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Classic Comfort Food and Cocktails for Cool and Cozy Nights

Raise a glass to old favourites and rediscover the pleasures of cooking and entertaining the way we used to

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This time of year, we always revert to entertaining with classic dishes that are perfect for the season and can easily be enjoyed without too much pre-meditated planning. It makes our entertaining a little easier while still giving us the opportunity to host friends and family. Our roast chicken recipe is inspired by my French mother's *poulet roti,* which was a weeknight staple in our home, and always a big hit!

Comfort foods endure precisely because of their universal charm, and a perfectly cooked roast chicken appeals across all generations and palates. We often revert to chicken for the main course for two reasons; beyond its crowd-pleasing popularity, it also stands out as an extraordinarily budget-friendly and accessible meal which in these days of grocery-bill-sticker-shock is a welcome reprieve. A quick trip to the local grocery store for a few simple ingredients and anyone can pull together this wholesome, deeply satisfying dinner without spending hours in the kitchen.

Now, of course, no succulent chicken would be complete without some rich, flavourful sides, so we prepared these Brown Butter Carrots to elevate a humble dinner into a memorable dining experience along with Sheila's famous patates, whose irresistible flavour makes them the undisputed star of the side spread.

Since the dinner is quite filling, we recommend for this type of meal instead of serving an appetizer have a few simple "bites" for guests when they arrive. Simply cut Emmental cheese and accompanying nuts and olives, complement a fall cocktail that can be served in both alcoholic and non-alcoholic versions for those driving or looking to curb their intake. Finally, finish with an easy-to-prepare but dessert that still has 'wow factor.

SEB'S TIP: *When you're planning out your table, place empty platters, boards and serving dishes on the table when you set it so you know exactly where they'll fit. Remove them before your guests arrive.*

THE COCKTAIL





Bourbon Grapefruit Cocktail with Thyme Simple Syrup

YIELD: 1 cocktail + 3½ cups simple syrup | **PREP TIME:** 5 minutes + 1 hour to cool | **COOK TIME:** 12 minutes (mostly Thyme simple syrup)

Ingredients:

Thyme Simple Syrup:

2 cups granulated sugar

6 thyme sprigs

Bourbon Grapefruit Cocktail:

2 oz bourbon

6 Tbsp pink grapefruit juice

1 Tbsp thyme simple syrup

1 pink grapefruit slice, for garnish

1 thyme sprig, for garnish

Method:

Thyme Simple Syrup:

• Combine the sugar, thyme, and 2 cups of water in a small saucepan and bring to a boil, without stirring, over medium heat.

• Reduce the heat to low and simmer, uncovered and without stirring, for 10 minutes.

• Remove from the heat and let cool for 1 hour. Strain the syrup and refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 weeks.

Bourbon Grapefruit Cocktail:

• Fill a cocktail shaker with ice, then add the bourbon, grapefruit juice, and simple syrup.

• Shake vigorously for 10 seconds.

• Strain into a rocks glass filled with fresh ice.

• Garnish with the grapefruit and thyme.

THE NON-ALCOHOLIC VERSION

Grapefruit Spritzer

Ingredients:

½ cup pink grapefruit juice

Splash of Thyme Simple Syrup (see above)

¼ cup sparkling water

1 pink grapefruit slice, for garnish

1 thyme sprig, for garnish

Method:

For the simple syrup:

• same as for alcoholic

For the cocktail:

• Fill a rocks glass halfway with ice.

• Pour the grapefruit juice to fill the glass halfway.

• Add a splash of simple syrup, then fill the remainder of the glass with sparkling water.

• Garnish with the grapefruit and thyme.

SEB SAYS: *For casual gatherings, I like to offer a cocktail that can easily be served as a non-alcoholic version so non-drinkers and children still feel included with a flavourful and interesting option.*

THE STARTER





Seasoned Emmental

YIELD: 6-8 servings | **PREP TIME:** 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1 lb Emmental cheese, cut in ½-inch cubes

1 Tbsp celery salt

Chips, any flavor

Nuts (almonds and cashews work well)

Olives

Method:

- In a medium bowl, combine the Emmental and celery salt.
- Gently toss to coat completely.
- Serve with toothpicks alongside bowls of chips, nuts, and olives.





