

# Cook Jewish-American Deli Food



Recipes with love from  
**The Robot Book  
Club**

# **Cook Jewish-American Deli Food**

*Mastering Bagels, Brisket, and Classic Delicatessen Favorites at Home*

The Robot Book Club

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# Preface

This book, and The Robot Book Club, is an experiment large scale AI generation. Every page, from layout to images to copy, was generated with zero human review.

The authoring and publishing teams were implemented in the Kaya scripting language. They were given only the input: Jewish-American Deli.

This is the only page authored by a human: Hello there!

— Ted Benson

# Prologue

There's a specific kind of hunger, one that can't be sated by trend or novelty. It's a hunger for memory, for the culinary echoes of a childhood spent around Formica tables, the scent of dill and cured meat clinging to the air, the rhythmic clatter of a slicing machine a familiar soundtrack. It's the taste of a heritage, forged in Eastern European kitchens and perfected in New York storefronts, then carried on suburban migrations. The Jewish-American deli isn't just a place; it's a living archive of a people's journey, a testament to resilience, comfort, and uncompromising flavor.

But let's be honest. Life moves faster now. The multi-day brines, the painstaking rendering of schmaltz, the hours dedicated to a perfect broth—these are luxuries most weeknight cooks simply can't afford. We crave those authentic tastes, that profound connection to our past, but the realities of the present often stand in the way. This isn't a cookbook for tourists, chasing some romanticized, watered-down approximation. This is for us, for the descendants of those who built these traditions, looking to reclaim that culinary soul on a Tuesday night.

What you hold is a bridge. It's a collection of practical intelligence, gathered and refined, designed to unlock those deep, resonant flavors using the ingredients you already find on supermarket shelves and the techniques that fit a modern schedule. We navigate the delicious, historic divide between the delicatessen and the appetizing store, from the savory, meat-heavy indulgence of a pastrami on rye to the bright, briny bounty of a Sunday morning lox spread.

This is about turning aspiration into execution. It's about honoring Bubbe's tireless efforts without needing her full-day commitment. It's about making real food, rich with story and flavor, because some things are just too good to leave in the past. Turn the page. There's work to do, and a lot of good eating ahead.



# Sunday Morning Appetizing Spread (New York)

*Recreating the quintessential high-end New York appetizing store experience for weekend brunch with accessible fish and dairy preparations.*

The Sunday appetizing spread isn't brunch. It's a secular sacrament—a weekly ritual built on cold-smoked fish, cultured dairy, and the unapologetic bite of raw onion. In New York, the faithful stand in line for hours and pay a small fortune for the privilege. But the true soul of the appetizing store, from the

fatty silk of cured salmon to the sweet-tart snap of pickled herring, was never meant to be locked behind a glass display case. It was born in cramped home kitchens out of necessity and survival.

These are the quiet triumphs of generations who knew how to stretch a dollar without surrendering an ounce of flavor. There are no professional smokehouses or exhausting culinary stunts here. Just a weeknight gravlax that cures while you sleep, a whitefish salad that hits the exact right smoky notes without the staggering markup, and the uncompromising science of a proper schmear. It's the quintessential spread, engineered for the home counter. You just supply the bagels.





# Bubbe's Whitefish Salad

This is the undisputed crown jewel of the New York appetizing spread. Born from Eastern European immigrants making do with Great Lakes catch, this isn't the slick, over-mayonnaised paste you find in corporate plastic tubs. It is an exercise in respect. It requires the patience to pick out the pin bones by hand, the wisdom to cut the heavy smoke with a hit of sour cream, and a legendary open secret borrowed from the great appetizing shops: a strategic handful of rich, baked salmon. Serve it chilled, piled high on a fresh bagel, and taste exactly what a Sunday morning in a Jewish-American home is supposed to be.

## INGREDIENTS

**1 lb**

whole hot-smoked whitefish  
*skinned, flaked, and deboned*

**4 oz**

hot-smoked salmon  
*flaked*

<b>1/3 cup</b>	high-quality mayonnaise	<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh lemon juice
<b>3 tbsp</b>	sour cream	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	lemon zest
<b>1 med</b>	celery <i>very finely minced</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	fresh chives <i>finely minced</i>		

## PREPARATION

- **Dismantle the fish.**

Gently score the skin of the whitefish along the belly and back, peeling the golden skin away and discarding it. Use a fork to push the opaque flesh outward from the center seam, pulling it away from the spine and ribcage.

- **Hunt for the pin bones.**

Spread the flaked whitefish and hot-smoked salmon on a brightly colored plate, which provides visual contrast, and use clean fingers to meticulously feel for and extract every tiny, translucent pin bone. Rushing this step is the only way to ruin the dish.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the foundational emulsion.**

In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, sour cream, lemon juice, lemon zest, and black pepper until perfectly smooth and tangy.

- 2. Introduce the aromatics.**

Stir the finely minced celery and chives into the mayonnaise dressing, creating the textural crunch that breaks up the rich fish.

- 3. Execute the fold.**

Add the meticulously cleaned, flaked whitefish and salmon to the bowl, then use a rubber spatula to very gently fold the mixture together until just moistened. Do not overwork it into a paste; you want the diner to feel distinct, chunky flakes of fish.

**1. Let the flavors marry.**

Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least one hour before serving, allowing the smoke, citrus, and alliums to meld into a cohesive bite.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The weeknight supermarket shortcut.**

If breaking down a whole smoked whitefish is too daunting or unavailable for a Wednesday night, substitute vacuum-sealed hot-smoked trout, mackerel, or sablefish. Just ensure it is hot-smoked (opaque and flaky), never cold-smoked like lox.

● **Hold the salt.**

Smoked fish is inherently heavily brined during the curing process. Never add additional salt to the dressing until you've folded in the fish and tasted the final product.



# Gehakte Herring

געהאקטע הערינג

*ge-hak-teh heh-ring*

For first-generation Jewish-Americans, Sunday mornings are defined by the Appetizing Spread, and before the bagels are toasted or the lox unrolled, there is the herring. Real gehakte herring is not the cloying, cream-drenched jarred stuff found in the modern supermarket; it is a sharp, briny, beautifully balanced mash of salted fish, tart apple, and raw onion that smells exactly like a grandmother's kitchen in the old country. By relying on a quick rinse of jarred fillets and a soaked-bread panade, this recipe bypasses the two-day bathtub soak of a whole salt herring without sacrificing an ounce of authenticity. The secret here is

old-world restraint: pulse the ingredients gently, fold in the eggs by hand, and let the mixture rest until the flavors marry into something undeniable.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 slice</b>	white bread or challah <i>crust removed</i>	<b>3 large</b>	eggs <i>hard-boiled, cooled, and peeled</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>1 1/2 tbsp</b>	sunflower oil or neutral vegetable oil
<b>14 oz</b>	pickled herring fillets in wine or clear vinegar sauce	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1 small</b>	Granny Smith apple <i>peeled, cored, and roughly chopped</i>	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>1 small</b>	yellow or red onion <i>peeled and quartered</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh dill or scallions <i>finely chopped</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Hard-boil the eggs ahead of time.**

Boil, cool, and peel the eggs in advance so they are completely cold when incorporated into the herring mixture.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Prepare the bread panade to bind the flavors.**

Place the crustless bread in a shallow bowl, drizzle with the apple cider vinegar and a splash of cold water, and let sit for five minutes before aggressively squeezing it out into a damp sponge.

- 2. Strip away the commercial brine from the herring.**

Discard the liquid and any soft onions from the jar, rinse the herring fillets briefly under cold running water to wash away the sweet preservatives, and pat them completely dry before roughly chopping.

**1. Pulse the apple and onion to a coarse mince.**

Add the quartered onion and chopped apple to the bowl of a food processor and pulse four or five times until finely minced, taking care not to pulverize them into a paste.

**2. Incorporate the herring and the squeezed bread panade.**

Add the dried herring and the damp bread to the processor, pulsing another four to five times until the mixture becomes a coarse hash with distinct, visible pieces of fish and apple.

**3. Chop and fold in the eggs by hand.**

Finely chop two of the hard-boiled eggs with a knife, bypassing the food processor entirely to prevent a gummy texture, and fold them into the herring hash with a spoon.

**4. Season the mixture and let it rest.**

Stir in the sunflower oil, sugar, and black pepper, then cover tightly and refrigerate for at least one hour to allow the volatile lipids to stabilize and the flavors to fully meld.

**5. Garnish with the remaining egg and fresh herbs to serve.**

Mound the chilled spread onto a serving dish, finely grate the yolk and white of the remaining hard-boiled egg over the top, and sprinkle with fresh dill before serving cold alongside cocktail rye bread or toasted bagels.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Respect the pulse.**

The single greatest failure of modern chopped herring is over-processing; you want a coarse, rustic texture, not a grey slurry.

● **The bread panade is non-negotiable.**

The soaked and squeezed bread acts as a sponge, absorbing the intense oils and briny flavors of the fish while holding the spread together.



# The Faux-Kippered Salmon Salad

טאַלס סאַלט

*laks salat*

Real kippered salmon is a hot-smoked masterpiece locked behind the glass cases of legendary New York appetizing shops, commanding absurd prices per pound. For the displaced diaspora trying to recreate that Sunday morning magic on a Tuesday, survival demands a little clever culinary forgery. Canned red sockeye salmon offers the exact cooked, flaky texture required, and when bound with a heavy-duty mayonnaise spiked with liquid smoke and the finely minced crunch of

a classic deli holy trinity—celery, red onion, and green pepper—it becomes a shockingly authentic facsimile. It is an unpretentious, deeply nostalgic hack that tastes exactly like home.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>14 1/2 oz</b>	wild red sockeye salmon <i>drained, skin and large bones removed</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	green bell pepper <i>minced as finely as possible</i>
<b>1/3 cup</b>	full-fat mayonnaise	<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh lemon juice
<b>1/4 tsp</b>	liquid smoke	<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh dill <i>finely chopped</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	celery <i>minced into a very fine brunoise</i>	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	white pepper
<b>2 tbsp</b>	red onion <i>minced as finely as possible</i>	<b>1 pinch</b>	kosher salt <i>to taste</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Mince the vegetables to the size of matchheads.**

Grandma's secret to appetizing salads is in the knife work; chunks that are too large will ruin the spreadable texture and leak water into your mayonnaise.

- **Pick through the canned salmon to discard dark skin and large vertebrae.**

While perfectly edible and traditional in old-world kitchens, removing them guarantees the smooth, luxurious mouthfeel of a high-end shop.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Flake the picked salmon aggressively with a fork.**

You want the fish broken down into fine shreds to achieve the traditional gehakte or chopped texture.

- 1. Whisk the mayonnaise, liquid smoke, lemon juice, white pepper, and dill in a small bowl.**

Mixing the liquid smoke into the binder before adding the fish ensures the smoky flavor distributes evenly without harsh, concentrated pockets.

- 2. Pour the smoky mayonnaise over the salmon and fold in the minced celery, red onion, and green pepper.**

Use a rubber spatula to gently but thoroughly combine until it forms a cohesive, spreadable salad.

- 3. Taste and adjust the seasoning with kosher salt if necessary.**

Canned salmon is already salted, so always taste before adding more.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Chill before serving for the best results.**

While you can eat it immediately, packing it into an airtight container and refrigerating for at least an hour allows the liquid smoke to permeate the fish and the raw onion to mellow.

- **Serve on a proper carbohydrate vehicle.**

Authentic deli salads demand a dense New York-style bagel, a bialy, or dark pumpernickel bread to stand up to the rich mayonnaise.



## Eggs Benjamin

When the booming brunch culture of 1930s New York collided with Kosher dietary laws, some unnamed genius at a deli counter swapped the forbidden ham for cold-smoked salmon and the lifeless English muffin for a slab of leftover challah. The result is Eggs Benjamin—the undisputed king of the appetizing spread. This isn't just breakfast; it's a profound cultural adaptation. We are ditching the punishing double-boiler for a foolproof blender hollandaise, leaving you with a silky, lemon-spiked emulsion that cascades over runny yolks and buttery, toasted bread. Simple, bulletproof, and exactly how it tastes in a crowded Manhattan diner.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 thick slice</b>	challah bread <i>preferably a day old</i>	<b>2 large</b>	egg yolks
<b>1 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter	<b>1 tbsp</b>	lemon juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>
<b>4 oz</b>	cold-smoked salmon <i>Nova style preferred</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	Dijon mustard
<b>2 large</b>	eggs	<b>1/2 cup</b>	unsalted butter <i>melted and bubbling hot</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	white vinegar	<b>1 pinch</b>	kosher salt and cayenne pepper
<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh dill or chives <i>finely chopped</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	whipped cream cheese <i>optional</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Crack the eggs into individual ramekins.**  
Doing this before you start cooking makes tipping them into the simmering water much easier and prevents broken yolks.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Blend the hollandaise base.**  
Toss the egg yolks, lemon juice, Dijon mustard, salt, and cayenne into a blender and pulse for a few seconds to combine.
- 2. Stream in the bubbling hot butter.**  
With the blender running on medium, slowly pour in the hot, melted butter in a steady thread. The heat cooks the yolks slightly, instantly forming a luxurious, warm emulsion. Leave it in the blender to keep warm.
- 3. Pan-toast the challah.**  
Melt a tablespoon of butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Toast the thick challah slices until deeply golden brown and crisp on both sides, about 2 minutes per side. Move them to your serving plates.

**1. Poach the eggs in a gentle vortex.**

Bring a saucepan of water with the vinegar to a gentle simmer. Stir the water to create a gentle whirlpool, then carefully tip each cracked egg into the center. Poach for exactly 3 to 4 minutes so the whites set but the yolks remain runny. Remove with a slotted spoon and dab dry on a paper towel.

**2. Assemble the masterpiece.**

Layer ribbons of cold-smoked salmon generously over the toasted challah. Top with the poached eggs, then spoon the warm hollandaise over the top so it cascades down the sides. Garnish with chopped dill or chives and serve immediately.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Never cook the salmon.**

The residual heat from the toasted bread, poached egg, and warm hollandaise is exactly enough to bring the smoked salmon to the perfect eating temperature without destroying its delicate, buttery texture.

● **Deploy a strategic schmear.**

If you crave the tangy bite of a classic bagel shop, spread a very thin layer of whipped cream cheese on the warm challah right before adding the salmon.

● **Swap challah for latkes.**

If you happen to have leftover potato pancakes in the fridge, crisp them up in a skillet and use them as your base for an incredible savory crunch.



# Schmear Science

שמירקעז

*shmir-kez*

If you grew up hitting the appetizing store on a Sunday morning, you know the texture of a true New York schmear. It sits high and proud on a fresh bagel, yielding instantly without tearing the soft bread. The secret behind the counter isn't an artisanal technique or an imported European curd—it's a splash of plain seltzer water. Beating cold, dense commercial cream cheese with carbonation introduces tiny pockets of gas, expanding the fat into a velvety cloud without diluting its signature tang. It is a brilliant, no-nonsense trick of the working-class immigrant kitchen.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>8 oz</b>	full-fat block cream cheese	<b>4 oz</b>	cold-smoked salmon <i>finely chopped</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	plain seltzer water	<b>1 tsp</b>	lemon juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>
<b>3 med</b>	scallions <i>finely sliced</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh dill <i>minced</i>
<b>1 pinch</b>	kosher salt		

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. Beat the cold cream cheese to soften the fats.**

Place the block of cold cream cheese in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Beat on medium speed for about one minute until the cheese begins to break down from the friction, then stop and scrape down the sides of the bowl.

**2. Whip in the seltzer water to aerate the cheese.**

With the mixer running on low, pour in one tablespoon of plain seltzer. Increase the speed to medium-high and whip for one to two minutes, watching the carbonation expand the cheese. If it still looks too stiff, add the second tablespoon of seltzer and whip for 30 more seconds until the texture resembles fluffy frosting.

**3. Fold in the mix-ins by hand.**

Remove the bowl from the mixer. Using a rubber spatula, gently fold in your chosen mix-ins: either the scallions and salt, or the chopped salmon, lemon juice, and dill. Never use the mixer for this step, or you will bruise the scallions and turn the salmon into an unappetizing paste.

