

CICLA VIA COOKS

A Love Letter to LA

Recipes by Rachel Burke, Meg Meo, Alex Merlino, Meisha Rainman, Aerieenne Russell, and Jennifer Woon





"CicLAvia Cooks: A Love Letter to LA" is just that; an homage to the great city where we live, work, play, eat, and cook! Los Angeles is a hub for food of all flavors and origins; from our vivid culinary scene and international eats to our abundant farmers markets and colorful neighborhood fruit trees, food is a part of the fabric of our city. We get a taste of this on CicLAvia Sundays.

Though we can't visit restaurants at a CicLAvia event right now, we have found new ways to satisfy our food cravings and support local businesses. We are patronizing new pop-ups and getting takeout from our neighborhood go-tos. We are reading cookbooks written by LA chefs. And we have been busy in our kitchens, channeling our love for LA into recipes for "CicLAvia Cooks."

What we cook in the kitchen is part of our own LA story; whether it's the meals we make as we watch our kids grow up here, or the dishes that were inspired by our favorite restaurants, the food that we love and make reflects the city that surrounds us.

We hope you enjoy these recipes as much as we do and find your own inspiration to get creative in the kitchen!

PERFECT DINER BREAKFAST

Recipe by Aerienne Russell, with tips and tricks from friends

As a lover of breakfast foods, pie, and Los Angeles history, some of my favorite haunts in the city are our classic diners. Some personal favorites include Nick's Cafe (Chinatown), the Original Pantry Cafe (DTLA), Millie's Cafe (Silver Lake), and Eat'n Park (Burbank). Of course there are so many great diners all across the city! But my faves check off my 3 rules of a good diner:

You never see the bottom of your coffee cup. The hash browns are crispy. The pies are homemade.

Throughout the safer-at-home period, I have been missing my weekend diner get-togethers with friends...plus I needed some goals to keep myself busy! One such goal I set for myself was to learn to make the perfect diner breakfast. Try it for yourself...

PERFECT BREAKFAST POTATOES

INGREDIENTS

Potatoes, peeled and diced into 1cm cubes (1 medium potato per person)
Butter (or non-dairy butter)
Oil for frying - Olive Oil, Vegetable Oil, or Canola Oil will work
Salt and Pepper
Water

Fill a large pot with enough water to fully cover the potatoes and generously salt the water (as salty as the ocean). Place over high heat and bring to a boil. Add potato cubes to boiling water and let cook until potatoes are firm, yet can be pierced with a fork. Remove from heat and drain. Add equal parts oil and butter to a large skillet (depending on how many potatoes you are using, 1-2 Tablespoons each) and heat over medium-high heat. Once oil/butter is hot, add potato cubes, turning occasionally. Fry until golden and crispy on each side. Drain cooked potatoes on paper towel. Salt and pepper to taste.

Notes: For a full diner experience, serve with a combination of the following sides: Breakfast meat or veggie breakfast meat of your choice, toast, pancakes, and fruit cup. Don't forget the bottomless coffee or orange juice!

PERFECT SCRAMBLED EGGS

What makes a perfect scrambled egg? In my mind, it should be soft, pillowy, creamy, curdy, and savory. After much experimentation and a combination of tips and tricks, I believe I have perfected the scrambled eggs. Choose quantities based on how hungry you are or how many people you are feeding.

INGREDIENTS

Eggs
Milk (or unsweetened, unflavored dairy-free milk)
Salt and Pepper
Butter (or non-dairy butter)

Place the saucepan over high heat. Let the pan get very hot. Crack the eggs into a bowl. Add a generous amount of milk (approximately 1-2 Tablespoons per egg), and salt and pepper to taste. Whisk vigorously with a fork until bubbly. Before adding eggs to the pan, lower the heat to the lowest setting. Add a nub of butter and swirl to coat the pan. Pour egg mixture into the pan and immediately begin stirring quickly with both chopsticks. (Stir in circles to create "curds" in the eggs). As the eggs begin to set, continue to fluff with the chopsticks. When the eggs are still slightly runny but have formed solid curds, turn off and remove from heat. Using the spatula, flip the eggs and allow the runny top to finish cooking.

