

Date Night at Home

The Ultimate Cookbook for Two



Next to almost every recipe in the book is this icon. Click this icon to watch the episode of our cooking show that corresponds with the menu you are cooking.



By Chef Wendy L. Lincoln

Photography by Tracy Lincoln

Dedicated to all of you who have supported our (me and my husband) dream to share love and good food with the world. We love you all so much. This cookbook is for you!

Loving thanks to my husband for his encouragement and constant support as this cookbook was created.

Salute to our dear friend and fellow epicurean Bill Westermeyer for enthusiastic support and assistance with reviews.

Special thanks to Chef Joan Kinder for helping me to find myself as a chef.

Thanks to Jody Yvette Wirt for supporting our dream and getting our show out there.

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About Date Night at Home

Date Night at Home is the ultimate cookbook for two. There are over 70 full planned menus that you can make with common ingredients sold at most regular American grocery stores.

Most menus include an appetizer or dessert, and sometimes both. At the very least, each features a full entrée paired with a starchy and vegetable side.

Date Night at Home is an ideal cookbook for anybody who wants to learn more about cooking, but does not have time for culinary school, or access to the fancy ingredients often called for in so-called gourmet recipes.

This cookbook is for anybody cooking for two, whether romance is involved or not. Roommates, friends, two to three member families, business partners, etc—anybody who desires to cook sensational food for two will love this cookbook.

Wait, This Book Comes with a Cooking Show?

This cookbook comes with a free cooking show and cooking help! Not only do you have the written recipe in hand, but you can visit our website HotKitchen.cooking and access all of our episodes to view demonstrations of how to make the recipes in this book. You can also hit me up with your questions. Visit our website and send your questions to me, or email me at feedback@hotkitchenonline.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

The underlying focus throughout the book is cooking from scratch. Why?

- ♦ *Scratch cooking is the cheapest route to gourmet food.*
- ♦ *Highly processed foods and the questionable ingredients they contain are out of the picture.*

What Will I Learn?

By cooking through these recipes, your culinary skills, creativity and confidence in the kitchen will blossom. You'll learn techniques used by professional chefs so you can cook like a pro. Lastly, you'll learn how cooking from scratch is better for your body and wallet.

You'll also learn how fun it can be to stay in instead of going out for a date night. My husband and I have kept this tradition for years and it has been a lot of fun, so much that we felt we should share our secret to happiness with you.

DIY Date Night Ambiance

When it is date night, make your kitchen a “Hot Kitchen” by cooking amazing food with lots of love and setting the table with a couple of candles, maybe a flower or two.

Luxury touches such as linens and fine dishware can go a long way toward transforming your table into a bistro, so go ahead and break out those rarely used dishes. You might go so far as to turn off distractions such as cell phones, computers, televisions, etc and instead turn on some relaxing music and get into the groove.

If you have children, we suggest putting them to bed or handing them off to friends or family for an evening so that the two of you can enjoy time alone.

What the Heck is Mise en Place?

Mise en Place is French for everything in place. In commercial kitchens, the term refers to the prepped ingredients, workstations, tools, and mindset. For example, a chef might ask if the cooks are “Mise en Place” before service to make sure everything is ready.

Every recipe includes Mise en Place, which lists off the tools you’ll need to make the recipe. It’s a given that you’ll need a knife and cutting board for almost every recipe, and some recipes will share tools and prepped ingredients

Mise en Place is a way of being. For a date night, or other social cooking occasion, you’ll have more fun if everything is prepped and set up before actually cooking.

So, take a little time to prepare all the ingredients and set out the tools. Keep dairy, meat, and other perishable prepped foods in the fridge, leave the rest on the counter, covered as needed. Then when it is time to eat, all you have to do is walk into the kitchen and start cookin.

Mise en Place is a mindset:

- ♦ *It is a calm state of mind that is ready to enjoy cooking.*
- ♦ *It is an organized mindset backed by the confidence that comes from being prepared.*
- ♦ *It is a relaxed state and way more fun than trying to prep and cook at the same time.*

A Mise en Place mindset also allows the cook to fully focus on cooking and pumping love and positive vibes into the food. It is a fact that food made with love turns out more flavorful and beautiful than food cooked by a frantic, frazzled, or upset cook.

