

## Sautéed Zucchini and Tomatoes

*The moment warm-weather vegetables arrive in the Paris markets, this is the sort of offering you find at local bistros. It might be nestled next to simple grilled fish or lamb, placed around eggs baked in a ramekin, served atop a croque-monsieur (a grilled ham-and-cheese sandwich) or folded inside savory crepes. All of the ingredients—zucchini, tomatoes, garlic, olive oil—bring the classic tastes of the Côte d’Azur, the sun-baked French Riviera, to the capital. The dish can be made a day or two ahead of time. It will taste even better, as the flavors will have had a chance to marry.*

In a mortar using a pestle, crush the garlic with a large pinch of salt until a paste forms. Set aside.

In a large fry pan over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil. Add the onions and sauté until softened, 6 to 7 minutes. Add the zucchini and bell peppers and cook, stirring, until the zucchini begin to soften, 5 to 8 minutes.

Add half of the garlic paste, the tomatoes, the 2 Tbs. tomato paste and thyme and stir well. Reduce the heat to low, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini and onions are very tender, 20 to 25 minutes. If the mixture is too thick, add a little water; if it is too thin, add 1 Tbs. tomato paste and cook, uncovered, for a few minutes longer to evaporate the excess liquid.

Stir in the remaining garlic paste and the parsley. Serve hot or at room temperature. Serves 4 to 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Foods of the World Series, *Paris*, by Marlena Spieler (Oxmoor House, 2004).

## Sautéed Green Beans

*These green beans are very easy to make and taste great. The dish includes shallots, which are in the same family as onions. Resembling a large clove of garlic covered with a papery bronze or reddish skin, the shallot has a sweet flavor when cooked.*

Fill a large saucepan half full with water and bring to a boil over high heat. Add the 1 tsp. salt and the green beans. Boil the beans until they are bright green and just tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain the beans and rinse with cold water until they are cool, then drain again.

In a fry pan over low heat, melt the butter. When the butter foams, add the shallots and cook, stirring with a wooden spoon, until they are very soft and beginning to brown, 10 to 15 minutes. Add the vinegar and stir for another minute until the shallots are coated.

Add the drained beans to the fry pan, increase the heat to medium and cook, tossing with the tongs, until the beans are heated through, about 1 minute. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately. Serves 4 to 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Fun Food*, by Stephanie Rosenbaum (Simon & Schuster, 2006).

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### Ingredients for Sautéed Zucchini and Tomatoes

3 garlic cloves

Salt, to taste

3 to 5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

3 yellow onions, sliced lengthwise

1½ lb. zucchini, trimmed and cut into ½-inch chunks

½ yellow bell pepper, seeded and diced

½ red bell pepper, seeded and diced

1½ lb. ripe tomatoes, seeded and diced

2 Tbs. tomato paste, plus more as needed

About ¼ tsp. minced fresh thyme

1 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

### Ingredients for Sautéed Green Beans

1 tsp. salt, plus more, to taste

1 lb. green beans, stems snapped off

1 Tbs. unsalted butter

4 shallots, thinly sliced lengthwise

1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar

Freshly ground pepper, to taste

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### Tips & Tricks

**Choosing Cuts for Sautéing and Panfrying:** The best cuts are boneless pieces of meat, such as chicken breasts, steaks, pork loin steaks, firm fish, shrimp, turkey cutlets and duck breasts. Many recipes call for pounding poultry before sautéing or panfrying to ensure even cooking.

**Selecting Fats for Sautéing and Panfrying:** Because both of these techniques call for medium-high to high heat, choose an oil with a high smoke point, such as canola or vegetable. The best fats to use are healthful ones that won’t burn easily. Canola and grape seed oils are rich in mono- and polyunsaturated fats that help lower the level of bad cholesterol and increase the good cholesterol. Olive oil has a lower smoke point but is also healthful. Some recipes call for both butter and oil when sautéing and panfrying. The butter provides flavor but burns at a relatively low heat. The oil can withstand higher heat and allows the butter to be heated to an increased temperature.

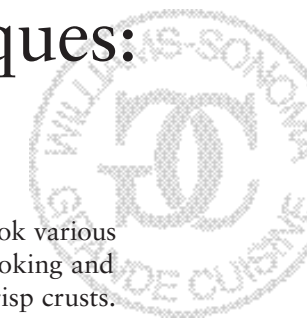
**Deglazing Pan Drippings:** Many recipes for sautéing and panfrying feature a rich-tasting sauce made from the pan drippings. The first step is to dissolve the browned bits, or fonds, using a process called deglazing. Place the pan over medium-high heat. When the drippings sizzle, add stock or another liquid and bring to a boil. Scrape the bottom and sides of the pan with a wooden spatula to loosen and dissolve the bits.

