



Home what's in the cupboard?

## pasta with chickpeas and tomato sauce, a festival of leftovers

Posted on January 8, 2020 by shelly



pasta with chickpeas and tomato sauce

I tend to have a lot of leftovers. I cook for my son and myself, and I never know whether he'll happily eat what I've made, or stare at it and me rather suspiciously, declaring that he doesn't want any, and may he please have a salami sandwich instead. Sometimes, if I ask, he'll agree to try the tiniest bite, just to see what he thinks, so as not to simply reject a dish out of hand. He ate perhaps 2 millimeters of the pizza 'scarole I made a month ago (a sort of rustic pizza stuffed with greens, olives, and anchovies), and declared that he didn't like it, which meant I ate pizza 'scarole for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for a week. It was delicious, but the whole endeavor to eat the food I had made specifically to avoid wasting any beautiful raw ingredients morphed into a marathon eating contest pitting my appetite and blood sugar against the pizza 'scarole in a bloodthirsty battle to the death. I guess I won? Who can tell.

Other times, he surprises me, my adventurous boy. He dismissed on sight the [artichoke lasagne](#) I recently made, but agreed to taste a generous forkful. Much to his delight—and mine—he rather liked it, and devoured the small piece I put on his plate. Except for the artichoke. “This is the only part I don't like, Mama. This thing,” he said, as he placed the hunk of marinated artichoke on my plate with his fork. “That's OK. I'm glad you enjoyed it,” I replied. To which he responded with the same thing he always says about my cooking: “Mama's the best cooker in the world!” I usually respond with a thank you, but, listing some of the cooks I love and admire. Lately, I've decided to graciously accept a compliment when given one, particularly when my child is listening.

“Thank you, sweetie. I enjoy cooking for us, and eating together.”

He declares himself full, and runs off to play or watch TV. Then comes the dance of the plate-clearing (Can't you do it Mama? No, I've cleared my plate. Please clear yours. Thank you!) and hand-washing (Why do I need to wash my hands? That's what we do, we wash our hands before and after we eat.).

I took a risk with this pasta and chickpea dish, as he has declared more than once his dislike for beans. This, despite his penchant for legumes in his toddlerhood and preschool years, and his continuing love of edamame. I've already eaten half of it for three warm, umami-rich meals. More for me if he won't eat it. And there's plenty of salami and bread.

*This recipe is one of a series promoting the [Greatest Tomatoes From Europe](#). I'm taking part in this campaign because I genuinely love canned San Marzano tomatoes from Naples, and their versatility. They're full of flavor and aroma, and perfect for cooking Mediterranean recipes, and much more.*

## pasta with chickpeas and tomato sauce (essentially my riff on pasta e cece)

*I used the leftover canned tomato juices and two tomatoes from the 28 ounce can of European San Marzano tomatoes I used to make [shakshuka](#), and the fresh lasagne noodles left over from the [artichoke lasagne](#). As you can see, I'm getting a lot of mileage from the package of aromatic lemon thyme I got from Lumardi's.*

```
1 shallot, minced
olive oil
1 can chickpeas, drained (15.5oz)
14 oz leftover canned tomato juices
and tomatoes (about 2 small tomatoes)
salt and pepper
1 piece parmigiano rind, about 2 square inches
2 leftover fresh lasagne noodles
lemon thyme, or thyme
parmigiano
chili flakes (optional)
```

1. Pour a tablespoon or two of olive oil in a saucepan on medium low heat.

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2. When the oil is hot, sweat the shallots.
3. Mix in the chickpeas and season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. Pour in tomato juice and tomatoes and bring to a bubbly simmer. Add in the cheese rind.
5. Simmer uncovered for 15 minutes. Taste and correct seasoning.
6. Chop the lasagne noodles into bite-size pieces and add them to the saucepan.
7. Cover, and simmer on low heat for 5 minutes.
8. Remove cover, stir, and see if the pasta is ready. If not, add 1 cup water, cover, and simmer for another 20 minutes. (My lasagne noodles were quite thick.)
9. Run your thumb and forefinger down a few thyme twigs over the saucepan. Taste and correct seasoning.
10. Grate as much parmigiano or pecorino as you like over the top and mix it in. Serve with a drizzle of olive oil, more cheese, and even a small ball of mozzarella or two on top, or on the side.

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## Just shakshuka, without any weird crap

Posted on [January 5, 2020](#) by [shelly](#)



Shakshuka and bread.

