

## Home Cooking Episode 2: Here's What Else You Knead to Know Today

Samin: Hi. I'm Samin Nosrat.

Hrishi: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

Samin: And we're Home Cooking.

Hrishi: This is episode two of our four part quarantine miniseries, where we take questions from folks who need help figuring out what to do with the ingredients they've got on hand. Later, we're going to be joined by James Beard award-winning cookbook author, Stella Parks, to help us answer some of your questions about baking.

Samin: We're also going to be joined by W. Kamau Bell, the great comedian and host of United Shades of America to discuss banana pancakes.

Hrishi: Thanks to everyone who sent in questions, we are excited to answer a few of them. But before we get to those first, Samin, what have you been cooking?

Samin: Oh, Hrishi, I'm in a real red sauce joint kind of mood these days.

Hrishi: Oh, yeah?

Samin: So before the quarantine for the last several months, I've been trying to eat either vegan or vegetarian for most or all of the day. And somehow in the last week, I made both pepperoni pizza and pork meatballs. That's more pork than I've eaten in months. And so I don't know, man. I don't know what's happening. And the other thing I'm craving, which I'm going to try and make in the next few days, is one of those ... Oh, wait. Did you go to school on the East Coast?

Hrishi: Yes, I did. That's where I'm from.

Samin: Yeah, so maybe you know all about this kind of stuff. But I really want to make one of those New Jersey style pizza salads, those ones that have salami and chick peas and radicchio, and there's pieces of cheese in the salad. And there's oregano in the vinaigrette. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Hrishi: I mean, it just sounds like you're describing a salad. Is that an East Coast thing?

Samin: In my imagination, that is New Jersey pizzeria salad.

Hrishi: What makes it the fact that there's sliced meat in it?

Samin: Yeah, the meat and the cheese. I think it's just the specific form and type of cheese and meat. That's all.

Hrishi: All right.

Samin: It's like a New Jersey chopped salad. I want to make that.

Hrishi: I mean, I object to the characterization of this being from New Jersey.

Samin: Are you taking this personally?

Hrishi: No. I'm just trying to set the record straight. I feel like a chopped salad, that's everywhere. You can't put that on New Jersey or put it in New Jersey.

Samin: Absolutely, I would agree that chopped salad comes from all over. I just think that this version of chopped salad. I mean, I've never been to New Jersey, so here I am just being prejudiced. But I have a lot of friends from New Jersey.

Hrishi: Oh, gosh.

Samin: And they take pride. My friend, Melissa, makes this stuff she calls Jersey mix, and it's so delicious. Maybe I call it Jersey mix, now that I think about it.

Hrishi: She's your token New Jersey friend that you're using to justify the stereotype.

Samin: No, she's not. I have a lot of New Jersey friends.

Hrishi: I just haven't met any of them. But I'm sure they exist.

Samin: Oh, God. Now we've gone down a real dark road.

Hrishi: This might be safer territory. Can you tell me about your red sauce?

Samin: Oh, no. Well, my red sauce is super simple. I historically have a whole thing where I cook onions and tomatoes and garlic for hours until they're so sweet, and then puree them, blah, blah, blah, do, do, do. And I'm in lazy mode right now, major lazy mode. So when I made the meatballs, I didn't do anything. I just crushed the can of tomatoes by hand, put it around the meatballs in the pan.

Hrishi: By hand, like literally with your hand? Or do you use a tool?

Samin: I didn't crush the entire can. I opened the can and then crushed the tomatoes inside.

Hrishi: Sure, yeah. I was not thinking you were going to Incredible Hulk the aluminum. But, I mean, by crush by hand, it's not like you're ... You're not using a fork or anything like that to help with the crushing.

Samin: No. In fact, that's to me, the greatest joy of cooking with a canned tomato, is the part where you get to use your hands to crush it. It's like the greatest fun. And so I did that, I put some salt in there. I was so lazy, I just grated some garlic in. And then I put it in the pan, and I had the ends of the onions that I had chopped and cooked and put in that meatballs, so I just put those onion ends in there.

Hrishi: I saw that on your Instagram. That's the part that people normally throw away.

Samin: Well, it is the part people normally throw away, but there is a very, very famous tomato sauce by Marcella Hazan, the great Italian cookbook author, maybe her most famous recipe is her tomato sauce, where she just takes a can of tomatoes, crushes it by hand, puts it in the pot, and then puts half of a raw sliced onion, and just simmers it, and then finishes it with butter, so it's literally tomato, onion, butter, salt. That's it.

Hrishi: Wow.

Samin: So I was like, "Well, maybe I can just sort of fake that by putting these onion ends in here and, letting them sort of perfume the sauce." And then whatever flavors are being exchanged between the meatballs and the sauce was pretty good. And then I had put all of these random cheeses that I just had little bits of cheese that I grated in the meatball mix. So I had the super random Gouda rinds, so I put Gouda rinds in the tomato pan. Usually, you would have Parmesan rind.

Hrishi: What happened? Does the rind melt? Does it fall apart?

Samin: Usually those hard cheese rinds, people traditionally will use them in a stock or a sauce. You'll throw your Parmesan rind into your bolognese. Or people even just make pure Parmesan stock out of the rinds because it's so flavorful. It's pure umami flavor.

Hrishi: And then you just pull it out like a bay leaf at the end?

Samin: Yeah. Exactly. And then you just pull it out at the end, so I just did that in hopes that something good would happen. I mean, it tasted pretty good.

Hrishi: You're saying you were doing this in lazy mode, but it actually still sounds like a lot of work.

Samin: I mean, it was definitely not a lazy dinner. The lazy meal I had this week was Annie's macaroni and cheese with frozen peas and chili crisp.

Hrishi: Yeah. That sounds pretty good too, though.

Samin: Oh, man. That was so good. But this definitely was an amount of work. It was just that I hit my work threshold. And I was like, "I'm not making sauce too." By the time I had made the meatball mix and browned the meatballs, I was done. But that's enough about my meatballs. Hrishi, what's the best thing you've tasted all week?

Hrishi: The best thing I've tasted recently is raw power.

Samin: That sounds like a energy drink.

