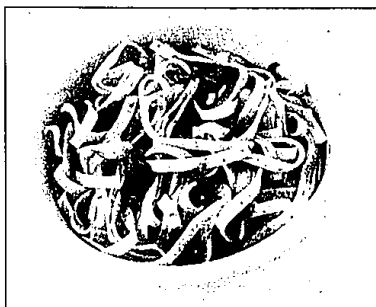


# The Minimalist favorite recipes from his book are...

BY LANA MINI

STAFF WRITER Mark Bittman, an award-winning food writer recommended the following recipes from his cookbook "The Minimalist Cooks at Home" (Broadway Books, copyright 2002, \$26).

I tried this recipe as Bittman said it was the easiest in the book to make. He was right — 20 minutes of cooking plus a few minutes to prepare — made it a quick meal. He recommends adding a teaspoon of garlic and some basil, which is optional. I did and the taste was robust. Despite his cooking tips at the bottom though, I wished the sauce would've coated the pasta better. Still, this recipe is a good one especially since Michigan grown tomatoes are in full season right now.



Pasta with fresh tomatoes is one of the easiest and quickest dishes in the book. It takes a mere 30 minutes to cook.

## SPAGHETTI WITH FRESH TOMATO SAUCE

Cooking time 20 minutes  
3 tablespoons butter or olive oil  
1 1/2 to 2 pounds fresh tomatoes (preferably plum)  
1 pound pasta, preferably linguine or other long noodles  
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and salt it. Place the butter or oil in an 8- or 10-inch skillet and turn the heat to medium. When the butter or the oil is hot, add the tomatoes and turn the heat to high.

Cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes begin to juice up, then turn the heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally until the sauce thickens.

Cook the pasta until it is ten-

der but firm. Drain and toss with the tomatoes and cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste again and serve immediately.

**Tips:** Fresh tomatoes should be cored before using — remove a cone-shaped wedge from the stem end. Peeling is optional if you don't like skin in your sauce.

There is an instant to the readiness of the sauce, Bittman says. When the fruit softens and the juices are in the skillet the sauce begins to thicken. At that moment it's ready. Two minutes later many of the juices will evaporate — making it not coat the pasta as well. If that happens just add a little olive oil or butter to the finished dish.

It's optional to add a tablespoon of minced shallot or a teaspoon of minced garlic to the butter or oil. Or add crushed red pepper flakes with the tomatoes.

Cook the pasta until it is ten-

## SHRIMP WITH LEMONGRASS

45 minutes  
2 tablespoons peanut or canola oil  
1 1/2 pounds shrimp, peeled  
1 tablespoon minced lemongrass  
1 teaspoon minced garlic  
1 teaspoon minced lime zest or lime leaves  
1/2 cup chicken, fish or shrimp stock or water  
2 tablespoons Nam Pla or nuoc mam (fish sauce available at most supermarkets and all markets selling Southeast Asian ingredients) OR soy sauce  
Freshly ground black pepper

Put the oil in a 10-12 inch skillet and turn heat to medium-high, a minute later, add shrimp. Cook undisturbed until bottoms of shrimp turn pink. Stir in lemongrass, garlic, and lime zest or leaves. If the mixture is dry

add the stock or water then the fish sauce and plenty of pepper. Serve immediately.

**Note:** Lemongrass doesn't really tenderize when cooking so if the core is too tough, mince it finely. Peel off all the exterior layers to reach the more tender inner core, that's the part to use.

Scallops can be used in place of shrimp for a vegetarian dish, says Bittman. Don't overcook scallops.

## ZITI WITH CHESTNUTS AND MUSHROOMS

30 minutes  
15 chestnuts  
1 ounce dried mushrooms such as porcini, shiitake, black trumpets, morels or an assortment  
3 tablespoons butter or extra virgin olive oil  
1/2 cup peeled and sliced shallots salt and fresh pepper  
1 pound ziti or other cut pasta

Cut a ring around each chestnut then place them in boiling water to cover and cook for three minutes. Remove from water a few at a time and peel while still hot. Meanwhile soak mushrooms in 1 1/2 cups very hot water.

Bring a large pot of water to boil and salt it. Place half the butter or oil in skillet, turn the heat to medium-high and a minute later add shallots. Sprinkle lightly with salt to taste and cook, stirring until softened, three to five minutes. Chop chestnuts into 1/2- to 3/4-inch chunks then measure about one cup. Add to skillet with more salt. Cook stir occasionally until the chestnuts deepen in color, about five minutes. Remove the mushrooms from their soaking liquid; strain, reserving the liquid. Chop the mushrooms and add to skillet, cook, stirring for a minute or two and add the

strained mushroom-soaking liquid. Turn heat to low and season to taste with lots of salt and pepper.

Cook the pasta until tender but not mushy. If the sauce is too thick add a little pasta-cooking water once the pasta is almost done. Stir in remaining butter or oil and drain the pasta and dress with sauce. Serve immediately.

**Note:** Removing chestnut shells is a three-step process. First use a paring knife — a curved one with a sharp point makes this quick and easy to cut a ring around the equator of each nut or make an X on the flat side. Plunge the nuts into boiling water to cover for about three minutes, then turn off the heat, leaving the chestnuts in water. Remove two or three at a time and using the knife with your fingers peel off both shell and skin; use a towel to protect hands from the heat if necessary.

## ROAST TURKEY BREAST

One hour  
Three to six pounds of turkey breast  
2 tablespoons olive oil, melted  
butter or chicken stock - optional  
salt and fresh ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 450. Place the turkey in a roasting pan; you can place stuffing under its breasts, bone if you like; if you want crisp stuffing, however, add it to the pan or bake it separate when about 30 minutes of cooking time remains.

Brush turkey with oil, butter or stock if you like and season with salt and pepper to taste. Place in oven and roast for 40 to 60 minutes depending on size, basting with the pan juices every 15 minutes or so then begin checking for doneness every few minutes with an instant-read thermometer. It's ready when it reads 155 degrees. Let turkey sit for 5 to 10 minutes so internal temperature can reach 160 degrees. Carve and serve.

**Note:** Basting a turkey adds flavor but does not maintain interior moisture. The only way to ensure moist meat is to avoid overcooking. For safety the USDA recommends roasting white-meat to 170 degrees but it will be unpalatably dry. If you do this, Bittman suggests serving it with gravy.

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## EASY COOKING

FROM PAGE B1  
time-consuming, layered recipes. Today, he said, simplicity is chic.

"Suddenly my easy roasted chicken was en vogue," Bittman said. "Foods I have cooked all my life are in demand today."

Growing up near the United Nations in New York City Bittman was close to hordes of ethnic restaurants ranging from Indonesian to Italian. It was easy and cheap to dine on Korean food — a plate of barbecue meat cost just \$3 in the 1960s. Ethnic foods weren't intimidating in New York as nearly every family had immigrant parents or grandparents. American cooking was still

finding it's way then, he said. His interest in cooking was cultivated during college days in Massachusetts.

"The food was abysmal in college during the 1970s," he said. "The restaurants were horrible so I had to cook for myself to get a good meal."

Over the years he's collected knowledge of not only simple recipes, but ones that can be prepared with ingredients found in most kitchens. A few dishes like the Shrimp with Lemon grass ask for the fish sauce nam pla that's found in Southeast Asian markets, but Bittman also writes that the fish sauce can be replaced with easier to find soy sauce.

The most simple meals to prepare he says:

"Italian food wins hands-down. It's so easy it's ridiculous. Chinese food comes in second."

The easiest Italian dish in "The Minimalist Cooks at Home" is the Spaghetti with Fresh Plum Tomatoes. This tomato sauce did not require the usual several hours cooking time.

Instead less was more as the stove was to be turned off precisely as the tomatoes began to thicken — after a mere 10 or 15 minutes.

Most of the recipes offered in the book take less than an hour to prepare such as Rice Noodles with Basil at only 40 minutes; Asian Style Mussels, 30 minutes; Chicken Curry in a Hurry, 15 minutes; Japanese Beef-

Scallion Rolls, 30 minutes; Piquillo Peppers with Shiitake and Spinach, 30 minutes; Spanish Tortillas, 40 minutes and 10 minute Cumin-Tomato-Relish and Pan-Grilled Tomato Salsa.

Sometimes it's difficult to find new ideas that don't require a lot of time.

"But there's always the person who doesn't know how to make a really good burger," said Bittman.

Still as a man who's earned a living teaching thousands to cook simply, hard recipes do not make him cringe.

"Do I like to eat complicated foods? Yes," Bittman said. "Do I want to cook it? No." lmini@oe.honcom.net

## Cake is a real honey

Celebrate the harvest with Honey Cake, which symbolizes hope for a sweet future.

Kretschmer, the makers of Wheat Germ, have made some healthful changes to the cake including using egg whites instead of whole eggs, less sugar and substituting part of the flour with wheat germ.

The wheat germ adds vitamin E and follic acid.

Sweet and healthy, why not?

1/4 cup vegetable oil  
5 egg whites lightly beaten  
2 teaspoons grated orange peel  
1 cup peeled chopped apple  
3/4 cup raisins  
Powdered sugar

Heat over to 350°F. Grease bottom of 8 or 9-inch square baking pan.

Combine flour, wheat germ, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and cinnamon and mix well. In another bowl combine the honey, coffee, oil, egg whites and orange peel; add to dry ingredients, mixing well. Stir in apple and raisins. Pour into prepared pan.

Bake about 50 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean and top is dark golden brown. Sprinkle with powdered sugar.

— Compiled by Lana Mini



Wheat germ can replace a portion of the flour in Honey Cake recipes.

## BreastFest 2002 An Evening with Marcia Wallace



Wednesday, September 25, Hotel Baronette, Novi  
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