

IMAGINE DINNER



A GUIDE TO CREATE AFFORDABLE AND SUSTAINABLE DISHES,
WITH A PINCH OF IMAGINATION

This cookbook is presented as a collaboration between the Los Angeles Food Equity Roundtable, UCLA's Department of Theater, Film, and Television, and the Sustainable LA Grand Challenge.

As our government agencies, universities, and nonprofit organizations work on changes to our food system, this cookbook is a reminder that Los Angeles chefs and artists have long been creating, imagining, and cooking up the future of food.



IMAGINE DINNER

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YOUR CHEFS

ABOUT MINH



Minh Phan is an art practitioner, chef, founder, and creative director of Michelin Star (2021, 2022) and 2021 LA Times Restaurant of the Year PHENAKITE, lauded porridge + puffs, and multi-disciplinary PKite Studio. LA Times Food Critic Bill Addison describes Phan's work as "ambitious and quietly radical." As a diasporic immigrant, Minh's work often reflects intersecting cultures, histories, and artistic traditions to create comforting and creative dishes.

www.porridgeandpuffs.com | [@porridgeandpuffs](https://www.instagram.com/porridgeandpuffs) | [@phenakite.la](https://www.instagram.com/phenakite.la)

ABOUT MARTIN



Born and raised in Los Angeles, Martin's interest in food began as a kid at his grandfather's restaurant Dem Bones Bar-B-Q, located in the westside of Los Angeles. After high school, he attended culinary school, and was first hired as an assistant pastry chef at Michelin starred Joe's Restaurant on Abbot Kinney, where he would meet friend and future mentor Brian Dunsmoor. Later at Hatchet Hall, Martin's love for food and history combined to create Hemings & Hercules, a dinner series inspired by the country's first celebrity chefs, that would go on to be featured as a part of the Netflix series High on the Hog. His dinner series is now featured regularly at Post & Beam in Los Angeles, and at restaurants around the country.

www.blackpotsupperclub.com | [@blackpotsupperclub](https://www.instagram.com/blackpotsupperclub)

ABOUT CAMILA



Camila Casanas is a holistic private chef and herbalist based in Los Angeles. In 2019, she founded Camila Creates, a full service food studio offering catering, meal delivery, and event curation services. Infused with care and creativity in equal measure, Camila's food is heritage driven, seasonally selected, and impeccably sourced. Her commitment to cultivating a holistic approach to health for her clients has deep roots in her own experiences. For Camila, it isn't enough to consider our individual relationships with food and with health – to be truly healthy, we must always consider each other.

www.camilacreates.love | [@amilacreates](https://www.instagram.com/camilacreates) | [@amilacreates.shop](https://www.instagram.com/camilacreates.shop)

FORWARD

A 19th century French lawyer, Anthelme Brillat-Savarin famously said, “tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are” aka “you are what you eat,” but I would flip that aphorism and say instead, “You eat what you are.”

Over the past 25 years I've researched and studied foodways in order to prepare for interviewing authors, journalists, home cooks, scientists, foragers, preservers et al. The deepest lesson I've learned is that food is THE expression of culture writ large. In fact, I've always thought that culture, expressed through food, can be distilled all the way down to a particular abode and what goes on within one's kitchen. Food is just that varied, cultivated and honored. The three chefs featured in these pages each enter the kitchen with their own histories including cultural background, food philosophy, flavor likes and dislikes and stories to share. In this way they tell their stories from kitchens and dining rooms give us just a glimpse of what we all share and what we are yet to taste.

We all eat, yet fewer and fewer of us cook. Technology driven convenience makes it possible to live a life without ever chopping an onion or turning on the stove. I find that utterly sad. Cooking is as much an expression of humanity as are music, dance, an art practice or writing, maybe even more so.

For if we're not well fed, where do we find the energy to dream and create?

And at a time when screens take up so much of our attention, cooking is a way to ground ourselves to the earth and the physical human experience. It's a moment of focus to give yourself and who you care for the pleasure of an edible expression of life. What could be more delicious?

Evan Kleiman

Host of KCRW's Good Food



Ah, the cookbook. A collection of ideas, recipes, stories to invite you to cook something. A recipe, similar to a script for a play or a film, is not the final product. You have to do the thing—cooking—in this case.

