
IN THE KITCHEN

BY PAT MARLOWE



JACK BISHOP AND LAUREN CHATTMAN

“Can I pick this one? Can I taste one? Should I pick bigger ones?” Rose Bishop asked in rapid succession as she stood in front of a trellis of sugar snap peas that eclipsed her forehead. “You know what you’re doing,” answered her father Jack Bishop, who was busy picking his own.

On a fine summer morning at Quail Hill Farm in Amagansett, the silence of pea-picking was periodically interrupted by culinary assertions. Mr. Bishop noted that shelling peas are “totally useless unless you pick them yourself,” since they lose their sweetness so rapidly. Rose, 10, noted that “pea shoots look just like a piece of grass,” before reinforcing her father’s plug for freshness: “I like the vegetables that you get here, but other vegetables I actually don’t like.” The other half of the clan, Lauren Chattman, Mr. Bishop’s wife, and six-year-old Eve, pulled French radishes in a nearby field, before all four gathered in the farm’s perennial garden to clip herbs.

From May through October, this is the family’s routine every Saturday morning, and many Tuesday mornings after school gets out. “This is so relaxing,” declared Eve, who was obviously glad to be far from the stresses of kindergarten. She sat in the middle of the herb garden, munching peas and radishes, and surveying the landscape. She picked a downy clover flower and asked, “Can I eat this?”

*From farm to fork, it’s all about culinary exploration, particularly in a household with a husband who is the executive editor of *Cooks Illustrated* (and author, most recently, of *A Year in a Vegetarian Kitchen*), a wife who is a prolific cookbook writer (most recently, *Mom’s Big Book of Baking*), and two children who have developed precocious palates. (For a recent school project to develop a fire-prevention campaign, Rose submitted a poster that declared, “Don’t play with your mother’s crême brûlée torch.”)*

Back home, Mr. Bishop decided to prepare “Greek Salad with

Marinated Radishes and Feta Cheese on Grilled Bread,” a spring recipe from his book. He diced radishes and tossed them into a marinade of vinegar, lemon juice, oregano, garlic, and salt and pepper, and later mixed in the lettuce (washed in a salad spinner, blotted dry, and torn by hand), tomatoes, olives, and mint. Ms. Chattman pulled a multigrain sourdough, made with her own starter, from the oven. (She’s writing a bread book.)

When husband and wife started discussing the trade-offs between local, hothouse tomatoes and imported field tomatoes, Rose declared, “Let’s do a taste test.” With eyes clamped shut, she and Eve gathered close to their mother, who gave them one of each tomato in succession. “Tell me which one is local and which one isn’t,” Ms. Chattman said. The girls weren’t impressed with either and agreed that both were “too dry.”

Cooking fresh from the farm can be a project, Mr. Bishop admitted. He generally adds at least an hour to the preparation time—for washing and trimming lettuce, for instance. “We like to say, ‘Eat slowly, dears,’” explained Ms. Chattman. “Because we spend hours harvesting and washing and cooking.” Both agree this isn’t a legitimate excuse to depend on prepackaged fare. They point to the ironic fact that cookbook sales, food magazine subscriptions, and ratings for food shows have soared even as Americans are cooking less than in past generations.

Even in the midst of the East End’s produce and seafood bounty, many chefs sacrifice a focus on freshness for some overdone, cosmopolitan notion of what is good. “They’re trying too hard,” Ms. Chattman said, offering sage advice for fad-dieting Americans and East End restaurateurs alike. “Do something simple with really fresh ingredients. You pick what’s there. And then you eat it. And you know it’s going to be good.” □