When food is blessed by the cook’s positive, loving energy, the food is no longer just sustenance for the body, but is literally food for the soul.

My husband and I created this book from the episodes of our cooking show, Hot Kitchen. These recipes have been thoroughly tested by us and many of our fans, so we are confident that you will have great results. Notes accompany almost every recipe that add a little extra explanation and/or give suggestions for substitutions.

We have worked very hard to share our Hot Kitchen with you. Love should be everywhere, that means the kitchen too. So be good to each other and remember to turn up the heat in your kitchen.

Love,

Tracy and Wendy

About Hot Kitchen

Hot Kitchen is our cooking show. We specialize in demonstrating how to make amazing dinners for two. It is available through our website HotKitchen.cooking, YouTube, iTunes and more.

Hot Kitchen began as a dream. My husband and I were on vacation on the Oregon Coast, watching a rare brilliant sunset. At the time, the economy was tanking and people were not going out to eat as much because times were getting tough.

We created the show as a way to show people how to keep a date night tradition alive, even as the budget grew tighter.

Also, we wanted to demonstrate how to make real food from scratch. Many restaurants just serve plates of processed foods, and even the shelves at the grocery stores are lined with the junk. It is costly to both the health and wallet.

Scratch cooking, on the other hand, is tastier, cheaper and much better for you. Once you know several techniques, scratch cooking is also a lot of fun and very creative. We demonstrate these concepts in every episode.

The show has been and continues to be an amazing learning experience for us. When we started in 2009, I had never hosted a cooking show and he had never filmed one. After shooting a couple of shows, we knew we had a steep learning curve ahead but it was so much fun that we kept going.

Over the next few years, we worked hard to improve our show and make it as good as a high-budget show produced in a studio.

Ultimately, the show led to this cookbook; the two work together. The recipes and menus are pretty much the same as what we share in the show. We encourage you to watch the episodes when it's not clear how to make a recipe—you'll be thrilled to see how easy it is to follow along! Reading is good, but sometimes being walked through it step by step makes all the difference.

By using this cookbook and watching our cooking show, you get to take advantage of my culinary education and your only cost is this book. Think of us as your own personal culinary school, provided to you at your own pace, and without outrageous tuition, screaming chef instructors or the hassle of going to school

The website is an easy way for you to get in touch with me, as well as an ongoing, ever-developing food blog and resource. Drop in anytime!

Artichoke Chicken with Romano Risotto



Nut 'n Honey Tassies



Romano Risotto Garnish



Artichoke - Lemon Sauce



Tassie Making



A delicate sauce of artichoke hearts with bright lemon notes tops braised chicken. Creamy, smooth, and almost perfectly white cheesy risotto contrasts and balances the bright flavors. For dessert, miniature sized nut tarts that are a play on the key ingredients in baklava: pistachio and honey. Inspired by the flavors of Greece and Italy.

Artichoke Chicken



Ingredients

- ♥ 2 Chicken Portions, bone-in and skin-on
- ♥ ¼ c Flour
- ♥ 2 cloves Garlic, chopped
- ♥ ½ of a large Onion, sliced
- ♥ ¼ tsp Chili Flake
- ♥ 2 slices Prosciutto, chopped
- ♥ 13-oz can Artichoke Hearts, drained
- ♥ ½ a Lemon, juiced
- ♥ 2 strips Lemon Peel
- ♥ ½ c Dry White Wine
- ♥ Handful of Spinach
- ♥ Butter

Mise en Place:

- ✓ Large Skillet with a Lid or Dutch Oven
- ✓ Tongs
- ✓ Wooden Spoon
- ✓ Can Opener
- ✓ 2 Plates

1. Put the flour on the plate and roll the breasts in the flour. Sear them presentation side down in a nice dollop of butter heated over medium. Chefy tip: press them down to maximize contact with the oil and create a nice flavor and color effect.
2. Once the color develops to a pretty golden brown, flip and sear the other side, but don't cook all the way through. Remove from the pan and set on a clean plate.
3. Add the onion, garlic and prosciutto to the pan and sprinkle in some black pepper. Cook until the aromas hit your nose, or about 1-3 minutes.
4. Drop the artichoke hearts into the pan and sauté for 30 seconds. [Deglaze](#) with the wine and lemon juice and add the strips of lemon peel.
5. Re-introduce the chicken to the pan. Push the aromatics to the edge and place the chicken, presentation side up, in the middle. Cover with a lid and simmer for 15-45 minutes—shorter for white meat and longer for dark.
6. Once the chicken is cooked through and tender, lift

the lid and sprinkle in the spinach.