Like many people—assuming people think about such things while at the bank or getting their nails done, or whatever—I have a platonic ideal of shakshuka, the North African and pan-Middle Eastern tomato stew with poached eggs. This platonic ideal does *not* include: spinach, feta, Gorgonzola, ham, potatoes, Gruyere, eggplant, or goddamn chipotles. Not that I'm irritated when clicking a recipe for shakshuka that includes one of these as an ingredient, but—OK fine, I am. I'm irritated. It irritates the hell out of me. Ham and even eggplant might have their place in a breakfast dish featuring some permutation of eggs and tomatoes, but for the love of Hera, just don't call it shakshuka.

Anyway. Back to my platonic ideal. Shakshuka, in my mind, will always be garlic, peppers, tomato, and eggs, with maybe some parsley, cooked in a small Teflon skillet for one with a large hunk of crusty "worker's bread" made of soft wheat. It's served piping hot on a trivet at a small workers' restaurant by the sweaty, irritable chef, who always has a smile for customers, or his motherly, put-upon, bespectacled wife with the delicately sweet face. But not on Tuesdays, because Tuesday is always couscous day, and you'd be a fool to pass that up, even for shakshuka.

My shakshuka is a time capsule of Or Yehuda, Israel, in the late 90s. I try to evoke the simple, satisfying flavors of Effie's Tunisian style shakshuka, which he served daily at his family run restaurant The Tunisian Sandwich (known by everyone in the neighborhood as, simply, Effie's).

You can leave out the hot pepper if you prefer yours mild. You can even switch out onions for the garlic, if you must. If you find your tomatoes too acidic, you can throw in a dash of sugar, I suppose, although I do think the sweet peppers provide enough balance on their own. And what do we call it if we add all sorts of weird crap that doesn't belong? That's right. Not-shakshuka. Because it isn't.

*This recipe is the first in a series promoting the Greatest Tomatoes From Europe. I'm taking part in this campaign because I genuinely love canned San Marzano tomatoes from Naples, and their versatility. They're great for Mediterranean recipes and beyond.*

## My platonic ideal of shakshuka

Olive oil

2-3 cloves garlic, peeled

1 red bell pepper

1 Fresno hot pepper

1/4 tsp cumin

1/4 tsp smoked paprika

1/2 tsp sweet paprika

Small handful of parsley

28oz can whole Italian tomatoes

Salt and pepper to taste

2-4 eggs

1. Slice the garlic cloves into thin slices, and chop the bell pepper into bite-sized chunks.
2. Coarsely chop the parsley.
3. Seed the hot pepper and slice it into rings.
4. Pull out most of the tomatoes from the can, chop them coarsely, and put them in a bowl. Add the tomato juices from the cutting board to the bowl. You'll have about half a can of tomato juice and a couple of tomatoes leftover. Reserve these for another recipe.

5. In a small skillet (I used a 6 inch skillet with a lid), pour in enough olive oil to generously cover the bottom of the pan. Place the skillet over low heat.
6. When the oil is hot and viscous, add the garlic slices.
7. When the garlic slices have softened and are turning golden, add the sweet and hot peppers. Turn up heat to medium low, and cook the peppers until they begin to glisten.
8. Add in the cumin and paprika, and stir to distribute. Cook for a minute or two.
9. Add in the tomatoes and parsley, and cook for about 5 minutes.
10. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Taste a piece of bell pepper—it should still have some crunch.
11. Gently crack an egg into different areas of the skillet. Depending on the size of your skillet, you can probably use 2-4 eggs.
12. Lower the heat to a gentle simmer and cover the skillet. Cook, covered, about 4-6 minutes, depending on how runny you like your eggs.
13. Serve with a hunk of hearty bread.

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### Breakfast for one: avocado toast

Posted on [January 5, 2020](#) by [shelly](#)



Breakfast for one this wintry Saturday morning is avocado toast with lemon and lemon thyme, with a fried egg on top and more lemon thyme. Sugar snap peas on the side. The other slice of toast is simply buttered. It's the heel of the loaf, and I rather wish I'd slathered it in plum or pine cone jam.

Matcha with half and half after.

I do so enjoy the ritual of weekend morning tea.

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### New Year's Day lunch for one

Posted on [January 1, 2020](#) by [shelly](#)



New Year's Day lunch for one

New Year's Day lunch for one: ricotta, quark, smoked mozzarella, marinated artichoke, and a fried egg on toast. The green stuff is avocado slices and lemon thyme.

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### artichoke lasagne

Posted on [January 1, 2020](#) by [shelly](#)



Butter and olive oil

1lb Italian sausage meat, or vegetarian seasoned ground meat substitute

4oz stock (vegetable or meat)

splash of white wine

2-3TBS flour

2-3TBS butter

6oz whole milk

15oz ricotta

8oz quark, or more ricotta

1/3lb smoked mozzarella

10oz marinated artichokes

Fresh lasagne noodles, or the type you don't need to pre-boil

Fresh lemon thyme, or regular thyme

Salt, pepper, nutmeg

1. Preheat the oven to 375F.
2. In a heavy skillet on medium heat, melt some butter with olive oil and brown the sausage meat, breaking up the clumps as you go. Season with black pepper and some lemon thyme leaves to taste.
3. When the meat is browned, put it in a bowl and deglaze the pan with the stock and wine on medium high heat, scraping up the browned bits as you go. When the liquid has reduced, after perhaps 5 minutes of cooking, pour it over the browned meat and mix.
4. Melt the butter and mix in the flour, adding the milk and simmering to create a béchamel sauce. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and a little nutmeg.
5. In a medium bowl, mix together the ricotta, quark, and grated smoked mozzarella. Season to taste with pepper and lemon thyme leaves.
6. Pour the béchamel into the lasagne pan. Place a layer of lasagne noodles on the sauce.
7. Pour the meat or meat substitute over the noodles. Top with half the sliced artichokes. Place another layer of lasagne noodles on the artichokes.
8. Put a little more than half the cheese mixture on the lasagne noodles. Arrange the remaining sliced artichokes on the cheese. Top with another layer of noodles.
9. Arrange the remaining cheese mixture atop the noodles, spreading it so that it covers every part of the noodles. Grate more smoked mozzarella so that it covers the top.
10. Cover with foil and bake at 375F for 45 minutes to an hour, or until bubbly. Bake uncovered for the last 5 minutes.

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## fried and frittered for chanukah

Posted on December 8, 2015 by shelly



It's that time of year, when Jews light candles and give presents and fry foods and generally remind ourselves that, hey, even though we don't celebrate that "other" big holiday, we still party and overeat for eight days and nights sometime in December. And now it seems even the Chanukah sweater is ubiquitous. I predict Chanukah socks for hanging from the mantelpiece this time next year.

I haven't had a chance to cook potato pancakes yet, although I did pan fry some frozen Trader Joe's latkes (shhhh! I was running late after work and had no time to prepare dinner the night before, much like the Israelites escaping Egypt who had insufficient time for their dough to rise, resulting in masochistic crackers that, oh, right, wrong holiday). But the crispier is stocked with parsnips in case I get a chance to make parsnip latkes sometime this week.

Here's a list of fried food recipes for Chanukah, or any other occasion:

- [Perfecting the potato pancake](#) (my BlogHer post on tips and ideas for a better latke)
- [Greek feta cheese fritters](#) (these will be tomorrow night's dinner)
- [Parsnip pancakes with truffled pecorino](#)
- [Zucchini pancakes with caraway seeds](#)
- [Francesco's tandoori-spiced zucchini, carrot, mint, and ginger fritters](#)
- [Faith's vegan latkes](#)
- Marlena Spieler's delicious prose recounting Chanukah memories and a [recipe for her aunt Ella's Chanukah snowball cookies](#)
- My own musings, plus a recipe for [carrot celeriac latkes](#).

Happy holiday commemorating the defeat of the hellenized Seleucids, who were neither Greek nor Assyrian!

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## toddler encounter

Posted on June 26, 2014 by shelly

At the pool, Evan encounters a Japanese-speaking toddler. They approach each other and stare. A pause. The little Japanese boy looks at Evan and makes a raspberry sound with his mouth. He grins. Evan grins. They stare at each other for a moment. Then Evan makes a raspberry sound, and grins at the other toddler. He grins back, and makes a noisier, sloppier sound. Evan responds in kind, and before I know it, they are exploding with laughter and sloppy fart noises.

The international language of Toddler demonstrated.

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## on david lynch

Posted on [May 6, 2014](#) by [shelly](#)

When I was a teenager, I loved *Twin Peaks*. I found it very funny, and enjoyed its peculiarity. (I was better able to appreciate its layered, intuitive complexity having watched it again as an adult.) When I watched David Lynch films in college, I was frustrated by what I felt to be an incoherent narrative. I changed my mind one day when a switch was flipped in my mind—you don't watch a Lynchian film with your conscious brain. You watch it with your subconscious brain. You don't so much watch (read: analyze) his films as much as you feel them, absorb them, let the waves of images crash upon your senses one after the other. Experiencing his films in this way results in a coherent experience—one that may be difficult to articulate, as it is composed of intricate layers of imagery and symbolism—but a sort of non-linear, illogical coherence nonetheless. I think of it as dream logic. If you watch his films as though they were dreams, they make perfect, remarkable, beautiful sense. And therein lies their meaning. Forcing David Lynch to discuss the "meaning" of his films before an audience is absurd. If the meaning could be articulated in simple language, why bother making the film? In fact, the meaning lies in the experience of watching the film. It's the interaction between the viewer's consciousness and the film itself. It's showing, not telling. So, snarky writer for the [Paris Review](#)—stop getting your panties in a twist because David Lynch won't tell you what his films are about. That's not his job. Just watch the damn movies yourself.

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## goodbye Oakland

Posted on [October 25, 2013](#) by [shelly](#)

Fuck you, Oakland.

Fuck your reckless drivers, routinely ignoring traffic lights and scarcely missing baby strollers and dog paws.

Fuck your high rents and gun-toting, murderous purse-snatchers and baby-killers.

Fuck your callous disregard for people living in a cesspool of hard drugs, poverty, and violence.

Fuck your worthless cops.

Fuck your incompetent schoolteacher mayor.

Fuck your San Francisco hipster transplants who think a \$2800 apartment on the lake is "cheap".

Fuck your giant new food market slash cooking school, sitting empty for years.

Fuck your smug rich neighborhoods with their starving white soccer moms.

Fuck your crack hoes.

Fuck your pimps.

Fuck your homeless mentally ill, dragging their cans and rags around with them in rusty old shopping carts, who appear one day and are gone the next (the cops have priorities).

Fuck your Google shuttle riders.

Fuck your incredible hutzpah at claiming to be Brooklyn.

Fuck your seedy downtown.

Fuck your pothole-ridden streets.

Fuck your five year plan for improving the city (more like 80 year plan).

Fuck your pollution.

Fuck your goddamn noisy Amtrak, horn blaring at 1am, rattling right through the middle of Embarcadero.

Fuck your smelly BART stations.

Fuck your shitty attitude.

Fuck your race riots.

Fuck your pretense at equality and your heel-digging entrenched divides.

Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you.

Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | [Comments Off](#)

## he likes cheese!

Posted on [June 20, 2013](#) by [shelly](#)



I like to take Evan grocery shopping when I can. He loves looking at all the colorful fruits and vegetables. When he sees something particularly exciting, like an olive oil dispenser in action, he cranes his neck forward and his mouth makes a little "o" shape as he stares at the interesting thing, brows raised in wonder. He takes in a small gasping breath and says "ohhhhhhhhhhh!" as he kicks his legs back and forth in utter excitement. Insatiable curiosity in its purest form.

He was in his stroller near the cheese counter one afternoon when I took a taste of some brie with one of those tiny wooden tasting paddles. Evan looked up, fascinated, his mouth a perfect circle. "Cheese!" I said. "Would you like to try some?"

I scooped a tiny quantity of brie with a fresh wooden paddle, said "Nom!", and swiped a bit of cheese in Evan's mouth. He slowly gummed at it, wrinkled his nose, and frowned, still gumming. He cocked his head to the side, as he does when he examines something new. Then his face brightened as he began to swallow. He looked up at me and made a small "o" face. More!

It was my turn to gasp excitedly. My baby likes brie!

I bought a small wedge for us both to share. I couldn't help it—I had to see if he would eat more at home. I grabbed a small container of crème fraîche from the refrigerator case to mix it with.

As it turns out, “cheese”—or rather pureed brie and crème fraîche—is one of Evan’s favorite foods. Who knew?

*This is the fourth post in a series on making your own baby food. See the previous posts here: [on making baby food](#), [what am I](#), [chopped liver?](#), [watermelon feta salad or soup](#).*

**brie for baby**

1 part brie (I used pasteurized)  
1 part crème fraîche or sour cream

Puree the brie and crème fraîche in a coffee grinder and store in a 4oz/125ml canning jar.

**brie for grown-ups**

Eat. Watch your little one eat. Gasp. Oh!

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