

THE WINE + FOOD ISSUE!

SERENDIPITY

LIVING IN FAIRFIELD & WESTCHESTER COUNTIES

CULINARY LEGEND

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Fall
Recipes
From

JOY BAUER
SCOTT CONANT
ALEX GUARNASCHELLI
ADAM RICHMAN
& MORE!

MOST
INNOVATIVE
CHEFS
OF 2018

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TO MEET THEM!



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SERENDIPITY



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MOST INNOVATIVE CHEFS OF 2018!

CHEF'S CHOICE

FROM GUILTY PLEASURES TO THE ONLY CHILI RECIPE YOU'LL NEED THIS SEASON, SIX CELEBRITY CHEFS SHARE WHAT'S ON THEIR PLATES—AND HOW TO MAKE SURE IT ALL TURNS OUT PERFECTLY. BY LAURA KENYON

Ingredients

- 6 Culinary superstars
- 3 Must-try recipes
- 8 Restaurants to add to your list
- 21 Expert tips
- 10 Guilty pleasures





Celebrity chef Scott Conant is known for creating bold flavors.

SCOTT CONANT

Taking Italian Cooking to the Next Level



Woodfire-roasted shrimp with 'nduja butter

There are few things sweeter than an Italian grandmother cooking a pot of fresh cavatelli for her loved ones in the Tuscan countryside. Picture: a table filled with family and friends, laughter, olive oil and a local guanciale (aka cured meat).

For Scott Conant, best-selling cookbook author, judge on Food Network's *Chopped*, and owner of four upscale Italian restaurants, this familiar vision from his own childhood represents the foundation of quality cooking. From braising meat to boiling pasta, he believes that the key to elevating Italian cooking is in the basics. This is his best advice for taking your cooking to the next level.

LEARN THE FOUNDATION

According to Conant, a good nonna's cooking has multiple layers and a soulful, long-lasting quality that fills up your palate. "The last thing you add to a dish is usually the first thing that you taste, and then it goes backwards from there," he says, emphasizing the importance of the "soffritto," or foundation. "If you don't have the foundation in place, it's really hard to identify something to stand on to lift you up," he says. That's why it's so important to truly understand those commodities of the Italian kitchen—searing, roasting, mixing vinaigrettes, even boiling pasta. "You really should learn how to do these things the way an Italian grandmother would do it. And then you can evolve and move forward from there," Conant advises.

STOCK YOUR KITCHEN

In addition to the basics (extra virgin olive oil, crushed red pepper, sea salt, garlic and pasta), Conant always keeps a few extra staples in the refrigerator—like bottarga, guanciale, or "a good salume." These special ingredients, which can sit in waiting for a few weeks, are often the next step in elevating a simple dish—once you master the basics, of course. "Maybe that spaghetti aglio e olio is a starting point for what becomes a spaghetti with clams," he says, "or spaghetti with shrimp. [But] you have to know how to make a spaghetti aglio e olio before you know how to make a spaghetti with clams or a seafood pasta," he says.

KNOW YOUR OILS

Extra virgin olive oil is widely considered the highest quality variety with the most robust flavor, and Conant almost always cooks with it. The



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exceptions: searing meat and mixing a vinaigrette. In the case of the former, extra virgin olive oil will likely darken and lose its flavor, while just the opposite may happen in a vinaigrette. “Straight extra virgin olive could be overwhelming for the rest of your vinaigrette,” he says, “so cut that with another oil that has a neutral flavor profile.” That could be avocado, sunflower, canola, or even melted brown butter.

SALT THE WATER

When boiling pasta, Conant says it is “shocking” how many people don’t put salt in the water first. “It sounds simple and it sounds pretty basic, but you should add enough salt to the water that it tastes like broth,” he says, advocating for a handful or even more. “It’s a lot, but you’re not consuming all that salt. You’re seasoning.”

UTILIZE MOTHER NATURE

When it comes to vegetables, Conant recommends roasting over boiling. Not only does this

allow for a tasty seasoning and caramelization, it’s also a way to be more health-conscious. If you’re roasting carrots, for example, he suggests washing them well but keeping the skin on. “That’s all nutrients. There’s no reason to boil them in water and cook all the nutrients out,” he says.

AVOID SHORTCUTS

“Make sure that you follow through on the technique,” says Conant. “If it says in a recipe to sear the steak well, really get that pan nice and hot.” Doing otherwise may save a few seconds, but it comes at the expense of flavor (in this case, caramelization). Says Conant: “Just having a broiled piece of meat is very different from having something that’s been seared off precisely and braised for an extended period of time at a low temperature inside of a heavily flavored liquid. Make sure that you sear that steak really well because everything means something in the end.”

