

THE MINIMALIST

Summer Express: 101 Simple Meals Ready in 10 Minutes or Less

By Mark Bittman

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The pleasures of cooking are sometimes obscured by summer haze and heat, which can cause many of us to turn instead to bad restaurants and worse takeout. But the cook with a little bit of experience has a wealth of quick and easy alternatives at hand. The trouble is that when it's too hot, even the most resourceful cook has a hard time remembering all the options. So here are 101 substantial main courses, all of which get you in and out of the kitchen in 10 minutes or less. (I'm not counting the time it takes to bring water to a boil, but you can stay out of the kitchen for that.) These suggestions are not formal recipes; rather, they provide a general outline. With a little imagination and some swift moves — and maybe a salad and a loaf of bread — you can turn any dish on this list into a meal that not only will be better than takeout, but won't heat you out of the house.

1 Make six-minute eggs: simmer gently, run under cold water until cool, then peel. Serve over steamed asparagus.

2 Toss a cup of chopped mixed herbs with a few tablespoons of olive oil in a hot pan. Serve over angel-hair pasta, diluting the sauce if necessary with pasta cooking water.

3 Cut eight sea scallops into four horizontal slices each. Arrange on plates. Sprinkle with lime juice, salt and crushed chilies; serve after five minutes.

4 Open a can of white beans and combine with olive oil, salt, small or chopped shrimp, minced garlic and thyme leaves in a pan. Cook, stirring, until the shrimp are done; garnish with more olive oil.

5 Put three pounds of washed mussels in a pot with half a cup of white wine, garlic cloves, basil leaves and chopped tomatoes. Steam until mussels open. Serve with bread.

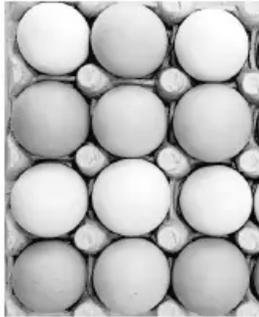
6 Heat a quarter-inch of olive oil in a skillet. Dredge flounder or sole fillets in flour and fry until crisp, about two minutes a side. Serve on sliced bread with tartar sauce.

7 Make pesto: put a couple of cups of basil leaves, a garlic clove, salt, pepper and olive oil as necessary in a blender (walnuts and Parmesan are optional). Serve over pasta (dilute with oil or water as necessary) or grilled fish or meat.

- 8** Put a few dozen washed littlenecks in a large, hot skillet with olive oil. When clams begin to open, add a tablespoon or two of chopped garlic. When most or all are opened, add parsley. Serve alone, with bread or over angel-hair pasta.
- 9** Pan-grill a skirt steak for three or four minutes a side. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, slice and serve over romaine or any other green salad, drizzled with olive oil and lemon.
- 10** Smear mackerel fillets with mustard, then sprinkle with chopped herbs (fresh tarragon is good), salt, pepper and bread crumbs. Bake in a 425-degree oven for about eight minutes.
- 11** Warm olive oil in a skillet with at least three cloves sliced garlic. When the garlic colors, add at least a teaspoon each of cumin and pimentón. A minute later, add a dozen or so shrimp, salt and pepper. Garnish with parsley, serve with lemon and bread.
- 12** Boil a lobster. Serve with lemon or melted butter.
- 13** Gazpacho: Combine one pound tomatoes cut into chunks, a cucumber peeled and cut into chunks, two or three slices stale bread torn into pieces, a quarter-cup olive oil, two tablespoons sherry vinegar and a clove of garlic in a blender with one cup water and a couple of ice cubes. Process until smooth, adding water if necessary. Season with salt and pepper, then serve or refrigerate, garnished with anchovies if you like, and a little more olive oil.
- 14** Put a few slices of chopped prosciutto in a skillet with olive oil, a couple of cloves of crushed garlic and a bit of butter; a minute later, toss in about half a cup bread crumbs and red chili flakes to taste. Serve over pasta with chopped parsley.
- 15** Call it panini: Grilled cheese with prosciutto, tomatoes, thyme or basil leaves.
- 16** Slice or chop salami, corned beef or kielbasa and warm in a little oil; stir in eggs and scramble. Serve with mustard and rye bread.
- 17** Soak couscous in boiling water to cover until tender; top with sardines, tomatoes, parsley, olive oil and black pepper.
- 18** Stir-fry a pound or so of ground meat or chopped fish mixed with chopped onions and seasoned with cumin or chili powder. Pile into taco shells or soft tacos, along with tomato, lettuce, canned beans, onion, cilantro and sour cream.
- 19** Chinese tomato and eggs: Cook minced garlic in peanut oil until blond; add chopped tomatoes then, a minute later, beaten eggs, along with salt and pepper. Scramble with a little soy sauce.

