

H A P P Y  
H E A L T H Y  
& H E A R T Y  
H O L I D A Y S

Memories and recipes from  
our homes to yours.



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**Rima Qureshi**



**James J. Gerace**



**Craig Silliman**

V Team,

You have all shown amazing resilience, strength and pride during this unprecedented and unpredictable year. The way you've handled the pandemic and come together as one team, regardless of where you are in the world, has been inspiring.

You know what else brings people closer together? Food.

Whether together or apart, cooking as a family or with friends and loved ones allows us to share our culture and heritage. As we fuel up for the new year, take some time this holiday season to celebrate, relax and spend a little time in the kitchen making memories with those you love.

We hope you enjoy some of our favorite recipes and stories.

Happy Holidays,

Hans, Ronan, Matt, Tami, Jim, Guru, Kyle,  
Christy, Rima, Diego, Craig,

# M U S H R O O M R I S O T T O

Usually, I tell you what to talk about at the dinner table but this time, I'm telling you what to make. My family's favorite is my mushroom risotto, a perfect holiday side dish. Together or apart, I hope you get to make some memories with your family this holiday season.

– Hans



## Ingredients

- 360g (12½ oz) Arborio rice
- 1500ml (6 ½ cups) organic stock - chicken, fish or vegetable as appropriate
- 3-4 shallots (onion), finely chopped
- 200ml (about ⅔ cup) dry white wine (preferable good quality)
- 250g (9oz) fresh chanterelle mushrooms
- 100-150g (3½-5¼ oz) Parmesan cheese
- 2 tsp extra virgin olive oil
- Pepper

## Preparation

- Step 1  
Start by cooking the stock and keep it warm. Fry the finely chopped shallots in olive oil until they are softened.
- Step 2  
Put the Arborio rice in the pan and stir with the shallots and the olive oil until combined.
- Step 3  
Add the white wine to the rice and stir until the wine has cooked into the rice. Then gradually start adding the warm broth for approximately 20 minutes while stirring all the time.
- Step 4  
Fry the chanterelles in a frying pan, then stir them together with pepper into the risotto and let it cook for the last 2 minutes.
- Step 5  
When the risotto is finished cooking, stir the parmesan cheese into the risotto carefully and then it's ready to serve.



# BACON & CABBAGE

My favorite holiday meal is a Traditional Bacon and Cabbage with Mustard Sauce, a good wholesome country dish like my grandmother used to make.

– Ronan

## Ingredients

### Bacon and Cabbage

- 3lb loin of bacon
- 1 carrot
- 2 celery sticks
- 2 leeks
- 1 tsp. peppercorns
- 2lb cabbage, finely sliced
- 1 Tbsp. butter

### Bacon Loin Topping

- 1 Tbsp. mustard
- 1 Tbsp. oven-dried breadcrumbs
- ½ Tbsp. brown sugar
- Knob of butter

### Mustard Sauce

- 2oz butter
- 1oz flour
- 1 Tbsp. mustard
- 10fl oz mixture cooking liquid and cream

## Preparation

### Step 1

Place the joint in a large saucepan. Add chopped vegetables and peppercorns. Cover with cold water. Bring to the boil, then simmer gently for approximately 20 minutes per ½ kg. Set oven to Gas Mark 6, 200°C (400°F).

### Step 2

Remove the joint from the saucepan. Reserve liquid. Remove the rind and score the fat. Place the joint on a roasting dish. Spread with mustard and breadcrumbs, sugar and a knob of butter. Place in the oven for 15-20 minutes.

### To Make the Sauce:

Melt the butter, add the flour and mustard. Cook for a minute or two. Whisk in the cooking liquid and cream. Bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 3-4 minutes. Taste for seasoning. The sauce should have the consistency of thin cream. Keep warm.

### To Cook the Cabbage:

Place the cabbage in a saucepan and barely cover with some of the reserved cooking liquid. Bring to the boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook for 2-3 minutes. Drain well and toss in butter. Season to taste.

Slice the bacon and serve on the bed of cabbage, a little of the mustard sauce and of course floury potatoes



# CINNAMON ROLLS

My favorite holiday recipe was shared by a friend with my mom over 60 years ago. Warning: The recipe is not for the faint of heart. As a child, we would spend Christmas Eve baking Cinnamon Rolls and, on the “night before Christmas,” we would deliver these freshly baked treats to friends and family for Christmas morning. On Christmas Eve, I will make these for my family as we embrace the spirit of Christmas.

– Tami



## Ingredients

- 1 package of yeast
- ½ cup lukewarm water
- ⅔ cup shortening
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 ½ tsp. salt
- 1 cup mashed potatoes
- 1 cup scalded milk
- 2 eggs
- 6 cups of flour

## Preparation

**Step 1**  
Dissolve yeast into water; allow the yeast to rise. Add remaining ingredients and stir in flour. Knead for 5 minutes. Allow the dough to rise and then once again knead/rise.

**Step 2**  
Divide the dough in half. Roll into rectangles approximately ¼" thick.

**Step 3**  
Spread a layer of butter, brown sugar, cinnamon and pecans (raisins optional). Roll and slice into 1 ¼" slices. Arrange 7-8 in a round pan (recipe should yield 4 pans).

**Step 4**  
Allow rolls to rise and then bake at 375 degrees for 20 minutes. Once cooled, frost with vanilla or sour cream frosting.



# VITELLO TONNATO

As a child, I remember my grandmother making Vitello Tonnato, a dish from the north-eastern region of Italy where my family comes from. Every Christmas, it still reminds me of her. Traditionally served cold as an antipasto, it consists of aromatic boiled veal – thinly sliced – served in a tuna fish sauce with hints of caper and anchovy.

– Diego

## Ingredients

- ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 ½ pounds veal top-loin roast, tied
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 4 anchovy fillets
- 1 Tbsp. drained capers
- 2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 6-ounce can Italian tuna in oil, drained and flaked
- 1 Tbsp. water
- 2 Tbsp. chopped parsley

## Preparation

**Step 1**  
Preheat the oven to 325°. In a medium skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil. Season the veal with salt and pepper and cook over high heat, turning, until golden brown, 8 minutes. Roast for 1 hour and 20 minutes, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center of the meat registers 135°. Let the roast cool, then wrap in plastic and refrigerate until chilled, at least 4 hours.

**Step 2**  
In a saucepan of boiling water, cook the eggs for 4 minutes. Drain and cool slightly in cold water. Cut off the tops and scoop the soft yolks into a blender. Blend in the anchovies, capers, vinegar and lemon juice until smooth. With the machine on, add the remaining ¾ cup of oil in a very thin stream, blending until creamy. Blend in the tuna until smooth, then add the water to thin the sauce slightly; season with salt and pepper. Refrigerate until chilled.

**Step 3**  
Thinly slice the roast. Arrange the slices on plates and spoon the sauce on top. Garnish with the parsley and serve.



# T O M A T O K U R M A

Before I came to the US, my mom taught me how to cook. I usually call her when I'm cooking to catch up and get her tips especially if it is a traditional Indian dish. This recipe is tomato kurma, also known as tomato curry (or Thakkali Kurma in Tamil). I like this dish during the winter because it is warming and the tomatoes make the dish a festive shade of red. If you pair it with Saag Aloo (Spinach Potato curry), you'll have a plate of green and red, for those celebrating Christmas.



- Guru

## Ingredients

- Tomatoes - 3 (diced)
- Onion - 1 big (diced)
- Grapeseed oil
- 1 tsp. Mustard seeds
- 1 Tbsp. Urud daal
- 1 Tbsp. Sambhar powder
- 2 big tablespoons coconut flakes
- Ginger (about the size of half of a finger)
- 2 peeled garlic cloves
- Salt to taste
- 4-6 Cilantro
- 6 Curry leaf
- 1-2 Cloves
- 1 Cinnamon stick
- 1 tsp. Cumin seeds

## Preparation

Dice the tomatoes and onion

2-3 tablespoons of oil in hot pot - add mustard seeds, cumin seeds, 6 curry leaves, 2 cloves, 1 cinnamon stick, urud daal and saute on medium heat

Add onion to pot

Add tomato to pot

Cook on medium heat and add half to one cup water (depending on your desired level of thickness of curry)

Add salt and sambhar powder - boil it

Coconut flakes (2 big spoons) - coconut, ginger, garlic, blend in blender to a smooth paste

Mix it all in the pot and boil

Garnish with cilantro

(Optional step: boil eggs and peel and cook with above before #9 Cilantro leaf step)



# BUCKWHEAT CREPES

I started making this French/Canadian recipe for buckwheat crepes or galettes de sarrasin for my daughters when they were little. It is still their favourite weekend breakfast decades later. It is definitely on the menu on Christmas morning just before they open their stockings. The girls love it with homemade jam or Nutella. Of course, in Montreal everything would be doused in maple syrup regardless of the filling!

– Rima

## Ingredients

- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup buckwheat flour
- ½ cup all purpose flour
- 3 eggs
- 2 Tbsp. melted butter, plus more for pan
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- ¼ tsp. salt

## Preparation

**Step 1**  
Combine buckwheat and all purpose flour with sugar and salt in a large mixing bowl.

**Step 2**  
Whisk milk, water, beaten eggs and cooled melted butter into the dry mixture.

**Step 3**  
Let mixture rest for 1 hour. This step is important to ensure thin crepes.

**Step 4**  
Over medium/high heat, butter a crepe or non stick frying pan. The high heat creates the crispy lacy pattern on the crepes.

**Step 5**  
Ladle ⅓ or ½ cup of crepe batter and cook until golden on one side. Flip and cook the other side. About 2-4 minutes in total.

**Step 6**  
Serve with toppings of your choice.





GRAHAM  
CRACKER  
COOKIES

Ok...so I'm not much of a cook; I make a good tuna fish sandwich. One thing I can make are these cookies. They are easy to make and really good around the holidays. We make these along with a bunch of other deserts that are more difficult (I'm not allowed to do those).