**4. Serve immediately or store in the refrigerator.**

The carbonated water will keep the schmear light and spreadable, even straight from the cold fridge, for up to five days.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Use full-fat block cream cheese exclusively.**

Low-fat varieties lack the structural fat necessary to trap the carbon dioxide bubbles, and tub cream cheese contains stabilizers that will break down if whipped further.

- **Choose one flavor variation.**

The ingredients list provides the components for either a sharp scallion schmear or a classic lox spread. Choose one set of mix-ins to fold into the base aerated cheese.



# Dybbuk Eggs

דיבוק אייער

*dib-buk aiy-er*

There is nothing quite like the smell of smoked Great Lakes whitefish wrapped in crinkling butcher paper to pull you right back to a Sunday morning in the suburbs. The 'Dybbuk' is a Jewish-American deli pun—a deviled egg possessed by the spirit of the appetizing counter. We are taking the old-world DNA of chopped eggs and mashing it with the smoky, lactic bite of a proper whitefish salad. It is an honest, deeply savory staple that unlocks a specific sense memory, built for a normal weeknight kitchen with zero pretense.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>6 large</b>	large eggs <i>ideally a few days old</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh dill <i>finely minced, plus extra for garnish</i>
<b>4 oz</b>	smoked whitefish <i>skinned, deboned, and finely flaked</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	fresh lemon juice
<b>3 tbsp</b>	mayonnaise	<b>1 tsp</b>	Dijon mustard
<b>1 tbsp</b>	sour cream	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	prepared white horseradish
<b>1 stalk</b>	celery <i>very finely minced</i>	<b>1 pinch</b>	kosher salt
		<b>1 pinch</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Plan ahead for peeling.**

Farm-fresh eggs are notoriously difficult to peel. Buy your eggs a few days before you plan to boil them to give the internal air pocket time to expand.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil and gently lower the eggs into the water with a slotted spoon.**

Immediately reduce the heat to a simmer, cover the pot, and set a timer for exactly ten minutes. Dropping them into hot water shocks the membrane, ensuring the shells will slip right off later.

- 2. Transfer the eggs immediately to an ice bath.**

Let them sit in the cold water for at least ten minutes. This halts the cooking process dead in its tracks and prevents that grim, grayish-green sulfur ring from forming around the yolks.

- 3. Use your bare fingers to shred the smoked whitefish.**

Do not just mash it with a fork. You have to use your hands to feel out and discard the tiny, hidden pin bones. Flake the meat as finely as possible.

- 1. Peel the eggs, slice them in half lengthwise, and pop the yolks into a medium mixing bowl.**

Arrange the hollowed-out egg whites on whatever serving platter you plan to use.

- 2. Mash the yolks into a fine sand, then vigorously stir in the mayonnaise, sour cream, lemon juice, mustard, and horseradish.**

Once the base is smooth and creamy, gently fold in your flaked whitefish, minced celery, and dill. Taste it before adding salt and pepper; the smoked fish already brings plenty of its own salinity.

- 3. Spoon the mixture generously back into the egg whites.**

Don't bother piping it from a plastic bag unless you're trying to impress someone who doesn't matter. A rustic, heaping spoonful is exactly how it should look.

Finish each with a tiny sprig of fresh dill.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Sourcing the fish.**

If you cannot find whole smoked whitefish at a local deli, check the supermarket seafood counter for vacuum-sealed smoked trout or sablefish. Both provide the necessary oily richness and smoke profile to cut through the egg yolk.



# Gravlax

גרבלקס

*grav-laks*

If you grew up associating Sunday mornings with the crinkle of white butcher paper, you know the magic of deli-style cured salmon. You don't need a smokehouse or a legendary Lower East Side storefront to replicate it. When Eastern European immigrants hit New York and found Pacific salmon cheaper than Baltic herring, they applied old-world Scandinavian curing methods to this new, vibrant fish. This is the uncorrupted classic: raw salmon, salt, sugar, fresh dill, and time. Ten minutes of work on a Thursday night buys you an unsmoked, buttery cure that melts against a fresh bagel by Sunday. Pure culinary alchemy, requiring nothing more than decent fish and patience.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 1/2 lb</b>	center-cut salmon fillet <i>skin-on</i>	<b>1 large bunch</b>	fresh dill <i>roughly chopped, stems and fronds included</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	coarse kosher salt	<b>1 tbsp</b>	whole white peppercorns <i>coarsely crushed</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	white granulated sugar	<b>2 tbsp</b>	vodka or gin

## PREPARATION

- **Source commercially frozen salmon.**

For home curing, previously frozen salmon is highly recommended over "fresh-never-frozen" to ensure any aquatic parasites have been destroyed by commercial flash-freezing.

- **Remove the pin bones.**

Run your fingers against the grain of the flesh before curing; if you feel any stiff pin bones, pull them out in the direction they point with clean tweezers.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix the cure.**

In a small bowl, combine the kosher salt, sugar, and crushed white peppercorns to create the 1:1 ratio that draws out moisture without turning the fish to leather.

- 2. Build the bundle.**

Lay down two large, overlapping sheets of plastic wrap, scatter a handful of the chopped dill in the center, and place the salmon skin-side down on top of the herbs.

- 3. Pack and wrap the fish.**

Sprinkle the vodka over the flesh, pack the salt and sugar mixture heavily over the exposed fish, press the remaining dill onto the cure, and wrap the bundle as tightly as possible.

**1. Press and cold-cure.**

Place the wrapped fish in a baking dish, set a flat plate on top, weigh it down with two heavy cans, and refrigerate for 48 hours, flipping the bundle halfway through.

**2. Wash and dry.**

Unwrap the dark, syrupy bundle, scrape off the dill and cure with your hands, rinse the salmon lightly under cold water, and pat it thoroughly dry with paper towels.

**3. Slice on a severe bias.**

Place the fish skin-side down on a cutting board and use your longest, sharpest knife to cut paper-thin, translucent slices at a sharp angle, leaving the skin behind.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The "Double Fillet" Trick.**

If curing for a crowd, rub the cure on two center-cut fillets, pile the dill on one, and sandwich them flesh-to-flesh before wrapping and pressing.

● **Storage.**

Wrapped tightly in fresh plastic or parchment, gravlax keeps in the coldest part of the fridge for up to seven days, or freezes beautifully for up to two months.

● **Avoid table salt.**

Never use iodized table salt for curing; the anti-caking agents and iodine will impart a bitter, metallic taste to the delicate fish.



## The L.E.O. Scramble

The L.E.O.—lox, eggs, and onions—is the undisputed king of the Jewish-American diner, a dish born not in the old-world shtetls, but on the Transcontinental Railroad. When immigrant grandmothers traded their staple salted herring for cheap, salt-cured Pacific salmon, they stretched it with eggs and sweet, deeply browned onions to balance the aggressive brine. It is immigrant ingenuity at its finest. The secret here isn't a rare spice; it's patience and thermal timing. Take your time unlocking the natural sugars of the onions, and whatever you do, respect the fish by folding it in off the heat at the very last second so it stays perfectly silky.

## INGREDIENTS

**2 tbsp**      unsalted butter

**1/2 large**    yellow onion  
*finely diced*

**6**            large eggs

**1/4 tsp**      black pepper  
*freshly ground*

**3 oz**        cold-smoked salmon  
*roughly chopped into 1/2-inch pieces*

**1 tbsp**      fresh dill  
*finely chopped*

## PREPARATION

- **Ready your mise en place.**

This scramble moves incredibly fast once the eggs hit the hot pan. Ensure your eggs are beaten, your salmon is chopped, and your dill is minced before the onions finish browning.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Melt the butter and slowly sweeten the onions.**

Set a medium non-stick skillet over medium heat and let the onions sweat and sizzle for 10 to 15 minutes until they are deeply golden and soft. Do not rush this process on high heat; you need their natural sugars to balance the salty fish.

- 2. Whisk the eggs with the black pepper.**

While the onions caramelize, beat the eggs vigorously until they are completely homogenous and slightly frothy. Do not add salt to the bowl, as the salmon brings more than enough salinity to the pan.

- 3. Soft-scramble the eggs over medium-low heat.**

Pour the eggs directly over the browned onions and let them sit undisturbed for a few seconds to set the edges. Use a rubber spatula to gently push the eggs around the skillet, forming large, soft curds.

**1. Remove from the heat and fold in the salmon.**

This is the golden rule that separates an authentic scramble from a dry, rubbery one. When the eggs are mostly set but still wet and glossy, pull the pan completely off the stove and gently fold in the chopped salmon. The residual heat will perfectly warm the fish without seizing its proteins.

**2. Garnish and serve immediately.**

Divide the scramble onto plates and hit it with the fresh dill to cut through the rich fats. Eat it straight away, ideally alongside a toasted, buttered bagel or leftover roasted potatoes.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Source the salmon smartly.**

True historical 'belly lox' is rare today and fiercely salty. Standard supermarket cold-smoked salmon (often mislabeled as lox) is the perfect, accessible substitute. Look for packages labeled 'lox bits' or 'trim' to save a few dollars just like the older generations would have.





## Quick Deli Lunches (American Suburbs)

*Tackling the meat-heavy legacy of the Jewish deli with clever supermarket sourcing and rapid flavor-building for iconic sandwiches in under 30 minutes.*

There is a romantic, smoke-stained myth that proper deli requires a basement in Brooklyn, weeks of secret curing, and an old man slicing meat with surgical precision. It's a beautiful notion, but out in the sprawl of the American suburbs, Tuesday lunch demands a different kind of hustle. Here, the magic lies in the unapologetic workaround—raiding the local supermarket for the right cuts, the

sharpest mustard, and the freshest rye, then manipulating them with enough heat and aggressive seasoning to conjure that unmistakable deli soul in twenty minutes flat.

This isn't heresy; it's survival. It's about chasing the ghost of the Harvey Special and navigating the quiet blood-feud between a Rachel and a Reuben without leaving your zip code. These are the sharp, unpretentious cheats that keep the old-world cravings alive on a modern timeline, proving you don't need a week to build a decent sandwich—just good instincts, hot fat, and a little ingenuity.





# The "Home Oven" Pastrami Cheat

פאַסטראַמע

*pas-tra-meh*

For our immigrant grandparents, the deli was a cultural halfway house—a loud, garlic-and-smoke-scented bridge between the Old World and the American dream. Traditional pastrami is a grueling, multi-week labor of love involving precise chemical cures, hardwood smokers, and closely guarded steaming vats. We don't have time for that on a Tuesday. This suburban cheat code hijacks a supermarket corned beef, bypassing the curing process entirely. With a heavy, freshly cracked crust of coriander and black pepper, and a tightly sealed, steamy oven

roast, it yields a silken, melt-in-your-mouth pastrami that hits every nostalgic note with zero pretense. It's a brilliant, working-class kitchen hack that tastes exactly like home.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 lb</b>	corned beef brisket <i>flat cut preferred, rinsed and seasoning packet discarded</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	smoked paprika
<b>2 tbsp</b>	yellow deli mustard	<b>1 tbsp</b>	dark brown sugar
<b>1 tsp</b>	liquid smoke	<b>1 tbsp</b>	garlic powder
<b>3 tbsp</b>	whole coriander seeds	<b>1 tbsp</b>	onion powder
<b>3 tbsp</b>	whole black peppercorns	<b>1 tsp</b>	mustard powder

## PREPARATION

- **Plan ahead for the great desalination.**

The meat requires at least 12 hours of inactive soaking time in the refrigerator before you can begin cooking.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Submerge the corned beef in a large bowl of cold water and refrigerate for 12 to 24 hours, changing the water halfway through.**

Commercial corned beef is aggressively salted for boiling, so skipping this soak guarantees inedibly salty pastrami.

- 2. Pat the beef completely dry, then aggressively crush the coriander and peppercorns using a heavy skillet or rolling pin until they resemble coarse gravel.**

Do not use pre-ground spices here. The magic lies entirely in the volatile oils released from freshly cracked seeds. Mix the cracked spices with the paprika, brown sugar, garlic, onion, and mustard powders.

- 1. Place the brisket fat-side up on a sheet of heavy-duty aluminum foil, massage the liquid smoke into the meat, and slather the entire cut with a thin, even layer of yellow mustard.**

The mustard acts as the glue. Pour your spice blend over the meat and press it aggressively into the surface with your hands so it adheres to all sides.

- 2. Wrap the foil tightly around the brisket to prevent leaks, place it on a wire rack inside a roasting pan with one cup of hot water poured into the bottom, and bake at 250°F for 4 to 5 hours.**

This sealed environment perfectly mimics the gentle heat of a smoker and the steaming vat of a master deli. The meat is done when a meat thermometer slides into the center with almost zero resistance, reading around 200°F.

- 3. Carefully unwrap the top of the foil to expose the crust, increase the oven temperature to 350°F, and bake for an additional 15 to 20 minutes to dry out and set the spice bark.**

Remove from the oven and let it rest on a cutting board for at least 30 minutes. If you slice it too soon, the juices will run out and the meat will shred into a dry mess.

- 4. Using a very sharp knife, slice the pastrami as thinly as possible against the grain and serve immediately piled high on warm rye bread.**

Always identify the direction of the muscle fibers before slicing and cut perpendicular to them to ensure tender, melt-in-your-mouth meat.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **You can utilize a pressure cooker for an emergency weeknight shortcut.**

Skip the oven. After soaking, place the rinsed, unspiced beef on a trivet in a pressure cooker with one cup of water and one teaspoon of liquid smoke. Cook on high pressure for 60 minutes with a 15-minute natural release. Carefully remove, pat dry, slather with mustard, apply the rub, and bake at 350°F for 15 to 20 minutes to set the crust.

- **Do not aggressively trim the fat cap from your raw corned beef.**

A proper deli pastrami retains a layer of fat. Leave at least a quarter inch intact to render down and continuously baste the meat during the long oven roast.



## The Harvey Special

If you walked into Mel & Murray's in mid-century Lynn, Massachusetts, you were witnessing the golden age of the suburban deli—a place where the strict dietary rules of the old world gave way to the indulgent pragmatism of the new. The Harvey Special was born when a regular asked for something special, resulting in a hot, messy collision of griddled pastrami, melted Swiss, and sweet onions on toasted, caraway-studded sissel bread. To recreate that authentic counter magic on a weeknight, you don't need a commercial flat-top; you just need to know the deli man's secret of flash-steaming the pastrami right in the skillet before burying it in cheese.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter <i>divided</i>	<b>4 oz</b>	Swiss cheese <i>sliced</i>
<b>1/2 med</b>	yellow onion <i>sliced thin</i>	<b>4 large slices</b>	seeded Jewish rye bread <i>lightly toasted</i>
<b>3/4 lb</b>	pastrami <i>thinly sliced from the deli counter</i>	<b>2 large slices</b>	beefsteak tomato
<b>1 tbsp</b>	water	<b>1 tbsp</b>	deli brown mustard <i>optional</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Have all ingredients prepped and within arm's reach.**

This sandwich comes together in a matter of minutes once the pastrami hits the hot pan, so slice your tomatoes, toast your bread, and unwrap your cheese before you turn on the stove.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Caramelize the onions quickly over medium-high heat.**

Melt half of the butter in a large skillet and add the sliced onions. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring frequently, until they are soft, sweet, and browned at the edges, then push them to one side of the pan.

- 2. Flash-steam the pastrami to render the fat and wake up the spices.**

Lower the heat to medium and pile the pastrami into the empty side of the skillet in two loose mounds. Let it sizzle for 30 seconds, pour the water directly into the pan next to the meat, and immediately cover with a tight lid for 30 to 45 seconds.

- 3. Blanket the steamed meat with the grilled onions and Swiss cheese.**

Remove the lid to reveal glistening, tender pastrami. Spoon the onions equally over the two mounds of meat, drape the Swiss cheese over the top, and cover the pan for 1 minute until the cheese is fully melted.

**1. Transfer the hot fillings onto toasted sissel bread and serve.**

Using a wide spatula, scoop the pastrami mounds onto the bottom slices of your toasted seeded rye. Top each with a thick slice of fresh tomato, close the sandwich, press down gently to marry the ingredients, and slice cleanly in half.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

- **Never cook cold pastrami in a dry pan.**

The secret to deli-quality pastrami at home is the quick skillet steam. A dry pan turns it to rubber, but a splash of water and a tight lid perfectly mimics a professional deli's steam box.

