



CHICKEN FRIED RICE

One of Ryan's favorite meals to make on his meal night is chicken fried rice, and the kids (and even Mom) love it too! Here's his tried-and-true recipe.

INGREDIENTS

3 large chicken breasts
1 package (12 oz) of mixed frozen
vegetables
2 cups rice
Bone broth or water
3 large eggs, scrambled
1 stick of butter (8 Tbsp)
Soy sauce
Salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Make the rice with the bone broth or water according to the directions. Put aside.
 2. Next, melt the butter in a skillet.
 3. Add the chicken, salt and pepper both sides, and cook until the chicken is no longer pink.
 4. Remove and cut into small pieces. Do not clean the skillet!
 5. Add the eggs to the skillet and scramble.
 6. Add the rice, chicken, and vegetables.
 7. Add salt, pepper, and soy sauce to taste.
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QUICK AND EASY SALAD

I often have most of these ingredients on hand to make this quick and easy salad instead of running through a drive-through somewhere. And yes, I top it with homemade ranch because I deserve a reward for all the vegetables.

INGREDIENTS

Bag of mixed greens

Red onion

Bacon bits

Grilled chicken

Avocado

Cherry tomatoes

Optional, fresh mozzarella cut into small pieces

Ranch dressing seasoning packet

METHOD

1. Mix the ingredients together to make the homemade ranch and chill for about an hour.
2. Next, toss the remaining ingredients together and enjoy!





BLUEBERRY COFFEE CAKE

When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I often turn to baking. There's something about the soothing ritual of stirring together ingredients that is comforting in my times of stress. This is a go-to, one-pot, easy, "healthy-ish" blueberry coffee cake that is always a crowd-pleaser, and it goes great with a cup of tea.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 sticks of butter (1 cup)
- 1 1/2 cups sugar or 3/4 cup maple syrup
- 3 large eggs
- 16 oz plain yogurt
- 2 cups frozen blueberries

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F.
2. Combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a small bowl. Set aside.
3. Beat the butter and sugar together.
4. Add the eggs to the butter and sugar, one at a time.

5. Gradually add the other mixed dry ingredients and then the yogurt.
6. Carefully fold in the blueberries.
7. Pour into a greased and floured 9 x 13 pan.

Topping

INGREDIENTS

- 2/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp vanilla

METHOD

1. Mix the topping ingredients together and crumble over the top.
 2. Bake for 30-40 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean.
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PEA SOUP

I made this soup as I stewed about that old desk. Most versions of pea soup are made with a ham hock, and I do that sometimes, but this version is made with bacon and bone broth, which is just as tasty. Enjoy.

INGREDIENTS

1 16 oz package of bacon
1 small onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
3 celery stalks, chopped
4 carrots, chopped
2 cups split peas soaked overnight
About 64 oz bone broth
Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

1. In a large stockpot or Dutch oven, cook the bacon, then remove and crumble it, but leave the drippings in the pot.
 2. Sauté the onion, garlic, celery, and carrots in the drippings for a few minutes (be careful not to burn the garlic).
 3. Drain the peas, then add them and broth. Bring to a simmer, cover, and cook for two to three hours (or longer if peas aren't soft). Stir occasionally.
 4. When peas are soft, add bacon bits, and salt and pepper to taste.
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CHICKEN MEATBALLS

Because I was such a brave girl at my post-op appointment, Ryan rewarded me with lunch at my favorite Greek restaurant in Nashville where I thoroughly enjoyed lemon rice and chicken meatballs, which, I can proudly say, I've now perfected as a dinner option at home.

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs ground chicken

2 Tbsp milk

Salt and pepper to taste

2 Tbsp parsley

Olive oil

METHOD

1. Place ground chicken in a large bowl.

2. Add milk, salt and pepper, and parsley.

3. Form into small balls.

4. Coat a skillet with olive oil and cook the meatballs on medium heat until no longer pink.

5. Remove from pan. Serve with your favorite rice and sauce.





CRÈME BRÛLÉE

It's ingrained in us to forego pleasure, especially pleasure for ourselves, but in doing so, we forego so much of what it means to be human, especially a woman! I vowed then and there to prioritize myself and, in turn, prioritize pleasure. And to really show how committed I was to the new-and-improved version of me who loves pleasure, I made the family crème brûlée for dessert.

