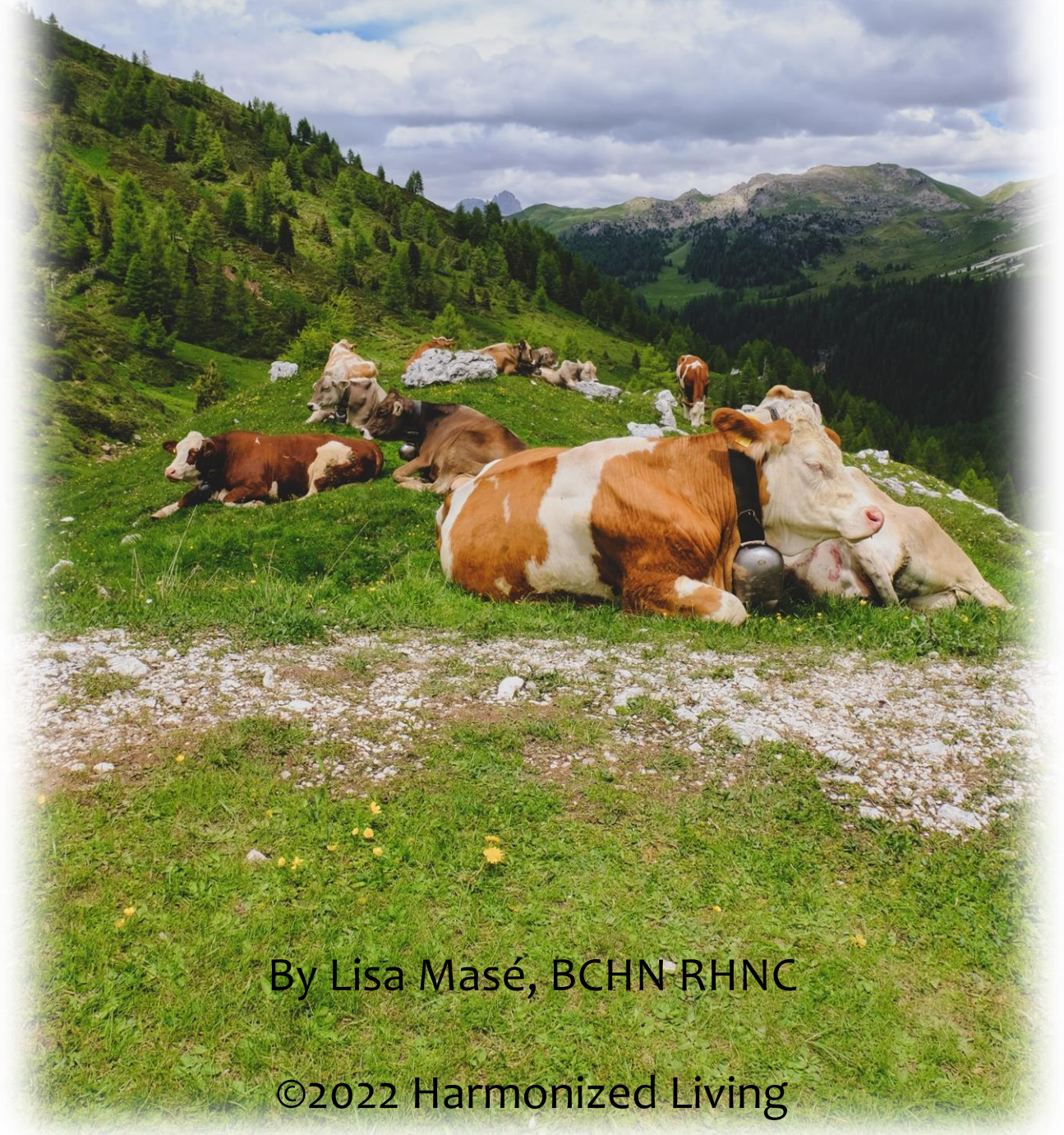


# FROM NONNA'S KITCHEN

## *Recipes of Northern Italy*



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Hello!

This is an image of me making apricot filled cookies with my grandmother, Aldina Masé.

