

SKILLET

Continued from Page 2B

Roast the inoffensive way

Heat a skillet first before adding oil, especially when roasting Brussels sprouts. They will get a better sear and turn out sweeter. The oil acts as a barrier at first and prevents vegetables from sticking to the skillet. Later, it helps to sear them.

To make crispy potatoes, coat them well with olive oil and be sure not to overcrowd the skillet. Potatoes need a lot of surface area to get the proper color and flavor.

Eggplants, squashes and peppers are not fussy nor do they take time to roast. However, they too need good surface area.

Sun-drenched summer tomatoes, tossed with olive oil, do not need to be placed in an even layer. The high heat will help the tomatoes burst and add a jammy taste.

POTATO-RAISIN BREAD SPIRAL

This skillet recipe is a nod to the old Irish fruit pan bread, writes author Anne Byrn. The potato and raisins help to keep the bread moist. If you prefer a glossy appearance, glaze the bread with a beaten egg before placing it in the oven.

- 1 medium baking potato, peeled and cubed
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 package (0.25 ounce) active dry yeast (2 1/4 teaspoons)
- 1/3 cup sugar, divided
- 4 1/2 to 5 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Vegetable oil, for greasing

Place the cubed potato in a small saucepan and cover with water. Bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat. Then reduce the heat to low, cover and let simmer until the potatoes are tender, 15 to 20 minutes.

Drain potatoes, reserving the cooking water. Mash potatoes in a small bowl and set aside.

Transfer 1 cup of the potato water to a large bowl. Whisk in yeast and 1 tablespoon of sugar until dissolved.

Add 2 tablespoons of the mashed potatoes to the yeast mixture.

Add 1 cup of flour. Beat with a wooden spoon or an electric mixer on medium speed until the ingredients are combined.

Let the mixture rest until it bubbles up slightly, about 20 minutes.

Add the remaining sugar, 3 cups flour, eggs, melted butter, raisins and salt.

Beat with the electric mixer on medium speed until the dough is soft and combined. Add 1/2 to 1 cup more flour as needed so that the dough comes together and away from the sides of the bowl. With the mixer fitted with a dough hook, beat the dough until it comes into a ball, 3 to 4 minutes. (You can also knead by hand until it comes into a ball, about 5 minutes.)

Lightly grease a large mixing bowl with vegetable oil and place the dough in the bowl. Cover the bowl with a kitchen towel and place in a warm spot until the dough doubles in size, about 1 hour.

With oiled or floured hands, punch down the dough. Turn it out onto a floured surface and roll with your hands into a rope that is 20 to 22 inches long.

Lightly grease the bottom and sides of a 12-inch skillet with vegetable oil. Pick up the dough rope and lay it in the skillet, starting at the edge and letting it coil like a snake, ending in the center. Cover the skillet with a kitchen towel and let rise in a warm spot until doubled, about 40 minutes.

When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake until the top of the bread is golden brown, 20 to 22 minutes.

Tent the skillet with foil and continue to bake until the bread sounds hollow when tapped, 20 to 25 minutes.

Remove the skillet from the oven and cool for 10 minutes. Run a knife around the edge of the skillet. Lift up the potato bread and place it on a wire rack to cool completely before slicing, about 30 minutes.

Makes 12 to 16 servings.

BEST EVER SKILLET PIZZA

It is important to heat the skillet at 450 degrees before placing the dough in the pan. You can use store-bought dough here. If you freeze the dough, make sure to let it rest on the counter for an hour to thaw. This dough takes slightly less time to cook (15 minutes) than the homemade crust (15-20 minutes), author Anne Byrn says.

1 pound store-bought pizza dough
1 to 2 teaspoons cornmeal
1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
1/2 to 3/4 cup tomato sauce
2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
Honey, for brushing
Red pepper flakes, optional

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Heat a 12-inch skillet on the stove top over medium-heat until quite hot, 3 to 4 minutes.

While the skillet is heating, stretch out dough to get it as thin as possible, about 12 inches in diameter. You can do this in the air or by pressing it out with your hands on a cornmeal-dusted work surface.

Sprinkle cornmeal in the hot skillet.

Taking care not to burn your fingers, place the dough in the pan on top of the cornmeal. Press dough halfway up the sides of the pan (it will shrink back and that's OK).

Whisk together olive oil and garlic and brush the mixture over the dough. Spoon on the tomato sauce. (Add desired toppings at this point.)

Scatter cheese all over. Brush honey on the crust edges and sprinkle red pepper flakes on top of the honey, if desired.

Turn off the stove and place the skillet in the oven.

Bake until the cheese has melted and just starts to brown, and the crust edges are browned, 15 to 20 minutes. Carefully run a knife around the edges and slide the pizza out onto a board to slice and serve.

Makes 4 to 6 servings as an appetizer and 2 to 3 servings as a meal.

— “Skillet Love: From Steak to Cake” by Anne Byrn (Grand Central Publishing; October 2019)

Topping variations

- Garden Vegetable: After spooning on the tomato sauce, add 1/2 cup of store-bought pesto, spreading it evenly. Sprinkle 1 cup of mozzarella cheese on top. Slice 2 beefsteak tomatoes, mini yellow, red and orange peppers (2 each) and 4 to 5 pickled jalapeno slices and place them over the cheese.

Scatter the remaining cup of mozzarella cheese and bake following the recipe's directions.

