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Breakfast and Brunch Favorites

Whether cooking up a hearty breakfast for one's own family or inviting a houseful of friends for a weekend brunch, everybody seems to love this kind of food. This chapter certainly reflects my Southern heritage. Down in Dixie, the morning meal has always been given a lot of special, loving attention. Such comforting dishes as fluffy buttermilk biscuits napped with spicy sausage gravy are likely to be more appreciated today than when I ate them at my grandmother's table. That's because we now tend to reserve them as special and somewhat indulgent treats for special occasions such as a Sunday brunch with invited guests, which is one of my favorite ways to entertain.

Not all of these recipes reflect my Southern roots. My love for the Southwest and its cuisine as well as my classic French cooking training are present too. I've selected recipes that are practical as well as yummy. Some can be made the day before while others can be whipped up on the spur of the moment. So, in the hope that more than one of your days will get off to a pleasant start because of good things to eat, I submit some of my tried and true favorites for the morning hours.

Make-Ahead Poached Eggs

A friend once returned from vacationing in a posh resort and told me about the “fancy” eggs they had for breakfast. He said they must have cooked their poached eggs in a special mold because they were all egg shaped. I smiled and told him they simply had a good breakfast chef who had learned the proper technique for poaching eggs. You don’t have to be a trained chef to do it. Simply follow my directions and practice a few times before you serve poached eggs to company.

As directed in this recipe, it is okay to poach eggs hours before you serve them. Submerge them, cooked, in room-temperature water and hold them for several hours or overnight in a cool kitchen. Longer holding times should take place in the refrigerator, but then reheating is not as quick or easy.

Eggs

Water

1 tbsp. white vinegar per qt. water

- Break the eggs, one at a time, into a small bowl or custard cup.
- Pour enough water in a nonstick skillet or saucepan to cover the eggs completely. Bring to a boil and stir in the vinegar. Bring the water back to a rolling boil and reduce to a simmer.
- With a large slotted spoon, stir the water to make a small whirlpool. With the side of the bowl actually touching the water, gently slide one egg into the center of the whirlpool. Repeat quickly with remaining eggs (best not to try to do too many at a time). Keep the water below the boiling point and cook until the white is completely cooked and opaque. Cooking time depends on desired doneness. For runny yolks, remove the eggs as soon as the white is opaque and firm and covers the yolk. For firmer yolks, allow the eggs to remain in the water 3 to 4 minutes longer.
- Remove the poached eggs to a dish filled with enough room-temperature water to cover.
- Cover the dish with plastic wrap and allow to sit at room temperature until ready to serve. Just before serving, lift the eggs with a slotted spoon and slide them into a pan of hot (not boiling) water for 1 or 2 minutes to warm them. Remove with the slotted spoon. Pat quickly with a paper towel to remove excess water and serve.

Poached Egg with Quick Tomato-Hollandaise Sauce

- 1 slice warm ham or Canadian bacon
- ½ English muffin, buttered and toasted
- 1 poached egg
- 3 egg yolks
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. hot pepper sauce
- 1 stick unsalted butter, melted and very hot
- 1 ripe medium to large tomato, peeled, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1 tsp. finely shredded fresh basil leaves

- Place the ham or Canadian bacon on the English muffin. Top with the poached egg.
- Place the yolks in a food processor with steel cutting blade. Add the lemon juice, salt, and hot pepper sauce. Process until the mixture is light and fluffy. With machine running, pour in the hot butter in a steady stream. Process until mixture is thickened and fluffy. Remove to a bowl and quickly fold in the tomato and basil. Spoon some of this sauce over the poached egg.

Poached Egg with Dilly-Cheese Sauce

- 1 slice smoked salmon
- ½ English muffin, buttered and toasted
- 1 poached egg
- 3 tbsp. butter
- ¼ cup finely chopped onion
- 2 tbsp. flour
- 1 cup milk (or light cream), heated
- 1 tbsp. chopped fresh dill (or 1 tsp. dried)
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

- Place the salmon on the English muffin. Top with the poached egg.
- Melt the butter in a small, heavy saucepan. Add the onion and cook over medium heat, stirring, for 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the flour and cook, without browning, stirring constantly for 2 minutes more.



Use your freshest eggs for poached eggs. The white is thicker and gathers around the yolk better. Eggs that have been in the refrigerator longer are best for boiling, since they are easier to peel. Always note the date on the egg carton and use within a few days after the date is expired.



Parmigiano-Reggiano has much more flavor when it is purchased in a piece and grated as it is needed. Wrap the cheese securely in plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator cheese drawer. A small amount can be easily grated with a hand grater, but a food processor is the quickest and most efficient way to grate larger amounts.

- Whisk in the heated milk, stirring until the mixture thickens.
- Remove from heat and stir in the dill and cheese.
- Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- Spoon some of this sauce over the poached egg.

French Pan Omelets

I don't know how many times I have demonstrated this procedure for my cooking students. I have also cooked individual pan omelets for as many as 150 people for a fund-raising brunch (with some good help, of course!). There are many times when a properly cooked omelet, some crunchy toast, and a cheerful beverage is the perfect simple brunch menu. If you want to master the omelet-making technique, you will need a good omelet pan. I prefer one with a nonstick finish. With the right pan and a little practice you should be able to turn out perfect omelets in no time. Allow me to recommend starting with small groups.

