

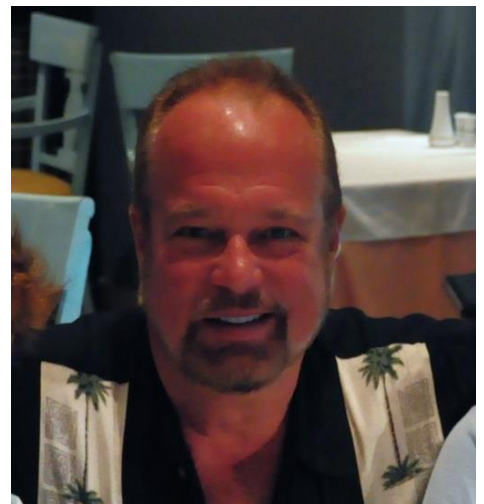
Preface

I have always been baffled when people I know “retire” and become bored, not knowing what to do to fill their time. Personally – I could live a thousand years and not experience all the creative endeavors I want to discover. So, my goal in these books is to try to inspire people that there are countless things to explore and enjoy in this life . With whatever you are bringing out of the world of imagination into the real world, i.e. *creating*, all you have to do is have the desire, and continually ask yourself “*How would I go about doing this?*” or “*What does this need?*” or “*What can I eliminate?*” or “*How can I make this better?*”. Then wait for the answer to come into your mind.

So a little about me, some people have referred to me as a “renaissance man” and that may apply – but I wanted to remove gender, which has nothing to do with this work, so I coined the term: “Renaissancier” – [**reh** · nə · sän · **sear**’] – *A person with a passion for experiencing and mastering a broad spectrum of skills, hobbies, disciplines and professions.* And this definitely applies to me, so I bought the domain and here we are!

I am a software entrepreneur/designer/developer, web application developer, chemical engineer, master distiller, teacher, patent holder, photographer, stained glass sculptor, woodworker, mixologist, bartender, private chef, entertainer, designer, singer, craftsman, gardener, pianist, MENSA member, marksman and writer. I am also the father of four men.

I approach everything I do with the pursuit of excellence at the forefront, thinking ‘out of the box’ and above all, having the confidence that I can achieve most anything when I focus my intellect, creativity and passion.



We all love to eat delicious food and do it every day, and I am most certainly a “foodie”, so I thought I would start here with the first book. It’s a natural for someone that wants to learn something new and satisfying, and you have the bonus of an exquisite meal when you are done!

This book is by no means a comprehensive cookbook or cocktail guide, but rather a selection of some of the most delicious foods and drinks I’ve created or discovered over the last 50 years from around the world. Some of these recipes are very simple, some are more complex. Start with a recipe that looks interesting, and no need to start with one of the complex ones. There are some that are very simple, and some that are not too complicated. So pick one that you’d like to eat!

In this book, I have strived to precisely explain how to recreate a recipe/process in the most unambiguous and comprehensive way so that you will be able to recreate my work exactly, then of course, take it wherever you desire. Could I have been more concise, yes, but I want you to know all the reasoning, the thought processes in my mind when I make each dish.

I don’t have an issue with people that like to cook without recipes or measurements. Sometimes I do that, like when I’m making an omelet. A few eggs, a little cream, some basil, some grated cheese, maybe a minced shallot, chopped salami or bacon, etc. That’s easy and fun, and it always comes out great. But when you are trying to recreate a complex recipe that took a while to perfect, if you can remember all the ingredients or the right amount of each to make it come out the same each time – you are a wizard. I am not. And if you want to convey this dish to someone else, if you don’t have a *precise recipe and process*, you will not succeed, and neither will they. So my goal here is to convey the instructions on how you can make it the exact way that myself and my guests came to love – then take it from there.

One of my pet peeves is when a chef creates a recipe that’s not precise, ambiguous, or incomplete in its instructions. Think of a cookbook as a user manual for a private chef. Good user documentation is occasionally not a skill that a chef may have. In my career in software development, I also participated in technical support and user documentation and have always tried to design/create these manuals from the user’s perspective. This is how I’ve gone about writing this book. If you find anything in this book that leaves you scratching your head, please email me at: george@renaissancier.com.

Aside from sharing some delicious recipes from a multitude of cuisines from around the globe with you, my ultimate goal in writing this book is to persuade you, by example, that you also have the ability to bring new creations out of the realm of imagination and into the real world where you can experience them and share with others.

By all means, feel free to substitute ingredients that you may not have. For instance, no need to make your own gomme syrup, which requires gum Arabic, you can just use regular simple syrup, or just sugar. Also – you may omit several ingredients if you like. These recipes are my best effort after many tries. For instance, you can get by without using all 15 ingredients I mention in the “Pittsburgh Ham Barbecue” – you can just use these 9 (or less): chipped ham, ketchup, brown sugar, butter, mustard, onion, pickle relish, vinegar, and Worcestershire sauce. Some people I know just use chipped ham and ketchup!

Aluminum – don’t use it for any food contact! While this is a controversial topic, and causation has not been firmly established, all I had to see is that [“aluminum levels are significantly elevated in Alzheimer’s Disease cases versus non-demented controls”](#) and I’m done with it! You’ll never see me use those cheap aluminum throw away trays, aluminum foil to cover a casserole dish or a non-coated aluminum skillet. The throw away aluminum hotel pans are actually more expensive over time. Compare the cost of a stainless steel pan the same size and it pays for itself in about 6 uses! But you need to wash the pan. Oh my! And baking dishes need lids! Use stainless steel, ceramic, glass, cast iron, etc.

Then, as this book unfolds, you will start to see that you don’t always need to be taught a recipe or a process, but that once you are familiar with recipes and processes, you only need inspiration, passion, and the willingness to work - to create something new, invent a delicious cocktail or dish with any flavor that you have in mind. It is my hope that ultimately this will lead you to have confidence that you can create just about anything that you can visualize!



How to Use this Book

I've organized this book into a few sections of recipes, with instructions and stories in some cases. At the bottom of each recipe there are usually color coded Quick Response Codes or "[QR Codes](#)" which have a Web address (URL) encoded into each one. These QR Codes can be scanned by your smartphone, and once successfully captured, will navigate to a page on the Web where you will find more information, or in many cases a place to purchase a hard-to-find ingredient. I color code and underscore the relevant text (as I did with "[QR Codes](#)" in this paragraph) and match that color to the QR Code at the bottom of each recipe. Make sure the lens on your smartphone is clean and then scan this QR Code for more information.



If you have the hardcopy book – you can scan as I mention above – but if you are looking at an electronic version, you can simply click on the corresponding QR Code.

The URLs encoded in these QR Code do not go directly to the pertinent website URL, but instead cross reference a database on my website, **renaissancier.com**. Here, you are redirected to the best URL for that product, which may change over time and will always be up to date, but if you should find a broken link anywhere – I encourage you to email me at george@renaissancier.com. I will redirect this QR Code to a new link that is appropriate.

Mandatory Equipment

Aside from everyday kitchen appliances, like saucepans, skillets, measuring spoons and cups, rolling pin, grater, tongs, etc., there are a few very important tools you will need when using this book. The most important is a [dual platform digital kitchen scale](#). In most of my measurements, I use weight as opposed to volume. Here's why. A cup of sifted flour is a different weight than a cup of unsifted flour...so if you want to specify an exact amount of flour, you use pounds, or grams, either one. You don't need to account

for the air in between the grains of flour! Same with salt – a tablespoon of Kosher salt is lighter than a tablespoon of table salt – because of the shape of the salt crystals. Kosher salt is coarse and shaped randomly, while table salt is fine and regular...with less space/air between the crystals. We don't have that problem with liquids – so we can use weight or volume – but I usually use volume for liquids, as does everybody else.

Next – while important for many things you cook, both an [instant read thermometer](#) and a [wireless meat thermometer](#) are crucial when cooking most meat in any way. For marinades and also for sous vide cooking, as well as keeping food the freshest in the refrigerator and the freezer, a [vacuum sealer machine](#) is very helpful.

Product References

I refrain from mentioning brand names in the recipes unless they are absolutely unique and essential, not that I don't have favorites, but over time, some brands may disappear and reappear. For example, Tanqueray Malacca Gin, a favorite of mine, disappeared in 2001 after being produced for only four years. It then reappeared in 2013. In all cases, I select my favorite product based solely on quality and will never accept money to recommend an inferior product. I may, however, accept money to recommend a different vendor so long as the vendor is reputable and responsive.

When you find a recipe here that you think you may like, I'd encourage you to make it my way at least once and then of course, change it to your own taste. Please read the entire recipe, including the notes before you prepare the first time.

If you should find a URL/link in this book that either has changed or does not work at all (broken link), if you have any problems with any product or vendor you encounter here, or if you have any other comments, suggestions, or corrections, please email me personally at george@renaissancier.com. When corrections or changes come out before I publish a second addition, I will list them on a [Corrections Page](#).

