

Around My French Table: More than 300 Recipes from My Home to Yours

By Dorie Greenspan

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Now in a big, personal, and personable book, Dorie captures all the excitement of French home cooking, sharing disarmingly simple dishes she has gathered over years of living in France.

Around My French Table includes many superb renditions of the great classics: a glorious cheese-domed onion soup, a spoon-tender beef daube, and the “top-secret” chocolate mousse recipe that every good Parisian cook knows—but won’t reveal.

Hundreds of other recipes are remarkably easy: a cheese and olive quick bread, a three-star chef’s Basque potato tortilla made with a surprise ingredient (potato chips), and an utterly satisfying roast chicken for “lazy people.”

Packed with lively stories, memories, and insider tips on French culinary customs, *Around My French Table* will make cooks fall in love with France all over again, or for the first time.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Fall into Cooking Featured Recipe from Dorie Greenspan's *Around My French Table*: Pumpkin Stuffed with Everything Good

I've got a slideshow of random snapshots that runs as a screensaver on my computer, and every time the picture of pumpkins for sale at Scott's Farm Stand in Essex, Connecticut, comes up, I smile. In the picture, it's a sunny day and the pumpkins, scattered higgledy-piggledy across a big field, look like so many roly-poly playthings. Some people might squint and imagine the jack-o-lanterns that many of these pumpkins are destined to become. Me? I see them sitting in the middle of my dining table, their skins burnished from the heat of the oven and their tops mounded with bubbly cheese and cream. Ever since Catherine, a friend of mine in Lyon, France, told me about how she and her family stuff pumpkins with bread and cheese and bacon and garlic and herbs and cream, I can't look at a pumpkin on either side of the Atlantic without thinking, "Dinner!"

Of course, pumpkins are a New World vegetable, but I'm seeing them more and more in the Paris markets, which means I'm making this dish more and more wherever I am. It's less a recipe than an arts and crafts project; less a formula than a template to play with and make your own.

Basically—and it's really very basic—you hollow out a small pumpkin, just as you would for a jack-o-lantern, salt and pepper the inside, and then start filling it up. My standard recipe, the one Catherine sent to me, involves seasoning chunks of stale bread, tossing them with bacon and garlic, cubes of cheese (when I'm in France, I use Gruyere or Emmenthal; when I'm in the States, I opt for cheddar) and some herbs, packing the pumpkin with this mix and then pouring in enough cream to moisten it all.

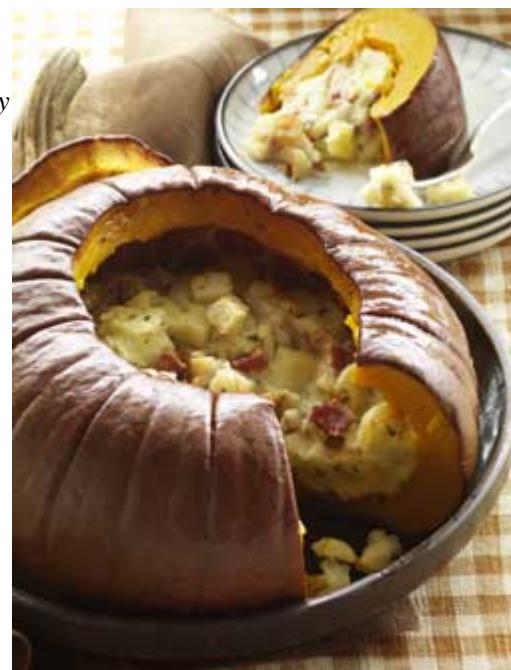
But there's nothing to stop you from using leftover cooked rice instead of bread—I did that one night and it was risotto-like and fabulous—or from adding dried fruit and chopped nuts, cooked spinach or Swiss chard, or apples or pears, fall's favored fruits. And I was crazy about the dish when I stirred some cooked hot sausage meat into the mix.

The possibilities for improvisation don't end with the filling: You've got a choice about the way to serve this beauty. I think you should always bring it to the table whole—you wouldn't want to deprive your guests of the chance to ooh and aah—but whether you should slice or scoop is up to you. If you serve it in slices, you get a wedge of pumpkin piled high with the filling, and that's pretty dramatic (if something this rustic can be called 'dramatic'). The wedge serving is best eaten with a knife and fork (or knife and spoon). If you scoop, what you do is reach into the pumpkin with a big spoon, scrape the cooked pumpkin meat from the sides of the pumpkin into the center, and stir everything around. Do this and you'll have a kind of mash—not so pretty, but so delicious.

