

*Cooking  
with Adrienne*

*A Story of Friendship and Food*

*by  
Joan M. Harper*



# Introduction

This book took over my life when my Best Foodie Friend, Adrienne, was diagnosed with a rare form of dementia\* that would ultimately rob her of the ability to speak, write, and cook. We had been cooking together for over 20 years. In a panic, I realized that many of the recipes we had made were in her head and mine, or scribbled on bits of paper. In a race against time, I began writing down all of our recipes and as many stories as I could recall. The result is *Cooking with Adrienne*.

We were the most unlikely of friends. I was a small-town girl from Massachusetts with a penchant for eating dessert first. Adrienne grew up in Brooklyn, then lived and worked in Manhattan. She went to Europe on her honeymoon and came home with a duck press. I got married in 1980, honeymooned in New Jersey, and then moved to Queens. I began working as an account executive for an investor relations firm run by Adrienne's husband in 1984. That was my first bit of luck.

My second bit of luck came six years later when I had the good fortune to travel to Europe with Adrienne and her husband. For me it was business, but for them every trip they took was a food odyssey; their goal was to find and eat the best food on the planet. I never expected to get to London or Paris even once, much less travel to Europe regularly. And while the trips were a lot of work I wasn't complaining. I hadn't completed my bachelor's degree but I was communicating financial strategies, building relationships between corporate clients and the global investment community, and eating in pretty fancy places.

Over the next 20 years we dined at some of the greatest restaurants as well as wonderful holes-in-the-wall. The food changed me and my taste buds forever. I became a foodie. Which was a good thing because the rule on every trip with Adrienne was that you had to try everything put in front of you. There were no food prejudices allowed when eating

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with Adrienne. On the other hand we never wasted our calories on badly prepared food. If it wasn't good we left it over as a message to the chef.

My travels with Adrienne awakened my palate and made me want to cook at home the food that I had been eating abroad; I couldn't put the palate genie back in the bottle. However, I had two small children, a full-time job, and no time to produce what I thought was the labor-intensive food that I had learned to love. That was when cooking with Adrienne really began. Despite my dessert-first culinary approach, Adrienne set to work educating my palate and teaching me to cook... anything and everything. I do wonder sometimes how I ended up living this life so far from where I began. But live it I did and still do.

The first thing Adrienne taught me was that all food is good food if properly prepared. And that making good, even great, food is within anyone's reach. It requires a bit of planning, a few basic skills, a willingness to taste everything, and an eye for presentation. A freezer full of homemade stock is also essential!

So who is Adrienne, and how did she become a doyenne of French cuisine? Like Gertrude Stein, Adrienne populated her life with the creative talents of her era. Her band of chefs from France included Gerard Boyer of Les Crayères; Alain Chapel of Chez La Mère Charles; Michel Guérard of les Prés d'Eugénie; Jean and Pierre Troisgros (and later Michel) of La Maison Troisgros; Roger Vergé of Moulin de Mougins; and, from Switzerland, Frédy Girardet of Restaurant Girardet. The food coming out of their kitchens revolutionized restaurant cuisine in the late sixties and throughout the seventies, resulting in nouvelle cuisine. Sadly, that term would later be hijacked by chefs with no clue what the revolution was about.



*With Roger Vergé 1977*

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The “new” cuisine emphasized the quality and freshness of the ingredients; simplified the cooking and the accoutrements, including the sauce; and displayed the food on the plate in an artistic manner. Dining became a complete sensory experience, not just a means to an end. It was this type of food that beguiled me during my travels with Adrienne.

Adrienne honed her palate on this new cuisine with the insight and under the tutelage of the chefs creating it. She learned to re-create this food at home without the aid of kitchen staff and while keeping her day job as a financial portfolio manager. She became an accomplished cook, influenced by the new cuisine, but with her own distinctive style. She strongly believed that the act of cooking was an expression of love. Love of those for whom she was cooking, but also love of the process of transforming good raw materials into something great.

As the food revolution spread outwards from France in the seventies, Adrienne also became the facilitator for bringing these chefs and their new cuisine to America. Many had never been to the U.S. and were uncertain of the quality and availability of ingredients. Adrienne became their resource for locating products and food suppliers. In fact, many of these three-star chefs asked Adrienne to assist them in the kitchen or at the very least be on-site during cooking classes and demonstrations. Michel Guérard called Adrienne his *petite marmite* when he taught a cooking class in Napa Valley for Robert Mondavi. Jean-Claude Vrinat, the owner of Taillevent in Paris, agreed to prepare a charity dinner at Tavern on the Green in New York City on the condition that Adrienne join his team. Jean and Pierre Troisgros would not accept any invitation to cook in America without vetting it with Adrienne and having her on-site.



