

THE TEN

My ten
favorite
recipes of
2026.

Each one
teaches a
technique
that unlocks
the rest.

THIS GUY COOKS

Each recipe = a new technique unlocked. Take the time to develop these skills and your ability expands. That's how you stop following recipes and start cooking.

As a new cook, I experimented with hundreds of recipes. I found a handful of things that worked and cooked them until my hands knew them by heart.

These are those lessons distilled down to ten dishes. The ones I make on a weekday when nobody's filming.

Here's the real gift, though. Each of these were specifically chosen to teach a core technique but also to build on one another.

Recipe 1 (Chicken Diane) teaches you how to develop the flavor of a pan sauce by lifting the fond from the bottom of the pan.

Recipe 2 (Osso Buco) builds on that concept, using the fond to elevate the flavor into a braise, then reducing that braise into a concentrated sauce.

Recipe 3 (Seared Scallops) takes the skill from searing the osso buco to a much more delicate protein.

Learn to build a pan sauce and you can finish almost any piece of meat. Learn to braise and you'll be cooking like a pro through the winter. Learn to emulsify and a jar of oil turns into a dressing, a sauce, and a serious upgrade for your vegetables.

Once you've made each of these dishes a couple of times, I promise, you'll stop following a recipe step-by-step every night. You'll begin looking to recipes for inspiration and feel comfortable swapping in ingredients you have in the pantry, fridge, or spice cabinet. You'll begin to understand the basics of flavor development, confident enough to taste what a dish needs and trust your hands to get it there. That's when the other six hundred recipes on my site stop being a list to follow and start being inspiration. Because you already know how to cook.

Ross

THE CURRICULUM

What you'll learn

Ten recipes, building upon each other. Ten techniques, how they actually work, and what each unlocks once you begin to trust your hands.

	THE DISH	THE TECHNIQUE	WHAT IT UNLOCKS
1	Chicken Diane PAN SAUCE FROM FOND · START HERE	Sear the meat until golden, pull it out, deglaze the browned bits with liquid, reduce, then finish with butter or cream.	Build a sauce with almost any piece of meat, all from the pan itself.
2	Osso Buco THE BRAISE	Sear for fond, caramelize the vegetables, add stock partway up, cover, cook low in the oven for hours.	Tough, cheaper cuts turn tender enough to cut with a spoon.
3	Seared Scallop BUTTER EMULSION	Reduce a little wine, whisk cold butter in off the heat.	A silky sauce for fish, chicken, or vegetables.
4	Carrot Ginger Sesame Vinaigrette THE EMULSION, MADE EASY	Blend the vegetable and acid until smooth first, then stream in the oil.	A jar of oil becomes a week of dressings.
5	Chimichurri THE RAW SAUCE	Chop finely, whisk in the oil, let it sit fifteen minutes, then brighten with the vinegar right before serving.	A bright sauce for anything off the grill, no cooking required.
6	Salmon Pistachio Dukkah BUILDING A CRUST	Toast whole spices, grind until coarse, press onto the oiled fish.	A crisp, flavorful layer for any protein.
7	Crispy Roasted Potatoes ROASTING FOR CRUNCH	Parboil with baking soda, rough up the edges, roast hot with space in the pan.	Develop real texture on anything you roast.
8	Red Wine Short Ribs THE RED WINE BRAISE	Dry brine with salt overnight, sear until dark, braise partly uncovered while the wine reduces into the sauce.	Company-worthy short ribs from a cheap cut and a bottle of wine.
9	Mussels Parmesan Cream ROUX AND STEAMED SHELLFISH	Cook flour into butter, build a cream broth, steam the shellfish until they crack open.	A quick cream sauce, and shellfish that tell you when they're done.
10	Pistachio Panna Cotta SETTING WITH GELATIN	Bloom gelatin in cold liquid, warm the cream but don't boil, strain, then chill.	Almost any liquid set into a silky dessert.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Cook the ten in order. Cook each one three times before you move on. That is how a recipe stops being instructions and becomes a reflex.



01 Chicken Diane

THE TECHNIQUE: A PAN SAUCE FROM FOND

START HERE

My most-cooked recipe, and the one that reached over five million people. It looks like something you'd order out and it takes about twenty minutes. The whole dish lives or dies on one lesson. Don't wipe out the pan.

