

Sauces, Condiments, Herbs, and Spices

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IN THE LAST TEN YEARS, NOTHING IN

cooking has changed as much as the way we season and accompany our food. This explains, in large part, why this chapter now appears here, in the front of *How to Cook Everything*. Sauces and seasonings have become easy, international, and omnipresent; they're much more important in everyday cooking than they used to be.

Until relatively recently, most popular sauces were French and downright intimidating. Often thickened, usually fat laden and stock based, almost

always complicated, these old standbys now seem staid and tame.

In the last ten or twenty years, though, we've adopted a more straightforward approach to adding flavor, most of it decidedly un-French. From salsas to pesto to vinaigrette (yes, it's French—but it's raw) all the way to chutneys, cooked vegetable and fruit sauces, yogurt sauces, and the huge variety of chile pastes and spice pastes and blends, we have at our disposal a host of easy-to-make, easy-to-understand, and incredibly useful preparations.

The result is that you can take the blandest recipes you can find—steamed chicken or fish, plain rice or pasta, even a slice of toast—and find fifty different accompaniments for each, creating a powerfully flavorful dish every time.

Spice blends are crucial to this new approach to seasoning, especially if you're interested in exploring global cuisines. Easily assembled, with a long shelf life, they're perhaps the ultimate convenience food, whether used on their own or in a sauce or condiment. Some store-bought sauces and spice blends are bound to be staples in your kitchen. (There's a good recipe for ketchup here, but the reality is you're not likely to rely on it exclusively.) Even though there are decent bottled condiments, most home-made sauces and spice blends—from curry and chile powder to simple salsa—are far superior and, because they are customized, far more likable than anything you can buy.

ESSENTIAL RECIPES

Here is a handful of super-fast and almost ridiculously easy sauces based on ingredients you probably have on hand. Some are served cold or at room temperature. Most you can make ahead and store in the fridge for a bit. And all can be varied to go with virtually anything you make, at any time of year.

★ Five-Minute Drizzle Sauce

MAKES: 4 servings (1/2 cup)

TIME: 5 minutes

F **V**

Nothing could be easier or more versatile. All you have to do is boil some pasta or rice or broil a piece of chicken or fish, then get this going while it cooks. I'll start you off with the base recipe—a kind of warm vinaigrette—and a handful of variations, but no doubt you'll soon come up with even more ideas.

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or butter

1 tablespoon minced onion, garlic, ginger, shallot, scallion, or lemongrass

2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice or mild vinegar, like balsamic

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Put the oil or butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. When the oil is warm or the butter is melted, add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until it softens (turn the heat down if it starts to color), a minute or two.

2 Stir in 2 tablespoons water and the lemon juice and sprinkle with some salt and pepper; maintain the heat so it bubbles gently for a minute or two. Taste, adjust the seasoning, and serve.

Spiced Five-Minute Drizzle Sauce. Along with the onion or other aromatic, add a pinch of any spice (such as ground cumin, coriander, or saffron) or spice blend like chili powder or curry powder (to make your own, see pages 65–69), or a small cinnamon stick or piece of vanilla bean.

Herbed Five-Minute Drizzle Sauce. Just before serving, stir in some chopped fresh herbs: 2 tablespoons of milder herbs like parsley, basil, chives, cilantro, or mint or 2 teaspoons of more potent herbs like rosemary, tarragon, sage, or oregano.

Fiery Five-Minute Drizzle Sauce. Along with the onion or other aromatic, add 1 tablespoon minced fresh chile (like jalapeño or Thai) or a whole dried chile (chipotle is wonderful; whatever you use, remove it before serving) or a sprinkle of hot red pepper flakes or cayenne.

Sesame-Soy Five-Minute Drizzle Sauce. Replace the olive oil with 2 tablespoons each of dark sesame and peanut oil; replace the lemon juice with soy sauce. Along with the onion or other aromatic, add 1 tablespoon sesame seeds or finely chopped peanuts if you like. Finish by adding 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro leaves just before using if desired.

Miso Five-Minute Drizzle Sauce. Scrap the whole main recipe and do this: Combine $\frac{1}{2}$ cup miso, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mirin (or 2 tablespoons honey mixed with 2 tablespoons water) or sake (white wine or even water is okay too) in a small saucepan. Bring almost to a boil to dissolve the sugar, then just keep warm until ready to serve.

Ten-Minute Juicy Drizzle Sauce. Almost any high-quality juice works here—try carrot, tomato, orange, or pomegranate, for example. Omit the lemon juice and water. In Step 2, stir in 1 cup fruit or vegetable juice instead. Bring the mixture to a boil and adjust the heat so it bubbles steadily. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the juice reduces by half and thickens almost to a syrup, about 5 minutes. Add herbs (see the first variation) if you like and serve.

5 Other Super-Fast Sauces or Condiments

1. Compound Butter (page 32)
2. Tahini Sauce or Dressing (page 35)
3. Raw Onion Chutney (page 36)
4. Thai Chile Sauce (page 39)
5. Homemade Mayonnaise (page 41)

★ Fresh Tomato or Fruit Salsa

Salsa Fresca or Pico de Gallo

MAKES: About 2 cups

TIME: 15 minutes

F M V

Salsa fresca (also known as *pico de gallo* or, in Mexico, *salsa mexicana*) is fast, tasty, useful, and simple. It's fantastic with chips or grilled meat or fish but also simply cooked grains, eggs, and veggies. And if you double the recipe, you can serve this like a chunky gazpacho and eat it with a spoon.

To take this in an unusual direction, replace the tomatoes with a couple cups of fruit: Apples (especially tart green ones), peaches, pears, and plums are the obvious choices, but seeded grapes, pineapple, orange or grapefruit segments, and even cherries or berries are all wonderful.

2 large ripe fresh tomatoes, cored and chopped (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups)

$\frac{1}{2}$ large white onion or 3 or 4 scallions, chopped

1 teaspoon minced garlic, or to taste

Minced fresh chile (like jalapeño, Thai, or less of habanero) or hot red pepper flakes or cayenne, to taste

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fresh cilantro or parsley leaves

2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice or
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Combine everything but the salt and pepper in a medium bowl. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, then taste and adjust the seasoning.

2 If possible, let the flavors develop for 15 minutes or so before serving, but by all means serve within a couple of hours.

Puréed Tomato or Fruit Salsa. For a less chunky version: Toss the salsa into a food processor and blend as smooth as you like.

Chilean Salsa. A little more assertive but less acidic: Increase the minced garlic to 1 tablespoon; add 1 tea-

spoon chopped fresh oregano leaves and 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil; omit the lime juice.

Salsa Cruda. This makes a good pasta sauce: Eliminate the onion and chile; substitute basil leaves for cilantro and balsamic vinegar for the lime juice. Add a tablespoon or more of good extra virgin olive oil.

Avocado–Red Pepper Salsa. Add a chopped avocado and chopped Roasted Red Peppers (page 330).

Bean Salsa. Black beans are most traditional, but pintos or even chickpeas work well here too: Add a cup of your favorite cooked beans; substitute red onion for the white and add 1 teaspoon ground cumin. Let sit for about 30 minutes to develop the flavors.

Mexican Cheese Salsa. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or more crumbled queso fresco and replace the garlic with $\frac{1}{2}$ English cucumber, peeled and chopped.

★ Simplest Yogurt Sauce

MAKES: 1 cup

TIME: 3 minutes

F M V

Good yogurt is sour and rich, practically a sauce itself; add a little salt and you're set. The recipe and variations here build on that idea, adding various seasonings or chopped vegetables in the traditions of (mostly) India—where yogurt sauces are called *raitas*—and the Middle East.

You can make your own yogurt (see page 823), but good yogurt is sold in stores too; just avoid those containing gelatin or pectin or lacking live cultures. Good yogurt may be thick or thin, it may have a hard, almost cream cheese layer on top, or it may not, but it always has a fresh, sweet-sour smell and delicious flavor. If you want a slightly thicker sauce, drain the yogurt for 15 minutes or so before starting (see page 824).

1 cup yogurt, preferably whole milk
1 teaspoon minced garlic

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Freshly squeezed lemon juice if necessary

1 Combine the yogurt with the garlic, a pinch of salt, and a grinding or two of pepper. Taste and adjust the seasoning, adding some lemon juice if necessary.

2 Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to a few hours; bring back to near room temperature before serving.

Herbed Yogurt Sauce. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh herbs or to taste. Use mint leaves, parsley, dill, cilantro, or any other tender herb. A teaspoon of dried mint or dill is also acceptable (other dried herbs are not as good).

Onion Yogurt Sauce. Add a tablespoon or more minced onion, shallot, or scallion; you can omit the garlic or not, as you like.

Richer Yogurt Sauce. Top with a tablespoon or so of good extra virgin olive oil, along with a sprinkling of paprika or cumin if you like.

Avocado Yogurt Sauce. Stir in (or purée in a food processor) $\frac{1}{2}$ ripe avocado or more, along with a little extra lemon juice.

Raita (Cucumber Yogurt Sauce). The classic Indian yogurt sauce: Add about 1 cup cucumber, peeled if you like, seeded, and chopped (and salted if necessary, see page 207); or peeled, seeded, cored, and diced tomato; or any mixture of vegetables, like those you'd use in Chopped Salad, Five Ways (page 204).

Ginger Yogurt Sauce. Stir in a tablespoon or so of minced fresh ginger.

Fiery Yogurt Sauce. Add hot red pepper flakes, chili powder (to make your own, see page 66), or minced fresh chile to taste.

Spicy Yogurt Sauce. Add a pinch or more of cumin, paprika, cayenne, dry mustard, saffron (let the sauce stand for a while before using it or use turmeric for the same color if less flavor), or ground ginger.

Nutty Yogurt Sauce. Or Seedy Yogurt Sauce: Stir in up to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped nuts or seeds. Shredded

unsweetened coconut is an Indian classic, but anything is fair game. (Poppy seeds look gorgeous.)

Yogurt Sauce with Beans. Add 1 cup drained cooked (or canned) beans, especially chickpeas.

Sweet Yogurt Sauce. A spoonful of honey—either alone or in combination with any of the above—goes well with heavily seasoned food, and the sweetness helps round out yogurt’s natural acidity.

Blue Cheese Dressing. Good with sour cream or mayonnaise too: Add about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbled blue cheese (Roquefort, for example) along with a bit of freshly squeezed lemon juice. Omit the garlic.

Vinaigrette: The Ultimate Sauce

You could make the argument that vinaigrette—basically, oil and vinegar with seasonings—is not only the mother of all salad dressings, but also of sauces, and marinades for that matter. (See pages 198–202 for a master recipe and tons of flavoring options.) Here’s a handful of ideas for using vinaigrette beyond salads:

1. Toss with finely chopped fruit or vegetables (or both) for an instant salsa.
2. Serve as a dipping sauce for crudités, dumplings, or other finger foods.
3. Use as a base for building other dips by adding yogurt or sour cream.
4. Drizzle on plain roasted, broiled, grilled, or steamed meat or vegetables toward the end of cooking.
5. Use to marinate fish, meat, or poultry before broiling, grilling, or roasting. Just be sure to blot the food dry before cooking; often I’ll also cover it with a fresh coat of oil to promote browning. If you want to use the leftover marinade as a sauce, be sure to boil it for several minutes first.
6. Brush on thickly sliced bread before grilling or broiling or use as a condiment to drizzle on sandwiches.

7 Uses for Simplest Yogurt Sauce

Any of the previous yogurt sauces can be used in myriad different ways. Some ideas:

1. As a salad dressing (thin with a little lemon juice or sherry vinegar and olive oil)
2. Alongside any simply grilled, broiled, roasted, steamed, or sautéed meat, fish, or poultry
3. Atop grilled or steamed vegetables or baked potatoes
4. As a dip for raw veggies or chips or any sort of fritter or other fried snack
5. Stirred into cooked rice or other grains for extra creaminess, body, flavor, and protein
6. Cooked on top of roasted vegetables, poultry, or meat as you might cheese (do not overcook, but add during the last 5 or 10 minutes of cooking)
7. Stirred into chopped raw fruit and/or nuts for a more complex fruit salad

★ Soy Dipping Sauce and Marinade

MAKES: About $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups

TIME: 15 minutes

F M V

This is an ideal dipping sauce for simply prepared (even steamed) fish, shrimp, chicken, or pork, and of course Fried Wontons or Egg Rolls (page 102); it’s also perfect for drizzling over Sushi Bowls (page 473) or tossing with hot or cold Chinese egg noodles. And you can make it even easier by skipping any or all of the garlic, ginger, or scallion. You also might try substituting $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ketchup for the sugar (don’t knock it until you try it) or, in Korean style, adding $\frac{1}{4}$ cup toasted sesame seeds to the sauce.

If you don’t have rice vinegar or sake, use fruity white wine or a tablespoon of cider or white vinegar mixed with a tablespoon of water.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons rice vinegar or sake

2 tablespoons dark sesame oil

- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon minced or grated fresh ginger
- 1/4 cup minced scallion

Combine all the ingredients and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Use immediately or refrigerate for up to 2 days.

Tahini Soy Sauce. Thicker and richer and terrific with anything grilled: Omit the ginger and scallion. Substitute 1/4 cup honey for the vinegar and add 2 tablespoons tahini; sprinkle with hot red pepper flakes if you like.

Sweet-and-Sour Sauce. Omit the sesame oil. Increase the sugar to 2 tablespoons; increase the vinegar to 3 tablespoons. Cook briefly over low heat, stirring, to dissolve the sugar. Taste and add more vinegar or sugar if necessary. Cool before serving or use warm as a basting sauce for roasted, grilled, or broiled vegetables, fish, poultry, or meat. You can make this hot-and-sour sauce by adding cayenne to taste.

The Basics of Flavored Oils

By taking an herb, spice, or aromatic and infusing its essence into oil, you create something delicious, akin to Compound Butter (page 32).

The first thing to consider is the oil itself: Do you want olive oil, another flavorful oil like peanut or dark sesame oil, or a neutral oil like grapeseed or corn? This is a judgment call you make on a case-by-case basis, but it's mostly common sense. You're likely to pair rosemary with olive oil, for example, because both are most often used in Mediterranean cooking; you're likely to pair star anise with peanut oil because both are likely to be used in Asian cooking. But whenever you're in doubt, reach for your neutral oil; you can't go wrong here. (In any case, do not use your best olive oil for infused oils; it will not make the final product any better.)

Infused oils can go bad and even cause illness, but you need not worry about this if you make small—1/2 cup—batches, enough to store comfortably in the refrigerator

and use in a week or two. You don't want it sitting around much longer than that.

Refrigerating many oils causes them to solidify, but this isn't a problem: Solidified oils will melt as soon as they come back to room temperature (or you can use them as a spread).

One last word: Don't bother to make infused oils with ground spices or herbs. These flavor oil (or anything else) so quickly that infusion contributes nothing further. And they're too easy to burn.

Flavored Oil

MAKES: 1/2 cup

TIME: 20 minutes, plus time to cool

F **M** **V**

It's almost impossible to use too much of the flavoring ingredients in this preparation, but if you do—if your oil becomes too strong—simply dilute it with a little fresh oil. You can certainly mix or match among the “OR” options here, but remember that combinations will limit the range of the oil's usefulness.

1/4 cup washed and dried fresh herb leaves: rosemary, thyme, bay leaf (dried will do), tarragon, marjoram, oregano, etc.

OR

1 tablespoon whole spice: star anise, peppercorns, cloves, allspice, nutmeg, dried chiles (or less if they're very hot), etc.

OR

Aromatics: 2 cloves garlic, lightly crushed; or 2 tablespoons fresh ginger slices, roughly chopped shallot or scallion, celery leaves, or a combination

Pinch salt

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil or neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn

1 Combine the ingredients in a saucepan over low heat. Warm gently until the mixture sizzles, then continue to cook until the oil is very fragrant, another minute or two.

2 Cool, then strain into a clean bottle or other container. Refrigerate and use within a month or, at the most, two.

Pesto, Herb Purées, and Herb Sauces

Herb pastes and purées give as much bang for the buck as any sauce preparation I know. The herb is always the dominant flavor (just look at the quantities), even when it's combined with spices or garlic. Use the best oil you can find and—more important—make sure it tastes fresh.

Traditional Pesto

Pesto Genovese

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

The best pesto is made with a mortar and pestle, and in Genoa, where pesto originated, few people will admit to using a food processor. But when you get into their kitchens, that's just what they do. And so do I.

If you have a garden filled with basil, by all means make as much pesto as you can and throw it in the freezer. It keeps fairly well, but to help retain its bright green color, drizzle a layer of olive oil over the top once it's in a container and don't add Parmesan until you're ready to use the sauce.

If you're using store-bought basil, you might as well just make it in the quantities given here and enjoy it fresh. And although it's not traditional, you can substitute parsley for all or some of the basil, with fine results.

2 loosely packed cups fresh basil leaves, rinsed and dried

Salt

1/2 clove garlic, peeled, or more to taste

2 tablespoons pine nuts or chopped walnuts

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil, or more as desired

1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan, pecorino Romano, or other hard cheese (optional)

1 Combine the basil with a pinch of salt, the garlic, the nuts, and about half the oil in a food processor or blender. Process, stopping to scrape down the sides of the container if necessary and adding the rest of the oil gradually. Add more oil if you prefer a thinner mixture.

2 Store in the refrigerator for a week or two or in the freezer for several months. Stir in the cheese by hand just before serving.

Pesto with Butter. Toss this with pasta or rice or use it as you would Compound Butter (page 32); it's really quite special: Blend in 2 tablespoons softened butter along with the last bit of oil (do not store this version).

Mint or Dill "Pesto." Super on pasta or grilled fish, chicken, or vegetables: Substitute mint or dill for the basil; the garlic is optional. Use a neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn, instead of olive oil and omit the cheese. Finish, if you like, with a squeeze of lemon juice. Use within a day.

Arugula "Pesto." Terrific with grilled steak or vegetables or plain rice: Substitute arugula—tough stems removed—for the basil. Omit the cheese. Use within a day.

Parsley (or Other Herb) Purée

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

Simpler, purer, less complex than traditional pesto, parsley purée is also even more of a standby. For one thing, you can find decent parsley year-round. For another, it's a brighter, fresher purée and therefore less specific in its uses. And, as you can see from the variations, it's equally effective with different herbs.

2 cups fresh parsley leaves (thin stems are okay), rinsed and dried

Salt
1/2 clove garlic, peeled, or more to taste
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil, or more as desired
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar or freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 Combine the parsley with a pinch of salt, the garlic, and about half the oil in a food processor or blender. Process, stopping to scrape down the sides of the container if necessary, and adding the rest of the oil gradually. Add the vinegar, then a little more oil or some water if you prefer a thinner mixture.

2 Taste and adjust the seasoning, then serve or cover and refrigerate for up to a couple of days.

Cilantro, Dill, Basil, or Mint Purée. These are good for their straight herbaceous flavors; cilantro purée is terrific with grilled chicken, mint with lamb, and so on: Substitute any of these herbs (leaves only or leaves and very thin stems) for the parsley.

Chimichurri. Very strong stuff: Use 3 or more cloves garlic, 2 tablespoons vinegar or freshly squeezed lemon juice, and at least 1 teaspoon of hot red pepper flakes. Do not refrigerate.

Green Olive Mojo. Caribbean and intense: Reduce the olive oil to 1/4 cup; use 1/4 cup freshly squeezed lime juice, or to taste, in place of the vinegar or lemon juice. After puréeing, use the food processor to pulse in 1 cup pitted green olives; or chop the olives by hand and add them. In any case, do not purée them.

Cilantro (or Other Herb) Sauce

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

Here just enough oil is added to thicken the mixture a bit; it doesn't become creamy like pesto, but it retains a vibrant herb flavor. Wonderful drizzled over fish or vegetables or stirred into soups. You can also make this with parsley, basil, dill, mint, or a combination.

2 cups loosely packed fresh cilantro leaves
Salt
1 clove garlic, peeled
3 tablespoons peanut oil or neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lime juice

1 Combine the cilantro, a pinch of salt, the garlic, and the oil in a food processor or blender. Process, stopping to scrape down the sides of the container if necessary. Add the lime juice and blend for a second; add a little water if necessary to thin the mixture, then purée.

2 Taste and adjust the seasoning, then serve or cover and refrigerate for up to a couple of days.

Cilantro "Pesto" with Ginger and Chile. Serious kick here and a must for chile lovers: Double the garlic and add about 1 tablespoon roughly chopped fresh ginger and hot fresh chile (like habanero or jalapeño, seeded) or hot red pepper flakes to taste.

REMOVING LEAVES FROM THYME



To remove the leaves from thyme or other fresh herbs, hold the top of the stem tightly with one hand and run your fingers downward to strip off the leaves.