Enjoy these stories and recipes from my childhood of cooking with my family in the Dolomite Mountains of Italy.

Even though contemporary recipes use exact measurements, I was raised cooking with ratios instead. Pinches, smells, flavors, intuition, and happy accidents are all cornerstones of my cooking practice.

I will try to provide measurements when possible. As always, use your intuition and preferences when cooking. These recipes are meant as suggestions, not rules.



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## RECIPES

### SPELT GNOCCHI

Choose 4 medium potatoes with dry flesh. Boil the potatoes in water until soft.

Trying to keep them warm without burning your fingers, cut the potatoes into chunks and pass them through a vegetable mill or smash them with the back of the fork.

Add just enough spelt flour to give the dough consistency, about 1 1/2 cups. It needs to be supple without being too sticky.

Roll the dough into inch-thick ropes. Cut the rope into small chunks.

Roll each chunk off the edge of a fork to create grooves on one side and a hole in the other side.

As you are shaping the gnocchi, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.

Add the gnocchi in small batches and remove them from the boiling water with a slotted spoon when they rise to the top.

Place them in a deep baking dish and keep them in a 250 degree oven to stay warm. Toss them with tomato sauce, sprinkle with parmesan cheese, and enjoy!

## BUCKWHEAT WINTER SQUASH GNOCCHI

Choose 1 medium buttercup squash or other winter squash with dry flesh.  
Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Bake the squash inside its skin in a baking dish with 1/2 cup of water for about 1 hour, or until it is fork soft. When the squash is tender, remove it from the oven, scoop out the seeds, and then scoop out the flesh. Discard the seeds and skin and set the flesh aside.

Add just enough buckwheat flour to give the dough consistency, about 1 ½ cups. It needs to be supple without being too sticky.

Roll the dough into inch-thick ropes and proceed with the gnocchi directions above.

When all the gnocchi are cooked, spoon pesto over them, serve and savor.



## SIMPLE PESTO

In a food processor, mix:

½ cup olive oil

2 Tablespoons almonds, sunflower seeds or pine nuts

2 teaspoons salt

½ Tablespoon lemon juice

Parmesan cheese to taste – about 2 Tablespoons (if desired)

Blend at highest speed for 2 minutes.

Turn the off processor, add enough basil to fill the bowl, and blend at lowest speed, stopping occasionally to tamp basil down into blades and add more as needed.

While blending, mixture may become too thick with basil leaves. If so, pour additional olive oil in a small stream through the opening of the food processor while it is blending.

Taste for salt and enjoy!

If you are making a large batch, place in small mason jars, label and freeze for winter use.

## CAPER SARDINE PESTO

*Small, salty sardines are low in contaminants due to their position further down the food chain. They are high in omega-3 fats, which are crucial for mental health as well as supple muscles, joints and skin.*

In a food processor, mix:

½ cup olive oil

½ teaspoon sea salt

½ Tablespoon lemon juice

Blend at highest speed for 2 minutes.

Turn the off processor, add enough basil to fill the bowl, and blend at lowest speed, stopping occasionally to tamp basil down into blades and add more as needed.

While blending, mixture may become too thick with basil leaves. If so, pour additional olive oil in a small stream through the opening of the food processor while it is blending.

Keep adding basil until you have used about 2 cups fresh basil.

Remove from food processor and place in a large serving bowl.

Add 2 Tablespoons capers and 1 can of sardines.

Enjoy with pasta, gnocchi, or on toast as an appetizer.



## HIGH PROTEIN BUCKWHEAT SOURDOUGH BREAD

Buckwheat, or *grano saraceno*, is not a true grain but a protein-rich seed. Its nutty flavor is a wonderful addition to bread. The tree seeds are traditional additions to bread in the Trentino Alto Adige region.

This wholesome bread is protein-rich and delightful. Try it as part of a weekend brunch.

You will need:

Baking paper

Food processor or high-powered blender

½ cup active sourdough starter

2 cups buckwheat flour

½ cup sunflower seeds

½ cup water

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon sea salt

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

1 tablespoon honey

1 teaspoon each: coriander, cumin, caraway & fenugreek seeds

Mix sourdough and 1 cup of the buckwheat flour together.

