

10 real-food
PARTY RECIPES
for *every* eater

by *Katie Kimball*

compliments of
KitchenStewardship.com

It's Party Time!

I promised you my secret strategy for getting your own kids to eat something healthy when faced with a table laden with junk food and I won't make you wait another minute.

You're welcome to steal it for your next party. It's very simple, only two steps:

1. Bring something you know your kids love (that follows your family's eating philosophy)
2. Make it an appetizer.

If the kids are allowed to eat as much as they want when you arrive and your dish is immediately available, they'll fill up just a bit on the good stuff. Mission accomplished.

These 10 recipes (+ 5 bonuses!) are some of our family's favorites, both for day-to-day eating (the cabbage salad is one) and for hosting or contributing to pot-luck parties. Some of them mimic popular processed foods and will thus be recognizable to (and hopefully enjoyed by) even mainstream eaters who would never expect that one could make a Mexican cheesy dip without Velveeta.

But now that this handy little book is in your hands – er, on your screen – you know the secret and can wow everyone in attendance.

If you're new to real food, you might appreciate some short introductions, like these:

- [10 Baby Steps to Frugal Real Food & Natural Living](#)
- [Top 3 Real Foodie Tips](#)
- [Why You Don't Want to Eat Artificial Sweeteners](#)
- [Real Fats: Skip the Trans, Say No to Polys, Focus on Traditional Fats](#)

- Back to Basics: Real Food (our original 10 baby steps from a new perspective)

Enjoy the recipes and your time with family and friends, and be sure to drop by Kitchen Stewardship or find us on Facebook for more great family-friendly, real food recipes plus time-saving tips for the kitchen and science geek research to help you figure out why to eat what you eat.

Katie

Bacon Deviled Eggs

It's a party appetizer twist on "bacon and eggs" that truly can't go wrong. You'll love having the excuse to cook a pound of bacon for breakfast or dinner a few days before your party!

Makes 12 servings.



Ingredients:

- 6 eggs
- 3 strips bacon, cooked crispy and diced (save the fat)
- 2 Tbs. homemade mayonnaise
- 2 Tbs. melted bacon fat
- 1 Tbs. Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt (start with 1/4 tsp. and taste)
- paprika, fresh parsley, chives or sliced green onion to garnish

Method:

1. Hard boil eggs.

- My method: *If your eggs are quite fresh, try putting an ever-so-slight crack in each shell by tapping the end before boiling, and add salt to the water so the eggs stay in their shells. Cover eggs with cold water. Bring to a boil, then remove from heat and cover the pot. (Turn the stove off, too.)*

- After 12 minutes, drain the water and cover with cold water, changing water a few times until the eggs are cool enough to handle.
 - Peel immediately – peeling warm eggs is easier than cold.
2. Cut around the egg whites the long way and remove the yolks to a mixing bowl. (This part is easier done once the eggs are cold.)
 3. Add the mayo, bacon fat, mustard, bacon and salt to the egg yolks, omitting about 1/3 of the bacon dices.
 4. Either use a hand blender to mix or mash with a fork or potato masher; add additional mayo if necessary.
 5. Refill the egg white halves with the mashed yolks. I prefer using a frosting applicator to do the job easily and with a fancy flair.
 6. Top with the reserved bacon bits and your chosen garnish, all of which are meant more to look pretty than to add flavor.

Notes:

- An even more bacon-y upgrade: Use melted bacon grease for a portion of the oil when you make the mayo, too. Super yum on sandwiches!
- Don't be afraid of bacon fat. It's nearly 50% monounsaturated fat, the same healthy fats as in avocados. Do try to source pastured bacon from happy pigs, processed without nitrites or nitrates.
- Any extra bacon grease is fine for a few days at least at room temperature, although I store mine in the fridge for long term. It's lovely for sauteeing green beans, asparagus and more.
- If you don't or won't make homemade mayonnaise, any mayo will do – but try to find one with wholesome ingredients if you can, m'kay?
- Adapted from *Civilized Caveman*

Supporting Recipe: Homemade Mayonnaise

Makes about a cup.

Ingredients:

- 2-3 egg yolks at room temperature
- 1/2 tsp. dry mustard powder (or 2 tsp. yellow mustard if no dry)
- 1/2-1 Tbs. apple cider vinegar OR lemon juice
- 1 tsp. sugar (or any sweetener, optional)
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder, onion powder and/or a dash paprika, optional
- 1 c. extra virgin olive oil or blend of virgin olive oil and refined sesame oil (or any liquid oil – even 1/3 melted bacon grease!)