Enjoy the journey!



Favorite Entrees and Sides

This section is devoted to the best dishes I've either created from scratch, or have found from other sources. For example, "Osaka Grilled Salmon" and "Beef Blackfoot" are two recipes of my own that I created from scratch. "Beef Wellington" is one of the most popular recipes in the world and when I found a recipe I liked, perhaps the only thing I changed was the process, so that the puff pastry would not be soggy. Likewise, "The Untossed Salad" while very simple, is superb as it was mentioned in the first "Three Rivers Cookbook" over a half century ago. I only made two small changes to this – using unfrozen peas, and adding an extra layer of mayonnaise. Then there are recipes for which I was inspired by a recipe on the web, but modified more extensively, like "Pittsburgh Ham BBQ". Most often, I will find three or more recipes and end up hybridizing the best attributes of them all into one of the recipes in this book.



I have made many hundreds of meals for guests at my dinner parties over the last half century and will always enjoy these gatherings as long as I live! Above is a recent dinner party in the Arboretum, my dining room, which is filled with tropical trees in the wintertime!

In this section of the book, I try to be as explicit and unambiguous as possible in my instructions, having experience in creating user documentation in one aspect of my software career. I intend this section for those who are already somewhat adept in the kitchen, and certainly for expert chefs as well. As long as you are able to follow instruction, you should be fine here. If there are any mistakes or suggestions, please email me at the email address below. I would love to hear from you!

If I need to give credit to you for any recipe I may have found on the web, please email me at george@renaissancier.com and I will mention you in the credit page:



Beef Blackfoot

Ingredients

- 1 pound Filet Mignon or Hangar Steak

Marinade

- [Worcestershire Sauce](#)
- Ground [Montreal Steak Seasoning](#)
- [Grill'n Spice](#)
- Ground Coriander seed
- Demerara sugar

Mignonette Sauce for Beef

- 4 oz. Red Wine Vinegar
- 2 oz. Pinot Noir
- 20 gm Shallot, finely minced
- 20 gm [Salt Cured Capers](#), finely minced
- 1 TBS Ground Coriander seed
- 2 tsp Ground White Pepper
- ½ tsp maple syrup

Garnish for Beef

- 20 gm Shallot, finely minced
- 20 gm [Salt Cured Capers](#), finely minced
- Fresh parsley, trimmed



Directions

For Mignonette Sauce

1. Prepare all ingredients and mix together in an airtight container.
2. Place the sauce in the refrigerator for at least a day or two.
3. Strain out all solids and store finished sauce in the refrigerator.

For Steak

1. Lay the steak out on a large cutting board and sprinkle a modest amount of each dry ingredient of the marinade on the steaks.
2. Turn all the steaks over in a sealable container and sprinkle an ounce or so of [Worcestershire sauce](#) on the steak
3. Then sprinkle the dry spices again on the opposite side of the steak and cover.
4. Leave refrigerated for at least 18 hours.
5. Start grill, preferable an open wood fire or hottest lump charcoal
6. Remove steak from the fridge, and dry both side with paper towels.
7. Immediately place on the grill, close to the coals/open flame for one minute per side.
8. Remove, and place between two cold dinner plates to stop the cooking process, then back into the refrigerator overnight.
9. Place serving plates and the meat in the freezer for a half hour (leave plates as long as you like)
10. Remove the meat from the freezer, then slice the meat thin, like sashimi with the sharpest of knives (e.g. Japanese sashimi knife) and arrange on a frozen plate, overlapping each piece.
11. Brush on the mignonette sauce and lightly sprinkle the capers and shallots on top of the beef.
12. Serve immediately with a garnish of fresh parsley tucked under one side of the beef.

Origins

I learned of Beef Blackfoot decades ago when I stayed at the Century Inn in Scenery Hill, PA, a delightful Inn that has been operating since the 1700s. They no longer have it on the menu, and I was unable to reach anyone that knew the recipe. So this is from my recollection, inspired by my stay there years ago. The recipe goes back to colonial days, with roots in the native American community.



Notes

Serves six as an appetizer.

In order to get the subtle wood fired flavor – the steak should be seared directly over the flames of a wood fire. Lower the grill grate close to the fire and get the grate red hot (1200°-1300°F)



You may have heard of “Blue Rare” which is charred on the outside, very rare inside (115°F). I would call this dish “Purple Rare”, charred on the outside, but raw on the inside (<80°F). This dish will not be as rosy in color as traditional steak tartare, but the fire roasted flavor is worth it.

Next time, I will try to find buffalo filet mignon!

Any charcoal or wood fired grill will work, but my favorite is the [Santa Maria Grill/Argentine Grill](#).



Pudim de Coco Brasileiro

(Brazilian Coconut Flan)

Ingredients

Custard

- 1 ½ cups half and half
- 2/3 cup [coconut syrup](#)
- 4 large eggs + 4 yolks
- 14 oz. (397g) can condensed milk
- 5 oz. (147ml) can evaporated milk
- 2 tsp vanilla extract (or paste)
- Pinch salt

Caramel

- 2/3 cup sugar (125 gm)
- 1 or 2 oz. espresso



Equipment/Cookware

There are several ways to make a flan, but the most convenient way I've found is to use a lidded flan mold that totally fits inside a large covered saucepan that is used as a "bain-marie" – or water bath. It is important for any flan to cook in a water bath and to tightly cover the flan mold while cooking.

I happened to have an 8 quart saucepan that was the perfect size for this recipe, and I found a perfect [stainless steel flan mold](#) as you see here:



Directions

1. For the caramel, place the sugar and 3 oz. water into a small saucepan and heat on the lowest heat. As it begins to boils, stir to make sure all the sugar is dissolved.
2. Keep watch on the boiling sugar syrup with an [instant read thermometer](#). Remove from heat when the temperature reaches 340°F-350°F This is at “light caramel stage”. Then add another the espresso slowly and stir/simmer until the temperature goes back up to 245-250°F (firm ball stage). This allows the caramel flavor to develop. Leaving it at the firm ball stage allows the custard to easily dissolve the caramel, which lubricates the flan so that it’s easy to remove from the mold. .
3. Immediately pour the caramel into the flan mold, tilt up and roll the mold around on a surface so that the caramel coats the sides and bottom of the mold. Let it cool and it will harden into a shell. **WARNING: Be extremely careful when working with hot caramel.** If you get any on your skin, it is a severe burn and it will stick to your skin like glue, making it even worse. Use oven mitts while coating the flan mold. How do I know this? Let’s just leave well enough alone!
4. For your “bain-marie” saucepan, and your flan mold, determine the right amount of water to add so that the flan mold can sit on top of the wire stand in the water so that the water level is in line with the custard level in the flan mold. (For example – for my setup I know I need to add 2.6 liters of water to the saucepan so that the water doesn’t splash up into the mold.)



5. Pre-heat the water to about 190°F on the stovetop and keep covered.
6. Pre-heat the oven to 300°F. Some ovens can bake using a heat source from the top and/or bottom of the oven. Use only the 'bottom bake' option if this applies to your oven.
7. For the custard, add about ¼ cup of the half and half into the eggs and whip with a fork. Strain the mixture through a coarse sieve to remove any small shell pieces, and also the “chalazae” (the clotty, stringy protein strands that hold the yolk in place)



8. Pour the strained mixture into a blender and add the [coconut syrup](#), vanilla extract/paste, salt, evaporated milk, condensed milk, and the rest of the half and half.
9. Puree for about 30 seconds to a minute.
10. Pour the custard into the flan mold through a fine strainer to eliminate the bubbles. Place the lid on top of the flan mold and fasten the lid down and place the flan mold into the bain-marie and carefully place on the medium low oven rack.
11. Some chefs use a pan without a lid and use aluminum foil as a cover. My advice: NEVER cook with aluminum foil or bare aluminum cookware. Use stainless steel, cast iron, glass, ceramic, or if you must – coated aluminum cookware (Teflon, titanium ceramic, etc.) Have lids for all your cookware – no aluminum foil! Aluminum is for step ladders, not food contact!
12. Add the lid to the bain-marie and gently push the oven rack into the oven and close the door. The purpose here is to gently cook the custard in a water bath as opposed to the direct heat of the oven.

13. After 1 hour and 30 minutes, remove the bain-marie from the oven carefully, then remove the flan mold and lid and measure the temperature of the custard with an instant read thermometer.



14. When the temperature of the custard is around 180°-185°F in the center – and around 185°-190°F closer to the outside edge of the flan mold (or if you insert a toothpick and it comes out clean), the flan is ready to cool. If flan is not fully cooked yet, clamp the lid back on and put the mold back in the bain-marie for another 10 or 15 minutes.
15. Once the flan is done, let it rest at room temperature for at least an hour. If you are not in a rush, you can let it rest for a few hours until the flan mold is lukewarm before refrigerating.
16. ...Or if you are in a hurry, just place the mold in ice water until lukewarm. Be careful that the ice bath water level is a half inch below the flan mold or you risk getting ice water seeping into your flan.
17. Place in the refrigerator until the flan is cold - at least three more hours but you can keep it in the refrigerator for a day or more.
18. When you are ready to serve, remove the lid and twist the mold back and forth quickly. If the flan floats around on a cushion of liquified caramel, then you are ready to 'demold'. If not, carefully run a thin, smooth knife around the outside of the flan to help separate the flan from the mold.
19. To demold, place the serving plate upside down over the top of the open flan mold and carefully and smoothly flip with two hands.
20. If the flan does not separate and de-mold, rap the serving plate on the table firmly until the flan comes free.
21. Serve the flan to your guests with cappuccino for an exquisite dessert!

Notes

- Consider using [Coco Lopez](#) coconut cream instead of my recommended [coconut syrup](#). Unlike homogenized coconut creams, if you store cans at room temperature in your pantry closet, the contents separate into three layers. Then chill in the refrigerator for at least a day. When you open the can, solidified coconut oil will be at the top. Remove this with a fork. The next layer is a beige coconut paste which is delicious and nutlike. As far as flavor, this is what you want to use, 2/3 cup of this coconut paste. But at the bottom is also a sweet clear coconut syrup, which you can use alternatively for this recipe. This will taste great and will give you silky smooth texture throughout. Or stick to my recommended [coconut syrup](#) if you don't want to harvest the syrup or the paste from the [Coco Lopez](#) can. But in my opinion, [Coco Lopez](#) has the most authentic coconut flavor.
- One consequence of using the coconut paste from the middle layer of [Coco Lopez](#) is that there is pureed coconut flesh there which also contains some coconut oil. This is the source of the wonderful flavor. Even though you have blended and strained the custard thoroughly, the top (or the bottom after you flip onto a plate) of the flan will have a different texture than the silky smooth texture on the top of the flan (after flipping). This is because the oily pureed coconut flesh rises to the top (while baking).
- This is very flavorful, but if you want to have the entire flan with the same silky smooth texture, use 2/3 cup of the clear coconut syrup from the bottom of the [Coco Lopez](#) can instead of the beige middle layer. The flavor is still good – but not as nutlike as the beige middle layer.
- Alternatively, you can use 2/3 cup white sugar instead of [coconut syrup](#) if you want a more traditional Spanish flan without the coconut twist. In addition, you will need to change the recipe slightly. Use 2 cups of whole milk instead of 1 ½ cups half and half, if you are using white sugar.



Cold Smoked Gravlax

Ingredients

Crust

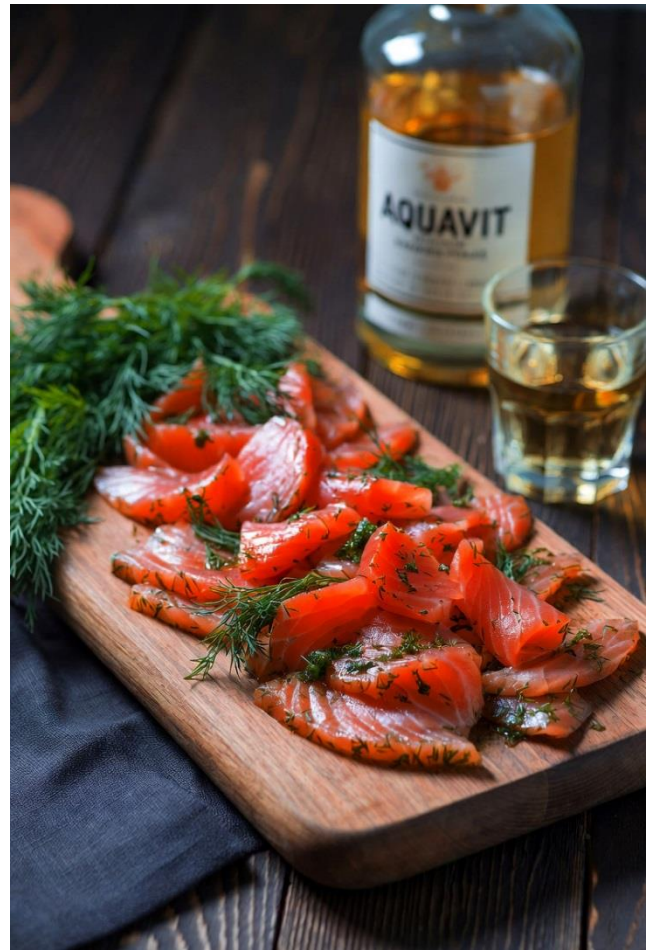
- 10 pounds salmon fillets, skin on
- 1 cup kosher salt
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup gin or aquavit
- 1 bunch (~6 oz.) of fresh dill
- 4 TBS coriander seeds
- 4 TBS juniper berries`
- 2 TBS pink peppercorns

History

Gravlax, meaning "buried salmon" in Swedish, is a Scandinavian dish with a long history rooted in traditional fish preservation methods. Originally, fishermen as early as the Middle Ages would bury salted salmon in sand above the high-tide line to lightly ferment and preserve it. Today, the process is more controlled, (and no sand in your teeth!) involving curing salmon in a dry marinade of salt, sugar, and dill and other spices and ingredients.

Process

Gravlax traditionally does not involve smoking, but this recipe does. If you already have a cold smoker, you can skip to the directions below, but if not, let me explain.



Cold smoking preserves and adds a wonderful smoke flavor to whatever you are smoking. I use a smoking cabinet as you'll see below, but you can use a normal grill, without turning on the burners, and purchase a [cold smoke generator](#) that you can attach to your grill. While I have not used these to date – this is a sample of what appears to be a good one. When I buy one, if different from this one, I'll change the link the QR code references (See bottom of this recipe).



It is very important to be able to control the combustion of the wood chips/pellets. You do not want to have a fast burning heavy smoke. Use whatever control your smoker has to limit the smoke to a trickle. Also – it's important to smoke below 90°F and preferably below 70°F. You do not want to cook the salmon at all. The texture should be the same as raw.

Directions

1. Using 4 nice whole sides of salmon fillets, clean and remove the scales and dry.
2. Remove any pin bones that may be left in the fillets.
3. Pour the Aquavit (or London Dry Gin) in a blender along with the dill, coriander seeds, juniper berries and pink peppercorns and puree for a minute or so. You can add a little water if the mixture doesn't blend well.
4. Pour this mixture into the salt and sugar and stir into a slurry.
5. In a container large enough to hold the salmon fillets, spread the brine slurry over both sides of the salmon, cover and refrigerate for at least 12 hours,



but for a more concentrated flavor and a drier, more oily texture, up to 2 or 3 days, turning the fillets occasionally.

6. Lay the fillets, skin side down on the rack/grate inside the cold smoker.

You may use any grill if you don't want to build a cold smoking cabinet like I show here, then attach a [cold smoke generator](#). Notice in my

cabinet, I have the smoke inlet on the bottom right and the chimney on the top left. I use an electric smoker as a smoke source and connected it to the cabinet with a dryer vent. It's important to be able to adjust the flow rate of the smoke. You just need a trickle of smoke and the never want a fire to start in your smoke generator.

Since my electric smoker uses an electric heating element, I always soak the wood chips in water first. You want smoke, NO FLAMES.

7. Start generating smoke and keep a close watch so that the smoke doesn't stop – but also that it doesn't belch out thick, heavy, bitter smoke. The ideal smoke temperature is below 70°F, but 90°F max.
8. I smoke for about 5 hours, but you can smoke longer for a smokier flavor.



9. When you are done, remove the skins from the fillets, and you can save them to sear in a skillet for a healthy, crispy treat. With the skin side down, hold the tail skin with a pair of kitchen pliers and slide a long sharp knife between the skin and meat, sliding the tail back and forth as you cut, pushing the knife away from you until the entire skin is removed.
10. Next, vacuum bag the fillets with a [vacuum sealer machine](#) like the one you see to the right.
11. I like to put the fillets in a deep freeze, even if I am using the next day. This changes the texture to be smoother, like you are used to seeing in Scottish smoked salmon.



Double Seared Picanha

Ingredients

- 3 to 4 pound Picanha steak
- [Sal Grosso Completo para Churrasco](#)



Directions

1. The picanha is perhaps the most popular cut of beef in Brazil and Argentina, and the flavor and texture are superb.

Ask your butcher to cut a picanha steak (AKA culotte steak, sirloin cap, or rump cap) and to make sure to leave the fat cap intact – do not trim. There are several ways to prepare this tasty cut of beef, but I prefer to leave it whole and cook either on a [Santa Maria Grill](#), or double seared, first in a skillet, then in a hot oven – which I describe in this recipe.



2. Preparation – rinse the steak and dry thoroughly with paper towels.

3. With a very sharp knife, score the fat cap every $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or so, across the entire width of the steak, then rotate the steak at an angle and score again – creating a diamond pattern of scores to let the fat render out during cooking. You can make these scores fairly deeply, halfway or more through the total thickness of the fat cap, but not cutting into the meat.



