

Join expert entertainer Kelly Randall Sia in her kitchen as she showcases more than 80 delectable recipes to enliven any occasion, whether it is an intimate family lunch or a 20-person dinner party. Inspired by the dozens of colourful cultures she has encountered when travelling the world, Kelly's diverse recipes are rich in international flavour and influence. Lavish food photography and a sprinkling of jewels accompany Kelly's delicious recipes to complete this culinary treasury.



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**Kelly
Randall Sia**

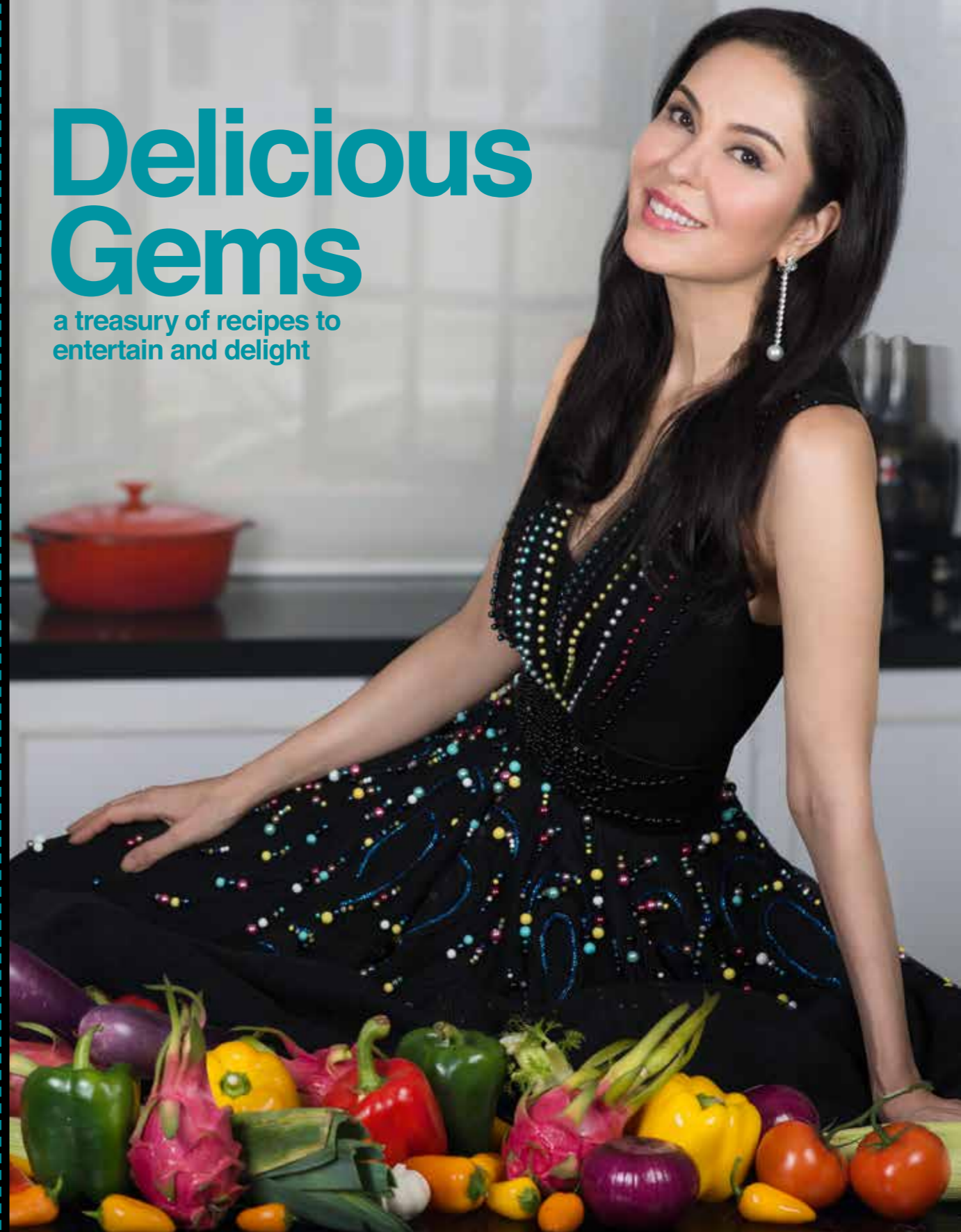
**Delicious
Gems**
a treasury of recipes to entertain and delight