Method:

1. Using an immersion blender, blend everything but the oil in a tall cylinder like a pint or quart wide-mouthed jar. (It won't work in a bowl.)
2. Add the oil, pouring somewhat slowly while blending constantly. It will “emulsify,” which means the egg yolks, vinegar or lemon juice, and oil will react to make the liquid become solid. So cool to watch!
3. If you add too much oil or too fast, your emulsification might break. It goes back to oil again. If that happens, crack a new egg yolk into a new jar, add a bit of lemon juice or

You could also use a food processor or blender, but you have to really, really pour the oil in slowly.

vinegar, and pour the broken emulsification in as if it's the oil – slowly! – until it thickens again. Then don't add any more!

Notes:

- See a video of how the emulsification works right [here](#).
- To lacto-ferment the mayo for a longer life and some bonus probiotics, add 1/2-1 Tbs. whey (drained from yogurt). Allow mayo jar to sit at room temperature for about 7 hours, then refrigerate to store.
- Here's [how to get some whey](#) to ferment.

Addictive Creamy Cheesy Chicken Dip

This is “that dish” that the family always begs me to bring to parties. I've heard that it's unwise to sit in front of the mini slow cooker because you might just eat your way to the bottom. Just hearsay though...I'm always glad if there are leftovers, because that's dinner the next night, baby!



Makes 6 cups; serves many!

Ingredients:

- 1 small onion, diced (or ~1 Tbs. dried minced onion flakes)
- ½ green or red bell pepper, diced
- ½-1 whole fresh jalapeno, diced, to taste
- 1 clove crushed garlic or ¼ tsp. garlic powder (optional)
- 2 Tbs. butter
- ¼ c. flour (3 Tbs. arrowroot or corn starch for GF)
- ¾ c. milk
- ¾ c. chicken broth
- ½ tsp. poultry seasoning
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 8 oz. cream cheese or 1 c. yogurt cheese, softened

“Incredibly tasty!! I LOVE this stuff, can't seem to get enough!” –from a recipe tester

- 2 c. cooked, shredded chicken (see note)
- 8 oz. sour cream
- 8 oz. cheddar cheese, cut into 1-cm. cubes (sharp is best)
- 4 oz. jalapeno jack cheese, cubed
- salt to taste – often needs 1/4-1/2 tsp., especially if you use homemade chicken broth

Method:

1. (A day or two in advance, set up yogurt cheese to strain.)
2. In a medium pot, melt the butter over medium heat, then add the fresh onion (if using) and both the bell and spicy peppers.
3. Sauté until limp, then add the garlic for the last minute (if using fresh).
4. Add the flour and stir around in the hot butter (it will be thick), then cook for a minute to get the flour taste out. (See below for GF instructions.)
5. Add all the milk, broth, poultry seasoning, salt and pepper, plus the powdered onion or garlic (if using).
6. Turn to medium-high heat and bring to a boil, stirring regularly. The sauce should thicken up within a few minutes or less.
7. *GF adaptation: Reserve a half cup of cold milk. Pour the remaining milk and broth into the pot once the onions and peppers have softened. Bring to a boil. Combine arrowroot or corn starch with the cold milk and whisk or shake in a jar to mix thoroughly. Pour the mixture into the boiling liquid and stir, adding spices once it's thickened.*
8. Add the yogurt or cream cheese, chicken, sour cream, and the two cubed cheeses. Cook over medium-low to melt everything, stirring often and scraping the bottom of the pot.
9. Finish by tasting and adding salt as necessary, often up to ½ teaspoon. If it's lacking something, add either salt or jalapeño, or both.
10. Serve HOT with homemade crackers (recipe below), cut raw veggies, or tortilla chips.

Notes:

- Here's how to make yogurt cheese – it's super simple, I promise.
- The chicken needs to be boiled so it shreds well, not just baked chicken breasts. They don't taste or act the same. A perfect opportunity to use slightly mushy chicken from making homemade chicken stock, if you want my humble opinion.
- For those lovers of spicy cheese among you, add an entire extra jalapeño. :)
- A mini slow cooker (or full sized even) is a good way to serve this dip.
- Any leftovers can be frozen for 6 months or refrigerated for up to 4-5 days.

Homemade Wheat Thin Style Crackers (including GF version)

These crackers have been our family's favorites for years, so nailing the gluten-free version may have been my happiest kitchen accomplishment of 2014. They're as addicting as the spicy chicken dip from the previous recipe, so they go great together...and they disappear fast, so I recommend making at least a double batch as long as you're messing up your kitchen. *See the notes for a soaked version.*

Makes about 3 cups of crackers.

Ingredients:

- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ c. whole wheat flour (spelt flour, traditional whole wheat or white whole wheat OR GF flour blend, see notes)
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbs. honey or any other sweetener, liquid or granulated
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. paprika
- 4 Tbs. cold butter or solid coconut oil or lard or palm shortening
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. water
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. vanilla
- salt for topping

Method:

1. Combine the flour, granulated sweetener (if using), salt and paprika in a medium bowl.
2. Using a pastry blender or two butter knives, cut the fat thoroughly into the dry mixture until it looks like large crumbs, no bigger than a pea. Some people like a food processor to cut in the fat, but I prefer to save dishes and keep it all in one bowl.
3. Combine the water, vanilla, and honey (if using) in a measuring cup.

