

BEST RECIPES & FOOD TRENDS 2016

FOOD & WINE

NOSTALGIC FLAVORS MADE MODERN



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BABKA

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*On the cover: Melissa Weller's Chocolate Babka (p. 54) and Raisin-Walnut Babka (p. 58) from The Gastronomer Files.
Photograph by Con Poulos; food styling by Simon Andrews; style editor: Suzie Myers*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CON POULOS; ELIESA JOHNSON; TARA FISHER; JAIME KOWAL; EVA KOLENKO; CON POULOS

Gavin Kaysen's
wild rice hot dish
(p. 82) is a tribute
to his grandmother
Dorothy's version.
Baking dish
by Staub.



Hot Dish Challenge

Hot dish is not just a casserole: It's a Midwestern icon. Chef Gavin Kaysen modernizes the classics.

BY JULIA HEFFELFINGER PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELIESA JOHNSON

When chef Gavin Kaysen decided to leave New York City's acclaimed Café Boulud to go home to Minnesota and open Spoon and Stable in Minneapolis, he did not expect a group of ladies from a local Lutheran church to be his most formidable critics. Kaysen, a 2007 F&W Best New Chef, clearly has affection for Midwestern comfort-food classics: His menu includes creamed spinach with panko-crusting cheese curds (p. 80) alongside more global recipes like scallop crudo with shiso leaf. But he'd never taken on hot dish, a layered casserole invented by budget-conscious farmwives in the 1930s that came to rely heavily on canned vegetables, creamed soup and crunchy toppings like Tater Tots or chow mein noodles. "Hot dish is a dangerous thing to play with," Kaysen says. "There will always be someone with a grandma who makes it better."

F&W decided to test Kaysen's Minnesotan mettle by asking him first to bring hot dish into 2016, then to invite a few local pros—the ladies of Mount Olivet Lutheran Church—to taste-test his recipes. This community takes its culinary traditions very seriously, but the Mount Olivet crew was won over by Kaysen's respectful attention. Gathered around a table in the center of Spoon and Stable's spacious dining room, they stared up at him adoringly. "Chef Gavin is as cute and humble as a hot dish!" exclaimed one smitten judge.

The recipes were a resounding success, particularly Kaysen's version of a chicken and wild rice hot dish his grandmother Dorothy made. Instead of using canned cream of mushroom soup, Kaysen substituted a wild mushroom gravy scented with fresh rosemary and thyme (p. 82). "I would make this every Sunday!" remarked one taster. The ladies also approved of his cassoulet-like hot dish with merguez sausage (p. 80), even though the "wienies" were deemed a little risqué for a church potluck. The judges' only request? A cup of coffee to drink with the hot dish, in true Minnesota fashion.

Kaysen's harissa-spiced cassoulet transports hot dish to North Africa (p. 80).

Dutch oven by Le Creuset.

Creamed Spinach with Fried Cheese Curds

Total 1 hr; Serves 8

- ½ cup grapeseed or canola oil, plus more for frying
- 4 medium shallots, minced
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- Kosher salt and pepper
- Four 10-oz. bags curly spinach, stems discarded
- 2 cups crème fraîche
- 2 cups panko
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 large eggs
- ½ lb. cheddar cheese curds

1. Set a rack over a large rimmed baking sheet. In a large pot, heat the ½ cup of oil until shimmering. Add the shallots, garlic and a generous pinch of salt and cook over moderately high heat, stirring, until softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the spinach in large handfuls, letting each batch wilt slightly before adding more. Cook, stirring occasionally, until all of the spinach is wilted, 7 minutes. Spread the spinach on the rack to drain and cool completely.

2. Preheat the oven to 375°. Squeeze the spinach dry and return to the pot. Stir in the crème fraîche and season with salt and pepper. Transfer to individual 6-ounce gratin dishes or a 2-quart baking dish. Bake the spinach until bubbling, about 15 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, heat 1½ inches of oil to 350°. Spread the panko and flour in 2 separate shallow bowls. In another shallow bowl, beat the eggs with a pinch each of salt and pepper. Dredge the cheese curds in the flour, tapping off any excess. Coat the curds in the beaten egg, then dredge in the panko, pressing lightly on the curds to help the crumbs adhere.