- **Seek out the right bread.**

True sissel bread is heavily seeded Jewish rye, characterized by its glossy crust and sharp caraway flavor. If you cannot find it, a high-quality soft Kaiser roll is a historically accurate suburban fallback.

- **Keep substitutions to a minimum.**

The Harvey Special is a specific piece of culinary history. The interplay of sharp caraway, smoky beef, and sweet Swiss is exactly what you want, so omit the tomato if you must, but don't mess with the core lineup.



# The 'Raaaaachel' vs. The Reuben

These are the two heavyweights of the Jewish-American deli counter. The Reuben brings fatty, earthy muscle; the Rachel counters with a peppery, crunchy snap. Both live or die by two unbending rules: a fiercely savory Russian dressing spiked with horseradish—not that sweet Thousand Island nonsense—and ruthless moisture control. Wring out your cabbage and pre-warm your meat, or suffer a soggy, disintegrated mess. This is authentic deli magic, stripped down and optimized for a Tuesday night in the suburbs.

## INGREDIENTS

**1/2 cup** mayonnaise

**2 tbsp** sour cream

<b>3 tbsp</b>	ketchup	<b>8 slices</b>	Jewish rye or marble rye bread <i>sliced 1-inch thick</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	prepared horseradish	<b>4 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter <i>softened to room temp</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	Worcestershire sauce	<b>8 slices</b>	deli Swiss cheese
<b>2 tbsp</b>	white onion <i>finely minced</i>	<b>1 lb</b>	deli corned beef or pastrami <i>thinly sliced</i>
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	smoked paprika	<b>1 cup</b>	sauerkraut or deli coleslaw

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Whisk the lifeblood of the sandwich.

In a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, sour cream, ketchup, horseradish, Worcestershire sauce, minced onion, and smoked paprika. Taste it—it should have a slight, nasal-clearing kick. This is true Russian dressing.

### 2. Wring out the wetness.

Place your sauerkraut (for a Reuben) or coleslaw (for a Rachel) in a fine-mesh sieve and press it aggressively with the back of a spoon. Wet cabbage is the enemy of crisp rye bread.

### 3. Take the chill off the meat.

Drop your sliced deli meat into a dry, large skillet over medium heat. Toss gently for 60 to 90 seconds just to wake up the savory fats and warm it through. Remove from the skillet and set aside.

### 4. Construct the architecture.

Butter one side of all eight bread slices edge-to-edge, then flip them over and spread a generous spoonful of dressing on the unbuttered sides. On four slices, build the stack in this exact order: one slice of cheese, a quarter pound of the warm meat, a quarter cup of the drained cabbage, and a final slice of cheese. Cap with the remaining bread, dressing-side down.

**1. Griddle with patience.**

Wipe your skillet clean and set it over medium-low heat. Place the sandwiches in the pan and cook undisturbed for 3 to 5 minutes until the bottom is deeply golden. Flip carefully and cook another 3 to 4 minutes until the Swiss cheese weeps down the sides.

**2. Slice and serve.**

Transfer to a cutting board and slice diagonally. Serve immediately with a garlic pickle spear and extra dressing for dipping.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Do not substitute Thousand Island dressing.**

Authentic deli flavor relies on the sharp, savory bite of horseradish-spiked Russian dressing to cut through the rich fat of the meat and cheese. Thousand Island is too sweet and will ruin the balance.

● **The cheese is the glue.**

Placing a slice of Swiss cheese on both the top and bottom of the meat and cabbage stack isn't just for flavor; it melts into the bread and acts as a binder to keep the sandwich from sliding apart.



# Sissel Bread Essentials

קימלברויט

*kiml-broyt*

There is no true Jewish-American deli sandwich without Sissel bread, 'sissel' being the old bakery shorthand for caraway seed. Back in the motherland, bakers babysat a bubbling rye sour for days to give the loaf its famous tang and keep the tricky grain from turning gummy. For a first-generation American with a day job, nobody has time for that on a Tuesday. The suburban grandma secret is pouring leftover kosher dill pickle brine straight into the dough, an instant hack that neutralizes the rye enzymes, builds the acid profile of a three-day sourdough, and infuses the loaf with the unmistakable garlic-and-dill echoes of a classic deli.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 cup</b>	water <i>warmed to 110°F</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	whole caraway seeds
<b>1/2 cup</b>	kosher dill pickle juice <i>at room temperature</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	instant potato flakes
<b>2 tbsp</b>	neutral oil	<b>1 1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1 tbsp</b>	instant yeast	<b>1 large</b>	egg white <i>beaten with 1 tbsp water</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	dark molasses	<b>1 tsp</b>	whole caraway seeds <i>reserved for topping</i>
<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	dark rye flour	<b>2 tbsp</b>	yellow cornmeal
<b>3 cup</b>	bread flour		

## PREPARATION

- **Bring the pickle juice to room temperature.**

Cold brine straight from the fridge will shock the yeast and dramatically slow your dough's rise.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix the base to hydrate the rye.**

In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk the warm water, pickle juice, oil, yeast, and molasses, then stir in the rye flour, potato flakes, and the 2 tablespoons of caraway seeds into a thick, muddy paste and let sit for 15 minutes.

- 2. Knead in the bread flour to build gluten structure.**

Attach a dough hook, turn the mixer to low, and gradually add the bread flour and salt until a shaggy dough forms, then increase to medium and knead for 6 to 8 minutes until it clears the bowl but stays slightly tacky.

- 3. Proof the dough until doubled in size.**

Scrape the dough out, form it into a smooth ball, and place it in a lightly oiled bowl covered with a damp towel to rise in a warm spot for 1 to 1.5 hours.

**1. Shape the dough into a traditional deli loaf.**

Gently deflate the dough, turn it out onto the counter, and shape it into a thick 9-inch oval log.

**2. Proof the shaped loaf on a cornmeal-dusted pan.**

Transfer the log to a baking sheet generously sprinkled with cornmeal, cover loosely, and let rise for 45 to 60 minutes until visibly puffy.

**3. Prepare the oven for steam baking.**

Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C) and place an empty cast-iron skillet or metal pan on the absolute bottom rack to get blazing hot.

**4. Glaze, seed, and slash the loaf.**

Brush the proofed bread entirely with the egg white wash, sprinkle with the remaining 1 teaspoon of caraway seeds, and make three to four half-inch deep diagonal slashes across the top with a sharp knife or razor.

**5. Bake with steam to develop a chewy, glossy crust.**

Place the baking sheet on the middle rack, immediately pour 1 cup of cold water into the hot skillet below, quickly shut the oven door, and bake for 35 to 40 minutes until the loaf is deep mahogany brown.

**6. Cool completely before slicing.**

Transfer the bread to a wire rack and wait at least two hours before cutting into it.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Do not slice the bread while it is hot.**

Rye continues to cook internally as it cools on the rack. Slicing it hot will permanently ruin the crumb, turning it into a gummy paste.

● **Expect a sticky dough.**

Rye flour absorbs heavy amounts of water and acts a bit like wet cement. Trust the process and rely on the bread flour's heavy-duty gluten structure rather than adding excess flour, which would yield a dense brick.

- **The pickle juice trick.**

The acidity of the brine neutralizes tricky rye amylase enzymes that would otherwise degrade the starches during baking, perfectly mimicking the pH drop of a three-day sourdough starter.



## "Mock" Chopped Liver

פאָלשע געהאַקטע לעבער

*fahl-sheh ge-hahk-teh lay-ber*

Before the health crazes and fancy meat substitutes, the dairy restaurants of New York's Lower East Side and the grandmothers of the American suburbs had a problem: Kosher law forbade mixing meat and dairy. Their solution was pure mid-century ingenuity. "Mock" chopped liver relies entirely on the alchemy of slowly rendered onions, earthy mushrooms, toasted walnuts, and the humble canned pea to mimic the deep, metallic umami of actual liver. It is a nostalgic powerhouse that belongs generously smeared on toasted rye, exactly the way your grandmother meant it to taste.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 tbsp</b>	neutral vegetable oil	<b>3 large</b>	eggs <i>hard-boiled and peeled</i>
<b>2 large</b>	yellow onions <i>thinly sliced into half-moons</i>	<b>15 oz</b>	canned sweet green peas <i>drained and rinsed</i>
<b>8 oz</b>	cremini or white button mushrooms <i>wiped clean and roughly chopped</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	Kosher salt
<b>1 cup</b>	walnuts <i>lightly toasted</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	freshly ground black pepper

## PREPARATION

- **Hard-boil and peel the eggs.**
- **Lightly toast the walnuts.**

Toast in a dry skillet over medium heat for about 5 minutes until fragrant, stirring frequently, then set aside to cool.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Heat the vegetable oil in a large, heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-low heat.**  
Add the sliced onions and a pinch of salt. Don't rush this; cook them slowly, stirring occasionally, until they reduce down to a sweet, deeply golden-brown jam. This will take about 30 to 40 minutes and forms the essential savory backbone of the dish.
- 2. Increase the heat to medium and add the chopped mushrooms to the onions.**  
Cook for 5 to 8 minutes until the mushrooms have released their natural juices and browned beautifully, then remove the pan from the heat to cool slightly.
- 3. Pulse the toasted walnuts in a food processor until they resemble fine gravel.**  
Be careful not to over-process them into nut butter.

1. **Add the cooled onion and mushroom mixture, along with the hard-boiled eggs, drained peas, kosher salt, and black pepper to the processor.**

Make sure to scrape in all the leftover oil from the pan, as that oil carries immense flavor.

2. **Pulse the machine 8 to 10 times, stopping to scrape down the sides, until you achieve a thick, cohesive, slightly chunky paste.**

Do not turn the machine on continuously, or you will end up with an unappetizing smooth purée that lacks the rustic texture of true chopped liver.

3. **Transfer the mixture to an airtight container and chill in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.**

While it can be eaten immediately, letting it sit overnight allows the flavors to meld and the starches to firm up the texture. Serve generously on rye bread or crackers.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not substitute frozen or fresh peas.**

The soft texture and subtle sweetness of standard canned sweet peas are essential for duplicating the authentic mid-century texture and the characteristic dull greenish-brown color of real liver.

- **Adapt the recipe easily for the Passover table.**

Omit the canned peas to observe the Ashkenazi restriction on kitniyot, add an extra 8 ounces of mushrooms, and include a splash of pure maple syrup to compensate for the lost sweetness.



# The Knishwich

קניש

*kuh-NISH-wich*

If you grew up anywhere near the Tri-State area, the smell of a frying potato knish and steaming pastrami is practically encoded in your DNA. But you don't need a plane ticket to the Lower East Side to taste it again. The secret to the ultimate Jewish-American deli sandwich isn't spending three days curing brisket or deep-frying pastry dough from scratch—it's knowing exactly what to buy and how to treat it. Get the square, commercially fried Coney Island-style knishes from the supermarket freezer, aggressively crisp them back to life, and treat

them like a hamburger bun. It is an indulgent, spectacular, unapologetic masterpiece of immigrant utility that will make you swear you are standing at the counter in Brooklyn.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 large</b>	square potato knishes <i>kept frozen or refrigerated until ready</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	fresh coleslaw or sauerkraut <i>drained well if using sauerkraut</i>
<b>1 lb</b>	premium deli pastrami <i>sliced very thin</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	water
<b>1/4 cup</b>	spicy brown deli mustard	<b>4 med</b>	kosher dill pickles <i>halved</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Procure the right meat.**

Ask your deli counter to shave the pastrami as thin as possible, and actively avoid pre-packaged, water-added cold cuts if you want the real deli experience.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Crisp the knishes to absolute perfection.**

Preheat your oven to 375°F or an air-fryer to 350°F, and bake the whole knishes directly on the rack for 10 to 15 minutes until the exterior is deeply golden, blistered, and audaciously crispy.

- 2. Gently steam the pastrami.**

Cold deli meat is a culinary sin here, so heat a large skillet over medium-low, add the water, loosely pile in the sliced pastrami, cover tightly, and steam for 2 to 3 minutes until the fat renders slightly and the meat is hot and fragrant.

- 3. Perform the sandwich surgery.**

Transfer the hot, crispy knishes to a cutting board and, using a serrated bread knife, carefully slice each horizontally in half to open them up like a hamburger bun.

**1. Assemble the masterpiece.**

Aggressively smear the inside of the top halves with spicy brown mustard, divide the hot pastrami evenly among the bottom halves, layer on the coleslaw or sauerkraut, and crown with the top half.

**2. Serve immediately.**

Press down gently on the sandwich and eat it hot alongside a crisp dill pickle with plenty of napkins.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Source the right knish.**

You need Gabila's square Coney Island knishes, which are widely available in the frozen or kosher aisle of most major American supermarkets. Do not buy round baked knishes; they will disintegrate when used as a bun.

● **The secular stadium adaptation.**

If you do not strictly keep Kosher dietary laws, slip a slice of Swiss cheese over the hot pastrami—a popular adaptation inspired by modern concession stands at New York sports arenas.



# The "Rolled Beef" Revival

רֹאֵלֶד רִינְדֵרְנִס

*rold rin-derns*

If you grew up in a Jewish-American suburb, you probably think a 'deli roll' is just store-bought turkey baked in frozen puff pastry. Forget that noise. The real deal—the giant panda of the old-world kosher butcher shop—is rold rinderns, or rolled beef. It is an endangered masterpiece of lean beef cured heavily with garlic and black pepper, tied tight, and smoked low. Almost no commercial delis make it anymore because it takes time, but that time is entirely passive. We skip the commercial smoker for a low-and-slow oven roast and a weekend fridge cure, yielding a week's worth of mind-blowing, authentic cold cuts ready for a Tuesday afternoon.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 lb</b>	flank steak or thin brisket flat	<b>1 tbsp</b>	smoked paprika
<b>3 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1 tsp</b>	liquid hickory smoke
<b>1 tbsp</b>	granulated sugar	<b>3 tbsp</b>	whole black peppercorns
<b>1 tsp</b>	Prague Powder #1	<b>3 tbsp</b>	whole coriander seeds
<b>6 med</b>	garlic cloves <i>finely minced or pureed</i>		

## PREPARATION

- **Pound the beef to an even thickness.**

Lay the flank steak flat on a cutting board, cover it with plastic wrap, and use a meat mallet to pound it firmly until it is an even 1/4 to 1/2-inch thickness across the entire surface so it rolls evenly.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix and apply the wet-dry cure.**

In a small bowl, mix the kosher salt, sugar, Prague Powder #1, minced garlic, smoked paprika, and liquid smoke into a gritty paste, then rub it aggressively into both sides of the flattened beef.

- 2. Roll and tie the meat as tightly as possible.**

Starting from the shortest end, roll the beef up like a jelly roll, pulling it as taut as you can manage. Secure the roll with butcher's twine tied tightly at 1-inch intervals to ensure it holds together when sliced.

- 3. Let the meat cure in the refrigerator.**

Wrap the tied beef tightly in multiple layers of plastic wrap, place it on a small baking sheet, and refrigerate for 5 to 7 days. Flip the roll once a day to ensure the cure penetrates evenly.

**1. Crush the spices and coat the roll.**

Unwrap the beef without rinsing it. Coarsely crack the peppercorns and coriander seeds in a heavy bag using your mallet, pour them onto a plate, and press the tied beef firmly into the mixture until the outside is practically black with spices.

**2. Roast low and slow.**

Preheat your oven to 225°F. Place the rolled beef on a wire rack set over a foil-lined baking sheet and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the dead center hits exactly 160°F. This will typically take 3 to 4 hours.

**3. Chill the beef completely before slicing.**

Do not slice it hot. Let the beef cool to room temperature on the counter, then wrap it tightly in foil and refrigerate it overnight so the proteins bind and the roll solidifies into a proper cold cut.

**4. Slice thin and serve cold.**

Remove the butcher's twine and use your sharpest knife or a home meat slicer to shave the rolled beef paper-thin. Pile it high on fresh rye bread with a heavy smear of spicy brown deli mustard.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Curing salt is non-negotiable.**

Prague Powder #1 is what gives authentic deli meats their characteristic rosy color and sharp tang, safely preserving the meat during the cold-cure and low-temp roast. Don't skip it, or you'll just end up with a salty gray roast beef.



