

Thyme Well Spent

... in the Kitchen

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Corn Soufflé Roll

6 servings

A do-ahead baked cheese omelette rolled like a jellyroll. Doesn't freeze, but will keep for several days.

3 TB butter	1 tsp vinegar (white, red, cider or any mild vinegar)
3 TB cornmeal	1 cup corn (cut fresh off the cob, frozen, or 12-oz. can drained)
1 tsp flour	½ cup parsley, cilantro, or a mixture, chopped
1 cup liquid (milk, mild stock, liquid from canned corn, or any combo)	1 onion, finely chopped
4 drops Tabasco-style hot pepper sauce or ¼ tsp cayenne	1 4-oz. can mild green chiles, chopped (optional)
1 tsp salt	12 oz. shredded Cheddar or Colby cheese
6 eggs, white and yolks separated	

Preheat oven to 350°. Line an 11X17-inch cookie sheet with sides (a "jelly roll" pan) with a sheet of aluminum foil. Grease and flour.

On the stovetop or in the microwave, melt the butter, stir in the cornmeal and flour. Heat for 30 seconds, then whisk in liquid, hot pepper sauce, and salt. Bring to a gentle boil, stirring until combined and thickened. Add the egg yolks, one at a time, beating after each is added. Set aside.

Meanwhile, use a mixer to beat the egg whites and vinegar until stiff in a clean, grease-free bowl. As gently as possible, mix in the liquid mixture and remaining ingredients, *except the cheese*. Spread this mixture in the foil-lined pan.

Bake 20 minutes. Top with shredded cheese and bake 7 minutes more. Let rest at room temperature for 5-10 minutes, then lift one lengthwise side of the foil liner and nudge into a jelly roll shape. As you roll, the foil pulls away. Wrap this foil firmly to keep the roll warm and in shape.

Serve now or refrigerate and re-warm later until the cheese is melty again. Serve with pesto or salsa as a topping if desired.

Variations: Other good fillings: A creamed spinach (or thawed spinach souffle) or a mix of sautéed onions, and mushrooms with cheese. Purchased or homemade cream cheese spreads such as Boursin or veggie cream cheese (maybe with extra veggies cut small and rolled in).

Cilantro Pesto

1½ cups

Use as a dip, salsa, chutney, pasta sauce, vegetable topper, sandwich spread. Vary the balance between cilantro and parsley to suit your preference.

6-8 green onions, green parts only	1-2 cloves garlic
1 bunch fresh cilantro, leaves and stems	1 Tb fresh ginger, grated or or minced
1 bunch fresh Italian parsley, leaves and stems	1 jalapeno (optional)
¼ cup ice water	½ cup canola oil
2 Tb pine nuts (can substitute other nuts)	Salt & pepper to taste
2 Tb sesame seeds	

Bring a medium pot of water to a rolling boil. Drop in washed onions, cilantro, and parsley to blanch for 2-3 seconds (yes, only this long). Immediately plunge blanched greens into a bowl of ice water to stop cooking. Cool briefly, drain, squeeze lightly to remove most of the water.

Put blanched greens and remaining ingredients – except the oil and salt and pepper – into a processor or blender and pulse to puree roughly. With machine running, **slowly** pour in oil until the sauce thickens and looks almost creamy. Adjust seasoning to taste with salt and pepper.

Stores in the refrigerator for a week, or can freeze.

NOTES: Can be made without blanching, but keeps longer and freezes with better color and flavor if blanched.

Wonderful on sandwiches. Ciabatta, grilled eggplant or chicken, fresh mozzarella or mild goat cheese, sliced tomato, and this pesto!

For a Southwestern version, omit the ginger and about ¼ cup of your choice of hot peppers roasted and pureed. The peppers should be roasted, skinned, and de-seeded. (Can use drained, canned green chiles as well.)

English Muffins

8 muffins

1/3 cup warm water	2 tsp sugar
1 envelope dry yeast (regular or fast-rising)	1 tsp salt
1/8 tsp sugar	1 TB solid shortening or butter
1 cup milk	2 cups flour

Stir the dry yeast and 1/8 tsp sugar to the 1/3 cup warm water and allow to rest for 5 minutes, or until foamy.

