

HOW TO BE A MAN

THE FATHERHOOD EDITION

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Esquire

MAN AT HIS BEST

JUNE/JULY 2012

BRUCE



FICTION FOR MEN
NEW STORIES BY

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WHAT MY DAD COOKED



Adam Carpenter

Jasper's Corner Tap & Kitchen, San Francisco: "Bacon waffles, with bacon bits and a little bacon fat mixed into the batter."

Josh Habiger

The Catbird Seat, Nashville: "Literally every single morning of my life: sliced grapefruit with powdered sugar on it."

James Holmes

Olivia, Austin: Crackers with smoked oysters and sardines out of the can.

Chris Pandel

The Bristol, Chicago: "It was always a great night when we would find out dad was making his thin-crust pizzas."

Roger Waysok

South Water Kitchen, Chicago: "He would wrap sliced potatoes, onions, butter, and salt and pepper in foil, then throw them on the grill. They were cooked perfectly every time."

WHEN FATHERS COOK

A MAN SHOULD KNOW HOW TO FEED HIS KIDS. ONCE IN A WHILE, DOESN'T HAVE TO BE FANCY. HERE ARE THREE RECIPES TO GET YOU STARTED, FROM CHEFS WITH EXPERIENCE.

RECIPES AS TOLD TO FRANCINE MAROUKIAN

Not a lot of people know how to make scabini anymore. In fact, for all I know my grandfather made it up. He was a cook in the Navy during World War II. Quit high school to enlist in 1942, when he was 17. He couldn't swim, but he had a buddy who wanted to join the Navy. So that's how he wound up on a boat, making scabini.

To make scabini, you first fry up some onions and hamburger in a pan. Next you add a can of Hunt's tomato sauce. Then you add a can of Veg-All mixed vegetables. ("The original convenience food. Since 1926.") After the sauce has thickened a little, you pour it over noodles. That's scabini. My grandfather made it by the vat on a destroyer escort in the Pacific.

By the time my father was a boy, in the early 1950s, Gramp could make scabini with his eyes closed. After working the midnight-to-seven shift as a welder at Pratt & Whitney, he would sleep till my dad ran through the yard from school in the afternoon. Then he'd get up and have supper on the table by the time my grandmother got home from the college where she worked as an administrator. He probably made scabini once a week.

In college, my father lived with a bunch of guys in an old house on a lake. The deal was my dad would cook and everybody else would clean. He made scabini.

My mother can cook anything. Every night growing up, she served the six of us food that my friends called "gourmet." But on the rare nights when she had to be out and it fell to my father to feed the kids, we ate scabini. He always seemed a little proud that he could come home after a tough day at work and make a meal for his children that filled us up and tasted good. It's a skill every father should have, best learned as a boy, when you aren't aware of what you're being taught.

—RYAN D'AGOSTINO



Although I came from a food-loving family and grew up to be a chef, my dad didn't pass down any soufflé recipes. For him, it was all about the sandwich, and he taught me to pay attention to every part. That means buying meats and cheeses sliced to order from the deli and using good-quality bakery bread, light but sturdy, so it won't get soggy when it comes in contact with the filling. You also want to slice the loaf yourself so that you can balance the ratio of the filling to the bread—let's say 30 percent filling to 35 percent bread on either side. The last consideration is the most important: You must offset the richness of the meat with some acidity, whether pickles, slaw, or, in

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Sang Yoon

Father's Office, Los Angeles: "Kimchi. I watched him make it at least a hundred times but still don't know how to do it."

Walter Pisano

Tulio Ristorante, Seattle: Scrambled eggs with ricotta.

Sam Mogannam

Bi-Rite Market, San Francisco: "The only two dishes he ever made were baked spaghetti with red sauce and corned-beef hash out of a can with extra sautéed onions."

John Currence

City Grocery, Oxford, Mississippi: White beans with ham hocks. "He's the whitest white man I know, but goddamn those beans are full of soul."

Scott Gottlich

Bijoux, Dallas: Chipped beef on toast.



Marcus Samuelsson

Red Rooster Harlem, New York: "I grew up in Sweden. My dad liked to pick mush-

■ FRIED-BOLOGNA SANDWICH CONTINUED

the case of this ultrarich bologna, the double whammy of pickled slaw. Because whether it's made by the dad or the son, a good sandwich is about relationships.

