



Tyger Williams/The Philadelphia Inquirer-TNS
Susanna Foo begins cooking her wild mushroom dumplings with porcini mushroom and truffle sauce at her home in Villanova, Pennsylvania.

Overcoming age-related cooking challenges

BY SARAH GANTZ

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Cooking at home is a mood-booster, exercises muscles and the mind, and can help us maintain a healthy diet, especially as we age.

But with age-related medical conditions come new challenges in the kitchen. People with dementia or memory loss may worry about forgetting the roast they put in the oven. Perhaps the meals you used to prepare for a family of five no longer make sense for a solo diner. Arthritis, lost muscle mass, decreased height, and vision problems can all affect how you cook.

Here are some tips to get the most out of home cooking.

Consider what you're cooking

Research shows that people who cook for themselves eat out less often and consume less fast food, said Julia Wolfson, an associate professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health who studies food systems and food policy. That can be especially important for older adults, whose metabolism has slowed and who may be at risk for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol — all medical conditions that are influenced by diet.

But, Wolfson said, “Just purely the act of cooking itself does not equal healthy eating.”

Get the most out of home cooking by planning meals that balance protein and high-fiber vegetables with fat and carbs. Think about portion sizes, and the amount of salt and sugar you use. For instance, packaged spice blends often contain lots of salt. Making your own spice blend may be one way to cut down on salt and amp up flavor.

Stock the freezer

In a 2020 study, Wolfson and her former colleagues at the University of Michigan found that older adults were more likely than the general adult population to cook for themselves at home. But people's relationship with food can change as they go through different life stages, such as chil-

dren moving out or the death of a spouse.

Preparing and eating a favorite meal associated with fond memories can be comforting. Make the meal you love, then freeze leftovers in individual-serving packages, rather than in one large container. You'll have dinner for the future and reduce the amount of time you have to spend cooking.

Load the slow cooker

Slow cooker meals are perfect for people who may have balance or strength issues that limit their ability to cook on the stove. Bending and lifting to use the oven can also become challenging with age.

Slow cookers sit on the counter, are designed to be left on all day, and are a good way to prepare larger meals that can be frozen, said Heath Jones, an occupational therapist with Wesley Enhanced Living Main Line, a senior living center in Media.

Eliminate access issues

Put everything you use most frequently in easy-to-reach spots, Jones suggested.

Plates and cups don't have to live in high-up cabinets. Leave them on the counter.

Reorganize the refrigerator so that the items you need are within easy reach, without needing to bend down or dig to the back of the fridge. And when it's time to replace your fridge, consider one with the freezer on the bottom or side, rather than on top.

Simplify cleanup

Disposable kitchen items, such as paper plates and aluminum pans, can make the difference between eating a healthy home-cooked meal or turning to processed foods. Too environmentally conscious to stock up on foil baking pans, paper plates, and plastic utensils? Line baking sheets with aluminum foil to avoid baked-on food that's hard to scrub off. Try single-pan meals to at least reduce the number of dirty dishes.

Channel stress into creativity after a long day at work

BY ANAGHA RAMAKRISHNAN

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Channeling your artistic side can be good for your mental health, but working in a high-stress environment can affect your creativity.

Not only can stress negatively affect cognitive flexibility and task switching, according to Frontiers in Psychology, uncontrollable stress can lead to worse performance on creative tasks. However, art therapy reduces stress, strengthens your creative muscles, decreases anxiety and depression, helps you process emotions and increases self-awareness, according to Very Well Health.

A study published in the National Library of Medicine found that a nurse's creativity can improve quality care, leave patients with higher satisfaction, prevent more invasive procedures and empower health care workers.

Forms of art therapy

There are many ways you can express yourself through art, as it comes in various mediums. Deciding where to begin may be the tricky part, but here's a short list of ideas to help you get started:

- Painting: If you are a beginner, consider acrylic paint. It's easy to use and is one of the less expensive options, according to Draw Paint Academy. For those with a little more experience, the academy recommends oils or watercolors.

- Drawing: This medium requires the least number of supplies and is one of the eas-

iest to access — all you need to get started is a pencil and a piece of paper. If you want to liven up your piece, use colored pencils or markers. For a project more intense or darker than graphite pencils, pick up some charcoals. Also, using a pen can allow you to be more precise with your lines and drawings.

- Baking and decorating: This outlet is not only great for your creativity, but tasty as well. All you need to do is look up a cake recipe, find ingredients in your grocery store and start baking. If you're making cookies or cake, try decorating them with homemade or store-bought icing. You can even buy plain cookies and cakes from the store and decorate them yourself.

- Photography: This medium allows you to appreciate the extraordinary in the most ordinary of things. A steaming cup of coffee on a window sill can suddenly become a dramatic photo with one click of a button. You don't have to own a fancy camera either, considering any smartphone could do the trick. Just open up your

camera, click away and you'll be surprised on how many moments you've captured.

- Collaging and scrapbooking: After clicking away all of your photos, try making a collage or scrapbook out of them. This can allow you to appreciate your photographs and make something new out of them.

- Make your own greeting cards: Is someone's birthday coming up? Do you want to send someone you know a thank you card? Consider making your own greeting cards. A personalized card can leave the recipient even more touched by your gesture. Grab a piece of paper, fold it in half, write your message, and add drawings or stickers to decorate it.

- Create a mosaic: Consider collecting medicine caps or other disposable items from your hospital and create a mosaic with what you've gathered. One nurse shared on TikTok that she collected med caps from her patients for four years. She plans to create a mural to remember all the patients she cared for.

