



BETTER BAKING IN ISOLATION

11 Recipes To Keep You Busy When You're Trapped Inside

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“Cooking and baking is
both physical and
mental therapy.”

Mary Berry

About

In the month of February 2020, I embarked on a new challenge to become a better baker. The challenge was a 10-week series featuring 10 recipes, hosted by Basically (a sub-group of the Bon Appetit food media company). At the time, I had no idea that the entire world would come to a standstill with the COVID-19 global pandemic. Trapped indoors with no place



to go, I looked forward to the weekly baking challenges (as did my family). These recipes were certainly challenging in more ways than one. I learned patience. I learned that the rules aren't always totally right and sometimes you have to make things more than once to make them work for you. I learned that baking at midnight in a house full of sleeping family members sometimes means you have to take the blender into your room and mix dough as quietly as

possible in your pajamas on the floor. And I learned that when you're creating a cookbook and you don't have the greatest photos for every single thing you make, you sometimes have to add a bonus recipe (here's looking at you, flan!). This was my experience.

-Merly

Note: All recipes, with the exception of the Easy Blender Cream Cheese Flan, have been reproduced from *The Basically Guide to Better Baking 2020*. Most recipe instructions have been edited to fit my personal preference. All photos are original and belong to me.

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Salty Buckwheat Chocolate Chunk Cookies

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup (125 g) all-purpose flour	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup (133 g; packed) light brown sugar
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (63 g) buckwheat flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (100 g) granulated sugar
$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking powder	1 large egg
$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking soda	2 large egg yolks
$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt, plus more	1 tsp. vanilla extract
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted	6 oz. bittersweet chocolate (65–75% cacao), coarsely chopped (reserve 1 handful)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1.** In a medium bowl, whisk both flours, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
- 2.** In a large bowl, add melted butter and both sugars. Whisk vigorously until butter has been absorbed into sugar and no big lumps remain, about 30 seconds.
- 3.** Add whole egg, then 2 egg yolks, one at a time, whisking until fully combined after each addition. Add vanilla and whisk until mixture is lighter in color and almost creamy.
- 4.** Add dry ingredients into bowl with sugar-egg mixture. Using a rubber spatula or wooden spoon, stir until just incorporated and no dry streaks remain. Add chopped chocolate (except for what was reserved) and gently mix. Cover and chill 2 hours.
- 5.** Preheat oven to 375° F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper. Roll or scoop dough into 10 (2-inch) balls and place 5 per baking sheet. Gently press 1-2 pieces of reserved chocolate into each cookie.
- 6.** Bake 8-10 minutes, rotating baking sheets halfway through or until edges are golden brown and centers have puffed up. Tap baking sheets lightly to deflate cookies. Let cookies cool on baking sheets 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely. Let baking sheets cool and repeat process.



