

# DINNER

CHANGING THE GAME



MELISSA CLARK

# Roasted SUMAC CHICKEN

## *with Plums*

Sumac—a spice ground from tart, dried berries grown in Mediterranean regions—adds a fruity hit of acid to dishes and a gorgeous red hue. Here, its gentle sourness contrasts with chicken that's been rubbed down with cinnamon and allspice before being roasted with sweet plums. The plums are pretty wonderful, caramelizing, condensing, and absorbing the spices and chicken juices as they roast, turning into a chutney-like sauce that you can spoon over the chicken for serving. If you can't get plums, try this with grapes or sliced peaches, nectarines, apples, or pears (use the same volume as you would plums). Or skip the fruit entirely. This fragrant, crisp-skinned chicken can stand alone.

**1. Prepare the chicken:** Grate the zest from the lemon and place it in a small bowl. Set aside the bald lemon.

**2.** Stir the sumac, salt, pepper, cinnamon, and allspice into the lemon zest until combined. Stir in 3 tablespoons of the olive oil and the garlic. The mixture should feel like wet sand. Rub it all over the chicken, including inside the cavity. Place the thyme in the chicken cavity. Place the chicken on a rimmed baking sheet and marinate, uncovered, in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours.

**3.** Heat the oven to 450°F.

**4.** Transfer the baking sheet to the oven, and roast the chicken for 30 minutes.

**5. Meanwhile, prepare the plums:** In a medium bowl, mix together the plums, shallots, honey, salt, cinnamon, allspice, and bay leaf. Set aside.

**6.** Squeeze 1 teaspoon juice from the reserved bald lemon into a small bowl, and mix it with the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil; drizzle this over the chicken. Then add the plum mixture to the baking sheet and continue to roast until the bird is golden-skinned and cooked through, 20 to 35 minutes.

**7.** Let the chicken rest, covered lightly with aluminum foil, for 10 minutes. Then carve and serve it with the plums, garnished with thyme sprigs.

### FOR THE CHICKEN

**1 large lemon**  
**1 tablespoon ground sumac**  
**4 teaspoons kosher salt**  
**1½ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper**  
**½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**½ teaspoon ground allspice**  
**4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling**  
**2 garlic cloves, grated on a Microplane or minced**  
**1 whole chicken (4 to 5 pounds), patted dry with paper towels**  
**½ bunch fresh thyme sprigs, about 6 sprigs, plus more for garnish**

### FOR THE PLUMS

**5 medium plums, pitted and cut into 1-inch chunks (about 1½ cups)**  
**2 shallots, very thinly sliced**  
**2 to 4 teaspoons honey, to taste**  
**¼ teaspoon kosher salt**  
**¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**¼ teaspoon ground allspice**  
**1 bay leaf, torn in half**

**TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR 50 MINUTES +  
AT LEAST 1 HOUR MARINATING  
SERVES 4 TO 6**

# CHORIZO PORK BURGERS

*with Grilled Honey Onions and Manchego*

Combining fresh chorizo sausage (squeezed out of its casings) with plain ground pork makes for a spicy, brawny burger. You can serve these plain, but I like to caramelize sliced onions on the grill and pile them on top. Their sweet-and-sour notes go really nicely with the pork. And a few slices of Manchego cheese add a pleasing salty creaminess that keeps with the Spanish theme here, though any sheep's milk cheese will work. One thing to note: because the burgers are made from raw pork, don't serve them rare; the fat content of the sausage and pork will ensure that your burger will stay nice and juicy even when cooked to medium. And be sure not to use cured chorizo, the salami-like kind you can slice and eat without cooking. The leathery texture won't work in a burger unless you pass it through a meat grinder.

If you can't find fresh chorizo, you can substitute spicy Italian sausages. Just increase the smoked paprika by one teaspoon. You can form the burger patties the day before grilling; wrap them well and keep them in the fridge until you're ready to light the grill.

1. Heat a grill or broiler to high.
2. In a large bowl, combine the pork, chorizo, salt, paprika, cumin, and garlic, mixing just to combine. Form into 6 to 8 patties, taking care to keep the mixture loose and not pack it tightly (which makes for a tough burger, as does overmixing; always use a light touch with ground meat).
3. In a small bowl, mix together the olive oil, sherry vinegar, and honey. Brush this over both sides of the onion slices and sprinkle them with salt. Grill or broil the onions until they are golden brown on both sides, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer the onions to a plate.
4. Grill or broil the burgers on both sides until they are cooked

to medium. Since this is raw pork, the meat should be cooked until pink on the inside but not red rare (140°F will give you medium to medium-rare meat). This can take anywhere from 3 to 6 minutes per side, depending on how thick you formed your patties and how hot your fire is, so watch them carefully.