For the sandwiches:

- 8 pieces good-quality white bread
- 8 pieces thick-sliced bologna, not prepackaged
- Olive oil for frying

For the slaw:

- ½ head napa cabbage, shredded
- ½ clove garlic, minced
- ½ small red onion, sliced thin
- ½ jalapeño pepper, minced
- ½ cup chopped sweet hot pickles (available in a jar; Tabasco is one brand)
- 3 tbsp champagne vinegar
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp spicy mustard
- 2 tbsp mayonnaise
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 ½ tsp salt

or Tony Packo's
About 4 cups

> **Combine slaw** ingredients and refrigerate for an hour.

> **Preheat** a large sauté pan on medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add a film of olive oil and the bologna in a single layer, working in batches if necessary—if it's too crowded, the meat will steam, not brown. Brown on both sides, then remove from the pan and set aside.

> **When all** of the bologna is fried, begin to assemble the sandwiches: Lay out 4 pieces of bread. Place two slices of bologna on each slice and top with some of the slaw. Top with the other piece of bread, press down lightly. Serves 4.



I'm a chef and my wife is a chef. But we still like to cook for our two boys on our day off. She usually handles the indoor work and I take the outdoor grill. It keeps us out of each other's hair and lets us take turns occupying the boys. My grill work is always simple and short, because I'd rather spend that outdoor time playing with them. One thing that always works for us is ribs. After butchering a lamb at the restaurant, I have two racks to bring home. (You can order them from a good butcher.) I precook them earlier in the day, during the boys' nap time, and then finish them off just before dinner. There's no time for charcoal at my house—those who insist it's the only way to grill don't have twins.

- 2 large lamb spareribs, about 1 ½ pounds each (These vary in size, like the animal.)

Rub mix:

- 1 tsp celery seed
- ½ tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp dry mustard
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp fine-ground sea salt (coarse if that's all you have)

> **Pat meat dry** with paper towel and rub in mix, letting the

spareribs sit out for at least an hour, two if possible.

> **Preheat oven** to 350 degrees.

> **Prepare 4** pieces of heavy-duty foil, at least 8 inches longer than the spareribs. Place each sparerib in the center of one foil sheet, **meat side down.**

Fold in the vertical ends first, and then the horizontal sides, crimping as you go so that the packet is airtight and lying closely against the spareribs—not tight, not loose. Repeat with second piece of foil, so the spareribs are double-wrapped. (In essence, this method steams the meat and renders the fat so that it drips down into the bottom of the foil packet, letting the meat side of the spareribs develop a crisp crust.)

> **Place packets** on a sheet pan, making sure the entire length of the sparerib touches the pan. Roast about 90 minutes. Open foil packets carefully, as steam will be released and there will be lots of melted fat at the bottom. The meat should be so tender that you can twist the bone, like an ignition key.

> **At this point,** you can serve the lamb without grilling: Let spareribs rest in opened packets for 30 minutes so that the rendering juices can be reabsorbed, then transfer the meat to a cutting board. Carve in between bones.

To grill and serve:

Let spareribs rest in opened packets for 1 hour. On the hottest grill possible, lay the ribs meat side down and don't move until the surface crisps, 5 to 7 minutes. Serves 4.

WHAT MY DAD COOKED

rooms in the woods—chante-relle, porcini, oyster. He would toast day-old bread and make a béchamel using flour, onion, cream, some cheese, chopped garlic, some chives, and salt. He'd sauté the mushrooms, toss them in the sauce, spread it over the toast, and bake it for ten minutes. We'd eat it together, washed down with a glass of milk."

Lou Campanaro

Village Belle, Philadelphia: Fried-bologna sandwiches.



Linton Hopkins

Eugene, Atlanta: "Sunny-side-up eggs fried in bacon fat in a cast-iron skillet. They're still the only thing he knows how to cook. He would tilt the pan to collect the fat on one side, and spoon it over the yolk to cook the egg from the top."

Doug Psaltis

RPM, Chicago: "Epic chuck steaks in his 'secret' marinade."

Benjamin Lambert

Wit & Wisdom, Baltimore: "He would take me and my brother to the butcher shop and ask for the best cut that day, and we would go home and grill it outside."



Danny Bornick

Firefly, Washington, D.C.: French toast made with challah bread leftover from Shabbat dinner.

Brian Lewis

Elm, New Canaan, Connecticut: Soft scrambled eggs and bacon.

Dale Talde

Talde, Brooklyn: "Steak" with rice. "My dad worked as a boilermaker and left the cooking to my mom. His go-to dinner was steak with rice. It wasn't usually an actual steak, but, like, whatever meat we had in the fridge."

David Burke

David Burke Kitchen, New York: He'd make a peanut-butter-and-banana sandwich, dip it in batter, cook it French-toast-style, and serve it with grape jelly warmed in the pan with a touch of maple syrup."