# The Sabich Express

סביח

*sah-beekh*

Before it became Israel's most iconic street food, the sabich was a quiet Friday night ritual for Iraqi Jews—a necessity born of Sabbath laws prohibiting fire. Today, it's a beautifully messy, drippy masterpiece of culinary engineering where fried eggplant, overnight eggs, and fermented mango pickle get shoved into a thick pita. You don't have eight hours for slow-roasted huevos haminados or a week to ferment green mangoes for authentic amba. By utilizing a high-heat oven roast, a precision eight-minute egg boil, and an ingenious supermarket hack that turns standard sweet mango chutney into pungent Iraqi amba, you

can reproduce the exact smells and tastes of Ramat Gan on a random Tuesday night. Keep it simple, trust the canonical ingredients, and respect the architecture of the build.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 large</b>	thick bakery-style pita bread	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	Dijon mustard
<b>1 cup</b>	hummus	<b>1/2 cup</b>	raw tahini paste <i>stirred well</i>
<b>2 med</b>	eggplant <i>peeled in alternating strips and sliced into 1/2-inch thick rounds</i>	<b>1/3 cup</b>	ice water
<b>2 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1 med</b>	lemon <i>halved and juiced</i>
<b>4 tbsp</b>	extra-virgin olive oil <i>divided</i>	<b>1 small</b>	garlic clove <i>grated</i>
<b>4 large</b>	eggs <i>at room temperature</i>	<b>2 med</b>	Persian cucumber <i>finely diced into 1/4-inch cubes</i>
<b>1/3 cup</b>	mango chutney	<b>2 med</b>	firm tomato <i>seeded and finely diced</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>1/4 cup</b>	red onion <i>finely minced</i>
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	curry powder	<b>1/4 cup</b>	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>finely chopped</i>
<b>1/4 tsp</b>	ground turmeric		

## PREPARATION

- **Prepare an ice bath for the eggs before you begin cooking.**

Fill a medium bowl with cold water and a handful of ice cubes. Plunging the eggs in immediately is non-negotiable for a perfect texture.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Draw the bitter liquid out of the eggplant by generously salting the slices and letting them rest for 15 minutes.**

Lay the zebra-striped eggplant rounds on a paper towel and sprinkle both sides with kosher salt. When you see brown beads of water pool on the surface, wipe the slices completely dry with a paper towel. This prevents them from acting like a sponge for oil and ensures a tender, meaty texture.

- 2. Roast the dried eggplant slices at 425°F for 25 minutes until deeply golden brown.**

Brush a baking sheet with 3 tablespoons of olive oil, lay out the slices in a single layer, and lightly brush the tops with a little more oil. Flip them halfway through the cooking time so both sides caramelize.

- 3. Boil the eggs for exactly eight and a half minutes before immediately plunging them into an ice bath.**

Gently lower room-temperature eggs into boiling water. The immediate ice bath stops the cooking to prevent that unappetizing green ring around the yolk, making them peel effortlessly. Once cooled, peel and slice into 1/4-inch rounds.

- 4. Whisk together the mango chutney, vinegar, curry powder, turmeric, and mustard to replicate traditional amba.**

This instantly reverse-engineers the complex, fermented tang of authentic Iraqi amba using ingredients you can find in any American supermarket.

- 5. Emulsify the raw tahini paste by vigorously whisking in the ice water until the seized mixture transforms into a fluffy, pale sauce.**

Don't panic when the tahini initially clumps. Keep whisking. The ice water tightens the emulsion. Once smooth, whisk in half of the lemon juice, the grated garlic, and a pinch of salt.

- 6. Combine the diced cucumbers, tomatoes, red onion, and parsley, dressing them with the remaining olive oil, lemon juice, and salt just before serving.**

Wait to dress the Israeli salad until the very last minute so the vegetables retain their crucial crunch and don't water down the sandwich.

**1. Build the sandwich by layering the ingredients in a strict, specific order to prevent structural failure.**

Slice the top quarter off a warmed pita and open the pocket. Smear a thick waterproof barrier of hummus on the inside walls. Slide in 3 to 4 warm eggplant slices, followed by the sliced eggs, and a generous spoonful of the Israeli salad. Drizzle heavily with the tahini and amba, then top with a sprig of fresh parsley.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

- **Source the thickest, highest quality pita bread you can find.**

Flimsy supermarket pockets will disintegrate under the weight of the tahini and amba. You need a sturdy, bakery-style bread to contain the cargo.





# Friday Night Stovetop Comfort (Eastern Europe)

*Streamlined 45-minute versions of classic Shabbat suppers, delivering deep, savory profiles using modern pantry shortcuts.*

Friday night arrives regardless of how brutally the week chewed you up. The sun dips, the candles get lit, and the collective blood pressure of a people drops. But the fantasy of the all-day, slow-simmering Eastern European kitchen clashes

hard with the reality of the modern grind. You still need that deep, schmaltz-laden comfort—the kind that restores the soul and tells the cold to go to hell—you just need it before nine o'clock.

Enter the hustle. This is survival cooking at its finest, trading a grandmother's endless patience for sharp, supermarket cheat codes. Wonton wrappers stepping in for hand-rolled kreplach dough. A sheet-pan brisket that delivers the exact same savory, caramelized punch as the sacred slow-braise. It is not heresy; it is adaptation. These are the same restorative staples, engineered for the tired, the hungry, and the deeply devoted.





# The Wonton-Wrapper Kreplach

קרעפלעך

*krep-lekh*

There's a profound poetry in using a Chinese wonton wrapper to resurrect the quintessential Eastern European dumpling. It's not a compromise; it's a stroke of absolute weeknight genius. First-generation grandmothers figured out long ago that the commercial wrapper is the exact same egg dough they used to labor over, just pre-rolled. The real trick—the secret that turns a flimsy wonton into a rustic, chewy pocket of schmaltz-laced meat—is a dusting of flour and

a little patience. Allowed to air-dry on the counter, the wrapper transforms, yielding a dumpling that thickens the golden chicken broth and tastes exactly like a Friday night in the old neighborhood.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 tbsp</b>	schmaltz or neutral oil	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	coarse black pepper
<b>1 large</b>	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh dill <i>finely chopped</i>
<b>1 lb</b>	leftover cooked chicken or brisket <i>roughly chopped</i>	<b>14 oz</b>	square wonton wrappers
<b>1 large</b>	egg <i>lightly beaten</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	cold water
<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1/2 cup</b>	all-purpose flour
		<b>2 qt</b>	chicken soup

## PREPARATION

- **Source the right meat.**

Authentic kreplach relies on repurposing leftover soup chicken or braised brisket. If you are starting from scratch on a weeknight, heavily brown and crumble a pound of raw ground beef in the skillet before processing.

- **Set up a sealing station.**

Line a baking sheet with wax paper and set a small bowl of water nearby to streamline the folding process.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Caramelize the onions.**

Melt the schmaltz in a large skillet over medium heat, add the onions, and cook patiently for 15 to 20 minutes until deeply golden.

**1. Process the filling.**

Pulse the chopped meat, caramelized onions with all their fat, beaten egg, salt, pepper, and dill in a food processor until it forms a coarse, cohesive paste—do not purée it into baby food.

**2. Fold the kreplach.**

Spoon a heaping teaspoon of filling onto the center of a wonton wrapper, paint the edges with water, fold diagonally into a triangle, press out the trapped air, and pinch tightly to seal.

**3. Execute the dusting trick.**

Lightly toss each dumpling in a shallow bowl of flour, shake off the excess, and let them sit in a single layer on wax paper for at least one hour to dehydrate and mimic a rustic, homemade dough.

**4. Boil the dumplings.**

Drop the kreplach into simmering chicken soup a few at a time, cooking for 3 to 5 minutes until they float to the surface and the wrappers are tender.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Fry the leftovers.**

While boiling in soup is mandatory for Friday night, leftover kreplach are magnificent when boiled, patted completely dry, and pan-fried in schmaltz with sliced onions until crispy.

● **Freeze for later.**

After dusting with flour, freeze the kreplach directly on the baking sheet before transferring to a zip-top bag; boil them directly from frozen, adding an extra minute or two to the cooking time.



# Deconstructed Sweet & Sour Cabbage

האלישקעס

*ho-LISH-kes*

Traditional stuffed cabbage is a masterpiece of Eastern European survival, but rolling leaves on a Tuesday night is an exercise in madness. The brilliant cooks of the diaspora figured this out long ago, opting instead to simmer tender meat-and-rice dumplings in a bed of shredded cabbage. The real secret to that unmistakable deli tang isn't lemon or vinegar—it's sour salt. It delivers a pure, sharp hit of acidity that balances the dark brown sugar without watering down the sauce. This is the exact flavor of the old country, stripped of the tedious labor.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 1/2 lb</b>	ground beef <i>80/20 blend</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	olive oil
<b>1 cup</b>	cooked long-grain white rice	<b>1 large</b>	yellow onion <i>diced</i>
<b>1 large</b>	egg <i>beaten</i>	<b>1 med</b>	green cabbage <i>cored and chopped into 1/2-inch ribbons</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	yellow onion <i>grated on a box grater</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	tomato paste
<b>2 clove</b>	garlic <i>minced</i>	<b>28 oz</b>	crushed tomatoes
<b>2 tsp</b>	kosher salt <i>divided</i>	<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	chicken or beef broth
<b>1 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>divided</i>	<b>1/3 cup</b>	brown sugar <i>packed</i>
<b>1/4 tsp</b>	ground allspice	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	sour salt <i>pure citric acid</i>
		<b>1/3 cup</b>	golden raisins

## PREPARATION

- **Source pre-cooked rice.**

Make sure you have cooked rice on hand before starting, whether it is leftover takeout rice or a microwave-ready pouch.

- **Chill the meatballs.**

If you have the time, pop the formed meatballs into the refrigerator to firm up while you prep and cook the cabbage stew base.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Form the stuffing meatballs.**

In a large bowl, gently mix the ground beef, cooked rice, grated onion, minced garlic, egg, half the kosher salt, half the black pepper, and allspice until just combined, then form into golf-ball-sized meatballs.

**1. Sauté the aromatics.**

Heat the olive oil in a large, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat, and sauté the diced onion for 5 to 7 minutes until translucent before stirring in the tomato paste to caramelize for another minute.

**2. Wilt the cabbage.**

Add the chopped cabbage ribbons and a heavy pinch of salt, tossing frequently until the overwhelming mound of cabbage begins to wilt and shrink down in the pot.

**3. Build the sweet and sour broth.**

Pour in the crushed tomatoes, broth, brown sugar, sour salt, and golden raisins, bring to a vigorous simmer, and taste to ensure the sharp pucker is perfectly balanced by the dark sweetness.

**4. Braise the meatballs.**

Gently nestle the meatballs into the simmering cabbage so they are mostly submerged, reduce the heat to medium-low, cover tightly, and simmer gently for 45 to 50 minutes without stirring.

**5. Finish and serve.**

Remove the lid to check the sauce, simmering uncovered for another 10 minutes if it needs to thicken into a glossy glaze, then ladle deeply over mashed potatoes or wide egg noodles.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Procure sour salt for authentic flavor.**

Sour salt contains no sodium; it is pure crystallized citric acid that provides the crisp deli tang without watering down the sauce like vinegar or lemon juice would.

● **Leftover rice is a weeknight savior.**

Raw rice suspended in an acidic tomato sauce takes hours to soften due to the low pH inhibiting starch gelatinization, so pre-cooked rice is absolutely mandatory here.



# One-Pan Kasha Varnishkes

קאַשע וואַרנישקעס

*kah-shuh vahr-nish-kuhs*

Before this dish became a staple of New York Jewish delis, it was an act of extreme peasant resourcefulness in the shtetls of Ukraine and Russia. It is an edible archive of the Ashkenazi diaspora: earthy roasted buckwheat paired with cheap, immigrant-adopted Italian bowtie pasta. The absolute soul of the dish lies in chicken schmaltz and a mandatory old-world technique—coating the raw buckwheat in egg before toasting to guarantee separate, fluffy grains. No truffle oil, no gentrified flourishes. Just austere, historically bulletproof comfort food executed flawlessly in a single pan on a Tuesday night.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 tbsp</b>	schmaltz <i>divided</i>	<b>1 1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>2 large</b>	yellow onions <i>halved and sliced thin</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>8 oz</b>	cremini mushrooms <i>sliced</i>	<b>8 oz</b>	dried bowtie pasta
<b>1 large</b>	egg <i>lightly beaten</i>	<b>3 1/2 cup</b>	chicken broth <i>hot</i>
<b>1 cup</b>	roasted buckwheat groats <i>whole or coarse granulation</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	fresh dill or parsley <i>chopped</i>

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Melt two tablespoons of the schmaltz in a large, deep skillet over medium heat and add the sliced onions with a pinch of salt.**

Cook slowly until deeply golden and syrupy, about 15 to 20 minutes. Add the mushrooms during the last 5 minutes to brown, then scoop everything into a bowl and set aside. Do not rush the onions; this is where the flavor lives.

- 2. Vigorously stir the beaten egg into the raw kasha in a small bowl until every grain is fully coated and wet.**
- 3. Scrape the egg-coated kasha into the hot, empty skillet over medium-high heat and stir constantly until dry.**

This takes 2 to 4 minutes. The egg cooks onto the exterior, forming a protein barrier that keeps the grains from bursting. You will know it is ready when the grains separate and smell intensely nutty.

- 4. Add the dried bowtie pasta, chicken broth, salt, and pepper directly into the skillet with the toasted kasha.**

Scrape the bottom of the pan to release any browned onion bits and bring the liquid to a rolling boil.

- 1. Immediately reduce the heat to the lowest possible simmer, cover tightly, and cook undisturbed for 12 to 14 minutes.**

Both the pasta and the kasha will absorb the savory broth simultaneously, practically creating its own rich sauce.

- 2. Remove the lid, stir in the remaining tablespoon of schmaltz, and fold the caramelized onions and mushrooms back into the pan.**

Let the skillet sit off the heat, covered, for 5 minutes so the flavors marry. Fluff with a fork, garnish with fresh herbs, and serve immediately.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Schmaltz Mandate**

Do not substitute oil here if you can help it. Schmaltz provides the fundamental umami backbone of Ashkenazi cooking. You can find it in the frozen kosher section of most supermarkets. If absolutely necessary, substitute 2 tablespoons of butter and 1 tablespoon of olive oil.

- **Granulation Matters**

Always buy whole or coarse roasted buckwheat, commonly sold under the Wolff's brand. Fine granulation will disintegrate into porridge, rendering the egg-coating technique useless.



# Matzah Ball Soup

קניידלעך

*kney-dlakh*

If there's one aroma that defines the Eastern European Jewish diaspora, it's a golden chicken broth simmering on a stove. Replicating the exact texture of your grandmother's matzah balls—ethereal, cloud-like dumplings bobbing in liquid gold—isn't magic; it's culinary science. The rules are uncompromising: rendered schmaltz for roasted depth, highly carbonated seltzer for lift, and a strictly separate boil to keep the main broth pristine. This is the canonical deli formula, streamlined for a Tuesday night without losing an ounce of soul.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 large</b>	eggs <i>beaten</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	baking powder
<b>1/4 cup</b>	schmaltz <i>melted and slightly cooled</i>	<b>2 qt</b>	chicken bone broth <i>high-quality store-bought</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	seltzer water <i>cold</i>	<b>1 med</b>	yellow onion <i>unpeeled and quartered</i>
<b>1 cup</b>	matzah meal	<b>4 med</b>	carrots <i>peeled and sliced into thick coins</i>
<b>1 1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>3 med</b>	celery stalks <i>cut into thirds, leaves included</i>
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	<b>1 bunch</b>	fresh dill

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Hydrate the batter.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs vigorously with a fork until frothy, then whisk in the melted schmaltz and cold seltzer. In a separate bowl, whisk the matzah meal, salt, pepper, and baking powder.

### 2. Combine with a light hand.

Pour the dry ingredients into the wet. Using a fork, stir just until combined. Do not overmix; it will look loose and soupy, which is exactly what you want.

### 3. Rest the dough.

Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for a minimum of 30 minutes. The matzah meal requires this time to absorb the liquids and solidify so the balls don't disintegrate when boiled.

### 4. Fortify the weeknight broth.

While the batter chills, bring the store-bought bone broth to a simmer in a large pot with the quartered onion, carrots, celery, and dill. Let it gently bubble for 20 minutes to infuse it with homemade, roasted flavor, then keep warm.

**1. Prepare the separate boiling liquid.**

Never cook matzah balls in your serving soup, as the shed starches will cloud your pristine broth. Bring a separate wide pot or Dutch oven of generously salted water to a rolling boil.

**2. Shape the dumplings.**

Wet your hands thoroughly with cold water. Scoop 1 to 1 1/2 tablespoons of the chilled batter into your palms and gently roll it into a ping-pong-sized ball.

Handle it like a fragile cloud; packing it tightly guarantees dense, heavy sinkers.

**3. Boil under cover.**

Drop the balls gently into the boiling salted water, reduce the heat to a steady simmer, and cover with a tight-fitting lid. Do not open the lid for 30 minutes. The trapped steam is crucial for puffing the dumplings.

**4. Assemble and serve.**

Place two or three puffed matzah balls into the bottom of a wide bowl. Ladle the clear, piping hot, fortified golden broth over the top, making sure to include a few slices of the soft cooked carrots.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The schmaltz shortcut.**

If you don't want to buy jarred schmaltz, simply skim 1/4 cup of the golden fat off the top of any homemade chicken soup. Neutral oil works in a pinch, but you will sacrifice the profound, roasted umami of traditional poultry fat.

● **Store leftovers separately.**

Keep the matzah balls and the chicken broth in entirely separate containers in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Storing them together will cause the dumplings to aggressively absorb the liquid and turn to mush.



# Shaved "Brisket" and Onions

ברוסט און ציבעלעס

*brust un tzi-bel-es*

Long before barbecue purists claimed brisket as their own, Eastern European Jewish grandmothers were turning this tough, heavily worked cut of beef into a Friday night masterpiece. In the American suburbs, they adapted—trading the old world's dried fruits for ketchup and brown sugar to create that definitive sweet-and-sour deli magic. The real secret here isn't a fancy ingredient; it's the timeline. You cannot rush it, and you cannot slice it hot. You braise it Thursday, chill it overnight, and shave it cold. Come Friday evening, your only job

is to drop those paper-thin ribbons into a bubbling skillet of deeply caramelized onion gravy. It's a masterclass in weeknight comfort, disguised as a two-day labor of love.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 lb</b>	flat cut beef brisket <i>patted dry</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	sweet paprika
<b>1 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	beef broth
<b>1 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	tomato ketchup
<b>2 tbsp</b>	neutral oil	<b>1/3 cup</b>	brown sugar <i>tightly packed</i>
<b>3 large</b>	yellow onion <i>halved and thinly sliced</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar
<b>5 med clove</b>	garlic <i>smashed and minced</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	Worcestershire sauce

## PREPARATION

- **Start a day ahead.**

The brilliance of this recipe is the two-day method. Plan to braise the meat on Wednesday or Thursday so it can chill in the fridge overnight for a stress-free Friday assembly.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Preheat the oven to 325°F and deeply sear the seasoned brisket in oil.**

A heavy Dutch oven is your best friend here. Season the meat aggressively, then get a dark, violent crust on both sides over medium-high heat on the stovetop. This locks in the flavor and kickstarts the caramelization. Pull the meat out and set it aside.

**1. Caramelize the sliced onions in the rendered beef fat until deeply golden.**

Lower the heat to medium. Do not rush the onions—let them cook down for 10 to 15 minutes, scraping up all those beautiful browned bits from the beef. Stir in the minced garlic and paprika for a final minute until fragrant.

**2. Build the sweet and tangy braising liquid directly in the pot.**

Pour in the beef broth, ketchup, brown sugar, vinegar, and Worcestershire sauce, stirring until it becomes a unified, bubbling sauce.

**3. Return the brisket to the pot, cover tightly, and braise in the oven for three to four hours.**

Nestle the meat into the onions and spoon some of the mixture over the top. Seal the pot with a heavy lid or tight foil. It's done when a fork slides into the center with zero resistance.

**4. Cool the brisket and refrigerate the entire pot overnight.**

This is the non-negotiable deli secret. Slicing hot brisket gives you pulled, shredded beef. Chilling it entirely allows the collagen to set so you can shave it properly.

**5. Shave the cold brisket against the grain into impossibly thin ribbons.**

Pull the cold meat from the pot and grab your sharpest chef's knife. Scrape off any solidified fat from the gravy if you prefer, then shave the beef into slices less than 1/4-inch thick.

**6. Bring the onion gravy to a simmer on the stovetop and gently fold in the shaved beef to heat through.**

Let it simmer for 15 to 20 minutes until the meat is piping hot and fully saturated with the sweet, tangy sauce. Serve straight from the skillet alongside wide egg noodles or scooped onto fresh challah.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **The weeknight cheat code.**

If you absolutely cannot plan a day ahead, you can fake this on a Tuesday by using pre-shaved supermarket sirloin or cheesesteak meat. Caramelize the onions, build the sauce, and quickly toss the raw shaved beef in the bubbling liquid for a few minutes until just cooked through. It lacks the deep, slow-braised collagen richness, but still delivers that nostalgic taste.

- **Stretch it out.**

Old school Ashkenazi cooks would stretch a pricey cut of meat by dropping chunky peeled carrots and halved red potatoes into the braise during the last hour and a half of oven cooking.



# Stovetop Citrus-Glazed Salmon with Lemon and Dill

Кисло-сладкая рыба

*kislo-sladkaya ryba*

Before the gleaming deli counters of suburban Ohio, there were the bustling fish markets of Eastern Europe, where thrifty grandmothers boiled tough river carp for hours in a sweet-and-sour broth. When those families landed in America, they traded muddy carp for rich Atlantic salmon and harsh vinegar for bright, sunny lemons. This is the ultimate first-generation adaptation: we take the ancestral flavor profile —tart lemon, dark brown sugar, a whisper of warming ginger, and a

massive fistful of fresh dill—and apply it to a high-heat stovetop sear. It delivers the complex, nostalgic, sticky-sweet perfection of a two-day dish in exactly twenty minutes.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 med</b>	salmon fillets <i>center-cut, skin-on</i>	<b>1 large</b>	lemon <i>zested and juiced to yield about 3 tbsp juice</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1/4 cup</b>	light brown sugar <i>packed</i>
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	<b>1/3 cup</b>	vegetable broth
<b>1 tbsp</b>	neutral cooking oil	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	ground ginger
<b>1 large</b>	sweet yellow onion <i>sliced very thin into half-moons</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	fresh dill <i>finely chopped</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Dry the fish aggressively.**

Pull the salmon from the fridge 15 minutes before cooking and pat it completely dry with paper towels. Moisture is the enemy of a good sear, and a dry surface guarantees crispy skin.

- **Mix the glaze in advance.**

Whisk the lemon juice, zest, brown sugar, ground ginger, and broth in a small bowl until the sugar mostly dissolves. Having this concentrated liquid ready ensures you aren't scrambling while the fish sears.

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. Sear the salmon skin-side down in a hot skillet.**

Heat the oil in a large, heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the salmon, pressing gently on each fillet for 10 seconds to prevent curling, and let it sear undisturbed for 4 to 5 minutes until the skin is incredibly crispy.

**2. Flip the fish and add the onions.**

Carefully turn the fillets with a fish spatula. Immediately scatter the thinly sliced onions around the fish in the pan so they can begin to soften.

**3. Pour in the lemon-ginger glaze and reduce rapidly.**

Pour your prepared glaze mixture directly over the fish and onions. It will bubble furiously; let it boil rapidly for 3 to 5 minutes. As the water evaporates, the sugars will caramelize and the onions will turn into sweet, jammy ribbons.

**4. Remove from heat and finish with fresh dill.**

Once the glaze coats the back of a spoon and the fish hits an internal temperature of 130°F, pull the pan off the stove. Scatter the dill over the top—the residual heat will release its aroma without killing its bright color.

## CHEF'S NOTES

● **Do not substitute dried dill.**

The fresh volatile oils of real dill are absolutely mandatory for that authentic, old-country aroma. Dried dill tastes like dust by comparison.

● **Serve it cold the next day.**

If you want to experience true 1950s suburban nostalgia, chill the leftovers in a glass container overnight. The glaze sets up beautifully, allowing the fish to marinate in the lemon and dill for an extraordinary cold lunch.



# Rapid Skillet Tzimmes

צימעס במחבת

*tzim-mes ba-ma-cha-vat*

The fake Hollywood versions of tzimmes rely on cups of refined sugar and canned sweet potatoes, resulting in a dish that tastes like a cloying dessert. Real Eastern European grandmothers understood the power of balance: the deep, savory weight of chicken schmaltz paired with the sharp bite of black pepper to cut through the natural sweetness of carrots and honey. This rapid skillet adaptation respects that old-world wisdom, trapping steam to tenderize the roots in minutes before reducing the pan juices into a glossy, unapologetically authentic glaze that fits perfectly into a rushed suburban Friday night.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 tbsp</b>	schmaltz <i>rendered, or substitute neutral oil</i>	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>1 1/2 lb</b>	medium whole carrots <i>peeled and sliced crosswise into exactly 1/4-inch coins</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	pitted prunes <i>roughly halved</i>
<b>1/2 med</b>	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	chicken broth
<b>1 small</b>	cinnamon stick	<b>1/4 cup</b>	orange juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>2 tbsp</b>	honey
		<b>1 tbsp</b>	light brown sugar

## PREPARATION

- **Slice the carrots with precision.**

The speed of this stovetop technique relies entirely on the carrots being exactly 1/4-inch thick. If you slice them inconsistently or too thick, they will not tenderize within the brief 10-minute steaming window.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sauté the vegetables to build a savory foundation.**

Heat the schmaltz in a large, wide skillet with a tight-fitting lid over medium-high heat until shimmering, then add the sliced carrots and diced onions. Toss them in the fat and let them cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions soften and the carrots take on a slight golden sheen on their edges, about 4 to 5 minutes.

- 2. Bloom the spices in the hot fat.**

Add the cinnamon stick, kosher salt, and black pepper to the skillet and stir constantly until highly fragrant, about 30 seconds. This fast step unlocks the essential oils in the spices, replicating the profound depth of a three-hour oven braise.

**1. Steam-braise the carrots to rapidly tenderize them.**

Lower the heat to medium and pour in the chicken broth, orange juice, honey, and brown sugar. Stir well to dissolve the sweeteners and lift any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Nestle the halved prunes among the carrots, bring the liquid to a rapid simmer, then cover the skillet tightly with the lid. Reduce the heat to medium-low and let it steam undisturbed for exactly 10 minutes.

**2. Reduce the pan liquids into a tight glaze.**

Remove the lid, verifying the carrots are fork-tender, and increase the heat back to medium-high. Let the liquid boil and reduce, stirring frequently but gently to avoid mashing the carrots or disintegrating the prunes, until the liquid evaporates into a thin, sticky syrup that tightly coats the vegetables, about 4 to 6 minutes.

**3. Adjust the balance and serve hot.**

Remove the skillet from the heat and taste for proper balance; if it leans too sweet, a tiny squeeze of fresh lemon juice or an extra crack of black pepper will instantly correct it. Serve straight from the pan.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Do not fall into the baby carrot trap.**

Manufactured baby carrots are whittled down from older stock and washed in solutions that mute their natural sugars and alter their cellular structure. Taking three minutes to peel and slice whole carrots into uniform coins is non-negotiable for the correct texture and earthy sweetness.

● **Navigating the kosher kitchen.**

If serving alongside a Friday night brisket or roast chicken, dietary laws prohibit mixing meat and dairy, making schmaltz the historically accurate fat. For a dairy meal, swap the chicken broth for vegetable broth and use unsalted butter.

● **Manage your prunes gently.**

Prunes are highly sensitive to heat and agitation. By nestling them on top of the carrots right before covering the pan to steam, they plump up elegantly without disintegrating into an unappealing paste.





# Weekend Feasts & Holiday Gatherings

*Simplifying beloved, technically challenging classics for weekend group hangouts and holidays.*

Holidays and weekend gatherings in a Jewish household mean a glorious, chaotic collision of starch, fat, and family. We're talking about the heavy hitters: blistered latkes that historically demand a pint of your own blood on a box grater, delicate blintzes wrapped tightly around sweet farmer cheese, and the dense, comforting gravity of a proper lokshen kugel. These are the dishes that carry the weight of generations, usually accompanied by the lingering smell of hot oil and the sound of someone arguing in the kitchen.

But honoring the ancestors doesn't require suffering. The secret to keeping these feasts alive isn't martyrdom; it's working smart. By leveraging a few practical techniques and accessible supermarket ingredients, you can turn out perfect bletlach and golden, crispy potatoes without sacrificing an ounce of their soul. These are the undisputed classics, stripped of the anxiety, ready for the table.





# Food Processor Latkes

קארטאָפּל לאַטקעס

*kartofl latkes*

For first-generation Americans, the smell of sizzling potatoes and onions is the visceral, unadulterated scent of home. But grandma showed her love through scraped knuckles on a box grater, a sacrifice you no longer have to make. The secret to a shatteringly crisp, tender-centered deli latke on a weeknight doesn't demand suffering—it demands a food processor and a little science. By utilizing a dual-blade chopping method, squeezing the potatoes bone-dry, recovering their native starch, and frying in oil spiked with a heavy dose of schmaltz, you get the old world, masterfully hacked for the new one.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 1/2 lb</b>	Russet potatoes <i>scrubbed but unpeeled</i>	<b>2 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1 large</b>	yellow onion <i>peeled and quartered</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>2 large</b>	eggs <i>lightly beaten</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	baking powder
<b>1/4 cup</b>	matzo meal	<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	neutral oil
<b>2 tbsp</b>	potato starch	<b>3 tbsp</b>	schmaltz

## PREPARATION

- **Secure your schmaltz ahead of time.**

Check the frozen kosher section of your local supermarket for rendered chicken fat. It is the absolute flavor backbone of the dish and bridges the gap between neutral vegetable oil and old-world authenticity.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Shred the potatoes and onion together using the food processor's coarse grating disc.**

Running the onion alongside the potatoes immediately coats the shreds in acidic onion juice, stopping the raw potatoes from oxidizing and turning a dismal gray.

- 2. Swap to the chopping blade to mince half the mixture.**

Remove half the shreds to a bowl. Swap the shredding disc for the standard metal 'S' blade, then pulse the remaining potatoes in the processor three to four times until roughly minced. Recombine them in the bowl. This dual-blade trick mimics the varied texture of hand-grating, yielding a soft center and crispy, straggly edges.

- 1. Squeeze the shredded mixture aggressively to remove all moisture.**  
Transfer the potatoes and onions into a clean dish towel or double layer of cheesecloth, twist the bundle tightly over a bowl, and squeeze until your forearms ache. Water is the absolute enemy of a crispy crust.
- 2. Recover the pure, natural potato starch from the extracted liquid.**  
Let that bowl of squeezed potato juice sit undisturbed for ten minutes. Pour off the brown water and scrape the thick, white paste at the bottom—pure native potato starch—directly into your dried potato mixture.
- 3. Bind the fritter base with eggs, starches, and seasoning.**  
Add the beaten eggs, matzo meal, commercial potato starch, salt, pepper, and baking powder to the potatoes. Toss it thoroughly with your hands or a fork until the mixture feels damp but not wet.
- 4. Shallow fry the latkes in a heavy skillet at 350°F.**  
Heat the neutral oil and schmaltz in a cast-iron skillet or heavy-bottomed frying pan. The schmaltz is non-negotiable for that authentic deli aroma. Drop loosely packed quarter-cups of batter into the hot fat, flatten slightly with a spatula, and fry undisturbed for three to four minutes per side until deeply golden.
- 5. Drain on a wire rack and serve immediately.**  
Avoid resting them on paper towels, which trap steam and cause soggy bottoms. Serve blistering hot with chunky applesauce and sour cream.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not overcrowd the pan.**  
Adding too much cold batter at once drops the oil temperature below the crucial 350°F threshold. Without the rapid outward push of steam, the potatoes will absorb the fat instead of frying, leaving you with a soggy, grease-logged pancake.
- **Never microwave a latke to reheat it.**  
If you are cooking for a crowd, fry them completely, cool on a wire rack, and freeze. Reheat directly on a wire rack set in a 400°F oven for ten minutes to perfectly re-crisp the exterior lipids.



