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A Brunch Date for Two

Put the romance back into breakfast

During the week, you might dart past your partner in the kitchen who's hurrying out the door with a coffee mug while you nosh on a cereal bar. With all the bustle of the workweek, who has time for an intimate meal together? But on the weekends—ahhh, the weekends—everything is on your time, not your boss'. So why not roll out of bed, keep on your pajamas and make brunch a date for two? With these recipes, you and your partner are likely to find that the most romantic meal might just be at 11 a.m. in your very own kitchen (no little black dress and overpriced menu involved).

By Ashley Cirilli

Sweet Morning Sundae

Ingredients:

- 8 medium strawberries
- 1 cup of Quaker Oh's cereal (or your favorite cereal)
- 1 ½ cups of creamy French vanilla or strawberry yogurt

Directions:

Cut 6 of the strawberries into 4 slices each. Place 6 strawberry slices in each of the 2 parfait glasses. Coat top of strawberries with thin layer of yogurt. Sprinkle ¼ cup cereal over strawberries and yogurt. Pour about ⅓ cup yogurt over cereal. Make another layer of strawberries, cereal and yogurt. Top each sundae with whole strawberry. Serve immediately.

French Toast Fondue

Ingredients:

2 tbsp. sugar
1 cup whole milk
3 large eggs
4 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
½ tsp. cinnamon
8 1-inch-thick slices soft French bread cut into 1-inch cubes
1 cup fresh blueberries
2 tbsp. corn starch
¼ cup of sugar
1 (14-ounce) package caramels
⅔ cup half-and-half
1 tbsp. butter
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Directions:

Heat oven to 375 degrees. In a bowl, whisk together sugar, milk, eggs, 3 tablespoons of the butter and cinnamon. Gently toss bread in mixture until coated well.

Spread remaining butter on a rimmed, nonstick baking sheet. Add bread cubes in a single layer and bake 12 to 15 minutes. Use a spatula to remove baked cubes from pan and serve immediately with dipping sauce and toppings.

To make blueberry dipping sauce, take 1 cup fresh blueberries, put in a saucepan and cook on medium-high. Add in sugar and stir till syrupy. In another bowl, whisk together cornstarch and water until it gets to the consistency of a heavy cream. When the blueberry mixture is boiling, add cornstarch mix and stir.

To make caramel dipping sauce, combine the caramels, the half-and-half, and the butter in a 1-quart microwave-safe measuring cup or bowl. Microwave on high for 2 to 3 ½ minutes to soften the candy (check the mixture after the first 2 minutes, and after that, at 30-second intervals). Remove the mixture from the microwave, then add the vanilla extract and stir until smooth.

If you prefer preparing the sauce on the stovetop, heat the caramels, half-and-half, and butter together in the top of a double boiler set over simmering water until the candy melts. Stir until the mixture is smooth, then remove the pan from the heat and stir in the vanilla extract.



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were this
uncomplicated
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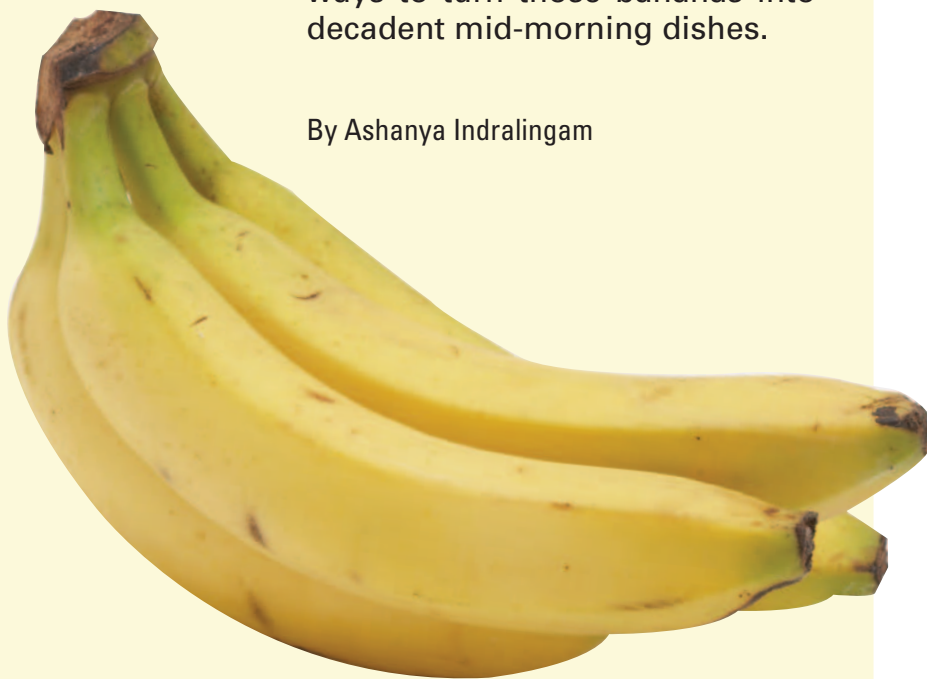


