

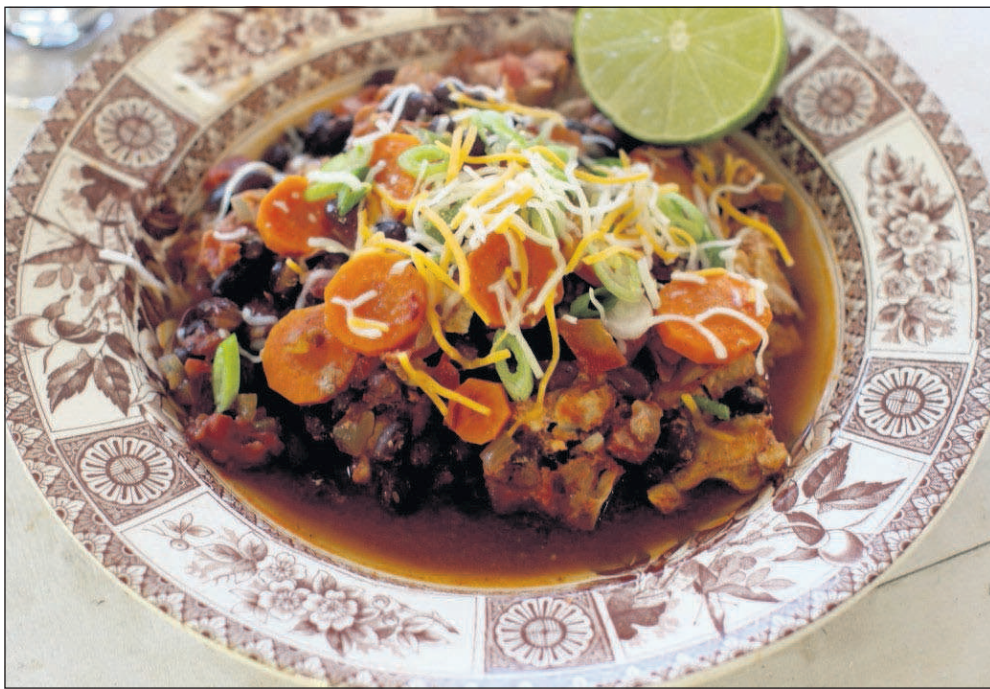
# Of chipotles, chicken and slow cookers. Weeknights are easy!

By KATIE WORKMAN  
Associated Press

One of the greatest secret weapon ingredients I know is chipotles in adobo sauce. These are smoked jalapeno peppers that have been stewed in a sauce of tomatoes, garlic, vinegar, salt and various spices, such as cumin, oregano and paprika. Imagine doing all that yourself! No thanks! Luckily, the whole thing — peppers and sauce — is sold in tiny cans at just about every grocer.

The easiest way to use these peppers and sauce is to puree the whole thing. I just dump the contents of the can right into the food processor or blender. Then I store the puree in a sealed container in the fridge. Whenever a soup, stew or a chili (or anything that calls for a little touch of smoky heat) needs a little something extra, in goes a tablespoon or two of the puree.

Speaking of secret weapons, one of the best appliances to earn that description is the slow cooker. For many of us, this



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

## Slow cooker chicken chili.

handy kitchen cooker takes up permanent residence on the counter during the colder months. The unparalleled pleasure of walking into your home at the end of a long day to be greeted by the scent of a cooked meal is hard to overstate.

In this chili, these two

secrete weapons join together to turn juicy and moist boneless, skinless chicken thighs into a somewhat spicy and couldn't-be-easier chili. I often make chili with ground chicken or turkey, which we all love, but it was nice to change it up with real cubes of chicken. This one is a

definite weeknight keeper.

*Katie Workman has written two cookbooks focused on easy, family-friendly cooking, "Dinner Solved!" and "The Mom 100 Cookbook." She blogs at <http://www.themom100.com/about-katie-workman/>*

## SLOW COOKER CHICKEN CHILI

**Start to finish:** 4 to 6 hours on high, 6 to 8 hours on low (15 minutes active)

**Servings:** 8

- 1 cup chopped yellow onion
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons pureed chipotles in adobo sauce
- 28-ounce can diced tomatoes, with juices
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- Two 15 1/2-ounce cans black beans, drained
- 3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of fat and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 scallions, trimmed and chopped
- Juice of 1 lime
- Kosher salt
- Shredded cheddar cheese or Mexican cheese blend
- Sour cream

In a large slow cooker, combine the onion, carrots, garlic, chipotles in adobo, tomatoes, chili powder, cumin and beans. Stir to combine, then add the chicken and stir again. Cook in the slow cooker on high for 4 to 6 hours, or low for 6 to 8 hours. Stir in the scallions and lime juice just before serving. Taste, then season with salt. Serve with shredded cheese and sour cream on the side.