- Eggplant Parm: After spooning on the tomato sauce, add mozzarella cheese. Slice 2 medium Japanese eggplants into thin rounds and put them in a bowl of cold water until they are ready to be cooked. In a skillet, add 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium heat. Add eggplant slices in batches and pan-fry until they are slightly brown on both sides. Add more oil if needed. Sprinkle eggplant slices with salt to taste. Place slices on top of the crust.
- Scatter 1 cup of cherry tomatoes, halved. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of grated Parmesan cheese over the vegetables. Bake following the recipe's directions. After taking the skillet out of the oven, sprinkle 2 tablespoons of chopped basil while the pizza is hot.

CHOCOLATE CHIP SOUR CREAM COFFEE CAKE

Anne Byrn is not kidding when she writes that this coffeecake is a good reason to eat cake before noon. I would add that it works for breakfast, too. It is not too sweet and the oranges add a nice flavor. It's best to use thin-skinned seedless oranges as otherwise the cake might turn out slightly bitter.

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) plus 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted, divided
- 1 1/2 cups plus 2 tablespoons

- sugar, divided
- 12-16 thin orange slices
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups (12 ounces) miniature semisweet chocolate chips

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat, swirling the skillet to distribute the butter evenly, about 2 minutes.

Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of sugar evenly over the melted butter. Place the orange slices on top of the sugar, creating a decorative pattern, either overlapping them in circles or creating concentric circles of slices.

Heat the skillet for another 2 to 3 minutes to allow the sugar to dissolve. Remove the skillet from the heat.

In a large bowl, whisk together flour, 1 1/2 cups sugar, baking powder, soda, cinnamon and salt.

Add the remaining 1/2 cup melted butter, oil, sour cream and vanilla. Mix with an electric mixer on medium speed (or by hand) until just combined, 1 minute. Fold in chocolate chips.

Dump the batter into the skillet on top of the oranges. Bake until the top of the coffeecake has lightly browned and is firm to the touch, 40 to 45 minutes.

Run a knife around the edges of the skillet to loosen the coffeecake. Invert the skillet onto a wooden board lined with parchment paper. If any of the oranges stick to the bottom of the skillet, slide under them with a small metal spatula and place them on top of the cake.

If you want a more dramatic look, slide the parchment onto a baking sheet and run it under the broiler until the oranges and sugar are caramelized.

Makes 12 servings.

— “Skillet Love: From Steak to Cake” by Anne Byrn (Grand Central Publishing; October 2019)

FLOWERS

Continued from Page 1B

2. The first time you sample an edible flower, taste only a small piece. Wait several hours before sampling more.

3. Sample minute amounts, taste before swallowing, and don't experiment when you're home alone. Some people have allergic reactions to the unusual compounds in flowers, so be cautious.

4. If it tastes bitter, too spicy, weird, or caustic, spit it out. Not all edible flowers taste the same everywhere. Soil, climate, and varietal differences will affect the flavor.

5. Do not eat unknown flowers. If it's not in a list of edible flowers, and if you don't know the flower by name, do not take the risk.

6. If any other part of the plant is poisonous, do not eat the flowers. Avoid sweet pea flowers, monk's hood (aconite), foxglove, lupine, and flower roots.

7. And finally, make sure you know that the flowers have not been sprayed with herbicides, pesticides, or other chemicals.

Some edible choices to consider are apple blossom,

calendula, carnations and pinks, cattail, chamomile, chickweed, chicory, chives, mums, comfrey, dandelion, daylily, dill, elder, fennel, gladiolus and goldenrod, hawthorn, hibiscus, hollyhocks, honeysuckle, jasmine, lavender, lemon balm, citrus blossoms, lemon verbena, lilac, mallow, marjoram, mint, mullein, mustard, nasturtium, pansy, viola, violet, geranium, passion flower, petunia, plum, rose, rosemary, sage, St. John's wort, squash blossom, thistle, artichoke, thyme, tulip, woodruff, and yucca.

Many flowers can be candied or painted with dilute egg white and dipped in fine granulated sugar (example: "crystallized" violets) then dried and used to decorate cakes and candies.

Garden Chores

- Roses should receive no further nitrogen fertilizer after August 15.
- Prune to shape hedges for the last time this season.
- If you want to grow big Dahlia flowers, keep the side shoots pinched off and the plants watered and fertilized regularly.

- Order bulbs now for fall planting.
- Compost or till under residues from harvested crops.
- Prop up branches of fruit trees that are threatening to break under a heavy crop.
- Spray peach and other stone fruits now to protect against peach tree borers.
- Cultivate strawberries. Weed preventers can be applied immediately after fertilizing.
- Apply insecticides now for grub control on lawns being damaged by their activity.

- Dormant lawns should be soaked now to encourage strong fall growth.
 - Begin planting lettuce and radishes for fall use now.
 - Pinch the growing tips of gourds when adequate fruit set is achieved. This directs energy into ripening fruits, rather than vine production.
 - Oriental poppies, irises, bleedinghearts, and bloodroot can be divided and replanted now.
- If you have garden questions or comments, please write to greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!



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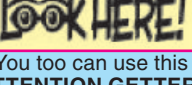


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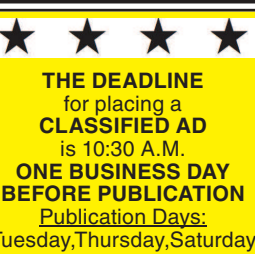
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