Hrishi: It is. It is really energy. It is really energizing. But I'm, no, I'm not talking about a food product. I'm talking about actual power, which is all I've felt since the first episode of our show came out, because I've been seeing all these Tweets and Instagram posts from people who have been making things that we recommended and like specifically the savory oats that I mentioned offhand.

Samin: Oh, I love that. You're just feeling like a food influencer?

Hrishi: Yeah, and I'm like, "Is this what Samin's feels all the time?"

Samin: You know, what's pretty wild? I mean not that this is part of our thing or has to be in our show, but you know what's pretty wild is that I love just guiding people toward cooking and I don't really care what they cook. I think just empowering them to cook anything is what brings me joy. But it is amazing to see the waves of life that this focaccia from the show has had. And I think it's an introductory sort of bread baking for a lot of people. It's the first time a lot of people have worked with yeast and it makes me really happy to see people succeeding and really enjoying making something, so it's pretty awesome.

Hrishi: Okay, on that note then, here's my promise to you before we are done with this podcast, I'm going to try to make it.

Samin: You are?

Hrishi: Yeah, I've never made bread before in my life, but for you I'll give it a shot.

Samin: Oh, that makes me so happy.

Hrishi: All right.

Samin: That makes me really, really happy. You know what, I think I'm going to try and do, which I'm going to regret saying this on the record ...

Hrishi: Make a podcast with me.

Samin: Is I'm ... Is what?

Hrishi: Make a podcast with me.

Samin: Is making a podcast ...

Hrishi: You're already regretting it.

Samin: I already read that. Well, it's mostly just the puns, but which now like I think in puns it's really focaccia-ed ta.

Hrishi: I'm sorry and you're welcome

Samin: No, I ... The other day I had a little tiny urge in my belly that I couldn't squash to make bread, like to make my own sourdough bread and I have never felt that desire. I've actively not felt that desire.

Hrishi: Well, I mean peer pressure, everybody else is doing it so now's the time

Samin: I also am just not like, there's so much great bread around me. They're amazing bakers in my community. But I don't know like it was a unfamiliar feeling and I'm going to try and heed it, I think. Ooh.

Hrishi: Well, I can't wait. I anxiously await the results.

Samin: Okay, great. Maybe there'll be a loaf of bread in the mail. You're just gonna get so much weird stuff in the mail.

Hrishi: Yes, that is what I want. Please send it. So obviously, constraints are a theme of the whole quarantine period. And we've been talking a lot about what people can make with what they have. But I wanted to play you some questions that deal with constraints around what people don't have. So this first question is from Marta, and we don't have audio, so I'm just going to read it. Marta asks, "I could use some practical advice on cooking on the really cheap. I have \$45 to stretch for 14 days of lunches and dinners. I have pretty much nothing left by way of staples, such as canned tomatoes, so it's pretty tight. Please help."

Samin: Wow. This is a really tough one. Anytime money has been tight for me, and there have been many times, I've been working in restaurants. And so there's always food ultimately. I've always had that safety. Let's do the math. Let's see. \$45 dollars for 14 days, it works out to just over \$3 a day.

Hrishi: When I've had budgets like that it was when I was on tour with my band and making no money, basically you're losing money everyday. And so you're just trying to eat for as cheap as possible, so you go to the grocery store in whatever town you're in and there were a lot of you know peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Samin: Yeah. I definitely am a champion of a PBJ, for sure. And I eat a lot of those even in my regular life.

Hrishi: Do you have any tips on advanced peanut butter and jelly technique?

Samin: No.

Hrishi: Okay. Well, let me give you mine. This only works if you have a toaster oven, but that is to put the, peanut butter onto the bread and then you toast it.

Samin: What?

Hrishi: Yes. So when the-

Samin: No! Won't it melt through?

Hrishi: No, it doesn't melt through, it doesn't melt through. I mean, you might get some leakage. I guess it depends on how porous your bread is. I use Ezekiel bread. And then as the bread toasts, the peanut butter warms up as well. And then on the other side of the bread you put the cold jelly and then you get the contrast of both. It's like what we were talking about with the latkes, you get the contrast of both the warmed up peanut butter and the cool jelly and the toasted crunchy bread.

Samin: This is wild. I'm going to try it. I'll get back to you.

Hrishi: Okay.

Samin: So anyway, back to Marta. Another thought I have is, I think eggs are going to help you get through this time. So like let's say a dozen eggs costs like four bucks. So what does that work out to?

Hrishi: 33 cents an egg.

Samin: So I think if you could take eight eggs and make like a tortilla Espanol with potatoes and caramelized onions. That could be turned into I would say six generous slices. And that will be totally satisfying as a meal on their own. And you could eat them with whatever pickles you've got lying around. You could eat them in a sandwich, I think would be really delicious.

Hrishi: One other thing I wanted to mention is a cookbook that our editor, Margaret Miller recommended when I shared Marta's question with her ... When I shared Marta's question with her, it's called Good and Cheap by Leanne Brown. Do you know this book?

Samin: Oh, my God, I totally remember that book. It's so awesome.

Hrishi: Yeah. It's specifically, designed for people to be able to eat well on \$4 a day.

Samin: Yeah, I think I used to recommend that cookbook to a lot of my students and I feel like the author wrote it specifically for people on a food stamps budget on a SNAP budget and it's actually super impressive and if I remember correctly, you can just download it for free off of the internet. You don't even have to buy the book.

Hrishi: Yeah, you can buy it online but you can also download a free PDF of it from her website [leanebrown.com/cookbooks](http://leanebrown.com/cookbooks) and what's also amazing is it's available in both English and in Spanish.

Samin: Oh, that's so cool. Does Margaret have any favorite recipes?

Hrishi: Actually, yeah, she said that she made the creamy zucchini fettuccine a whole bunch and we can put a link to that one specifically, too, Leanne has, has that recipe up on her site.

Samin: Oh man. Oh, it looks so delicious. I remember this book being amazing because it uses a lot of whole ingredients and it's kind of just teaches you the thinking behind how to stretch stuff, how to shop for bargains and how to eat nutritiously and deliciously on a really, really low budget. So I think that's an awesome, awesome recommendation. Thanks Margaret.

Hrishi: Okay, Marta, check out Good and Cheap and I hope that this advice helps.

Samin: Yeah. Marta, good luck!

