

COPYCAT SPICES

CUSTOM EDITION

🍷 A COPYCAT HALLOWEEN COLLECTION

THE COPYCAT HALLOWEEN COOKBOOK

Your favorite restaurant dishes, made in your own kitchen — hand-picked, tested, and photographed.

● 34 RECIPES

COPYCAT SPICES

A Copycat Halloween Collection

The Copycat Cookbook

HALLOWEEN EDITION • 34 RECIPES

October 21, 2026

Compiled, tested, and typeset by the Copycat Spices kitchen. Set in Playfair Display,
Source Serif 4, and Source Sans 3.

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— FOREWORD

A Note From Our Kitchen

There's a particular kind of magic in recreating a dish you love. The first bite of something homemade that tastes right. The moment your kitchen fills with a smell that makes everyone wander in to ask what's cooking.

That feeling is why Copycat Spices exists. We spend our days reverse-engineering the dishes people crave most — testing brines, chasing the exact ratio in a signature sauce, and figuring out how a restaurant gets that crust, that pull, that color — so you can make them at home for a fraction of the price, exactly how you like them.

This cookbook is yours — 34 recipes, hand-picked, and put together to live on the counter, not lost in a browser tab. Each recipe here was photographed, tested, and written to be genuinely easy to follow on a busy weeknight. No mystery steps, no restaurant secrets held back — just the real technique that makes each dish work.

You chose every page. The sauces your family asks for, the comfort food that tastes like a road trip, the dessert that ends every holiday — they're all here, together, in one book.

Thank you for cooking with us. We can't wait to see what you put on your table.

Warmly, the Copycat Spices team

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HALLOWEEN

01
COCKTAILS

*The bar-menu drinks worth mixing at home —
shaken, stirred and poured before anyone sits down.*

5 RECIPES



Nº 01

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Black Widow Martini

A jet-black Black Widow martini for Halloween: blackberry and lemon turned inky with activated charcoal, served with a licorice-black sugar rim and a candy spider. Dramatic, easy, and mocktail-friendly.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
5 min	0 min	2	Easy	200

01 Ingredients

FOR 2 MARTINIS:

- 3 oz vodka
- 1 oz blackberry liqueur (crème de mûre) or blackberry syrup
- 1 oz fresh lemon juice
- ½ oz simple syrup
- ⅛ teaspoon food-grade activated charcoal (or black food coloring)
- Ice, for shaking
-

FOR THE BLACK RIM:

- 1 lemon wedge (to wet the rim)
- 2 tablespoons black sanding sugar

GARNISH:

- Candy spiders or fresh blackberries on a pick

MOCKTAIL SWAP:

- Replace vodka + blackberry liqueur with 4 oz blackberry juice

Black Widow Martini CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 **Chill and rim the glasses.** Freeze two martini glasses 10 minutes. Run a lemon wedge around each rim, then dip in black sanding sugar.
- 2 **Shake.** Fill a shaker with ice. Add vodka, blackberry liqueur, lemon juice, simple syrup, and the activated charcoal. Shake hard for 15 seconds — the charcoal needs the agitation to disperse into a uniform, opaque black. (For the mocktail, shake blackberry juice, lemon, simple syrup, and charcoal.)
- 3 **Check the color.** It should be a solid, light-swallowing black. If it looks dark purple, add a tiny extra pinch of charcoal and shake again.
- 4 **Strain.** Double-strain into the prepared glasses.
- 5 **Garnish.** Perch a candy spider on the rim or drop skewered blackberries across the top. Serve immediately — charcoal can settle, so give it a gentle swirl if it sits.

WHY IT WORKS

Food-grade (also called food-safe) activated charcoal is sold specifically for coloring food and drinks black and is used in small amounts, like the $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon here.



Nº 02

— HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Poison Apple Punch

A wickedly good Halloween party punch: caramel-apple flavored, glowing green, and served in a cauldron with a candied 'poison' apple garnish.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
10 min	0 min	10–12 (one large punch bowl / cauldron)	Easy	210

01 Ingredients

FOR THE PUNCH (BATCH OF 10–12):

- 2 cups apple cider, chilled
- 1½ cups sour apple liqueur or apple schnapps (such as DeKuyper Sour Apple Pucker)
- 1½ cups vodka
- 3 cups lemon-lime soda or tonic water, chilled (tonic glows under blacklight)
- 3–5 drops green food coloring
- 1 green apple, thinly sliced, for floating

- Ice ring (freeze 2 cups cider in a ring/bundt mold), optional but recommended

FOR THE CARAMEL 'POISON' RIM:

- 2 tablespoons caramel sauce
- 2 tablespoons black or coarse sanding sugar (or granulated sugar + a pinch of black food-coloring gel)

MOCKTAIL SWAP:

- Replace vodka + liqueur with 2 cups extra apple cider + 1 cup green apple juice

Poison Apple Punch CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 **Rim the glasses first.** Pour caramel sauce onto a small plate and the black sugar onto another. Dip each glass rim in caramel, then in the sugar, twisting to coat. Set aside to set while you mix — the caramel gives you the dripping 'poison' look.
- 2 **Build the punch base.** In a large punch bowl or plastic cauldron, combine the chilled apple cider, sour apple liqueur, and vodka. Stir well. (For the mocktail, combine cider and green apple juice here instead.)
- 3 **Add the fizz.** Just before serving, pour in the chilled lemon-lime soda or tonic water and stir once, gently, to keep it bubbly.
- 4 **Color it sinister.** Add green food coloring a drop at a time until you reach a glowing, slightly murky green. Stir gently so it swirls.
- 5 **Chill without diluting.** Slide in the frozen cider ice ring, or add ice to individual glasses only. Float thin green apple slices on top.
- 6 **Serve.** Ladle into the caramel-rimmed glasses. Under a blacklight (if you used tonic), the punch will glow. Garnish each glass with a candied or plain apple slice.

WHY IT WORKS

Swap the vodka and sour apple liqueur for an equal volume of extra apple cider plus about 1 cup of green apple juice (like a green-apple Kool-Aid or Ceres Green Apple), and keep the lemon-lime soda.



Nº 03

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Smoking Zombie Cocktail

The Zombie is the original 'undead' tiki cocktail — a potent blend of three rums, fruit juices, and warm spice, served smoking for Halloween. Here's the balanced classic recipe, a smoking-serve trick, and an easy alcohol-free version.

PREP
8 min

COOK
0 min

SERVES
1 (scale up freely)

LEVEL
Medium

CAL
280

01 Ingredients

FOR 1 ZOMBIE:

- 1½ oz aged/gold rum
- 1½ oz white/light rum
- 1 oz overproof (151) dark rum
- ¾ oz fresh lime juice
- ½ oz falernum
- 1 oz pineapple juice
- ½ oz grenadine
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters

- 1 dash absinthe (or a rinse)

- Crushed ice

GARNISH:

- Mint sprig, pineapple frond, brandied cherry; food-safe dry ice for smoke (optional)

MOCKTAIL SWAP:

- 2 oz pineapple juice + 1 oz passionfruit nectar + ¾ oz lime + ½ oz orgeat + ½ oz ginger syrup + barspoon grenadine, topped with soda

Smoking Zombie Cocktail CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Combine everything but the overproof rum.** In a shaker with a scoop of crushed ice, add the gold rum, white rum, lime juice, falernum, pineapple juice, grenadine, bitters, and absinthe.
- 2 Flash-blend or shake briefly.** Give it a short 5-second shake — you want to chill and combine without fully diluting; the Zombie is meant to be strong and slushy.
- 3 Fill the glass.** Pour, unstrained, into a tall glass or tiki mug packed with fresh crushed ice.
- 4 Float the overproof rum.** Slowly pour the 1 oz of 151 over the back of a spoon so it floats on top — this is the classic Zombie float and, if you choose, can be briefly flamed (extinguish before drinking).
- 5 Garnish.** Add a mint sprig, pineapple frond, and a cherry. For the Halloween serve, drop a small piece of food-safe dry ice into the base with tongs and let it fog. Wait until it fully sublimates before drinking.
- 6 Mocktail version:** Combine the mocktail ingredients over crushed ice, top with soda, and garnish the same way.

WHY IT WORKS

The Zombie was created by Donn Beach (Don the Beachcomber) in 1934 and named for its strength.



Nº 04

— HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Vampire's Kiss Martini

A blood-red Vampire's Kiss martini for Halloween: raspberry and cranberry with a dripping 'blood' rim of grenadine and red sugar. Elegant, easy to shake, and just as striking as a zero-proof mocktail.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
5 min	0 min	2	Easy	195

01 Ingredients

FOR 2 MARTINIS:

- 3 oz vodka
- 1 oz black raspberry liqueur (Chambord)
- 2 oz cranberry juice (100%, not cocktail, for less sweetness)
- ½ oz fresh lime juice
- Ice, for shaking

FOR THE BLOOD RIM:

- 2 tablespoons grenadine (or red food-gel + corn syrup)
- 2 tablespoons red sanding sugar

MOCKTAIL SWAP:

- Replace vodka + Chambord with 3 oz pomegranate juice + 1 oz raspberry syrup

Vampire's Kiss Martini

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 **Chill the glasses.** Put two coupe or martini glasses in the freezer for at least 10 minutes — a cold glass keeps the drink frosty and helps the blood rim set.
- 2 **Make the blood rim.** Pour grenadine onto a small saucer. Dip each chilled rim into it, then turn the glass upright and let the syrup drip down the outside. Dip the drips in red sanding sugar if using. Return glasses to the freezer while you shake.
- 3 **Shake it cold.** Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Add vodka, Chambord, cranberry juice, and lime juice. Shake hard for 15 seconds until the shaker frosts over. (For the mocktail, shake pomegranate juice, cranberry juice, raspberry syrup, and lime instead.)
- 4 **Strain.** Double-strain into the prepared glasses to keep the surface crystal clear against the dark, bloody red.
- 5 **Garnish.** Drop in a single fresh raspberry or a maraschino cherry to sink to the bottom like a drop of blood. Serve immediately.

WHY IT WORKS

Pour grenadine (or thick red corn-syrup food gel) onto a saucer. Dip the rim of a chilled glass in it, then slowly turn the glass upright — the grenadine runs down the outside in uneven drips, just like blood.



Nº 05

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Witch's Brew Punch

A bubbling, smoking green Witch's Brew punch for Halloween: tart, tropical, and served from a cauldron with creeping dry-ice fog. Big-batch, 10-minute build, plus an easy alcohol-free version for the whole coven.

PREP
10 min

COOK
0 min

SERVES
10–12 (one cauldron)

LEVEL
Easy

CAL
220

01 Ingredients

FOR THE BREW (BATCH OF 10–12):

- 2 cups pineapple juice, chilled
- 1 cup blue curaçao
- 1½ cups white rum or vodka
- ½ cup fresh lime juice
- 3 cups lemon-lime soda, chilled

- Lime wheels and gummy worms, for garnish

- Ice ring (freeze 2 cups pineapple juice in a ring mold)

- Food-safe dry ice, optional, for fog

MOCKTAIL SWAP:

- Replace rum + curaçao with 1½ cups extra pineapple juice + 4 tablespoons blue raspberry syrup

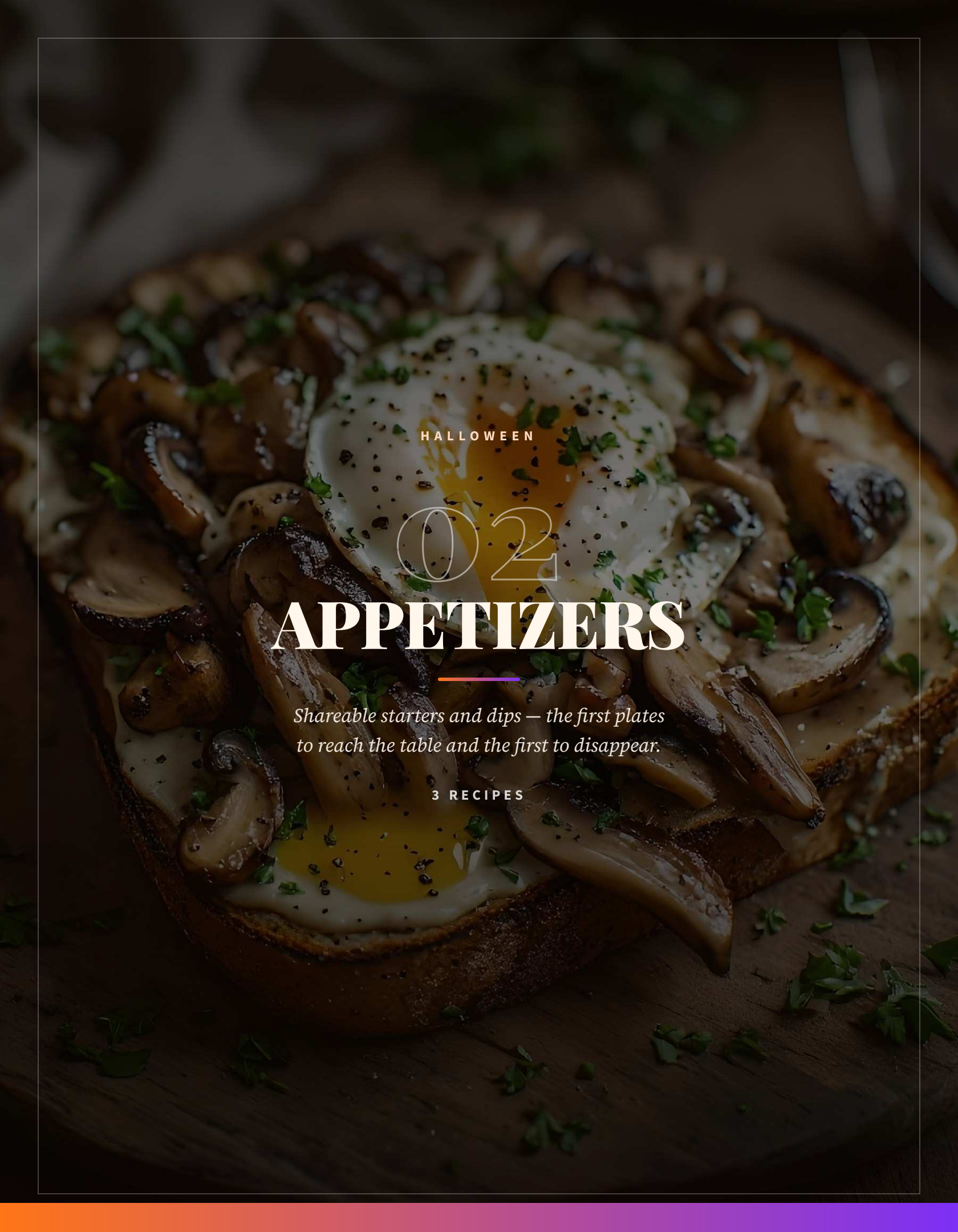
Witch's Brew Punch CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Chill everything first.** A cold base means less ice and less dilution. Refrigerate the juices and soda ahead of time.
- 2 Build the base.** In a cauldron or large punch bowl, combine pineapple juice, blue curaçao, white rum, and lime juice. Stir — the mixture turns green as the blue and yellow combine. (For the mocktail, use pineapple juice and blue raspberry syrup here.)
- 3 Adjust the color.** If it's more teal than green, add a splash more pineapple juice; if too pale, add curaçao a tablespoon at a time.
- 4 Add the fizz.** Just before serving, stir in the chilled lemon-lime soda gently to keep the bubbles.
- 5 Chill without diluting.** Float the frozen pineapple ice ring in the bowl.
- 6 Make it smoke.** With tongs, lower a chunk of food-safe dry ice into the bowl. It will bubble and send fog creeping over the sides. Serve while it's smoking.
- 7 Garnish and serve.** Ladle into glasses over ice, add a lime wheel, and drape a gummy worm over the rim.

WHY IT WORKS

Blue curaçao (blue) mixed with pineapple juice (yellow) makes green — basic color mixing. The exact shade depends on your ratio: more curaçao gives a deeper teal-green, more pineapple gives a brighter lime-green.



HALLOWEEN

02

APPETIZERS

*Shareable starters and dips — the first plates
to reach the table and the first to disappear.*

3 RECIPES



Nº 06

GRAMERCY TAVERN · COPYCAT

Wild Mushroom Toast

Inspired by Gramercy Tavern's famous mushroom tartine: deeply seared chanterelles and hen of the woods in tarragon cream on grilled sourdough, topped with a soft-cooked egg and shaved Parmigiano.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	25 min	4	Medium	380

01 Ingredients

FOR THE MUSHROOMS:

- 1½ lbs mixed wild mushrooms (chanterelles, hen of the woods/maitake, shiitake, cremini — any combination)
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided (2 tbsp for mushrooms, 1 tbsp for shallots)
- 2 tablespoons neutral oil (grapeseed or avocado)
- 3 medium shallots, thinly sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves (stripped from about 12 sprigs)
- 2 tablespoons dry sherry or dry white wine
- ⅓ cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon fresh tarragon leaves, roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE TOAST:

- 4 slices sourdough bread, cut ¾ to 1 inch thick
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- Flaky sea salt

FOR FINISHING:

- 4 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar (for poaching)
- ½ oz Parmigiano-Reggiano, shaved with a vegetable peeler
- A few drops truffle oil (optional but recommended)
- Fresh thyme or chervil sprigs for garnish

Wild Mushroom Toast CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Prep the mushrooms.** Brush any dirt from the mushrooms with a dry pastry brush or damp paper towel — don't rinse them. Tear hen of the woods into 2-inch rustic pieces. Halve or quarter large chanterelles lengthwise. Leave shiitakes whole or halve if large. Set aside in a wide bowl.
- 2 Sear the first batch.** Set a 12-inch cast-iron or stainless skillet over the highest heat your burner will produce. Let it preheat for 2 full minutes until very hot. Add 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon oil. When the butter foam subsides (about 30 seconds), add half the mushrooms in a single layer. **DO NOT STIR** for 2 full minutes — leave them in contact with the pan. Season lightly with salt. After 2 minutes, toss once. Cook 1 more minute. Transfer to the bowl. Wipe the pan clean.
- 3 Sear the second batch.** Repeat step 2 with remaining 1 tablespoon butter, 1 tablespoon oil, and second half of mushrooms. Transfer to bowl with first batch.
- 4 Build the base.** Reduce heat to medium. Add 1 tablespoon butter to the same pan. Add shallots with a pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, 4 to 5 minutes until softened and translucent. Add garlic and thyme; cook 1 minute more.
- 5 Finish the mushrooms.** Return all seared mushrooms to the pan. Pour in the sherry and cook until evaporated, about 1 minute, scraping up any browned bits. Pour in the cream and cook, stirring, until reduced by half and the sauce coats the mushrooms, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in tarragon and parsley. Taste and adjust salt and pepper. Keep warm over the lowest heat or off the heat if your burner runs hot.
- 6 Grill the toast.** Spread softened butter on both sides of each sourdough slice. Heat a grill pan or flat cast-iron over medium-high heat. Add the bread and cook undisturbed for 2 minutes until deeply golden with grill marks or an even golden crust. Flip and cook 2 minutes more. Transfer to plates. Season the top surface with a pinch of flaky salt while still warm.
- 7 Poach the eggs.** Bring 2 inches of water to a gentle simmer in a medium saucepan (small bubbles rising from the bottom; not a rolling boil). Add 1 teaspoon white vinegar. Crack each egg into a small cup first. Stir the water to create a gentle swirl, then slip eggs in one at a time. Cook 3 minutes exactly for a runny yolk with fully set whites. Remove with a slotted spoon to a paper towel to blot.
- 8 Assemble.** Pile the mushroom mixture generously over each toast slice — don't hold back, mound them high. Place one poached egg on top of each. Shave Parmigiano-Reggiano over the plate using a vegetable peeler. Add 3 to 4 drops of truffle oil if using. Finish with a fresh thyme or chervil sprig. Serve immediately.

