



BETWEEN THE ROWS
WENDY SCHMIDT

Narcissus family a welcome addition to any garden

The narcissus family has a lot going for it, including:

1. Deer won't eat them.
2. Gophers won't eat them, and I'm willing to bet that moles won't eat them, either.
3. Narcissus come back year after year forever. At least 50 years or more which is forever to me ...
4. They multiply. All of them do. "Ice Follies" in my yard always multiplied faster than any other named variety.

There are at least 10 types of narcissus.

1. Trumpet daffodils: the trumpet is longer or as long as the petal segments. Examples are King Alfred, Mount Hood. This group includes bicolor and reverse bicolor. Salome, the first pink daffodil, is a favorite bi-color trumpet daffodil.

2. Large-cupped daffodils: Cups are more than one-third the length of flower segments, but not as long. Ice Follies and Binkie and Carlton are examples.

3. Small-cupped daffodils: cups less than one-third the length of the segments (these aren't as readily available for purchase).

4. Double daffodils: instead of a cup, the petal segments are made up of fragments of the cup and the corona (the petals around the base). Doubles have been around a long time.

5. Triandrus hybrids: cups at least two-thirds the length of the segments. Clusters of medium-sized, slender-cupped flowers. Thalia is an old favorite of this type.

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Stephanie Strasburg/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

If you like a PB & J sandwich, this cake is for you. The strawberries on top are not only a feast for the eyes but also for the palate.

FRUIT CAKES ARE ALWAYS IN SEASON

Arthi Subramaniam
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Jason Schreiber is a staunch advocate of fruit cakes for every season.

While his repertoire includes the boozy Christmas fruitcake loaded with dried fruits and nuts, it is not confined to it. The recipe developer and food stylist has widened the fruits-in-cake concept with creative desserts that incorporate familiar and uncommon fruits.

He touts a peanut butter and jelly snack

cake topped with strawberries. Four-layer hummingbird cake flavored with banana, pineapple and coconut. Crumb cakes moistened with poached pear or blueberry and gooseberry. Crepe cake layered with a guava paste filling. Macaroon cake packed with dried apricots. Raspberry tea cake with a hint of black pepper. Creamy cheesecake perfumed with pureed mamey, aka sapote. Chocolate cake soured with port-soaked dried figs.

They are among 75 recipes featured in his

debut cookbook, "Fruit Cake: Recipes for the Curious Baker" (William Morrow; November 2020). The 38-year-old Brooklyn resident has worked at Ron Ben-Israel Cakes in New York City and written recipes under the Martha Stewart brand name.

It was after he made a fruitcake for his brother's wedding that he decided to pay ode to fruit cakes with a cookbook.

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Tales from a lobster fan

James P. DeWan
The Daily Meal

Don't get me wrong; I love lobster. Still, that armed and armored sea-spider, klaxon red and steaming on the platter can be frightening.

Which is why some of us with more delicate sensibilities might eschew serving the entire beast in favor of a simple and elegant lobster tail. Neat and tidy and nary a whit scary.

Fresh vs. frozen

Lobster tails mostly come frozen, like ice cream and woolly mammoths. That's because, unlike your regular swimmy-type fishes — your anchovy, your bream, your cod — lobsters don't take well to being dead. They have enzymes that begin breaking down muscle immediately upon their demise, giving the meat a mushy, unsettling texture.

On top of that, once that lobster passes, numerous bacterial freeloaders begin multiplying like microbial rabbits and, while that may sound adorable, it can result in some nasty foodborne illnesses.

Flash freezing solves all of these problems by preserving the lobster in its pristine, ready-to-cook state.

How to defrost lobster tail

When our lobster tails come frozen, we need to thaw them. Properly. None of this leaving them in the sun all afternoon like a beached and pokey narwhal.

Store frozen tails in the freezer until the day before you want to cook them, then transfer them to the fridge to thaw overnight.

Or, if you bought them on a whim and want them now, now, now, do this: 90 minutes before dinner, put your frozen tails in a bowl in the sink. Fill the bowl with cold water and set it beneath a slow but steady stream of water. When the tails thaw, you'll be able to bend them easily, like an articulated straw.

How to butterfly lobster tail

If you're serving your tails whole, you may want to butterfly them before cooking. This isn't necessary, but it makes for a swankier presentation while allowing all the meat equal access to the heat. A chef's knife is fine for this, but, if you have a good pair of kitchen shears, this is just the task for them.

Start at the part of the tail that used to have the rest of the lobster attached to it. Cut straight down the center of the top of the shell — not the meat — all the way to the flippers. Don't cut the flippers.

Next, pry the two halves of the shell gently apart to expose the meat within. You can cook the tail just like this using any method.

If you want a schmancier presentation, though, try this (it's especially nice for steaming and dry heat methods): Peel the meat gently from the bottom of the shell, starting at the where-the-lobster-was side, leav-



Eberly Film Labs-The Daily Meal/TNS

This lobster roll recipe features a celery salt garnish, a nod to the Chicago-style hot dog.

ing it attached at the flipper. Lift the meat — still attached near the flipper — up and out of the shell. Push the two halves of the shell back together and lay the meat on top to resemble a crustacean sarcophagus. Finally, if you want, score the meat down the center and open the two thin sheets to the sides like a theatrical curtain to reveal the glistening translucence within.

How to cook lobster tail

Lobster tails can be boiled or steamed (called moist heat methods), or baked (a.k.a. roasted), broiled or grilled (dry heat methods). Regardless of method, figure very roughly about 60 to 90 seconds cooking time per ounce of tail, with that ratio increasing somewhat for larger pieces.

While I generally prefer dry heat, one advantage to moist heat is that its temperatures tend to be lower, which means there's less risk of overcooking. I like moist heat if I'm planning to take the meat out of the shell and use it for something else, like lobster rolls (see accompanying recipe) or a nice pasta dish.

To cook your lobster tails, both boiling and steaming are easy: Just slip them into a huge pot of boiling water or set them on a steam rack. Something to consider is that, like shrimp — which are also all tail — lobster tails tend to curl up when cooked. Thus, you might want to insert a skewer through the meat down the length of the tail before cooking, although this is not generally done when

the meat's on top of the shell.

If you're going with dry heat, after you butterfly the shell, brush the meat with melted butter or olive oil and season it with salt. You can also add some flavoring ingredients. Freshly ground black pepper is easy and timeless. A sprinkle of garlic powder or paprika never hurt anyone. Or do a spice rub like Old Bay or something Cajun-style for a bit of heat. Remember: if your rub contains salt, you don't need to add it separately.

As for baking, I prefer high heat — say, 425 degrees F. Simply set the butterflied, oiled and seasoned lobster tails on a parchment- or foil-covered sheet pan and bake until done.

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