Hrishi: Here's a question from someone who also is dealing with some interesting constraints. Listen to this:

Max: Hi my name is Max and I'm a city bus driver in Seattle, Washington. I'm wondering if you have any great ideas about food to take with me out on the road. At the moment, I'm driving a piece of work that still goes out in the afternoons and evenings and gets people around who have essential trips that they need to make and rely on public transit for that. I pull up to a transit center and have a half hour break where there's an opportunity for me to hop off the bus and wash my hands and then eat whatever I've packed to bring with me. There is no microwave and no refrigerator, so I'm wondering if you have any ideas about things to take with me and ways to make this an especially grounding experience especially in the middle of a pandemic.

Samin: Wow, Max. You're amazing.

Hrishi: Right?

Samin: I've got some ideas. The things that come to mind are salads that either won't degrade with being dressed for hours out of the fridge or actually improve. So

things like grain salads, I think, will be delicious as they sit sort of and marinate. A farro salad, a chickpea salad-

Hrishi: So you don't have to separate your dressing from your salad.

Samin: Yeah. It's already done. It's already dressed and it's sitting there and is delicious. I think cabbage slaws improve with sitting around and you could make that sort of Mexican-ish or you could make it with sesame oil and crunchy peanuts and chilies.

Hrishi: I, too, like a cabbage slaw, improve with sitting around

Samin: Yeah. Cabbage slaw if you wanted to put a little bit of shredded roast chicken. You don't need a refrigerator if you have a cooler lunch bag. I think that's fine for several hours for stuff like that. The things I wouldn't want to eat if they weren't refrigerated are probably intense dairy situations or mayonnaise, probably or deli meats. Those things I wouldn't keep out. But if you have a lunch cooler or something you can put a little ice pack in, a little bit of shredded cooked chicken will be fine. I think a soba noodle salad or a rice noodle salad that is either pre-dressed or that you make a little separate jar of dressing and you just sort of dump it into the Tupperware, close the Tupperware and shake to dress is a great thing that feels kind of vibrant and alive. Another thing that came to mind immediately was the kinds of sandwiches that improve with sitting. Historically, the way that I've seen them is people will build a many layered, say cheeses and pickled vegetables and maybe a little bit of meat or something in there and then wrap it in foil and press it under a weight, a can of tomatoes or something. And so all the flavors marinate and then that thing gets sliced so you could sort of approximate that with focaccia. You could do a little bit of salami and pickled vegetables, pickled peppers or anything like that in there.

Hrishi: Do you have to worry about the pickled vegetables soaking?

Samin: Making it soggy?

Hrishi: Yeah. Making it soggy.

Samin: Well, I think those sandwiches you kind of want a little sog, but I also think there's creative assemblage, creative sandwich assembly,, creative layering.

Hrishi: The order of operations within your sandwich.

Samin: Exactly. So there are definitely the things that you could put on the outer edges that would prevent too much sog. I'm not a number one fan of the lettuce as the barrier because then the lettuce gets soggy.



Hrishi: Right. You have to be thoughtful about the social distancing between your sandwich ingredients.

Samin: Absolutely because you just have to think about what it's going to be like in several hours. But I take great joy in a pre-assembled sandwich. I really do. Another thing I think is with sandwich or salad what's inevitable is some sog so what's going to make it more exciting to eat is some crunch. So this is when the classic potato chip in a sandwich or-

Hrishi: You're speaking my language.

Samin: Like a crunchy thing crumbled atop your salad is really going to make it much more exciting to eat. So some crunchy things that I can think of, I mean, a very simple one that you can just always have a little jar of in your pocket or in your lunch bag is furikake, the Japanese mix of seaweed and sesame seeds. Any sort of sesame seeds spice mix is just a little bit of crunch right there.

Hrishi: And a little umami

Samin: And a little bit of umami and salt, that's so good. There's also the crumbled potato chip which you could pre-crumble in your bag and then just sprinkle without having to touch.

Hrishi: I recommend a jalapeno potato chip especially for that because you get the salty crunchy bits but also a little zing.

Samin: Oh, I like that. Also, for this particular purpose, I would recommend a kettle chip. It doesn't have to be a Kettle brand, but a kettle. Those are just much crunchier chips for this application.

Hrishi: Okay thanks Max! One of the things that is neat about all of these constraints is that they are leading people to some really creative solutions and so Samin, I just wanted to play you this story that we got from Nicole. I loved it.

Nicole: Currently sitting in my home in Boone, North Carolina making some focaccia and it's 11:30 at night and my house is a little too cold for it to proof, but I don't have a proofing drawer so I stuck my whole bowl in my dryer that had some clean clothes in it and had just been done. So yeah, that's what you've got to do to proof your dough. I'm freaking out. Having cabin fever is really real.

Samin: Oh, Nicole. I feel you. I hope the carbs helped ease your pain.

Hrishi: The dryer is so good.

Samin: I fully have been there where I'm "Where can I put this? Where is going to be warm enough?" I don't know that I've ever been creative enough to think about the dryer, but I love that she did.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: I have to say I'm so inspired by people's creativity these days and the focaccia dough in the dryer is no exception.

Hrishi: It's a great example.

Samin: That's awesome. Thanks for sending that. Thank you, Nicole.

Hrishi: Okay joining us in a moment is Stella Parks, author of BraveTart. Before we get her on the line though, Samin, can you just explain who Stella is and why you wanted to have her join us.

Samin: So Stella is an amazing baker who I always look to. Anytime I have a baking question, I'm always "What would Stella do? What would Stella say?" She just has endless patience where I have none. And so anytime I need to look up, both for my own baking or when I need to sort of refer to something so that I can talk about it, I'll read what she has written. And she's very calming and very, very smart.

Hrishi: Okay, let's go we've got her on the line. Hey Stella

Samin: Hi Stella!

Stella: Oh my god, hey guys!

Hrishi: Stell, we've got a bunch of baking questions that have been sent into us. Are you ready to just jump in?

Stella: Yeah. I'm ready to bake the apocalypse. Yeah.

Hrishi: So I think the most common thing that people are encountering with baking is that there is no white flour. Here's Daniel.

