

Doing Valentine's Day right with have-it-your-way doughnuts

By ALISON LADMAN
Associated Press

Most everybody loves fresh, warm doughnuts. But most everybody doesn't love the hassle of making those fresh, warm doughnuts. It's a messy process that involves making a dough that can be temperamental. Who has time for that on Valentine's Day?

So we've created a method of making doughnuts that takes the temperamental out of the equation. You start with a dough — we'll get to your choices in a moment — that you buy at the grocery store. Next, cut it and fry it. It's way easier than it sounds, especially since you aren't fussing with making the dough. Now just top the doughnuts with something fun. You can even make it a project you do with your partner. Or it can be a fun activity to do with kids (the toppings, not the frying).

To start, you'll need to select your ingredients. You'll need dough, oil and toppings. Let's start with the dough. Pick any of the following — tubes of flaky biscuits, homestyle biscuits or cinnamon buns. All of these can be found in the refrigerated section of the grocer, usually near the dairy. If you'd like to make raised doughnuts, you can find loaves of raw white bread dough in the freezer case. Just thaw the dough overnight in the refrigerator, then let warm to room temperature before using.

If you go for a biscuit or bun dough, simply unroll and separate them. For bread dough, roll it out to 1/2 inch thick, then use 3-inch cookie



This photo features an array of toppings for doughnuts including pretzels, dried fruits, toasted nuts, toasted coconut, crushed cereal and crushed cookies, peanut butter, chocolate glaze and caramel sauce.

or biscuit cutters to cut rounds or rings from it.

For the frying, you'll need about 4 cups of oil. Peanut oil or grapeseed oil are great choices, but canola will work, too. It's also handy to have an instant or candy thermometer. This makes it much easier to monitor the temperature of the oil.

The toppings are where the real fun happens. We've listed some fun topping combinations below, including some glazes (which glue the toppings to the doughnuts), but feel free to have fun with different combinations. Spread out a topping bar of different glazes and toppings,

SUGGESTED COMBINATIONS

- **The Elvis:** peanut butter glaze, crumbled bacon, banana chips
- **The Chocolate Bomb:** chocolate glaze, Cocoa Pebbles, shaved chocolate
- **The Turtle:** caramel glaze, toasted pecans, shaved chocolate
- **The Tropical:** vanilla glaze, chopped dried pineapple, candied ginger, toasted coconut
- **The Black Forest:** chocolate glaze, dried cherries, drizzle with vanilla glaze

then let people design their own doughnuts. If you want to keep it simple, you could just fill a large bowl with cinnamon-sugar, then toss the warm doughnuts in that until coated.

Alison Ladman is a chef, food writer and recipe developer for The Associated Press. She also owns The Crust and Crumb Baking Company in Concord, New Hampshire.

FRYING

To fry, fill a large, deep pot with 1 to 1 1/2 inches of oil. Heat over medium-high until the oil reaches 350 F to 375 F. Adjust the heat to maintain this temperature. Place a cooling rack over a rimmed baking sheet and set near the pot of oil. When everything is ready, fry your doughnuts in batches of 3 to 4, being careful to not overcrowd your pan. The doughnuts will take about 3 minutes per side. Use tongs or a slotted spoon to carefully turn each doughnut over, cooking until deep golden brown. Transfer the finished doughnuts to the prepared rack to drain. Repeat until you've used all your dough, allowing the oil to return to the proper temperature between batches.

GLAZING

Once the doughnuts are fried, it's time to glaze them.

- **Simple vanilla glaze:** Whisk together 1 cup powdered sugar, 1 tablespoon milk and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract.
- **Chocolate glaze:** Heat 1/2 cup heavy cream in a small bowl in the microwave until simmering. Add 3/4 cup chocolate chips and stir until completely melted.
- **Caramel glaze:** Heat 1/4 cup heavy cream in a small saucepan with 1 cup caramel candies over medium-low heat, stirring until smooth and melted.
- **Peanut butter glaze:** Heat 1/2 cup heavy cream in a small bowl in the microwave until simmering. Add 1 cup peanut butter chips and stir until completely melted.

TOPPINGS

While the glazes are still wet, sprinkle any of the following (or whatever inspires you) over them:

- Cap'n Crunch cereal
- Cocoa Pebbles cereal
- Crumbled cooked bacon
- Chopped dried banana chips
- Toasted coconut flakes
- Chopped, toasted nuts
- Shaved chocolate
- Candied ginger
- Chopped dried fruit
- Candy sprinkles



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

Baked penne pasta with prosciutto and fontina cheese.

The secret to a better baked pasta? Soak, don't cook your pasta

By SARA MOULTON
Associated Press

If there's anything more comforting than boiled pasta in a sauce, it's got to be baked pasta in a sauce. The baking adds a crispy crust that is such a delicious contrast to the tender goodness of the dish.

The challenge is to how to get the pasta to turn out just right. Most baked pasta recipes instruct you to boil the noodles until cooked halfway before baking them. This allows the pasta to finish cooking in the oven as it bathes in the sauce. But this method has challenges. If you boil the noodles more than halfway, they'll be overcooked by the time you pull the finished dish out of the oven. I find it hard to get the pre-cooking time right.