In a medium saucepan or microwave-safe bowl, warm milk gently, then add 1TB sugar, salt, and shortening. Mix until dissolved. Use a spoon to beat the dissolved yeast mixture and flour into the warmed milk. Will be soft, almost a batter. Let rest in the pan or bowl for 30 minutes to rise.

Heat a skillet to medium high and grease the pan. Without stirring down the dough, scoop into pan in roughly 3-inch rounds. Cover to concentrate the heat. When the bottom browns, flip and cover again to cook the other side (3-5 minutes each side). Repeat until dough is used. Best split and toasted. For maximum “cragginess,” split with a fork instead of a knife

NOTES: Since skillets and ranges differ, make a single test muffin to check the timing. For a perfect shape, ladle muffin dough into greased and floured English Muffin rings or 3-inch biscuit cutters.

Apple Butter

3 cups / 24 oz.

3 lb cooking apples	dash salt
¾ cup cider vinegar	3 TB mixed sweet spices, i.e. cinnamon sticks, star anise, allspice berries, whole cloves, sliced fresh ginger
2 water, apple juice, or cider	juice & zest of 1 lemon
3 cups sugar, approximately	

Wash and quarter apples. In a large pot, bring the apples (cores, seeds, stems and all), vinegar, and liquid to a boil. Simmer 20+ minutes or until apples are completely soft. Remove from heat. Pour into a strainer or colander with small holes set over a mixing bowl. Use the back of a spoon to press the pulp and cooking liquid through the holes of a strainer or colander with small holes. Discard the remainder. Return apple puree to the cooking pot with ½ cup of sugar per cup of apple puree, plus the salt, sweet spices, and lemon.

Cook on low heat, stirring occasionally to prevent a crust on the bottom, until the apple butter has thickened to your liking. Can take up to several hours. Taste periodically and use a slotted spoon to remove the spices when the strength of their flavor suits you.

Either refrigerate for use within the next month, or spoon into sterilized jelly jars with lids and process in a boiling water bath for 20 minutes.

Herbal Jelly

3 cups / 24 oz.

15 minutes of your time and endless variations

¼ cup of water	3 cups of sugar
¼ - ½ cup fresh herbs & flavorings	juice of 1 lemon
¾ cup of non-acidic fruit juice (measured after straining if pulpy)	3 oz. liquid pectin

Bring water, herbs, and flavorings to a boil, cover, and remove from heat to steep at least 10 minutes. Strain before using.

In a medium saucepot, combine juice, herbal infusion, sugar, and lemon juice. Bring to a rolling boil, stirring often to help melt the sugar. Remove from heat, skim foam if necessary. Stir in the liquid pectin and return to heat. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Skim foam as needed, then refrigerate for use within the next month. Alternately, pour into hot, sterilized canning jars, seal, and process 20 minutes in a boiling water bath.

Flavor variations: Change the herbs and flavorings, change the liquid. For example, Pineapple Basil Jelly uses strained pineapple juice and an infusion of ¼ to ½ cup of chopped fresh basil and a 3-inch piece of lemongrass. Apricot Tarragon Jelly uses strained apricot nectar and an infusion of ¼ cup of fresh tarragon leaves and zest of 1 lemon. Cranberry Wine Jelly uses a mix of cranberry juice and wine with an infusion of ¼ cup of thyme and peel of 1 orange.

Marilyn Monroe

8 cups

Hot tomato with a shot of gin – and that's how this soup claimed its name.

2 TB olive oil	1 10%-oz. can condensed tomato soup
4 TB chopped fresh herbs (1 or 1-1½ TB dried), divided use (a mix – i.e, thyme parsley, chives, basil, chervil, fennel, tarragon)	2 cups tomato juice
1 15-oz. can tomatoes (diced or stewed)	2 cups stock – vegetable or chicken preferred
	Salt & pepper
	½ cup gin (optional)

Set aside 1 TB of the herbs as garnish. Sauté the remaining herbs over medium to low heat 1-2 minutes, being careful not to brown. Add drained canned tomatoes and stir another several minutes. Add condensed soup, tomato juice, and stock. Simmer until warmed and steaming. Correct the seasoning with salt and pepper if needed. Stir in the optional gin and bring back to a simmer.