4. Add slowly to the flour mixture, watching for all the flour to be incorporated. If you don't need all the water, that's okay.

5. Mix well until combined, but only until the dough comes together, to assure the most tender crackers.

6. Preheat the oven to 400F.

7. Cover all your surfaces with flour and roll the dough as evenly as you can.

8. Use parchment paper and cookie sheets or two ungreased baking stones to roll one quarter or up to half the dough at a time, depending on how large your baking surface will be and how thin you can get the dough. If using parchment paper, you can roll out on the counter OR just use the bottom of your cookie sheet for both rolling and baking – then you don't have to transfer the parchment from the counter to the pan.

9. Roll from the center to the edges, going in all directions (away from you, toward your body, left and right). Keep rolling until the dough is as thin as humanly possible without tearing. You might flip the dough to make it easier to roll, but I don't always have to.

10. Use a pizza cutter or sharp knife and cut the dough into squares or triangles, about 1 ½ inches each. If using parchment paper on the counter, move the whole sheet to the trays before scoring. Fork pokes make them look extra authentic.

Super crispy cracker trick:

Just bake them for 5-6 minutes, and even if they're still soft, turn off the oven and leave the crackers in while the oven cools. In a few hours or overnight, you'll have perfectly crispy, crumble in your mouth crackers!

Note: Electric ovens continue to generate heat after being turned off, so if you're on electric, check the crackers for extra browning after 10 minutes or so. Alternately, head the problem off at the pass by holding the oven door open a minute after you turn off the heat.

11. Sprinkle the squares lightly with salt. Repeat with the remaining pieces of dough.

12. Bake the crackers, one sheet at a time, until crisp and browned, 5 to 10 minutes. Baking stones take a bit longer. (If you want to bake two trays at once, you can position your racks on the very top and bottom of the oven, and switch the trays halfway through the baking time.)

13. As the thinner crackers on the edges begin to brown, remove them and return the remaining crackers to the oven to finish baking. These crackers bake quickly, so watch them closely – sometimes 30 seconds can turn them from golden brown to toast!

14. Cool completely before storing in an airtight container.

From a recipe tester: *My husband's comment (and he has been avoiding gluten for a while) was, "Wow, I finally get to eat a cracker that tastes like something other than glue."*

Notes:

- *Make your own GF flour blend:* Mix 2 c. brown rice flour, 2 c. freshly ground buckwheat flour, 2 c. sorghum flour and 2 1/2 c. arrowroot starch. This blend worked great in these crackers, plus our favorite [pumpkin muffins](#) and [pancakes](#). (Those muffins would be a great addition to a fall party, by the way, along with [crispy apple chips](#) and warm homemade applesauce!) *If you don't want to commit to a big batch of GF flour, you can use a heaping half cup of each of the three flours and then 1/2 cup + 3 Tbs. arrowroot for a double batch of this recipe.*
- For extra stability if baking gluten-free – although none of our testers had trouble with crumbly dough or crackers – you could add 1/4 tsp. xanthan gum or powdered psyllium husk to the dry ingredients.

- *Soaked grain adaptation:* Soaking crackers to improve digestion is super easy. Simply mix up the dough using whey drained from yogurt in place of half or all of the water. Leave the dough to soak on the counter overnight or at least 12 hours. Some say salt has no place in soaking grains, so you can absolutely omit the salt in the dough and then knead it in thoroughly just before baking. This method is effective with both whole wheat and whole grain GF flours.
- If you love the idea of making packaged foods from scratch, my eBook *Better Than a Box* has over 200 pages of recipes and tutorials to help you make your *own* favorite recipes without any boxes, bottles or cans. Be sure to use the coupon that came with your party package!

Creamy Avocado Dip

Even folks who don't like avocados or guacamole enjoy this dip! If you use yogurt cheese, it's a great way to get in some surprising probiotics. If you use goat cheese, it's a nice mild presentation of what can be an overwhelming flavor.

Makes about a cup.



Ingredients:

- 1-3 cloves garlic
- 1 avocado
- 1/2 c. yogurt cheese (or 4 oz. soft goat cheese)
- 2-3 Tbs. lemon juice
- (optional) 1/4 tsp. lemon zest
- 1/2 tsp. salt (omit with goat cheese; add salt to taste)
- 1/4 c. fresh parsley or cilantro (or about 1 Tbs. dried)

Method:

1. Whiz the garlic in a food processor first to mince, then add the avocado, yogurt cheese/goat cheese, lemon juice and salt. Process everything until smooth. (An immersion blender works great as well if you mince the garlic separately – or a fork in a pinch!)
2. Stir in the herbs.
3. Serve with carrot sticks, sliced bell peppers and other vegetables for dipping. Also good on steak or fajitas – what else can you experiment with?

