

The Side Dish Solution: *holiday style*



By Christine Pittman

The Side Dish Solution: *holiday style*

*Side dish recipes that add sparkle to
your holiday dinners.*

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The Side Dish Solution: Holiday Style

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First edition.

*To my favorite taste-testers,
Graz, Jeremy and Emily.
Love you always. xo*



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• INTRODUCTION •

Do you have trouble deciding what to make for dinner? Me too. And it's the toughest when company's coming over. Deciding what to make can be as much work as cooking the dinner itself!

I believe that side dishes are the key to creating delicious meals. I therefore use The Side Dish Solution strategy to plan meals.

Here's how it works. When you can't think of something to make, start with a really basic idea:

Chicken Breasts with Potatoes and Green Beans

Then look for recipes or ideas that add sparkle to the side dishes. You'll end up with something like this:

Chicken Breasts with Parmesan-Roasted Potatoes and Garlicky Lemon Green Beans

See? What begins as boring becomes extraordinary. Dinner solved!

The Side Dish Solution is never more useful than during the holidays because holiday meals are all about the sides. Sure, we love the big meaty entrées but what makes a holiday dinner special are the accompaniments: Green Bean Casserole, Sweet Potato Casserole, Stuffing, Yorkshire Pudding and Cranberry Sauce. Without them it wouldn't be a holiday dinner.

This cookbook has classic holiday side dishes with twists and a bunch of new fall and winter sides to add sparkle to your holiday meal. To make your meal-planning even easier, this book is organized into menus. Each chapter is a different holiday menu with a suggested entrée, side dish recipes and a suggested dessert. There's a menu for Thanksgiving Dinner, Christmas Dinner, plus three more dinners that feature wintery side dishes in all their cozy glory.

I hope you, your friends and family love these recipes and that you have fun adding sparkle to your holiday meals.

Happy Holidays from my family to yours,

Christine XO

• THANKSGIVING DINNER •

This Thanksgiving Dinner has the classic sides but with homemade healthy twists. Indulge and feel good about it, and then go crazy on the Pumpkin Pie!

• MAIN DISH •

Turkey, Gravy & Cranberry Sauce

• SIDE DISHES •

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• DESSERT •

Classic Pumpkin Pie with Bourbon Spiked Whipped Cream



• GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE FROM SCRATCH •

This Green Bean Casserole is creamy, mushroomy and oniony like the original, but without all the canned foods. Even with all those fresh ingredients it's still a snap to make.

PREP TIME 20 minutes

COOK TIME 40 minutes

TOTAL TIME 1 hour

SERVES 8

INGREDIENTS

1 cup panko breadcrumbs
½ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
salt
black pepper
olive oil
1 and ½ lbs. green beans, trimmed and
cut into 2 inch lengths
8 oz. mushrooms, thinly sliced
1 medium onion, thinly sliced
3 Tbsp. flour
1 (12 oz.) can of 2% evaporated milk

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. In a small bowl combine the breadcrumbs, Parmesan cheese, ½ teaspoon of salt, ¼ teaspoon of pepper and 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Set aside.
2. Combine the beans, 1 tablespoon olive oil, ¼ teaspoon of salt and ¼ teaspoon of pepper in a 13x9" cake pan. Roast for 10 minutes and then shake the pan. Continue to roast until beans are fork tender, 10-15 more minutes.
3. Meanwhile, warm 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until well-browned, 7-9 minutes. Reduce heat to medium. Add ¼ teaspoon of salt and the flour. Stir well to coat all the mushrooms in flour. Stir in the evaporated milk. Heat while stirring continuously until the liquid is bubbling and thick. Taste and add more salt and pepper if needed.
4. Pour the creamy mushrooms over the beans and stir to combine.
5. Sprinkle with the breadcrumb mixture and bake until browned on top, 20-24 minutes.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

You can assemble the casserole to the end of Step #4 and then cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days. Proceed with Step #5 but note that it will take longer to heat through.

• OLIVE OIL MASHED POTATOES •

Olive oil mashed potatoes use olive oil instead of butter for richness and creaminess. This recipe is easy to make and the result is sunny yellow potatoes that will brighten your holiday table.