Serve topped with a scatter of the remaining herbs.

Variations: This is a very forgiving recipe, the point of which is to jump start the flavor of tomato soup. Vary the herbs, use different versions of canned tomatoes and tomato juice, switch the flavor boost of gin to vodka, white wine, vermouth, or simply a tablespoon or two of vinegar. Add a pinch of cayenne or pepper sauce to suit your whim. Top with pesto instead of fresh herbs.

Black Pepper Biscuits

8 large biscuits

2 cups all-purpose flour	pinch of sugar
3½ tsp baking powder	½ cup shortening, cut in bits
½ tsp cream of tartar	2/3 cup milk
1 TB freshly ground black pepper	2 TB milk or cream
1 tsp salt	½ tsp freshly ground black pepper for the tops of the biscuits

Preheat oven to 450°. In a mixing bowl or food processor combine flour, baking powder, cream of tartar, pepper, salt, and sugar. Sprinkle the shortening pieces over the flour mixture, and cut in or whirl until it resembles coarse meal. Add the milk and mix until the dough just barely comes together.

Turn onto a lightly floured surface. Knead lightly to develop the gluten. Pat the dough, until it is ¾ of an inch thick. Using a 3" biscuit cutter (or glass), cut out the biscuits and place them on a greased baking sheet. Re-form the dough and repeat until used. Brush the tops of the unbaked biscuits with milk or cream, and sprinkle with the remaining freshly ground black pepper. Bake for 12-15 minutes until the biscuits are golden brown. Allow to cool a bit before serving, then eat as is or slice and use for sandwiches of melted cheese and ham or sliced turkey, avocado, and tomato conserve.

Tomato Conserve

approximately 3 pints

The condiment ketchup wishes that it were!

3 pounds fresh tomatoes, chopped (cored, but with juice, seeds, skins)	1½ tsp salt
2 yellow onions, chopped	1 tsp cayenne pepper
1/3 cup dark brown sugar	½ tsp red chili flakes
1/3 cup white sugar	1 tsp smoked paprika (can use plain paprika)
juice of 1 lemon	½ tsp ground coriander
	½ tsp cumin

½ tsp cinnamon

1 TB grated fresh ginger

¼ cup vinegar

Combine all ingredients in a large, deep pot. Bring to a boil and simmer over low heat for several hours until deep-colored and flavorful, stirring occasionally. Correct seasoning to suit your taste.

Either refrigerate for use within the next month, or can in hot, sterilized canning jars, processing 20 minutes in a boiling water bath.

Rosemary Roasted Nuts

2 cups

2 cups nuts (your choice)

3TB butter

2 TB sugar

1 TB salt

1 TB fresh rosemary, chopped

2 tsp grated fresh lemon or orange zest

Toast nuts in a dry pan over medium heat, stirring frequently until fragrant and beginning to color. Add remaining ingredients and stir until sugar melts, 2-3 minutes.

Variation: If using nuts already roasted and salted, skip initial pan toasting and additional salt. Taste when almost done and correct seasoning with additional salt if needed.

Asian Deviled Eggs

24 egg halves

Different and very good!

1 dozen eggs, hard-boiled and peeled

2 cups soy sauce (Low sodium preferred)

½ cup sake (or white wine)

10 star anise pods (can use broken pieces)

½ cup green onions, coarsely chopped ¼ cup sugar

¼ cup fresh ginger, finely chopped or grated

¼-½ cup mayonnaise

(depending on how creamy you like egg filling)

½ -1 TB Sriracha or hot pepper sauce

2½ tsp wasabi or horseradish

¼ cup chives or green onions, finely chopped

Make a marinade by bringing soy sauce, sake, star anise, 1/2 cup green onions, sugar, and ginger to a boil and stir to combine. Let cool to room temperature. Marinate whole boiled eggs in cooled liquid in a plastic baggie or covered container in the refrigerator for 4-8 hours. The outside of the eggs will turn a cocoa brown color.