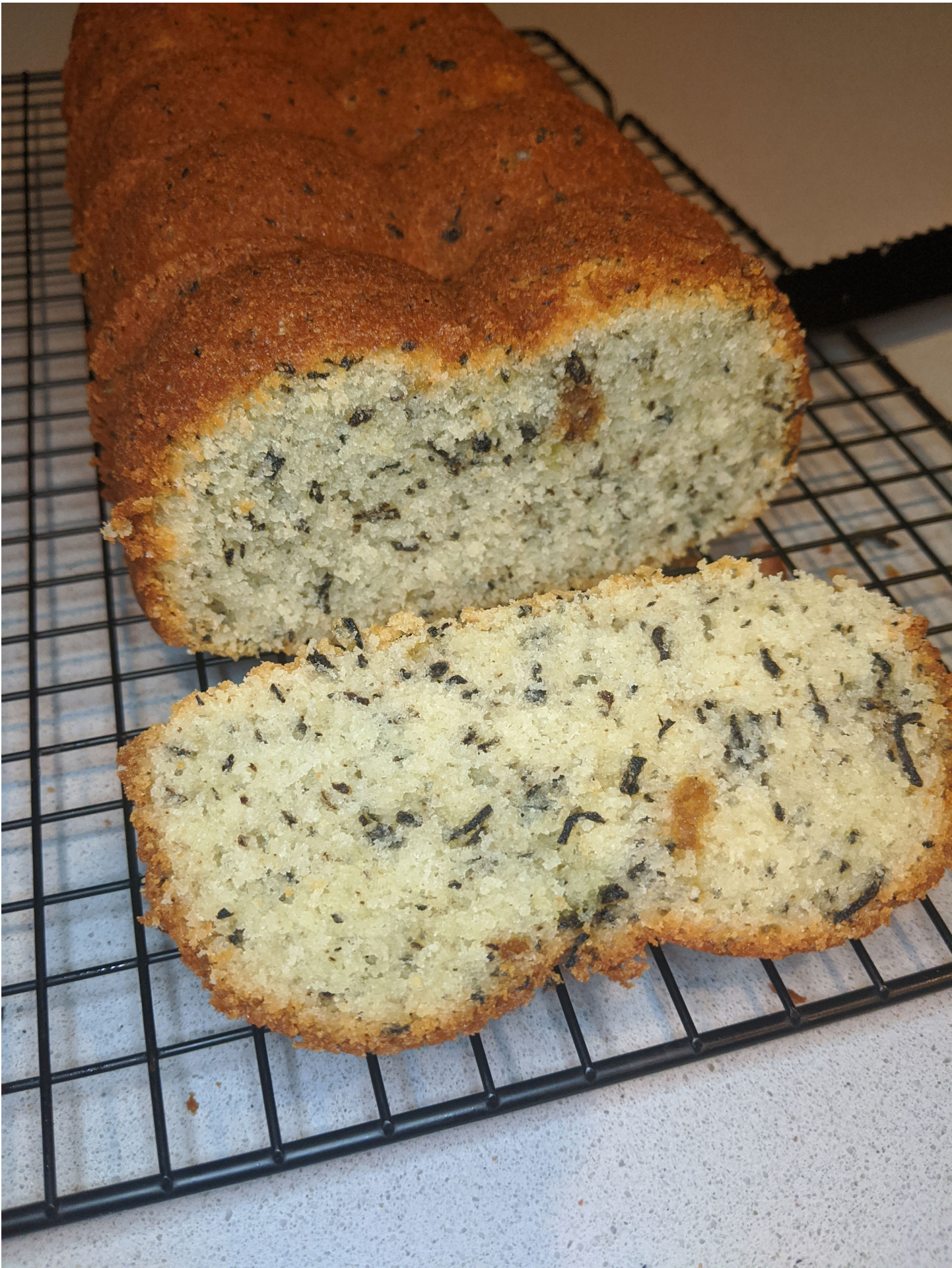
Earl Grey Yogurt Cake

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup vegetable oil, plus more for pan
- 2 cups (250 g) all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- 2 large eggs
- 1¼ cups (250 g) granulated sugar
- 1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt
- 3 Tbsp. loose-leaf Earl Grey tea or ¼ cup tea from bags
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 325° F. Lightly coat a 9- x 5-inch or 8-½- x 4-½-inch loaf pan with oil.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, salt, baking powder, and baking soda.
3. In a large bowl, vigorously whisk eggs and sugar 1 minute (mixture should be pale and frothy). Whisk in yogurt, tea, and vanilla extract. Slowly add in 1 cup vegetable oil, whisking constantly until incorporated.
4. Add dry ingredients into yogurt-tea mixture and whisk to combine. Add batter to prepared pan and smooth top. Gently tap against surface to eliminate any air bubbles.
5. Bake 50-60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Let cool in pan 15 minutes, then run a knife between cake and pan to release. Serve warm or at room temperature.



Shockingly Easy No-Knead Focaccia

INGREDIENTS:

1 ¼-oz. envelope active dry yeast
(about 2¼ tsp.)