Daniel: My question is about white flour. I mean I can't find any on any shelves. So when I did go to the store I found whole wheat flour, unbleached and I also found a couple versions of gluten free flour. It's just all there was. So what do I do?

Stella: So I think most importantly we have to decide how experienced someone is and how committed they are to the thing it is that they want to make. And whether or not pivoting might be a better idea. I would stick with recipes from the

manufacturer. They're familiar with what their flours need and how they behave and they'll have recipes that are tested and developed specifically for those flours. And I think that would be a much smarter option than trying to wing it. But if you're not really familiar with baking and suddenly trying to adapt all your recipes to 100% whole wheat flour, you're still changing the fundamental structure of a recipe, So looking for recipes that are based around whole wheat flour would a great way. I have a recipe on serious eats for 100% whole wheat sandwich loaf, so that's a good place to jump in.

Hrishi: Okay. Good. Then we have a question from Jennifer

Jennifer: Hello. As you know, a lot of recipes online that call for a stand mixer to make the bread, and I can't really justify buying a stand mixer at the moment. So I was wondering if either of you had any tips or techniques or recipes to still make beautiful, wonderful bread without necessarily having a gadget like that.

Hrishi: I too am without a stand mixer. In fact, I had a cookie fail earlier this week that I'm blaming on my lack of a stand mixer.

Stella: Did the cookies spread too much?

Hrishi: They did spread too much.

Stella: Yeah

Hrishi: So it would make my life easier I think, but I know I can make them without a stand mixer. What about with bread?

Stella: Bread is one of those things where a stand mixer is extremely useful, but not necessarily vital. You can absolutely make bread by hand, it just definitely takes a little bit more muscle power. It depends on the recipe, for sure. There are a lot of recipes that don't involve a tremendous amount of kneading, but then there are some others that do require a little bit higher level of gluten development. I think people can be really surprised when they're like, "Oh, I'm still going and my arms hurt." Because if it takes like eight minutes on a stand mixer, it's going to take you a long time to do that by hand. I actually just picked a loaf of Kenji's no knead bread that's on Serious Eats and that was great. That's been in my regular rotation.

Samir: Can you tell us a little bit about what a no-knead bread is? Is it really no-kneading?

Stella: It really is no-kneading, but the trade off with no-knead breads is that they're a little bit time consuming, because you're letting the gluten form passively in the dough over time. For the average person, that's not the recipe they want to go to because they want a bread now. But for those of us who are settling into our new quarantine routine, that could be a really good thing to incorporate,

because you can just keep a batch going. Meanwhile, you've got the next loaf fermenting in the fridge. That can be really great, and there's no need for a stand mixer for something like that.

Hrishi: No knead for a stand mixer.

Samin: Whoa. I know. No knead for a-

Stella: I should have seen that. I was walking right into that.

Samin: But wait, so no-knead bread lets time do the work that a stand mixer would be doing.

Stella: Yeah, absolutely. Or the otherwise muscle power of some sort would be doing.

Samin: As a person who has not baked much bread in my own life, I'm tempted to start with the no-knead, because I'd rather invest the time than the work. I'm so lazy.

Hrishi: There was another question that we got. Samin, I wanted to see if you had any thoughts on this because it comes from Italy, where I know you spent a lot of time. It comes from Noelle, and there's no recording here, but I'll just read it. She said, "I'm an American living in Rome for many years now, approaching week four of quarantine. I've been doing some baking. While I usually use Italian recipes, occasionally I want to make some American classics, brownies, chocolate chip cookies, et cetera. But I find that double "O" flour behaves differently from all purpose flour. And the -- Wait, Samin, I'm gonna send this to you will you tell me how to pronounce this?"

Samin: Lievito vanigliato per dolci

Hrishi: Okay, she said it is not the same as baking powder. What's that?

Samin: It's like a vanilla flavored raising agent for desserts.

Hrishi: And do you have a lot of experience using these ingredients?

Samin: Yeah, I've used double zero flour for all sorts of stuff. I love it for pasta. It's very soft, it's very finely milled. And soft and hard are just words that refer to the protein content of flour. So soft flour will be less glutenous once it's worked, and harder flours you can work and develop more gluten and get all that crustiness. So if you want a crusty bread, you're not going to get that out of a super soft double zero flour. What Stella's been saying all along is you're never going to be able to conjure magic out of your ingredients. But I do think, what you can do in Italy is look for something like durum wheat flour or another harder flour to get that protein content up and start trying to get some bread out of that.

Stella: Things are going to be different, and it might not be exactly like you read about or you pictured or you saw an Instagram or something. It's going to be something different, and you just have to roll with that. Or its needs might be different. It might take longer to bake, or it might need more water, or take more needing or whatever this variable is. But if you're not holding this tight expectation that it's going to be exactly like the thing that you read about and you're willing to just, "Let's see what happens. I'm learning about it," then that's fantastic. It's really about expectation management I think.

Hrishi: Stella, do you think that there are some American classics, like Noel was asking about, that are more forgiving?

Stella: I think cookies are a pretty safe bet in terms of baked goods, because if your cookies spread a little bit more, or they're a little bit chewier than you expected, they're a little bit cakier than you expected, they're still going to be cookies and that is a really great thing.

Samin: I definitely made chocolate chip cookies from the Toll House recipe when I lived in Italy, and I think they were just... They spread a little bit more. But I think ultimately it was still pretty recognizable.

Hrishi: If you crossed a chocolate chip cookie with pizza dough, I still think it would be pretty good.

Stella: I'm so in.

Samin: Oh my gatos.

Hrishi: Okay. Here's the question that we got from Ian Chillag, he's the host of one of my favorite podcasts, Everything Is Alive. I love him. Here's his question:

Ian: Hey Hrishi and Samin. This is Ian in Los Angeles, where I am isolating at home with my wife and our new baby. My wife is having a craving for white cake, a classic birthday cake. We don't have any white flour. We do have some whole wheat flour, and I have sugar and brown sugar, baking soda, baking powder. We have some oatmeal. Just through the pantry here. Wild Sockeye salmon, Werther's Originals, some Life Savers, a lot of cereal, mostly the bran flake variety.

Hrishi: Okay, he's just listing stuff. Let me skip ahead.

Ian: Yeah, so I don't know. I'd love to be able to make her a cake. I guess help me help her. Okay. Talk to you soon. Thank you. Bye bye.