Banana Brunching

Recipes for ripe bananas

Buying all those bananas seemed like a good idea at the time. They're healthy. Oh, and cheap by the pound. Not to mention they were green when you bought them, so you thought you had all the time in the world. But the bright yellow came... and went. Now all you're left with is a cluster of squishy black goodness. You can't turn back time, but here are three ways to turn those bananas into decadent mid-morning dishes.

By Ashanya Indralingam



Ingredients:

- 1 cup fat-free milk
- 1 medium banana, peeled, cut into ½-inch slices and frozen
- 1 to 2 tbsp. sugar or honey
- 1 tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tsp. instant coffee crystals
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup small ice cubes or crushed ice

Ingredients:

- 8 cups cut-up fruit, such as papaya, banana, strawberries, carambola (star fruit)
- ¼ cup toasted chopped walnuts
- 2 medium bananas, peeled and sliced
- 1 8-oz. carton lemon low-fat yogurt
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- Lettuce leaves

Ingredients:

- 1 instant vanilla pudding mix
- 2 cups milk
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 1½ tsp. vanilla
- 4 medium, firm bananas
- 2 tbsp. butter, melted
- 1 to 2 tbsp. sugar
- 12 shortbread cookies or gingersnaps, broken into 1-inch pieces
- 1 tbsp. honey, such as wildflower, orange blossom, or clover
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
- ½ cup pecan halves, toasted

banana mocha smoothies

Directions:

In a blender, combine milk, banana, sugar, cocoa powder, coffee crystals and vanilla. Cover and blend until smooth. Add ice cubes. Cover and blend until nearly smooth.



fruit salad with banana dressing

Directions:

For the dressing, combine sliced bananas, lemon yogurt, sugar and lemon juice in a blender container. Cover and blend for 15 to 20 seconds or until smooth. Chill dressing, covered, for up to two hours in the refrigerator. To serve, line salad plates with lettuce and arrange the fruit on top. Pour on the dressing and sprinkle with walnuts. Makes 8 side-dish servings.



grilled bananas and pudding

Directions:

Prepare pudding according to package. Whisk in sour cream and vanilla until smooth. Set aside half. Cut each banana in half crosswise, then cut each half lengthwise. Brush bananas with butter and sprinkle with sugar. Heat a nonstick pan over medium heat. Grill bananas for 2 minutes or until browned, turning once. To serve, place two quarters in each of the four dishes, cutting to fit as necessary. Top with cookies and pudding and repeat. Drizzle honey and nutmeg over pudding. Top with pecans. Makes 4 servings.



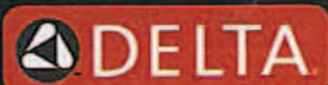
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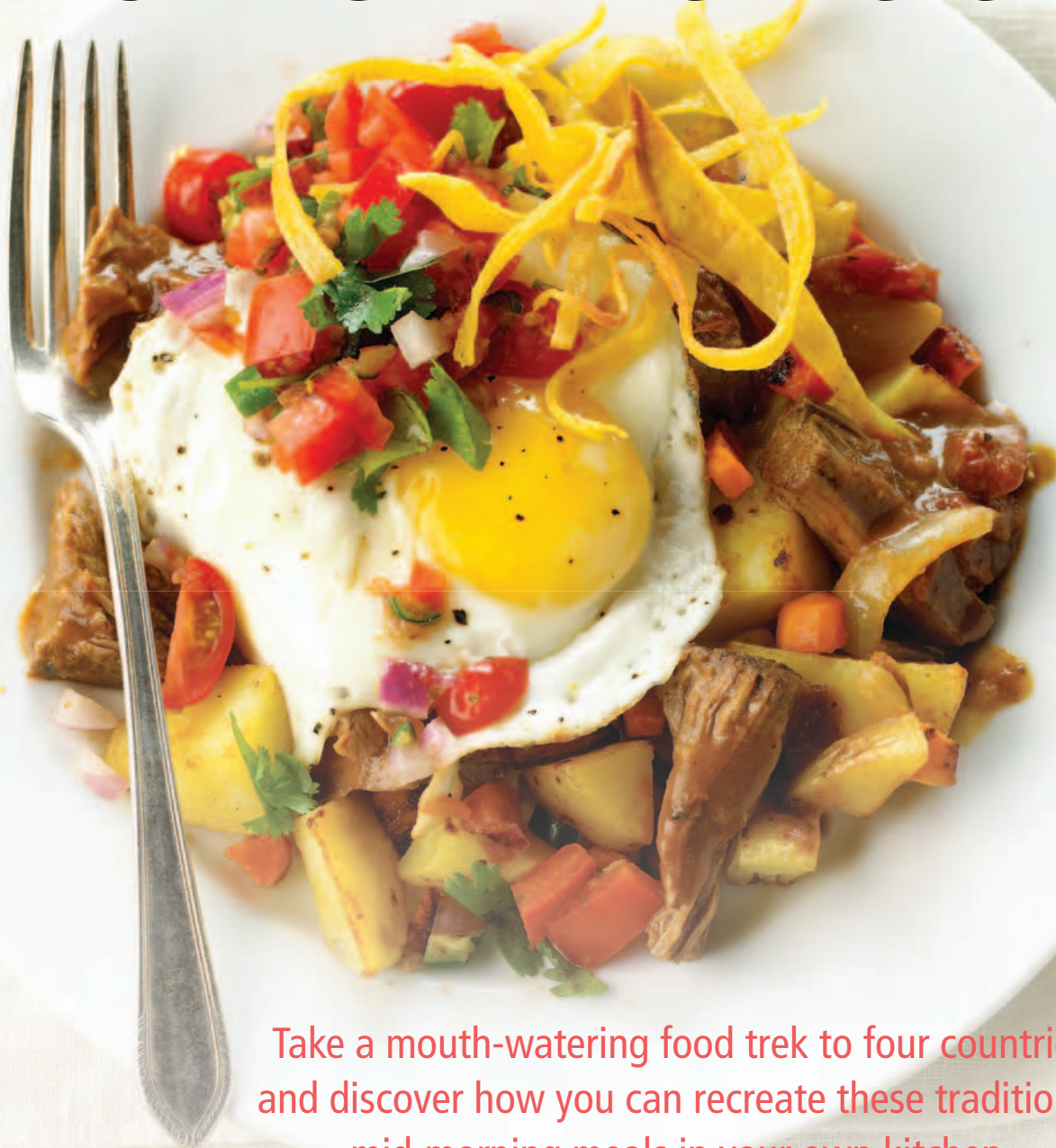
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Brunch Bazaar



Take a mouth-watering food trek to four countries and discover how you can recreate these traditional mid-morning meals in your own kitchen.

By Ashanya Indralingam & Madeline Giangrosso

Let's face it—when it comes to food, we're in love with all things exotic. More than a fad, dining at ethnic restaurants is a gastronomic adventure. Unfamiliar but enticing spices and herbs flavor every bite while pictures of far-flung destinations and traditional music enhance the experience.

Because dining out isn't always an option, we've created four mid-morning menus that

take you around the world, without leaving the comfort of your home (and those snuggly house slippers). We've even added some helpful ways to create the appropriate mood—a playlist or a wine pairing perhaps? We don't have anything against IHOP, but if you're burnt-out on bacon, eggs and pancakes, then this international brunch selection is for you.



● Mexican

Huevos Rancheros

Huevos Rancheros, the classic Mexican breakfast dish that translates to “eggs ranch-style” in Spanish, can be made in several different variations depending on how spicy you like it. This variation, which is slightly hotter than your average mild dish, can be taken up a notch by increasing the amount of chipotle chili powder. Take your taste buds on a vacation to the south for a Mexican fiesta—sombrero not included.