PREP TIME *10 minutes*

COOK TIME *10 minutes*

TOTAL TIME *20 minutes*

SERVES *8*

INGREDIENTS

4 lbs. red potatoes, in 2 inch chunks

1 Tbsp. salt

¼ cup regular olive oil

1 Tbsp. Pompeian Koroneiki olive oil,
or other olive oil with a flavor that
you enjoy

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Put potatoes and salt in a large sauce pan and add just enough water to cover. Heat over high until it reaches a boil. Remove cover and reduce heat to a simmer. Simmer on low until potatoes are fork tender, about 10 minutes. Drain but reserve 1 cup of the cooking water.
2. Add half of the reserved water. Mash a bit. If soaked up and not too liquidy add ¼ cup more. Stir. If soaked up, add ¼ cup more. Then add the regular olive oil. Mash. Drizzle with the Koroneiki before serving.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

Potatoes can be cut and placed in a pot of cold water up to 2 hours before cooking. Drain and then proceed with the above instructions from the beginning.





• MOM'S STUFFING MUFFINS •

This stuffing recipe is the one that I watch my mom make every holiday season. In recent years she has started cooking it in muffin tins because it yields a nice crunchy top and moist interior. You can read my mom's full stuffing tutorial at COOKtheSTORY.com/stuffing-tutorial.

PREP TIME 20 minutes

COOK TIME 30 minutes

TOTAL TIME 50 minutes

YIELD 12

INGREDIENTS

¼ cup butter or margarine
2 onions, chopped
2 tsp. poultry seasoning, divided
2 tsp. salt, divided
2 tsp. black pepper, divided
15 thick slices of bread (day old is best), in 1 inch cubes
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 and ½ cups milk or chicken broth

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease 12 non-stick 2½ inch muffin cups.
2. Warm the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onions, 1 teaspoon of the poultry seasoning, 1 teaspoon of the salt and 1 teaspoon of the pepper. Cook stirring occasionally until onions are softened, 5-6 minutes.
3. Put the bread cubes in a large bowl. Scrape the onions and butter onto the bread. Stir.
4. Combine the eggs and milk. Pour half over the bread and stir. Squeeze a handful of the moistened bread. If droplets of liquid come out, you've added enough liquid. If no droplets appeared, add more liquid and test again (how dry the bread was to start with and the type of bread used affects how much liquid you'll need). Stir in the remaining teaspoon of poultry seasoning, teaspoon of salt and teaspoon of pepper.
5. Divide the stuffing among the muffin tins. They will be well-mounded. Bake until brown and crunchy on top and heated through, 30-40 minutes. Immediately run a plastic knife around the edges of each muffin cup and then gently remove the portions of stuffing.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

Stuffing muffins can be baked a day ahead. Remove immediately from muffin tin, cool and refrigerate. Reheat on a baking sheet in the oven at 400°F until warmed through, about 12-15 minutes.

• TROPICAL SWEET POTATO CRUMBLE CASSEROLE •

This twist on the classic Sweet Potato Casserole has lime and ginger to give it a subtle tropical feel.

PREP TIME 20 minutes

COOK TIME 40 minutes

TOTAL TIME 1 hour

SERVES 8 to 10

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. sweet potatoes, cut into
a ½ inch dice
4 Tbsp. maple syrup
2 Tbsp. lime juice
1 Tbsp. water
½ tsp. salt, divided
2 tsp. ground ginger, divided
½ cup packed brown sugar
¾ cup flour
1 and ½ cups granola (one with
coconut if possible)
3 oz. pecans, roughly chopped
½ tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. baking soda
½ cup unsalted butter, melted

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. In a 9×13” cake pan combine the sweet potatoes, maple syrup, lime juice, water, ¼ teaspoon of the salt and 1 teaspoon of the ginger.
2. In a medium bowl combine the brown sugar, flour, granola, pecans, baking powder, baking soda, ¼ teaspoon of salt and 1 teaspoon of ginger. Add the melted butter and stir until moistened.
3. Scatter the butter mixture evenly over the sweet potatoes and then press down all over so that the topping holds together.
4. Bake until the top is well-browned and the sweet potatoes in the middle are fork-tender, 40-60 minutes. If the topping becomes too brown before the potatoes are cooked, cover the top with aluminium foil. Let rest for 10 minutes before serving.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

Complete Steps #1 and #2 up to a day ahead. Store separately in refrigerator. 1.5 hours before serving, put both on the counter to come to room temperature. After 30 minutes, preheat oven and continue with steps #3 and #4.