Stella: First of all, I think we need to focus on the sockeye salmon. I think a salmon cake is going to be so much closer to a white cake than a cake made a full wheat flour. That's where I'm at right now.

Samin: I already was losing my mind just when he started with whole wheat flour, no white flour. I was like, "Okay, this is already impossible," and then he listed 5,000 other things.

Hrishi: What's a cake that Ian can make with just whole wheat flour, and Werther's Originals? Stella, can you help him?

Stella: Again, I think it's all coming back to expectation management. What we've got to work with.

Samin: Cause what goes into a classic white cake?

Stella: The thing that makes white cake tastes like white cake is specifically the type of flour used, so if you're getting away from that...

Hrishi: So we can't make a traditional white cake maybe, but is there some kind of birthday cake that one could make with the whole wheat flour to approximate?

Stella: I don't think if I ever made a whole wheat flour cake, which is why I'm going back to the sockeye salmon, and I think for a really nice dinner of these delicious salmon cakes, and just saying, "Babe, I know you're craving white cake right now, but the only cake I know how to make are these salmon cakes. And I just want you to know I'm thinking of you." I am a real Debbie Downer, you guys.

Samin: No, you're not. No, this is I think, really, really important for people to hear because I think there is, of course, going to be some amount of substituting that's going to happen and is necessary. But I think it's really good cooking advice to tell people you got to just change your game. It's not about changing the ingredients, it's about looking at what you have and making what's appropriate with that.

Stella: Yes. 100%.

Hrishi: So for everyone else, you can thrive by working with the ingredients you have, Ian for your lovely wife Emily and her very specific craving for white cake. I think you're out of luck until you can get some white flour. Sorry.

Stella: Yeah, sorry.

Samin: Sorry, Emily.

Hrishi: Okay. I want to change the gears a little bit. There are a couple of questions that we got that weren't baking specific when they were sent into us, but I thought baking might be a great context to try and answer them. Let me start with this question from Rose.

Rose: Hello, Samin and Hrishi. My name is Rose and I have a question about apples. I buy them at the farmer's market or in the CSA that we get because I have this idea that I will eat them as a snack because that is what good healthy people do. But in reality, I eat Doritos and drink Diet Coke, and the apples are piling up. Right now, I have, let's see, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 apples in various stages of their life. They're fine. They're totally edible I think, just not in a snacking kind of way. So, I need to get rid of them because they're a visual reminder that I'm a trash person, and they're taunting me. And I just, I have to do something with these apples but I don't know what and I don't really want to make applesauce because I don't really like applesauce. Help me use these apples, so they can go away and hopefully in a way that doesn't involve puff pastry because that sounds really scary.

Samin: Rose, you're not a trash person.

Hrishi: There's, by the way, an addendum that she sent to her question.

Rose: I have bad news. I found three more apples in the back of the fridge which brings the apple count up to 19. Please help me.

Stella: This is amazing.

Samin: Rose, that is a lot of apples.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: Where do you even keep them? You got to get rid of them.

Stella: I'm ready for this one. And it's weirdly converging with the whole wheat cake.

Samin: What?

Stella: I actually do have a cake that's made with 100% whole wheat flour. I just forgot, I repressed it but at least it can be. The carrot cake from my book, which is also on Serious Eats for free, I think it's like part whole wheat and part white but actually 100% whole wheat is great in that recipe because there's a lot of liquid in that recipe, and whole wheat flour is great at managing that liquid content. So, you can definitely at least make a carrot cake, which is nothing like a white cake. But in terms of these apples, you take the apples and you shred them the way you shred carrots like on a box grater. Then you wrap them up in cheesecloth or a tea towel and just squeeze until all the juice comes out, which

is really delicious. You have a glass of freshly squeezed apple cider to enjoy and then the dried-out shreds get used just like carrots in the carrot cake recipe, and now it's an apple cake.

Samin: Oh, my God. You are blowing my mind. Can I tell you something crazy right now?

Stella: I'm so ready.

Samin: This is the way I feel now. This is making me feel like an impostor, but it's okay. For the last four months, I've had a dream, a real dream that I will invent a cake that started as banana bread and then I was like, "What if I put whole wheat flour in this banana bread?" So, I did many tests and started working in whole wheat pastry flour, which is a little softer, and I found a good percentage that tastes really good in the banana bread. And then I was like, "What if this cake could use whatever you have?" So, I've been making versions with apples, with pears, with carrots, and here I am at home thinking I'm so brilliant and inventing something totally new, and it's already in your book. I love that you're all, "It has whole wheat flour, it has carrots, it has apples, it's great." I'm like, literally...I mean, I know there's nothing new under the sun. I'm very familiar with that in cooking that everything's already been done. But it's just so funny because I was like, "Oh, yeah. I'm just going to frame this in this way that it's anything cake," and literally already did it.

Hrishi: I love that this happens in other mediums because just a couple weeks ago I was working on the score for a video game, and there was a piece that I was writing and I felt so good about it, and I was like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. This is coming together. " And then I finished and I walked away, and then I came back and I played it again and I realized I had written one of the main themes from Skyrim, not just already a piece of music that existed, but specifically a piece of music for a video game that I had just happened to have been playing the week before. I'm glad that that happens for chefs too.

Samin: Oh, yeah. All the time, all the time. Anyways, Stella, I'll credit you if I ever write the recipe.

Stella: Oh, my God. Well, I mean it's like the fun part about fruits and vegetables is they're all mostly water, so there's a lot that you can do in terms of switching them back and forth.

Hrishi: Yeah, that's so cool. That's awesome.

Samin: Stella, you're amazing. Thank you so much. Thanks so much for sharing all of your knowledge.

Stella: Just putting a stop to all the fun, like everyone stop. Don't do that thing you are about to do. Do something else instead.



Samin: No. I think you're just preventing a lot of disappointment, which is really an important part of it. Helping people know when to change course is really important, and sometimes you're not going to get that fluffy cupcake that you're really craving, and that's okay. Just go on Instagram and watch videos of other people's fluffy cupcakes.

Stella: Oh, my gosh.

Hrishi: Stella, this has been a huge honor for me. I love your cookbook and this has been a real treat to talk to one of my cookie heroes directly. So thanks for joining us.

