

A Sutherland Belle

Hot Browns, My Way

Serves 4

Some recipes are meant to be followed. Others are meant to be lived in.

Life rarely gives you a perfect set of instructions, and neither does a good kitchen. You work with what you have. You adjust when something isn't holding. You trust your instincts when the plan no longer fits. And somehow, if you stay with it, it still comes together.

This version keeps the spirit of the original but allows for a little more flexibility. English muffins give it structure where it needs it. Tomatoes go under the broiler so they soften and sweeten instead of slipping off. A Gruyère béchamel adds depth and character, finished with Parmesan for that final bite.

Not because the original needed fixing, but because sometimes the best thing you can do is shift, adapt, and keep going.

Ingredients

4 English muffins, split and lightly toasted
8 slices roasted turkey breast
4 slices bacon, cooked until crisp
2 medium tomatoes, sliced
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 cups whole milk, warmed
1 cup grated Gruyère cheese
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon paprika, plus more for garnish
¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Fresh parsley, for garnish

Instructions

1. Preheat the broiler and position a rack in the upper third of the oven.

2. Arrange the toasted English muffin halves on a baking sheet. Layer each with turkey, folding slightly for height.
 3. In a saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Whisk in the flour and cook until lightly golden, about 1 to 2 minutes. Slowly whisk in the warm milk, stirring constantly until smooth and thickened, about 3 to 5 minutes.
 4. Reduce heat to low and stir in the Gruyère until melted. Season with salt, pepper, and paprika.
 5. Spoon the béchamel generously over each turkey-topped muffin, letting it run down the sides.
 6. Top with tomato slices and sprinkle with Parmesan.
 7. Broil until bubbling and lightly browned, about 2 to 4 minutes.
 8. Remove from the oven, top with crispy bacon, garnish with parsley, and serve immediately.
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Storage

Refrigerate: Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to 2 days.

Freeze: Not recommended, as the sauce may separate.

Reheat: Warm in a 325°F oven until heated through. Avoid the microwave to keep the base from softening.

Classic Derby Pie

Serves 8

There's a reason this pie shows up every first weekend in May. It's rich without being heavy, sweet without going too far, and somewhere between a pecan pie and a soft chocolate chip cookie if the two ever met in the middle. The secret has never been adding more. It's knowing when to hold back. Let the pecans lead, let the filling stay tender, and use just enough chocolate to round it out.

Ingredients

1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust
½ cup unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled
¾ cup granulated sugar
¼ cup packed light brown sugar
2 large eggs
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons bourbon
½ cup all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon cornmeal
½ teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup chopped pecans, lightly toasted
½ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
¼ cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
Flaky salt, for finishing

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place the pie crust into a 9-inch pie plate and crimp the edges as desired.
 2. In a large bowl, whisk together the melted butter, granulated sugar, and brown sugar until smooth. Add the eggs, vanilla, and bourbon, whisking until fully combined.
 3. Stir in the flour, cornmeal, and salt until just incorporated. Fold in the pecans and chocolate chips, distributing evenly.
 4. Pour the filling into the prepared crust and smooth the top.
 5. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes, until the center is set but still slightly soft when gently shaken.
 6. Remove from the oven and finish with a light sprinkle of flaky salt while warm.
 7. Let cool completely before slicing so the filling can set.
 8. Serve at room temperature.
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Storage

Refrigerate: Cover and store for up to 4 days.

Freeze: Wrap tightly and freeze for up to 2 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator.

Reheat: Bring to room temperature or warm slices gently in a low oven.