Marshall Cavendish
Cuisine



Delicious Gems

a treasury of recipes to
entertain and delight



Kelly Randall Sia

For Review Only

*Dress to kill,
but don't cook that way!*



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Introduction

Childhood is a miraculous time when your mind, like a thirsty sponge, eagerly absorbs whatever fascinates or stimulates your fancy. From the age of three, I started observing my glamorous Japanese mother in the kitchen as she chopped, seasoned, flavoured and prepared delicious meals. She could create the most wonderful flavours using bottles of mysterious dried leaves (herbs) and powders (spices). And for some reason she wouldn't allow me to do anything, but watch and listen. Which I did, intently.

My mom, Mariko, was a single parent raising a toddler (me) in Los Angeles (LA), California in the early 1970s. She was born Mariko Taki in February 1940, soon after the outbreak of WWII. After a rather underprivileged childhood due to the war, Mariko spent her young adulthood in Japan, making ends meet by modelling. One night, she attended a magic show in Tokyo and met a handsome Irish-American, John Randall, aka Johnny Aladdin.

John was a travelling magician and he asked Mariko up on stage only to steal her wristwatch. He then made a deal with her: her watch in return for a date with him. John made Mariko his life partner as well as his partner on stage. Seeing that she was beautiful and had a natural charm that would draw in the crowds, he taught her how to perform in front of an audience. Mariko learned to dance the soft-shoe with a floating cane, legendary card tricks and a little sleight of hand. In the late 1960s, John owned an entertainment company in Vietnam that put on shows for the GIs, and he moved there with Mariko. In August 1967, I was born in Vietnam. My parents named me Kelly Taki Randall.

Sadly, the romance between my parents came to an end in 1970. Mom and I boarded a plane for LA where she had found us a little apartment in Hollywood on Beachwood Drive under the famed Hollywood sign. We would call this home for the next 10 years.

For Review Only



Glorious Beginnings

When I'm hosting a luncheon or dinner, I think about what my guests would enjoy having during that time of the day.

For example, while I would be perfectly happy with Eggs Benedict for dinner, I wouldn't subject my friends to my idiosyncratic cravings. As such, I have selected a few recipes that I deem admirably appropriate to, shall we say, begin the day. I am not saying at all that you should limit yourself to only having these palatable plates in the light of day — it's just lending tradition a curtsy.





Using flavoured butter is a fabulous way to boost the taste of bread, pasta, meat, chicken and fish. Melt it and use as oil to cook for a quick way to amplify flavour.



Truffle Butter

This is hands down the favourite among my guests. I don't hold back on the truffles. The taste of this butter is concentrated because I use four truffle elements for an intense flavour. It is great topped on meats, used in pastas or spread on bread.

Makes 1 cup (227 g / 8 oz)

INGREDIENTS

1 cup (227 g / 8 oz)
unsalted butter, softened
1 tsp truffle salt
4 Tbsp truffle oil
1 tsp truffle honey
1 Tbsp truffle paste

PREPARATION

Place the butter, truffle salt, truffle oil and truffle honey into a food processor and blend until well combined, making sure to stop and scrape down the sides several times during the process.

Add the truffle paste and pulse a couple of times to distribute the paste, making sure not to over mix. This will ensure that the paste is evenly spread throughout the butter.

Transfer to a bowl or mould and refrigerate. Use as desired.

Gula Jawa Cinnamon Butter

Lovely for making cinnamon toast in a pinch, this sweet butter can also be dolloped atop roasted parsnips or yam.