*With Jean Troisgros,  
Mondavi Kitchen, Napa  
Valley, 1978*

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By the time I was admitted to her kitchen, Adrienne had cooked dinner for four of the top chefs in France, all seated at the same table. They had 11 Michelin stars among them! What was it about Adrienne that made these chefs trust and value her? I think it was mostly two things: Adrienne had a sophisticated palate, and she was an incorrigible flirt. These two attributes alone were irresistible to most chefs. But she also thrived in a competitive work environment at a top investment bank, which was similar to the intensity experienced by many chefs in three-star kitchens. Indeed, many top chefs turned to her to manage their financial assets as their reputations grew.

In the beginning Adrienne was my mentor. Over the course of two decades our friendship grew. I was the skinny, blond, out-of-town *shiksa* to her sophisticated, wise-cracking New Yorker. She shared with me her recipes and stories of a life dedicated to cooking and eating the best food possible. She was an exacting teacher and I had constantly to earn my place in her kitchen. But the hours we spent side by side cooking, tasting, testing, and occasionally failing, were some of the happiest I have known.

Adrienne can no longer cook, write, or speak. Her voice is locked inside her head but her palate is still sharp and her mind continues to function. What's more, she can offer a critique or a compliment with a raised eyebrow or a sly grin. In this book I give you her best recipes and stories in the hope that they inspire you, as they did me, to find *joie de vivre* in kitchen.



*\*A portion of the profits from Cooking with Adrienne will be donated to finding a cure for Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA), also known as Pick's disease, which is the condition Adrienne is living with.*

## SIMCA BECK

*In August and September, when the tomatoes are abundant, we gorge ourselves on the [tomato salad recipe](#) because we know that the time for eating it at its best is finite. The salad epitomizes the best things of summer – the warmth of the sun, the sweet acidity of vine-ripened tomatoes, the crunch of sweet Vidalia onions, and the licorice taste of basil – all swimming in a perfectly balanced vinaigrette.*

*This simple recipe comes with a storied history. In 1965 Adrienne decided she wanted to take cooking lessons in France. Not knowing how to go about finding a teacher, she picked up the phone and called Craig Claiborne, the food critic for the New York Times (whom she did not know at the time), to ask for a recommendation. He gave her Julia Child's number. Yes, that Julia Child. Unfortunately, Julia was living in the States at the time, but she recommended one of her co-authors on Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Simone (Simca) Beck. Simca had homes in Provence near Cannes and in Paris where she had a cooking school. She taught Adrienne the basics of French cooking and culture and they became good friends.*

*One sunny afternoon Adrienne invited Simca to a poolside lunch at a house they were renting in Mougins, France. She served a fresh tomato salad as the first course. Simca proceeded to remove the skin from each slice of tomato with her knife and fork before she ate them. "The skins are not appealing and the tomato absorbs the vinaigrette better without them." She explained that the easiest way to remove the tomato skins before preparing the salad was to quickly blanch them in hot water and peel the skins away. To this day it is how we prepare the tomatoes for the salad.*



*Adrienne with Simca at Bramafam May 1971*



## SALADE D'ÉTÉ DE TOMATE

### *Summer Tomato Salad*

In this recipe the measurements for the oil and vinegar are not given and what you end up with may not align with the classic 3:1 ratio for a vinaigrette. This is because the dressing will be influenced by the sweetness and acidity of the tomatoes. So each time you must taste, taste, taste to get the balance correct. You should use the best-quality vinegar and olive oil here because their taste will shine against the tomatoes.

*Serves 4*

*Prep time: 45 minutes*

**6 to 8 large beefsteak or other  
meaty tomatoes**

**Good-quality balsamic vinegar**

**Extra virgin olive oil**

**1 Vidalia or other sweet onion,  
sliced very thin**

**Sea salt**

**Sherry vinegar**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**2 large handfuls fresh basil leaves**

**1 large semolina baguette, sliced**

**2 (8-ounce) fresh buffalo  
mozzarella balls (not the  
rubbery ones), sliced**

Bring a large pot of water to the boil. Half fill a large bowl with cold water. Make a small "X" in the skin of each tomato at the end opposite to the stem (where there is a small black dot or sometimes a series of irregular round black bumps). This will help the skin to peel off easily. Blanch 3 or 4 tomatoes in the boiling water for 3 to 5 minutes. You will see the skin crack and peel. Remove immediately and place in the cold water. Repeat with remaining tomatoes.



