

WHAT'S FOR DIN?

Tonight we have six different things for you to eat! In short, there's potatoes, veggies, meat, salad, dessert, and a little after dessert treat. But here's the long version:

MENU

(1) ULTIMATE MASHED POTATOES & "GRAVY"

I tried to make these potatoes as flavoursome as possible. So instead of normal butter and milk and salt in the potatoes, there is roasted garlic, onion puree, sour cream, a hint of blue cheese, bits of smoked pork chops, turmeric, fried potato skins, and chives. THEN I top it with the intensely savoury cooking sauce from the ribs. And for a little crunch, there is fried garlic and onion and sesame to put on top.

Instructions: heat the potatoes in the microwave until desired temperature is reached, and then top it with the little baggie of crunchy bits which will be labeled "POTATOES."

(3) JAPANESE STYLE BRAISED VEGGIES

These veggies are a little nod to my months spent in Australia in a Japanese inspired restaurant. One of the homely meals we would have is vegetables cooked in a simple sesame and ginger broth. I have done a similar thing with radish, carrots, cabbage, mushrooms, bok choy, and celery, except I have made a twist on it by barely cooking some of the veggies, so you get a little fresh crunch. Also, there's a little seaweed to top them with.

Instructions: heat the container of veggies in microwave, top with the baggie named "SEAWEED" and enjoy!

(2) JASON'S MOM'S RIBS

My friend Jason has parents who are Cantonese, and one night Jason's Mom cooked me up her signature dish for dinner: sticky ribs. It may have been the best ribs I ever had. I asked her how she made them and I'm giving you a version of them tonight. It is pork ribs that have been braised in dark sugar, brown rice vinegar, rice wine, tamari, miso, sesame and ginger until the meat is tender and the ribs become sticky with the sauce. From Jason's mom to us to you, we hope you enjoy!

Instructions: ribs may be on their own container, or with the potatoes. Either way, heat them in the microwave until hot and they're ready to go!

(4) SOUTHEAST ASIAN STYLE FRESH SALAD

I spent hours thinking of the perfect creamy yet fresh dressing for this one, and then one night while Jackie and I were on a sunset jog, it popped into my head: roasted cashew and mango. It's put with some grilled pineapple, fresh herbs and vegetables. Also, for a little savoury bite, there's some spiced pork crackling to go on top.

Instructions: Five minutes before eating, cut the tip off the bag of dressing in the salad container and squeeze it over. Toss the salad. Then, top with the baggie labeled "CRACKLING," then enjoy!

(6) SNACKIE: NUT BRITTLE

This is one of those things that just popped into my head one day and I knew I had to try it out. There's a sneaky surprise ingredient that is one of my favorite's to experiment with, and one that makes me dance around the kitchen because of my deep love for it. Taste the brittle and then open the little card taped to the "SNACKIE" baggie to learn what it is. Cashews, almonds and holiday vibes in this brittle with cranberries and cinnamon.

(5) MARIO'S CAKE

I left home when I was seventeen to cook and travel the world. I took a gap year and spent the first six months cooking in Australia and farming on a remote island. Then I went to Italy and made cheese. I worked as a shepherd and cheesemaker for a man named Mario. He spent his life creating an idyllic country life. Each lunch we would feast on homemade salami and prosciutto, followed by veggies, pasta, cheese, fruit, wine and of course, espresso after each meal. After lunch we always had a siesta. Anyway, one day I pitched in with cooking to make a ricotta, pear and chocolate cake for dessert. That lunch Mario said to me "Liam, your cake brings me tears," which may have been one of the most touching things anyone has said to me. I decided to share this cake with you.

In detail, it is a fresh cheese and Icelandic-style yogurt called skyr (both made by our boss Jodi and Jackie), olive oil and honey cake, with pears in the middle. The pears have been braised for three hours in red wine and spice, and once sandwiched in the cake, I grate a little dark chocolate in. I have added a twist to the original version (I can't exactly remember what I made four years ago anyway) by adding a crunchy pecan crumble to go on top, and a hazelnut cream. In some ways this cake has come full circle because I first made it with sheep's ricotta from Mario's farm, and now I'm making it with sheep's cheese from Shepherd's Way, the farm Jackie and I work at now.

Instructions. Heat the cake mildly in the microwave (not too much or the heat will dim the chocolate flavor), before topping with the baggie called "PECAN." Cut the tip off the bag of cream labelled "HAZLENUT," and pipe as desired over the cake.