Makes 1 cup (227 g / 8 oz)

INGREDIENTS

1 cup (227 g / 8 oz)
unsalted butter, softened
4 Tbsp granulated
gula Jawa (palm sugar)
2 tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp ground aniseed
1 tsp kosher salt

PREPARATION

Place all the ingredients into a food processor and blend until well combined, making sure to stop and scrape down the sides several times during the process.

Transfer to a bowl or mould and refrigerate. Use as a spread on breads, pastries, cakes and muffins.

Orange Butter

If you like marmalade but want to forgo that much sugar, this is an excellent alternative that gives you two tastes — rich butter and zesty orange peel — in one vehicle. Spread on toast, pancakes or French toast for a refreshingly citrusy note.

Makes 1 cup (227 g / 8 oz)

INGREDIENTS

1 cup (227 g / 8 oz)
unsalted butter, softened
2 Tbsp finely grated
orange zest
1 Tbsp honey
1 tsp kosher salt

PREPARATION

Place all the ingredients into a food processor and blend until well combined, making sure to stop and scrape down the sides several times during the process.

Transfer to a bowl or mould and refrigerate. Use as desired.

Miso Butter

This lively, umami-rich butter will infuse sublime savouriness into whatever you integrate it with. Use it to scramble eggs, spread on toast, pan-fry fish or season poultry. Scoop a ball of this butter on steak, hot off the pan, and let it melt.

Makes 1 cup (227 g / 8 oz)

INGREDIENTS

1 cup (227 g / 8 oz)
unsalted butter, softened
3 Tbsp white miso paste
2 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp light soy sauce
1 tsp onion powder
1 tsp grated garlic
1 tsp ground black pepper

PREPARATION

Place all the ingredients into a food processor and blend until well combined, making sure to stop and scrape down the sides several times during the process.

Transfer to a bowl or mould and refrigerate. Use as desired.

Bread — I knead you baby!

If you've never baked bread before, please allow me to encourage you. It is so, so satisfying when you pull a perfect loaf out of the oven — not to mention the spectacular scent of freshly baked bread you'll have wafting through your home. (Imagine a cartoon character hypnotically floating with his nose fastened to visible vapours wafting from the kitchen!) Open a window and taunt your neighbours with the promise of a slice of heaven.

First word of advice: don't be afraid. And do not be disappointed or discouraged if at first your loaf doesn't turn out looking like a diva. Baking beautiful bread comes by way of practice. You get to know when the dough feels right, what to look for and how to tweak it into sublime perfection. Basically, you'll learn that being kneady isn't always a bad thing! Ba-dum bump! Because to get a loaf to rise to impeccable hole-y-ness, you need to knead. When the moment of truth comes, and you take that serrated knife and cut into your lovely loaf of lusciousness, and you see soft, fluffy crevices evenly spread throughout, trust me, you'll want to belt out like Frankie Valli:

*You're just too good to be true
I can't take my eyes off you
You'd be like heaven to touch
I wanna hold you so much
At long last love has arrived
And I thank God I'm alive
You're just too good to be true
Can't take my eyes off of you
I knead you baby
And if it's quite all right
I knead you baby...*

Brioche Buns

Recipe on page 22 (see Note)



For Review



These dishes can either be appetisers or main courses depending on your appetite and how you choose to plate them. They make a good fit for brunch, lunch, a snack or a meal any time of the day to satisfy your savoury cravings in style.





Jumbo Prawn Cocktail

Large chilled prawns lounging on the edge of a cocktail glass filled with sauce is a polished and palatable hor d'oeuvre. I like to serve this course before a big juicy steak. A little surf before your turf is always a good thing.

Makes 2 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 6 jumbo prawns
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 ripe avocado

Cocktail Sauce

- ½ cup (120 g / 4¼ oz) ketchup
- 3 Tbsp horseradish sauce
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 lemon, grated for zest
- 1 Tbsp chopped shallots
- ¼ tsp kosher salt
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper

Garnish

- 1 lemon, cut into wedges
- 2 sprigs basil

PREPARATION

Half-fill a medium pot with water and bring to a boil over high heat.

