



“Exanimo World Cookbook”

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Introduction

The Oxford English Dictionary defines tapas as small Spanish savoury dishes, typically served with drinks at a bar. Fair enough, but they forgot to mention how easy, delicious and adaptable they are! If you're anything like me, once you start eating this way, it is difficult to go back to our way of one big plate of the same thing. Tasting and picking is infinitely more fun and the possibilities are endless. In fact, this style of eating can be adapted to any culinary tradition and served buffet or sit-down style. Purists beware.

Enter my cookbook. In no time at all, you'll be dazzling your guests with colourful recipes that are a treat for all the senses. Use my recipes as a guide to create anything from casual get-togethers to inspired feasts. The sky's the limit. Mix and match cultures, breakdown barriers and transform palates in a mostly guilt-free, healthful environment. All you need is a set of 8 side plates and teacups, which double as cute mini bowls. Some of my ideas have been inspired by my travels, whether on the streets of Montreal or abroad, others by my crazy restaurant family's life, while others are happy accidents.

A few things to remember

My recipes are merely guidelines. In the melting pot that is North America, people come from all backgrounds and as such, have different tastes and tolerances for spices and herbs. For instance, one person may like something a bit spicier than another. That is why there is a lot of room for individual palates here. If a recipe says 1 tbsp. it is not set in stone. I enjoy the sensory and relaxing aspect of cooking and adjust seasonings until they taste good to me – please do the same and don't get bogged down by specific quantities. Cook like a painter, not an engineer, unless you are one, in which case I apologize. Furthermore, some spices become less pronounced the longer you have them opened in your cupboard, and as such, a very spicy cinnamon that you purchased last year may have lost a bit of its edge over time.

Please use common sense while cooking. For instance, the newer stovetops and ovens get and stay hot very quickly, compared to older, traditional models, so please cook mindfully. Never be too far from the stove or oven while cooking and wait to see if the suggested temperature works for your appliance. For example, you may find that you need to increase or lower the temperature by 25 degrees or more. Always start on the lower end if you are unsure. If you burnt your butter because the phone rang and you were sidetracked, start again. It's better to waste a tbsp. of burnt butter than an entire dish that tastes of it. Remember that cooking should be fun, so relax, get your eyes, ears and noses ready, and enjoy the experience.

Cheers,

Anastasia

Mediterranean Party for 8

Don't be intimidated by this party. Everything is very simple to prepare. In fact, with all your ingredients on hand, you can have this on the table and ready to wow your guests in three hours flat. Try to get your shopping done, table set and Sangria ready to go the day before so that the day of the party you can concentrate on cooking. The best way to execute this menu is to prepare all vegetables, herbs and mixtures first, and then start cooking. It may mean using an entire box of Ziplock bags but it's well worth it. This way, everything gets cooked and served at the same time. So without further ado...

Menu:

Bruschetta

Pan seared lambchops

Paella cakes

Vegetarian stuffed baby eggplant

Baked halibut with tomato olive salsa

Red and white Sangria

San Pellegrino



Bruschetta

Ingredients

4 large plum tomatoes, chopped.
2 tbsp flat leaf Italian parsley, finely chopped
2 tbsp fresh basil, finely chopped
2 large cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 tbsp finely chopped shallots
2 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp finely grated parmesan cheese
2 tbsp balsamico cotto, available in fine food stores
1 tbsp greek oregano
freshly ground pepper
pinch of sea salt

Method

Can be made one day ahead and refrigerated. Bring to room temperature before serving.

Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl.

Lightly toast eight thin slices of baguette or country bread and spoon bruschetta on top. Serve immediately. This should be done at the end, or right before serving all items.

Stuffed Baby Eggplant

Ingredients

4 baby eggplants
1 scant tsp sea salt
1 tbsp olive oil
1 leek, finely chopped
1 onion, finely chopped
1 celery heart with leaves, finely chopped.
2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
4 large button mushrooms, thinly sliced
1 small zucchini, chopped
¼ red pepper, chopped
¼ green pepper, chopped
4 plum tomatoes, canned or fresh, roughly chopped
2 tbsp flat leaf parsley
2 tbsp dried basil
2 tbsp dried greek oregano
freshly ground pepper
pinch of sea salt
2 tbsp Italian breadcrumbs
1/3 cup toasted pine nuts
1/3 cup raisins, optional
1/3 cup crumbled feta cheese

Method

Cut four baby eggplants in half, lengthwise. Using a very sharp knife, hollow out the eggplant, leaving only one cm of white flesh attached to the purple outer shell and discard or pickle or use in another recipe.

