1 large crown and stem of broccoli
- 2 apples

**DRESSING**

- 1 lemon, juiced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- salt and pepper

**ALTERNATE DRESSING**

- 1 tbsp yogurt
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp fresh dill, chopped
- salt and pepper

# Broccoli Apple Salad

FOR FOUR

Slice the stem of the broccoli into  $\frac{1}{8}$ " discs. If you can't get them that thin, don't worry, but the thinner the better if you have the patience! Once you reach the crown of the broccoli, cut each of the florets off and slice each of them as thinly as you can as well. Set the broccoli in a bowl.

Halve and core the apples, then place the apples flat side down on your cutting board to make them easier to slice. Slice the apples into  $\frac{1}{8}$ " pieces as well, then dump them into the same bowl.

Choose either of the dressing options and prepare it by simply mixing the ingredients together in a small bowl. Taste it and season with more salt and pepper to match your preferences.

Pour the dressing over the bowl of vegetables and mix it all together.

If you put a plate in the fridge for 10 minutes before serving the salad, it'll stay crisp slightly longer. For the best presentation, pile the salad as high and tight as you can manage.

# Snacks, Sides & Small Bites

When cooking on a budget, snacks are often the first thing you shave away. If you're creative, though, you can make plenty of cheap, healthy and delightful snacks to enjoy in all seasons and on any occasion. (And remember, leftovers make great snacks, too!)



**\$3.40 TOTAL**  
**\$0.85 / SERVING**

**BITES**  
**58**

# Smoky and Spicy Roasted Cauliflower

FOR FOUR

Roasted veggies are always delicious, but there's something magical that happens to cauliflower in the oven. It gets so crispy and nutty, and that flavor is brought out even more with the spices here. I'm happy to just eat a bowl of this for dinner, maybe with an egg on top.

1 head cauliflower, cut into small pieces  
2 cloves garlic, unpeeled  
1 tbsp butter, melted  
1 tsp smoked paprika  
½ tsp cayenne pepper  
salt and pepper

Turn the oven to 400 °F.

In a medium-sized roasting pan, arrange the cauliflower pieces and the unpeeled cloves of garlic. Pour the butter over the cauliflower and then sprinkle the spices over top. Use your hands to thoroughly coat the cauliflower with butter and spices.

Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how crispy you like the florets. Squeeze the roasted garlic throughout and trash the skins.



**\$4 TOTAL**  
**\$1 / SERVING**

# Mexican Street Corn

FOR FOUR

This recipe takes fresh, sweet summer corn—already amazing—and adds salt, tang, and spice to the experience. If you have an outdoor grill, prepare the corn that way, but for those without, a broiler is a great shortcut!

4 cobs corn  
4 tbsp mayonnaise  
½ cup cotija, queso blanco, feta,  
Romano or Parmesan, grated  
chili powder  
1 lime, sliced into wedges

Turn your oven's broiler up to high.

Peel off the outer layers of the corn and clean off all the corn silk. Leave the green ends attached for a convenient handhold.

Place the cobs on a baking pan under the broiler for 2 to 3 minutes, then rotate them and repeat until they're brown and toasty all the way around. The broiling shouldn't take more than 10 minutes total.

Working quickly, spread a tablespoon of mayonnaise over each cob, lightly coating every kernel. Next, sprinkle the cheese all over the corn. It should stick fairly easily to the mayonnaise, but you'll probably get a little messy coating them thoroughly.

Sprinkle chili powder over the corn, but not too heavy or it'll be gritty. Use any chili powder you like; ancho or cayenne are great.

Lastly, squeeze lime juice all over and serve hot!



# Cornmeal Crusted Veggies

FOR FOUR

These are kind of like having veggie french fries. The cornmeal makes them super crunchy, and they're great with a dipping sauce. Might I suggest peanut sauce (p. 161)? This breading process can be done with almost any vegetable; some of my favorites include zucchini wedges, bell peppers, and cooked winter squash. It's sort of like fried green tomatoes or okra, but this baked version skips the expense and mess of the oil, yet keeps the crunch.

½ lb green beans, stems cut off  
½ cup all-purpose flour  
2 eggs  
¼ cup milk  
1 cup cornmeal  
1 tsp salt  
1 tsp black pepper  
1 tsp paprika  
½ tsp garlic powder

#### ALTERNATIVES

zucchini  
bell pepper sticks  
winter squash  
cauliflower florets  
broccoli florets  
okra  
carrot sticks

Heat the oven to 450 °F.

Set up your breading station! On one plate, spread out the flour. Crack both eggs into a bowl, add the milk, and mix lightly with a fork. On another plate, spread the cornmeal, salt, black pepper, paprika, and garlic powder. Mix the plate with your fingers.

Spread a small amount of oil or butter across a baking sheet.

A few at a time, take the green beans and dredge them in the flour. Next, transfer the flour-covered beans to the egg mixture. Cover the beans lightly with egg mixture, being careful to shake off any excess egg. Then transfer to the cornmeal mixture and coat them evenly.

Carefully spread the crusted green beans onto the baking sheet. Repeat until you've done them all. If you run out of any of the three mixtures, just mix up a bit more.

Bake for 10 to 15 minutes, until golden and crispy. Enjoy hot with your favorite dipping sauce!

Pictured are bell peppers and green beans.

\$2.80 TOTAL  
\$1.40 / SERVING



# Poutine

FOR FOUR

Poutine isn't an everyday meal, but it's a favorite. Since I don't like deep-frying at home, I bake the fries; they still get crispy without the fuss of frying.

Montreal-style poutine is made with vegetable gravy, as in this recipe, but you can also make your favorite beef or turkey gravy.

Of course, proper poutine uses cheese curds, and if you can find them do use those, but fresh mozzarella works for me. It has the same spongy quality, just maybe with a little less squeak. This recipe does come out a little more expensive than you would think because of the fresh mozzarella. If you use less or skip the cheese entirely, you can cut the price in half.

2-3 medium Russet potatoes, sliced into sticks  
2 tbsp vegetable oil  
salt and pepper  
scallions, chopped  
6 oz fresh mozzarella, diced

## GRAVY

2 tbsp butter  
1 shallot or 3 scallions, finely chopped  
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
2 tbsp all-purpose flour  
1½ cups vegetable broth  
1 tsp soy sauce  
½ tsp cayenne pepper  
salt and pepper  
6 leaves fresh sage, finely chopped (optional)

Set the oven to 400 °F.

Pour 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil onto a baking sheet. Spread the oil around, then spread out the sticks of sliced potato. Pour the rest of the oil over the top and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Use your hands to ensure the potatoes are coated with oil, salt, and pepper, and evenly spread across the pan. Place them in the oven and bake for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the gravy. Melt the butter in a saucepan on medium heat. Add the shallot and garlic. Let them cook for 2 minutes until translucent, but not brown. Add the flour and quickly stir with a spoon. Add a little broth if gets too clumpy.

Let the mixture cook until it turns light brown. Add the vegetable broth, soy sauce, and cayenne pepper. Bring the gravy to a boil, then turn down the heat and let it cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Taste it, adding salt and pepper as needed. Turn down the heat to very low, just enough to keep the gravy warm until the fries come out of the oven.

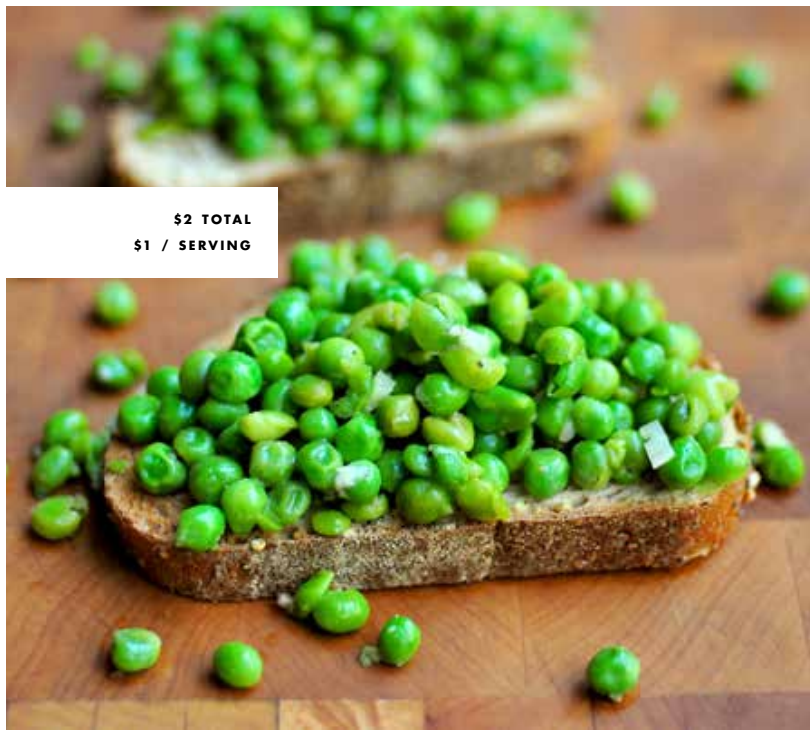
Dice the mozzarella.

After the fries have baked for 20 minutes, remove them from the oven. Lift them with a spatula and test their tenderness with a fork. If it goes through easily, the fries are ready. If you want them a little more crispy, flip them over and put them back in the oven for a few more minutes.

Once they're done, pile one layer of fries onto a plate. Top with cheese and then the hot gravy. Repeat with a second layer before sprinkling with scallions and more freshly ground black pepper.