WHY IT WORKS

After the chicken sears, the golden crust stuck to the bottom of the pan is called fond, and it is pure concentrated flavor. A splash of liquid lifts it back into the sauce. That is how you make a pan sauce, and it is one of the single most useful things you can learn to do in the kitchen. Sear a protein, pull it out, cook something aromatic in the drippings, add a splash of liquid, scrape, reduce, finish with butter or cream. Dinner. *The key: do the scraping with a wooden spoon. Every home cook should own one.* The one rule that keeps it from going wrong: build the sauce on something with body, stock or a splash of brandy, and save the acid for the end. Lemon added early turns the sauce thin and sharp. Added last, it brightens everything underneath it.

THE INGREDIENTS

CHICKEN

2 chicken thighs (boneless, 6 to 8 oz each)
or 2 breasts, sliced into cutlets
1 tbsp avocado oil
2 tbsp butter
Kosher salt and black pepper

SAUCE

16 oz white button mushrooms, sliced
1 large shallot, finely chopped
2 tbsp brandy or cognac
½ cup chicken broth
⅓ cup heavy cream
Juice of 1 lemon
1 tbsp Dijon
1 tbsp Worcestershire
¼ cup parsley, finely chopped

EQUIPMENT

A heavy stainless or cast iron pan. Fond only builds in a pan that holds heat.
A wooden spoon, for scraping.
An instant-read thermometer. 165°F is the number, no guessing with chicken.
Tongs.

HOW TO MAKE IT

- 1 Season the chicken well. Heat the avocado oil over medium-high. Sear in oil alone, not butter; the water in butter makes the skin stick.
- 2 Sear golden both sides, cook through to 165°F, about 4 minutes a side. Don't move it while the first side sears. Let the crust set and it will release on its own. Move to a plate. Leave all of the brown bits in the pan. That is the start of your sauce.
- 3 Drop the heat to medium. Add the mushrooms and the butter, and let them cook and begin to brown together before you stir, about 5 minutes.
- 4 Add the shallot and cook until they become translucent and begin to soften, about 3 minutes.
- 5 Pour in the brandy or cognac and scrape the pan while it reduces until almost all of the liquid disappears, only 15 to 30 seconds. Watch closely, this is the moment the fond becomes flavor.
- 6 Add the broth, cream, Dijon, and Worcestershire. Simmer until it coats a spoon, about 3 minutes.
- 7 Take it off the heat. Stir in the lemon juice and parsley, taste, and adjust with salt. Taste again.
- 8 Slide the chicken and any of its juices back in, spoon the sauce over, and serve right away.

WHERE IT GOES NEXT

Do this three times and you will never look at the recipe again. Then try it with pork chops, a steak, or salmon. Same move, different protein, different liquid.

Get the full recipe: thisguycooks.com/chicken-diane



02 Osso Buco with Parmesan Risotto

THE TECHNIQUE: THE BRAISE, PLUS A PROPER RISOTTO

BUILDS ON 1 *Take the fond you learned how to use in Recipe 1 and turn it into a braise, then reduce that braise into a sauce.*

Osso buco sounds like a weekend project. It's really two techniques stacked on one plate, and both of them reward you for leaving things alone. Really. I mean it, once it's cooking, do your best not to tinker with it. The shanks go into the oven tough and come out ready to fall off the bone.

WHY IT WORKS

A braise is a trade. You give a tough cut time and low heat, and it returns to you meat you can cut with a spoon. The low heat is the key, not a minor detail. Be gentle, and the collagen has time to melt into gelatin that keeps the meat succulent. Too hot, and the fibers go dry before the collagen ever gets the chance. The method never changes. Sear for fond, caramelize the vegetables, deglaze, add stock partway up the meat, then cover and transfer it to a low-heat oven for a few hours. The collagen melts into the liquid, and that liquid becomes your sauce. A Dutch oven is the one pot worth real money for this one because of how well it retains heat. It sears, braises, and lands on the table. The risotto underneath teaches a second move. Warm stock, one ladle at a time, stirred until the rice gives up its starch. Patience, delivered twice.