Sprinkle the eight shells with one scant tsp seasalt and turn upside down onto paper towels. This will absorb excess moisture.

Preheat oven to 350.

Meanwhile, heat olive oil in a large pan and saute onion, leek, garlic, celery, zucchini, mushrooms, both peppers, tomatoes, parsley, basil, oregano and season with freshly ground pepper and pinch of salt for about ten minutes, or until all veggies are soft, but not overcooked.

Remove from heat and stir in pinenuts and raisins, if using.

Fill baby eggplants with mixture and place in shallow baking dish. Bake eggplant in preheated oven for twenty five minutes or until cooked.

Remove from oven and set broiler on high. Sprinkle eggplant with breadcrumbs and feta and place under broiler for five minutes.

Baked halibut with tomato olive salsa

Ingredients

4 6-8 oz halibut fillets
2 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp dried parsley
1 tbsp dried oregano
pinch salt
freshly ground pepper

For the salsa

1 pint cherry tomatoes, chopped
1 cup kalamata olives, pits removed, finely chopped
2 tbsp olive oil
juice of ½ lemon
3 finely chopped shallots, white part only
2 tbsp capers
pinch seasalt
freshly ground pepper

Method

Place halibut fillets in shallow baking dish and drizzle with olive oil, parsley, oregano, salt and pepper.

Bake at 350 for twelve-fifteen minutes or until cooked through and you can delicately flake off a piece of fish with your fork (use your piece as the tester). If filets are cut thick, it may take up to seventeen minutes to cook. Do not overcook.

Cut each filet in half, to make eight pieces.

Combine ingredients for salsa in bowl and spoon over fish before serving.

Saffron Seafood Paella cakes

Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil
1/3 cup chopped green pepper
1/3 cup chopped red pepper
1 chopped onion
4 chopped plum tomatoes, fresh or canned
1 tbsp dried parsley
1 tbsp dried basil
1 tbsp dried oregano
freshly ground pepper

½ cup calrose rice
2 cups chicken broth
2 pinches saffron threads, finely chopped

8 large shrimp
16 mussels, well scrubbed.

¾ cup panko breadcrumbs

1 cup sunflower oil for cooking (do not use olive oil – far too heavy)

Saffron aioli

2 egg yolks
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 tsp Dijon mustard
1 pinch white pepper
1 pinch salt
1 pinch saffron threads, finely chopped
¾ cup sunflower oil
1 tbsp lemon juice

Method

Heat olive oil in large pan and add peppers, onions, tomato and herbs. Saute for five minutes, or until soft.

Add rice, one cup chicken broth and saffron and bring to boil.

Lower heat to med-low and cover for ten minutes.

If liquid has been absorbed, add more broth.

Add shrimp and mussels and cover again for ten minutes.

Shrimp should be cooked and mussels opened.

Remove from heat. Remove seafood and discard shells. Chop into small pieces and return to rice mixture. Transfer to bowl and let cool.

When cool, add breadcrumbs and form into eight balls. Flatten slightly and place on cookie sheet and cover with plastic wrap. Place in fridge for twenty minutes.

Heat sunflower oil in pan and when sizzling, add paella cakes. Cook approximately two and a half minutes on each side. Set aside on paper towels when done.

Serve with saffron aioli and lemon wedges.

To make aioli, combine egg yolks, mustard, garlic, salt, pepper, saffron in food processor or using hand held mixer. With the motor running, slowly add your oil, drizzling 1-2 tbsp at a time, combining well with each addition. If you do not add oil slowly, your aioli will separate and you will have to start again.

When all the oil has been added, stir in 1 tbsp of lemon juice.

Pan seared Lamb chops

Ingredients

8 2 oz lamb chops

Marinade:

2 tbsp olive oil, plus 2 tbsp for cooking.
juice of one lemon
1 tbsp greek oregano
1 tbsp dried parsley
pinch of sea salt
freshly ground black pepper

Method

Combine ingredients for marinade in a small bowl.

Place lamb chops in shallow dish and pour marinade over.

