



BETWEEN THE ROWS
WENDY SCHMIDT

Irises are blooming all over

Irises are beginning to bloom all over. The kind I like best are the tall, bearded, German irises. Each color seems to have a different delicate fragrance and there must be millions of colors and color combinations.

The irises in my neighbor's yard are all the same color: two-toned red-violet, lighter on the top, and as high as my waist (but I am short). The fragrance is like that of marshmallows (the kind that came in boxes before they puffed them a lot and put them in plastic bags). Boxed marshmallows were drier and more squarish.

But I digress. There are many kinds of irises and their relatives are plentiful. They are bulbs — rhizomes — and grow in all zones. There are about 200 iris varieties. Their forms vary but all have six-petaled flowers.

The three inner petals are usually erect, the three outer petals hang or curl back. There are four main groups of iris:

- **Bulbous** — all have bulbs that become dormant and can be lifted and replanted in late fall. The flowers are dainty, somewhat orchid-like. These include: *reticulata*, which are short, purple and violet-scented; *Xiphoides* (English iris); Spanish iris; Dutch iris; and Wedgwood irises.

- **Crested iris** — have a small, narrow crest at the base of hanging petals (falls). They include *I. Cristata*, *I. Japonica* and *I. tectorum* (roof irises).

- **Beardless irises** — such as *I. Ensata*; *I. Foetidissima* (Gladwin iris); *I. Missouriensis* (western blue flag); *I. Pseudacorus* (yellow flat or yellow water iris); *I. Siberica* (Siberian iris); *I. Unguicularis* (winter iris); Louisiana irises; Pacific Coast irises such as *I. Douglasiana* (central California up to Oregon); *I. Innominata* (northern California and southwest Oregon); and *I. Tenax* (Washington and Oregon). There are also spuria irises.

- **Bearded irises** — most irises grown are this type. All have a tuft of hair or beard on the three hanging petals.

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One-Pot Gumbo



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

Gumbo with chicken, andouille sausage and Cajun spices, served on a bed of rice, offers a taste of the Lowcountry.

CREOLE COOKING

By **Gretchen McKay**
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

This one-pot gumbo is made with chicken, spicy andouille sausage and the holy trinity of Creole cooking — onion, celery and bell pepper.

It's adapted from a recipe booklet I bought years ago in Charleston, South Carolina, after taking a low country cooking class at the now-defunct Charleston Cooks. It's a favorite because it's so easy to make and offers quick cleanup. Also, it reminds me of one of my favorite Southern cities.

Gumbo typically includes shrimp, but a shellfish allergy in my house mandated I leave it out. It also usually includes okra, a hot weather vegetable that helps thicken the broth. Some find it slimy, and some like it for that. It can be difficult to find in grocery stores but often is in ample supply in Indian markets.

EASY LOW COUNTRY GUMBO

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 Spanish onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pound chicken thighs, cut into bite-sized pieces (about 4)
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 yellow or red bell pepper, diced
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 tablespoon Creole seasoning
- 2 cups chicken stock or broth
- 1 (15-ounce) can fire-roasted tomatoes
- ½ pound andouille sausage, sliced into rounds
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves, chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/3 cup corn kernels
- 8 to 10 okra, sliced
- Hot sauce, to taste
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

- 2 cups cooked rice, for serving
- 1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced

Place butter in large stockpot and melt over medium heat. Add onion and cook until translucent. Add garlic and chicken to pot and cook for 5 minutes.

Add celery and peppers and cook for another minute. Sprinkle flour and Creole seasoning over meat and vegetables and stir well.

Add stock, tomatoes, sausage, thyme, bay leaves and sugar to pot and bring to a simmer. Cook for about 10 minutes, and then stir in corn and okra.

Cook another minute or two, then add a couple dashes of hot sauce, Worcestershire sauce and season to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve, place a scoop of cooked rice in a bowl and top with a scoop of the gumbo. Garnish with sliced scallions.

Serves 6 to 8.

Homemade mayo: Whip it up in 5 minutes

By **Genevieve Ko**
Los Angeles Times

Making mayonnaise from scratch requires only four pantry staples and takes less time than running to the store for a new jar. Once you've got it, the BLTs, tuna or egg salad in your days ahead will be better for it.

While many homemade formulas call for only egg yolk, I prefer to use the whole egg. The final texture is silkier and airier and the mayonnaise is less likely to break when you make it. Like vinaigrettes and salad dressings, mayonnaise is an emulsification of oil and water, which naturally don't want to mix. The key to preventing mayonnaise from turning into oil-slicked blobs is to add the oil in a very slow, very thin stream as you incorporate it.

I like it best in dishes where it gets to shine, like this potato salad. This is the kind you get at Korean barbecue restaurants, one little plate of banchan among the many. It's perfect with grilled meat and shows off the richness of your homemade mayo.



Genevieve Ko / Los Angeles Times-TNS

Whole egg mayonnaise

be sure to drizzle in the oil very slowly to prevent the mixture from breaking.

- 1 large egg
- 2½ teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup vegetable oil

Blend the egg, lemon juice and salt in a food processor or blender until smooth.

Scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl if needed. With the machine running, add the oil in a very slow, steady stream. Blend just until emulsified.

Variations

- **Handmade Whole Egg Mayonnaise:** Whisk the egg, lemon juice and salt in a medium bowl. Continue whisking while adding the oil in a very slow, steady

stream. Whisk until emulsified.

- **Olive Oil Mayonnaise:** Substitute one-quarter of the oil with extra-virgin olive oil, slowly streaming the vegetable oil in first.

Raw Egg Food Safety

The egg remains raw, which the USDA says isn't safe because of the risk of salmonella. If you're concerned, use a pasteurized egg.

Make Ahead:

The mayonnaise can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

SMASHED POTATO SALAD

Time: 45 minutes
Yields: Serves 4

At Korean barbecue restaurants, small dishes of this style of mashed potato salad are served with the grilled meat. Cool and creamy with mayonnaise and boiled eggs, it's the perfect accompaniment to the smokiness of charred meat. Pops of crunch from quick-pickled cucumber add a refreshing note. Starchy Russet or other baking potatoes smash the most easily here; waxy ones, such as red, white or Yukons, will give you a chunkier salad. While this is ideal with homemade mayonnaise, it's also tasty with store-bought varieties, especially the Japanese Kewpie brand.

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