INGREDIENTS

- 5 Tbsp white sugar
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 3 egg yolks
- 1/4 tsp vanilla extract (or maple for a twist)

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F.
2. Whisk 3 Tbsp sugar and heavy cream in a medium pot over low heat on the stove until combined.
3. Remove from heat and whisk in eggs yolks and vanilla extract until smooth.

4. Pour mixture into two ramekins and set these on a roasting pan. Pour enough hot water into the pan to reach halfway up the sides of the ramekins.
 5. Bake about 50 minutes and then chill in the refrigerator for 2 hours.
 6. Remove and sprinkle 1 Tbsp of sugar on top of each.
 7. Broil in the oven for 30–60 seconds, until the tops are brown and bubbly.
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APPLE PIE WITH GRANDMA HOLLY'S EASY PIE CRUST

I've been known to make this specific apple pie for Ryan when I have a super special favor to ask him that might require a bit of heavy lifting, like laying a patio in our backyard or putting together the sauna that I ordered from Costco; those unavoidable household tasks that no one wants to accomplish! A few pieces of Ryan's favorite apple pie with Grandma Holly's pie crust usually will do the trick.

Pie Crust (makes 2)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 sticks of chilled butter chopped
in small pieces
- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 pinches salt
- 2 tsp sugar
- A few Tbsp of ice water

METHOD

1. Start with the dough: Blend dry ingredients for the crust in a mixer with a paddle attachment.
 2. Add butter and blend for about a minute.
 3. Slowly add ice water, a teaspoon at a time. You do not want a wet dough!
 4. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill in the fridge for about an hour.
 5. Remove dough from fridge and split in half. Roll out one half until it fits in a pie pan.
 6. Pinch edges to form a crust (save second crust or make another pie).
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APPLE PIE (continued)

Filling

INGREDIENTS

- 6 or 7 apples (or to fill crust) cut into slices, skin on or off
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 1 tsp cinnamon

METHOD

1. Combine apple slices, maple syrup, and cinnamon in a bowl and stir.
2. Spoon into pie crust.

Topping

INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 cup flour
- 1/3 cup butter
- 1 cup sugar

METHOD

1. Combine topping ingredients and sprinkle over the apple mixture.
 2. Bake at 350° F for about an hour.
 3. Check the edges at around 45 minutes and place foil around them if they are looking too dark.
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PINE NEEDLE TEA

Yes, it sounds ridiculous. Yes, I am a bit crunchy at heart. Yes, I made this and it's not great, but it is extremely healthy. You see, I read about how pine needle tea has five times the vitamin C content of an orange, and living in the age of COVID, we need as much vitamin C as we can get. I thought, let's try it!

METHOD

1. First, it is very important that you find the right kind of pine needles. Our land is abundantly supplied in these. You want the kind where when you rip off one little bundle, it holds five long needles—to make sure, maybe check out a YouTube video on the subject.
 2. Next, boil water and then crunch up a bunch of pine needles and place them in the bottom of a mug.
 3. Pour the boiling water over the needles and allow them to steep for a few minutes.
 4. Sip and enjoy (and even if you don't particularly like the taste, it's still good for you, so count that in your favor).
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BBQ CHICKEN PIZZA

One of our favorite dinners is homemade pizza. In my last book, *Blended with Grit and Grace*, I included my perfected pizza dough recipe. Here I'm going to offer an easy version of our favorite grilled BBQ chicken pizza with a few of our favorite store-bought crust options for an easy, somewhat healthy version of a fancy bistro pizza.