101

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ONE MAKE SIX-MINUTE EGGS: SIMMER GENTLY, RUN UNDER COLD WATER UNTIL COOL, THEN PEEL. SERVE OVER STEAMED ASPARAGUS. TWO TOSS A CUP OF CHOPPED MIXED HERBS WITH A FEW TABLESPOONS OF OLIVE OIL IN A HOT PAN. SERVE OVER



ANGEL-HAIR PASTA, DILUTING THE SAUCE IF NECESSARY WITH PASTA COOKING WATER. THREE CUT

ON TAL SLICES EACH. LIME JUICE, SALT AND MINUTES. FOUR OPEN A BEANS AND MIX WITH



EIGHT SEA SCALLOPS INTO FOUR HORIZONTAL SLICES EACH. ARRANGE ON PLATES. SPRINKLE WITH CRUSHED CHILIES; SERVE AFTER FIVE CAN OF WHITE

SMALL OR CHOPPED SHRIMP, MINCED GARLIC AND THYME



LEAVES IN A PAN. COOK, STIRRING, UNTIL THE SHRIMP ARE DONE; GARNISH WITH MORE OLIVE OIL.

FIVE PUT THREE POUNDS OF WASHED MUSSELS IN A POT WITH HALF A CUP OF WHITE WINE, GARLIC CLOVES, BASIL LEAVES

AND CHOPPED TOMATOES. STEAM SERVE WITH BAGUETTE. SIX HEAT IN A SKILLET. DREDGE SOLE OR FLOUR AND FRY UNTIL CRISP, A SIDE. SERVE ON SLICED BREAD



UNTIL MUSSELS OPEN. A QUARTER-INCH OF OIL FLOUNDER FILLETS IN ABOUT TWO MINUTES WITH LETTUCE AND

20 Cut eggplant into half-inch slices. Broil with lots of olive oil, turning once, until tender and browned. Top with crumbled goat or feta cheese and broil another 20 seconds.

21 While pasta cooks, combine a couple cups chopped tomatoes, a teaspoon or more minced garlic, olive oil and 20 to 30 basil leaves. Toss with pasta, salt, pepper and Parmesan.

- 22** Make wraps of tuna, warm white beans, a drizzle of olive oil and lettuce and tomato.
- 23** The New York supper: Bagels, cream cheese, smoked salmon. Serve with tomatoes, watercress or arugula, and sliced red onion or shallot.
- 24** Dredge thinly sliced chicken breasts in flour or cornmeal; cook about two minutes a side in hot olive oil. Place on bread with lettuce, tomato and mayonnaise.
- 25** Upscale tuna salad: good canned tuna (packed in olive oil), capers, dill or parsley, lemon juice but no mayo. Use to stuff a tomato or two.
- 26** Cut Italian sausage into chunks and brown in a little olive oil; chop onions and bell peppers and add them to the pan. Cook until sausage is browned and peppers and onions tender. Serve in sandwiches.
- 27** Egg in a hole, glorified: Tear a hole in a piece of bread and fry in butter. Crack an egg into the hole. Deglaze pan with a little sherry vinegar mixed with water, and more butter; pour over egg.
- 28** New Joe's Special, from San Francisco: Brown ground meat with minced garlic and chopped onion. When just about cooked, add chopped spinach and cook, stirring, until wilted. At the last minute, stir in two eggs, along with grated Parmesan and salt and pepper.
- 29** Chop prosciutto and crisp it in a skillet with olive oil; add chopped not-too-ripe figs. Serve over greens dressed with oil and vinegar; top all with crumbled blue cheese.
- 30** Quesadilla: Use a combination of cheeses, like Fontina mixed with grated pecorino. Put on half of a large flour tortilla with pickled jalapenos, chopped onion, shallot or scallion, chopped tomatoes and grated radish. Fold tortilla over and brown on both sides in butter or oil, until cheese is melted.
- 31** Fast chile rellenos: Drain canned whole green chilies. Make a slit in each and insert a piece of cheese. Dredge in flour and fry in a skillet, slit side up, until cheese melts.
- 32** Cobb-ish salad: Chop bacon and begin to brown it; cut boneless chicken into strips and cook it with bacon. Toss romaine and watercress or arugula with chopped tomatoes, avocado, onion and crumbled blue cheese. Add bacon and chicken. Dress with oil and vinegar.
- 33** Sauté 10 whole peeled garlic cloves in olive oil. Meanwhile, grate Pecorino, grind lots of black pepper, chop parsley and cook pasta. Toss all together, along with crushed dried chili flakes and salt.
- 34** Niçoise salad: Lightly steam haricot verts, green beans or asparagus. Arrange on a plate with chickpeas, good canned tuna, hard-cooked eggs, a green salad, sliced cucumber and tomato. Dress with oil and vinegar.
- 35** Cold soba with dipping sauce: Cook soba noodles, then rinse in cold water until cool. Serve with a sauce of soy sauce and minced ginger diluted with mirin and/or dry sake.
- 36** Fried egg "saltimbocca": Lay slices of prosciutto or ham in a buttered skillet. Fry eggs on top of ham; top with grated Parmesan.