WHY IT WORKS

Mushrooms are about 90% water by weight. When you add them to a pan they immediately begin releasing that water as steam.



Nº 07

— HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Deviled Egg Eyeballs

The creepiest Halloween party appetizer: deviled egg eyeballs with realistic bloodshot veins baked right into the whites using the crack-soak method, topped with a green-olive iris and pimento pupil. 30 minutes of active work, 24 eyeballs.

PREP

30 min (+ 2 hrs soak)

COOK

12 min

SERVES

12 (24 halves)

LEVEL

Easy

CAL

140

01 Ingredients

FOR THE EGGS:

- 12 large eggs, at least 7 days old (see FAQ)
- 1 tablespoon red liquid food dye (not gel — it won't disperse)
- Cold water to submerge eggs

FOR THE FILLING:

- 4 tablespoons Duke's mayonnaise (or Hellmann's)
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon white wine vinegar

- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper

FOR THE EYES:

- 12 pimento-stuffed green olives, sliced into 24 thin rounds (the red pimento becomes the pupil)
- 12 small black olives, sliced into thin rounds (for a black pupil layer)
- Red food dye gel in a fine-tip tube, or sriracha + a toothpick (for drawn-on veins)

Deviled Egg Eyeballs

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Boil with precision.** Place eggs in a single layer in a large pot. Cover with cold water by 1 inch. Bring to a full rolling boil, then cover the pot, remove from heat, and let sit for exactly 12 minutes. (12 minutes gives a firm but not chalky yolk — the gray-green ring that ruins deviled eggs means you went longer.)
- 2 Stop the cooking immediately.** Drain and transfer eggs to an ice bath — a large bowl of cold water and a tray of ice. Leave them 10–15 minutes. The ice bath stops the cooking and creates a slight gap between egg and membrane, which helps both peeling and the crack-soak.
- 3 Crack the shells — don't remove them.** Once the eggs are cool, tap each egg all over with the back of a spoon, working your way around the entire surface. You want the shell crackled like a mosaic, still clinging to the egg, with visible cracks throughout. Do not peel. Think of it as creating a network of channels for the dye.
- 4 Soak in red dye.** In a large bowl or zip-lock bag, combine cold water and 1 tablespoon of red liquid food dye. Submerge the cracked eggs completely. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours — overnight gives deeper, more dramatic veins. The longer the soak, the bolder the effect.
- 5 Peel and dry.** Remove eggs from the dye bath and peel under cold running water, pulling the shell off carefully to preserve the vein pattern. Pat each egg completely dry with a paper towel, including the surface — any moisture will make the filling slip when you pipe it.
- 6 Make the filling.** Slice each egg in half lengthwise. Pop the yolks into a bowl. Mash with a fork until no large lumps remain, then add the mayo, Dijon, white wine vinegar, salt, and white pepper. Mix until smooth and creamy. Taste — it should be savory, slightly tangy, not sweet. Refrigerate the filling for at least 20–30 minutes before piping; cold filling holds a dome, warm filling spreads flat.
- 7 Dry the whites again.** Before filling, press a paper towel inside each egg white cup to absorb any residual moisture. This is the step most recipes skip — wet whites make the filling slide.
- 8 Pipe the filling.** Spoon the chilled filling into a zip-lock bag, seal, and snip a small corner. Pipe a generous dome into each white cup, filling it slightly above the rim. The dome is what gives the eyeball its 3D shape.
- 9 Draw the veins.** Using a fine-tip red food dye gel tube or a toothpick dipped in red gel, draw 3–4 thin, slightly squiggly lines radiating out from the center of the filling dome toward the edges of the white. Make them irregular — different lengths, slightly different angles. Straight uniform lines look painted; asymmetric lines look bloodshot. Let the veins set for 5 minutes before the next step.
- 10 Build the eye.** Press a green olive round (pimento side up) into the center of the filling dome — it will sink in slightly and stay put. Lay a thin black olive round on top of the pimento, centered, to add a dark pupil layer. Press lightly to adhere.
- 11 Serve cold.** Arrange on a platter (a deviled egg tray keeps them from rolling) and serve within 2–3 hours.

WHY IT WORKS

The realistic method is the crack-soak: boil the eggs, then — without peeling — tap the shells all over with the back of a spoon to crack them throughout (you want a crackled shell, not a removed one).



Nº 08

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Graveyard Seven-Layer Dip

The most showstopping Halloween party food that takes 20 minutes to build: a classic seven-layer taco dip dressed up as a graveyard — broken tortilla chip tombstones, sour cream ghosts.

PREP
20 min

COOK
0 min

SERVES
10 servings

LEVEL
Easy

CAL
310

01 Ingredients

BASE LAYER:

- 1 can (16 oz) refried beans, seasoned (or plain — season yourself with ½ tsp cumin, ½ tsp chili powder, ¼ tsp garlic powder)

CREAM LAYER:

- 8 oz cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 packet (1 oz) taco seasoning

GUACAMOLE:

- 3 ripe avocados
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon cumin

REMAINING LAYERS:

- 1 cup salsa or pico de gallo (drain excess liquid if watery)
- 1½ cups shredded Mexican cheese blend
- 1 can (2¼ oz) sliced black olives, drained
- 3 green onions, thinly sliced

GRAVEYARD DECORATIONS:

- 12–15 thick tortilla chips (whole and broken halves for tombstones)
- ¼ cup sour cream (for piping ghosts and tombstone text)
- Small zip-lock bag (for piping)
- Toothpicks (for lettering and details)

FOR SERVING:

- Large bag of tortilla chips

Graveyard Seven-Layer Dip

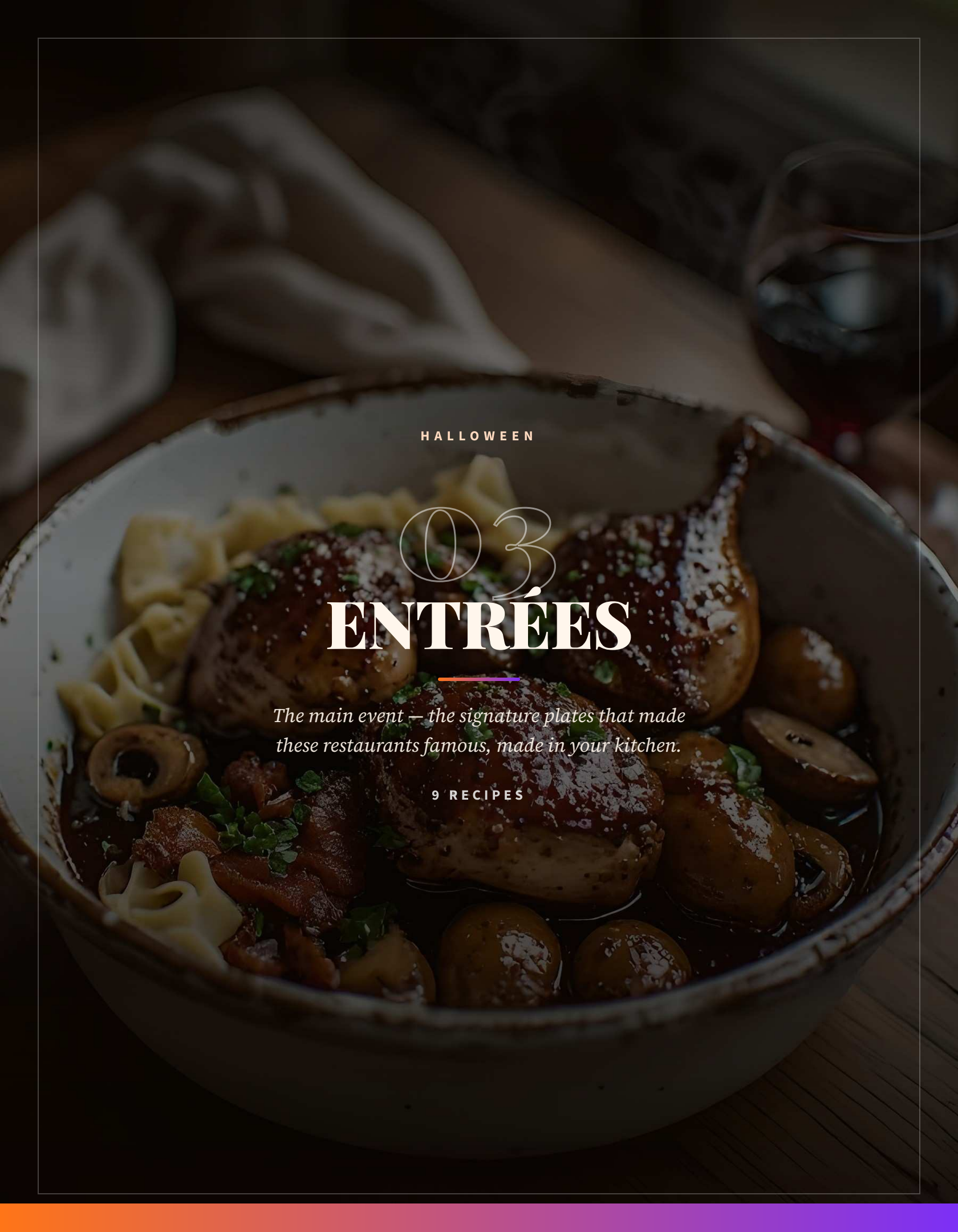
CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Prep your dish.** Use a 9x13 baking dish, a large deep pie dish, or a wide shallow bowl. The rectangular dish gives you the most graveyard real estate.
- 2 Make the cream layer.** Beat softened cream cheese with sour cream and the taco seasoning packet until smooth and uniform — use a hand mixer or a fork and real effort. Lumps of unseasoned cream cheese will be noticeable. If your cream cheese isn't fully softened, microwave it in 10-second bursts until pliable but not warm.
- 3 Make the guacamole.** Halve and pit the avocados. Scoop the flesh into a bowl and mash with a fork until you have a rough, slightly chunky paste — lumps are fine and help with the burial mound shape later. Add lime juice, salt, and cumin. Taste and adjust. Set aside.
- 4 Build the layers.** Spread the refried beans in an even layer across the bottom of the dish. Spread the cream cheese mixture over the beans in a smooth, even layer that reaches the edges. Spoon the salsa or pico de gallo over the cream layer and spread gently (keep it to the center-inner area, not to the edges — this prevents it from making the outer layers watery). Sprinkle the shredded cheese over the salsa. Scatter the sliced olives across the cheese.
- 5 Add the guacamole hill.** Mound all the guacamole in one corner or offset toward one end of the dish, forming a rounded hill about 1½ inches high. This is the burial mound — it doesn't need to cover the whole surface. Press plastic wrap directly against the guacamole's surface and refrigerate while you work on decoration, or proceed immediately if serving within the hour.
- 6 Scatter the 'grass.'** Sprinkle sliced green onions around the edges and between the tombstone chip positions — they create the look of graveyard grass without competing with the other decoration.
- 7 Set the tombstones.** Break several tortilla chips into rough tombstone shapes (irregular tops work better than straight breaks — they look like weathered stone). Press them into the dip at slight backward angles so they lean rather than stand straight up. Vary the heights and positions — uneven is more realistic than a neat row.
- 8 Pipe the decorations.** Transfer sour cream to a small zip-lock bag and snip 3mm off one corner. Pipe 'RIP' on each tombstone chip (a toothpick helps with fine strokes). Dot ghost shapes across the open surface — a rounded blob with a dragged tail, two olive-round eyes pressed in close together. Use a toothpick to scratch tiny cross-stitch details into the burial mound if desired.
- 9 Refrigerate until serving.** Cover loosely with plastic wrap — don't let the wrap touch the decorations — and refrigerate for up to 4 hours. Add any additional tombstones right before guests arrive (earlier than that and the chips soften). Serve with a full bowl of fresh tortilla chips on the side.

WHY IT WORKS

Build it the morning of your party and refrigerate covered for up to 8 hours before serving. The beans, cream cheese layer, and cheese all hold well. The guacamole is the problem child: avocado oxidizes.



HALLOWEEN

03
ENTRÉES

*The main event — the signature plates that made
these restaurants famous, made in your kitchen.*

9 RECIPES



Nº 09

— BALTHAZAR • COPYCAT

Balthazar's Coq au Vin

Balthazar's famous coq au vin: a whole bottle of Burgundy braised with smoked bacon, pearl onions, and mushrooms until the sauce turns midnight-black.

PREP

30 min

COOK

1 hr 45 min

SERVES

6

LEVEL

Medium

CAL

505

01 Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken (3½–4 lbs), cut into 8 pieces — or 3 lbs bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs and drumsticks
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 8 oz (225g) smoked slab bacon, cut into ½-inch lardons (thick-cut strips work if slab bacon is unavailable)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 medium carrots, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 celery stalks, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 head garlic, halved horizontally through the equator
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

- 1 bottle (750ml) red Burgundy or Pinot Noir — Côtes du Rhône works too
- 1½ cups (360ml) beef or veal stock (not chicken stock — the depth matters here)
- 1 bouquet garni: 4 sprigs fresh thyme, 2 bay leaves, 6 parsley stems, tied in cheesecloth or bundled with twine

FOR THE GARNISH:

- 1 cup (150g) pearl onions, blanched 1 minute in boiling water and peeled (or frozen, thawed)
- 8 oz (225g) button mushrooms, quartered
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- ¼ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped, to finish
- **To serve:** buttered egg noodles, crusty baguette, or mashed potatoes

Balthazar's Coq au Vin CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Pat the chicken pieces completely dry with paper towels. Season generously on all sides with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Dry chicken browns; wet chicken steams.
- 2 In a large Dutch oven (5–6 quart) over medium heat, cook the bacon lardons in a single layer, stirring occasionally, until the fat has rendered and the bacon is golden-brown and crisp, about 10 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside. Leave the rendered fat in the pot.
- 3 Increase the heat to medium-high. Add the mushrooms in a single layer and resist the urge to stir immediately — cook undisturbed for 3 minutes, then stir once and cook another 2 minutes until golden-brown. Remove and set aside. (Crowding mushrooms causes them to steam and turn grey rather than brown.)
- 4 Add the olive oil to the pot. Working in two batches to avoid crowding, sear the chicken skin-side down for 4 minutes until deeply golden-brown, then flip and sear 2 minutes more. The skin must be genuinely golden-brown before you flip — pale chicken means pale sauce. Transfer each batch to a plate as it finishes.
- 5 Reduce heat to medium. Add the diced onion, carrots, celery, and halved garlic head to the pot. Cook, stirring and scraping up any browned bits from the bottom, until the vegetables are softened, about 5 minutes. Add the tomato paste and stir to coat, 1 minute. Sprinkle the flour over the vegetables and stir another minute until it disappears.
- 6 Pour in the full bottle of wine and scrape the bottom of the pot vigorously — all the browned bits are concentrated flavor. Raise the heat and bring to a medium boil. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the wine has reduced by half, about 20–25 minutes. The liquid will turn from bright purple-red to a darker, more serious burgundy. This is the first reduction.
- 7 Add the beef stock and bouquet garni. Return the chicken pieces (not the bacon or mushrooms yet) to the pot, skin-side up. The liquid should come about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the chicken. Bring to a gentle simmer, cover, reduce heat to low, and braise undisturbed for 1 hour, until the leg meat is meltingly tender when pierced with a paring knife.
- 8 Lift the chicken pieces out and set aside. Strain the braising liquid through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean saucepan, pressing firmly on the vegetables to extract every drop of liquid and gelatin. Discard the spent vegetables and bouquet garni.
- 9 Bring the strained liquid to a strong simmer and cook, skimming any fat that rises to the surface, until reduced by half — about 20–25 minutes. This is the second reduction and the most important step: do not skip it. The sauce will turn from wine-red to nearly midnight-black and thicken until it coats the back of a spoon. Run your finger across the back of a sauce-covered spoon — the line should hold. Taste and adjust salt.
- 10 While the sauce reduces, sauté the pearl onions in 1 tablespoon of butter in a small skillet over medium heat, stirring often, until golden and lightly caramelized, about 5 minutes.
- 11 Return the chicken pieces, reserved bacon, mushrooms, and glazed pearl onions to the midnight-black sauce. Simmer gently for 15 minutes to marry the flavors. Just before serving, remove the pot from heat and swirl in the remaining tablespoon of cold butter — this enriches the sauce and gives it a glossy sheen. Add the chopped parsley. Taste once more and serve immediately over buttered egg noodles or with crusty bread.

WHY IT WORKS

Most coq au vin recipes reduce the wine once — either before braising or after. Balthazar's version does both, and the difference in the finished sauce is dramatic.



Nº 10

— CROWN SHY · COPYCAT

Halloween Short Rib

Crown Shy's famous bone-in short rib: braised in sungold tomatoes and red wine until the sauce turns near-black, finished with crispy eggplant and melted fresh mozzarella.