THE INGREDIENTS

THE BRAISE

- 2 veal shanks (about 12 oz each), cross-cut
- 1 tbsp beef tallow
- ½ yellow onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 celery stalk
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1½ tbsp tomato paste
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1½ cups beef stock
- ½ bay leaf
- 1 thyme sprig
- ½ rosemary sprig
- 1 strip orange peel
- Sea salt

EQUIPMENT

- A heavy Dutch oven with a lid.
- Tongs, for rolling the shanks.
- A ladle, for the risotto.
- A microplane, for the gremolata zest.

HOW TO MAKE IT

- 1 Pat the shanks dry and season lightly with salt.
- 2 Heat the beef tallow in a Dutch oven over medium-high.
- 3 Sear the shanks 3 to 4 minutes per side on the cut faces, until a deep golden-brown crust forms.
- 4 Roll the shanks onto their sides and give them a quick sear all around. They don't need to get as dark as the cut faces, but a golden edge adds more fond to the pot and helps the collagen tighten evenly. Set aside.
- 5 Add the onion, carrot, and celery. Cut the heat for 2 minutes. The onions release moisture and naturally deglaze the pan.
- 6 Return the heat to medium, lower than searing. Cook the vegetables 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until caramelized.
- 7 Stir in the tomato paste and cook 2 to 3 minutes, letting it caramelize and sweeten.
- 8 Add the garlic and cook 30 to 60 seconds, until fragrant.
- 9 Deglaze with the white wine, scraping the fond. Reduce by half.
- 10 Return the shanks. Add the beef stock, bay leaf, thyme, rosemary, and orange peel.
- 11 Bring to a simmer, cover, and transfer to a low-heat oven at 325°F. Braise 2½ to 3 hours, until fork-tender.
- 12 Lift the shanks out and keep them warm. Strain the braising liquid, skim the fat, and reduce over medium until it coats the back of a spoon, 10 to 15 minutes. This is the reduction the whole dish is built on.



02 Osso Buco with Parmesan Risotto

PART TWO · THE RISOTTO AND THE FINISH

THE INGREDIENTS

THE GREMOLATA

2 tbsp parsley
½ tbsp lemon zest
½ tbsp orange zest
1 small garlic clove, hand-chopped

THE PARMESAN RISOTTO

¾ cup arborio rice
3 cups warm chicken stock
1 small piece parmesan rind
¼ cup champagne
1 shallot, finely minced
2 tbsp unsalted butter, divided
⅓ cup parmesan cheese, finely grated
Sea salt
Fresh cracked black pepper

HOW TO MAKE IT

THE GREMOLATA

- 1 Start this early so it can dry out. Mix the parsley, lemon zest, orange zest, and hand-chopped garlic, then spread it thin on a paper-towel-lined tray in a warm, sunny spot to lose some moisture while everything else cooks.

THE RISOTTO

- 1 Warm the chicken stock in a saucepan with the parmesan rind. Simmer gently to infuse, then keep warm. Pull the rind before using.
- 2 In a separate pan, melt 1 tbsp of the butter. Add the minced shallot and cook until translucent.
- 3 Stir in the arborio rice and toast lightly, 1 to 2 minutes.
- 4 Deglaze with the champagne and cook until absorbed.
- 5 Ladle in the warm parmesan-infused stock one scoop at a time, stirring until each addition is absorbed before the next. Keep going 18 to 20 minutes, until the rice is creamy with a slight bite.
- 6 Off the heat, stir in the remaining 1 tbsp butter and the parmesan. Season with salt and finish with fresh cracked black pepper.

TO PLATE

- 1 Spoon the risotto onto warm plates, nestle a shank over each portion, and spoon the reduced braising sauce over the top.
- 2 Scatter the gremolata for texture and brightness, add a twist of black pepper, and serve immediately.

WHERE IT GOES NEXT

Make this once and the braise will start to make sense. Try it with pork shoulder, lamb shanks, or beef chuck. Same process, same low oven, all winter.

Get the full recipe: thisguycooks.com/osso-buco-with-parmesan-risotto



03 Seared Scallop with Beurre Blanc

THE TECHNIQUE: BEURRE BLANC, A BUTTER EMULSION

BUILDS ON 2 *Take the sear from the osso buco and put it on a more delicate protein, then finish with a butter emulsion.*

This plate looks like it's off a tasting menu but really only takes about twenty minutes. The scallops take a little technique, but the sauce is the real lesson, and it's nothing more than cold butter whisked into a little reduced wine until it turns glossy.