Notes:

- How to make yogurt cheese.
- For kids especially, yogurt cheese is much, much milder than using goat cheese, but goat cheese will add a certain sophistication to your party.
- Cream cheese is a decent substitute for yogurt cheese as well if you're in a hurry and don't like goat cheese, and for dairy-free families, one tester had great success with a nut cheese.
- Variations: Add 1-2 Tbs. of pesto and top with tomatoes for a new twist.
- *Adapted from Food with Kid Appeal.*

Cabbage Feta Salad

This simple salad goes together in minutes and is a welcome change from a lettuce salad, plus cabbage is incredibly frugal and keeps in the fridge for a really long time. Cool, crisp, with a little bite, cabbage salad will refresh you, even if you are not a coleslaw fan.

Serves 4 or more.



Ingredients:

- 1/4 head cabbage
- 1/4 red onion, diced or thinly sliced
- optional: red or orange bell pepper, diced or very thinly sliced, to taste
- optional: shredded carrots
- 2-3 Tbs. extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)
- 1/2-1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, crushed or 1/4 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp. salt (more to taste)
- 1/2 tsp. dried dill weed (more to taste)
- crumbled feta or goat cheese (at least 1/4 cup)
- optional: sunflower seeds
- freshly ground black pepper

Method:

1. Shred cabbage into thin ribbons with a sharp knife. Place in a large bowl.
2. Mix in red onion and optional peppers and/or carrots, adding more to taste if you'd like. (For kids, omit the onion and offer it to top individual salads instead.)

3. Drizzle EVOO and vinegar on top and mix well until satisfied with the saturation. Add more to taste. (Feel free to whisk the “dressing” ingredients – oil, vinegar and spices – together in a separate bowl and then pour over the vegetables. I just like fewer dishes...)

4. Sprinkle garlic, salt and dill over the top and mix in thoroughly.

5. Add feta or goat cheese to taste (I leave it right on top without stirring). May want to offer additional cheese at the table for individual salads.

6. Serve with optional sunflower seeds and freshly ground black pepper.

From a recipe tester: *My cabbage dreading husband said "Now THIS is how I like cabbage."*

Notes:

- This salad is best served about an hour after making it – that gives enough time for the flavors to meld but not so long that the cabbage is getting soggy.
- Store leftovers in the refrigerator – good after a day, okay after two days, and getting old and not-so-tasty after that.
- Feel free to experiment with add-ins: Some recipe testers skipped the onion, some added diced fresh tomato, and some thought other nuts, like almonds or pecans, would be lovely in place of the sunflower seeds. Offer on the side instead of incorporating and everyone can try something different once the cabbage is “dressed.”
- *Alternative oils and vinegars may be used as well; one tester enjoyed the salad with coconut oil (bring to room temperature to un-solidify that oil); another liked red wine vinegar instead of balsamic.*

Cheesy Taco Dip

This is a weapon in your fight against Velveeta and other fake cheeses – will your guests be convinced that this from-scratch version of a classic party dip is as good as the one made with the yellow bricks of processed cheese product? That's my vote...

Makes about 2 cups.

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbs. butter
- 3 Tbs. flour OR for GF, 2 Tbs. arrowroot starch or corn starch
- 1/8 tsp. pepper
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 c. whole milk
- 1/2-1 c. shredded cheese, to taste (sharp cheddar, Mexican blend, etc.)
- 1/2 c. salsa (choose your heat level, add more to taste)
- optional: 1/2 c. prepared taco meat
- optional: 1/4 tsp. salt
- optional toppings: fresh diced onion, bell peppers, jalapeños, and cilantro



From a recipe tester:
"Amazingly delicious! My husband said it's the best non-fake cheese sauce ever."

Method:

1. In a heavy-bottomed pot, melt the butter over medium heat.

2. Add the flour (not the starch, see next point) and stir over the heat for at least a minute to cook the floury taste out. (The texture will be crumbly/solid, don't be alarmed.)
3. *GF version: Add the milk and seasonings at this point, holding out 1/3 c. of cold milk. Mix that milk thoroughly with the starch and pour into the boiling pot, stirring often over medium-high to high heat. It should thicken up within a minute or so, then turn down the heat and continue with the cheese step.*
4. Add the pepper, garlic powder and milk all at once.
5. Cook over medium heat, whisking frequently to incorporate the flour into the milk and to prevent scorching, until the milk comes to a gentle boil.
6. Cook and stir while bubbly for at least a minute and the sauce will start to thicken up.
7. Add cheese. Taste. Add more if necessary.
8. With heat on low, stir in salsa and meat (if desired) and heat through.
9. If your meat and cheese are salty enough, you may not need the bit of salt, but taste and see. If it seems "flat" stir in 1/4 tsp. salt.
10. Best served warm, either from the stovetop or in a mini slow cooker.
11. Serve with tortilla chips, carrot or celery sticks or other munchy dippers.