# Blintz

בלינצעס

*blin-tses*

If you grew up anywhere near a Jewish deli, the smell of butter browning against a sweet, thin crepe is permanently etched into your memory. True cheese blintzes aren't just stuffed pancakes; they are delicate *bletlach*—Yiddish for leaves—wrapped around a tangy, dense cheese core. In the old country, *bubbe* used *tvorog*, a dry-curd farmer's cheese. Here, we unlock that exact texture using a clever supermarket hack: heavily drained ricotta blended with cream cheese and brightened with fresh lemon zest. The real secret? You only cook the crepe on one side. The pillowy raw side melts right into the filling,

while the cooked side hits the pan later for a perfectly crispy, butter-blistered finish. No shortcuts. Just the genuine taste of Shavuot mornings and Sunday deli brunches.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 cup</b>	whole milk	<b>1 lb</b>	whole milk ricotta cheese <i>drained in a fine-mesh sieve for 30 minutes</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	water	<b>4 oz</b>	cream cheese <i>softened to room temperature</i>
<b>4 large</b>	large eggs <i>at room temperature</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1 cup</b>	all-purpose flour	<b>1 large</b>	large egg yolk
<b>2 tbsp</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1 tsp</b>	vanilla extract
<b>1 tsp</b>	vanilla extract	<b>1 tsp</b>	fresh lemon zest
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1 tbsp</b>	neutral oil <i>for greasing the pan</i>	<b>4 tbsp</b>	clarified butter

## PREPARATION

- **Drain the ricotta.**

This is the absolute non-negotiable secret to mimicking the dry, curdy texture of Eastern European tvorog. Line a fine-mesh sieve with cheesecloth or a heavy paper towel, set it over a bowl, and let the ricotta drain for at least 30 minutes to remove excess moisture.

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. Blend the crepe batter and let it rest.**

In a blender, combine the milk, water, eggs, flour, 2 tablespoons of sugar, 1 teaspoon of vanilla, and 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Blend on high until perfectly smooth. Let the batter rest on the counter for 30 minutes (or overnight in the fridge) to relax the gluten so the crepes won't tear.

**2. Mix the drained cheese filling.**

In a medium bowl, combine the thoroughly drained ricotta, softened cream cheese, 1/4 cup of sugar, the egg yolk, 1 teaspoon of vanilla, lemon zest, and a pinch of salt. Mash and mix vigorously with a fork until perfectly smooth.

**3. Cook the crepes on one side only.**

Heat an 8-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat and lightly grease it with oil. Pour slightly less than 1/4 cup of batter into the center, instantly swirling the pan to coat the bottom in a thin, even layer. Cook for 60 to 75 seconds until the bottom is golden and the top is dry—do not flip it. Slide the crepe onto a plate. Repeat, placing parchment between each crepe.

**4. Fill and roll the blintzes tightly.**

Place a crepe cooked-side up (slightly sticky raw side facing down) on your counter. Spoon 2 heaping tablespoons of the cheese mixture onto the lower third. Fold the bottom edge over the filling, tuck in the sides like an envelope, and roll it tightly away from you into a secure cylinder.

**5. Pan-fry the blintzes seam-side down until crispy.**

Heat the clarified butter in a large skillet over medium heat until gently sizzling. Working in batches, fry the blintzes seam-side down for 1 1/2 to 2 minutes per side until deeply golden, crispy, and blistered. Transfer to paper towels to drain briefly before serving hot with sour cream and berry compote.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **The freezer is your friend.**

Grandmothers made these by the dozen. After rolling (but before the final fry), freeze them solid on a parchment-lined baking sheet, then transfer to a zip-top bag. Fry directly from frozen on a weeknight, just dropping the heat slightly and adding an extra minute per side.

- **The casserole method.**

If you are hosting a crowd and don't want to stand over a frying pan, pack the unfried, rolled blintzes tightly into a buttered 9x13 baking dish. Dot with butter, cover tightly with foil, and bake at 350°F for 30-40 minutes. They won't have the crispy deli exterior, but they will be exquisitely tender.



# Crispy-Edge Muffin Tin Lokshen Kugel

לאַקשן קוגל

*LOK-shun KOO-gull*

The smell of sweet, cinnamon-laced noodle kugel is a mainline to mid-century American Jewish nostalgia. When Eastern European immigrants arrived in the States, they adapted their humble, old-world casseroles to flaunt the astonishing abundance of the New World: rich sour cream, sweet butter, and curdy cottage cheese. But the perennial family war was always over who claimed the crispy corner pieces. This recipe eliminates the fight entirely. By baking the custard-soaked noodles in a heavily greased muffin tin—a trick borrowed from modern Israeli home kitchens—every single serving becomes a

coveted, caramelized edge piece. It also drops the cooking time from an hour and a half to twenty-five minutes, making an ancestral classic highly viable on a Tuesday night.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1/2 lb</b>	wide egg noodles	<b>1/4 cup</b>	unsalted butter <i>melted and slightly cooled</i>
<b>3 large</b>	eggs	<b>1 tsp</b>	pure vanilla extract
<b>1 cup</b>	full-fat sour cream	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	ground cinnamon
<b>1 cup</b>	small-curd cottage cheese	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1/2 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1/2 cup</b>	dark or golden raisins
<b>1 tbsp</b>	granulated sugar		

## PREPARATION

- **Plump the raisins.**

Place the raisins in a small bowl, cover with hot tap water, and let them soak for 10 minutes before draining well.

- **Prepare the pan.**

Generously grease a standard 12-cup muffin tin with softened butter or non-stick spray. Skip the paper liners; the noodles need to touch bare metal to fry.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Par-boil the noodles.**

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil, add the egg noodles, and cook for exactly 4 to 5 minutes until just al dente. Drain, rinse briefly with cold water, and shake completely dry.

**1. Build the custard.**

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, sour cream, cottage cheese, melted butter, 1/2 cup of the sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, and salt. Leave the cottage cheese lumpy; those curds are essential for the final texture.

**2. Fold and rest.**

Stir the drained noodles and plumped raisins into the wet custard and let the mixture sit on the counter for 10 minutes. Don't rush this part. The undercooked noodles need time to drink in the dairy so the whole thing doesn't collapse into a watery mess in the oven.

**3. Portion and bake.**

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Scoop the noodle mixture into the greased muffin cups, gently press down any rogue noodles so they don't burn, and sprinkle the remaining tablespoon of sugar evenly over the tops.

**4. Bake to a crisp.**

Bake on the middle rack for 25 to 28 minutes until the centers are set and the edges are deeply caramelized.

**5. Cool and extract.**

Let the mini kugels rest in the tin for 10 minutes to firm up, then run a butter knife around the edges and pop them out to serve.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Make it ahead of time.**

These hold up beautifully. Bake them a day in advance, store in the fridge, and reheat in a 350 degree oven for 10 minutes to restore the crispy edges.

● **Do not skimp on the fat.**

Use full-fat sour cream and cottage cheese. Low-fat alternatives will compromise the custard's structural integrity and leave you with a sad, watery pudding.



# The "Biscuit Dough" Sufganiyot

סופגניות אשל

*soof-gah-nee-yoht eh-shel*

If you grew up in the States, you might know the quick jelly doughnut as a gimmick born from a pop-can of refrigerated biscuit dough. It's a cute trick, but it tastes exactly like fried canned bread. The true weeknight shortcut comes straight from the Israeli grandmother's playbook: sufganiyot eshel. By mixing everyday pantry staples with cultured dairy like kefir or sour cream, a rapid chemical reaction gives you the fluffy, tender crumb of a yeast doughnut in five minutes flat. Toss a splash of brandy in the batter to forcefully repel the cooking

grease, and drop a raw carrot in the hot oil to keep your kitchen from smelling like a fry pit. It's generationally verified magic, with absolutely no proofing required.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 large</b>	eggs	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	baking soda
<b>1 3/4 cup</b>	plain kefir	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1/4 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1 large</b>	carrot <i>peeled and cut into 2-inch chunks</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	vanilla extract	<b>1 1/2 qt</b>	canola oil
<b>1 tbsp</b>	brandy or cognac	<b>1/2 cup</b>	smooth strawberry preserves
<b>2 1/2 cup</b>	all-purpose flour	<b>1 cup</b>	powdered sugar
<b>1 tbsp</b>	baking powder		

## PREPARATION

- **Set up a proper draining station.**

Set a wire rack over a baking sheet lined with paper towels before you begin frying to keep your workspace organized.

- **Prepare your filling tool.**

Transfer the smooth strawberry preserves into a plastic squeeze bottle or a piping bag fitted with a round tip so it is ready the moment the doughnuts are out of the oil.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the wet ingredients.**

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, kefir, sugar, vanilla, and brandy until completely smooth.

**1. Incorporate the dry goods.**

In a separate bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt, then gently fold this into the wet mixture with a spatula just until the flour disappears. The batter will be sticky, thick, and shaggy—closer to a wet muffin batter than bread dough. Do not overmix, or your doughnuts will turn out dense.

**2. Heat the oil and deploy the carrot.**

Pour two to three inches of canola oil into a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven, drop in a chunk of raw carrot, and heat to 330°F. The carrot acts as a magnet for loose, burning bits of dough, keeping your oil clean and your kitchen smoke-free. If you lack a thermometer, dip the handle of a wooden spoon into the oil; steady, energetic bubbles mean it's ready.

**3. Drop the batter using the traditional two-spoon method.**

Dip two metal tablespoons into the hot oil for a second to slick them, scoop a walnut-sized ball of batter with one spoon, and use the back of the second to gently slide it off and into the oil. Work in small batches of five or six so you don't drop the oil temperature.

**4. Fry to a deep golden brown.**

Fry for 2 to 3 minutes per side. The chemical leavening will often cause them to magically flip themselves when the bottom is cooked. Look for the pale white band around the equator that proves your oil temp is dead-on, then transfer with a slotted spoon to a wire rack.

**5. Fill and generously dust.**

Once cool enough to handle but still warm, use a wooden skewer to poke a hole in the side of each doughnut, wiggle it around to create a cavity, and squeeze in about a teaspoon of strawberry preserves. Finish with an aggressive shower of powdered sugar.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Alcohol Shield**

Don't skip the brandy. When the alcohol hits the hot oil, it evaporates rapidly, creating outward steam pressure that physically repels the fat. It cooks off completely, leaving you with a remarkably light, non-greasy crumb.

- **The Kefir Alternative**

If you can't find kefir, you can perfectly replicate the authentic Israeli cultured dairy base by whisking together 1 cup of plain whole-milk yogurt and 3/4 cup of full-fat sour cream.

- **The Modern Piping Hack**

If the rustic, knobby shape of the two-spoon method isn't for you, scoop the wet batter into a heavy-duty ziplock bag. Snip a 1-inch hole in the corner, squeeze dollops directly over the oil, and snip them off with kitchen shears for perfectly round mini-doughnuts.



# Everything Bagel "Moshes in a Blanket"

משה בתיבה

*mo-sheh ba-tey-vah*

In the States, they're Pigs in a Blanket, but in a kosher kitchen, pork is off the table. Enter 'Moshe Bateva'—Moses in the Ark—an Israeli childhood staple popularized in the seventies. For first-generation kids, these are pure nostalgia. To elevate them from a lazy party shortcut to a proper deli classic, you need three things: real all-butter puff pastry for a shattering crunch, a hidden swipe of mustard baked right into the dough, and a heavy shower of Everything Bagel spice to bridge the gap between the homeland and the New York diaspora.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>14 oz</b>	uncured kosher beef hot dogs <i>patted completely dry and cut into thirds</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	mayonnaise
<b>16 oz</b>	frozen all-butter puff pastry <i>thawed overnight in the refrigerator</i>	<b>1 large</b>	egg <i>lightly beaten with 1 tsp water</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	Dijon mustard	<b>4 tbsp</b>	Everything Bagel seasoning

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Preheat the oven to 400°F and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.**
- 2. Dry the hot dog pieces ruthlessly with paper towels.**  
Any residual moisture on the beef will steam the pastry from the inside out, causing a soggy bottom. Don't skip this.
- 3. Roll out the thawed puff pastry on a lightly floured surface to a 1/4-inch thickness.**  
In a small bowl, whisk together the Dijon mustard and mayonnaise. Using a pastry brush or the back of a spoon, paint a very thin, even layer across the entire surface of the dough.
- 4. Cut the pastry into long triangles, about two inches wide at the base.**  
Place a dried piece of hot dog at the wide base of a triangle and roll it tightly toward the pointed tip, just like making rugelach. Press the tip gently into the dough to seal it, letting the ends of the hot dog peek out slightly.
- 5. Arrange the wrapped franks on the baking sheet seam-side down, spaced an inch apart.**  
Brush the tops and sides generously with the egg wash, then immediately shower them with the Everything Bagel seasoning so it adheres.
- 6. Bake on the center rack for 15 to 20 minutes.**  
The puff pastry should be deeply golden brown, puffed, and flaky. Let them rest for 5 minutes before serving alongside extra mustard.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Assemble these ahead of time for parties.**

You can roll these in advance and freeze them unbaked on a baking sheet. When guests arrive, brush with egg wash and seasoning right before baking, adding 3 to 5 minutes to the oven time.



# Puff Pastry Rugelach

רוגלך בצק עלים

*ro-ga-lach ba-tzek a-lim*

If you grew up grabbing a box of rugelach from the local kosher bakery, you know the exact texture we're chasing: flaky on the outside, dense and fudgy on the inside, with a shiny glaze that leaves your fingers unapologetically messy. Traditional yeasted doughs require hours of proofing and patience you probably don't have on a Tuesday. The real secret to pulling this off at home isn't some Hollywood hack, it's what modern Jewish grandmothers actually do: store-bought, all-butter puff pastry. Hit them with a hot sugar syrup the absolute second they leave the oven, and you've captured that nostalgic, old-world bakery magic without the multi-day hustle.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 package</b>	all-butter puff pastry <i>thawed in the refrigerator</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	walnuts <i>finely chopped</i>
<b>3/4 cup</b>	chocolate spread	<b>1 large</b>	large egg
<b>2 tbsp</b>	unsweetened cocoa powder	<b>1 tbsp</b>	water
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	ground cinnamon	<b>1/2 cup</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	espresso powder	<b>1/2 cup</b>	water
		<b>1 tsp</b>	vanilla extract

## PREPARATION

- **Preheat the oven.**

Set your oven to 375°F and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Make the sugar syrup.**

In a small saucepan, bring the granulated sugar and 1/2 cup water to a boil over medium heat, stirring until dissolved. Simmer for 2 to 3 minutes until slightly thickened, pull it off the heat, stir in the vanilla, and set aside.

- 2. Prepare the dry spice mixture.**

Whisk together the cocoa powder, cinnamon, and espresso powder in a small bowl. This is your lock; it absorbs the oil in the chocolate spread so it doesn't separate and bleed all over your baking sheet.

- 3. Spread and lock the filling.**

Unfold one sheet of the cold puff pastry and gently roll it to a 1/8-inch thickness. Smear a thin, even layer of the chocolate spread across the dough, leaving a tight 1/4-inch border, then generously dust the dry cocoa mixture and chopped walnuts over the top.

**1. Cut and roll the rugelach.**

Cut the dough in half lengthwise to create two long strips, then cut each strip into triangles with bases about 3 inches wide. Starting from the wide base, roll each triangle up tightly toward the tip.

**2. Chill the dough before baking.**

Place the rolled pastries point-side down on a parchment-lined baking sheet and throw the pan in the freezer for 15 minutes. Puff pastry relies on ice-cold butter to create those explosive, flaky layers in the oven.

**3. Egg wash and bake.**

Whisk the egg with 1 tablespoon of water and generously brush the tops of the chilled rugelach. Bake for 18 to 25 minutes, until the pastry is puffed and deeply golden brown.