4. Then lightly sprinkle “Sal Grosso” (culinary rock salt) on both sides of the steak. I prefer to seal in a vacuum bag, or cover with plastic wrap (NEVER aluminum foil!) and leave in the refrigerator overnight, with the fat cap on top. But at least do this at room temperature about four hours before you cook.



5. On your range top, preheat an oven safe skillet (cast iron is ideal) on medium heat to about 350°F to 380°F (I use an [infrared thermometer](#) to check the average temperature of the skillet).
6. Preheat the oven to 450°F.
7. Add a little avocado oil (high smoking point) to the skillet and place the steak in the skillet meat side down.
8. Turn the heat to medium low and keep a watch on the temperature of the skillet with the [infrared thermometer](#). Try to keep the skillet temperature around 350°F – 380°F, max. The meat will lower the temperature of the skillet.
9. At this temperature, pan sear the meat side for about 4 minutes. Then flip the steak and pan sear the fat cap side for about 8 minutes.
10. During this time, insert the [wireless meat thermometer](#) horizontally in the center of the thick end of the steak so that it is inserted to the proper mark on the probe.
11. After the pan sear is finished, move the skillet into the oven on the middle rack. Since this cut of meat has a thick fat cap – we are doing a ‘double sear’ as I call it, to make sure that the fat cap is well rendered and fairly crispy.
12. When you are roasting meat in an oven at 450°F, the “temperature gradient” will “accelerate” more quickly than on an open grill. Technically, this is the ‘reverse sear’ part of the double sear. When meat is cooking, the temperature on the outside

of the meat will be much higher than in the center, initially, and as it cooks, the internal temperature of the meat will increase to the temperature where you want to remove the steak to rest. But in a 450°F oven, you will need to remove the picanha much earlier, as the internal temperature of the meat will be accelerating faster than with other cooking methods. I have had the internal temperature increase during the rest by 18°F to 20°F due to this double sear method.

13. For this reason, watch the temperature very closely and remove the steak to rest for 10 minutes when the internal temperature reaches 110°F for rare, and 115°F for medium rare. Ovens are different – and I would suggest 115°F the first time you try this, then adjust the next time to suit your taste.
14. When the steak has reached the desired internal temperature (15 to 20 minutes in the oven), remove the skillet from the oven, baste the fat cap crust with fat from the skillet, then place the steak on a cutting board for at least 10 minutes before slicing.
15. During the rest, leave the thermometer in the steak to observe the temperature increase over time. It will continue to rise, and start to plateau after around 9 or 10 minutes. Take note of this temperature. It is the one to remember, as this governs how done your steak will be when you serve. I prefer a medium rare (130°F-133°F) final internal temperature for picanha, and those that prefer rare, aim to start slicing around 126°F-129°F final internal temperature.
16. Slice thin ($\approx 1/4$ ") and serve with chimichurri, or just salt and black pepper. And enjoy the crispy fat cap! It's meant to be eaten, not sliced away for the dog.



Biltong

Ingredients

- 4 pounds beef round (silverside), flank steak, or picanha (sirloin cap)

Brine

- ½ cup [balsamic vinegar](#)
- 1/3 cup [Worcestershire sauce](#)
- 1 oz. [Essig Essenz](#) (optional)

Spice Mix

- 40 gm coriander seed
- 5 gm white peppercorns
- 15 gm freshly ground black pepper
- 20 gm baking soda
- 1/8 tsp ground [super hot](#) chili pepper

Cure

- 1 cup [coarse salt](#)
- ½ cup [brown sugar](#)

Origin

Biltong originated in South Africa in the 17th century, and is the national snack of that country, and its popularity has spread across the globe. My recipe is fairly well aligned with traditional recipes, and will take you through the process of curing and drying the strips of beef. Other meats can be used as well, and ostrich, kudu, fish, and chicken have been used. Cuts of beef from the round are most often used. Silverside (bottom round) is perhaps the



most popular, but I prefer flank steak, and also the “Picanha” – or sirloin cap (also called culotte steak or rump cap). But whatever cut you used, a well marbled cut is best for biltong.

Directions

1. First, slice the meat with the grain into pieces that are 3 or 4 inches wide and 6 to 12 inches long. The meat should be a thickness of about an inch or so – but no thinner or not much thicker than that.
2. Then cover all sides of the meat with the cure for about 3 or 4 hours, max, turning a few times.
3. Brush off the salt/sugar cure and then marinate the beef in the brine for 2 hours, turning a few times to ensure the brine penetrates every nook and cranny. Optionally, add Essig Essenz (25% acetic acid) to the brine to raise the acid level.
4. Lightly roast the coriander seeds and white peppercorns in a dry skillet until they are fragrant, then grind in a spice grinder to a medium coarse texture. Do not roast so hot that they smoke, or the seeds pop. Just till fragrant.
5. Combine with the rest of the spice mix ingredients and mix thoroughly.
6. Remove the meat from the brine and let excess liquid drain off. Strain brine and save.
7. Cover the meat thoroughly with half the spice mix and let rest for 3 hours.
8. Pack the meat pieces close together in a non-metallic container, and drizzle all the brine into the container so as not to wash off the spices. Use a turkey baster to slowly cover the top of the meat, and then drizzle the rest of the brine into the gaps between the pieces of meat. Let rest for another 3 hours. It's normal for the brine to foam as the baking soda reacts with the vinegar and neutralizes the acid, also tenderizing the beef.



9. Remove the meat from the container (use glass/plastic/ceramic – but non-metallic – never aluminum) and dry with a paper towel.
10. Coat the meat thoroughly with the rest of the spice mix.
11. Weigh one of the pieces and make note of the weight. If your pieces are varying thicknesses, weigh a few of the pieces and keep track of the level of drying.



12. Hang the pieces on hooks and let air dry in a well ventilated room. I have also used a dehydrator set to 85°F – mainly to have it in an enclosed container to keep any bugs from becoming interested. Some prefer to make a wooden drying box to hang the biltong using a computer fan to draw in fresh dry air into the box from a few vents covered with fine screen. The main message here is to keep the bugs off the biltong!
13. Over the next few days, weigh the same piece(s) of meat. When they are about 60% - 55% of the original weight, it's time stop the drying process. (perhaps 5 to 7 days or longer depending on the meat thickness, temperature, and humidity)
14. Next, I like to put the pieces in a vacuum bag and store in the refrigerator for at least a few days before cutting. This helps normalize the moisture content throughout the pieces so that the texture is uniform.
15. You can slice by hand with a very sharp knife – but I prefer a meat slicer – set to about 1mm thickness as you see below. This is flank steak – very good, but not very well

marbled. The best meat is that which is well marbled, whether you are grilling or making biltong.

Notes

- This is a fairly basic recipe, but some people add other spices to the spice mix, such as fennel or caraway seeds.
- When you are ready to serve, slice the meat across the grain, and fairly thin, 1/8 inch or less.
- You can store the vacuum sealed biltong in the fridge for several months, or in the freezer for years.
- You can use any brand of ingredients that I've highlighted in colored text above, but if you want my favorites, scan the QR codes below that correspond to the color of the underscored text. You may also click on the corresponding QR Code below if you are looking at an electronic (PDF) version of this recipe.



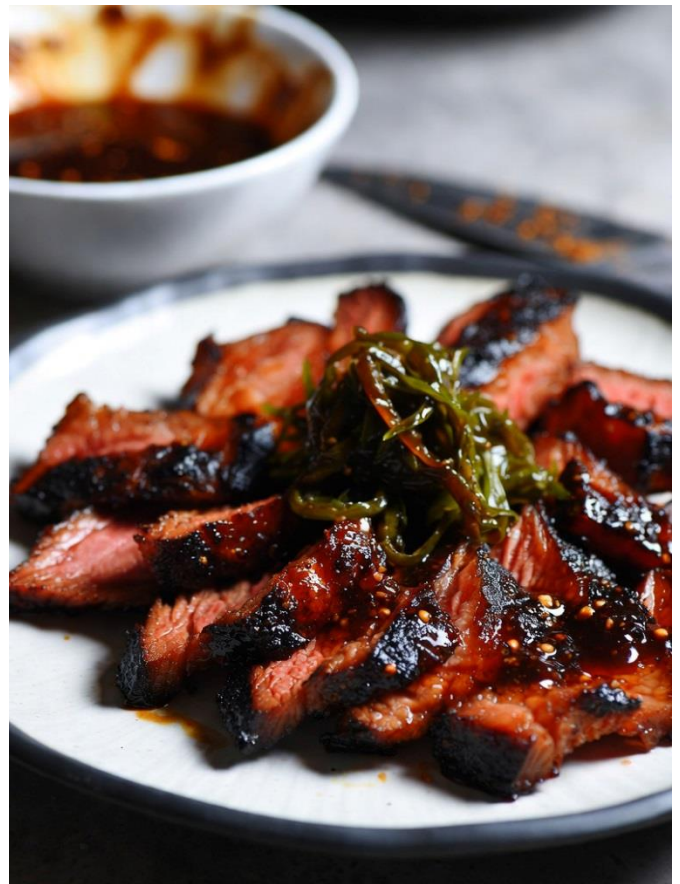
Where we first tried biltong! My friend, Sara, and I went to South Africa in 2013 and found this store in St. Lucia, KwaZulu-Natale, on the Indian Ocean.