37 Frisée aux lardons: Cook chunks of bacon in a skillet. Meanwhile, make six-minute or poached eggs and a frisée salad. Put eggs on top of salad along with bacon; deglaze pan with sherry vinegar and pour pan juices over all.

38 Fried rice: Soften vegetables with oil in a skillet. Add cold takeout rice, chopped onion, garlic, ginger, peas and two beaten eggs. Toss until hot and cooked through. Season with soy sauce and sesame oil.

Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

39 Taco salad: Toss together greens, chopped tomato, chopped red onion, sliced avocado, a small can of black beans and kernels from a couple of ears of corn. Toss with crumbled tortilla chips and grated cheese. Dress with olive oil, lime and chopped cilantro leaves.

40 Put a large can of chickpeas and their liquid in a medium saucepan. Add some sherry, along with olive oil, plenty of minced garlic, smoked pimentón and chopped Spanish chorizo. Heat through.

41 Raita to the rescue: Broil any fish. Serve with a sauce of drained yogurt mixed with chopped cucumber, minced onion and cayenne.

42 Season boneless lamb steaks cut from the leg with sweet curry powder. Sear on both sides. Serve over greens, with lemon wedges.

43 Migas, with egg: Sauté chopped stale bread with olive oil, mushrooms, onions and spinach. Stir in a couple of eggs.

44 Migas, without egg: Sauté chopped stale bread with chopped Spanish chorizo, plenty of garlic and lots of olive oil. Finish with chopped parsley.

45 Sauté shredded zucchini in olive oil, adding garlic and chopped herbs. Serve over pasta.

- 46** Broil a few slices prosciutto until crisp; crumble and toss with parsley, Parmesan, olive oil and pasta.
- 47** Not exactly banh mi, but... Make sandwiches on crisp bread with liverwurst, ham, sliced half-sours, shredded carrots, cilantro sprigs and Vietnamese chili-garlic paste.
- 48** Not takeout: Stir-fry onions with cut-up broccoli. Add cubed tofu, chicken or shrimp, or sliced beef or pork, along with a tablespoon each minced garlic and ginger. When almost done, add half cup of water, two tablespoons soy sauce and plenty of black pepper. Heat through and serve over fresh Chinese noodles.
- 49** Sprinkle sole fillets with chopped parsley, garlic, salt and pepper; roll up, dip in flour, then beaten egg, then bread crumbs; cook in hot olive oil about three minutes a side. Serve with lemon wedges.
- 50** The Waldorf: Toast a handful of walnuts in a skillet. Chop an apple or pear; toss with greens, walnuts and a dressing made with olive oil, sherry vinegar, Dijon mustard and shallot. Top, if you like, with crumbled goat or blue cheese.
- 51** Put a stick of butter and a handful of pine nuts in a skillet. Cook over medium heat until both are brown. Toss with cooked pasta, grated Parmesan and black pepper.
- 52** Grill or sauté Italian sausage and serve over store-bought hummus, with lemon wedges.
- 53** Put a tablespoon of cream and a slice of tomato in each of several small ramekins. Top with an egg, then salt, pepper and grated Parmesan. Bake at 350 degrees until the eggs set. Serve with toast.
- 54** Brown small pork (or hot dog) chunks in a skillet. Add white beans, garlic, thyme and olive oil. Or add white beans and ketchup.
- 55** Dredge skate or flounder in flour and brown quickly in butter or oil. Deglaze pan with a couple of spoonfuls of capers and a lot of lemon juice or a little vinegar.
- 56** Make a fast tomato sauce of olive oil, chopped tomatoes and garlic. Poach eggs in the sauce, then top with Parmesan.
- 57** Dip pork cutlets in egg, then dredge heavily in panko; brown quickly on both sides. Serve over lettuce, with fresh lemon, or bottled Japanese curry sauce.
- 58** Cook chicken livers in butter or oil with garlic; do not overcook. Finish with parsley, lemon juice and coarse salt; serve over toast.