Samin: You're the best.

Stella: Thank you both so much for having me. This has been awesome.

Hrishi: Stella's book is called BraveTart: Iconic American Desserts. You can also find her work on [seriouseats.com](http://seriouseats.com) and follow her @BraveTart. So Samin, once we've got bread-

Samin: Whole wheat or not?

Hrishi: Exactly.. Here's a question about what to do with it.

Peder: My name is Peder from Oslo, Norway and I'm baking a ton of bread this quarantine period. My question is what are your favorite ways to use bread? Not just as a side, but as an ingredient in a dish.

Hrishi: What do you think?

Samin: This is my favorite thing to do is cook with bread, so I've got this covered. Whew! Okay, and I'm going to say all the classic things.

Hrishi: Yeah. Are we talking about sliced bread here?

Samin: Yeah. A lot of these applications you could just use a loaf of sliced bread for, for sure.

Hrishi: Okay.

Samin: But these are going to be better with bread where the only ingredients are flour, water and yeast rather than shelf-stable stuff.

Hrishi: Okay.

Samin: I'm going to go down the whole classic Italian using your bread up route, but before I go there, I want to say there's this recipe for a breadcrumb cake. It's literally a cake that's made out of breadcrumbs instead of flour in a cookbook called, This is Camino, which is a cookbook from a dearly departed restaurant in Oakland called Camino. It's kind of just interesting. It's different than a regular cake, obviously because it's not flour, it's breadcrumbs, but it's a wonderful way to use up breadcrumbs.

Hrishi: But it's a sweet cake. It's not a savory thing.

Samin: No, no. It's a dessert. It's so good. It gets soaked in a syrup. Even before we enter this discussion, what I want to say is when your bread gets really, really, really dry and crusty, what's happened is it's lost moisture. So if it's so dry and hard that you can't even cut it or do anything with it, the way to come back from that is to rehydrate it. Literally just drizzle some water over it. So the other day I had probably not quite a quarter of a loaf, but a pretty big piece of very, very three-weeks old loaf of bread that wasn't moldy. It was just hard. Hard as a rock. And so I just ran it under the faucet for a second and let it sit for a while. Like maybe 15 minutes.

Hrishi: Like the way you would rehydrate a sponge?

Samin: Kind of. Yeah. Like that. And then I just let some water go into it and so that was how I got it soft enough to be able to cut safely without risking cutting off my hand. And then I cut it into pieces and sort of tore it as much as I could and poured milk over it because I was going to use those breadcrumbs for meatballs. So that's one way to extend what meat you have and use bread in your meatballs. But even if you're not going to tear up the bread, you still could just drizzle a little bit of water on it and then put it in the toaster and that'll create steam and sort of get it to a point where it's sliceable and then you could make bread pudding, which is where you just pour a custard over some bread. You could make french toast which is the stove-top version of custard over some bread. So panzanella is this bread salad that I like to toast croutons and toss them with tomatoes and cucumbers and basil and pickled onions and make a sort of half soggy, half crunchy salad. So the key with panzanella, for me, is to make sure that the crusty bread that's been toasted is then appropriately soaked with vinaigrette. So that you get both crunchy and soggy in the texture because if it's too hard, it's going to scrap all the skin off the rough of your mouth and if it's too soft, it's just a soggy mess. So You have to let it sit for at least 15 minutes or until it starts to get really that just perfect moment and that's when you want to serve it. So there's panzanella.

Hrishi: And can I give my, again, absolute beginner's thing?

Samin: Always, yeah.

Hrishi: I don't know if this counts as the answer to Peder's question, but I love an egg in a basket.

Samin: Oh, me too! I love that! I also love, what are all the names for it that you know?

Hrishi: Toad in a hole.

Samin: Toad in a hole. I feel like there's a chicken in a something. Maybe we've got to make a list of all the names for this because I feel like there's so many names.

Hrishi: Okay. I'm looking it up. Here's an article from Myrecipes.com that says "Egg in a hole has at least 66 different names."

Samin: Oooh! A hole in one, spit in the ocean. Some of these are insane.

Hrishi: There's one it says man in a raft. Someone just made that up.

Samin: Oh no! The raft one I've heard.

Hrishi: You have?

Samin: Yeah, but maybe not a man in a raft. I've heard of other things on the raft.

Hrishi: Sure. Well, it'll take more time to list all the different names for it than it will to actually make it because you just take a piece of bread, put a hole in it and then crack an egg in it while it's on the frying pan and it's so good.

Samin: Oh, it's so good.

Hrishi: It just integrates the whole thing and it looks cute and it's delicious.

Hrishi: There's actually one other name that I know of for this dish and it comes from a movie I was just thinking about yesterday as a great movie that I want to watch because I find it so comforting and cozy which is Moonstruck. Did you ever see Moonstruck?

Samin: Oh yeah. With Cher, right?

Hrishi: With Cher. Yeah. In Italian, they call it "egg in a trashcan".

Samin: It's called uovo in un rifiuti.

Hrishi: Uovo nel cestino?

Samin: Okay.

Hrishi: There's a great scene where they're making this. Olivia Dukakis is making it for herself and Cher. Make yourself some egg in a trashcan and watch the movie Moonstruck.

Samin: Well, speaking of breakfast foods, I think we should give my friend Kamau a call. W Kamau Bell is a Comedian and the Emmy Award Winning Host of United Shades of America on CNN. But even more importantly he is the father of three adorable girls. But I'm really curious to find out what he's been cooking with his kids.

Hrishi: All right, let's call him. Hey, Kamau, thanks so much for joining us

Kamau: Thank you, thanks for having me.

Samin: Hey, Kamau. I've been up to your house before. We've all cooked dinner. And I'm just wondering like what are you guys eating? What are you cooking these days?

Kamau: So for me, if I'm around, I try to help the kids with breakfast and do breakfast, but I can't do like big meals because usually they have to run out to school. But there's a thing like that I have made for my kids for years and I sort of stopped because I got busy, but is great for Juno. It's Two ingredient banana pancakes. You guys must know about this. You're a cultured people.

Samin: Well, I heard about the two ingredient banana pancake from Padma Lakshmi's Instagram a few years ago.

