

# The Urban Forager

CULINARY EXPLORING & COOKING ON L.A.'S EASTSIDE



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
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### BLUEBERRY PUDDING CAKE

Great for brunch or dessert, this can be made ahead, cooled completely, then wrapped well in foil and kept at room temperature for at least one day. Or you can prepare everything up until baking and store in the refrigerator covered with plastic wrap. Bake when your guests arrive, and serve hot.

Serves 4 to 6

Preheat oven to 375°.

#### INGREDIENTS

- ⅓ cup plus ½ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- ¼ cup water
- 10 ounces (2 cups) fresh, good-quality blueberries
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1¾ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg
- ½ cup whole milk
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

#### METHOD

- Place oven rack in middle position.
- Butter a 9-inch-square baking pan or ovenproof oval pan of equivalent size.
- Stir together ⅓ cup sugar, lemon juice, cornstarch, and ¼ cup water in a small saucepan. Stir in blueberries. Bring to a simmer and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat.
- In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, salt, and remaining ½ cup sugar.
- In a large bowl, whisk together egg, milk, melted butter, and vanilla. Add the flour mixture, whisking until just combined.
- Spoon batter into baking pan or ovenproof oval casserole, then pour blueberry mixture evenly over batter (berries will sink).
- Bake until a knife inserted into center of the cake comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes.
- Cool in pan, on a rack, 5 minutes.



### MARIO'S QUESO FUNDIDO

My husband, Eric, and I first tasted this rich, beautiful dish at Mario Rodriguez's home. Eric is a dedicated sausage-maker and brought homemade chorizo. Monica, Mario's wife, made guacamole (see page 144) with avocados from their tree. These tastes lead me back to Mario again and again; his skill and imagination with all things edible remain an inspiration.

Serves 4

#### INGREDIENTS

- ½ tablespoon olive oil or lard
- ½ cup finely diced onion
- 8 ounces chorizo
- Kosher salt to taste
- 1 pound asadero cheese (or Oaxaca or jack cheese as second choice), shredded

#### METHOD

- Heat a cast-iron or other heavy-bottomed, well-seasoned skillet over medium heat.
- Add oil or lard and heat.
- Add onion and sauté until soft.
- Remove chorizo from casing and add to skillet. As you sauté, break the chorizo down with a spoon until it begins to crumble. Continue to sauté until chorizo is browned, about 5 to 10 minutes. Add salt to taste.
- Add cheese to chorizo mixture and stir it in until it melts. Avoid heating the mixture too long after the cheese melts or the cheese will become tough.
- Serve immediately. (Mario uses the cast-iron skillet in which the queso fundido was cooked.)
- Optional garnishes include a couple pinches of chopped cilantro leaves or a tablespoon of pico de gallo tipped into the center. I used a few of Minh's Geranium Pickled Baby Onions (see page 51).
- Serve with corn tortillas or chips.

**FOOD SOURCES:** Find chorizo, cheese, and tortillas at Los Cinco Puntos, La Mayordomia Market, El Mercado de Los Angeles, Rincon Argentino, Super A Foods, Vallarta Supermarkets.





Roasted Turkey Breast with Fennel served with Roasted Potatoes with Tarragon and Shallot Crème Fraîche (see page 158).

### ROASTED TURKEY BREAST WITH FENNEL

Before I remarried, money was scarce, but that didn't stop my daughter, Nori, and me from enjoying our meals. One great way was to roast a turkey breast on Sunday and serve it with roasted potatoes, salad, etc. The breast lasted days, morphing into several great leftovers, such as turkey Waldorf salad, turkey enchiladas, turkey quesadillas, and lunch sandwiches.

Makes about 8 servings

Preheat oven to 450°.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 large bone-in turkey breast with skin (3 to 4 pounds)
- 1 stalk fennel, fronds only (you can save the bulb for Fennel Gratin [see page 157] or a salad)
- 3 to 5 cloves garlic, peeled and halved
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground pepper

#### METHOD

- Wash turkey breast, drain, and pat dry. Rinse fennel fronds and pat dry.
- Slide your hand between turkey skin and breast and carefully tuck fennel between skin and meat.
- Cut ½-inch slits through turkey skin into the breast meat; push garlic cloves into each slit. Generously salt and pepper breast on all sides.
- Place breast skin-side up on a rack set into an ovenproof baking pan. Roast for 20 minutes, then turn the oven down to 350°. Roast turkey until juices run clear, about 1 more hour. Internal temperature should be 165° to 170° with an instant-read thermometer. Turkey will continue to cook after it is out of the oven, so do not let temperature go higher than 170° or it will dry out.
- Let turkey rest on a cutting board for about 15 minutes. Slice and serve.

**NOTE:** Safety instructions for chicken apply to turkey as well (see page 182).



### MASAKO'S NUT COOKIES

Masako Yatabe Thomsen has baked with Sumi Chang for more than ten years, contributing a number of exceptional baked goods to Europe's repertoire. These cookies are healthy enough to be eaten with a sense of virtue and so delicious that it is difficult to stop. Therein lies the conundrum.

Makes 2 to 3 dozen cookies, depending on size

Preheat oven to 350°.

#### INGREDIENTS

A total of 14 ounces of the following; nuts can be lightly roasted or unroasted

- Sliced almonds
- Walnuts, chopped
- Hazelnuts, chopped
- Pistachios, chopped
- Cashews, chopped
- Pecans, chopped
- Pumpkin seeds
- Sunflower seeds
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon orange zest (a coarse microplane works well)
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 large egg whites
- 3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon unsalted butter, melted

#### METHOD

- In a medium bowl, mix nuts, flour, cinnamon, and orange zest.
- Mix sugar and egg whites in a stainless metal bowl that will fit over a saucepan partially filled with hot water, or in a double boiler over low heat, until sugar is completely dissolved. I use a whisk and stir energetically to avoid “scrambled eggs.”
- Add sugar and egg mixture to nut mixture. Mix gently with a rubber spatula.
- Stir in melted butter.
- Drop dough in 2-inch or larger dollops onto parchment-lined half-sheet pan.
- Flatten with a fork. It helps to dip the fork in cold water to avoid sticking.
- Bake 15 to 17 minutes, until cookies are golden brown.

**NOTE:** It is not necessary to use all the nuts and seeds listed. Consider color, texture, and taste combinations. Masako typically uses about four types. I weigh the nuts separately from the seeds, which stay whole. Then I chop the nuts together with a large knife. I like the nuts chopped relatively small, but not so fine as to lose the delightful texture. If nuts are too coarsely chopped, the cookie batter does not hold together well.

**FOOD SOURCES:** Aladdin Nuthouse for the highest-quality, freshest nuts; Sprouts Farmers Market, farmers' markets.