Clean and devein the prawns. Start by removing the head, then peeling the shell off the meat, including the tail. Using a paring knife, make a small slit down the back of the prawn to reveal the intestinal tract (vein). Remove it and discard. Repeat this process with the remaining prawns and set aside.

Place all the ingredients for the cocktail sauce in a food processor and blend until smooth. Set aside.

Prepare an ice bath in a large bowl to fully submerge the prawns once they are cooked.

When the water is boiling, add the salt. Place the prawns in the boiling water for 2 minutes until they turn pink and are cooked. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the prawns to the ice bath to stop the cooking process. When the prawns are cooled, drain and pat dry. Set aside.

Take 2 martini glasses and fill them until about three-quarters full with the cocktail sauce.

Arrange 3 prawns neatly on the side of each glass, making sure to space them evenly.

Halve the avocado and take the stone out. Use a melon baller to scoop 2 orbs out for the garnish. Press an orb into the rim of each glass so they stay in place. If the avocado is not soft enough to press onto the rim, use a paring knife to make a slit one-third of the way through the orb.

Cut the lemon into half moons and make a slit in each slice. Place a slice of lemon between the prawns.

Garnish with basil to add a splash of garden freshness. You can also substitute with other tender herbs like coriander (cilantro) or parsley. Serve.

NOTE

The prawns shells and heads can be saved and kept in the freezer to make stock for use in other dishes.



For Review Only

*Not only should our food make an impression,
we should also make an entrance.*



Broiled Chicken Medallions with Kelly's Happy Chilli Cashew Cream

Kelly's Happy Chilli cashew cream is the star of this show. This cream can be used with a variety of meats and vegetables. Also, Kelly's Happy Chilli straight up is a great condiment which instantly lends a South East Asian flavour to any dish.

Makes 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

2 chicken breasts,
bone-in, skin-on,
each about 250 g (9 oz)

2 Tbsp olive oil

2 red radishes

5 cherry tomatoes

1 cup mixed bean sprouts

¼ cup tightly packed
(12 g / ½ oz) chopped parsley

8 tsp slivered almonds

Kelly's Happy Chilli Cashew Cream

Makes 1⅓ cups

1 cup (125 g / 4½ oz)
cashew cream (page 108)

⅓ cup Kelly's Happy Chilli
(page 216)

PREPARATION

Combine the cashew cream and Kelly's Happy Chilli and mix well. Set aside.

Preheat the oven 260°C (500°F).

Brush the chicken breasts with olive oil. Place on a baking tray and broil for 20–25 minutes. The juices should run clear when the chicken is pierced with a knife. Remove and let sit for 5 minutes.

In the meantime, using a mandolin on the thinnest setting, slice the radish creating paper-thin slices.

Cut the cherry tomatoes into quarters.

Cut the chicken breasts into 2-cm (¾-in) slices.

Spoon some Kelly's Happy Chilli cashew cream in the centre of each serving plate. Place some cherry tomatoes on the cream and arrange some radish slices on either side of the cream. Spread out the chicken on one side of the cream like an open fan. Sprinkle each plate with mixed bean sprouts, parsley and slivered almonds.

Spoon some cream over the chicken and serve the extra cream on the side.

NOTE

The cashew cream and Kelly's Happy Chilli can be kept in the freezer, readily available for your next meal.



*Always remember,
memorable meals are those
in which you've added
your personal touch.*



*You must remember this,
A quiche is still a quiche, a fry is just a fry,
The fundamental foods apply, as time goes by..*

Sorry, I can't help being a cornball sometimes! Don't ya just love Casablanca? I've watched that movie more times than I'd like to admit and I still drool over Ingrid Bergman's wardrobe! The style of those old Hollywood classics has me nostalgic for nights watching my gorgeous mother get herself ready for a dinner party she would throw. What I have learned from my childhood observing my mom and what I still hold fast to, is the conviction of not only making food look and taste amazing, but that I too can make an impressive entrance! My mom always made an effort to look her best while she made her guests feel like VIPs. After all, it's the whole experience of the evening that guests will take away with them, from the warm welcome upon arrival to the after dinner delights. There were nights, if the guests were particularly privileged, that my mom would perform a bit of magic at the end of dinner. To me, everything my mom did; her expertise in preparing the perfect dinner, her artistry in putting herself together, her finesse in hosting her guests, her dexterous sleight of hand, was magic. She knew how to make people feel special by sharing her own individuality.