The Herb Lexicon

Literally thousands of plants are used as herbs. The ones used in this book are in the following charts, which are pretty self-explanatory. The first lists the most frequently

EVERYDAY HERBS

HERB	DESCRIPTION	USES
Basil <i>Basilico</i>	The most familiar varieties (like Genovese) have flavors of licorice and cloves; the more exotic, like Thai, may be peppery and minty. Sold everywhere and easy to grow in warm weather.	Best raw or cooked only briefly. Use the leaves whole or tear them; or chop them if you don't mind the leaves turning black. The edible flowers look great in salads.
Bay Leaves <i>Sweet Bay, Sweet Laurel, Bay Laurel</i>	Glossy, green, and leathery when fresh; grayed and brittle when dried. The flavor is subtle but complex; fresh are much stronger than dried, though both are good; whole dried leaves are far better than ground. Turkish (small, round leaves) are superior to Californian (long, narrow leaves). Easy to grow in Mediterranean climates.	In stocks, soups, sauces, poaching liquids, to flavor vinegars; with roasts of all kinds (throw in a few leaves the next time you're roasting vegetables).
Chervil	Looks similar to parsley but smaller, with lacy leaves and an anise-basil flavor. Fresh only; dried is useless. Easy to grow in not-too-hot climates, but so delicate it's not easy to find in supermarkets.	So delicate it's best used raw or added at the end of cooking. Delicious in omelets, creamy or light sauces, salads, and with vegetables.
Chives	Bright green, hollow, and grasslike, with mild onion flavor. Garlic chives have wider and flatter leaves and a more garlicky taste but aren't as common. Fresh are far preferable, sold everywhere, and easy to grow.	Best raw or cooked only briefly. An assertive addition to soft cheese spreads and compound butter.
Cilantro <i>Coriander, Chinese Parsley, Mexican Parsley</i>	Tender and parsleylike in appearance, but distinctive in aroma and flavor (those who don't like it, and they're not insignificant in number, say it tastes soapy). Useless dried, though the seeds are the spice coriander, see page 61.) Sold everywhere and easy to grow.	Like basil and many other herbs, best added at the last minute. Widely associated with the flavors of Mexican, Thai, and Indian cooking. Use the roots in stews or other long-cooked dishes.
Dill <i>Dill Weed</i>	Stalks with blue-green feathery, tender leaves, with familiar flavor. Fresh is superior to dried, which has less flavor but at least retains some character. Sold in most supermarkets and easy to grow in not-too-hot weather. Dill seed is used as a spice.	Use at the end of cooking, as its flavor is diminished by hot temperatures (though tying stems in a bundle and cooking with stews gives a nice flavor). Super in dishes made with sour cream, yogurt, or mustard or tossed into a green salad.
Marjoram <i>Sweet Marjoram, Knotted Marjoram, Wild Marjoram</i>	Short, square stems with light green, fuzzy, oval leaves. Often confused with oregano, but superior. Dried marjoram isn't too bad, though far more pungent than fresh. Sold in most supermarkets and an easy-to-grow perennial in most climates.	Add fresh toward the end of cooking; crumble dried leaves between your fingers. Wonderful with green salads, vinaigrettes, eggs, beans, all sorts of vegetables, and especially tomato sauces.
Mint	Square stems with bright green, wrinkled leaves (spearmint) or smooth ones (peppermint and other varieties). Best fresh, though dried is sometimes a decent substitute. Sold in most supermarkets and easy to grow (invasive, in fact).	Chop or crush fresh leaves to release their flavor. Traditional with peas or potatoes, goes well with many vegetables and fruits; perfect in yogurt-based sauces, chutneys, and many Southeast Asian dishes. Ideal in herbal teas and cocktails.

EVERYDAY HERBS (CONTINUED)

HERB	DESCRIPTION	USES
Oregano <i>Greek Oregano, Mexican Oregano, sometimes Wild Marjoram</i>	Square stems with dark green, fuzzy, spade-shaped leaves. Stronger and spicier than marjoram. Fresh is infinitely better, but dried is acceptable. Sold in most supermarkets, and an easy-to-grow perennial in most climates.	Fresh and dried can be cooked or used as a garnish in small amounts. Good with tomatoes, cheeses, pizza, vegetables, beans, and vinaigrettes.
Parsley	Crisp stems with bunches of dark leaves with fresh flavor. There are two varieties: curly and flat-leaf (Italian) parsley; the latter is somewhat better, but it's not worth making a big deal about. Sold everywhere; dried is useless.	Impossible to overstate its importance; used in just about everything from soups to salads, vinaigrettes, sauces, vegetables, eggs, and pasta and as a garnish. Especially valuable in winter for its freshness.
Rosemary	Grayish green needles on woody branches, with crisp, piney aroma and flavor. Fresh rosemary is sold increasingly in supermarkets and is easy to grow as a perennial (warmer climates) or an annual. Dried leaves are also flavorful.	Wonderful with beans and roast meats, also with most vegetables, egg dishes, pasta, and breads. The woody branches make perfect skewers for broiling or grilling too.
Sage	Soft, woolly, oval grayish green or multicolored leaves. Sharply flavored, slightly bitter, and very aromatic. Fresh leaves are best; dried are stronger and somewhat mustier, but not bad. Increasingly sold in supermarkets or can be grown as a perennial almost anywhere.	Use fresh leaves whole or chopped. Crumble dried leaves with your fingers. One of the most important herbs of Italy; wonderful with beans, stuffings, breads, biscuits, and pasta.
Tarragon	Narrow, lance-shaped, bright to dark green leaves, with strong, complex flavor and aroma, faintly licoricelike. Fresh is always best; dried is less flavorful but usable. Often sold in supermarkets and easily grown as a perennial in most climates. (If you have a choice, grow French tarragon.)	Whole or chopped fresh leaves can be cooked; flavor is not at all tamed by heat, so use it sparingly. Good with seafood, chicken, or eggs. Crumble dried tarragon between your fingers to release essential oils.
Thyme	A small shrub with tiny green or grayish green leaves. Minty, lemony, and earthy. Fresh is more pungent and aromatic than dried, though dried is useful. Often sold in supermarkets and easily grown as a perennial in most climates.	The classic French cooking herb, often used in long-simmering or braising recipes. Use fresh leaves and tips as a garnish, but very sparingly—its strong flavor easily overwhelms everything else. Perfect teamed with olive oil and garlic at the beginning of many sautés.

used herbs, in alphabetical order. The second includes several others that are a little more unusual and are sometimes but not always found in supermarkets.

Though no herb is a direct substitute for any other, there are many situations in which you're not necessarily looking for a specific flavor but rather the freshness that herbs provide. In these cases you can substitute parsley for basil, cilantro for mint, and so on. Just don't expect the end product to taste the same.

Fresh herbs keep best when stored in the refrigerator.

Most should simply be wrapped in damp paper towels and slipped into a plastic bag. Set those with fragile leaves—like basil, chervil, dill, mint, and parsley—stem down in a jar of water with a plastic bag over the leaves; change the water every day (and try not to upset the glass!).

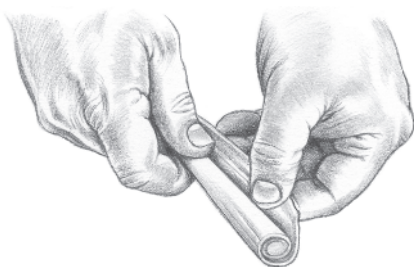
Store dried herbs in sealed lightproof jars (or in a dark place) for up to a year. Taste before using them and you'll know when it's time for a new batch.

Before using, it's usually best to strip herb leaves from

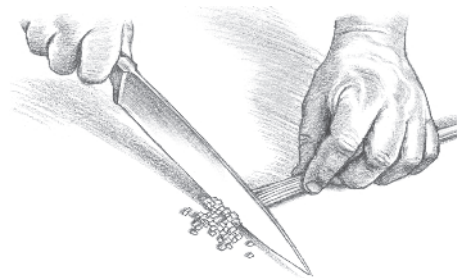
SPECIALTY HERBS

HERB	DESCRIPTION	USES
Epazote <i>Mexican Tea, Wormseed, Pigweed</i>	Bright green, jagged, and pointed leaves with green stems, usually sold in bunches when fresh. Its aroma is unusual and its taste powerful, but it adds a valuable flavor to Mexican dishes. Fresh leaves are better, but dried are more common. Sold in Mexican and Latin American markets; easily grown as an annual.	Use chopped or whole fresh or dried leaves in small quantities. Traditionally used with beans and some moles; also good with corn and other summer vegetables, in quesadillas, and in scrambled eggs.
Lavender	Narrow gray-green leaves with long purple or pink flower spikes. The scent and flavor is minty and floral—you'll recognize it immediately. Can be grown as a perennial in any moderate climate.	Fresh leaves and flowers can be minced and tossed into salads and fruit dishes or cooked in sauces, candies, and pastries. Great with roasted or grilled meat, especially lamb. Works well in infusions (see page 962).
Lemongrass <i>Citronella Root, Sereh</i>	A stiff, narrow stalk that could be mistaken for a scallion. Strong citrus flavor and aroma; think citronella candles. Best fresh; dried is acceptable. Sold in supermarkets and Asian markets (especially Vietnamese and Thai). Easy to grow in warm climates or as an annual in temperate zones.	Cut off woody tops and peel off tough outer layers (see illustration below); mince or pound the pieces to release their flavor and aroma. Soak dried lemongrass in hot water for at least 30 minutes before using.
Lime Leaves <i>Kaffir Lime Leaves</i>	Tough, shiny green leaves; very aromatic, with unusually floral and limy flavor. Fresh is best, but dried are good. Sold in most Asian markets and can be grown wherever citrus will grow.	In Southeast Asian dishes of all types. Mince or toss in the whole leaves during cooking; use double the amount of dried leaves for fresh. Or use a teaspoon of grated or minced lime zest for each leaf.
Shiso <i>Perilla, Japanese Basil or Mint, Beefsteak Plant</i>	Flat bright green or reddish purple leaves with a jagged edge. Combination of basil, mint, and cinnamon flavors. Dried is less flavorful but somewhat useful. Sold in many Asian (especially Japanese) and some Mexican markets; easy to grow inside or out (like mint, it is invasive and will spread like mad).	As you would use basil or mint. Traditionally served with sashimi and sushi, cucumbers, pickles, tempura; in salads, soups; when dried, sprinkled over rice.

PREPARING LEMONGRASS



To prepare lemongrass, cut off the woody tops and peel off tough outer layers.



Make a couple lengthwise cuts, then slice crosswise to mince.

their tougher, more bitter stems (this is especially true of the strongest herbs like rosemary and oregano). Just hold the top of the stem tightly with one hand and run your fingers downward to strip off the leaves.

The Basics of Compound Butters

Compound butter is nothing more than butter mixed with a flavorful ingredient: anything from an herb or spice to a bit of fruit, like lemon, or a condiment like mustard or soy sauce. It's best used as a finishing ingredient in sauces and also on grilled or broiled meats and vegetables.

To make it, you just combine butter and your chosen ingredient(s); there is no exact ratio. But use good-quality unsalted butter and certainly avoid margarine. (If you want to avoid butter, see Flavored Oil, page 26.)

You can refrigerate compound butter for days or freeze it for a month or so. Roll it into a log and wrap in two or

three layers of plastic before freezing. When you need some, slice a piece off and return the rest to the freezer.

Compound Butter

MAKES: 4 to 8 servings

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

Herb butters are the most basic and traditional compound butters; variations follow. Bear in mind that some herbs are stronger than others—and spices are stronger still—so adjust the amount based on taste.

2 tablespoons chopped parsley, chervil, cilantro, chives, dill, or sage, or smaller amounts of tarragon, rosemary, or thyme leaves, or a combination

4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter, at room temperature

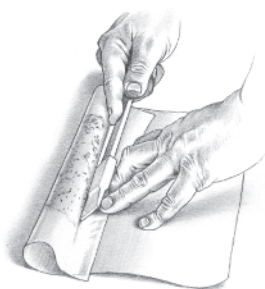
Salt

Freshly ground black pepper (optional)

Juice of ½ lemon (optional)

- 1 Use a fork to cream the herbs with the butter; add salt as needed and pepper and lemon juice if you like.
- 2 Use or wrap and refrigerate or freeze for later.

ROLLING COMPOUND BUTTER INTO A LOG



For an elegant presentation, you can roll compound butter into a log; using wax or parchment paper is the easiest, though foil works in a pinch. A rubber spatula can help form smooth sides, though rolling with your hands is fine, too. Once the butter is firm, remove the wrapper and cut crosswise into pats as thick or thin as you like.

15 Easy Flavorings for Compound Butter

These can be used in conjunction with the herb or not, as you prefer (same with the lemon juice) or combined with one another. Amounts are approximate; adjust to taste.

1. 2 tablespoons chopped scallion
2. 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
3. For a sweet butter: 1 to 2 tablespoons honey or minced crystallized ginger
4. 1 teaspoon grated lemon or lime zest, along with 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon or lime juice
5. 1 tablespoon capers, rinsed and mashed, with 1 teaspoon minced lemon zest
6. 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar, with 1 tablespoon minced shallot if you like
7. 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard or horseradish or 1 teaspoon wasabi powder

8. 2 teaspoons Spanish paprika
9. 2 tablespoons minced pitted green or black olives
10. 1 teaspoon minced garlic
11. Mashed flesh of 1/2 peach, plum, or pear
12. 1 or 2 teaspoons soy sauce
13. 1 or 2 (or more if you're a fanatic) mashed anchovies
14. 2 or 3 tablespoons finely chopped dried shrimp
15. 1 or 2 tablespoons minced fresh or dried chiles, or to taste

6 Almost-as-Easy Flavorings for Compound Butter

Cooking takes the edge off garlic, onions, and other foods, so you'll have a milder-tasting compound butter. Let the flavoring cool before adding them.

1. 2 or more cloves Roasted Garlic (page 303).
2. 1 teaspoon minced garlic cooked in 1 tablespoon butter for 2 to 3 minutes, or until soft. Enhance it with 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger (add for the last minute of cooking) and a little soy sauce.
3. 2 finely chopped scallions or shallots, sautéed with 1 or 2 tablespoons butter in a pan over medium-low heat.
4. About 3 tablespoons chopped cashews or other nuts, sautéed with a tablespoon or two of butter in a pan over medium-low heat until light golden.
5. About 2 tablespoons chopped carrot, cooked over medium-low heat in a tablespoon or two of butter until very soft. Nice with parsley.
6. 2 pieces crisply cooked bacon, crumbled.

Fresh (Uncooked) Sauces

A classically trained French chef would scoff at calling a bunch of chopped tomatoes, onions, chiles, and seasonings a "sauce," yet salsa is most Americans' favorite condiment, and if it's not a sauce, I don't know what is.

Salsa isn't the only uncooked sauce: Here too are chutneys, American classics like horseradish sauce and relishes, and Asian-style dipping sauces. (For the simplest uncooked sauces, see pages 22 to 26 in the Essential Recipes section.)

Generally the building blocks are simple and vegetable based, but fruits and nuts can also be excellent. Season with herbs, aromatics, or chiles (or all three) and balance with acidity or sweetness as needed.

Fresh Tomatillo Salsa

MAKES: About 2 cups

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

Super-fresh and perfect in summer. Look for firm unshriveled tomatillos still covered with tight husks (after husking, be sure to rinse off the tacky residue). If fresh tomatillos are not available, canned are okay, though the results will be less crunchy.

Poblanos and some other fresh chiles have tough skins that are best removed. The easiest way to peel them is to char the skin, which has the added benefit of giving the salsa a light smoky flavor. You can, however, skip this step if you're rushed.

- 2 medium poblano or other mild fresh green chiles
- 2 cups chopped husked tomatillos (about 1 pound)
- 3 scallions, chopped
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic, or to taste
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice, or to taste
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 If you like, roast the chiles according to the directions on page 330. Or leave raw. Either way, remove the stems and seeds from the chiles and either mince them or pulse them a few times in a food processor.

2 Put the remaining ingredients into a medium bowl with the chiles and stir to combine. Taste, adjust the seasoning, and serve or refrigerate for up to 2 days (bring back to room temperature and adjust the seasoning again before serving).

Green Tomato Salsa. Good in fall, when green tomatoes are plentiful and cheap: Substitute green tomatoes for the tomatillos.

Green Chile Salsa. Stronger: Replace the tomatillos with 2 cups chopped fresh mild green chiles, like more poblano or New Mexican; increase the minced garlic to 2 tablespoons; substitute parsley for the cilantro and lemon for the lime juice.

Pepita Salsa. Easily made from the pantry: Replace half of the tomatillos with toasted pepitas (see page 317). Serve immediately.

Corn Salsa. Distinctive and delicious: Substitute 2 cups corn kernels from Corn on the Cob, Grilled or Roasted (page 289) for the tomatillos.

Jicama Salsa. Very crunchy: Replace the tomatillos with chopped peeled jicama and substitute minced fresh ginger for the garlic. Add 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint leaves. Let sit for about 30 minutes before serving.

Papaya Salsa

MAKES: About 2 cups

TIME: 20 minutes

F M V

This fruit salsa is a natural with fish and seafood, and you can make any fruit the star here: mango, melon, and nectarine are some of my favorites. Just be sure to taste while you're assembling, balancing the sweetness (which, of course, varies with every fruit) with the acidity of the citrus juice and the heat of the chiles.

2 cups firm but ripe papaya, cut into 1/2-inch chunks

1/2 cup diced red onion

1/2 cup diced red, yellow, or green bell pepper or a combination

2 tablespoons minced fresh chile (like jalapeño or Thai), to taste, or hot red pepper flakes or cayenne, to taste

1/4 cup or more chopped fresh cilantro leaves

1 tablespoon olive oil

3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice, or more to taste

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Put all the ingredients in a medium bowl and stir to combine. Let sit for about 5 minutes, then taste and adjust the seasoning, adding more chile, lime, or salt as needed.

2 Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to a couple of hours. (Bring back to room temperature before serving.)

Citrus Salsa. Lovely in winter: Make this salsa just before serving it. Substitute a combination of orange, grapefruit, and lemon segments (see page 398) for the papaya. Omit the olive oil.

Peach-Melon-Tomato Salsa. Perfect in summer: Use 1 medium ripe tomato, 2 medium peaches, and 1/4 small cantaloupe (you should still have about 2 cups of fruit). Use basil or mint instead of cilantro if you like. Serve within 30 minutes.

Chipotle-Cherry Salsa. Unusual and wonderful: Replace the papaya with pitted cherries (fresh or frozen); omit the peppers and chile and instead add 1 tablespoon chopped canned chipotle chiles in adobo sauce. Serve at room temperature or cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days.

Radish Salsa

MAKES: About 2 cups

TIME: 30 minutes

F M V

Radishes are a classic salsa ingredient in Mexico, and the technique—mixing a vegetable (or fruit) with onion, an acid, chiles, and fresh herbs—is downright common. Serve with any Grilled Steak (page 717) or Cheese Quesadilla (page 109), Shredded Pork (page 759), or just a big bowl of tortilla chips.

2 cups chopped radishes, like daikon, red, or a combination (about 1 pound)
 1/2 English cucumber, peeled and diced
 1/2 small red onion, chopped
 1 scallion, thinly sliced
 1 teaspoon minced garlic
 1 tablespoon minced fresh chile (like jalapeño or Thai), or to taste, or hot red pepper flakes or cayenne, to taste
 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice, or more to taste
 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Put all the ingredients in a medium bowl and mix thoroughly.

2 Taste and adjust the seasoning, adding more chile, lemon, or salt as needed. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate for up to a day.

Cucumber Salsa, Thai Style. Replace the radishes with additional diced cucumber and carrot (about 1 medium of each); red onion with shallots; and lemon with lime juice. Add a tablespoon of rice vinegar. Omit the garlic.

Green Papaya Salsa, Thai Style. Sort of a mini papaya salad: Substitute peeled, seeded, and shredded green papaya for the radishes, use lime instead of lemon juice, and replace the scallion and red onion with a thinly sliced shallot. Add a tablespoon or so of rice vinegar.

Tahini Sauce

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

Ground sesame paste is the base for one of the fastest, easiest, richest sauces on the planet. You don't even need a food processor, though it makes the sauce much smoother and the variations easier.

The most common way to eat tahini sauce is on Falafel (page 439) or on a salad of cucumbers, tomatoes, and onions. But you can use it to dress all sorts of salads or drizzle on any not-too-heavy grilled fish, meat, or vegetable.

1/2 cup tahini, with a tablespoon or two of its oil
 Juice of 1 lemon, or more to taste
 1 clove garlic, peeled, or more to taste
 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin (optional)
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Put the tahini, 1/2 cup water, the lemon juice, garlic, and the cumin if you're using it in a food processor, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and process until smooth. Or whisk the ingredients in a bowl (mince the garlic first).