FOOD

Adam Richman's grilled shrimp tacos include a honeydew sriracha salsa.



Grilled Shrimp Tacos with Honeydew Sriracha Salsa

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 honeydew melon, diced
- 1/2 cup sriracha
- 4 plum tomatoes, diced
- 1 white onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 jalapeno, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled
- 1/2 cup olive oil, plus more for grilling
- 1 pound medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 12 small flour or corn tortillas
- 1/2 head of iceberg lettuce, shredded
- Pico de gallo, for serving

1. In a sealable plastic bag, combine the honeydew and sriracha. Add more sriracha if the honeydew isn't completely coated. Press all the air out of the bag, seal it and refrigerate overnight.
2. The next day, in a large bowl, combine the tomatoes, onion, cilantro, jalapeno, lime juice and marinated honeydew. Set aside.
3. Crush the garlic cloves and place them in a small bowl. Cover with the 1/2 cup of olive oil and let sit for at least 30 minutes.
4. Preheat a grill (or a cast-iron skillet) until hot.
5. Pat the shrimp dry with paper towels, then brush them with the garlic olive oil. Thread the shrimp on skewers, then place the skewers on the grill. Cook for about 2 minutes, turn and cook another 1 to 2 minutes, until just pink throughout. Transfer the shrimp to a clean plate. Remove and discard the skewers.
6. To assemble, place a few shrimp in each tortilla and top with the melon salsa and lettuce. Serve while the shrimp are still warm. Pass the pico de gallo around the table.

ADAM RICHMAN

Home Cooking

When half your life is spent touring the world in search of noteworthy foods, the allure of home reaches a whole new level. For Adam Richman, a Travel Channel host and producer who visited more than 13 countries for one season of *Secret Eats with Adam Richman* alone, this downtime is precious. So what does the ultimate foodie crave when he finally gets to roll up his sleeves in the comfort of his own kitchen? That would be some homemade grilled shrimp tacos.

"What I love about the shrimp tacos in this recipe is that they are not a complex dish to put together, but they have a complex flavor profile," says Richman. "Infusing the melon with the sriracha and infusing the oil with garlic are two great ways to add huge layers of flavor in just two steps. You get sweet, savory and spicy in one delicious package."



JOY BAUER

Whipping Up Some Joy

As *The Today Show* show's nutrition and health expert, author of 12 *New York Times* bestselling books, and host of NBC's *Health + Happiness With Mayo Clinic*, Joy Bauer has a lot on her plate. Her latest book focuses on ways in which food can cure what ails you—be it seasonal allergies, brain fog, or even anxiety.

"When you think about food, you probably think about pleasing your taste buds, celebrat-

ing a happy event or maybe losing weight. But food is so much more than that," says Bauer. "Food can boost energy and brain power. Food can help prevent disease. And in some cases, eating the right food may even reverse certain conditions."

A self-described foodie, Bauer credits the creation of *Joy's Simple Food Remedies: Tasty Cures for Whatever's Ailing You* to current

research as well as her own experiences. "We're moving in the direction of using food as medicine, so it's the perfect time for a book like this. Food deserves our respect," she says. "Now is the time to bring the incredible powers of food into the mainstream."

So rather than reaching for the medicine cabinet, head straight for the kitchen next time you're battling the following ailments.



A bite of these blondies not only tastes good, but can help combat anxiety.

Joy Bauer's Stress-Relieving Orange-Chamomile Blondies

MAKES 16 SQUARES

- One 15.5-ounce can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- ½ cup almond butter
- ½ cup honey
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons dried chamomile (about 5 chamomile tea bags)
- 1 ½ to 2 tablespoons orange zest (from 1 orange)
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ cup semisweet chocolate chips
- ½ cup chopped pecans (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease an 8-inch square pan with oil spray.
2. Place all the ingredients except for the chocolate chips (and pecans, if using) in a food processor or blender, and process until the batter is smooth and creamy.
3. Fold in the chocolate chips and optional pecans. (The batter should be thick.)
4. Bake for about 25 to 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean and the edges are a tiny bit brown.
5. Let the blondies cool in the pan for at least 20 minutes before slicing.

(story continued)



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BRAIN FOG

Despite the nickname “senior moment,” there are no age requirements for misplacing your keys or forgetting a colleague’s name, according to Bauer. And while there are countless triggers for brain fog, certain foods have been shown to sharpen focus and memory. Blueberries, for instance, are “loaded with antioxidants that can help prevent or slow cognitive decline,” says the mother of three. Also in Bauer’s arsenal: caffeinated coffee, which can increase alertness, improve mood, boost cognitive function and reverse fatigue; cocoa powder, which has flavanols associated with better brain function and improved blood flow; and iron-rich lentils, which help the brain produce neurotransmitters and are “critical for brain function.”

