

THE
MORSE FAMILY
HOLIDAY COOKBOOK
mikemorselawfirm

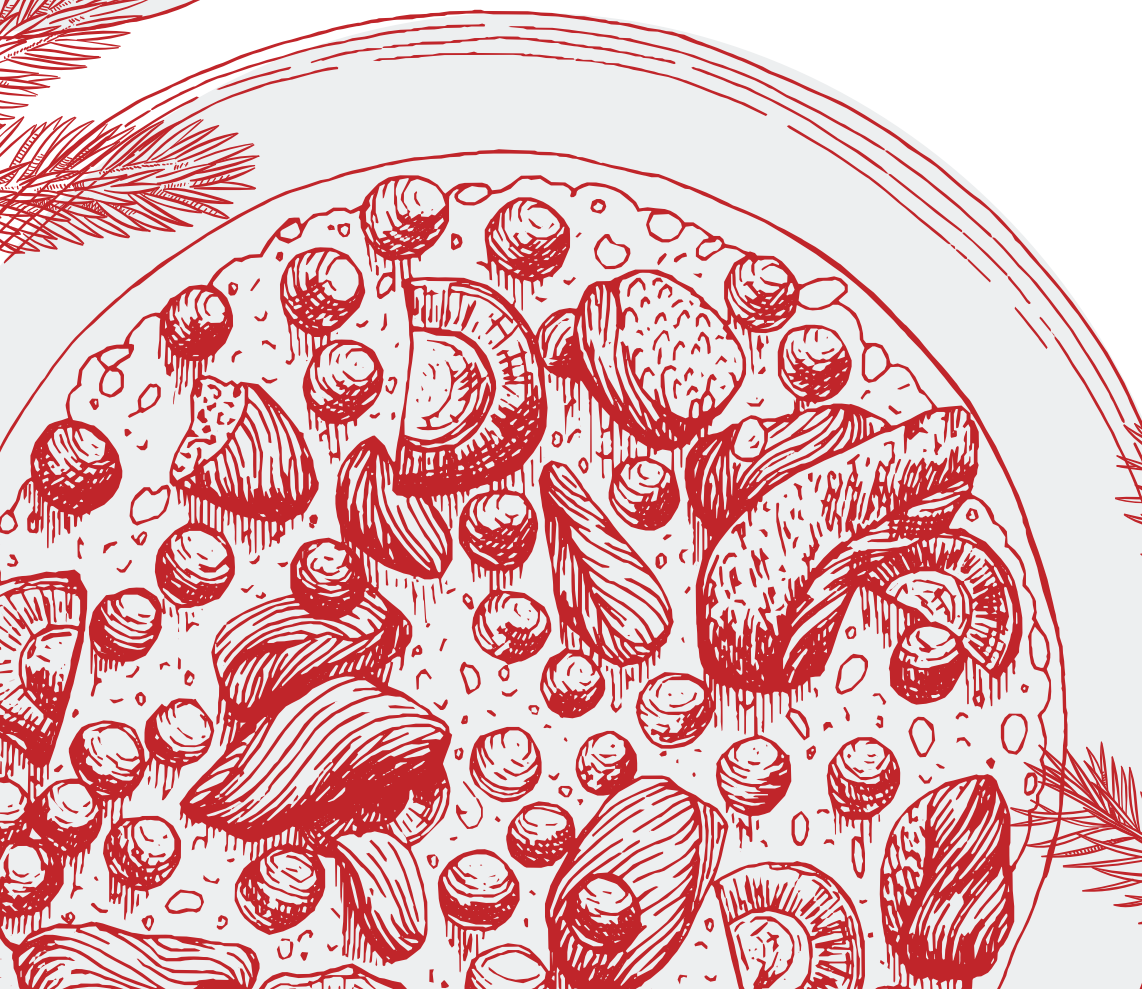


Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Roasted Butternut Squash Soup	2
Minestrone Soup	3
Mike's Classic Caesar Salad	4
Spinach Salad	5
Challah Bread	6
Seasoned Turkey	7
Savory Dressing (Not Stuffed)	8
Homestyle Roasted Veggies	9
Brown Sugar-Glazed Sweet Potatoes with Marshmallows	10
Chocolate Babka	11



Introduction

1

The holidays have always held a special place in my heart. I love it when our get-togethers have no obligations beyond good food, good cheer, and a warm table where everyone is welcome. From gathering around a hearty meal to sharing stories and laughter, there's a simple joy in just being together.