**4. Apply the bakery finish.**

The absolute second you pull the tray from the oven, generously dab the warm sugar syrup over the piping hot pastries. They should sizzle on contact, creating that signature lacquered glaze that locks in the moisture.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The Cocoa Lock.**

Dusting the chocolate spread with cocoa powder isn't optional. It transforms the filling into a dense, fudgy interior rather than a leaky, burnt mess on your pan.

● **The Sizzle Factor.**

The syrup must hit the pastry while it is piping hot, straight out of the oven. If the pastries cool down, the syrup will just make them soggy instead of shiny.

● **Point Down.**

Always place the rugelach on the pan with the pointed tip tucked firmly underneath the weight of the cookie, or they will unroll and flatten out while baking.



# "Babka" Monkey Bread

לחם קופים בבקה

*lechem kofim babka*

Any kid raised in the diaspora knows the intoxicating smell of a Jewish bakery—yeast, caramelized butter, and dark chocolate. Traditional babka is a beautiful labor of love, requiring overnight fermentation and intricate braiding that has exactly zero place on a Tuesday night. But mid-century grandmas were ruthless pragmatists. They knew the secret to delivering that deep, pull-apart Brooklyn soul without the sweat: commercial frozen challah dough. Cut into bite-sized pieces, heavily coated in butter and Dutch-process cocoa, and finished with a

hot simple syrup glaze, it perfectly marries the structural joy of Hungarian arany galuska with the undisputed king of the deli case. It tastes exactly like home, with none of the stress.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 pkg (14 to 16 oz)</b>	frozen braided challah dough <i>thawed just until pliable</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	ground cinnamon
<b>1/2 cup</b>	unsalted butter <i>melted and slightly cooled</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	pure vanilla extract
<b>2/3 cup</b>	granulated white sugar	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1/3 cup</b>	light brown sugar <i>packed</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	walnuts <i>finely chopped</i>
<b>1/3 cup</b>	Dutch-process cocoa powder	<b>1/3 cup</b>	water
		<b>1/3 cup</b>	granulated white sugar (for glaze)

## PREPARATION

- **Grease a standard 10-inch Bundt pan with butter or non-stick spray.**  
Avoid pans with removable bottoms so the melting butter and sugar won't leak into your oven.
- **Whisk the dry coating ingredients together.**  
In a shallow bowl, mix the 2/3 cup of granulated white sugar, brown sugar, cocoa powder, cinnamon, salt, and walnuts.
- **Stir the vanilla into the melted butter.**  
Whisk the extract into the slightly cooled butter in a separate small bowl.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Cut the partially thawed challah dough into bite-sized pieces.**  
Unravel the strands and cut them into about 50 to 60 walnut-sized pieces, rolling them quickly into rough spheres.

- 1. Dip the dough balls into the butter, then coat them heavily in the cocoa-sugar mixture.**

Work in small batches, tossing three or four pieces in the butter before moving them to the dry mixture to coat completely.

- 2. Layer the coated dough balls into the prepared pan.**

Stagger the placement like laying bricks so the pieces interlock. Drizzle any remaining butter and sugar evenly over the top.

- 3. Let the dough rise in a warm, draft-free spot until noticeably puffy.**

Cover the pan loosely with plastic wrap. This final proof takes 45 to 90 minutes depending on your kitchen's temperature; the dough should swell to fill the gaps.

- 4. Bake at 350°F for 30 to 35 minutes.**

The bread is done when the top looks deeply caramelized and the bubbling sugars around the edges are dark and syrupy. Tent loosely with foil if it browns too quickly.

- 5. Simmer the water and remaining white sugar into a glaze.**

While the bread is in its final minutes of baking, heat the water and the remaining 1/3 cup of sugar in a small saucepan over medium heat just until the sugar dissolves.

- 6. Brush the hot syrup over the baked bread, then let it rest in the pan for exactly 15 minutes.**

Do not skip the rest period. The syrup gives the bread its authentic deli shine, and the rest allows the molten caramel to thicken enough to stick to the bread instead of running off.

- 7. Invert the bread onto a serving platter.**

Place a large plate upside down over the Bundt pan, hold them tightly together, and confidently flip. Let the bread cool for at least 10 minutes before pulling it apart with your fingers.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Find the right dough.**

Frozen challah dough is readily available in the kosher freezer section of most supermarkets. Do not substitute canned biscuit dough, which uses chemical leaveners and completely lacks the chewy, bready structure required for an authentic babka experience.

- **Assemble the night before for an easy morning bake.**

To make this for a weekend morning feast, assemble the bread in the pan, cover tightly, and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, let it sit at room temperature for 30 to 45 minutes to take the chill off before baking.



# Savory Potato Kugel

קארטאפל קוגל

*kar-toff-el koo-gull*

This isn't some gentrified, micro-green-dusted approximation of your heritage. It's the pure, unadulterated comfort of a shtetl kitchen, optimized for a busy weeknight in the suburbs. Six cheap ingredients, and one non-negotiable grandmotherly secret: scalding the batter in screaming-hot fat. You want that deep, burnished, fried-potato crust yielding to a steamy, tender center? You squeeze the water out of your potatoes like they owe you money, and you don't skimp on the oil. It's a masterpiece of culinary survival, and it tastes exactly like home.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>5 lb</b>	russet or Yukon gold potatoes <i>peeled and quartered</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	schmaltz or neutral vegetable oil
<b>2 med</b>	yellow onions <i>peeled and quartered</i>	<b>1/3 cup</b>	matzo meal or potato starch
<b>5 large</b>	large eggs	<b>1 1/2 tbsp</b>	kosher salt
		<b>1 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Set up the sizzle.**

Place a 9x13-inch glass baking dish or a 10-inch cast-iron skillet into your cold oven. Pour all but 2 tablespoons of your chosen fat into the pan. Turn the oven on and preheat to 400°F (200°C). Heating the oil and the pan together until it's practically smoking is the ancient secret to a crust that tastes deep-fried rather than baked. Do not skip this.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mince the onions to a pulp.**

Fit your food processor with the standard chopping blade and pulse the onions until finely minced. Transfer them to a massive mixing bowl.

- 2. Shred the potatoes.**

Swap the blade for the coarse grating disc. Shove the potatoes through the feed tube. Immediately mix the shredded potatoes into the minced onion; the onion juices act as an antioxidant and will stop the potatoes from oxidizing and turning an ugly gray.

- 3. Extract the moisture relentlessly.**

Dump the potato-onion mixture onto a clean kitchen towel or into a colander. Squeeze it over the sink with everything you've got. Wet potatoes make a soggy, miserable kugel. The drier the shreds, the crisper the final dish.

**1. Build the batter.**

In a separate bowl, aggressively whisk the eggs, kosher salt, black pepper, and the reserved 2 tablespoons of fat. Fold in the dry potato mixture, then sprinkle the matzo meal over the top. Mix thoroughly with your hands so every strand is coated.

**2. Scald the batter.**

Carefully pull that blistering hot pan of oil from the oven. Instantly scrape the potato batter into the hot fat. It should violently sizzle and pop around the edges—this cauterizes the crust immediately. Quickly smooth the top with a spatula.

**3. Bake it out.**

Return the dish to the oven and bake for 60 to 75 minutes. You're looking for a completely tender center and deeply burnished, golden-brown edges. If the top darkens too fast, tent it loosely with aluminum foil.

**4. Let it rest.**

Don't touch it. Let the kugel stand for at least 20 minutes before cutting. Like a lasagna, it needs time to set its structure, or it will fall apart on the plate.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The great grating debate.**

Traditionalists will tell you to bleed over a box grater for an hour. Don't listen to them. Using the grating disc of a food processor is perfectly authentic for the modern weeknight kitchen and gets the job done in sixty seconds.

● **Choosing your fat.**

If you can find schmaltz (rendered chicken fat) in the freezer section of your supermarket, use it. It imparts a profound, savory depth that oil simply cannot replicate. Otherwise, a neutral oil like canola does the job just fine.



## Afternoon Glass Case Snacks (New York Deli)

*Bright, acidic, and crunchy mini-fridge mains and side dishes inspired by the glowing deli display case, perfect for rapid make-ahead snacking.*

There is a specific kind of salvation found behind the smudged glass of a New York deli case, bathed in humming fluorescent light. It is here that the heavy, fatty monoliths of cured meat give way to the sharp, bracing acidity and aggressive crunch that makes the whole ecosystem work. These are the unsung

heroes of the Jewish culinary arsenal—the garlic-spiked half-sours, the heavily vinegared health salads, the smoky, unapologetic whipped whitefish—designed to cut through the richness and keep a palate alive.

Transplanted to the home kitchen, these aren't just side dishes. They are tactical, make-ahead fridge raids waiting for a Tuesday afternoon slump. Armed with nothing more than standard supermarket produce and a little patience, anyone can conjure the bright, loud magic of the corner deli straight from their own Tupperware.





# The "Claremont Diner" Health Salad

Салат Витаминный

*Salat Vitaminiy*

Slide into a New Jersey diner booth in 1955, and before you even order the pastrami, they hit you with a bowl of pickles and a cold, sharp, impossibly crunchy cabbage salad. The Bauman brothers at the Claremont Diner made this mayo-free "Health Salad" famous, but its true lineage stretches back to the harsh winters of Eastern Europe, where Ashkenazi grandmothers relied on Salat Vitaminiy to get by. The secret to making it taste exactly like the deli glass case isn't in the ingredients—which are strictly cheap supermarket standards—but in a Russian manual technique called "pereteret". You aggressively massage

the raw cabbage with salt and sugar until it physically breaks down, turning a tough vegetable into a sponge that drinks up the tangy white vinegar brine. It takes fifteen minutes of prep on a Sunday night, stays ruthlessly crisp in your fridge for two weeks, and acts as the ultimate acidic counterpunch to a heavy meal.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 1/2 lb</b>	green cabbage <i>cored and cut into 1/8-inch shreds</i>	<b>3/4 cup</b>	white distilled vinegar
<b>2 med</b>	carrots <i>peeled and grated</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	neutral oil
<b>1 med</b>	English cucumber <i>sliced into thin half-moons</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	white granulated sugar <i>divided</i>
		<b>plus 1</b>	
		<b>tbsp</b>	
<b>1 small</b>	sweet onion <i>sliced into paper-thin strips</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	kosher salt <i>divided</i>
		<b>plus 1 tsp</b>	
<b>1 med</b>	green bell pepper <i>cored, seeded, and sliced into paper-thin strips</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>1 med</b>	celery stalk <i>sliced thinly</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	cold water

## PREPARATION

- **Break out the food processor.**

To replicate the ultra-thin, uniform texture of a commercial deli case on a busy weeknight, skip the chef's knife and use the slicing and grating attachments of a food processor or a handheld mandoline.

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. Apply the grandma secret of pereteret to break down the cabbage.**

Place the shredded cabbage in your largest mixing bowl. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon of the kosher salt and 1 tablespoon of the sugar. Roll up your sleeves and vigorously massage, squeeze, and rub the cabbage between your palms for 2 to 3 minutes. It will shrink in volume, soften considerably, and pool a watery juice at the bottom. Do not drain this juice; it is the foundation of your dressing.

**2. Add the prepared vegetables to the massaged cabbage.**

Toss in the grated carrots, sliced cucumber, sweet onion, green pepper, and celery.

**3. Whisk together the heavy-hitting vinegar brine.**

In a separate small bowl, vigorously whisk the white vinegar, neutral oil, the remaining 1/2 cup of sugar, the remaining 1 tablespoon of kosher salt, black pepper, and cold water until the sugar and salt fully dissolve.

**4. Toss the salad with the dressing and prepare for the osmotic soak.**

Pour the dressing over the vegetables and toss thoroughly. It will look like there isn't enough liquid, but do not add more. The salt and sugar will continue drawing moisture out of the vegetables to build the brine. Transfer everything, including all liquid, to a large airtight container or a gallon-sized heavy-duty plastic bag.

**5. Give the salad at least twelve hours in the fridge to properly pickle.**

Do not serve this immediately. It needs 12 to 24 hours of resting time. Whenever you open the fridge to grab a drink, give the container a shake or flip the bag to keep the brine redistributing. Use a slotted spoon to serve, leaving the liquid behind. It will stay brutally crisp for up to two weeks.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Accept no substitutions on the white distilled vinegar.**

Fancy apple cider or white wine vinegars will miss the authentic, sharp diner flavor profile entirely. You want the cheap stuff here.

- **Managing standard supermarket onions and cucumbers.**

If you can't find a sweet Vidalia onion, use a standard yellow onion but rinse the slices under cold water for 30 seconds to kill the harsh sulfuric bite. If using a standard waxy cucumber instead of English, peel it completely and scrape out the watery seeds so they don't dilute your brine.



## The Secret-Brine Deli Macaroni Salad

This isn't your sad, mayonnaise-drowned picnic afterthought. In the glass case of any respectable Jewish-American deli, the macaroni salad is an unsung masterpiece born of working-class thrift and Eastern European flavor profiles. The secret is all in the brine. You don't just slop cold mayo onto cold pasta; you shock hot, freshly boiled elbows with a sharp, sweet bath of vinegar and leftover pickle juice straight from the barrel. The starch drinks it in from the inside out. Only then do you hit it with Hellmann's and the grandmotherly genius of grated onion. It's a crossover classic that tastes exactly like a Tuesday lunch in the Bronx.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	elbow macaroni	<b>1 1/4 cup</b>	Hellmann's mayonnaise
<b>1/3 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar	<b>1 small</b>	white onion <i>grated</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	dill pickle juice	<b>2 large</b>	celery stalks <i>finely diced</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	white granulated sugar	<b>1 large</b>	carrot <i>peeled and grated</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	neutral oil	<b>1/2 cup</b>	dill pickles <i>seeded and finely diced</i>
<b>1 1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt		
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper		

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Whisk the secret brine.

In a large bowl, vigorously whisk the vinegar, pickle juice, sugar, oil, salt, and pepper until the sugar and salt dissolve completely.

### 2. Boil the macaroni past al dente.

Cook the pasta in heavily salted water for 1 to 2 minutes longer than the package directs so it is fully tender but not falling apart.

### 3. Shock the hot pasta in the brine.

Drain the pasta thoroughly but absolutely do not rinse it; immediately dump the steaming hot elbows directly into the brine and toss to coat.

### 4. Let the pasta cool and absorb.

Leave the brined pasta at room temperature for 20 to 30 minutes, tossing occasionally, until cooled and the sharp liquid is mostly absorbed into the noodles.

### 5. Build the crunch.

Fold in the grated onion along with its juices—the old-school trick to get the flavor without biting into harsh, raw chunks—plus the diced celery, carrot, and pickles.

**1. Emulsify with the mayonnaise.**

Gently fold in the mayonnaise until the pasta is deeply coated and creamy, adding another dollop if the mixture looks dry.

**2. Chill to meld the flavors.**

Cover tightly and refrigerate for at least two hours, though letting it sit overnight is the true standard of the deli case.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Stick to the script.**

Do not substitute the mayonnaise for Greek yogurt or olive oil blends. The high fat content of commercial Hellmann's is what protects the pasta from becoming soggy.

● **Troubleshooting a dry salad.**

If the pasta absorbs too much moisture overnight, stir in a splash of leftover pickle juice or milk to loosen the emulsion rather than dumping in massive amounts of extra mayonnaise.



# The 24-Hour "Bag-Weighted" Half-Sour Pickles

זויערע אוגערקעס

*zoyere ugerkes*

True New York deli pickles don't roll off a factory line swimming in vinegar; they are born from saltwater, garlic, and a little patience. To recreate the legendary half-sour—bright green, violently crisp, and reeking beautifully of garlic and dill—one must follow two old-world rules. First, lop a tiny sliver off the blossom end to kill the softening enzymes. Second, toss a bay leaf into the jar for its crunch-saving tannins. Forget expensive ceramic crocks; a plastic zip-top bag filled

with leftover brine provides the perfect, heavy seal to keep the cucumbers submerged. This is the authentic, unadulterated deli experience, engineered for a Tuesday night.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	Kirby cucumbers <i>unwaxed and thoroughly washed</i>	<b>1 med</b>	dried bay leaf
<b>2 tbsp</b>	coarse Kosher salt	<b>1 tsp</b>	black peppercorns
<b>4 cup</b>	non-chlorinated water	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	coriander seeds
<b>5 med cloves</b>	garlic <i>peeled and smashed</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	mustard seeds
<b>1 large handful</b>	fresh dill <i>stems included</i>	<b>1 pinch</b>	red pepper flakes <i>optional</i>

## PREPARATION

- **The Ice Bath.**

If the cucumbers aren't farm-stand fresh, submerge them in a bowl of ice water for 1 to 2 hours to restore their natural turgor pressure and crispness before brining.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Dissolve the salt.**

In a large pitcher, combine the non-chlorinated water and Kosher salt, stirring vigorously until completely dissolved to create a mathematically perfect 3.5 percent lacto-fermentation brine.