2 Taste and adjust the seasoning, adding more lemon juice, oil, water, or garlic as you like. Serve immediately or cover tightly and use within a day or so.

Yogurt Tahini Sauce. Richer: Instead of water, use 1/2 cup yogurt (whole milk, low-fat, or nonfat).

Coconut Tahini Sauce. Perfect with grilled or broiled chicken or pork: Instead of water, use 1/2 cup coconut milk (to make your own, see page 389; use slightly less than 1/2 cup canned with a little water).

Roasted Pepper Tahini Sauce. Use either the main recipe or either of the preceding variations and add a Roasted Red Pepper (page 330) to the food processor.

Roasted Garlic Tahini Sauce. Instead of the raw garlic, use the soft flesh from 1 head Roasted Garlic (page 303).

Minty Tahini Sauce. Add 1 cup fresh mint leaves to the food processor.

Curry Tahini Sauce. Omit the cumin and add up to 2 tablespoons curry powder (to make your own, see pages 66–67).

Anchovy Tahini Sauce. Lovely on Grilled or Broiled Eggplant (page 294) or steamed asparagus (see page 239): Omit the salt. Add 1 or 2 anchovies (if whisking, mash them first in the bottom of the bowl).

Homemade Horseradish

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 10 minutes, plus time to rest

F M V

Thanks to the food processor, horseradish is easy to prepare. But it really clears out the sinuses, so be careful. If you're planning to process large quantities, consider goggles and gloves—really.

One 1-foot-long horseradish root (about 1 pound)

About 1/2 cup white or rice wine vinegar

Salt

1 Peel the horseradish with a sturdy vegetable peeler or paring knife and cut it into chunks. Put in a food processor with about half the vinegar. Process, stopping the machine and scraping the mixture down as needed, until finely minced. (Do not try this with a blender; it will not work. The only alternative is to grate the horseradish by hand.)

2 Taste and add more vinegar as needed and salt to taste. Store in the refrigerator. Horseradish will keep almost indefinitely, but will become increasingly mild.

Cranberry Relish with Orange and Ginger

MAKES: About 4 cups

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

Quite tart, easily the equal of Traditional Cranberry Sauce (page 51), and even better on turkey sandwiches. Stir in 1/2 cup of raisins and/or chopped walnuts or pecans at the end if you like.

1 large navel or other orange

4 cups fresh cranberries (about 1 pound), picked over and rinsed, or frozen cranberries

1/2 cup sugar, or more to taste

1 teaspoon minced or grated fresh ginger, or to taste

1 Use a vegetable peeler or paring knife to remove the entire zest of the orange; set aside. Remove and discard the thick white pith. Separate the orange into sections.

2 Combine the orange flesh, zest, cranberries, and sugar in a food processor. Process until the mixture is chunky. Stir in the ginger and more sugar if needed. Serve right away, but it's best if it sits for at least 30 minutes to allow the flavors to marry. It keeps well, refrigerated, for a few days.

Red Pepper Relish

MAKES: 4 servings

TIME: 1 hour

M V

Use this on almost anything grilled, but especially chicken or fish. Add a pinch or two of ground cumin if you like.

4 Roasted Red Peppers (page 330)

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar

1/4 teaspoon minced garlic

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Roughly chop the peeled roasted peppers and mix with the oil, vinegar, and garlic. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Stir, then taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve immediately or refrigerate for a day or two (bring back to room temperature to serve).

Raw Onion Chutney

MAKES: About 3/4 cup

TIME: 1 hour, largely unattended

M V

There's nothing shy about this classic condiment from India, and that's why it's perfect with the subtle flavors of beans or the smokiness of grilled meats. A dab on a sandwich isn't half bad either.

2 small to medium or 1 large red or Vidalia onions, quartered and thinly sliced or chopped
1 teaspoon salt, or more to taste
1/2 teaspoon coarsely cracked black peppercorns
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon paprika, or more to taste
Pinch cayenne, or to taste (optional)
Pinch chaat masala (to make your own, see page 68), to taste (optional)

1 Separate the layers of the onion and combine with the salt, black peppercorns, vinegar, and paprika in a small dish. Let sit for an hour.

2 Stir in the cayenne and chaat masala if you're using them and serve immediately or refrigerate for a day or two (bring back to room temperature to serve).

Hot or Mild Pepper Chutney. Not necessarily fiery: Replace the onions with 4 to 5 fresh, hot red chiles (or use 1 medium red bell pepper or a combination for a milder version). Substitute 2 cloves garlic for the black peppercorns. Pulse everything in a food processor until coarsely chopped, but do not purée. (At this point, you may refrigerate the chutney for about 2 weeks; bring back to room temperature before serving.)

Cilantro-Mint Chutney

MAKES: 1 1/2 cups

TIME: 15 minutes

F M V

Cilantro and mint have a wonderful affinity, with sweet grassy flavors that are assertive but food friendly. That said, you can certainly make a respectable version of this with one herb or the other; or use Thai or regular basil as a substitute for either.

1 1/2 cups firmly packed chopped fresh cilantro leaves
1/2 cup firmly packed fresh mint leaves
1 to 2 Thai or other hot fresh green chiles, seeded if you like, or to taste, or hot red pepper flakes, to taste

2 inches fresh ginger, cut into chunks
1/2 red onion, quartered
2 cloves garlic, peeled
1/4 cup freshly squeezed lime juice
1/2 teaspoon salt, or more to taste

1 Combine the herbs, chiles, ginger, onion, and garlic in a food processor and pulse until finely ground.

2 Add the lime juice and salt and process until nearly smooth (you may need to add up to 1/4 cup water to help the food processor get going); taste and adjust the seasoning. Refrigerate for up to a day; serve at room temperature.

Creamy Cilantro-Mint Chutney. This cools the whole thing down a bit and makes it closer to a Raita (page 24): Add 1/2 cup or more good yogurt, then adjust the seasoning again and serve.

Long-Lasting Cilantro-Mint Chutney. Increase the garlic to 5 cloves and use 1/2 cup white wine vinegar instead of lime juice. (At this point, you may cover and refrigerate the chutney for several weeks.)

Coconut Chutney

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

This fresh, chewy—and very easy—chutney goes well with Chicken Biryani (page 654) and many other Indian dishes and can be made with ingredients from the pantry. In fact, if you don't have coconut, it's just as delicious (and certainly more colorful) made with chopped carrots or beets.

1/2 cup shredded coconut
1 inch fresh ginger, chopped, or 1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 small hot fresh green or red chile (like jalapeño or Thai), or hot red pepper flakes, to taste
1/2 bunch fresh cilantro, leaves only

1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
Pinch salt

- 1 Put the coconut, ginger, chile, cilantro, and cumin in a food processor or blender and pulse until finely ground.
- 2 Add the lime juice and salt and pulse again, until nearly but not quite smooth. Taste, adjust the seasoning, and serve at room temperature or refrigerate for up to a few hours.

Crunchy Nut Chutney

MAKES: About 1 cup
TIME: 15 minutes

F **M** **V**

A chunky, well-seasoned chutney to stir into sauces or soups, toss with noodles or rice, or serve alongside roasted vegetables, chicken, or meat. Peanuts and cashews are the most common choices, but any nut or seed will work here, as long as you taste and adjust the seasonings accordingly. Remember that nuts vary widely in flavor, so be prepared to add more salt or garlic or even a little brown sugar or oil if the mixture seems too bitter or dry.

1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon coriander seeds
1 dried Thai or other small red chile, or to taste
1 cup roasted unsalted peanuts or cashews
1/2 teaspoon salt, or more to taste
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or more to taste
1 clove garlic, peeled

- 1 Toast the seeds and chile in a small dry skillet over medium heat, shaking the pan frequently until the seeds color slightly, about 5 minutes. (If the nuts are raw, you can toast them the same way.)
- 2 Process all the ingredients together in a blender or food processor, stopping the machine to scrape down the

sides if necessary, until coarsely ground (not as smooth as peanut butter). Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to a week (bring back to room temperature before serving).

Dried Fruit and Nut Chutney. With the other ingredients, add 3/4 cup dried fruit, like dates, apricots, raisins, cranberries, or cherries. Again, go for a coarse grind, not a purée.

Real Garlicky Nut Chutney. If you want a chunky chutney, roughly chop the nuts and garlic (and coconut if you're using it) by hand: In Step 2, add 2 to 3 cloves garlic with or without 1/2 cup shredded coconut and a tablespoon or so of freshly squeezed lime juice.

Walnut and Yogurt Chutney. Use walnuts for the nuts and a fresh green chile, like jalapeño or Thai, instead of the dried chile. Proceed with the recipe and then stir in 1/2 cup or more yogurt at the end.

Basil-Soy Dipping Sauce

MAKES: About 1/2 cup
TIME: 15 minutes

F **V**

This dead-easy sauce is even better than it might seem, because you can completely change the main flavor by replacing the basil with cilantro, mint, lemongrass, lime leaves, or even a different type of basil. This makes a fantastic dipping sauce for Vietnamese Summer Rolls (page 107).

1 clove garlic, minced
2 tablespoons soy sauce
2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
1 tablespoon sugar
1 or 2 fresh Thai chiles, seeded and thinly sliced
1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh basil leaves, preferably Thai

Whisk together all the ingredients plus 2 tablespoons water until the sugar is dissolved. Let sit for 5 minutes so the flavors meld.

Thai Chile Sauce

Nam Prik

MAKES: About 1/2 cup

TIME: 5 minutes

F M

An essential, slightly sweet Thai sauce (the Vietnamese *nuoc cham* is almost identical), used as a dressing for vegetables, noodles, meats, and fish and as a dipping sauce for almost any tidbits of food. Addictive, if you ask me. (Try it with plain grilled shrimp and you'll see.) Many people make this blazingly hot; though my version is much tamer, if you add five, or even ten, small Thai chiles you won't be breaking with tradition.

- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
- 2 tablespoons nam pla (Thai fish sauce)
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/4 teaspoon minced hot fresh chile (like Thai or jalapeño), cayenne, or hot red pepper flakes, or to taste
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon minced dried shrimp (optional)
- 1 tablespoon finely shredded carrot (optional)

- 1 Combine all the ingredients and stir until the sugar dissolves.
- 2 Taste and adjust the seasonings as necessary (I often add more nam pla). Let rest for a few minutes before serving or refrigerate for up to a day (bring back to room temperature before using).

Ginger-Scallion Sauce

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 15 minutes

F M V

The combination of ginger and scallions is the traditional accompaniment to Steamed Dumplings (page 106). It's also a fabulous addition to soups; finally (well, probably

not finally—you'll think of other uses), it's terrific on top of plain thin Chinese egg noodles (see page 552).

To cut way down on the chopping: Throw the ginger, scallions, and garlic into a food processor (a mini food processor works too) and pulse until chopped thoroughly and evenly—but do not purée.

- 1/4 cup minced fresh ginger
- 1/2 cup chopped scallion
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt, or more to taste
- 1/2 cup peanut oil or neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn

- 1 Mix the ginger, scallion, garlic, and salt together thoroughly in a heatproof bowl.
- 2 Put the oil in a small saucepan or skillet over high heat until smoking. Carefully pour the oil over the ginger-scallion mixture, mix well, and serve or refrigerate for up to 3 days (bring back to room temperature before serving).

Garlic-Scallion Sauce. Less complex but more powerful: Increase the garlic to 1/4 cup and eliminate the ginger.

Chile-Scallion Sauce. A little heat: Add 3 tablespoons (or to taste) of your favorite finely chopped fresh chile (see the chart on page 71). Increase the garlic to 2 large cloves and reduce the ginger to 1 tablespoon or omit it entirely.

Simple Miso Dipping Sauce

MAKES: About 1 cup (4 servings)

TIME: 15 minutes

F M V

Serve this as a dipping sauce, in individual small bowls, or as a dressing or finishing sauce for Grilled or Broiled Potatoes (page 342), whole wheat pasta, Grilled or Broiled Boneless Chicken (page 641) or Grilled or Broiled Tofu (page 445). The type of miso you choose will make this sauce lighter or heavier.

6 tablespoons miso
3/4 cup warm water or sake or a mixture
1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon mirin or white wine
1 tablespoon rice vinegar, or more to taste
Salt

1 Put everything except the salt in a small bowl and whisk together. Taste and add more vinegar and salt if needed.

2 Serve immediately. To use warm, heat gently but do not boil. Or refrigerate for up to a week (and serve warm or cold).

Simple Miso Herb Dipping Sauce. Lots of bang for your buck: Add 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro, basil, Thai basil, shiso, or mint (or a combination.) For a smooth green sauce, combine everything in the blender.

Simple Miso Citrus Dipping Sauce. Brighter and fresher: Instead of the rice vinegar, add a tablespoon or two of freshly squeezed lemon, lime, orange, or tangerine juice. If you like, grate some of the skin into a fine zest (page 393) and float a sprinkle on top of each little bowl.

Simple Miso Soy Dipping Sauce. A no-brainer and good: Add a tablespoon or two of soy sauce to the main recipe or either of the preceding variations.

Miso Carrot Sauce with Ginger

MAKES: About 1 1/4 cup

TIME: 15 minutes

F M V

A high-quality version of the goopy orange stuff put on salads in many Japanese restaurants. Try it on warm or chilled chickpeas or edamame (see page 411 or 424) or over any plain cooked whole grain (see page 451) or Grilled Fish Fillets or Steaks (page 564).

1/4 cup peanut oil or neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn
1/4 cup rice vinegar
3 tablespoons mild or sweet miso, like yellow or white
1 tablespoon dark sesame oil
2 medium carrots, roughly chopped
1 inch fresh ginger, cut into coins
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Put all the ingredients except the salt and pepper into a food processor and pulse a few times to mince the carrots. Then let the machine run for a minute or so, until the mixture is chunky-smooth. (If you want it smoother, use a blender.)

2 Taste and adjust the seasoning, then serve immediately or cover tightly and refrigerate for up to several days.

Ponzu Sauce

MAKES: About 2 cups

TIME: Overnight, completely unattended

M V

The famous Japanese dipping sauce usually made with dried bonito (a relative of tuna), yuzu (a Japanese citrus), and mirin, but the substitutions here all work fine.

1 cup freshly squeezed yuzu juice or 1/2 cup each freshly squeezed lemon and lime juices

1 cup soy sauce

1/3 cup mirin (or 3 tablespoons honey mixed with 3 tablespoons water)

1 tablespoon sugar

1/2 cup dried bonito flakes or a 4-inch piece kombu

1 Whisk together all the ingredients in a mixing bowl, cover, and refrigerate overnight.

2 Strain into an airtight container and refrigerate until ready to use (it will keep for several days).

Lemongrass Ponzu. Omit the yuzu juice. Increase the mirin to 3/4 cup, reduce the soy sauce to 1/4 cup, add

1/2 cup water (or Dashi, page 160) and a stalk of lemongrass, peeled, trimmed and crushed, in the pot with the bonito. Simmer for 15 minutes, strain, and serve warm or at room temperature.

The Basics of Mayonnaise

Most beginning cooks find the whole idea of making mayonnaise from scratch daunting, but it's really not difficult at all. And when you get it right—which is likely to happen on your first try—you'll have a sauce that is a zillion times better than anything you'll ever eat out of a jar.

As for the fear of raw eggs: If you're worried about this (and I'm not going to argue with you), you can try making mayonnaise with pasteurized eggs (though it's not my first choice), or try the eggless Skordalia on page 94. Or buy the best mayo you can find and doctor it up with some of the suggestions in this section.

Demystifying Mayo

Mayonnaise is an emulsion, in which oil is dispersed into eggs through vigorous stirring to produce a thick pale yellow cream; a few basic seasonings balance the flavors. Homemade mayos go south when you add the oil too quickly or (less often) you add too much oil. You might also make sure your eggs aren't too cold and your oil is at room temperature, because temperature fluctuations can cause some instability, though this is a really minor point. And if you've heard that the direction in which you whisk matters, forget it.

To help you add the oil in a slow steady stream, you could put it in a squeeze bottle or a liquid measuring cup with a spout. Or use a teaspoon to start with literally drops at a time. If you're using a food processor, note that many have a feed tube with a small hole in it, put there specifically for this purpose; you put the oil in the tube and it drips out. (I have drilled holes in feed tubes without them, which also works.)

For general purposes, I like grapeseed oil best because

of its neutral flavor, especially if you're planning on adding ingredients; corn oil delivers slightly more flavor and golden color. Use olive oil if you want a particularly Mediterranean taste, which is often the case, especially with the Aioli variation. Asian ingredients go better with a mayonnaise made from grapeseed, corn, or—for a more pronounced flavor—peanut oil. For vinegar, I like sherry or white wine vinegar, but try lemon or even lime juice for a brighter flavor. All of these decisions should be based on how you plan to use the mayo.

Homemade Mayonnaise

MAKES: 1 cup

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

I have made mayonnaise countless times with blender, food processor, and whisk, and though the machines make things marginally easier, all techniques are fool-proof if you follow the preceding suggestions (see “Demystifying Mayo”) along with this recipe.

What will change is the texture of the mayonnaise when you make additions. By hand, there will always be bits and pieces of the stir-ins for a more rustic sauce. By machine, the mayonnaise will be smooth and evenly colored.

- 1 egg yolk
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 cup neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn, or extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar, white wine vinegar, or freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 To make by hand: Put the yolk and mustard in a medium bowl. Beat together with a wire whisk. Begin to add the oil in dribbles as you beat, adding more as each amount is incorporated. You'll notice when a thick emulsion forms, then you can add the remaining oil a little

faster. Depending on how fast you beat, the whole process will take about 5 minutes.

To make by machine: Put the yolk and mustard in a blender or food processor and turn the machine on. While it's running, add the oil in a slow, steady stream. When an emulsion forms, you can add it a little faster, until all the oil is incorporated.

2 Add salt and pepper, then stir in the vinegar. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Use immediately or refrigerate for about a week (less if using fresh herbs or aromatics).

Garlic Mayonnaise (Aïoli). A Mediterranean classic, strong stuff, but addictive: Peel 3 to 8 cloves garlic, to taste. If mixing by hand, mince; if using a machine, roughly chop. Use at least half olive oil (you can go all the way if you like) and proceed with the recipe, adding the garlic in Step 2.

Chile Mayonnaise. Use mild chiles, like ancho, or hot like Thai or dried chipotle: Soak one or two dried chiles in warm water until soft (see page 70). Drain and pat dry. Or use 1 canned chipotle and a little of its adobo sauce. If mixing by hand, mince the chiles; if using a machine, roughly chop. Add the chile in Step 2.

Roasted Pepper Mayonnaise. Pretty and complex: Add 1 Roasted Red Pepper (page 330) or use yellow or orange. If mixing by hand, mince; if using a machine, roughly chop. Add the pepper in Step 2.

Green Sauce, French Style. Easier by machine: After the mayonnaise is made in Step 2, add to the blender or processor 1 sprig fresh tarragon, about 10 sprigs watercress (thick stems removed), 10 chives, and the leaves from 5 parsley stems. Process until not quite puréed but definitely green.

Cold Mustard Sauce. Fabulous sandwich spread: Add 1 heaping tablespoon Dijon or whole grain mustard along with the other ingredients in Step 2. Thin with a tablespoon or two of cream—fresh, fraîche, or sour—to the desired consistency.

12 Easy Ways to Flavor Mayonnaise

After the mayo is done, stir, blend, or process in any of the following ingredients, alone or in combination. If working by hand, be sure to mince the ingredients well. (And of course you can use any of these—and the preceding variations—to flavor store-bought mayo too.)

1. Saffron Mayonnaise: A pinch of saffron threads
2. Herbed Mayonnaise: Up to 1 tablespoon chopped strong fresh herb leaves like rosemary, oregano, tarragon, marjoram, epazote, or thyme or up to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped mild fresh herb leaves like parsley, cilantro, chives, chervil, or basil
3. Tartar Sauce: Up to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped sweet pickles or capers and a spoonful of mustard
4. Soy Mayonnaise: 2 tablespoons soy sauce, or to taste
5. Wasabi Mayonnaise: 1 teaspoon wasabi powder, or to taste
6. Citrus Mayonnaise: 1 teaspoon (or more) grated citrus zest
7. Horseradish Mayonnaise: At least a teaspoon of prepared horseradish
8. Seasoned Mayonnaise: A few dashes of Tabasco, Worcestershire, or other prepared sauce
9. Nutty Mayonnaise: Up to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup toasted chopped almonds, walnuts, or pecans (see page 317)
10. Ginger Mayonnaise: 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
11. Spiced Mayonnaise: Up to 2 tablespoons of any spice blend, like curry or chili powder (to make your own, see pages 65–69)
12. Anchovy Mayonnaise: 2 or 3 anchovies, blended in at the very end (omit the salt)

Real Ranch Dressing

MAKES: 2 cups

TIME: 10 minutes

F **M** **V**

The secret to ranch dressing is buttermilk powder, which is probably in the baking section of your supermarket.