## Vegetables to Love

With a paring knife, peel the skin off the tomatoes and remove the stem and any white pith. Slice the tomatoes horizontally approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick and layer them in a wide shallow serving bowl. Sprinkle each layer with balsamic and sherry vinegar, oil, some of the onion, and salt.

When you have all the tomatoes sliced, taste the liquid in the bowl for the oil/vinegar sweet/acid balance. Add more sherry vinegar and olive oil, as well as salt and pepper, as necessary. Unlike most salads, the dressing should pool in the bottom of the bowl. You should have about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of dressing in the bowl by the time you serve the salad. Taste again. If you are not sure about the balance, let the salad sit for 10 minutes to allow the juices of the tomatoes and the onions to blend with the oil and vinegar. Taste again for seasoning.

Chiffonade (chop or cut with scissors into fine strips) the basil and sprinkle on the salad just before serving. If you chop the basil before making the salad it will get discolored, so wait until just before serving. I find scissors are easier than a knife: Remove the leaves from each branch and stack them into piles. Fold the pile of leaves in half along the spine and, starting at the tip, scissor them into thin strips.

### To Serve

Spoon some of the dressing from the bowl onto a slice of semolina bread, add a slice of buffalo mozzarella, then smother it with the tomatoes and more dressing and get ready for nirvana!





# La Carte

Coquilles à la Nage

Puligny Montrachet 1969  
Charles - Henri Clerc  
et Fils

Filet de Bœuf Périgourdine

Romanée St. Vivant 1961  
Les Quatre Jours  
Louis Latour

Salade

Fromage

La Coupe

Thé

Café



# FISH MADE EASY

*Fish, to taste right, must swim three times – in water, in butter and in wine.*

— Polish proverb

**B**efore I met Adrienne, I never liked fish. I knew it was good for me and I ate it but I never liked it. After 25 years of cooking with Adrienne, I not only love fish but have grown fins and gills to prove it!

Many people are reluctant to cook fish, whether they like it or not, because they are worried about how to cook it. Fish is really no more difficult to cook than meat or chicken and usually takes less time. Determining when it is done is what usually puts people off. Adrienne was always actively touching the food she cooked. When you handle anything raw you begin to understand its texture. This helps you to know how the texture changes as it cooks so that you can tell when it is done to your liking by giving it a poke. Always wash your hands after handling raw fish or meat.

Start checking the fish after 6 to 8 minutes. Press the center of the fillet with your finger (or a spoon): if the fish gives way and flakes then it is fully cooked – which means overcooked! You want the center of the fillet to push back or be a bit bouncy rather than give way. When in doubt, take it out of the heat and pull apart the flakes in the center of the fillet. If it is translucent but not raw, and just comes away from the bone, it is not quite done. But take it off the heat, because it will continue cooking while it rests on the plate. A bit of practice will take the mystery out of judging when it is done.

Most of the recipes here feature fish that are very robust and difficult to overcook so don't be afraid. As with everything about cooking, if something goes wrong, "punt." Most classic recipes are the result of a kitchen mistake that was turned into an innovation. Overcooked fish can be turned into a delicious lunch salad with a bit of mayo, chopped parsley and chives served on a piece of toast. So dive in!





## LA GRIBLETTE DE BAR AU JUS D'OIGNON ROSE ET FUMET DE CHOU VERT

*Sea Bass with Red Onion Jus and Green Cabbage*

This dish, from the *cuisine minceur* (literally “slimming cooking”) inventor Michel Guérard, is an unusual combination of cabbage, red onions, and sea bass fillets that creates a perfect fusion of taste. The name itself is a bit of a pun which reveals Michel’s mischievous sense of humor. A *griblette* is a larded piece of meat which you would normally serve with cabbage and a jus. Michel has turned that traditional concept inside out by using fish rather than meat and jus from onions.

We first had this dish at his Les prés d’Eugénie restaurant in Eugénie-les-Bain in 2006 and were stunned by the combination of taste and texture. Adrienne and Michel discussed the method of cooking the various ingredients at great length during our meal. The next day he presented her with the recipe opposite, written in his own hand.