Photographs: Stephen Munshin

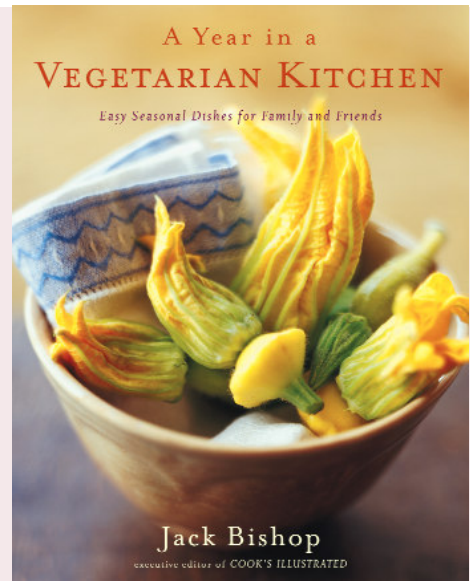


SQUASH BLOSSOM FRITTATA

Serves 2 to 4 as a main course

- 8 large eggs
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme leaves, plus several small clusters of flowers (the flowers are optional)
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 8 large squash blossoms
- 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil

1. With a fork, beat the eggs, cheese, thyme, salt, and several grindings of pepper together in a medium bowl until well combined.
2. Rinse the squash blossoms and inspect them for insects, shaking the blossoms to remove the insects and excess water. Pat the blossoms dry on paper towels. Trim and discard the green stem and tough bottom portion from each blossom, including the pistil inside each blossom. Cut each blossom in half lengthwise.
3. Adjust an oven rack to the top position and heat the broiler. Heat the oil in a medium ovenproof nonstick skillet over medium heat. When the pan is hot, swirl the oil to coat the pan bottom evenly. Add the egg mixture and reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook just until the bottom of the frittata starts to set, about 2 minutes. Arrange the squash blossoms in a starburst pattern in the eggs, with the frilly leaves pointing towards the edge of the pan. Overlap the blossoms to cover the entire top surface of the frittata. Continue to cook the frittata, occasionally sliding a spatula around the edges of the pan to loosen the frittata, until the bottom of the frittata is golden brown and the eggs are runny just on top, about 8 minutes.
4. Place the pan directly under the broiler and cook just until the top is golden brown and set, 1 to 2 minutes. Watch carefully to prevent the frittata from burning.
5. Remove the pan from the broiler. Cut the frittata into wedges and serve or slide it onto a large platter and take it to the table whole. The frittata can be cooled in the pan and then served at room temperature.



EASIEST-EVER ROASTED SUMMER VEGETABLE TARTS

Serves 2 as a main or 8 as an appetizer

- 1 14-oz. package puff pastry, preferably an all-butter brand
- 6 small plum tomatoes (about 10 oz.), halved lengthwise
- 4 medium shallots, halved
- 1 medium zucchini (about 8 oz.), cut in half crosswise, each piece cut lengthwise into 1/2-inch-thick planks
- 1 medium eggplant (about 8 oz.), cut crosswise into 1/2-inch-thick rounds
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. minced fresh thyme leaves

1. Defrost the puff pastry according to package instructions, preferably in the refrigerator for several hours.
2. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 400 degrees. Spread out the tomatoes and shallots on one rimmed baking sheet and spread out the zucchini and eggplant on a second rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle the vegetables with salt and pepper to taste. Roast, turning the vegetables once, until golden brown in spots, about 40 minutes. Remove the vegetables from the oven but do not turn off the oven.
3. As soon as the vegetables go into the oven, unfold the puff pastry on a lightly floured work surface and remove the paper liners. Cut the pastry along the seams into 4 rectangles. Refrigerate 2 rectangles and reserve for another use. Roll the remaining 2 rectangles into 7-inch squares. Transfer the rolled puff pastry squares to a large baking sheet and refrigerate until well-chilled, about 30 minutes.
4. When the vegetables come out of the oven, scrape them into a bowl and toss with the oil and thyme. Adjust the seasonings, adding salt and pepper to taste. Layer the eggplant and zucchini slices over the two puff pastry squares, leaving a 1/4-inch border around the edges. Top the eggplant and zucchini with the tomatoes and shallots.
5. Bake the tarts until the pastry is deeply browned, about 25 minutes. Serve immediately or cool and serve at room temperature.

Recipes from Jack Bishop, *A Year in a Vegetarian Kitchen: Easy Seasonal Dishes for Family and Friends* (Houghton Mifflin, 2004).