1 7- to 9-in. pan

2 large eggs

Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 generous tbsp. butter

- Season the eggs with salt and pepper.
- Beat the eggs about 25 times with a fork.
- Place the butter in the pan.
- Over high heat, heat the butter until melted and bubbly—it should not brown.
- Let the bubbles start to subside and immediately pour in the eggs.
- Stir gently with the fork at right angles to the pan 8 or 9 times.
- Shake the pan over the heat until the eggs puff and the center is partially set.
- Place the filling across middle—at a right angle to the handle of the pan.
- With the back of a fork, fold one-third of the omelet away from you toward the center of the pan.
- Tilt the pan and let the omelet roll out, making a triple fold.
- Serve immediately on heated plates.

Mexican Omelet

Tomatoes, chopped, peeled, and seeded

Extra-virgin olive oil

Jalapeño peppers, sautéed

Onions, chopped

Sour cream

Fresh cilantro, chopped

- Lightly cook the tomatoes in oil.
- Remove the tomatoes and mix in the peppers and onions.
- Fill the omelet with the mixture. Top the finished omelet with sour cream and cilantro.

Avocado and Bacon Omelet

Avocado slices

Crisp bacon pieces

Sour cream

Fresh dill, chopped

- Fill the omelet with avocado and bacon. Top the omelet with sour cream and dill.

Mushroom and Brie Omelet

Mushrooms, sliced

Shallots, finely chopped

Parsley, chopped

Butter

1 small slice Brie (rind removed)

- Sauté mushrooms, shallots, and parsley in butter. Add the Brie.
- Fill omelet with the mixture. Top the finished omelet with parsley.

Southwestern Brunch Eggs

For those brunches that are really more lunch than breakfast, try this egg dish with a Mexican flavor. If it looks like a lot of trouble to make in the morning, simply plan ahead and make the onion-tomato sauce the day before. You only have to reheat the sauce and proceed with the egg-cooking step.



Store garlic and onions in a cool, dry place and in a basket or other container that “breathes.”

8 strips bacon, diced
2 tbsp. olive or vegetable oil
2 large red Spanish onions, coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 fresh jalapeño peppers, seeded and finely chopped
1 4-oz. can chopped mild green chiles
1 28-oz. can diced plum tomatoes, drained
½ tsp. salt, or to taste
Hot pepper sauce, to taste
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
8 large eggs
1 cup shredded jack cheese
Extra chopped cilantro, for garnish
Vegetable oil, for frying tortillas
8 corn tortillas

- Fry the bacon in a large heavy skillet until crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon to drain on paper towels. Pour the bacon fat from the skillet.
- Heat the oil in the skillet. Sauté the onions, garlic, and jalapeño peppers over medium heat, stirring often, until the onions are tender.
- Stir in the canned chiles and the tomatoes. Season with salt and hot pepper sauce and return the bacon pieces. Cook, stirring often, over medium-high heat for 15 minutes.
- Stir in the fresh cilantro.
- Break the eggs, one at a time, into a small bowl. Carefully place them on top of the onion mixture, spacing them so they will cover the top of the sauce when done. Cover the skillet and cook for 5 to 8 minutes or until the yolks are set but not hard.
- Sprinkle the top of each egg with cheese and return the lid just until the cheese is melted.

- Sprinkle with the extra chopped cilantro.
- In about 1 in. vegetable oil in a small, heavy skillet, fry the tortillas until they are crisp. Drain on paper towels and place on a paper-towel-lined baking sheet in a warm oven until ready to serve.
- With a large cooking spoon, remove 1 egg with some of the onion mixture under it and place on 1 crisp tortilla. Repeat with remaining eggs. Spoon any extra sauce around the tortillas.
- Serves 4 to 8.

Eggs Mexicana

For a brunch on a warm, sunny morning, a chilled dish can be special and fun. I love to serve this one outdoors. It is practical, too, because almost all of the preparation can be done hours ahead. Hold everything in the refrigerator: the sauce, the eggs, and the washed and dried lettuce leaves. Wait until shortly before serving time to slice the avocados and assemble this colorful and tasty dish. It looks beautiful arranged on a large cheerful platter. Serve it with some warm corn tortillas and fresh fruit, and your guests will love it.

2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup chopped yellow onion
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 roasted mild green chiles, peeled, seeded, and chopped
2-3 jalapeño peppers, seeded and finely chopped
4 medium tomatoes, peeled and coarsely diced
2 tbsp. red-wine vinegar
2 tbsp. chopped cilantro
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. sugar
1 cup mayonnaise
1 cup sour cream
2 ripe avocados
Fresh lemon juice
8 hard-cooked eggs
Crisp lettuce leaves
Cilantro, for garnish



Roasting mild green chiles such as anaheim or poblano brings out their best flavors. To roast peppers, preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place a baking sheet on bottom rack to catch any drips. Place the peppers directly on the rack and roast until skin is puffed and brown and peppers are tender. Remove with tongs or a long-handled fork to a plastic bag with a resealable top. Close the bag immediately and allow the peppers to cool sealed in the bag. They sweat as they cool, softening the skin and making peeling much easier. Peel, remove the stems, and scrape out the seeds. The stringy veins on the insides should be removed.



When a recipe calls for “sweet salad onion,”

you may choose from Red Spanish Onions, which are generally available year round; Vidalia, the sweet onion from Georgia and the first of the sweet varieties to appear in the market each year (late spring through midsummer); and Texas Sweets, New Mexico Sweet Onions, Hawaiian Maui Onions, and Walla Wallas from Washington, all of which are harvested in the summer and early fall. In the winter, we get good sweet onions from South America. All of these onions are meant to be eaten raw and should always be only lightly cooked for best flavor.