Notes:

- This dip is a great excuse to make tacos earlier in the week for the family so you have leftover taco meat ready. If you sauté an onion in with your taco meat, it adds even more to this recipe.
- Add heat if desired with some finely chopped jalapeño peppers or color/ flavor with smoked paprika. A good salsa really makes this recipe a winner.
- To make a thinner cheese "sauce" that is pourable, like for nachos or cooked veggies, reduce the flour or starch by a tablespoon.
- *For the GF version:* Arrowroot does make a very thick, sort of "stringy" texture when used in dairy. With the cheese and other stuff in there, our family thinks it turns out just fine, and it's still not too thick on the plate. If you're unsure, start with

1 Tbs. and adjust to thicken if needed before adding the cheese (always mix the starch in with cold milk before stirring into the pot). You can also thin it out at the end with more milk or butter.

- *Time-saving tip:* As long as you're making taco meat, make plenty of extra and freeze in servings that fit your family's needs. Super quick meal!
- *Frugal tip:* I use cooked lentils to make up 1/4-1/2 of my taco meat. If I'm browning 2 pounds of meat, I'll add about 2-4 c. cooked lentils and another 1-2 Tbs. taco seasoning.

Supporting recipe: Homemade Guacamole

This is the appetizer my 8-year-old son has taken charge of and makes himself, with nary a measuring spoon in sight. You'll love the simplicity and your guests will love the options for dipping their chips and carrots.



Ingredients:

- 1 medium avocado
- 1/2 – 1 Tbs. lime or lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 – 1 tsp. adobo seasoning (recipe below)

Method:

1. Wash and pit the avocado. Scrape out into a bowl – some say you should use a fork or spoon and gradually scrape the avocado flesh bit by bit out of the half shell, and then you won't have to do any further smashing to make the guacamole.

2. Add the lime juice, salt, and adobo – the smaller amount of each one – and mix thoroughly. If you haven't scraped gradually, try an immersion blender or food processor for the job if you like power tools, or a potato masher or fork does just as well.

3. Taste and adjust seasonings to your liking. After a few times of practice, you'll probably be able to eye up the measurements on everything. For example, filling the dent left by the pit in half the avocado is just right to measure lime juice. Fill and be done.

4. Serve with tortilla chips and salsa, of course, or better yet, carrot sticks and other veggies.

Notes:

- Avocados can brown pretty fast and look less than appetizing. Avoid brown guac by using avocados that are just ripe enough (squeeze near the stem just like you would a pear; don't wait until the whole thing is soft), adding the citrus juice as soon as possible, leaving the pit in for storage, and most importantly, lay plastic wrap or waxed paper directly touching the top of the guac so air can't flow and touch it at all. Make no more than 24 hours in advance.
- To serve guests, top with chopped tomato, fresh cilantro, and/or red onion.
- Frugal tip: Look for bags of limes on sale or on the reduced produce rack. Freeze fresh lime juice in 1 Tbs. servings in ice cube trays. The cubes are little enough that after just 5 minutes or so out of the freezer, even a hand blender can usually crush them up.

Supporting Recipe: Adobo Seasoning

Ingredients

- 1 Tbs. + 1 tsp. Mexican oregano*
- 1 Tbs. each:
 - cumin
 - garlic powder
 - onion powder
 - black pepper
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 Tbs. salt, optional

Method

1. Blend all the spices together in a jar.
2. Mark your container to remind yourself whether you used the salt or not; you don't want to double up on salt when you make guacamole!
3. You might need up to 1 1/4 teaspoons adobo for one avocado if you include the salt in the blend.

Notes

- * If you don't have Mexican oregano, use regular oregano, but only use 1 Tbs.
- Try on grilled meat, bean side dishes with Mexican food, or as a less spicy alternative to taco seasoning.

Black Bean Fudgy Brownies

Dessert recipes are a dime a dozen, but a verging-on-healthy dessert that is both easy and inexpensive to make that everyone still recognizes and enjoys? Not as easy to find. That's why it's the only dessert in the book – I figure you probably have a repertoire of sweets and treats you love to make anyway.

Makes 16 squares.

Ingredients:

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ c. cooked black beans, or one can, drained and rinsed well
- 3 eggs (or 2 large eggs)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. melted butter or coconut oil, either refined or unrefined
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. cocoa powder
- a pinch of salt (if using home-cooked beans, none for canned beans)
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. honey OR $\frac{3}{4}$ c. sugar or sucanat
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. chocolate chips (optional, but helpful)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c. walnuts (optional)

Method:

1. Grease an 8x8 glass baking dish.
2. In a food processor, blend everything but the chocolate chips and walnuts until absolutely, totally smooth.
3. Fold in the chocolate chips and nuts (or you can sprinkle these on top in the pan).
4. Pour into the greased pan and bake in a preheated 350F oven for 30-40 minutes.