COLD OR FLU

With more than 200 viruses lurking about during “the sneezin’ season,” Bauer knows that it’s “virtually impossible” to fully prevent colds and flu. “But by eating foods rich in vitamin C (think:

guava and mushrooms), beta-carotene (such as carrots) or a combo of the two (like pink grapefruit), you can bolster your immune system to help protect against these bugs or dampen the symptoms if you do catch a bug.”

FATIGUE

While nothing can beat proper hydration and a good night's sleep, several common foods can also help boost energy when you're feeling tired. According to Bauer: "Purple grapes are loaded with water (to help prevent dehydration, a common cause of fatigue) and are also rich in resveratrol (the same good-for-you component in red wine), which has been shown to combat exhaustion. Dark meat poultry is another fatigue fighter because it's rich in protein, which provides the body with a sustained source of energy and iron, a mineral that enables the body to produce hemoglobin, the substance in red blood cells

that carries oxygen throughout the body. Walnuts are another great source of energy because they're the richest nut in omega-3 fats, and have been shown to boost energy in cancer survivors following a fatigue-reduction diet.”

STRESS AND ANXIETY

When you're battling anxiety and stress, be sure to consume omega-3s, which can be found in fatty fish such as salmon, sardines, Atlantic mackerel or Arctic char. "Study after study shows that omega-3s are helpful in fighting depression, and one study found them to be particularly useful in combating anxiety, too," says Bauer, who also touts the anxiety-easing powers of chamomile tea and citrus. "Vitamin-C rich orange is another stress-busting bite. In one study, people who took vitamin C for two weeks and had to face a nerve-wracking test felt less frazzled and had a lower blood pressure than those who didn't get the vitamin.”

HANGOVER

"The no-fail cure for a hangover... is to not get one in the first place!" jokes Bauer. "Unfortunately, we've all been there, and may go there again. When that happens, there are a few key nutrients to look for the morning after. Potassium, which you can find in ample amounts in bananas, mangoes and white potatoes, helps replace lost electrolytes that typically happens with dehydration. Vitamin B6 is another key nutrient for hangover relief. Studies show people who got a dose of this vitamin experienced a 50 percent reduction in symptoms. Pineapple is another tasty fix—it's loaded with water for tasty hydration and also contains an enzyme called bromelain that can help with digestion and may also ease inflammation. Whip up a banana-mango-pineapple smoothie for a quick and delicious hangover remedy." ●

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Take your time cooking this cozy chili and it will be worth the wait.

KEVIN DES
CHENES

Elevated Comfort Food

For more than 20 years, Chef Kevin Des Chenes has been filling hungry bellies all over New England. Starting with the launch of 156 Bistro in Burlington, VT, he has served as executive chef in some of the region's most prestigious kitchens, including the famous Washington Square Tavern in Boston, MA, and McGrath's Catering in Newport, RI.

"Simplicity is best," he says, when asked to describe his cooking philosophy. "Sometimes it's not the ingredients that you use, but the ones you don't use. It is important to edit yourself as a chef and use restraint when necessary, and also use bold flavors when necessary."

Last year, the author of *Beyond My Chef Coat: Cuisine and Cocktails with Chef Kev D* shared with *Serendipity* how to cook the perfect steak. Today, he shares what he refers to as "the perfect elevated comfort food"—a chili recipe that uses short ribs instead of ground beef and makes it easy for home chefs to move from mild to explosive.



I LOVE THIS CHILI RECIPE BECAUSE THE BRAISED SHORT RIB GIVES YOU A NOTHER LEVEL OF TEXTURE AND FLAVOR."

Chef Kevin Des Chenes is known for his comfort food with a twist.



Chef Key D's Braised Short Rib Chili

SERVES: 10

- 3 pounds boneless chuck flap meat (or boneless beef short rib)
- 1 pound carrots
- 1 pound celery
- 1 pound Spanish onions
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 16-ounce cans dark red kidney beans
- 1 28-ounce can crushed San Marzano tomatoes
- 1 12-ounce bottle of beer (lager or ale)
- 3 bay leaves
- 4 tablespoons chili powder
- 1-2 tablespoons red pepper flakes (depending on desired heat)
- 2 cups red wine
- 1 6-ounce can tomato paste
- Salt and pepper to taste

FOR THE BEEF:

1. Cut the beef into 5-ounce portions.
2. Chop half of the carrots, celery and onions to create a mirepoix.
3. In a Dutch oven, combine the beef, mirepoix, red wine, tomato paste, salt and pepper.
4. Add enough water to cover the ingredients.
5. Cover and bake at 300°F for 4 hours.