Most of these recipes have been passed down or re-imagined over the years, and each one is open to a little creativity. My mom never wrote her recipes down, so I learned to make each dish by memory and feel. Every holiday season, my son Mike loves to tease me, asking, "Mom, what did you do different this time?" because I always end up adding a small twist or addition to keep things interesting.

As you cook and share these dishes, my hope is that they bring the same comfort, joy, and togetherness to your own celebrations. From my kitchen to yours, may these recipes fill your holidays with warmth, love, and a few new traditions. Enjoy, and happy holidays!

Warm Regards,

Sue Morse



Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

Servings: 4 people

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 55 minutes

- butternut squash
- olive oil
- shallot
- salt
- garlic cloves
- maple syrup
- ground nutmeg
- ground black pepper
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- butter (or olive oil for a vegan option)

There's nothing like a warm bowl of soup to bring people together. I've always loved making soups because they're so simple, yet so comforting. This roasted butternut squash soup has become one of my favorites—it's healthy, packed with nutrients, and perfect for serving a group. The flavor of roasted butternut squash is incredible! I highly recommend.

Step 1: Roast the Squash

Preheat the oven to 425°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Cut your butternut squash in half and scoop out the seeds. Drizzle the cut sides with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and rub to coat evenly. Place the squash halves face-down on the sheet and roast for 40–50 minutes, until tender and caramelized. Let cool for 10 minutes.

Step 2: Prepare the Aromatics

Heat olive oil in a soup pot over medium heat. Chop a shallot and add it to the pot with a pinch of salt. Cook for 3–4 minutes, stirring, until softened and golden. Mince garlic cloves and stir them in, cooking for about 1 minute until fragrant.

Step 3: Blend the Soup

Scoop the roasted squash flesh into a blender, discarding the skins. Add the sautéed shallots and garlic, a drizzle of maple syrup, a pinch of nutmeg, freshly ground black pepper, and 3 cups of vegetable broth. Blend until creamy, working in batches if needed.

Step 4: Final Adjustments

If the soup is too thick, stir in additional vegetable broth until the desired consistency is reached. Add a small amount of butter (or olive oil) and blend to incorporate.

Step 5: Serve

Reheat the soup in the pot over medium heat, if necessary, until steaming. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm, garnished with black pepper or toasted pepitas, if desired.



Minestrone Soup

3

Servings: 5 servings

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Bake Time: 12 minutes

4 tablespoons butter (or olive oil)
3/4 cup chopped onions
1/3 cup chopped celery
1 can kidney beans
1 cup sliced zucchini
2 cups shredded cabbage
2 cans Italian-style tomatoes
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1/2 cup potatoes
1 quart chicken stock
2 garlic
2 tablespoons parsley
1/3 cup elbow macaroni
1 cup parmesan cheese
salt and pepper

This hearty minestrone soup is packed with fresh vegetables, tender pasta, and just the right amount of richness. It's perfect for those cool evenings when you want something warm and comforting without spending hours in the kitchen. I love how versatile this recipe is—you can easily adjust it based on what's in your pantry. It's a dish that feels both rustic and satisfying, and it's always a hit with friends and family.

Step 1: Sauté the Base

Melt 4 tablespoons of butter (or use olive oil) in a large pot. Add 3/4 cup of chopped onions and 1/3 cup of chopped celery. Sauté until softened, about 5 minutes.

Step 2: Add Vegetables and Stock:

Stir in 1 can (20 oz) of kidney beans, 1 cup of sliced zucchini, 2 cups of shredded cabbage, 2 cans of Italian-style tomatoes, and 1 tablespoon of tomato paste. Add 1/2 cup cubed potatoes, 1 quart of chicken stock, 2 chopped garlic cloves, and 2 tablespoons of parsley. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Step 3: Simmer

Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally to ensure even cooking.

Step 4: Finish with Pasta and Cheese

Stir in 1/3 cup of dry elbow macaroni. Cook for another 15–30 minutes until the pasta and vegetables are tender. Add 1 cup of grated Parmesan cheese and stir to combine.

Step 5: Serve and Enjoy

Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. For extra richness, sprinkle an additional 1/4 cup of Parmesan cheese before serving. Serve hot with crusty bread.



Mike's Classic Caesar Salad

Servings: 2 people

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 0 minutes

- 2-3 cloves of garlic
- 1 egg
- anchovies (optional)
- 2-3 teaspoons of dijon mustard
- extra virgin olive oil
- 1/3 Lemon
- 2 teaspoons worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese
- black pepper
- salt
- 2 heads of romaine lettuce

When Mike was younger, around 17, he worked at over 25 restaurants, including a high-end spot where he made Caesar salads tableside. Working as a waiter taught him how to connect with people, have an eye for detail, and handle pressure—skills that helped shape him into the incredible lawyer he is today. This recipe takes me back to those days, and I know Mike would love for you to try it too!

Step 1: Prep the Garlic and Anchovies

Mince 2-3 cloves of garlic or use a garlic press. If using anchovies, mash 1-2 fillets into the base of a wooden salad bowl.

Step 2: Make the Dressing Base

In the bowl, whisk together 1 egg yolk, 2-3 teaspoons of Dijon mustard, and 2 teaspoons of Worcestershire sauce until smooth.

Step 3: Add Lemon and Olive Oil

Squeeze the juice of 1/3 lemon into the bowl. Gradually drizzle in olive oil while whisking to create a creamy emulsion. Adjust the amount of oil to reach your preferred consistency.

Step 4: Incorporate Cheese and Seasoning

Stir in 1/4 cup of grated Parmesan cheese. Add freshly cracked black pepper and a pinch of salt to taste.

Step 5: Prepare the Lettuce

Wash and chop 2 heads of romaine lettuce into bite-sized pieces. Pat dry with a towel or use a salad spinner.

Step 6: Toss the Salad

Add the lettuce to the bowl and toss until evenly coated with the dressing.

Step 7: Finish and Serve

Top with extra Parmesan cheese and black pepper. Serve while fresh.

Spinach Salad

5

Servings: 6 to 8 people

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Chill Time: 30 minutes

10 ounces baby spinach
1/2 cup slivered almonds
3 cups of coleslaw mix
1/2 cup dried cherries or cranberries
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup white vinegar
3/4 cup dried mustard
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon celery seed
1 1/2 tablespoons minced onion
1/2 cup canola oil

This salad is one of my go-to recipes when I need something quick, delicious, and guaranteed to please a crowd. It's light yet satisfying, and the combination of fresh spinach, crunchy almonds, and sweet dried cherries is always a hit. The best part? It's not labor-intensive at all! I've made it for family gatherings, potlucks, and even as a last-minute addition to weeknight dinners, and it never disappoints.

Step 1: Prepare the Salad Base

Start with about 10 ounces of fresh baby spinach and place it in a large serving bowl. I like to use enough to create a nice, full base for the salad. Add half a cup of slivered almonds for crunch, then toss in three cups of coleslaw mix. Finally, sprinkle in half a cup of dried cherries or cranberries for a hint of sweetness.

Step 2: Make the Dressing

In a medium bowl, combine 1/4 cup of sugar, 1/4 cup of white vinegar, 3/4 teaspoon of dried mustard, 3/4 teaspoon of salt, and 1/2 teaspoon of celery seed. Whisk the ingredients together until the sugar is mostly dissolved. Add 1 1/2 tablespoons of minced onion to give the dressing a bit of savory depth.

