

Spirited Cooking and Baking

Cooking and baking with liquor is an age-old practice going back hundreds of years, but even today, there is no end to the different ways bourbon, rum, vodka, and brandy can enhance a dish.

The best part of cooking with spirits (although debatable for some!) is that the alcohol cooks off while the essential flavor of the chosen spirit remains. That makes cooking and baking with hard liquor attractive to guests without the worry of getting tipsy in the process of devouring the offerings.

The recipes we've compiled use whiskey and vodka, but feel free to research options and experiment. There are so many variations and combinations you can use to create delicious dishes and baked goods using spirits. Enjoy!

BY LEE J. KAHRIS

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Penne
Alla
Vodka
Bake

page 11





Penne Alla Vodka Bake

courtesy of thegirlonbloor.com

This creamy, layered pasta is full of flavor and pairs well with a small Caesar or arugala salad.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 shallot, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pound chicken breasts, diced
- 1 (750ML) can crushed tomatoes
- ½ cup vodka
- ⅓ cup whipping cream
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon red chili flakes
- 1 pound rigatoni pasta
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 2 cups spinach, chopped
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh basil

Heat olive oil in large pot over med-high heat. Add shallots and garlic, sautéing for 30 seconds. Add chicken and cook for 3-4 minutes until lightly browned. Add crushed tomatoes and vodka. Bring to a boil and simmer, covered, for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.

Add whipping cream, Parmesan cheese, salt, pepper, and red chili flakes, stirring well to combine. Cook for another 2-3 minutes, then remove from heat. Add dried pasta, chicken broth, red pepper, and spinach, tossing well to coat.

Grease a large oven-safe dish (I used a 9x13 baking dish) and then add pasta mixture, pushing pasta down into liquid as much as possible.

Cook in the oven, covered in tinfoil, for 40 minutes, stirring halfway through cooking time. Remove from oven and top with mozzarella cheese, then cook for another 10 minutes or until cheese is melted.

Garnish with fresh basil and serve.

Maple Bourbon Banana Pudding Cake

courtesy of Food & Wine Magazine

This delectable treat forms a rich sauce on the bottom of the dish that will tantalize all your taste buds.

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ cup superfine sugar
- 1 overripe banana, mashed
- 1 large egg
- 1 cup whole milk, at room temperature
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- ¾ cup pure maple syrup
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons bourbon
- 1/4 cup finely chopped pecans
- Vanilla ice cream, for serving

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. In a 2-quart baking or soufflé dish, melt the butter in the microwave. Whisk in the superfine sugar and banana, mashing until thoroughly combined. Whisk in the egg and milk.

In a bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder and salt; whisk into the baking dish until combined (the batter will be pretty loose).

In a microwave-safe cup, heat the maple syrup, light brown sugar, and ½ cup of hot water at high power for 1 minute or until hot. Add the bourbon. Drizzle the syrup mixture over the batter; it will seep to the bottom. Do not stir. Scatter the pecans on top.

Set the dish on a rimmed baking sheet, and bake for 40 minutes until the cake is golden. Let cool for 5 minutes, then scoop into bowls and serve with ice cream.



Drunk Dutch Apple Pie

This Dutch Apple Pie gets an adult makeover with some bourbon whiskey-infused spiced apples. It's a little boozy, a little sweet, and tasty enough to be gone in a beat. But make sure to plan ahead! You'll need several days to infuse your apples first.



courtesy of Mad River Distillers

Mad River Distillers Bourbon Whiskey

- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 chopped apples (to infuse in Bourbon Whiskey)
- 3-4 chopped fresh apples
- 1 pie crust
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon flour
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 ½ teaspoons pure lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon lemon zest
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup flour
- 2 teaspoons water
- 3 tablespoons softened unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon



PHOTO BY FREDRIKA ST. JARNE

At least 3 days before you bake the pie (ideally longer), infuse two apples for your pie filling. Peel the apples, then cut them into slices.

