

RAMEN

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The result: a spicy sesame miso broth and alternating spoonfuls of noodles with the rich egg yolk and the smoky trout. Perfection. For now.

ALMOST-INSTANT SPICY SESAME MISO RAMEN

This is a twist on instant ramen, a recipe quick and easy enough to make in between Zoom calls. It is not a traditional miso ramen recipe and has a lighter, simplified broth that lets the flavor of the smoked trout shine through. You can add complexity by replacing the water with stock, or you can dress up the ramen with your favorite vegetables and garnishes. Look for hot-smoked fish in seafood coolers at grocery stores. Do not use cold-smoked or salt-cured fish, such as lox or gravlax, for this recipe. Hot sesame oil is spicier than regular sesame oil, because it holds the flavors of red chile peppers.



Kelly Yamanouchi/Atlanta Journal-Constitution-TNS
A collage of ramen experimentation.

- 2 teaspoons miso paste
- 1 package instant ramen (omit seasoning packet) or 1 block ramen noodles, preferably Lotus Foods Millet & Brown Rice Ramen
- 1 egg
- 2 ounces hot-smoked trout or salmon
- ½ teaspoon hot sesame oil

In a one-quart pot, bring 2 cups of water to a boil. While it's coming to a boil, transfer ¼ cup of the hot water into a small bowl. Add miso paste to the bowl and stir to make a slurry. Pour the miso slurry back into the pot. Add ramen noodles to the boil-

ing broth. Cook the noodles for 3 minutes, or according to package directions. One minute before the noodles are done, add smoked trout and crack an egg into the pot. Do not stir.

Once the egg white has cooked, pour the ramen into a serving bowl and top with sesame oil. Break the egg yolk into the broth and let it rest for 1 minute before eating the ramen. Serves 1.

Nutritional information
Per serving: Per serving: 481 calories (percent of calories from fat, 23), 28 g protein, 62 g carbohydrates, 5 g fiber, 12 grams total fat (2 g saturated), 199 mg cholesterol, 879 mg sodium.

MOIST

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She ended up taking just eight classes, deciding she'd rather write about food than be a professional chef.

With the help of a friend, she was soon writing stories and creating recipes for major publications and online magazines such the now-defunct Zester Daily. She also drew on her educational background to teach cooking classes, often with a focus on sustainable eating. She is particularly invested in seafood, with two cookbooks on the subject — 2017's "Herring: A Global History" and "Fish Market" in 2013.

In the technique-focused "Luscious, Tender, Juicy," Hunt says it's not about chasing trends but instead focusing on the everyday ingredients and techniques that keep food tender and flavorful.

Written for both the novice and experienced cook, it includes everything from snacks and sides to cakes, pies, pastries and breads. You'll also find lists of baking and cooking tools. All aim to bring moisture back into the kitchen with simple, easy-to-find ingredients.

Many of the 70-plus recipes are globally inspired, reflective of 51 countries on six continents she's visited over the years with her husband, Sean Dippold. Others were influenced by the multicultural meals of her childhood. Her best friend growing up was Greek, and she also ate lots of Italian-American, Syrian, Indian and Polish foods as a kid.

"It really made me interested in how food was made, especially since my mom hated cooking," she says.

Hunt calls the book her "pandemic baby" because despite the many challenges of COVID-19, the entire project — from writing to testing to photographing and layout — came together in a whirlwind in 2020. Not that she's complaining.

"It was a nice way to try out recipes on people" who were otherwise stuck at home, she says.

SATINY ROSEMARY-STILTON POPOVERS

These light and airy rolls are so easy to make, and they're an elegant alternative to sliced bread.

Made from an egg batter, they're fluffy and light, with a perfectly hollow center when torn open. Fresh rosemary adds a wonderful woody flavor that's perfect for winter.

I was lucky to find a \$5 popover pan — which are deeper than traditional cupcake pans — at the thrift store, but you can also use a mini muffin or regular muffin pan.

- 1 ½ tablespoons melted unsalted butter plus more for greasing pans
- 3 extra-large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 ½ cups milk, at room temperature
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour, sifted
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary
- ½ cup crumbled English stilton or other rich blue cheese

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Grease the popover pans with butter. Place in the oven for 2-3 minutes to preheat.