- Heat the oil in a skillet. Sauté the onion and garlic for 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the mild chiles and jalapeños, remove from the heat, and let cool. Put into a bowl and mix with the tomatoes, vinegar, cilantro, salt, and sugar.
- Gently stir the tomato mixture into the mayonnaise and sour cream. Chill until serving time.
- At serving time, peel and slice the avocados. Acidulate with lemon juice. Place the whole, peeled eggs on a bed of crisp lettuce and spoon over the sauce to cover well. Surround with the avocado slices and garnish with cilantro.
- Serves 8.

Sausage-Mushroom Frittata

An egg dish with Italian origins, a frittata can have as many flavors as you have ingredients in the refrigerator. In fact, it's a good way to use up leftovers. Another favorite flavor combination is cubed boiled potatoes and ham with a flavorful cheese such as Gruyere. Tomatoes, onion, and just enough garlic and fresh basil to flavor it make a glorious frittata for a summer morning. I also often grate in a bit of Parmigiano-Reggiano, my favorite cheese.

- 1 lb. spicy pork sausage, crumbled**
- 2 tbsp. butter**
- 1 large sweet salad onion, halved and thinly sliced**
- 8 oz. mushrooms, washed and thinly sliced**
- 2 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley**
- ½ tsp. salt, or to taste**
- 10 large eggs**
- Dash hot pepper sauce**
- 6 oz. (1½ cups) shredded Swiss or Gruyere cheese**

- Cook the sausage in a heavy skillet, stirring occasionally, until all the red is gone. Remove with a slotted spoon to a paper-towel-lined dish.
- Heat the butter in a 10-in. nonstick skillet.

- Add the sliced onion and sauté 5 minutes or until softened.
- Add the mushrooms. Sauté about 3 minutes more or just until the mushrooms are cooked but still firm. Sprinkle in the parsley and salt.
- Stir in the sausage.
- Whisk together the eggs, hot-pepper sauce, and 1 cup cheese. Pour over the vegetables.
- Sprinkle over the remaining cheese.
- Place the skillet in a preheated 375-degree oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until a knife inserted near the middle comes out clean and the mixture is puffed.
- Cut into wedges and serve immediately.
- Serves 6-8.

Bacon and Onion Quiche

Quiche is not as popular a brunch or luncheon dish as it was, but this classic savory French pie is always well received when properly executed and filled with an interesting combination of flavors. This particular recipe is ideal for brunch. If you don't have a food processor and don't want to go to the trouble of making the French butter pastry, simply make a basic American-style crust using vegetable shortening. One final word about this recipe: buy a flavorful, good-quality bacon. My favorites are the ones smoked with apple wood.

1 recipe Pâte Brisée (see below)
6 strips thick-cut peppered bacon, diced
4 large eggs
½ cup light cream
Pinch freshly grated nutmeg
½ tsp. salt
Dash freshly ground black pepper
3 tomatoes, peeled and seeded
3 tbsp. butter
2 medium onions, halved and thinly sliced
½ tsp. dried oregano
Pinch sugar

1 tsp. salt

¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

2 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley

¾ cup grated Emmenthaler (or other natural Swiss) cheese

- Make the pastry according to the following recipe and prebake it as directed. Set aside to cool.
- Brown the bacon, stirring, in a heavy skillet. Remove with a slotted spoon to a paper-towel-lined dish.
- Whisk together the eggs, cream, nutmeg, ½ tsp. salt, and dash pepper. Set aside.
- Coarsely chop the tomatoes; set aside.
- Melt the butter in a heavy skillet and sauté the onions until just tender.
- Add the tomatoes and stir until the excess liquid is evaporated. Season with oregano, sugar, 1 tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Stir in the parsley.
- Spoon the tomato mixture, cheese, and bacon into the bottom of the prebaked pastry.
- Pour over the egg mixture.
- Bake in a preheated 375-degree oven for 30 to 35 minutes or until puffed and golden.

Pâte Brisée

1½ cups unbleached flour

½ tsp. salt

1 egg yolk

1 stick cold unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces

4 to 5 tbsp. ice water

- Blend together the flour, salt, egg yolk, and butter, either with two table knives or the steel cutting blade of the food processor, until the mixture resembles coarse meal.
- Add the ice water and process or stir until pastry is moist. Pat into a disc and wrap in plastic wrap. Chill for at least 2 hours.
- Let the pastry warm up enough to be pliable, and roll out on a lightly floured surface to a large, thin (about ⅛ in. thickness) circle. Roll this around the pastry rolling pin and gently place into an 11-in. removable-bottom tart pan. Gently fit loosely into

pan, letting dough fall into place. Roll off the excess and press remaining pastry firmly onto sides of pan. Cover with parchment paper and pour in pie weights.

- Bake in bottom third of a preheated 400-degree oven for 10 minutes. Remove the paper and weights and bake about 2 minutes longer, just until the dough is set and baked. Let cool before filling.

Note: Removable-bottom tart pans are originally from France and can be found in specialty kitchen stores. They are designed with a bottom and sides that separate. After the quiche is baked and properly cooled, set it on something smaller in diameter and allow the sides to fall away. The bottom will still hold the quiche. It looks prettier and is easier to serve when the sides of the pastry are no longer covered by the pan. If you don't have an 11-in. removable-bottom tart pan, bake this quiche in a 10-in. pie pan.