The sauce can be made a day in advance, and the fried onions can be done an hour or more ahead and kept warm. Do not discard the sautéed onions used to make the jus. Tuck them into the fridge until you have time to check out the recipe for Pissaladiere Niçoise in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.





## LA GRIGIETTE DE BAR AU JUS D'IGNON ROSE

INGRÉDIENTS pour 4 personnes : peu épaisses

- 4 GRIGIETTES DE BAR DE 120g (ESCALOTES TAILLÉES EN BIAIS UN PEU ÉPAISSES)
- 4 IGNONS ROUGES MOYENS
- 5<sup>g</sup> DE VINAIGRE DE VIN
- 20<sup>g</sup> DE BEURRE DEMI SEL
- CHOU VERT FRAÎCE OU CHOUX DE BRUXELLES (AU CHOIX SELON LES POSSIBILITÉS)

POUR LA SAUCE :

- 3 IGNONS ROUGES
- UN PEU DE THYM
- 15<sup>g</sup> DE BEURRE
- 30<sup>g</sup> DE VINAIGRE DE VIN
- ½ l d'eau
- 70<sup>g</sup> DE BEURRE MONTÉ

### PROGRESSION DE LA RECETTE

LA SAUCE :

- ÉMINCER 3 IGNONS ROUGES ET LES FAIRE REVENIR AVEC LE THYM DANS LES 15<sup>g</sup> DE BEURRE.
- DÉGLACER AVEC LES 30<sup>g</sup> DE VINAIGRE DE VIN
- RÉDUIRE PRESQUE À SEC ET MUIILLER AVEC LE ½ l. d'eau
- CUIRE DOUCEMENT PENDANT 1 HEURE, PASSER AU CHINOIS, RÉDUIRE À NOUVEAU JUSQU'À OBTENIR 100<sup>g</sup> DE JUS D'IGNON
- AJOUTER ALORS LES 70<sup>g</sup> DE BEURRE MONTÉ. RECTIFIER L'ASSAISONNEMENT
- MANTENIR AU CHAUD.

- ÉMINCER LES 4 IGNONS ROUGES, LES FAIRE SUEUR AVEC LES 20<sup>g</sup> DE BEURRE DEMI SEL
- LES AMENER À LA CUISSON LÉGÈREMENT CROQUANTE
- CISELER LES FEUILLES DE CHOU FRAÎCE, LES BLANCHIR À L'EAU BOUILLANTE SALÉE.
- S'IL S'AGIT DES CHOUX DE BRUXELLES, BLANCHIR 1 SECONDE LES BELLES FEUILLES ET CISELER LE CŒUR ET SUEUR À L'HUILE D'OLIVE.
- MÉLANGER LE CHOU CHOISI AUX IGNONS.

- CUIRE LE BAR AU FOUR À 150° EN LE BARRAGEONNANT D'HUILE D'OLIVE (IL EST CUIT À 47° À CŒUR)

DESSAGE :

- DISPOSER AU FOND D'UNE ASSIETTE CREUSE LES IGNONS ET LES FEUILLES DE CHOU CISELÉ
- POSER DESSUS LES GRIGIETTES DE BAR
- DÉCORER AVEC QUELQUES FEUILLES DE CHOU DE BRUXELLES, PLUMES DE CERFEUIL, FLEUR DE SEL ET POIVRE ANNONCETTE AUXQUELLES ON AJOUTE QUELQUES ROUELLES D'ÉCHALOTE LÉGÈREMENT FARIÉGÉES ET FRISES DANS LE BEURRE CLARIFIÉ.
- EMULSIONNER LA SAUCE AU MIXER AVANT DE LA VERSER AUTOUR DES GRIGIETTES.

BON APPÉTIT !

*Michel*

## Fish Made Easy

*Serves 4*

*Prep/cook time: sauce 1½ hours; fish and cabbage 45 minutes*

### **Sauce**

<b>6 tablespoons (¾ stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature</b>	<b>2 cups water</b>
<b>3 red onions, sliced ¼ inch thick</b>	<b>Salt and freshly ground black pepper</b>
<b>Sprig of fresh thyme</b>	<b>Champagne vinegar or Banyuls vinegar</b>
<b>2 tablespoons white wine vinegar</b>	

Melt 2 tablespoons of butter in a sauté pan over medium-high heat. When it foams, add the onions and thyme; sauté for about 5 minutes, until onions are tender and translucent. Don't let them brown. Deglaze the pan with white wine vinegar and reduce until almost dry, about 10 minutes. Add the water and cook over low heat for 1 hour, until the onions are soft and sweet tasting. Strain through a sieve, reserving liquid. Refrigerate onions for another use. Return onion liquid to the pan and reduce again to about ½ cup. Add the remaining 4 tablespoons butter and boil vigorously for 2 to 3 minutes. Season with salt, pepper and a dash of Champagne vinegar as needed. Keep the sauce warm; *or*, if making ahead, pour into a container and refrigerate. Bring to room temperature before reheating.