- Kyle

### Ingredients

- 2 sticks unsalted butter
- 1 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 1/3 cups chopped toasted pecans
- 1 (6 oz) package semisweets

### Preparation

- Step 1  
Heat oven to 350. Butter 11x17 baking sheet (I just use parchment).
- Step 2  
Arrange crackers side by side touching. Stir butter and brown sugar in a saucepan over medium heat until butter melts and sugar dissolves.
- Step 3  
Mix in vanilla. Increase heat and boil for one minute. Pour caramel mixture over grahams. Sprinkle with nuts and bake until caramel topping bubbles and turns deep brown.
- Step 4  
Remove from the oven and immediately sprinkle coco chips over cookies. Cool a bit then carefully score. I let them cool (fridge helps, or outside) then break them up into smaller squares.



# SAUSAGE CHEESEBALLS

It wouldn't be a holiday dinner in the Ellis household without sausage cheese balls as one of our side dishes. The kids usually help make them the day before, and then we have to keep everyone away from them before the holiday dinner!

- Matt

## Ingredients

- 32 oz regular flavor pork sausage
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose baking mix
- 16 oz (4 cups) shredded cheddar cheese
- ½ cup finely chopped onion
- ½ cup finely chopped celery
- 2 tsp. black pepper
- 2 tsp. minced garlic

## Preparation

- Step 1  
Combine all ingredients in a large mixing bowl.
- Step 2  
Form into 1" balls, and place on an ungreased baking sheet.
- Step 3  
Bake for 18-20 minutes at 375F until golden brown.



# CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Who doesn't love a classic chocolate chip cookie? During Covid my son, Harry, has made us chocolate chip cookies almost everyday. They have been a source of joy in our house that we will continue throughout the holiday season.

- Christy

## Ingredients

- ¾ cup sugar
- 1 stick softened butter
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ¾ tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- One egg
- 1 ½ cups flour
- Chocolate chips

## Preparation

- Step 1  
Mix sugar, brown sugar and butter in a large bowl. Mix until smooth.
- Step 2  
Add vanilla extract, salt, baking soda, flour and egg.  
Stir in chocolate chips.  
Mix until smooth.
- Step 3  
Put in oven until bottoms of cookies are golden.



# FRIED CALAMARI

My grandparents emigrated from Italy between the two world wars and brought with them the tradition of seven fishes on Christmas Eve which we have continued. I do most of the cooking and often cook ten different fish – including shellfish – to ensure everyone likes at least seven. Over the years I have perfected a recipe for the “appetizer” fish, fried calamari.

– Jim



## Ingredients

- 2 ½ pounds of squid, cleaned and cut into rings
- 2 large cloves of crushed garlic, of course
- 1 cup flour
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- Pinch or more of cayenne pepper
- Plain breadcrumbs, 4 cups
- Corn oil for frying (has to be corn oil)

## Preparation

**Step 1**  
Mix all the dry ingredients together, include the crushed garlic, but don't include the breadcrumbs. They're last.

**Step 2**  
Then add enough water to make a slightly thick batter – like oatmeal. Mix it thoroughly. Dip the calamari rings into this batter – best that your calamari is dry when you do this – then dip into the plain (unseasoned) breadcrumbs.

**Step 3**  
Deep fry in small batches for 1-2 minutes at about 375 degrees. Don't overcook or they'll be chewy. When they come out I like to sprinkle some freshly grated parmesan cheese over them when they are still hot. Serve them hot with homemade marinara sauce – that's another recipe.



# BUTTER FUDGE BROWNIES

Every year at Thanksgiving my wife does the bulk of the cooking but my role is to spend a full day over the long weekend baking Christmas cookies. I make gingerbread men, sugar cookies and date coconut balls, but the perennial family favorite are butter fudge chocolate brownies, which we refer to as "Mama's brownies." My grandmother, whom we referred to as "Mama" when we were little, made these brownies throughout my mother's childhood, and my mother then continued the tradition. As a result, they were the taste that I grew up associating with Christmas. When my mother was in the final stages of cancer in 1996, she and I talked about a lot of memories and she dictated the recipe for Mama's brownies for me. That recipe, hastily scribbled on one of my work notepads, is what I still use almost 25 years later because it reminds me of my mom.



- Craig

## Ingredients

### Brownies

- 2 squares unsweetened chocolate
- 1/3 cup butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 3/4 cup flour
- 3/4 tsp. salt
- 3/4 tsp. baking powder

### Topping

- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 cups confectioners sugar
- 2 Tbsp. milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla

## Preparation

### Step 1

Melt butter and chocolate. Add sugar and eggs and beat. Add rest of list and mix. Pour into 9x13 pan and bake at 350 for 25 minutes then let cool.

### Step 2

Melt butter and mix rest and spread on brownies. Let cool.

Melt one square of unsweetened chocolate and one tbsp of butter and spread this on top of the vanilla fudge.





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