- 2. Trim the blossom ends.**

Identify the rougher blossom end of each cucumber, opposite the smooth stem indent, and slice exactly 1/16 of an inch off to eliminate the softening enzymes.

**1. Pack the glass jar.**

In a clean, wide-mouth 1-quart glass mason jar, drop in half the dill, the bay leaf, the smashed garlic, and the spices.

**2. Wedge in the cucumbers.**

Pack the cucumbers tightly into the jar, standing them vertically, and tuck the remaining dill into any empty gaps.

**3. Submerge in the cold brine.**

Pour the cold salt brine over the cucumbers until they are completely covered, leaving about an inch of headspace at the top.

**4. Apply the bag-weight.**

Push a clean, sandwich-sized zip-top bag into the mouth of the jar, pour about 1/2 cup of the leftover salt brine into the bag, and seal it tightly so it spreads out and forces the cucumbers entirely underwater.

**5. Ferment for 24 hours.**

Leave the jar out of direct sunlight at room temperature for 24 hours, at which point the pickles will be bright green, highly garlicky, and incredibly crunchy.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Use only non-chlorinated water and pure Kosher salt.**

Tap water chlorine and table salt additives will inhibit the natural lacto-fermentation process and turn the brine a cloudy, unappetizing gray.

● **Cloudy brine is a sign of success.**

A cloudy brine or a fine white sediment settling at the bottom of the jar is a definitive indicator of a healthy lactic acid bacteria bloom, not spoilage.

● **Refrigerate to halt fermentation.**

Once they reach the desired flavor after 24 to 48 hours, remove the plastic bag, screw on the jar lid, and place them in the refrigerator where they will stay crunchy for up to three weeks.



## Bubbe's Gurkensalat

אוגערקע סאַלאַט

*uh-gur-keh sah-laht*

If you grew up walking into a New York deli, your senses were immediately hijacked by the smell of curing pastrami, garlic pickles, and the sharp tang of vinegar. Sitting right there in the glowing glass case was a massive metal bowl of glistening, translucent cucumbers. Because kosher delis serve meat, they couldn't serve the creamy, dairy-based salads of the old country alongside them. Instead, our grandmothers adapted, leaning into a sharp, sweet-and-sour vinegar brine that cuts through a fatty corned beef sandwich like a laser beam. The real secret here isn't a fancy ingredient; it's a ruthless technique.

You have to salt the cucumbers and aggressively wring the water out of them before dressing, forcing them to absorb the brine instead of diluting it.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 large</b>	English cucumbers <i>unpeeled, sliced 1/8-inch thick</i>	<b>1/3 cup</b>	granulated white sugar
<b>1 med</b>	red onion <i>halved and sliced paper-thin</i>	<b>3 tbsp</b>	fresh dill <i>finely chopped</i>
<b>1 1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar	<b>1 pinch</b>	sweet Hungarian paprika <i>for garnish</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	water <i>cold</i>		

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. **Sweat the cucumbers and onions.**

Place the thinly sliced cucumbers and onions into a colander set over a large bowl or in the sink. Sprinkle the kosher salt evenly over the vegetables and toss gently with your hands to coat, then let them sit undisturbed for exactly 30 minutes to draw out the excess water.

### 2. **Wring out the excess moisture.**

After 30 minutes, discard the pool of water at the bottom of the bowl. Take handfuls of the cucumbers and onions and literally squeeze them over the sink with your clenched fists to expel as much remaining liquid as humanly possible, then transfer the wilted vegetables to a clean serving bowl or glass jar.

### 3. **Build the sweet-and-sour deli brine.**

In a liquid measuring cup, combine the white vinegar, cold water, and white sugar. Whisk vigorously until the sugar is completely dissolved and the liquid is totally clear, then stir in the chopped fresh dill and black pepper.

## 1. **Marinate and chill.**

Pour the brine over the squeezed cucumbers and onions, tossing well so they drink up the tart liquid like sponges. Cover tightly and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, though it reaches absolute perfection if left overnight. Serve cold with a slotted spoon and a light dusting of sweet paprika.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Keep simple things simple.**

Resist the urge to add olive oil, fancy mustard, or exotic vinegars. The absolute perfection of this dish relies on the stark, unpretentious clash of distilled white vinegar and sugar against the crisp cucumber. Adding oil will just coat your palate and ruin the sharp acidity required to cut through rich deli meats.

- **Hold the extra salt.**

Because the cucumbers are heavily salted to draw out moisture, the residual salt left behind after squeezing is almost always sufficient. Do not add additional salt to the dressing without tasting the finished salad first.

- **Make it ahead.**

Unlike a tossed green salad, this is a pickled product. It will keep perfectly in a sealed container in the fridge for up to a week, making it a brilliant Sunday meal-prep move for easy weeknight eating.



## "Quick-Stained" Pickled Beets and Red Onions

רויטע בוריקעס

*royte burikes*

The secret to those neon-pink onions glowing in the deli case isn't food coloring—it's the natural science of the beetroot. In the old country, bubbes boiled beets whole in their skins to lock in that brilliant ruby juice. We're chasing that exact same magic, just a hell of a lot faster. By pouring a boiling, caraway-heavy brine over cold raw onions and vacuum-sealed cooked beets, the onions instantly lose their harsh bite while keeping their crunch. You get a hundred percent of that authentic, earthy, sweet-and-sour Old World flavor in exactly ten minutes of weeknight prep.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	cooked red beets <i>vacuum-sealed and sliced 1/4-inch thick</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1 med</b>	red onion <i>sliced into thin rings</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	caraway seeds
<b>1 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>4</b>	whole cloves
<b>1 cup</b>	water	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black peppercorns
<b>1/3 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>3 large cloves</b>	garlic <i>smashed</i>
		<b>1</b>	bay leaf

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Alternately pack the beet slices and red onion rings into a clean one-quart glass jar.**  
Drop the smashed garlic cloves in between the layers as you build them.
- 2. Combine the vinegar, water, sugar, salt, caraway, cloves, peppercorns, and bay leaf in a small saucepan.**  
Bring the mixture to a rolling boil over medium-high heat, stirring for about three minutes until the sugar and salt are completely dissolved.
- 3. Carefully pour the boiling liquid directly into the jar over the beets and onions.**  
Ensure the vegetables are completely submerged in the hot brine to flash-cure the onions and immediately begin pulling the color from the beets.
- 4. Let the jar cool completely to room temperature on the counter before sealing with a lid and transferring to the refrigerator.**  
They are ready to eat in two hours, but the onions will achieve their ultimate neon-pink deli stain after twenty-four hours.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **For a sharp, Passover-inspired variation, add a tablespoon of freshly grated horseradish root to the jar before pouring in the brine.**

This creates a sinus-clearing bite that cuts perfectly through rich cuts of beef or fatty smoked fish.



# Antipasto Marinated Button Mushrooms

If you grew up navigating the glorious, chaotic aisles of an old-school New York appetizing shop, you know the glass case. Next to the smoked whitefish and the giant potato knishes sat plastic tubs of glowing, olive-oil-slicked marinated mushrooms. They were earthy, sharply tangy, and laced with garlic and oregano. The secret to making these at home on a weeknight isn't foraging for wild truffles; it's a brilliant, old-world Eastern European technique. Instead of pouring a dressing over raw mushrooms, you boil everyday supermarket button

mushrooms directly in a heavily spiced, acidic brine. They release their water, shrink down, and soak up the garlic, vinegar, and olive oil like little sponges in exactly five minutes.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	white button or cremini mushrooms <i>wiped clean, woody stems trimmed, halved if large</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1/2 cup</b>	water	<b>1 tsp</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1/2 cup</b>	white wine vinegar	<b>1 tsp</b>	dried oregano
<b>1/3 cup</b>	extra-virgin olive oil	<b>1 tsp</b>	dried parsley
<b>4 large cloves</b>	garlic <i>gently smashed and peeled</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	whole black peppercorns
		<b>1/2 tsp</b>	crushed red pepper flakes
		<b>1 large</b>	dried bay leaf

## PREPARATION

- **Sort the mushrooms by size to ensure even cooking.**

Leave small, bite-sized mushrooms entirely whole. Halve or quarter exceptionally large ones. Do not slice them thinly, or they will turn to mush during the boil.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the water, vinegar, olive oil, garlic, salt, sugar, herbs, and spices in a medium saucepan.**
- 2. Bring the liquid to a rolling boil over medium-high heat, then carefully drop in all the prepared mushrooms.**

It will initially look like there isn't enough liquid in the pot, but within sixty seconds the mushrooms will release their juices, shrink, and completely submerge.

- 1. Once the liquid returns to a boil, set a timer and let the mushrooms simmer for exactly five minutes.**

Stir occasionally as they transform from bright white to a deeply saturated, olive-brown color. Do not overcook them.

- 2. Remove the pot from the heat immediately and allow the mushrooms to cool completely in their own liquid at room temperature.**

As they cool, osmotic exchange pulls the olive oil, vinegar, and garlic flavor deep into their centers.

- 3. Transfer the mushrooms and all their liquid into a sealed container and refrigerate.**

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Let them rest in the refrigerator overnight.**

While they can be eaten at room temperature immediately, they are exponentially better the next day once the flavors meld and the texture firms up.

- **Serve slightly chilled or at room temperature.**

If serving straight from a cold fridge, let them sit on the counter for fifteen minutes so the extra-virgin olive oil can loosen up.

- **Save the leftover marinade.**

Once the mushrooms are gone, you are left with a richly flavored, mushroom-infused vinaigrette perfect for dressing simple greens or a submarine sandwich.



# The Pickle-Juice Potato Salad

קארטאפל סאלאט

*kartofl salat*

If you grew up staring into the glass cases of authentic New York delicatessens, you know those towering mounds of pristine, creamy potato salad sitting next to the half-sours. The secret to that resonant, tangy bite isn't a complex dressing, but a frugal immigrant trick: pouring sharp, garlic-heavy pickle brine over steaming hot potatoes so the starches absorb the liquid from the inside out. Combined with the textural purity of grated onion and white pepper, this is the canonical deli technique perfectly adapted for a weeknight kitchen.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 lb</b>	Russet or white potatoes <i>peeled, halved lengthwise, and sliced crosswise into 1/4-inch half-moons</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	white pepper
<b>1/2 cup</b>	kosher dill pickle brine <i>strained from a jar of high-quality supermarket pickles</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	Dijon or spicy brown mustard
<b>1/2 med</b>	yellow onion <i>grated on the large holes of a box grater to yield 2 to 3 tablespoons of pulp and juice</i>	<b>1 1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt <i>plus more for boiling the potatoes</i>
		<b>3/4 cup</b>	high-quality mayonnaise

## PREPARATION

- **Prevent oxidation while prepping.**

As you peel and slice the potatoes, drop them immediately into a pot of cold water to prevent them from turning brown.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil the potatoes to perfect tenderness.**

Drain the cold water from your prepped potatoes, refill the pot with fresh water to cover them by 1 inch, and add a generous tablespoon of kosher salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook for 8 to 10 minutes until a fork pierces them easily but they haven't turned to mush.

- 2. Administer the hot brine soak.**

Drain the potatoes in a colander and immediately transfer them to a large mixing bowl. While they are still steaming hot, pour the pickle brine directly over them so the open cell structure of the potato can drink up the liquid.

- 3. Add the foundational flavor base.**

Add the grated onion pulp and juice, white pepper, and measured kosher salt to the warm potatoes. Use a flexible rubber spatula to fold the mixture gently, taking care not to shatter the fragile potato slices.

**1. Lock in the flavor.**

Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and place it in the refrigerator to chill completely, ideally overnight. The potatoes will absorb the brine through capillary action as they cool, pulling the flavor to their core.

**2. Build the final emulsion.**

The next day, gently drain away any excess liquid pooling at the bottom of the bowl. Fold in the mayonnaise and mustard until the cold potatoes are coated in a thick, pristine white dressing.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Grate the onion, never chop it.**

Authentic deli potato salad is entirely creamy and unblemished by raw, crunchy alliums. Grating the onion extracts the pungent juice and integrates it seamlessly without disrupting the texture.

● **Stick to white pepper.**

Standard black pepper leaves small specks throughout the dish, which traditional deli operators viewed as visually unappealing. White pepper maintains the salad's pristine appearance while providing an essential, earthy heat.

● **Patience is a required ingredient.**

Adding mayonnaise to hot potatoes causes the oil to separate from the egg emulsion, resulting in a greasy, broken dressing. You must let the brined potatoes chill completely before dressing them.



# The 10-Minute Israeli Chopped Salad

סלט קצוץ דק

*sa-lat ka-tzutz dak*

The secret to this deli staple isn't some rare spice imported from the old country, it is the uncompromising discipline of the blade. The magic of this Levantine classic relies entirely on dicing the vegetables as finely and uniformly as humanly possible. This precise knife work maximizes the surface area, allowing the salt and fresh lemon to rapidly extract the vegetable waters into a brilliant, oil-laced puddle at the bottom of the bowl. It is a masterpiece of minimalism that practically commands you to tear off a piece of bread and wipe the plate clean.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	Persian cucumbers <i>left unpeeled and diced into 1/4-inch micro-cubes</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	fresh mint leaves <i>finely minced</i>
<b>1 lb</b>	firm Roma tomatoes <i>diced into 1/4-inch micro-cubes</i>	<b>3 tbsp</b>	extra-virgin olive oil
<b>1/2 small</b>	red onion <i>finely minced</i>	<b>3 tbsp</b>	freshly squeezed lemon juice
<b>1/2 cup</b>	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>thoroughly washed, dried, and minced</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	Kosher salt
		<b>1/4 tsp</b>	freshly ground black pepper

## PREPARATION

- **Wash and thoroughly dry the fresh herbs before beginning.**

Moisture is the enemy of a clean mince. Wet herbs will turn to a bruised paste when chopped, robbing the salad of its vibrant, distinct herbaceous flavor.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Dice the cucumbers, tomatoes, and red onion into uniform micro-cubes and place them in a large, wide mixing bowl.**

Use a relentlessly sharp chef's knife or a high-quality mechanical chopper, as precision is exactly what forces the vegetables to release their essential juices.

- 2. Add the minced parsley and mint to the bowl.**

Ensure the herbs are completely dry before you chop them, otherwise they will turn into a bruised, muddy paste and ruin the bright baseline of the dish.

- 3. Drizzle the extra-virgin olive oil and fresh lemon juice directly over the vegetables.**

Sprinkle evenly with the Kosher salt and black pepper, then use a large spoon to gently fold the ingredients together from the bottom up so everything is thoroughly coated.

**1. Let the salad rest at room temperature for exactly five to ten minutes.**

This brief rest is non-negotiable. It gives the salt enough time to draw the cellular juices from the tomatoes and cucumbers, creating the highly prized dressing that pools at the bottom of the bowl.

**2. Taste, adjust the salt and lemon if necessary, and serve immediately.**

Bring a heel of fresh challah or warm pita to the table specifically for dipping and soaking up the remaining liquid.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Choose the right cucumber for the job.**

Thin-skinned Persian or Kirby cucumbers are strictly required for their density and crunch. If you are stuck with thick, waxy American supermarket cucumbers, peel them completely and scoop out the watery seeds with a spoon to prevent the salad from turning into a swamp.

- **Adapt to the season.**

If it is the dead of winter in the Midwest and Roma tomatoes are pale and mealy, substitute a pint of firm cherry or grape tomatoes to guarantee the structural integrity and sweetness the dish requires.