## **Fish, Onions, and Cabbage**

**1 to 2 tablespoons unsalted  
butter**

**4 medium red onions, sliced  $\frac{1}{4}$   
inch thick**

**1 small savoy cabbage, core  
removed and leaves cut in  
 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch strips**

**4 fillets of sea bass, 4 to 5 ounces  
each**

**Olive oil for brushing**

**Fresh chervil or parsley sprigs**

**Coarse salt and freshly ground  
black pepper**

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a sauté pan over high heat. When it foams, add onions and reduce heat to medium. Sweat the onions (cook slowly without browning) for 2 to 3 minutes. Increase the heat to high and cook until slightly crunchy but not burned, about 10 minutes. Add an additional tablespoon of butter if necessary. Drain on a paper towel and keep warm until ready to serve.

Bring a pot of salted water to boil. Add cabbage and cook until just tender, 5 to 10 minutes. The only way to tell if it is cooked is to bite a piece: It should have a bit of resistance, but not hard. Drain and return to the pan. Briefly toss to dry over medium heat. Remove from heat but keep warm.

While the cabbage is cooking, make three diagonal slashes on each sea bass fillet through the skin, just into the flesh. Brush the fillets with olive oil. Place them skin side up in a baking pan; place on the top rack in the oven. Bake until the skin crisps and the flesh is cooked through, 10 to 15 minutes. If the skin starts to burn, move the pan down to the middle rack.

## **Presentation**

Divide most of the fried onions and the cabbage among four slightly concave plates. Top with the sea bass. Decorate with the remaining cabbage, fried onions and sprigs of chervil or parsley. Season with coarse salt and ground pepper and dress with the warmed sauce.



MICHEL GUÉRARD  
*Les Prés d'Eugénie by way of Le Pot-au-Feu*

*In 1971 Andre Surmain, co-owner of Lutèce in New York City, came back from Paris raving about a tiny little two-star restaurant in an industrial suburb of Paris. M. Surmain made a reservation for Adrienne and her husband and off they went on a food odyssey which resulted in a lifelong friendship with Michel Guérard, and his wife Christine.*

*The restaurant was called Le Pot-au-Feu, which translates as “pot on the fire,” and references a quintessential French dish, popular with rich and poor, in the country and city, that is the essence of French home cooking. True to the tradition of the dish for which it was named, you entered the restaurant through the back door past the coat rack and the postage stamp-sized kitchen. The tables were so close together that in order to sit down or get up the entire row in which your table was located needed to move. On that first visit, they found themselves in good company when they sat down next to Julia Child and her husband.*

*Thanks to Adrienne’s obsessive note-taking we know that Michel discussed the menu with them and chose the desserts. He trained as a pastry chef and won the prestigious Meilleur Ouvrier de France for Pastry in 1958. See her notes about the meal on the next page.*

*Le Pot-au-Feu was forced to close in 1972 because a new road was cutting straight through the restaurant. But Adrienne followed Michel when he resurfaced in 1974 at the spa at Eugénie-les-Bain. Over the course of more than 40 years, and hundreds of meals, a friendship took hold that bridged the divide between chef and patron.*

## DINNER MAY 1971

### Le Pot-au-Feu

- Foie Gras de Maison** excellent, delicate and delicious no gelee. 16
- Saumon frais aux ciboulettes** thin escalope of salmon sautéed, served in a lovely light sauce with chopped chives. 16
- Merlan Braise après F. Point** carrots, onions and lots of mushrooms all sort of covering the whole, boned whiting; sauce was faintly sweet and exquisite – delicate, tres raffine. 19
- Aileron de Volaille aux concombres** Just incredible! Succulent bits of chicken done en casserole with little wedges of cucumber (+ other vegetables) in a light sauce – just delectable. 19
- Charolaise a la moele Fleurie** excellent straight-forward Charolaise, bordelaise sauce. 16
- Pommes Anna** very thinly sliced potato, crusty and brown on top - delicious. 16
- Wine:** Sancerre 18 Fr and Brouilly (served in a cold pewter tankard/carafe) 15 Fr
- Feuillete aux poires caramélise** a wonderful light square of feuillete filled with cr. Chantilly, on top a whole pear sliced in very thin slices and caramelized – just divine... soft and creamy, crisp and crunchy all at the same time. 18
- La Dijonnaise cassis sorbet**, small pieces of pear & poire eau de vie – a lovely combination. 17