Heat one tbsp olive oil in a large pan and cook four chops over medium high for two minutes on each side for a perfect medium rare. You know your pan is ready if it sizzles when the chop hits. If not, wait until it does. Keep warm in the oven while you cook four others.

Serve with more fresh cut lemons.

White sangria

In a pitcher, combine a mixture of ½ cup each: lychees, kiwi slices, seedless green grapes cut in half, peach or nectarine slices and fill pitcher ¾ of the way with a nice Spanish or Italian white varietal. Refrigerate overnight. When ready to serve, add lemon and lime slices, 1 oz Peach Schnapps, 1 can Fresca and 1 cup orange juice. Serve over ice and enjoy.

Red Sangria

In a pitcher, combine a mixture of ½ cup each: raspberries, strawberries, seedless red or purple grapes cut in half, sliced plums and fill pitcher ¾ of the way with Spanish or Italian red wine. Refrigerate overnight. When ready to serve, add cinnamon sticks and orange slices, 1 oz Grand Marnier, 1 can Ginger Ale and 1 cup orange juice. Serve over ice and enjoy.

Round out your table with thinly sliced Iberico ham, a Spanish staple, a mild Spanish cheese, mixed olives, hot and sweet peppers, a bowl of almonds, lemon wedges, and bottles of chilled San Pellegrino.

Download The Gypsy Kings, Paco De Lucia, Andrea Bocelli and some Bouzouki music to keep things authentic.

If you have any clay or terra cotta pots and serving trays that you don't use because they don't go into the dishwasher, now's the time to make an exception. Ditto for any beautiful linen or lace napkins and tablecloths.

Game-Day Party for 8

This menu is comprised of easy to prepare satisfying snacks that make for healthier and tastier game-day fare. Instead of placing each item on a separate plate, try using two large platters and mix and match all the items. This way, each side of the TV room gets easy access to these delicious treats. Round off your platters with refreshing carrot and celery sticks.

Menu:

Frickles

Spicy Baked Jerk Chicken Drumsticks with Guava Glaze

Bison sliders

Baked tilapia tacos with summer salsa

Guacamole with blue corn chips

Beer and Margaritas



Frickles

Try serving the frickles as an hors d'oeuvre while you're busy with the finishing touches.

Ingredients

4 large kosher dill pickles, sliced in four, lengthwise.

3 eggs

¼ cup 2% milk

1 cup flour

2 cups sunflower oil

1 cup homemade breadcrumbs (there will be left over breadcrumbs to use for the sliders and at a later date)

For breadcrumbs:

1 day-old baguette or sourdough loaf, cut into 2 inch cubes.

1 tsp garlic powder

1 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp parsley

1 tsp dried basil

1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

1 pinch sea salt

Method

Place bread in shallow baking dish and bake at 275 until dried out (approximately 20 minutes).

When done, remove from oven and let cool.

When cool, place bread in food processor or blender and convert to crumbs, leaving some small chunks in tact.

Stir in all herbs and spices.

Store in airtight container.

For Frickles:

With a fork, combine egg and milk in small bowl. Set aside.

Place your flour in another small bowl and set beside the egg mixture. Do the same for the breadcrumbs.

Pour sunflower oil into a heavy pan until you have a depth of approximately 1/3 inch. Two cups should do the trick.

Heat oil on high for approximately one minute. To test the oil, drop a few breadcrumbs into the pan: if they begin to sizzle and cook, your oil is hot enough; if not, keep it on high and try again in 30 seconds and so on.

While the oil is heating up, dredge your pickle slices in the egg mixture, then in the flour mixture, then in the egg mixture again and finally in the breadcrumb mixture, making sure to coat each piece thoroughly.

Cook frickles in sunflower oil for 6-8 minutes or until golden and crispy. Turning only once.

Remove from oil and place on paper towels to absorb excess oil.

Serve immediately with Thousand Island dressing or Dijon mustard for dipping.

Spicy Baked Jerk Chicken Drumsticks with Guava Glaze

Jerk marinade is very easy to make yourself and countless recipes abound online. The key components are scotch bonnet, allspice, garlic, thyme, white vinegar and vegetable oil and recipes differ slightly. If you're short on time, Walkerswood, from Jamaica, sold in most Caribbean markets makes a really great marinade.