2 tsp. honey

2 ½ cups lukewarm water

5 cups (625 g) all-purpose flour

1 Tbsp. kosher salt

6 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided, plus more
for hands

4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, plus more for pan

Flaky sea salt

2–4 garlic cloves

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1.** In a medium bowl, whisk yeast, honey, and water; let sit 5 minutes.
- 2.** Add flour and salt and mix with a rubber spatula until a shaggy dough forms and no dry streaks remain.
- 3.** In a large bowl, pour 4 Tbsp. olive oil. Transfer dough to bowl and turn to coat in oil. Cover with a silicone lid or plastic wrap and chill until dough is doubled in size (it should look very bubbly and alive), at least 8 hours and up to 1 day. If you're in a rush, you can also let it rise at room temperature until doubled in size, 3–4 hours.
- 4.** Generously butter a 13x9" baking pan, for thicker focaccia or an 18x13" rimmed baking sheet, for thinner and crispier focaccia. Pour 1 Tbsp. olive oil into center of pan. Keeping dough in the bowl and using a fork in each hand, gather up edges of dough farthest from you and lift up and over into center of bowl. Give the bowl a quarter turn and repeat process. Repeat two times; you want to deflate dough while you form it into a rough ball. Transfer dough to prepared pan. Pour any oil left in bowl over and turn dough to coat in oil. Let rise, uncovered, in a dry, warm spot until doubled in size, at least 1½ hours and up to 4 hours.
- 5.** Preheat oven to 450°. Test dough by poking it with your finger. It should spring back slowly, leaving a small visible indentation. If it springs back quickly, the dough isn't ready. (If dough is ready but you aren't, you can chill up to 1 hour.) Lightly oil your hands. If using a rimmed baking sheet, gently stretch out dough to fill. Dimple focaccia all over with your fingers, creating deep depressions in the dough (reach your fingers all the way to the bottom of the pan). Drizzle with remaining oil and sprinkle with flaky sea salt. Bake focaccia 20-30 minutes or until puffed and golden brown.
- 6.** When ready to serve, in a small saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Remove from heat and grate in garlic. Return to medium heat and cook, stirring often, until garlic is lightly toasted, 30-45 seconds. Brush garlic-butter over focaccia. Slice into squares or rectangles.

Pecan-Caramel Shortbread Cookies

INGREDIENTS:

⅓ cup (47 g) pecans, toasted
1½ cups plus 2 Tbsp. (188 g) all-purpose flour
3 Tbsp. sugar
½ tsp. kosher salt
1 cup (2 sticks) chilled unsalted butter,
cut into ½” pieces

¼ cup plus 1 Tbsp. store-bought dulce de leche
2 tsp. water
White nonpareil or raw sugar (for rolling)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 325°. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Pulse pecans until very finely ground. Add flour, sugar, and salt; pulse once or twice just to combine, scraping down sides as needed.
3. Add chilled butter to food processor, and pulse in 3-second-long bursts, scraping down sides as needed, until dough begins to come together in large clumps. Add ¼ cup dulce de leche and pulse until dough comes together into a single mass and no streaks remain.
4. Transfer dough to parchment paper or plastic wrap and use your fingers to pat it down into a rectangle. If dough is too sticky to work with, transfer to fridge for 10 minutes, or until firm enough to handle. Fold parchment up and over dough and use it to press and roll dough into a 9” log (about 2” in diameter). Roll up tightly and chill 90 minutes, or freeze 20 minutes.
5. In a small bowl, mix remaining 1 Tbsp. dulce de leche and water (it should be a pourable consistency). Spread an even layer of nonpareil or raw sugar on a baking sheet. Using a pastry brush, lightly brush outside of chilled dough with thinned dulce de leche. Roll log in sprinkles, pressing gently to help them stick, until evenly coated. Transfer log to a cutting board. Discard or save remaining sprinkles.
6. Slice dough into ¼”-thick rounds, rotating log about a quarter of a turn after every 3 or 4 slices to ensure that all of the slices have a nice round shape.
7. Place cookies on prepared baking sheets, spacing 1” apart. Freeze 30 minutes so dough can firm back up.
8. Bake cookies 20-24 minutes, rotating baking sheets halfway through, until golden brown around edges. Let cookies set slightly on baking sheet, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely (cookies will firm up and get crispier as they cool).