Adrienne and Michel Guerard at Mondavi Kitchen,  
Napa Valley, CA

More Than Meat



## MOUSSAKA

At the end of the summer when the eggplants came fast, furious, and enormous, we made moussaka by the trayful. The whole family gathered round to lend a hand in the preparations. But in reality we were all waiting for a taste of that first batch of fried eggplant, hot and melting in the middle - it's the best part of making moussaka. Of course the finished product was devoured as well, but that taste of fried eggplant hot from the skillet is the reason we always begged Adrienne, "Please make moussaka!"

You must salt the eggplant slices in order to draw the water out or they will not fry properly. If you don't, the liquid they exude will make the moussaka soupy and bitter. And it is helpful to have two pans for frying the eggplant and two people manning them. If your kitchen is big enough and you have enough friends/family, a third person can make the meat sauce. When I do it solo, it takes the best part of an afternoon, so to make the time truly worth it, I usually make double the quantity, one for dinner and one for the freezer. I cut the moussaka destined for the freezer into quarters and freeze each section separately. Countless times I have been delighted to find this delicious homemade dish in my freezer when I was too tired to cook.

Each amount are  
meaningless; not a less  
of the or that - it  
doesn't matter.  
when putting bottom layer  
of eggplant in pan - overlap to make a solid  
base - next layer can have "spaces" in it  
MOUSSAKA - (enough for 8)

## More Than Meat

*Serves 8*

*Prep time: 2 hours. Assembly and cook time: 1¼ hours*

<b>4 to 6 medium to large eggplants</b>	<b>1 (16-ounce) bottle tomato sauce</b>
<b>Salt</b>	<b>4 tablespoons fresh oregano</b>
<b>½ cup all-purpose flour</b>	<b>2 tablespoons dried oregano</b>
<b>Sunflower oil</b>	<b>2 tablespoons fresh or dried thyme</b>
<b>1 tablespoon olive oil</b>	<b>Freshly ground black pepper</b>
<b>1 medium onion, finely chopped</b>	<b>12 ounces shredded mild cheeses, perhaps 8 ounces fontina and 4 ounces Cheddar</b>
<b>2 cloves garlic, chopped</b>	<b>4 eggs</b>
<b>1½ pounds ground beef or lamb</b>	<b>1½ cups light cream</b>
<b>¼ pound ground pork</b>	
<b>¼ pound ground veal</b>	
<b>2 ripe tomatoes or two canned Italian tomatoes, peeled and chopped</b>	

### **Eggplant**

Slice the eggplant into ½-inch-thick slices. Sprinkle with lots of salt on both sides, lay on paper towels, and let sit for 20 to 30 minutes. Remove to fresh paper towels and press lightly to remove as much water as possible. Place the flour on a plate. Heat ¼ inch sunflower oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Don't add more than a ¼ inch of oil because the eggplant absorbs a lot of the oil in the pan and it will taste greasy. In batches, dredge the eggplant slices in the flour, shake off excess, and place in the hot oil. Brown on both sides, 8 to 10 minutes, remove to paper towels to drain. Continue until all the eggplant is fried.

*Important: The flour that remains in the pan will start to burn after about two batches and will make everything taste bitter. Pour out the oil and wipe the pan with a paper towel – being careful not to burn yourself – and continue with fresh oil. Also, do not dredge the eggplant in the flour until you are ready to put it in the oil. If you do it too far in advance, the eggplant will soak up the flour and not fry properly.*

## More Than Meat

### **Meat Sauce**

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until softened. Add all the ground meats and cook, stirring and breaking up the meat, until browned and crumbly. Drain off excess fat and water. Return the pan to the heat and add the tomatoes, tomato sauce, fresh oregano, dried oregano, thyme, salt, and pepper. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer for 20 minutes, until cooked through.