Nothing else delivers that characteristic tang, and it works as a thickener to boot.

- 1 cup mayonnaise (to make your own, which is preferable, see page 41)
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1/4 cup buttermilk powder
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh chives or parsley leaves (optional)

1 Put the mayonnaise, buttermilk, and buttermilk powder in a medium jar with a tight-fitting lid. Sprinkle with a little salt and lots of freshly ground black pepper. Add the chives or parsley if you like, put on the lid, and shake vigorously for 30 seconds or so.

2 Taste and adjust the seasoning. Use immediately or refrigerate for a few days. (It will keep longer if you don't add the fresh herbs.)

5 Ways to Spin Real Ranch Dressing

1. Chili Ranch Dressing: Add 2 teaspoons chili powder (to make your own, see page 66) to the mixture.
2. Curry Ranch Dressing: Add 1 tablespoon curry powder (to make your own Fragrant Curry Powder, see page 67) to the mixture.
3. Parmesan Ranch Dressing: Add 2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan to the mixture and cut back on the salt.
4. Bacon Ranch Dressing: Add 1/4 cup or so of crisply fried and crumbled bacon to the jar.
5. "Bleu" Ranch Dressing: Add 1/4 cup finely crumbled blue cheese to the jar.

The Basics of Mustard

The pungent mustard plant belongs to the same family as broccoli, cabbage, and turnips. We eat the greens, at least sometimes (see page 315), but it's the seeds—ground into a paste we call *mustard*—with which we're most familiar.

Yellow and White Mustard Seeds: The largest of the mustard seeds and the mildest. Their tart flavor makes them good for everyday ground and prepared mustards, though when used alone, the flavor is one-dimensional.

Brown Mustard Seeds: The most pungent mustard, ranging from reddish to brown. The sharpest Chinese-, German-, and English-style mustards are all based on these.

Black Mustard Seeds: Indian cooking often features these slightly oblong seeds, which are sharp. In ground mustards they help add another dimension and deepen the color.

Dry (Powdered) Mustard: When seeds are ground very finely, the result is a powder or "flour." The simplest mustard is made from this powder: Just mix about 1/4 cup with a sprinkle of salt and a teaspoon or two of sugar. Then stir in water, wine, or beer a little at a time until you get the desired consistency. The paste will be very strong, though the sugar rounds it out a bit. Chinese Mustard Dipping Sauce, below, is a little more sophisticated.

Dijon-Style Mustard: The name given to the smooth, pleasantly hot, wine-based mustards modeled after those from Dijon, France. Since getting such a smooth grind with everyday kitchen equipment is impossible, you've simply got to buy it. American-made Grey Poupon is the most familiar brand; Maille (from France) is another good choice. Use Dijon mustard for salad dressings, sauces, and all-purpose smearing.

Coarsely Ground, Whole Grain, or Stone-Ground Mustard: If bits of the seeds remain intact, the mustard has a slight crunch with an almost nutty flavor. (See the recipe on page 44.) Perfect for hearty dishes, next to a slab of corned beef, or whenever you want a more assertive flavor combined with texture.

Chinese Mustard: You can find this saucelike mustard in Asian markets, well-stocked grocery stores, and of course Chinese restaurants; it's on the thin side and quite sharp. To make your own, just make a thinner version of the powdered mustard recipe above. To make delicious Chinese Mustard Dipping Sauce, add a little dark sesame oil and a splash of soy sauce; serve it with

any dumplings (page 104), Fried Wontons or Egg Rolls (page 102) or deep-fried vegetables, like those on page 247.

Flavored Mustards: “Gourmet” mustards, mostly made by small companies, are spiked with all sorts of things, from tarragon to beer to roasted shallots to fruit. Some are better than others, but you can also make your own (see below).

Prepared Yellow Mustard: There’s no reason to bother with old-fashioned neon-yellow mustards. About the only thing they have going for them is their mildness, which isn’t really a plus, and most contain extra ingredients you don’t want anyway.

Wasabi: Natural, fresh wasabi is a rhizome (a stem that grows underground like ginger). It’s bright green, with a heat that will clear your sinuses. But mustard is the main ingredient of the prepared “wasabi” we use most often.

Grainy Mustard

MAKES: 1½ cups

TIME: 15 minutes, plus a day or two to soak the seeds



You’ll be amazed at how easy, cheap, and good homemade mustard is. Plus, you can customize the flavor many ways with minor adjustments; see the list that follows. Make sure, though, to mix yellow mustard seeds with brown or black, or the results will be too harsh.

To make a faster—though undeniably sharper and less subtle—mustard, use a spice grinder or coffee mill to grind the mustard seeds into a coarse powder, then slowly stir in the liquids until you get the consistency you want (you might have to add a little more). Sprinkle with salt and serve immediately or keep as you would any mustard.

¼ cup yellow mustard seeds (about 1½ ounces)

¼ cup brown or black mustard seeds
(about 1½ ounces)

½ cup red wine or water

½ cup sherry vinegar or malt vinegar (or any vinegar with at least 5 percent acidity; see page 197)

Pinch salt

1 Put all the ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid or other sealed glass or ceramic container. (Don’t use metal; it will corrode.) Shake or stir, then set aside to soak for a day or two.

2 Put the mixture in a blender and purée for several minutes to grind, adding a little extra water as needed to keep the machine running. Stop and scrape the sides down once or twice and repeat. You’ll never get the mustard as smooth as Dijon, but you can control the coarseness by how long you blend. Taste and add more salt if you like.

3 Return the mustard to the container and cover tightly. Store in a cool, dark place (or refrigerate) for up to several months. The mustard will be quite sharp at first, but it will thicken and mellow with time.

16 Ways to Flavor Grainy Mustard

Start with ½ cup mustard, then stir in the following ingredients. Note that using fresh herbs, fruit, or vegetables will reduce the mustard’s storage time to a week.

- 1. Mustard Relish:** Add ½ cup chopped sweet pickle and ¼ cup each chopped red onion and red bell pepper.
- 2. Tarragon Mustard:** Add 1 tablespoon chopped tarragon leaves.
- 3. Rosemary Mustard:** Add 1 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary leaves.
- 4. Tomato Mustard:** Add 1 tablespoon tomato paste.
- 5. Honey Mustard:** Add 2 tablespoons honey.
- 6. Horseradish Mustard:** Add 1 teaspoon freshly grated or prepared horseradish (see page 306), or more to taste.
- 7. Molasses Mustard:** Add 1 tablespoon molasses.
- 8. Balsamic Mustard:** Add 1 to 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, to taste.
- 9. Creole Mustard:** Add ¼ teaspoon cayenne, or more to taste.

10. **Roasted Garlic Mustard:** Add 2 to 3 cloves Roasted Garlic (page 303), mashed with a fork.
11. **Chile Mustard:** Add 1 teaspoon minced fresh chile (like jalapeño or Thai), or to taste, or hot red pepper flakes or cayenne to taste.
12. **Peach Mustard:** Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh peach purée (1 medium peach, peeled, pitted, sliced, and puréed or mashed with a fork).
13. **Mango Mustard:** Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh mango purée ($\frac{1}{2}$ medium mango, peeled, pitted, cubed, and puréed or mashed with a fork).
14. **Nori Soy Mustard:** Add 1 sheet toasted and crumbled nori (see page 350), plus 1 tablespoon soy sauce.
15. **Port Wine Mustard:** Instead of the red wine or water, use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ruby or tawny port.
16. **Brewhouse Mustard:** Instead of the red wine or water, use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup strong-flavored beer, like stout, porter, bock, or dark or amber ale.

Cooked Sauces

This section ranges from near-spontaneous reductions to make-ahead sauces that keep for ages, like ketchup and barbecue sauce. Some, like Dashi Dipping Sauce (page 56), weren't everyday sauces when I first wrote *How to Cook Everything*, but they certainly are now. And others, like the handful of classic French sauces, never seem to go out of style. For Fast Tomato Sauce (and tons of variations) see pages 502–504.

The Basics of Reduction Sauces

A reduction sauce is nothing more than simple pan sauce that builds on the drippings and cooked bits left after you roast or sauté something. Add some liquid—like stock, wine, cream, or water—then reduce its volume and thicken it by boiling. Sometimes the reduction is finished with butter or cream. The result is a flavorful sauce

that naturally relates to the food instead of being added as a separate component.

The process is straightforward and foolproof:

1. Once the meat, chicken, fish, or vegetables are cooked, remove them from your roasting or sauté pan. Then add about twice as much liquid as you would like sauce.
2. Turn the heat to high (if you're working with a large roasting pan, set it over two burners) and deglaze the pan: Stir, scraping the bottom of the pan to release any solids left from cooking.
3. Keep the liquid bubbling vigorously until it is reduced by about half. (If you'd like a smooth sauce, you can strain the solids out before proceeding.)
4. To finish the sauce, stir in some softened butter (or Compound Butter, page 32, or Flavored Oil, page 26), extra virgin olive oil, or cream. Taste and sprinkle with a little salt and pepper and, if necessary (it might not be), some chopped herbs. To serve, you can pool the sauce underneath your food, pour a little on top, or pass it at the table.

Every reduction sauce is a variation on these simple steps. Some are thickened by adding flour before the liquid or a cornstarch mixture after reducing; most are more heavily seasoned. You change reduction sauces by manipulating the various stages. For example, when you heat the pan before deglazing, you might sauté a little garlic, shallot, or other aromatic. But basically, that's about it.

Here are the two basic reductions—one thickened, one not—with plenty of ideas for more.

Simple Pan Sauce

MAKES: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

TIME: 10 minutes



Here's a sauce made in the same pan you just used to cook meat or vegetables. Keep your food warm in a low oven if necessary while you prepare the sauce. Or just add

the food back to the pan with the finished sauce and heat through for a minute or so.

- 1 tablespoon minced shallot or onion
- 1/2 cup dry white (for fish, poultry, or vegetables) or red wine (for red meat)
- 1/2 cup chicken, beef, or vegetable stock (to make your own, see pages 157–159) or water, warmed
- 2 tablespoons softened butter (optional)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- A few drops freshly squeezed lemon juice or vinegar (optional)
- Chopped fresh parsley leaves for garnish

1 Pour off all but 1 or 2 tablespoons of the cooking fat (if there are dark, nonfatty juices in the skillet or roasting pan, leave them in there). Turn the heat under the skillet or pan to medium-high and add the shallot and the wine. Cook, stirring and scraping, until most of the wine has evaporated, the shallot is soft, and the bottom of the pan is clean.

2 Add the stock and cook, stirring, until there is just under 1/2 cup of liquid, then turn off the heat. Add the butter, a little at a time, stirring well after each addition to incorporate it. Taste and sprinkle with salt, pepper and/or lemon juice or vinegar if necessary. Sauce the meat or vegetables however you like. Garnish with parsley right before serving.

Lemon-Caper Sauce. Add 1 tablespoon or more minced capers along with the shallot and wine. Finish with at least 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice to taste.

Asian-Style Reduction Sauce. Cook 1 tablespoon each minced garlic, ginger, and scallion (in place of shallot) until soft before adding the wine. Omit the butter. Stir in 1 tablespoon soy or nam pla (Thai fish sauce) or Worcestershire sauce and finish with a few drops of freshly squeezed lime juice. Garnish with minced fresh cilantro leaves.

Mushroom Sauce. Before adding the wine, cook 1/2 cup chopped wild or domestic mushrooms along with 2 tablespoons minced shallot, until soft. Best with 1/4 cup or more heavy cream added at the last minute.

13 Ways to Flavor Simple Pan Sauce

- 1. Aromatic Pan Sauce:** Add 1/2 cup or more chopped aromatic vegetables—onion, shallots, mushrooms, celery, carrot, or a combination—to the fat remaining in the pan before adding the wine. Cook, stirring, until soft, then add the liquid.
- 2. Creamy Pan Sauce:** Substitute heavy cream for half or all of the stock.
- 3. Boozy Pan Sauce:** Substitute sherry, Madeira, port, vodka, bourbon, or vermouth for the wine.
- 4. Seasoned Pan Sauce:** Add chopped fresh herb leaves or ground spices at the beginning or the end. Those added at the beginning will become better incorporated; those added at the end will retain more of their flavor. Add them twice if you like.
- 5. Piquant Pan Sauce:** Add chopped anchovies, dried tomatoes, or olives along with the shallot.
- 6. Tart Pan Sauce:** Add 1 tablespoon or more of freshly squeezed lemon juice or any vinegar at the end of cooking, tasting as you add.
- 7. Tomato Pan Sauce:** Add chopped or crushed tomatoes or tomato sauce in place of or in addition to some of the stock.
- 8. Jammy Pan Sauce:** Add 1 tablespoon or more of marmalade or jam, whisked in at the end of cooking; especially good with broiled meats.
- 9. Mushroom Pan Sauce:** Add reconstituted dried mushrooms (see page 314) along with the shallot or onion. Use the mushroom-soaking liquid to replace some of the broth.
- 10. Juicy Pan Sauce:** Use fruit juice—especially orange or tomato or anything freshly juiced—in place of some of the stock or water.
- 11. Mustardy Pan Sauce:** Add prepared Dijon or grainy mustard, along with some cream if you like, in place of or in addition to the optional butter.
- 12. Sauce-Spiked Pan Sauce:** Stir in a spoonful or two of any salsa or chutney in place of or in addition to the optional butter.
- 13. Spicy Pan Sauce:** After you pour off the excess fat in Step 1—but before you add the wine—stir in a tablespoon or so of any spice mixture, like curry powder,

4 Ways to Thicken a Sauce

I've got the same attitude about thickening sauces as I do about thickening soups: If you want them thicker—and sometimes you do—use less liquid or cook them a little longer. Here are some other ways you can add body and sheen to many of the cooked sauces.

- 1. Puréeing:** Chunky sauces turn smooth and luxurious when puréed. An upright blender will give you the best results (always cool food to a safe temperature before putting it in a blender); an immersion blender is easier but not as powerful. A food processor or food mill will give you a little rougher texture.
- 2. Enriching:** Adding cream, sour cream, yogurt, egg yolks, or small bits of very cold butter will add body to cooked sauces. But beware of excess heat: Cream and butter are relatively stable even if the sauce bubbles a bit, but boiling will curdle sauces made with yogurt or eggs. (Eggs are best tempered before being added to sauces: Stir a bit of the hot sauce into beaten eggs to warm them, then stir that mixture back into the sauce.)
- 3. Starting with a Roux:** To make a roux, cook butter or oil and flour together in equal proportion, constantly stirring over medium heat, until the flour begins to toast. (The darker you cook the roux, the deeper and nuttier the flavor; just be careful not to let it burn.) You can cook the roux first and then whisk in a liquid like stock or milk (this is the technique used in Béchamel, page 57); or you may add the cooked roux to an already simmering sauce. Either way, let the mixture cook for a few minutes to thicken fully.
- 4. Adding Cornstarch:** When you dissolve cornstarch (you can use other starches, but this is the most common) in water, or a bit of the sauce you want to thicken, the result is a cloudy mixture known as a *slurry*, and it works brilliantly. A general formula is 1 tablespoon cornstarch dissolved in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of liquid to thicken 2 to 4 cups of sauce. Whisk it smooth with a fork or spoon, then incorporate into the sauce, which will thicken and get shiny as it is gently heated.

chili powder, or garam masala (to make your own, see pages 65–69) or any single ground spice. (You can stir in 2 or 3 tablespoons finely chopped or ground nuts at this point if you like.) Cook and stir for about a minute, until just toasted. Then add the liquid.

Thickened Pan Sauce

Gravy

MAKES: 2 cups

TIME: 20 minutes



This is the standard gravy for turkey or meat loaf, again starting with the browned bits left in your pan from cooking meat. This version is easy, fast, and lump-free. Stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup or more of heavy cream just before serving if you want a creamier, richer-tasting sauce. For more about ways to thicken any cooked sauce, see “4 Ways to Thicken a Sauce,” which follows.

1 cup dry white wine

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped onion

3 cups plus 3 or 4 tablespoons chicken, beef, or vegetable stock (to make your own, see pages 157–159) or water

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup minced giblets or other meat, or more to taste (optional)

2 tablespoons cornstarch, or a bit more as needed

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Spoon off all but 1 or 2 tablespoons of the cooking fat (if there are dark, nonfatty juices in the skillet or roasting pan, leave them in there). Add the wine and onion and turn the heat under the pan to high. Cook, stirring and scraping, until most of the wine has evaporated, the onion is soft, and the bottom of the pan is clean, about 5 minutes.

2 Add 3 cups stock and continue to cook, stirring, until reduced by about half, 5 to 10 minutes. If you have

any solids—like giblets—add them and turn the heat down to low. Combine the remaining stock with the cornstarch and stir it into the liquid; it will begin to thicken almost immediately.

3 Cook, stirring, for about 5 minutes; season with salt and pepper to taste. If the sauce is not as thick as you'd like, combine another tablespoon of cornstarch with 1 tablespoon water or stock and add to the mixture. Cook for another 5 minutes and serve.

Salsa Roja

Cooked Tomato Salsa

MAKES: About 2 cups

TIME: 45 to 50 minutes



This classic cooked tomato and chile sauce can be served chunky or puréed and used for enchiladas, tacos, or whatever you like. The guajillo chiles called for here lend a complex, smoky flavor, and moderate heat. If you want a milder salsa, substitute ancho or other mild chiles.

- 2 large guajillos or other medium-hot dried chiles, toasted, soaked, and cleaned (see page 70), soaking water reserved
- ¼ cup neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 pounds tomatoes, peeled, seeded, cored, and chopped, with their liquid (about 3 cups; canned are fine)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice

1 Mince the chiles. Put the oil in a medium saucepan or deep skillet with a lid over medium-high heat. When hot, add the chiles, onions, and garlic and cook, stir-

ring occasionally, until the onions soften, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, sugar, some salt, and plenty of pepper.

2 Adjust the heat so the mixture bubbles gently and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture has thickened and come together, about 20 minutes. If the salsa gets too thick, thin it with some of the reserved chile-soaking water or plain water.

3 Stir in the cilantro and lime juice. Taste and adjust the seasoning if necessary. Serve hot or at room temperature or refrigerate for up to 2 days.

Red Enchilada Sauce. Essential on Cheese Enchiladas (page 826): Use an immersion blender to purée the sauce in the pan. Or cool the mixture slightly, pour into a blender or food processor, and purée carefully.

Salsa Borracha. Translates as “drunk salsa” because it’s cooked with beer and finished with tequila: In Step 1, add a bottle of beer with the tomatoes. (It might take a little longer to thicken.) Use an immersion blender to purée the finished sauce in the pan. Or cool the mixture slightly, pour into a blender or food processor, and purée carefully. Finish with 2 tablespoons (about a shot) of tequila if you like.

Charred Salsa Roja. Cut the tomatoes and onions into thick slices and grill on both sides until charred, about 10 minutes total. Proceed with the recipe; add 2 tablespoons or so of chopped fresh mint along with the cilantro, if you like, in Step 3.

Chipotle Salsa Roja. Toast, soak, and clean a chipotle chile along with the others. Or add a canned chipotle chile with its adobo along with the tomatoes.

Salsa Sofrito. Substitute Roasted Red (or yellow) Peppers (page 330) for the guajillos; replace the cilantro with a tablespoon or so of chopped fresh oregano leaves, and use red wine vinegar instead of the lime juice.

Salsa Verde

Cooked Tomatillo Salsa

MAKES: About 2 cups

TIME: 30 minutes

F M V

Green salsa goes especially well with pork and egg dishes, though you can use it anywhere you would Salsa Roja (preceding recipe). To keep this on the mild side, substitute another poblano for the hot fresh chile. If in-your-face heat is what you're looking for, add even more hot chiles or some of their seeds.

- 10 to 12 tomatillos, husked and rinsed
- 2 medium poblano or other mild fresh green chiles, roasted and cleaned (see page 330)
- 1 or 2 serrano or other hot fresh green chiles, (optional), roasted and cleaned (page 330)
- 3 tablespoons neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn
- 2 large onions, diced
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon Mexican or other oregano
- 1 cup vegetable stock (to make your own, see page 157) or water
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 1/4 cup freshly squeezed lime juice

1 Heat the oven to 400°F. Put the tomatillos on a baking sheet and roast until the skins are lightly browned and blistered, about 20 minutes. Remove the tomatillos; when they're cool enough to handle, chop them finely, along with the chiles, saving their juices.

2 While the tomatillos are roasting, put the oil in a large deep skillet over medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until they are very soft and lightly browned, about 10 minutes. Add the tomatillos, chiles, oregano, stock, and a large pinch of salt and pepper; stir and bring to a low simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture thickens slightly, 10 to 15 minutes.