Ham and Leek Tart

The time and energy required to make this tart are sure to be rewarded when you hear the compliments from your guests. In fact, if you have a food processor for making the pastry dough, it isn't a complicated dish at all. It is a good brunch main dish because it can be made entirely ahead. It is, however, preferable to make and prebake the pastry and have the ingredients for the filling ready to assemble so that all that remains in the morning is to mix the filling, pour it into the pastry shell, and bake. There is a flavor and texture advantage to serving such a tart fresh from the oven. After telling you that, I will say that I have made it the night before, served it warmed in a preheated 300-degree oven for 15 to 20 minutes, and heard no complaints. A dish of seasonal fresh fruit and some well-chilled champagne are all that are needed to complete the brunch menu. It's perfect for a small group.

- 1 recipe Pâte Brisée (see above)**
- 2 medium leeks**
- 2 tbsp. olive oil**
- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter**
- 1½ tsp. chopped fresh thyme leaves (or ½ tsp. dried)**
- Pinch salt**



Washing leeks properly and thoroughly is important because they grow in sandy soil and often contain a lot of grit. Cut away the tough part of the green top. (Wash and save for flavoring stocks.) Trim the root end. Slice and wash thoroughly by soaking in lukewarm water. To leave it whole, place the trimmed leek on a cutting board and cut, lengthwise, three-fourths of the way through. Soak in lukewarm water for a few minutes. Then, hold under a steady stream of lukewarm water, pulling away the layers with your thumbs. Rinse away all of the grit.



Lukewarm water does the best job of washing away grit from herbs and vegetables. It is also more comfortable on the hands.

4 oz. thinly sliced prosciutto or Westphalian ham, cut into julienne strips

1 tbsp. flour

4 large eggs

1 cup heavy cream

$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. cayenne pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt

- Prepare the pastry according to the recipe above.
- Trim the leeks and slice crosswise into $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. rounds. Put them into a sink of lukewarm water and wash thoroughly. Drain.
- Heat the oil and butter together in a heavy skillet. Sauté the leeks, stirring, until just tender. Season with thyme and a pinch of salt. Stir in the ham.
- Sprinkle over the flour and cook 2 minutes longer, stirring—without browning the flour. Place the leek mixture in the pre-baked pastry, distributing evenly.
- Whisk together the eggs, cream, pepper, and salt. Pour over the leek mixture just before ready to bake.
- Bake in the bottom third of a preheated 375-degree oven for about 30 minutes or until puffed and golden.
- Let cool 10 minutes before serving. Serve warm.
- Serves 8.

Crustless Quiche

This recipe goes back a number of years to when quiche was on every restaurant's menu. I taught classes at Cincinnati's first real gourmet kitchen shop and cooking school, a charming place called Hurrah! One of my most popular classes was "Quiches, Soufflés, and Omelets." This quick and easy recipe is not a real "quiche" but was a favorite of my students. It is still as a standby for a quick Sunday brunch entree.

2 tbsp. butter
1 medium onion, halved and thinly sliced
1½ cups cubed ham
½ cup chopped parsley
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
6 eggs
1½ cups half and half
½ cup biscuit mix
1 tsp. salt
¼ tsp. hot pepper sauce
Dash nutmeg

- Melt the butter in a skillet. Add the onion and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring.
- Stir in the ham and parsley.
- Spoon into a buttered 9- or 10-in. pie pan. Sprinkle over the cheese.
- In a blender, blend the eggs, cream, biscuit mix, salt, and seasonings. Pour into the pie pan.
- Bake in the center of a preheated 375-degree oven for 35 to 45 minutes or until puffed and golden brown.
- Let cool about 10 minutes before cutting into wedges.
- Serves 8.



Flat-leaf or Italian parsley is always preferable as a flavoring ingredient because it has considerably more flavor than the curly variety.

Ham and Asparagus Gougere

Even a novice cook need not be intimidated by the French name or the number of ingredients and steps in this most delicious dish. A gougere is based on that delightfully light and elegant pastry, pâte à chou, which is the same pastry used for cream puffs. A food processor makes the pastry foolproof. The filling is not at all difficult and can, in fact, be made the night before, covered, and stored in the refrigerator. This pretty dish is an excellent main-course choice for brunch for a small group and makes a lovely presentation when it comes out of the oven to go directly onto your table. It's a dish I have often served for a spring brunch, just when the first asparagus comes into season. It is perfect for an Easter brunch as well as an elegant way to use up leftover ham. Just add some fresh fruit for a lovely, complete meal.

Pâte à Chou

1 cup water

1 stick butter or margarine, cut into 8 pieces

¼ tsp. salt

1 cup all-purpose flour

4 large eggs

½ cup shredded Swiss cheese

- Place the water, butter, and salt in a small saucepan. Bring to a rolling boil. (The butter should be melted.) Stir in the flour all at once and stir vigorously until mixture forms a ball of dough that leaves the sides of the pan. Remove from heat and set aside to cool for 5 minutes. Put into the food processor with steel blade in place. Add the eggs. Process until mixture is shiny and very sticky. Add the cheese and process just to mix.
- Grease a 10- or 11-in. round baking dish and spoon the pastry in a ring around the edge. Make the filling and spoon the filling in the center. Top with the 1 cup cheese.
- Place in the center of a preheated 400-degree oven for 40 to 45 minutes or until the pastry is puffed and golden brown. Sprinkle with the parsley and serve at once.