Hrishi: I had never heard about it.

Kamau: Oh, yeah, well it's kind of brilliant, especially for kids, because all it is is a banana and two eggs. So it's just like, so you can feed them pancakes but also feel like they actually got something inside of them other than wheat and, you know ...

Samin: Maple syrup.

Kamau: And wheat.

Samin: Yeah, totally.

Hrishi: Is it literally only two ingredients?

Kamau: I mean you can put, you can spice it up. I'm sure Padma covered this, because she knows how to do stuff. But yeah, you can like add like a little bit of baking powder or you can add a little bit of vanilla. So I do mine with a little bit of baking powder, a little bit of vanilla and, and a little, just a hint of cinnamon for the aromatics. I don't know if you guys know that word but yeah, but you can

just do it with a banana and two eggs. You just mash the banana up and the banana very quickly turns into like just a mush and then you put two eggs in. You just whip it together and they sort of come out, you want to make them small like silver dollar size. And they sort of come out a little bit more like a crepe. But they have the same sort of feeling as a pancake. It's magical. It's really, because when you hear about it you're like, "It doesn't make any sense," but it works.

Samin: Do you cook them in butter?

Kamau: Yes. I cook them in lots of butter. It's a very thin mix and then you cook it and they stay very thin. You have to watch them. Cause if your skillet is too hot they will just sort of burn through right away. So you have to sort of really monitor them as you cook them and you know, she likes them big, which is a little harder to flip them, but I try to make them bigger. But yeah, it's definitely like the first few batches of them and you have to figure out the system and then now it's like I can do it, like while I'm dancing and singing, running through songs.

Hrishi: Doing all of your dad duties at once.

Kamau: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, it's just like, "Oh," that's why the other day I was like, "Oh, I can do this quickly." Whereas like literally for the first year of making them, I would like Google the recipe again, even though it's super so ... "Okay, is it still one banana? Okay, it's still one banana."

Samin: Can I suggest something for Sammie's next like movie party?

Kamau: Yeah, a 1,000% you can.

Samin: Okay. I think it would be a really fun project for you guys to make popcorn together.

Kamau: Okay.

Samin: The way I like to make it is I pop it in a pot with coconut oil because I think the coconut oil gets so hot that the popcorn stays crisper than with other fats.

Kamau: Mm. Okay, nice.

Samin: And then if you happen to have these very specific hippie ingredients ...

Kamau: We may have some, we've been known to be hippie.

Samin: I love putting nutritional yeast and salt on there. But nutritional yeast comes in these like flakes that often don't stick to popcorn. What I've discovered is if you grind the nutritional yeast in a spice mill or a coffee grinder until it's a fine

powder, which will make you cough, if you inhale it, it will stick to the popcorn a lot better. So then I make a little mixture out of the yeast and the salt and I put it on the coconut oil popcorn and it's so delicious. And it's my favorite thing. Every time if anyone between the ages of three and seven comes over, that's the project. That's the thing we do together.

Kamau: All right. So how much salt and nutritional yeast? Is it one to one?

Samin: Just until it tastes good. Yeah. Oh, it's definitely more yeast than salt.

Kamau: Okay, okay.

Samin: Yeah. It's just, yeah, just until it tastes good. But yeah, it's a fun project. And even if you don't have all those toppings, I mean the fun part about doing it at home is like you have all your spice rack or you have Parmesan cheese you can grate on there or you can just melt butter and put it on. But I do think that like mixing it in a big bowl after you hear all that popping is really fun for little ones.

Kamau: Oh, yeah.

Hrishi: I just ordered a couple of sea salt blends that I think are coming today that I'm really excited to use on popcorn, because that's become our sort of go to TV snack. But I ordered something called Magic Unicorn Sea Salt. I put out a thing on Twitter asking people to send ... I said, "What's like a, a specialty food vendor that you love that needs some support so I can try some things that I've never had before?" And someone sent me this link to this Magic Unicorn Sea Salt that's a blend of paprika and garlic and Rosemary and celery seed and, and ocean salt. And I'm really excited to try that on the next time we make popcorn.

Samin: Oh and it comes in like pink rainbow packaging.

Kamau: Nice.

Hrishi: Yeah, exactly.

Samin: So I definitely feel like some five to eight year olds would be real crazy for that.

Kamau: Oh yeah, no, you had me at Magic Unicorn Sea Salt. I was like ... It could taste horrible. They'll love it.

Hrishi: Kamau, I had one more question for you about the pancakes. I was wondering, do you think of that as food for your kids? I mean I have the palette of a five-year-old, so to me it just sounds like something I would want to eat. But do you ever eat them yourselves or is it just for your daughters?

Kamau: I mean, when I make them I'm like, "Hey, I'll eat one if there's one leftover," like at the end, but it's definitely like this is theirs, you know? I think, yeah, it's definitely like if I make, I would never be at home by myself and make them. Like it's like a food hack that I love the fact that like if they eat them, I'm like, "They had protein and a banana and they don't even know it or care." Yeah.

Samin: I have a favor to ask, which I totally understand if the answer's no, but I wonder if Juno would be willing to come talk about the banana pancakes for a second.

Kamau: Oh, Juno? You want me to see if I can get Juno?

Samin: Yeah.

Kamau: All right. Let's see.

Kamau: Hey, Juno? Juno, you want to come talk to Samin for a second, while I'm doing this recording? You could say hello to her. You want to say hello? Okay, so she's right here. She's ready. She wants to ask you a question about the banana pancakes.

Juno: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Samin: Can you tell us about the banana pancakes? Do you like them?

Juno: Yes.

Samin: What do you like about them?

Juno: Mm. Everything.

Hrishi: What's your dad like when he's making the banana pancakes? Do you ever see him doing it?

Juno: Yes, sometimes I help him do it. There's a whole lot of steps, so I can't really remember all of them.

Kamau: What do you like to do when we're making it? What your favorite part?

Samin: Oh, my God, that's so good.

Juno: Stir. But my least favorite thing to do is crack the eggs.

Hrishi: Oh, why is that?

Juno: I was trying to crack an egg, but I don't know why I was and I accidentally dropped it on the floor and my mom and my sister were watching, So I'm like, I don't want to drop it on the floor again, so I just don't want to do eggs.