In a large mason jar, add the apple slices, ¼ teaspoon cinnamon, and ⅛ teaspoon nutmeg.

Pour enough bourbon whiskey in the jar to cover the apples. Shake to blend the spices with the apples, and store in the refrigerator until ready to use.

After three days of bourbon and apple infusion, preheat the oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit.

Prepare your pie crust by pressing it into the bottom and sides of a glass pie pan. Set it aside.

Take out the mason jar with the bourbon whiskey-infused apples. Using a mesh strainer, strain the apples from the bourbon. Set the spiced apple-

infused bourbon aside — it will make for a great cocktail later.

Peel and slice 3-4 fresh apples.

In a large bowl, combine the bourbon-infused apples with the fresh cut apples. Add the sugar, flour, salt, ½ teaspoon of ground cinnamon, ⅛ teaspoon of nutmeg, lemon juice, and lemon zest. Stir well.

To make the streusel topping, in a separate bowl, combine ½ cup sugar, ½ cup flour, 2 teaspoons water, 3 tablespoons softened unsalted butter, and 1 teaspoon cinnamon. Mix the ingredients together with a fork until it resembles crumbs.

Pour the apple pie filling into the unbaked pie crust.

Top the apple filling with the streusel mixture, spreading it out so that all of the apples are covered.

Place the pie in the preheated oven on the middle rack. Bake for 40 minutes (or until the pie is bubbling and the streusel topping is starting to brown). To protect your pie crust from burning, cover the crust with a pie shield or aluminum foil after 15 minutes of baking.

After the pie is done cooking, let it cool for 1-2 hours. When ready to serve, top it with a dollop of whipped cream.

Bourbon Chicken and Couscous

courtesy of Mad River Distillers • Serving size: 2

This dinner recipe is adapted from Platter Talk's Whiskey Chicken, using Mad River Distiller's Bourbon Whiskey and boneless chicken breasts. There is no mistaking the bourbon flavor in this simple sauce, drizzled over chicken and a bed of pearl couscous.

2 boneless chicken breasts

Salt and pepper

2 tablespoon & 1 teaspoon unsalted butter

2 teaspoon olive oil

1 onion diced

4 cloves crushed garlic

3½ cups chicken broth

¼ cup Mad River Distillers Bourbon Whiskey

1 cup pearl couscous

1 cup frozen peas

2 teaspoon cornstarch

To prepare the couscous: In a small pan, bring 1½ cups of chicken broth to a boil. Add 1 teaspoon of butter, then stir in the pearl couscous. Cover the pan with a lid and reduce heat to low. Simmer for 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally until fully cooked.

While the couscous is cooking, season the uncooked chicken breasts with salt and pepper.

In a large skillet, warm 1 tablespoon of butter and the olive oil over medium heat. Place the chicken breast in the skillet. Cook for 5 minutes on each side, then remove the chicken from the skillet and set it aside.

Add the remaining butter to the skillet, along with the onions. Cook the onions until softened — about 5 minutes — then add the garlic. Sauté for about 1 minute.

Add 2 cups of chicken broth to the skillet, along with the Bourbon Whiskey. Stir, then reduce heat to a simmer.

Optional: If you like a thicker sauce, mix the cornstarch with a little water, then slowly stir it into the sauce.

Return the chicken to the skillet, and continue to simmer for about 5 minutes on each side. (More or less cooking time may be needed, depending on the thickness of the cut. To be fully cooked, chicken should reach an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.)

Before removing the chicken, add the peas to the skillet and mix them with the bourbon sauce, cooking for another 1-2 minutes.

Layer the chicken and peas over a bed of prepared couscous. Drizzle some of the bourbon sauce over the chicken.

Just a drizzle of the bourbon sauce is recommended, as a little goes a long way. You can always add more to your liking.

For food safety, be sure the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

This recipe is for adults only. Alcohol is retained in the meal.