3 Stir in the cilantro and lime juice, taste, and adjust the seasoning. Serve at room temperature or refrigerate for up to 2 days.

Green Enchilada Salsa. Use an immersion blender to purée the finished sauce in the pan. Or cool the mixture slightly, pour into a blender or food processor, and purée carefully.

Green Chile Salsa. Milder and simpler: Increase the chiles to 5 poblanos; omit the tomatillos and serranos. Decrease the stock to 1/4 cup, more or less, as needed. Proceed with Steps 1 and 2; then use an immersion blender to purée the salsa. Or cool the mixture slightly, pour into a blender or food processor, and purée carefully. Proceed with Step 3.

Pumpkin Seed Sauce. Thick and with a toasted nut flavor like green mole, only much easier: Toast or roast 1 cup green pumpkin seeds (pepitas; see page 317) and pulse them several times in a food processor until finely chopped. Add them to the onion-garlic mixture in Step 2, along with 1 tablespoon chopped fresh epazote if you like. Proceed with the recipe.

Super-Hot Chile-Garlic Salsa. Substitute 3 to 5 habaneros for the poblanos and serranos; omit the tomatillos, onion, oregano, and stock. Put the habaneros and garlic in a small skillet over medium heat. Cook, shaking the skillet occasionally, until the garlic and chiles are brown (or partially wrap the garlic and chiles in foil and roast in a 400°F oven for about 30 minutes). Stem and seed the chiles (wear gloves, if you have them, or wash your hands thoroughly). Put the chiles, garlic, cilantro, and lime juice in a food processor or blender and purée until pasty.

Corn and Tomato Relish

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

A quintessential summer sauce with a bit of bite. Pass it at the table with red meat, chicken, or flavorful fish.

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 4 ears corn, husked and stripped of their kernels
- 2 large luscious red tomatoes, cored and roughly chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin, or to taste
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne, or to taste
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Place the oil in a medium nonstick skillet over high heat and heat for 2 minutes. Add the corn and sauté until lightly browned, a minute or two.

2 Turn the heat down to medium, add the tomatoes, cumin, and cayenne, and cook for 30 seconds more; turn off the heat.

3 Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Serve immediately or refrigerate for a day or two and serve at room temperature.

Grilled Pineapple and Onion Salsa

MAKES: About 2½ cups

TIME: 20 minutes

F M V

Grilled fruit makes a fabulous base for salsa; its caramelized sweetness is offset perfectly by the tang of lime juice and the heat of chiles. Use this to dress a green salad, as a dip for tacos, or alongside Grilled or Broiled Boneless Chicken (page 641) or Huevos Rancheros (page 800).

1 pineapple, peeled, cored, and cut into thick rings (see page 402; canned rings, drained of excess juices, are also okay)

1 large red onion, cut into thick slices

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon minced fresh hot chile (like jalapeño or Thai), or to taste, or hot red pepper flakes or cayenne, to taste

1 stalk lemongrass, peeled, trimmed, and minced

2 tablespoons chopped fresh Thai basil or mint leaves

2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Heat a charcoal or gas grill fire to fairly low heat, and put the rack about 4 inches from the heat source. Brush the pineapple and onion slices with the olive oil; if you're worried about the slices falling through the grate, thread them on soaked wooden skewers. Cook, turning once or twice, until soft and slightly charred, about 8 minutes total. Remove the slices as they finish cooking. When cool enough to handle, discard the skewers and chop into bite-sized chunks, saving as much of the juices as possible.

2 Put the pineapple and onions in a medium bowl with the chile, lemongrass, basil, and lime juice. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and stir to combine. Let sit for about 5 minutes, then taste and adjust the seasoning, adding more chile, lime, or salt as needed. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to an hour.

Grilled Apricot and Onion Salsa. If you can get good apricots—and that's a big if—this is terrific; but it's not bad with good dried apricots, soaked in water or wine to cover until soft: Substitute about 8 halved fresh or dried apricots for the pineapple, a tablespoon of minced fresh ginger for the lemongrass, and lemon for the lime juice.

Grilled Peach and Corn Salsa. A nice midsummer salsa: Replace the pineapple with 3 or 4 ripe peaches, halved, and use a tablespoon of minced fresh ginger instead of the lemongrass; add 1 or 2 cobs' worth of

Corn on the Cob, Grilled or Roasted (page 289) and 2 chopped scallions. Use lemon or lime juice.

Traditional Cranberry Sauce

MAKES: About 1 quart

TIME: 20 minutes, plus time to chill

M **V**

If cranberry sauce generally tastes too sweet to you, know that the sugar is what helps it gel. So go ahead and use less sugar if you want, but expect the sauce to be runnier. (A better solution for you might be to make Cranberry Relish with Orange and Ginger, page 36). If you want a very firm sauce, make the variation.

4 cups (about 1 pound) fresh cranberries, picked over and rinsed, or frozen cranberries

1½ cups sugar

1 Combine the cranberries and sugar with 2 cups water in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the berries are broken, 10 to 15 minutes.

2 Transfer to a bowl; cool, then chill until ready to serve. The sauce can be refrigerated, covered, for up to a week.

Firm Cranberry Sauce or Cranberry Jelly. Increase the sugar to 2 cups. For sauce, proceed as directed. For jelly, cook for 5 minutes longer, stirring frequently. Pass through a strainer into a mold, bowl, or jelly jars and cool, then chill until firm. Slice to serve.

Balsamic Syrup

MAKES: ¼ cup

TIME: About 15 minutes

F **M** **V**

A good use for inexpensive balsamic vinegar, which is both sweet (it usually contains sugar) and sour, so the

rich syrup naturally works well drizzled over both savory and sweet foods like grilled chicken, watermelon, or strawberries. This keeps in the refrigerator almost indefinitely.

1 cup balsamic vinegar

1 Put the balsamic vinegar in a small nonreactive pan over medium-low heat. Bring to a boil, then immediately lower the heat so it bubbles gently.

2 Cook until reduced to ¼ cup, about 20 minutes; it should be thickened and syrupy. (It will thicken a little more as it cools.) Serve warm or refrigerate for several months.

8 Great Ways to Flavor Balsamic Syrup

For more flavor, slip any of the following ingredients into the pan while the vinegar is reducing. When you're done, strain the syrup if needed (or if you want).

1. Raw or Roasted Garlic (page 303), to taste
2. Caramelized Onions (page 325) or shallots (½ cup)
3. A sprig of a strong herb like rosemary, tarragon, or thyme; or a few sprigs of milder ones like parsley, mint, or basil
4. ¼ cup fresh, fruity red wine
5. ½ cup fresh chopped fruit or berries, like raspberries, apples, figs, strawberries, blackberries, pears, grapes, or cherries
6. ⅓ cup chopped dried fruits, like dates, apricots, pears, cherries, strawberries, figs
7. 2 tablespoons molasses, maple syrup, or honey
8. ½ cup freshly squeezed orange juice

Homemade Ketchup

MAKES: About 1 quart

TIME: About 2 hours

M **V**

Though it's unquestionably easier to buy ketchup, this is infinitely better, and it's not loaded with high-fructose

corn syrup like most bottled ketchup (in fact, it has just a bit of sugar). If you're a gardener, you must try the Green Ketchup variation.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Pickling Spice (to make your own, see page 67)
- 2 tablespoons neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn
- 1 red or yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded, and roughly chopped
- 1 large onion, roughly chopped
- 1 celery stalk, roughly chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 6 cups chopped ripe tomato (about 3 pounds tomatoes—canned are fine; don't bother to drain)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar
- Salt
- Cayenne, to taste

1 Heat the cider vinegar and Pickling Spice in a small pot until just beginning to boil; turn off the heat and let the spices steep until ready to use, at least 45 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, put the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. When hot, add the bell pepper, onion, celery, and garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is soft, about 10 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste until it is evenly distributed and begins to color, another minute or two. Add the tomato and stir well, scraping the bottom of the pot to prevent sticking. Adjust the heat so the mixture bubbles gently and cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened, about 45 minutes, being careful not to let the tomato stick to the bottom and burn.

3 Strain the spiced vinegar and stir it into the tomato mixture along with the brown sugar, salt, and cayenne; cook until just a little thinner than bottled ketchup, about 45 minutes. Taste, adjust the seasonings, and

remove from the heat. Use an immersion blender to purée the ketchup in the pot or pass it through a food mill. Or let the mixture cool slightly, pour it into a blender or food processor, and purée carefully. Cool and serve or refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

Green Ketchup. Very useful for gardeners: Replace the red or yellow pepper with a green one and use 2 pounds green tomatoes and 1 pound peeled and cored tart apples instead of red tomatoes (you should have about 6 cups total). Substitute a seeded jalapeño for the garlic if you like. Omit the tomato paste and increase the brown sugar to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Add a cup or so of water when you add the green tomatoes in Step 2.

Tomatoless Ketchup. Blurring the lines between ketchup and chutney: Replace the tomatoes with 3 pounds chopped carrots and 2 pounds peeled and chopped beets. Add 2 cups water and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice along with the carrots and beets in Step 2. Omit the tomato paste if you like.

Basic Barbecue Sauce

MAKES: About 2 cups

TIME: 20 minutes

F **M** **V**

One of my standard barbecue sauces, which simply builds more flavor into ketchup. If you want to baste with this sauce when grilling or roasting, add it toward the end of the cooking to prevent burning. If you want to add some heat, use more chili powder or add some cayenne, or Tabasco or other hot sauce.

2 cups ketchup (to make your own, see the preceding recipe)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry red wine or water

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup wine vinegar or rice vinegar

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce or soy sauce

1 tablespoon chili powder (to make your own, see page 66), or to taste

1 tablespoon minced onion

1 clove garlic, minced or crushed

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Combine all the ingredients except the salt and pepper in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the flavors have a chance to blend, about 10 minutes.

2 Taste and add salt and pepper if necessary. Use immediately or cool, cover, and refrigerate for up to a week.

Curry Barbecue Sauce. More fragrant: Add a teaspoon or more of curry powder (to make your own, see pages 66–67) along with the other ingredients.

Horseradish Barbecue Sauce. Add up to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly grated horseradish or up to 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish to taste. Add it up front for a milder kick or at the end for a big kick.

Mustardy Barbecue Sauce. Reduce the vinegar to 2 tablespoons. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Dijon or stone-ground mustard.

Chipotle Barbecue Sauce. Serious heat: In a small bowl, use a fork to mash 1 or 2 canned and minced chipotle chiles along with some of their adobo sauce into a paste. Add to the sauce with the rest of the ingredients.

Bourbon Barbecue Sauce. There's some woody complexity in this one: Instead of wine, use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup bourbon.

Beer Barbecue Sauce. More down-home: Instead of wine, use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup beer (the darker the better—use stout or porter if you can).

Light Barbecue Sauce. A tad more elegant: Replace 1 cup of the ketchup with vegetable stock (to make your own, see page 157).

Asian Barbecue Sauce. Replace 1 cup of the ketchup with 1 cup hoisin sauce. Use plum wine instead

of the red wine if you like and use rice vinegar and soy sauce. Add 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger and 1 tablespoon Chinese mustard (see page 43) if you like.

Indian-Style Tomato Sauce

Makhani

MAKES: 2 cups

TIME: 30 minutes

F M V

A decidedly un-Italian tomato sauce. The spices are toasted in butter, resulting in a sauce that is rich, almost sweet, a little hot. It turns grilled lamb and plain rice (and everything else it touches for that matter) into something remarkable, and I really love it with Hard-Boiled Eggs (page 791).

4 tablespoons butter or neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn

1 medium onion, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 inch fresh ginger, minced

1 tablespoon minced fresh chile (like jalapeño or Thai), or to taste, or hot red pepper flakes or cayenne, to taste

2 teaspoons garam masala or any curry powder (to make your own, see pages 66–67)

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon chili powder (to make your own, see page 66)

Large pinch sugar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 cups chopped ripe tomato (about 1 pound), preferably peeled and seeded (drained canned is okay)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cream or coconut milk (to make your own, see page 389)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves

- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds

1 Put 3 tablespoons of the butter or oil in a deep skillet over medium-high heat. When the butter is melted or the oil is hot, add the onion, garlic, ginger, and chile. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is soft, about 5 minutes. Stir in the garam masala, chili powder, and sugar and sprinkle with salt and pepper; cook and stir until the spices become fragrant, a minute or two more.

2 Add the tomato and cook, stirring frequently, until it starts to release its liquid, about 3 minutes. Add the cream and the cilantro and keep cooking and stirring until the mixture comes to a boil.

3 Turn the heat down so that the sauce bubbles gently and cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomato breaks up and the mixture comes together and thickens, about 30 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning. (At this point, you may cool, cover, and refrigerate the sauce for up to 3 days. Reheat gently before proceeding.)

4 Put the remaining butter or oil in a small pan over medium-high heat. When the butter is melted or the oil is hot, add the cumin and mustard seeds and toast them until they begin to pop, less than a minute. Spoon over the sauce just before serving.

Smooth Green Chile Sauce, Indian Style

MAKES: 4 to 6 servings

TIME: 20 minutes

F M V

Nothing about this chile sauce is subtle; the color is deep green, the aroma is mouthwatering, and the flavors are intense (you can increase the heat, if you like, by adding some serrano or other hot fresh chiles). It's delicious with Paratha (page 849) and Dry-Pan Eggplant (page 294). Add some yogurt (see the Chile-Yogurt Sauce variation) to mellow it a bit.

6 poblano or other mild fresh green chiles, roasted and cleaned (see page 330), or canned

1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger

2 teaspoons cumin seeds

¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

Pinch asafetida (optional)

¼ cup neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice

1 Put the chiles, ginger, cumin, cilantro, and asafetida if you're using it in a blender or food processor; purée until smooth, adding a tablespoon or so of water if necessary to keep things moving.

2 Heat the oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. When hot, add the chile purée and cook, stirring frequently, for about 2 minutes. (Be careful when adding the chile purée—it will splatter when it hits the hot oil.) Reduce the heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened, another 2 to 3 minutes.

3 Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste and stir in the lime juice. Serve hot or refrigerate for up to 3 days.

Red Chile Sauce, Indian Style. Lovely color, spectacular flavor: Replace the poblanos with 6 New Mexico or other mild fresh red chiles, roasted and cleaned (see page 330).

Red Chile Sauce, North African Style. Replace the poblanos with 6 New Mexico or other mild fresh red chiles. Substitute 2 cloves garlic for the ginger; add ½ teaspoon each caraway, coriander, and fennel seeds; omit the asafetida.

Chile-Yogurt Sauce. A wonderful combo of cool and hot, especially with samosas (see page 106) or as a dip: Let the chile sauce cool and then add ½ cup or more yogurt. Serve at room temperature.

Chile and Coconut Sauce. Rich, spicy, creamy, and delicious: In Step 2, stir about 2 cups coconut milk (to make your own, see page 389) into the simmering chile purée.

Peanut Sauce

MAKES: 2 cups

TIME: 35 minutes



Toss this Thai-style sauce with Chinese egg noodles or pool some on the bottom of a plate and top with broiled or grilled shrimp, chicken, pork, vegetables, or tofu. Or use it as a dip for celery, red bell pepper, cherry tomatoes, and rice crackers. If you want a smooth sauce, use peanut butter instead of chopped peanuts; for a sweeter one, add about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of ketchup (to make your own, see page 51) along with the coconut milk; for lightness, substitute stock or water for the coconut milk.

3 small dried red chiles (like Thai or piquin), seeded, or cayenne or hot red pepper flakes, to taste

3 garlic cloves

2 shallots, peeled

1 stalk lemongrass, white part only, peeled, trimmed, and thinly sliced (optional)

2 teaspoons ground turmeric

1 tablespoon peanut oil or neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn

1 cup coconut milk (to make your own, see page 389)

1 tablespoon brown sugar

2 tablespoons soy sauce, or more to taste

2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped roasted peanuts or crunchy peanut butter

Salt

1 Combine the chiles, garlic, shallots, lemongrass, and turmeric in a food processor and grind and until fairly smooth; scrape down the sides of the machine once or twice if necessary.

2 Put the oil in a medium saucepan or skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the chile-garlic mixture and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the remaining ingredients and whisk until smooth. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sauce thickens, about 15

minutes. Taste and add a sprinkle of salt or a little more soy sauce if necessary. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to a week (warm gently over very low heat or in a microwave before using).

Curry Peanut Sauce. Another layer of flavor: Omit the chiles, lemongrass, and turmeric. Instead, put one 2-inch piece of fresh ginger and 2 tablespoons of curry powder or curry paste (to make your own, see pages 66–67 or 75–76) in the food processor along with the shallots.

Simpler Peanut Sauce. More peanutty (and makes less): Omit everything except the chiles, sugar, soy sauce, and peanuts. Use the food processor to blend, adding a little water or more soy sauce to get the consistency you like. Then gently heat the sauce in a small saucepan over low heat or in the microwave. Finish with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup each sliced scallion and minced fresh cilantro.

Southern-Style Peanut Sauce. Peanut sauce, down-home style: Omit the chiles, lemongrass, turmeric, and soy sauce. You can hand-mince the shallots and garlic if you like, instead of using the food processor. Proceed with the recipe, but use cream instead of coconut milk and lemon juice instead of lime juice.

Teriyaki Sauce

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 15 minutes



Familiar and always popular, teriyaki sauce is also fast and simple. You can slather it on virtually any grilled or broiled seafood, poultry, or meat or add it at the last minute to stir-fried vegetables.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup soy sauce

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup mirin (or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey mixed with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water)

1 tablespoon minced or grated fresh ginger

- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup chopped scallion

Combine the soy sauce and mirin in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Cook until bubbling, about 2 minutes. Turn off the heat, stir in the ginger, garlic, and scallion, and use immediately or refrigerate for up to a day.

Mushroom Teriyaki Sauce. Add 1/2 cup finely chopped mushrooms—shiitake, cremini, and button are all fine—before cooking.

Caramelized Onion Teriyaki Sauce. Put about 1/2 thinly sliced onion in a small saucepan over medium heat. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is dry and almost sticking to the pan, 10 to 15 minutes. Add 1 tablespoon neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion browns, another 10 minutes or so. Proceed with the recipe, adding the ingredients to the pan with the caramelized onion.

Roasted Garlic Teriyaki Sauce. Increase the garlic to 2 cloves. Leave them whole and don't bother to peel. Wrap them in foil and roast in a 375°F oven until soft, about 20 minutes. Remove the skin from the garlic, mash it into a paste, and add it to the soy sauce and mirin.

Dashi Dipping Sauce

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 5 minutes, plus time to cool



A useful sauce that's especially fast if you make the dashi in advance. It's wonderful with Tempura (page 101), Pot Stickers (page 104), and Asian-style noodles (see page 552).

- 1 cup Dashi (page 160)
- 1/4 cup mirin (or 2 tablespoons honey or sugar mixed with 2 tablespoons water)
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce

In a small pot, combine the ingredients and bring to a boil. Turn off the heat and let cool. Use or cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

7 Quick Additions to Dashi Dipping Sauce

This stuff is so easy to spice you won't believe it—once it's cooked, you can stir in almost anything. Use the amounts here as guidelines; you can really just add to taste.

1. Ginger: About 1 tablespoon grated fresh or 1 teaspoon ground
2. Daikon: About 1/4 cup grated
3. Wasabi: About 1 tablespoon paste
4. Sesame: About 1 tablespoon toasted seeds (see page 317) or tahini
5. Garlic: About 1 teaspoon raw or 1 tablespoon roasted (see page 303)
6. Scallion or shallot: About 1/4 cup minced
7. Chile (see pages 71–73): About 1 teaspoon minced fresh or dried

Butter Sauces

Though these classics based on butter are not as popular as they once were, there's a great deal to be said for their richness and creaminess, which are both satisfying and elegant. And as we conquer our fear of butter they may once again become more common.

Brown Butter

Beurre Noisette

MAKES: 1/4 cup

TIME: 15 minutes



Cooking butter till it browns gives it not just color but also a range of complex flavors. Try this anywhere you might use a pat of butter. It takes only a few minutes to make, even with the additions in the variation and the following list.

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter

❶ Put the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir, scraping down the sides with a rubber spatula, until the butter foam subsides and the butter turns nut brown.

❷ Turn off the heat and keep warm until you're ready to use it, but use it as quickly as you can, certainly within 15 minutes.

Black Butter Sauce (Beurre Noir). One step further and more dramatic: Cook the brown butter until black flecks start to form, another 2 or 3 minutes. Immediately drizzle the butter over whatever food you are serving, then turn the heat to medium and rinse the pan with 2 tablespoons sherry or white wine vinegar, shaking and letting about half the vinegar evaporate. Add 1 tablespoon drained capers if you like and ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and drizzle this mixture over the food. Toss if necessary and serve.

4 Simple Additions to Brown Butter

Stir in any of these during the last minute of cooking, when the butter is just about ready (this point is easy to recognize once you've made brown butter a couple of times). If you want to use them in combination, increase the quantity of butter by 2 tablespoons for each additional ingredient.

1. Finely ground nuts (¼ to ½ cup): The usual ones like hazelnuts, cashews, pistachios, walnuts, or almonds, but also macadamia nuts or sunflower or pumpkin seeds; also whole pine nuts
2. Chopped fresh herbs: A tablespoon or so of oregano, rosemary, sage, thyme, or tarragon or up to ¼ cup milder herbs like parsley, cilantro, mint, dill, or basil
3. Mustard: Up to a tablespoon of either Dijon or whole grain, to taste, whisked in a bit
4. Vinegar: About a tablespoon of sherry or balsamic, which will make a "broken" sauce rather than emulsifying into the butter

Béchamel and 12 Other Creamy Sauces

MAKES: About 1½ cup

TIME: 10 to 20 minutes

F V

These all begin with flour and butter (or oil), cooked together to make a roux (see page 47). To guarantee success, cook the fat-and-flour mixture long enough to rid the flour of its raw taste; this takes just a couple of minutes but requires nearly constant stirring. Then add the milk slowly, so no lumps form. (You can always beat or blend them out, but that's more work.)

2 tablespoons butter or extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1 to 1½ cups milk

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

❶ Put the butter or oil in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. When the butter melts or the oil is hot, use a wire whisk to incorporate the flour. Turn the heat to low and cook, whisking almost constantly, until the mixture turns tan, about 3 minutes.

❷ Stir in the milk a little bit at a time, whisking constantly. When about a cup of the liquid has been stirred in, the mixture will be fairly thick. Add more milk a little at a time until the consistency is just a little thinner than you like, then cook, still over low heat, until the mixture thickens again.

❸ Sprinkle with salt and pepper and serve immediately or keep warm over gently simmering water or in a double boiler for up to an hour, stirring occasionally.

Brown Sauce. A pinch of thyme is good here: In Step 1, cook the flour-fat mixture until brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Use beef, chicken, or vegetable stock (to make your own, see pages 157–159) in place of the milk.

Velouté (White) Sauce. Use chicken, fish, or lobster stock in place of the milk.

10 Simple Additions to Butter Sauces

Not every addition here is appropriate for every variation in the section, so I give some guidance. But please experiment.

1. Cook 1 tablespoon minced shallot in the butter until softened before adding the flour. Especially good with Brown Sauce.
2. Cook 1 or 2 tablespoons pine nuts or other chopped nuts in the butter until lightly browned before adding the flour. Good with Brown, Velouté, Old-Fashioned, and Curry Sauces.
3. Whisk in 1 tablespoon or more mustard during the last minute of cooking. Always appropriate.
4. Season to taste with lemon or vinegar during the last minute of cooking. Always appropriate.
5. Stir in 1 tablespoon or more capers during the last minute of cooking. Best with Brown and Velouté Sauces (see above).
6. Use mushroom-soaking liquid for part of the stock and add 1 or 2 tablespoons minced reconstituted dried mushrooms during the last minute of cooking. Always appropriate.
7. Stir in any minced fresh or dried herbs you like during the last minute of cooking. Always appropriate.
8. Stir in 1 tablespoon or more prepared horseradish during the last minute of cooking. Always appropriate.
9. Add Worcestershire, soy, or fish sauce (nuoc mam or nam pla, available at Asian markets) to taste during the last minute of cooking. Use your judgment.
10. Add about 1 tablespoon tomato paste about a minute before removing the sauce from the heat. Best with Béchamel or Velouté Sauce.

Shallot Sauce. Cook $\frac{1}{4}$ cup minced shallot, onion, or scallion (or 1 tablespoon minced garlic) in the butter until softened before adding the flour.

Nut Sauce. Cook 1 or 2 tablespoons pine nuts or other chopped nuts in the butter until lightly browned before adding the flour.

Mustard and/or Caper Sauce. Whisk in 1 tablespoon or more prepared mustard, capers, or both during the last minute of cooking.

Lemon Sauce. Season to taste with lemon juice (at least a tablespoon) or vinegar during the last minute of cooking.

Beurre Noisette Sauce. Cook the butter until it's brown before adding the flour. This adds a distinctively nutty flavor.

Mushroom Sauce. Use mushroom-soaking liquid for part of the stock and add 1 or 2 tablespoons minced reconstituted dried mushrooms during the last minute of cooking.

Herb Sauce. Stir in any minced fresh or dried herbs you like during the last minute of cooking.

Light Tomato Sauce. Add about 1 tablespoon tomato paste about a minute before removing the sauce from the heat.

Mornay (Cheese) Sauce. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cup grated Emmental (Swiss), Gruyère, or other good cheese to the mixture after it has thickened.

Old-Fashioned Curry Sauce. Add 1 tablespoon curry powder (to make your own, see pages 66–67) or to taste, along with the flour.

Béarnaise Sauce

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 20 minutes

F **V**

Béarnaise is overkill, but it does such wonderful things to grilled meat and fish that it deserves to be made every now and then, and it's not at all difficult. In addition to the variation, you can spike the completed béarnaise with a dollop of Dijon mustard or horseradish, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon or so of minced garlic, a tablespoon of chopped capers, or

chopped fresh herbs—especially tarragon, chervil, or parsley—to taste. See “10 Simple Additions to Butter Sauces” (left) for more ideas.

- 1 tablespoon minced shallot
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon leaves or ½ teaspoon dried tarragon
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons white wine or other vinegar
- 2 egg yolks
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter, cut into bits
- Freshly squeezed lemon juice if needed

1 In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, combine the shallot, most of the tarragon, a sprinkle of salt and pepper, and the vinegar. Cook until all but about 2 tablespoons of the vinegar has evaporated, just a minute or two. Let cool.

2 Beat the egg yolks with 1 tablespoon water and stir into the vinegar mixture. Return to the stove over low heat and beat continuously with a wire whisk until thick, about 5 minutes.

3 With the heat as low as possible, use a wooden spoon to stir in the butter ½ teaspoon or so at a time. Add the remaining tarragon and taste; add salt and pepper if necessary and, if the taste is not quite sharp enough, a bit of lemon juice. If the sauce is too thick, stir in hot water, a teaspoon at a time. Serve immediately.

Béarnaise Sauce with Tomato (Choron Sauce). Stir ½ cup or more puréed tomato sauce (like Fast Tomato Sauce, page 502) into the finished béarnaise. Or combine ¼ cup tomato paste with ¼ cup cream and stir that in.

Beurre Blanc

MAKES: About ½ cup

TIME: 10 minutes



Light and easy, beurre blanc is essentially béarnaise without egg and is brilliant over any simply cooked fish or vegetable. Make sure the butter is cold.

- 2 tablespoons minced shallot
- ⅓ cup white wine vinegar or rice vinegar
- ⅓ cup dry white wine
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) cold butter, cut into bits

1 Combine the shallot, vinegar, and wine in a small saucepan over medium heat. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until reduced to a couple of tablespoons, about 5 minutes. Cool for 2 minutes.

2 Turn the heat as low as possible and whisk in the butter a bit at a time. As each piece is incorporated, add the next. When the sauce is creamy and smooth, and all the butter is incorporated, you're done. Serve immediately; this sauce will not keep.

Hollandaise Sauce

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 10 minutes



You can make hollandaise in a blender (see the variation), but the stovetop version is perhaps a little finer, a bit more fun, and pretty much foolproof. Hollandaise takes well to fresh herbs added at the end; try tarragon (a teaspoon), dill or chervil (a tablespoon), or another herb, depending on how you're using the sauce.

- 3 egg yolks
- Salt
- 6 tablespoons (¾ stick) butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Pinch cayenne (optional)

1 Put the egg yolks, 2 tablespoons water, and a pinch of salt in a small saucepan over very low heat. Cook, whisking constantly, until light, foamy, and slightly thickened, 3 to 5 minutes. (If at any point during this process the yolks begin to curdle, immediately remove from the heat and continue to whisk for a minute before returning the pan to the stove.)

2 Remove from the heat and stir in the butter a tablespoon or two at a time. Return to the heat and continue to whisk until the mixture is thick and bright yellow. Add the lemon juice, then taste, adjust the seasoning (add the cayenne now if you're using it), and serve. (If you like, you can keep the finished sauce warm over extremely low heat or—better—over very hot water for 15 or even 30 minutes, whisking occasionally.)

Blender Hollandaise. Melt the butter in a small saucepan over low heat or in the microwave; do not let it brown. Combine all the other ingredients in the blender and turn on the machine. Slowly drizzle in the butter; the mixture will thicken. Taste and add more lemon juice or other seasonings if necessary.

The Basics of Spices

When I first wrote *How to Cook Everything*, many of the seasonings I used were a bit obscure; now most of them are mainstream. Still, you won't find all of these in your local supermarket, especially whole. And I wouldn't suggest you buy them there even if they were.

Rather, I encourage you to buy spices from somewhere that specializes in them or at least sells them in bulk. That generally means Asian or Indian markets, gourmet shops, on-line, or by mail (see Sources). Most whole spices keep so well, for so long, you won't need to stock up more than once or twice a year.

Whole spices have huge advantages over ground. Not only do they tend to be of higher quality to begin with, but they keep much better, and you can toast and grind them at the last minute, for maximum flavor.

That said, everyone uses preground spices, because they're so convenient. So toast and grind whole spices when you can—even if that means every fifth time or every tenth time.

Whole spices stay potent for months, up to a year, sometimes even longer. Sunlight, moisture, and heat are their only enemies. So just keep them in a tightly covered

opaque container or in a jar in a dark place. The cooler, the better, though the refrigerator is too humid.

Toasting and Grinding Spices

It doesn't matter whether the spice is a seed, a flower, a piece of bark, or a dehydrated version of something fresh (like amchoor and ginger). Gentle warming activates and releases their essential oils and makes them aromatic. But too much direct heat burns them, resulting in a bitter taste.

When I can, I toast whole spices just before grinding. If they're big, like cinnamon sticks or nutmeg, break them up or crush into pieces—with your fingers, the back of a knife, a hammer, the bottom of a pan, whatever. If they're encased in pods, like cardamom, lightly crush the pods and remove the seeds (discard the husks). Then set a dry skillet over medium-high heat. Add the spices and cook, swirling the pan or stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until they smell really good, for just a minute or two. Immediately remove them from the pan.

Whir the spice or spices in a coffee grinder or spice grinder. (You can use a cheap one, which costs ten bucks; purists use a mortar and pestle.) Unplug it, then wipe it out as best you can. (If you're feeling really energetic, grind a little rice to a powder after removing the spices; the rice powder will remove the seasonings when you dump it out.) Store the ground spices in a tightly covered container, preferably an opaque one (or at least away from light). They'll stay potent as long as any other ground spices, which is to say a few weeks.

The Spice Lexicon

In the first chart that follows are the spices most people use to cook and bake. It's not a comprehensive list—"Specialty Spices" contains many others—but you can certainly get by, and cook well, with the everyday spices alone. These are, however, judgment calls; if you were going to cook a lot of North African or Middle Eastern dishes, you'd put sumac in the first list instead of the second; similarly, if you

EVERYDAY SPICES

SPICE	DESCRIPTION	USES
Allspice <i>Jamaica Pepper, Myrtle Pepper, Newspice, Pimento</i>	Berries that come from the aromatic evergreen pimento trees (not to be confused with pimientos, the peppers; see page 73). Small and shriveled, they look like large peppercorns, smell a bit like a combination of cloves and nutmeg, and taste slightly peppery. Available as whole berries and ground.	By the pinch; a little goes a long way. Particularly delicious with grains like bulgur, couscous, rice, and polenta and vegetables like beets, carrots, parsnips, winter squashes, and sweet potatoes. Extremely useful in pies, puddings, gingerbread, and some chocolate desserts.
Cardamom	Whole pods may be green, brown-black, or whitish. Each contains about 10 brown-black slightly sticky seeds with a rich spicy scent, a bit like ginger mixed with pine and lemon. You may find whole pods, “hulled” (just the seeds), and ground. Ground is the most common but the least potent. I buy whole pods (most often white).	A staple in Middle Eastern and Indian (it’s a key ingredient in many spice mixtures) cooking; also used in some pastries, especially in Scandinavia. Sometimes pods are cooked whole, especially in braised dishes, where they soften (I like to eat them this way). Otherwise, gently crush the pods with the flat side of a knife, remove the seeds, and grind or crush as required.
Celery Seeds	Tiny tan whole seeds, usually from lovage, a relative of celery that has an intense celery flavor.	A little goes a long way. Often used in pickling brines, cheese spreads, and salad dressings.
Cinnamon <i>Canela, Ceylon or Sri Lanka Cinnamon</i>	The aromatic bark of a tropical laurel tree. Cassia—cinnamon’s less expensive cousin—is often sold as cinnamon; it’s the bark from a laurel tree native to China. Cinnamon or cassia bark dries into long, slender, curled sticks, reddish brown in color. Ground cinnamon is useful, though it’s easy enough to grind sticks when necessary. Cassia is redder and usually comes in chip form; its flavor is more biting and bitter, making it better suited to savory dishes than sweet ones.	Use whole cinnamon sticks or pieces of cassia in soups, stews, chiles, and curries or add to rice or other grains. True cinnamon is excellent in pastries, as well as in rice puddings and other concoctions that feature sweet cream. It’s delicious paired with apples or in mulled cider or cold fruit soups.
Cloves	The unripe flower buds of a tall evergreen native to Southeast Asia. Pink when picked, they are dried to reddish brown, separated from their husks, then dried again. Whole cloves should be dark brown, oily, and fat, not shriveled. They have a sweet and warm aroma and a piercing flavor. Both whole and ground forms are common, and both are useful.	Use cloves sparingly—their flavor can be overwhelming—and try to remove whole cloves before serving (or at least warn people to look out for them!). To make this easier, you can stud an onion with cloves and then remove the onion or wrap them in cheesecloth. A pinch of ground cloves is good in spice blends, batters and doughs, fruit pie fillings, and stewed fruit.
Coriander	Seeds of the cilantro plant (page 29), these are small, round, and vary in color from pale green when fresh to light or dark brown when dried. The lemony flavor is somewhat like cilantro leaves, but the overall taste is much more complex, with hints of cumin, fennel, and even cloves. Both whole seeds and ground are common.	Coriander seeds can be cooked whole into dishes (and are quite pleasant to eat) or ground first. Coriander is most often used in conjunction with other spices, especially cumin and cardamom, and is an important part of many spice mixtures or alone in Asian- and Latin American-style stews and soups.

EVERYDAY SPICES (CONTINUED)

SPICE	DESCRIPTION	USES
Cumin <i>Comino</i>	The highly aromatic dried fruit of the cumin plant, a relative of parsley. Because they look similar, cumin and caraway are often confused, though they don't taste alike at all. If you find cumin bitter, seek out the black seeds, which are more peppery and sweet. Whole seeds and ground are available in brown (the most common), black, and white varieties. (Black and white cumin can usually be found in Indian markets.)	Lightly toasting the seeds before using enhances their flavor. Like coriander, it's frequently included in spice mixtures, like garam masala, kebsa, and chili powder. But it's also used solo a great deal, especially in Latin American and Middle Eastern cooking.
Dill Seed	The seeds are light brown, oval, and flat. They have a stronger taste than the fresh or dried herb and a good one. Seeds and leaves are both common, though the leaves are considered an herb (see page 29).	Often used whole, though occasionally ground. Excellent with cucumbers, radishes, potatoes, and sauces made with sour cream, yogurt, or mustard. They are also featured in Pickling Spice (page 67).
Fennel Seed <i>Sweet Cumin</i>	From bulbless fennel, these seeds are small, pale greenish brown ovals with tiny ridges and an aromatic, warm, sweet taste reminiscent of licorice. Not as strong as anise and a bit more useful. Whole seeds are most common.	Delicious in salad dressings, yogurt sauces, and pilafs; one of the five ingredients in Five-Spice Powder (page 68) and some curry powders and a popular flavor in India, Italy (think sausages), and southern France. Whole or ground fennel seed makes an interesting addition to spice cookies, shortbread, and quick breads.
Ginger	Yellowish tan and powdery, with the distinctive aroma of ginger, dried ginger is inferior to fresh (see page 304) but useful nevertheless. Crystallized (candied) ginger is delicious out of hand and can be used in cooking.	Ground ginger is often used in sweets, like cakes, cookies, quick breads; it's very convenient for spice mixtures.
Nutmeg	The egg-shaped kernel inside the seed of the fruit of a tropical evergreen tree, dark brown and about 1 inch long. (Its covering is called mace; see the following chart.) It is sometimes a whitish color, the result of being dusted with lime to discourage insects (wash this off before grating or grinding). Available whole or ground; since the whole keeps nearly forever and is easily grated, there's no reason to buy ground.	Strong and slightly bitter, so use sparingly, by grating it directly (just put the unused portion back in the jar or bag) or by breaking into pieces first (use a hammer). A sweet and warm spice, it's lovely with fruit dishes, custards, cakes, and other sweets, as well as vegetables, especially spinach. It also works well with cream and cheese sauces for pasta.
Paprika <i>Pimentón</i>	Bright red-orange powder with a spicy-sweet aroma; anything turning brown is too old. Varying in heat from mild (sweet) to hot; peppery to smoky (usually Spanish). The best paprika comes from Spain (pimentón, which may be smoked and is really good) or Hungary (<i>Szegedi</i> is a good word to look for). California paprika is usually quite mild and not as good. (See "The Basics of Chiles and Peppers," page 69.)	As you would any ground dried chile (that's what it is). Delicious with grains, eggs, cheese, and many vegetables and in soups, stews, sauces, rice, and potato dishes. You can substitute ground mild chile (like ancho) for paprika with no problem.