Step 3: Add the Oil and Chill

Slowly drizzle in 1/2 cup of canola oil while whisking constantly. This step is key to making the dressing creamy and well-blended. Once everything is combined, cover the bowl and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. This chilling time allows the flavors to meld and enhances the taste of the salad.

Step 4: Toss and Serve

Pour the dressing over the salad. Start with about half the dressing and toss gently to coat all the ingredients evenly. Now you're ready to serve!

Challah Bread

Servings: 8 to 10 people
Prep Time: 25 minutes (plus 1 hour 45 minutes rising time)
Bake Time: 28 minutes

warm water (divided use)
 1 packet (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast
 sugar (divided use)
 3 1/2 cups flour
 1 teaspoon kosher salt
 3 tablespoons canola oil
 2 eggs
 1 teaspoon heavy cream
 sesame seeds

Challah bread holds a special place in our family, both as a delicious treat and as a way to honor our Jewish heritage. This braided loaf is soft, slightly sweet, and fun to make. It's nice to appreciate both the beauty in the process and the tradition it represents.

Step 1: Mix Ingredients

In a small bowl, combine 1/4 cup warm water, yeast, and 1 teaspoon sugar. Let it sit for 5 minutes until foamy. In a stand mixer, combine 3 1/2 cups flour, 2 teaspoons sugar, and 1 teaspoon salt. With the mixer on low, add the yeast mixture, 1/2 cup warm water, 3 tablespoons oil, and 2 eggs. Mix on medium speed for 5 minutes, until the dough forms a ball and pulls away from the sides.

Step 2: Roll Bread

Spray a large bowl with cooking spray, place the dough inside, and cover with plastic wrap. Let rise in a warm spot for 1 hour or until doubled in size. Punch down the dough and divide it into 3 equal portions. Roll each portion into a 15-inch rope and braid them together on a greased baking sheet. Pinch and tuck the ends underneath.

Step 3: Let Dough Rise

Cover the braid lightly with plastic wrap and let rise for 45 minutes. Preheat the oven to 375°F. In a small bowl, whisk the egg with 1 teaspoon heavy cream. Brush over the dough and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Step 4: Bake and Serve

Bake for 28 minutes, or until golden brown. Let cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.



Seasoned Turkey

7

Servings: 10-12 people

Prep Time: 20 minutes (plus 1–2 days
for seasoning and drying)

Bake Time: 2 hours

kosher salt

1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary
leaves

grated zest of 1 lemon

1 (12- to 14-pound) fresh turkey

1 large yellow onion, unpeeled and cut
into eighths

1 lemon, quartered

8 sprigs fresh thyme

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted

butter, melted

freshly ground black pepper

Turkey is the centerpiece of many holiday feasts, a tradition that brings warmth and joy to the table. This recipe delivers a beautifully seasoned, moist, and flavorful bird with crispy golden skin. With a little advance prep and aromatic herbs, this turkey is sure to impress your family and friends.

Step 1: Prepare the Turkey

Two days before roasting, mix 3 tablespoons of kosher salt, minced rosemary, and lemon zest. Wash the turkey inside and out, drain well, and pat dry. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of the salt mixture inside the cavity and rub the rest over the skin, including under the wings and legs. Place the turkey in a shallow dish, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 1–2 days. The day before roasting, remove the plastic wrap and leave the turkey uncovered in the fridge to dry the skin.

Step 2: Preheat the Oven

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Stuff the cavity with the onion, lemon, and thyme, then tie the legs together with kitchen string and secure the wings close to the body. Brush the skin with melted butter and sprinkle with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Step 3: Cook the Turkey

Place the turkey in the oven legs-first and roast for 45 minutes. Lower the temperature to 325°F and roast for about 1 hour, or until a thermometer reads 165°F in the breast and 180°F in the thigh.