Whisk together the butter, eggs, milk, flour, salt, pepper, rosemary and cheese until smooth. Pour the batter into the preheated pans, filling each cup to less than half full.

Bake for 25-30 minutes, until golden brown and puffy. Serve hot.

Makes 12 popovers.
— "Luscious, Tender, Juicy" by Kathy Hunt (Countryman Press, \$30)

GIVE-ME-MORE MOROCCAN COUSCOUS

Kathy Hunt developed this salad recipe after traveling through North Africa. It's a hearty side that makes good use of peppers and canned tomatoes, with the pearly couscous adding a toothsome texture.

Try as I might, I could not find the small balls of toasted semolina flour at my local grocery. But I discovered a great substitute in a bag of Sardinian fregola pasta. I used kalamata olives and lemon-infused olive oil for extra zing.

- 8 ounces pearl couscous
- 15-ounce can chopped tomatoes, drained, 2 tablespoons juice reserved
- 2 red peppers, diced
- 2 scallions, white and 1-inch green minced
- 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded, quartered and diced
- 3 tablespoons Moroccan or oil-cured black olives, chopped
- 1 cup chickpeas
- ¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon curry powder
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- Pinch of saffron threads, optional

Cook couscous according to package instructions and place in a large bowl.

Add tomatoes, peppers, scallions, cucumbers, olives and chickpeas. Toss to combine.

In a small bowl, whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, reserved tomato juice, cumin, curry powder, cayenne pepper and optional saffron. Pour half the dressing over the couscous and stir until evenly coated, adding more to taste.

Refrigerate couscous for at least 1 hour so it can absorb the dressing. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Serves 6-8.
— "Luscious, Tender, Juicy" by Kathy Hunt (Countryman Press, \$30)

BUTTERY SEA SCALLOPS

With its warm, nutty flavor, brown butter makes these soft, plump bivalves even more succulent. I paired the seafood with a green salad dressed in a citrus vinaigrette.

Consider odor, color and luster when shopping for scallops. They should smell mildly sweet and never fishy, with a pale pink to light beige hue and a glistening sheen.

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 12-16 sea scallops
- Sea salt, to taste
- Ground black pepper, to taste

Melt 4 tablespoons butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Once butter has melted, start swirling the pan over heat. During this time the butter will foam and then slowly settle, 4-5 minutes.

Continue cooking and swirling the pan for another 2-3 minutes. Once butter turns golden in color and brown specks begin to form, remove pan from heat and set aside.

Season scallops with salt and pepper.

Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in large frying or saute pan over medium heat. Once butter has begun to bubble, add scallops.

Cook for 3-4 minutes, until bottom has browned. Using a thin spatula or fish turner (I used my fingers and a fork), gently turn scallops and cook until other side is brown. Remove scallops from pan, place on a large plate and cover with a heat-proof lid.

Reheat brown butter over medium heat for about 30 seconds. Place equal amounts of scallops on four dinner plates. Drizzle brown butter over the scallops and serve immediately.

Serves 4.
— "Luscious, Tender, Juicy" by Kathy Hunt (Countryman Press, \$30)



Steven M. Falk/The Philadelphia Inquirer-TNS
Timothy Hudson runs near Chester Park, Pennsylvania. Hudson lost 100 pounds during the pandemic by improving his diet and running up to 5 miles a day. He developed plantar fasciitis, a common source of heel pain that he uses stretches and massage to relieve.

FOOT

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Unsupportive shoes or going barefoot, a dramatic increase in physical activity, exercise that puts lots of pressure on your heels (such as running or dancing) and obesity can all contribute to plantar fasciitis.

Achilles tendinitis occurs when the tendon that runs down the back of the leg between the calf and heel is overused. The injury is common among runners and athletes, but can affect anyone who dramatically and suddenly changes activity level.

Plantar fasciitis and Achilles tendinitis were already top causes of heel and foot pain, and the sequestered pandemic lifestyle many people have adopted has worsened the problem.

Normally, taking your shoes off when you get home at the end of the day isn't a big deal. But during the pandemic, many people's entire workday has been spent at home. That means a lot more people wearing slippers or flip-flops without any arch support or, worse, walking around barefoot, said Rachel Shakked, an orthopedic surgeon who specializes in foot and ankle surgery at Rothman Orthopaedic Institute in Philadelphia.

For many people, less physical activity during the pandemic has contributed to weight gain and stiff muscles, which in turn can lead to foot pain.

"The obvious answer is put shoes on," Shakked said. "Nobody really loves wearing shoes in the house. (But) especially if you have hardwood floors or tile, walking and standing on hard surfaces can cause that discomfort in your heel."

Supportive shoes and lifestyle changes, such as maintaining a healthy weight, are the best bets for keeping foot pain at bay, said Richard K. Rettig, chief of the division of podiatry at Einstein Healthcare. Sneakers are always a good choice, but if you insist on slippers or sandals at home, choose a pair with arch support.

"If someone can change their lifestyle — lose the weight, not go barefoot, not

wear sandals," they may be able to live foot-pain-free for years, said Rettig, who has not seen an increase in foot pain patients during the pandemic. Most people, however, don't change their habits and return for treatment when the pain flares up again, he said.

Other ways to treat foot pain include heel cups that stabilize the foot, ice, and cortisone shots.

People who don't find relief with those techniques may need surgery.

When Zachary Baermeister, an elementary school principal in Lancaster County, first started working remotely in March 2020, the plantar fasciitis that had bothered him since 2019 subsided. At home, he wore sneakers with orthotic inserts instead of the stiff and unsupportive dress shoes he normally wore to work, and had more time for stretching and low-impact exercise.

But by the time his school returned to in-person teaching that fall, the pain in his heel was worse than ever. Being on his feet less during the workday had allowed his heel to recover, but also led to stiffer calf muscles, his doctor told him.

By 2021, the pain was so bad — and unchanged by stretching, massage and cortisone injections — that Baermeister's doctor recommended surgery to release the tension in his heel caused by the plantar fasciitis and tarsal tunnel syndrome (a pinched heel nerve).

"I wasn't able to do activities with my three kids," said Baermeister, 35. "They'd talk about activities but then say, 'Oh, wait, Dad can't do that. He can't run.'"

Baermeister had the surgery in mid-January and has to keep weight off the foot for several weeks. But he hopes to develop a plan for stretching and exercise with lower impact on his feet that will get him back to chasing his kids around.

Too much activity can also lead to foot pain

Shakked's caseload of foot pain patients is up about 25% compared with before the pandemic. In addition to people damaging their feet by going barefoot, she's seen an

increase in patients with problems related to too much physical activity. Abruptly becoming more active can lead to inflamed tendons and ligaments — especially if you're wearing the wrong shoes.

Other patients have suffered stress fractures from overzealous neighborhood walking routines. (She's also treated at least four people who fractured their ankle tripping over a pet — being home all the time creates more opportunities for dogs and cats to get under our feet.)

Hudson had never done much running before setting out on his weight-loss journey.

But after doing a double take at the number on the scale, he decided to get moving. Hudson works at a school as a one-on-one aide for children with special needs — a job that wasn't needed when his school went virtual.

"It gave me that time of self-reflection — I can do this and I don't have a choice but to be outside," he said. "Had I been at work, would I ever have had the time to actually go through and do it?"

Hudson started with walking, then transitioned to running. At the same time, he starting taking freelance photography jobs, which kept him on his feet for hours at a time.

By summer 2021, Hudson had added basketball with friends to his routine, and the pain in his feet got bad enough to see a doctor, who diagnosed plantar fasciitis.

Daily stretches, a more moderate exercise routine, and knowing to call it quits when he feels even a twinge of pain have helped significantly, he said.

Hudson is back at work now, and figuring out how to balance his old school routine with his newly active lifestyle.

"It's been a little bit of an adjustment, getting up at the crack of dawn to work out," he said. "But it's fun."

That may not be many people's idea of a good time, but for Hudson, starting his day with a workout is a reminder of what he gained during the pandemic — a new sense of pride and confidence that he can do things he never thought he could.

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