PINE NUT SAUCE

Recipe by Rachel Burke

Adapted from the "Pine Nut Vinaigrette" recipe in
the *Six Seasons: A New Way With Vegetables* by
Joshua McFadden

Makes 1 - 1 ¼ Cup

INGREDIENTS

4-6 Oz Pine Nuts
1 Garlic Clove, smashed
¼ to ½ Teaspoon Red Chili Flakes
¼ Cup Red Wine Vinegar
2 Tablespoons Water
⅓ Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Juice of Half or Whole Lemon

I love vegetables! I love roasting and sautéing them. Leafy greens, broccolini, carrots, green beans, brussels! A simple preparation with olive oil, salt and pepper is always delicious, but what's even more delicious is adding a sauce. LA has such amazing produce year round, it's difficult to not buy at least a half a dozen seasonal vegetables while shopping at the farmers market. After making a Pine Nut Vinaigrette for a green bean / scallion dish, I had a lot left over, and ended up slathering it on every single vegetable I cooked. I ended up eating so many more vegetables because I wanted to eat this sauce! It's quick, zesty, and bright. And it really makes a simple veggie taste amazing.



Toast pine nuts: Preheat the oven to 350° F and toast the pine nuts for about 5 minutes until they are light brown. Let cool.

Make dip: In a food processor, add room temperature toasted pine nuts, smashed garlic clove, red chili flakes, red wine vinegar and two tablespoons of water. Blend together. Slowly pour in olive oil and blend until smooth.

Roast veggies and serve! Pour sauce into a bowl. Squeeze in lemon juice and stir to thin out sauce a bit. Roast and sauté all your favorite veggies and pour this on top! Or use it as a dip with raw vegetables. It's super versatile and tastes good on everything.

FUNGHI ASSOLUTI

Recipe by Alex Merlino
Inspired by the dish at Terroni in Downtown Los Angeles

Serves 2 as a main course
or 4 as a side

INGREDIENTS

3-5 Cloves Garlic, crushed, sliced or minced
1 Pound Sliced Oyster Mushrooms – substitute with Maitaki, Shiitake, Cremini, Baby Bellas, etc. Fresh is best.
½ Pound Arugula – Farmers Market fresh is best
Champagne Vinegar - substitute with White Wine Vinegar, Lemon, Rice Wine Vinegar
2-3 Slices Sourdough Bread for croutons
Olive Oil
Salt and Pepper
Parmesan Cheese for serving

In December of 2016, CicLAvia staff celebrated the holidays with a lunch at Terroni in Downtown Los Angeles. I was thrilled to discover Funghi Assoluti, Terroni's flavor-packed, baked oyster mushrooms over a bed of arugula. This coupled with an Aperol Spritz made the perfect holiday meal! Funghi Assoluti marries some of my favorite flavors in a simple, elegant, and versatile dish. My adaptation works as a main course or a tasty side. It's easy to make for one or a group and is delicious throughout the seasons. Enjoy.



Sauté Mushrooms: Sauté garlic in a generous amount of olive oil until fragrant (3 minutes), add the sliced mushrooms and sauté on medium heat for approximately 10 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Prepare arugula and croutons: While the mushrooms are sautéing, place arugula in a large serving/salad bowl. Sprinkle with a generous amount of vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper (arugula is forgiving). Set aside. Cube the bread and sauté over medium heat with olive oil, salt and pepper. Stir until brown on two sides. Set aside.

Serve! While mushrooms are still warm pour on top of arugula. Don't mix until ready to serve, the warm mushrooms will wilt the arugula. Add croutons. Shave parmesan on the top and serve.

MAGIC BEAN SOUP

Recipe by Meisha Rainman
Adapted from Pasta and Bean Soup - Cooks
Illustrated Cooks Country Magazine April/May
2008

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

4 (16 Oz) Cans Cannellini Beans,
drained and rinsed, divided
2 (14.5 Oz) Cans of Diced Tomatoes
1 Cup Frozen Spinach
8 Cups Low-sodium Chicken Broth,
divided
4 Tablespoons Olive Oil
3 Medium Onions, chopped small
8 Garlic Cloves, minced
2 Teaspoons Fresh Rosemary, chopped
Salt and Pepper
2 Cups Ditalini, or other small pasta
Grated Parmesan or Pecorino Romano
Cheese

I first made this soup when my daughter was 2 years old and a very picky eater. Before this, she had refused all beans so we called it Magic Bean Soup - first to encourage her to try it and then because she loved it so much. Ten years later, this recipe is a family favorite and in regular rotation at our house. It's a very forgiving recipe so don't be afraid to make substitutions/adjustments to best suit your taste and pantry supplies!