Step 4: Serve

Remove the turkey from the oven, cover tightly with aluminum foil, and let it rest for 20–30 minutes. Carve and serve with pan juices.

Savory Dressing (Not Stuffed)

Servings: 8-10 people

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 35 minutes

1 loaf of bread, cubed and left out overnight to stale
2 tbsp canola oil (or butter)
2 stalks celery
1 large onion
1 cup mushrooms
1 tbsp fresh sage
1 tbsp fresh thyme
1 tbsp fresh rosemary
Salt and pepper to taste
2 cups vegetable broth (or milk)
2 large eggs
butter or oil for pan

This one is close to my heart because it's based on the way my mom (Mike's grandmother) used to make it every Thanksgiving. She always made it inside the turkey, but for all the vegetarians at our table, I've learned to cook it on the side. It's got all the good stuff—fresh herbs, savory veggies, and just the right amount of seasoning. I hope this brings some cozy holiday magic to your table too!

Step 1: Prepare the Vegetables

Dice the celery and onion, and slice the mushrooms. In a large skillet, heat canola oil over medium heat. Add the celery, onion, and mushrooms. Sauté until the vegetables are soft, about 5-7 minutes.

Step 2: Add the Herbs

Minced the sage, thyme, and rosemary. Stir it in and let it cook for another 2 minutes to release the flavors.

Step 3: Combine Ingredients

In a large mixing bowl, combine the sautéed vegetable mixture with the cubed stale bread. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Step 4: Add Liquids

Pour the vegetable broth (or milk) and beaten eggs over the bread mixture. Gently stir until the bread absorbs the liquid and becomes moist but not overly soggy.

Step 5: Transfer to Baking Dish

Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease a baking dish with butter or oil, then transfer the dressing mixture into the dish. Cover with aluminum foil.

Step 6: Bake the Dressing

Bake covered for 15 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for another 20 minutes, or until the top is golden and crispy.

Step 7: Serve and Enjoy

Let cool slightly, then serve as a flavorful, savory side dish for your Thanksgiving feast.

Homestyle Roasted Veggies

Servings: 6-8 people

Prep Time: 15-20 minutes

Bake Time: 30 minutes

balsamic vinegar (optional)
broccoli
squash
parsnips
onions
carrots
mushrooms
brussel sprouts
olive oil
salt and pepper
garlic salt

During the holidays it's hard to cater to everyone's preferences, but a dish that's enjoyed by all is my oven-roasted veggies. Not only are they yummy, but the leftovers are divine. And, they make a beautiful presentation on a platter. The following recipe can be altered for personal preference; it's hard to make a mistake. The following is simply a suggestion.

(Psst...When you start, it may look like you have enough for two families. They cook down; so make more than you think you need.)

Step 1: Turn on Oven

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Step 2: Prepping the Pans

Prepare 2 roasting pans or cookie sheets with rims, and line them with parchment paper (depending on how many veggies you plan to roast).

Step 3: Prepare the Veggies

Cut veggies into 1-inch pieces. Place the veggies in a large bowl and coat with olive oil (you don't need a lot).

Step 4: Season the Ingredients

Season with salt, pepper, garlic salt, and any other spices of your choice.

Step 5: Distribute Veggies

Evenly divide the veggies between the two pans.

Step 6: Put in Oven

Place in the oven and stir every 15 minutes until the veggies are soft. (If using balsamic vinegar, mix it in after the veggies have been cooking for a little while.)

Step 7: Remove From Oven

After approximately 30 minutes, remove from the oven. The veggies can be served warm or at room temperature—they're delicious either way!



Brown Sugar-Glazed Sweet Potatoes with Marshmallows

Servings: 8 people

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Bake Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

4lbs sweet potatoes (yams)
 2/3 cup brown sugar
 5 tablespoons butter
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
 ground ginger
 2 cups miniature marshmallows
 1/2 cup sliced almonds

This dish is the ultimate crowd-pleaser, perfect for holiday gatherings. I've adjusted the original recipe to cut down on the butter and sugar, making it a little lighter without sacrificing the indulgent flavors. The golden glaze and toasted marshmallows make this a must-have at the table—it's like dessert disguised as a side!