### **Assembly**

Preheat the oven to 350°F

Lightly oil a 13 x 9-inch baking pan or 3-quart casserole. Layer the eggplant slices, then the meat sauce, then the cheese in the casserole until all the ingredients have been used, about 3 layers each. End with a layer of cheese. Beat together the eggs and cream until smooth. Pour over the casserole. Bake for 45 minutes, until browned and bubbly. Cool for 10 minutes before serving.

# DESSERT LESS SWEET

*All I really need is love, but a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt.*

— Charles Schulz (as Lucy Van Pelt)

When I first started cooking with Adrienne, she made the first course, the main course, and the sauce. I made the dessert, usually something involving pastry. Even though I was the acknowledged Pastry Queen, Adrienne was teaching me to taste carefully and respect the essence of the ingredients. I had had a heavy hand with sugar in the beginning, but as I started to pull back on it, the natural sweetness and flavor of the ingredients were allowed to shine. It is almost impossible to taste as you go with dessert, but the more I baked for Adrienne, the less I depended on added sugar.

Long before I came on the scene though, Adrienne had her own repertoire of desserts. Most of them were directly or indirectly inspired by the chefs and “new” cuisine that was informing all of her other cooking. These dessert recipes all share certain critical elements: Most can be made in advance, are light in taste, and have the right balance of sweetness. The last thing you taste in a meal shouldn't dull your taste buds; it should continue to tantalize them.

I was fascinated by the refreshing bite of Candied Grapefruit and the balance of the sweet pastry and tart plums in the Heavenly Plum Clafoutis. The lightness, yet intensely chocolate taste of the Mocha (Marriage) Mousse had me at first bite. But I think the biggest surprise was the Danish Fantasy – a combination of tart/sweet pineapple and bittersweet chocolate enveloped in a cloud of whipped cream and served in a caramelized tuile cup. I still love an apple pie straight from the oven but these desserts have earned their place in my repertoire.



## MOCHA (MARRIAGE) MOUSSE

Adrienne's husband told me that he loved her mocha mousse so much that it tipped the balance in favor of asking Adrienne to marry him. This was not a guy who took marriage, or chocolate, lightly! But after they were married in Paris, he said that Adrienne never made the dessert again!

In her defense, Adrienne had embarked on cooking lessons with Simca Beck just after she married and began making much more elaborate meals, which meant less time to make dessert. She says she'd had no idea how critical the recipe had been to the marriage proposal. When we resurrected it we re-named it Mocha Marriage Mousse. It originally came from *The Around the World Cookbook*, which I cannot find online nor can I locate in Adrienne's library. If anyone has a copy I would love to see the original recipe.

*Serves 6*

*Prep/cook time: 1¼ hours plus 4 hours to chill*

**3 ounces semisweet or  
bittersweet chocolate,  
coarsely chopped**

**4 egg yolks**

**¾ cup sugar**

**3 tablespoons brewed espresso  
coffee, cooled**

**1½ teaspoons (⅔ envelope)  
unflavored gelatin**

**2 cups heavy cream**

**3 egg whites**

**1 ounce shaved or grated  
semisweet or bittersweet  
chocolate**

Place the chopped chocolate in the top of a double boiler set over simmering water. Stir occasionally until the chocolate is completely melted. Remove the top of the double boiler and set aside to cool while you prepare the rest of the ingredients.

In a standing mixer with the whisk attachment or with an electric beater, beat the egg yolks until light in color. Add the sugar and continue

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beating until light and fluffy. Add 2 tablespoons of the espresso and the cooled melted chocolate and mix well.

Place the remaining 1 tablespoon espresso in a small cup. Sprinkle the gelatin over and let sit for a minute, until softened. If needed, add 1 teaspoon cream to dissolve the gelatin completely. Stir the gelatin mixture into the chocolate mixture and set aside. The addition of the gelatin helps the mousse hold its light airy texture.

With an electric mixer, whip the cream to soft peaks, then gently fold into chocolate mixture.

In a clean dry bowl, beat the whites until stiff but not dry. Fold one-third slowly and carefully into the chocolate mixture. When it has been incorporated, fold in half the remaining whites. When that has been incorporated, fold in the final portion of whites. The gradual incorporation of the whites helps to preserve the structure of the mousse.

Scrape the mousse into individual glasses or a 2-quart mold. Chill at least 4 hours. Garnish with shaved chocolate.



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*Life itself is the proper binge.*

— Julia Child



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