5. The brownies are done when a toothpick or knife inserted comes out clean, more or less. Watch the edges for blackening/drying out if you're unsure.

6. Store at room temperature for a few days, but any longer than that demands cold storage for these goodies.

Notes:

- I don't recommend previously frozen home-cooked beans. You can get very good results with home-cooked beans, but the brownies get a little chalky if the beans have been frozen.
- The recipe can be doubled, but only if you have a food processor larger than 7 cups.
- The brownies might be able to be made in a blender, but you'll need to coax the beans to completely blend by stopping often and pushing down with a spatula. Don't add liquid to make it happen though; that would mess up your final product.
- *Recipe adapted from Natural Fertility and Wellness.*

Homemade Ginger Ale

A homemade soda is such fun to serve to guests, and for this one, you don't need any fancy equipment, processed sugary syrups or even club soda. It's refreshing and bubbly with simple sparkling mineral water and fits any season or climate.

Makes at least 12-16 servings.

Ingredients:

- 2 c. chopped fresh ginger root
- 1 Tbs. grated lime peel or 1-2 Tbs. lime juice
- 4 c. water
- 3/4 c. sucanat or 1/2 c. honey*
- Sparkling water (like Perrier or other brands)
- optional: clear stevia drops



Method:

1. Peel the fresh ginger root. If you've never done this before, I recommend cutting off all the "knobs" and using a good veggie peeler or a paring knife on the straightest parts, then a regular spoon to peel the little knobs you cut off.
2. Chop or slice all the parts until you have 2 cups. See notes for how to store extra ginger.
3. Combine the ginger, lime, and water in a pot and heat just to a boil, then turn the heat down to low.
4. Add the sweetener and mix thoroughly. Simmer for 15-30 minutes, uncovered, stirring often at first to make sure the sweetener dissolves instead of sticking to the

bottom of your pot. This will get all the lovely flavors from the ginger and lime to infuse the water and create a sort of “simple syrup” with the sweetener, and you may find that some of the water reduces (evaporates) to thicken it up. You may even want to turn the heat to medium for the last 5 minutes to evaporate a bit more water, and if you'd like it very thick and concentrated, boil over medium for about 20 minutes, either before or after straining out the ginger.

5. Turn off the heat and allow to cool until you can safely strain it. Pour the contents of the pot through a strainer into a glass jar for storage. Discard the ginger and lime peels or reuse for a batch of ginger tea, boiling them in water and then simmering on low for another 30-60 minutes and drinking warm.

6. Keep in the refrigerator for up to one month.

7. *Make the ginger ale by the glass:* Mix 2-3 tablespoons of the ginger syrup into an 8-ounce glass full of ice and top off with sparkling water (about 3/4 cup). Add drops of stevia to taste if necessary.

From a recipe tester: *“Tastes very similar to store-bought ginger ale.”*

Notes:

- * This amount of sweetener is definitely a “light” version that may not fit most guests' tastes. I chose to add 3-5 drops of clear liquid stevia or an unrefined brown stevia to each glass. You could also add honey by the glass or simply use up to 1 cup honey or 1 1/4 cups sucanat from the start.
- If you have extra from the ginger root you purchased, just freeze it either peeled or unpeeled. If you freeze slices or chunks, you can use it to make ginger tea. If you freeze the whole knob, you can grate it on a microplane while frozen and it works wonderfully for anything! More [here](#) on freezing, storing and using fresh ginger.
- For an “adult drink,” certainly you can add a splash (or a shot) of vodka, rum, etc. Have fun!
- Garnish with lime wedges or twists if you like.

- If you have expectant mothers at your party, this recipe should be great to stave off nausea.
- *Green tea variation:* Steep two green tea bags in one half of the syrup for a few minutes to make a green tea ginger ale.

Fruity Agua Fresca {Framework Recipe}

If you're throwing a summer party, skip the soda/sherbet punch bowl. This fruit-based recipe will allow you to use any fruit that's in season and serve a gorgeous, refreshing, summery drink your guests are sure to love.

A “framework” recipe means that you have lots of options for flavors and ranges given on all the ingredients. I recommend trying a small batch with 3 cups fruit and tasting as you add each ingredient. It's a fun activity for kids to help you hit it just right!