Ingredients

8 large chicken drumsticks, skin removed.
3/4 cup Jerk marinade
1/2 cup unsalted butter
1/2 cup guava jelly, sold at most Caribbean markets. If you can't find any, peach jelly will do.

Method

In a large bowl, marinate chicken in Jerk marinade overnight.

Transfer chicken to baking sheet and bake at 375 for 35-40 minutes or until done.

Remove from oven and set broiler to 500. In a small saucepan, melt butter and jelly over low heat.

When melted and combined, baste chicken generously and place under broiler until bubbling and crisp, turning once (approximately 3-4 minutes on each side).

Bison sliders

Ingredients

24 oz extra lean, ground bison meat
5 oz tomato juice or V8
2 eggs
1/3 cup homemade breadcrumbs
4 oz crumbled feta cheese
1/2 tsp dried parsley
1/2 tsp thyme
1/2 tsp sage
1/2 tsp oregano
pinch of sea salt,
Dash of Tabasco
Dash of Worcestershire

Method

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and make 8 meatballs.

Place them on a baking sheet and flatten them slightly.

Pan fry, BBQ or broil for 5-10 minutes, until desired temperature is reached. I recommend medium-rare to medium.

Serve on a mini pretzel, potato flour, or traditional burger bun with your choice of caramelized onions, grilled Portobello mushrooms, sweet or hot peppers, goat, swiss or cheddar cheeses, guacamole, bacon, heirloom tomato slices, low fat mayo infused with your choice of herbs and spices, such as chipotle or curry, mustard, ketchup and relish.

Guacamole

Ingredients

3 cloves garlic, minced
Juice of ½ a lemon
Juice of 1/2 a lime
3 ripe avocados, peeled, cored and roughly chopped
½ ripe tomato, finely chopped
¼ red pepper, diced
¼ cup cilantro, finely chopped
pinch of pepper
pinch of seasalt
1 tsp chili powder
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely diced.

Method

Place garlic in a large mortar and pestle. Pour lemon and lime juice over. Let stand a few minutes.
Add all ingredients except the avocado and combine.
Add avocado and mix until desired consistency is reached.
Serve with organic blue corn chips.

Baked Tilapia Tacos with Summer Salsa

Ingredients

8 3-4 oz tilapia fillets
Pinch of sea salt
Pinch of pepper

For salsa:

2 pints cherry tomatoes, diced
2 large ripe mangoes, peeled, cored and diced
1 red pepper, seeded and diced
2 jalapeno peppers, seeded and diced
3 shallots, white parts only, diced
1/3 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro

Juice of 2 limes

¼ cup sunflower oil
Pinch of sea salt
Pinch of pepper
8 soft flour tortillas

Method

Place tilapia on a baking dish and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake at 350 for 10-12 minutes or until done, turning once.
While fish is cooking, combine all salsa ingredients in a bowl.
When fish is done, spoon salsa over for colour and place remaining salsa in a bowl on the side.
Serve fish with soft flour tortillas and lime wedges.

Week-end Brunch for 8

The problem with brunch is that no one feels like waking up at the crack of dawn to make it and lack of coordination on the part of the chef can have disastrous results. That's why this brunch can be prepped the night before and be on the table in 40 minutes the day of. This is also why I've organized this menu a little differently. No need to be a morning person to ace this menu.

Menu:

Mimosas (champagne and Oj)

Coffee

Broccoli frittata (12 eggs; 1 head broccoli, 1 cup whole milk, 2 cups sharp cheddar, salt and pepper to taste)

Raisin French toast (8 thick slices, 4 eggs, milk, vanilla, nutmeg, cinnamon))

Mini tropical fresh fruit kebabs (40 assorted bite sized pieces or 5 per skewer)

Mini sausage and purple potato skewers (4 sausages and 8 mini purple potatoes)

Heirloom tomato salad cups (8 ripe heirloom tomatoes, one red onion, fresh basil, dried parsley, oregano, oil and wine vinegar)

The day before:

Buy yourself a bouquet of fresh flowers to place on the table – remember to choose lower stemmed varieties so that everyone can see each other over them. Try filling 3 mason jars with different, colourful varieties and place them on the table wherever you like.

Buy champagne. Mumm's Napa is inexpensive and delicious.

