



Roasted Harissa Chicken
with Herbed Pistachio
Goat Cheese p. 97

A Happy Holiday **FEAST**

Your guide to cooking with cheese all season long

Whether the table is set for two or 20, the food served family-style or multi-course, the holiday feast is one of the best parts of this short-lived season. Yet, without proper preparation, anticipatory stomach growls can quickly turn into knots for the home cook or baker. Here's the good news: Pitfalls are easy to avoid with a few bits of knowledge. So, flip the page for our best tips, tricks, and cheese-filled dishes—your recipe for festive success awaits.

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**Chicory Salad *with Brown*
Butter Vinaigrette and
Smoked Blue Cheese p. 97**



INGREDIENTS MATTER

Most recipes simply call for a stick of butter or a few large eggs, but once you get to the grocery store, you're often faced with further decisions. Sweet cream or cultured butter? Organic or free-range eggs? Heavy cream or whipping cream? Find the answers below.

PUT AN EGG IN IT

Gone are the days of choosing eggs based only on size—let's break down the buzzwords

CAGE-FREE hens live in spaces where they have room to walk, spread their wings, and lay eggs in nests; though a step up from battery cages, the chickens are still confined to barns.

FREE-RANGE hens have access to the outdoors and about two square feet per hen—but the designation doesn't specify the quality of outdoor space or the amount of time chickens must spend there.

PASTURE-RAISED hens have at least 108 square feet per bird and feed on grass and insects while on pasture.

ORGANIC EGGS, according to the USDA, come from hens that can roam free, with access to the outdoors, and eat feed that doesn't contain pesticides or fertilizer.

TIP: If these designations matter to you, look for certifications that come from a third party instead of the egg producer alone. That way, you're guaranteed producers have met a specific set of standards.



BETTER BUTTER

There's a lot of variety on the butter shelf these days—here's the lowdown

There are two main types of butter: **sweet cream** and **cultured**. The former, made from fresh heavy cream, is the most common style in American supermarkets and is sold salted or unsalted. The latter, a beloved European style, is made with cream that has been lightly soured or dosed with live bacterial cultures before being churned. Expect a noticeable tang, plus a slight nuttiness.

Butterfat—the percentage of fat in milk compared to water—is what really divides American-style and European-style butters. Sweet cream butter hovers around 80 percent butterfat, while European butters are a little richer, with 82 to 86 percent. So, if you're baking, be warned: That extra fat can change the structure of a recipe meant for standard sticks. If you're set on substituting, play it safe and make a trial run well before party time.

TO SALT OR NOT TO SALT?

Unless a recipe explicitly calls for salted butter, opt for unsalted sticks. Being able to add as much or as little salt as you want means you can tweak your meal to different palates or dietary needs. Plus, saltiness can vary by brand, so your results might be unexpected if the store is sold out of your standby.

CREAM 101

With these pointers, you'll know which pint to pick

HEAVY CREAM AND WHIPPING CREAM

30–36 percent fat

A full-bodied fat content means these two are fairly interchangeable (though heavy cream is a little richer). Use either for—you guessed it—whipped cream to top pies and cakes, or stir them into sauces and soups (the higher fat content makes them less likely to curdle).

LIGHT CREAM

19 percent fat

While it's too low in fat to whip, light cream is perfect for post-party breakfasts: Drizzle it over fruit or granola, pour into coffee, or whisk with eggs for the perfect soft scramble.

HALF-AND-HALF

12 percent fat

This 50-50 mix of milk and cream can easily form a skin when cooked, so save it for chilled uses—after all, no dessert spread is complete without a cup of coffee or tea.

Overwhipped your cream? If you've been whisking for a while and the dairy in your bowl has turned chunky and yellow, it's time to start again with a new pint. But don't toss the thick stuff—continue whipping until the solids and liquids separate; then strain, form the remaining solids into a ball, and refrigerate. You've just made butter.



*Gougères with
Ossau-Iraty and Piment
d'Espelette* p. 97

*Rye Crispbreads with
Labneh and Hot-Smoked
Salmon* p. 97

TUROPHILE TUNES

To us, a party without cheese is like a party without music: boring. So why not pair the two? Find a list of crowd-pleasing cheeses matched with musical stylings at culturecheesemag.com/turophile-tunes.

Preserved Lemon Ice Cream
with Olive Oil
and Sea Salt p. 97



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LEFTOVERS

If the party is winding down and you've still got heaps of food, it's time to pack it in, er, up. Whether you divvy up your bounty among your guests or keep it all to yourself is up to you, but here's how to do leftovers right.

PREP

The week leading up to the party is the ideal time to clean out the fridge. Free up space and bulk up your container collection by finishing leftovers and tossing what's past its prime.

SHOP

Take stock of your storage options to figure out what you need. We like plastic deli containers—they're reusable, stackable, and ready for both the microwave and the freezer. Plus, interchangeable lids means no scrambling to match pairs, and they're available in bulk online. Throw in some painter's tape (easy to remove!) and permanent markers for easy labeling, too.

PLAY IT SAFE

Aim to get food into the fridge or freezer within two hours of it being cooked. Bacteria thrive between 40°F and 140°F (what the USDA calls "the danger zone"); take your time enjoying your spread, but don't let it sit for too long.

STACK

Whether you're packing bags for guests or stacking tubs in your fridge, keep larger, heavier containers at the bottom so delicate leftovers don't get squashed. (If you can, wait until foods are cool before you stack; keeping the warmth together will slow the cooling process.)

KEEP TRACK

In the fridge, most leftovers will keep for three to five days. Use the aforementioned painter's tape and markers to label and date each storage container. Looking to keep the feast going for longer? Opt for the freezer, where leftovers can last for up to four months. (But be advised: Frozen food can lose flavor and texture over time.)



TIP:

Beat the burn.

Avoid freezer burn by minimizing the air in your packaging. Wrap meat tightly in plastic wrap before placing in containers or zip-top freezer bags (squeeze the air out of those, too, or bust out the vacuum sealer). For side dishes, choose the correct container size; you want to fill it as much as possible to reduce air gaps.