Korean Beef Barbecue

Ingredients

- Well marbled chuck short ribs
- 1 cup [Bulgogi sauce](#)
- 1 large (50 gm) shallot, minced
- 2 tsp ground black pepper
- 2 oz. [Chinese black vinegar](#)
- ¼ cup [kkaennip jangajji](#) sauce
- 80 gm [kkaennip jangajji](#) leaves
- 2 oz toasted sesame oil
- 25 gm ginger pulp
- 15 gm garlic, pressed
- 1 TBS cornstarch



Directions

1. For four people, I like to get a whole, 2 rib cut of short ribs, about 4 pounds or more with the bone in.
2. Remove the bones by carefully slicing around the bone until it comes free of the slab.
3. Remove excess fat from the top side of the boneless rib cut.



4. Slice the meat into 9mm thick strips, preferably with a meat slicer.
5. Mix the cornstarch with a little of the vinegar so there are no lumps. Add the rest of the vinegar and stir in.
6. Add all the other ingredients in a bowl and stir well.
7. Put the sauce and beef in an airtight container and leave in the refrigerator overnight - or even a few days.
8. Grill slices on the highest heat - or even an open wood fire for about 2 minutes per side.



Notes

Another option for the beef is to have the short ribs cut “flanken style” where the cut is across the bones and small sections of bone are left in the beef. I prefer the boneless and I also prefer to bone it myself.



Korean Pickled Perilla Leaves

(Kkaennip Jangajji 깻잎 장아찌)

Ingredients

- 40-50 fresh perilla leaves
- 6 oz. soy sauce
- 2 tsp [*Kashmiri chili*](#)
- 1 TBS fresh garlic, pressed
- 2 TBS brown sugar
- 3 minced scallions
- 6 red and 6 green Thai peppers
- 4 TBS [*gochujang*](#)

Directions

1. Wash the leaves and remove stems. Pat dry with paper towels and let air dry.
2. Slice the peppers thin and add all the other ingredients together.
3. Layer the leaves, spooning on the sauce every 2 or 3 layers.
4. Pour in the rest of the sauce and store in an airtight container in the fridge.
5. Ready to use in 2 days and will keep for a few months in the fridge.

Notes

Make sure to get the perilla leaves that have one side purple in color, instead of all green. This is the "Kkaennip 깻잎" or "Perilla frutescens" 紫蘇, also known as the beefsteak plant. In Japan it is known as the Shiso leaf.



Bavarian Rotisserie Chicken

Ingredients

- 1 or 2 Whole Chickens (5 lb each)
- Kosher Salt
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Baste

- 2 oz. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 ½ oz. Spice Blend (see below)
- Zest of one lemon

Bavarian Spice Blend

- 4 parts Hähnchen spice
- 2 parts smoked paprika
- 1 part Mambo Rub (optional)
- 1 part Low and Slow Spice/BBQ Seasoning (optional)



The Process - Directions

1. Clean and dry the chicken then sprinkle kosher salt over the entire chicken and place on a rack in a covered container in the fridge overnight.
2. Mix all the ingredients of the spice blend, stir well with a wire whisk. For 1 or two chickens, 1 part is 1 TBS. This will keep in an airtight container so you can make more if you like.
3. Sift spice blend through a strainer so that it is uniform.

4. Mix the baste ingredients at least a few hours before rubbing under the breast skin. The baste should be the consistency of mustard, if too thick, add more olive oil.

5. The next day, bring the chicken out, rinse off any salt, then dry the chicken with paper towels and prick the skin all over with a [sharp pointed tool](#).

6. Using a thin, stiff, flat spatula, or your fingers, rub the well-stirred baste under the breast skin and membrane, next to the flesh.

7. Tie the leg tips together tightly.

8. Then fold back the wings so that the two last joints (wing tips) of the wings are almost touching each other on the back and tie one truss in the middle of the wings.

9. Lastly, tie one truss in the middle of the thick end of the legs. The point here is to shape the chicken so that it holds together well on the spit, and doesn't flop around as the rotisserie spins.

10. Insert rotisserie rod as close to dead center of the chicken as you can, then insert and tighten clamps into the chicken. If you are cooking two chickens, make sure to have one breast side up and the other breast side down. This will help make the weight more evenly distributed.

11. Also have the legs of both chickens near the center of the rod, and the breasts on the outside of the rod/spit. The legs can take a higher heat and still be tender.

12. Start the fire/burners/charcoals to a medium high heat until ready for the chicken.

13. Lift the rod with chickens with both hands to see where the heavy spot falls, then place and tighten the counterbalance on the rod opposite the heavy side.



14. Insert the [thermometer probe](#) in the thickest part of the breasts. You want to have the entire probe (up to the insertion mark) inside the breast meat – and not touching any of the metal clamps which hold the chicken firmly on the rod/spit. You also don't want the probe to poke through the meat into the chicken cavity. Either of these mistakes will affect the temperature reading and the texture/tenderness of the chicken.
15. Insert the rod into the rotisserie motor, mounting the chicken on the grill, and turn on the motor.
16. Spray Extra Virgin Olive Oil lightly, using an [oil sprayer](#), over the chicken as the rotisserie is turning.
17. Sprinkle the spice blend over the entire chicken as the rotisserie is turning.
18. Sprinkle again when the chicken is halfway cooked (internal temperature ~110°F)
19. Cook the chicken until the internal temperature of the breast is at least 150° F but no more than 155°F.
20. Remove the chicken and let rest breast side up for 10 minutes. Remember, the meat is still cooking during the rest.
21. While resting, remove the rod, clamps, and string.
22. When the resting is done, carve the chicken into legs, wings, breasts and serve.
23. I always cook more than I need – and you can pick the meat off later and use for stew, pot pies, soup, chicken salad, etc.

Notes

You may use any rotisserie chicken spice, and the Mambo rub and “low and slow” spice are optional – but the ingredients above are the best I've found so far. If you choose to eliminate the optional spices, replace that amount you eliminated with the same amount of [Hähnchen spice](#).

For the baste, use 2 oz EVOO for every 1 ½ oz. (3 TBS) of dry spice. You may have some baste left over – but it keeps well in the refrigerator.

When you are cooking two chickens at the same time – you must take care to move the coals around so that both chickens finish at the same time. Also – you can lower the chickens closer to the coals near the end for crispier skin. Keep in mind that there is a time lag when you change the heat profile. This will help you get the two chickens in synch.

Whatever you have as a heat source, adjust the heat so that the skin of the chicken is a little bubbly while turning on the spit, but not blazing hot. Try to minimize dripping chicken fat. The higher the cooking temperature, the more the internal temperature will increase during the rest.

It's critical not to let the temperature go above 155° F when you remove the chickens from the grill. Also don't remove until they are above 150° F. But 155° F is perfect.

Any grill with a rotisserie will work, but my favorite is the [Santa Maria Grill/Argentine Grill](#). See the next section for details.



Santa Maria/Argentine Grill



What makes the [Santa Maria Grill/Argentine Grill](#) my favorite, is that you are cooking over an open wood fire, which will turn into hot coals, imparting that wood fire flavor to whatever you are cooking. In addition, the control you have is as good, if not better than any other grill. This is because you can lower the grate so that it's right on top of the coals/fire, or you can raise it two feet above the hot coals, or anywhere in between. You can control the hot spots/cool spots in the firebox by raking the coals to wherever you want under the grate, so that you can do a reverse sear of a rare steak for a nice crispy bark, all while you are keeping slow grilled vegetables warm on the other side. Some of these can be very expensive – between \$8,000 and \$30,000 or more! I had wanted one for years, but I was not going to spend that kind of money on a grill. I saw an ad on Facebook and clicked on it, only to find a lovely \$10K grill. But Facebook then started to send me every Santa Maria Grill ad

they had! One of them, made by [Backyard Discovery](#) was much less expensive. I had to assemble it, and in the process, I found it very well designed and manufactured.



After using it a few times, I started wondering if I could attach a rotisserie to the grate and crank that up or down to control the temperature. Sure enough, I was able to find a [rotisserie attachment](#) that I thought I could make work, so I ordered it:



I had to shorten the rod to fit, and ground a new point to the rod, then drilled some holes in the grate frame. After threading the holes with tap and die, I then bolted the rotisserie brackets to the frame and then could mount the rod to the grill. After using once – I realized that I needed to attach a [thermal shield blanket](#) to protect the rotisserie motor from the intense heat in the firebox. You can see this [thermal shield blanket](#) to the right of the chicken, below the motor in the [video](#).