Cover with a cloth and set aside on the counter for 8 hours or overnight.

After the dough has risen, mix in the second cup of buckwheat flour.

Add the rest of the ingredients and stir well until a thick dough forms.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Line a loaf pan with baking paper and grease the paper with some extra sunflower or olive oil.

Place bread in the oven and cook for 35 minutes (until the bread is firm on top and springs back when gently pressed).

Remove from the oven and cool for 30 minutes in the tin.

Allow to cool completely before storing in an airtight container in the fridge for a week.

## RISOTTO

Risotto essentially means 'a little rice'. It's the perfect base for getting creative with cooking.

The best varieties of rice for risotto go rancid quickly when exposed to air. Opt for brands that are packaged and vacuum sealed as opposed to ones in bulk bins. My father's favorite is Vialone Nano. He travels with multiple bags in his suitcase when he leaves Italy and comes to the States.

You will need:

1½ cups Arborio, Carnaroli, or Vialone Nano rice

1 quart chicken or vegetable stock

½ cup white wine

1 onion, chopped

1 carrot, diced

3 tablespoons olive oil

¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese (optional)

Sea salt and black pepper to taste

Heat the stock to a simmer in a medium saucepan, then lower the heat so that the stock stays hot without scorching.

In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. When the butter has melted, add the chopped onion. Sauté for 2 or 3 minutes, or until it is slightly translucent.

Add the rice to the pot and stir it briskly with a wooden spoon so that the grains are coated with the oil. Sauté for another minute or so, until there is a slightly nutty aroma. But don't let the rice turn brown.

Add the wine and cook while stirring, until the liquid is fully absorbed.

Add carrots and stir once again.

Add a ladle of hot chicken / vegetable stock to the rice and stir until the liquid is fully absorbed.

When you see bubbles rise to the top of the rice, add another ladle or two of stock.

Continue repeating this process. It can feel calming and soothing to watch risotto cook.

This process will take about 20 minutes.

During the last few minutes of cooking, you can stir occasionally to let the natural starches of the rice develop and give the risotto a creamy consistency.

At this point, you can get creative and add different ingredients to spice up your risotto. Here are some examples:

Spring: steamed asparagus and juice of 1 lemon

Summer: freshly chopped tomatoes and basil

Fall: Sautéed finocchiona sausage and chopped fennel

Winter: Roasted butternut squash and toasted squash seeds



## HOME-MADE EGG PASTA

It's easier than you think!  
Gather friends or family members.  
Make it a group project.

You will need:

1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 cup rye flour  
1 cup spelt flour  
Cornmeal for dusting  
2 eggs  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
2 tablespoons water



Prepare the dough by mixing everything but the egg in a large bowl.  
Make a well in the center, crack the eggs into it and whisk them together. Add oil and water and whisk a bit more.

Then, slowly incorporate the flour into the egg mixture.

Once the dough is moist but not sticky (add another tablespoon of water if you need to), knead it a bit, but not too much. You want to develop the gluten but not over-work the dough, which makes it rubbery.

After kneading, shape it into a ball, place it in the bowl, and cover it with a cloth. Allow it to rest at room temperature for about 30 minutes.

Now, you are ready to roll! Start by pulling off a piece of dough about the size of a golf ball. Flatten it into a rectangle. Either roll it out on a cutting board covered with cornmeal or use a pasta machine to flatten it.

If the dough starts to feel sticky, sprinkle with cornmeal.

Once the dough is fairly thin (about 1/4 inch), run it through the cutting rollers on your pasta machine or loosely roll the pasta into a tube and dust it with cornmeal. Then, slice the rolls with a sharp knife.

This is a great moment for teamwork! Have people feeding the pasta through the machine, others who are catching it on the other side, still others who are checking on the sauces and water bubbling away on the stove.

Transfer the noodles to a cookie sheet dusted with cornmeal. You can hang them to dry and freeze them or throw them into salted boiling water to cook. Noodles are done when they float to the top of boiling water.