How to make a real Italian beef

BY STEPHANIE BREIJO

Los Angeles Times

In addition to star Jeremy Allen White's months of training at restaurants, including Santa Monica's Pasjoli, much of the realism so many have attributed to TV's “The Bear” is due to the culinary supervision of chefs Courtney Storer and Matty Matheson, who also played handyman Neil Fak on the show. The culinary producers devised on-camera dishes for the FX on Hulu series and also served as inspiration and sounding boards within the writers room.

For Storer, the onscreen depiction of the Italian beef would need to be perfect. The former Jon & Vinny's chef grew up eating the sandwich with Christopher Storer, her brother and the show's creator. It's an item that contains memories of celebrations, of game days, of family get-togethers. As a child, years before taking her first kitchen job at Sonny's Express in Park Ridge, Illinois, she would order a beef there and break it into pieces to make it last throughout the day. For years after moving to Los Angeles, she questioned whether she should open a beef shop herself — and whether Angelenos would embrace or even understand it if she tried.

Then came “The Bear,” her brother's longtime labor of love, and a time for her beloved beef to shine. For some, it would be their first introduction to one of Chicago's greatest culinary exports.

She and Matheson created two versions for the show: one more traditional to a classic Chicago beef shop, representing how Richie and the crew would originally make it, then another using Carmy's fine-dining techniques, which he'd try and employ on Day One of his return. Carmy's method incorporated chefier methods, such as browning the beef before roasting it to layer more flavor and deglazing the pan with red wine.

“I really enjoyed making the beef with Matty because we didn't look back at recipes,” Storer says. “We were like, ‘What would we want to eat?’ Or, ‘How would this chef that comes from fine dining come in and give a spin on something that's done a specific way all the time?’”

They shot the pilot at the iconic Mr. Beef on Orleans, in Chicago, then built a working kitchen on a stage in L.A. that re-created the space but gave themselves more room for easier camera maneuvering — all while still re-creating the cramped, claustrophobic kitchen feeling, which ratcheted up the tension throughout the season. Roughly 30% of Storer's role was sharing her years of restaurant experience, helping the writers and actors make the show as realistic to chefs' lived experiences as possible. The other 70% of her role was cooking on set, preparing the food that would appear onscreen — and every day there was a food shot. The scent, she says, was torturous to the cast and crew — especially on the day that called for braciolo, a highly aromatic dish of rolled steak in tomato sauce that cooks all day.

They'd walk by and say, “We just wanna know that we can eat it.”

So how do you make a proper Italian beef? Storer shared her recipe and gave us a demonstration in her kitchen (see the video above). She says the recipe is very forgiving. She used beef chuck in her demo, but she's also used top round or top sirloin roast. She suggests that you choose the cut of meat that best fits your budget. The bread, however, is a critical component. It should be soft, American-style French bread, not crusty sourdough. As for the giardiniera, Storer chefs hers up by using fennel bulbs in addition to the traditional carrot, celery and cauliflower, but she says that what you find jarred in

your local supermarket or deli should work fine.

‘THE BEAR’ ITALIAN BEEF SANDWICH

Time: 1 hour 30 minutes, plus several hours chilling time

Yields: Makes 8 sandwiches

This is the home version of the renowned sandwich featured on the FX on Hulu series “The Bear.” Its onscreen recipe was developed by the show's Chicago-raised culinary producer, Courtney Storer — sister of “The Bear's” creator, Christopher Storer, and former culinary director for L.A.'s Jon & Vinny's — alongside chef Matty Matheson.

Courtney Storer uses beef chuck in the video demonstration above, but she's also used top round or top sirloin roast. Storer browns her meat with a quartered onion and a head of garlic halved horizontally; she says you can also brown the meat separately and then sauté six sliced garlic cloves, or even skip the browning step altogether if time is short.



Left to right, Jeremy Allen White as Carmen ‘Carmy’ Berzatto, Lionel Boyce as Marcus, and Ebon Moss-Bachrach as Richard ‘Richie’ Jerimovich in FX Network’s “The Bear.”
Fox Networks-TNS

For the giardiniera, Storer says that what you find jarred in your local supermarket or deli should work fine. If you want to make your own, any basic giardiniera recipe will work — you soak your vegetables with enough water to cover them and about 1/2 cup of salt for 8 hours or overnight, then mix your drained vegetables with a cup of white vinegar and a cup of olive oil, plus garlic, dried oregano, red pepper flakes and black peppercorns, refrigerating it all for 2 days before using. Storer distinguishes hers by using fennel bulbs in addition to the traditional carrot, celery and cauliflower. Many use sweet red peppers as well. If you like it hot, add jalapeño, sport peppers or, Storer's preference, serrano peppers. She also likes to heat the vinegar with the aromatics (the garlic, oregano and spices) and pour that over the soaked vegetables with the oil.

Pack as much of the thinly sliced beef as you can into the Italian sandwich roll before dousing it with jus and adding your choice of giardiniera.

1 (4-pound) roast of top sirloin or top round, trimmed of fat
2 tablespoons kosher salt, divided
2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper, divided
2 tablespoons grapeseed oil
6 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 onion, quartered
1 quart reduced-sodium beef stock
1 tablespoon beef bouillon, preferably Knorr
2 tablespoons dried oregano
2 tablespoons garlic powder
2 tablespoons onion powder
1 tablespoon dried basil
1 teaspoon red chili flakes



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