After getting the internal meat temperature where you want it, e.g. 130° F for Medium Rare beef, 155° F for Medium chicken, or 200° for fall off the bone brisket, I always rest the meat for at least 15 minutes or even more – but in an well insulated baking dish with cover. You want the meat to still be hot when you serve it, and by doing an insulated rest, your guests will be amazed!



Smokehouse Chili

Ingredients

- 6 pounds 80/20 ground chuck
- 28 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 28 oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 32 oz. dark red kidney beans
- 1 large sweet onion, minced
- 1-6 serrano peppers, quartered
- 1 cup Chili Blend (see below)
- 1 TBS ground black pepper
- 3 TBS [ham soup base](#)
- 1 TBS [roasted beef soup base](#)
- 3 oz. maple syrup
- 3 TBS [Liquid Smoke \(hickory\)](#)
- 1 TBS [Grill'n Spice](#)
- 2 TBS [Montreal Steak Seasoning \(ground\)](#)
- 1 TBS [brown sugar](#)
- 1 TBS MSG
- 4 oz. rum
- 2 oz. bourbon



Chili Blend (or use your own favorite chili blend)

- 2 parts ["Stockyards Special" Chili Blend](#)
- 2 parts ["El Reno Red" Chili Blend](#)
- 2 parts ["Cuzco Gold" Chili Blend](#)
- 2 parts Paprika
- 1 part roasted cumin powder

Directions

1. Brown ground chuck in a hot skillet and chop finely with a flat edged spatula.
2. After the fat renders out, strain the fat and brown the beef toasty brown, then place in a large crock pot.
3. Drain the kidney beans and add the beans to the crock pot.
4. Drain the diced tomatoes, (drain more for thicker texture, less for thinner) and add to the crock pot with the crushed tomatoes.
5. Add all the rest of the ingredients (except not the rum and bourbon) to the crock pot and cook on high for 3 hours, then low for 3 hours. Then turn to warm.
6. After another hour or so, stir in the rum and bourbon.

I first developed this chili recipe in 2006 for a local contest and won first prize in the “hot chili” category. When I first made this – I would smoke the meats in the hot smoker with hickory chips before browning, hence the name “Smokehouse Chili”. But over the years, I found that using Liquid Smoke was every bit as good and a lot less effort. Otherwise, I have only tweaked the recipe slightly in all these years.

Notes

- Strain fat from top with a large spoon, then Stir chili every half hour or so.
- If you don't want beans, substitute with 2 pounds more of 80/20 ground chuck
- For heat, 1 serrano pepper is for mild chili. 3 peppers is good for almost everyone, Using 4 peppers is perfect for heat lovers. 6 peppers or more will be quite hot for everyone.
- Make sure to quarter each pepper lengthwise.



Swabian Zwiebelkuchen

Ingredients

Crust

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1 packet yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar

Filling

- 400 gm yellow onions, minced
- 400 gm shallots, minced
- 2 oz. bacon grease
- 80 gm lightly fried bacon, minced
- 1 ½ cups sour cream
- 150 gm smoked gouda, grated
- 4 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons 00 flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 tsp caraway seeds, crushed
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ½ tsp nutmeg



Directions

Crust

1. Stir the yeast and sugar in the warm milk (95°F), wait 6 minutes.
2. Put the flour, butter (at room temperature) and salt in a mixer and add the milk mixture.
3. In a mixer, mix with a dough hook for 7 minutes, then place in a greased bowl in a warm place and let rise until twice the original size

Filling

1. I like to cook bacon in advance and keep the finished bacon in a Ziploc bag in the fridge for when I need it. (See “Mama Lloyd’s Bacon” recipe) So this recipe calls for 80gm of bacon that you have already fried.
2. Heat the bacon grease in a skillet and add the onions and shallots. Cook in high heat until the onions just start to change color, then reduce the heat and let the onions slowly caramelize to a light golden brown, about a half hour. Strain out most of the oil and let cool.
3. In a bowl, mix the sour cream, gouda, eggs, 2 tablespoons flour, 2 teaspoons salt, crushed caraway seeds, along with the black pepper.
4. Add the onion/bacon mixture to it and thoroughly combine everything.
5. Lightly grease a springform pan, spread the dough into the pan and up the sides until it's about ½ inch from the top
6. Pour in the filling and sprinkle some whole caraway seeds lightly over the top
7. Preheat the oven to 375°F and place the pan on the middle shelf. Bake until the top is lightly browned and the center of the Zwiebelkuchen is firm, like custard. The internal temperature should be 175°-180° F. Should take 35-45 minutes, but start checking the internal temperature after 30 minutes.
8. Remove and let rest for at least ½ hour.

Notes

- If you want to swing this dish down towards an Austrian palate, optionally you can soak the crushed caraway seeds in Marillenschnaps (apricot schnaps) overnight, and just add it all to the mixture when you make the dish.



St. Vincent Black Cake

Fruit Mix

- 8 oz. golden raisins, chopped
- 8 oz. pitted dates, chopped
- 4 oz. dried black figs, chopped
- 4 oz. dried strawberries, chopped
- 8 oz. [Amarena cherries](#), chopped
- 3 oz. candied lemon peel, chopped
- 3 oz. candied orange peel, chopped
- 1 tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 tsp Saigon cinnamon
- 1 TBS vanilla extract
- 275 ml [Vincentian Cake Wine](#)
- 300 ml Myer's rum
- 75 ml 151° rum

Cake Ingredients

- 1 lb dark [Muscovado sugar](#)
- 2 1/4 cups flour
- 2 tsps baking powder
- 2 sticks unsalted butter, softened
- 5 large eggs
- 2 oz. [Pomeroon Cassareep](#)
- 1 TBS finely ground food grade activated charcoal (optional)

Icing/Decoration

- 170 gm almond paste
- 3 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 3 large egg whites at room temperature



- 1 TBS *strained fresh lemon juice*
- Silver and gold dragées for decorating the cake

Directions

1. Make the candied lemon/orange peels by removing the peel from 3 oranges and 3 lemons and slicing into ¼" strips. Simmer in 2 cups sugar and 1 cup water until the temperature reaches 230°F. These are much better than the stuff you can buy and you will have some left over.
2. Combine all the ingredients of the fruit mix and let macerate, covered, for at least two weeks at room temperature.
3. In a saucepan, combine 1/2 lb of the brown sugar and one cup of water, bring the mix to a boil over medium heat, stirring and washing down any sugar crystals clinging to the side with a brush dipped in cool water, till the sugar is dissolved. Boil the syrup, swirling the skillet occasionally.
4. When the temperature of the syrup is 250°F, add the remaining 1/2 lb. of brown sugar and the butter together with the syrup and mix in a mixer until the mix is light and fluffy.
5. Sift the flour and baking powder together in a bowl.
6. Beat in the large eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. the flour mix, and 1 1/3 cup of the of the sugar syrup and cassareep, reserving the remaining syrup for another use.
7. In another large bowl combine the flour mix and the fruit mix and divide the batter between two buttered and floured 10 inch springform pans.
8. Bake the cakes in the middle of a pre-heated 350°F oven for roughly and hour, but specifically until the center of the cake is fully risen and the internal temperature reaches 180°F. The centers of the cakes will be quite moist.
9. Let the cakes cool in the pans on a rack, then remove the sides and the bottoms of the pans and wrap the cakes in plastic wrap. Let the cakes stand at room temperature for 1 week, covered.
10. Roll out half the almond paste between two sheets of plastic wrap to create a 10 inch round and remove the top sheet of plastic wrap. Fit the almond paste over one of the cake layers, trimming the edge if necessary, remove the other sheet of plastic wrap and fit the remaining almond paste onto the remaining cake in the same manner.

11. Make the icing: In a mixer, beat 2 cups of the confectioners' sugar, the egg whites, and the lemon juice for 4 to 6 min or possibly till the mix holds soft peaks. Beat in the remaining 1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar and beat till the icing holds stiff peaks.
12. Transfer 1 cup of the icing to a piping bag fitted with a decorative tip, spread the remaining icing on the tops and the sides of the cakes with a long metal spatula, and pipe the icing in the icing bag decoratively onto the cakes.
13. Arrange the dragées on the cakes.

Notes

- You will most likely not be able to get the Vincentian Cake Wine – but you may substitute with Manischewitz Concord Grape wine.
- Myer's Rum (Jamaica) or Gosling's Black Seal (Bermuda) are both good, but if you can find a dark rum from the South Caribbean like Plantation Dark Rum (Barbados) or Demerara Rum (Guyana) – you will enjoy!
- Do not substitute the traditional maraschino cherries or glace cherries for the Amarena cherries. The Amarena cherries are superb.
- You may substitute dark brown sugar for the Dark Muscovado sugar.
- If you are wondering about the activated charcoal, this is a healthy ingredient, and will not change the flavor of the cake in any way – it is just to make the black cake blacker! Start out with a teaspoon and if you want it darker – add more until you reach the color you want.