FOR DESSERT

CLASSIC PUMPKIN PIE WITH BOURBON SPIKED WHIPPED CREAM

A traditional pumpkin pie with extra spice and some boozy whipped cream to make everyone happy after dinner.

» Get the recipe at [COOKtheSTORY.com/pumpkin-pie](https://www.cookthestory.com/pumpkin-pie)

• CHRISTMAS DINNER •

I love a juicy roast pork for Christmas dinner. Be sure to make lots of gravy so you can slather the potatoes and the Sage and Onion Pie.

• MAIN DISH •

Roast Pork and Gravy

• SIDE DISHES •

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• DESSERT •

Easy Chocolate Double Layer Whiskey Cake



• GRANNIE’S SAGE AND ONION PIE •

This recipe is like a cross between stuffing and Yorkshire pudding. The sage and thyme make it wonderful with roast pork or roast chicken.

PREP TIME 15 minutes

COOK TIME 25 minutes

TOTAL TIME 40 minutes

SERVES 8

INGREDIENTS

1 lg. onion, chopped
vegetable oil or lard
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 tsp. salt
3 eggs
½ cup milk
¼ cup water
2 tsp. dried sage leaves (or 3 tsp.
minced fresh sage leaves)
1 tsp. dried thyme leaves (or 2 tsp.
minced fresh thyme leaves)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a skillet warm 1 tablespoon of oil or lard over medium-low heat. Add the onion and cook stirring occasionally until soft but not brown, 4-5 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, combine the flour and salt in a medium bowl. Make a well in the center and crack in the eggs. Stir well.
3. In a small measuring cup mix together the milk and water. Pour about half of it into the flour and egg mixture and stir. Add a dribble more and then stir. Continue adding liquid just until the batter is about the thickness of a thin pancake batter. I typically use about two-thirds of the liquid. Beat by hand with a whisk for 2 minutes.
4. Let the batter sit at room temperature for one hour.
5. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Measure 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil or lard into a 9” pie plate or a rimmed 9”x11” baking sheet. Put the pan into the oven until the oil is very very VERY hot, about 10 minutes. While the oil heats, stir the onions, sage and thyme into the batter. Once the oil is hot tilt it around to distribute the oil evenly in the pan. Then immediately and carefully (watch out for oil spatters!) pour the batter into the pan and put it back into the oven. Don’t open the oven for at least 20 minutes.
6. Bake until it is well-browned on the top and on the bottom, 23-27 minutes. Serve while hot.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

You can complete Step #3 up to 12 hours ahead. Cover and refrigerate. Bring it out of the fridge 1 hour before baking. Whisk it a bit and then proceed with Steps #5 and 6.

• INDIVIDUAL BRUSSELS SPROUTS GRATIN •

I adore vegetable gratins. Soft veggies, creamy sauce, crunchy top. What I don't love about gratins are all the steps. This one makes it much simpler by not requiring a bechamel-type sauce. You just use a drizzle of cream and you're good to go.

PREP TIME 10 minutes

COOK TIME 40 minutes

TOTAL TIME 50 minutes

SERVES 8

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. medium-sized brussels sprouts
2 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
kosher salt
coarse black pepper
½ cup panko bread crumbs
½ cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
¼ tsp. garlic powder
½ cup whipping cream or evaporated milk
a pinch of nutmeg

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Trim the bottom stem nub off of the brussels sprouts and discard. Cut sprouts in half. Put them in a casserole dish that is wide enough that the sprouts are only one or two deep. Be sure to include any little leaves that fell off in the trimming process since these will get nice and crispy when roasted.
2. Toss the sprouts with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, ½ teaspoon of kosher salt and ¼ teaspoon of coarse black pepper. Roast in the oven until they're starting to brown but are still a bit al dente when pricked with a fork, 25-30 minutes.
3. In a small bowl combine the whipping cream and nutmeg. Transfer roasted sprouts to 8 ramekins. Drizzle each with 1 tablespoon of the cream mixture.
4. Combine the panko, cheddar, garlic powder, ¼ teaspoon of kosher salt and ¼ teaspoon of pepper. Crumble it between your fingers so that the cheese breaks up into smaller bits and really mixes into the crumbs. Add the remaining tablespoon of olive oil and mix again. Distribute the breadcrumbs evenly over the sprouts.
5. Put all the ramekins on a baking sheet so they're easier to transfer in and out of the oven. Bake until the crumbs are crisply brown, 15-20 minutes. Let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

This gratin can be done the day before up to and including Step #3. When ready to cook, add the breadcrumb topping and bake until heated through and brown on top, 15-20 minutes.





FOR DESSERT

EASY CHOCOLATE DOUBLE LAYER WHISKEY CAKE

This dessert starts with a cake box but nobody will notice because of the decadent chocolate, coffee and whiskey flavors going on.

» Get the recipe at COOKtheSTORY.com/whiskey-cake

• PARMESAN ROASTED POTATOES AND ONIONS •

I need to apologize because the pan you use here will be hard to clean. But don't line it with foil because a stickier, less tasty mess will ensue, or with parchment paper because no real browning will happen. Just make peace with the crusty mess and know that the potatoes are going to be delicious. And hey, if you did the cooking, maybe somebody else will do the dishes.

PREP TIME 15 minutes

COOK TIME 40 minutes

TOTAL TIME 55 minutes

SERVES 6 to 8

INGREDIENTS

3 lbs. of small red potatoes, halved
4 medium Vidalia onions (or other sweet onion), peeled and quartered
2 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. olive oil (divided)
½ tsp. coarse salt
1 tsp. dried thyme leaves
4 oz. Parmesan cheese, finely grated
2 Tbsp. roughly chopped chives for garnish (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Rub a big metal pan (11"x17" is ideal) with 1 teaspoon of the olive oil.
2. In a large bowl combine the potato halves, onion quarters, the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil, salt and thyme.
3. Sprinkle the Parmesan cheese all over the prepared pan in an even layer. Place the potatoes in a single layer cut-side-down on top of the Parmesan. Scatter the bits of onion all around.
4. Roast in the oven for 40-50 minutes, until the potatoes are really tender and browning on top, the onions are browning on the edges and the Parmesan cheese at the edges of the pan (and maybe further towards the middle) is crunchy and brown.
5. Remove the pan from the oven. Use a metal spatula to scrape and get under the crusty Parmesan and lift the potatoes and onions into a serving dish. Some of the potatoes won't have a hard dark crust but instead gloopy bits of melted Parmesan stuck to them. Mix them up a bit so everyone gets some crunchy and some melty. Sprinkle with chives, if using.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

This recipe really does need to be made just before serving. You can grate the Parmesan cheese and cut the onions ahead of time though.

• FESTIVE STEAK DINNER •

This is a steak dinner but the stuffed apples and cranberry horseradish sauce make it clear that this is no summer BBQ.

• MAIN DISH •

Grilled or Broiled Steaks with Cranberry Horseradish Sauce

Recipe for Cranberry Horseradish Sauce: Stir together ½ cup of whole berry cranberry sauce with 2 teaspoons of spicy horseradish sauce, or more to taste. Serve alongside the steaks or cook steaks as normal but add a smear of the sauce on the top of each one after the last flip.

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• DESSERT •

Chocolate Fruit Dip



• CIDER-MARINATED ONIONS, POMEGRANATE SEED AND GOAT CHEESE SALAD •

The onions in this recipe are marinated in cider vinegar to add extra flavor and to form the base of the salad dressing. If you can't find the L'il Bo's onions called for in the recipe, use a single medium sweet onion instead.