Ingredients:

- 6-8 c. cubed fruit (watermelon, cantaloupe or other melon, strawberries, papaya, kiwi, pineapple, peaches, mango, fresh berries, even cucumbers, ETC.)
- 1-3 Tbs. honey or 10+ drops clear liquid stevia
- 1-4 c. water
- optional: 1-4 Tbs. lime juice or lemon juice

Method:

1. Place the cubed fruit in a blender and blend to a puree (frozen fruit, thawed, works great). If you need to add some water, depending on the power of your blender, that's fine.

2. (Optional – you can choose a thicker or thinner agua fresca by skipping this step if you like.) Pour puree into a fine mesh strainer OR a colander lined with a tea towel or cheesecloth, doubled. Place it over a bowl or large glass measuring cup and allow to strain for about 10 minutes. You can speed it along by pressing gently with a spatula or large spoon. If using cloth, squeeze the last bit of juice out. Discard the pulp or use in a smoothie or add to plain yogurt.

3. You should have between 2-4 cups of “juice” at this point. Taste a small sip (but don't be discouraged, a little sweetener goes a long way and may be needed depending on the fruit used).
4. Add at least one cup of water.
5. Add some sweetener, 1 Tbs. at a time, and taste. (If your honey is thick, use the blender to incorporate.)
6. Add more water if you'd like. As soon as I reminded myself, “This is supposed to be flavored water, not juice,” I was able to enjoy the subtle flavors more and not seek “sweet juice” flavor.
7. The lime juice can make a *massive* difference in the overall taste and I highly recommend trying some especially with any melon, papaya, or mango. Just add a tiny splash to a taster glass if you're unsure about changing the flavor in your whole batch. Two of my neighborhood testers liked the watermelon agua fresca much better with lime, as did I, one liked the straight-fruit version, and the 2-year-old wanted “more” of all kinds. :)
8. Serve over ice.
9. Make it pretty with mint leaves and/or lime wedges or curly twists of lime peel to serve.
10. Be sure to write down what you did once you love it so you can repeat it with future batches!

Notes:

- I first came across the “auga fresca” idea at [Simple Bites](#), where Aimee also shares lots of ideas for non-alcoholic summery drinks, although I've since looked at at least a dozen recipes to get a feel for how people make it and create the framework. They ranged in ratio of fruit to water from 8 c. fruit + 1 c. water all the way to 3 c. fruit + 8 c. water.
- Click the link above for a demo recipe if you simply don't like experimenting in the kitchen. Aimee will give you exact measurements. :)

Homemade Irish Cream

For a fall or winter party, a homemade creamy adult beverage adds just the right ambiance along with a bottle of good red wine. Plan ahead for this one as it takes a week for the Irish Cream to “rest” before drinking.

Makes 6 cups, at least 12-16 servings.

Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 2 c. homemade sweetened condensed milk (recipe below)
- 1 tsp. instant coffee
- 2 tsp. chocolate syrup (recipe below if you want homemade)
- 2 c. vodka or Irish whiskey (any brand)
- 2 c. heavy cream (mine was raw)
- Dark glass bottles*

* If you can't source dark glass bottles, try looking for pasta sauce in brown jars. You could also cover clear glass jars with foil or paper for storage and serve in something more attractive. I've used large vanilla bottles, reused liquor bottles or darker wine bottles, even beer bottles, all washed excruciatingly well, of course.

Method:

1. Sterilize the bottles. You have 3 options:
 - Run through your dishwasher with a heated or sanitizing drying cycle.
 - Boil in a pot of water for about 15 minutes (the water should fill the bottles or jars and also submerge them). Pad the bottom of the pot with a folded towel so nothing breaks. If you have labels on the bottles, they'll likely come off during the boil, which is handy. Use immediately or make sure they dry completely before putting lids on for a future date. I had some bottles without lids and simply used rubber bands to affix foil or waxed paper over the top for storage.

- Bake in an oven at 200F for at least 20 minutes, once they are completely cleaned and dry already. Make sure there aren't any plastic caps, rings or labels left on.
- 2. Beat eggs until thick and lemon colored. This is achieved fairly easily with a whisk, but a hand blender, full-sized blender or whisk attachment to a stand mixer does the trick even better.
- 3. Slowly add all the other ingredients, beating or blending well after each addition. If you're making your own condensed milk, add the coffee to it when it's still warm. (If the coffee granules don't seem like they're dissolving right away, they nearly always disappear after some good whipping with a small appliance, or over time while the Irish Cream rests.)
- 4. Pour into sterilized dark glass bottles. I recommend a funnel.
- 5. Allow to rest at room temperature for one week before drinking.
- 6. Store cold for up to 3 months or on the shelf for one month.
- 7. Serve straight or on the rocks in small portions (2-4 ounces) as it is very rich.

Food Safety Note: The alcohol will sterilize the entire solution, including any bacteria that might be in the eggs. ([source](#)) If you're feeling very squeamish about raw eggs, you can actually just leave them out and it's still very creamy.