PREP

30 min

COOK

3 hr

SERVES

4

LEVEL

Medium

CAL

580

01 Ingredients

- 4 bone-in beef short ribs (about 1 lb each — roughly 3½–4 lbs total)
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more for seasoning
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 medium carrots, diced into ½-inch pieces
- 4 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 cup red wine (Chianti, Barbera, or Côtes du Rhône)
- 1½ lbs fresh sungold (or mixed cherry) tomatoes, halved — or, out of season, two 14-oz cans whole cherry tomatoes (Mutti or Bianco DiNapoli), crushed by hand
- 1 cup beef stock, plus more if needed
- 4 fresh thyme sprigs
- 1 rosemary sprig
- 1 bay leaf
- For the eggplant: 1 medium Italian eggplant (about 1 lb), cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (for eggplant)
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt (for eggplant)
- For finishing: 4 oz fresh mozzarella, torn into rough pieces
- Flaky sea salt for finishing
- Fresh basil leaves for garnish (optional)

Halloween Short Rib

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Season the short ribs:** Pat the short ribs completely dry with paper towels — surface moisture is the enemy of browning. Season all over with 2 teaspoons kosher salt and 1 teaspoon black pepper, pressing the seasoning into the meat. Let them sit at room temperature for 30 minutes while you prep the vegetables.
- 2 Preheat and sear:** Preheat the oven to 325°F. Heat a 6-quart (or larger) Dutch oven over high heat until smoking hot. Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Working in batches if needed (don't crowd the pan), sear the short ribs on all four sides for 3–4 minutes per side, until a deep mahogany crust forms on every surface. This crust — not the braise — is what gives the final sauce its depth. Resist the urge to move the ribs before they release naturally. Transfer to a plate and set aside.
- 3 Build the base:** Reduce heat to medium. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons of fat from the pot. Add the diced onion and carrots and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and lightly golden, 7–8 minutes. Add the smashed garlic and cook 1 minute more. Add the tomato paste and stir constantly for 2 full minutes — the paste should darken to a brick-red and stick slightly to the bottom of the pot. This cooked-out tomato paste is what makes the sauce complex and non-acidic.
- 4 Deglaze and reduce:** Pour in the red wine. With a wooden spoon, scrape up every browned bit stuck to the bottom of the pot — this is pure concentrated flavor. Raise the heat to medium-high and reduce the wine by half, about 4–5 minutes. The alcohol smell will mellow and the liquid will look glossy and slightly syrupy.
- 5 Build the braise:** Add the sungold tomatoes (if using fresh, add them halved; if using canned, crush each by hand so they break apart and release their juice). Add the beef stock, thyme sprigs, rosemary, and bay leaf. Stir to combine. The liquid should look orange-red and loose at this stage — it transforms during the braise. Nestle the seared short ribs back in the pot, bones facing up. They should be mostly submerged; add a splash more stock if needed. Bring to a gentle simmer.
- 6 Braise:** Cover the Dutch oven with its lid. Transfer to the preheated 325°F oven. Braise for 2 hours 45 minutes to 3 hours, checking at 2 hours 30 minutes. The short ribs are done when a paring knife slides into the meat with almost no resistance and the meat pulls slightly from the bone. The liquid in the pot at this point will have darkened significantly — from orange-red to a deep burgundy. Remove from the oven.
- 7 Roast the eggplant (do this during the last 45 minutes of braising):** Raise the oven temperature to 400°F (or do this in a separate oven). Toss the cubed eggplant with 2 tablespoons olive oil, ½ teaspoon kosher salt, and several grinds of black pepper. Spread in a single layer on a sheet pan — do not crowd; use two pans if needed. Roast 25–30 minutes, flipping once halfway through, until the edges are deeply caramelized and nearly crispy and the centers are dense and tender. The eggplant should look almost burnished. Set aside.
- 8 Reduce the sauce:** Carefully lift the short ribs from the Dutch oven and set them aside on a plate. Strain the braising liquid through a fine-mesh strainer into a bowl, pressing on the spent vegetables to extract every drop of liquid; discard the solids. Return the strained liquid to the Dutch oven. Place over medium-high heat and simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 15–20 minutes until the sauce is near-black, thick enough to coat a spoon, and reduced by about one-third. Taste and adjust salt. This reduction is the visual heart of the dish — do not skip it.
- 9 Finish and serve:** Return the short ribs to the near-black sauce, spooning the sauce over them generously. Scatter the roasted eggplant over and around the ribs. Tear the fresh mozzarella into rough pieces and arrange over the hot short ribs — it will begin to melt immediately from the heat of the dish. Finish with a pinch of flaky sea salt and fresh basil leaves if using. Serve immediately, directly from the Dutch oven or plated on warmed plates, with soft polenta, pappardelle, or crusty bread to soak up the sauce.

WHY IT WORKS

Beef short ribs come from the lower section of the rib cage, specifically from ribs 1–5 (chuck short ribs) or 6–10 (plate short ribs). The meat is composed of several thick muscle groups separated by layers of fat and connective tissue — primarily collagen.

Nº 11

DIRTY FRENCH • COPYCAT

Halloween Duck Confit

Dirty French's famous duck confit reimagined for Halloween: slow-rendered duck legs crisped in a cast iron until the skin is near-black and crackling, finished with a blood-red cherry-port reduction.

PREP

20 min (+ overnight cure)

COOK

3 hr 15 min

SERVES

4

LEVEL

Medium

CAL

580

01 Ingredients

FOR THE CURE:

- 4 duck legs (about 3 lbs total), excess fat trimmed but skin on
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 4 garlic cloves, smashed
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 bay leaves, crumbled
- 1 teaspoon fresh orange zest

FOR THE CONFIT:

- 3–4 cups rendered duck fat (enough to submerge the legs) — OR use the oven method: 1 cup chicken stock, tightly covered

FOR THE CHERRY-PORT HALLOWEEN SAUCE:

- 1 medium shallot, finely minced

- 1 teaspoon unsalted butter, plus 1 tablespoon cold for finishing

- ½ cup ruby port

- 1 cup dark sweet cherries, pitted — fresh, frozen (thawed), or good-quality jarred

- 1 cup duck or chicken stock

- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

- 1 teaspoon honey (optional, to balance acidity)

- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

TO SERVE:

- 2 heads Belgian endive or frisée lettuce, leaves separated

- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar

- 1 tablespoon walnut or olive oil

- Flaky sea salt (Maldon or fleur de sel) for finishing

Halloween Duck Confit CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 **The night before (cure):** Pat the duck legs completely dry with paper towels. Combine the kosher salt, black pepper, smashed garlic, thyme, crumbled bay leaves, and orange zest in a small bowl. Rub this mixture thoroughly all over each leg, getting under the skin where you can. Arrange the legs skin-side up in a single layer on a plate or small sheet pan. Refrigerate uncovered overnight, or for at least 4 hours. The salt draws surface moisture out and concentrates flavor in the meat.
- 2 **Prepare to confit:** Remove the legs from the refrigerator 30 minutes before cooking. Wipe off the cure completely with paper towels — this removes excess salt that would make the finished dish too salty. Do not rinse; just blot.
- 3 **Confit the duck (stovetop fat method):** Pack the legs tightly skin-side down in a small Dutch oven or heavy pot. They should fit snugly — the fat level should just cover them. Melt the duck fat (if solid) in a small saucepan and pour over the duck legs. Place over the lowest burner setting and maintain a temperature of 200–225°F (occasional tiny bubbles at the surface, but no real simmering). Cook 2½–3 hours, until the meat is very tender when pierced with a paring knife and pulls slightly away from the bone. Do not rush this with higher heat — the long, low temperature is what produces the silk-tender texture.
- 4 **Confit the duck (oven method — easier):** Preheat oven to 250°F. Arrange the legs skin-side down in a tight single layer in a Dutch oven or baking dish. Pour the chicken stock over the legs. Cover tightly with a sheet of foil, then the lid. Cook 3 hours until very tender. The duck renders enough of its own fat to baste the meat throughout the cook.
- 5 **Cool and rest:** Remove from heat. Let the duck cool in its fat until lukewarm. At this point you can refrigerate the legs submerged in the fat for up to 2 weeks (they improve with a day or two of resting), or proceed immediately to finishing.
- 6 **Make the cherry-port sauce:** In a small saucepan over medium heat, melt 1 teaspoon butter and sauté the shallot until soft, about 2 minutes. Add the port, raise heat, and reduce by half, about 3 minutes — the port should look thick and syrupy. Add the cherries and stock. Simmer briskly until reduced by about half and the sauce coats a spoon, 10–12 minutes. Add the red wine vinegar and taste — add a teaspoon of honey if the sauce needs balance. Season with salt and pepper. Just before serving, remove from heat and whisk in the cold tablespoon of butter for gloss. The sauce should be deep garnet-black — the Halloween color of this dish.
- 7 **Crisp the duck skin:** Lift the duck legs from the fat. Pat the skin completely dry with paper towels — remove every trace of surface fat. Heat a dry (no oil) cast-iron or heavy stainless skillet over medium-high until very hot, about 2 minutes. Place the legs skin-side down. Immediately reduce heat to medium. Cook undisturbed for 6–8 minutes — do not move the legs. The skin will release its own fat and turn progressively darker until it reaches a near-black, crackling crisp. Flip and cook 2 minutes more on the meat side. The flesh should be heated through and the skin should sound hollow when you tap it.
- 8 **Dress the greens and plate:** Toss the endive or frisée with the sherry vinegar, oil, and a pinch of salt. Arrange a small mound of dressed greens on each plate. Set the duck leg alongside, skin-side up. Spoon the cherry-port sauce generously over and around the duck (not on the skin — keep it crispy). Finish with a pinch of flaky sea salt over the skin. Serve immediately.

WHY IT WORKS

Duck confit (confit de canard in French) is an ancient preservation technique from Gascony: the duck legs are salt-cured to draw out moisture, then slow-cooked fully submerged in their own rendered fat at very low temperature (200–225°F).



Nº 12

GRAMERCY TAVERN • COPYCAT

Halloween Beef Stew

Gramercy Tavern's legendary fall braised beef — chuck slow-cooked in Guinness and red wine until the sauce turns near-black, finished with wild mushrooms and root vegetables.

PREP

25 min

COOK

2 hr 45 min

SERVES

6

LEVEL

Medium

CAL

520

01 Ingredients

FOR THE BRAISE:

- 3 lbs (1.4 kg) beef chuck, cut into 2-inch cubes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 stalks celery, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 bottle (11.2 oz / 330ml) Guinness Extra Stout
- 1 cup dry red wine (Côtes du Rhône, Syrah, or any full-bodied red)
- 2 cups beef stock (low-sodium)

- 3 sprigs fresh thyme

- 2 bay leaves

FOR THE VEGETABLES (ADDED IN THE LAST 30 MINUTES):

- 4 oz (115g) cremini mushrooms, quartered
- 4 oz (115g) shiitake mushrooms, stems removed and sliced
- 2 medium parsnips, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 medium turnip, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter (to finish)
- 2 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped (to garnish)

OPTIONAL HALLOWEEN GARNISH (BONE MARROW CANDLES):

- 4 cross-cut marrow bones, about 1–1½ inches each (ask your butcher for canoe cuts)
- Flaky sea salt

Halloween Beef Stew

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Preheat your oven to 325°F. Pat the beef chuck cubes completely dry with paper towels — this is essential for browning. Season aggressively with kosher salt and black pepper on all sides.
- 2 Heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a large Dutch oven (5–6 quart) over medium-high heat until shimmering. Working in two or three batches to avoid crowding, sear the beef cubes undisturbed for 3–4 minutes per side until deeply browned on at least two surfaces. Do not rush this; pale beef means pale sauce. Transfer each batch to a plate as it finishes.
- 3 Reduce heat to medium. Add the diced onion, carrots, and celery to the fat remaining in the pot. Cook, stirring and scraping up any browned bits, until the vegetables are softened and beginning to color, about 8 minutes. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute more. Add the tomato paste; stir to coat and cook until the paste darkens from bright red to brick-red, about 2 minutes.
- 4 Pour in the Guinness and red wine, scraping the bottom of the pot vigorously — every browned bit is flavor. Raise the heat to medium-high and bring to a rolling simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid has reduced by half, about 15 minutes. It will change dramatically: from foamy amber beer + purple wine to a near-black, unified liquid. This is your first reduction and the source of the Halloween color.
- 5 Add the beef stock, thyme sprigs, and bay leaves. Stir to combine. Return the browned beef and any accumulated juices from the plate to the pot. The liquid should come about three-quarters up the sides of the beef. Bring to a simmer, then cover tightly and transfer to the 325°F oven.
- 6 Braise for 1 hour 30 minutes undisturbed. After 1½ hours, add the quartered cremini mushrooms, sliced shiitake, cubed parsnips, and cubed turnip directly to the pot. Cover and continue braising for another 30 minutes, until both the beef and root vegetables are completely tender — a paring knife should enter the beef with zero resistance.
- 7 Optional bone marrow garnish: increase oven temperature to 450°F. Place the marrow bones on a small rimmed baking sheet and roast for 15 minutes, until the marrow has softened and is just beginning to pull away from the bone. Sprinkle with flaky sea salt. Set aside.
- 8 Transfer the cooked beef and vegetables to a large bowl with a slotted spoon. Strain the braising liquid through a fine-mesh strainer into a medium saucepan, pressing firmly on the solids to extract every drop. Discard the spent onion-carrot-celery (the root vegetables that braised with the beef are the keeper; these strained-out aromatics are spent). Return the braising liquid to the stove over medium-high heat. Simmer briskly until reduced by one-third, about 10 minutes, skimming any fat from the surface. Taste and adjust salt. The sauce should be very dark, glossy, and just thick enough to coat a spoon.
- 9 Remove the sauce from heat and swirl in 2 tablespoons cold butter — this gives the sauce a final gloss and rounds its flavor. Return the beef and vegetables to the pot with the sauce. Stir gently to coat everything. Taste once more and adjust seasoning.
- 10 Serve in the Dutch oven or a deep serving bowl. Place the roasted marrow bones upright in the stew like Halloween candles. Scatter the chopped parsley over the top. Bring to the table with crusty bread or mashed potatoes alongside.

WHY IT WORKS

The two reductions serve different purposes.



Nº 13

— MAREA · COPYCAT

Halloween Black Squid Ink Pasta

A jet-black squid ink pasta with sweet lump crab, inspired by Marea's celebrated squid ink and crab pastas, made at home for Halloween. Minimal ingredients: squid ink spaghetti, garlic, white wine, crab, and good olive oil.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	20 min	4	Medium	580

01 Ingredients

- 12 oz (340g) dried squid ink spaghetti — De Cecco Nero di Seppia, Rustichella d'Abruzzo, or Garofalo brand
- Kosher salt for pasta water (about 2 tablespoons per 4 quarts — pasta water should taste like mild seawater)

FOR THE SAUCE:

- ¼ cup (60ml) good extra virgin olive oil, plus a drizzle to finish
- 5 cloves garlic, thinly sliced (not minced — slices turn golden evenly without burning)

- ½ teaspoon red chili flakes, plus more to taste
- ½ cup (120ml) dry white wine — Pinot Grigio, Vermentino, or dry Sauvignon Blanc
- 8 oz (225g) fresh or high-quality refrigerated lump crab meat (Dungeness, blue crab, or king crab), picked for shells
- 1 lemon, zested and halved for juice
- 3 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
- Flaky sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to finish

Halloween Black Squid Ink Pasta

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Bring a large pot (at least 5 quarts) of water to a rolling boil. Add 2 tablespoons kosher salt — the water should taste mildly salty. Add the squid ink spaghetti and cook according to package directions minus 1 minute (it will finish cooking in the pan). Set a liquid measuring cup next to the pot — you must reserve the pasta water before draining.
- 2 While the pasta cooks, warm the olive oil in a large wide skillet (12-inch) over medium-low heat. Add the sliced garlic in a single layer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the garlic is fragrant and the edges are just starting to turn golden, about 2–3 minutes. The garlic should sizzle gently, not aggressively — if it's browning fast, lower the heat. Burned garlic is irreversible and will ruin the dish.
- 3 Add the red chili flakes to the garlic oil and stir for 20 seconds. Pour in the white wine — it will sizzle and steam. Raise the heat to medium and let the wine reduce by half, about 2 minutes, scraping up any stuck bits. Remove the pan from heat while the pasta finishes.
- 4 Before draining the pasta, ladle out 1 full cup of the black pasta water and set it aside. Drain the pasta.
- 5 Return the skillet to medium heat. Add the drained pasta and ½ cup of the reserved black pasta water. Using tongs, toss continuously for 2–3 minutes, lifting and turning the pasta so every strand is coated. The sauce should look glossy and just barely coat the noodles — add more pasta water a splash at a time if it looks dry or sticky.
- 6 Remove the skillet from heat. Add the crab meat, the zest of half the lemon, a squeeze of lemon juice (about 1 tablespoon), and the chopped parsley. Fold gently with tongs — the crab is already cooked and needs only 30 seconds of residual heat to warm through. Tossing aggressively breaks up the lump pieces.
- 7 Taste and adjust: more chili flakes for heat, more lemon for brightness, flaky sea salt if needed. Serve immediately in warmed bowls with a final drizzle of olive oil and a crack of black pepper. The pasta does not hold — eat it the moment it's plated.

WHY IT WORKS

This is a real Italian culinary rule, not arbitrary tradition.



Nº 14

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Rao's Braised Short Ribs

Make the famous braised short ribs from Rao's — NYC's most impossible-to-get-into restaurant — at home. Bone-in ribs slow-braised in Chianti, San Marzano tomatoes, and herbs for 3 hours. The perfect Halloween dinner party entrée.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
25 min	3 hr	4	Medium	580

01 Ingredients

- 4 bone-in short ribs, English-cut, about 3½–4 lbs total (ribs should be at least 2½ inches thick)
- 2 tsp kosher salt, plus more for seasoning
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 medium yellow onion, roughly chopped
- 3 celery stalks, roughly chopped
- 2 medium carrots, roughly chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 bottle (750ml) Chianti Classico or Barolo
- 1 can (28 oz) San Marzano whole peeled tomatoes
- 1 cup low-sodium beef broth
- 3 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- Creamy polenta or egg pappardelle, for serving
- Fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped, for garnish

Rao's Braised Short Ribs CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Season and prep.** Preheat oven to 325°F. Remove short ribs from the refrigerator 30 minutes before cooking. Pat all surfaces completely dry with paper towels — dry meat browns, wet meat steams. Season aggressively on all sides with salt and pepper.
- 2 Brown in batches — the most important step.** Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large Dutch oven over high heat until shimmering and beginning to smoke. Working in 2 batches (never crowd the pot), add the short ribs and brown hard: 3 to 4 minutes per side without moving them, until a deep mahogany crust forms on all four meaty sides. Transfer to a plate and repeat with the second batch.
- 3 Build the soffritto.** Reduce heat to medium. Add the remaining tablespoon of olive oil, then the onion, celery, and carrot with a generous pinch of salt. Cook 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are soft and starting to color at the edges. Add the garlic and tomato paste; cook 2 more minutes until the paste darkens slightly from bright red to brick red.
- 4 Deglaze and reduce the wine.** Pour in the entire bottle of wine. Scrape up all the browned bits from the bottom of the pot — those are pure flavor. Raise the heat and bring to a boil, then maintain a vigorous simmer until the wine has reduced by half, about 12 to 15 minutes. The sauce will still look thin; this is correct and expected.
- 5 Add tomatoes, broth, and herbs.** Crush the San Marzano tomatoes by squeezing each one through your fist directly into the pot (discard most of the watery packing liquid). Add the beef broth, then nestle the short ribs back in — they should be mostly submerged. Tuck the rosemary, thyme, and bay leaves around the ribs.
- 6 Braise low and slow.** Cover the Dutch oven with its lid and transfer to the oven. Braise for 2½ to 3 hours. At 2½ hours, test doneness: the meat should yield completely to gentle tong pressure and pull cleanly from the bone with no resistance. If it tugs back at all, give it another 20 to 30 minutes — there is wide forgiveness at the far end.
- 7 Transfer ribs and skim the sauce.** Using a slotted spoon or tongs, carefully transfer the short ribs to a plate — they will be very fragile. Discard the herb sprigs and bay leaves. Skim as much fat as possible from the braising liquid with a wide spoon. For the cleanest sauce, refrigerate the pot overnight and lift off the solidified fat cap the next day.
- 8 Reduce the sauce and serve.** If the braising liquid seems thin, simmer over medium heat for 8 to 10 minutes until it lightly coats a spoon. Adjust salt. Return the short ribs to the sauce to warm through, 2 to 3 minutes. Serve immediately over creamy polenta or egg pappardelle, spooning the dark garnet braising sauce generously over and around each rib. Garnish with chopped parsley.

WHY IT WORKS

Crowding the pot drops the temperature of the oil rapidly, and the meat steams instead of searing. Steamed meat turns gray; seared meat turns mahogany. That mahogany crust — the Maillard reaction — is the flavor foundation the entire braise builds on.



Nº 15

— DEAD RABBIT • COPYCAT

The Dead Rabbit's Steak and Stout Pie

The Dead Rabbit's famous Steak and Stout Pie, made at home: beef chuck braised in Guinness Draught until falling-apart tender, sealed under crisp puff pastry in cast-iron crocks.

