

The background image is a top-down view of a dining table. It features two white plates with a rustic, brown-rimmed edge, each containing a fresh salad. The salads are composed of various green leafy vegetables, sliced cherry tomatoes, and a lime wedge. A glass of iced coffee with a black and white striped straw sits to the right. A silver knife and fork are placed between the two plates. The entire scene is set on a light-colored wooden table.

recipes

the quarantine kitchen

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HELLO!

Hi! My name is Ilhaam, and I'm the human/closet-chef behind The Kitchen Mission. Before we get into the "main" part of the recipe book (haha), I thought I'd introduce myself so you can get to know me a little better! Right off the bat, you should know that I *will* seize every opportunity to make puns. I'd like to think that making silly "dad jokes" is part of my irresistible charm ;)

My love for cooking started at a very, very young age. I grew up watching my mom, my grandmothers and my aunts make literal magic in the kitchen. Their ability to take whatever they had on hand, and turn it into a meal that really ought to be served at a gourmet restaurant, amazed me. In fact, during our family gatherings, most of our conversations take place in the kitchen - the heart of the home - and revolve around food. The conversations go something like this:

Person A: "Oh my goodness this tastes amazing! How did you make it!?"

Person B: "Really! Thank you! Honestly, it was so easy. All I did was..."

... then they proceed to list out numerous steps and variations that really should sound intimidating, but in reality captivate us and leave us all longing to set foot in the kitchen, to give the recipe a whirl.

For me, the kitchen is a place of calm and peace, a playground where I get to explore my creativity, and most of all, a place that brings about a sense "home" and comfort.

During this difficult time, I hope to bring that sense of peace and comfort to your homes. It's a period of uncertainty, and the whole "social distancing" thing can get so very lonely. I know there are times when I don't feel motivated to do anything at all - let alone cook. I can only imagine what everyone else is going through.

My hope with this book is to remove that feeling of being "distanced" and bring us all a little closer. I hope these recipes can help relieve a little stress and bring you some peace while cooking! Heck, maybe cooking can even turn into a fun family affair, where everyone gets their hands dirty and cooks a meal together!

I've tried to include recipes that are quick, easy to follow and that don't require fancy ingredients! You may even see a few Instagram favourites featured! Feel free to share this e-book with anyone and everyone that you think would appreciate it.

A few things you should know when following my recipes:

1. I don't expect you to follow it. If I'm honest, I don't think I've ever followed a recipe from start to finish (not even my own), so I don't expect you to! I like to think it's my (and soon to be your) way of remixing a recipe. It's actually one of the reasons behind why I started my Instagram page! I needed a skeleton copy of the recipes so I could refer back to them.
2. Get creative and enjoy the process! You're in control of the process, it's not in control of you. Make all the changes and substitutions you need to, and be confident in yourself! **Always** adjust the spices to your taste. You got this honey boo boo!
3. It will always be okay, I promise. Messing up is part of the process. I've messed up more times than I can count (the burnt cakes and over-salted food can attest to this), but what I've learned is cooking can be so forgiving! Almost anything can be salvaged (even the cake). Plus, there's always a takeaway lesson (and maybe meal, if you're lucky) from it!

Now let's make some wonderful memories.

From my heart to yours,

Ilhaam

A still life photograph featuring a collection of fresh tomatoes. A large, round, red tomato with a green stem is the central focus, resting on a light-colored wooden cutting board. Surrounding it are several smaller, oval-shaped cherry tomatoes, some of which are also on the cutting board. The tomatoes are scattered across the board and a white, textured cloth that is partially visible. The background is a neutral, light gray surface. The overall composition is simple and rustic, emphasizing the freshness of the ingredients.

soups & appetizers

CREAMY TOMATO BISQUE

A rich, creamy, and herby take on a classic tomato soup recipe, served with browned-butter, herb & garlic croutons. The perfect comfort food for those cold, wintry nights!

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 4-6 tomatoes on the vine
OR cocktail tomatoes
- 6 cloves of garlic
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1 chicken bouillon cube in
1 cup water
- ⅓ cup fresh basil
- 4 sprigs of thyme
- ½ tsp Italian seasoning
- ¼-½ tsp chilli flakes
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- ½ cup half and half cream
(or milk)
- Salt + pepper to taste

Tip: Always do a taste test and adjust the spices to your taste!

DIRECTIONS:

1. Cut the tomatoes in halves and place them on a tray, cut-side down. Brush the skins with olive oil and season with salt. Add the garlic cloves to the same tray and roast until the tomato skins are charred, around 15-20 minutes.
2. In a Dutch oven or deep pot, melt 2 tbsp of butter. Add the sliced onion and cook until light golden, then add in the garlic cloves and cook until fragrant.
3. Next, add in the roasted tomatoes, the chicken bouillon, fresh basil, fresh thyme, Italian seasoning, chilli flakes, sugar, and balsamic vinegar. Let the soup simmer on low heat for 15-20 minutes until the flavours are infused, then use an immersion blender to blend until no large chunks are left. You can opt to strain the soup at this point, for an even smoother texture.
4. Stir in half and half cream, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Simmer until ready to serve - the longer, the better!
5. Serve hot, topped with browned-butter, herb & garlic croutons, or alongside grilled cheese sandwiches, or enjoy it on its own! The possibilities are endless.

Optional: Add in sun-dried tomatoes, after blending the base

Notes:

1. Ideally you want to use a meaty tomato with few seeds. If you're in a rush, you could substitute for a jar of strained tomatoes, as it's less acidic and processed than canned tomatoes.

MEDITERRANEAN QUINOA SALAD

*This zesty salad is packed with lots of fresh flavour and an abundance of nutrients! The addition of crunchy nachos as a salad topper, make this **the** ultimate salad!*

INGREDIENTS:

Quinoa Salad:

- 1 cup of quinoa, cooked
- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed
- 1 can black beans, rinsed
- ½ an onion, diced
- 2 baby cucumbers, diced
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, diced
- 1 cup green peppers, diced
- 1 cup red peppers, diced
- Handful of cilantro, finely chopped
- Handful of mint, finely chopped

Dressing:

- ¼ cup of olive oil
- Juice of 1½ lemons
- Zest of a lemon
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 3 tbsp basil, finely chopped
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- Salt and pepper to taste

Topping:

- Handful of crushed nacho chips
- Feta or mozzarella cheese (optional)

Yield: 3-16 oz mason jars

DIRECTIONS:

1. Mix the ingredients listed under *Quinoa Salad* together, and set aside.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together the ingredients listed under *Dressing*. Pour the dressing over the salad and mix until everything is incorporated. Pour into a big salad bowl, or portion into mason jars! They keep in the fridge for up to 3 days.
3. Before serving, add feta or mozzarella cheese and crushed nachos as your salad toppers! The nachos add so much texture and give the salad a satisfying crunch..

Notes:

1. To cook the quinoa, I thoroughly rinse it 3 times. This washes away its top layer and helps get rid of the bitterness. I then add 1½ cups of water to 1 cup of quinoa (1.5:1 ratio), and half a cube of chicken bouillon. Bring the pot to a boil, then cover with a lid and let it simmer on low heat for 10 minutes, or until the quinoa is almost cooked through. Remove the lid and fluff the quinoa with a fork. I usually add in some lime juice and chopped cilantro for additional flavour!
2. Feel free to add in olives or any other vegetables you want to the salad!

HOMESTYLE CREAMY CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

A creamy take on the classic, chicken noodle soup, this soup works amazingly as a side, or a main! The best part? You don't have to feel guilty with this lightened edition!

INGREDIENTS:

Chicken breast seasoning:

- 1 chicken breast
- 1 tbsp garlic paste
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper
- Salt + pepper

Soup:

- 1 onion, finely diced
- 2 tsp garlic paste
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 3 tbsp flour
- 1 chicken bouillon, dissolved in 3-4 cups of hot water
- 2 squares rice noodles (or noodles of choice)
- 2 small potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 sprigs of thyme
- 1 cup milk of choice
- Salt + pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

1. Marinate the chicken breast in the ingredients listed under *Chicken breast seasoning*, for 20 minutes.
2. Heat a Dutch oven. Once hot, melt butter/ghee and sear the chicken breast on each side, until golden. Set aside. The chicken does not have to be cooked through, as you will be adding it back to the soup base and it will finish cooking in there.
3. In the same pot, add more butter/ghee if needed. Sauté the onions until translucent. Next, add the garlic and cook until fragrant, then add in the celery and carrots and cook until the veggies are slightly softened and aromatic.
4. Now add the flour and let it cook for a few minutes, until it's not longer raw. Don't let it brown! This will help thicken the base, without adding cream. Slowly pour in the chicken bouillon mixture, while stirring to remove any lumps.
5. Add the chicken breast, rice noodles and potatoes into the pot. Stir until evenly incorporated.
6. Next, season with salt and pepper, and add in the bay leaves, thyme and any other herbs you wish to add. Cover and let the soup simmer on low heat for 20 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked. Remove the herbs and the breast. Shred the chicken breast and add it back to the soup.
7. Add in the milk and let the soup simmer an additional 5-10 minutes, or until it's thick. Taste test and adjust salt and pepper if necessary.