**Best Pans for the Stovetop:** When you are making a pan sauce, a fry pan or sauté pan with an uncoated surface is the best choice because it allows the flavorful bits to adhere to the pan bottom after sautéing or panfrying. A pan that disperses heat evenly will allow for better buildup of those bits and will brown the food evenly without much effort. Although a nonstick pan will work, it won’t develop as many browned bits. If you are using a nonstick pan, whisk the ingredients with a plastic whisk or other nonmetal tool to avoid scratching the protective coating. Select a pan that will hold the food comfortably. If the pan is too small, the liquid will accumulate rather than evaporate, causing the food to steam rather than sear. If the pan is too large, both the food and the pan will dry out too quickly and possibly scorch and even burn.

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# Essential Cooking Techniques: Sautéing & Panfrying



Two related techniques—sautéing and panfrying—are used to quickly cook various cuts of meats and vegetables. Both methods call for oil or butter for cooking and medium-high to high heat, which browns the ingredients and creates crisp crusts. Recipes that use these techniques often include a pan sauce that helps to bring the flavors together. The recipes featured here are suitable for a wide range of occasions, from quick weeknight meals to special dinners for guests.

## What Is Sautéing?

Sautéing is an ideal technique for today’s busy home chefs because it cooks food quickly, preserving the flavors, and by not diluting the food in liquid, preserving its nutrients. By intensifying the flavors in foods, sautéing increases the pleasure of eating healthy vegetables, fruits and grains. Although generally used for main dishes, this cooking method is also good for preparing starters, sides and desserts.

Sautéing calls for cooking food rapidly over high heat in a small amount of fat. The technique—the name of which derives from the French word for “jump”—has been traditionally described as tossing and stirring small pieces of food in a hot pan. The definition has expanded to include larger pieces of fish, poultry and meat, which are sometimes cut or pounded thin to shorten the cooking time. These larger pieces don’t need to be kept moving constantly, though are sometimes turned several times.

Since no water is involved, sautéing is known as a dry-heat cooking method, like grilling and roasting. The dry heat and fat create appealing and delicious browning. As food browns, its juices concentrate and caramelize. Adding liquid to the pan at the end of sautéing dissolves these juices and produces a delicious sauce in minutes.

As a rule, start sautéing over medium-high or high heat to ensure a nice browned surface, and then lower the heat so the food will cook through without burning. To lessen the risk of foods sticking to the pan, always heat the pan before you add the fat, and then heat the fat before you add the food. Swirl the pan to coat it evenly with the fat. When sautéing a larger piece of poultry or meat, let it cook undisturbed for a few minutes to brown well on the first side.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma New Healthy Kitchen Series, *Sautéing*, by Dana Jacobi (Weldon Owen, 2007).

## Tips & Tricks

**Crumb and Flour Coatings:** Before sautéing or panfrying, apply flavored bread crumbs or seasoned flour to the outside of the meat to protect the flesh from the high heat of the cooking fat. This insulation seals in the juices and adds another layer of flavor and texture to the dish, producing a crisp, golden crust when the food is browned.

**Testing with Your Senses:** Thin, tender pieces of poultry and pork are often difficult to test for doneness using a thermometer. Instead, carefully press on the cooked meat with a fingertip and note the texture. When it is done, poultry and pork should feel firm to the touch. You can also cut into the edge of the meat and make sure it is opaque throughout, with no signs of pink.

### Ingredients for Panfried Garlic & Oregano Chicken

3 thick slices stale crusty bread, torn into large pieces

2 garlic cloves

4 tsp. dried oregano

3⁄4 tsp. kosher salt

3⁄4 tsp. freshly ground pepper

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, each about 6 oz., lightly pounded until 1⁄2 inch thick

1⁄2 cup plus 2 Tbs. olive oil

4 lemon wedges

## What Is Panfrying?

Panfrying, also called shallow frying, typically uses more fat than sautéing but far less than deep-frying, which involves fully submerging the food in hot oil. With panfrying, the food is cooked over medium to high heat in hot oil to produce a crisp exterior and a moist interior. This method works well for larger pieces of meats and vegetables, such as bone-in chicken parts, which require longer cooking times than sautéing does.

When panfrying, it is critical to use an oil with a high smoke point along with a heavy-bottomed pan that retains heat well and will keep the oil at an even temperature. You generally use up to 1 inch of oil, or enough to come about halfway up the sides of the food that you are panfrying.

As with sautéing, be sure to allow enough room between pieces of food. This will prevent sudden dips in the oil’s temperature as well as the release of the food’s natural juices.