Cocktails and Hors D'oeuvres

Before serving dinner to my guests, we always go down to the bar and have a few tasty cocktails along with delicious hors d'oeuvres. Of course the feeling we get from a little alcohol is enjoyable, but when you think about it, isn't it really the taste that drives one cocktail to be more popular than another? If it were just about the feeling/effect, we would not have wine stores, or liquor stores with thousands of different spirits, we'd just have ethanol stores that only sold one product, grain alcohol.

In this section, I will introduce you some great cocktail recipes and hors d'oeuvres that pair well with the drinks, along with some stories about how I was first introduced to the cocktails.



The Fizz

Fizzes hail from the early days of mixology, long before Prohibition. Jerry Thomas, considered to be the father of American mixology, published the very first cocktail guide in 1862, *[“How to Mix Drinks – A Bon Vivant’s Companion”](#)*. Fizzes always contain fresh raw egg, sugar, lemon juice and at least one primary liquor and may also include other liqueurs and flavorings. Once shaken, seltzer is added to make this refreshing summer cocktail effervesce. I’m not sure why fizzes have faded from popularity, but I wouldn’t be surprised if it was simply the labor intensity of their preparation – or perhaps the political incorrectness of raw egg. If there were any cocktail in this book I would encourage you to make sooner than later, it would be a fizz. Why? Because of their unique, exquisite, delicate flavor and texture, and also because once you make a fizz and get it right, you will have earned a gold star in bartending that few can claim. The rest is downhill from there. Go for it!



How to Make a Perfect Fizz

A well made fizz is perhaps the most labor intensive cocktail you will make, and even if you are tempted to take shortcuts in the future, you should at least make a traditional fizz once by the methods I describe here.

The key to any good carbonated cocktail is to maximize the fizziness produced by the carbonation without sacrificing flavor. To do this, you must use dry ingredients, for



example - white sugar versus simple syrup. Next, if you freeze the ingredients first, along with the shaker and the glasses, the water needed for the finished cocktail will come from the seltzer as opposed to melted ice.

First, place all the ingredients except egg, ice and seltzer into the shaker and shake for half a minute. Then place the shaker into the freezer for a half hour. Then add the egg to the shaker and shake for another 30 seconds. Next, add the ice – larger pieces only – no crushed ice or small pieces. While the Ramos Gin Fizz recipe recommends shaking for twelve (yes, 12) minutes, I have found that if you use superfine sugar, that 3 minutes of vigorous shaking will do the trick. By the way, don't use confectioner's sugar – this contains corn starch and will change the look and texture of the cocktail.

Strain the concentrated cocktail into the frozen glass(es) through a medium fine sieve. This will strain out any thick, tougher portions of the egg. Next add chilled seltzer to fill the glass about 7/8 full and stir briefly. Tap the bottom of the glass for half a minute with a fizz mallet. This can be made from a 1" dowel rod of a hardwood like walnut. Tap vigorously, but carefully – as not to break the glass. I find that a thick bottom glass is best for this. This process breaks the larger bubbles in the head and condenses the froth so that it's thicker and holds together well. Next add seltzer to the middle of the cocktail until the frothy head extrudes over the top of the glass about a quarter inch or so....then imbibe! (As Jerry Thomas would say)

It is fitting that I begin this section with a traditional Ramos Gin Fizz, then follow with my own creations.



Ramos Gin Fizz

4 oz. [Hayman's Old Tom Gin](#) (serves two)

2 oz. Heavy cream

2 Tbs. [Superfine White Sugar](#)

1 ½ tsp. Fresh lemon juice

1 ½ tsp. Fresh lime juice

1/8 tsp. Vanilla extract

3/8 tsp. [Orange Blossom Water](#)

2 egg whites

¼ tsp. [Gum Arabic](#) (optional)

Seltzer

ice

Perhaps that most famous fizz still being served today is the Ramos Gin Fizz, created by Henry Ramos at the Imperial Cabinet Saloon in New Orleans in 1888. It was popularized in the early 1900s and was the favorite cocktail of Louisiana Governor, Huey Long. The Roosevelt Hotel trademarked the name in 1935 and it's still served there today. I tasted my first Ramos Gin Fizz in the "Atlantic Jazz Yard" at Rehoboth Beach in 2010. This recipe is my twist on the standard Ramos Gin Fizz, and is not far from the original cocktail. As a further twist, you may consider adding 1 oz. of any fragrant liqueur. I have tried St. Germaine, Crème de Violette, Cointreau or Crème Yvette. Gum Arabic is optional, but it adds a delightful velvety texture that you'll see used in several vintage cocktails, and also creates a tighter, frothier head.

First add all the ingredients except the egg, ice and seltzer to a shaker and place in a freezer for at least a half hour along with 2 tall glasses. See "How to Make a Perfect Fizz"



at the beginning of this section for more detailed instructions. When ready, add the egg whites and shake for 30 seconds. Then add several larger pieces of ice and close the shaker. Wrap the shaker in a towel (so your hands will not freeze!) and shake vigorously for a full 3 minutes. I know this is a lot of work, so think of this as a little workout instead of labor and you'll be able to do it!



Then strain through the shaker top and additionally through a coarse sieve (to catch all the thicker egg pieces) equally into two tall glasses. Add cold seltzer to both glasses to about 1 inch below the rim and stir briefly with a stirring stick.

Tap the base of each glass with a fizz mallet for about a minute to compact the frothy head. Then finally pour seltzer directly into the center of each drink until the head rises about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above the rim of the glass. Voila! A perfect Ramos Gin Fizz!



Frozen Daiquiris

Frozen Daiquiris should be blended until smooth, without any crunchy pieces of ice in the mix. The secret to getting a smooth, well blended frozen daiquiri depends on the temperature of the whole system – not just the ingredients, but the blender jar as well. I prefer a glass blender jar, and I keep the jars in the freezer at all times when I'm not blending or serving. My favorite blender is the [Vita-Mix TurboBlend VS](#), but any powerful, variable speed blender should make a fine frozen daiquiri. Incidentally, the name "Daiquiri" typically refers to a cocktail made of rum, lime juice, sweetener. The term, "Frozen Daiquiri" has now come to be associated with a wide variety of cocktail ingredients.

How to Make a Perfect Frozen Daiquiri

First, add all the liquid ingredients to the frozen blender jar, then I add ice to about 80% capacity of the jar and blend on the highest speed. While blending, you will know you have the right system temperature when the daiquiri is circulating up the inside surface of the jar, and then to the center and down the vortex back into the blade. If the system is too warm, the drink will be too watery and this should absolutely be avoided. If it's too cold, cavitation will occur and the blade will be spinning in an air pocket and the drink will not circulate and blend properly. This is why it's critical to have good variable speed blender with a speed dial as opposed to six or eight speed buttons. Then you can adjust the speed to circulate perfectly regardless of the temperature of the mix.

Once it's smooth, you can taste it and add anything that might be needed to achieve the flavor and color you want – sugar, food coloring, etc. Use any food coloring sparingly, squeezing a drop at a time into a running blender, until the color is what you want. Remember that if you add more alcohol, this will lower the freezing point of the mix and make it thinner.

Always return the covered jar to the freezer after serving. If you don't use all the mix at once, you can leave in the freezer for weeks, and just let the blender jar warm up at room temperature for 5 to 15 minutes before blending to serve again. Straight from the freezer, you can also scoop the mix into a bowl and serve as you would gelato or sorbet. The alcohol content keeps the mix from freezing solid.

I'm starting this section off with a popular mix that I came up with this past Memorial Day for the annual swim picnic – the Jasmine Daiquiri.



Jasmine Daiquiri



9 oz. [Extra Dry Rum](#)

3 oz. Cream (optional)

4 Tbs. [Jasmine Syrup](#)

5 tsp. [Orgeat Syrup](#)

1 tsp. [Lemon Extract](#)

Garnish with rolled shiso leaf (perilla) or mint

Ice

Pairs well with:

Berries and Jasmine Whipped Cream

Jasmine Whipped Cream:

16 oz Heavy Whipping Cream

5 tsp. Jasmine Syrup

½ tsp. Lemon Extract

Add the ingredients to the blender jar and blend according to the instructions at the beginning of this section: “How to Make a Perfect Frozen Daiquiri”.

How to Make Whipped Cream

The only equipment you need is a Whipped Cream Canister and Whipped Cream Cartridges (Nitrous Oxide). Add 16 oz. of heavy whipping cream to the canister along with any flavorings or sugar (see recipe above). Then screw on the top of the canister, and place a nitrous oxide cartridge tip-down against the puncture pin and screw down until the pin punctures the metal tip and the gas flows into the canister. Then shake well and refrigerate. Whipped cream is ready to serve immediately.