## POLENTA

At my grandmother's house, polenta was always prepared in a big copper pot with a long-handled wooden spoon. This is not a requirement for successful polenta. Just know that a long stirring utensil will prevent any burns as the mix thickens and bubbles. In our family, everyone likes to take a turn stirring the simple mixture to witness the moment of alchemy when it begins to thicken.

This dish may seem simple, but it can become essential to survival. When my father survived World War II by hiding out in the French-Italian Alps with his grandmother, Luzellette, this was often the only food they had to eat, along with potatoes they grew and goat milk from the goats they raised.

You will need:

1 cup cornmeal

1 teaspoon salt

4 cups water

Bring the water to a boil in a medium stock pot.

Sprinkle cornmeal and salt into the pot.

Whisk well for the first two or three minutes.

Reduce heat to simmer and let the polenta cook, uncovered, for about 10 minutes.

Return to the pot and reduce the heat to low.

Start stirring.

Stir vigorously for a few minutes, pause for a few, and then resume.

Ask someone else to take a turn.

Continue this way until the polenta is thick and almost impossible to stir.

Ladle it onto plates and serve with your favorite sauce in the spring and summer, a slab of Fontina cheese in the fall, or venison braised in root vegetables and red wine in the winter.





## **FARINATA**

Native to Tuscany, this chickpea flatbread is simple, protein-rich, and gluten-free. It's also known as socca.

You will need:

3 eggs

2 Tablespoons olive oil

1 cup water

½ teaspoon salt

¼ cup fresh rosemary, chopped

2 cups chickpea flour

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Grease a cookie sheet with olive oil.

Toast chickpea flour in a dry skillet on low heat for 3 minutes, or until it becomes a bit darker in color. Remove from heat.

Whisk together eggs, oil, water, salt, and rosemary.

Slowly add toasted chickpea flour and mix until you achieve a dough-like consistency.

Using both hands, stretch dough into pie dish and press along the perimeter.

Bake for 15 minutes.

Enjoy with a drizzle of olive oil, fresh tomato slices, or grilled artichokes.

## TUSCAN RIBOLLITA SOUP

I learned to make this dish when we started helping family friends to harvest olive on a small grove in the Pienza region of southern Tuscany. Try the recipe to see why it's known as 'ribollita' or 'boiled again' soup.

It's a nourishing whole meal when paired with polenta – perfect for the hungry olive harvester at the end of the day.

You will need:

- 1 cup cooked cannellini (white kidney) beans
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 onions, peeled and chopped into crescents
- 3 carrots, chopped into cubes
- 3 celery stalks, chopped
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 cups chicken or vegetable stock (make your own or choose a brand with no sugar)
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary OR 2 Tablespoons dried rosemary
- 1 bunch kale, roughly chopped
- ½ cup rolled oats

\*\*\*Soak beans overnight. \*\*\*

Rinse and drain. Bring to a boil in a medium stock pot with 4 cups water. Skim off foam, reduce heat, and cook for 30 minutes or until they are tender.

Chop the celery, onions and carrots.

In a large pot, sauté the garlic, onion, celery, and carrot in olive oil over medium heat for about 5 minutes.

Add the stock and rosemary.

Bring to a boil, reduce heat, then simmer, covered, for about half an hour.

Add the kale, oats and cooked beans. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 15 more minutes.

Serve sprinkled with Parmigiano Reggiano cheese if desired.



## EASTER ASPARAGUS WITH ORANGE AND OREGANO

*When oranges ripen in Sicily and trucks drive all over Italy to sell them on roadsides, all Italians rejoice. It takes time for the trucks to reach the North, so oranges often grace our tables through the spring season.*

You will need:

2 pounds asparagus

2 Tablespoons olive oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 tablespoon dried oregano

Juice of 1 orange

Orange wedges to finish

Rinse asparagus in cold water and trim off tough ends of stalks.

Put oil in a heavy skillet with a tight-fitting lid and heat gently.

Lay asparagus in the pan and shake from side to side to coat asparagus with oil.

Cover tightly and cook over medium heat for 3 minutes. Check asparagus and turn as needed to make sure the stalks cook evenly and don't burn.