7. Replace the lid to allow the steam to wilt the tender greens.

8. Pull out the chicken and plate atop a pool of Romano Risotto, and remove and discard the lemon peel. Garnish the chicken with the goodies in the pan.

Artichoke Chicken is inspired by the flavors of Greece and Italy. Lemon is a prominent flavor in Greek cuisine, and it contrasts elegantly with the creamy risotto, which is a favorite from Italian cuisine. Both countries would tell you they influence the other, but the truth is they share a lot when it comes to food. Regardless of whether it's more Greek or Italian in influence, this is one scrumptious chicken dish.

Romano Risotto



Ingredients:

- ♥ ½ c Arborio Rice
- ♥ 1 Tbsp Butter
- ♥ 2 c Whole Milk
- ♥ 1 c Water
- ♥ ¼ tsp Salt
- ♥ ½ c Romano Cheese, grated

Garnish:

- ♥ 2 Pepadew Peppers
- ♥ 4 Kalamata Olives
- ♥ A few crumbles Feta

Mise en Place:

- ✓ 2 Saucepans
- ✓ Wooden Spoon
- ✓ Ladle
- ✓ Grater

1. Combine the milk and water in a saucepan and bring to a simmer. Stir occasionally to keep skin formation at bay.
2. Warm the second pan over medium-high heat and melt the butter. Stir the rice into the butter and cook it for 2 or 3 minutes, or until it turns slightly golden.
3. Add about 6 ounces of the hot milk and a bit of salt to the rice. Stir, stir, stir and reduce heat to medium-low.
4. Continue to add the milk-mix a few ounces at a time after the initial milk is mostly absorbed. Keep cooking, adding milk, very lightly salting, and stirring for about 25 minutes.
5. When you're down to the last few ounces of milk, taste the rice. It should be tender, yet still have a bit of push when you bite down.
6. Right before you plate, fold in the cheese. Also add the rest of the milk and stir more. Cook it for a couple more minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt.
7. Plate with the chicken, or serve on its own, garnished with colorful peppers, olives and feta cheese.

Things that make risotto awesome: Almost constant stirring, adding hot liquids, seasoning early on and periodically throughout cooking, subtle flavors, and of course, lots of love

Nut & Honey Tassies



Yield: 12 Cookies

Ingredients

- ♥ 2 Tbsp Butter
- ♥ 1 Tbsp White Cane Sugar
- ♥ 1 Tbsp Brown Cane Sugar
- ♥ 1 Egg
- ♥ ½ c Flour
- ♥ ½ c Hulled, Chopped Pistachios
- ♥ ¼ c Honey

Mise en Place:

- ✓ 2 Mixing Bowls
- ✓ Sturdy Spoon
- ✓ Tiny Muffin Tin or Tart Pans
- ✓ Wooden Spoon
- ✓ Preheated Oven, 350° F
- ✓ Cooling Rack
- ✓ Whisk

1. Put the butter in the mixing bowl and add the sugars. Rub them together to soften and combine without incorporating air.
2. When it is all combined, crack the egg carefully and separate the white and yolk: the yolk goes into the butter/sugar, the white goes into the second mixing bowl. Chefy tip: unlike meringue-based recipes, you won't ruin anything if a little yolk sneaks into the white.
3. Next, add the flour and keep rubbing to blend.
4. Fill the wells of a mini muffin tin with crumbles of dough. Press the dough into the wells to form tiny shells.
5. Whip the egg white to a froth and fold in the pistachios and honey.
6. Fill the shells with the nut mix and push any rouge drippings into the wells.
7. Bake for 10-15 minutes. The nuts will puff up and the crust will sport a golden-brown tinge. Let them cool for five minutes to set, then gently pop them out after loosening with a fork or toothpick. Cool the treats on a rack.