WHY IT WORKS

Beurre blanc is an emulsion. The butter melts, but it stays suspended in the sauce as tiny droplets instead of separating out as grease, and that's the difference between silky and greasy. The thing holding it together is already in the butter. The little bit of milk protein in whole butter is the emulsifier. Clarified butter has none, which is why it won't hold. Two rules that help keep it together. The butter stays cold, and the whisk keeps moving. If it ever looks close to splitting, pull it off the heat and whisk in one more cold piece of butter. And there is a shortcut: a spoonful of crème fraîche buys you insurance. It holds the emulsion so it won't break on you.

THE INGREDIENTS

THE SCALLOPS

4 to 6 scallops, depending on size
Salt, to taste

THE BEURRE BLANC

2 tbsp white wine
1 tbsp shallot, minced
1 bay leaf
½ cup crème fraîche
1 stick butter, cubed and cold
Salt, to taste
Juice of 1 lemon

TO FINISH

1 tbsp cold chive oil (or dill oil)
Caviar, for topping
Roasted asparagus or other vegetable, optional

EQUIPMENT

A small saucepan, for the sauce.
A whisk. The emulsion doesn't happen without it.
A sauté pan that can take real heat.
A sheet tray, for the asparagus.

HOW TO MAKE IT

- 1 Heat the oven to 400°F.
- 2 Combine the wine, shallot, and bay leaf in a small saucepan. Reduce until almost dry.
- 3 Add the crème fraîche and reduce by half over medium heat, about 3 to 4 minutes.
- 4 Whisk in half the butter, 1 tablespoon at a time. Once it's in, pull the pan off the heat and whisk in the remaining cold butter.
- 5 Season with salt and lemon juice. Keep warm.
- 6 Toss the asparagus in olive oil and salt, then roast for 5 minutes, until tender but bright.
- 7 Right before serving, gently whisk the cold chive oil into the sauce to break the beurre blanc. Now that you can hold an emulsion, you can break it on purpose. The chive oil pools into the sauce for a restaurant plate.
- 8 Set the scallops in a very hot, well-oiled pan. They'll stick at first. The first layer releases water immediately, no matter how dry you patted them. Once a crust starts to form on the bottom, rotate each one a quarter turn, about 45°. That lets the moisture come off and the sear actually take. Give them about 90 seconds a side, until golden and just cooked through.
- 9 Plate the asparagus, spoon over the broken beurre blanc, top with the scallops, and finish with a dollop of caviar.

WHERE IT GOES NEXT

Master this and you stop buying sauce. Halibut on Tuesday, asparagus on Friday. Cold butter, gentle heat, keep whisking.

Get the full recipe: thisguycooks.com/seared-scallop-with-beurre-blanc-caviar



04 Carrot Ginger Sesame Vinaigrette

THE TECHNIQUE: EMULSIFIED DRESSING

BUILDS ON 3 *The same emulsion as the beurre blanc, made the easy way. Here the blender does the whisking.*

This is the dressing that turns a basic salad into something you'll crave. It's also the friendliest emulsion you'll ever make, because the blender does the work.

WHY IT WORKS

Every dressing is the same equation. An acid, a binder, oil, and agitation. The classic way there is a whisk and a slow stream of oil. Here, the blender is the shortcut. For a dressing this thick with raw vegetables it's the better tool. The miso holds the oil and water together, the carrot gives it body. Blend the vegetables and the acid smooth first, because oil emulsifies into a thick base far more willingly than a thin one. Let it run longer than feels necessary. Once you learn the framework of this dressing, you can let your creativity run wild. It becomes a simple formula. Change the vegetable, change the acid, change the binder. For this one, it's miso. For the next, maybe you'll try mustard.

THE INGREDIENTS

THE VINAIGRETTE

2 carrots, chopped
1 tsp ginger, chopped
¼ cup rice wine vinegar
1 tbsp white miso
1 tsp sesame oil
¼ cup olive oil
¼ cup water
Juice of ½ lime
½ tsp kosher salt

EQUIPMENT

A blender.
A rubber spatula.
A jar with a lid, for storing in the fridge.