4. Working in 2 batches, fry the cheese curds until golden and crisp, 2 to 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the fried curds to paper towels to drain. Top the spinach with the fried cheese curds and serve.



The ladies of Mount Olivet give their hot dish feedback.

Harissa-Spiced Cassoulet

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Active 1 hr 30 min
Total 3 hr plus overnight soaking; Serves 10 to 12

Harissa is a North African blend of cumin, coriander and other spices. Kaysen uses it to add a smoky kick to his version of a French bean-and-sausage casserole.

½ lb. thick-cut bacon, finely chopped

1 large onion, finely diced

1 celery rib, finely diced

2 medium carrots, finely diced, plus 2 large carrots, cut into 2½-inch lengths

14 oz. dried cannellini beans (2 cups), soaked overnight and drained

Kosher salt and black pepper

1½ tsp. cumin seeds

1½ tsp. coriander seeds

1½ tsp. yellow mustard seeds

1 tsp. smoked paprika

¾ tsp. crushed red pepper

¼ cup plus 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

Twelve 2-oz. merguez sausages

2 large sweet potatoes (1¼ lbs.), peeled and cut into 2½-inch pieces

3 turnips (¾ lb.), peeled and cut into 2½-inch pieces

4 oz. rustic peasant bread, crusts removed, bread cut into ¼-inch dice (2 cups)

2 Tbsp. minced parsley

1 tsp. grated lemon zest

Plain yogurt, for serving

1. In a large enameled cast-iron casserole, cook the bacon over moderately high heat, stirring occasionally, until the fat is rendered. Add the onion, celery and diced carrots and cook, stirring occasionally, until beginning to soften, about 8 minutes. Add the beans, cover with water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to moderately low and

simmer the beans until al dente, about 20 minutes. Remove from the heat, add a generous pinch of salt and let stand for 30 minutes. Drain the beans, bacon and vegetables and transfer to a bowl; reserve 2 cups of the cooking liquid.

2. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350°. In a small skillet, toast the cumin, coriander and mustard seeds over moderate heat, shaking the pan, until fragrant and the mustard seeds begin to pop, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a spice grinder and let cool. Add the smoked paprika and crushed red pepper and grind the harissa blend into a powder.

3. Wipe out the casserole and heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in it. Add the merguez and cook over moderate heat, until lightly browned all over, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Do not wipe out the casserole.

4. Add the sweet potatoes, turnips and large carrots to the casserole. Season with salt and black pepper and cook over moderately high heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables begin to soften, 5 minutes. Add the harissa spice blend and cook until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Stir in the bean mixture and the reserved 2 cups of cooking liquid and bring just to a simmer. Arrange the merguez on top. Cover and bake the cassoulet for about 1 hour, until the beans are tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed. Remove from the oven and uncover the cassoulet.

5. Preheat the broiler. In a bowl, toss the bread, parsley, lemon zest and the remaining 3 tablespoons of olive oil; season with salt and black pepper. Sprinkle the bread over the cassoulet and broil until golden and crisp. Let the cassoulet stand for 10 minutes before serving. Pass yogurt at the table.

WINE Red-berried, medium-bodied Côtes du Rhône: 2011 Chateau des Tours.

CRISPY TOPPING

Tater Tots, French's French Fried Onions, chow mein noodles, crushed potato chips



SAUCE

Canned cream of anything soup: mushroom, celery, chicken, cheddar



STARCH

Wild rice, macaroni, mashed potatoes



VEGETABLE

Canned corn, canned green beans



PROTEIN

Ground beef, shredded chicken, canned tuna



ANATOMY OF A HOT DISH

Kaysen checks in on the tasting at Spoon and Stable.

Hot Dish History

1930

The first recorded hot dish recipe appears in the *Grace Lutheran Ladies Aid Cookbook* from Mankato, Minnesota. The recipe calls for two pounds of "bamburger" (i.e., ground beef), Creamette brand elbow macaroni and canned peas.