*Nutrition information per serving: 410 calories; 110 calories from fat (27 percent of total calories); 12 g fat (5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 175 mg cholesterol; 910 mg sodium; 29 g carbohydrate; 9 g fiber; 6 g sugar; 44 g protein.*



Linda Lombardi via AP

This Dec. 12 photo shows people walking through a traditional-style covered shopping area known as a shotengai in the Kichijoji neighborhood of Tokyo. The area is known for its small stores and for a large park, Inokashi-

## Small shops, big park in Tokyo's Kichijoji neighborhood

By LINDA LOMBARDI  
Associated Press

Visitors looking to spend a few hours away from the tourist attractions of central Tokyo might consider taking the train to Kichijoji. Along with the usual department stores and chain retailers like Uniqlo that cluster around large Tokyo train stations, the neighborhood is home to smaller shopping areas, some uniquely Japanese, and a major park.

The JR Kichijoji train station is west of central Tokyo on the Chuo line, one stop away from the popular Ghibli Museum. The museum is devoted to the work of Studio Ghibli, which is known for animated movies including "My Neighbor Totoro" and the Academy Award-winning "Spirited Away."

As you head from the station toward Inokashira Park, you'll find cute shops with a youthful vibe selling clothes and knickknacks on side streets. Restaurants offer outdoor seating, which isn't common in Tokyo. You'll actually have to look a bit for Japanese food in this part of the neighborhood, but one good choice is on the left as you head into the park: Toriyoshi, which has an English menu and specializes in yakitori (grilled chicken skewers). Nearby cafes specialize in French toast, waffles or crepes, and French and Italian food. At a Starbucks, locals hang out with their dogs and babies.

A flight of stairs leads down into Inokashira Park, full of big trees around a pond, where you can rent pedal boats and see street performers on weekends in nice weather. The park is also a good spot for viewing cherry blossoms in season.

Follow the bridge over the pond to a small zoo. The first section is mostly birds; it's a bit of a hike to the rest of the zoo, but it's

a nice walk. Visitors from places where squirrels roam freely might be surprised to find squirrels living here in a walk-through enclosure. Admission to the zoo is 400 yen for adults (about \$3.35) and a small amusement park area has rides for children.

For a traditional Japanese shopping experience, on the other side of the station look for tall blue-green metal framework. This is the Sun Road shotengai, a shopping street covered by an arcade. It's like a shopping mall unrolled into one long row but a bit more practical, selling everything from eyeglasses to vegetables. Shotengai are fading in some parts of Tokyo, but this one is modernized and vibrant. You'll find boutiques, discount shops, shoes plain and fancy, books, coffee places, all kinds of clothing, drugstores, and restaurants, with more Japanese food in this area than other parts of the neighborhood. You can get an English brochure about the broader area at a tiny tourism booth (blink and you'll miss it) on the right.

For a trip back in time to the mid-20th century, don't miss Harmonica Yokocho, a warren of narrow alleys full of tiny bars and restaurants that's liveliest at night but worth a look any time of day. (The grid of alleys is said to resemble the reeds of a harmonica.) To find it, look to your left inside the Sun Road entrance; if you see tiny alleys that you're not sure are public, that's probably it. You can also access the alleys from the main road, directly across from the station. Some stores here are run by younger people, and boutiques are popping up. But there's also an old, cheap clothing shop and a restaurant with the dust of decades on its plastic curtain and paper lantern. That slightly scruffy atmosphere is part of the area's charm.

## Frittatas: All the yumminess of omelets, but with way less effort

By KATIE WORKMAN  
Associated Press

Eggs for dinner! Talk about serious comfort food. And one of my favorite weeknight ways to prepare them is as frittatas.

A frittata is an Italian omelet, but one in which all of the add-ins (cheese, veggies, meat, rice, what have you) are mixed directly into the eggs (rather than folded into the center). And that makes them so much easier and less fussy. The only real challenge about making frittatas is getting the top to cook. Some brave souls will try to flip them. I'd rather rely on the broiler (meaning I start the frittata on the stovetop to cook the bottom, then pop it under the broiler to finish the top).

Or sometimes I just turn to my trusty muffin pan. If you distribute the frittata mixture among the cups of a 12-cup muffin pan, you end up with 12 adorable little frittatas, individually sized, portable, cute as buttons. Plus, they tend to cook more quickly and with even less effort than if you start them stovetop.