PREP
20 min

COOK
2 hr 30 min

SERVES
4

LEVEL
Medium

CAL
620

01 Ingredients

STEAK AND STOUT FILLING:

- 2 lbs beef chuck, cut into 1½-inch cubes
- 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tbsp neutral oil (canola or grapeseed), divided
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced (about 1½ cups)
- 3 medium carrots, cut into ½-inch rounds
- 3 stalks celery, cut into ½-inch pieces
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp tomato paste

- 2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 can (14.9 oz) Guinness Draught — use the can with the nitrogen widget, not Extra Stout
- 2 cups low-sodium beef stock
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 bay leaves

PUFF PASTRY TOP:

- 1 sheet (from a 17.3 oz package) frozen puff pastry, thawed overnight in the refrigerator
- 1 large egg + 1 tbsp water, beaten together (egg wash)
- Flaky sea salt, optional, for finishing

The Dead Rabbit's Steak and Stout Pie

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1** **Brown the beef — don't skip or rush this.** Pat the beef cubes completely dry with paper towels. Dry beef browns; wet beef steams. Season generously with salt and pepper on all sides, then dust lightly with the flour and toss to coat. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering and just starting to haze. Add half the beef cubes in a single layer — don't crowd. Cook undisturbed for 2 to 3 minutes until deeply browned, then turn and repeat on at least two more sides. Total per batch: about 8 to 10 minutes for real caramelization. Transfer to a plate. Add the remaining tablespoon of oil and repeat with the second batch. The pot will have a deep brown layer of fond on the bottom — this is exactly what you want.
- 2** **Build the vegetable base.** Reduce heat to medium. Add the diced onion to the fat and fond in the pot and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the carrots and celery and cook 3 more minutes until starting to soften. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute. Stir in the tomato paste and cook, pressing it into the vegetables and scraping the bottom, until it darkens from bright orange to a deeper brick-red, about 2 minutes. Don't rush this step — the caramelized tomato paste adds body and depth the raw paste lacks.
- 3** **Deglaze with Guinness.** Pour in the entire can of Guinness Draught. The pot will bubble vigorously. Scrape every browned bit off the bottom with a wooden spoon — all of that fond dissolves into the braising liquid and becomes the backbone of your gravy. Add the Worcestershire sauce. Bring to a boil and let the Guinness reduce for 3 minutes, which mellows some of the raw bitterness of the hops.
- 4** **Braise until completely tender.** Return the browned beef and any accumulated juices to the pot. Pour in the beef stock — the liquid should come about two-thirds of the way up the beef; add a splash more stock if needed. Nestle in the thyme sprigs and bay leaves. Bring to a simmer, then reduce the heat to the lowest setting on your stove. Cover tightly and cook until the beef falls apart when pressed with a spoon, 1 hour 45 minutes to 2 hours 15 minutes. Check every 30 minutes; if the liquid is rolling, turn the heat down further — it should barely simmer.
- 5** **Reduce and season the gravy.** Discard the thyme stems and bay leaves. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the beef to a bowl. Increase heat to medium-high and simmer the braising liquid uncovered for 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until it thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon and looks glossy. Taste it: it needs real seasoning at this point — add salt and pepper until it tastes finished and rounded, not flat. Gently stir the beef back in. Let the filling cool for at least 20 minutes before assembling the pies. A hot filling will melt the puff pastry from underneath before the top gets a chance to bake.
- 6** **Preheat and prep the pastry.** Heat oven to 400°F. On a lightly floured surface, unfold the thawed puff pastry. Cut it into 4 rounds or squares sized to generously cover the tops of your baking vessels with about a 1-inch overhang. Score a light crosshatch pattern on the top of each piece with a sharp knife — do not cut through the pastry.
- 7** **Fill the crocks and add the pastry tops.** Divide the cooled filling evenly among 4 oven-safe cast-iron skillet or 10 to 12-ounce ramekins, filling them to about 1 inch from the top. Drape a pastry piece over each crock, pressing the edges firmly against the rim to seal. Brush generously with egg wash, covering the full surface. Sprinkle with flaky sea salt if using.
- 8** **Bake until deeply golden.** Place the filled crocks on a rimmed baking sheet (to catch any drips). Bake at 400°F for 22 to 27 minutes, until the pastry is puffed and a deep, rich golden-brown — significantly darker than pale blonde, closer to the color of a well-baked croissant. The filling should be visibly bubbling around the edges. Let rest 5 minutes before serving — the gravy continues to set slightly.



Nº 16

— VIRAL TIKTOK · COPYCAT

Halloween Graveyard Shepherd's Pie

The viral TikTok Halloween dinner: a rich lamb-and-vegetable shepherd's pie topped with dark green mashed potato 'cemetery grass,' piped white tombstones, and crushed cracker 'graveyard dirt.' Feeds six and takes under an hour.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
25 min	35 min	6	Easy	465

01 Ingredients

FOR THE FILLING:

- 1½ lb (680g) ground lamb — the traditional choice for shepherd's pie and the one that gives the dish its name. Ground lamb has enough intramuscular fat to stay juicy after browning without going greasy. If you prefer beef, 80/20 ground beef is the right substitute; lean ground beef (90/10) produces a drier filling.
- 1 medium yellow onion (about 1 cup diced) — finely diced so it softens completely into the sauce and doesn't leave large chunks
- 2 medium carrots (about ¾ cup diced) — peeled and cut into ¼-inch dice. Uniform size means everything cooks evenly in the same time.
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp tomato paste — adds color, umami depth, and body to the gravy. Stir it in and let it fry in the fat for 1–2 minutes before adding liquid; this caramelizes it slightly and removes the raw tinny flavor.
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 cup (240ml) low-sodium beef broth
- 1 tbsp all-purpose flour — the thickener. Stir it in with the tomato paste before adding the broth so the flour cooks out and there's no chalky taste.
- 1 cup (150g) frozen peas — add them straight from frozen in the last 2 minutes; they don't need pre-cooking and stay bright
- 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves (or ½ tsp dried thyme)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp fine salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper
-

FOR THE MASHED POTATO TOPPING:

- 2 lb (900g) russet potatoes — peeled and cut into 1½-inch cubes. Russets produce the fluffiest, driest mash, which is what you want here: a stiff, pipeable mash holds the tombstone shape through the oven. Waxy potatoes (Yukon Gold, red) are creamier but produce a softer mash that may slump.
- 4 tbsp (56g) unsalted butter, at room temperature — cut into pieces so it melts smoothly into the hot potato without clumping
- ½ cup (120ml) warm whole milk — warm, not cold. Cold milk cools the potato instantly and makes it gluey. Add it gradually — you may not need the full ½ cup.
- 1 tsp fine salt
- ¼ tsp white pepper
- Green food coloring — standard liquid or gel. You need 4–6 drops to get a vivid 'grass' green.
- Black food coloring — 1 drop added to the green makes it darker and more 'cemetery' than bright spring green. One drop is usually enough.

FOR THE GRAVEYARD TOPPING:

- 4–5 dark crackers (black sesame crackers, dark rye Wasa, or regular Ritz crackers) — crushed to fine crumbs in a ziplock bag. The crumbs get scattered over the dark green mashed potato right before serving to mimic loose graveyard dirt. Dark crackers read more realistically than light ones; crumbled roasted nori (seaweed) is another option and adds almost no calories.
- Optional: 2–3 small fresh rosemary sprigs — pressed into the potato at angles to look like bare trees
- Optional: 6 small flags or toothpick signs reading 'RIP' — for serving drama

— VIRAL TIKTOK · COPYCAT

Halloween Graveyard Shepherd's Pie

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Make the filling.** Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Heat 2 tbsp olive oil in a 10–12-inch oven-safe skillet or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the ground lamb and cook, breaking it up with a spoon, for 6–8 minutes until browned and cooked through. Drain off all but about 1 tbsp of the rendered fat — leaving some fat in the pan adds flavor, but excess fat makes the finished pie greasy.
- 2 Build the filling base.** Reduce heat to medium. Add the diced onion and carrot to the lamb and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes until the onion is soft and translucent. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute more. Stir in the tomato paste and flour and cook for 1–2 minutes, stirring constantly, until the paste darkens slightly and the raw flour smell disappears. Add the Worcestershire sauce, broth, thyme, salt, and pepper. Stir well to incorporate everything and scrape up any browned bits. Bring to a simmer and cook 4–5 minutes until the gravy has thickened to a loose, glossy consistency — it should coat the back of a spoon. Stir in the frozen peas. Taste and adjust seasoning. Remove from heat.
- 3 Cook the potatoes.** While the filling simmers, cover the potato cubes with cold salted water in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a medium boil and cook 15–18 minutes until a fork slides into the center of the largest cube with no resistance. Drain thoroughly, then return the potatoes to the hot pot over the lowest possible heat for 1–2 minutes, shaking occasionally — this evaporates surface moisture and produces a drier, fluffier mash.
- 4 Mash to a pipeable consistency.** Add the butter to the hot potatoes and mash until melted in completely. Add the warm milk a few tablespoons at a time, mashing between additions, until the potato is smooth but stiff — like thick hummus or soft play dough. You want the mash to hold a shape when piped, NOT flow. Season with 1 tsp salt and ¼ tsp white pepper. Taste and adjust.
- 5 Divide and color the mashed potato.** Remove about 1 generous cup of mashed potato to a small bowl and set it aside — this is your tombstone white. Into the remaining large portion, stir 5 drops of green food coloring and 1 drop of black food coloring until the color is fully incorporated and uniform. It should look like the color of a shadowy lawn, not neon green — add another drop of black if it looks too bright.
- 6 Top the filling.** Spread the dark green mashed potato over the filling in an even layer, going all the way to the edges to seal in the filling. Use the back of a spoon to create a gently textured surface — some slight peaks and valleys look more like uneven ground than a perfectly smooth top.
- 7 Pipe the tombstones.** Transfer the white mashed potato to a piping bag fitted with a large round tip, or a sturdy ziplock bag with one bottom corner snipped to create a ½-inch opening. Pipe 6–8 tombstone shapes directly on the surface of the dark green potato: each tombstone is a tall rectangle about 1½ inches wide and 2 inches tall, with an arched or pointed top. Pipe the outline first, then fill it in solidly — you want each tombstone to be thick enough (about ¼ inch) to hold its shape through the oven. Using a toothpick or the tip of a skewer, score 'RIP' into the center of each tombstone while the potato is still soft.
- 8 Bake and finish.** Bake at 400°F for 22–25 minutes until the filling is visibly bubbling around the edges of the pan and the tombstones have just the faintest golden tips. Remove from the oven and let sit 5 minutes — the filling continues to set and thickens slightly as it cools, making it much easier to portion cleanly. Just before serving, scatter the crushed dark cracker crumbs over the green potato in patches to create 'graveyard dirt.' If using rosemary sprigs as trees, press them in now at slight angles so they look windswept. Serve directly from the skillet.

WHY IT WORKS

It's a classic shepherd's pie (ground lamb or beef in savory gravy with vegetables) decorated to look like a Halloween cemetery: the mashed potato topping is split.



Nº 17

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Viral TikTok Halloween Mummy Chicken

The viral TikTok Halloween mummy chicken: seasoned chicken breasts wrapped in crescent dough strips like mummy bandages, baked until golden with olive-slice eyes.

PREP

15 min

COOK

28 min

SERVES

4

LEVEL

Easy

CAL

610

01 Ingredients

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (6–7 oz each)
- 2 tubes (8 oz each) refrigerated crescent roll dough (Pillsbury or store brand)
- 8 large pitted black olives, halved lengthwise
- 1 egg + 1 tbsp water (egg wash)
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- ½ tsp onion powder
- ½ tsp kosher salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- Cooking spray or 1 tbsp olive oil for the pan

Viral TikTok Halloween Mummy Chicken

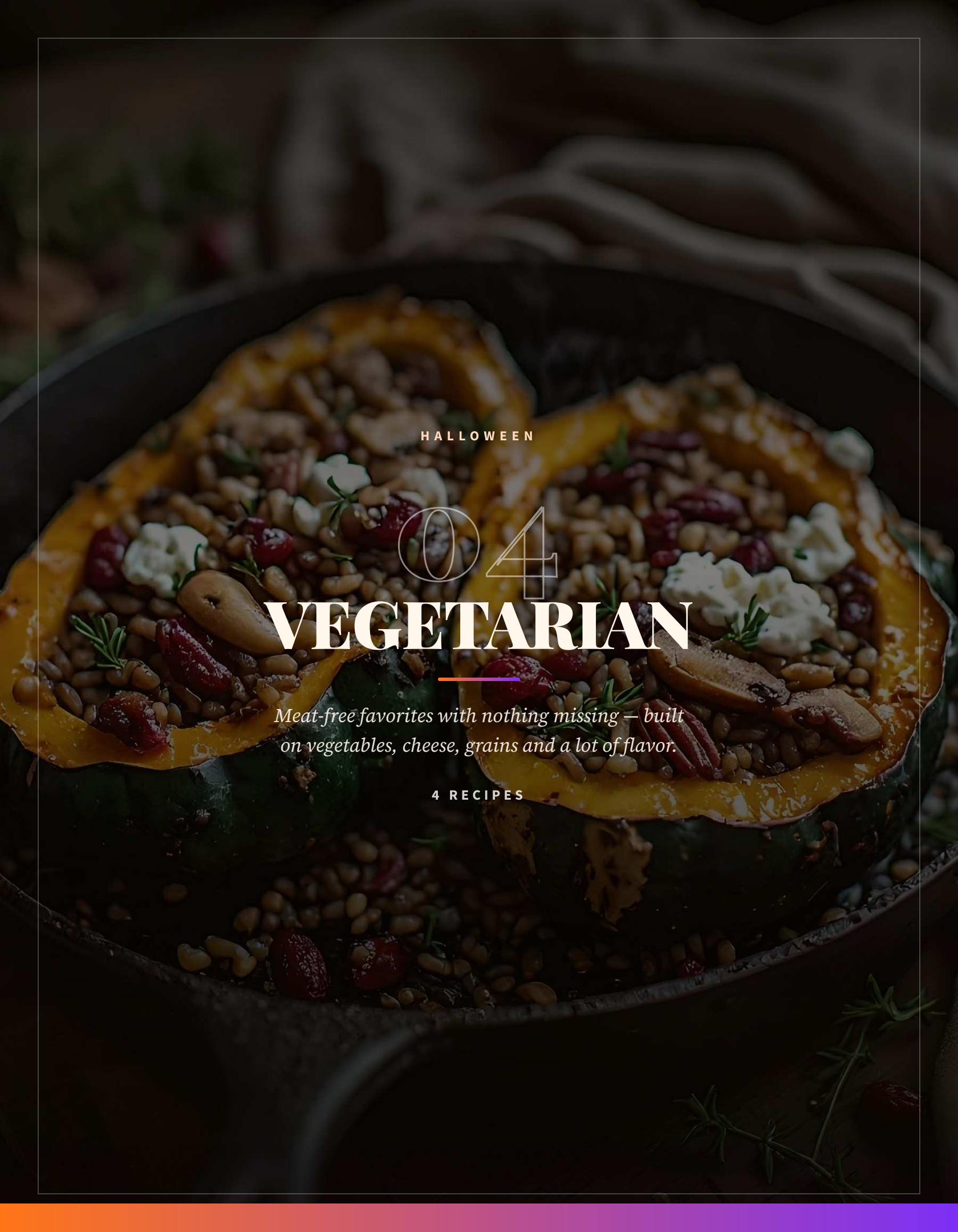
CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Prep the oven and pan.** Heat oven to 375°F (190°C). Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper and spray lightly with cooking spray.
- 2 Pound the chicken.** Place each chicken breast between two sheets of plastic wrap or in a zip-lock bag. Using a meat mallet, rolling pin, or heavy skillet, pound each breast to an even ¾-inch (2 cm) thickness. This is the most important step — even thickness ensures the chicken and dough finish at the same time.
- 3 Season the chicken.** In a small bowl, mix garlic powder, smoked paprika, Italian seasoning, onion powder, salt, and pepper. Pat the pounded chicken breasts dry with paper towels, then rub the seasoning mix evenly over all sides of each breast.
- 4 Cut the crescent strips.** Open both tubes of crescent dough and unroll onto a cutting board. Cut each triangle lengthwise into 3 long, thin strips — you'll have about 24 strips total. They don't need to be perfectly even.
- 5 Wrap the mummies.** Place one seasoned chicken breast on the parchment-lined baking sheet. Lay the end of a crescent strip under the breast to anchor it. Wind the strip diagonally over the top of the chicken, overlapping slightly. Continue adding strips in overlapping diagonal passes — working like real mummy bandages — until about two-thirds of the breast is covered. Leave a 1-inch gap at one end (the head) for the eyes. Tuck the final strip end under the last wrapped section to secure. Repeat for all 4 breasts.
- 6 Apply egg wash.** Whisk 1 egg with 1 tablespoon of water. Using a pastry brush, coat all the crescent strips evenly with egg wash — this is what gives the dough a deep golden-brown color. Do not brush the bare chicken in the face gap.
- 7 Bake.** Bake at 375°F for 25–28 minutes, until the crescent dough is a deep golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted through the dough into the thickest part of the chicken reads 165°F (74°C). Check at 25 minutes — ovens vary.
- 8 Add the eyes.** Remove the tray from the oven. Immediately press two halved black olive slices into the face gap of each mummy, cut side down — the residual heat from the dough will help them stay in place as it cools slightly. Work quickly while the dough is still pliable.
- 9 Rest and serve.** Let the mummies rest 3 minutes on the baking sheet before serving — the resting time lets the juices redistribute and makes the mummies much easier to move without the crescent strips pulling away. Serve on a dark platter for maximum Halloween effect.

WHY IT WORKS

Chicken breasts are thick in the center (sometimes 1.5 inches) and thin at the edges (sometimes 1/2 inch).



HALLOWEEN

04
VEGETARIAN

Meat-free favorites with nothing missing — built on vegetables, cheese, grains and a lot of flavor.

4 RECIPES



Nº 18

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Stuffed Acorn Squash with Wild Rice and Mushrooms

The best Halloween vegetarian dinner: acorn squash halves roasted until caramel-sweet, then stuffed with earthy wild rice, cremini mushrooms, dried cranberries, toasted pecans, and a crumble of goat cheese.