59 Brown bratwursts with cut-up apples. Serve with coleslaw.

60 Peel and thinly slice raw beets; cook in butter until soft. Take out of pan and quickly cook some shrimp in same pan. Deglaze pan with sherry vinegar, adding sauce to beets and shrimp. Garnish with dill.

61 Poach shrimp and plunge into ice water. Serve with cocktail sauce: one cup ketchup, one tablespoon vinegar, three tablespoons melted butter and lots of horseradish.

62 Southeast Asia steak salad: Pan- or oven-grill skirt or flank steak. Slice and serve on a pile of greens with a sauce of one tablespoon each of nam pla and lime juice, black pepper, a teaspoon each of sugar and garlic, crushed red chili flakes and Thai basil.

63 Miso steak: Coat beef tenderloin steaks (filet mignon) with a blend of miso and chili paste thinned with sake or white wine. Grill or broil about five minutes.

64 Pasta with fresh tomatoes: Cook chopped fresh tomatoes in butter or oil with garlic until tender, while pasta cooks. Combine and serve with grated Parmesan.

65 Sauté squid rings and tentacles in olive oil with salt and pepper and garlic; add chopped tomatoes. Cook until the tomatoes break down. Serve over pasta.

66 Salmon (or just about anything else) teriyaki: Sear salmon steaks on both sides for a couple of minutes; remove. To skillet, add a splash of water, sake, a little sugar and soy sauce; when mixture is thick, return steaks to pan and turn in sauce until done. Serve hot or at room temperature.

67 Rich vegetable soup: Cook asparagus tips and peeled stalks or most any other green vegetable in chicken stock with a little tarragon until tender; reserve a few tips and purée the rest with a little butter (cream or yogurt, too, if you like) adding enough stock to thin the purée. Garnish with the reserved tips. Serve hot or cold.

68 Brush portobello caps with olive oil; sprinkle with salt and pepper and broil until tender. Briefly sweat chopped onions, then scramble eggs with them. Put eggs in mushrooms.

69 Buy good blintzes. Brown them on both sides in butter. Serve with sour cream, apple sauce or both.

70 Sauté squid rings and tentacles in olive oil with salt and pepper. Make a sauce of minced garlic, smoked pimentón, mayo, lots of lemon juice and fresh parsley. Serve with a chopped salad of cucumber, tomato, lettuce, grated carrot and scallion, lightly dressed.

- 71** Press a lot of coarsely ground black pepper onto both sides of filet mignon or other steaks or chopped meat patties. Brown in butter in a skillet for two minutes a side. Remove steaks and add a splash of red wine, chopped shallots and a bit of tarragon to skillet. Reduce, then return steaks to pan, turning in the sauce for a minute or two.
- 72** World's leading sandwich: prosciutto, tomato, butter or olive oil and a baguette.
- 73** Near instant mezze: Combine hummus on a plate with yogurt laced with chopped cucumbers and a bit of garlic, plus tomato, feta, white beans with olive oil and pita bread.
- 74** Canned sardines packed in olive oil on Triscuits, with mustard and Tabasco.
- 75** Boil-and-eat shrimp, cooked in water with Old Bay seasoning or a mixture of thyme, garlic, paprika, chopped onion, celery, chili, salt and pepper.
- 76** Make a thin plain omelet with two or three eggs. Sauté cubes of bacon or pancetta or strips of prosciutto until crisp. Cut up the omelet and use it and the meat to garnish a green salad dressed with olive oil and balsamic vinegar.
- 77** Sear corn kernels in olive oil with minced jalapeños and chopped onions; toss with cilantro, black beans, chopped tomatoes, chopped bell pepper and lime.
- 78** Cook shrimp in a skillet slowly (five minutes or so) to preserve their juices, with plenty of garlic and olive oil, until done; pour over watercress or arugula, with lemon, pepper and salt.
- 79** Liverwurst on good sourdough rye with scallions, tomato and wholegrain mustard.
- 80** Not-quite merguez: Ground lamb burgers seasoned with cumin, garlic, onion, salt and cayenne. Serve with couscous and green salad, along with bottled harissa.

