

## Herb-Infused Parmesan Custard

*This eggy custard has a touch of garlic for a piquant but not too brash flavor. Serve it as the centerpiece of a brunch, with a tangle of mixed greens on the side. Or present it in tandem with vegetables, such as grilled asparagus spears, or a saucy ragout.*

Preheat an oven to 325°F. Lightly butter six ¾-cup ramekins or custard cups, sprinkle with the cheese and tilt to coat the sides evenly; tap out and reserve the excess cheese. Arrange the ramekins in a baking dish just large enough to hold them.

In a saucepan over medium-low heat, bring the half-and-half, thyme and garlic to a simmer. Remove from the heat, cover and let stand for 5 minutes.

In a bowl, whisk together the whole eggs, egg yolks, salt and white pepper until blended. Gradually whisk the warm half-and-half mixture into the yolks, then whisk in the reserved cheese. Pour into a glass measuring cup or pitcher. Divide evenly among the prepared ramekins.

Place the baking dish with the ramekins on the oven rack. Gently pull out the rack and pour enough hot water into the baking dish to come about ½ inch up the sides of the ramekins. Gently push the oven rack back into place. Bake until a butter knife inserted into a ramekin comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes. Remove the baking pan from the oven, then use tongs to remove the ramekins from the water. Serve immediately. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Breakfast Comforts*, by Rick Rodgers (Weldon Owen, Inc., 2010).

## Deviled Eggs with Lemon Zest, Chives and Capers

*Ever-popular deviled eggs have many variations. Sometimes, as in the French classic oeufs mimosas, the yolks are simply mashed with Dijon mustard and seasoned with salt and pepper. Here, a heady mix of shallots, chives, capers and lemon zest are added to the yolks along with the mustard.*

Place the eggs in a large saucepan and add cold water to cover by 1 to 1½ inches. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. When the water reaches a boil, remove the pan from the heat, cover and let stand for 20 minutes.

Using a slotted spoon, remove the eggs from the pan. Pour off the hot water and fill the pan with cold water. Return the eggs to the pan and let cool for 5 minutes. Remove the eggs and peel them under cold running water.

Cut the eggs in half lengthwise. Carefully remove the yolks and place in a bowl. Set the whites aside. Add the mustard, mayonnaise, salt, pepper, chives, shallots, capers and lemon zest to the yolks. Using a fork, mash together until the yolk mixture is smooth and fluffy.

Spoon 1 heaping teaspoonful of the yolk mixture into the cavity of each egg-white half, mounding it slightly. Arrange the deviled eggs on a plate. Serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to 4 hours. Serves 4 to 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Essentials of Breakfast and Brunch*, by Georgeanne Brennan, Elinor Klivans, Jordan Mackay and Charles Pierce (Oxmoor House, 2007).

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### Ingredients for Herb-Infused Parmesan Custard

Butter for ramekins

¾ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

2 cups half-and-half

1 tsp. minced fresh thyme

1 garlic clove, minced

3 whole eggs plus 4 egg yolks

½ tsp. kosher salt

¼ tsp. freshly ground white pepper

*“Many farmers’ markets offer fresh, recently gathered eggs. I like the deep-orange color of the yolks and the satisfaction I get from buying from a local farm. An overlooked choice for dinner, eggs are one of the best quick-cooking ingredients for weeknight meals. I use them to make frittatas, soufflés and fritters, as well as to perch atop flavorful vegetable ragouts.”*

— Kristine Kidd, Author,  
Williams-Sonoma *Weeknight Fresh & Fast*

### Ingredients for Deviled Eggs with Lemon Zest, Chives and Capers

6 eggs

1 Tbs. Dijon mustard

1 Tbs. mayonnaise

½ tsp. salt

½ tsp. freshly ground pepper

2 Tbs. minced fresh chives

1 tsp. minced shallots

1½ Tbs. capers, rinsed, drained, patted dry and coarsely chopped

2 tsp. grated lemon zest

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# Technique Class: Eggs—Sweet & Savory

A common kitchen ingredient, the egg is as much a staple as sugar, flour, salt and milk. But eggs are small miracles. They can be eaten by themselves—fried, boiled, scrambled, poached, baked—or added to numerous other dishes, both sweet and savory, to provide flavor, color and consistency. Cookies, cakes, soufflés, omelettes, custards and quiches cannot be made without breaking a few eggs.