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BREAKFAST BURRITOS
CHEF: MICHAEL LEVITON
 Area Four, Cambridge, Massachusetts

For me, cooking at home is less about being a chef and more about being a dad. I have a limited time frame and a “do no

harm” attitude in the kitchen: I don’t want to burden myself with a lot of cleanup. This breakfast works on all counts, including the most important consideration: My kids will eat it. The flexibility is another bonus. Because children’s tastes change quickly, I can get them to experiment with flavor by doing something as simple as switching out the salsa—we’ve gone through tomato, mango, and peach. Although adding avocado might work in some houses, it doesn’t fly in mine.

Right now, the eggs are scrambled with bacon, and sometimes I use breakfast sausage. I’m working them up to chorizo.

For each burrito:

- 2 to 3 thick slices bacon (more sweet than smoky, such as maple-and-black-pepper-cured, applewood-smoked), cut into ½-inch dice
 - 2 jumbo eggs, lightly whisked with 1 tsp half-and-half
 - ½ cup shredded mild cheese, such as a mix of jack and cheddar
- ABOUT 2 HUGE Tbsp*

- One 10-inch flour tortilla
- Easy spiced black beans* and pico de gallo, drained, for serving

- > **Using an 8-inch skillet** over moderate heat, slowly render the bacon until the fat liquefies but the bacon is still soft.
- > **Pour off** rendered fat and reserve, leaving enough in the pan only to glaze the surface. Over low heat, quickly scramble the eggs in the bacon fat until just soft, about 2 minutes.
- > **While eggs** are still soft, remove pan from heat and gently fold in shredded cheese so that it melts but doesn’t break.
- > **While egg mixture** is setting, warm the tortilla in a large, hot skillet (cast iron if possible) until there is just a hint of crispiness on one side but the other side is still pliable, about 90 seconds. (Do not flip the tortilla.)
- > **Transfer tortilla** (crisp side down) to clean workspace and quickly spoon eggs into the center, leaving at least a 2-inch clean edge for folding. Fold top and bottom edges of the tortilla to meet over the eggs, and then the right and left sides, quickly turning the packet over to a plate, seam side down.

- > **Serve with** easy spiced black beans and pico de gallo.
- ***Easy spiced black beans:** Heat one 15-oz can good-quality black beans in their own liquid (do not drain) with pinch (¼ tsp) cumin, pinch (¼ tsp) chili powder, ½ tsp salt (salt before serving, according to taste and brand), 2 tbsp black coffee, and 1 tbsp rendered bacon fat.

ABOUT 8 MINS.



HOW TO FEED YOUR KIDS
 BY CHEF CHARLIE PALMER

- > **When they** were really small, we would take the stuff we ate and puree it in a small Cuisinart. It could be chicken and carrots, with porcini mushrooms. All together. I’d like to think that developed their palates.
- > **For the teenage athlete**, there’s no in-between. My oldest son will come home with Pop-Tarts one day, and I’m thinking,

Pop-Tarts? Are you kidding me? And the next day he’s saying, “Dad, we need fruit salad. I need some cabbage.”

- > **The only thing** we were adamant about was soft drinks. My wife is big on sparkling water and juices. But never apple juice. Everyone plays a game with apple juice: *Oh, it’s apple juice. It’s natural.* It’s still loaded with sugar, even if you get it at Whole Foods. A kid gets a taste of that, and that’s where the candy thing comes in.
- > **I’m a true believer** that if you get your kid to actually help cook broccoli and asparagus, they’re more apt to eat it.
- > **My kids** don’t even know how to have dinner without a salad. It becomes routine.
- > **Shaved cabbage**, a little red onion, any vinaigrette. Throw in an apple. Five minutes.
- > **You can say** your kids like only chicken fingers and hot dogs, but that’s because that’s what’s easier for you to feed them.

- > **Chicken fingers:** Think of the quality of that meat. There’s usually a reason they’re putting breading on it and frying it.
- > **The plain pasta** thing kills me. “Could I just get pasta with butter and cheese for my kid?” You want to pay 40 bucks for a bowl of fking pasta with butter? Okay. But why not have your kid try the pasta with pea shoots and julienne of smoked salmon, a little bit of lemon zest? I bet they’re going to like it.
- > **In stores**, you’re seeing chicken breasts that are already thin-cut. Put it in a marinade and just grill it. If it doesn’t happen on Tuesday as planned, do it on Wednesday.
- > **We go** out of our way to have what the boys call “the big family dinner.” They’re allowed to bring anybody they want, as long as they tell me ahead. Why is it important to have these dinners? Because the conversation that happens would never happen anywhere else.