Catherine serves it scooped. I serve it sliced sometimes and scooped others. Either way, I can't imagine this won't become an instant fall favorite chez you. --*Dorie Greenspan*

Makes 2 very generous servings or 4 more genteel servings

You might consider serving this alongside the Thanksgiving turkey or even instead of it--omit the bacon and you've got a great vegetarian main course.



Ingredients

1 pumpkin, about 3 pounds
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1/4 pound stale bread, thinly sliced and cut into 1/2-inch chunks
1/4 pound cheese, such as Gruyère, Emmenthal, cheddar, or a combination, cut into 1/2-inch chunks
2–4 garlic cloves (to taste), split, germ removed, and coarsely chopped
4 strips bacon, cooked until crisp, drained, and chopped
About 1/4 cup snipped fresh chives or sliced scallions
1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme
About 1/3 cup heavy cream
Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg

Center a rack in the oven and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with a silicone baking mat or parchment, or find a Dutch oven with a diameter that's just a tiny bit larger than your pumpkin. If you bake the pumpkin in a casserole, it will keep its shape, but it might stick to the casserole, so you'll have to serve it from the pot — which is an appealingly homey way to serve it. If you bake it on a baking sheet, you can present it freestanding, but maneuvering a heavy stuffed pumpkin with a softened shell isn't so easy. However, since I love the way the unencumbered pumpkin looks in the center of the table, I've always taken my chances with the baked-on-a-sheet method, and so far, I've been lucky.

Using a very sturdy knife--and caution--cut a cap out of the top of the pumpkin (think Halloween jack-o'-lantern). It's easiest to work your knife around the top of the pumpkin at a 45-degree angle. You want to cut off enough of the top to make it easy for you to work inside the pumpkin. Clear away the seeds and strings from the cap and from inside the pumpkin. Season the inside of the pumpkin generously with salt and pepper, and put it on the baking sheet or in the pot.

Toss the bread, cheese, garlic, bacon, and herbs together in a bowl. Season with pepper--you probably have enough salt from the bacon and cheese, but taste to be sure--and pack the mix into the pumpkin. The pumpkin should be well filled--you might have a little too much filling, or you might need to add to it. Stir the cream with the nutmeg and some salt and pepper and pour it into the pumpkin. Again, you might have

too much or too little--you don't want the ingredients to swim in cream, but you do want them nicely moistened. (But it's hard to go wrong here.)

Put the cap in place and bake the pumpkin for about 2 hours--check after 90 minutes--or until everything inside the pumpkin is bubbling and the flesh of the pumpkin is tender enough to be pierced easily with the tip of a knife. Because the pumpkin will have exuded liquid, I like to remove the cap during the last 20 minutes or so, so that the liquid can bake away and the top of the stuffing can brown a little.

When the pumpkin is ready, carefully, very carefully--it's heavy, hot, and wobbly--bring it to the table or transfer it to a platter that you'll bring to the table.

Storing

It's really best to eat this as soon as it's ready. However, if you've got leftovers, you can scoop them out of the pumpkin, mix them up, cover, and chill them; reheat them the next day.

Fall into Cooking Featured Recipe from Dorie Greenspan's *Around My French Table*: Marie-Helene's Apple Cake

I remember once trying to teach a French friend of mine the expression, "as American as apple pie." After I'd explained what pie was, I thought the rest would be easy..but not exactly.

"I don't understand," she said, "we have apples, too, and we make delicious desserts with them. Why couldn't we say, 'As French as tarte Tatin?'"

I certainly wasn't going to argue with her, especially when she was right about all the delicious desserts the French make with apples.

One of my favorites is one that's not anywhere near as well known as the upside-down tarte Tatin. Actually, I don't think it has a formal name of any kind. I dubbed it Marie-Hélène's Apple Cake because it was my Parisian friend, Marie-Hélène Brunet-Lhoste, who first made it for me. Marie-Hélène spends her weekends in Normandy, the land of cream, butter, Brie, and apples, and the cake she made had apples she'd picked from her backyard that afternoon.