1934

Campbell's debuts its condensed creamed soups. Flavors like cream of mushroom, or "the Lutheran Binder" as it's referred to in the Midwest, become the go-to hot dish base.

1953

When left with a surplus of scraps from frozen French fries, the brothers behind Ore-Ida potatoes, Nephi and Golden Grigg, grind the potato bits with spices, form nuggets and deep-fry them. Housewives across the Midwest begin to top hot dish with these Tater Tots.

1986

Garrison Keillor and Jean Redpath perform an ode to hot dish, "Tuna, the Food of My Soul," on *A Prairie Home Companion*: "Only a small can of tuna; mushroom soup, celery and peas; mixed with a quart of egg noodles; sprinkled with chips and with cheese."

1999

Minnesota author Pat Dennis releases *Hotdish to Die For*, a collection of short mysteries in which hot dish is the weapon of choice. Some titles include "Death by Idaho" and "The Lutheran Who Lusted."

2006

The Great Minnesota Get-Together, in true state fair fashion, begins offering hot dish on a stick: Tater Tot on a Swedish meatball skewers that are dipped in corn dog batter, deep-fried and served with a cream of mushroom dipping sauce.

2015

Minnesota lawmakers go head to head in a Hotdish Off in DC. Representative Betty McCollum wins for her turkey-and-sweet potato recipe. Senator Al Franken is runner-up with Turkey Chow-Minn.

Tasters' Notes

“

Love the guilt-free creamed spinach! (It has to be healthy—there's spinach in it.)”

—June Kroog

“

Earthy, yummy mushrooms. The wild rice dish is a modern take on the church-lady classic. Chef Gavin was brave to tackle this dish!”

—Pastor Monica Hammersten

“

The crispy shallot topping on the root-vegetable hot dish is a game changer. It might even beat out Tater Tots!”

—Karen London

“

I like the different root vegetables in the harissa-spiced cassoulet, but as an older person, I like my vegetables cooked more than is popular today.”

—Jean Nederostek



Root-Vegetable Hot Dish with Parsnip Puree

Active **1 hr 45 min**; Total **3 hr**
Serves **8 to 10**

SORGHUM

- 2 Tbsp. grapeseed or canola oil**
- 1 small onion, finely chopped**
- 2 garlic cloves, minced**
- Kosher salt and pepper**
- 2 cups pearled sorghum (13 oz.), rinsed (see Note)**
- 4 cups chicken stock or low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth**

ROOT VEGETABLES

- ¾ lb. rutabaga, peeled and cut into ½-inch dice**
- ¾ lb. carrots, peeled and cut into ½-inch dice**
- ¾ lb. celery root, peeled and cut into ½-inch dice**
- ¾ lb. turnips, peeled and cut into ½-inch dice**
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- Kosher salt and pepper**

PARSNIP PUREE

- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter**
- 1 small onion, finely chopped**
- 1 lb. parsnips, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces**
- 3 cups chicken stock or low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth**
- Kosher salt**

CRISPY SHALLOTS

- Grapeseed or canola oil, for frying**
- 3 large shallots, thinly sliced into rings**
- 1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour**
- Kosher salt**
- Snipped chives, for serving**

1. Cook the sorghum Preheat the oven to 400°. In a large saucepan, heat the oil. Add the onion, garlic and a generous pinch of salt and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the onion



begins to soften, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the sorghum and stock and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sorghum is tender and the stock is absorbed, about 1 hour. Season the sorghum with salt and pepper.

2. Meanwhile, cook the root vegetables In a very large bowl, toss all of the vegetables with the olive oil and season generously with salt and pepper. Spread the vegetables in an even layer on 2 large rimmed baking sheets. Roast until tender and lightly browned, 30 to 35 minutes; stir the vegetables halfway through roasting.

3. Make the parsnip puree In a medium saucepan, melt the butter. Add the onion and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until just softened, about 5 minutes. Add the parsnips, stock and a generous pinch of salt and bring to a boil. Simmer over moderately high heat until the parsnips are tender and the stock is slightly reduced, about 20 minutes.