## Panfried Garlic & Oregano Chicken

*A golden brown, oregano-flecked crumb coating, redolent of garlic, is reason enough to make these chicken breasts. The crust also protects the meat from the heat of the pan to keep it moist. Served with a tossed green salad, this dish provides the perfect balance of crisp and tender.*

With a food processor running, drop the bread pieces through the feed tube, one at a time, and process into coarse crumbs. Transfer to a bowl.

With the food processor running, drop the garlic cloves through the feed tube to chop finely. Stop the processor and add the bread crumbs, oregano, 1⁄4 tsp. of the salt and 1⁄4 tsp. of the pepper. Pulse to combine.

Using a pastry brush, coat the chicken breasts on both sides with the 2 Tbs. olive oil. Sprinkle both sides evenly with the remaining 1⁄2 tsp. salt and 1⁄2 tsp. pepper. Spread the bread crumb mixture in a wide, shallow dish. One at a time, place the chicken breasts in the crumbs, covering them completely, and pat lightly to help the crumbs adhere. Transfer to a baking sheet.

Place a very large fry pan or sauté pan over medium-high heat and pour in the remaining 1⁄2 cup oil. When the oil shimmers, place the breast halves in the pan and cook until the undersides are golden, about 4 minutes. Using a slotted spatula, turn and cook the other sides until golden and the breasts feel firm when pressed in the center, about 4 minutes more. Transfer to paper towels to drain briefly, turning them once, about 30 seconds, then place on warmed individual plates. Place a lemon wedge on each plate for squeezing and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Chicken for Dinner* (Weldon Owen, 2009).

## Chicken Breasts with Cream & Sherry

*In this simple but elegant dish, sherry and cream elevate sautéed chicken breasts with an indulgent sauce. Choose dry sherry, such as amontillado or fino, to strike the right flavor balance.*

Sprinkle both sides of the chicken breast halves with the 1⁄2 tsp. salt and 1⁄2 tsp. pepper.

Place a large fry pan or sauté pan over medium-high heat and add 1 Tbs. of the butter and the oil. Meanwhile, spread the flour in a shallow dish. One at a time, lightly coat the chicken in the flour, shaking off the excess, and place the chicken in the pan.

Cook until the undersides are golden brown, about 3 minutes. Turn the chicken over and reduce the heat to medium. Sauté until the second sides are golden brown and the chicken feels firm when pressed in the center with a fingertip, about 3 minutes more. Transfer to a warmed platter.

Place the pan over medium heat and add 1 Tbs. of the butter. When the butter has melted, add the shallot and sauté until softened, about 2 minutes. Increase the heat to high, add the sherry and bring just to a boil, scraping up the browned bits from the pan bottom. Add the stock and cream and cook until reduced by one-fourth, about 2 minutes.

Return the chicken to the pan, turn once and cook for 1 minute. Transfer the chicken to warmed individual plates. Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the remaining 1 Tbs. butter until melted. Taste and adjust the seasonings with salt and pepper. Spoon the sauce over the chicken and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Chicken for Dinner* (Weldon Owen, 2009).

## Sautéed Green Cabbage with Country Ham

*One of the most distinctive of all Southern delicacies is salt-cured country ham. It originated in the days before refrigeration and is now produced from corn-fed hogs in Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky and parts of North Carolina. The most famous of all the country hams, however, is made from peanut-fed hogs in Virginia and is called Smithfield ham, after a small town of the same name. Its patented production is restricted by law to city limits. The process involves salting the ham, then smoking it and finally aging.*

In a large sauté pan over medium heat, melt the butter. When the butter is hot, add the onion and sauté, stirring occasionally, until tender and translucent, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the cabbage and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, 25 to 30 minutes. Add the ham and cook, stirring, 2 to 3 minutes more. Season with salt and pepper, transfer to a warmed serving bowl and serve immediately. Serves 12.

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### Ingredients for Chicken Breasts with Cream & Sherry

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, each about 6 oz. and lightly pounded until 1⁄2 inch thick

1⁄2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more, to taste

1⁄2 tsp. freshly ground pepper, plus more, to taste

3 Tbs. unsalted butter

1 Tbs. canola oil

1⁄4 cup all-purpose flour

1 shallot, minced

1⁄3 cup dry sherry

2⁄3 cup chicken stock

1⁄2 cup heavy cream

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### Ingredients for Sautéed Green Cabbage with Country Ham

3 Tbs. unsalted butter

1 large yellow onion, sliced crosswise into thin rings

4 lb. green cabbage, quartered and cut into 1⁄4-inch-thick strips

1 cup diced country ham

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste