

Home Cooking Chronicles: Use What You Have Frittata

BY BRIAN MEDFORD

My friend Aimie is the mother of four children that refer to me as “UB” (Uncle Brian). Until I moved to the North Coast, weekly Sunday dinners were the norm for us. I’ve watched their family grow from one kid to four.

They are adventurous eaters, begging for peas, asparagus, oysters and dried seaweed. Their collection of pets has grown as well and includes dogs, chickens, geese, ducks, horses, gerbils, hamsters and rats. Recently, the second eldest raised a scurry of squirrels (Who knew they were called a scurry?).

Despite soccer practice, animal feedings, rock climbing, violin concerts, urgent care visits and random uncles showing up on Sundays, Aimie manages home cooked dinners. It’s one-part magic trick, one-part sheer determination. I’ve never seen her use a recipe, except for Thanksgiving gravy — but that’s only once a year so it doesn’t count.

Her two food rules are making a dinner mostly of vegetables and not overcooking salmon. To be honest, their salmon dinners sometimes veers into sashimi territory but they love it so I eat it.

Some folks wonder if home cooking is always a protein, two sides, a carb and dessert. I say no. Is a dinner less glorious when it’s not that combination? Not at all. Sure, Aimie has served unorthodox Sunday dinner combinations — my all-time favorite being baked ham with tortellini night — but it’s still comforting, soothing and bolstering. Some dinners are smoother than others, some are supported by Hello Fresh, some are ham with a side of tortellini. That’s OK.

Home cookery is cooking at home with the people you care about. It is less about what’s on the plate — but that there is a plate, intention, a plan to feed your family and to sit down together and catch up on the day. Dinner at Aimie’s may look eccentric to some folks but it looks like love to me.

My go-to home-cooked dinner when I’m busy and stretched thin (minus four children and two dozen or so pets) is a frittata. It’s an opportunity to use what I have and clear out the fridge. I think of a frittata as



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A finished frittata.

grown-up scrambled eggs — which by the way, are my kitchen nemesis. I’m working on it though.

Use What You Have Frittata (yields four to six servings)

This is more of a series of suggestions than a formal recipe. Do what sparks joy. If you’d like, pair your frittata with a green salad. I think hot sauce on the side should be required. I like Crystal Hot Sauce.

Ingredients

- 8 ounces protein (bacon, sausage, ham or mushrooms with 1 tablespoon unsalted butter)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter or extra virgin olive oil
- 8 ounces vegetables (bell peppers, kale, leeks and/or spinach), thinly sliced
- Eight large eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 ounces full-fat dairy (ricotta, heavy

- cream, half-and-half or milk)
- 2 ounces shredded cheese (cheddar or Parmesan)
- 2 tablespoons fresh herbs (thyme, parsley, chives and/or basil)
- Hot sauce

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.

Cook the protein or mushrooms in a 10-inch cast iron skillet over medium-high heat, then remove from the pan and drain. If you are using bacon, ham or mushrooms, cut into smaller pieces before cooking.

Add the butter, a ½ teaspoon of kosher salt and the sliced vegetables to the cast iron skillet. Cook until the vegetables are soft over medium-high heat.

While the vegetables are cooking, crack the eggs into a large bowl. Add the remaining salt and freshly cracked black pepper. Whisk well. Add the dairy and the shredded cheese. Whisk until combined.

Turn the heat down to medium. Pour the egg mixture onto the cooked vegetables and then scatter the cooked protein on top. Gently stir the egg mixture to be sure the mix-ins are well distributed. Cook on the stovetop until most of the egg has cooked. Sprinkle the fresh herbs on top and transfer to the oven to finish cooking. The top of the frittata should be slightly brown and the eggs will puff. If the eggs still jiggle, the frittata is not done.

Let the frittata sit in the pan for a few minutes. Then, run a spatula around the edge and as far under the center as possible. Carefully slide the frittata onto a cutting board. If it cracks or rips, it’s OK. Just cobble it back together. Serving directly from the pan works too. Cut into wedges and serve warm with your favorite hot sauce.

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