Ayam Kecap

This Indonesian stew of tender chicken (*ayam*) on the bone, meaty black mushrooms and hard-boiled eggs all generously saturated in a sweet dark soy sauce (*kecap*) and herbal gravy will have you coming back for more. Serve with a heap of steaming hot rice.

Makes 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 6 dried black mushrooms
- 1 kg (2 lb 3½ oz) chicken drums and thighs, bone-in, skin-on, cleaned and cut into smaller pieces
- 3 extra large eggs
- 3 Tbsp rice bran oil
- 2 whole heads garlic with skin
- ½ cup (120 ml / 4 fl oz) Shaoxing rice wine
- 2 cups (480 ml / 16 fl oz) chicken stock
- 2 Tbsp granulated *gula Jawa* (palm sugar)
- 4 Tbsp dark soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp light soy sauce

Marinade

- 1 Tbsp rice bran oil
- 2 Tbsp grated garlic
- 1 tsp ground black pepper
- 2 Tbsp light soy sauce
- 5 star anise
- 2 cinnamon sticks

PREPARATION

Soak the mushrooms in hot water for about 30 minutes to rehydrate them. Drain and trim the stems. Halve the mushroom caps and set aside.

In a bowl, combine the ingredients for the marinade. Add the chicken and make sure every piece is well coated. Cover and set aside while you prepare the other ingredients.

Place the eggs in a large pot and fill the pot with water until about two-thirds full. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat.

Turn off the heat and let sit for 10 minutes. Run over with cold water to cool the eggs, then peel and set aside.

Heat the oil in a wok over high heat. Add the whole garlic cloves and fry for 1 minute. Remove and set aside.

Using the same wok, add the marinated chicken with its marinade and fry until lightly browned. Add the Shaoxing rice wine and cook for another minute, then add the chicken stock, *gula Jawa* and soy sauces.

Bring to a boil, then lower the heat to a simmer. Return the garlic to the wok. Add the mushrooms and hard-boiled eggs. Cover the wok and leave to simmer for 45 minutes or until the chicken is cooked and tender.

Serve with steaming hot rice or my delicious *nasi uduk* (page 178).





Believe it or not, this American classic, pot pie, originated from Greece where they used leftover meats and placed them in open pastry shells. It was the Romans who later used pastry to cover the top, which is what I've done here.



Tequila Chicken Pot Pie
Recipe on page 124

Tequila Chicken Pot Pie

Tequila, once the alcohol is burned out, creates an ambrosial aroma that is distinctly fruity, yet uniquely mellow. Perfumed with tarragon, it produces a deliciously sweet bouquet that is sure to stimulate your appetite.

Makes 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

85 g (3 oz) shallots
 10 g (1/3 oz) tarragon
 2 chicken breasts, bone-in, skin-on, each about 250 g (9 oz)
 2 Tbsp + 1 tsp olive oil
 2 Tbsp butter
 1/2 cup (120 ml / 4 fl oz) tequila
 1/3 cup (75 g / 2 2/3 oz) unsalted butter
 45 g (1 1/2 oz) plain flour
 2 tsp grated garlic
 4 cups (960 ml / 32 fl oz) chicken stock
 1 cup (240 ml / 8 fl oz) heavy whipping cream
 1 1/2 tsp kosher salt
 1 tsp ground black pepper
 1 chicken bouillon cube
 2 cups (300 g / 10 1/2 oz) frozen mixed vegetables
 1 extra large egg

PREPARATION

Prepare 4 deep baking dishes, each about 10-cm (4-in) in diameter.

Preheat the oven to 260°C (500°F).