Camouflage Chocolate Fudge Brownies

INGREDIENTS:

Nonstick cooking oil spray or room-temperature unsalted butter (for pan)

8 oz. cream cheese, cut into 1" pieces

3 large eggs, chilled

1½ cups (266 g) sugar, divided

1 tsp. vanilla extract, divided

¾ tsp. kosher salt, divided

1½ tsp. plus ¾ cup plus 2 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder, preferably Dutch-process

10 Tbsp. unsalted butter (142 grams), cut into 1" pieces

1 tsp. instant espresso powder (optional)

½ cup (63 g) all-purpose flour

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 325°. Lightly coat a 9x9" baking pan with nonstick cooking oil spray or room-temperature unsalted butter. Line with parchment paper, leaving a handle on all sides. Lightly coat parchment with nonstick spray.
2. In a double boiler, over medium heat, add cream cheese, stirring occasionally until very soft, about 5 minutes. (It should be soft enough that you can easily mix with a wooden spoon.)
3. Remove from heat and mix cream cheese until smooth (leave saucepan simmering). Add egg, sugar, ½ tsp. vanilla, and 1/4 salt; whisk until very smooth. Transfer half of cream cheese mixture to a small bowl and whisk in 1½ tsp. cocoa powder. Set both bowls aside.
4. In another medium bowl, add butter, espresso (if using), remaining 1 cup sugar and ¾ cup plus 2 Tbsp. cocoa powder, and ½ tsp. salt. Place bowl over saucepan and cook, stirring occasionally once the butter starts to melt, until mixture is homogeneous and too hot to leave your finger in it, 7–9 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes.
5. Add remaining chilled eggs and remaining vanilla to butter mixture, one at a time, whisking vigorously after each addition until smooth and glossy (the mixture will look curdled and broken until you add the second egg). Add flour and mix with spatula or spoon until no longer visible, then vigorously mix another 30 strokes.
6. Scoop out ½ cup brownie batter and set aside (place near a warm spot to keep it loose). Scrape remaining batter into prepared pan and spread into an even layer. Working quickly, spoon alternating dollops of cocoa–cream cheese mixture and cream cheese mixture over batter. Dollop reserved brownie batter on top (it will be quite thick).
7. Bake 22-25 minutes or until center is set and toothpick has moist crumbs. Transfer pan to a wire rack and let cool completely. Using parchment paper overhang, lift brownies out of pan and transfer to a cutting board. Remove parchment paper and cut brownies into sixteen 2¼" squares, wiping knife clean with a damp rag between slices.



Sour Cream & Onion Biscuits

INGREDIENTS:

8 scallions, thinly sliced crosswise, root ends trimmed	½ tsp. baking soda
12 Tbsp. chilled unsalted butter, divided	1¼ tsp. sugar
2½ tsp. Diamond Crystal or 1½ tsp. Morton kosher salt	2½ cups (313 g) all-purpose flour, plus more for surface
1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper	1¼ cups sour cream, plus more for serving
1¾ tsp. baking powder	Flaky sea salt

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 425°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Melt 2 Tbsp. chilled butter; set aside. In a large bowl, whisk together 1½ tsp. salt, 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, baking powder, baking soda, sugar, and flour.
3. Cut remaining 10 Tbsp. chilled butter into ½” pieces. Add to dry ingredients and toss to coat. Using your hands, work butter into dry ingredients, smashing it between your fingers and flattening it between your palm until there are lots of thin shards and pea-size bits. Add reserved scallions and toss to evenly distribute.
4. Create a well in center of mixture and add sour cream to center. Using a fork and working in circles, mix until large shaggy clumps form. If your bowl is wide enough, fold dough over itself a couple of times inside it until it comes together.
5. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead once or twice until it comes together; flour your hands if needed. If there are any loose bits, add to center of dough and knead once more to incorporate. Pat dough into an 8x4” rectangle about 1” thick.
6. Working from a short side, fold dough in thirds as you would a letter. It doesn’t need to
7. overlap perfectly. Pat dough into another 8x4” rectangle, then fold dough in thirds like a letter one more time. (You’ll have done the folding procedure two times total.) Pat dough back into an 8x4” rectangle and straighten with your hands and/or bench scraper.
8. Cut rectangle in half lengthwise, then cut each half crosswise into 4 squares for a total of 8 biscuits. Transfer biscuits to prepared baking sheet. Brush tops with melted butter; sprinkle with flaky sea salt.
9. Bake 18-22 minutes or until golden brown.