Step 1: Prepare the Sweet Potatoes

Preheat your oven to 375°F. Peel and cut 4 pounds of red-skinned sweet potatoes into 1-inch pieces. Arrange them in a 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking dish.

Step 2: Make the Glaze

In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine 2/3 cup of packed golden brown sugar, 5 tablespoons of butter, 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon, 1/2 teaspoon of salt, 1/4 teaspoon of ground nutmeg, and a pinch of ground ginger. Stir the mixture as it heats until the sugar dissolves and the glaze comes to a gentle boil.

Step 3: Coat the Potatoes

Pour the glaze evenly over the sweet potatoes. Toss gently to coat the pieces, then cover the dish tightly with foil.

Step 4: Bake

Place the dish in the oven and bake for 50 minutes. Remove the foil, baste the potatoes with the syrup, and continue baking uncovered for another 20 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender and the glaze thickens slightly. Stir occasionally to keep the potatoes coated.

Step 5: Add the Toppings

Increase the oven temperature to 500°F. Sprinkle 2 cups of miniature marshmallows and 1/2 cup of sliced almonds evenly over the sweet potatoes. Return the dish to the oven and bake for 3 minutes, or until the marshmallows are golden and the almonds are lightly toasted.

Step 6: Serve and Enjoy

Let the dish cool for a few minutes before serving. It's best enjoyed warm, with the gooey marshmallows and sweet glaze taking center stage!

Chocolate Babka

11

Servings: 2 Loaves

Prep Time: 25 minutes (plus 1 hour 45 minutes rising time)

Bake Time: 28 minutes

Dough:

4½ cups all-purpose flour

½ cup granulated sugar

2¼ teaspoons instant yeast

4 large eggs (room temperature)

½ cup whole milk (room temperature)

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

10 tablespoons unsalted butter (room temperature)

Filling:

½ cup unsalted butter (cubed)

½ cup heavy cream

8 ounces chopped dark chocolate

¾ cup powdered sugar

⅓ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

Syrup:

⅓ cup granulated sugar

⅓ cup water

Chocolate Babka is a delicious treat that combines the elements of cake and bread, making it perfect for any holiday. As a Jewish family, this pastry is a household staple.

Step 1: Mix Ingredients

In a stand mixer, combine flour, sugar, and yeast. Add eggs, milk, and salt, and mix on low speed until the dough begins to come together. Gradually add butter, ensuring it's fully incorporated before adding more. Continue kneading for about 10 minutes until the dough is smooth, stretchy, and slightly sticky. Transfer to a greased bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and chill overnight (at least 8 hours).

Step 2: Prepare the filling

In a saucepan, melt the butter and cream over medium heat. Stir in chopped dark chocolate until fully melted. Remove from heat and whisk in powdered sugar and cocoa powder until smooth. Cool for 1 hour.

Step 3: Assemble the Babka

Divide dough into two equal portions. Roll one portion into a 12x16-inch rectangle on a lightly floured surface. Spread half of the chocolate filling evenly over the dough, leaving a 1-inch border on one side. Starting from the short end, roll the dough tightly into a coil and pinch the seam to seal. Cut the roll in half lengthwise. Place the halves cut-side up, and twist them together. Tuck the ends underneath and transfer to a greased loaf pan. Repeat with the second portion of dough and remaining filling.

Step 4: Rise and Bake

Cover with plastic wrap and let the dough rise in a warm spot for 1½ to 2 hours. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Bake the babkas for about 40 minutes. While the babkas are baking, combine sugar and water in a small saucepan. Simmer over medium heat until the sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat.

Step 5: Finish the Babka

Immediately after removing the babkas from the oven, brush them generously with the syrup. Let them cool in the pans for about 30 minutes before transferring to a wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.