To be honest, I have a fickle relationship with cookbooks. They feel so much like a fantasy - I won't really ever cook what the author has dreamed up in all those pages. A list of ingredients can't compare with a steaming bowl of noodles, a salty crunch of a sandwich, or the tangy, bright heat of a fresh sauce. It is a book, after all, not the food itself. But what if dreaming wasn't the job of the author, or at least the burden of imagination was not only placed on chefs? Some of it is up to you and me, with some good ingredients and a kitchen.

Minh, Martin and Camila are all chefs who have shared their stories, favorite recipes, and creative ways to save and reuse ingredients. Their restaurants and recipes have shaped my understanding of how Los Angeles continues to be such an important city for food. I hope you enjoy their recipes and try them yourself, or maybe even make them all into a dinner party for you and your community.

How to use this cookbook: get inspired, learn a few recipes, write notes in the margins or add your adaptations. Imagine dinner.

Elizabeth Schiffler

PhD Candidate in Theater and Performance Studies

Certificate in Food Studies

And a lover of food and art

CHEF MINH PHAN

A PICKLE IN TIME

Much can be said about a culture and/or civilization by how and what it preserves. Sun-dried or dirt buried, confit or frozen, fermented or pickled, every culture has its way of extending the season. Some of the results yield richer and more complex flavors, others are ingenious survival techniques.

Writing from the perspective of a diasporic immigrant, living on the land of Tongva, modern Los Angeles, the land of bountiful ingredients and meshes of many cultures and races, I can safely say almost everyone has a pickle recipe. Delicious, practical, philosophical, pickles are the oldest thing in the recipe book, yet we are learning new things about fermented foods all the time (gut therapy, anyone?).

My pickle recipe is a simple guideline. Truly, one can pickle anything. I do “pickle” grains (i.e. rice, buckwheat) and animal proteins (especially eggs), but fresh produce is my favorite. This simple “quick pickle ratio” is the base for literally thousands of recipes using seasonal produce.

What’s my favorite seasonal ingredient to use? I have many but the humble brassica family (i.e. cabbage, mustard greens) always amazes me. Practicing a classic knife cut (try a rondelle!) or inventing a new one is one of my favorite things to do with pickles, so have fun!

RATIO BY VOLUME (aka amount, like cups)

2	2	1
WATER : VINEGAR : SUGAR		
SALT TO TASTE		

TIPS

- Add aromatics to your heart's desire.
Examples: dried spices, fresh alliums, fresh herbs, citrus zest, etc.
- For leafy or fruity items, use a cold brine. Heated then cooled.
- For sturdier roots and stems, use a hot brine. Produce can be cooked in brine to desired doneness or poured over your washed and cut ingredients as a carry-over heat method.
- Too sweet or vinegary, add more water to dilute.

SHOPPING LIST

VEGGIES SUGAR VINEGAR

Here's a sample recipe:

MEYER LEMON + RADISHES

1 Meyer Lemon

1 lb of radishes

(daikon, red radishes, watermelon radishes or any other radish found everywhere/year round but especially at farmers markets)

1 Tbsp Coriander Seed

3 Cups Water

3 Cups White Vinegar

1.5 Cups Sugar

2 tsp Salt, more to taste

1 – 1 quart glass jars with lids.

DIRECTIONS

1. Wash and zest one meyer lemon. Save juice for salad dressing or make lemonade.
2. Wash radishes. Peeling is optional, but consider it if the peel is bruised and/or woody. Cut into desired shape and size (about 1" chunks/wedges or thin slices).
3. Although this recipe will be using a "cold" brine (room temperature in this case), I like to heat it up first to "pasteurize" it and dissolve the sugar and salt. Heat up the brine in a saucepan on your stove: Water, vinegar, sugar, and salt. Let cool to room temperature. Taste brine. Add a pinch of salt to desired brine taste.
4. Place zest, radishes, and coriander seeds in a glass jar. Pour cooled brine into the jar. Seal the jar with a lid, then gently shake a few times to activate coriander seeds and zest oils.

Remove the lid and taste! Add another pinch of salt if you think you'll need it. Replace and close lid, shake, put in fridge for a few hours or overnight. Taste again. Eat within 2 weeks. Great with or in sandwiches, with rice/grain/noodle bowls, eggs, and savory porridge.