Make the soup: In a blender, puree half the beans, all of the tomatoes, all of the spinach, and half the broth until smooth. Set aside. Add olive oil and onions to a large dutch oven or stock pot and cook until onions are softened but not browned, stirring frequently, about 12-15 minutes. Add garlic and rosemary and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add remaining whole beans, remaining broth, entire pureed mixture, 2 teaspoons of salt, and 1 teaspoon of pepper. Stir to combine.

Bring to a boil and then reduce heat to low and simmer for at least 30 minutes. Taste before serving and adjust salt & pepper to your liking. If you have the time, I like to simmer it for 1- 2 hours and find the more time you give it the better it gets! Just stir periodically, make sure it stays at a simmer, and nothing is sticking to the bottom of the pot.

Cook pasta and serve! About 20 minutes before ready to serve, cook the pasta separately according to package instructions. Add a scoop of cooked pasta to each bowl and ladle soup over it. Top with parmesan cheese and enjoy!

Notes:

- Replace the chicken broth with vegetable broth to make this vegetarian.
- For a chunkier soup, leave half the tomatoes out of the puree and add later with the other ingredients.
- Use any greens you have on hand or leave them out entirely!
- Soup can be refrigerated up to 3 days or frozen longer but DO NOT add pasta. Store pasta in a separate container or make before serving
- Easily halve this recipe for 4 servings

PERSIMMON MUFFINS WITH PEPITA STREUSEL

Recipe by Jennifer Woon
Inspired by recipes from David Lebovitz, James
Beard, and Megan Gordon

Makes 12 Muffins

INGREDIENTS

Pepita Streusel

- 2 Tablespoons Flour
- 2 Tablespoons Brown Sugar
- ½ Teaspoon Cinnamon
- ¼ Teaspoon Salt
- 2 Tablespoons Unsalted Butter, slightly
chilled and cubed
- 1/4 Cup Pepitas
- 3 Tablespoons Rolled Oats

Persimmon Batter

- ¼ Cup Apple Juice
- ⅔ Cup Dried Cherries (or dried fruit of
your choice)
- 2 Large Hachiya Persimmons
- ¼ Cup Unsalted Butter, melted and
cooled to room temperature
- 1¾ Cup Sifted Flour
- 1 Teaspoon Baking Soda
- ¾ Teaspoon Salt
- ½ Teaspoon Nutmeg
- 1 Cup Granulated Sugar
- ¼ Cup Unsweetened Apple Sauce
- 2 Large Eggs, lightly beaten

Oftentimes people associate pumpkins with autumn, but a close second for me are persimmons highlighting the change of the season in farmers markets and grocery stores. A ripe persimmon is delicious on its own, but what better way to celebrate this fruit than in bread. Inspired by David Lebovitz who adapted his persimmon bread recipe from James Beard's "Beard on Bread". I decided to put my own small twist to this sweet recipe and adapted it for my family for the holidays. The recipe I use for pepita streusel to top my persimmon muffins is adapted from a talented baker, Megan Gordon, which can be found on her blog, A Sweet Spoonful: <https://asweetspoonful.com/>. It provides a nutty, sweet crunchiness that makes the first, second, third and so forth bite worth the extra step each time. If pepitas or streusel are not something you enjoy, no worries as this muffin tastes wonderful on its own!



Preheat the oven to 375° F. Butter muffin cup tin and lightly flour the interior cups (shake excess flour out), or line muffin cups with cupcake liners.

Make the pepita streusel: Combine flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Mix until combined. Add and cut the cubes of butter into the mixture until resembling coarse crumbs. Add the pepitas and rolled oats. Using your hands, gently squeeze the mixture together to resemble coarse crumbs. Set the pepita streusel inside the refrigerator to chill.

Make the permission batter: Prepare the dried cherries by soaking them in the ¼ cup of apple juice for 10 minutes. Puree 2 large Hachiya persimmons in a blender or food processor. Measure out 1 cup. Combine the sifted flour, baking soda, salt, nutmeg, and sugar in a large bowl. Create a well in the center of the large bowl and stir in each item: butter, applesauce, eggs, and 1 cup persimmon purée until just combined. Add in the dried cherries with the apple juice. Mix until just combined.