PREP
15 min

COOK
40 min

SERVES
4

LEVEL
Easy

CAL
380

01 Ingredients

FOR THE SQUASH:

- 2 medium acorn squashes (about 1½ lb each), halved lengthwise and seeded
- 1½ tbsp olive oil
- 1½ tbsp pure maple syrup
- ½ tsp fine salt
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE WILD RICE FILLING:

- ¾ cup (135g) dry wild rice blend (or 100% wild rice), rinsed
- 1½ cups (355ml) vegetable broth (for cooking the rice)
- 1½ tbsp olive oil
- 2 medium shallots, finely diced

- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 8 oz (225g) cremini mushrooms, cleaned and roughly chopped
- 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves (or ½ tsp dried)
- ½ tsp fine salt, plus more to taste
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tbsp dried cranberries
- ¼ cup (30g) pecans, roughly chopped and toasted
- 2 tbsp fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped

TO FINISH:

- 2 oz (55g) soft goat cheese, crumbled (omit for vegan)
- Extra parsley or fresh thyme for garnish (optional)

Stuffed Acorn Squash with Wild Rice and Mushrooms

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Preheat oven to 400°F (205°C).** Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil or parchment.
- 2 Prep the squash.** Halve each acorn squash lengthwise from stem to tip — microwave the whole squash for 3 minutes first if the shell feels too hard to cut safely. Scoop out all seeds and stringy fibers with a large spoon or melon baller and discard. Place the four halves cut-side-up on the baking sheet.
- 3 Glaze and roast.** Whisk together olive oil, maple syrup, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Brush the cut face and the inside of each squash cavity generously with the glaze. Roast at 400°F for 30–35 minutes, until the flesh is deeply golden-brown and caramelized and a fork pierces the thickest part with no resistance. The edges where the orange flesh meets the green shell should be starting to pull away and darken. If still firm at 30 minutes, roast 5 more minutes.
- 4 Cook the wild rice.** While the squash roasts, combine the rinsed wild rice blend and vegetable broth in a medium saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover tightly, and cook for 25–30 minutes until the rice is tender and most of the liquid is absorbed. Remove from heat, let sit covered 5 minutes, then fluff with a fork.
- 5 Sauté the mushrooms.** Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the shallots and cook 3 minutes until soft. Add garlic and cook 1 minute. Add mushrooms, thyme, salt, and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 7–8 minutes until the mushrooms have released all their liquid and that liquid has evaporated — you want the mushrooms golden and slightly caramelized, not steaming in liquid. Remove from heat.
- 6 Make the filling.** Combine the cooked wild rice and sautéed mushrooms in the skillet (or a large bowl). Add cranberries, toasted pecans, and parsley. Toss to combine. Taste and adjust salt — wild rice absorbs a lot of seasoning, so this may need more than you expect.
- 7 Fill and finish.** Spoon the wild rice filling generously into each roasted squash cavity, mounding it slightly above the rim. Crumble goat cheese evenly over the tops. Return the filled squash to the oven for 5 minutes, just until the cheese is warmed through and begins to soften. Serve immediately, garnished with extra parsley or fresh thyme.

WHY IT WORKS

Yes. Farro is the best substitute (nutty, chewy, absorbs flavors beautifully). Long-grain brown rice works well and is easier to find. Regular white rice works but produces a softer, less textured filling that can feel wet.



Nº 19

— **BABBO** • **COPYCAT**

Pumpkin Lune

Babbo's legendary fall pasta: half-moon ravioli stuffed with roasted butternut squash, balsamic vinegar, and Parmigiano — no ricotta — tossed in crispy sage brown butter and finished with grated amaretti.

PREP

1 hr (including pasta rest)

COOK

45 min

SERVES

6

LEVEL

Hard

CAL

415

01 Ingredients

FILLING:

- 1 medium butternut squash (about 2 lbs / 900g), halved lengthwise and seeds removed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ cup (50g) Parmigiano-Reggiano, freshly and finely grated
- 2 tablespoons good-quality balsamic vinegar (aged Aceto Balsamico di Modena preferred)
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

FRESH PASTA DOUGH:

- 2 cups (250g) 00 flour or all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 3 large eggs plus 1 extra egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

- Pinch of kosher salt
- Semolina flour for dusting the tray
- 1 egg beaten with 1 tablespoon water (egg wash for sealing)

SAGE BROWN BUTTER:

- 8 tablespoons (115g) unsalted butter
- 10 to 12 large fresh sage leaves
- Small squeeze of fresh lemon juice
- Kosher salt to taste

TO FINISH:

- Shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 3 whole dry amaretti cookies (for grating tableside — ½ cookie per portion)
- Fleur de sel (optional)

Pumpkin Lune CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 **Roast the squash.** Preheat oven to 400°F. Rub the cut faces of the squash halves with olive oil and season lightly with salt. Place cut-side down on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Roast 40 to 45 minutes until completely soft — a skewer passes through with zero resistance and the cut face is deeply golden. Remove and cool 10 minutes.
- 2 **Drain the squash.** Scoop the cooked flesh into a fine-mesh strainer set over a bowl. Let drain for at least 10 minutes, pressing gently with the back of a spoon twice. This step removes the water that makes filling loose and causes lune to burst in the pot. Do not skip it.
- 3 **Make the filling.** Transfer the drained squash to a medium bowl. Add the finely grated Parmigiano, balsamic vinegar, and freshly grated nutmeg. Mash and stir until smooth — the filling should be thick, cohesive, and hold its shape on a spoon. Taste: it should be savory and complex, with a clear squash flavor balanced by the cheese and a faint sweet-acid note from the balsamic. Season with salt and black pepper. Cover and refrigerate at least 30 minutes (up to 24 hours) until firm and cold.
- 4 **Make the pasta dough.** Mound the flour on a clean work surface and create a wide well in the center. Add the 3 eggs, extra yolk, olive oil, and pinch of salt into the well. Beat the eggs gently with a fork, slowly drawing flour in from the inner walls of the well. Once the dough comes together as a rough mass, set the fork aside and knead by hand for 8 to 10 minutes until smooth, elastic, and slightly tacky but not sticky. Wrap in plastic and rest at room temperature for 30 minutes.
- 5 **Roll the pasta.** Divide the rested dough into 4 equal pieces; keep three covered while you work. Flatten one piece into an oval and run it through a pasta machine at the widest setting, folding in thirds between the first 2 to 3 passes. Then run through progressively thinner settings — no more folding — finishing at setting 5 or 6. The sheet should be nearly translucent. Lay on a lightly floured surface covered with a clean kitchen towel. Repeat with remaining pieces.
- 6 **Cut and fill the lune.** Use a 3½-inch round cutter to cut rounds from the pasta sheets. Keep them covered — they dry in minutes. Working one at a time: place a scant tablespoon of filling in the center of a round. Brush the full perimeter with egg wash. Fold into a half-moon, aligning the edges. Press firmly from the center of the curved edge outward to the tips, pushing out all air pockets. Run your thumb along the seam twice to be sure. Set on a semolina-dusted tray; don't let lune touch each other.
- 7 **Make the sage brown butter.** Set a wide skillet over medium heat. Add the butter and let it melt. Add the sage leaves — they should sizzle. Swirl the pan and watch: the butter will foam, the foam will subside, and the milk solids will begin to brown. Cook until the butter is deep amber and smells nutty — 3 to 4 minutes total. Remove from heat immediately and add the squeeze of lemon juice to stop the cooking. Season with a pinch of salt.
- 8 **Cook the lune.** Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. Salt heavily. Cook lune in batches (don't crowd) for 2 to 3 minutes until the sealed edges feel just tender when gently pinched. Use a slotted spoon to lift them directly into the brown butter skillet. Reserve ¼ cup pasta cooking water.
- 9 **Finish and serve.** Return the skillet to low heat. Add 2 tablespoons pasta cooking water and toss gently to coat the lune in the emulsified sauce. Serve immediately in warm, shallow bowls. Top each portion with shaved Parmigiano, a fried sage leaf or two, and — the move that defines the dish — finely grate half a dry amaretti cookie over each bowl at the table. Add a pinch of fleur de sel if desired.

WHY IT WORKS

Most home and restaurant squash pasta recipes add ricotta because it's easy, affordable, and adds a mild creaminess that makes the filling pliable. Babbo's pumpkin lune omits it deliberately.



Nº 20

— SPOTTED PIG • COPYCAT

Gnudi

The most-searched-for dish from The Spotted Pig — April Bloomfield's famous NYC gnudi: pillowy ricotta dumplings with a 24-hour semolina skin, finished in hazelnut-brown butter with crispy sage. The trick is the rest period, not the dough.

PREP

25 min + 24 hr rest

COOK

10 min

SERVES

4

LEVEL

Medium

CAL

430

01 Ingredients

FOR THE GNUDI:

- 2 cups (16 oz / 450g) whole-milk ricotta, such as Calabro or Bellwether — NOT part-skim or low-fat
- 1 cup (about 3 oz / 85g) finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, plus more for serving
- 1 large egg yolk
- ¼ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- ½ tsp fine sea salt
- ¼ tsp freshly ground white pepper

- 1½ cups fine semolina flour, divided (for rolling and resting)

FOR THE BROWN BUTTER SAUCE:

- 6 tbsp (85g) unsalted butter
- 12 to 14 large fresh sage leaves
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR HALLOWEEN SERVING (OPTIONAL BUT BEAUTIFUL):

- 3 tbsp fresh pomegranate arils
- Pinch of Aleppo pepper or smoked paprika

Gnudi

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 **Drain the ricotta — start here, ideally the evening before.** Line a fine-mesh strainer with two layers of cheesecloth (or a clean kitchen towel, lint-free). Spoon in the ricotta, set the strainer over a bowl, cover, and refrigerate for at least 2 hours — overnight is better. The ricotta is ready when it holds its shape in a mound and no liquid pools beneath it when you press it gently with the back of a spoon. Watery ricotta is the most common reason gnudi fall apart.
- 2 **Mix the dough.** In a large bowl, combine the well-drained ricotta, Parmigiano-Reggiano, egg yolk, nutmeg, salt, and white pepper. Mix gently with a fork — just enough to combine everything into a uniform pale yellow dough. Do not overmix; you're not developing structure, and overworking makes the dumplings tough.
- 3 **Form the gnudi.** Spread about ½ cup of semolina in an even layer on a rimmed baking sheet. Scoop a heaping teaspoon of dough (roughly 1 tablespoon / 20g) and drop it into the semolina. Use a second spoon to roll it gently until evenly coated, then roll lightly between your palms into a rough ball about the size of a large marble. Handle them as little as possible — warmth from your hands softens the dough. Set each ball on the semolina-dusted sheet without touching its neighbor. Repeat until all dough is used (you'll have about 24 to 28 gnudi).
- 4 **Rest in semolina — the step you cannot skip.** Dust more semolina generously over the top of the gnudi. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 24 hours, up to 48. During this rest, the semolina draws moisture from the ricotta surface and forms a delicate, paper-thin skin that holds the dumpling together in the boiling water. There is no way to speed this up — 24 hours is the minimum for a reliable cook. Make them the night before you plan to serve.
- 5 **Cook the gnudi in two batches.** Bring a large pot of water to a vigorous rolling boil and salt it very generously (it should taste distinctly salty — about 1 tablespoon of salt per quart of water). Set the brown butter skillet on a nearby burner so you can transfer the gnudi immediately. Working in 2 batches of 12 to 14, gently lower the gnudi in with a slotted spoon — don't drop them from height. They will sink to the bottom, then slowly rise to the surface.
- 6 **Finish timing carefully.** Once the gnudi float, cook 30 more seconds, then remove with a slotted spoon and transfer directly to the brown butter skillet. Do not let them sit in the water past this point — they will become waterlogged and soft.
- 7 **Make the brown butter while the first batch cooks.** Place the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Swirl occasionally. After about 3 to 4 minutes, the butter will foam, then the foam will subside and the milk solids on the bottom will turn golden and smell nutty. The moment it smells like toasted hazelnuts, add the sage leaves — they will sizzle dramatically. Fry 30 to 45 seconds until the leaves crisp and the butter deepens to amber. Season with salt and pepper. Keep warm over the lowest heat while the second batch cooks.
- 8 **Plate and serve immediately.** Transfer gnudi to shallow bowls, 6 per serving. Spoon any remaining brown butter from the skillet over each portion. Top with 3 to 4 crispy sage leaves and a generous grating of Parmigiano-Reggiano. For the Halloween serving: scatter pomegranate arils over each bowl. The jewel-red against the pale dumplings and amber butter is visually striking on the table, and the pomegranate's tartness cuts through the richness of the brown butter and ricotta in a way that feels considered rather than decorative.

WHY IT WORKS

The rest period is what makes or breaks the recipe — there is no workaround. As the gnudi sit in semolina, the fine-ground flour slowly draws moisture from the ricotta surface and forms a paper-thin skin that acts like a pasta wrapper.



Nº 21

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Black Bean Boo-dle Soup

The viral TikTok Halloween vegetarian soup with jet-black broth — naturally dark from blended black beans, not food coloring. Udon noodles, carved carrot jack-o-lanterns floating on top, ready in 40 minutes.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	25 min	4	Easy	395

01 Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 cans (15 oz each) black beans — drain and rinse, but RESERVE the liquid from one can
- 4 cups vegetable broth (low-sodium preferred)
- 2 tablespoons tamari or soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- Kosher salt and black pepper to taste
- 8 oz dried udon noodles (or 12 oz fresh/frozen)
- 3 large carrots, peeled
- 2 tablespoons full-fat coconut cream (or oat milk), for serving
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds (optional)

Black Bean Boo-dle Soup CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Sauté the aromatics.** Heat olive oil in a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Add the diced onion and cook 6–7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft and just starting to turn golden at the edges. Add garlic and cook 1 minute more until fragrant. Add the cumin, smoked paprika, chili powder, and cayenne; stir constantly for 30 seconds to bloom the spices in the oil — you'll smell them become more fragrant immediately.
- 2 Build the black broth.** Add the drained and rinsed black beans, the reserved can liquid from one can, and the vegetable broth. Stir to combine, scraping any spice bits off the bottom of the pot. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce to a steady simmer (small bubbles, not a hard boil) and cook uncovered for 12 minutes. The bean liquid adds body and deepens the color.
- 3 Blend until jet-black — the critical step.** Remove the pot from heat. Using an immersion blender directly in the pot, blend three-quarters of the soup completely smooth — work in slow circles from the bottom and keep blending for at least 90 seconds. The broth should turn deep, opaque black with no visible chunks in the blended portion; whole beans will remain in the unblended quarter for texture. (Alternatively, carefully ladle three-quarters of the soup into a standing blender in two batches, blend each on high for 60 seconds with the lid held firmly, and pour back into the pot. Hot soup expands — fill the blender no more than halfway and hold a folded kitchen towel over the lid.)
- 4 Season and hold.** Stir the tamari and lime juice into the jet-black broth. Taste and add salt and black pepper as needed — the broth should be deeply savory, slightly smoky, and have a gentle building heat from the cayenne. If the broth is thicker than you'd like, stir in up to ½ cup more vegetable broth to reach a pourable consistency. Cover and keep warm over the lowest heat while you prepare the noodles and carrots.
- 5 Carve the carrot jack-o-lanterns.** Cut the peeled carrots into rounds about ¾ inch thick — thicker than you'd think, so they hold their carved shape in the hot broth. Using a small sharp paring knife, cut a jack-o-lantern face into one flat side of each round: two small triangle eyes, a small triangle nose, and a jagged zigzag mouth (cut one notch pointing up, then one pointing down, alternating, for a 'teeth' effect). The carving is shallow — you're removing small wedges from the surface, not cutting through. A rough, imperfect face looks more authentically spooky in the bowl than a precise one. Bring a small pot of salted water to a boil and cook the carved carrot rounds for 3–4 minutes until just fork-tender but still firm enough to hold their carved shape. Drain and set aside.
- 6 Cook the udon noodles.** Bring a separate large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook dried udon noodles according to package directions, usually 8–10 minutes, until tender but still slightly chewy (al dente). Fresh or frozen udon cooks in 2–3 minutes. Drain and rinse immediately with cold water to stop the cooking and prevent the noodles from sticking together. Keep them in the colander until ready to serve.
- 7 Assemble and serve.** Divide the udon noodles among four deep bowls. Ladle the jet-black broth generously over and around the noodles — it should pool dark and dramatic around the pale noodles. Float 3–4 carved carrot jack-o-lanterns on the surface of each bowl. Drizzle ½ tablespoon of coconut cream in a small circle on the surface of the broth, then drag a toothpick or skewer through it in one direction to pull it into a spiderweb or swirl effect. Scatter green onions and sesame seeds over the top and serve immediately.

WHY IT WORKS

You didn't blend enough. This is the single most common issue — stopping at half-blended gives a dark grey, speckled broth. You need to blend at least three-quarters of the soup completely smooth and keep blending until no visible bean chunks remain.



HALLOWEEN

05
FOOD

*Breakfasts, sides and everything in between
— the recipes that round out the table.*

3 RECIPES



Nº 22

— IHOP · COPYCAT

Pumpkin Spice Pancakes

IHOP's fall pumpkin spice stack runs \$13–15 at the restaurant. This copycat nails the cream-cheese-iced, pumpkin-battered original — plus a 10-second jack-o-lantern face trick for Halloween morning.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
10 min	25 min	4	Easy	520

01 Ingredients

FOR THE PUMPKIN SPICE BATTER:

- 2 cups (240g) all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar, packed — brown sugar instead of white adds a slight molasses depth that amplifies the pumpkin spice notes
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1½ teaspoons pumpkin pie spice — if you don't have a blend, use ¾ tsp cinnamon + ¼ tsp ginger + ¼ tsp nutmeg + ⅛ tsp cloves
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1¼ cups (300ml) full-fat buttermilk — full-fat buttermilk is thicker and more acidic than low-fat; the extra acidity reacts with the baking soda to give a more pronounced rise. If substituting, stir 1 tablespoon of white vinegar into 1¼ cups whole milk and let sit 5 minutes.
- ½ cup (120g) canned pumpkin puree — use pure pumpkin (Libby's or similar), not pumpkin pie filling, which already has sugar and spices added
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

- Butter or neutral oil for the griddle

FOR THE CREAM CHEESE ICING (IHOP'S SIGNATURE DRIZZLE):

- 4 oz (115g) full-fat cream cheese, softened to room temperature — cold cream cheese will be lumpy no matter how long you beat it; set it out 30 minutes ahead
- 1 cup (120g) powdered sugar, sifted
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2–3 tablespoons whole milk — start with 2 tablespoons, then add more a teaspoon at a time until the icing flows off a spoon in a slow ribbon

FOR THE WARM PUMPKIN TOPPING:

- ½ cup (120g) canned pumpkin puree
- 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- ½ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tablespoons water, to thin

OPTIONAL — JACK-O-LANTERN DECORATION:

- About ¼ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips — you need roughly 20–25 chips per pancake for two triangle eyes, a triangle nose, and a 6–8 chip curved smile

Pumpkin Spice Pancakes CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 **Make the cream cheese icing first.** Beat the softened cream cheese with a hand mixer or stand mixer until completely smooth, about 1 minute. Add the powdered sugar and vanilla. Beat on low to combine, then on medium until smooth and thick. Add milk a tablespoon at a time, beating until the icing falls from the beater in a slow, thick ribbon. It should be pourable but not runny. Set aside at room temperature while you make the pancakes — it will thin slightly from the warmth, which is what you want for drizzling.
- 2 **Warm the pumpkin topping.** Stir together the pumpkin puree, maple syrup, pumpkin pie spice, salt, and water in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally, until smooth and heated through. Keep warm on the lowest setting, stirring occasionally. If it thickens too much, add a splash of water.
- 3 **Mix the dry ingredients.** In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, brown sugar, granulated sugar, baking powder, baking soda, pumpkin pie spice, and salt.
- 4 **Mix the wet ingredients.** In a medium bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, pumpkin puree, eggs, melted butter, and vanilla until smooth and the pumpkin is fully incorporated.
- 5 **Combine — gently.** Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Fold together with a rubber spatula using 12–15 strokes. Stop when no dry flour is visible, even if the batter is still lumpy. Lumps are fine; overmixing develops gluten and makes pancakes dense and rubbery. Let the batter rest undisturbed for 5 minutes — this activates the leavening and relaxes the gluten.
- 6 **Heat the griddle.** Set an electric griddle to 375°F (190°C), or warm a cast iron skillet over medium heat for 2 minutes. Test by flicking a few drops of water onto the surface — they should skitter and evaporate in 2 seconds. Brush lightly with melted butter.
- 7 **Pour the pancakes.** Use a 1/3-cup measure for consistent sizing. Pour batter onto the griddle, leaving 2 inches between each. You should hear a gentle sizzle immediately.
- 8 **Optional jack-o-lantern faces.** After 30 seconds, when the edges have just begun to set, quickly press chocolate chips into each pancake: two small triangles for eyes (3 chips each in a triangle), one triangle for the nose (3 chips), and a curved row of 6–8 chips for the smile. Work fast — you have about a 45-second window before the batter is too set to accept them.
- 9 **Flip once.** When bubbles cover most of the surface and the edges look matte (not glossy), about 2–3 minutes, flip the pancakes in one confident motion. Cook the second side for 1–2 minutes. The chocolate chip side will have golden pancake surrounding slightly melted, embedded chips — the faces are permanent. Do not press down on the pancakes.
- 10 **Keep warm.** Transfer cooked pancakes to a wire rack set on a sheet pan in a 200°F (93°C) oven. Never stack pancakes to keep warm — the steam makes them soggy.
- 11 **Serve.** Stack 3–4 pancakes per plate. Drizzle cream cheese icing back and forth across the stack in IHOP's signature zigzag. Spoon warm pumpkin topping alongside or over the top. Serve immediately.

WHY IT WORKS

Canned pumpkin puree adds an orange tint to the batter that deepens as the pancakes cook — you'll see golden-orange pancakes rather than standard pale gold ones. This is correct and expected.



Nº 23

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Caramel Apples

Classic Halloween caramel apples made from scratch with real homemade caramel — rich, glossy, and nothing like the rubbery store-bought kind.

PREP
15 min

COOK
15 min

SERVES
6

LEVEL
Medium

CAL
390

01 Ingredients

- 6 medium Granny Smith apples (firm, tart)
- 6 wooden craft sticks or lollipop sticks
- 1 cup (2 sticks / 225g) unsalted butter
- 2 cups (400g) packed dark brown sugar
- 1 cup (240ml) heavy cream
- 1 cup (240ml) light corn syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp fine sea salt
- 2 tbsp baking soda (for washing apples)
- Optional decorations: Halloween sprinkles, crushed graham crackers, mini chocolate chips, melted dark or white chocolate, candy eyes

Caramel Apples CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 The night before (or at least 4 hours ahead): remove the wax.** Scrub each apple under hot water with a tablespoon of baking soda, rinse clean, and dry thoroughly with paper towels. Place on a baking sheet lined with paper towels and refrigerate uncovered overnight. This removes the food-grade wax coating and eliminates surface moisture — both essential for caramel adhesion. You'll know the wax is gone when the apple skin looks matte rather than shiny.
- 2 Insert the sticks.** When ready to dip, insert a wooden craft stick firmly into the stem end of each apple, pushing at least 1½ inches deep. The stick should feel completely secure — wiggle it gently to confirm. Set apples aside at room temperature for 10 minutes to take the chill off the skin.
- 3 Prep your dipping station.** Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and grease it well with butter (or use a silicone mat). Set up any decorations — sprinkles, crushed graham crackers, crushed cookies — in separate shallow bowls nearby. You'll need to decorate within 30 seconds of dipping, so everything should be within arm's reach.
- 4 Make the caramel.** In a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan (at least 3-quart), combine butter, brown sugar, heavy cream, and corn syrup. Clip a candy thermometer to the side. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until butter melts and everything combines into a smooth liquid. Once the mixture reaches a boil, stop stirring.
- 5 Cook to 238°F.** Continue cooking without stirring until the caramel reaches 238°F (soft-ball stage), about 10–12 minutes. It will be a deep amber color and smell rich and butterscotch-like. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla extract and salt. Let the caramel sit undisturbed for 5–7 minutes until it cools to around 200°F — it should coat a spoon thickly but still flow slowly.
- 6 Dip each apple.** Tilt the saucepan at an angle to create a deep pool. Hold an apple by the stick, plunge it into the caramel, and rotate it slowly 360 degrees so caramel coats all sides up to about ½ inch from the stick. Lift the apple out and spin it gently over the saucepan to let excess caramel drip back — count to 10 while spinning. This creates an even coat instead of a thick pooled base.
- 7 Decorate immediately.** Before the caramel sets (you have about 30 seconds), roll or press the coated apple into your chosen decorations, or drizzle with melted chocolate. Set each finished apple on the buttered parchment and let stand 15–20 minutes until the caramel is firm to the touch.
- 8 For a Halloween spiderweb drizzle:** let caramel set 10 minutes, then dip or drizzle in melted dark chocolate and let set another 5 minutes. Melt 2 oz white chocolate and pipe or drizzle concentric circles over the surface, then drag a toothpick from the center outward through the rings to pull each circle into a point — instant spiderweb. Press candy eyes on while the caramel is still slightly tacky. Serve the same day for best texture; refrigerate wrapped apples for up to 3 days.

WHY IT WORKS

Two causes, almost always in this order: (1) the apple still has its store-bought wax coating — scrub with hot water and baking soda for 60 seconds, rinse, and repeat if needed; (2) the apple had surface moisture.



Nº 24

— HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Ghost Grilled Cheese

The viral TikTok Halloween ghost grilled cheese: a classic buttery, two-cheese grilled sandwich with a white American cheese ghost melted on top and two nori-punched eyes.

PREP

5 min

COOK

10 min

SERVES

1 sandwich

LEVEL

Easy

CAL

510

01 Ingredients

FOR 1 SANDWICH:

- 2 slices sandwich bread (white, sourdough, or brioche)
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, softened (about ½ tbsp per bread face)
- 1 slice sharp cheddar
- 1 slice muenster or white American cheese (for the inside)
- 1 slice white American cheese (for the ghost shape on top)

- 1 small sheet nori (dried seaweed) — about a 2-inch square

OPTIONAL:

- Pinch of garlic powder mixed into softened butter for extra flavor
- Dijon mustard spread inside (adds tang without overpowering)

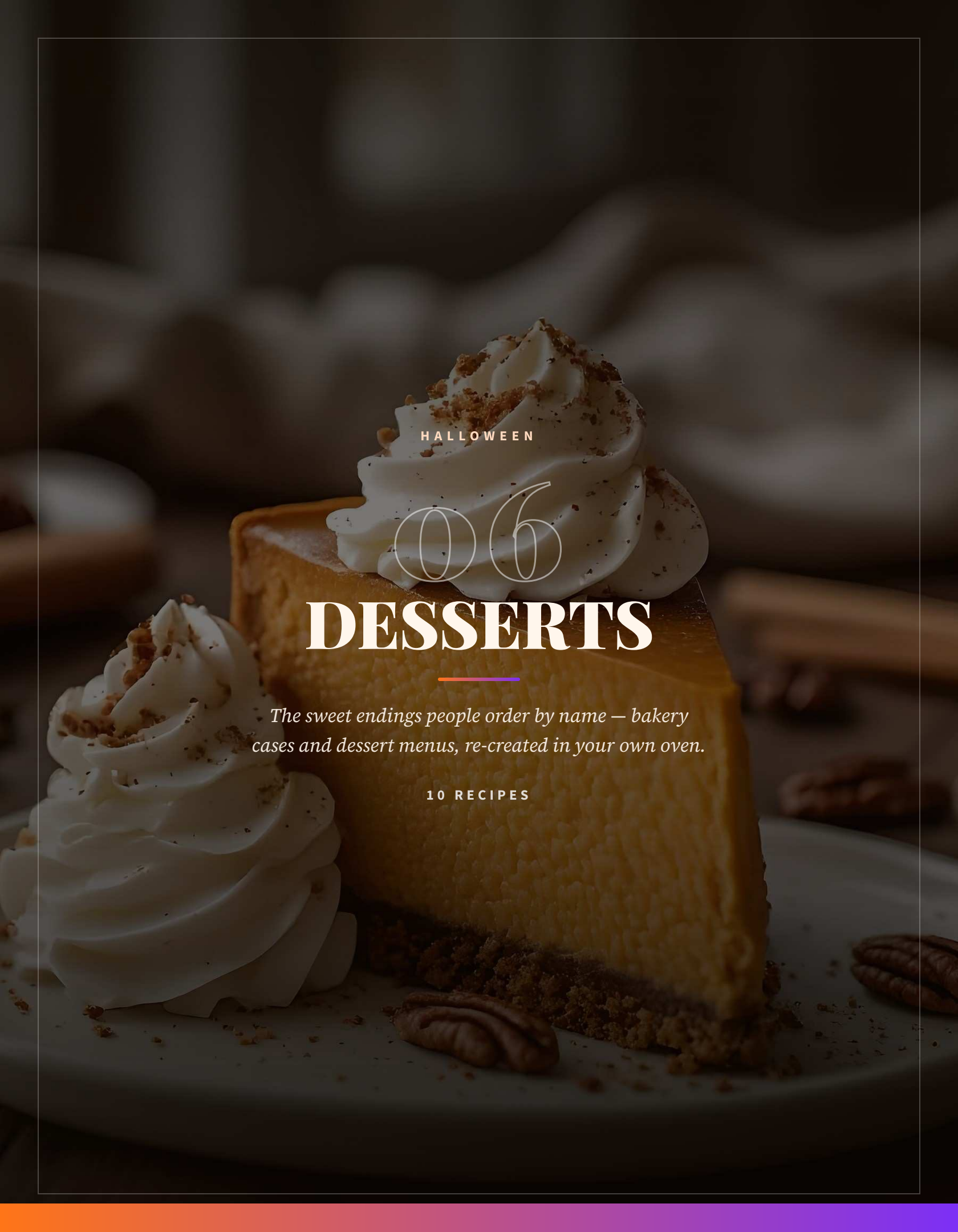
Ghost Grilled Cheese CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Cut the ghost shape:** Take the slice of white American cheese for the ghost and use a small ghost-shaped cookie cutter to press out the shape. If you don't have a cutter, fold the slice in half and cut a ghost shape freehand with kitchen scissors — a rounded top and 2–3 wavy bumps along the bottom. Set the ghost shape aside. Save the cheese scraps to add inside the sandwich if you like.
- 2 Butter the bread:** Spread the softened butter evenly across one face of each bread slice. Get all the way to the edges — unbuttered spots won't brown and will look pale on the finished sandwich. If using garlic butter, mix the garlic powder into the butter before spreading.
- 3 Build the sandwich:** Lay one slice of bread butter-side down in a cold (unheated) skillet. Layer the cheddar slice and the muenster slice on top. Place the second bread slice on top, butter-side up.
- 4 Cook the first side:** Place the skillet over medium-low heat. Let the sandwich cook for 3–4 minutes without touching it. Resist the urge to press down — you want even browning, not compression. The bread should turn a deep, even golden-brown. Peek at the bottom edge after 3 minutes: if it's pale, give it another minute; if it's golden, it's time to flip.
- 5 Flip and finish the inside:** Carefully flip the sandwich. The inside cheeses should be starting to melt — you may see the edges beginning to ooze slightly. Cook the second side for 3 minutes over medium-low heat.
- 6 Add the ghost:** With the second side nearly done (about 45–60 seconds left), lay the ghost cheese shape you cut earlier flat on top of the sandwich — the ghost sits on the top bread face, not inside. Cover the skillet with a lid. The trapped steam melts just the base of the ghost, bonding it to the bread without the ghost going translucent or losing its shape. After 45–60 seconds, remove the lid and slide the sandwich onto a plate immediately.
- 7 Make the eyes:** While the ghost is still warm, use a standard ¼-inch hole punch to punch two circles from the nori sheet. Press one circle into each 'eye socket' position on the ghost's face while the cheese is still slightly sticky from the heat. The nori adheres on contact. Alternatively, press two thin rounds of black olive in the same position. Position the eyes asymmetrically for a more expressive ghost — perfectly centered eyes look decorative; off-center eyes look alive.
- 8 Serve:** Serve immediately with a cup of tomato soup, ketchup, or any dipping sauce. The sandwich is best within 5 minutes of leaving the pan — the ghost shape softens as it cools, and the crust loses its crackle.

WHY IT WORKS

White American cheese (the deli-sliced kind, not processed cheese food in individually wrapped squares) is the best choice for the ghost shape.



HALLOWEEN

06

DESSERTS

The sweet endings people order by name — bakery cases and dessert menus, re-created in your own oven.

10 RECIPES



Nº 25

— THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY • COPYCAT

Pumpkin Cheesecake

Make the Cheesecake Factory Pumpkin Cheesecake at home — dense, spiced pumpkin filling on a crushed gingersnap crust, with a sour cream cap and cinnamon whipped cream. The exact technique that keeps the top crack-free.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
35 min	75 min	12	Hard	710

01Ingredients

FOR THE GINGERSNAP CRUST:

- 2 cups gingersnap cookie crumbs (about 35–40 gingersnap cookies, finely ground — Nabisco Ginger Snaps work; the store brand is fine; avoid the soft-baked style)
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted

FOR THE PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE FILLING:

- 4 packages (8 oz each, 32 oz total) full-fat cream cheese, softened fully to room temperature — at least 2 hours out of the fridge
- 1¼ cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup (8 oz) canned pumpkin puree — use plain pumpkin puree (Libby's 100% Pure Pumpkin), NOT pumpkin pie filling, which is pre-sweetened and pre-spiced and will throw off the ratios entirely
- 4 large eggs, room temperature
- ½ cup full-fat sour cream, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg (freshly grated is noticeably better)
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- ⅛ teaspoon fine salt

FOR THE SOUR CREAM CAP:

- 1 cup full-fat sour cream, room temperature
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE CINNAMON WHIPPED CREAM:

- 1½ cups heavy whipping cream, cold
- 3 tablespoons powdered sugar
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Pumpkin Cheesecake

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 **Bring everything to room temperature.** Set cream cheese, eggs, sour cream, and pumpkin puree out at least 2 hours before baking. Cold cream cheese will not beat smooth, and a lumpy batter leads to a dense, cracked cheesecake. Pumpkin puree straight from the fridge can seize the cream cheese slightly if it's too cold.
- 2 **Make the gingersnap crust.** Pulse gingersnap cookies in a food processor until finely ground — the texture should resemble coarse sand with no large pieces. (Alternatively, crush them in a zip-lock bag with a rolling pin.) Mix crumbs with sugar and melted butter until the mixture holds together when you press it between your fingers. Press firmly and evenly into the bottom and about 1 inch up the sides of a 10-inch springform pan. Use the flat bottom of a measuring cup to compact it. Bake at 325°F for 10 minutes until set and dry. Remove and let cool completely.
- 3 **Prepare the water bath.** Preheat oven to 325°F. Wrap the outside of the springform pan in two tight layers of heavy-duty aluminum foil, pressing snugly all the way up the sides. Place inside a large roasting pan. Bring a kettle of water to a full boil and set aside.
- 4 **Beat the cream cheese until completely smooth.** Using a stand mixer with the paddle attachment (or a hand mixer), beat the softened cream cheese on medium speed for 4 minutes, scraping the bowl twice, until zero lumps remain. This is the most important step — any unbeaten lumps will still be visible in the finished cheesecake.
- 5 **Add sugar and pumpkin.** With the mixer on low, add the sugar and beat until incorporated, about 1 minute. Add the pumpkin puree and all four spices (cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves) and the salt. Mix on low until fully combined and the color is uniform — about 2 minutes. Scrape the bowl thoroughly; the bottom of the bowl often hides unmixed cream cheese.
- 6 **Add eggs one at a time.** Add eggs individually on the lowest mixer speed, mixing for 15–20 seconds after each egg until the yolk is just absorbed. Do not increase the speed and do not beat past the point of incorporation — excess air means puffing and cracking. Scrape the bowl between eggs.
- 7 **Fold in sour cream and vanilla.** Add the sour cream and vanilla and mix on low for 30 seconds until the batter is smooth and uniform. Stop immediately. The batter should be glossy, pale orange, and flow off a spatula in a thick ribbon.
- 8 **Bake in the water bath.** Pour the filling over the cooled crust and smooth the top. Set the roasting pan on the middle oven rack and pour boiling water into the roasting pan until it reaches halfway up the sides of the springform. Bake at 325°F for 65 to 75 minutes. The cheesecake is done when the outer 2–3 inches are set and a 3-inch circle in the center still jiggles gently when you shake the pan. An overbaked pumpkin cheesecake turns grainy and dense — err toward underdone.
- 9 **Cool in the oven — do not skip this.** Turn off the oven and crack the door open 2 inches. Leave the cheesecake inside for 1 full hour. The gradual temperature drop is what prevents cracking and sinking. Pumpkin cheesecake is particularly vulnerable to rapid cool-down because the extra moisture in the filling creates more steam pressure.
- 10 **Apply the sour cream cap.** Whisk together 1 cup sour cream, 3 tablespoons sugar, and ½ teaspoon vanilla until smooth. After the hour oven-cool, spread this mixture evenly over the surface with an offset spatula. Return the cheesecake to the oven (turned back on to 325°F) for 5 minutes to set the cap lightly. This smooths any surface cracks and adds the signature Cheesecake Factory tang.
- 11 **Chill overnight.** Remove from the water bath. Run a thin knife around the edge between the cheesecake and the pan rim. Cool on the counter 30 minutes, then refrigerate uncovered for at least 8 hours, preferably overnight. The flavor improves significantly with a full overnight chill — the spices meld and the texture firms to the dense, sliceable consistency the restaurant's version is known for.
- 12 **Make the cinnamon whipped cream.** Beat cold heavy cream, powdered sugar, cinnamon, and vanilla with a hand mixer or stand mixer on medium-high until stiff peaks form. Pipe or dollop around the edge of the cheesecake just before serving, or serve alongside each slice.
- 13 **Slice and serve.** Release the springform sides. Dip a sharp thin-bladed knife in very hot water, wipe completely dry, and slice. Wipe and re-dip the knife between every cut. A 10-inch cheesecake cuts cleanly into 12 slices.



Nº 26

SALT AND STRAW • COPYCAT

Salt & Straw Jack o' Lantern Pumpkin Bread Ice Cream

Salt & Straw's 2026 Halloween flavor made at home: pumpkin spice custard ice cream folded with chunks of homemade pumpkin bread and a tangy cream cheese frosting swirl.

PREP
45 min

COOK
30 min

SERVES
8

LEVEL
Medium

CAL
395

01 Ingredients

PUMPKIN BREAD (MAKE THE DAY BEFORE):

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup light brown sugar, packed
- ½ cup canned pure pumpkin puree (not pumpkin pie filling)
- ⅓ cup neutral oil (vegetable or canola)
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp fine salt

PUMPKIN SPICE CUSTARD BASE:

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup whole milk
- ¾ cup canned pure pumpkin puree
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 5 large egg yolks
- 1½ tsp pumpkin pie spice
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp fine sea salt

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING SWIRL:

- 4 oz (½ block) full-fat cream cheese, softened to room temperature — use block, not tub
- ½ cup powdered sugar, sifted
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 2–3 tablespoons heavy cream, as needed for consistency

Salt & Straw Jack o' Lantern Pumpkin Bread Ice Cream

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Day 1 — Bake the pumpkin bread.** Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease an 8x8-inch baking pan (or an 8x4 loaf pan). In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, granulated sugar, brown sugar, baking powder, baking soda, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. In a second bowl, whisk the pumpkin puree, oil, and eggs until smooth and uniform. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and stir with a rubber spatula until just combined — a few dry streaks are fine; do not overmix. Pour into the prepared pan and bake 24–28 minutes for the square pan (35–40 minutes for the loaf pan) until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool completely in the pan, about 1 hour.
- 2 Day 1 — Cube and freeze the bread.** Once fully cool, cut the pumpkin bread into ½-inch cubes. Spread them in a single layer on a parchment-lined sheet pan. Freeze uncovered overnight, or for a minimum of 4 hours, until completely solid. Do not skip freezing — room-temperature or refrigerator-cold bread will dissolve into the ice cream rather than stay as distinct pieces.
- 3 Day 1 — Make the custard base.** In a medium saucepan, combine the heavy cream, whole milk, pumpkin puree, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon, and salt. Whisk to combine and heat over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the mixture just begins to steam and tiny bubbles appear at the edges — do not boil. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk the egg yolks and sugar together vigorously for 1–2 minutes until the mixture is pale yellow and thick. Slowly pour about 1 cup of the hot cream mixture into the egg yolks, whisking constantly as you pour — this is the temper, and it prevents the eggs from scrambling. Pour the warmed egg mixture back into the saucepan with the remaining cream. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon or heatproof spatula, until the mixture thickens enough to coat the back of the spoon and reaches 170°F on an instant-read thermometer — about 6–8 minutes. Do not let it boil.
- 4 Day 1 — Strain and chill.** Remove from heat. Pour the custard through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean bowl, pressing lightly to push everything through — this removes any accidentally scrambled egg bits. Stir in the vanilla extract. Place the bowl over an ice bath (a larger bowl filled with ice water) and stir for 5 minutes until the custard is cool to the touch. Cover with plastic wrap pressed directly against the surface and refrigerate overnight — at least 8 hours. Cold custard churns significantly better than room-temperature custard: colder liquid means faster churning and smaller ice crystals.
- 5 Day 2 — Make the cream cheese frosting swirl.** Beat the softened cream cheese with an electric mixer or vigorously by hand until completely smooth and lump-free, about 2 minutes. Add the sifted powdered sugar and vanilla and beat until combined. Add heavy cream one tablespoon at a time, mixing after each addition, until the frosting is smooth, glossy, and thick enough to drizzle slowly from a spoon in ribbons — think slightly looser than pipe-able frosting. It should pour but hold its shape. Set aside at room temperature.
- 6 Day 2 — Churn the ice cream.** Pour the cold custard into your ice cream maker and churn according to the manufacturer's instructions — typically 18–22 minutes for a standard 1½-quart machine, until the ice cream has the texture of soft-serve (it should mound when you push a spoon against the wall of the bowl, not flow back immediately). It will be too soft to scoop at this point — that is correct.
- 7 Day 2 — Layer into the container.** Working quickly, spoon one third of the churned ice cream into a 2-quart freezer-safe container or loaf pan. Scatter one third of the frozen bread cubes evenly over the ice cream. Drizzle one third of the cream cheese frosting over the top in S-curves or zigzags. Repeat the layers twice more: ice cream, bread cubes, cream cheese frosting. Once all three layers are in, take a butter knife and drag it through the layers in 4–5 slow S-curves across the length of the container. Do not over-swirl — you want visible streaks of frosting and distinct bread pieces, not a uniform blend.
- 8 Day 2 — Harden.** Press a sheet of plastic wrap directly against the surface of the ice cream (this prevents ice crystals from forming on top). Cover with a lid or tight foil wrap. Freeze until firm — at least 4 hours, preferably overnight. When fully hardened, the ice cream should be scoopable directly from the freezer after sitting at room temperature for 3–4 minutes.



Nº 27

— STRIP HOUSE • COPYCAT

Strip House's Brooklyn Blackout Cake

Strip House's legendary Brooklyn Blackout Cake made at home: thin devil's food layers stacked with thick chocolate pudding, wrapped in dark ganache, and pressed all over with chocolate crumbs.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
45 min	35 min	12	Medium	820

01 Ingredients

FOR THE DEVIL'S FOOD CAKE LAYERS (MAKES 3 ROUNDS — 6 LAYERS TOTAL + CRUMBLE):

- 2¼ cups (270g) all-purpose flour
- 1¾ cups (350g) granulated sugar
- ¾ cup (75g) Dutch-process cocoa powder, sifted
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon fine kosher salt
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 cup (240ml) buttermilk, room temperature
- 1 cup (240ml) hot strong-brewed coffee (not instant — use a real brewed coffee; espresso diluted with water works well)
- ½ cup (120ml) neutral oil (vegetable or canola)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE CHOCOLATE PUDDING FILLING:

- ¾ cup (150g) granulated sugar
- ½ cup (50g) Dutch-process cocoa powder, sifted
- 4 tablespoons (32g) cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon fine kosher salt
- 3 cups (720ml) whole milk
- 3 tablespoons (42g) unsalted butter
- 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract

FOR THE DARK CHOCOLATE GANACHE:

- 12 oz (340g) bittersweet chocolate (65–70% cacao), finely chopped
- 1½ cups (360ml) heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons (28g) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 tablespoon light corn syrup (for gloss and to prevent crystallization)

Strip House's Brooklyn Blackout Cake

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Make the pudding filling first — it needs at least 8 hours to firm up.** In a heavy saucepan, whisk together the sugar, cocoa, cornstarch, and salt until no lumps remain. Gradually whisk in the milk until completely smooth. Set over medium heat and cook, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula and scraping the bottom and corners of the pan, until the pudding thickens and large, slow bubbles begin to pop on the surface, about 12–15 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the butter and vanilla until fully incorporated. Pour into a shallow bowl or container, press plastic wrap directly against the surface (prevents a skin from forming), and refrigerate overnight — minimum 8 hours, 12 is better. The finished pudding should be very firm: thick enough that a spoon dragged through it leaves a clean track.
- 2 Bake the cake layers.** Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Butter three 9-inch round cake pans, line the bottoms with parchment, and butter the parchment. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, cocoa, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs, buttermilk, coffee, oil, and vanilla until combined. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and whisk just until smooth — don't overmix, but don't leave lumps either. The batter will be quite liquid. Divide the batter evenly among the three prepared pans (each pan will be about $\frac{3}{4}$ full). Bake 28–32 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with just a few moist crumbs (not wet batter). Cool in the pans 10 minutes, then turn out onto wire racks and cool completely. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour or overnight — cold cake layers are much easier to slice.
- 3 Slice the cold cake rounds into thin layers.** Place each round flat-side down on a cutting board. Using a long serrated knife, mark the equator of each round all the way around with a light score line. Then, with one hand gently pressing down on the top of the round (as if holding it steady), use a long sawing motion to slice through the full round horizontally. You want 2 thin layers per round = 6 layers total. Keep them flat on parchment paper as you work. Refrigerate any layers you're not actively using — cold layers are structurally firmer and less prone to crumbling.
- 4 Crumble one layer for the coating.** Take the thinnest or least-perfect of your 6 layers and use your hands to break it into small, irregular crumbs — some fine crumbs, some pea-sized pieces. Spread them on a rimmed baking sheet. You should have a generous pile. Set aside at room temperature.
- 5 Assemble the cake.** You now have 5 cake layers remaining. Place the first layer on a cardboard cake round or a flat serving plate. Remove the pudding from the refrigerator and stir it vigorously to loosen slightly — it will still be very thick. Spoon about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pudding onto the layer and spread it evenly to the edges with an offset spatula, going all the way to the edge in a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick layer. Lay the second cake layer directly on top and press gently so it's level. Repeat with pudding between each layer. After the fifth (top) layer is placed, use the offset spatula to scrape away any pudding that squeezed out from the sides. You want the stacked cake to have clean, sharp sides. Refrigerate the stacked cake for 2 hours — this firms up the pudding and makes the exterior coating step much cleaner.
- 6 Make the ganache.** Place the chopped chocolate in a large heatproof bowl. In a small saucepan, heat the cream over medium heat until it just begins to simmer (don't boil). Pour the hot cream over the chocolate and let it sit undisturbed for 2 minutes. Add the butter and corn syrup, then stir slowly from the center outward in widening circles until the ganache is completely smooth, glossy, and homogeneous. Set aside at room temperature for 20–30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until it reaches a pourable-but-not-runny consistency — it should flow slowly off a spoon and hold its shape when poured on a surface. If it cools too much and becomes stiff, gently warm over a double boiler.
- 7 Coat the cake with ganache.** Remove the chilled stacked cake from the refrigerator. Pour about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the ganache over the top, using an offset spatula to spread it in a thin, even layer across the top and down all the sides. The goal is a thin, complete coat — not a thick exterior. The crumbs will provide the final visual. Smooth the sides as much as possible. If the ganache starts to set too quickly, you can warm the spatula briefly under hot water and dry it before smoothing.

8

Apply the crumb coating — act quickly. Within 10–15 minutes of applying the ganache (while it's still slightly tacky), take handfuls of the chocolate cake crumbs and gently press them into the ganache on the sides and top of the cake. Work methodically from the bottom up on the sides, then across the top. Use a flat hand to press the crumbs in with very light pressure — just enough contact to embed them, not so hard that you dent the ganache. The goal is complete coverage: no ganache should be visible through the crumbs. Use every last crumb. The finished cake should look like it's been completely blanketed in chocolate rubble. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving.

9

To serve: Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before slicing. For clean slices, run a long serrated knife under hot water, wipe completely dry, and make one smooth downward cut per slice — no sawing. Wipe the blade dry between each slice. Serve immediately.

WHY IT WORKS

The chocolate pudding filling must be refrigerated overnight (minimum 8 hours, preferably 12) before you assemble the cake — this is the most commonly skipped step and the most important one.



Nº 28

— HALLOWEEN · COPYCAT

Viral TikTok Dirt Cake

The viral TikTok dirt cake that never goes out of style: layers of creamy vanilla pudding and cream cheese filling between crushed Oreo 'dirt,' topped with gummy worms. No-bake, 20 minutes, serves 12.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	0 min	12	Easy	425

01 Ingredients

THE FILLING:

- 1 package (8 oz) full-fat cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- ¼ cup (55g) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (120g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 2 packages (3.4 oz each) instant vanilla pudding mix (Jell-O brand or equivalent)
- 3 cups (710ml) cold whole milk (less than the box directions — this makes a stiffer pudding that holds its layers)
- 1 container (12 oz / 340g) Cool Whip, thawed (or 3 cups freshly whipped heavy cream, stiff peaks)

- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract

THE DIRT:

- 1 package (14.3 oz / 405g) Oreo cookies (regular, not Double Stuf)

FOR SERVING:

- 1 bag (3–4 oz) gummy worms
- 1 clean terra cotta flower pot (8–10 inch diameter, lined with plastic wrap) or a 9×13-inch baking dish
- Fresh silk or plastic flowers (optional, for the garden-party presentation)

Viral TikTok Dirt Cake CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Make the pudding layer first.** Whisk both packages of instant vanilla pudding mix with 3 cups cold milk in a large bowl for exactly 2 minutes — no more, no less. The mixture will seem thin at first. Cover and refrigerate for 5 minutes until it sets to a loose, spoonable consistency. It will look slightly underthick — that's correct for this application.
- 2 Beat the cream cheese base.** Using a hand mixer or stand mixer, beat the softened cream cheese and butter together on medium speed until completely smooth and fluffy, 2–3 minutes. Any lumps here will persist through the final dessert. Add the sifted powdered sugar and vanilla extract; beat 1 more minute.
- 3 Fold in the Cool Whip.** Gently fold the thawed Cool Whip into the cream cheese mixture using a rubber spatula. Use slow, full strokes from the bottom up — don't stir. You want to keep as much air as possible. The mixture should look light and mousse-like.
- 4 Combine the layers.** Add the set vanilla pudding to the cream cheese–Cool Whip mixture. Fold gently until just combined — swirls of pale yellow pudding are fine and will disappear in the final dessert. Do not overmix.
- 5 Crush the Oreo dirt.** Remove the cream filling from every Oreo first — twist them open and scrape the white filling with a butter knife. (The filling mixed into the crumbs creates pale chunks that look like gravel, not dirt.) Seal the chocolate wafers in a large zip-lock bag and crush with a rolling pin until you have a mix of fine crumbs and small irregular pieces. Variable texture reads as real dirt; uniform powder reads as cocoa dust.
- 6 Layer the dirt cake.** If using a flower pot, line it with plastic wrap first, letting several inches hang over the sides (this is how you scoop it at the table). If using a 9×13 pan, just begin layering directly. Start with a generous layer of Oreo crumbs covering the entire bottom (about ¾ cup). Spoon half the filling over the crumbs and smooth it level. Add another layer of Oreo crumbs. Spoon the remaining filling and smooth. Finish with a thick, even layer of Oreo crumbs covering the entire surface — this is the 'dirt' that everyone sees first.
- 7 Refrigerate.** Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, and up to overnight. The dessert firms up significantly as it chills, making it much easier to serve. The Oreo crumbs also absorb a little moisture from the filling during this time, softening slightly — which is correct.
- 8 Add the gummy worms just before serving.** Press gummy worms into the Oreo surface so the bottom half is buried and the top half arcs upward, as if wriggling out of the dirt. Do this at the last moment — if you add them too far in advance, the Oreo crumbs absorb color from the worms and the surface looks smudgy. For the flower pot presentation, add silk flowers at the back of the pot, with worms framing the front.
- 9 Serve.** Scoop with a large spoon, making sure each serving gets all three layers — crumbs, filling, crumbs. Use a spoon rather than a spatula; the layers don't cut cleanly in a pot, and the rustic scoop is part of the presentation.

WHY IT WORKS

Because it looks exactly like a pot of garden dirt — crushed chocolate Oreo cookies are indistinguishable in color and texture from dark potting soil, especially once they've absorbed a little moisture from the filling. The gummy worms complete the illusion.



Nº 29

— VIRAL · COPYCAT

TikTok Halloween Candy Bark

The viral TikTok Halloween candy bark: white chocolate poured thin, swirled with dark chocolate for a spooky marbled look, then loaded with candy corn, Reese's Pieces, Halloween M&Ms, and black and orange sprinkles. 30 minutes, no oven.

PREP

10 min

COOK

5 min (+ 20 min set)

SERVES

12

LEVEL

Easy

CAL

248

01 Ingredients

- 12 oz (340g) white chocolate chips or white baking wafers — Ghirardelli, Guittard, or Nestlé Premier White chips all melt smoothly. Avoid generic store-brand white chips; they contain less cocoa butter and can turn gritty when melted.
- 3 oz (85g) dark chocolate chips (60–70% cacao) — for the swirl. The contrast between the ivory white chocolate and dark swirl is the visual centerpiece of the bark.
- 1 teaspoon coconut oil, divided — adds just enough fluidity for clean swirling. Add $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp to the white chocolate and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp to the dark. The oil lowers the melting point slightly and makes both chocolates easier to pour and swirl.
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup candy corn — the most iconic Halloween candy; the orange, yellow, and white color blocks stand out vividly against white chocolate.
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup Reese's Pieces — the orange/brown/yellow palette is almost identical to Halloween's color scheme and the peanut butter flavor pairs surprisingly well with white chocolate.
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup Halloween M&Ms (orange, black, and green) — adds color saturation and a glossy, jewel-like look on top.
- 2 tablespoons orange and black Halloween sprinkles — the fine sprinkle layer unifies the surface and fills the visual gaps between larger candy pieces.
- Optional: 4 Oreo cookies, roughly crushed — adds a black-and-white crunchy element that reinforces the Halloween color scheme and adds textural contrast.
- Optional: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mini pretzels — the salt-sweet combination is the most popular bark variation on TikTok and the saltiness cuts through the richness of the white chocolate.

TikTok Halloween Candy Bark

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Line the pan.** Lay a sheet of parchment paper on the rimmed baking sheet, pressing it flat against the bottom and up the sides. Set aside. Set out all your candy toppings in small bowls — you'll have about 90 seconds to scatter them once the chocolate is poured, so having everything measured and ready is important.
- 2 Melt the white chocolate.** Place the white chocolate chips and $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon coconut oil in a completely dry microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 30-second intervals at 50% power, stirring after each interval. After the first interval the chips won't look melted — stir anyway; the residual heat continues melting them between bursts. Stop microwaving when about 80% of the chips are melted and stir until smooth. This usually takes 2–3 intervals. Do not microwave at full power or for more than 30 seconds at a time; white chocolate burns faster than dark chocolate and scorched white chocolate cannot be fixed. **Alternatively:** melt over a double boiler — a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan with 1 inch of barely simmering water, bowl not touching the water, stirring constantly. Take the bowl off the heat as soon as the chocolate is smooth.
- 3 Melt the dark chocolate.** In a second completely dry bowl, melt the dark chocolate chips and remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon coconut oil the same way: 30-second intervals at 50% power, stirring between. Dark chocolate can handle the heat slightly better than white, but still burns if overheated. Transfer the melted dark chocolate to a small piping bag, zip-lock bag with a corner snipped off, or just leave it in the bowl — you only need about 3–4 tablespoons for the swirl.
- 4 Pour and spread the white chocolate.** Pour the melted white chocolate onto the center of the lined baking sheet. Use an offset spatula or the back of a large spoon to spread it into a rectangle roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. You can go thinner ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch) for a more elegant, snappable texture or keep it at $\frac{1}{4}$ inch for a chunkier, more substantial bark. Leave about a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border from the edges of the parchment — imperfect edges break cleanly and add to the handmade look.
- 5 Add the dark chocolate and swirl.** Immediately drop small spoonfuls of melted dark chocolate over the white chocolate surface, or drizzle it in long lines from the tip of the bag. Space the dark chocolate clusters evenly across the surface. Pull a toothpick through the dark chocolate drops in long, slow S-curves — one smooth pass from top to bottom of the pan, then one pass from left to right, creates a clean marbled effect. Resist the urge to over-swirl; five or six passes is usually enough. More than that blends the colors into a muddy gray-brown.
- 6 Add the Halloween candy.** Working quickly before the chocolate surface begins to set (you have 60–90 seconds), scatter the candy corn, Reese's Pieces, Halloween M&Ms, and any crushed Oreos or pretzels over the surface. Leave the sprinkles for last — pour them evenly across the whole surface so they fill the gaps between larger pieces. Press each candy very gently with your fingertip to ensure it adheres to the surface. Candy that sits on top of already-set chocolate falls off when you break the bark.
- 7 Refrigerate until firm.** Slide the baking sheet into the refrigerator. Do not move it until the chocolate is completely firm — at least 20 minutes, up to 45 minutes for a thicker layer. The chocolate is set when it looks matte (not shiny) and feels completely hard when you press the edge with a finger. If you rush this step and break the bark while the chocolate is still warm, the pieces crumble rather than snap cleanly.
- 8 Break into shards.** Lift the parchment off the baking sheet and peel it away from the back of the bark. Break the bark into irregular shards by hand — the imperfect edges are part of the aesthetic. For cleaner pieces, score the surface with a sharp knife before refrigerating and then break along the score lines. Arrange on a serving platter or package in cellophane bags tied with orange ribbon for gifting.