Kamau: You just don't want to do eggs.

Samin: But I will tell you and I'm a professional cook. I've made so many mistakes. and mistakes and things like dropping eggs on the ground, it's a really important part of becoming a good cook. You have to make mistakes. It's part of practice. So I think at some point, I'm not going to pressure you, you should try and crack another one day. Juno, thank you so much for coming to talk to us. I'm so glad we got to hear about the pancakes and the egg.

Juno: Bye.

Samin: Bye.

Kamau: Well, there you go. That's Juno's podcast debut.

Samin: I love it. That was amazing. Thank you.

Hrishi: Thanks so much, Kamau.

Samin: Thank you so much. Thank you and we wish you guys lots of like good times and cozy times and no divorces.

Kamau: That's a ...People out there who are not parents. Like, "Man, I'm catching up on so many books and TV shows." And we just trying not to hate you.

Hrishi: Thanks Kamau

Samin: Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Kamau: Thank you.

Hrishi: You can find Kamau on Twitter @WKamauBell and on Sunday April 26th his Emmy Award Winning CNN show United Shades of America returns for a new season. So Samin, I feel like this episode has been focused primarily around some of these really common staples but we've got one question that to me sounded so bonkers, I wanted to hear what you thought about it.

Samin: I can't wait.

Hrishi: Okay, here we go.

Mallory: Hi, guys. My name's Mallory. I'm calling in from Brookfield, Connecticut where my boyfriend and I are camped out with some friends at their lake house and tonight is the one year anniversary of our friends actually getting this house, which has become our quarantine bunker and I wanted to make them a celebratory meal tonight. I was at Whole Foods yesterday and at the fish



counter they had a whole octopus and I love octopus, but I've never tried making it at home, so I wanted to get some advice on the best way to prepare it. The equipment that we're working with is electric stove top and we do have a grill also outside. So I wondered if I should boil it and then grill it, but would love your expert recommendations. Thanks.

Hrishi: I've never eaten octopus.

Samin: I love octopus. I love it. I love this question. It's so weird, but I love it.

Hrishi: It still blows my mind even to think that you can buy a whole octopus at the store.

Samin: Yeah, but it also probably is not in high demand. So that's probably why it was available. Yeah, octopus is delicious.

Hrishi: Is this something that's going to also draw from your time in Italy?

Samin: Yeah. I definitely cooked a lot of octopus almost daily in Italy,

Hrishi: Almost daily in Italy?

Samin: Oh, yeah. At the restaurant where I worked, it was called Zibibbo. It doesn't exist anymore, but it was a wonderful place to work. We had an octopus and potato salad on the menu and it was so delicious. And so every day, we would cook these little Mediterranean octopi which were, I don't know, probably like 16 inches long. So the thing about octopus is if you don't cook it right, it'll get tough. So it always has to be simmered and that's an opportunity for you to make a delicious stock at the same time. Water, tomato, a celery, an onion, a garlic. Whatever you want to put into that delicious stock, which you could use later to make some octopus for risotto or pasta. The key is knowing when to pull it from the liquid, which is as soon as it's tender. For a little octopus, that could be about 40 minutes and for a bigger one, that could be significantly longer. You just have to keep an eye on it. You can never let it really boil. Once it comes to a boil, you turn it down to a simmer. And if it boils, it will get tough. So you cook it until it gets tender. The Italian sort of old wives thing, which I just do out of superstition, is to put a cork from a wine bottle into the pot. They say that that helps tenderize octopus.

Hrishi: Is that real?

Samin: Yeah, I don't know if it does or not, but I do it every time. And then once it's cooked, you could ... What we did at the restaurant was we so we would slice it and marinate it and serve it at room temperature, or a little bit cold. But I think grilling it is really delicious, because then it gets all of that char on the outside and I think the most delicious octopus I've ever had was an octopus and chickpea salad. Here we are again with chickpeas. At a restaurant in New York

called Café Altro Paradiso, which is an Italian restaurant, but when I asked them why this octopus was so mouth wateringly delicious, they were like, "Oh, it's because our chef Agnossio puts a marinade on there before grilling with fish sauce in it."

Hrishi: Like a Vietnamese fish sauce?

Samin: Yeah. Like Vietnamese fish sauce. I think a little sort of yummy, sugary, sort of fish-saucey marinade on there would be so so so good. So the key there is when you're grilling it, all you're doing is you're heating it up and you're charring the outside. You're not really cooking it anymore. You just grill it over pretty high heat and you get all that yumminess, and then you serve it however you like with a little bit of pickles, with a little bit of chickpeas, a little bit of beans. I think that'll be delicious.

Hrishi: Sounds awesome, I think. I've never had an octopus and I can't actually really say for sure that I want to. If you want to send me octopi, I would take it in the form of just eight pies. Just send me eight pies.

Samin: Okay. I think I can't take it anymore.

Hrishi: Well, that's a good place to wrap it up then today.

Samin: Oh my gosh.

Hrishi: Thanks to everybody who sent in questions to us.

Samin: And thanks to Stella Parks for answering all those questions about Whole Wheat.

Hrishi: Thanks to W Kamau Bell and his wonderful daughter Juno for joining us. Also thanks to the New York Times Podcast, The Daily, for letting us use Michael Barbaro's catch phrase for the title of this episode. He always says,

Michael Barbaro: "Here's what else you need to know today"

Samin: Thanks to Queen Margaret Miller for her fantastic editing, to Zach McNeas for mixing the show. And to Gary Lee and Casey Deal for their help, too.

Hrishi: Let us know if you have any cooking related questions. You can call us at 201-241-COOK or you can record a voice memo and send it to us at [ALittleHomeCooking@gmail.com](mailto:ALittleHomeCooking@gmail.com).

Samin: Our website is [HomeCooking.Show](http://HomeCooking.Show).

Hrishi: And you can find recipes and ideas from the show there.

Samin: You can follow me at @CiaoSamin on Twitter and Instagram.

Hrishi: And I'm @HrishiHirway.

Samin: Stay healthy, eat well, and take care of each other.

Hrishi: We'll be back soon with another episode.

Samin: Until then, I'm Samin.

Hrishi: And I'm Hrishi.

Samin: And we'll be home cooking.