These cookies are inspired by the flavors of baklava, and on a larger scale, the flavors of Greece. Greek culture tends not to focus on rich desserts, and with such a hot climate that's completely understandable.

However, there are delicious cookies, especially those packed with nuts and honey. Incidentally, each cookie serves up wholesome nutrients that are compliments of the nuts and honey. You may substitute up to half the flour with a whole grain flour to sneak in a little more nutrition.

Cajun Stuffed Chicken with Cajun Hash and Creamed Mustard Greens



Andouille, Brie, & Trinity Filling

Brie Wedges accented with Jam

Plenty of Garlic in the Mustard Greens



Brie Saganaki with fresh Kiwi Fruit and Crackers



Popular Cajun elements of andouille sausage and trinity make the flavors pop and match from the stuffed chicken to the hash. Brie cheese also showcases its versatility by making the chicken decadent as well as playing the role of a fun little appetizer that utilizes the same breading as the chicken. This delightful menu is inspired by the flavors of Louisiana.

Cajun Stuffed Chicken



Ingredients:

Breeding:

- ♥ ½ c Flour
- ♥ 2 Tbsp Cajun Spice
- ♥ 1 Egg
- ♥ 1 c Breadcrumbs

Filling:

- ♥ ½ c Trinity*, small dice
- ♥ 2 oz Brie Cheese, thinly sliced
- ♥ 1 Tbsp Cool Butter
- ♥ 1 4- to 5-inch piece of Andouille Sausage, sliced
- ♥ 2 portions Chicken, skin-on

Mise en Place:

- ✓ Baking Pan, greased
- ✓ Twine or Toothpicks
- ✓ 3 Saucers or Large Bowls
- ✓ Tongs
- ✓ Fork

1. Debone and open up the chicken: [Butterfly breasts](#), or if using a thigh/drumstick, debone the thigh and stretch the flesh away from the bone in the drumstick to make a pocket.
2. Prepare your breading station. Each saucer will contain one of the following, flour, beaten egg, and breadcrumbs. Beat the egg until white and yolk are one. Chefy tip: if you're making Saganaki, bread it *before* you do the chicken.
3. Divide the butter between the two chicken portions and push it under the skin.
4. Lay the trinity, sausage and brie inside the chicken.
5. Seal it up by tying it with twine or using toothpicks.
6. Carefully roll each chicken portion in flour, egg, and breadcrumbs and place the chicken in your baking pan. Pat some extra breadcrumbs on the top of each piece to perfect the crust.
7. Put any extra slices of andouille sausage on top of the chicken to become yummy and crispy as the chicken bakes.

8. Bake at 375° F for 45 minutes, or internal temperature reaches 160° F.

9. Plating: Plate the mustard greens atop the Cajun Potato Hash. Take the chicken and lean it against or stack it on top of the whole thing.

**Trinity refers to a blend of equal parts chopped celery, onion, and green bell pepper. It is one of Cajun cooking's calling cards. A little background: Louisiana is a melting pot for cuisine, with the strongest influences coming from French, Spanish, Italian and Native American foods. Other Cajun calling cards include cayenne, cream, Cajun spice blends (homemade or store bought), andouille sausage (even better if you can find alligator andouille) and of course, Tabasco.*

Cajun Potato Hash



Ingredients:

- ♥ 4 small Red Potatoes, diced
- ♥ ½ c Trinity*, medium diced
- ♥ 4- to 5-inch link Andouille, sliced
- ♥ ½ tsp Salt (optional)
- ♥ 2 tsp Cajun Spice Blend
- ♥ ½ tsp Italian Herb Blend (basil, oregano, thyme, rosemary)
- ♥ ½ tsp Paprika
- ♥ Drops of Tabasco, to taste

Mise en Place:

- ✓ Large Skillet
- ✓ Rigid Spatula

1. Wash the potatoes well under cool running water before you dice them up.
2. Warm your skillet over medium heat.
3. Sauté the sausage and trinity together until some of the fat renders out of the sausage. The veggies will look glossy and will be a little bit soft.
4. Add the spices, herbs and salt.
5. Toss in the potatoes. Season to taste with Tabasco or other Louisiana-style hot sauce.
6. Continue tossing the hash periodically as it cooks. Total cooking time will be approximately half an hour.
7. Check and adjust your seasonings as the potatoes finish.
8. Plate and top with [Rich Mustard Greens](#) or a poached egg.