Prepare the dough for the pie crust. Cut the butter into small cubes. Place the flour, salt, sugar and baking soda in a food processor fitted with a metal blade and process until well combined. Add the butter and pulse several times until the mixture looks like fine crumbs. This should take about 10 seconds. Continue to pulse while drizzling in the iced water through the feed tube until the dough begins to clump together. Stop just as it begins to form a ball. Remove the dough from the processor, being careful of the blade, and place onto a lightly floured worktop. Work the dough into a ball and then press into a disc. Cover with plastic wrap and let rest in the refrigerator for 1 hour.

In the meantime, peel and chop the shallots. Finely chop the tarragon.

Coat the chicken breasts with 2 Tbsp olive oil. Place on a roasting tray and broil for 25 minutes. The juices should run clear. Let sit for 10 minutes, then pull off the skin and debone. Cut the chicken into 1-cm (1/2-in) cubes. Set aside.

In a frying pan, heat 2 Tbsp butter and 1 tsp olive oil over medium-high heat. When the pan is very hot, add the shallots and fry for 2–3 minutes until the shallots begin to brown. Flambé the shallots by carefully adding the tequila and tilting the pan slightly to ignite the tequila. The fire can get high, so be careful. (If the fire gets too big, remove from the heat and let the tequila burn off while carefully tilting the pan in a clockwise motion.) Cook for about a minute after the flame dies down. Add the tarragon and continue to fry for 1 minute. Remove from heat and set aside.

Pie Crust

1 1/4 cups (284 g / 10 oz) very cold butter
 3 cups (375 g / 13 1/4 oz) plain flour
 1 1/2 tsp kosher salt
 2 Tbsp sugar
 1 tsp baking soda
 1/2 cup (120 ml / 4 fl oz) iced water

Make a rye using the unsalted butter and flour. Melt the unsalted butter in a saucepan over medium heat. When it starts to bubble, whisk in the flour and stir until well combined.

Add the cooked shallots and tarragon, garlic, chicken stock, cream, salt, pepper and chicken bouillon cube. Whisk until well combined. Bring to a simmer, then turn off the heat.

Divide the chicken cubes and mixed vegetables equally among the 4 baking dishes. Ladle the white sauce equally into the baking dishes leaving a 1-cm (1/2-in) gap from the top. Set aside.

Use a saucer that is about 2-cm (3/4-in) wider than the diameter of the baking dishes as a template for cutting the pie crust.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and place it on a lightly floured worktop. Flour your rolling pin and roll the dough out into a 0.5-cm (1/4-in) thick sheet. Use the saucer to cut out 4 circles.

Place a dough circle over each baking dish and gently pat the sides to keep the dough in place. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. At this point, the pot pies can also be kept refrigerated until you are ready to bake and serve them.

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F).

Beat the egg in a bowl and brush the pie crust with the beaten egg.

Using a paring knife, make 4 small slits in the pie crust for the steam to escape as the pies bake.

Bake for 20 minutes or until the pie crust is golden brown. Remove and let sit for 5–10 minutes before serving. Be careful! The filling will be piping hot.



For Review Only



Chic Accessories

Sometimes, it's about the little things making the big things shine. Other times, it's just gilding the lily. When putting that final touch on a well-assembled outfit, or main course, it's essential to determine whether or not one needs that additional adornment. I like to practise my panache by adding just enough to complement the showpiece. If you have an exquisite dress, you don't need to drown it with jewellery. Likewise, if your main is magnificent, a single side will suffice.

Having said that, let me ask you this: have you ever been to a restaurant and just wanted to order the sides?

I have been guilty of making a meal out of French fries and mac and cheese. But so what? These are the crown jewels!

Here are a few add-ons to make your showpiece shine!



Chawanmushi

This hot and savoury egg custard is a traditional Japanese starter. Its smooth, light and silky texture lends a lovely backdrop and adds contrast to the delicate flavours of shellfish.

Makes 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 3 extra large eggs
- 1 cup (240 ml / 8 fl oz) dashi (page 217)
- 2 Tbsp heavy whipping cream
- 2 Tbsp mirin
- 1½ tsp light soy sauce
- ½ tsp sesame oil
- ½ cup (85 g / 3 oz) fresh shelled ark clams

Garnish

- 2 tsp chopped spring onion
- 8 pieces *uni* (sea urchin)
- 4 fresh shelled ark clams

PREPARATION

Whisk the eggs, dashi, cream, mirin, light soy sauce and sesame oil in a bowl.

Prepare 4 *chawanmushi* bowls (with lids) and spoon the clams equally into the bowls.

Pour the egg mixture into each bowl, leaving a 1.5-cm (¾-in) gap from the rim.

Cover the bowls with their lids and place on a rack in large wok filled with water until about 2.5-cm (1-in) high. Make sure the bowls do not touch the water.

Steam for 12 minutes, then remove the bowls from the wok. Let cool for a few minutes.

Garnish the *chawanmushi* with spring onion, uni and clams. Serve.

NOTE

Fresh seafood is always nice, but if necessary or for convenience, canned clams and even canned oysters are good too.



Cauliflower Salad

When my mom first made this for me as a young child using bottled Italian dressing, I was sceptical. Actually, I refused to try it. Instead of forcing me or coercing me to eat it, she simply sat there, in front of me, crunching and munching, and making faces like she was eating heaven on a plate and totally contented that there was more for her. It was a brilliant move. To this day, I can eat an entire head of cauliflower by myself. With dressing of course!

Makes 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

1 medium head cauliflower
1 Tbsp sliced red onion
100 g (3½ oz) Italian salad mix (radicchio, wild rocket, black cabbage, frisee, red and green coral)
A handful of basil leaves

Dragon Fruit Vinaigrette

1½ cups (280 g / 10 oz) red-fleshed dragon fruit
1 cup (240 ml / 8 fl oz) olive oil
⅓ cup (80 ml / 2⅔ fl oz) red wine vinegar
2 Tbsp chopped shallots
1 tsp grated garlic
2 tsp kosher salt
2 tsp ground black pepper
1½ tsp sugar
⅛ tsp thinly sliced red bird's eye chilli

PREPARATION

Cut the cauliflower into florets and place in a large bowl. Fill the bowl with sufficient boiling water to cover the cauliflower and let soak for about 2 minutes to blanch it. Drain, then refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Place all the ingredients for the dragon fruit vinaigrette in a blender and blend on high speed until smooth. Set aside.

Take the chilled cauliflower from the refrigerator. Add the sliced red onion and ⅓ cup (80 ml / 2⅔ fl oz) dragon fruit vinaigrette. Toss well.

Line a serving plate with the Italian salad mix. Spoon the cauliflower over the salad mix. Garnish generously with basil leaves and serve.

NOTE

If you can't find red-fleshed dragon fruit to make the vinaigrette, you can try Mom's way with good ol' bottled Italian dressing. Then toss in some fresh raspberries or sliced strawberries to add fruitiness and colour.



*I find cauliflower's attraction is in its versatility.
You can use multifarious cooking methods,
but my favourite way is Mom's way,
barely cooked and crunchy.*





By definition, a dessert is the tastefully sweet end to an honourable story and who doesn't love a happy ending to a great story? As a child, I couldn't get enough of sweets. I even had a propensity for eating condensed milk straight out of the can. Okay, I still do that on occasion. If there's a can of condensed milk open, chances are, I will attack it with a spoon, especially if it's been chilled. It was a bit difficult narrowing down my dessert recipes for this section. Certainly, there could be a whole book dedicated solely to "happy endings", but here I have chosen a favoured few fairy tale finishes for your selection.





Coconut Cake

There is a ton of great things being said about the coconut, but if you simply love the flavour of coconut like I do, this cake will not disappoint. The coconut powder is typically used to make milk, but I use it to make a paste to give the cake a powerful coconutty flavour.