EVERYDAY SPICES (CONTINUED)

SPICE	DESCRIPTION	USES
Saffron Zafran, Asafran	<p>Even at \$40 or so an ounce, worth having around; really. (Buying in smaller quantities can mean that instead of \$600 a pound you pay more like \$4,000 a pound. And if it's much cheaper than that, it's probably not saffron at all, but marigold or another imitation.) The threads should be strong, long, and a brilliant orange-red color. It's highly aromatic, warm, and spicy, with a slightly bitter taste and gives food a distinctive and lovely yellow color and an exotic, wonderful flavor. To approximate its color you can use annatto or turmeric, but nothing tastes like saffron. Buy only threads; ground is useless.</p>	<p>Use saffron sparingly (a good pinch is about right); too much can give food a medicinal taste. Add threads directly to the dish or steep them in some of the cooking liquid or oil for a few minutes first. Used in many traditional breads and cakes, as well as in rice (like Yellow Rice, the Best Way, page 463), pasta, and cheese dishes.</p>
Sesame Seeds Benne Seeds	<p>Small, flat, and oval with a pointed tip and a nice nutty, somewhat sweet, flavor, especially when toasted. Available whole, as paste (tahini, page 196), or as sesame oil (see page 196). White (most common), red, and black varieties; also unhulled white seeds, which are slightly bitter and harder to digest. (You can also buy pretoasted sesame seeds, but they sometimes have an off flavor.)</p>	<p>With their rich natural oils and nutty flavor, sesame seeds are an important flavoring in the cooking of China, Korea, Japan, India, and the Middle East; they are also used in Europe and are often lightly toasted (see page 317) before use. They are delicious as a coating for fried foods or as a garnish, sprinkled into sauces, dressings, on salads. Store in the refrigerator or freezer to prevent rancidity.</p>
Star Anise Chinese Anise	<p>The fruit of an evergreen tree native to China; pods are a dark brown, eight-pointed star, about 1 inch in diameter, with seeds in each point, perhaps the strangest-looking spice you'll ever buy and quite lovely. Although it has a licoricelike flavor, it is botanically unrelated to anise. Available whole.</p>	<p>Whole stars make an attractive garnish. If less than a whole star is required, break the star into individual points. You may want to wrap the points in cheesecloth and remove them before serving. Use in soups, marinades, and spice mixtures; part of Five-Spice Powder (page 68).</p>
Vanilla Beans	<p>From the seed pod of a climbing orchid, grown in tropical forests. Good pods are 4 to 5 inches long, dark chocolate brown, tough but pliant, and sometimes covered with white crystals, called <i>givre</i> ("frost") in French. Inside, they have hundreds of tiny black seeds. Good vanilla is expensive, so be suspicious of cheap beans. Wrap tightly in foil or seal them in a glass jar and store them in a cool place or the refrigerator. Available in whole pods (superior) and extract (convenient).</p>	<p>You can steep pods whole in sauces or syrups, but it's usually best to split the pod lengthwise and scrape the seeds into the liquid. Make vanilla sugar by burying a couple of whole beans in a jar of sugar, which will absorb their aroma after a few days (replenish the sugar in the jar as you use it). Exceptional with chocolate and coffee; used to flavor all kinds of desserts. Good with fruits: try poaching pears, apples, figs, or pineapple in a syrup flavored with vanilla.</p>

SPECIALTY SPICES

SPICE	DESCRIPTION	USES
Amchoor <i>Amchur, Green Mango Powder</i>	Made from unripe green mangoes that are peeled, sliced, dried, and ground, amchoor has a tangy sour taste. Used much like lemon juice, primarily in Indian cooking. Available powdered or in dried slices.	Sift if necessary to remove lumps before using. Best with curries, chutneys, and pickles and especially in the blend Chaat Masala (page 68).
Anise Seeds <i>Aniseed, Sweet Cumin</i>	Tiny crescent-shaped greenish brown seeds with a sweet licorice flavor. Star anise or fennel can usually fill in for these and vice versa. Available whole or ground.	Although most common in desserts, anise works well in both sweet and savory dishes that include apples, cucumbers, carrots, turnips, or cabbages, or in fruit salads, salad dressings, pickles, stuffings, and sauerkraut.
Annatto <i>Achiote</i>	Triangular brick-colored seeds that smell earthy or musky and taste slightly peppery but subtle. Traditionally used in Latin American dishes. Available whole, ground, or less frequently as a prepared paste.	The seeds are too hard to crush easily and must be soaked for 10 minutes in boiling water first. Once drained, grind them with a mortar and pestle or in a clean spice mill or coffee grinder. More often, whole seeds are used to color and flavor oil as a first step in cooking dishes; just be sure to fish them out before adding the other ingredients.
Asafetida <i>Hing, Devil's Dung, Stinking Gum</i>	Made from the dried sap of giant fennel. The lumps are a waxy brownish black, and the powder is a beige color. Its unfortunate high-sulfur odor—like rotten garlic—can overcome your kitchen. But with a bit of cooking, it's transformed into a haunting flavor that smells a bit like onion. The powder is undeniably easier to use, but it's generally less pure, so go for the lump form if you can find it.	Indian cuisine primarily, especially vegetables, beans, potatoes, and in chutney, pickles, and sauces, usually in spice mixtures, like sambar powder. It is very potent, so use it only by the pinch. Try adding a tiny amount to plain boiled rice. To minimize the smell, double-pack powdered asafetida in a jar inside another jar, or it will stink up your pantry. A lump will keep indefinitely and should be pulverized just before use.
Caraway	Slender, ridged, whole brown seeds from a parsley-related plant, with an anise-cumin flavor	Traditionally used in rye bread, caraway is delicious with a variety of cabbage and potato dishes and other hearty soups and stews.
Capers <i>Caper Berries</i>	The flower buds of a shrub that grows in the Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and California. Dried and then salted or soaked in brine. The tiniest (usually from France) are the most prized, though the biggest—which are the size of small grapes—are attractive and tasty too.	Whether brined or salted, rinse capers before using. Their tart, piquant flavor makes them perfect with rich, oily foods and sauces like sautéed meats or buttery pilafs. Add them to simple sauces or mayonnaise as a last-minute flavor boost.
Fenugreek <i>Methi</i>	Distinctive rectangular seeds; small, brownish yellow, and very hard. They have a pungent, almost acrid aroma and an earthy, somewhat bitter taste that is found in many Indian dishes. Available whole and ground.	Used mainly in the cuisines of India and northern Africa, in chutneys, dals (lentils), and curries. It goes especially well with eggplant and potatoes. An essential ingredient in many curry powders.

SPECIALTY SPICES (CONTINUED)

SPICE	DESCRIPTION	USES
Juniper Berries	The berrylike cones from the evergreen tree of the same name; the size of dried peas, blue-black in color. They taste like a mix of pine, fruit, and lemon peel and are the dominant flavor in gin. Delicious, but limited in use.	Very pungent, so use in moderation. Toasting brings out their aroma, and crushing releases their flavor. You can also use whole, in a cheesecloth bag or tea ball, and then remove before serving. Classic in stuffings, sauerkraut, sauces, and pickling.
Mace	The hard, lacy coating—or aril—that covers the pod that contains the nutmeg kernel. When the fruit first opens, mace is bright red. After drying and pressing, it becomes a dried yellow-brown color. Its flavor is very similar to that of nutmeg, though more bitter. Usually available ground; called blades when whole.	Add ground mace directly to savory dishes toward the end of cooking. Whole blades can be used as is in soups or stews and then removed before eating. Commonly used in cakes and other sweets, traditional in doughnuts and pumpkin pie. Nutmeg is almost always an adequate substitute.
Poppy Seeds	From the same plant as opium; the teeny seeds, which are about the size of a pinhead, come from inside the flower's pods. Most of the seeds we use in the U.S. are slate blue, but those used in India are usually smaller and a yellow-white color. They add a nutty flavor and a subtle crunch to foods. Available whole or crushed into a paste.	Used in Europe and the Middle East in or on sweets and baked goods. Good in salad dressings, fruit salads, and with Eastern European-style noodle dishes. In India, poppy seeds are toasted, ground, and used to flavor and thicken curries. The paste is used as a filling for strudel-type pastries and in other baked foods. Very finely ground almonds or almond paste is a good substitute.
Sumac Summaq	Dried, ground fruit, used as a souring agent—much like lemon—in the Middle East. The brick-red berries also lend a bit of color. Available in whole dried berries or ground, which is more common.	Toast and grind dried berries or use whole: Crack them and soak in water for 15 to 20 minutes, then wrap in cheesecloth and squeeze to extract the juice, which can be used like lemon juice. Powder is usually added during the last few minutes of cooking. Use with grilled items, on salads, or in dips like hummus or baba ghanoush.
Turmeric Indian Saffron	Darker skinned than ginger (like ginger, it's a rhizome), with thin fingers; its flesh is bright orange-red and difficult to grind. Available ground (most common) or in dried pieces.	Turmeric is most frequently used dried in spice blends (if you see some fresh, try mincing some in pickles; see page 229. But use sparingly; too much tastes bitter. Typical in Indian vegetarian cooking, especially in dal; also good with rice and other grain dishes, like couscous.

weren't interested in Chinese cooking, you'd forget about star anise (and Sichuan peppercorns, which are described along with other peppercorns on page 78). For real Indian cooking, you must have asafetida. And so on.

A note about garlic powder, which is probably conspicuous by its absence: I simply see no reason to use anything but fresh garlic, which is cheap and easy to use, keeps for a long time, and is one of the most important flavors in cooking.

For mustard seeds, see “The Basics of Mustard” (page 43); for chiles, see the charts on pages 71 to 73. For peppercorns, see the lexicon on page 78.

Spice Mixtures

Spice mixtures may be the ultimate convenience foods; with a few tucked away in your pantry the world of fla-

vor is at your fingertips. If you have any doubt, sprinkle one piece of boiled potato with chili powder and another with curry and then taste.

As with single spices, there are several ways to use mixtures: Try them as a last-minute dusting of flavor on already cooked foods. Or put them in at the beginning as flavor foundations, cooking them in the butter or oil before building in other ingredients. They also make terrific rubs to season seafood, poultry, meats, tofu, or vegetables before grilling, broiling, or roasting—just sprinkle the blend on when you season with salt and pepper and use your hands to spread it evenly.

The blends in my spice cabinet are based on seasonings used around the world, though there are very few unusual ingredients among them. I've arranged them loosely in the order of how frequently I use them in this book.

With all of these, you can of course combine pre-ground spices; but if you start (as the recipes do) with whole spices whenever practical, and toast and grind them yourself before blending, your spice mixtures will really sing.

Chili Powder

MAKES: About 1/4 cup

TIME: 5 minutes

F **M** **V**

Do yourself and everyone you cook for a favor and toss out any taco seasoning or jarred chili powder tucked away in your spice rack. Not only will this mixture blow anything you can buy out of the water, but it's also easy to make.

2 tablespoons ground ancho, New Mexico, or other mild dried chile (see page 72)

1/2 teaspoon cayenne, or to taste

1/2 teaspoon black peppercorns

2 teaspoons cumin seeds

2 teaspoons coriander seeds

1 tablespoon dried Mexican oregano

1 Put all the ingredients in a small skillet over medium heat. Toast, shaking the pan occasionally, until the mixture is fragrant, 3 to 5 minutes.

2 Grind in a spice or coffee grinder until powdery. Store in a tightly covered container for up to several weeks.

Hot Curry Powder

MAKES: About 1/4 cup

TIME: 10 minutes

F **M** **V**

Curry powder is a generic term for what we think of as an Indian blend of spices. These mixtures can be quite personal, so adjust this recipe to your taste. If it sounds too hot for you (the black peppercorns alone pack quite a punch), try the others that follow or just reduce the amount of chiles.

2 small dried Thai or other hot chiles

1 tablespoon black peppercorns

1 tablespoon coriander seeds

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

1 teaspoon ground fenugreek

1 tablespoon ground turmeric

1 tablespoon ground ginger

Cayenne, to taste (optional)

1 Put the chiles, peppercorns, and seeds in a medium skillet over medium heat. Cook, shaking the pan occasionally, until lightly browned and fragrant, just a few minutes; for the last minute of cooking, add the ground spices.

2 Cool, then grind to a fine powder in a spice or coffee grinder; add cayenne to taste at this stage if you're using it. Store in a tightly covered opaque container for up to several months.

Fragrant Curry Powder

MAKES: About 1/4 cup

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

A mild and complex spice mix, perfect when you're looking for loads of flavor without heat.

1/4 teaspoon nutmeg pieces
Seeds from 5 white cardamom pods
3 cloves
One 3-inch cinnamon stick
1 teaspoon black peppercorns
2 tablespoons cumin seeds
1/4 cup coriander seeds
2 bay leaves
2 dried curry leaves (optional)
1 teaspoon ground fenugreek

1 Put all the ingredients except the fenugreek in a medium skillet over medium heat. Cook, shaking the pan occasionally, until lightly browned and fragrant, just a few minutes; for the last minute of cooking, add the fenugreek.

2 Cool, then grind to a fine powder in a spice or coffee grinder. Store in a tightly covered opaque container for up to several months.

Garam Masala

MAKES: About 1/4 cup

TIME: 15 minutes

F M V

Literally meaning “warm mixture,” this North Indian spice blend should be made in small quantities and used quickly so it's as fresh as possible. Like the preceding mixtures, it can be customized to your taste and used wherever a recipe calls for curry powder.

Seeds from 10 cardamom pods
One 3-inch cinnamon stick

1 teaspoon whole cloves
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg pieces
1 tablespoon cumin seeds
1 tablespoon fennel seeds

1 Put all the ingredients in a medium skillet over medium heat. Cook, shaking the pan occasionally, until lightly browned and fragrant, just a few minutes.

2 Cool, then grind to a fine powder in a spice or coffee grinder. Store in a tightly covered opaque container for up to several months.

Pickling Spice

MAKES: About 1 cup

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

A traditional spice blend that gives a pickled flavor to virtually anything; see Three-Day Pickles (page 231), or for a more unusual use, try some on Grilled or Broiled Boneless Chicken (page 641) or Mashed Potatoes (page 339).

Two 3-inch cinnamon sticks
10 bay leaves
2 small dried hot red chiles (like Thai) or 1 tablespoon hot red pepper flakes, or to taste
1/4 cup mustard seeds
2 tablespoons allspice berries
2 teaspoons cloves
2 tablespoons black peppercorns
2 tablespoons coriander seeds
2 teaspoons cardamom seeds
2 tablespoons dill seeds

1 Break the cinnamon sticks, bay leaves, and chiles into pieces.

2 Roughly chop (or crush by pressing on the spices with a heavy skillet) all the other ingredients, leaving most of the seeds whole.

3 Stir to combine the spices and store in a tightly sealed container for up to several months.

Jerk Seasoning

MAKES: About 1/4 cup

TIME: 5 minutes

F M V

In Jamaica, jerk seasoning is typically used as a rub or marinade for grilled chicken or pork.

- 1 tablespoon allspice berries
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg pieces
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon cayenne, or to taste
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger or 2 teaspoons ground ginger

1 Put the allspice, nutmeg, peppercorns, and thyme in a spice or coffee grinder and grind to a fine powder.

2 Mix in the remaining ingredients and use immediately. Or leave out the garlic and fresh ginger and store in a tightly covered container for up to several weeks, adding the ginger and garlic as you use the seasoning.

Chaat Masala

MAKES: About 1/2 cup

TIME: 5 minutes

F M V

Chaat masala is among my favorite spice blends, with an intense sourness that comes from amchoor, a powder

made from dried mangoes that's available in Indian markets (where you'll find the other unusual ingredient, hing, or asafetida). Traditionally used as a seasoning for raw or cooked vegetables or fruit, it's good on plain rice, salads, beans, fresh cheeses like feta, and even chicken or fish.

- 1/4 cup amchoor
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon asafetida
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne
- Pinch salt

Put all the ingredients in a tightly covered opaque container and shake or stir to combine. Use immediately or store for up to several months.

Five-Spice Powder

MAKES: About 1/4 cup

TIME: 5 minutes

F M V

Sichuan peppercorns make this spice blend unusual and unforgettable. This tiny fruit pod (it's not really a peppercorn; see page 78) has an unusual smoky, citrusy flavor. Use this in stir-fries, for spiced nuts, and even sprinkled on desserts, like Butter Cookies (page 892) and Old-Fashioned Baked Custard (page 885).

- 1 tablespoon Sichuan peppercorns or black peppercorns
- 6 star anise
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cloves
- One 3-inch stick cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons fennel seeds

Put all the ingredients in a spice or coffee grinder and grind to a fine powder. Store in a tightly covered opaque container for up to several months.

Seaweed “Shake”

MAKES: About 1/4 cup

TIME: 20 minutes

F M V

This “shake” is not a green smoothie, but an American translation for the ubiquitous family of Japanese seasonings that you sprinkle on food as a last-minute condiment—using either your fingers, a spoon, or some kind of big-holed shaker (thus the name). Sushi Rice (page 474) and Sushi Bowls (page 473) are good places to use it; so are bowls of broth with soba or udon noodles and fish, meat, or vegetables.

Make this in small batches, because it stays fresh for only a little while; if you think you’ll use it all within a week or so, double or triple the recipe.

2 sheets nori or 1/4 cup crumbled dulse

1 tablespoon sesame seeds

1 teaspoon salt, preferably sea salt

Cayenne, to taste (optional)

1 Set a large dry skillet (preferably cast iron) over medium heat. When it’s hot, put a nori sheet in the pan and toast until it turns slightly green, which will take only a few seconds. Turn and quickly toast on the other side. Set aside to cool and repeat with the other nori sheet.

2 While the pan is still hot, toast the sesame seeds, stirring or swirling the pan constantly to keep them from burning. When they are fragrant and beginning to turn golden, after about a minute, put them in a small bowl, sprinkle with salt, and stir.

3 Crumble the nori into the bowl with the sesame seeds and salt. Or if you want a finer shake, whir the nori in a spice grinder for a few pulses, then add. Stir in the cayenne if you like. Store, tightly covered, in a dark place for up to a week.

The Basics of Chiles and Peppers

One of the most frequently used ingredients in this chapter is the chile: dried, fresh, chopped, whole, with seeds, without, processed, in paste—it’s everywhere. This isn’t surprising, since we’ve become a nation of hot heads, gobbling down more chiles than ever before. Maybe we’ve caught on to the fact that chiles have something extra going for them: Capsaicin, the thing that gives peppers their heat, releases “feel good” endorphins in the brain. On top of that, they’re high in vitamin C and contain some antioxidants (especially the red ones, which contain beta-carotene). But really, the taste’s the thing.

The Chile/Pepper Lexicon

All chiles and peppers are in the same botanical family, capsicum. There are literally thousands of varieties, ranging from fingernail size to foot-long, from sunset orange to purplish green. They vary in terms of heat (some, like bell peppers, are not hot at all) and complexity of flavor, sometimes as much from pepper to pepper as from variety to variety. That variability can make things a bit unpredictable. That’s why the way I cook with chiles is to take a few home, slice a tiny piece out of one before I prepare a dish, and taste. Then I decide how much to use. Really, it’s the only foolproof method. Habaneros are hot, poblanos are mild, but “hot” and “mild” vary wildly. You gotta taste.

When I use chiles, sometimes I’m looking for just a little heat, in which case hot red pepper flakes will do. Sometimes, though, I want the complex flavors chiles can bring, and then I pay attention to the type I’m using. When it really matters to the flavor of a dish, I will call for a specific variety, though this is rare (and usually limited to milder chiles, or to chipotle, which has a distinctively smoky taste). The entries in the following charts include a list of substitutions. Where you live has a lot to do with the kinds you will find, as does your proximity to

Latin or Asian stores, which offer larger selections. But really, if you go to the store and they've got only one type of chile, you might as well buy it. Even if it's the super-hot habanero (unlikely), you can buy a few, take them home for a taste test, and then use as you like.

Keep in mind that you can always substitute dried chiles (which obviously stores better, so you can always have some around) for fresh, and usually vice versa. The bottom line, though, is this: Use what you like, what you can find, and as much as you think tastes good.

The chiles in the following charts are divided into three groups: fresh, dried, and mild and sweet. They're organized from hottest to mildest and, within that order, by how frequently I use them.

Buying and Storing Chiles

Look for firm, smooth fresh chiles, with shiny skins and fresh-looking stems. Keep them in the fridge, wrapped loosely in a plastic bag for a week to two, maybe even longer.

Dried chiles that are still pliable are ideal—there's no need for them to be bone-dry—and they should never be dusty, dank, or moldy. When you get them home, put them in an airtight container and tuck them away in a dark corner of your pantry or spice shelf. Soak, grind, or crumble as needed.

For the sake of measurements, here are two general rules. Every square inch of chile flesh—not including seeds, pith, or the core—will yield about 1 tablespoon when minced. One medium bell pepper—cored, seeded, and chopped—will yield about a cup.

Working with Fresh Chiles

Unless they're stuffed (see page 333), fresh chiles are almost always cut up before using, the hotter ones minced, the medium and mild ones (like poblanos or bell peppers) chopped. Cook them along with aromatic vegetables like onions, garlic, and ginger before adding them to other ingredients, use them raw as a last-minute garnish, or add them anywhere in between.

Working with Dried Chiles

The simplest way to use dried chiles is to add them whole. The only problem with this is that you have no idea what kind of heat level they will contribute to the dish, and I've gotten some intense surprises this way.

Making Chile Powder: Next easiest is to remove the stem—and the seeds and veins too, if you want less heat—then toss them into a spice grinder and pulse until you get the desired texture. (Be careful when you open the lid; the aroma could be powerful.) Stored tightly covered in a dark place, this ground chile—it's real chile powder—will remain potent for months.

Toasting Dried Chiles: Toasting dried chiles in a dry skillet set over medium heat before using them is the best way to bring out their smoky flavor. It takes only a couple minutes on each side, though I usually bother with it only when the chile will be featured prominently.

Soaking Dried Chiles: Especially for use in soups and stews, dried chiles are often soaked. Cover the chiles in boiling water and soak until they're soft and pliable, which may take as little as 15 minutes or up to 30, depending on the age of the chiles. Then remove the seeds and veins. Some of the larger chiles will separate from their tough skins, so remove those too. Strain and save the soaking water (which can be very potent) if you want. Now you can chop and use the chiles, or purée them, either in a soup or stew or with a little of the soaking water and served as a straight chile sauce.

Working with Mild or Sweet Peppers

Chiles are actually fruit, so maybe it's not surprising that some of the milder ones can be quite sweet. Minced, chopped, or sliced, they are versatile both cooked and raw. The only thing you don't want to do is simmer them in liquid for too long; they'll turn bitter.