Eggs are nutritional powerhouses, supplying protein; vitamins A, D and E; and minerals such as phosphorus, manganese, iron, calcium and zinc. Egg whites, also known as albumen, are among the most healthful of foods, being low in fat and high in protein. The yolks, on the other hand, contain the fat and cholesterol—and the most flavor.

**Selecting:** Chicken eggs, by far the most commonly marketed and eaten eggs, are graded according to quality and size. Quality refers to freshness rather than nutrition. The highest-quality eggs, determined at time of packing, are AA, which have thick whites and firm, plump yolks. Grade A eggs fall only shortly behind in terms of quality. (Grade B eggs are low quality and rarely make it to the retail market.)

In terms of size, eggs are labeled jumbo, extra-large, large, medium, small and peewee. Most recipes are developed for large eggs and, while other sizes may be substituted, you may have to adjust the recipe.

Buy large AA eggs if possible. Look for those without cracks and with clean shells. Check the sell-by date, which should be as distant as possible.

**Storing:** Store eggs in a cold part of the refrigerator where the temperature is below 40°F. Keep them in their cartons; don’t transfer them to the egg racks found in some refrigerators. Additionally, eggs should be stored with the broad ends up, which is how they are packed. This keeps the yolk centered. Do not leave eggs at room temperature; a day on the countertop ages them as much as a week in the refrigerator.

Unbroken eggs refrigerated in their carton will keep for 5 weeks past their sell-by date. As they age, the whites will thin and become more transparent and the yolks will flatten, but the nutritional value of the eggs will not diminish. Use older eggs for baking, reserving the fresher ones for other cooking. Older egg whites are easier to whip up into voluminous meringue than absolutely fresh eggs, while fresh eggs are best for emulsified sauces such as hollandaise and mayonnaise.

Recipes will sometimes call for egg whites or egg yolks only, leaving you with leftover parts of eggs. Refrigerate uncooked egg whites in a tightly lidded glass or plastic container for up to 5 days. Refrigerate uncooked egg yolks in a glass or plastic container covered with a little water and tightly lidded for up to 2 days.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Kitchen Companion* (Time-Life Books, 2000).

<b>Ingredients for Poached Eggs with White Bean–Tomato Ragout</b>
1 Tbs. olive oil
3 oz. pancetta, chopped
1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
4 tsp. minced fresh rosemary
¼ to ½ tsp. red pepper flakes
2 cans (each 14.5 oz.) fire-roasted tomatoes, with juices
2 cans (each 15 oz.) cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
¾ cup water
Coarse kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 to 2 tsp. white vinegar
4 to 8 eggs
Grated sharp cheddar cheese for sprinkling

<b>Ingredients for Ham and Gruyère Croque Madame</b>
4 Tbs. (½ stick) unsalted butter
2 Tbs. all-purpose flour
1 cup milk, warmed
1 cup shredded Gruyère cheese
5 tsp. Dijon mustard
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
8 slices good-quality, firm white sandwich bread
4 eggs
½ lb. thinly sliced Black Forest ham

## Poached Eggs with White Bean–Tomato Ragout

*White beans simmered with pancetta, rosemary and fire-roasted tomatoes make an enticing base for poached eggs. It’s a novel choice for dinner and just as good for breakfast or lunch. Serve with thick slices of broiled country bread.*

In a large saucepan over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the pancetta and sauté until it starts to brown, about 3 minutes. Add the onion, rosemary and red pepper flakes and sauté until the onion is tender, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes with their juices, the beans and water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer until the mixture thickens, about 15 minutes. Season with salt and black pepper.

Meanwhile, pour water into 1 (for 4 eggs) or 2 (for 8 eggs) large fry pans to a depth of 1 inch. Season the water with salt and add 1 tsp. vinegar to each fry pan. Bring the liquid to a boil, then reduce the heat to maintain a bare simmer. One at a time, break an egg into a small cup or bowl and gently slip the egg into the water. Simmer gently until the eggs are cooked as desired, 3 to 4 minutes for runny yolks or up to 5 minutes for firmer yolks.

Divide the white bean mixture among 4 warmed bowls. Using a slotted spoon, transfer 1 or 2 eggs to each bowl. Top the eggs with cheese and black pepper and serve immediately. Serves 4.