Bake: Spoon the muffin mixture into the muffin tins; about ⅔ - ¾ per cup. Top with the pepita streusel. Bake for 25 - 30 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool muffins until room temperature for best results.

PUMPKIN SPICE TOAST WITH ORANGE ZEST

Recipe by Jennifer Woon

Serves 1-2

INGREDIENTS

2 Tablespoons Unsalted Butter,
softened
at room temperature
 $\frac{3}{4}$ Teaspoon Pumpkin Spice (you can
buy it or make your own recipe)
1 Teaspoon Brown Sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ Teaspoon Granulated Sugar
 $\frac{1}{3}$ Teaspoon Orange Zest (or to taste)
2 Slices of your favorite bread (Milk
bread is my favorite one to use for
this recipe!)

Inspired by the various brown sugar toast recipes that came my way through social media (originally starting with the Youtube channel yumyum cooking: <https://youtu.be/GVbG35DeMto>), and my love for exploring bakeries across Los Angeles, this simple yet flavorful toast found a home in my heart.

Prep: Mix thoroughly the butter, pumpkin spice, brown sugar, granulated sugar, and orange zest in a small bowl. Spread the butter mixture over both sides of your slices of bread (don't forget the edges).

Toast: Heat your skillet over medium heat and place both slices of bread into it. Toast for ~45 seconds, or until golden brown and the edges are crisp. Once one side is done, flip the bread slices to toast the other side. Remove the bread slices from the skillet and enjoy. (Optional: a side of orange marmalade, or a light spread of cream cheese take this indulgent treat to sweeter level!)

MEYER LEMON CREAM PIE WITH CHOCOLATE- ROSEMARY CRUST

Recipe by Meg Meo
Adapted from "The Lime Pie That Saved Us"
recipe in the cookbook [Dappled](#) by Nicole
Rucker (of Fat and Flour at Grand Central Market)

Makes one 9-inch pie

INGREDIENTS

Chocolate Rosemary Graham Crust

9 Full Sheets (135g) Graham Crackers
3 Tablespoons Granulated Sugar
¼ Cup Cocoa Powder
1 Tablespoons Dried or Fresh Rosemary
½ Teaspoon Salt
6 Tablespoons Unsalted Butter, melted

Lemon Filling

One-14oz can of Condensed Milk
4 Large Yolks
Zest from 3 Meyer Lemons
½ Cup Meyer Lemon Juice, from
approximately 3 Lemons (regular
lemons will work also!)
¼ Teaspoon Salt

Whipped Cream

1 Cup Whipping Cream
¼ Cup Yogurt
2 Tablespoons Granulated Sugar
A Pinch of Salt

Making pie is my favorite way to get creative in the kitchen, and there is no better place than LA to find inspiration for what kind of pie to bake. Year round, you can walk in any neighborhood in LA and see pie ingredients growing in front yards—citrus in the winter, pomegranates and figs in the fall, strawberry plants in the spring, and rosemary everywhere all the time. Making pie is a celebration of LA. Make a crust, pile it high with fruit, and voilà, you have LA in a tin. Inspired by all the citrus trees I saw when I first moved to LA, I started growing my own little Meyer lemon tree. Five years later, I've harvested a total of 5 lemons, but one day, I hope it produces enough for me to bake this pie all year long.



Preheat the oven to 325°F and grease a 9-inch pie tin.

Make the graham crust: In a food processor, combine graham crackers, sugar, cocoa powder, rosemary, salt, and melted butter until the mixture is smooth and comes together. Transfer the mixture to the pie tin, pressing the mixture evenly into the bottom and sides. Bake in the oven for 12-15 minutes or until the crust feels firm to the touch. Once baked, transfer to a wire rack and cool.

Make the lemon filling: Whisk together the condensed milk, yolks, lemon zest, lemon juice, and salt until smooth and the zest is evenly distributed. Transfer the filling to the cooled shell. Bake for 15-20 minutes in a 325°F oven or until the mixture wobbles ever so slightly in the center and the edges are set. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely, about 2 hours.

Make whipped cream and serve! Combine whipping cream, yogurt, sugar, and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment. Whisk on medium speed until it is thick and billowy. To test if the whipped cream is ready, lift out the whisk attachment, and the whipped cream will form peaks that will bend slightly at the top. Make sure not to over whip the cream; it should still be slightly pourable. Top the pie with the whipped cream and refrigerate for at least 3 hours before serving.