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. olive oil
½ medium onion, chopped
15 oz. can whole tomatoes
3 oz. can green chilies
pinch of chipotle chili powder
4 tortillas
butter
4 eggs
2 tbsp. cilantro

Directions:

Make the sauce by softening onions with the olive oil in a large skillet on medium heat. Once the onions are transparent, add in the tomatoes and juice. Add in the chopped chilies and chipotle chili powder and bring to a simmer by turning the heat to low. Stir occasionally. Heat a teaspoon of olive oil in a skillet on medium heat, coating the pan. Heat the tortillas in the pan, one at a time for about a minute on each side. Fry eggs in the same skillet, adding a little butter to the pan. To serve, spoon some of the sauce onto a warmed plate. Top with a tortilla and the fried egg. Add more sauce on top and sprinkle with cilantro.

*Take it
up a notch
with more
chipotle chili
powder!*

{Mexican Groove}

To put yourself in a south-of-the-border state of mind, turn on these tunes:

Yo Digo Baila

by Mexican Institute of Sound

Ando Bien Pedo

by Banda Los Recoditos

Me Gusta Todo De Ti

by Banda El Recodo de Cruz Lizarraga

Estuve

by Alejandro Fernandez

Hay Ojitos

by Intocable

Carita De Angel

by Larry Hernandez

Sin Evidencias

by Banda MS





Brazilian

Frango Recheado

Take your family and friends on a trip to Brazil with a stuffed chicken full of the country's authentic flavor. The stuffing mixture, called farofa by natives, is a seasoned element unique to Brazil.

Ingredients:

1 whole chicken
2 cloves of crushed garlic
2 bay leaves
finely chopped parsley
1-2 tbsp. of lemon juice or white wine
4-5 slices of crustless toast bread
2 tbsp. of vegetable oil
1 chopped onion
1 cup of chopped bacon
1 can of sweet corn
salt and black pepper to taste

Directions:

To prepare the stuffing, sauté the onion and bacon in hot vegetable oil. Add in the corn, parsley, onion, salt and pepper and cook for five minutes. Use a food processor to mince the bread. Add into the mixture and stir well. Let cool and save for later. To prepare the chicken, rinse and dry with a paper towel. Place in a bowl and season it generously with the garlic, bay leaf, parsley, lemon, salt and pepper. Cover with plastic wrap and leave in the fridge overnight. The next day, remove the chicken from the marinade and stuff. Use toothpicks to close any openings in the chicken and place it on a baking dish greased with vegetable oil. Cover dish with aluminum foil and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Remove foil and continue to bake for 20-30 more minutes or until the chicken is golden brown.

{Brazilian pico de gallo}



For a little bit of spice and zest to kick up your dish, try incorporating this mouth-watering array of flavors that come straight from the heart of Brazil.

Ingredients:

1 cup of diced green and red bell peppers
½ cup diced onions
1 cup diced ripe tomatoes
¼ cup white wine vinegar
2 tbsp. olive oil

Directions:

Mix together in a bowl the green and red peppers, onions, tomatoes, vinegar and olive oil. Add a hint of salt right before serving it. Serve on top of any meat, fish or sausage for some added kick to your dish.



French

Coq au Vin

French cooking may have a reputation for being snooty and frilly, but no dish is more down-to-earth than rustic favorite coq au vin. Like so many classic French dishes that have become American staples, coq au vin stew was first introduced to Americans in the 1960s by the esteemed Julia Child in her book *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

Most coq au vin recipes call for lengthy preparation and long hours waiting for the slow-cooker to work its magic. We love this sans slow-cooker recipe variation. Smaller pieces of chicken and vegetables and two pans to do cooking tasks simultaneously drastically reduce preparation time. Hearty, French fare is under an hour? C'est magnifique!

Ingredients:

Nonstick cooking spray
3 pounds chicken thighs, skinned
1 envelope beefy onion soup mix
1 ½ cups loose-pack frozen small whole onions
2 cups fresh button or wild mushrooms, quartered
½ cup dry red wine
Mashed potatoes (optional)
Snipped fresh basil or parsley (optional)

Directions:

Lightly coat a large skillet with nonstick cooking spray; heat over medium heat. Cook chicken thighs, several at a time, in the hot skillet until brown; drain off fat. Place chicken thighs in a 3 ½- or 4-quart slow cooker.