HOW TO MAKE IT

- 1 Add the chopped carrots, ginger, and rice wine vinegar to a blender. Process until completely smooth.
- 2 Add the white miso, sesame oil, olive oil, and water. Blend again until fully combined and silky.
- 3 Season with the kosher salt and lime juice to taste, blending briefly again to bring it together.

WHERE IT GOES NEXT

Roasted red pepper, tomato, beet. Any vegetable that blends smooth can carry a dressing. Same equation, new jar.

Get the full recipe: thisguycooks.com/carrot-ginger-sesame-vinaigrette



05 Chimichurri

THE TECHNIQUE: THE RAW HERB SAUCE

BUILDS ON 4 *Oil and acid again, but whisked loose by hand. No heat, just a whisk, a knife, and good herbs.*

The sauce I reach for more than any other. No stove, no blender, just a knife and fifteen minutes of sitting time, and it wakes up anything that comes off a grill or out of a pan.

WHY IT WORKS

A raw sauce is seasoning you assemble instead of cook. Herbs, acid, oil, salt, and something with an edge. The craft is in the knife work. Chop the herbs fine and dry; a blender bruises them into a paste and the sauce goes muddy. This sauce is chopped, never blended. Then walk away for fifteen minutes. The rest melds everything into one sauce, and the vinegar goes in last so it stays bright. Learn the frame and salsa verde, gremolata, and half the world's table sauces are the same idea with different herbs.

THE INGREDIENTS

THE CHIMICHURRI

½ cup parsley, finely chopped
¼ cup cilantro, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tbsp red wine vinegar
¼ cup olive oil
¼ tsp red chili flakes
½ tsp kosher salt

EQUIPMENT

A sharp knife and a cutting board with room.
A small bowl and a fork, for the whisking.

HOW TO MAKE IT

- 1 Finely chop the parsley and cilantro. Add them to a small bowl.
- 2 Stir in the minced garlic, chili flakes, and kosher salt.
- 3 Slowly whisk in the olive oil until the sauce comes together.
- 4 Let it sit 15 minutes so the flavors meld.
- 5 Right before plating, stir in the red wine vinegar. Adding it last keeps the brightness intact, in color and in taste.
- 6 Taste and adjust the seasoning as needed.

WHERE IT GOES NEXT

Steak tonight, eggs in the morning, roasted carrots after that. The jar never makes it to Friday.

Get the full recipe: thisguycooks.com/chimichurri



06 Salmon with Pistachio Dukkah Crust

THE TECHNIQUE: BUILDING A CRUST

BUILDS ON 5 *Chimichurri was about flavor. This is about texture: a crust of toasted spice pressed right onto the fish.*

A weeknight fish that plates like a restaurant. Dukkah is an Egyptian nut and spice blend you'll make once and then start keeping in a jar. Here it does double duty, crust on the fish and crunch on the plate.

WHY IT WORKS

A crust is texture you attach to a protein, and it follows three rules. Toast the whole spices first, because raw ground spice tastes like dust. Keep the mix coarse, since powder burns where coarse toasts. And give it something to grip. Brush the fish with oil, press the crust on firmly, and let the pan set it. A mortar and pestle earns its shelf space. Coarse, not powdered, is the whole texture. The same move puts herbs on a rack of lamb, panko on a chicken cutlet, and seeds on a squash. Anywhere a soft thing wants a crisp edge.

THE INGREDIENTS

THE PISTACHIO DUKKAH

½ cup dry roasted salted pistachios
2 tbsp sesame seeds
1 tbsp coriander seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
½ tsp black peppercorns
½ tsp sea salt

THE SALMON

2 salmon fillets (6 oz each, skin-on)
2 tbsp olive oil
Lemon wedges, for serving

EQUIPMENT

A small dry skillet, for toasting the spices.
A mortar and pestle or spice grinder.
A nonstick skillet.
A fish spatula, for the flip.