Filling

4 tbsp. butter or margarine

1 large onion, thinly sliced

8 oz. fresh mushrooms, cleaned and sliced

2 tbsp. flour
½ cup chicken broth, heated
½ cup light cream or whole milk
1 tbsp. dry sherry
Salt, to taste
Generous dash hot pepper sauce
2 cups cubed cooked ham
1 lb. asparagus, cut into 1-in. pieces and cooked until crisp-tender
1 cup (4 oz.) shredded Swiss cheese
2 tbsp. chopped parsley

- Melt the butter in a large heavy pan. Over high heat, sauté the onion for 2 minutes, stirring. Add the mushrooms and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring. Reduce the heat to medium and add the flour. Cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes without browning. Whisk in the chicken broth and cook until thickened. Whisk in the cream and sherry and whisk until smooth and bubbly. Season to taste with the salt and hot pepper sauce. Remove from the heat and stir in the ham and asparagus. Spoon into the baking dish and follow the above directions.
- Serves 6-8.

Crepe Batter

I am well aware of the fact that crepes are not as fashionable in culinary circles in this country as they once were. But a perfectly done French pancake—all golden, thin, and delicate—will never go out of style. Furthermore, it is such an ideal main course for brunch any season of the year. It is also a good choice for the busy host or hostess who wants to do the cooking and still enjoy the guests. All of the preparation can be done ahead. The actual crepes can be made days ahead. After they are cooled, freeze them in thin stacks in heavy-duty foil. They are then ready to be thawed overnight on the counter and popped into a hot oven in their foil package just long enough to be reheated. The warm crepes are easily separated, ready to be filled with your favorite fillings. The filling can be made the night before, covered tightly, and chilled. All that's left is to fill the crepes and bake them until hot through. A side dish of fresh marinated veggies or a colorful bowl of assorted fruits can be made ahead and chilled. And you can, indeed, enjoy the party along with your guests.



An easy way to cook asparagus that keeps its good flavor and texture is to roast it in a hot oven. Simply break away the tough ends and wash the asparagus. Drain well. Place in a single layer in a shallow baking pan. Sprinkle with just enough extra-virgin olive oil to lightly coat each spear. Season lightly with some coarse sea salt. Place the open pan in a preheated 450-500-degree oven. Roast for 10 to 15 minutes, depending on the thickness of the asparagus spears. (The thick ones are preferable.) When the asparagus is done, it should be crisp-tender.



It is not necessary to have a special crepe pan to make crepes. Any small skillet with shallow sides will do. The pan should have a nonstick coating or be seasoned by thickly coating the inside with vegetable oil and heating until very hot. Allow to cool and pour off the oil. Wipe out the skillet with a paper towel. Do not wash with detergent and hot water; rather, rinse with hot water alone and dry over a burner. Such a seasoned pan should be reserved only for crepes and omelets.

The following crepe batter is used for savory crepes. The batter is more likely to be lump free when made in the blender. The resting period is important for the proper texture of the finished crepe since it allows the flour particles to dissolve thoroughly in the liquid.

1 cup water
1 cup milk
4 large eggs
½ tsp. salt
2 cups all-purpose flour
4 tbsp. melted unsalted butter or margarine

- Place all the ingredients in the order listed into a blender. Cover and blend at top speed for 1 minute. Place in a covered container and let rest at least 2 hours at room temperature (or overnight in the refrigerator). The batter should be the consistency of heavy cream. If it is too thick, whisk in a bit more water or milk.
- Ladle just enough batter to lightly cover the bottom of a greased preheated crepe pan (or small skillet). Cook on the first side until the batter is completely set. Turn and cook for about 15 seconds on the second side. Invert the pan to remove each crepe to a side dish.
- Makes about 18 to 20 8- or 9-in. crepes.

Shrimp and Mushroom Crepes

1 recipe Crepe Batter (see above)
3 tbsp. butter or margarine
½ cup chopped onion
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1 lb. fresh mushrooms, washed, trimmed, and thinly sliced
¼ cup dry sherry
1 lb. cooked shrimp (cut into pieces if large)
¼ cup chopped parsley
1½ tsp. fresh thyme leaves
2 tbsp. butter or margarine
2 tbsp. flour

1 cup milk, heated
½ tsp. salt
Dash nutmeg
Dash hot pepper sauce
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
1 recipe Mornay Sauce (see below)
1 or 2 cups extra shredded Swiss cheese for top

- Make the Crepe Batter and cook 18 crepes ahead of time.
- Melt the 3 tbsp. butter or margarine in a large, heavy skillet. Over high heat, sauté the onion and garlic, stirring, for 3 minutes. Stir in the mushrooms and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the sherry and cook until all the liquid is evaporated. Remove from the heat and stir in the shrimp, parsley, and thyme. Set aside.
- In a heavy saucepan, melt the 2 tbsp. butter. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring, over medium heat for 2 minutes. Do not brown. Whisk in the milk and cook, stirring, until thickened. Season. Remove from heat and stir in the cheese, stirring until melted. Stir the sauce into the mushroom mixture.
- Reheat the crepes and fill by spooning a couple of large spoonfuls of the filling into the center of each crepe. Roll up and place, seam side down, in a shallow greased baking dish. Cover well and chill until ready to heat and serve.

Mornay Sauce

4 tbsp. butter or margarine
4 tbsp. flour
3 cups milk, heated
1 tsp. salt, or to taste
¼ tsp. hot pepper sauce
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese

- Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring, over medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes. Do not brown. Whisk in the hot milk. Season. Off the heat, stir in the cheese until melted.
- To finish the crepes, spoon over just enough of the Mornay Sauce to cover each crepe; sprinkle with shredded Swiss cheese and bake in a 350 degree oven until hot through—about 20 minutes. Serve hot.
- Makes 18 filled crepes.

Marilyn's Souffléed Spoon Bread

This is a much-requested recipe from my "Quiches, Soufflés, and Omelets" classes. Spoon bread is a traditional Southern treat and this version uses the techniques of a soufflé to make it lighter and more elegant. It is a rich but very tasty treat.

3 cups milk (whole or 2 percent)

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup yellow cornmeal (preferably stone ground)

1 tsp. salt

1 tbsp. sugar

5 tbsp. unsalted butter or margarine

3 large egg yolks

5 large egg whites, room temperature

1 tsp. white vinegar

- Bring the milk to a slow boil in a heavy, nonreactive saucepan. Slowly stir in the cornmeal, 1 tbsp. at a time. (If a lump should form, use a whisk and beat until smooth.) Add the salt and sugar. Cook, stirring, until mixture thickens—about 5 minutes.
- Stir in the butter. Remove from heat.
- Beat the egg yolks until fluffy and lemon colored. Stir into the cornmeal mixture.
- Beat the egg whites with the vinegar until stiff peaks form. (Mixture should be shiny. Do not beat until dry.)
- Stir approximately one-fourth of the whites into the cornmeal mixture. With a rubber spatula, lightly fold in the remaining whites.
- Turn into a well-greased 1½-qt. (6-cup) soufflé dish (or any straight-sided casserole).
- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Place the dish in the center, reduce the heat to 375, and bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until mixture is golden and puffed.
- Serve immediately.
- Serves 8-10.



Rules for beating egg whites: Egg whites must be free of any yolk and should be room temperature for beating. Beat in a clean, dry bowl. As soon as they are stiff, and still shiny, cease beating.

Southern Buttermilk Biscuits

Down South where I grew up, it simply wasn't breakfast without biscuits. Nobody thought much about biscuits. They just made them, usually without consulting a recipe. Everybody's grandmother had the recipe in her head. But biscuits are a good example of a simple formula that always manages to be more difficult than it seems. I have encountered a lot of questions over the years about biscuit successes and failures. There is obviously no one simple answer. Starting with the right flour is certainly one of the answers. Soft wheat flour is a necessary ingredient to make a biscuit with the proper texture. It is not necessary to use buttermilk, but I think true Southern biscuits are made with buttermilk. (And if you do choose to use what we Southerners call sweet milk, leave out the baking soda.) The biscuit dough should be sticky and wet, so a heavily floured board is needed for the rolling and cutting step. If enough flour is added to make a firm, nonsticky dough, you are sure to have heavy biscuits. Oh well. As I often say to my radio-show callers, you are not making the atom bomb, just dinner. In this case, it is just biscuits and there is no question that one of the secrets is practice. All our grandmothers could vouch for that.

2 cups all-purpose soft wheat flour

2 tsp. baking powder

½ tsp. baking soda

½ tsp. salt

½ cup solid vegetable shortening (such as Crisco)

1 cup buttermilk

½ to ¾ cup extra flour, for flouring board and biscuit cutter

- Into a mixing bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, soda, and salt.
- Add the shortening. Using a wire pastry blender or two forks, quickly cut in the shortening until the mixture resembles very coarse meal. Pour in the milk. Lightly mix just until the milk is mixed in and a soft dough forms.
- Generously flour a large board. Turn the dough out onto the board, coating the bottom side. Quickly turn to coat the other side. Pat out with floured hands or gently roll with a floured rolling pin to ½- to ¾-in. thickness. Cut out with a 2½- to 3-in. biscuit cutter. Cut close together, using as much dough as possible to avoid reshaping and rolling again.

- Place the biscuits with sides touching in a greased 9-in. cake pan.
- Bake in the center of a preheated 450-degree oven for about 10 minutes, or until golden brown.
- Serve hot.
- Makes about 15 medium biscuits.

Note: For a variation, add $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. coarsely ground black pepper to the dry ingredients and 1 tbsp. finely shredded fresh basil leaves along with the buttermilk.

Southern Sausage Balls in Cream Gravy

I know that most of us are trying hard to eat healthier, which almost caused me to leave this recipe out of the book. I have limited myself to making it only once a year for my annual Christmas Brunch. But I reconsidered when I remembered how my guests always look forward to this dish. My dear friend and fellow Southerner Russ Wiles always loved this concoction and my much-loved brother-in-law Rege Jensen jealously guarded a batch I made up one holiday season at his house. Even if you only make this recipe once a year, it is worth having. It is a wonderful breakfast or brunch treat on a cold winter day. Be sure to use a good grade of flavorful, spicy pork sausage.

- 1 lb. spicy pork sausage**
- 5 tbsp. butter or margarine**
- 5 tbsp. flour**
- 3 cups whole milk, heated**
- 1 tsp. salt**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. freshly ground black pepper**

- Form the sausage into small balls. Fry in a large, heavy skillet until cooked through and golden brown. Remove from the pan with a slotted spoon. Pour the sausage drippings from the pan. (Do not wipe out or wash.)
- Return the skillet to the heat and melt the butter or margarine. Add the flour and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly for 3 minutes.

- Whisk in the hot milk, salt, and pepper. Cook, stirring, until mixture bubbles and thickens. Add the cooked sausage balls and cook in the gravy for a few minutes.
- Serve hot over split Southern Buttermilk Biscuits.
- Makes 4 cups.

Beignets

I started my cooking career in New Orleans, and that experience has had a great influence on my recipe repertoire as well as my style of cooking. If you have ever visited that fascinating city, you know how much everyone loves their little French raised doughnuts called "beignets." If you go to visit, be sure to stop in a cafe to indulge in some of those sugar-coated treats with a cup of the traditional cafe au lait. Though you may have tried making your own beignets with the popular mix sold in New Orleans, the good news is that they are quite easily made from scratch. They are ideal, too, for a weekend-company breakfast, since the dough is best made the night before. It rises slowly in the refrigerator and the chilled dough is easily rolled and cut into squares, ready to toss into some hot oil for a very short cooking time. Remove to a paper-towel-lined tray for a short draining time and then sprinkle liberally with powdered sugar. Serve hot to what are guaranteed to be very happy guests!

½ cup boiling water
2 tbsp. vegetable shortening
¼ cup sugar
½ tsp. salt
½ cup evaporated milk
1 pkg. dry yeast
¼ cup warm water (105 to 115 degrees)
1 large egg, lightly beaten
3¼-3¾ cups all-purpose flour
Vegetable oil, for frying
Powdered sugar, sifted

- Pour the boiling water over the shortening, sugar, and salt.
- Stir until the shortening is melted. Add the milk and let stand until the mixtures cools to 115 degrees.

- Dissolve the yeast in the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warm water and stir into the cooled milk mixture. Add the egg.
- Stir in 2 cups of the flour and beat well with a wooden spoon. Stir in enough flour to make a soft dough.
- Place in a greased bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Place in the refrigerator overnight.
- Pat or roll dough on a lightly floured surface to $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. thickness. Cut into small squares—approximately 2 in. square.
- Heat about 4 in. vegetable oil in a deep skillet or saucepan to 375 degrees. Drop the doughnuts into the hot oil with the top surface down.
- When doughnuts float to the top, turn once and brown on the second side. Remove with a slotted spoon to a paper-towel-covered tray. Sprinkle with the powdered sugar while still hot.
- Serve immediately.
- Makes about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ dozen.

Golden-Raisin Scones

I never think my scones taste quite as good as many of the delicious ones I've enjoyed at tea time in England and Scotland. I'm sure one of the reasons is because our flours are different. Then there is that wonderfully indulgent clotted cream they always serve to spread on the scones! One year during a stay in a fabulous old country house in Devon, home of the famous Devonshire cream and butter, I enjoyed every calorie from my daily scones and clotted cream. Nevertheless, I always come back home and do my best to duplicate the highlights of those culinary adventures so I can share them with my students. I adapted this recipe for the food processor. I think these scones almost make up in ease and convenience for what they may lack in authenticity and I never seem to have any left over.

3 cups all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

1 tbsp. baking powder

1 tsp. salt

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sticks (12 tbsp.) cold unsalted butter


1 cup milk

¾ cup golden raisins
1 tsp. freshly grated orange rind
1 tbsp. milk
2 tbsp. sugar (coarse crystal, if available)

- In the food processor bowl, combine the flour, ⅓ cup sugar, baking powder, and salt.
- Cut the cold butter into 12 pieces and sprinkle over the top of the dry ingredients.
- Process, pulsing on and off, until the mixture resembles coarse fresh breadcrumbs.
- Add 1 cup milk, the raisins, and orange rind. Process for a few seconds, just until the dry ingredients are moistened (important not to overmix).
- Remove from the processor bowl directly onto a floured board. Knead lightly just to gather together into a smooth mass.
- Gently pat into a circle ½ in. thick.
- Cut with a 2½-3-in. floured biscuit cutter.
- Place the scones on an ungreased baking sheet. Using a soft-bristle pastry brush, brush the tops lightly with 1 tbsp. milk. Sprinkle with 2 tbsp. sugar.
- Bake in the upper third of a preheated 425-degree oven for about 12 minutes or until golden brown.
- Serve hot with butter and jam.
- Makes about 18.

Easy Batter Yeast Rolls

We Southerners are accustomed to eating freshly baked yeast rolls at all hours of the day. This is an old-fashioned recipe that I adapted to modern methods and ingredients: quick-rise yeast for faster rising and the food processor or mixer with dough hook for effortless mixing. They are really fast and easy enough to make in the morning to serve for a mid-day brunch, but it is even easier if the dough is made the night before and allowed a “cool rise” in the refrigerator. It will take a bit longer for the chilled dough to double and be ready to go into the oven, but it’s a



When cutting biscuits or scones, be sure to push the cutter straight into the dough and lift straight up. Do not twist the cutter before removing it. Twisting it will press the edges of the dough together and inhibit rising. Cut biscuits as close together as possible, as twice-rolled dough tends to toughen.



Always scald milk in a nonreactive pan to prevent it from discoloring. It is “scalded” when bubbles form around the edge.



Yeast dough is best risen at a temperature of 90 to 95 degrees. An easy method: Place a pot of boiling water in the oven. Place the covered dough on the rack above it and close the oven door to contain the heat from the water.

convenient way to serve delicious hot bread for a late weekend breakfast or brunch. Try these rolls spread with plenty of butter and your favorite strawberry preserves.