Maryvone's Famous French Roast Chicken

YIELD: 6-8 servings | **PREP TIME:** 30 minutes + 15 minutes to rest | **COOK TIME:** 1 hour

Ingredients:

Chicken:

2 (each 3 lb) chickens

4 Tbsp salted butter, divided

6 thyme sprigs, divided

4 rosemary sprigs, divided

4 Tbsp olive oil, divided

Kosher salt and black pepper

3 stalks celery, chopped in 1-inch pieces

2 carrots, peeled and chopped in 1-inch pieces

4 garlic cloves

2 bay leaves

4 cups chicken stock, plus more for jus

Jus:

1 Tbsp cornstarch

4 cups roasting pan juices

Kosher salt and black pepper

Method:

Chicken:

• Preheat the oven to 375°F.

• Remove the chicken giblets, any excess fat, and leftover pin feathers and pat dry.

• Place each chicken breast side up with its legs facing you.

• Gently slide your fingers under the skin to loosen, being careful not to tear the skin. Rub the butter under the skin.

• Place 1 sprig each of thyme and rosemary in the cavity of each chicken.

• Place each chicken in a medium bowl. Rub with the oil and season with salt and pepper.

• With each chicken still breast side up and legs facing you, truss it with kitchen twine to secure the legs together and the wings to the body of the bird. (There are some great YouTube videos available online to show you how to do this.)

• In a roasting pan large enough to hold both chickens snugly without crowding, mix together the celery, carrots, garlic, bay leaves, and stock. Add the remaining rosemary and thyme. Place the chickens on top of the vegetables. Roast, uncovered, for 30 minutes, then baste each chicken with the roasting pan juices every 15 minutes until the internal temperature reaches 165°F in the center of the breast. This should take about 1 hour, but check the temperature with a meat thermometer to be sure.

• Remove the chickens from the baking dish and transfer to a platter to rest for 15 minutes before serving. Strain the roasting pan juices, reserving the liquid to make the jus.

Jus:

• Whisk the cornstarch in 3 Tbsp of cold water until completely combined to make a slurry. Set aside.

• Place the roasting pan juices in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. You may want to add some stock to increase the yield.

• Reduce the heat to medium, add the cornstarch slurry and cook, stirring frequently, until the jus is thickened enough to coat the back of a spoon.

• Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve warm alongside the chicken.



Sheila's Patates

YIELD: 6-8 servings | **PREP TIME:** 15 minutes | **COOK TIME:** 30 minutes

Ingredients:

½ cup canola oil

1 cup butter

3 lb baby new potatoes, washed and quartered

Kosher salt and black pepper

Method:

• Warm a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, then add the oil and butter.

• Once the butter has melted, add the potatoes and stir to coat.

• Reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are golden and cooked through, about 30 minutes.

• Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve warm.

SHEILA SAYS: *These golden potatoes are so irresistible that you will need to keep a watchful eye on the kitchen counter, as family members are notorious for trying to sneak a bite or two long before dinner is officially served.*

Brown Butter Carrots

YIELD: 6-8 servings | **PREP TIME:** 20 minutes | **COOK TIME:** 25 minutes

Ingredients:

2 bunches field carrots (12–16 carrots)

2 Tbsp olive oil

½ cup butter

Kosher salt and black pepper

Method:

• Preheat the oven to 375°F.

• Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

• Trim the carrot greens down to 2 inches and scrub the carrots to remove any dirt. Pat dry with paper towel and place on the prepared baking sheet.

• Drizzle the carrots with the oil and dot with pats of the butter. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

• Bake, turning after 10 minutes to coat evenly with butter, until slightly caramelized and easily pierced with a fork, 25 minutes.

SHEILA SAYS: *Scale back on side dishes: While we love having a wide variety, you can choose just two if you're pressed for time.*



Creamy Baked Pears

YIELD: 6 servings | **PREP TIME:** 10 minutes | **COOK TIME:** 25 minutes

Ingredients:

½ cup butter, divided

2 Tbsp granulated sugar, divided

3 Bosc pears, skin on, halved and cored

1 cup whipping (36%) cream

Method:

• Preheat the oven to 375°F.

• Grease a shallow baking dish just large enough to hold the pears snugly without crowding with 2 Tbsp of the butter and sprinkle with 1 Tbsp of the sugar.

• Place the pear halves in the baking dish, cut sides down. Rub the remaining butter over the pears and sprinkle with the remaining sugar.

• Bake for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and pour the cream into the baking dish. Return to the oven and bake until the pears are soft, about 15 minutes. Serve warm.

SHEILA SAYS: *Want to save time ... Change up the dessert a little. Poach the pears the day before then chop them up and refrigerate in an airtight container. Warm or microwave for 1 minute and serve over plain vanilla ice cream*



Seb and Sheila Centner

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