HOW TO MAKE IT

- 1 Toast the sesame, coriander, cumin, and peppercorns in a small skillet over medium heat until fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes.
- 2 Transfer to a mortar and pestle (or spice grinder). Pound until coarse but not powdered.
- 3 Roughly chop the pistachios and mix them with the spices and sea salt.
- 4 Pat the fillets dry. Brush the flesh side with olive oil.
- 5 Press the dukkah onto the flesh side of each fillet, coating evenly.
- 6 Heat a nonstick skillet over medium-high with 1 tbsp olive oil.
- 7 Place the salmon skin-side down. Cook 4 to 5 minutes, until the skin is crisp.
- 8 Flip carefully and cook 2 to 3 minutes, until the crust is golden and the salmon is just cooked through.
- 9 Serve crust-side up with lemon wedges for squeezing, and scatter any extra dukkah around the plate for dipping.

WHERE IT GOES NEXT

The jar of leftover dukkah is the real gift. Eggs, yogurt, roast vegetables. Everything wants the crunch.

Get the full recipe: thisguycooks.com/salmon-pistachio-dukkah-crust



07 Crispy Roasted Potatoes, Rosemary & Garlic

THE TECHNIQUE: ROASTING FOR CRUNCH

BUILDS ON 6 *The same crust idea, now on a vegetable. Built for crunch.*

One of my essential winter side dishes, and the potatoes people ask about after they hear the first bite. The oven isn't the secret. What you do to the potato before it gets there is.

WHY IT WORKS

Crunch is built, not hoped for. The baking soda turns the boiling water alkaline, and that alkalinity breaks down the pectin holding the potato's surface together, pulling a layer of starch to the outside. The hard toss after they boil roughs the starchy surface into a 'craggy' paste. That paste is what fries in the infused oil and shatters when you bite. Three rules travel to everything you roast. Rough up the surface so there's something to crisp. Give every piece space on the pan, because crowding steams and space crisps. And don't turn them until the undersides are actually golden, not almost. Use a thin metal spatula so the crust stays on the potato, not the pan.

THE INGREDIENTS

THE POTATOES

4 lbs russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 2 to 3 inch chunks
½ tsp baking soda
Kosher salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

THE INFUSED OIL

5 tbsp extra virgin olive oil (or duck fat)
1 small handful fresh rosemary leaves, finely chopped
3 medium garlic cloves, minced

TO FINISH

1 small handful fresh parsley leaves, minced

EQUIPMENT

A large pot and a colander.
A small sauce pot and a fine sieve, for the oil.
A large baking sheet. One layer, no crowding.
A thin metal spatula.

HOW TO MAKE IT

- 1 Heat the oven to 450°F. Peel and cut the potatoes into large chunks.
- 2 In a large pot, cover the potatoes with water by 2 inches. Add the baking soda and 2 tbsp salt. Bring to a boil, then lower to a simmer. Cook until mostly tender, about 10 minutes.
- 3 Meanwhile, simmer the olive oil with the rosemary and garlic in a small pot until the garlic is just starting to golden. Strain the oil into a large heatproof bowl or jar and set the garlic-rosemary mix aside on a paper towel.
- 4 Drain the potatoes then return them to the pot 1 minute to steam-dry.
- 5 Tip into the infused oil and toss vigorously until the exteriors are rough and mashed. Season with salt and pepper.
- 6 Spread on the baking sheet and roast until the undersides are deeply golden before you turn them, about 20 minutes. Then toss and roast 30 to 40 minutes more, tossing occasionally, until deep golden brown all over.
- 7 Toss with the reserved garlic-rosemary, scatter the parsley, finish with flaky salt, serve immediately.

WHERE IT GOES NEXT

The baking-soda toss isn't just for potatoes. Carrots, parsnips, celery root. Any dense root crisps the same way.

Get the full recipe: thisguycooks.com/crispy-roasted-potatoes



08 Red Wine Braised Short Ribs

THE TECHNIQUE: THE RED WINE BRAISE

BUILDS ON 2 *Osso buco was the gentle braise. This is the same method, deep and dark.*

You salt the ribs the night before, sear them dark, and let them sit in the oven four quiet hours. A whole bottle of wine goes in. All of it comes back as sauce.

WHY IT WORKS

Darkness at the start becomes depth at the end. Sear the ribs until they're almost too brown and build the braise on that crust: the deeper the sear, the richer the sauce. Leave the pot partially covered so the wine reduces into a sauce that's already concentrated. And the overnight salt isn't optional. It seasons the meat all the way through, not just the surface.