Chris Warde-Jones for The New York Times

- 81** Combine crab meat with mayo, Dijon mustard, chives and tarragon. Serve in a sandwich, with potato chips.

- 82** Combine canned tuna in olive oil, halved grape tomatoes, black olives, mint, lemon zest and red pepper flakes. Serve with pasta, thinning with olive oil or pasta cooking water as needed.
- 83** Pit and chop a cup or more of mixed olives. Combine with olive oil, a little minced garlic, red pepper flakes and chopped basil or parsley. Serve over pasta.
- 84** Cook chopped tomatillos with a little water or stock, cilantro and a little minced fresh chili; serve over grilled, broiled or sautéed chicken breasts, with corn tortillas.
- 85** A winning sandwich: bresaola or prosciutto, arugula, Parmesan, marinated artichoke hearts, tomato.
- 86** Smoked trout fillets served with lightly toasted almonds, shredded fennel, a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of lemon.
- 87** Grated carrots topped with six-minute eggs (run under cold water until cool before peeling), olive oil and lemon juice.
- 88** Cut the top off four big tomatoes; scoop out the interiors and mix them with toasted stale baguette or pita, olive oil, salt, pepper and herbs (basil, tarragon, and/or parsley). Stuff into tomatoes and serve with salad.
- 89** Pasta frittata: Turn cooked pasta and a little garlic into an oiled or buttered skillet. Brown, pressing to create a cake. Flip, then top with three or four beaten eggs and loads of Parmesan. Brown other side and serve.
- 90** Thai-style beef: Thinly slice one and a half pounds of flank steak, pork shoulder or boneless chicken; heat peanut oil in a skillet, add meat and stir. A minute later, add a tablespoon minced garlic and some red chili flakes. Add 30 clean basil leaves, a quarter cup of water and a tablespoon or two of soy sauce or nam pla. Serve with lime juice and more chili flakes, over rice or salad.
- 91** Dredge calf's liver in flour. Sear in olive oil or butter or a combination until crisp on both sides, adding salt and pepper as it cooks; it should be medium-rare. Garnish with parsley and lemon juice.
- 92** Rub not-too-thick pork or lamb chops with olive oil; sprinkle with salt and pepper plus sage or thyme. Broil about three minutes a side and drizzle with good balsamic vinegar.
- 93** Cut up Italian sausage into chunks and brown in a little olive oil until just about done. Dump in a lot of seedless grapes and, if you like, a little slivered garlic and chopped rosemary. Cook, stirring, until the grapes are hot. Serve with bread.
- 94** Ketchup-braised tofu: Dredge large tofu cubes in flour. Brown in oil; remove from skillet and wipe skillet clean. Add a little more oil, then a tablespoon minced garlic; 30 seconds later, add one and a half cups ketchup and the tofu. Cook until sauce bubbles and tofu is hot.
- 95** Veggie burger: Drain and pour a 14-ounce can of beans into a food processor with an onion, half a cup rolled oats, a tablespoon chili powder or other spice mix, an egg, salt and pepper. Process until mushy, then shape into burgers, adding a little liquid or oats as necessary. Cook in oil about three minutes a side and serve.

96 A Roman classic: In lots of olive oil, lightly cook lots of slivered garlic, with six or so anchovy fillets and a dried hot chili or two. Dress pasta with this.

97 So-called Fettuccine Alfredo: Heat several tablespoons of butter and about half a cup of cream in a large skillet just until the cream starts to simmer. Add slightly undercooked fresh pasta to the skillet, along with plenty of grated Parmesan. Cook over low heat, tossing, until pasta is tender and hot.

98 Rub flank steak or chuck with curry or chili powder before broiling or grilling, then slice thin across the grain.

99 Cook a couple of pounds of shrimp, shell on or off, in oil, with lots of chopped garlic. When they turn pink, remove; deglaze the pan with a half-cup or so of beer, along with a splash of Worcestershire sauce, cayenne, rosemary and a lump of butter. Serve with bread.

100 Cook red lentils in water with a little cumin and chopped bacon until soft. Top with poached or six-minute eggs (run under cold water until cool before peeling) and a little sherry vinegar.

101 Hot dogs on buns — with beans!