\$1.50 TOTAL  
\$0.75 / SERVING

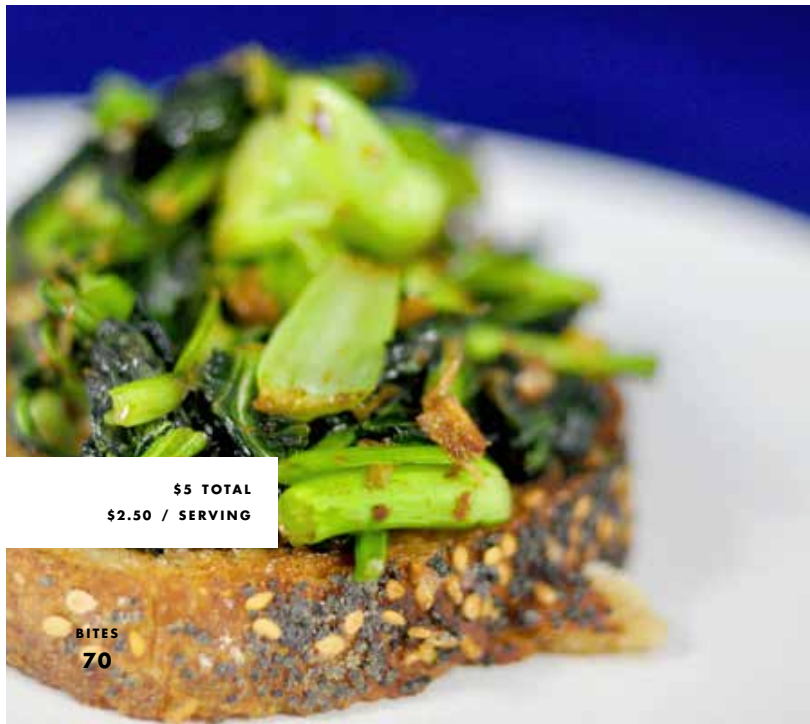




**\$2 TOTAL**  
**\$1 / SERVING**

**PEAS AND LEMON:** This is like a less-salty, more-rustic version of the British classic mushy peas. Add a bit of olive oil to a pan on medium heat. Drop in the garlic and peas along with 2 tablespoons of water so that the peas can steam a bit. Leave them until they turn bright green. Sprinkle with lemon juice, Romano, salt, and pepper, then remove the peas from the heat and mash with the back of a fork, either in the pan or in a bowl. Pile onto toast and enjoy!

- 1 tsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 cup peas, fresh or frozen
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- Romano or Parmesan, freshly grated
- salt and pepper



**\$5 TOTAL**  
**\$2.50 / SERVING**

**ASIAN GREENS GRA PROW:** This works with any Asian green, from bok choy to tatsoi to gai lan. Splash the oil in a pan on medium heat. Sauté the garlic for 2 minutes, then add the ginger, soy sauce, and the stem part of the greens. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes, until almost tender. Add the leafy part of the greens and cook for 2 more minutes. Turn off the heat and mix in the Thai basil. Taste and add salt and pepper, unless the soy sauce is salty enough on its own.

- 1 bunch Asian greens, stem separated from leaves
- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp ginger root, grated
- 2 tsp soy sauce
- 1 handful Thai basil
- salt and pepper



**\$3 TOTAL**  
**\$1.50 / SERVING**

**SALTY BROCCOLI:** Warm up the oil in a pan on medium heat. Add the garlic and chili flakes and cook for 2 minutes, until they smell great but are not yet brown. Add the anchovy and cook for another minute. Add the broccoli and about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of water. Cover the pan, steam for 3 minutes, then toss and cook for 2 minutes, until the broccoli is tender and the water is gone. Spoon onto toast; top with cheese, salt, and pepper!

- 1 tsp olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp chili flakes
- 1 anchovy, finely chopped
- 1 crown and stem of broccoli, chopped
- Romano or Parmesan, freshly grated
- salt and pepper



**\$3.50 TOTAL**  
**\$1.75 / SERVING**

**BROILED EGGPLANT SALAD:** Here's yet another use for leftovers—or just a way to make a great salad more substantial. Simply dollop the broiled eggplant salad onto toast, then add some herbs or greens to the top for a fresh counterpoint, along with a bit of cheese.

- broiled eggplant salad (p. 43)
- fresh herbs or greens
- any cheese, crumbled or grated



\$1 TOTAL  
\$0.25 / SERVING

BITES  
74

IDEAS

# Popcorn!

Popcorn is such a great snack. It's easy to forget how easy and cheap it is to prepare at home. Try some different toppings! I've suggested a few on the opposite page.

1/3 cup popcorn  
2 tbsp vegetable oil  
2 tbsp butter, melted  
salt

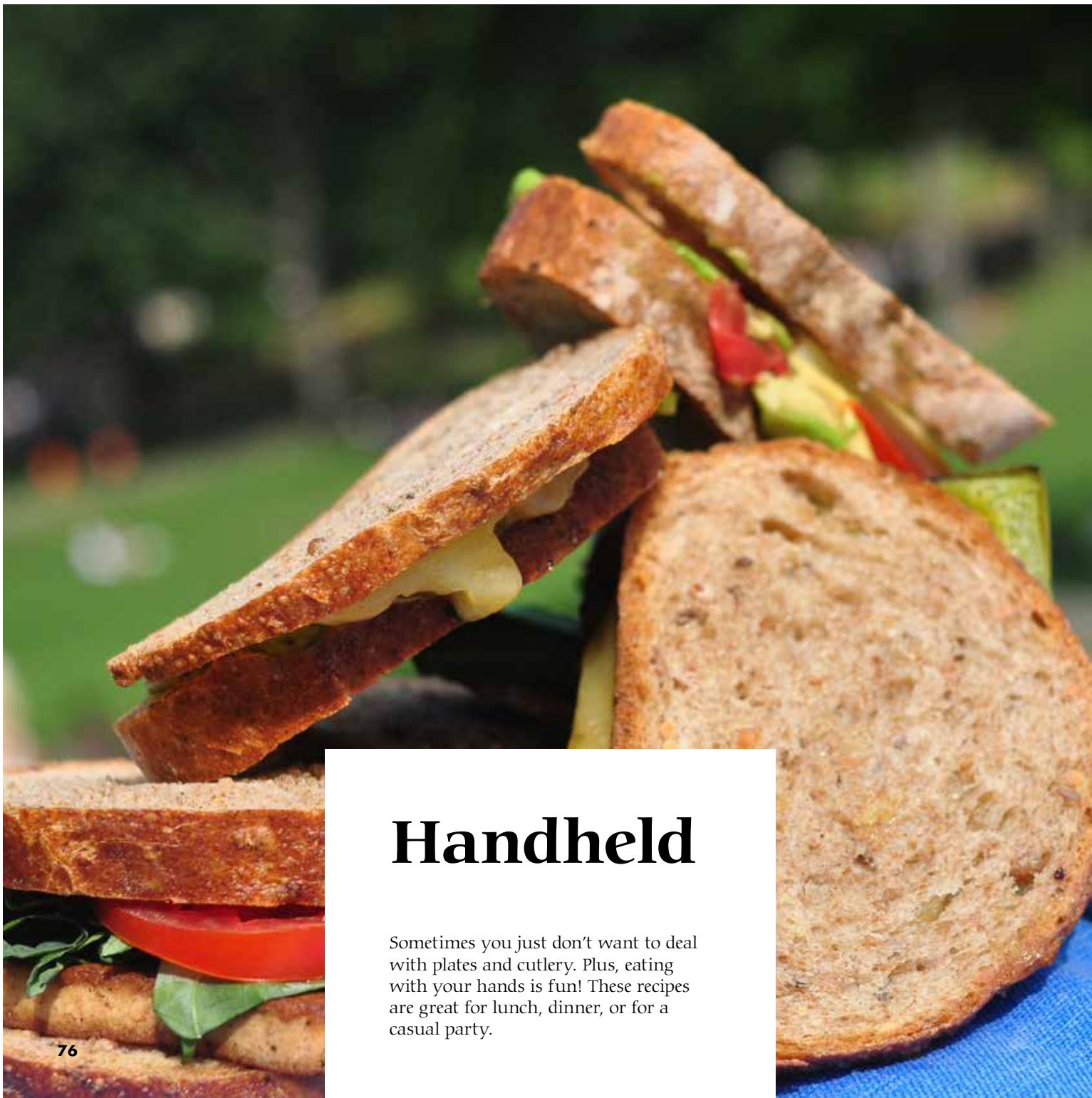
Place a large pot with a tight-fitting lid on the stove. Pour in the vegetable oil, then the popcorn kernels. Put the lid on and turn the heat to medium.

Using pot holders or oven mitts, occasionally shake the pot from side to side to make sure the kernels are evenly distributed in the oil. Once the popcorn begins to pop, turn the heat down to medium-low and gently shake again.

Once the popping slows down to 5 to 10 seconds between pops, turn the heat off. Wait until you're sure the corn has stopped popping and remove the lid.

Move the popcorn to a bowl and pour butter, salt, and other spices or toppings over top. Gently toss to coat it evenly.

This recipe makes about 10 to 12 cups of popped popcorn—enough for four people. Eat it while it's hot!



## Handheld

Sometimes you just don't want to deal with plates and cutlery. Plus, eating with your hands is fun! These recipes are great for lunch, dinner, or for a casual party.





\$9 TOTAL  
\$2.25 / PIZZA

# Broccoli Rabe and Mozzarella Calzones

MAKES FOUR CALZONES

Calzones are pizza in a slightly different form—a form that lets you get stuff in more filling without weighing down the crust. Broccoli rabe is great, but you can use any bitter green, or even broccoli or cauliflower. You'll love these crusty pockets full of oozy goodness!

pizza dough (p. 139)  
1 tbsp olive oil  
1 large bunch broccoli rabe, chopped  
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 tsp chili flakes  
2 anchovies, finely chopped (optional)  
salt and pepper  
2 cups grated mozzarella cheese

Turn the oven to 500 °F (or as hot as your oven gets). Sprinkle a small amount of flour or cornmeal over a baking sheet and set aside.

Place a large pan on medium heat and add the olive oil. Once the oil is hot, add the tough stem ends of the broccoli rabe and cook for 2 minutes. Next, add the rest of the broccoli rabe, including the leafy parts, along with the garlic, chili flakes, and anchovies. Give the ingredients a stir and let it cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add salt and pepper to taste. The broccoli rabe is done when the stems are tender. Set the filling aside.

Divide the pizza dough into 4 equal pieces. Sprinkle flour over the countertop and place one of the four pieces of dough on it. Using your hands or a rolling pin, roll out the dough as you would for pizza (p. 79).

Roll the dough out quite thin. Pile  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your broccoli rabe mixture and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of mozzarella onto one side of the circle, leaving a lip around the edge.

Gather up the half of the dough that isn't weighed down with filling and fold it over top. Pinch the edges of the dough together to create a half-moon shape. Place it carefully on the prepared baking sheet and repeat until you have four calzones.

Bake for 6 to 8 minutes or until the calzones are golden-brown on the outside. Be careful when you bite into them—they'll be hot!



\$7.20 TOTAL  
\$0.60 / EMPANADA

# Potato and Kale Rolls with Raita

FOR FOUR

These are a great meal to make when you have leftover roti and raita. The filling comes together in minutes and could be anything, but potatoes and greens are tasty and filling.

8 roti (p. 138)  
2 large or 4 medium potatoes, chopped  
1 bunch kale or spinach, chopped with stems removed  
1 tbsp ghee or butter  
1 tsp cumin seeds  
½ cup onion, finely chopped  
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 tbsp ginger, finely grated  
1 tsp turmeric powder  
1 tsp coriander powder  
1 tsp cayenne powder  
raita (p. 164)  
fresh cilantro

Put a skillet on medium heat and add the ghee or butter. (Ghee, which is traditional in Indian cooking, is just butter with the milk solids removed, and it can withstand higher temperatures than butter without burning.)

Once the butter is hot, add the cumin seeds and let them sizzle for 5 seconds before adding the diced onion. Let the onion cook for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally.

In a small bowl, mix the garlic, ginger, turmeric, coriander, cayenne powder, salt, and 1 tablespoon of water.

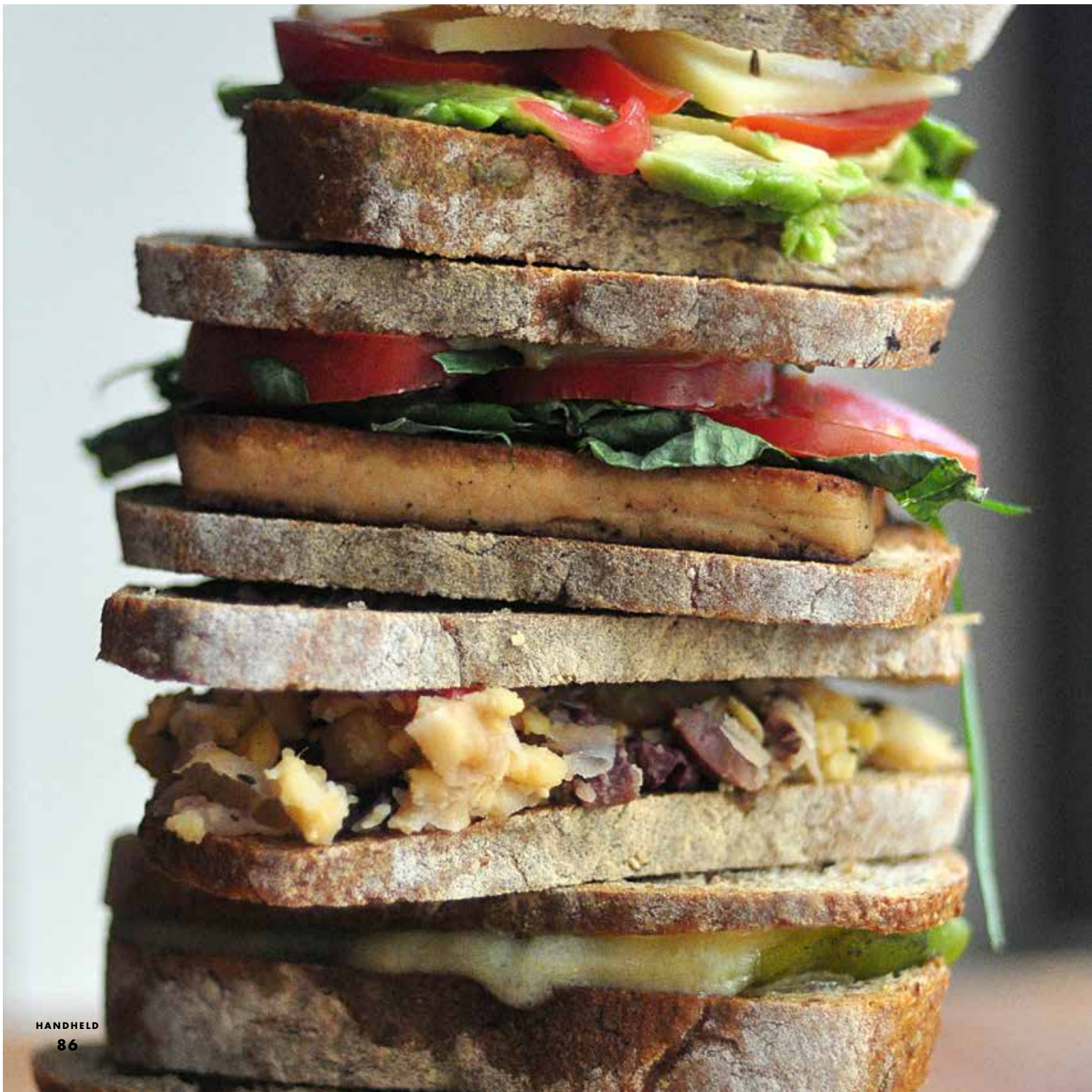
Add the spices to the onion mixture and mix, cooking for another 2 minutes. It will smell strongly aromatic. This step is important because the spices become toasted and release their flavor.

Next, add the potatoes. Stir to coat them with the onions and spices. Add about a cup of water and cover the pan with a lid. Let it cook for about 10 minutes, checking occasionally to stir and make sure nothing is burning. Add more water as needed. You want the final mixture to be only a bit moist, but the water helps everything cook evenly.

Test the potatoes with a fork: if you can easily pierce them, they're ready. Once they are, add the kale and stir until the kale is wilted. Taste and add more salt if needed.

To assemble the rolls, scoop ⅛ of the mixture into the center of a roti, distributing it in an even line. Roll it up.

Serve two roti per person with cilantro and a generous dollop of raita, either over the top or on the side.





# Dinner

My favorite meal of the day. For me, eating dinner indicates that the hard work is done: it's time for family, relaxing, and the more optional endeavors. A great dinner is an opportunity to show love to those you are cooking for and to yourself.

# Pasta with Eggplant and Tomato

FOR TWO

This is similar to a traditional pasta alla norma, but without anchovies and ricotta salata. I like to use a tubular pasta for this dish, but you can use anything, even spaghetti. The eggplant and tomatoes come together into a sauce that is thick and jammy and savory.

½ lb pasta (rigatoni or similar)  
2 tbsp olive oil  
1 large eggplant, cubed  
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
½ tsp chili flakes  
2 cups canned tomatoes, finely diced  
¼ cup Romano or Parmesan, freshly grated  
salt and pepper  
fresh basil, finely chopped (optional)

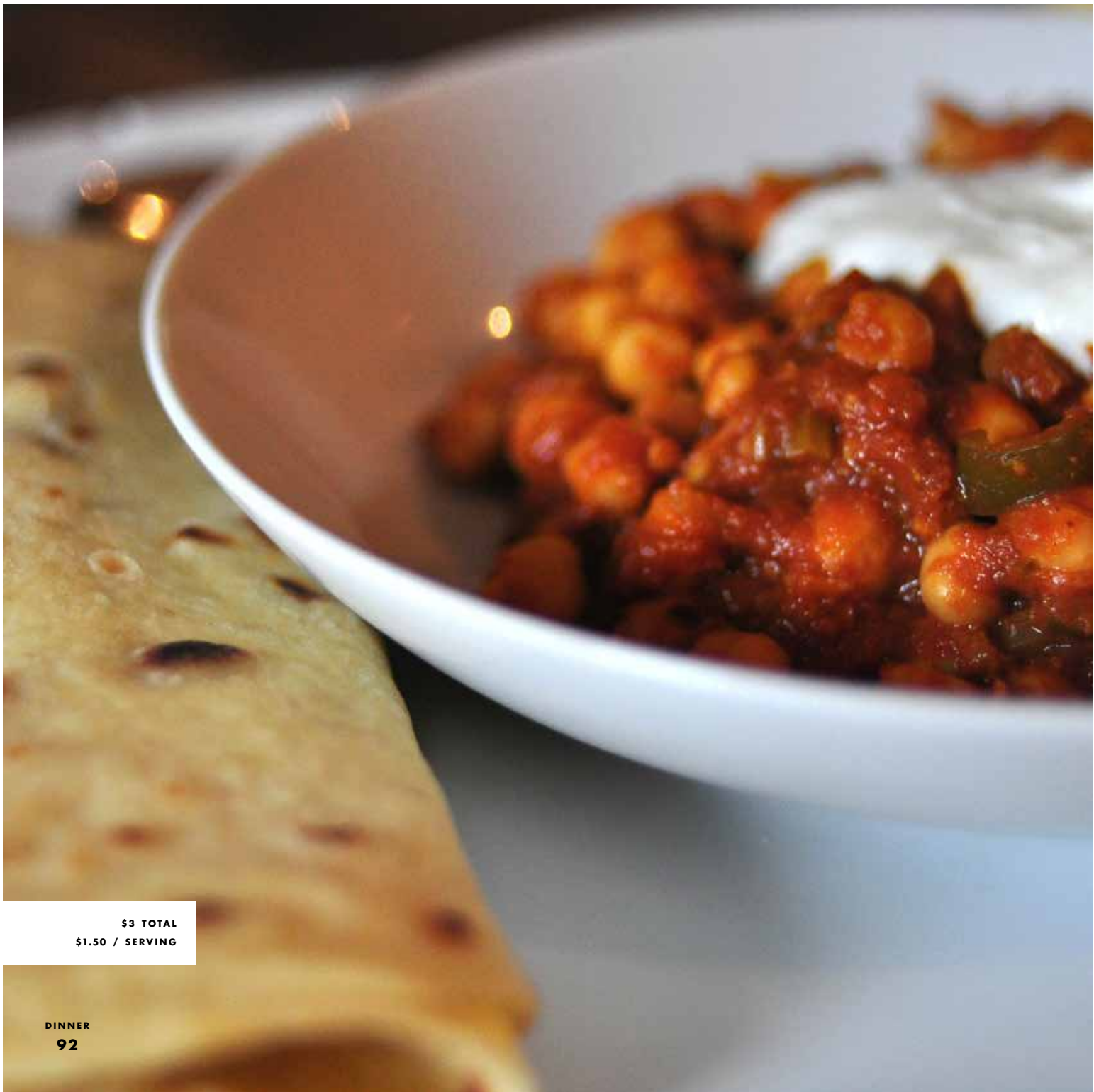
Put a pot of water on high heat and add a good shake of salt. Bring it to a boil and cook the pasta according to the package instructions.

While the water is coming to a boil, splash the olive oil into a wide pan on medium-high heat. Let it get hot. Add the eggplant cubes and sprinkle them with salt, then cook for about 5 minutes. If the eggplant starts to look too dry, add a bit of water.