The Heat Factor

There are ways to measure a particular chile's heat or give a range within specific varieties. Scoville units are the most

EVERYDAY FRESH CHILES

CHILE	DESCRIPTION	HEAT	OTHER FORMS	SUBSTITUTIONS
Habanero <i>Scotch Bonnet (not technically the same, but virtually interchangeable)</i>	Round and fairly small, like teeny bell peppers, ranging in color from neon green to yellow, gold, and orange, depending on maturity and variety. The flavor is slightly fruity and bright once you get past the fire.	Very hot	Dried	Nothing has the same complex flavor (or packs quite the same wallop)
Cayenne <i>Finger Chile</i>	Long, slightly gnarled, and slender; green to red when mature	Very hot	Also available dried whole and ground	Thai, or use ground cayenne (see previous page)
Thai <i>Thai Bird</i>	Pinky size or smaller; green to red when mature	Very hot	Dried (see the following chart) and sometimes pickled	Cayenne
Giant Thai	Basically a bigger Thai pepper (see above)	Hot	Usually fresh only	Thai or jalapeño (use more jalapeño)
Chile de Arbol <i>Red Chile</i>	Finger length and slender; green to red when mature	Hot	Dried (more common)	Jalapeño
Serrano	Finger size or smaller, thin skinned; sold either red (mature) or green	Hot	Dried	Cayenne or Thai (use less); jalapeño (use more)
Jalapeño	Sold green mostly, though sometimes red; the flavor is slightly herbaceous and grassy	Hot to medium	Smoked and dried (see Chipotle in the following chart)	Serrano or chile de arbol
Fresno	Like jalapeños, only with thinner flesh; usually red (mature), but sometimes available green	Hot to medium	Usually only fresh	Serrano or jalapeño
Poblano	Like a smaller, flatter bell pepper; usually very dark green or purple or sometimes red (mature). Super for stuffing (you should peel first; see pages 330–333), grilling, and roasting.	Medium to mild	Dried (see Ancho in the following chart)	Anaheim or New Mexico
Anaheim <i>Chile Colorado (when red)</i>	Long and wide, somewhat flat; available both green and red (mature). Used for stuffing, grilling, roasting; egg dishes, mild salsas, sauces and dressings.	Medium to mild	Dried (see California in the following chart)	Poblano or New Mexico
New Mexico <i>Green Chiles or Red Chiles, depending on maturity</i>	Similar to Anaheim, only pointed on both ends, available both green and red (mature). Used for stuffing, grilling, roasting, puréeing into sauces and chilies.	Medium to mild	Both available dried	Anaheim

EVERYDAY DRIED CHILES

CHILE	DESCRIPTION	HEAT	OTHER FORMS	SUBSTITUTIONS
Dried Habanero	Small, roundish, reddish brown, very wrinkled. Use judiciously in chiles, soups, broths.	Very hot	Fresh (see the preceding chart), and sometimes smoked and dried	Dried chipotle
Chipotle <i>Chile Seco; Smoked Jalapeño</i>	Dried: light to reddish brown; canned: quite dark, almost purple. Because they're smoked, the flavor is incomparable—smoky, hot, and complex. These give a rich smokiness to chilies, stews, cooked salsas. If using dried, grind and use judiciously as you would cayenne. Minced or puréed, canned chipotles—with a little of their adobo—add body along with the heat.	Very hot to hot	(Fresh, they're jalapeños; see the preceding chart)	Nothing, really
Piquin <i>Piquin</i>	Fingernail size and shape, bright red; somewhat shiny skins; very complex flavors	Very hot to hot	Fresh (rare)	Dried Thai chiles
Chile de Arbol <i>Red Chile (see Thai in the preceding chart)</i>	Unlike many dried chiles, these retain a bright reddish brown to almost orange color; narrow and a couple inches long; nice heat and depth of flavor.	Very hot to hot	Fresh (less common; see the preceding chart)	Guajillo (which is milder, too)
Thai <i>Red Chile (not the same as other small Asian or American varieties, but virtually interchangeable)</i>	Small, narrow, brownish red	Hot	Fresh (see the preceding chart)	
Hot Red Pepper Flakes <i>Crushed Red Pepper; Dried Red Pepper; Ground Red Pepper</i>	The ubiquitous combination of seeds and bits of pepper, sometimes suspended in oil, always red. With supermarket kinds, assume that a variety of peppers are used to achieve a level of heat specified by the manufacturer. Use whenever you want to add plain old heat. For more character, make your own (see page 70).	Hot to medium	None	Crumble or grind any whole dried red pepper like Thai or Serrano; or for a milder flavor, use California
Cascabel <i>Chile Bola or Rattle Chile (because the seeds shake around inside)</i>	Smooth skinned and puffy—kind of like brown Ping-Pong balls, only smaller, with deep, smoky flavor	Hot to medium	Fresh (rare)	Chile de arbol

EVERYDAY DRIED CHILES (CONTINUED)

CHILE	DESCRIPTION	HEAT	OTHER FORMS	SUBSTITUTIONS
Guajillo	Dark reddish brown with shiny, thick skin; flat and about an inch wide and a couple inches long	Medium	Fresh guajillo (rare)	New Mexico or ancho
New Mexico— Red and Green	Long, somewhat wide, and flat; red or green	Medium	Fresh (see the preceding chart)	California or ancho
Ancho	Almost purple or black; compact, squarish; medium size. The classic in mild chili powder and an excellent mild dried chile.	Medium to mild	Fresh (and called poblano; see the preceding chart)	Pasilla or California
Pasilla Chile Negro	Almost black, very wrinkled, long, and narrow	Ranges from hot to mild, depending on the variety	Fresh (less common)	New Mexico
California	Longish and narrow, slightly flat, with rusty red color	Medium to mild	Fresh (see Anaheim in the preceding chart)	Ancho
Paprika Hungarian Paprika or Spanish Paprika	Usually found ground in cans or jars in sweet or smoked varieties (especially Spanish)	Mild	Rarely found fresh	none

MILD OR SWEET PEPPERS

PEPPER	DESCRIPTION	FORMS
Bell Peppers Sweet Peppers; Hol- land Peppers; also called by their color— red, yellow, orange, or green	The familiar large bell pepper, thick walled and moister than hot peppers; crisp, with a grassy or sweet flavor, depending on maturity. They range in color from shades of green (usually bitter, because immature) to yellow, orange, or red (or even purple).	Fresh
Shishito Guernika, or Padrone	Of Japanese or Spanish origin; finger sized, slightly gnarled, pale green. Delicious grilled or fried, served with salt.	Only fresh
Pimiento	Narrower and slightly smaller than a bell pepper, with a pointed end; more intense, sweet flavor, and red only	More commonly found in jars, but sometimes you see fresh.
Banana Peppers	Slightly larger than a jalapeño, yellowish green in color; don't confuse them with the hot Hungarian wax peppers.	Fresh

common, but there are others. I don't find any of them useful since each chile is different. There are, however, a few generalizations that are useful to know about: Small peppers tend to be hotter than large ones (with a few notable exceptions), while mature (red or orange) peppers pack a bigger wallop than green ones. And the seeds and veins (the pith) are the hottest parts of the chile. Any chile can be tamed (relatively) by removing the seeds and pith. Simply include some seeds if you want to pump up the heat.

Please remember that chiles can burn, literally. If you've got rubber gloves, think about using them. If not, every time you touch a chile, wash your hands with warm soapy water—twice is better than once—and be careful not to touch your eyes or any other tender areas for a while. If your hands are chapped or cut, chiles will irritate them.

And if your mouth is on fire, don't reach for that margarita—at least not to tame the heat. You'll get more relief from a glass of milk, strange as that may sound. Plain bread and crackers are also good options.

Chile Pastes

Like spice blends and rubs (see pages 65–69), chile pastes are not exactly sauces but cooking ingredients that are useful in dressings, sauces, and marinades and to smear on foods before grilling or roasting.

Chile Paste, Eight Ways

MAKES: About $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

TIME: 45 minutes, largely unattended



Pure dried chiles, reconstituted and puréed, make a terrific paste. Use relatively mild ones like ancho, dried Anaheim, or New Mexico green (which will make the paste green). Guajillo or chipotle will be much hotter. Better yet, use a combination of mild and hot, which gives you both heat and complexity (my favorite is mostly ancho with a hit of chipotle).

The variations simply build additional flavors into the all-chile base. Whichever kind you make, if fresh herbs or aromatics are involved, use within a day or so for maximum freshness and oomph. Chile paste made with only dried seasonings will last for a couple of weeks.

2 ounces (6 to 12, depending on size) any dried whole chiles

Salt

2 tablespoons neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn

1 Toast the chiles in a dry skillet over medium heat for a minute or two on each side, then soak them in boiling water until soft, 15 to 30 minutes. Drain the chiles, saving the soaking liquid, and remove and discard the seeds and veins (for a hotter paste, save some of the seeds).

2 Put the chiles, any seeds you're using, and a pinch of salt in a blender or food processor. Purée until smooth, adding a spoonful of soaking water at a time until you reach the desired consistency.

3 Put the oil in a small skillet and over medium-high heat. Cook the chile paste, stirring constantly, until deeply colored and fragrant, about 2 minutes. Use immediately or refrigerate for up to 2 days. Just before serving, taste and adjust the seasoning.

Mexican-Style Chile Paste. Use all guajillo or other dark chiles: To the blender or processor, add 2 cloves garlic, 1 teaspoon ground cumin, and 2 tablespoons fresh epazote, Mexican oregano, or oregano leaves (or 2 teaspoons dried herbs). Use corn oil if you like instead of grapeseed and proceed with the recipe.

Chipotle Paste. Hot. Hot. Hot: Use some or all dried chipotles. Or skip Step 1 and use 1 small can of chipotles, with their adobo sauce (about $\frac{1}{3}$ cup).

Thai-Style Chile Paste. Quite complex: Use 2 or 3 Thai chiles along with the mild chiles. To the blender or processor, add 1 inch lemongrass, peeled, trimmed, and chopped and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh cilantro or Thai basil leaves. Use peanut oil if you like instead of grapeseed.

Vietnamese-Style Chile Paste. Use 2 or 3 Thai chiles along with the mild chiles. To the blender or processor, add 3 or 4 cloves garlic and 2 tablespoons nam pla (Thai fish sauce), 2 tablespoons sugar, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh mint leaves. Use peanut oil if you like instead of grapeseed. After cooking, squeeze in the juice of 1 lime.

Indian-Style Chile Paste. Useful if you want to add heat to Indian dishes: To the blender or processor, add 1 tablespoon garam masala (to make your own, see page 67), or more to taste. Use peanut oil if you like instead of grapeseed.

Harissa. The flavor is quite complex: To the blender or processor, add 1 tablespoon ground coriander seeds, 2 teaspoons ground cumin, and 1 or 2 cloves garlic. Use extra virgin olive oil instead of grapeseed.

How to Use Chile Pastes

Some uses of chile pastes are obvious. Others take a bit of thought. Some of each:

- Rub pastes directly onto fish, poultry, or meat before cooking—any kind of cooking, not just grilling.
- Toss a spoonful or two of any chile paste with simply cooked vegetables, pasta, or grains (along with a little butter or oil if you like).
- To turn chile paste into a “real” sauce, heat a batch with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup or so of oil, butter, cream, stock, tomato sauce, or even water, then use.
- Stir chile paste directly into yogurt, sour cream, or mayonnaise for a quick chilled sauce.
- Mix with a little extra virgin olive or neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn, and brush on fish, chicken, meat, vegetables, or tofu as they come off the grill.
- Stir a little into nut pastes for a spicy spread for toasted bread.
- Smear a little on sandwiches (especially grilled cheese!).

Chile and Black Bean Paste. To the blender or processor, add 2 tablespoons fermented black beans and eliminate the salt until you taste for seasoning. Use peanut oil if you like instead of grapeseed.

Chile-Garlic Paste

MAKES: About 2 cups

TIME: 10 minutes

F M V

Among the most ubiquitous and versatile of Asian sauces, used in hundreds of dishes and other sauces. Like the previous recipe, you can learn to make this instinctually, and you can customize the heat level by using milder chiles (like New Mexico) or hotter ones (Thai, chile de arbol, piquin, or habanero). You can also reduce the heat level some by removing the seeds from the chiles before crushing them.

1 cup dried red chiles, like red Thai, chile de arbol, piquin, or red New Mexico

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped garlic

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup hot water, or more if needed

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup white wine vinegar or distilled vinegar

2 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt, or to taste

1 Combine all the ingredients in a blender or food processor and purée to a smooth paste. Add more hot water by the tablespoon if the paste is too thick.

2 Use immediately or refrigerate for up to 3 months.

Red Curry Paste

MAKES: About $\frac{3}{4}$ cup

TIME: 25 minutes

F M V

Cilantro roots—the roots of the cilantro plant, often attached to the bunch of cilantro you buy at the super-

market—lend that bright cilantro flavor without your having to use the entire bunch. Just be sure to rinse them very well to get all the sand and dirt off before using. To use the leaves, see Cilantro-Mint Chutney (page 37) and Cilantro “Pesto” with Ginger and Chile (page 28).

- 10 Thai or other medium to hot dried red chiles, seeded, or to taste
- 4 dried lime leaves or fresh lime leaves, finely chopped, or 1 tablespoon grated lime zest
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 2 stalks lemongrass, peeled, trimmed, and roughly chopped
- 2 shallots, roughly chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, smashed
- 1/2 to 1 inch fresh ginger, roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons cilantro roots, rinsed well, or 3 tablespoons chopped cilantro stems
- 3 tablespoons peanut oil

1 Soak the chiles and lime leaves in warm water for about 15 minutes.

2 Put the coriander and cumin seeds in a small skillet over medium heat. Cook, shaking the pan occasionally, until lightly browned and fragrant, about 3 minutes. Cool, then grind to a powder in a spice or coffee grinder.

3 Drain the chiles and lime leaves and, along with all the remaining ingredients except the oil, transfer to a blender or food processor; grind to a paste, stopping the machine to scrape down the sides as necessary. Gradually add the oil while blending; you are looking for a fairly smooth, thick paste. Store in a tightly covered container and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

Green Curry Paste. Substitute fresh green chiles for the red chiles and add 1 tablespoon ground turmeric to Step 3.

Red or Green Curry Sauce. Put 2 tablespoons neutral oil, like grapeseed or corn, into a deep skillet over medium heat. Add 1/4 cup Red or Green Curry Paste and cook, stirring constantly, until it becomes fragrant and the color deepens, about 2 minutes. Stir in 1 1/2 cups coconut milk (to make your own, see page

389) and just bring to a boil, reduce the heat a bit, and let it bubble gently until thickened, about 5 minutes. Stir in 1/2 cup chopped fresh Thai basil, mint, or cilantro if you like.

The Basics of Salt

All salts are created naturally—in rock and bodies of water—but they’re not all the same. Common table salt is mined, milled, refined, and “enhanced” with iodine and other ingredients into small, free-flowing grains. But consistency has a downside: the flavor of table salt is harsh, with iodine the predominant mineral taste.

At the other end of the spectrum is an array of specialty salts, pulled from both oceans and clay, with nuances of flavor and color you may or may not think are worth the expense. In between is a handful of everyday salts—either coarsely milled from deposits in rock or made by evaporating ocean water. Either way the result is an additive-free “coarse salt.” These are the ones I use both in the kitchen and on the table.

Salt gets its name and primary flavor from sodium chloride, the major compound present in all types in varying degrees. The subtle flavors of sea salts (which may be described as “briny,” “metallic,” or “earthy”) come from traces of minerals. The more trace minerals, the less sodium chloride, which is why many sea salts taste less “salty” than table and kosher salts.

Storing Salt

Even the wettest sea salts are extremely long-lived and stable. But because salts can have a corrosive effect, you should keep them in glass, ceramic, crockery, or wood containers—definitely not metal. Plastic is okay for short periods of time.

Grinding Salt

Some very coarse salts require additional grinding. Use a special salt mill designed for this purpose or crush small amounts in a mortar and pestle. Again, the idea is to avoid metal parts, which will only corrode and rust.

Seasoning Salt

It's easy enough to season your own salt with herbs and spices. For example, try putting a sprig of fresh rosemary, lavender, oregano, or thyme into a small shaker bottle of salt for a few days (then remove). Or toast a spoonful of coriander, cardamom, or cumin seeds or even a dried chile and stir into the salt, either whole or ground. Use these during cooking or as a last-minute finish.

Salt in My Recipes

I primarily use either kosher salt or sea salt. Salting food is a matter of personal taste, so I rarely specify quantities. But I won't totally leave you in the dark. The instructions suggest when to season with salt—usually more than once during the process and almost always at the end—and I always encourage you to taste.

I do specify exact measurements in rare dishes where a precise amount of salt really makes a difference and of course in baking recipes, where I almost always use kosher salt; sea salt is less uniform and might have overpowering mineral flavors.

The Salt Lexicon

Kosher and sea salts are common in supermarkets. Less common salts like Maldon (from England), fleur de sel (Brittany), and smoked salts are usually available in gourmet shops and definitely by mail order (see Sources).

Kosher Salt

This usually comes in big boxes, either flaked or coarsely ground. I like the flaked best, but both are fine. It's as white as table salt, but the flavor is clean and slightly mineral, with no lingering aftertaste.

Uses: This is my all-purpose salt for baking, salting cooking water, and last-minute seasoning.

Generic Sea Salt

Made by either heating saltwater in pipes and tubs or open-air evaporation; the most complex generally start

with the most complex saltwaters. That said, connoisseurs will argue that heating the water destroys some flavor. Try a few different ones and see what you think; your palate may be more sensitive than mine, because I can't really find that much difference among them.

Uses: Because these tend to be more expensive than other kinds of salt, I generally reserve them for cooking and final seasoning rather than add them to pasta water and the like. And I never use it in sweet baking recipes.

Fleur de Sel

Literally “flower of the sea,” this prized sea salt from the coast of France (Brittany) is fine, grayish white, and slightly damp.

Uses: After cooking, as the final seasoning. It's so good you can use it to “dress” fresh salad greens, either alone or with a light squeeze of lemon.

Maldon Sea Salt

Made by a special process in England, this salt is rolled flat and flaky. The result melts on your tongue and on hot food unlike any other salt, leaving behind a pleasant flavor that builds slowly. It can be tough to find (though easy by mail order), but when you do it's usually relatively inexpensive.

Uses: Absolutely the best on piping-hot fried foods, roasted potatoes, and scrambled eggs.

Table Salt

As mentioned above, this is the common salt of shakers and paper packets across America. Iodine was added several decades ago and remains in the mix today, frequently along with other noncaking ingredients. The fine grains dissolve faster than most coarse salts, which can be an advantage.

Uses: Anywhere—but it's quite “salty,” so use less.

Rock Salt

This less pure salt is commonly used in roasting and ice cream making to conduct heat or cold. A small bit probably wouldn't kill you, but you definitely don't want to eat it.

Salts for Enthusiasts

If you feel like getting carried away, there's a rainbow of colors and flavors to try: Look for the ivory Ravidà from Sicily, bright red Alae salt from Hawaii, black salts from India, and Celtic gray sea salt from France. Some may be tough to find, but each is renowned—sometimes even justifiably—for conveying the distinct flavors of its earth and sea.

The Basics of Pepper

Native to India and now cultivated throughout the hot and humid regions of the world, this vine-growing fruit has been fought over and for throughout history, with good reason. The flavor is deep, sharp, smoky, slightly acidic, and pleasantly hot, a balance that cannot be duplicated with anything else. It's become ubiquitous, and its value can't be overstated. But it's easy to lose sight of this if you use packaged ground pepper.

A Word About Grinding Pepper

What you grind at the moment doesn't taste at all like the same spice you shake out of a can or jar, and it barely resembles its home-ground kin that's a few hours old. That said, if you really can't bear to grind as you go, do it every few weeks in small batches and keep the ground pepper in a tightly sealed container.

There are many types of peppermills for table and kitchen grinding. Ideally you want a sturdy metal or wooden mill with a screw at the top or bottom to adjust the grind. Of course you can also grind pepper in a spice or coffee grinder (see "Toasting and Grinding Spices," page 60). Or simply crack pepper into large chunks with the flat side of a big knife or put peppercorns into a plastic bag and take a hammer to them.

The Peppercorn Lexicon

Don't confuse pepper with chiles (see page 69). Peppercorns are technically fruit—not seeds—that grow in clus-

ters on long "spikes." They are harvested ripe as they begin to mature from green to red or yellow-green fruit. After curing in the sun, they shrivel and turn black.

Black Peppercorns

There are many varieties, known mostly by the region in which they were raised, but what you will usually find is a blend simply labeled *black pepper*. Take a whiff if possible to make sure the aroma is complex and sharp without being acrid. Store these and other dried peppercorns whole, in tightly sealed containers in a cool, dark place.

White Peppercorns

Because the skins have been removed, white pepper is milder than black. It's perfect for everything from cream sauces to fruit desserts, anytime you're looking for the range of pepper flavors with a little less punch. But if you're going to use it, commit to buying another pepper mill and grind your own.

Green Peppercorns

These are best—but rare—fresh, where their mild fruity and grassy flavor is at its peak. They're also packed in brine (refrigerate after opening) or dried (you must reconstitute these in hot water like dried chiles or mushrooms).

Pink Peppercorns

Though they are not from the same plant as pepper, the flavor is very similar to black pepper, only slightly sweet.

Sichuan Peppercorns

Also called *Chinese peppercorns*, *anise pepper*, *gagara*, *flower pepper*, and *sansho*, Sichuan peppercorns aren't from the pepper vine at all but are the flowers of a small tree. Sichuan pepper's flavor is unique and essential to Sichuan cooking; a flowery, slightly smoky aroma combines with a somewhat lemony-medicinal flavor, and a tongue-numbing, unhot "spiciness" that feels almost like local anesthesia. (This is how Sichuan food can contain so many chiles without being overwhelmingly hot.)