Makes one 23-cm (9-in) cake

INGREDIENTS

- 2²/₃ cups (320 g / 11¹/₄ oz)
plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¾ tsp kosher salt
- 250 g (9 oz) coconut powder
- ½ cup (80 ml / 2²/₃ fl oz)
boiling water
- 1 cup (227 g / 8 oz) butter
- 2 cups (480 ml / 16 fl oz)
buttermilk
- 3 extra large eggs
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract
- 2 cups (400 g / 14 oz)
castor sugar
- 1½ cups (100 g / 3½ oz)
coconut flakes

Coconut Buttercream Frosting

- 1 cup (227 g / 8 oz)
butter, softened
- 4 cups (480 g / 1 lb 1 oz)
icing sugar
- 2 cups (225 g / 8 oz)
coconut powder
- 4 Tbsp coconut cream
- ¼ tsp kosher salt

PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 160°C (325°F). Line two 23-cm (9-in) round baking pans with baking paper.

Sift the flour, baking powder and baking soda into a bowl. Add the salt and set aside.

Place the coconut powder in a saucepan. Add the boiling water and mix well. Add the butter and buttermilk and stir constantly over low heat until the butter is melted and the mixture is smooth. Remove from heat and let cool slightly until it is not hot anymore. This is because it will be added to the egg mixture and we don't want the eggs to cook.

In a large mixing bowl, beat the eggs with the vanilla extract. Gradually add the warm coconut mixture and sugar and mix well. Add the flour mixture and mix until the dry ingredients are just moistened.

Pour the batter evenly into the prepared pans. Bake for 45 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the cakes comes out clean. Set aside on a wire rack to cool.

Increase the temperature of the oven to 180°C (350°F).

Pour half the coconut flakes onto a baking tray and toast in the oven for 10–15 minutes until lightly browned. Watch to prevent it from burning. Set aside to cool.

Prepare the frosting. Place the butter, icing sugar, coconut powder, coconut cream and salt into the bowl of a stand mixer and whisk until smooth and fluffy.

Spread some frosting over the top of one cake and sprinkle the untoasted coconut flakes evenly over. Place the other cake over the first. Spread the remaining frosting over the top and sides of the cakes. Sprinkle with toasted coconut flakes.

NOTE

You can also make a four-layer cake by cutting the two cakes horizontally in half. Stretch the frosting by spreading a thinner layer between the layers.



Coconut Panna Cotta

This is one of my favourite Italian desserts. The delicate flavour of the vanilla custard enhanced by the exotic flavours of the tropical fruit makes this a perfectly luscious end to any meal. It is quick to put together and can be made ahead of time. I serve it in martini glasses for an elegant presentation.

Makes 6 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 4 Tbsp whole milk
- 2½ tsp gelatin powder
- 2⅓ cups (560 ml / 18⅔ fl oz) coconut milk
- ½ cup (120 ml / 4 fl oz) heavy whipping cream
- ½ cup (150 g / 5⅓ oz) condensed milk
- ⅓ tsp kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract

Fruit Topping

- 1 starfruit
- 2 red-fleshed dragon fruit
- 2 mangoes

PREPARATION

Pour the whole milk into a small bowl and add the gelatin powder. Give it a stir and set it aside to bloom.

Combine the coconut milk, cream, condensed milk and salt in a pot at least three times the volume of the mixture. Bring to a boil over medium heat, whisking frequently to avoid scorching or breaking. Keep an eye on the cream because once it hits a boil, it will expand rapidly and spillovers are no fun. Turn off the heat and add the gelatin mixture. Whisk until the gelatin is completely dissolved.

Strain the mixture through a sieve into a bowl. Stir in the vanilla extract.

Ladle the mixture equally into 6 martini glasses until it is about 2 cm (¾ in) from the rim. Refrigerate for at least 6 hours or overnight.

When ready to serve, take the panna cotta out of the fridge and let sit at room temperature while you prepare the fruit topping.

Slice the starfruit across to get 6 stars and dice the remainder.

Peel and dice the dragon fruit and mangoes.

Spoon the diced fruit into the glasses. Decorate with the starfruit slices.