Let cool slightly, then transfer the parsnips and their cooking liquid to a food processor and puree until smooth. Season with salt.

4. Fold the cooked sorghum into the parsnip puree and spread evenly in a 9-by-13-inch or 4-quart baking dish that's at least 2 inches deep. Scatter the roasted vegetables evenly over the puree. Cover with foil and bake for about 25 minutes, until bubbling.

5. Meanwhile, make the crispy shallots In a large saucepan, heat ½ inch of oil until shimmering. In a bowl, toss the sliced shallots with the flour. Working in batches, fry the shallots over moderately high heat, stirring, until lightly browned and crisp. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the fried shallots to a paper towel-lined plate to drain; season with salt. Garnish the casserole with the crispy shallots and chives and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The casserole can be prepared through Step 4 and refrigerated overnight. Bring to room temperature and reheat gently before topping with the shallots and chives.

NOTE Sorghum is a grain that grows in the Midwest and the South. If you can't find pearled sorghum, use unpearled (whole) sorghum. Soak the grain overnight and increase the cooking time to about 1 hour and 45 minutes.

WINE Earthy, fruit-forward cru Beaujolais: 2013 Georges Descombes Morgon.

Chicken and Wild Rice Casserole

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Active **1 hr 45 min**
Total **2 hr 30 min**; Serves **8 to 10**

Fresh herbs, tender Swiss chard and a simple mushroom gravy transform this classic Minnesota hot dish.

WILD RICE

½ lb. wild rice (1½ cups)

- 1 medium carrot, finely chopped**
- 1 small onion, finely chopped**
- 1 celery rib, finely chopped**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 1 thyme sprig**
- Kosher salt and pepper**

SWISS CHARD

- 3 Tbsp. grapeseed or canola oil**
- 1 large shallot, minced**
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced**
- 3 lbs. Swiss chard, stems discarded and leaves coarsely chopped**

MUSHROOM SAUCE

- ¼ cup grapeseed or canola oil**
- 1½ lbs. cremini mushrooms, sliced**
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter**
- ½ small onion, finely chopped**
- 1 small celery rib, finely chopped**
- 2 garlic cloves, minced**
- 3 thyme sprigs**

continued on p. 100



“Hot dish is a dangerous thing to play with,” says Gavin Kaysen. “There will always be someone with a grandma who makes it better.”

This root-vegetable hot dish is a lighter alternative to the traditionally meat-heavy casserole. Roasting dish by Revol.

**CHICKEN AND WILD RICE CASSEROLE** *continued***1½ tsp. minced rosemary****Kosher salt and pepper****¼ cup all-purpose flour****4 cups chicken stock or low-sodium broth****½ cup heavy cream****2 lbs. thinly sliced chicken scaloppine, pounded ¼ inch thick****1½ cups panko****3 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted****Chopped parsley, for serving**

1. Make the wild rice In a large saucepan, combine all of the ingredients with a generous pinch each of salt and pepper. Cover with water and bring to a boil over high heat. Simmer over moderate heat until the rice is tender, about 1 hour. Drain well.

2. Meanwhile, cook the Swiss chard Set a rack over a large rimmed baking sheet. In a pot, heat the oil. Add the shallot and garlic and cook over moderately high heat, stirring, until softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the Swiss chard in large handfuls, letting each batch wilt slightly before adding more. Cook, stirring occasionally, until all of the chard is wilted, 8 to 10 minutes. Spread the chard out on the rack to drain and let cool completely. Squeeze out any excess water.

3. Make the mushroom sauce In a large, deep skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil until shimmering. Add half of the mushrooms and cook over moderately high heat, undisturbed, until browned on the bottom, 5 minutes. Cook, stirring, until the mushrooms are tender and browned all over, 5 minutes longer; transfer to a plate. Repeat with the remaining oil and mushrooms.

4. Wipe out the skillet and melt the 2 tablespoons of butter in it. Add the onion, celery, garlic, thyme, rosemary and a generous pinch each of salt and pepper. Cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are just starting to brown, about 8 minutes. Stir in the mushrooms. Sprinkle the flour over the vegetables and cook, stirring, until incorporated, about 2 minutes. Gradually whisk in the stock and bring to a boil, stirring frequently. Reduce

the heat to moderate and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is thickened and no floury taste remains, about 7 minutes. Stir in the cream and season the sauce with salt and pepper.

5. Preheat the oven to 375°. Arrange half of the chicken in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch or 4-quart baking dish that's at least 2 inches deep. Scatter half of the Swiss chard over the chicken, followed by half of the wild rice and half of the mushroom cream sauce. Repeat the layering once more with the remaining chicken, greens, rice and sauce.

6. In a medium bowl, toss the panko with the 3 tablespoons of melted butter and sprinkle evenly over the casserole. Cover with foil and bake for about 35 minutes, until bubbling. Uncover the casserole and turn on the broiler. Broil 6 inches from the heat until the panko is lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes. Garnish with chopped parsley and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The baked casserole can be cooled down and refrigerated overnight. Reheat gently and crisp the panko under the broiler before serving.

WINE Ripe, full-bodied California Chardonnay: 2014 Truchard Vineyards.

Chocolate Pot de Crème with Candied Brioche Whipped CreamActive **1 hr 15 min**; Total **2 hr plus cooling**
Serves **8**

This recipe was inspired by Kaysen's grandmother Dorothy. "She used to make a big bowl of chocolate pudding and then set it in the middle of the table with a handful of spoons," he recalls.

PUDDING

2 cups heavy cream**1½ Tbsp. instant espresso powder****5 oz. dark chocolate (60% cocoa), finely chopped****2 large eggs****2 large egg yolks****½ cup sugar****¼ tsp. kosher salt**

CROUTONS

3 oz. brioche, cut into ½-inch dice**¾ cup sugar****Ground cinnamon, for sprinkling**

WHIPPED CREAM

¼ cup warm heavy cream, plus ½ cup chilled heavy cream**1 Tbsp. sugar**

1. Make the pudding Preheat the oven to 325°. Set an 8-inch round soufflé dish in a small roasting pan. In a medium saucepan, whisk the cream with the espresso powder and bring just to a simmer over moderately high heat. Remove from the heat, add the chocolate and let stand for 2 minutes; whisk until smooth.

2. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs and yolks with the sugar and salt. Gradually whisk in one-fourth of the hot chocolate cream until smooth; gradually whisk in the remaining cream. Strain the pudding through a fine sieve into the soufflé dish. Add enough hot water to the roasting pan to reach halfway up the side of the soufflé dish. Bake the pudding for about 50 minutes, until just set. Let cool slightly and then remove from the water bath and let cool completely.

3. Meanwhile, make the croutons Spread the brioche on a baking sheet and toast in the oven until golden, about 12 minutes. Transfer the croutons to a bowl and let cool completely. Wipe off the baking sheet and line it with a sheet of parchment paper.

4. In a medium saucepan, combine the sugar with ¼ cup of water and cook over moderately high heat, stirring occasionally, until the temperature reaches 240° on a candy thermometer, about 7 minutes. Stir in the brioche and cook, stirring, until the croutons are coated in an amber caramel, 3 to 5 minutes. Spread on the prepared baking sheet and sprinkle with cinnamon. Let cool completely, then coarsely crush the candied croutons.

5. Make the whipped cream In a blender, combine the ¼ cup of warm heavy cream with the sugar and one-fourth of the candied croutons; puree until smooth. Let cool.

6. In a large bowl, using a hand mixer, beat the ½ cup of cold heavy cream at high speed until soft peaks form. Fold in the candied brioche cream and beat at high speed until stiff peaks form. Spoon the chocolate pot de crème into glasses and top with the candied brioche whipped cream and the remaining candied croutons.

MAKE AHEAD The pudding can be refrigerated overnight; bring to room temperature before serving. The croutons can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature overnight.

Spoon and Stable, 211 First St. N., Minneapolis; spoonandstable.com.