And pre-cooking the pasta, even halfway, takes work and dirties a large pot and colander. Then again, if you don't pre-cook the pasta and instead add it dry to the sauce for baking, it will take much longer to become tender in the oven, even as it absorbs all the liquid in the sauce. Dry pasta needs to hydrate.

So what's a home cook to do? Use my simple no-cook method of pre-cooking the pasta. Just soak the pasta in warm salted water before adding it to the other ingredients and sliding the mixture into the oven. Presoaking is a way to begin hydrating the pasta and washing away some of its starch, even as the salt in the water pre-seasons the pasta.

Yes, you'll dirty a bowl, but given that that's the same vessel in which you'll combine all the dish's

BAKED PENNE WITH PROSCIUTTO AND FONTINA

Start to finish: 1 hour 15 minutes (20 minutes active)
Servings: 6

- 1 pound penne pasta
- Kosher salt
- Butter, for coating the baking pan
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 cup crushed tomatoes
- 1 to 2 teaspoons red pepper flakes, to taste
- 1 1/2 ounces finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 4 ounces coarsely grated fontina cheese
- 4 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto, chopped

In a large bowl, combine the pasta with enough lukewarm, well salted water to cover. Let stand for 45 minutes.

Heat the oven to 450 F. Lightly butter a shallow baking dish (12-cup capacity with 2 to 2 1/2-inch sides).

Drain the pasta and set aside. In the same bowl, combine all remaining ingredients, stirring well. Add the pasta, toss to combine, then season with a pinch of salt. Transfer the mixture to the prepared baking dish, pressing it down evenly. Bake on the oven's middle shelf until bubbly and browned, 20 to 22 minutes.

Nutrition information per serving: 590 calories; 240 calories from fat (41 percent of total calories); 27 g fat (15 g saturated); 0.5 g trans fats; 100 mg cholesterol; 1060 mg sodium; 63 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 5 g sugar; 24 g protein.

ingredients, it's the only bowl you'll need. The soak requires 45 minutes, but it's hands-off time, freeing you up to prep the rest of the ingredients in the meantime. Then it takes no time at all to assemble the dish and pop it into the oven.

Just 20 or so minutes later you can collect your reward: deeply-flavored baked pasta, creamy on the bottom and crispy on top. The

perfect wintry entree. Add a salad and some crusty bread and be happy.

Sara Moulton was executive chef at Gourmet magazine for nearly 25 years, and spent a decade hosting several Food Network shows. She currently stars in public television's "Sara's Weeknight Meals" and has written three cookbooks.



Austin Parks & Recreation Department via AP

This 2012 photo shows the Elisabet Ney Museum in Austin, Texas.

Travel to a past era at Elisabet Ney Museum

By GLENN ADAMS
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Four miles from the bustling state capitol, a castle-like structure sits in a corner of Austin's Hyde Park neighborhood. It's built from white stones, complete with columns and a square tower. Out front, a field of native greenery teeming with tall purple and yellow wildflowers seems to have been lifted from the Texas plains and left to grow as nature intended.

This is the Elisabet Ney Museum, a historic site housing works by Ney, a celebrated German sculptor. Ney and her physician-philosopher husband, Edmund Montgomery, left Europe amid political turmoil in 1871 and decided to come to Texas. She established her studio and home here in 1892, naming the site Formosa, Portuguese for beautiful. Over time it became a gathering place for intellectuals, politicians and artists of the area.

Walking on wood-planked floors, visitors can approach the

If You Go...

ELISABET NEY MUSEUM: 304 E. 44th St., in the Hyde Park section of Austin, Texas; <https://www.austintexas.gov/Elisabetney>. Open Wednesday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday. Free admission; donations accepted.

statues of her subjects, ranging from European royalty to Texas heroes of a century ago. Ney's tools are left scattered about, as if she had just walked away for a moment. One almost expects her to appear and engage in a conversation. A narrow spiral stairway leads to the tower Ney had built for her husband to carry on his work; it's easy to imagine his footsteps on the stairs.

Outside, a metal geodesic dome — one in a series of contemporary works featured on the 2 1/2 acre site — brings visitors back to the 21st century. But the sensibility of that earlier era lingers.

Kentucky Creation Museum leaders seek approval to expand its size

PETERSBURG, Ky. (AP) — A Kentucky museum dedicated to a literal interpretation of the Bible is planning to nearly triple its size.

The Kentucky Enquirer reports that Creation Museum leaders say a proposed three-story, 210,000-square-foot building would be a large hall for traveling exhibits. It's part of the museum's three-year plan.

Mike Zovath, co-founder of Creation Museum parent company Answers in Genesis, says it'll

be built where the current guest parking lot sits.

The museum needs approval for a zoning change to build a new parking lot. The Boone County Planning & Zoning Commission will decide Wednesday whether to recommend the change.

The expansion will help prepare for an increase in visitors the museum anticipates after Ark Encounter, a 510-foot long wooden ship modeled on the biblical story of Noah, opens in July.