FOR THE VEGGIES:

1. Finely dice the remaining mirepoix vegetables.
2. Heat a skillet over medium heat and add the butter. Toss in the diced vegetables and sauté until tender.
3. Deglaze with the beer and let cook for 8 to 10 minutes.

TO ASSEMBLE:

1. Remove the Dutch oven and remove 1/3 of the braising liquid.
2. Add the chili powder, beans, bay leaves, tomatoes, red pepper flakes, salt and pepper.
3. Place the Dutch oven on the stovetop over medium heat.
4. Add sautéed mirepoix to Dutch oven.
5. Allow chili to cook and reduce for about 1 1/2 hours. Stir and taste often, adding salt, pepper and red pepper flakes to taste.
6. When done, remove the bay leaves and garnish with favorite toppings (avocado, cheese, sour cream, bread, etc.)
7. Serve and enjoy!

JOSHUA LEWIS

FOOD



Lindsay Perkins baking with her daughter Valerie.

LINDSAY PERKINS

Local Flavor

West Hartford chef Lindsay Perkins is Connecticut through and through. Having honed her baking skills at Truffles Bakery and Kitchen in Farmington, the Wethersfield native now teaches children and adults how to cook through her Hartford-based Lindsay Culinary, LLC. Here, she shares her go-to spots for breakfast, dessert and more.

Breakfast at Heirloom Market at Comstock Ferre in Old Wethersfield, CT

My order is always the bacon, egg and cheese on a homemade buttermilk biscuit with maple sriracha; a freshly baked pastry of the day; a "Red Juice" (freshly pressed beets, citrus, fresh ginger, carrot and apple); and a nonfat latte with two raw sugars. Eat outside in the warmer months, or inside in the wonderfully rustic Comstock Ferre building, the oldest, continually run retail seed store in the country. End your excursion by taking a picturesque walk down Main Street and get transported back into colonial times as you stroll by the beautiful period homes, museums and shops.

Lunch at ARTISAN Restaurant in West Hartford, CT

The newly opened restaurant is located in the

boutique Delamar Hotel in West Hartford's Blue Back Square entertainment district, with a sister location in Southport, CT. Go for a leisurely lunch and sit outside amid the lovely garden; the freshly picked herbs and veggies will no doubt end up on your plate.

Cocktails at Max Downtown in Hartford, CT

Our capital city's crown jewel, Max Downtown, is the place to "see and be seen" before an evening at The Bushnell Center for Performing Arts (*Hamilton* is coming in December), the XL Center before a concert or a UConn basketball game. Sip on a Mulberry Basil Collins in the newly redesigned whiskey bar as you gaze up at the wine mezzanine that stores their expansive wine collection. The steaks and seafood are legendary, but be sure to save room for dessert—my favorite is the individual baked Alaska, a delicious classic.

Fine Dining at Eleven Madison Park in NYC

I have had the pleasure of eating at Eleven Madison Park two times, including a tasting menu in 2016 (before the redesign) that lasted four wonderful hours. The food was innovative, delicate, personal; the service was impeccable, warm, and not stuffy in the least. If you choose to pair your meal with wines, prepare for questions from the sommelier like, "Would you like to explore traditional Italian varietals or be surprised with wines from off-the-beaten path?" Say "off-the-beaten-path."

Dessert at Mozzicato's Bakery & Pastry Shop in Hartford, CT

My absolute favorite, *favorite*, place to go for dessert! I get a big box of pastries that I pick out from their impressive wall of bakery cases packed with Italian favorites like tiramisu, cannoli, cream puffs, éclairs, beautiful individual sized cakes and sweets filled with ricotta, vanilla, or chocolate cream. The Nutella ricotta pie is served by the slice; I always get a full-size one for Easter. Get a loaf of Italian bread or slice of pizza, or sip on espresso in The Caffè attached.

Shopping at Cookshop Plus in West Hartford, CT

Located in West Hartford Center, Cookshop Plus is a family-owned culinary gold mine for the professional or home cook. With a tremendous inventory of appliances, cookware and chefs tools and the largest assortment of sprinkles, cake pans, cookie cutters and decorating supplies I have ever seen! They offer cooking classes, on-site knife sharpening, and in-store tastings on the weekends featuring locally made products. It's my go-to when I'm looking for the perfect hostess gift, cake supplies, or when I just want to poke around and be inspired.



Assorted baking goodies at Cookshop Plus

NICOLE REDARD