

GRILLED

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Though it is smoked to begin with, bacon only improves from a little extra fresh smoke from the glowing embers of a campfire. Toast, too, tastes better when cooked directly on the grate over a fire. Don't cook the avocado.

And if you do happen to remember the egg, simply cook it in the pan you used for the bacon. But frankly, the sandwich I made was so good it did not need an egg.

The next dish I made is so obvious I'm embarrassed that I never thought of it before — quesadillas cooked over a fire.

Like the French toast, the secret is to cover it in foil. Once protected from the fiercest heat of the fire, the quesadilla has a chance to warm up slowly until the cheese reaches the ideal state that scientists refer to as "gooey."

You can put anything in a quesadilla, but I stuck to the basics: precooked chicken, black beans, salsa and shredded cheese. When you're cooking over a campfire, you don't want to get too fancy.

Unless you're making shrimp scampi. If you happen to have the ingredients for shrimp scampi at your next campout, you may as well make it. It's actually a simple, unassuming dish, but it is as delicious to eat at a campfire as it is unexpected.

Once again, the key is to use foil. Just divide the ingredients — shrimp, garlic, white wine or chicken stock, butter, red pepper flakes, lemon juice and a bit of salt — into foil pouches, seal the pouches tight and put them on the grate.

Foil, of course, is notoriously nontransparent. And because shrimp are so quick to cook, you'll have to open the pouches a few times to see if they are done.

But this slight effort does not matter, because the results are so worth it: shrimp scampi, on a camping trip. Imagine that.

Naturally, any time spent around a campfire must include s'mores, but I decided to mix things up and make savory s'mores. That is, I stuffed mushroom caps with blue cheese and wrapped them with bacon.

Perhaps you have had dates stuffed with Parmesan and wrapped with bacon. These savory s'mores are a



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post Dispatch-TNS

Savory S'mores, mushrooms with bacon and blue cheese, made on the grill.



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post Dispatch-TNS

Shrimp Scampi, made on the grill.

variation on that life-changing idea, and you get the extra benefit of the smoke-enhanced bacon.

Bacon, mushrooms and blue cheese. It's the ultimate appetizer. It's almost worth going camping for.

CAMPFIRE QUESADILLAS

Yield: 4 servings

4 flour tortillas, medium size (7 inches)
8 ounces cooked chicken (from about 12 ounces raw)
1 cup canned black beans, drained and rinsed
1 cup salsa
1 cup shredded Mexican blend cheese

1. Place each tortilla on a large piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil and place chicken on half of each tortilla. Top with equal amounts of beans, salsa and cheese. Fold tortilla over

and fold foil over tortilla, but do not seal the edges.

2. Place foil packets on the grate over a fire and cook, flipping occasionally, until cheese has melted and tortilla is moderately browned and crisp.

Per serving: 392 calories; 13 g fat; 5 g saturated fat; 68 mg cholesterol; 28 g protein; 40 g carbohydrate; 3 g sugar; 5 g fiber; 821 mg sodium; 311 mg calcium

— Recipe by Daniel Neman, adapted from a recipe by cupcakediariesblog.com

SAVORY S'MORES

Yield: 4 servings

8 ounces mushrooms, preferably with large caps
1 1/2 ounces blue cheese
8 ounces bacon

1. Clean mushrooms and remove the stems. Fill caps with

blue cheese and wrap with bacon so the bacon covers the cheese. Secure with a wooden toothpick.

2. Place wrapped mushrooms on a grate over a fire. Cook, occasionally turning carefully with long tongs, until bacon is done. When turning, try to keep melted cheese from dripping out (but don't worry; it will still taste good).

Per serving: 284 calories; 26 g fat; 10 g saturated fat; 45 mg cholesterol; 11 g protein; 3 g carbohydrate; 2 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 466 mg sodium; 61 mg calcium

— Recipe by Norma Klingsick

CAMPFIRE FRENCH TOAST

Yield: 4 servings

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1 (12-ounce) can nonfat

evaporated milk or 1 1/2 cups whole milk
2 large eggs
2 tablespoons pure maple syrup, plus more for serving
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
8 slices multigrain bread
1 cup mixed berries, optional

1. Spray 8 (14-inch) pieces of heavy-duty foil with nonstick spray, or use nonstick foil, and brush the center of each piece with melted butter.

2. Whisk together the evaporated milk, eggs, maple syrup, vanilla and cinnamon in a small baking dish or large resealable bag. If you don't have a whisk, use a fork.

3. Dip both sides of each piece of bread in the milk mixture until fully submerged. Arrange 2 pieces of bread next to each other, without overlapping, on 1 piece of buttered foil. Repeat with the remaining bread and 3 pieces of foil.

4. Make the foil packs: Put the remaining 4 pieces of foil, buttered-side down, directly on top of the bread so the foil touches the bread and the edges line up. Fold and crimp the edges tightly to make 4 rectangular packets.

5. Place the packs on a grate over a medium-hot fire and cook about 5 minutes on each side. Cooking time will depend on the heat of the fire and the distance of the packs above the embers, so check for doneness by carefully opening one of the packs (hot steam will escape). The French toast is done when it is browned on both sides and the center is custardy. Keep in the packets or transfer to plates. Top each serving with 1/4 cup of the berries, if using, and more maple syrup.