INGREDIENTS

2 of my favorite quick and easy crust options:

- Cauliflower crusts found in the freezer section are a good gluten-free option
- Essential Baking Co Organic Artisan Thin Crust Pizza Crust

1 large red onion, sauteed in olive oil until soft

Cooked chicken cut in small pieces

Your favorite BBQ sauce

Spinach

Mozzarella cheese

Parmesan cheese

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven (or grill) to 425° F.
 2. To assemble: Spread a small amount of sauce over the pizza crust.
 3. Add toppings and cheese.
 4. Bake for 10–15 minutes (but watch closely).
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CHEESY BROCCOLI SOUP

We often enjoyed cheesy broccoli soup as we were out thrifting for deals. I don't handle dairy well (therefore, it's usually an occasional treat) and managed to create this fantastic dairy-free version. Enjoy.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 2 bags frozen broccoli (10 oz each)
- 2 peeled garlic cloves, minced
- 4–5 cups bone broth
- Salt and pepper
- 1 cup raw cashews

METHOD

1. Place cashews in a heat-safe bowl and pour boiling water over nuts. Leave uncovered. Wait about an hour—or until cashews soften.

2. Place the nuts in a blender and blend, adding water from the bowl until consistency is smooth and creamy. Set aside.
 3. Sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil in a large pot or Dutch oven.
 4. Add the broccoli and bone broth. Cook over medium heat until broccoli is tender.
 5. Transfer soup to a blender and blend until smooth.
 6. Return to pot or Dutch oven and add salt and pepper to taste, then cook on low until heated through.
 7. Add cashew cream and mix thoroughly.
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EASY STEAK AND ASPARAGUS

INGREDIENTS

2 rib eye steaks
Asparagus
Olive oil
Salt and pepper
Montreal Steak Seasoning
Dale's Steak Seasoning
2 Tbsp butter

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F.
2. Place the steaks in a shallow pan. Baste both sides of the steaks with Dale's Steak Seasoning. Apply salt, pepper, and Montreal Steak Seasoning to both sides.
3. Marinate about an hour and then heat a cast iron skillet on medium high. Sear

- one side of each steak for about 5 minutes (based on taste and thickness of steak).
 4. Flip over and cook another 4-5 minutes.
 5. Place a tablespoon of butter on top of each steak. Remove and let sit for a few minutes.
 6. Place the asparagus in a shallow dish and drizzle with olive oil.
 7. Apply salt and pepper.
 8. Bake for approximately 10 minutes until al dente (still firm but cooked through).
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TURKEY CLUB SANDWICHES

That last night together on our trip to Georgia, we made club sandwiches—my go-to whenever I'm in the mood for some gluttonous delights! These are the best; and if wrapped in tin foil, they stay fresh for a bit. Try them. You won't be disappointed.

INGREDIENTS

Good quality sourdough bread
Butter
A few strips of fried bacon
Good quality deli roasted turkey
A few spinach leaves
A couple of slices of tomatoes
Mayo
Swiss or provolone cheese

METHOD

1. Slather one side of two pieces of bread with butter and lay the buttered side flat in a skillet.
 2. Add the cheese, then the spinach leaves, the turkey, and bacon strips, and top with the second piece of bread.
 3. Fry until lightly browned.
 4. Remove and add tomatoes and mayo if desired.
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FLOURLESS CHOCOLATE CAKE WITH HOMEMADE WHIPPED CREAM



One of my absolute favorite things on my honeymoon was the flourless chocolate cake at the French restaurant. I've managed to recreate a version of it for us to enjoy at home too.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup dark chocolate chips
8 Tbsp butter
3/4 cup sugar
1/4 tsp salt
1 tsp vanilla
3 eggs
1/2 cup cocoa powder
1/2 cup maple syrup
8 oz whipping cream

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F.
2. Lightly grease a metal 8" round cake pan.
3. Put the chocolate and butter in a nonstick pot over low heat. Stir constantly until melted.

4. Transfer to a mixing bowl, and stir in the sugar, salt, and vanilla.
5. Add the eggs, beating briefly until smooth.
6. Add the cocoa powder, and mix just to combine.
7. Spoon the batter into the prepared pan.
8. Bake for 25 minutes; the top will have formed a thin crust.
9. Remove it from the oven, and let it cool in the pan for 5 minutes.

Whipped Cream

Place the whipping cream and maple syrup in a bowl with a stand mixer and beat until soft peaks appear. Place a dollop of whipped cream on each slice of cake.