CHEF MARTIN DRALUCK

A HISTORY OF MACARONI & CHEESE CASSEROLE

My name is Martin Draluck, and I've been working in restaurants in Los Angeles for close to two decades. My area of expertise is Black culinary history. I currently run the Black Pot Supper Club experience, a dining event centered around telling the stories of America's earliest Black culinary influencers. This recipe is inspired by James Hemings, an important figure in Black culinary history. Hemings was enslaved to Thomas Jefferson, and his life and career as a chef shaped much of what we think of as American cuisine today, including a classic dish, macaroni and cheese.

Storytelling is one of the greatest parts of cooking. Bringing people together around a table full of food brings a natural ease to idea and story exchange. Creating that environment is an art in itself. The artistry of creating a dining environment can appear in different ways. Having the right group of people is the most important. For me it has to be people that I vibe with, and who I also know aren't afraid to eat. Having the right people around can make even the worst meals tolerable. Music is also an important element for a successful environment. I don't always need a set playlist, because I always enjoy finding new music. As long as the music fits the mood, I'll be good with it.

This dish feeds 4-6 people depending on the suggested additions. For this recipe you'll want one casserole dish, one medium sized pot, and a strainer/colander.

INGREDIENTS:

16 oz (2 cups) of your favorite macaroni noodle
(*ie elbow, rigatoni, penne, etc....*)

24 oz (3 cups) milk, cream, or any combination thereof

A few handfuls of cheese, really any will do

An equal amount of soft butter (butter at room temperature) and flour

SHOPPING LIST

NOODLES MILK CHEESE BUTTER

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat your oven to 375°
2. Mix your soft butter and flour together until a mixture forms somewhere between paste and dough. Set aside in a small container for later. (this is called a *beurre manié*)
3. Cook your noodles in a pot of boiling salted water, according to the directions on the packaging and set aside to cool.
4. Slowly warm your milk/cream mixture while occasionally whisking to avoid curdling at the bottom.
5. When you've reached a simmer, begin adding your cheese or cheese scraps to the liquid, stirring to break up any lumps.
6. Now you can begin to add your butter/flour mixture spoonful at a time, stirring until you see the mixture begin to simmer again then thicken and slightly shine.
7. Pour your smooth cheese sauce over your noodles and mix in a casserole dish.
8. Top with another handful of cheese (and bread crumbs if you have them) and bake in a preheated oven until cheese is melted and bubbly.
9. Let cool slightly before eating.

The great part of this recipe is that you can add anything into this cooked noodle mixture: canned tuna fish, cooked ground beef, grilled baked or fried chicken, vegetables, leftovers or whatever your heart desires.

CHEF CAMILA CASANAS

ANATOMY OF A PERFECT MEAL

This recipe is a template: many different ingredients can be swapped in or out depending on seasonal availability, access, or limited ingredients. The recipe is complete in terms of having a main component and accompanied sides that make this a truly nourishing and satisfying meal no matter what ingredients are being used.

“My style of cooking is meant to make you feel like your grandma fixed you a plate.”

Loving, warm, and tells the story of having fun, using what's available to you, and simply doing the best you can while navigating an ever-changing and complex food system we all have to navigate. After years of working in fine dining, fussy food felt exclusive and love-less. Now, I'm a holistic chef and herbalist who cooks heritage driven food, which is nutrient dense and focuses on highlighting local regional ingredients and accessible execution. I don't think it's enough to consider our individual relationships with food and health – to be truly healthy, we must always consider each other and the world around us.

In my own kitchen, saving vegetable scraps and meat bones is a really simple way to create a foundation of building flavor by making stocks and broths than can be used to cook beans, grains, sauces, and bases for soups or to be drank as a medicinal tonic when it's infused with simple herbs. Recovering almost spoiled ingredients could look like blending them into a soup or roasting them and blending them into a dip for snacking. It's all about getting creative with execution, because almost all ingredients have use no matter what stage of life they're in.

To me, one of the most important components of a dining experience is having a tidy space, especially if you're eating from home; cleaning the kitchen as you go, eating on a table that's free of clutter and has fresh flowers, unscented candles, or a beautiful tablecloth allows us to focus on the meal and take in all of it's nuance without being distracted.

Here are some other components I like:

NO PHONES!

GREAT LIGHTING (no overhead lights) a warm soft glow that adds a bit of romance.

GOOD FRIENDS AND FAMILY, of course, are THE MOST important part of the meal other than the food itself. It is scientifically proven that enjoying a meal with loved ones is good for our health.

THE PROPER VESSEL for serving is also important, a cooked meal deserves to be served on a glass plate if that's possible.

And lastly, set the mood with **A PLAYLIST** – something soothing and relaxing that again compliments the meal being served and doesn't take anything away from the experience by being distracting.





GARDEN TORTILLA SOUP

MAKES ABOUT 6 SERVINGS

- 3 tablespoon neutral flavored oil
- 1 medium white onion, chopped
- 1 medium red bell pepper, diced
- 1 medium green bell pepper, diced
- 3 carrots, diced
- A couple stalks of celery, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 large sweet potato, diced
- 2 cup roasted tomatoes
- 1 can diced green hatch chiles
- 1 cup cooked black beans
- 1 cup cooked pinto beans
- 1 cup cooked hominy
- 1 tbsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 2 tsp oregano
- 1 tbsp chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms/or shredded chicken/beef/pork
- 16 oz tomato sauce
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 4 cups stock (*made from used vegetable scraps/leftover meat bones*)
- 4 cups of water
- 1 tsp apple cider vinegar/or white vinegar/lemon juice/lime juice

SHOPPING LIST

VEGGIES HERBS BEANS, TOMATO SAUCE & PASTE

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a heavy bottomed pot, heat 3 tablespoons of neutral oil on medium heat. Add in onion, bell peppers, carrot, and celery. Saute until translucent, then add in garlic, reduce heat to medium low, continue to saute for about 5 minutes.
2. Add in sweet potato, tomatoes, chiles, beans, and seasonings, stir well. Finally add in mushrooms, tomato sauce, broth, and water. Bring to a boil, then cover and reduce heat to low and simmer for about an hour, stirring occasionally, or until most of the water has reduced and the soup has slightly thickened.
3. Finish by stirring in the apple cider vinegar and adjust seasoning if needed (you'll know if you need to adjust once you taste your soup).
4. Serve with garnish of your choice and enjoy. Can be stored in the freezer for up to 3 months.

GARNISH OPTIONS:

Dressed hearty greens (like kale or spinach), chopped cilantro, radishes, avocado, cheese, crispy tortilla strips, sour cream, lime, flower petals, chili crisp, chopped cabbage, shredded carrots, if you have stale bread or tortillas you can toast and crumble them on top.



SHOPPING LIST

CILANTRO PARSLEY BASIL
MINT PUMPKIN SEEDS
VINEGAR OIL GARLIC

SERVE YOUR SOUP WITH:

Cooked grain (I prefer rice!), or pasta. Top the whole dish with....

HERBY PUMPKIN SEED SALSA VERDE

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

1 bunch cilantro, chopped

1 bunch parsley, chopped

1 bunch of basil (*about 1 cup*)

About 2 cups mints leaves

1 ish cup of toasted salted pumpkin seeds

(or sunflower seeds, or any type of nuts)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup red wine vinegar

(or white vinegar, or apple cider vinegar, or lemon juice)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil *(or any neutral oil)*

A few garlic cloves

Salt, pepper, and red chili flakes to taste

DIRECTIONS: Blend all together or in a food processor until just combined but not completely smooth. Can be stored in the fridge for up to 3 days. Spoon over potatoes, eggs, meat, salads, veggies, rice, pasta and whatever else!

NOTES: any herbs can be swapped out here, and can include things like carrots tops, radish tops, wilted hearty greens, the green tops of leeks, or onion peels, scraps of cheese

SHOPPING LIST

VINEGAR OIL MUSTARD HONEY GARLIC LEMON



EVERYDAY SALAD DRESSING

MAKES ABOUT $\frac{3}{4}$ CUP

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar

(I like red wine, but white vinegar or apple cider vinegar works here too)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil *(or any neutral oil)*

2 tbsp dijon mustard

1 tbsp honey *(or brown sugar)*

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 tsp salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp black pepper

3 tbsp lemon juice *(or lime juice, orange juice)*

DIRECTIONS: combine everything together in a bowl and whisk well until combined, toss with your favorite vegetables or greens.