WHY IT WORKS

Your chocolate seized — a very small amount of water got into it and caused the cocoa butter to separate from the cocoa solids. Even a single drop of steam from a boiling double-boiler pot can cause this. There is no fix once chocolate seizes.



Nº 30

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Viral TikTok Halloween Ghost Brownies

The viral TikTok Halloween brownies recipe with 1.7M likes: fudgy chocolate brownies cut into 16 squares, each topped with a marshmallow dipped in white chocolate that drapes into a ghost shape, finished with mini chocolate chip eyes.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	35 min	16	Easy	335

01 Ingredients

FOR THE FUDGY BROWNIES:

- ¾ cup (170g) unsalted butter
- 1½ cups (300g) granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs + 1 egg yolk, room temperature
- 2 tsp pure vanilla extract
- ¾ cup (94g) all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup + 3 tbsp (about 55g) unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ tsp fine salt

- ½ tsp baking soda

FOR THE MARSHMALLOW GHOSTS:

- 16 large marshmallows
- 12 oz (340g) white chocolate chips or Ghirardelli White Melting Wafers
- 1 tbsp refined coconut oil (for smoothness — skip if using melting wafers)
- 32 mini chocolate chips, or 1 black edible food-coloring marker

Viral TikTok Halloween Ghost Brownies

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).** Grease a 9×13-inch baking pan and line it with parchment paper, leaving a 2-inch overhang on the long sides. Set aside.
- 2 Melt the butter.** In a medium saucepan over low heat, melt the butter, then remove from heat. Whisk in the sugar until combined — the mixture will look grainy and slightly separated. That's correct.
- 3 Add eggs and vanilla.** Let the butter-sugar mixture cool for 2 minutes so you don't scramble the eggs. Add the 3 whole eggs and the extra yolk one at a time, whisking vigorously after each. Add vanilla and whisk until the batter is smooth, glossy, and pulls slightly from the sides of the pan.
- 4 Add the dry ingredients.** Sift the flour, cocoa powder, salt, and baking soda directly into the wet mixture. Fold with a spatula until just combined — stop as soon as you can't see dry streaks. Overmixing develops gluten and makes cakey brownies instead of fudgy ones.
- 5 Bake 30–35 minutes,** until the edges pull away from the pan and a toothpick inserted 2 inches from the center comes out with moist crumbs (not wet batter). The center will look slightly underdone — pull them now. They finish setting as they cool.
- 6 Cool completely, then chill.** Let brownies cool in the pan for 1 hour at room temperature. Then refrigerate 30 minutes. Cold brownies are much easier to cut cleanly and hold the ghost decoration better than warm ones.
- 7 Cut into 16 squares.** Lift the slab out using the parchment overhang. Cut 4 columns × 4 rows. Return the cut squares to the pan or arrange on a parchment-lined baking sheet.
- 8 Melt the white chocolate.** Combine white chocolate chips and coconut oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 30-second bursts, stirring between each, until fully melted and smooth — usually 2–3 rounds. (If using Ghirardelli Melting Wafers, skip the coconut oil.) Keep the bowl warm so the chocolate stays fluid.
- 9 Dip the ghosts — the critical step.** Pick up a marshmallow by its flat bottom. Dip the rounded top into the white chocolate, submerging it about two-thirds of the way. Lift it straight up out of the bowl, then hold it above the bowl for a full 5 seconds. Watch the excess chocolate drape downward and form a wavy hem — that's the ghost's body taking shape.
- 10 Set each ghost on a brownie.** Place the dipped marshmallow immediately on the center of a brownie square, flat side down. The pooled white chocolate will spread slightly onto the brownie surface, anchoring the ghost. Repeat with all 16 marshmallows.
- 11 Add the eyes.** While the white chocolate is still wet (within 60 seconds of dipping), press two mini chocolate chips — pointed side down, so the flat side shows — into the white chocolate shell to form eyes. Or wait for the chocolate to fully set and use a black edible food-coloring marker to draw dot eyes.
- 12 Refrigerate 10 minutes** to set the white chocolate completely before serving or transporting.

WHY IT WORKS

The drape is gravity working on molten chocolate. When you dip a marshmallow and immediately set it down, the chocolate has no time to run — it stays on top as a dome.



Nº 31

— HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Viral TikTok Halloween Ghost Chocolate Chip Cookies

The viral TikTok Halloween ghost cookies everyone's decorating this October: thick chewy chocolate chip cookies topped with a marshmallow dipped in white chocolate, draped so it puddles into a ghost.

PREP
20 min

COOK
12 min

SERVES
22

LEVEL
Easy

CAL
310

01 Ingredients

FOR THE CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES:

- 2¼ cups (280g) all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 1 cup (225g) unsalted butter, at room temperature (not melted)
- ¾ cup (150g) granulated sugar
- ¾ cup (165g) packed light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 2 tsp pure vanilla extract

- 2 cups (340g) semi-sweet chocolate chips

FOR THE MARSHMALLOW GHOSTS:

- 22 large marshmallows (one per cookie)
- 1½ cups (255g) white chocolate chips or white melting wafers
- 1 tbsp coconut oil (makes the chocolate thin enough to drape)
- 1 black edible food marker (find in cake-decorating aisles or online) — or 2 tbsp melted dark chocolate + toothpick for dotting eyes

Viral TikTok Halloween Ghost Chocolate Chip Cookies

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Make the cookie dough.** Beat butter, granulated sugar, and brown sugar together in a stand mixer (or with a hand mixer) on medium speed for 2–3 minutes until pale and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating after each. Add vanilla. Whisk together flour, baking soda, and salt in a separate bowl, then add to the butter mixture in two additions, mixing on low until just combined. Fold in chocolate chips by hand. For thicker, chewier cookies, cover the dough and refrigerate for 30 minutes (optional but recommended).
- 2 Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).** Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
- 3 Scoop and bake.** Scoop dough into balls about 1½ tablespoons each (about the size of a golf ball) — slightly larger than the standard tablespoon scoop, which gives the cookie a sturdier base for the marshmallow. Place 2 inches apart on prepared sheets. Bake for 11–12 minutes until the edges are set and lightly golden but the centers still look slightly underdone. They firm up as they cool. Do not overbake — a crispy cookie won't support the marshmallow topping well.
- 4 Cool cookies.** Remove from oven and let cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack. You want them warm but not hot — a still-warm cookie helps the marshmallow settle slightly into the surface, but a hot cookie is too soft to hold the weight.
- 5 Melt the white chocolate.** Combine white chocolate chips and coconut oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring well between each interval, until completely smooth and fluid. The coconut oil thins the chocolate so it flows and drapes. If it seems too thick (it should coat a spoon and flow off like heavy cream), add another ½ tsp coconut oil and stir. Keep the bowl warm by setting it over a larger bowl of hot tap water between batches.
- 6 Dip and place the marshmallows.** Hold a marshmallow with your fingers at the flat end (not pinching the sides). Dip the other end into the white chocolate, submerging it about halfway. Lift the marshmallow out and hold it point-side-up, dipped end down, above the bowl for a full 5 seconds — let the excess white chocolate fall and stretch. This is the ghost's drape. Now set the marshmallow, dipped end down, onto a cooled cookie, pressing gently so it adheres. The white chocolate should puddle slightly around the base. Repeat for each cookie.
- 7 Refrigerate to set.** Slide the baking sheets or a large tray with the decorated cookies into the refrigerator for 10 minutes until the white chocolate shell is fully set and firm to the touch.
- 8 Draw the ghost faces.** Use the black edible food marker to draw two small dot eyes on the white chocolate shell of each marshmallow. Vary the expression slightly — dots at different heights, a small worried frown on some, or an open circle 'O' mouth for a screaming ghost. Keep marks small: the marshmallow face reads better with restraint. Allow 2–3 minutes for the marker ink to dry before stacking or packaging the cookies.

WHY IT WORKS

White chocolate seizes when it comes in contact with even a small amount of water — steam from a double boiler, a wet spoon, or condensation. Use completely dry bowls and utensils.



Nº 32

— HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Viral TikTok Halloween Ghost Meringue Cookies

The viral TikTok Halloween ghost meringue cookies: crispy-outside, marshmallow-inside meringue dollops piped into ghosts with tiny chocolate chip eyes.

PREP
20 min

COOK
1 hr 30 min

SERVES
30

LEVEL
Easy

CAL
28

01 Ingredients

- 4 large egg whites, room temperature (about 120g / 4 oz)
- ¼ tsp cream of tartar
- 1 cup (200g) superfine sugar (also called caster sugar) — or pulse regular granulated sugar in a food processor for 30 seconds
- ½ tsp pure vanilla extract
- Pinch of fine salt
- 60 mini chocolate chips (2 per ghost), for eyes — plus a small handful of extras in case of errors

Viral TikTok Halloween Ghost Meringue Cookies

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Prep your workspace.** Preheat oven to 200°F (93°C). Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper. Wipe your mixing bowl and whisk attachment with a paper towel moistened with a drop of white vinegar — any fat residue will prevent stiff peaks. Separate your eggs over a separate small bowl (not over the mixing bowl) so a broken yolk doesn't contaminate everything.
- 2 Beat the whites to soft peaks.** Place egg whites and cream of tartar in the clean bowl of a stand mixer (or use a hand mixer). Beat on medium speed until the mixture looks like loose foam and holds soft, floppy peaks that curl over when the beater is lifted — about 2–3 minutes. Don't rush to high speed; building structure gradually gives more stable meringue.
- 3 Add sugar one tablespoon at a time.** Switch to high speed. With the mixer running, add the superfine sugar one tablespoon at a time, waiting about 15 seconds between additions. This slow addition prevents the sugar from weighing down the whites before they can incorporate it. The meringue will get glossier and stiffer with each addition.
- 4 Test for stiff, glossy peaks and dissolved sugar.** After all the sugar is in, keep beating on high until the meringue holds stiff, straight peaks that don't curl when the beater is lifted, and the surface looks thick and glossy — not dull or dry. Test that the sugar has dissolved by rubbing a bit between your fingers: it should feel completely smooth. If you can feel sugar grit, keep beating another 2 minutes. Add vanilla and salt; fold in with a spatula.
- 5 Fill the piping bag.** Fit a large piping bag with a Wilton 1A tip (or similar large round tip). Fold the top of the bag down over your hand like a cuff, then spoon the meringue in using a spatula. Twist the top closed, pressing out any air pockets.
- 6 Pipe the ghosts.** Hold the bag perpendicular to the baking sheet, tip about ½ inch above the surface. Squeeze firmly to build a wide base (about 2 inches across) — keep squeezing as you slowly raise the bag. When the ghost is about 2½–3 inches tall, gradually ease off the pressure and pull straight up in one smooth motion to form the tapered wisp at the top. Pipe all ghosts leaving at least 1 inch between them — they spread very slightly.
- 7 Add the eyes.** Immediately press 2 mini chocolate chips into each ghost, point-side in, to form eyes. Vary the placement slightly — some looking up, some looking down, some slightly cross-eyed — so each ghost has personality.
- 8 Bake low and slow.** Slide both trays into the oven. Bake for 90 minutes without opening the oven door. The ghosts should look dry and set, very lightly cream-colored (not white) at the end. Do not open the door to check.
- 9 Cool in the oven.** Turn off the oven. Leave the meringues inside — door closed — for at least 1 more hour, or leave them overnight until the oven is completely cool. This is the step that prevents cracking. They're done when they lift cleanly off the parchment with a firm, dry base.
- 10 Store immediately.** Transfer to an airtight container as soon as you remove them from the oven — humidity begins to soften them within an hour in open air.

WHY IT WORKS

Almost always one of two causes: the oven was too hot, or you opened the door to check on them. Meringues need a very low oven (200°F/93°C) — higher temperatures cause rapid steam expansion that cracks the shell.



Nº 33

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Ghost Popcorn Balls

The viral TikTok Halloween ghost popcorn balls: marshmallow-coated popcorn shaped into balls, dipped in white candy melts, and given two candy-eye faces. No baking, 30 minutes, and every kid at the party wants one.

PREP
20 min

COOK
5 min

SERVES
12 ghost balls

LEVEL
Easy

CAL
225

01 Ingredients

- 12 cups plain popped popcorn (from about ½ cup unpopped kernels, or 2 standard microwave bags — lightly salted)
- 10 oz (283g) mini marshmallows
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus extra softened butter for your hands
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon fine salt (omit if using salted popcorn)
- 8 oz (226g) white candy melts or white chocolate chips
- 1–2 teaspoons coconut oil or vegetable shortening (only if using white chocolate chips to thin the coating)
- 24 candy eyeball candies (2 per ghost)
- **OPTIONAL FOR GHOST FACES:**
 - Black food-coloring gel pen or black royal icing in a piping bag (for drawing screaming mouths)

Ghost Popcorn Balls

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Pop and prep the popcorn.** Air-pop or microwave the popcorn per package directions. Spread across a very large mixing bowl or roasting pan and pick out any unpopped kernels. Set aside.
- 2 Melt the marshmallow coating.** In a large saucepan over medium heat, melt 3 tablespoons of butter. Once melted and foamy, add all 10 oz of mini marshmallows. Stir constantly with a silicone spatula until fully melted and smooth, about 3–4 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla extract and salt.
- 3 Coat the popcorn.** Immediately pour the hot marshmallow mixture over the popcorn. Fold quickly with a silicone spatula (or two forks) until every piece of popcorn is evenly coated. Work fast — the coating stiffens as it cools.
- 4 Shape the ghosts.** Let the mixture cool for 3–4 minutes — it should be warm but not burn your hands. Generously butter both of your hands with softened butter. Working quickly, scoop about 1 heaping cup of coated popcorn, press firmly between your palms with a squeezing/rotating motion, and shape into a tall oval (taller than wide — like an egg standing upright). This is the ghost body. Set each ball on a parchment-lined sheet pan. Re-butter your hands between every 2–3 balls. Repeat until all 12 ghosts are shaped.
- 5 Let balls set.** Allow the shaped balls to cool completely at room temperature until firm, about 15 minutes. Don't rush this — soft balls will crack when you dip them.
- 6 Melt the white coating.** In a microwave-safe bowl, melt the white candy melts in 30-second bursts at 50% power, stirring between each burst, until fully smooth. (If using white chocolate chips, add the coconut oil and melt the same way.) The coating should be fluid enough to drip off a spoon — if too thick, microwave 10 more seconds and stir.
- 7 Dip the ghosts.** Using a spoon or by holding each ball over the bowl, spoon the white coating over the top two-thirds of each ball, letting it drip down in uneven rivulets — this creates the flowing ghost shape. Leave the bottom quarter uncoated so the ghost doesn't just look like a white ball. Return to the parchment.
- 8 Add the eyes.** Immediately while the coating is still wet, press two candy eyeballs onto each ghost — about halfway up the body, roughly ¼ inch apart. Press firmly but gently so they sit flush in the coating. If the coating sets before you add the eyes, dab a tiny amount of melted coating behind each eyeball and press in place.
- 9 Optional faces.** Once the coating is fully set (about 15 minutes), use a black food-gel pen to draw a screaming 'O' mouth below each pair of eyes, or a wavy worried mouth. Work with the pen nearly horizontal so the gel doesn't blob — light, fast strokes. Let dry 5 minutes before handling.
- 10 Serve or package.** Arrange on a platter immediately, or wrap each ghost individually in cellophane bags for party favors. They hold at room temperature for up to 2 days.

WHY IT WORKS

The viral version is marshmallow-coated popcorn shaped into oval balls, dipped in white candy melts for the ghost body, and given two candy eyeball candies pressed in while the coating is still wet.



Nº 34

HALLOWEEN • COPYCAT

Viral TikTok Halloween Graveyard Brownies

The viral TikTok Halloween dessert everyone's making this fall: fudgy chocolate brownies turned into a graveyard with Milano tombstones, Oreo dirt, and gummy worms. Ready in under an hour.

PREP
25 min

COOK
30 min

SERVES
20

LEVEL
Easy

CAL
425

01 Ingredients

FOR THE BROWNIES:

- 1 cup (225g) unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled
- 2 cups (400g) granulated sugar
- 4 large eggs, room temperature
- 2 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup (85g) unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 cup (125g) all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp fine salt

- 1 cup (170g) semi-sweet chocolate chips

FOR THE GRAVEYARD:

- ½ cup (120g) chocolate frosting (store-bought is fine)
- 20 Oreo cookies, cream filling removed (about 2 cups crumbs)
- 2 packages (5 oz each) Pepperidge Farm Milano cookies
- 1 tube black food-coloring writing gel
- Candy pumpkins, gummy worms, or black cat candy corn for graves

Viral TikTok Halloween Graveyard Brownies

CONTINUED

02 Method

- 1 Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).** Grease a 9×13-inch baking pan and line it with parchment paper, leaving a 2-inch overhang on the long sides for easy lifting.
- 2 Make the batter.** Whisk melted butter and sugar together in a large bowl until smooth. Add eggs one at a time, whisking well after each. Add vanilla. Sift in cocoa powder, flour, and salt; fold with a spatula until just combined — a few dry streaks are fine. Fold in chocolate chips. Do not overmix.
- 3 Bake 28–32 minutes,** until the edges pull away from the pan and a toothpick inserted 2 inches from the center comes out with moist crumbs (not wet batter). The center will look slightly underdone — pull them now.
- 4 Cool completely.** Let brownies cool in the pan for at least 1 hour. For firmer graves, refrigerate 30 minutes after cooling.
- 5 Write the tombstones.** Working on a cutting board, use the black writing gel to write 'RIP' (or 'R.I.P.', a name, or a spooky date) on the flat face of each Milano cookie. Write slowly and don't overload the gel or it will pool. Let them dry undisturbed for at least 10 minutes — wet gel smears on contact.
- 6 Crush the Oreo dirt.** Twist open the Oreos and scrape out the cream filling (discard it or eat it). Seal the chocolate wafers in a zip-lock bag and crush with a rolling pin until you have a mix of fine crumbs and small irregular pieces — variable texture is what makes it look like real dirt.
- 7 Score the brownies.** Lift the cooled slab out using the parchment overhang. Cut into 20 brownies (4 columns × 5 rows). Return them to the pan, spacing them slightly if possible.
- 8 Apply the mud.** Spread a very thin layer of chocolate frosting over the top of each brownie — just enough to act as edible glue. This is the step most people skip and then wonder why their dirt falls off.
- 9 Add the dirt.** Immediately press Oreo crumbs generously over the frosting on each brownie, covering the surface completely. Press lightly so they adhere.
- 10 Plant the tombstones.** Push one Milano cookie into each brownie on a very slight backward lean, about ½ inch deep. The backward lean keeps them stable and looks like a weathered grave.
- 11 Finish the graveyard.** Tuck gummy worms into the Oreo crumbs so they look like they're emerging from the dirt. Place candy pumpkins between graves. Scatter a few extra Oreo crumbs over the whole pan to unify the scene.

WHY IT WORKS

Two culprits: warm brownies (they're too soft to hold the cookies upright) and too-shallow insertion (you need to push each Milano in at least 1/2 inch). Make sure brownies are fully cooled, ideally refrigerated for 30 minutes after frosting.

From a browser tab to *your kitchen counter.*

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