

whitefish pouches with beets and buckwheat garlic dill butter

The French term for this style of dish is “en papillote” where ingredients are assembled and baked together. I love making these for dinner parties, because they can be built ahead. The only trouble is that the skin of the fish is left a bit slimy, so best to take it off or sear the fish separately, which I’ll show in the demo. If you don’t have parchment, tin foil will work just as well.

1 cup hulled buckwheat groats, toasted or not
4 medium beets, boiled or steam-roasted
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 sprigs dill, minced
4 tbsp | 2oz butter, softened
1 lemon, zested and juiced
½ tsp salt
4 whitefish filets, about 4-6 oz each
½ cup white wine or hard cider
4 oz salad greens
¼ cup olive oil
salt and black pepper

Bring 4 cups salted water to a boil

Whisk in the buckwheat groats, return to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook until just tender, about 10 minutes

Drain the buckwheat, toss with a glug of olive oil to keep from sticking, and let cool

Rub the skins from the cooked beets and then cut into irregular medium-sized pieces

Paddle the butter, garlic, dill, lemon zest, and salt

Heat oven to 400F

Take 4 20” rectangles of parchment and fold in half, brush with olive oil on one half

Place ½ cup cooked buckwheat down along with a few of pieces of beets, then lay the fish next to the buckwheat and top with 1 tbsp of the garlic-dill butter

Fold the parchment over and crimp the sides closed

When there is 1” left open spoon in 2 tbsp of the wine and then seal shut

Place the pouches on a baking sheet and bake until the fish is cooked though, 12 minutes

While the fish is cooking, dress the salad greens with the lemon juice, olive oil, a pinch of salt and grind or two of black pepper

When the fish is done transfer the pouches to dinner plates and cut open

Serve the salad on the side

squash risotto with paprika oil, orange and chocolate

Risotto gets a bad rep for taking a long time. In my experience, it only takes about 20 minutes from start to finish, it is just that those 20 minutes are active, tied-to-the-stove, time. What I love about risotto is that it pairs well with just about any set of flavors. If all you have is risotto and some wilted chard in the back of the fridge—you have dinner. This is one of my favorite combos because who can't get into chocolate for dinner? I generally make the squash puree ahead of time, and in very large batches then freeze in 1 cup deli containers making for a very fast meal indeed. I like to garnish risotto with items that become fragrant as soon as they hit the warm rice. You could also add a handful of toasted pepitas or almonds, but it isn't necessary and can distract from the creamy texture of the risotto.

1 medium sized squash, any variety except spaghetti

¼ cup olive oil

2 tbsp smoked paprika

1 tsp chili flakes

½ cup neutral oil

2 cups risotto rice

1 cup white wine or hard cider

8 cups water

1 orange

2oz dark chocolate or 2 tbsp coconibs

Heat oven to 400F

Crack squash in half and roast cut side down leaving seeds in place

Roast until the squash is tender when pushed by a prodding finger

Remove from the oven, discard seeds, scoop flesh away from the skin and place in a bowl or food processor and mash with the olive oil and a big pinch of salt until smooth

In a small pan over medium high heat, toast the spices in a tbsp of the neutral oil

Remove from the heat and add the rest of the neutral oil and let steep until ready to use

Bring the water to a boil

In a large shallow pan, heat a glug of olive oil over medium heat and toast the rice briefly

Add the wine or hard cider and start stirring

When the liquid has been absorbed, add a ladle full of water to the pot at a time, stirring until the liquid has been almost fully absorbed

Repeat until the rice is tender

Add the squash puree to the rice and stir to blend

Divide between four serving dishes

Drizzle with the smoked paprika oil, garnish with zest of the orange and gratings of chocolate

chickpea pancakes with winter salad (cabbage, carrot, lemon coriander oil, parsley)

Chickpea pancakes, or socca, are my favorite I-need-to-eat-something-that-will-make-me-feel-good-and-fast meal. For just that reason I keep a bag of chickpea flour in the freezer at all times. The ratio is simple, 1 cup chickpea flour and 1 cup soda water and some olive oil. Some time and heat and whatever you have in your fridge to make a fast salad and that's it. You can use regular water but the soda water helps make the texture lighter—just avoid any pampelmousse or other flavored soda waters.

1 cup chickpea flour
1 cup soda water
¼ tsp salt
½ head red cabbage, sliced thinly
2 carrots, shaved into ribbons
5 sprigs parsley, roughly chopped
2 pickle spears, chopped
¼ cup pickle liquid
¼ cup mayo

Heat oven to 450F

Whisk the chickpea flour, soda water, salt together with a glug of olive oil

Heat a medium frying pan over high heat

Add a big glug of olive oil and then pour in the batter and let sizzle

Transfer to the oven and bake until cooked through, about 10 minutes

While it bakes, in a medium sized bowl, combine the cabbage, carrots, parsley, and chopped pickle spears

In a jar combine the pickle liquid and mayo and shake into a dressing

Pour a table spoon or so over the salad with a pinch of salt and black pepper and toss

Taste and adjust dressing and seasoning as desired

Remove the socca from the oven, cut into wedges and serve with a hefty pile of salad

bean “potlicker” with escarole and garlic

It isn't necessary to soak beans before cooking, but it does cut the cooking time in half by rehydrating the beans in advance. I like to cook the beans in an extra bit of water making a flavorful pot liquor fortified with garlic, celery, and onion. Then just before serving wilt escarole or any hearty green, like kale, chard, radicchio etc, in the cooking liquid and fortify with an extra bit of fresh garlic, olive oil, lemon, and parsley. I have made a fine meal out of nothing but beans, their cooking liquid, and some greens, but the additional aromatics add quite a bit.

2 cups beans, soaked
2 ribs celery , cut into chunks
1 onion, cut into chunks
3 cloves garlic, peeled and cut thinly
1 head escarole, cut into wide pieces
¼ cup olive oil
1 lemon, zest and juice
4 sprigs parsley, roughly chopped

Drain the beans from their soaking liquid and rinse

Transfer to a medium sized pot, adding the celery, onion, and 2/3 of the garlic

Cover the beans by at least one inch of water

Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook until tender, about 20 minutes depending on the bean

When tender, remove from the heat and add a big pinch of salt and the rest of the garlic

Taste and add more salt as desired

While the cooking liquid is still warm, add the escarole and wilt

In a small bowl combine the olive oil, lemon zest, juice and parsley with a pinch of salt and grind of black pepper

Divvy the beans between 4 serving bowls

Garnish with a hefty spoonful of the parsley, lemon, olive oil mixture

Serve with big slices of toast or an extra big spoon for getting all that broth