PREP TIME 30 minutes

COOK TIME 0 minutes

TOTAL TIME 30 minutes

SERVES 6-8

INGREDIENTS

3 Tbsp. cider vinegar, divided
salt

coarse black pepper

2 Lil' Bo's Petite Sweet Vidalia Onions,
trimmed of tops and root end

3 Tbsp. olive oil

¼ tsp. granulated sugar

10 oz. dark salad greens (baby
spinach or a mix including baby kale
is perfect)

8 oz. plain soft goat cheese, at room
temperature

2 cups pomegranate seeds

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a medium-sized bowl combine 2 tablespoons of the cider vinegar with 1/8 teaspoon of salt and 1/8 teaspoon of pepper. Thinly slice the onions and stir them with the vinegar mixture until they're thoroughly coated. Set aside for at least 20 minutes. Proceed with the recipe or cover and refrigerate for up to 12 hours.
2. To the onions add the olive oil, the remaining 1 tablespoon of cider vinegar, a pinch of salt, a pinch of pepper and the sugar. Stir to combine.
3. Divide the salad greens between 8 medium-sized plates. Use a fork to lift about ¼ cup of the marinated onions out of the liquid and onto each plate. Drizzle each serving with 1 tablespoon of the juices from the bowl. Top each salad with 1 ounce of the goat cheese divided into 4-5 pieces. Finish by sprinkling each salad with 1/8 of a cup of pomegranate seeds.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

The onions can be marinated and the salad dressing made up to 12 hours in advance.

• APPLES STUFFED WITH SAUSAGE, ROSEMARY AND PINE NUTS •

Stuffing is the perfect holiday side dish. This recipe takes it to a new and exciting place by baking it inside of apples.

PREP TIME 15 minutes

COOK TIME 50 minutes

TOTAL TIME 65 minutes

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

6 medium RubyFrost apples, or other firm cooking apple
½ lb. cooked Italian sausage (about 3 links), chopped or crumbled
1 cup cubed fresh bread
3 Tbsp. pine nuts
1 Tbsp. chopped fresh rosemary
1 and ½ tsp. olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
2. In a medium bowl combine the sausage, bread crumbs, pine nuts and rosemary.
3. Cut the top third off of an apple. Use a melon baller to scoop out the core of the apple along with some of the flesh, leaving ¼ to ½ inch around the edges. Repeat with remaining apples. Arrange apples in a baking dish.
4. Divide the sausage mixture among the apples, squashing it gently so that it all fits. The stuffing will be mounded above the apples. Drizzle each mound of stuffing with ¼ teaspoon of the olive oil.
5. Bake until the apples are tender, 50-60 minutes. Use a metal spatula to lift apples out of the baking dish and onto a serving plate.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

The stuffing can be made and the apples stuffed up to 1 day ahead. Before stuffing them, rub top cut sides with lemon juice to prevent a bit of browning. But don't worry if the apples do discolour since that happens from cooking as well. Any resultant browning will look like it came from the oven.





FOR DESSERT

CHOCOLATE FRUIT DIP

After a hearty steak dinner you might not want a big dessert. Snack on some fruit and a rich (but healthy!) chocolate dip, made with Stonyfield Organic Greek yogurt instead.

» Get the recipe at [COOKtheSTORY.com/fruit-dip](https://www.cookthestory.com/fruit-dip)

• OVEN RÖSTI •

Rösti is a Swiss dish similar to a large potato pancake. This recipe serves 4 and can serve 6 in a pinch. But, the soft potato center and crunchy edges will have everyone wanting more so I'd cook two. With the make-ahead tip below, you can easily make extras to accommodate a larger group.

PREP TIME 10 minutes

COOK TIME 25 minutes

TOTAL TIME 35 minutes

SERVES 4-6

INGREDIENTS

1.5 lbs. baking potatoes (about 3 medium)

½ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. coarse black pepper

1 Tbsp. vegetable oil

1 Tbsp. unsalted butter

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Shred the potatoes. Transfer them to a thin cloth kitchen towel. Wrap the towel around the potatoes and twist it up to squeeze out as much liquid as you can. Discard the liquid. Spread out the potatoes and sprinkle with the salt and pepper. Toss them around a bit to combine it all.
3. Heat the oil and butter in an oven-safe cast iron or non-stick skillet over medium heat. Swirl it around until the butter is melted and hot. Add the potatoes and carefully press down to spread them out and compact them, being careful not to burn yourself on the edges of the pan. Leave the pan on medium heat for 3 minutes and then transfer to the oven.
4. Bake until underside is well-browned, 12-15 minutes. Remove from the oven and push down gently on the potatoes with a metal spatula. Run a knife around the edge of the skillet to loosen any stuck potatoes. Put a plate over the skillet and invert the potato pancake onto the plate. Slide the pancake back into the skillet so that the less browned side is down. Return it to the oven until the underside is browned, 12-15 more minutes.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

Make the rösti up to 4 hours ahead of time. Transfer to a baking sheet. Cool, cover and refrigerate. To serve, bake on the baking sheet in a hot oven until heated through, about 10 minutes, or warm it in a skillet over medium heat, flipping occasionally so that neither side gets too brown.

• HOLIDAY SALMON DINNER •

A roasted side of salmon always looks indulgent and festive coming out of the oven. Be sure to tell everyone to put the Corn and Bacon Relish on both their salmon and their rice. Hint: You might want to double that recipe!

• MAIN DISH •

Salmon and Plain White Rice

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• DESSERT •

Chocolate Lava Cakes with Blackberry Wine Sauce

• APPLE, BEET AND KALE SALAD •

Beets and apples taste wonderful together. I originally used a RubyFrost apple in this recipe. If you can't find one, go for a crisp apple with a balance of sweet and tart flavor.

PREP TIME 10 minutes

COOK TIME 2 minutes

TOTAL TIME 12 minutes

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

2 Tbsp. butter

2 Tbsp. water

3 Tbsp. cider vinegar

¼ cup sugar

1 tsp. prepared horseradish

a pinch of salt

1 cup mayonnaise

8 cups baby kale or dark salad
green mix

1 apple, cored and sliced ¼ inch thick

1 (14.5 oz.) can sliced beets, drained
and cut in half (or 3 fresh beets,
peeled and simmered until tender
and then sliced ¼ inch)

a 1 oz. piece of hard Manchego or
Parmesan cheese

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Melt the butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Stir in the water, vinegar, sugar, horseradish and salt. Add the mayonnaise and stir until the sugar has dissolved, 1-2 minutes. Remove from heat.
2. Divide the kale or salad greens among 4 plates. Top with the apple slices and beets. Use a potato peeler to shave the cheese over each salad. Drizzle each salad with 2 tablespoons of the dressing. You will not use up all the dressing. Store the remainder in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

The salad dressing can be made up to 1 week in advance. Store covered in the refrigerator. Warm it a bit in the microwave to serve.





• QUICK GREEN BEANS WITH GARLIC AND LEMON •

I don't often use the microwave to cook. But every now and then I find myself short on time and it is a real saver. That's how I first wound up cooking green beans in the microwave. Now I do it all the time, especially if I'm hosting a big dinner and already have a full oven and full stovetop. These don't take any of that precious space.

PREP TIME 5 minutes

COOK TIME 3 minutes

TOTAL TIME 8 minutes

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

1 clove garlic, minced

1 tsp. lemon zest

½ tsp. salt

½ tsp. coarse black pepper

2 tsp. olive oil

12 oz. trimmed green beans

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large microwave-safe bowl combine garlic, lemon zest, salt, pepper and olive oil. Add green beans and toss to coat.
2. Top bowl with an inverted microwave-safe plate. Microwave on high for 2 minutes. Toss beans and microwave on high for another 30 seconds at a time until they're the tenderness that you like. It will be about 1-3 minutes more. Drain off any accumulated liquid. Toss again and serve.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

This is really a last-minute recipe. But you can mix up the garlic, lemon zest, salt, pepper and olive oil a couple of hours ahead. Add the beans at the last minute and then cook.

• CORN AND BACON RELISH •

Simple roasted salmon becomes exciting when topped with a sweet corn and bacon relish. This little side is also delicious on chicken and pork chops.

PREP TIME 5 minutes

COOK TIME 5 minutes

TOTAL TIME 10 minutes

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

4 strips of bacon
1 medium sweet onion (like Vidalia)
finely chopped
2 cups of corn kernels (I use frozen
kernels that have been defrosted)
2 Tbsp. brown sugar
kosher salt
3 Tbsp. fresh lime juice
2 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook the bacon strips in a large frying pan over medium heat until they are a bit crispy. Remove the strips from the pan and pour out all but 1 tablespoon of the bacon fat.
2. Turn the heat to medium-low and add the onion, stirring occasionally until it is softened, 5-7 minutes. Add the corn, brown sugar and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt. Cook and stir until heated through, about 1 minute. Transfer to a bowl. Add the lime juice and parsley. Chop the bacon finely and stir it in.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

This relish can be made up to two days ahead of time. Cover and refrigerate. Warm it back up over medium-low heat in a small saucepan or in the microwave.



FOR DESSERT

CHOCOLATE LAVA CAKES WITH BLACKBERRY WINE SAUCE

Bake these cakes while you eat dinner so they're warm when you're ready for dessert.

» Get the recipe at [COOKtheSTORY.com/lava-cakes](https://www.cookthestory.com/lava-cakes)

• CELEBRATORY CHICKEN DINNER •

Chicken always seems like a humble entrée but everyone loves it so you can't go wrong. The key to making it special is to surround it with delicious side dishes. A soft bread topped with apples and cheddar and an unusual but delicious vegetable side (with bacon!) are the perfect things to make the meal shine. Oh, and the pumpkin soup appetizer? It has bacon too. How can you not love that?

• MAIN DISH •

Roasted Whole Chicken or Chicken Pieces

• SIDE DISHES •

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• DESSERT •

After-Dinner Coffee Ice Cream Float



• QUICK PUMPKIN SOUP WITH BACON PARMESAN CRUMBLES •

The best part about this soup (other than the Bacon Parmesan Crumble on top!) is that it's ready in under 15 minutes. Serve it as an appetizer or alongside leftover turkey sandwiches for a perfect holiday lunch.

PREP TIME 0 minutes

COOK TIME 15 minutes

TOTAL TIME 15 minutes

SERVES 6

YIELD 8 cups

INGREDIENTS

2 cups low or no-sodium chicken broth
2 (15oz.) cans pure pumpkin purée
1 (12 oz.) can evaporated milk
1 Tbsp. packed brown sugar
1 and ½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. coarse black pepper
½ tsp. dried sage leaves
½ tsp. garlic powder
1 oz. Parmesan cheese
3 strips pre-cooked bacon

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Put a large pot or Dutch oven over high heat. Add the chicken broth, pumpkin purée, evaporated milk, salt, pepper, sage, garlic powder and brown sugar. Stir. Reduce heat to medium. Cover and cook, stirring often, until it comes to a simmer. Reduce heat to low. Taste. Add more salt and pepper if desired.
2. While the soup is coming up to a simmer, finely grate the Parmesan cheese and finely chop the bacon. Mix them together.
3. Preheat a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Drop the Parmesan and bacon mixture into the pan in 6 little piles with space between them. When the piles have melted and started to brown (about a minute), use a spatula to scrape under them and flip them over. They'll squidge up a bit when you try to get under them but that's o.k. Cook, flipping occasionally, until golden brown on both sides, 1-3 more minutes. Remove from heat. Let them cool for a minute and then chop them up.
4. Ladle the soup into bowls and top with the bacon and Parmesan crumbles.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

This soup can be made ahead, refrigerated and then reheated to serve. The bacon topping is best made up to 2 hours ahead of time. Store uncovered at room temperature until serving.



• ROASTED FENNEL WITH BACON AND THYME •

Tasting something new adds fun to an event. That's why this dish is perfect for a special occasion. It features fennel, which is a vegetable that not everyone is familiar with. Pairing the fennel with the much more familiar bacon and thyme makes it a bit more familiar so that nobody is afraid. Your guests will be excited to try it!

PREP TIME 10 minutes

COOK TIME 40 minutes

TOTAL TIME 50 minutes

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

2 Tbsp. olive oil

3 medium fennel bulbs, trimmed and cored

½ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. coarse black pepper

6 slices pre-cooked bacon

14 sprigs of fresh thyme, divided

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Oil a large baking sheet with 1 tablespoon of the oil. Slice fennel in ¼-inch slices. Arrange slices in a single overlapping layer on the baking sheet. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Scatter the bacon over top. Put 10 of the thyme sprigs at equal distances apart over the fennel. Drizzle with the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil.
3. Roast until fennel is brown on the bottom and tender in the middle, 40-50 minutes. Discard the roasted thyme (it's o.k. if leaves remain but remove the woody stems). To serve, garnish with remaining fresh thyme sprigs.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

Prep the fennel slices ahead by trimming, coring and slicing the bulbs into ¼ inch slices. Put on a large plate and top with damp paper towel to prevent drying out. Refrigerate up to 1 day. Note that the fennel may discolor a bit but it is safe to eat and it won't be noticeable once cooked. You can also cook the bacon a day or two ahead or buy the bacon pre-cooked in boxes near the lunch meat section of the grocery store.

• EASY APPLE CHEDDAR SKILLET BREAD •

You can use any pizza dough for this recipe. I've tried it with tubes of pizza dough from the refrigerator section (near the tubes of biscuits). But my favorite is to use homemade pizza dough or the pizza dough that is sold in the bakery at my grocery store. Cooking times and temperatures will vary depending on type. Use the temperature specified in the homemade dough recipe or on the purchased dough container.

PREP TIME 10 minutes

COOK TIME 15 minutes

TOTAL TIME 25 minutes

SERVES 4 to 6

INGREDIENTS

3 tsp. olive oil, divided

1 lb. of pizza dough (or 1 (13 oz.) tube of dough)

1 tart green apple, cored and sliced thinly

1 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

1/2 tsp. fennel seeds, lightly crushed

1/2 tsp. coarse sea salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Pour 1 teaspoon of the oil into a 10 inch cast iron or oven-safe non-stick skillet. Use your fingers to rub the oil on the bottom and sides of the skillet.
2. Roll or stretch the dough so that it is larger than the skillet (if using dough from a tube, it is already rolled out). Center the dough over the skillet and then allow the middle to sink in. Fold any corners in towards the center, squidding the dough until it fits. Brush the top of the dough with another teaspoon of olive oil.
3. Lay the apple slices in a single overlapping layer on top of the dough. Brush the tops of the slices with the final teaspoon of olive oil. Sprinkle on the cheddar followed by the fennel seeds and the sea salt.
4. Bake until the top and bottom of the bread are golden brown and the cheese has become dark and a bit crunchy in a few spots, 15-25 minutes depending on type of dough used. Cut into wedges and serve hot.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

If you're going to use homemade pizza dough, you can make it up to 2 days ahead. Store it in the refrigerator in a large plastic bag (I use a clean white kitchen garbage bag) loosely tied so that the dough can expand. Punch it down occasionally so it doesn't overtake your fridge.



FOR DESSERT

AFTER DINNER COFFEE ICE CREAM FLOAT

If you can't decide between dessert, a coffee or an after-dinner drink, have all three with this easy hot coffee float. It's fabulous with a shot of Irish Cream or orange liqueur.

» Get the recipe at [COOKtheSTORY.com/coffee-float](https://www.cookthestory.com/coffee-float)

*I wish you a wonderful
holiday season and a
happy, healthy and tasty
New Year!*

Christine XO



• ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS •

I'm forever grateful to those who visit my site. Whether you make my recipes or use them for inspiration, I'm thankful you're there. And also that you're reading this book! I hope you like it and that it helps you create a delicious holiday season.

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• ABOUT THE AUTHOR •

Christine Pittman is a professional recipe developer and food photographer whose work has appeared in numerous publications both in print and online. Christine believes that everyone deserves to eat good home cooking and so she focuses on quick and healthy homemade recipes that fit into everyday life.

For instance, in her SOUPin15 weekly series Christine shares homemade soup recipes that are ready in under 15 minutes. See all her quick soups at [COOKtheSTORY.com/SOUPin15](https://www.cookthestory.com/SOUPin15). Or visit her site for more fresh and simple home-cooked recipes at [COOKtheSTORY.com](https://www.cookthestory.com).





Side dishes are the key to creating delicious meals. In this book you'll find amazing side dish recipes that make holiday meals sparkle, including twists on the classics and new fall and winter sides to try. To simplify your holiday meal-planning, *The Side Dish Solution: Holiday Style* is organized into five holiday menus including a menu for Thanksgiving Dinner, Christmas Dinner, plus three more dinners that feature wintry side dishes in all their cozy glory. Dessert suggestions are also included. It's everything you need to make your holiday meals sparkle.

You're going to love these recipes and all the fun of adding new side dishes to your holiday meals.