Splurge on freshly ground gourmet coffee and pretty paper napkins.

Buy your mini bamboo skewers, butter, cheese, eggs, whole milk, broccoli, raisin French toast, oj, tomatoes, basil, red onion, assorted fruits, such as pineapple, mango, melon, strawberries, grapes, star fruit, kiwis and bananas, sausages and mini purple potatoes.

The night before:

Set your table for 8. Don't forget champagne flutes, coffee cups, milk and sugar and maple syrup caddies, and flowers.

Boil your potatoes until just done and cover and refrigerate (remember you will be reheating them in the morning so they will cook in the microwave for 2 minutes longer).

Boil your sausages and cover and refrigerate.

Cut your fruit into bite-sized chunks (except the banana!) and toss gently with orange juice. Cover and refrigerate.

Steam your head of broccoli and cut up into very small bites, place in a large bowl and let cool. Add 12 eggs, 2 cups freshly grated sharp cheddar cheese, 1 cup whole milk, 1 tsp freshly ground pepper and ½ tsp sea salt. Cover and refrigerate.

Slice your raisin bread into thick slices and place in tightly sealed plastic bag.

Crack 4 eggs into a bowl. Add ½ cup whole milk, dash pure vanilla extract, cinnamon, nutmeg. Cover and refrigerate.

Leave butter out in butter dish overnight.

Leave tomatoes out overnight.

Take out 4 platters and 8 teacups or mini bowls for salad.

Chill your champagne in the fridge overnight.

Take out 1 medium frying pan, 1 large frying pan and one large skillet that can go under the broiler, 1 shallow glass bowl that is wide enough to soak your bread in, 1 big bowl for salad, spatula, whisk, sharp knives, mini skewers

Brunch day!

Wake-up, get dressed and start your coffee.

Take everything out of the fridge.

Heat 2 tbsp butter on medium heat in oven-friendly skillet and pour broccoli and egg mixture into it. Lower heat to medium-low.

While that is cooking, wash, dry and chop your tomatoes into quarters or sixths if need be. Sprinkle with ½ tsp each: dried greek oregano, and parsley, pinch of sea salt, ½ cup chopped fresh basil, extremely thinly sliced red onion, freshly ground black pepper, drizzle with olive oil and red wine vinegar. Toss and divide into 8 mini servings. Place one at each table setting.

Check the frittata! Using a spatula, lift the edges and tilt the pan so that the liquid on top can get to the bottom. When the last bit of liquid has been moved to the bottom of the pan, remove from heat immediately. The residual heat in the pan will cook the egg without burning the bottom.

Heat 1 tbsp of butter over medium heat in the medium frying pan and add your 4 pre-cooked sausages. Lower to medium low and brown them until crispy on the outside, about 5 minutes. When done, wrap in foil and put in 275 degree oven to keep warm.

Skewer your fruit for a total of 8, adding banana if using. Place on platter and place on table.

Place your frittata under the broiler over medium. Make sure it's not too close -1/4 of the way down, or halfway to the middle is perfect.

Microwave your potatoes for 2 minutes. Set aside until slightly cool and slice in half. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and a little rosemary if you like.

Remove sausages from oven and slice in thick rounds.

Make 8 skewers, alternating between potato and sausage.

Place on platter and place on table.

Check your frittata! It should be done. Remove from oven when slightly golden on top. Let rest for 5 minutes.

Melt one tbsp. butter in frying pan over medium-low and soak your raisin bread thoroughly – approximately 1 full minute per slice.

Cook two slices at a time, adding butter as needed, about 2 minutes on each side or until golden brown on the outside and soft in the middle. Don't be shy with the butter, I'm afraid there's no way around it with French toast. Be good tomorrow.

Have a glass baking dish ready to place cooked slices on a keep warm in 275 degree oven.

Place 8 slices on platter and dust with powdered sugar and dash more cinnamon. Place on table.

Slice your frittata into 8 pieces and serve.

Uncork the bubbly and serve, topping off each glass with a little oj – just for colour!

There you go: an extravagant brunch for 8 in 40 minutes. This shouldn't cost you more than 13.25\$ per person, including the flowers, napkins, bubbly and coffee.

Hope you enjoyed the first Exanimo World Cookbook. The second one will be out soon with Asian and Irish themed parties and more!

The End