Sprinkle chicken thighs with dry soup mix. Add onions and mushrooms. Pour wine over all. Cover and cook on low-heat setting for 5 to 6 hours or on high-heat setting for 2 ½ to 3 hours. Using a slotted spoon, remove chicken from slow cooker. Use a fork to remove chicken from the bone, shredding it into bite-size pieces. Discard bones. Return chicken to mixture in cooker. If desired, serve with hot mashed potatoes and sprinkle with basil.

{Wine Pairings}

Red Burgundy

Delicious both on its own and as a food pairing, Burgundy wines are light-bodied and submissively play up the hearty flavors of this meal.

Cote de Rhone

Full-bodied in taste, the Rhone wines of the Southern region of France are strong complements to this dish.

Bordeaux

Bordeaux wines feature a nice cherry and blackcurrant flavor that not only pair well but also enhance the rich, rustic nature of the coq au vin.

Recommended:
Chateau Haut-
Beausejour, St-
Estephe 2006, \$22

Don't let the phyllo fool you—this Greek dessert is as easy to make as it is to enjoy. Baklava is essentially chopped walnuts, sweetened with honey and wrapped in layers of pastry goodness.

Though baklava originated in Central Asia, Greek seamen traveling through Mesopotamia were so enthralled by this dessert that they brought the recipe home to Athens. The Greeks' major contribution to the evolution of this pastry is the creation of a technique that made it possible to roll it thinner. They named this flaky-thin dough phyllo, meaning leaf in Greek. This same unleavened flour dough is also used in many parts of the Middle East and the Mediterranean to make pies and pastries, including the Egyptian Umm Ali dessert and gullac, a traditional Turkish pastry.

Ingredients:

4 cups walnuts, finely chopped
½ cup sugar
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 ¼ cups butter, melted
1 16-oz. package frozen phyllo dough, thawed
1 ½ cups sugar
1 cup water
¼ cup honey
½ tsp. finely shredded lemon peel
2 tbsp. lemon juice
2 inches stick cinnamon

Directions:

For filling, in a large mixing bowl stir together chopped walnuts, ½ cup sugar and ground cinnamon. Set aside.

Brush the bottom of a 15x10x1-inch baking pan with some of the melted butter. Unfold phyllo dough. Keep phyllo covered, removing sheets as you need them. Layer one-fourth of the phyllo sheets in the pan, generously brushing each sheet with melted butter as you layer, and allowing phyllo to extend up the sides of the pan. Sprinkle about 1 ½ cups of filling on top of the phyllo. Repeat layering the phyllo sheets and filling twice.

Layer remaining phyllo sheets atop the third layer of filling, continuing to brush each sheet with butter before adding the next phyllo sheet. Drizzle any remaining butter over the top layers. Trim edges of phyllo to fit the pan. Using a sharp knife, cut through all layers to make 60 diamond-, triangle- or square-shaped pieces.

Bake in a 325-degree oven for 45 to 50 minutes or until golden. Slightly cool in pan on a wire rack.

Meanwhile, for syrup, in a medium saucepan stir together the 1 ½ cups sugar, the water, honey, lemon peel, lemon juice and stick cinnamon. Bring mixture to boiling. Reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Remove the stick cinnamon. Pour the syrup over the warm baklava in the pan. Cool completely. Place in an airtight container and store at room temperature for up to three days or freeze up to one month. Thaw at room temperature for 30 minutes before serving.

Greek —● Baklava



{Greek show} ▶

Aquamarine seas, untouched islands, whitewashed coastal villages and tiered cities—yes, the beauty of Greece is legendary. So it's not surprising that this Balkan nation's many isles and inlets are popular settings for so many movies. Here's a list of our favorites to help set the right mood or inspire your next vacation.