Add spices and orange juice.

Continue cooking 5 minutes longer, or until asparagus is tender but still crisp and bright green.

Mix in orange wedges and serve hot.





## MUSHROOM SPINACH SAUCE

*In the Dolomites, mid-summer is the time for hunting mushrooms. My dad would wake us up before dawn, as though the elusive fungi would run away if we didn't sneak up on them early. We would head for dappled, rich woods on south-facing slopes and visit our well-loved patches where chanterelles, honey mushrooms, and boletes flourish.*

*Upon our return, the task was simple yet tedious: cut the stems and brush the dirt off of each specimen. Then, cook them down in olive oil, salt and black pepper so that they could either be pickled 'sotto aceto' – under vinegar – or eaten fresh over egg pasta.*

*These days, we practice the same time-honored ritual when my parents come to visit Vermont.*

You will need:

3 Tablespoons olive oil

1 large yellow onion

½ pound fresh mushrooms: chanterelle, bolete and / or cremini

½ pound spinach

2 cloves garlic

Salt and black pepper to taste

Brush excess dirt off of mushrooms and chop lightly. Do not wash mushrooms.

Slice 1 large onion into crescents.

Coat the bottom of a skillet with vegetable oil. Heat oil on the stovetop, add onions, turn heat to low, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add mushrooms and cook for 10 more minutes.

Meanwhile, mince garlic.

Wash spinach.

Add these to the skillet and season with salt and pepper.

Sauté for 2 more minutes.

Serve over pasta or polenta.

## FRITTATA WITH GREENS AND BEETS

Autumn in Northern Italy brings cooler evenings and roasted roots. Beets come out of the garden for lacto-fermenting, storing in the cantina – root cellar – or adding to a quick dinner of frittata and sourdough bread.

You will need:

1 large yellow onion  
2 medium red beets  
1 generous bunch dark leafy greens: spinach, chard, or kale  
Salt, coriander, thyme, and black pepper  
Olive oil  
6 eggs  
Juice of 1 lemon  
Fresh parsley

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Wash and chop beets into bite-sized cubes.

Grease a rectangular baking dish with olive oil.

Place beets in the dish, dash with water and 1 teaspoon salt, toss with a spatula, and roast in the oven for 20 minutes.

Remove and set aside.

Meanwhile, chop onion into crescents.

Heat olive oil in a skillet and add onions.

Turn down the heat to medium low.

Add salt, coriander, and thyme – about ½ teaspoon.

Cover and simmer for 5 minutes.

Add greens and simmer for 10 more minutes.

Reduce oven temperature to 375 degrees.

Place onions and greens in the baking dish with the beets.

Drizzle with a little more olive oil and toss to coat.

In a bowl, beat 6 eggs, salt, pepper, lemon juice, and a few splashes of water.

Mince parsley and add it to the egg mixture.

Pour egg mixture over the vegetables and bake for 40 minutes.

Slice and serve hot.

## LINZER TORTE

The invention of Linzer torte is subject of numerous legends, reporting on a Viennese confectioner named Linzer or the Austrian baker Johann Vogel, who about 1823 at Linz started the mass production of the cake that made it famous around the world. I request it every year for my birthday, and my father gladly obliges. We love to make it together.

Take 2 cups fresh or frozen cranberries and, in a stock pot, heat gently with:  
½ teaspoon each: cardamom, cloves, ginger  
a pinch of salt

Let this mixture cook slowly, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes or until cranberries have popped open. Once cooked, add 2 Tablespoons raw honey and take off the heat.

*If you do not have fresh cranberries, use a 4 oz. jar of fruit-juice sweetened jam. Choose raspberry if possible.*

Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl, combine:  
1 ½ cups almond flour (or hazelnut flour)  
1 ½ cups spelt (use rice flour for a gluten-free version)  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
½ teaspoon ground cloves  
a pinch of salt

Stir to incorporate.

Add 1 stick of cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces.  
Stir to coat the butter pieces with flour.