Notes:

1. Instead of adding flour to the base, you can add a corn starch slurry when you add the milk and let it thicken.
2. I prefer searing the chicken breast first to give it colour, I find it adds more flavour than just poached chicken. If you do however end up poaching the chicken first, reserve the broth! Add the broth to the soup with the chicken bouillon, instead of water.



CRISPY CHICKEN PAKORAS

Restaurant-style pakoras, from the comfort of your own home! These crisp, fried pakoras flavoured with chilli and lemon are so delicious, they rival the ones served at your favourite Hakka restaurant!

INGREDIENTS:

Marinade:

- 1 chicken breast, cubed
- Juice of half a lemon
- ½ tsp paprika
- 1 tsp tandoori powder
- 1½ tsp garlic paste
- ½ tsp cumin powder
- ½ tsp coriander powder
- ⅛ tsp garam masala
- 1 stem sliced spring onions
- 1 green chilli, finely chopped (or to taste)
- Salt to taste
- *Optional: Crushed curry leaves*

Coating:

- 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 3 tbsp corn starch
- 1 tbsp water

DIRECTIONS:

1. Marinate the chicken in the ingredients listed under *Marinade* for at least 20 minutes.
2. Once the chicken is marinated, add the flour and cornstarch. Toss until the chicken is evenly coated, then slowly add in the water (if needed) until the chicken is coated in a thick paste. The batter should **not** be runny!
3. Heat oil on medium-high heat. Once hot, deep fry the chicken pieces individually, until golden.
4. Garnish with spring onions and serve with lemon wedges.

Notes:

1. I prefer using white meat, but if you prefer dark meat, you can substitute for boneless, cubed chicken thighs!
2. To keep the pakoras **crispy**, once you remove them from the fryer, let them cool on a cooling rack with wax paper underneath, to catch the drippings. I personally leave them in a wire fry basket. The key is to let air circulate *underneath* the pakoras (or any deep-fried food for that matter), to keep them from getting soggy.
3. You can substitute all-purpose flour for gram flour in this recipe.



entrées

CHICKEN POT PIE

Seasoned, shredded chicken and vegetables, enveloped in a sinfully rich and creamy sauce. This recipe can be used as a pastry filling, or topped with cheese and broiled to perfection, to be enjoyed on its own.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2-3 tbsp butter
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup poached and shredded chicken, reserve the chicken broth
- 1-1½ cups milk
- ½ tsp ground celery seed
- Salt + pepper to taste
- ½ tsp chilli flakes
- 1 green pepper, finely chopped
- ½ cup carrots, chopped
- ½ cup celery, chopped
- ½ cup peas
- 2 potatoes, boiled and cubed
- 2 eggs, boiled and cubed
- 3 sprigs of thyme
- 1 pie crust

Tip: For poaching the chicken, first season it with ginger, garlic paste, salt, pepper, a couple of cardamom pods and cloves, and a cinnamon stick. You can also add thyme and any other herbs, if you wish.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat butter in a deep saucepan or dutch oven. Once hot, add in the onions and sauté until golden brown. Next, add in the flour and make a roux, stirring constantly until the flour is no longer raw, around 3 minutes. The mixture should look sticky and slightly puffy. If the mixture looks clumpy, add in the chicken broth ¼ cup at a time, until you have a smooth and silky base.
2. Next, slowly add in the milk, constantly stirring until it's fully incorporated. Season with salt, pepper, chilli flakes and ground celery seed. Let this mixture simmer until it's thickened. If it's too thick, add a little more chicken broth. The mixture shouldn't be runny!
3. Now add in the green pepper, shredded chicken, carrots, celery, peas, potatoes and eggs. Stir until everything is well incorporated. Now add in the sprigs of thyme, cover the pot and let it simmer for 10 minutes. Once done, remove the thyme sprigs and do a taste test to adjust seasonings as needed.
4. At this point, you can either use this mixture as a pie filling and bake it in the oven until the crust is golden brown. Alternatively, you can pour the mixture into a pie dish - sans pastry - and top it with shredded mozzarella cheese. Broil it in the oven for 5-10 minutes or until the top is bubbly and golden brown.

Notes:

1. You could shred a rotisserie chicken or opt to grill your chicken breast. I prefer poaching it, so that I can reserve the broth and use it.
2. This filling can also be poured into individual ramekins and topped with puff pastry, for individual chicken pot pies.



DINER-STYLE TUNA MELTS

A diner classic, these mouthwatering tuna melts are quick and easy to make, and taste unbelievable! They make the ideal comfort meal, or the perfect work lunch!

INGREDIENTS:

Tuna mixture:

- 1 can tuna, drained
- 3 tbsp mayonnaise
- 1 green/red chilli, sliced
- 1 stem spring onions, chopped (white + green parts)
- 2 tbsp cilantro, finely chopped
- Juice of ½ a lime
- Salt + pepper to taste

Toppings (optional):

- 8 slices of bread of choice
- Sliced tomatoes
- Sliced onions
- Cheddar cheese

Yield: 4 sandwiches

DIRECTIONS:

1. Mix the ingredients listed under *Tuna Mixture* together, until incorporated. Taste and adjust the seasonings as needed.
2. Spread the outer sides of the bread slices with mayonnaise or butter. Flip and layer the inside with tuna mixture, toppings of choice and cheese.
3. Heat a cast-iron skillet or panini press. Once hot, add the sandwich and cook it on *medium-low* heat, to prevent the sandwich from burning. You can cover the pan with a lid, this helps the cheese melt faster. Once the bottom is crisp and golden, flip and cook the other side of the sandwich. Once cooked, slice in diagonals and serve immediately! These sandwiches make the perfect side to any soup, or the perfect work/school lunch!

Notes:

1. I prefer canned, flaked wild Albacore tuna in water, because it has a less fishy taste, however it can be higher in mercury so be cautious of your intake.
2. Spreading a thin layer of mayonnaise on your bread instead of butter, results in perfect gold, crisp edges.

BUTTER CHICKEN

A restaurant staple, butter chicken is made up of tender, succulent tandoori chicken pieces, cooked in a deliciously creamy, buttery and aromatic, spiced tomato sauce.

INGREDIENTS:

Marinade:

- 2 chicken breasts, cubed
- 3 tbsp thick yogurt
- 1 tsp ginger paste
- 1 tsp garlic paste
- 1 tbsp tandoori powder
- ½ tbsp Kashmiri chilli powder
- 1 tbsp lime juice
- ½ tsp garam masala
- Salt to taste

Sauce:

- 2 tbsp butter/ghee
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 1½ cups crushed tomatoes
- ½ tsp fenugreek leaves
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- ½ tsp garam masala
- ½ tsp chilli powder (or to taste)
- 1½ cups milk/cream
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp butter, cubed
- Chopped cilantro to garnish

DIRECTIONS:

1. Marinate the chicken in the ingredients listed under *Marinade*, for at least 1 hour - overnight.
2. Heat a deep pan or Dutch oven. Once hot, melt ghee/ butter and sear the chicken pieces until browned. Set aside.
3. In the same pan, sauté the onions until translucent. Next, add in the crushed tomatoes, fenugreek leaves, cumin powder, coriander powder, garam masala and salt. Let this mixture cook through until oil separates and the colour gets richer and darker. If it gets too thick too fast, add a little water to the sauce. This will help the sauce cook through. Once cooked, blend the base with an immersion blender.
4. Now add in the milk/cream and the honey. Let the sauce simmer on low heat, until everything is fully incorporated and the sauce thickens.
5. Add the chicken and the juices to the sauce. Continue to simmer for an additional 10-15 minutes. Taste and adjust the spices if needed. Now stir in the 1 tbsp of butter until it's melted. This will instantly transform the texture into a rich and velvety sauce.
6. Smoke the butter chicken by placing a shisha coal on a piece of foil, light the coal and place the foil + coal to the pot. Cover the pot and let it sit for 10-15 minutes. Once done, remove the foil + coal and garnish the Butter Chicken with chopped cilantro. Serve with naan, paratha and/or rice.

Notes:

1. When searing the chicken, don't move it around. Let it brown on one side, then flip and brown on the other side.
2. I usually use milk as I find cream to be too heavy. You can use a combination of both, or opt to use cashew milk!
3. Smoking it adds an *enormous* amount of depth to the flavour of the dish!



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PAN-SEARED FISH TACOS

A delicious weeknight meal made with seasoned, pan-seared fish, served with a zesty coleslaw, pico de gallo, and creamy cilantro lime crema, enveloped in a crispy corn tortilla

INGREDIENTS:

Fish Marinade:

- 1lb halibut (or other flaky, white fish), filleted
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper
- ½ tsp paprika
- 1 tsp garlic paste
- Juice of half a lime
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 8 corn tortillas
- Salt to taste

Zesty Coleslaw:

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tbsp garlic paste
- 3 green onion stems, chopped
- Juice of 1 lime
- Salt + pepper to taste
- 1 bag coleslaw mix

Cilantro Lime Crema:

- ½ an avocado
- ¼ cup greek yogurt
- Handful of cilantro
- 1 tbsp garlic paste/1 garlic clove
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- ½ a jalapeno
- Salt to taste

DIRECTIONS:

1. **For the fish:** In a bowl, whisk together the first 7 ingredients listed under *Fish Marinade*. Marinate the fish filets for 15 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, prepare the toppings. Blend all the ingredients listed under *Zesty Coleslaw*, except for the coleslaw mix. Pour the sauce over the coleslaw and mix until evenly incorporated. For the cilantro lime crema, blend together all the ingredients listed under *Cilantro Lime Crema* and set aside.
3. Heat a cast iron skillet on medium heat (or any skillet you have) and add oil. Once hot, sear the marinated fish on each side until golden brown. Set aside and let the fish rest for 5 minutes, then flake with a fork.
4. In the same pan/skillet, toast the tortillas on each side, until warmed through and slightly golden.
5. **Assemble the tacos:** Layer the tortillas with the coleslaw, flaked fish, and top with the cilantro lime crema, spicy fish taco sauce and any other toppings you wish to add. We love throwing on some pico de gallo too! Squeeze lime juice on top and garnish with cilantro.

Notes:

1. I like making a *spicy fish taco sauce* on the side as well. I mix together equal parts sour cream and mayonnaise, 1 tsp cumin powder, 1 tsp garlic paste, 1 tsp sriracha sauce, 1 tbsp lime juice and salt to taste.
2. When searing the fish filets, don't move them around! Let the fish cook on one side until golden, then *gently* flip and cook the other side.
3. Get funky with the toppings! Make it your own, you can add and remove anything you want.

Additional toppings: Pico de gallo, cilantro, lime juice, spicy fish taco sauce.

SEEKH KEBABS

The ultimate grill food, these succulent kebabs are marinated in a flavourful blend of spices, and seared to perfection on a cast-iron skillet. Brushed with butter, garnished with cilantro and lime juice, and served with naan and raita, they are so scrumptious!

INGREDIENTS:

Seekh Kebabs:

- 1lb lean, ground beef
- 2 tbsp ghee/butter
- 1 tbsp garlic paste
- 1 tbsp ginger paste
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1½ tsp cumin powder
- ½ tsp garam masala
- ½ tsp paprika
- 1-2 green chillies, chopped
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- ½ cup of bread crumbs
- ½ tbsp plain greek yogurt
- ¼ cup mint, finely chopped
- ¼ cup cilantro, finely chopped
- Juice of a lime
- Salt to taste

Raita:

- ½ cup plain greek yogurt
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- Handful of cilantro
- Handful of mint
- 1 green chilli
- Juice of half a lime
- Salt to taste

Optional: Finely chopped cucumbers.

DIRECTIONS:

1. **For the kebabs:** Marinate the beef in the ingredients listed under *Seekh Kebabs* for at least 1 hour. Roll into hot-dog sized kebabs and skewer them.
2. **For the raita:** Meanwhile, make the raita by blending together all the ingredients listed under *Raita*, except for the cucumbers. Once the sauce is blended, stir in the chopped cucumbers.
3. Heat a cast-iron skillet on medium heat. Once hot, melt 1 tbsp ghee. Add the kebabs to the pan one at a time, and sear until golden. Use a spatula or tongs to gently roll the kebabs, to cook cooking on all sides. Once cooked, brush the tops of the kebabs with melted butter and garnish with cilantro! Serve with lime wedges, naan and raita!

Notes:

1. The yogurt acts as a tenderizer and makes the kebabs extremely soft, enhances the flavour, and prevents them from shrinking.
2. I prefer cooking my kebabs on a cast iron skillet - I love the flavour and find the kebabs cook perfectly. If you prefer, you can add sliced onion rings over the kebabs (to keep them juicy) and grill them in the oven for 20 minutes. Be careful not to overcook them as doing so will dry them out!
3. I always cook a small piece of meat on the stove and do a taste test, before rolling all the kebabs. This way if any spices need adjusting, you can do so!
4. If you find your kebabs are too loose, add more breadcrumbs
5. If you find the kebabs are sticking to your hands when rolling them, rub a little bit of oil on your hands and continue rolling.

SAFFRON CREAM TAGLIATELLE

Pan-seared chicken breasts in a buttery saffron sauce, served over tagliatelle pasta!

INGREDIENTS:

Chicken rub:

- 2 chicken breasts, butterfly cut
- 1 tbsp oil
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 2 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp paprika
- 2 tsp brown sugar
- Salt to taste

Saffron sauce:

- 1 tbsp butter
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 cup mushrooms, thinly sliced
- ½ tbsp garlic paste
- 2 tsp white vinegar
- 1 chicken bouillon dissolved in 1½ cups hot water
- Pinch of saffron strands
- ½ cup cream or milk
- Chopped parsley to garnish

Additional Ingredients:

- Tagliatelle or pasta of choice, cooked
- 1 tbsp finely chopped parsley, to garnish

DIRECTIONS:

1. Rub the chicken in the ingredients listed under *Chicken rub*, and let it rest for at least 2 hours.
2. Heat a Dutch oven or deep pot. Once hot, melt 1 tbsp butter. Add the chicken breasts, laying them away from you. Sear until golden, then flip and sear the other side until golden. Set aside and let the chicken rest.
3. In the same pot, melt more butter if needed. Add the chopped shallots, mushrooms, and salt. Once the shallots are translucent and the mushrooms are dehydrated, add in the garlic and sauté until fragrant.
4. Next, add in the vinegar to deglaze the pan and scrape off any chicken scrapings. Once the vinegar is cooked off, pour in the chicken bouillon mixture, and pinch in the saffron strands. Let the mixture simmer on low heat, allowing the saffron strands to open up and infuse flavour into the sauce, around 10 minutes.
5. Now pour in the cream or milk of choice, and let the sauce simmer for an additional 10 minutes, until thickened and the saffron infuses a deep yellow colour.
6. Slice the chicken breasts, and add them + the juices to the sauce. Add in your pasta of choice, and garnish with chopped parsley.

Notes:

1. If you don't want to use cream, you can thicken the base by creating a roux. Add 1 tbsp flour after the vinegar is cooked off. Cook the flour for 3-4 minutes - don't let it brown! Slowly pour in the chicken bouillon mixture, and work out any clumps until the base is smooth. Then continue with the recipe and substitute your milk of choice.
2. You don't have to use Tagliatelle pasta, you can use any pasta of choice, or serve with mashed potatoes!
3. You can substitute the chicken for another protein, or keep it vegetarian! Simply substitute the chicken bouillon for veggie broth.



HAKKA CHILLI BEEF

Tender pieces of beef flash-fried, and tossed in a sweet and spicy gravy. This dish is bursting with flavour and tastes best when it's served with Benihana-style fried rice!

INGREDIENTS:

Marinade:

- 1lb steak strips cut 1" wide
- 1 tbsp garlic paste
- 1 tbsp ginger, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 2 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- Salt + pepper to taste

Sauce:

- 1 onion, thick cubes
- ½ a green pepper, thick cubes
- 1 tbsp garlic paste
- 1 tbsp ginger, sliced
- 2 dried red chilli
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- 2 tbsp strained tomato sauce
- 2 tbsp corn starch
- Salt + pepper to taste
- Spring onions to garnish

Tip: Before marinating the steak, brine the meat in a mixture of salt + vinegar for 20 minutes, to tenderize and remove the raw smell.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Marinate the steak strips in the ingredients listed under *Marinade* for at least 1 hour.
2. Place the steak, marinade and enough water to just cover the meat in the InstantPot. Close the pressure lid, select the "Meat" function on high setting, high pressure. Let the steak pressure cook for 30 minutes and natural release. Reserve the broth.
3. Meanwhile, get started on the sauce. Heat a wok or deep frying pan. Add oil, once hot sauté the ginger, garlic and dried red chillies until fragrant. Add in the onions and fry them until they're fragrant. Next, add in the green peppers, and fry an additional 2-3 minutes. Remove and set aside. Don't overcook the veggies or they will lose their bite!
4. In the same pan, add the steak strips and flash fry them until golden. Reduce the heat, and move the steak off to the side of the wok. Add a little more oil to the centre of the pan and add in the chilli powder. Sauté it until its fragrant and deeper in colour - don't burn it! Add in the strained tomato sauce to the chilli, and cook it until it's thickened. Stir the steak into the sauce until all strips are evenly coated.
5. Add the sautéed veggie mixture back to the wok. To the reserved steak broth, add the corn starch and whisk until it's evenly incorporated and no lumps remain. Slowly pour the broth mixture into the wok, and cook until it's thickened and darker in colour. Taste test and adjust seasonings as needed. Garnish with chopped green onions and serve with Benihana-style fried rice (pg. 22).

Notes:

1. Flash-frying refers to a cooking method where you cook food on high heat, for a short period of time.
2. If you don't have an InstantPot, you can pressure cook your meat as you usually would. I found a huge difference in pressure cooking the steak first, then flash frying it to give it colour, as opposed to just searing the steak. The meat was significantly more succulent and tender.

BENIHANA-STYLE FRIED RICE

A classic hibachi style vegetable fried rice, this one is a favourite in our home and pairs wonderfully with the Hakka Chilli Beef!

INGREDIENTS:

Garlic butter:

- 3 tbsp butter, softened
- 2 tsp garlic, minced
- 1 tsp lime juice
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- Pepper to taste

Fried rice:

- 1 cup cooked rice
- 2 eggs, scrambled
- 2 carrots, cubed
- 2 stems spring onions, finely chopped (white and green parts)
- 2-3 tbsp soy sauce
- Salt + pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine the ingredients listed under "garlic butter," until all the ingredients are evenly combined. Set aside.
2. Heat a deep pan or a wok. Once hot, melt 1 tbsp of the garlic butter. Add half the rice, then add in more garlic butter. Alternate until all the rice and garlic butter is added to the wok.
3. Next, add in the cubed carrots, spring onions and the scrambled eggs. Gently stir them into the rice until evenly incorporated. Let the rice cook through on low heat until the carrots are just softened, but still have a bit to them.
4. Add in the rest of the soy sauce, salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with more green onions and serve warm!

Notes:

1. Fried rice works best with slightly dehydrated, day-old rice! However, if you don't have cooked rice on hand, you can dry it out in the oven. Cook rice as you normally would, then transfer to a baking pan. Spread the rice out in a thin layer and bake it at 200F for 30 minutes, or until it's no longer sticky. Stir the rice halfway through to dry it out evenly and prevent it from sticking to the pan.
2. I add my carrots in after the rice because I like mine a little crunchy, however if you want your carrots softer, sauté them first in the garlic butter, prior to adding the rice.
3. I've made this recipe several times, and it turned out best when the garlic butter mixture was melted prior to cooking with it! The hot butter allows the garlic and soy sauce flavours to open up and infuses a ton of flavour into the rice! It was a happy accident :)



sweet
eats

MAMA'S POUND CAKE WITH COFFEE BUTTERCREAM

The easiest, fluffiest vanilla pound cake recipe, with the perfect crumb. Mama's pound cake is the best you'll ever have . Like, ever!

INGREDIENTS:

Cake:

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt

Coffee Buttercream:

- ½ cup softened butter
- 2 cups icing sugar
- 2 tbsp cacao powder
- 1 tbsp instant coffee dissolved in 1 tbsp hot water
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp milk

Tip:

1. If you have the whipped coffee base/dalgona coffee base ready at home, substitute the instant coffee mixture for 1 tbsp whipped coffee base. It does wonders for the icing!
2. Always use room temperature ingredients!

*Yield: 2-9" round cakes OR
3-6" rounds*

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. **For the cake:** In a bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, baking powder and salt until combined. Set aside.
3. Using the paddle attachment on a stand mixer, beat the butter on medium speed for 5-7 minutes, or until fluffy. Then, pour in the sugar and beat until creamed.
4. Add eggs one at a time, beating after each addition. Add in the vanilla and mix until incorporated.
5. Gently fold in the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients, until fully incorporated. Don't over-mix!
6. Grease and flour 2-9" pans. Pour an even amount of the batter into both the pans. Bake in the oven for 40-50 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean. Cool the cake in the pans for 15 minutes, then transfer to a cooling rack and cool completely.
7. **For the icing:** Using the whisk attachment on a stand mixer, mix the ingredients listed under coffee buttercream to your desired consistency. Ice the cakes when they're cool.

Notes:

1. Every oven differs, so keep an eye on your cake. Baking times may vary based on your oven temperature and pan size!
2. I use cake baking strips around my pans, to prevent uneven baking and dry edges. They always result in perfectly baked cakes, with flat tops! I highly recommend using them, however if you don't have them handy, you can DIY your own at home! Measure enough paper towel and foil paper to wrap around your pan. Wet the paper towel, wring out excess water, fold it into a strip that's the height of your pan, then wrap the strip in foil. Wrap the foil around your pan and bake the cakes.



NUT & DATE ENERGY BALLS

These nut & date balls are filled with energy and nutrition, making them ideal as a post-workout or Iftar snack! They're also perfect for satisfying that sweet tooth - bonus points!

INGREDIENTS:

Date balls:

- 1½ cups of Medjool dates, pitted
- ¼ cup hazelnut butter
- 1½ tbsp cacao powder
- 2 tbsp chia seeds
- 2 tbsp hemp hearts
- ½ cup almonds
- ½ cup walnuts
- ½ cup shredded coconut

Topping (optional):

- Shredded coconut, cocoa powder or chopped nuts.

Tip: The cacao powder can be substituted for chocolate protein powder if you're making these as a post-workout snack!

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a food processor, add all the ingredients listed under "date balls".
2. Once the mixture is coarsely chopped and begins to come together, you're ready to start rolling.
3. Roll into small, 2" balls and set aside. You can roll the balls in shredded coconut, cocoa powder or chopped nuts! Store them in an airtight container, in the fridge for up to two weeks.

Notes:

1. This recipe is so versatile and forgiving, you can substitute any of the add-ins and play around with the measurements to your liking! You can use almond butter or peanut butter instead of hazelnut butter, or swap out the walnuts for pistachios or pecans. Add in sunflower seeds or sesame seeds if you have them on hand. I used to throw in 1 tbsp of Nutella, but since I've discovered hazelnut butter I find it does the trick!
2. This is a staple in our home for the month of Ramadhan. We love breaking our fast with them because they're so jam-packed with energy and good stuff!

RICE KRISPIES SQUARES

These cleaner Rice Krispies squares are like a hybrid between a Crunch bar and a Rice Krispies treat. They are the ultimate sweet treat and you don't have to feel guilty indulging in one!

INGREDIENTS:

Rice Krispies squares:

- 3 cups Rice Krispies (or any puffed rice cereal)
- ¾ cup hazelnut butter
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- ⅓ cup honey

Topping (optional):

- 1 cup semi-sweet/dark chocolate
- 2 tsp coconut oil
- Sea-salt flakes to top

DIRECTIONS:

1. **For the Rice Krispies squares:** In a saucepan over low heat, whisk together the hazelnut butter, coconut oil and honey until just incorporated. You don't want to heat the mixture through! Set aside and cool for 5-10 minutes.
2. In a bowl combine the Rice Krispies' and the hazelnut butter mixture. Gently stir until the cereal is evenly coated.
3. Line a 9"x13" pan with parchment paper. Spread the mixture in the prepared pan, using a spatula to gently press down and evenly flatten it.
4. **For the topping:** In a microwave or on the stove, melt the chocolate and coconut oil. Stir in 30-second intervals to keep the chocolate from burning.
5. Using an off-set spatula or spoon, spread the melted chocolate evenly over the Rice Krispies mixture, and sprinkle sea-salt flakes. Refrigerate until it's set, around 20-30 minutes. Cut into squares and enjoy! Store the bars in the refrigerator for up to 10 days (if they last that long!)

Notes:

1. You can substitute the hazelnut butter for almond butter, tahini, peanut butter or soy butter. The honey can be substituted for maple syrup, agave or coconut syrup. I've used maple syrup in the past, however the texture of the squares won't be as chewy.
2. Don't add the hot mixture to the Rice Krispies, or else they will get soft and soggy. Let the mixture cool down, then fold it into the cereal.
3. Any puffed rice cereal will do for this recipe!
4. The topping is optional, but highly recommended! It tastes SO good. Any chocolate can be substituted.



THANK YOU!

This book is dedicated to my Mama, my very own Master-Chef! Without her knowledge, love and guidance, these recipes would not have been curated (or in some cases, shared). 99% of the recipes in this book are either based off of her recipe, or inspired by her. Thank you for letting me share this small piece of the amazing and talented person that you are, with the rest of the world. Thank you for always being patient with me, sharing your love and passion for good food with me (it's a pretty big deal), teaching me your #life hacks, and for always answering my numerous FaceTime calls, when something in the kitchen just doesn't "look right". We all know how dire those moments are when you're standing by the stove, staring at the monstrosity that's ahead of you, wondering how the heck you're going to fix it. Thank you for always being my "fixer" (let's add that to the millions of other hats moms wear) and for always keeping me humble. I love you.

To my amazing husband Ali, thank you for thinking the world of me. Thank you for being my quality control officer, my editor, my strength, my cheerleader, and for always giving me a solid 10/10, even when the food is more of a 3/10. You're the person I always and forever want in my corner.

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See you all in the next one!

From my heart to yours,

Ilhaam