Tahini Billionaire Bars

INGREDIENTS:

Nonstick cooking oil spray or vegetable oil (for pan)

1 cup (125 g) all-purpose flour

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (83 g) powdered sugar

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup toasted sesame seeds, plus more for serving

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt, divided

1 cup (2 sticks) chilled unsalted butter, divided

2 egg yolks

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups (packed; 250 g) light brown sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup heavy cream

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup tahini

1 tsp. vanilla extract

6 oz. bittersweet chocolate (65%–75% cacao), coarsely chopped

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350°. Lightly coat a 9x9" or 8x8" baking pan, preferably metal, with nonstick cooking spray or vegetable oil. Line pan with parchment paper, leaving overhang on all sides.
- 2.** In a medium bowl, whisk flour, powdered sugar, sesame seeds, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt. Cut $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) chilled butter into $\frac{1}{2}$ " pieces and add to dry ingredients; toss to coat. Using your fingers, work in butter until pieces are about pea-size. Add yolks to bowl and mix with a rubber spatula or wooden spoon. Dough should hold together when squeezed in your hand.
- 3.** Scrape dough into prepared pan and gently press into an even layer (lightly flour your hands if needed). Prick dough with a fork in several spots. Bake 24-28 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool slightly.
- 4.** Meanwhile, cut remaining chilled butter into 8 pieces. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, heat butter and brown sugar, whisking constantly until butter is melted and sugar is dissolved, about 3 minutes. Whisk in heavy cream and 1 tsp. salt. Bring to a boil and cook, whisking constantly, until bubbling becomes less frequent and butterscotch is thick enough to coat a spoon, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat.
- 5.** Add tahini and vanilla to butterscotch mixture and whisk until incorporated and smooth. Pour butterscotch over shortbread and tilt pan to distribute evenly if necessary. Chill 30-40 minutes or until set.
- 6.** In a microwaveable bowl, melt chocolate in 40-second increments, stirring between bursts. Pour over butterscotch and spread evenly to edges of pan; sprinkle with toasted sesame seeds. Chill 1-2 hours or until chocolate is firm.
- 7.** Using parchment paper overhang, pull bars out of pan and set on a cutting board. Using a serrated knife, slice into 25–36 pieces with a sawing motion.

Easy Blender Cream Cheese Flan

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ cup granulated sugar, divided
- 6 eggs
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese
- 1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 (12 fluid ounce) can evaporated milk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1.** Preheat oven to 375° F. Place a rimmed baking sheet in the oven.
- 2.** In a blender, combine ½ cup sugar, the eggs, cream cheese, both milks, and vanilla. Do not overmix. Set aside.
- 3.** In a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, melt 1 cup sugar until liquefied and golden in color. Carefully pour hot syrup into a 9” round baking pan, turning the dish to evenly coat the bottom and sides. Pour egg mixture into baking pan.
- 4.** Place pan on baking sheet and carefully fill baking sheet with water. Bake 50-60 minutes or until a knife inserted in center comes out clean.
- 5.** Let cool completely. Refrigerate until ready to serve. When ready to serve, carefully run a knife around edge of pan and invert on serving plate.

Cardamom-Pistachio Carrot Cake

INGREDIENTS:

Vegetable oil (for pan)

1 cup (2 sticks) plus 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, divided

3 large eggs, room temperature

3 medium (250g) carrots, grated on large holes

1 cup (130 g) raw pistachios

1 cup (packed; 200 g) dark brown sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (150 g) granulated sugar, divided

$1\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. baking powder

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. baking soda

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt, divided

$1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cardamom

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups (188 g) all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup carrot juice

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Lightly coat bottom and sides of a 9" cake pan with oil. Cut a parchment round. Lightly grease parchment.
2. Set a fine-mesh sieve over a measuring glass and place next to stove. Cut 1 cup butter into pieces. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, heat butter until foaming, about 2 minutes. Add pistachios and cook, stirring often, until butter browns and nuts smell toasty, about 5 minutes. (Butter will get very foamy and it will be hard to see what's going on, so once foam is golden brown, remove pan from heat and lift out a few nuts with a spoon every 10 seconds to check how they are browning.) Pour mixture through prepared sieve, scraping in all of the browned bits; set nuts and butter aside separately.
3. In a large bowl, add eggs, brown sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50 g) granulated sugar, baking powder, baking soda, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, cardamom, and cinnamon. Using an electric mixer on high speed, beat 3 minutes (mixture should be thick, pale, and slightly increased in volume). Decrease speed to medium-high and gradually stream in reserved brown butter (including browned bits); beat until combined. Go slow—if you add the butter too quickly, it'll be hard to achieve the emulsion you're aiming for.
4. Coarsely chop reserved pistachios. Using a rubber spatula, fold in flour until almost completely combined. Add nuts and carrots and continue to fold until everything is incorporated. Scrape batter into prepared pan; smooth surface. Place pan on a smooth surface and give it a fast 360-degree spin (minimizes doming during baking).
5. Bake 50-55 minutes or until deeply browned and a tester inserted in center comes out clean. Transfer to a wire rack and let cake cool in pan. When cooled, run a butter knife around

perimeter to loosen. Invert cake onto a plate. Remove parchment paper; discard.

- 6.** In a medium saucepan over high heat, cook carrot juice, heavy cream, remaining granulated sugar, and remaining salt until a consistency similar to lava (do not stir). You want it to be thick enough to stick to the cake, but do not let it brown.
- 7.** Once glaze is thick enough, remove pan from heat and stir in remaining butter. Let glaze cool until you can comfortably hold your finger in it, about 15 minutes. Stir well and pour over center of cake, nudging to the edges. Let glaze cool at least 10 minutes before slicing cake.



Triple-Onion Galette

INGREDIENTS:

1½ cups (188 g) all-purpose flour,
plus more for dusting

1 Tbsp. sugar

1¾ tsp. kosher salt

16 Tbsp. (2 sticks) chilled unsalted butter,
divided

⅓ cup cold water

1 large onion, thinly sliced

8 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

2 oz. Parmesan cheese, finely grated

12 scallions

2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard

Freshly ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1.** To make the crust, in a medium bowl, whisk flour, sugar, and salt until combined. Cut 12 Tbsp. butter into ½” pieces; add to dry ingredients, and toss to coat and distribute. Using your hands and working quickly, rub and smash butter into flat irregular pieces (be careful not to overwork; you don’t want to soften the butter too much.)
- 2.** Drizzle water over and mix with a rubber spatula, smashing in butter, until dough mostly comes together—it will be dry and shaggy.
- 3.** Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Working quickly and using a rolling pin and your hands, press dough together to form a mass. (The dough will seem like a crumbly dry mess at first but will come together as you fold and roll.) Roll dough into a rough square about ½” thick. Fold in half into a rectangle, then again to make a small square. Press down on dough with rolling pin to make it hold together. Roll dough out once more to make a rough square about ½” thick. Repeat folding process again.
- 4.** Using rolling pin, gently flatten dough, rotating as needed, to make a 6”-diameter disk. Dust surface with more flour and roll disc into a 14” circle about ⅛” thick. Brush off any excess flour. Fold dough in half, then in half again to make a rough triangle (makes it easier to move). Transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet and unfold). Chill while you make the filling.
- 5.** Preheat oven to 375°.
- 6.** In a medium skillet over medium heat, heat 3 Tbsp. butter until foaming, about 1 minute. Reduce heat to medium-low; add onion, garlic, and ½ tsp. salt, and stir. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are tender and beginning to brown, 6–8 minutes. Uncover and continue to cook, stirring occasionally and adding a splash of water if onion begins to stick, until golden brown in spots, about 5 minutes more. Transfer onion mixture to a plate; reserve skillet.

- 7.** In reserved skillet over medium heat, melt 1 Tbsp. butter. Remove from heat and add scallions and remaining salt. Toss to coat.
- 8.** Remove dough from refrigerator and spread evenly with Dijon mustard, leaving a 1½”–2” border. Scatter onion mixture over mustard and sprinkle with cheese; season with pepper. Make slits in border at 2”–3” intervals, fold flaps up and over filling, slightly overlapping. Scatter scallions over.
- 9.** Bake 45-50 minutes or until crust is deep golden brown and scallions are slightly charred.



Sticky-Sweet Date Buns

INGREDIENTS:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 3 Tbsp. buttermilk or plain whole-milk yogurt (not Greek)

10 Tbsp. vegetable oil, divided

1 large egg

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -oz. envelope active dry yeast (about $2\frac{1}{4}$ tsp.)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (packed; 100 g) dark brown sugar, divided

3 cups (375 g) all-purpose flour

$1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt, divided

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. baking soda

1 cup (packed; 180 g) Medjool dates, pits removed, torn in half

2 tsp. ground cinnamon

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (83 g) powdered sugar

1 tsp. vanilla paste or extract

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a small microwaveable bowl, combine buttermilk and 6 Tbsp. oil; heat in three 10-second bursts until just about body temperature (an instant-read thermometer should register about 98°).
2. In a measuring glass, whisk egg, yeast, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (packed; 50 g) brown sugar. Then, whisk into buttermilk.
3. In a food processor, pulse flour, 1 tsp. salt, and the baking soda to combine. With the motor running, stream in buttermilk mixture. Process until about 80% of dough comes together into a ball (mixture will look very wet at first, then begin to pull away from sides), about 2 minutes.
4. Using a rubber spatula, scrape dough onto an unfloured surface. (It should still be pretty wet and sticky.) Knead, pushing it away from you, then pulling it back toward you, until a smooth ball forms, about 3 minutes. The dough will grow silkier, tighter, and easier to work with as you knead. (If dough is too sticky to work with, lightly oil your hands.)
5. Roll out dough into a rough 8" square. Fold dough over onto itself to make an 8x4" rectangle, then flatten slightly and fold over once more to make a 4" square. Roll dough back out to an 8" square and repeat folding process (you should be back at a 4" square). In a medium bowl, pour 1 Tbsp. oil and add dough (still folded); turn to coat. Cover bowl tightly and chill until doubled in volume, at least 8 hours and up to 1 day.
6. To make date filling, in a small bowl, place dates. Pour hot water over. and let soak until softened, about 10 minutes. Drain dates and transfer to clean food processor; discard soaking liquid. Add 2 Tbsp. oil, the cinnamon, and remaining salt. Purée, scraping down sides as needed, until smooth, about 4 minutes. (You should have about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup purée.)
7. Grease a 10" cast-iron skillet with remaining oil. Punch down dough, then transfer to a clean, unfloured surface and roll out to an 8" square. Fold in half into an 8x4" rectangle, then fold rectangle over itself to form a 4" square. If dough feels tough, let sit about 5 minutes to relax and try again. Roll out dough to a 12" square about $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick.

- 8.** Spread date puree evenly over dough, leaving a ½” border without purée along edge farthest from you. Sprinkle remaining brown sugar over purée.
- 9.** Starting at edge closest to you, roll dough away from you into a tight log. Using a sharp serrated knife and long sawing motions, trim about ½” of dough from both ends and discard. Slice log crosswise into 3 sections, wiping knife clean between slices. Slice each section crosswise into 3 buns (you should have 9 buns total, each about 1” thick). Transfer buns to prepared pan as you go.
- 10.** Cover pan tightly with foil and place in a warm, dry spot. Let buns rise until they’re doubled in volume and spring back slowly when poked, leaving only a small indentation, 1–1½ hours.
- 11.** Preheat oven to 350°. Bake buns, still covered, until puffed, pale, and mostly set, about 20 minutes. Remove foil and continue to bake until golden brown, about 15 minutes if you prefer a soft and squishy bun and up to 25 minutes for a more toasted bun. Let cool slightly.
- 12.** Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk powdered sugar, vanilla, and remaining buttermilk to combine. Brush glaze over warm buns and serve from skillet.



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