5. When the burgers are almost cooked through, top them with the cheese and let the cheese melt while the patties finish cooking. You can also toast the buns at this point if you like.
6. Serve the burgers in the buns, spread with your condiments of choice and the onions and pickles, if using, on top.

**1 pound ground pork**

**1 pound fresh (uncured) chorizo, squeezed out of its casings**

**½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed**

**½ teaspoon smoked paprika (hot or sweet) to taste**

**½ teaspoon ground cumin**

**1 garlic clove, grated on a Microplane or minced**

**1½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**

**1 tablespoon sherry vinegar**

**2 teaspoons honey**

**1 large Spanish onion, sliced**

**6 ounces Manchego cheese, thinly sliced**

**Hamburger buns, for serving**

**Mayonnaise, mustard, and/or ketchup, for serving (optional)**

**Sliced pickles, for serving (optional)**

**TOTAL TIME: 20 MINUTES**

**SERVES 6 TO 8**

# SHRIMP BANH MI

This sandwich maintains all the crunchy, spicy, pickle-y goodness of a Vietnamese *banh mi*, but without having to resort to takeout to get one. Even better, instead of being filled with an array of often unidentifiable pork products (what exactly is that bologna-like cold cut anyway?), it's made from shrimp cakes seasoned with lemongrass, garlic, and ginger that you can whirl together in your food processor in minutes, then quickly pan-fry. The shrimp cakes become crisp and aromatic, with a springy texture to contrast with the juicy, quick-pickled carrots and radishes that get sandwiched alongside. You can make this as spicy or as mild as you like—just dial back or dial up the Sriracha and jalapeño to taste.

**2 small carrots, peeled and shredded**  
**½ cup thinly sliced radishes**  
**1 jalapeño, seeded and diced, plus more thinly sliced jalapeño for serving**  
**4 teaspoons rice vinegar**  
**Pinch of sugar**  
**Kosher salt to taste**  
**2½ teaspoons Asian fish sauce**  
**16 sprigs fresh cilantro**  
**2 garlic cloves**  
**2 teaspoons grated peeled fresh ginger**  
**1 lemongrass stalk, trimmed, outer layers removed, inner core smashed and chopped**  
**1 small fresh chile (such as Thai or serrano), halved and seeded**  
**8 ounces shrimp, peeled and deveined**  
**2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil**  
**Mayonnaise, for serving**  
**Sriracha, for serving**  
**1 baguette, split lengthwise and crosswise, and toasted**

TOTAL TIME: 25 MINUTES

SERVES 2

1. In a small bowl, toss together the carrots, radishes, jalapeño, 2 teaspoons of the rice vinegar, a pinch each of sugar and salt, and ½ teaspoon of the fish sauce. Stir to combine, and let it rest while you prepare the shrimp.
2. In a food processor, combine 8 cilantro sprigs with the garlic, ginger, lemongrass, chile, and remaining 2 teaspoons each fish sauce and rice vinegar, and process until everything is finely chopped. Add the shrimp and pulse the mixture, continually scraping down the sides of the bowl, until you have a chunky paste.
3. Heat the sesame oil in a large skillet over high heat. Add the
- shrimp paste, pressing it into the skillet. Cook until the paste is browned on one side, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip it over and cook until it is browned on the other side. (Don't worry if it breaks up. It can be like a hash or like a burger—both will work in the sandwich.) Sprinkle the cooked shrimp paste lightly with salt.
4. Spread mayonnaise and Sriracha to taste over the cut sides of the baguette pieces. Place the shrimp mixture on the bottom 2 pieces of baguette and top with the pickled carrots and radishes, the remaining 8 cilantro sprigs, and jalapeño slices to taste. Cover with baguette tops to form sandwiches.