Once the cubes are a little brown on all sides, add the garlic and chili flakes and stir. Add the tomatoes and cook for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Again, if it looks too dry, add a bit of water. Everything will shrink up and become a sort of loose, thick sauce. Add half the cheese and half the basil, if you have it.

Once the pasta is cooked, drain it and add it to the saucepan. Toss everything together, then turn off the heat. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Serve it in bowls sprinkled with more Romano and basil.



**\$3 TOTAL**  
**\$1.50 / SERVING**





# Black-Eyed Peas and Collards

FOR FOUR

This is similar to the southern classic Hoppin' John. If you have them, you can add more vegetables to the base along with the onion—celery, carrot, bell pepper, and some canned tomato would all be great in this. If you want to skip the bacon, just add smoked paprika to replace the smoky flavor.

- |                                 |                                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 cup dried black-eyed peas     | 3 strips bacon, cut into small pieces |
| 1 tbsp butter                   | 1 bay leaf                            |
| 1 large onion, finely chopped   | 1 large bunch collards                |
| 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped | salt and pepper                       |

Soak the black-eyed peas overnight in 4 cups of water.

Melt the butter in a large saucepan on medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, bacon, and bay leaf. Cover the pan with a lid and leave it for 2 minutes. Stir occasionally and cook until the onions are translucent and the bacon is starting to be crispy. Drain the peas and pour them into the saucepan. Cover them with water and turn the heat down to medium-low. Cook for 30 minutes to 2 hours. The cooking time will depend on how old the peas are, which is difficult to predict. The peas are done when you can easily squish them on the countertop with the back of a spoon. Check on them every half hour or so, and if water boils off, add more to cover them.

While the peas cook, line up several collards leaves on your cutting board and slice the tough central stem away from the leaves. Discard the stems. Thoroughly wash the collards, then chop them into bite-sized pieces. Alternatively, use your hands to tear the collards into small pieces.

Once the peas are cooked, add the collards to the pot and put the lid back on. Add 1 teaspoon of salt and some freshly ground pepper, then stir. Taste the liquid and peas and add more salt as needed. Cover the pan with a lid and leave for about 10 to 15 minutes. Once the collards are tender, turn off the heat.

Serve this over rice or any other grain, or with some toast or flatbread.

\$3.90 TOTAL  
\$0.65 / SERVING



# Filipino Chicken Adobo

FOR EIGHT

¾ cup rice vinegar or white vinegar  
¼ cup soy sauce  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
½ tsp black pepper  
2 bay leaves  
8 chicken thighs, fat trimmed  
2 tbsp vegetable oil  
¾ cup water  
2 medium potatoes, chopped  
4 medium carrots, sliced  
2 cups white rice  
salt  
2 tsp cornstarch

## ADDITIONS

4 jalapeños  
ginger root, grated

## VARIATIONS

1½ lb pork shoulder or butt, cubed,  
instead of chicken  
1 can coconut milk instead of water  
chicken schmaltz instead of vegetable oil

This ultra-adaptable recipe comes to us care of Tony Pangilinan, who grew up on food stamps after his family immigrated from the Philippines “with nothing but four suitcases and a lot of dreams.” After several decades of struggling to achieve those dreams, Tony can now help support family members who remain in poverty in the Philippines. Despite their hard circumstances, he notes that his relatives “still feel blessed.”

Filipino adobo—very different from Spanish adobo—is basically anything cooked in vinegar, soy sauce, and garlic. Although this version is chicken, you can use any meat or vegetables you like. It’s a brilliant dish that turns basic staples into deliciousness. Because it’s vinegar-based, it also keeps well in the fridge!

In a large, non-aluminum pan, stir together the vinegar, soy sauce, garlic, pepper, and bay leaves. Add the chicken, coating each piece thoroughly. Cover and let marinate for at least 30 minutes, but overnight is great.

Pull the chicken out of the marinade and pat each piece dry.

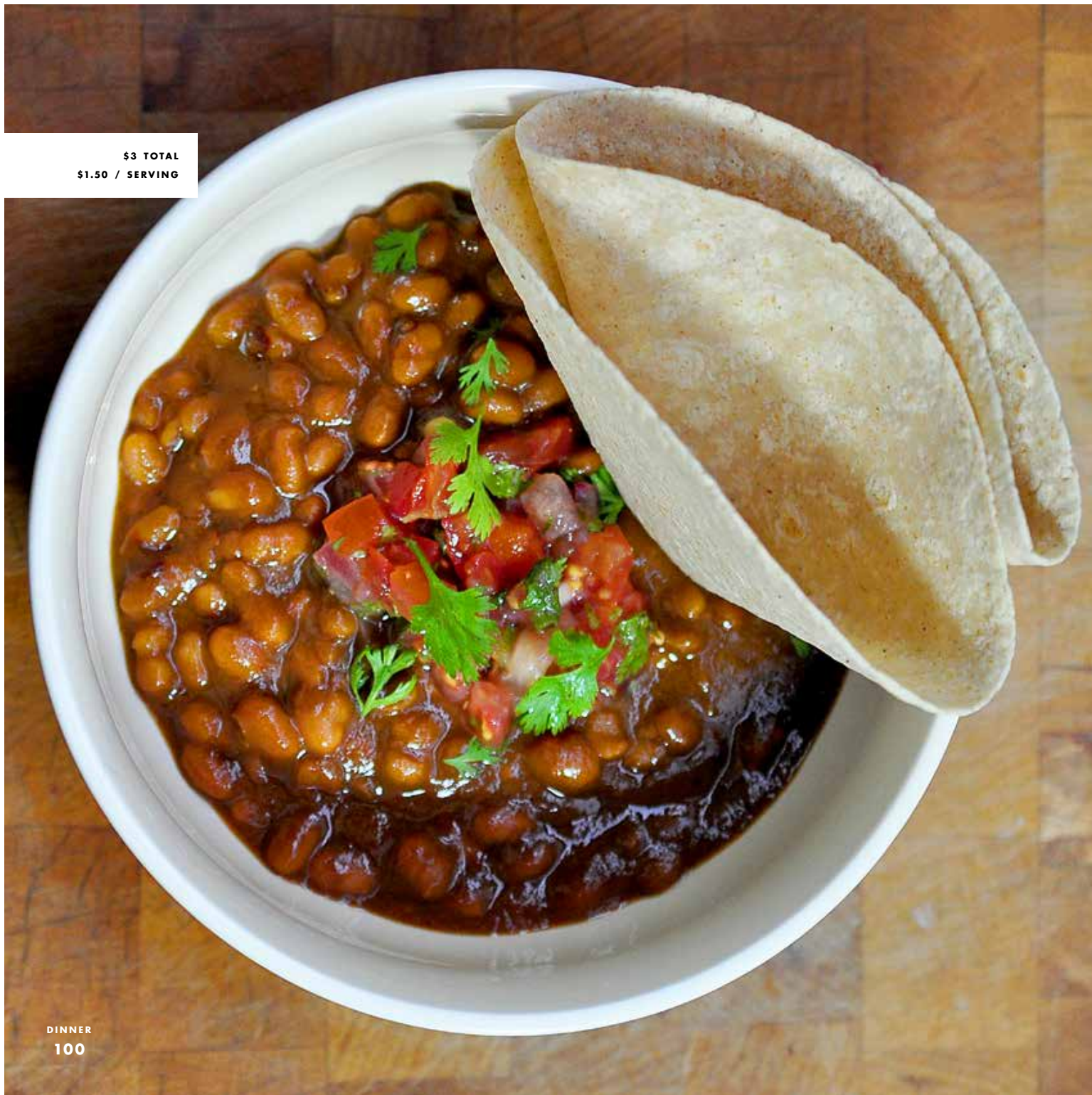
Pour the oil into a large pot on medium heat. Once the oil is hot, add enough chicken to fill the bottom of the pot. Let it cook for a few minutes, until one side of the chicken is browned, then flip it over. When the first batch of chicken is done, remove it from the pot and repeat with the remainder.

After all the chicken is browned, put it back in the pot along with the marinade, water, potatoes, and carrots. Turn the heat up until the liquid comes to a boil, then reduce to low heat and simmer for 45 minutes, or until the meat near the bone is no longer pink and the carrots and potatoes are cooked through.

About 20 minutes before the adobo is ready, pour the rice into a medium pot with 4 cups of water. Add two pinches of salt. Bring to a boil over medium heat with the lid off. Turn the heat down and cover with a lid that is slightly askew to let the steam escape. Cook about 20 minutes, until the water is all gone.

Remove the bay leaves from the adobo. In a small bowl, mix the cornstarch with a tablespoon of water, then stir it into the sauce. Let the sauce boil and thicken until the chicken and vegetables are well glazed. Serve over the rice.

**\$3 TOTAL**  
**\$1.50 / SERVING**



# Half-Veggie Burgers

FOR EIGHT

When a reader named Quinn suggested a recipe that used both lentils and meat, I started thinking about how veggie burgers and beef burgers each have their own strengths. Why not combine the two ideas to create a burger with meaty flavor but the lean protein and low cost of lentils? And so I offer you the half-veggie burger. May it rest a little lighter in your belly.

3 cups lentils or beans, cooked  
1 cup bell pepper or other vegetable, finely chopped  
1 lb ground beef or other ground meat  
1 egg (optional)  
salt and pepper  
8 buns

You can use almost any vegetable to make these burger patties, except lettuce and other greens. If you pick a hard vegetable like potato, squash, or eggplant, you'll need to cook it first.

Roughly mash the lentils. Make sure the vegetables are either small to begin with (like corn or peas) or finely chopped so that they cook evenly. I went for a bell pepper this time.

Mix the lentils, veggies, and meat with your hands in a large bowl. If you're going to barbecue, add an egg to keep them from crumbling. Season with salt and pepper. Form into 8 patties.

Grill the patties either on the barbecue or a pan on the stovetop over medium-high heat. Sear until dark brown on one side, then flip 'em and do the same on the other side. If you want cheeseburgers, lay cheese on the patties after flipping them once.

Serve on toasted buns with your favorite condiments and fresh vegetables. Burgers are a great place to be adventurous!

If you won't eat all the burgers at once, wrap the raw patties in plastic. Refrigerate for a few days or freeze for up to 2 weeks.

\$16.50 TOTAL  
\$2.75 / SERVING



I got really excited when my friend Iva asked for a recipe that featured the Chinese flavors she grew up with. After all, Chinese cooking depends on the same general principles as *Good and Cheap*: build bright flavors from a few key ingredients; use lots of veggies and just a little meat or fish. The ginger-garlic broth in this hot pot is spectacular! You can use whatever vegetables you have around, but mushrooms help create an earthy broth. The effect of such a small amount of toasted sesame oil is remarkable, too—an investment, but a transformative flavor.

If you have time, freeze the ginger root for an hour before you start. It's much easier to grate when frozen! Store the rest of the root in the freezer until the next time you need it.

Drop the grated ginger root and garlic into a pot over medium heat. A few seconds later, once you can start to smell the garlic, pour in the water. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low.

Add the mushrooms, chili paste, soy sauce, and toasted sesame oil. Place a lid on the pot and let simmer for 20 minutes.

Separate the white and green parts of the scallions. You'll cook the white and save the green to sprinkle over the soup.

Cut the tofu into four slices, then turn each slice into eight squares. Or just chop it up however you like.

Add the tofu, carrots, and the white parts of the scallions to the broth. Cook about 10 minutes more, until the carrots are tender.

Add the noodles and keep boiling until they soften, usually just a few minutes, although it depends on the type of noodles.

Taste the broth. If it isn't salty enough, splash in more soy sauce. Adjust the sesame oil and chili paste to your taste as well.

Ladle the soup into bowls. For a little crunch, top with bean sprouts and the green bits of the scallions.

If you have leftovers, you'll find you like this soup even more the next day. Overnight, the flavors will infuse into the tofu, as well as combining with each other. You might want to store the noodles separately, though, because otherwise they'll get soggy.

# Tofu Hot Pot

FOR FOUR

1 tbsp ginger root, finely grated  
4 cloves garlic, finely grated  
8 cups water  
½ lb mushrooms, chopped  
1 tsp chili paste  
2 tbsp soy sauce  
2 tsp toasted sesame oil  
4 scallions, chopped  
16 oz firm tofu  
4 medium carrots, chopped  
8 oz dried spaghetti, soba,  
or any Asian noodles  
bean sprouts (optional)

## ADDITIONS

chicken, pork, or beef  
peanuts, chopped  
cabbage, chopped  
kimchi  
chili peppers  
fresh cilantro  
daikon radish, sliced



**\$9.00 TOTAL**  
**\$1.50 / SERVING**

**DINNER**  
**108**



# Savory Summer Cobbler

FOR FOUR

Celebrate summer's most ubiquitous vegetables, tomato and zucchini, with a crunchy Southern biscuit topping.

- 3-4 medium zucchini or summer squash, chopped into bite-sized pieces
- 3-4 large tomatoes, canned or fresh, chopped into bite-sized pieces
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 4 scallions, finely chopped
- 1 lemon, zested
- ¼ cup fresh basil (optional)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- salt and pepper

## TOPPING

- 1½ cups all-purpose or whole-wheat flour
- ½ cup cornmeal
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- ½ cup sharp cheddar, grated
- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup milk

Put the butter for the topping in the freezer for 30 minutes. Set the oven to 425 °F.

Lightly oil an 8" x 10" baking dish (or any baking dish that will accommodate the mixture) and pile in the vegetables, garlic, scallions, lemon zest, and basil. Pour the olive oil, salt, and pepper over top and mix it up with your hands. Bake the vegetables for 25 minutes while you prepare the biscuit topping.

For the topping, measure out the flour, cornmeal, baking powder, salt, pepper, paprika, and cheese into a bowl. Mix it up!

Once the butter is frozen, use a box grater to flake the butter into the flour mixture. Gently massage the butter into the flour with your fingers until it's crumbly but still clumpy. Add the milk and quickly bring the dough together. Don't knead the dough: lumpiness is fine and results in flaky topping. Put it in the fridge until the vegetables come out of the oven.

Once the vegetable mixture has cooked for 25 minutes, quickly top it with small clumps of biscuit dough. The vegetables should still be visible in some areas.

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until the vegetables are bubbly and the topping is lightly browned. Top with some more cheddar and some chopped herbs, then enjoy!

For a variation, swap the zucchini for eggplant. Chop the eggplant into bite-sized pieces, salt them, and set them aside for 30 minutes before continuing with the recipe as you would with the zucchini.

\$6.60 TOTAL  
\$1.65 / SERVING



# Vegetable Quiche, Hold the Crust

FOR FOUR

Much as I love this quiche hot, I like it even better cold out of the fridge the next day. It makes a great fast breakfast or lunch. The quiche in the picture uses broccoli, but you can make it with pretty much any kind of vegetable. Some of my favorites are roasted green chilies and cheddar, winter squash with goat cheese, zucchini and tomato, or spinach and olive.

- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 large onion, sliced into half moons
- 3-4 cups chopped vegetables
- 8 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup cheddar or other cheese, grated
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper

Set the oven to 400 °F.

There are two ways to make this quiche. If you have a cast-iron or other oven-proof skillet, you can make the quiche right in the skillet. This cuts down on dishes. Otherwise, start with a regular skillet and later transfer everything to a pie plate to bake.

Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add your onion slices and sprinkle a bit of salt and pepper over them. Cook the onions until they are golden brown and starting to caramelize. If your pan is oven-proof, simply remove it from the heat and spread the onions evenly across the bottom. Otherwise, butter a pie plate and scoop the onions into it, creating an even layer on the bottom. The onions add a crust-like texture and a bit of crunch.

A note on vegetables: For things like broccoli, cauliflower or winter squash, I suggest steaming or cooking them before adding them to the quiche to ensure they'll be fully cooked. For tomatoes, zucchini, spinach or any other quick-cooking vegetable, just use them fresh.

Spread the vegetables evenly over top of the onions. The dish or pan should look fairly full.

In a bowl, use a fork to lightly beat the eggs with the milk, cheese, salt, and pepper, just enough to break up the yolks and whites. This is a savory custard mixture. Pour the custard over the vegetables and onions and enjoy watching it fill in all the free spaces.

Bake the quiche in the oven for 1 hour. Once the surface is lightly brown all the way across, it's fully cooked.

Let the quiche cool for about 20 minutes, then slice into wedges and serve with a side salad.

**\$12 TOTAL**  
**\$3 / SERVING**



# Spicy, Crunchy, Creamy Polenta

FOR TWO

Polenta plus vegetable plus egg equals satisfying and delicious. You can also add a can of corn to the polenta for deep, rich, corny flavor. Or go a little different by adding frozen peas, scallions, olives, or (my favorite) green chilies to the polenta. Or skip the Romano and add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of grated cheddar to the polenta.

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup polenta or cornmeal  
2 cups water  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt  
1 tbsp olive oil  
4 cups fresh spinach or 1 cup frozen spinach, roughly chopped  
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 anchovy, finely chopped (optional)  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp chili flakes (or fresh chili)  
2 eggs  
Romano or Parmesan, freshly grated salt and pepper

Bring the water and salt to a boil in a medium-sized pot, then turn the heat down to low and slowly pour in the polenta while stirring briskly with a wooden spoon. Stirring while pouring is crucial to keep the polenta creamy and smooth—no lumps! Once the cornmeal becomes smooth and thick, place a lid on the pot with the spoon still in it so that steam can escape.

Let the polenta cook while you prepare the rest of the meal, checking in occasionally to give it a stir. The total cooking time should be about 25 to 30 minutes, but if you're in a rush, you can eat it after 15.

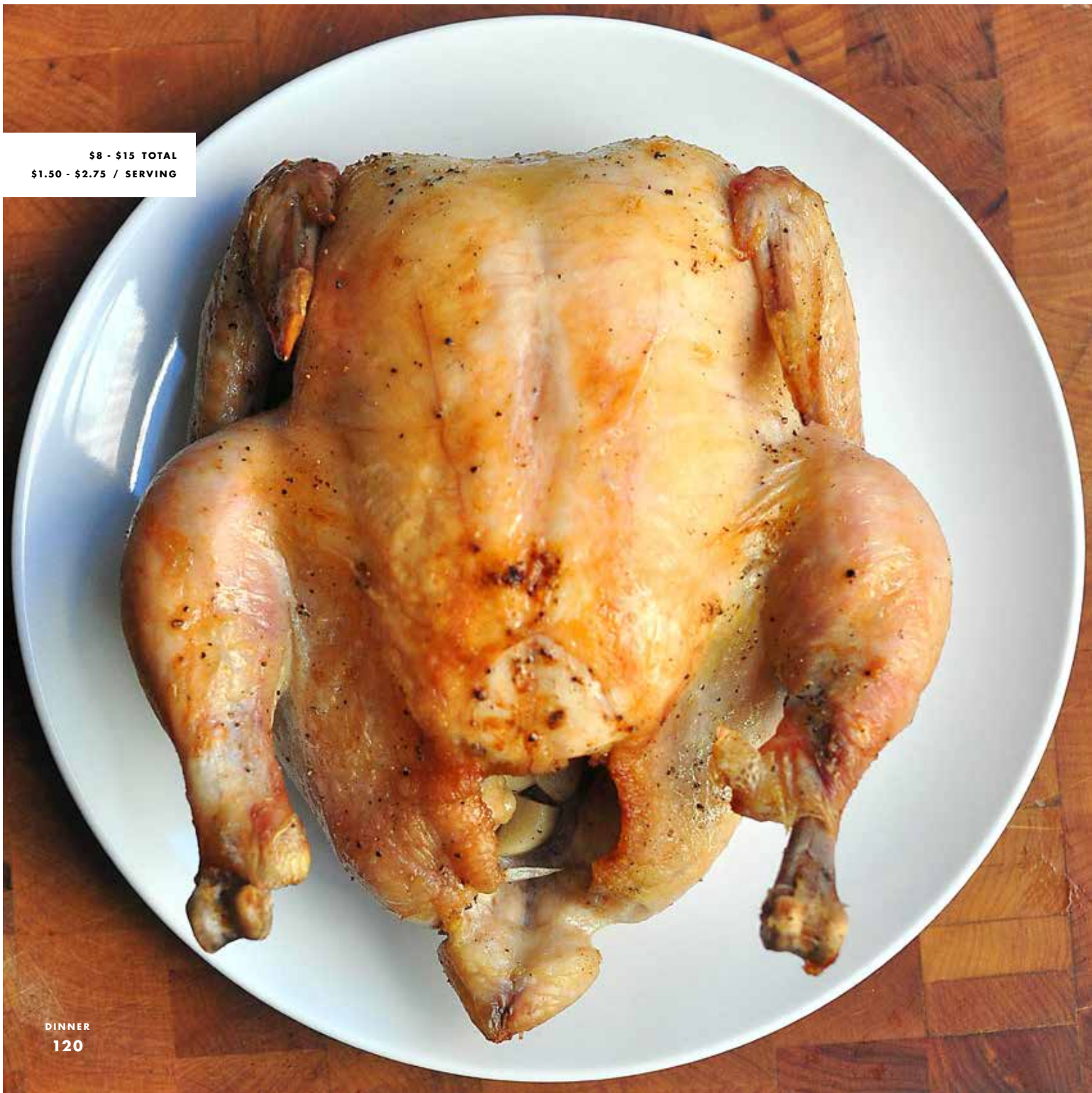
Meanwhile, chop the spinach, garlic, and anchovy if you're using it. Set them aside. Add a bit of olive oil or butter to a pan on medium heat. Let the pan heat up until it sizzles when you flick it with water. Add the garlic, anchovy, and chili flakes. Let them cook until you can smell them, about 1 minute. Add the spinach and toss it around with a spoon or tongs, or just swirl the pan to coat the spinach with the garlic mixture. Let everything cook for 3 to 5 minutes, until the spinach is wilted. Remove the pan from the heat and move its contents to a bowl to wait for the polenta and eggs.

When the polenta is about 2 minutes from done, start with the eggs. Wipe the pan quickly with a cloth, then put it back on medium heat. Splash a bit more olive oil in the pan and wait for it to get hot. Crack the two eggs into the pan and cover with a lid. This will steam them, making sunny-side-up eggs with fully cooked whites.

Scoop the polenta into a pair of bowls. Add some Romano and lots of salt and pepper. Layer about half the vegetables over the polenta.

Once the whites of the eggs are cooked, remove them from the pan with a spatula and lay them over the polenta and vegetables. Top with the rest of the vegetables and further sprinklings of cheese.

**\$8 - \$15 TOTAL**  
**\$1.50 - \$2.75 / SERVING**



Set the oven to 400 °F.

Clean and chop your vegetables. Generally, I prefer to leave the skin on for the following reasons: skin tastes nice and gets crispy; there's a lot of nutrition in the skin; peeling is slow! Just be sure to wash the vegetables thoroughly.

It's up to you how you want to chop your vegetables. Many are nice roasted whole, like new potatoes or little sunchokes or turnips—they will be crispy and salty on the outside and bursting with fluffy, starchy goodness inside. The general rule is that the smaller you chop things, the faster they cook, so try to keep everything about the same size so nothing cooks faster than anything else.

Dump your vegetables into a roasting pan. Drizzle everything with olive oil or melted butter—about 2 tablespoons per medium-sized roasting pan. Season generously with salt and pepper and add any other extras from the list at right. Use your hands to coat the vegetables thoroughly with the oil and spices.

Pop the pan in the oven for 1 hour or longer, but check on the vegetables after 45 minutes. Test them by poking them with a knife. If it meets no resistance, they're finished; if not, let them cook longer. Don't worry: it's not much of a problem if you overcook them. Unlike vegetables overcooked through boiling or steaming, overcooked roasted vegetables may dry out a bit, but still retain their shape and flavor.

After you pull the vegetables out of the oven, push them around with a spatula to free them from the pan. Remove any garlic cloves and smash them into a fine paste (removing the skins at this point), then put the garlic back in the pan and mix together.

Squeeze the juice out of any lemons and discard the woody bits of any cooked herbs. Add a little more butter, a bit of favorite sauce, a little soft cheese or mayonnaise, and serve.

Turn the page for another great idea for roasted veggies.

#### METHOD

# Roasted Vegetables

When the weather turns cool, I want only to eat warm, flavorful food. Roasting is easy, it warms up the kitchen, and it makes the house smell like the holidays. If you're uncertain how to prepare a new vegetable, you usually can't go wrong with roasting—most things end up sweeter, with nice crunchy bits. If you roast a bunch of vegetables at the beginning of the week, you can eat them throughout the week in various ways: with eggs at breakfast, folded into an omelette, as a side dish, in a taco or sandwich, on toast, or with any grain.

vegetables  
olive oil or butter  
salt and pepper

#### ROOTS


potatoes, sweet potatoes, beets, turnips, onions, parsnips, carrots, sunchokes, kohlrabi, fennel

#### NON-ROOTS

bell peppers, winter squash, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, asparagus, eggplant

#### EXTRAS

whole garlic cloves (unpeeled), lemon slices or lemon zest, anything you would pair with roast chicken, tough herbs like sage, oregano, thyme, bay leaves, any dry spice combination (p. 166)



**\$3 TOTAL**  
**\$0.75 / SERVING**





\$9 TOTAL  
\$4.50 / SERVING

DINNER  
126

# Spicy Broiled Tilapia with Lime

FOR TWO

This meal comes together so quickly it's astonishing. Broiled fish is crispy on the outside and flaky and moist on the inside. If you quickly sauté some vegetables while the fish cooks, dinner will be on the table in minutes.

2 fillets tilapia or other white fish	1 tsp cumin powder
1 tsp salt	½ tsp garlic powder
½ tsp pepper	½ tsp oregano
1 tsp cayenne pepper	½ lime, juiced

Turn your oven's broiler to high.

Mix the spices together in a small bowl. Sprinkle them over both sides of the fish and massage gently with your fingers to cover thoroughly in the spices.

Lay the fish on a baking pan lined with aluminum foil.

Broil for 4 to 7 minutes. The fish will cook very quickly, so after 4 minutes, check to see if they're done by gently inserting a butter knife into the thickest part. If it goes through easily and the fish flakes apart, you're done. If the knife meets resistance and the fish stays together, put the fillets back under the broiler for another few minutes. Once you've done this once or twice, you'll be able to tell when your fish is done at a glance.

When the fish is done, squeeze a lime over it. Serve with rice or a favorite side dish like spicy green beans (p. 59).



# Spicy Pulled Pork

FOR TEN

\$14 TOTAL  
\$1.40 / SERVING

BATCHES  
128



# Deviled Eggs

MAKES TWENTY-FOUR HALF EGGS

Deviled eggs are my favorite party food and the perfect recipe to dedicate to my friend Camilla. At parties, I often eat too much random junk food and end up feeling gross. These eggs are a great antidote: festive and delicious without being empty calories. Although they're a little fussy, they aren't actually difficult to make. I'll start you off with these few ideas, but you can add whatever flavors suit your fancy.

Hard-boiled eggs are easier to peel if the eggs aren't quite fresh, so try making these when you have eggs that have been sitting around for a week or two.

Place a layer of eggs at the bottom of a pot that is large enough to fit them with a bit of wiggle room. If you can't fit all your eggs, don't stack them—they might crack. Split them into batches instead.

Cover the eggs with cold water. Bring the pot to a boil over medium heat without a lid. As soon as the water is boiling, turn off the heat and cover the pot with a tight lid. Set a timer for 10 minutes.

When the timer goes off, gently pour out the hot water and cover the eggs with very cold water. The cold water stops the cooking process so that you don't end up with that slightly icky blue-green skin around your yolk.

Peel the eggs. Everyone has their own technique, but I like to gently roll each egg across the counter to crack the shell. Roll the egg around until it looks like a cracked desert landscape, then peel it starting from the bottom. Once peeled, rinse the egg and set it aside. Repeat until you have peeled all the eggs.

Slice each egg in half lengthwise. Pop the yolks out and put them in a medium bowl. Don't worry if you leave a little yolk behind. Set the whites aside on a plate.

Sprinkle the yolks with salt and pepper, then add other ingredients of your choice to the bowl. Mash with a fork and mix until it becomes a relatively smooth paste.

Arrange the whites on a plate and spoon the yolk mixture back into each hole. Pile the filling high! Alternatively, scoop the filling into a plastic sandwich bag. Cut off the corner of the sandwich bag and squeeze the yolk mixture into the whites.

Sprinkle with the scallions and some paprika for color. Have a great party!



**\$14 TOTAL**  
**\$0.20 / PEROGY**

**BATCHES**  
**132**

# Perogies

**MAKES SIXTY TO SEVENTY-TWO**

This is a huge recipe that will feed you for days. It takes time and effort, but the results are worth it. The most fun approach is to invite a couple of friends over for a perogy-making party. Everyone takes home a bag or two for the freezer, and it's a great time!

## **DOUGH**

- 4½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 cups yogurt or sour cream
- 2 eggs
- 1 tbsp water, as needed

## **FILLING**

- 5 Russet potatoes, roughly cubed
- 1½ cups sharp cheddar, shredded
- salt and pepper

## **ADDITIONS**

- 2 tbsp scallions, chopped
- 4 cloves roasted garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp paprika

## **TO SERVE**

- sour cream
- scallions, chopped



**\$7.20 TOTAL**  
**\$0.12 / DUMPLING**

**DOUGH**

4 cups flour  
salt  
2 eggs  
1 cup water

**VEGGIE FILLING**

3 cups broccoli,  
finely chopped  
2 cups carrot, grated  
8 oz firm tofu, crumbled  
2 tbsp soy sauce  
1 tsp toasted sesame oil  
2 scallions, chopped  
2 eggs

**PORK FILLING**

1 lb ground pork  
or sausage,  
cooked or raw  
3 cups collards, chard,  
spinach, or scallions,  
finely chopped  
2 tbsp soy sauce  
1 tsp toasted sesame oil  
2 scallions, chopped  
2 eggs

**ADDITIONS**

ginger root, grated  
garlic

# Dumplings

MAKES SIXTY

My friend Raffaella comes from a huge family and fondly recalls making dumplings with her sisters growing up. (Her brothers just ate them.) Dumplings are a great way to use up veggies that don't look fresh anymore. Minced inside a dumpling, they come back to life! I've provided a couple of ideas here, but as with so many recipes, the filling is up to you. If you mess up and it comes out bland, just dip the dumpling in soy sauce or chili sauce and you'll still be happy.

# Staples

These are the building blocks of great meals. Freshly made flatbreads are amazingly cheap to produce and taste fabulous. They can take a bit of time to make at first, but you'll get faster with practice and the flavor is absolutely worth it. Large batches of grains and beans can be cooked at the beginning of the week, then used in different meals each day, saving both time and money. Staples are where the possibilities begin!