Make a well in the center and, in that well, add:  
1/2 cup maple syrup  
1 egg  
Zest of one lemon (optional)

Whisk these together until they are well-mixed.  
Slowly mix everything together. Make sure the butter does not melt too much.  
Separate dough into two balls.  
Place in the fridge to cool for 15 minutes or so.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.  
Grease a pie plate with butter.

Remove dough from fridge and roll out one piece between two pieces of waxed paper.  
You can use an empty wine bottle or a rolling pin.  
Roll it until it is the size of the pie plate, including the sides.  
Lift it gently and place it into the pie plate. Don't worry if it breaks. Just patch it back together.

Now, fill this crust with cranberry (or apricot) mixture and set aside.

Roll out the second dough ball and cut into thick strips. Arrange strips in a lattice pattern over the top of the berry mixture. Again, cut and patch together as needed. This dough is so buttery that it's forgiving.

In a small bowl, whisk 1 egg. With a pastry brush, paint egg over the crust to glaze.

Bake for 40 minutes. Allow to cool for at least 5 minutes before slicing. It's better the next day.





## **APRICOT JAM**

This is one of my all-time favorite foods. When the apricots were ripe on our neighbor's orchard, we could come back to my Nonna Dina's kitchen with bushels of them and start making jam. She made it with so much sugar and pectin.

I have adapted the recipe. Honey is a wonderful replacement because it acts as pectin, too.

You can also make this jam with blueberries or raspberries.

You will need:

4 pounds or so fresh, ripe apricots

a pinch of salt

1 cup of local honey

Start by blanching and de-stoning the fruit. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Fill a bowl with cold water. Drop the fruit into boiling water and boil for 20 seconds. Transfer to the ice water with a slotted spoon, and cool briefly. Slip off the skins, cut in half and remove the stones.

Place the fruit in a heavy saucepan and simmer for 15 minutes over medium heat. Simmer 10 to 15 minutes, stirring often, until the apricots have broken down into a thick purée. Stir often until the apricots have reduced into a thick purée.

While jam is cooking, sterilize pint mason jars and lids by placing them in the sink, pouring boiling water over them, and draining them on a clean dish towel.

Separate oven racks so that a jar fits in between them and line the racks with cookie sheets.

Preheat oven to 200 degrees.

Add honey and stir to incorporate. Taste for sweetness and add more honey if desired. Turn off heat and ladle hot jam into hot jars. Make sure you leave 5 cm of headspace from the top of the jar.

Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace as needed.

Wipe any jam off of jar rims and put lids on jars. Screw bands down until tight.

Turn off the oven.

Place jars in the oven and leave them in for 6 hours or overnight.

Test jars by pressing on the top to make sure that the lid is firm.

Repeat the oven canning process for any lids that are not firm.

Label jars with name and date, place on pantry shelves.

Set plenty aside for spreading on buttered toast and making cookies.

## APRICOT TART

This tart is delicious, subtly sweet, and naturally gluten-free. Thanks to traveling folk, the fragrant spices that grace this dessert have been finding their way to Italy for centuries. Cinnamon and cardamom are warming and carminative. Nutmeg, *myristica fragrans*, balances the hormones and is considered an aphrodisiac in its native Banda Islands.

You will need:

1 ½ cups quick oats  
½ cup boiling water  
2 cups cornmeal  
¼ cup (1 stick) cold, unsalted butter  
½ teaspoon each: cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg  
a pinch of salt  
1 cup apricot jam

For the glaze:

5 Tablespoons local honey  
2 tablespoons apricot jam  
Juice of ½ lemon  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
a pinch of salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Place oats in a bowl and cover with boiling water.  
Let stand for 5 minutes.

Add cornmeal, spices, and jam. Stir well.  
Whisk egg and add to the batter. Incorporate briefly.  
Cut butter into the bowl and fold in.

Grease a 9 inch cake or pie pan with butter.  
Smooth batter into it and bake for 40 minutes.

Pull cake out of the oven and let it cool for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the glaze.  
Place all ingredients in a saucepan and heat gently, whisking with a fork.  
Set aside.

Spread glaze over the top and serve warm.

It's good with a little whipped cream for dessert or alongside eggs for breakfast.