Potato hash is a flavor-packed side that is welcome any time of the day. For example, if you wanted to make

this dish for brunch, it would be divine topped with a poached egg or two—creamy, runny egg yolks are rather complementary to hash.

For dinner, I suggest you top the hash with the creamed mustard greens. The greens do about the same thing for the hash as a poached egg, minus the runniness. Potato hash also does a fine job as a filling stand-alone entrée that is perfect for a lighter meal.

Rich Mustard Greens



Ingredients:

- ♥ 1 bunch Mustard Greens
- ♥ 3 cloves Garlic, sliced
- ♥ A few slices of Onion
- ♥ A Dozen Capers
- ♥ 1 Tbsp Flour
- ♥ 1 Tbsp Butter
- ♥ ½ c Whole Milk or Cream
- ♥ A sprinkle of Nutmeg
- ♥ A squeeze of Lemon

Mise en Place:

- ✓ Large Skillet
- ✓ Two Wooden Spoons

1. Melt the butter over medium-low heat. Stir in the flour and cook for a couple of minutes, and keep the heat low so the roux doesn't brown.
2. Add the onion and garlic, and then sauté for about 5 minutes to soften. Keep the heat low and just hot enough to maintain a low sizzle.
3. Squeeze the lemon into the roux.
4. Add the mustard greens, but you'll probably need to add them in three or four stages as they cook down.
5. Use two spoons to keep the greens in rotation; they will wilt as they come into full contact with the hot pan.
6. Continue cooking until the greens turn dark and wilt down by about 70 percent, or about 8 to 12 minutes.
7. Fold in the cream and cook for a couple more minutes.
8. Adjust seasonings to taste with salt, pepper, and a bit of nutmeg.

In the raw state, mustard greens taste a lot like green leaf lettuce tossed in dry mustard. When cooked, the greens sweeten, the mustard strengthens, and a nutty characteristic comes into play. Vitamin-packed mustard greens are also surprisingly fibrous, which can only help your case when you make a decadent Cajun-inspired menu.

Brie Saganaki Bites



Ingredients:

- ♥ 2 oz Brie Cheese
- ♥ ½ Tbsp Jelly (Preferably a spicy jelly)
- ♥ Flour
- ♥ Beaten Egg
- ♥ Unseasoned Breadcrumbs
- ♥ 4-8 Butter Crackers
- ♥ Cajun Spice Blend, or Salt and Pepper
- ♥ 1 serving Fresh Fruit e.g. kiwi, pear, apple, grapes, etc.

Mise en Place:

- ✓ Frying Pan
- ✓ Tongs
- ✓ Breeding Station from Brie Stuffed Chicken
- ✓ Paper Towel

1. Cut the brie into two-bite wedges. Slice the wedges open and leave a hinge on the skin side.
2. Spread a bit of jam on the cut, and then close the cheese back up.
3. Use the breading station you set up for the chicken, but bread the cheese first to minimize the risk of cross-contamination.
4. Dunk each bite of cheese in flour, egg, and then breadcrumbs.
5. Fry in a thin layer of nice hot oil until all sides brown.
6. Set on a paper towel to drain. Season lightly with Cajun spices or just salt and pepper.
7. Plate and garnish each bite with a dollop of jam.
8. Serve with a stack of crackers, and garnish the plate with sliced fresh fruit.

Here is the perfect complementary appetizer to the Cajun Stuffed Chicken.

You'll probably have some brie left over from the chicken, so why not fry it and make it into an amazing appetizer? Saganaki is a Greek word that refers to bites of fried food. You might have seen it on a menu in its most popular form: fried cheese served with fruit. Saganaki can also be individually frozen after breading, and then fried off at a later time. They are great for a party appetizer too!