You can play with this concept endlessly. Add cubes of tender (cooked) potato, steamed broccoli florets, leftover rice, crumbled cooked sausage or bacon, whatever. Frittatas are a great way to stretch some random bits and pieces languishing in the refrigerator into another lovely meal. Breakfast, lunch, snack, dinner, I am happy to see a frittata at any point of the day.

I'm also happy to eat a frittata warm from the pan, at room temperature, or even cold the next day. Come, join me in the wide world of frittatas.



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

A frittata is an Italian omelet, but one in which all of the add-ins (cheese, veggies, meat, rice, what have you) are mixed directly into the eggs (rather than folded into the center).

## SOUTHWESTERN MINI FRITTATAS

**Start to finish:** 30 minutes

**Makes:** 12 mini frittatas

- 2 tablespoons butter, divided
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, cored and diced
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 2 cups chopped button mushrooms
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 10 large eggs
- 1/2 cup crumbled queso fresco or feta cheese

Heat the oven to 350 F. Mist a 12-cup muffin pan with cooking spray.

In a medium skillet over medium, heat 1 tablespoon of the butter until melted. Add the onion and red pepper, then season lightly with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are golden brown and tender, about 6 minutes. Transfer the vegetables to a plate, then return the skillet to the heat.

Add the remaining tablespoon of

butter and add the mushrooms and oregano. Lightly season with salt and pepper, then increase the heat to medium-high. Saute for about 8 minutes, or until there is no liquid left in the pan and the mushrooms are beginning to brown.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, then season them with salt and pepper. Add the onion and pepper mixture along with the mushrooms, then stir to combine. Use a small ladle to fill each muffin cup with the egg and vegetable mixture almost to the top.

Sprinkle the cheese evenly over each frittata, then bake until they puffed and set, the cheese is melted and the tops are lightly golden, about 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and let sit for 1 to 2 minutes, then use a butter knife to pop the frittatas out of the tins. Let sit for a few more minutes on a wire rack. Serve warm, at room temp or even cold.

*Nutrition information per frittata: 100 calories; 60 calories from fat (60 percent of total calories); 7 g fat (3 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 190 mg cholesterol; 170 mg sodium; 3 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 7 g protein.*

## TRAVEL BRIEFLY

### Oil boom anniversary

The southeast Texas city of Beaumont is celebrating the 115th anniversary of an important event in January: the discovery of the Lucas Gusher, which ushered in an oil industry boom.

The gusher erupted from a drilling site south of the city on a hill named Spindletop. Oil flowed for nine days before the well could be capped. It no longer produces oil, but at one time it produced thousands of barrels a day.

Beaumont's Spindletop-Gladys City Boomtown Museum creates a replica of the gusher with water as part of the Jan. 9 anniversary celebration, which also includes re-enactments of life in the early days of the oil rush, with craft demonstrations, live entertainment and an old-fashioned "drillers' lunch." The museum is part of Lamar University.

### NBA All-Star in Toronto

Basketball fans from the U.S. will have to pack their passports if they're

heading to the NBA All-Star game this year.

That's because it takes place in Toronto on Feb. 14.

It's the first time in the history of the annual exhibition game that it's being held outside the U.S., but it's also a fitting place for the event: Canada hosted the first-ever game of the Basketball Association of America — which eventually merged with another league to form the NBA — on Nov. 1, 1946, in Toronto, according to NBA.com.

The All-Star 2016 game will be played at Air Canada Centre, home of the Toronto Raptors. The city promises festivities to welcome visitors all weekend. Details at <http://nbaevents.com>.

### Edgar Allan Poe's birthday

The Edgar Allan Poe House & Museum in Baltimore celebrates the poet's 207th birthday the weekend of

Jan. 16 and 17.

Poe lived at 203 N. Amity St. in the tiny brick house — just 13 feet wide — in the 1830s.

Admission will be free for the celebration, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Jan. 16, and 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Jan. 17.

The house closed for the winter in late December so the birthday events will be among the few days the museum is open to the public before regular hours resume in late May. For details, visit <https://www.facebook.com/PoeBaltimore/>.

Poe was born Jan. 19, 1809. He died in 1849 after being found delirious on the streets of Baltimore. His birthday was marked for decades by a visitor who left roses and cognac at Baltimore's Westminster Hall and Burying Ground, 519 W. Fayette St., where Poe is buried. A monument there bears Poe's likeness; another marker bears a raven in honor of his famous poem, "The Raven," with its haunting refrain, "Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'"