# SPICY PORK NOODLES

## *with Ginger and Baby Bok Choy*

This pan-fried noodle dish can be the blueprint for many varied dinners. You can use the basic pan-frying technique and Asian flavorings (ginger, sesame oil, chile, and soy sauce), but change up the vegetable and protein as the seasons and your appetite dictate. In addition to pork and bok choy, some of my other favorite combinations include kale and diced shrimp, shredded butternut squash and ground lamb, and Brussels sprouts and ground beef. If you like this dish, it's worth seeking out the black vinegar. Although balsamic makes an okay approximation, it's a bit sweeter and winier than Chinese black vinegar, which is made from fermented rice and has a smokier, woodier character.

**1.** Thinly slice the bok choy stems. Finely chop half of the ginger, and slice the remaining half into thin matchsticks.

**2.** Bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a boil. Add the noodles and cook according to the package instructions. Drain, run under cool water, and drain again.

**3.** Heat 1 tablespoon of the peanut oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the pork and cook, breaking it up with a fork, until it is golden and cooked through, about 10 minutes. Season the pork with  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt, the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons soy sauce, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon of the rice vinegar. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the meat to a bowl.

**4.** Add the remaining 1 tablespoon peanut oil to the skillet. Stir in

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the scallions, the finely chopped ginger, and the garlic and chile. Cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the bok choy stems and  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt. Cook until the bok choy is almost tender, about 2 minutes. Then toss in the bok choy leaves and return the pork to the skillet.

**5.** Toss in the noodles, remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup soy sauce, and remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon rice vinegar. Cook until just warmed through. Transfer the noodles to a large bowl and toss with the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup scallions and the sesame seeds, sesame oil, and cilantro. Taste and drizzle with more sesame oil if needed. In a small bowl, combine the ginger matchsticks with just enough black vinegar to cover. Serve the ginger mixture alongside the noodles as a garnish.

**12 ounces baby bok choy  
(3 to 4 small heads), trimmed, dark green leaves and stems separated**

**1 2-inch piece fresh ginger (1 ounce), peeled**

**Kosher salt, as needed**

**About 8 ounces dried rice stick  
noodles (if your package is a little  
smaller or larger, it's fine)**

**2 tablespoons peanut or safflower oil**

**1 pound lean ground pork  
(or turkey)**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup plus  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons soy sauce**

**1 tablespoon rice vinegar**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup thinly sliced scallions  
(white and green parts)**

**3 garlic cloves, finely chopped**

**1 fresh Thai or habanero chile,  
seeded if desired, thinly sliced**

**2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds**

**$1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons toasted sesame oil,  
plus more for drizzling**

**Fresh cilantro or basil leaves,  
torn, for serving**

**Chinese black vinegar or balsamic  
vinegar, for serving**

**TOTAL TIME: 40 MINUTES**

**SERVES 4**

# MEXICAN TORTILLA SOUP with *Avocado and Chipotle*

As much as I love a classic Jewish chicken noodle soup, I have to admit that the chile, spices, and a big squeeze of lime in this Mexican version give it a lot more pizzazz than the usual parsley and dill. Plus, with avocados and a dollop of sour cream, it's a rich and satisfying soup without being the least bit heavy. Not to say this replaces my mom's chicken noodle broth in my soup repertoire; I'm just saying it occupies a similarly cozy spot.

Frying your own tortillas here isn't strictly necessary, but they are undeniably more delicious, crisper, and more appealingly rich than anything you can buy. That said, if you don't want to bother, substitute a good brand of purchased tortilla chips.

**1.** In a medium pot, heat the 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and chile and cook until they are soft, 7 to 10 minutes. Stir in the garlic, cumin, and chipotle; cook for 1 minute. Add the stock, tomatoes, chicken, and salt. Simmer for 20 minutes, breaking up the tomatoes with a spoon.

**2.** While the soup simmers, prepare the tortillas if you are using them: Slice the tortillas into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-wide strips; cut any long center strips in half crosswise. Heat the remaining  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup olive oil in a medium skillet over medium-

high heat. Drop in one strip of tortilla to test the oil; if the oil is hot enough, the tortilla strip will sizzle. Fry the tortilla strips in batches, turning them once with tongs, until golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes per batch. Transfer the finished tortillas to a paper-towel-lined plate and immediately sprinkle them with salt.

**3.** To serve, ladle the soup into warmed bowls and float a handful of tortilla strips in each one. Top with a dollop of sour cream, some diced avocado, sliced scallions, and cilantro. Serve with lime wedges alongside.

**$\frac{1}{3}$  cup plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 small onion, diced**  
**1 poblano chile or green bell pepper, seeded and diced**  
**1 garlic clove, finely chopped**  
**1 teaspoon ground cumin**  
**1 chipotle in adobo, seeded and finely chopped**  
**3 cups chicken stock**  
**1 15-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes**  
**2 cups shredded cooked chicken**  
**1½ teaspoons kosher salt, plus more as needed**  
**4 6-inch whole-wheat or corn tortillas (optional)**  
**Sour cream, for serving (optional)**  
**Diced avocado, for serving**  
**Sliced scallions, for serving**  
**Fresh cilantro leaves, for serving**  
**Lime wedges, for serving**

**TOTAL TIME: 45 MINUTES**

**SERVES 4**

# WHITE BEAN DIP

## *with Charred Scallions*

Dense and creamy with a distinct smoky flavor from charring the scallions, this simple, garlicky, crowd-pleasing dip goes with pretty much anything you want to serve it with. Try thick slices of salami or kielbasa for something unexpected. Steamed asparagus, broccoli, and cauliflower are obvious but elegant choices. And good bread is always welcome.

Be sure to get a deep, dark, nearly black color on the scallions when charring them; that's what gives this dip its distinct, smoky-sweet flavor. Without the char, it's just plain old bean dip. Also to note: you can make this with freshly cooked white beans (see page 233) instead of canned beans if you like. It will have an earthier and more intensely beany flavor, which is all to the good.

**½ cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling**

**1 large bunch scallions (about 8 scallions), white and light green parts cut into 2-inch lengths, dark greens thinly sliced**

**2 garlic cloves, finely chopped**

**2 15-ounce cans white beans, such as cannellini or Great Northern, drained and rinsed**

**¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh dill leaves, plus more for serving**

**4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice**

**¾ teaspoon kosher salt**

**Ground Turkish red pepper or hot paprika, as needed**

**TOTAL TIME: 20 MINUTES**

**MAKES APPROXIMATELY 3 CUPS**

**1.** Heat the 2 tablespoons olive oil in a 9-inch cast-iron skillet over high heat. Add the white and light green scallion pieces and cook, turning them occasionally, until they are well charred and very tender, 5 to 10 minutes.

**2.** Transfer the scallions to the bowl of a food processor. Add the garlic, beans, dill, lemon juice,

and salt. Pulse to combine. Then, with the motor running, drizzle in the  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup olive oil. The mixture should be smooth, but with some texture.

**3.** Scrape the dip into a shallow bowl, drizzle it with olive oil, and sprinkle with Turkish red pepper, the sliced scallion greens, and chopped dill.

*Smashed Sichuan*

## CUCUMBER SALAD

Mild cucumbers can take a lot of bold seasoning, and here they get it in a dousing of garlic, fresh ginger, chile, and soy sauce. Serve this salad with something mild to soften its bite. I love it with fish (particularly rich salmon or tuna fillets) or with any kind of Asian noodle or grain dish. It also does wonders to perk up a simple plate of fried or scrambled eggs. If you can find thin-skinned Persian cucumbers, they work especially well here, and there's no need to peel them.

You can make the salad up to four hours ahead; store it in the fridge until serving.

1. Arrange the cucumbers on a cutting board. Using a rolling pin, meat pounder, or the flat side of a cleaver or heavy chef's knife, pound the cucumbers until they are broken apart and smashed. Tear them into 1½-inch-long chunks, discarding any seeds that fall out in the process (it's okay to leave some of the seeds). Put the cucumbers in a large bowl.

2. In a small bowl, combine the garlic, ginger, vinegar, sesame oil, soy sauce, salt, brown sugar, and chile slices. Mix well, add this to the cucumbers, and toss.

3. You can serve this straightaway, but it gets better if you chill it for at least 20 minutes and up to 4 hours. Just before serving, taste the salad and adjust the seasonings if needed.

**2 pounds cucumbers, peeled if desired**

**2 garlic cloves, grated on a Microplane or minced**

**1 teaspoon grated peeled fresh ginger**

**4 teaspoons Chinese black vinegar or rice vinegar**

**1½ teaspoons toasted sesame oil**

**1 teaspoon soy sauce**

**Kosher salt to taste**

**Large pinch of light brown sugar**

**1 small fresh red chile, thinly sliced, seeded if desired**

**TOTAL TIME: 15 MINUTES**

**SERVES 4**