**Quick Tips:** For a meatless version, leave out the pancetta. The bean ragout makes a delicious side dish for chicken, lamb or pork. Almost any grating cheese would be good here—Manchego, Parmigiano-Reggiano, pecorino and Comté are all excellent alternatives for the cheddar. Fire-roasted canned tomatoes are a flavorful convenience item to keep on hand in the pantry.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Weeknight Fresh & Fast*, by Kristine Kidd (Weldon Owen, Inc., 2011).

## Ham and Gruyère Croque Madame

*A croque madame is so much more than a grilled ham and cheese. In signature French fashion, this otherwise humble sandwich is drenched in a decadent, cheesy sauce, then broiled in the oven until bubbling and golden. A fried egg on top is the crowning glory.*

In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, melt 2 Tbs. of the butter. Whisk in the flour until smooth. Let bubble without browning, whisking frequently, for 1 minute. Gradually whisk in the warm milk, increase the heat to medium and bring to a gentle boil, whisking frequently. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, whisking frequently, until thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in ¾ cup of the cheese and 1 tsp. of the mustard. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a bowl, placing a piece of plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the sauce and let cool.

Preheat an oven to 400°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

Arrange the bread slices in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet and transfer to the oven. Bake, turning the slices over once, until toasted on both sides, about 10 minutes total. Remove from the oven and set aside.

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In a large fry pan over medium heat, melt the remaining 2 Tbs. butter. Crack the eggs into the pan. Season with salt and pepper, cover, reduce the heat to medium-low and cook until the whites are set, about 2 minutes for sunny-side-up eggs. Or carefully flip the eggs over and cook to the desired doneness.

Preheat a broiler.

Spread 4 bread slices with the remaining 4 tsp. mustard. Add an equal amount of the sliced ham and 1 Tbs. of the sauce to each slice. Top with the remaining bread slices. Return the sandwiches to the parchment-lined baking sheet. Spread the remaining sauce over the tops of the sandwiches and sprinkle each with 1 Tbs. of the remaining cheese. Broil until the cheese is melted and golden, about 2 minutes. Transfer to plates, top each with a fried egg and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Breakfast Comforts*, by Rick Rodgers (Weldon Owen, Inc., 2010).

## Corn and Chili Strata with Mexican Chorizo

*Strata, a casserole of eggs, bread, cheese and other ingredients, is a busy cook’s secret weapon and makes a great weeknight dinner. The dish can be assembled the night before, then baked the next day to golden perfection. Use fresh Mexican-style chorizo, not smoked Spanish sausage links, for this Southwestern version, which is studded with mild green chilies and sweet corn.*

Preheat a broiler.

Place the chilies on a baking sheet and broil, turning occasionally, until blackened on all sides, about 12 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and let cool until easy to handle. Peel off the blackened skin. Discard the stem, seeds and ribs and chop the chilies. Transfer to a bowl and add the corn.

Meanwhile, in a large fry pan over medium heat, warm the 1 Tbs. olive oil. Add the chorizo and cook, breaking it up with the side of a wooden spoon, until it begins to brown, about 8 minutes. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion softens, about 3 minutes more. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the chorizo mixture to paper towels to drain. Discard the fat in the pan.

Lightly oil a 3-quart baking dish. In a large bowl, whisk together the milk, eggs, hot pepper sauce and salt until combined. Arrange 6 of the bread slices in a single layer on the bottom of the prepared dish, tearing the slices to fit, if needed. Top evenly with half of the chorizo mixture, half of the chili mixture and half of the cheese. Repeat with the remaining bread slices, chorizo mixture, chili mixture and cheese.

Slowly pour the milk mixture over the layers. Wrap the dish securely with plastic wrap. Press gently on the plastic to submerge the layers in the milk mixture. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to overnight.

Preheat an oven to 350°F.

Uncover the baking dish and transfer to the oven. Bake until the strata puffs and becomes golden brown, about 1 hour. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool for 5 minutes. Serve warm. Serves 8 to 10.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Breakfast Comforts*, by Rick Rodgers (Weldon Owen, Inc., 2010).

<b>Ingredients for Corn and Chili Strata with Mexican Chorizo</b>
3 poblano chilies
1½ cups fresh or thawed frozen corn kernels
1 Tbs. olive oil, plus more for baking dish
1 lb. fresh Mexican-style chorizo sausage, casings removed
1 white onion, chopped
2 cups milk
8 eggs
½ tsp. hot pepper sauce
¾ tsp. kosher salt
12 slices day-old baguette, each ½ to ¾ inch thick
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese