



DINING AT HOME

Story & photos by Tracy Beard

All the holiday decorations are packed and put away. The house is clean, and I have taken stock of the kitchen. At the beginning of each year, I inspect my kitchen accessories and inventory the refrigerator, freezer and pantry. I ask myself, “Is it time for a few new hand towels, pot holders or fresh spices? What needs to be used up from the freezer, and do I need to replace any pantry items?”

As an enthusiastic cook, I have a pantry containing the usual suspects, i.e., flour, sugar, potatoes, onions and canned goods. As a trained chef, I often cook for people with different diets; I keep on hand ingredients for preparing vegan, paleo and keto meals. I appreciate many ethnic cuisines and typically stock unique and unusual items on my shelves to create authentic Chinese, Thai, Mexican and Mediterranean dishes. If your pantry is not as extensive, have no fear, as you should be able to locate at your local grocery store everything needed for these recipes.

As a well-traveled foodie, I admit I am pretty spoiled in regard to dining on delicious cuisine. I am not fond of “repeat” meals. Leftovers are okay once or twice, but not more than that. However, occasionally I find a dish that tantalizes my tastebuds enough to warrant its duplication several times. The potato galette recipe at left is one of those dishes. It makes for a superb light dinner or an excellent brunch dish. It is easy enough to whip up for one

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Potato Galette with Greens

1 handful of your favorite greens
 1/3 Tbl. lemon juice and 2/3 Tbl olive oil
 (or 1 Tbl Italian dressing)
 Salt and pepper to taste
 1 ounce goat cheese
 2 Tbl. panko bread crumbs
 2 small potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
 ½ granny smith apple, peeled and sliced
 1 tsp olive oil
 2 Tbl. butter

Make a ball of goat cheese and flatten it. Roll the ball in the panko crumbs. Place 1 tablespoon butter in a pan and fry goat cheese round until golden brown on both sides. Set aside and keep it warm. Pour olive oil and ½

tablespoon butter in a 6-inch frying pan. Melt the fats and coat the pan. Remove the pan from the stove and make an overlapping ring with the potato slices. Top with apple slices and finish with another layer of potato and lightly salt and pepper. Return the pan to the stove and cook the bottom layer until the potatoes are crispy golden brown on the outside and tender inside. Slide onto a plate. Put the remaining butter in the pan and melt. Flip the potato galette onto another plate and slide the raw side into the frying pan. Cook until golden. Top the galette with the warm goat cheese round. Toss the greens in dressing and serve with or on top of the galette. An excellent addition would be some caramelized onions inside with the apple or on top as a garnish.

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Pickin's from the Pantry

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or can be gussied up and served as a culinary piece of art for a few friends.

While growing up, my family had dinner together almost every night. My mother cooked typical dishes like macaroni and cheese, fried pork chops with homemade applesauce or spaghetti with meat sauce. Each summer I helped my mother can fruits and vegetables. It was no surprise to have home-canned green beans with bacon or peaches with dinner. My grandmother, on my father's side, also filled her storeroom each summer with home-canned goods. I learned the value of "putting up" food for winter from these two remarkable women and continue that tradition today.

Tacos are an easy pantry fix. Tortillas last "forever" in the refrigerator and have a week-long shelf life in the pantry. Meats and cheeses keep well in the freezer. Tacos range the gamut, from simple to trendy and gourmet.



Tracy's Carnita Tacos

1 pound roasted pork shoulder, shredded (or home-canned pork)
3 Tbl. taco seasoning
3 Tbl. olive oil
1/3 cup water
Corn and/or flour taco-size tortillas
3/4 cup cotija cheese
Pickled onions
(homemade or store-bought)
1/4 cabbage – shredded
2 avocados – sliced
3 limes – sliced into wedges



Thinly slice your cabbage and crumble the cotija cheese. Slice the avocado and place some pickled onions in a bowl. Place three tablespoons of olive oil in a large skillet on medium-high heat. Add the shredded pork. Fry the pork until crispy bits are created and the meat is thoroughly heated. Add 3 tablespoons of taco seasoning and 1/3 cup water. Warm the tortillas on the stove or wrap in foil and warm in the oven for 15 minutes at 350 degrees. Now your taco bar is ready. Fill your tacos and finish with a squeeze of lime.

YOU MAY HAVE HAD YOUR FILL of candy after the holidays, but you never know when someone might stop by. This candied almond bark is made entirely from pantry ingredients. It is easy to prepare, not too sweet and makes a great ending to any meal.

Candied Almond Bark

1/2 Tbl. butter *plus extra to butter the dish*
1/4 cup sugar
3/4 cup whole almonds - toasted
4 ounces bittersweet chocolate (72%)
4 ounces semisweet chocolate
Coarse sea salt
(I like Maldon sea salt flakes)

Butter a baking dish or use a silicone baking mat. Swirl the sugar in a medium saucepan over medium heat until a light copper color; do not stir. Add butter, using a whisk to blend. Stir in almonds. Pour the mix onto the silicone pad and spread it out to cool. After 15 minutes break the brittle into small pieces. Melt chocolate in a double boiler. Once melted, add the candied almonds. Stir well. Pour onto a silicone mat and smooth into a single layer. Wait five minutes and sprinkle with salt. Place in refrigerator for two hours and then break into pieces. The bark will stay fresh for one week in a cool, dry place with layers separated between foil or parchment and in an airtight container.



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PANTRIES ARE A FABULOUS PLACE to begin meal planning and to alleviate stress. Whether you entertain regularly or cook mostly for the family, it is easy to whip up dishes with dried pasta, canned or homemade sauces and a few refrigerator items to freshen up the meal.

In this time of ups and downs with bad weather and inconsistent employment, it is always a good idea to have a stocked pantry capable of feeding your family for three days to two weeks. Get creative and stock up with some Asian egg noodles, soy sauce and oyster sauce, along with some Chinese BBQ pork from the freezer and fresh veggies from the refrigerator.

Now you are set for an impromptu Asian dinner anytime or prepared for a grrrrreat Chinese New Year's dinner on February 1 — 2022 is the year of the Tiger!

Vancouver, Wash. resident Tracy Beard writes about luxury and adventure travel, traditional and trendy fine dining and libations for regional, national and international magazines. She is CRR's "Out & About" columnist, now in her seventh year.