# Roti

MAKES SIXTEEN

These are a staple flatbread in many parts of India. They're quick to make and very tasty when fresh. Enjoy them with a curried filling, dip them in soups or stews, or fill them with eggs at breakfast.

2 cups whole-wheat flour  
1 tsp salt  
1 cup water

In a small bowl, mix together all the ingredients using one clean hand. It should form a fairly moist dough. Knead until smooth and form into a ball. Cover with a damp towel or paper towel and set aside for 10 minutes to an hour.

Divide the dough into 16 small balls.

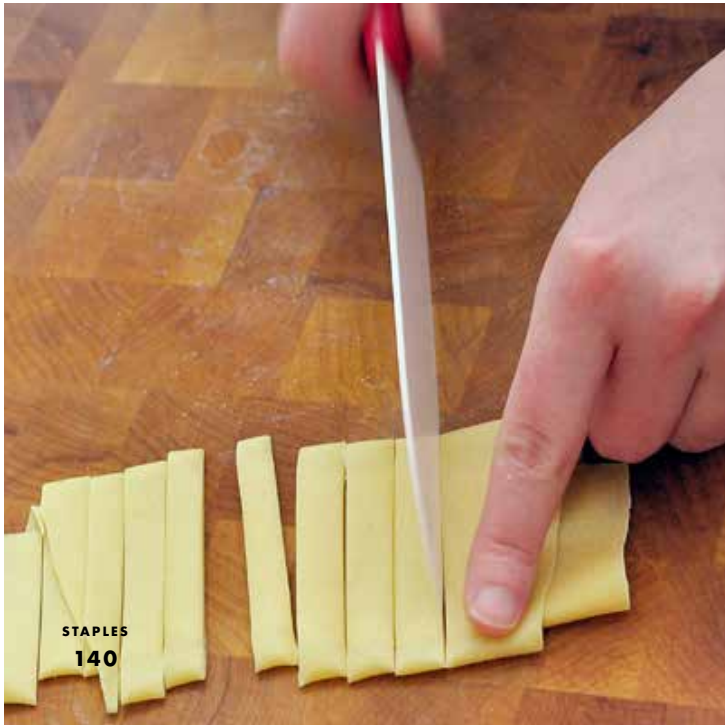
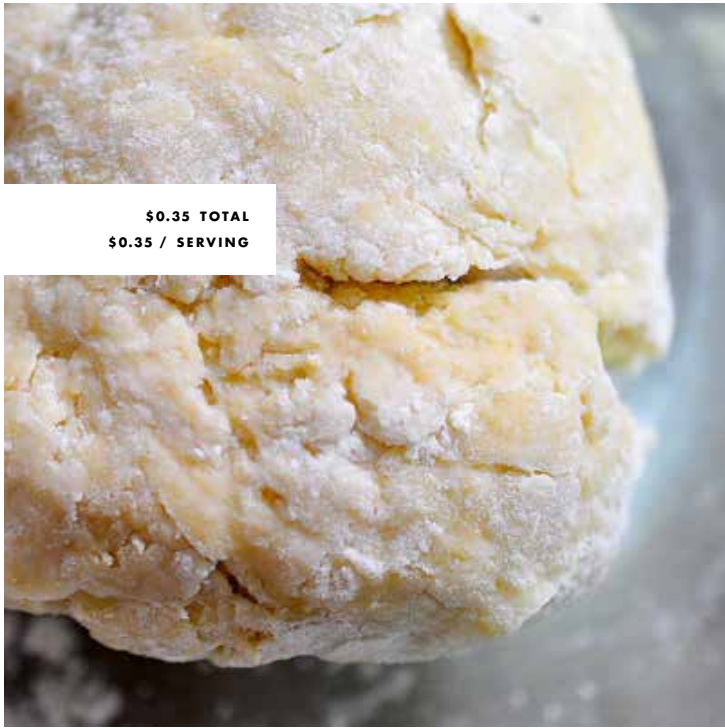
Sprinkle a countertop with flour and place one piece of dough in the middle. Cover the ball with flour on all sides so that it doesn't stick to the surface, then gently roll it out with a rolling pin (or a bottle if you're in a pinch) until it's thin and flat, about  $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick. As you roll the dough, be sure to unstick it from your counter and flip it over. To make it round, roll straight in front of you, then turn the dough 90 degrees and roll out again.

Place a non-stick skillet on medium heat. Once the pan is hot, add the roti and cook until the dough lifts away from the pan around the edges and small bubbles form. Flip the bread over and cook the other side. Usually it goes very quickly. You want to see light-brown bubbles all over the dough. Don't let it get too dark, though, as this will make the roti too crunchy to use for rolls. Repeat this process until you're finished with the dough.

Once you have practiced, you can roll out one roti while another cooks in the pan to make the process quicker.

Keep them under a towel on the counter or in a warm oven until ready to serve.

\$0.50 TOTAL  
\$0.03 / ROTI





# Best Tomato Sauce

MAKES THREE AND A HALF CUPS

There are many ways to make tomato sauce. I don't find that the more complex recipes taste any better; this one is boldly tomatoey and works on just about anything. It also takes 5 minutes to make. Can't beat that.

1 tbsp olive oil  
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
½ tsp chili flakes  
28 oz can tomatoes, crushed or diced  
½ lemon, zested (optional)  
salt and pepper

Add the olive oil to a saucepan on medium heat. Sauté the garlic for 1 minute, until it smells great and becomes translucent. Add the chili flakes and cook for 30 seconds. Add the can of tomatoes, mix, and cook until warmed through. Add a little lemon zest, then salt and pepper to taste. Since canned tomatoes are often already salted, you may not need to add any.

If you want a thicker sauce that will stick to pasta better, cook for 10 to 20 minutes to evaporate more of the liquid. Use immediately or keep in a jar in the fridge for later use.



**\$3.50 TOTAL**  
**\$1 / CUP**



**\$1.50 TOTAL**  
**\$0.75 / SERVING**

Here are three quick ways to make plain rice a little more exciting. An early reader, Charles, said he loves rice with vegetables, but these treatments work for grains other than rice as well—everything from quinoa to barley to farro. Vegetables are a great way to liven up the usual rice and beans.

# Rainbow Rice

FOR TWO

1 cup rice  
2 cups water  
salt

To make normal rice, pour 2 cups of water into a pot with 1 cup of uncooked rice and two pinches of salt. That'll be enough for two generous portions, or three or four smaller servings. With the lid off, bring to a low boil over medium heat, then turn the heat down to low and put the lid on slightly askew, so that the steam can escape. Cook for about 20 minutes, until the water is all gone.

1 cup canned tomatoes, puréed

**RED RICE:** Stir the tomatoes with 1½ cups of water, then pour it into a pot with 1 cup of uncooked rice and two pinches of salt. Cook as above.

1 cup canned winter squash, pumpkin, or sweet potato, puréed

**ORANGE RICE:** Stir the squash, pumpkin, or sweet potato with 1½ cups of water, then pour it into a pot with 1 cup of uncooked rice and two pinches of salt. (You can also use frozen, boiled, or sautéed squash.) Cook as above.

1 cup frozen spinach, beet greens, chard, or fresh parsley

**GREEN RICE:** Chop up the spinach as much as you like. The more finely chopped, the more it will disperse into the rice. Cook normal rice, as above, for about 15 minutes, until most of the water is gone but not quite all. Mix the spinach into the rice. Cook with the lid off for the last 5 minutes. Adding the spinach at the end keeps it lush and bright, rather than the sad color of overcooked spinach.



METHOD

# Croutons or Breadcrumbs

bread  
butter or vegetable oil as needed  
salt and pepper

I am constantly haunted by the hard, several-day-old bread that I have neglected. Luckily there are plenty of delicious solutions that avoid the trash can. Croutons and breadcrumbs will keep for ages in a sealed container on the counter, and when you have them around you'll find yourself using them everywhere and finding excuses to make a salad.





# Drinks

You don't need a special drink at every meal (unless of course it is the meal!) but when you do, let fruit play a leading role, and make it yourself. It'll be so much better than the overpriced bottles in the supermarket.

# Smoothies

FOR TWO

I have four types of smoothies here, but of course there are many more. Give these a try when you have overripe fruit that you wouldn't eat otherwise. Add a teaspoon of vanilla to any of these and they will seem incredibly professional. The frozen melon drinks, in particular, are the most refreshing treat on a hot summer day.

**DRINKABLE YOGURT:** If you like the grocery store's yogurt drinks, try making these at home for less! You don't even need to blend them—just add the juice and yogurt to a jar, then shake.

½ cup plain yogurt  
½ cup fruit juice

**MELON SMOOTHIE (TWO PICTURED):** When you buy a melon, dice and freeze whatever you don't eat. Pull it out and blend it with a bit of water or juice to thin it out. It's like a better slushy!