2 pkg. quick-rise dry yeast

1 cup warm water (105 to 115 degrees)

1½ cups milk, scalded

¼ cup sugar

1½ tsp. salt

3 large eggs

1 stick unsalted butter or margarine, softened

5½ cups all-purpose flour

- Dissolve the yeast in warm water in a large mixer or food-processor bowl.
- Add the milk, which has been cooled to at least 115 degrees. Add the sugar, salt, eggs, butter, and 2½ cups of the flour.
- Mix for 1 minute, scraping sides of bowl, then beat for 2 minutes more.
- Add the remaining flour and mix until smooth.
- Cover the bowl and let rise in a warm place until doubled—about 45 minutes. (Or place a sheet of greased plastic wrap directly on top of the dough. Cover the bowl with foil and place in the refrigerator overnight.)
- Stir down with a wooden spoon. Spoon into well-greased muffin tins.
- Let rise until doubled—30 to 45 minutes (depending on temperature of dough).
- Bake in the center of a preheated 350-degree oven for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool for 5 minutes in the pan before removing.
- Serve warm.
- Makes 18 large rolls.

One-Bowl Coffee Cake

Another quick and easy favorite, this tasty breakfast cake falls into my group of pantry-shelf recipes. That means that all of the ingredients are usually on hand, so you can decide on a lazy weekend morning that you are in the mood for a treat, simply get out all of the stuff, and throw it together. It requires only one bowl and one pan too! While it bakes, the aromas will stir even the sleepest members of the household, and its warm broiled topping is simply scrumptious.

1½ cups sifted flour
4 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
1½ cups quick-cooking oats
Grated rind of 1 orange
¾ cup brown sugar
1 cup milk (whole or 2 percent)
¾ cup melted butter or margarine
2 eggs, lightly beaten

- Sift together the flour, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon.
- Mix in the oats, rind, and sugar.
- Add the milk and butter to the eggs, and pour into the center of the dry ingredients. Stir just enough to moisten.
- Spread the batter into a greased 9-in. cake pan.
- Bake in a 450-degree oven for 30 minutes.

Topping

½ cup light brown sugar
2 tbsp. melted butter or margarine
½ cup chopped nuts (pecans or walnuts)

- Combine the ingredients and spread over the baked cake.
- Broil 3 minutes, or until the topping is bubbly.



The secret to fluffy quick breads, meaning bread, coffee cake, or muffins that are leavened with baking powder and/or baking soda, is to use a very light hand when mixing. After the dry ingredients are combined with the liquids, simply stir just enough to moisten. It is better to see a few flour particles than to overmix, which can result in a heavy finished product.

Peanut-Butter Muffins

I've always liked peanut butter for breakfast. It's delicious on toast, with or without jam. These muffins baked with plenty of peanut butter are even better. Serve them warm with your favorite jam. They don't need butter.

1 cup light brown sugar
1 cup granulated sugar
2 cups peanut butter, smooth or crunchy
1 tbsp. butter or margarine
3 eggs, separated
2 cups sifted flour
1 tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. salt
1¾ cups buttermilk or plain yogurt

- In an electric mixer, cream together both sugars, peanut butter, and butter or margarine.
- Beat in the egg yolks.
- Sift together the dry ingredients.
- Add the dry ingredients alternately with the buttermilk to the creamed mixture.
- Beat the egg whites until soft peaks form.
- Stir one-fourth of the beaten egg whites into the peanut-butter mixture. Fold in the remaining egg whites.
- Fill greased muffin pans two-thirds full.
- Bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for 20 to 25 minutes.
- Makes 24 muffins.

Strawberry Muffins

This muffin recipe has been in my files since my New Orleans days. These muffins cannot qualify as light, but are they ever a treat! If you've ever had a typical Southern breakfast in one of the many great small bed-and-breakfast inns down South, then you may have tasted this muffin or something akin to it. It is truly a recipe worth trying when you are in the mood for a sweet morning treat.

2 sticks butter or margarine, softened

1½ cups sugar

3 eggs

1 tsp. baking soda

1 cup buttermilk or plain yogurt

½ cup golden raisins

½ cup chopped pecans

3 cups sifted flour

1 cup strawberry preserves

- In an electric mixer, cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
- Add the eggs, one at a time, beating after each addition.
- Stir the baking soda into the buttermilk or yogurt and add it to the bowl.
- Stir the raisins and nuts into the sifted flour.
- Fold in the flour mixture and stir in the preserves.
- Fill greased muffin pans two-thirds full.
- Bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for 20 minutes.
- Makes 24 muffins.

Pecan Pancakes Deluxe

If anything can qualify as real comfort food, it has to be a stack of home-made pancakes on a chilly morning. My Southern heritage comes to the fore again with my choice for a pancake recipe. If you've never tried them with pecans, you are missing a real treat. I love to serve these with maple syrup, but they are also good with a fruit syrup such as strawberry or blueberry.

1 egg, lightly beaten
½ cup powdered sugar
½ stick butter or margarine, melted
⅔ cup milk
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. allspice
½ cup chopped pecans

- Stir together the egg, sugar, butter, and milk.
- Sift the dry ingredients together and stir in the pecans.
- Add the liquid mixture to the dry ingredients. Stir to just blend. (Batter should be slightly lumpy.)
- Ladle onto a lightly greased preheated griddle or skillet.
- Cook 1 to 2 minutes per side, turning only once.
- Serve hot with butter and hot syrup.
- Makes about 15 3-in. pancakes.