Savannah Field Club Cocktail



1.5 oz. Peach Schnapps
1 oz. Sour Apple Schnapps
1 oz. Calvados or Applejack
½ oz. Gomme Syrup
½ oz Fresh lemon juice
½ tsp. Angostura Bitters
1/4 tsp. Peach Bitters

Shake for a half minute in a shaker and strain into a rimmed martini glass. Garnish with a long twist of lemon and a real maraschino cherry.

This drink has been an overwhelming favorite of many of my guests, and is always requested at every gathering. I was experimenting with making a peach flavored cocktail and at first started with lemon juice, but when it was too much citrus, I began substituting apple liqueurs and discovered this delightful combination. The addition of bitters was all it needed to round out the flavor into a winner.

If you take a look at any bar book, there are no holds barred when it comes to naming a drink. When I name a drink, I first close my eyes and taste it and see what images come to mind. With this one, I imagined myself at a posh country club in the deep south right after Prohibition was repealed. I imagined a warm August day with a gentle breeze, sitting in a rocking chair on a large veranda, watching a croquet match while sipping this cocktail. Savannah immediately came to mind as I remembered the movie “Legend of Bagger Vance” and then came the name.

Gomme Syrup

You already know how I feel about sweetening a cocktail. If you use superfine white sugar, it will easily dissolve in the shaker, no color will be added to your drink, no flavor but sweetness, and no extra water. Why does this matter? While for a “martini” style cocktail, you need the ice melting in the shaker to dilute the spirits to the desired strength, for a fizz, or “Collins” style cocktail, I want to maximize the amount of water that comes from seltzer, so as to maximize the fizziness of the drink.

I have a few exceptions, and one is Gomme Syrup. Long before prohibition, bartenders used this thick, concentrated sweetener not only to sweeten a drink, but to add silky texture to the cocktail. Gum Syrup (Sirop de Gomme in French) is simply white sugar, gum arabic and water. Not only does the gum change the texture of a drink, but it allows you to mix a super-saturated sugar solution, and prevents crystallization. I no

longer use simple syrup, but rather prefer this concentrated, silky sweetener instead. Here is the recipe that I use to make 16 oz. of Gomme Syrup:

13 oz. white sugar

3 oz. Gum Arabic

7 oz. Water

(all ingredients by volume, not weight)

While heating the water to a boil, thoroughly mix the dry gum and sugar together in a bowl with a whisk, so that there are no clumps of powdered gum to make lumps in the syrup. As soon as the water boils, slowly pour the powder mixture into the water while whisking constantly. As soon as all the solids have dissolved, remove from the heat, let cool a bit and then pour through a fine sieve and bottle. Keep refrigerated.

You can also make Sirop de Gomme with other sugars like Dark Muscovado, Demerara, Date Sugar, etc. to add not only sweetness, texture and a frothy head to your cocktails, but rich and interesting flavors as well.

Berlinerweisse



500ml Hefe-Weissbier

1.5 oz Himbeersiropp

Garnish with lemon

Pairs well with:

Landjäger

Berlinerweisse (or *Berlinerweiße* in German) is a type of sour wheat beer which has been brewed in Northern Germany since the 16th century. To balance the sourness,

sweet syrups are typically added to this unique beer, most often raspberry syrup (*Himbeersiroop*) or woodruff syrup (*Waldmeistersiroop*).



The first time I encountered this delightful beer cocktail was on a business trip to Milwaukee, where my client Bill Lang, took me to dinner at [Mader's German Restaurant](#) in Old World Milwaukee. As soon as I set foot in this perhaps most famous German Restaurant in the US, I felt as if transported to Germany as it appeared over a century ago.

With a multi-million dollar collection of art, medieval armor and antiques dating back to the 14th century and exquisite, authentic German cuisine, dinner at Mader's is a must for travelers to Milwaukee.

I fell in love with the Berlinerwieße they served there as well as Paulaner Hefe-Weißbier, which to this day remains my favorite wheat beer. Fill a chilled glass with the beer, pouring with the glass at an angle as not to develop too thick a head, perhaps an inch. Then pour in the syrup slowly in a circular motion, garnish with a wedge of lemon, and then savor with Landjäger, German mustard and a nice pumpernickel.



Jamaican Planter's Punch



2 oz Meyer's Dark Rum

1 oz Wray and Nephew's Overproof Rum

1.5 oz Jasper's Secret Mix *

1 oz Valencia Orange Juice

1 oz Pineapple juice

3 dashes Orange Bitters

Garnish with a few Amarena Cherries, a wedge of pineapple and twist of orange

Pairs well with:

Fried Jamaican Red Bananas

Planter's Punch traces its roots to Jamaica in the late 1800s, and *not* to the Planters Hotel in Charleston, SC. Several sources quote its earliest mention being in the September 1878 issue of the London magazine, *Fun*. Here they listed the recipe as follows:

*"A wine-glass with lemon juice fill, of sugar the same glass fill twice
Then rub them together until
The mixture looks smooth, soft, and nice.
Of rum then three wine glasses add,
And four of cold water please take. A Drink then you'll have that's not bad —
At least, so they say in Jamaica."*



I first discovered the beauty of Jamaica on a vacation there many years ago. It was there, at the Sans Souci Hotel near Ocho Rios (still in operation today as Couples Sans Souci) that I first tasted authentic Jamaican Planter's Punch. I have tried to duplicate the wonderful blend of flavors ever since, but not until reading Ted Haigh's book

"Vintage Spirits and Forgotten Cocktails" did I come upon the missing ingredient: "Jasper's Secret Mix"! I've made a hybrid punch of the ingredients from my past attempts (as mixologists often do) and added this missing ingredient to make what I would call a perfect Planter's Punch recipe.

*** Jasper's Secret Mix:**

Juice of 12 limes

1.5 cups sugar

1.5 oz Angostura Bitters

1/2 Nutmeg, finely grated

1 tsp Allspice, finely ground in mortar and pestle

(keep refrigerated)

Shake all liquid ingredients in a shaker with ice, then pour entire shaker into a tall glass and garnish with a *real* Maraschino cherry and wedge of pineapple on a skewer. Then twist a twist of orange into the drink and you are ready to go!

OK – so now I've got to talk about what happened to Maraschino cherries during Prohibition and why you should avoid the fluorescent red ones that you buy in most grocery stores and rather seek out (or make yourself), *real* Maraschino Cherries.

Back in Jerry Thomas' day, Maraschino cherries were the ultimate cocktail garnish. Imagine fresh Marasca cherries saturated with heavenly Maraschino liqueur (pronounced mare-a-SKI-no), while retaining the crispy texture of the fresh fruit and a wonderful finish. But then came Prohibition, where an entire nation temporarily tried behavior modification on for size...or at least pretended! Imagine changing the constitution of a free nation to try to manage social behavior.

The flow of Maraschino cherries and liqueur from Europe came to an end and a non-alcoholic substitute was in order. So someone got the idea to soak fresh cherries in a salt and alum solution to strip away the natural cherry flavor and color. Then after washing out the salts, soaking them in a sugar syrup, almond extract (yes, almond! I mean, if you're going to strip the life out of a fruit and then give it an entirely different flavor, why not make it taste like a kumquat, or perhaps a pecan!)...and of course, that unearthly red dye – they were supposedly ready for your cocktail.

Well, we've come a long, long way since we repealed Prohibition with the passage of the twenty-first amendment, and now, real Maraschino or Amarena cherries are just a few mouse clicks away!

Fried Jamaican Red Bananas:

3 ripe red bananas

Flour

Butter for the skillet
3 Tbs dark brown sugar
2 oz dark rum (Myers or Goslings Black Seal are good)
½ tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp grated nutmeg
1/8 tsp ground allspice
Pinch of ground Scotch Bonnet peppers (or any Capsicum Chinense)
Fresh ground black pepper

Mix the last seven ingredients stir for a minute or so under low heat until sugar is dissolved. You should use fairly ripe bananas. The color of the skin of a red banana is not the best gauge of ripeness. Slice each banana lengthwise and notice the color of the flesh. If it's slightly a salmon color, this is a good indication of ripeness. Also the fresh cut flesh should be fairly soft and have a fragrant banana scent as opposed to the scent of wet cardboard. The skin of a ripe red banana should easily peel away from the flesh. Now cover with a thin coat of flour. Heat the butter at a medium high heat until the water disappears from the butter and frying temperature is reached. Fry the bananas until the bottom side is toasty brown, then flip them all and do the same to the other side. Then lower the heat to medium and drizzle the spice/rum mixture onto each banana. Don't let the syrup crystallize into candy, just simmer until the syrup is at a 'soft ball' stage. Shake the skillet to mix everything evenly (hopefully you are using a good Teflon skillet!) Flip the bananas once again and simmer until soft inside and serve. These are deliciously sweet and hot, and you may need to cool your palate with a second or third glass of punch!