THE INGREDIENTS

THE SHORT RIBS

3 to 4 lbs bone-in beef short ribs
Kosher salt, to taste
Avocado oil, as needed

THE BRAISE

1 onion, large dice
2 medium carrots, large dice
2 stalks celery, large dice
1 head garlic, halved horizontally
4 roma tomatoes, large dice
750 ml bottle red wine (Bordeaux or Burgundy)
2 cups chicken stock
2 tbsp black peppercorns
A few sprigs fresh thyme
A few sprigs fresh rosemary
A few bay leaves

TO SERVE

Polenta
3 tbsp chopped chives
Fried shallots

EQUIPMENT

A cast iron Dutch oven.
Cheesecloth and twine, for the sachet.
Tongs, for the sear.

HOW TO MAKE IT

- 1 One day before cooking, season the ribs liberally with kosher salt. Let them marinate in the refrigerator, uncovered, overnight.
- 2 The next day, set the oven to 325°F and pat the ribs dry with a paper towel.
- 3 Heat a cast iron Dutch oven over medium-high to high. Add a thin film of avocado oil and sear the ribs on all sides until deeply browned and crusty, about 5 to 8 minutes.
- 4 Transfer the ribs to a plate to rest.
- 5 Drain the scorched oil from the Dutch oven and add a fresh thin film of avocado oil.
- 6 Add the onion, carrots, celery, and garlic, and lower the heat to medium. Sweat until translucent, about 5 minutes, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom.
- 7 Add the diced roma tomatoes and cook until softened, 5 to 8 minutes.
- 8 Pour in the red wine, chicken stock, and black peppercorns. Return the ribs to the pot.
- 9 Tie the thyme, rosemary, and bay leaves in a piece of cheesecloth (or with a piece of twine) to make a sachet and add it to the pot.
- 10 Bring the liquid to a simmer, then partially cover the pot and transfer to the oven.
- 11 Braise until the ribs are nearly falling apart, about 4 hours.
- 12 Optional, but worth it: let the ribs cool in their braising liquid, then refrigerate overnight. As the protein relaxes it reabsorbs the sauce, and the dish comes back moister and deeper, the jump from an 8.5 to a 9.5. The next day, lift off any set fat and gently reheat the ribs in the sauce before serving.
- 13 Serve over creamy polenta, spooning that sauce over the top, garnished with chopped chives, and topped with fried shallots if you want to take it up a notch.

WHERE IT GOES NEXT

The dark sear and a bottle of wine aren't just for short ribs. Oxtail, beef cheeks, a chuck roast. Any tough, rich cut wants this braise.

Get the full recipe: thisguycooks.com/red-wine-braised-short-ribs



09 Mussels with Parmesan Cream

THE TECHNIQUE: ONE PAN, SHELLFISH, A FAST CREAM SAUCE

BUILDS ON 1 *A cousin of the pan sauce from Recipe 1: a fast cream broth in one pot, with shellfish that tell you the moment they are done.*

Mussels are the fastest luxury at the fish counter and usually also the cheapest thing on it. One pot, about half an hour, and a broth good enough that the bread matters as much as the mussels. Pro tip: buy more bread than you think you need. You'll thank me later.

WHY IT WORKS

Cooking shellfish comes with its own built in timer. The mussels crack open when they're done, which makes this the least stressful seafood you can cook. The real reward is the liquid gold under them. You'll learn in this recipe that a spoonful of flour into butter makes a quick roux, and that's what lets the broth hold cream and a quarter pound of cheese without it separating (you'll hear chefs refer to this as 'breaking'). Keep the aromatics gentle and blond in color, never browned, so the broth stays sweet. And stir the cheese in off the heat, so it melts instead of seizing up. A tight lid keeps the steam in, and the steam does the cooking. So choose your pot wisely.

THE INGREDIENTS

THE MUSSELS & BROTH

2 lbs mussels, cleaned and debearded
5 to 6 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1 shallot, thinly sliced
3 tbsp butter
1 tbsp all-purpose flour
8 oz clam juice (or fish stock)
¾ cup heavy cream
1 lemon, juiced and zested
4 oz parmesan cheese, finely grated
Kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper, to taste
Scallions or parsley, chopped, for garnish
Crusty bread, for serving

EQUIPMENT

A Dutch oven (or a large pot with a tight fitting lid).
A silicone whisk, for the roux and the broth.
A wooden spoon.
A slotted spoon, to lift the mussels out.
A stiff brush, for scrubbing the shells.