I call this dessert a cake, mostly because I don't know what else to call it. The rum-and-vanilla-scented batter is less cakey than custardy. And there's only enough of it to surround the apples. It's a very homey, almost rustic cake and it's good no matter what kinds of apples you use. In fact, when I asked Marie-Hélène which apples she used, she said she didn't know--she just used whatever she had.

The cake is extremely easy to make (foolproof, really, you just whisk the ingredients together in a bowl), satisfying, fragrant (I love the way the house smells when it's in the oven) and appealing in an autumn-in-the-country kind of way.

It may be as French as can be, but it's become this American's favorite. I hope you'll like it too. Now's certainly the time for it. --*Dorie Greenspan*

Makes 8 servings

Ingredients



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon baking powder
Pinch of salt
4 large apples (if you can, choose 4 different kinds)
2 large eggs
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
3 tablespoons dark rum
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled

Center a rack in the oven and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Generously butter an 8-inch springform pan and put it on a baking sheet lined with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper.

Whisk the flour, baking powder, and salt together in small bowl.

Peel the apples, cut them in half and remove the cores. Cut the apples into 1- to 2-inch chunks.

In a medium bowl, beat the eggs with a whisk until they're foamy. Pour in the sugar and whisk for a minute or so to blend. Whisk in the rum and vanilla. Whisk in half the flour and when it is incorporated, add half the melted butter, followed by the rest of the flour and the remaining butter, mixing gently after each addition so that you have a smooth, rather thick batter. Switch to a rubber spatula and fold in the apples, turning the fruit so that it's coated with batter. Scrape the mix into the pan and poke it around a little with the spatula so that it's evenish.

Slide the pan into the oven and bake for 50 to 60 minutes, or until the top of the cake is golden brown and a knife inserted deep into the center comes out clean; the cake may pull away from the sides of the pan. Transfer to a cooling rack and let rest for 5 minutes.

Carefully run a blunt knife around the edges of the cake and remove the sides of the springform pan. (Open the springform slowly, and before it's fully opened, make sure there aren't any apples stuck to it.) Allow the cake to cool until it is just slightly warm or at room temperature. If you want to remove the cake from the

bottom of the springform pan, wait until the cake is almost cooled, then run a long spatula between the cake and the pan, cover the top of the cake with a piece of parchment or wax paper, and invert it onto a rack. Carefully remove the bottom of the pan and turn the cake over onto a serving dish.

Serving

The cake can be served warm or at room temperature, with or without a little softly whipped, barely sweetened heavy cream or a spoonful of ice cream. Marie-Hélène served her cake with cinnamon ice cream and it was a terrific combination.

Storing

The cake will keep for about 2 days at room temperature and, according to my husband, gets more comforting with each passing day. However long you keep the cake, it's best not to cover it — it's too moist. Leave the cake on its plate and just press a piece of plastic wrap or wax paper against the cut surfaces.

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Acclaimed writer and baking wizard Greenspan, author of the James Beard Award-winning *Baking*, celebrates French home cooking in this noteworthy and visually stunning collection. A part-time Paris resident for more than a decade, Greenspan focuses on what French people really eat at home: easy-to-prepare yet flavorful dishes that are suitable for just about any time of day. From Bacon and Eggs and Asparagus Salad to Chicken in a Pot to Veal Chops with Rosemary Butter, her offerings are hardy, mostly uncomplicated, and superbly appetizing. She also provides sidebars on a wide range of topics, including whether or not to wash raw chicken, several ways of cooking beets, mussels, and more. She offers variations on classic dishes such as Pot-au-Feu, including recipes for seafood and veggie versions that take minutes instead of hours. Recipes include advice on storing leftovers as well as serving information. The chapter on vegetables and grains is particularly welcome, with delectable gratins, lentil, and rice dishes as well as a baby bok choy and sugar snap dish that will make hard-core carnivores drool. A feast for the eyes and palate alike, this superb collection belongs in every foodie's kitchen. Photos. (Oct.)

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Review

"Food that doesn't take a diploma from Le Cordon Bleu to prepare, from a 'culinary guru.'" (*New York Times*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Anita Pfeifer:

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Todd Quesinberry:

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Carl Johnson:

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