Per serving: 321 calories; 13 g fat; 7 g saturated fat; 117 mg cholesterol; 13 g protein; 37 g carbohydrate; 16 g sugar; 5 g fiber; 262 mg sodium; 166 mg calcium

— Adapted from a recipe by the Food Network

SHRIMP SCAMPI

Yield: 4 servings

4 garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons dry white wine or chicken broth
1/8 teaspoon (2 large pinches) salt, or to taste
Pinch crushed red pepper flakes, or to taste

Black pepper, to taste
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 1/2 pounds shrimp, shelled
2 tablespoons butter, cut into 4 pieces
1 tablespoon chopped parsley

1. In a small bowl, mix together garlic, wine or broth, salt, crushed red pepper, black pepper and lemon juice.

2. Divide shrimp onto 4 large pieces of heavy-duty aluminum foil, and sprinkle evenly with garlic-wine mixture. Top each portion with 1 piece of butter, and sprinkle with parsley. Fold foil over each shrimp mixture and fold edges to seal tightly.

3. Place foil packets on a grate over a fire and cook, flipping occasionally, until done. Cooking time will vary depending on the size of the shrimp and heat of the fire, but remember that shrimp cook quickly. Periodically open a packet to check doneness; shrimp are cooked when they are pink and curled.

Per serving: 268 calories; 13 g fat; 7 g saturated fat; 304 mg cholesterol; 34 g protein; 3 g carbohydrate; 1 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 278 mg sodium; 123 mg calcium

— Recipe by Daniel Neman

BACON AND AVOCADO TOAST

Yield: 1 serving

2 slices multigrain bread
2 strips bacon
1 small ripe avocado
1 wedge lemon
Salt and pepper

1. On a grate over a campfire or grill, toast bread on both sides.

2. Place a cast-iron skillet over the fire and cook bacon; watch carefully to keep from burning. Cut avocado in half, remove the pit and scoop out the middle; mash it with a fork in a small bowl. Spread the avocado on one piece of toast, sprinkle with the juice of the lemon and season well with salt and pepper. Top with the bacon and the other piece of toast.

Per serving: 606 calories; 46 g fat; 11 g saturated fat; 37 mg cholesterol; 17 g protein; 37 g carbohydrate; 5 g sugar; 14 g fiber; 735 mg sodium; 85 mg calcium

— Recipe by Daniel Neman

TEACHERS

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Teachers do more than teach. They help students learn to tie their shoes, put on mittens, remember homework (and, no, the dog can't eat it all the time), learn to read, write, understand math and learn to get along with others. And the list goes on and on.

A teacher must have a sense of humor. One teacher told his first-graders, on the first day of class, that they needed to get in a line. This request was met with dead silence. The first-graders all looked at each other. One of them had the courage to raise his little hand and ask the teacher, "What's a line?" Well, we all have to start some place.

A teacher, in the absence of a parent, is also the comforter of life's heartbreaks and heartaches, from the first time they don't get picked for a team to the last broken heart when they don't get invited to the dance. They are the tender of skinned knees and other assorted

"boo boos" that go with growing up. And, no, it isn't just a part of "the job." Teaching is not a job, it is a calling, a passion. If you are a teacher you know this and understand it. If you are a teacher and someone asks you, "why are you a teacher?" Do you find yourself thinking, "Well, I could try to tell you, but you probably wouldn't understand."

We are so very fortunate that we have not had to endure the heartbreak of a tragedy such as Columbine, Sandy Hook or Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School. Places where teachers paid the ultimate price protecting their students. Again, fearlessly and without thought to their own safety, they kept their students safe and out of harm's way.

If your child can read and write, play well with others, does not run with scissors, and doesn't need all the toys in the toy box, you probably have a teacher to thank.

According to a recent National Public Radio report, stress is the number one reason, even ahead of pay

(which isn't the number one reason one goes into teaching in the first place), why teachers leave their profession. This was true even before the pandemic. Between teaching in person (when they can) and teaching virtually, some teachers are working 10-hour days, six days a week. Again, this is time they are away from their families.

Though there should be an appreciation week, and maybe some day there will be, for administrative staff, principals, custodial, para professionals and cafeteria staff, and all the others who keep a school running, and they are greatly appreciated for their contributions, until such time as they have their own "week of appreciation," we will have to acknowledge them as a group, and thank them for their hard work. And, yes, there should be a parents' appreciation week, too. That goes without saying, of course.

I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with the finest teachers imaginable. I have learned from

them, laughed with them and, yes, even cried with them. Teachers go above and beyond for their students every day. They love their jobs.

On a personal note, my best friend of more than 50 years is a teacher. At the start of the pandemic she was working 10 hour days, six days a week. That is dedication. She wasn't doing it for any recognition or accolades, she was doing it for her students. I sent flowers. Thank you, Helen, for all you do.

I have also been on the receiving end of education by some excellent teachers. I have one in particular, who taught me how to be a critical thinker, how important the First Amendment is, that a

sentence is more than a capital letter and a period (who knew, right), and that on time is late. Thank you, Dr. Tom Heuterman, for everything.

So, the next time you are out in the community and you see a teacher, thank him or her. They need to hear those words, they need to

hear them often, and they need to hear them from us.

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