HOW TO MAKE IT

- 1 Set a medium Dutch oven over medium heat and melt the butter.
- 2 Add the garlic, lemon zest, and shallot, then reduce the heat to medium-low. Sauté until soft and translucent, 8 to 10 minutes. Avoid browning. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper.
- 3 Whisk in the flour until smooth and cook 1 to 2 minutes, until it forms a golden paste and loses its raw smell.
- 4 Add the clam juice and bring to a boil, whisking to fully incorporate the flour and lift anything stuck to the bottom with a wooden spoon.
- 5 Reduce to a simmer and stir in the cream. Season again with salt and pepper.
- 6 Add the mussels and half the scallions. Stir and cover with the lid. Steam until the mussels open, about 5 minutes. Lift the opened mussels to a bowl with a slotted spoon; discard any that stay shut after 10 minutes.
- 7 Taste the broth. Adjust with salt, pepper, or lemon juice, and simmer a few minutes to thicken if you want.
- 8 Off the heat, stir in the remaining lemon juice to taste, then the parmesan until fully melted. Return the mussels to the pot, or pour the broth over the serving bowl.
- 9 Garnish with the remaining scallions. Serve immediately with lemon wedges and crusty bread.

WHERE IT GOES NEXT

Next week it's clams, white wine, and a different herb. The pot won't notice.

Get the full recipe: thisguycooks.com/mussels-with-parmesan-cream



10 Pistachio Panna Cotta, Honeyed Orange

THE TECHNIQUE: SETTING A CUSTARD

THE FINALE *The set. Warm cream, a little gelatin, and time in the fridge does the rest.*

The dessert that makes people assume you trained somewhere. Panna cotta is barely cooking. You warm cream, you set it, and the refrigerator does the rest. The whole trick is stopping at barely set.

WHY IT WORKS

Gelatin is the most forgiving way to set a dessert, and it asks only two things. Bloom it in cold liquid first so it dissolves evenly, and keep it off the boil once it's in, because hard heat weakens the set. The right amount is the least amount. A panna cotta should just barely hold its shape and shiver when the plate moves. Silky is the entire point, so strain it through a fine-mesh sieve.

THE INGREDIENTS

THE PANNA COTTA

1½ cups heavy cream
1½ cups whole milk
½ cup dry roasted salted pistachios
¼ cup sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
Pinch of kosher salt
1 packet unflavored powdered gelatin
(about 2¼ tsp)

THE HONEYED ORANGE

1 cup orange segments
1½ tbsp honey
2 tsp lemon juice

TO FINISH

2 tbsp dry roasted salted pistachios,
crushed
Mint leaves or microgreens, optional

EQUIPMENT

A saucepan.
A blender.
A fine-mesh sieve.
Ramekins or small molds.

HOW TO MAKE IT

- 1 Add the gelatin to the cold milk in a small bowl and let it bloom, 5 to 10 minutes.
- 2 Combine the cream, sugar, pistachios, vanilla, and a pinch of salt in a saucepan. Bring to a gentle simmer, then remove from the heat. Let it steep 15 to 20 minutes to infuse.
- 3 Add the bloomed milk and gelatin to the warm cream and blend until smooth.
- 4 Strain through a fine-mesh sieve. The silky texture lives or dies here.
- 5 Pour into ramekins or molds. Cool slightly, cover, and refrigerate at least 4 hours, until fully set.
- 6 Toss the orange segments with the honey and lemon juice. Let them sit at room temperature for 15 minutes.
- 7 Unmold the panna cottas (or serve them in the ramekins). Garnish with the honeyed orange and the crushed pistachios. Add mint or microgreens if you like.

WHERE IT GOES NEXT

One packet to about three cups of dairy sets almost any liquid you can flavor. Coffee, coconut milk, buttermilk.

Make it the night before and dessert is finished before anyone rings the bell. That's the real trick of hosting.

Get the full recipe: thisguycooks.com/pistachio-panna-cotta-with-honeyed-orange