Boy on a Dolphin (1957)

Starring: Sophia Loren, Alan Ladd & Clifton Webb
Setting: Hydra

James Bond: For Your Eyes Only (1981)

Starring: Roger Moore
Setting: Meteora

Summer Lovers (1982)

Starring: Darryl Hannah & Peter Gallagher
Setting: Santorini

Shirley Valentine (1989)

Starring: Pauline Collins & Tom Conti
Setting: Mykonos

Captain Corelli's Mandolin (2001)

Starring: Nicholas Cage & Penelope Cruz
Setting: Cephalonia

Wake up to Pizza

From apples to asparagus, exciting toppings for your morning pie

By Valeria Turturro and Claire Hanan

Welcome to the new game day brunch. We don't mean wings, lil smokies, a pigskin and team jerseys. Instead, we'll show you how to throw the perfect pizza party in which half time means playing a few rounds of Catch Phrase or Bananagrams. Revamp that old pizza recipe and make these fruit- and veggie-inspired pies the center of your next Scrabble showdown.

Pizzas give you the freedom to combine any assortment of ingredients and discover new ways to delight your taste buds. They're also the perfect party food with their no-fuss eating. They can be sweet or savory, delicate or rich and hearty. For brunch, substitute the more filling meaty pizzas with lighter toppings, like fruit, nuts and veggies. Be inspired by your favorite side dishes, like

salads. For the Cranberry & Walnut Pizza, we took everything we loved about our favorite salad and discovered that it tastes even better on a pizza. Or make things a little sweeter and add chocolate, like a White Chocolate, Pistachio and Cherry Pizza. Try any kind of crust -- white, wheat, Phyllo or even a cookie crust. Wheat pizza crust (recipe below) makes these pizzas healthy and even more flavorful.



Whole Wheat Pizza Crust

Ingredients:

- 1 cup warm water
- 1 tbsp. sugar or honey
- 2 tbsp. oil
- 1 pkg. yeast
- 1 ½ tsp. salt
- 3 cups whole wheat flour

Directions:

Dissolve yeast in warm water. Mix in all remaining ingredients; beat well. Knead for 5 minutes. Let rise for 45 minutes.





White Chocolate, Pistachio, Cherry Pizza

Ingredients:

1 whole wheat pizza crust
2 ½ ounce shelled, unsalted pistachios,
toasted
3 oz. ground cherries (or fresh cranberries)
⅓ cup heavy cream
8 oz. white chocolate, chopped
2 tbsp. unsalted butter

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Place the
nuts on a baking sheet and toast for about

10 minutes or until golden. Prepare a bowl
with ice water. In a pot of boiling water,
blanch the ground cherries for a couple of
minutes until they soften slightly but do
not burst. Plunge them into the ice water
and let cool. Dry on a baking sheet lined
with paper towels. Place chopped white
chocolate in metal bowl. Bring the cream
to a boil. Pour over the white chocolate.
Stir until smooth. Add butter, then stir to
combine. Scatter nuts and ground cherries
on pizza dough (or tart shell), and then
top with white chocolate mixture. Bake in
the oven for 15-20 min. Serve warm.



Asparagus and Bacon Pizza

Ingredients:

1 whole wheat pizza crust
1 cup mozzarella cheese
¾ cup goat cheese
1 pkg. sliced Canadian bacon, cut into strips
½ cup of asparagus (cut into 1- inch pieces)
4 oz. sour cream
½ cup julienned red onions

Directions:

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Sprinkle flour on a cookie sheet and roll the wheat dough onto the sheet. Roll dough out to desired thickness. Evenly coat crust with sour cream. Add remaining ingredients generously. Bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes. Serve warm.

Cranberry and Walnut Pizza

Ingredients:

1 whole wheat pizza crust
1 tbsp. pesto
4 tbsp. olive oil
½ cup shredded mozzarella
⅓ cup dried cranberries
¼ cup walnuts, chopped to desired size
¼ cup crumbled goat cheese

Directions:

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Sprinkle flour on a cookie sheet and roll the wheat dough onto the sheet. Roll dough out to desired thickness. In a small bowl, combine olive oil and pesto. With a spoon or brush, spread the oil and pesto mixture evenly on rolled out dough. Sprinkle mozzarella cheese, dried cranberries, walnuts and goat cheese on top of the pesto. Bake pizza in oven for 10-12 minutes or until cheese has melted and crust is golden brown.



Friendly Competition



While you cook, play a few rounds of Mad Gab. It's not important to keep score, as everyone will probably be helping in the kitchen and have messy hands. When it comes time to eat, play one of the following games. Ditch the scorecards (and sore losers) – messy hands and distracted cooks make keeping score a hassle.