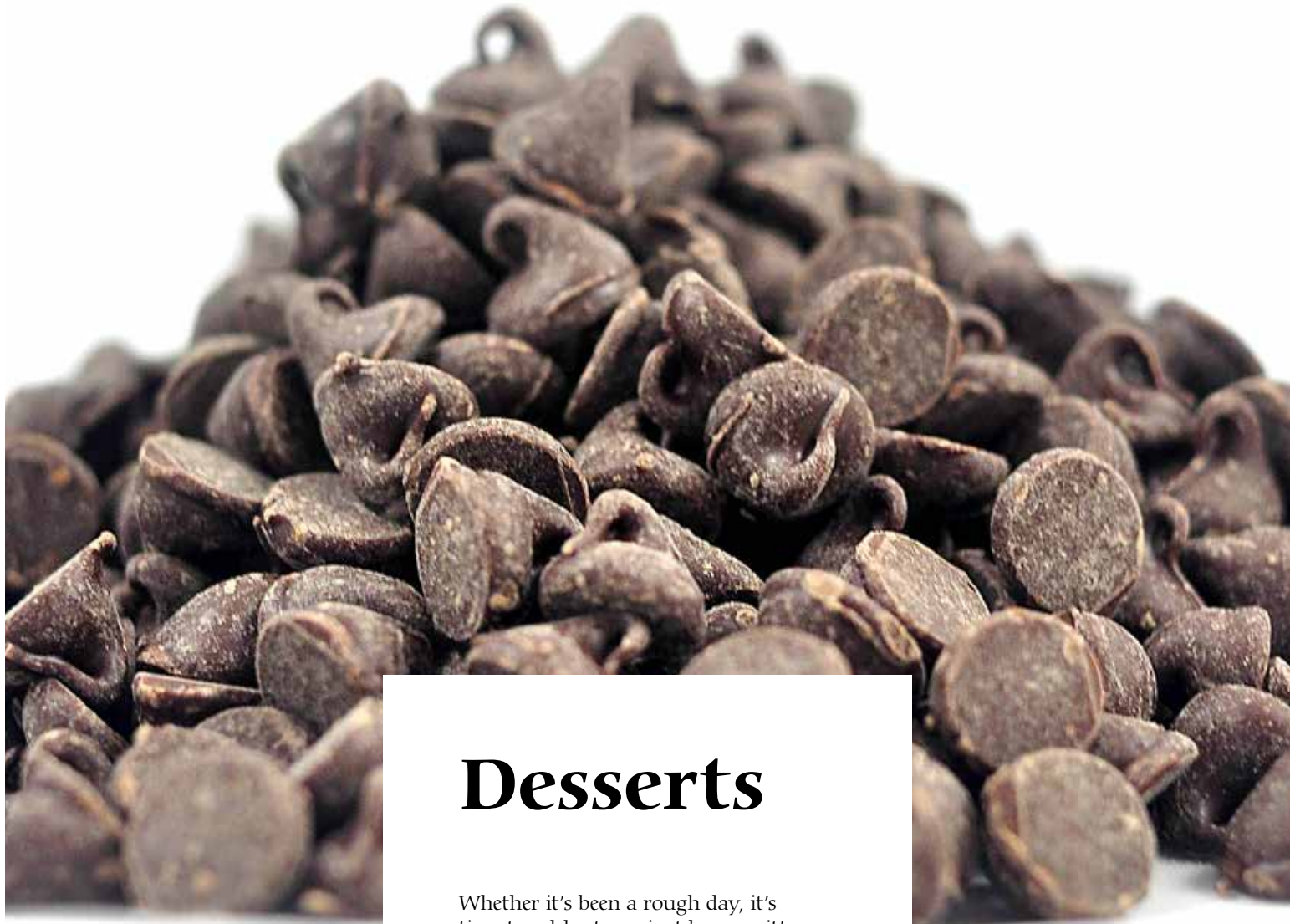
1 cup frozen melon  
½ cup water or juice  
1 tsp vanilla

**BERRY SMOOTHIE:** Blend until smooth, then adjust with more berries or milk to your taste.

½ cup yogurt  
1 cup frozen berries  
milk or juice to thin as needed

**MANGO LASSI (NOT PICTURED):** Blend the mango and yogurt together. If it's too thick to drink with a straw, add some milk to thin it out. A ripe and juicy mango combined with thin yogurt is often all you need. Be warned: if you make this for children, they will request it over and over.

1 mango, diced  
1 cup yogurt  
milk to thin as needed



## Desserts

Whether it's been a rough day, it's time to celebrate, or just because it's Wednesday, these sweets are totally worth it.



\$10 TOTAL  
\$0.25 / COOKIE

# Peach Coffee Cake

FOR TWELVE

This is adapted from the apple cake often served during Rosh Hashanah. It's simple and wonderful for dessert, with tea, or as a sweet breakfast. The juicy peaches add a ton of flavor to this simple cake. If you buy peaches in season, the cost can be quite reasonable.

6 peaches, pitted and cut into 8 slices each  
1 tsp cinnamon  
½ lemon, juiced  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
2 tsp baking powder  
½ lb unsalted butter (2 sticks), at room temperature  
1⅓ cups brown sugar  
⅛ tsp salt  
2 large eggs  
1 tsp vanilla

Turn your oven to 350 °F.

Using the paper wrapping from the butter, lightly butter an 8" x 11" glass baking dish or 9" springform pan. Any shape will do so long as it is large enough. This cake doubles in size when it bakes.

In a large bowl, mix the peach slices, lemon juice, and cinnamon together with your hands, making sure the peaches are well coated in cinnamon.

In a medium bowl, stir the flour with the baking powder, getting rid of any lumps.

In another large bowl, beat the butter, brown sugar, and salt, either with a wooden spoon or an electric mixer. Stop when the mixture is fluffy and has slightly lightened in color. Add the vanilla, then the eggs one at a time, fully mixing in the first before adding the second.

If using an electric mixer, switch to a wooden spoon and add the flour mixture into the butter mixture, gently incorporating it until it's smooth. The batter will be quite thick.

Spread half the batter over the bottom of the buttered pan. Evenly distribute 24 of the peach slices over top. (There should be 48 in total.) Spread the other half of the batter over the peaches, then top with the remaining peaches. Sprinkle with a tablespoon or so of sugar and place the cake in the oven.

Bake for 1 hour or until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean.





# Fast Melon Sorbet

FOR FOUR

2 cups frozen melon  
½ cup plain yogurt  
¼ cup sugar  
1 tsp vanilla  
or lime juice  
(optional)

When you see lovely watermelons, honeydews, and cantaloupes on sale, buy them up. Eat half, then cube and freeze the other half. When you want a quick dessert or smoothie, pull out a bag of frozen melon and whip this up.

Add all the ingredients to a food processor or blender until just smooth. Don't blend too much, or the sorbet will become oversoft. Serve immediately or stick it into the freezer to enjoy later.

**\$2.40 TOTAL**  
**\$0.60 / SERVING**



## Flavor

If you have a great sauce or a few spices in your kitchen, you'll never have to tolerate bland food. Most of these recipes require surprisingly little effort and time, pack a ton of flavor, and can be stored for use in any dish you choose.



**\$3.50 TOTAL**  
**\$3.50 / CUP**

**FLAVOR**  
**162**

# Spice Oil

MAKES ONE CUP

Use this spice oil on salads, in cold noodle dishes, or on roasted or sautéed vegetables. If you have trouble finding the spices, you can get all of them at most Asian grocery stores.

- 1 clove garlic
- 1 cup olive or vegetable oil
- 2 tbsp chili flakes or dried red chilies
- 1 tsp Sichuan or regular peppercorns
- 1 star anise
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- ¼ tsp salt

Use the side of a knife to crush the garlic clove until it cracks open. Add all of the ingredients to a small pot.

Warm the mixture over low heat for about 10 minutes, until it starts to bubble gently and you can hear a bit of a sizzle, then turn off the heat. You want to heat it just enough to let the spices infuse into the oil, without getting so hot that the spices start to cook or fry.

Remove the pot from the stovetop and put it in the fridge with a lid. Let the spices infuse for 4 to 8 hours.

Taste the oil. If it isn't strongly spicy, let it infuse for a few more hours. Once it's ready, strain through a sieve to remove the spices.

Store in a jar in the fridge for up to a week.



**\$2.50 TOTAL**  
**\$1.25 / CUP**

# Raita

**MAKES TWO CUPS**

1 cup cucumber, chopped  
½ cup tomato, chopped  
¼ cup red onion, chopped  
1 cup yogurt  
1 tsp cumin powder  
½ tsp cayenne powder  
2 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped  
salt and pepper

**ADDITIONS**

1 tbsp ginger, grated  
2 tbsp mint  
¼ cup chickpeas  
cooked spinach

Raita is a traditional Indian sauce served with all kinds of things. It's simple and surprisingly tasty. Spoon it onto chana masala (p. 93), the potato and kale rolls (p. 84), or anything spicy to cool things down.

This recipe is extremely loose. Basically, just stir some of your favorite chopped vegetables into yogurt and add salt and pepper. Use this as a stepping stone to develop your own.

After you stir all the ingredients together, store the raita in a covered container in the fridge until you're ready to use it.

So many of the recipes in this collection can be easily modified to your taste. Learning to cook with different spices, herbs, and aromatics will instantly elevate your cooking and open up new and interesting possibilities.

Spices are expensive to buy, but since you use such small amounts, they end up costing pennies per recipe. If you're able to shop around, look for inexpensive spices in bulk at ethnic markets.

Below, I've ranked what I feel are the most important seasonings, but if you already know what you like, please listen to yourself! I know that my sister would rank chipotle powder just under salt, so do as your heart commands.

**CHILI FLAKES:** Chili is a great choice if you like things a little spicy. I add just a dash of chili flakes to almost all savory dishes to give them a little more dimension. Plus, chili flakes are usually pretty cheap.

**CUMIN OR CUMIN SEEDS:** Cumin goes well with so many flavors, and is essential in Mexican and Indian cuisine.

**CURRY POWDER:** Curry powder is a bunch of south Asian spices blended together. I prefer to make my own out of individual spices, but if you're new to curry, consider buying a blend to start out. If you love it, start buying the separate spices.

**DRIED OREGANO AND DRIED THYME:** Both of these herbs are still tasty when dried. They add a lot of flavor to chili, soups, or roasted vegetables. However, don't bother with dried basil, dried cilantro, or dried dill unless you particularly like them and can't afford to get them fresh. They lose almost all their magic when dried.

**CINNAMON:** This is probably everyone's favorite "sweet" spice. If you like baking, get some as soon as possible.

**PAPRIKA AND SMOKED PAPRIKA:** Paprika adds a bit of heat, although not nearly as much as chili flakes. Instead, it gives you a great mild pepper taste. Smoked paprika is my favorite way to get smoky flavors into a dish. These are by no means essential, but they're lots of fun.

IDEAS

# Spices and Aromatics

Try the flavor combinations below on anything from rice to roasted chicken to vegetables. Mix them into butter, or add them to popcorn, toast, or vegetables. In short, experiment!

lemon zest and garlic  
oregano, cumin, and chili powder  
cumin seeds, coriander seeds, and mustard seeds  
onion, garlic, and ginger  
anchovy, garlic, and chili  
salt, pepper, and Romano or Parmesan  
onion, chili, and fresh cilantro  
sage, rosemary, and thyme  
lemon, olives, and garlic  
chipotle powder and lime  
pickling spices  
paprika and fresh dill  
garlic and fresh parsley  
fennel seeds and fresh parsley  
orange, lemon, and lime zest  
ginger, cinnamon, and black pepper  
cardamom, coriander, and bay leaf  
coconut, chili, and lime  
scallions and fresh cilantro  
garlic and fresh basil

# Thanks

This book was made possible by the more than 5,600 generous people who supported my Kickstarter campaign. These fine folks donated more than 8,000 free printed copies of the book for individuals and families who needed them, and helped me offer tens of thousands of copies to non-profits at near cost. Those supporters who wanted to be named appear below. To each of them—and the thousands more who remain anonymous—my deepest thanks.

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