Notes:

- To make a virgin version, skip the vodka and skip the “rest” time on the shelf. Refrigerate and drink within 3-7 days – depending a lot on the freshness of your cream and egg. It pretty much tastes like melted ice cream. My kids went ga ga when I let them taste it!
- The virgin drink is incredible as a coffee flavoring, iced or hot.

From a recipe tester: *This Irish Cream recipe made a delicious treat! My friends and I loved the vanilla flavor of the virgin drink. We agreed it tasted like pudding or ice cream.*

- Be sure to label your bottles with expiration dates, especially if you're giving any away as gifts. (I've consumed the Irish Cream after 6 months in cold storage, so use your judgment on the 3 mos./1 mo. timing.)

Supporting Recipe: Homemade Sweetened Condensed Milk Substitute

This recipe will make just about exactly the two cups called for in the Irish Cream recipe above.

Ingredients:

- 3 c. whole milk
- 1 to 1 1/2 c. unrefined sugar (organic cane sugar or sucanat)*
- 6 Tbs. butter
- 2 tsp. vanilla

Method:

1. Mix milk and sugar together in a heavy-bottomed saucepan.
2. Stirring often, bring to a low simmer over medium-low heat. As soon as steam starts lifting off the milk, lower the heat even further, and when the sugar is entirely dissolved, put the heat as low as it can go. A simmer burner is great for this.
3. The goal is to reduce the quantity in the pot (which is now about 3 1/2 cups) by approximately half. It takes about 2-3 hours at very low heat to reduce to about two cups of liquid; it will end up thick enough to coat a spoon and slightly tan in color. You could speed it up a bit if you watch carefully and stir often. I preferred the freedom to wander the house doing other tasks, and thus allowed my process to take quite some time.
4. Once reduced to your satisfaction, whisk in the butter and vanilla.

Notes:

- * Honey should work too, using about 1/2-2/3 c. and keeping that heat very, very low.
- Allow the mixture to cool quite a bit before mixing into the Irish Cream – you don't want to cook the eggs and have little eggy bits floating in your beverage. It's nice to dissolve the instant coffee while the milk is still warm, however.
- Here is a [dairy-free version](#) if you need it.

Supporting Recipe: Homemade Dairy-free Chocolate Syrup

Makes about a cup.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 c. water
- 1 c. sucanat
- 1/2 c. Dutch-processed cocoa
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- scant Tbs. raw honey (optional)

Method:

1. Over medium heat, bring water and sucanat to a boil, then turn down the heat and stir until sucanat is completely dissolved. Choose a pot that can fit at least 5 times the amount of water and sucanat, as the next step will cause things to expand and you don't want to be caught off-guard!
2. Whisk in the remaining ingredients until the cocoa powder is fully dissolved.
3. Return to a gentle boil, then over low heat, set a timer for 5 minutes and stir often until mixture is slightly thickened, just beginning to look like syrup instead of

water. You're not looking for perfect "Hershey's style" consistency yet, as the syrup will thicken up even more as it cools. May take up to 10 minutes.

4. Pour the finished syrup into a glass jar or, once cooled, into a BPA-free squirt bottle. (Repurposed ketchup or other bottles work, for example.)

5. Store at room temperature to be easily pourable for a month or more. Syrup can also be stored in the refrigerator for longer storage but will thicken up quite a bit.

Notes:

- No Dutch-processed cocoa? That's okay. Make it "homemade" by simply adding a scant half teaspoon of baking soda to the dry cocoa and whisk carefully.

- Feel free to cut the sweetener down for a "dark chocolate" feel or just use white sugar for a "still better than the bottle" creation. You can taste and add more while it's still on the stove if need be. (I've never tried it with 100% liquid sweetener.)

- What you don't need for the Irish cream recipe could be served drizzled over fresh berries for your party guests or as an ice cream topping or for chocolate milk for your family. Enjoy! :)

From a recipe tester: *"I made a double recipe of the chocolate syrup and I'm loving it. No more Hershey's!"*

About Katie Kimball

I'm Katie Kimball, a Catholic wife and mother of four who wants the best of nutrition and living for her family. My educational background is actually in elementary education and English, but as I began cooking for my children and reading about nutrition, I quickly became a home chef and researcher. In early 2009 I began my journey as an online writer, and I'm head over heels for the tangled web that is the blogging career.



As we work to feed our families, I believe that God calls us to be good stewards of all His gifts: time, finances, the good green earth, and of course, our healthy bodies. KitchenStewardship.com seeks to share with others ways to balance all four and be prayerful in the call to vocation in the kitchen.

I'm far from perfect: my kitchen is often a mess, I lose my patience with family members, and I certainly spend too much time on the computer. But I do my best to provide optimal nutrition and health for my loved ones, which means I spend a lot of time in the kitchen, too. I make just about everything from scratch and talk about food all the time. I also strive to make things taste good, which is where you benefit.

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