Drain the eggs and pat dry. Cut in half lengthwise and carefully pop out the cooked egg yolks. (Can freeze the marinade to use again.) Mash the yolks with mayonnaise, Sriracha, and wasabi. Stir in ¼ cup green onions. Fill centers of the egg whites with the yolk mixture. Garnish if desired with a dot of Sriracha, more chopped green onions, cilantro, toasted sesame seeds, etc.

Serving note: Can be made a day in advance if stored in the refrigerator covered in plastic wrap so that the filling doesn't get crusty.

Heavenly Ricotta Toasts

1½ cups / 24 toasts

4 TB anchovy filets (or 3 TB anchovy paste)

2 cloves garlic

2 TB chopped basil

2 TB chopped chives

2 TB chopped tarragon

2 TB chopped parsley

2 TB chopped dill

½ cup Ricotta

1 cup mayonnaise

Salt and pepper

lemon juice to taste (try 1 tsp to start)

24 appetizer-sized bread rounds, toasted on 1 side

Puree anchovies, garlic, and chopped herbs. Mix with Ricotta and mayonnaise. Add salt, pepper, and lemon juice to taste. Spread thickly on the un-toasted side of breads, spreading to the edge. Broil until slightly puffed.

Coriander Shortbread

5 dozen

2 tsp coriander seeds

1½ tsp curry powder (homemade or purchased)

2 tsp orange zest

16 TB (2 sticks) butter

½ cup sugar

1 tsp vanilla extract

1 tsp salt

1¼ cups flour (for crisper texture, substitute

3 TB cornmeal or rice flour for 3 TB of flour)

Stir coriander seed in a small skillet over medium heat until beginning to be fragrant, 1 or 1½ minutes, then add curry powder and stir and toast another minute. Set aside. When cool, grind together in a spice mill or mortar and pestle.

In a large bowl or food processor, beat together the orange zest, butter, sugar, vanilla, and salt until well combined. Sprinkle with the ground spices and then the flour. Blend thoroughly. Roll dough into 2 small logs, each about 9 inches long. Chill long enough to firm the dough for easy slicing, or freeze until needed.

Preheat the oven to 350°. Cut the dough into ¼-inch slices and bake on an ungreased cookie sheet until the edges are golden, about 15 minutes. (Optional: Sprinkle the tops of cookies with sugar crystals before baking.)

Homemade Curry Powder: In a small, dry skillet lightly toast 2 TB each of whole cumin seed, green cardamom seed, and whole coriander seed. Let cool, then combine with ¼ cup ground turmeric, 1 TB dry mustard powder, and 1 tsp cayenne. As needed, grind to a powder before using. Stores dry for up to 6 months if un-ground, 2-3 months if ground, or longer if frozen.

Figs with Honey, Thyme, & Goat Cheese

Fresh soft goat cheese
Honey

Thyme
Figs

Wash and quarter figs. Arrange ingredients on a plate, scattering thyme leaves over cheese. To serve, top a piece of fig with cheese and top with a drizzle of honey.

Orange-grilled Chicken

4 servings

1 cup orange juice
1 onion, finely chopped
2 TB Balsamic vinegar
zest of 1 orange
1 tsp red pepper flakes

2 TB honey
3 TB rosemary leaves
Salt & pepper
4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

Make a marinade by combining all ingredients in a leak-proof plastic bag. Add chicken and marinate in the refrigerator at least 4 hours or overnight. Remove chicken from marinade and grill or broil. Serve with Gremolata.

Gremolata: In a small bowl, combine ½ cup minced fresh flat-leaf parsley, the finely grated zest of 1 lemon and 2 garlic cloves, minced, and stir to blend. Makes about ½ cup.

Green Beans with Mustard Seed Vinaigrette

4 servings

1 lb. fresh green beans, washed & trimmed
1 TB olive oil
2 TB mustard seeds
1 TB red wine vinegar

1 TB sugar
2 TB olive oil, in addition to above
1 onion, sliced

Cook green beans in boiling, salted water to cover until soft enough to eat but still crisp and crunchy. Rinse to stop cooking.

Heat 1 TB olive oil in a sauté pan, add mustard seeds, stirring until they pop, about 2 minutes. Scrape out of pan and set aside. In the same sauté pan, cook onion over low heat in remaining olive oil until soft, 8-10 minutes.

Separately heat and stir the vinegar and sugar until the sugar dissolves. Cool slightly. Combine all ingredients, including green beans. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Pesto Vegetable Terrine

8 servings

Free-wheeling use of herbs makes this upscale cuisine.

6 TB fresh basil (if you're desperate, 3 TB dried basil
and ¼ cup fresh parsley)
6 TB fresh oregano (2 TB dried leaf oregano)
3 TB fresh thyme (1½ tsp dried leaf thyme)
2 cloves garlic

½ cup olive oil
Salt & pepper
8 oz. Monterey Jack, shredded
6-10 small red potatoes, sliced into ¼" rounds
1 onion, sliced

2 bunches fresh spinach, washed, blanched, and chopped (or
1 10-oz. package of frozen chopped spinach, thawed),
with the water squeezed out
1 zucchini, sliced into ¼" rounds

1 yellow squash, sliced into ¼" rounds
2 carrots, peeled and sliced into ¼" rounds
Salt & pepper

In a food processor, chop and combine the herbs and garlic. Drizzle in the olive oil while the machine is running. Add salt and pepper, then whirl the pesto again briefly to mix. Stir about ¼ of the pesto into the shredded cheese and set aside for later use.

Preheat the oven to 350°. In an ovenproof dish or pan that will hold 8 cups, layer the vegetables beginning with the potatoes. As each vegetable is added, dribble on a bit of the pesto and salt and pepper. Press firmly to compact the layers. Cover with foil or a lid and bake 45 minutes. (Can microwave, uncovered, 15 minutes instead.)

Remove top and sprinkle with reserved cheese-pesto combination. Bake uncovered for an additional 5 minutes, or until cheese melts and begins to brown. (Can melt cheese in a microwave, but the color will be better if this last step is done in a hot oven or under the broiler.)

Variations: Use any combination of herbs, or begin with purchased pesto with added grated cheese. Substitute any cheese and vegetables that appeal. Or simply make the pesto cheese mix and add to any cooked vegetable or veggie combo. Warm briefly on the stove or in a microwave or oven until the cheese melts.

Salad with Herbed Buttermilk Dressing

4 servings

Herbed Buttermilk Dressing

1 cup

1 shallot
1 clove garlic
2 TB parsley
1 tsp thyme
2 tsp cider vinegar

6 TB mayonnaise
½ cup buttermilk
½ tsp salt
LOTS of freshly-ground black pepper

Using a processor or by hand, finely mince the shallot, garlic, parsley, and thyme. Stir together with the cider vinegar, mayonnaise, and buttermilk. Season with salt and LOTS of coarsely ground black pepper. Serve now or chill to let flavors develop. Keeps a week.

Mixed lettuces, about 1½ cup per serving
4 strips of bacon, cooked until crisp and crumbled (optional)
½ small cucumber, cut up
1 cup coarsely chopped tomatoes

½ small red onion, sliced thin
Croutons
Salt & pepper

Mix and toss with homemade buttermilk dressing.

Caramel Roasted Pears

4 servings

4 pears, ripe but not mushy
2 TB canola oil (or any flavorless or mild cooking oil)
Salt & pepper
4 TB butter

2-3 sprigs fresh thyme
4 TB honey
4 TB vinegar (try a fruit vinegar, sherry vinegar,
even cider vinegar)

Wash and quarter pears lengthwise, removing the core. Lightly salt and pepper the cut sides. Heat the oil in a pan over medium high heat. Put in pears, cut side down. Checking frequently, lightly brown on all cut surfaces, several minutes per surface.

Flip the pears so that the skin side is down and add butter and thyme to the pan. Continue to sauté, basting several times with the butter until the pears are cooked through. Gently remove the pears from the pan, add honey and vinegar to the butter and thyme. Increase heat and stir for another several minutes or until the mixture foams and thickens a bit into a sauce. Spoon this caramel sauce over the pears and serve warm.

Serving notes: Best texture if served immediately, but can be made in advance and re-warmed. Serve with a cheese that appeals to you and complements the menu – a rich Brie, sharp cheddar, aged Manchego, etc. Cookies are also wonderful on the side, perhaps gingersnaps or shortbreads. Good with ice cream, gingerbread, or spice cake.