

“S” is for Spring... and Strawberry Scones



It's finally Spring! And the best way to celebrate is with this delicate bread that serves as a breakfast, snack or dessert.

This is one of my favorite scones to make, and it was adapted from the [America's Test Kitchen](#) recipe.

Rich with cream and butter, this scone also has a crispy crust to give it a sweet crunch.

What Does Fall Taste Like?... Muffins!

What do you think Fall tastes like?

Many proclaim the glories of an infamous caffeinated drink distributor's seasonal latte. It has become such a seasonal obsession that painfully infatuated masses dive into a pit of despair when the flavored syrups are not officially released in stores yet.



In recent years, the PSL craze has grown to unreasonable proportions, involving sausage, butter, and dog treats.

Yes, that's right... Dog treats. (63 more "pumpkin spiced" items can be found [here](#).)

Brilliant Colors and Flavors of the Season

A couple of years ago, I tasted a cookie that inspired me to combine some of my favorite flavors of the season into one delicious treat. Thus, my "Tastes Like Fall" muffins were born.

Just like the leaves outside that turn into fiery colors, this muffin springs bright with oranges, greens, and reds. The earthy warmth of nutmeg and cinnamon contrast well with the tart cranberries. To welcome in the crispy chill of the morning, make some of these and pair with your favorite coffee. I've heard the Maple Pecan latte is nice.





Celebrate Summer Salads!

It is full-on summer right now, and Seattle has been especially gorgeous this year. Almost constant sunshine and temperatures in the mid-70s is really spoiling us. We haven't seen a raindrop in months...And that's fine with us. We know that come January, there will be plenty to go around.

As I shared in an [earlier post](#), I take delight in immersing my senses in the seasons by exploring the bounty of the current time of year.

When you think of summer, what flavor comes to mind?



For me, the smell and flavor is **Basil**.

So fresh and earthy, crisp with licorice undertones, I dip my nose into a bunch of fresh basil and breathe deep the aroma as I do a bouquet of flowers.

Lately, I keep fresh basil on hand for a new salad I discovered. With my home full of boys, a green salad is not going to satisfy. But this recipe, adapted from Relish.com, provides hearty portions that leaves everyone satisfied.

Would You Like a Little Slice of Spring?

This winter in Seattle was harsh. It was especially cold and wet, seeming to last forever.



So the appearance of Spring has been a pleasant relief, lifting the mood and reviving life everywhere.

When the days are sunny, everyone finds an excuse to get out and work on their gardens. The fragrant breeze and the warmth of the sun entice you to stay out until your skin is toast.

What I love most about the start of a new season are the flavors that define them.

I delight in revisiting and discovering recipes that fully embrace the bounty of that particular time of year.

When you think of Spring, what flavor comes to mind?

What do you taste that is bright and says “surprise!” ?

For me, it’s **Lemon**.



I recently discovered a [Lemon Meringue Tart recipe](#) that will become a cherished Spring ritual.

Looking for something different to do last summer, the boys and I went on an adventure into Seattle to visit the [Living Computer Museum](#). Naturally, I did a search of food places nearby and found that [Macrina Bakery](#) was just down the street. So, the boys oogled over the computer museum, and I oogled over the lunch choices (and dessert, too!). While we were there, I hopped on the bandwagon of subscribers for their newsletter, like any foodie would.

In March, I found their “Recipe of the Month” in my inbox soon after receiving an 11 inch tart pan as a gift. I believe it was heaven-sent and immediately set to making one. The results were phenomenal!

Lemon Meringue Tart with Almond Pastry Crust

Adapted from Macrina Bakery's "Recipe of the Month" for March, this recipe is a variation of a Lemon Chess Tart. Its rich flavor balances well with the tartness of lemons and a sweet, crisp almond crust.

Almond Pastry Crust

- 5 ounces unsalted butter (chilled)
- 2/3 cup powdered sugar
- 1 /4 cup ground almonds
- Pinch salt
- 1 large egg
- 3/4 tsp vanilla paste
- 2 cups plain flour (plus)
- 3 tbsp plain flour

Lemon Tart Filling

- 2 1/4 cups granulated sugar
- 2 tbsp blanched and ground almonds
- 1 1/2 tbsp plain flour
- 6 large eggs
- 1 tbsp freshly grated lemon zest
- 3/4 cup fresh squeezed lemon juice
- 1/4 cup whole milk
- 6 tbsp unsalted butter (melted)

Meringue Topping

- 4 large egg whites
- 1/2 tsp cream of tartar
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar

- 3/4 cup powdered sugar

Prep the Ingredients

1. Prepare all of the tart filling ingredients and let them sit at room temperature for 30 minutes while you make the crust.

Prepare the Tart Crust

1. Beat the butter in a mixer on low until softened.
2. Sift in the powdered sugar, and then add the ground almonds and salt. Mix until fully incorporated.
3. Beat in the egg and vanilla paste, followed by the plain flour. Gather into a ball and cover in plastic wrap.
4. Flatten into a disk and chill in the fridge for at least an hour.



Bake the Crust

1. Roll out the chilled crust dough to the thickness of a quarter. Place the pastry in the tart pan, pressing into and up the sides, slightly above the edge of the pan.
2. Press extra dough into the sides to stabilize them. Remove extra crust from around the pan and bake on a sheet pan for a bonus treat.

3. Prick the base with a fork and place in the freezer to chill for 15 minutes while you preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
4. Bake in the center of the oven until just beginning to brown, about 15 minutes. Remove and cool.



Create Filling and Bake

1. Drop the temperature of the oven to 325 degrees. Sift sugar, cornmeal and flour into a large bowl.
2. Crack the eggs and beat into the sugar mixture one at a time. Beat in the remaining ingredients, making sure each is thoroughly incorporated before adding another.
3. Place your baked tart crust on a rimmed baking sheet and set on the oven rack. Pour the filling into the shell, just until it almost reaches the top.
4. Slide the sheet into the oven and bake for 40 to 45 minutes, until the center is set and the surface is golden brown. Check the tart after the first 15 minutes of baking to make sure it is browning evenly.
5. Let the tart cool on a wire rack for at least 1 hour.



Preparing the Meringue

1. In the bowl of a mixer, whip the egg whites. As you whip, add in the cream of tartar and 1 tablespoon of the granulated sugar.
2. When soft peaks form, add the remaining granulated sugar. Whip until you reach stiff peaks.
3. Remove from mixer and fold in powdered sugar with a rubber spatula. Spread on top of the tart and brown using the broiler setting of your oven.

Alternative Topping:

We enjoyed our lemon tart with sweetened whipped cream. Just combine 1 cup of heavy cream with 2 tablespoons of sugar and 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract. Whip until the cream holds its shape. Enjoy!

5 Pain-Free Meal Planning Tips

I admit it... I love food.



I love eating food, I love thinking about food, I love talking about food and I love making delicious things to eat. I think I can fairly say that everyone loves eating something yummy. And we all get the opportunity to do that multiple times a day. (Yay!)

Because I love to think about food, it isn't hard to pick what meals I want to make for my family. The trouble comes when you have to make that decision over and over and over again, every...single...day.

After 15 years of marriage and 11,700 meals prepared (3 meals a day x at least 5 days a week x 52 weeks x 15 years), you can imagine that meal planning has become somewhat of a **chore**. I've heard from friends about how they struggle with what to put on the table each week and how frustrating it can be to go to the grocery store and figure out something to satisfy everyone in the house. That can be so discouraging.

The challenge of meal planning each week can really put a strain on your family. It can consume valuable time and energy, only to be met with unpleasant comments by our children.

It doesn't have to be that way.

Over the years, our family has developed a system that reduces

the amount of rigor required to produce nutritious, satisfying meals each week. My tech savvy husband and I have streamlined our grocery shopping and created a large resource of meals to draw from for future lists. Let me share with you what we have learned to help make the process a lot less painful and (almost) pleasant.

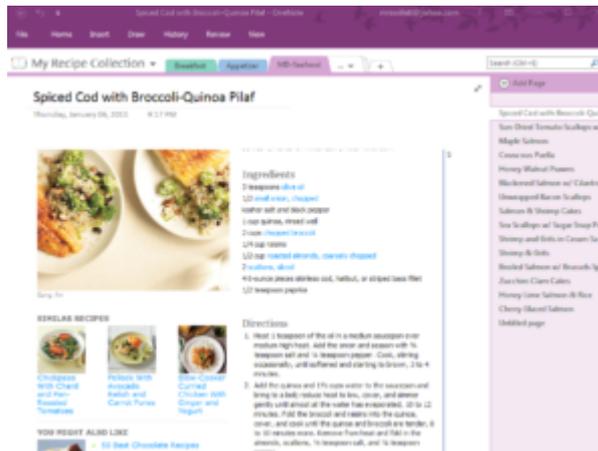
5 Family Meal Planning Tips

#1. Begin Collecting Recipes

It is a whole lot easier to choose meals for your family when you have a stash of recipes ready to pick from. Now, I don't expect you to adopt recipe collecting as a hobby (and be a food nerd like me), but when you set aside recipes based on what your family likes and the ease of making it, you can filter through them pretty quickly come planning time.

Some Ways to Collect Recipes:

- Food Magazine Clippings – This is my favorite way of collecting ideas for new meals. I think it is the satisfying sound that comes from ripping out the pages. ☐ I have a massive 3-ring binder of newspaper and magazine clippings I have collected over the years. (Taste of Home and Cook's Country are the ones I recommend.)
- Pinterest Boards – Digitally collecting recipes can be a lot easier and faster. You can sign up for a free account on [Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) and create boards for any category you want. My favorite board (and the one I pin to the most) is [Delectable Desserts](#). If you are feeling adventurous, you can get the [Pinterest extension](#) for your browser and create pins for any recipe you find online.
- OneNote Recipe Book – This is my second favorite



app for collecting recipes. It is basically a digital notebook where you can type information or paste screen clippings onto pages under separate category tabs. This one is nice, because unlike Pinterest, I can do a search for a particular ingredient through all the pages and clippings.

- Browser Bookmarks – For recipes on the internet, you can bookmark the pages and organize them on your browser. You can also create folders for each type of recipe you are collecting.

Experiment with some of these to find which works best for you

What other ways have you learned to collect recipes? Please let us know in the comments section below.

#2. Consider Categories When Planning

Once you have a stash of recipes to draw from, then you can begin building your menu. A couple of tools that will help expedite and harmonize the process can be found on my [*Freebies* Page](#). The [Family Menu Organizer](#) lists two weeks of meals in an easy to use table. As you begin to assemble your meals, take into consideration what category of main dish you are choosing.

Some categories to choose from: Pasta, Soup, Sandwiches, Casserole, Rice, Salads, Slow Cooker

Families are most satisfied when a different type of main dish is created each night. Pasta is quick and easy to pair with most foods, but more than 3 times a week can be too much (although I'm sure my boys would disagree). Also, when you are looking for meals, you can narrow down your search by reviewing your menu to see which category you have not chosen yet.

#3. Review Your Schedule and Plan Accordingly

Another consideration to make when meal planning is your family's schedule. Some nights, you won't have much time to make a meal, and pasta would be the quickest choice. On Sunday evenings you may have more time to prepare dinner and may choose to make a casserole. To save time, you may want to cook two meals on one night and refrigerate the casserole to throw in the oven when you get home the next day. Also, to take full advantage of the nutrients in your food, you can make recipes with fresh foods earlier in the week and save the recipes with canned or frozen foods for later in the week.

#4. Build your grocery list as you pick your meals.

Some of you have noticed that I didn't mention the second tool on my [*Freebies* Page](#). The single most thing that has made our family meal planning almost painless was invented by my husband. We use an [Excel Grocery List](#) which is organized by aisles and stores. That may not sound so great, but the most wonderful thing about it is that he and I use it on [Google Sheets](#) and can access it from any of our devices. Whenever I think of something, I just pop it on the list. I can print the list out by grocery store, or whip out my phone when I am shopping. I will go back to it when I am ready to start a new list, clear out the items I don't need anymore and leave any items we will need to get again. So simple, easy and accessible!

#5. Don't throw away those menus!

My last tip is a bit of encouragement for all the hard work you have gone through to build healthy meals for your family. Keep your menus to use as a future reference and build a “Family Favorites” stash of ideas for the future. Reward yourself for the effort you are making for your family and each time it will get a little bit easier.

If you can put some of these tips into practice, I’m sure you will find that you don’t have to dread meal planning anymore.

What about you? Do you have any tips or tricks to share? Please let us know in the comment section below.

Power Packed Poultry



In early December, a friend of mine had become overwhelmed with the amount of eggs her new ducks were laying. She was looking for someone to take them, and I was more than happy to oblige.

One thing most my friends and family know about me is that I am almost always eager to explore uncharted culinary territory. Last week, it was rutabaga. Love it! A short while

ago, I was surprised at a restaurant when they served sun chokes. Yum!

What new foods have you tried lately?

So I was thrilled to come home with some duck eggs. It is at this point that the teacher geek in me pokes out and wonders what makes duck eggs so special.

They are slightly larger than a chicken egg, but did you know that they have 50% more protein, 6 times more Vitamin D, and twice as much Vitamins A and K. They also have twice as much fat and 3 times as much cholesterol. Quite the power packed poultry!



Duck Egg on the Right
Compared to Chicken
Egg

Now I think the most exciting part of exploring new foods is deciding what you want to make with them. Just before Christmas 2015, I stumbled upon some persimmon and as a result found the most **amazing** recipe for steamed pudding to use them in.

If you were me, what would you do with the eggs? Have you ever had them before?

My boys love quiche.

Probably because we eat it quite regularly, and they are filled with cheese. There are lots of flavors going on,

especially if you add ham or bacon.



So I figured it would be a great recipe to try this new food in. Since the eggs were larger, I only added 3 duck eggs into the recipe that called for 4 chicken eggs. That seemed to work just fine. The quiche came out perfect and everyone loved it. Yay!

Another culinary adventure explored! See now, that wasn't so bad, was it?

Healing from the Inside Out

For a couple of weeks after Christmas, my fatigue was really ramping up. Post holiday bingeing for sure. Although, when I removed most of the troublesome food from my diet, I didn't feel any better. Then I found an interesting article about juicing and began to do some research.

What do you know about juicing? Ha



Apparently, juicing is popular among celebrities. The idea is that you give your digestive system a break and flood your system with vitamins and nutrients from freshly pressed fruits and vegetables. Now, I know what you are thinking. *Yeah, right, everybody knows what juicing is.* Although it sounds like I just crawled out from under a rock, hear me out.

Juicing to Purify

Routine juicing cleanses the body. It nourishes the liver to help it regenerate and remove toxins that have been stored in fatty tissue. During the process, your system can revisit injuries and allow for a deeper healing that couldn't occur at the time the damage was done.

This sounded interesting to me. My body has been through a fair amount of trauma these past two years. I decided I would try it. Of course it sounds fun at first, just drinking juice, but when the hunger pangs hit an hour later and the severe headache arises that evening, you start to reconsider.

The third day into it, I came across a verse that made me think about juicing.

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but **share with me in the sufferings** for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and **called us with a holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began...”

II Timothy 1:8-9

Holiness is purifying.

It cleanses with fires of suffering and pain. God asks us to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). He wants us to withhold ourselves from seeking the pleasures and luxuries of this world. When we choose to trust in the difficult times, press in to prayer when our hope seems to wane and stand firm on the Word of God, we are being purified into a stronger more Christ-like person.

Yes, the hunger pangs and headaches are difficult. I admit I don't enjoy watching my boys eat homemade banana bread a dear friend made for us. What I do get in return is worth so much more. Clarity of mind, renewed energy lasting longer than coffee and deep, deep healing I so desperately need.

Juicing for the health of my body and **holiness** for the health of my soul.