NOTES: adding in chopped herbs of literally any kind, or any seasoning to fit the flavor profile of the rest of your meal. Example, add in cumin and red chili flakes if you're making a latin inspired dish, or oregano and basil for italian flavors, or ginger and sesame oil if you're using Asian flavors.



KITCHEN SINK BROTH RECIPE

DIRECTIONS:

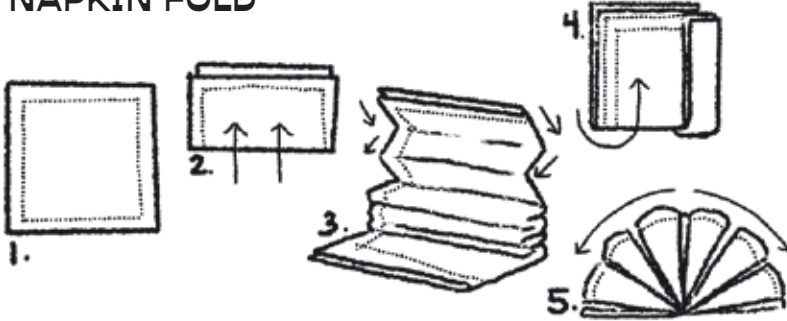
1. Remove the tops/bottoms/skins/stems from any vegetables you are preparing, and save any used bones.
i.e. roasted/roisserie chicken bones, beef bones, lamb bones, or pork bones. corn cobs, any type of squash, beet greens, fennel, chard, parsnips, green beans, pea pods, bell peppers, eggplant, mushrooms, asparagus, and herbs like basil, cilantro, parsley, thyme, rosemary, mint, and also any kind of potato peels.
2. Continue this process until a freezer bag sided amount is full.
3. Dump bag into pot and fill $\frac{3}{4}$ of the pot (or until scraps just start to float) with water.
4. Add a splash of vinegar or citrus juice, salt, pepper, and any seasonings you want. Bring water to a boil and then turn down to a low simmer with the lid on for at least 30 minutes to an hour and half.
5. Strain the stock into smaller containers (you can freeze what you don't use) Let it cool completely.

**Refrigerate the stock for up to 7 days, or freeze for up to 3 months.
Use for things like: cooking grains, soups, and sauces**

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

TIPS FOR DINNER PARTIES

NAPKIN FOLD



TABLESCAPE

Give some extra care to the table or place you are serving your dishes. Maybe grab an old bed sheet, a colorful dish towel, clean newspapers from the recycling bin, or just give a nice wipe down to your table before placing your dishes.

CENTERPIECE

Pick some flowers on a pre-dinner walk, or buy just a few stems at the nearest farmer's market. Put a vase, a small token, or a candle to bring focus. Set your plates - they don't have to match, be fancy, or anything - just give each guest a clear spot to sit

COMMEMORATE

Hang a piece of paper, grab an old journal, or pass around a phone and write notes on favorite moments from the night

CLEAN UP:

*Up to you - it's always okay to have a group clean up effort!
Save leftover food for lunch, or send it home with your guests!*

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COMMUNITY FOOD RESOURCES, including locations and types of resources, from food pantries to farmer's markets:



Learn more about

**THE LA COUNTY FOOD EQUITY
ROUNDTABLE STRATEGIC PLAN**, and what steps the county is taking to address food insecurity.



Learn more about the **HISTORICAL TREND OF
FOOD INSECURITY** in LA County:



IMAGINE YOUR DINNER

- Imagine a dish
- Look here in this cookbook
- Remember your favorite meal as a kid
- Ask a friend or family member who is really good at cooking for a recipe

The recipe I'm imagining is:



I'm going to ask

_____ and _____
to bring their dishes.

Ingredients

SET THE MOOD

MUSIC

What to play:

Vibe:

TABLE SETTING

Dishes:

Utensils:

Decor:

Condiments:

GUESTS (circle)

Family · Friends · Neighbors · Crush · You

GUESTLIST:

FOOD ALWAYS HAS A STORY, AND IN ORDER TO MAKE A GREAT DINNER, IT'S TIME TO TELL YOURS

What inspired this meal? What do you hope your guests will taste? Feel? Remember?

Write, draw, and dream up your dinner below.