

## Home Cooking Transcript: Episode 4

Samin: I'm Samin Nosrat.

Hrishi: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

Samin: And we're home cooking.

Hrishi: This is the fourth episode of our four-part miniseries where we help you figure out what to cook with what you've got in the house.

Samin: Does that mean we're done? Does that mean I never have to do more puns with you? I think in puns now because of you and it's really fakakta.

Hrishi: When you're making your fakacia?

Samin: Okay. I'm not going to miss this.

Hrishi: Coming up later we're going to be joined by perhaps the greatest living cellist in the world. Yo Yo Ma.

Samin: Besides being a genius, he's also that uncle that you wish you had.

Hrishi: He's like a hug personified. To quote an episode of the West Wing, "Yo Yo Ma rules." We got a lot of great questions from all over the world for this episode Samin, but before we get to all of them, what have you been cooking?

Samin: You guys, I finally feel like I can come out of the lasagna closet.

Hrishi: That means you're finally ready to admit that you identify as a lasagna.

Samin: Well, I basically am 99% lasagna now because for the past month I haven't been making so much lasagna. I have been living inside of a lasagna. Because I've been working on this project for the New York Times where I thought it would be really fun if we have kind of a national dinner party, so I had to test a bunch lasagna recipes using different ingredients I could get at different stores.

Hrishi: If you had to guess, how many lasagnas have you made in the last month?

Samin: Yesterday, I jokingly said 40, but I think I have probably made eight, which is I just want you to know, a lot of lasagna.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: It's just been a journey. It's been a carbohydrate filled journey.

Hrishi: To go along with all of this you wrote a really beautiful article for the New York Times and I just wanted to say how much I really love it.

Samin: Oh, thanks so much.

Hrishi: I really loved this paragraph. You wrote, "I still miss setting the table for others. I miss the feeling of anticipation right before people arrive for a meal and relief right after they leave. I miss that inexplicable moment at the dinner table when any awkwardness washes away and a bunch of individuals, some of whom might've been strangers, becomes a unified group. I miss conversation is so vibrant that no one is tempted to pull out a phone. I really love that.

Samin: Thanks. Yeah, I actually had a lot of, I've been living under the layers of lasagna and so I haven't had a ton of room to mentally or emotionally process a lot of stuff. But sitting down to write was really an opportunity to do that. And I think it's actually part of why writing that piece was kind of hard for me was because I really had to sort of reckon with a lot of my feelings about the stuff that I really miss and how I really feel right now. And I've had different phases, I assume we all have. I was really lonely about the third week and now I just feel like I've lost my mind.

Hrishi: Which is exactly the right time for us to start recording.

Samin: Great, Oh wait, there was one other thing I've been making that I kind of wanted to tell you about because I think you would be in to it. So I bought some milk the other day, this really delicious milk that has a cream top and it's super rich. And then when I got home I realized that it had expired, I bought it the day it expired.

Hrishi: Had it actually gone bad, did it smell bad? Or just the date was ...

Samin: Well, so whereas typically the sell by date is a sell by date, not a use by date on milk. This brand, because it's from a small local farm, the expiration date is no joke. So I kind of was like, "Wow, I've

got to use this up today." But it was a quart and a half, it was a lot of milk and I didn't know what to do. So I made pudding, I made two kinds of pudding.

Hrishi: Oh wow.

Samin: Yeah. I made tapioca and I made chocolate pudding and I mean they were both delicious, but the tapioca was the best tapioca I've ever made. It was so good. And it was from a recipe from 101 cookbooks, Heidi Swanson's website and I think we should link to the recipe because I think everyone should be making it, it was so good. And then the next day we had a tapioca and we had a pudding party in the courtyard and all the neighbors, I was like, "Bring your own bowl and your own spoon." And I put the pudding out so everyone else could eat it because otherwise I was going to eat it for six meals in a row.

Hrishi: That sounds really good and I think you have already basically answered one of the questions that I had that I had planned to play you.

Samin: Oh, really?

Hrishi: Yeah. Let me play it for you now.

Samin: Okay.

Hrishi: Here's a question from Marian from Paris.

Marian: I'm currently in lockdown in my small Parisian apartment with no oven or no microwave, so I'm having the difficult task to be a little bit creative in terms of what I cook, and I miss sweets. So my question would be, can you give me some sweet recipes and dessert recipes that can be done without an oven or a microwave? Thank you very much, I love the podcast. Bye bye.

Samin: I'm so sorry, it sounds so lonely. You sound so lonely and I feel it. I mean, we're all feeling so lonely. Yeah, I would definitely suggest in your case, to make some sort of stove top puddings or stove top custards. So tapioca, chocolate pudding, those are very American, but there's also plenty of less American versions. You could also make a mousse of any flavor, but chocolate is a classic.

Hrishi: How does one make a mousse?

Samin: A mousse is basically a pudding that then has, and usually they're made with cream. Mousses are made with cream. Mooses, Meeses mices? I would say mousse is usually made with cream rather than milk. I'm not sure it will set without the cream, and then it has eggs in it and then you take the egg whites and you whip them and you fold whipped cream and eggs and at the end to lighten it up. So it's not so different from making pudding. And as for a chocolate mousse recipe, there's a great, really simple one on New York Times cooking that my colleague Tegile Rao wrote about. It's from this amazing pastry chef, Natasha Picowitz, who is the pastry chef of Cafe Altro Paradiso and Flora Bar in New York. And she just basically came up with a very simple blender chocolate mousse. The other thing I was thinking about this morning, it's be even simpler and I find it to be incredibly delicious. I don't actually understand why it's so delicious, it is this three ingredient thing called posset.

Hrishi: How do you spell that?

Samin: P-O-S-S-E-T. And it's almost a fore runner of pudding or anything like that. It's a hundreds of year old British dessert. I haven't actually made it in the States before. I was just thinking today that I wanted to go get some cream and try it. But it's basically very lightly curdled cream, but it doesn't have curdly texture. It has a very smooth texture. And the posset that I had when I was in England last year was just so satisfying and creamy on the tongue and so refreshing. So you just take some cream and sugar and you bring it up just barely to a boil and you have to use the richest, thickest cream you can find. In England it's called double cream. And then you would just sweeten it, you bring it up and then you take it off the heat and then you add some freshly squeezed lemon juice. And it doesn't even have to be lemon juice, it could be the sour juice of any fruit. So it could be passion fruit or rhubarb. It's so good. It's and you're like, "I don't understand. It's made with three ingredients. I don't understand how this works."

Hrishi: Okay. I am pudding this question away, I'm pudding this question away. Thanks for the question Marion. Okay. Here's another question, I love this one.

Jacob: Hi this is Jacob.

Julia: And Julia.

Olivia: And Olivia.

Jacob: And during the ...

Olivia: Coronavirus...

Jacob: We've been enjoying food where you wrap up food in other foods like?

Olivia: Tacos.

Julia: And summer rolls.

Jacob: And Japanese hand rolls. So our question is?

Julia: What other foods besides those foods ...

Olivia: Can we try ...

Jacob: That are foods where you wrap up some food in some other food? Thanks.

Olivia: Bye.

Julia: Bye.

Samin: Oh my God, I love you. I also love the choreographed nature of that question. It really felt like they had a script.

Hrishi: What I love about it is that they wrapped their question in each other's questions.

Samin: Oh my Gatos. That was the cutest thing I've heard in a long time. That was amazing. Well first of all, you've come to the right place, my friends. I am obsessed with foods that are wrapped in other foods.

Hrishi: So am I.

Samin: You are?

Hrishi: I am. A couple of months ago, I went on a food expedition, you know I love themed food expeditions?

Samin: Yeah, it's how we spent our first time together, we went on a cookie expedition.

Hrishi: That's right, the first time we hung out. Yeah. So a couple months ago I went on a stuffed foods expedition. Basically what they're talking about, but like fried, wrapped and fried both.

Samin: We had stuffed foods on our food expedition. We had a weird detour at the end of the cookie day where we had empanadas.

Hrishi: Oh, that's right. So it was basically, the empanadas were part of this as well. And then we also got samosas and we also got Jamaican Patties.

Samin: What's a Jamaican Patty?

Hrishi: It's right in the same family as all these other things. It's a flaky pastry outside and then it's like a stuffed turnover.

Samin: Okay.

Hrishi: And then for dessert we had McDonald's Apple pies.

Samin: And then you went home and you had indigestion.

Hrishi: It was a great night. The only thing I love more than delicious food is delicious food wrapped in a theme. And especially when the theme is wrapping foods.

Samin: Oh, Gatos.

Hrishi: Okay, what are your suggestions for Jacob and Olivia and Julia?

Samin: Well I actually have, I wrote an article about this once. But apart from that, I had the weirdest idea yesterday, and this is not exactly a food wrapped in other foods, but it's so weird that I thought maybe I should share it.

Hrishi: Oh, I can't wait.

Samin: And so I was like, what if you took half an avocado, you removed the pit and then inside the space where there's the pit you put in half a hard boiled egg, and then you removed the egg yolk and you put a cherry tomato or an olive inside.

Hrishi: Wow.

Samin: Then it's like an avocado version of a turducken.

Hrishi: Turducken, wow.

Samin: It's an aveggado.

Hrishi: Wow, that's really good. And, it's the perfect name. See, you love wordplay too. Let's be honest.

Samin: Oh God, yeah, I do. I do. Yeah. I'm just shedding everything today.

Hrishi: Aveggado, it's really good.

Samin: And I know that's not what you were asking for. I just thought I would share that.

Hrishi: Yes, worth it. It's brilliant. Okay, but back to the premise of the original question.

Samin: This is more about wrapped foods. And so here, let me list off some of my favorites.

Hrishi: Okay, do you want me to drop a beat?

Samin: Oh yeah, do it.

Hrishi: So you can rap these foods?

Samin: Oh no.. Okay, here we go. So I think there's an entire world of dumplings that would be really fun to visit. So we've got our typical Chinese dumplings, which you can make with vegetables, with noodles, with bean sprouts, and almost always with some cabbage in there. Or pork, you could also put pork and cabbage is a classic. One of my favorite ways to cook dumplings. My friend from Japan taught me when we were in college, it was the way her mom would always make them. And then later I learned, it's called Winged Gyoza. So once you make all the dumplings, you fit them into a

frying pan, either a nonstick or a cast iron. You sort of just put them in there almost as tightly as possible with the flat side down. And you make a cake essentially. And so the starch as it cooks off of them as they're frying sort of sticks them all together. And so you put some oil in the pan, you put your pot stickers in, you let them fry and brown, and then you put some water on there and put a lid on and let them steam the rest of the way to finish cooking. And then you can un-mold that whole thing onto a plate and you have this beautiful cake of pot stickers that is super brown and delicious and crispy on the bottom.

Hrishi: So you want them to stick together?

Samin: Yeah, you want them to stick together, and then you have the fun of kind of pulling them apart. Another version of that. The winged Gyoza is where you put a few less in the pan so they're not all touching. And then you just make a little slurry out of cornstarch or potato starch and you pour that into the pan. And then that sort of turns into the starchy wings that sort of hold the thing together. And that way it's also like a little pancake. So that's one of the treats I really love. And I also think making any sort of dumpling with kids is really fun. So it's just a nice thing to get little hands involved in.

Samin: Other foods that I love to make inside of other foods

Hrishi: Yeah, can you suggest one that's maybe for the lazy cook like myself, where you can maybe more simply take a bread or some container, plop the stuff inside, and then just wrap it up and eat it, without having to do additional steps?

Samin: You're so lazy. Well, I guess you could always just take a piece of mortadella or turkey and put it inside some romaine lettuce.

Hrishi: Lettuce wraps is a real thing.

Samin: Yeah, a lettuce wrap. There's also... You know, stuffed cabbage rolls are another classic, that come from lots of different cultures, that are really delicious. There's also enchiladas, which are tortillas filled with other... Like you could do cheese or meats, and then pour a delicious sauce over that you could either buy in a can, or make quite simply out of peppers and tomatoes that you puree together, and some spices, and then bake that. Wow. This wrapping thing could go on forever. If you want a real project... And I've actually



been considering doing this myself... you could make tamales. Which are not really hard to make. They just take some time and some patience.

Hrishi: Really? from my perspective, they seem so elaborate. I love tamales so much, but I could never... I just, you know. They just seem like out of the realm of possibility.

Samin: They are not. I will say it's definitely, you have to make a time commitment to make them, but the great thing is they freeze really well, so you get to eat them for many, many, many days and meals to come. And they're easy to share with other people. And in this case, which it sounds like there are a lot of willing helping hands at Jacob's house, it's a really fun thing to do with other people. I did it on Thanksgiving. We made turkey mole tamales. I was having Thanksgiving with a group of people, some of whom were very avid and interested cooks, and other people who were like, "I don't want to touch anything." And I told everyone that the rule was you had to make at least one, just one. And by the time everyone made one, even the most negative, despairing people were like, "This is so amazing. This is so fun, and I want to do more. I want to do more." Because it is really fun. It's just really, really fun. So, the hardest part is, in my opinion, making the masa. You know, the corn filling, the corn part, the masa. I had never done that on my own before. I had always bought prepared masa that was already premixed with the fat and the water, so that it was already kind of this creamy texture. But I just made it in my stand mixer with some ground masa and warm water. I added some chicken stock, because I had it. And then I used a combination of chicken fat and lard, because I had both, but you could also just use oil or butter, if you don't have either of those. And some salt, and you could put a little baking powder in there. Then you have whatever you're going to wrap your tamales in. I had banana leaves, which I bought frozen at the Mexican grocery, but they also have them a lot of the times at the Chinese grocery, or any Asian grocery stores, or you could buy corn husks from a Mexican grocery or a Latin grocery, and soak them so they're soaked. Then you just smear a thin amount of that onto the leaf, and then you put whatever your filling is. And so, we made mole ones, but I also wanted to make some vegetarian ones, so I took some... poblanos and Anaheims, And I just put them directly over the flame on the gas burner, until all of the skin was sort of black and charred. Then I peeled that off and chopped those up, and mixed them with big pieces of Monterey Jack cheese, and that was the cheese and chile filling. So the filling was really easy to

make, honestly. It's a day long project, but you can make it with your kids, and educate them about Mexico, and Nixtamalization, and all sorts of good stuff. It's a edible lesson.

Hrishi: That reminds me of another early time that we hung out. Do you remember when you were here in L.A., and you were-

Samin: Oh, yeah. I know what you're going to say.

Hrishi: ... going to make tortillas? You were going to make tortillas, and you went and you got the masa, and then it turned out to be a huge failure, because they had given you the wrong kind of... They gave you tamale masa instead of tortilla masa?

Samin: Yeah. That's right. We had a taco party at my friend's house, and I invited all these people. I had done all this research to find out where to buy the best masa in L.A., and I drove really far, to the other side of town, to get prepared masa. Then we came back and none of the tortillas were working, and it took me a really long time, like an embarrassingly long time, to realize that I had bought the masa for tamales, and not for tortillas. And so, we ended up eating the entire meal on chips.

Hrishi: Exactly. Yeah, because you did try and make some tortillas out of them, and they, forgive me, did turn out quite bad.

Samin: No, they were so bad. They were so, so, so bad. I'm still living that down, honestly. Like, people still bring it up.

Hrishi: No, but that was-It was actually a really, really nice experience for me, because it... You know. I mean, I knew you a little bit, but it just made me a lot less intimidated to be around you, to have this experience where, you know, this like world-renowned chef is here, and is like, "Well, this didn't work out." I was like, "Okay. Yeah.

Samin: I'm happy to fail, to put you at ease.

Hrishi: Stars of cooking, they're just like us."

Samin: I learned my lesson, which was if you're going to make your own tortillas, have some store-bought ones as backup.

Hrishi: Okay. Just to go back one second, to lazy person foods... What about dishes that can be made where you don't have to create that

dough, the outer wrapping? Like, say you had something like a lavash, or pita bread, or something that's more easily store bought, that then you can fill that with something?

Samin: So like a sandwich wrap, you're talking?

Hrishi: Yeah, or like the hand roll it could be seaweed

Samin: Yeah, I think... Nori. I think nori's a good one. I think tortillas are good ones. I think lavash bread is a great one. Injera, if you can get your hands on it, the Ethiopian sponge bread. But those I think will just lead to different forms of sandwiches. And if you want to have a lot of fun with some kiddos, what I would suggest is making a variety of different rolled sandwiches on lavash breads or tortillas, and then you can slice them into slices, so you get to see the roll up, like the pinwheel?

Hrishi: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Samin: And so, if you use all sorts of different colorful vegetables, or things like cream cheese or you could put a little slice of deli meat or anything in there, then it's kind of a colorful way, and a little bit more exciting. I think it's that fun thing where you're making a surprise, and you're not sure what it's going to look like yet. You know?

Hrishi: It's like a bread-y version of maki, of sushi cut roll.

Samin: Totally. Yeah. It's bread sushi.

Hrishi: That sounds great. Yeah.

Samin: Thanks Jacob...

Hrishi: And Julia...

Samin: And Olivia...

Hrishi: For that question.

Samin: We love you.

Hrishi: Okay. Samin, I have a few questions here about meats and non-meats. I guess that counts all foods.

Samin: In other words, everything. Got it. Food.

Hrishi: Let me play you this question. This one comes from Sonal.

Sonal: My question is about fear and chicken. In about 2013, I got salmonella from eating chicken that was cooked in someone's home. Since then, I have developed a fear of eating undercooked chicken, and therefore don't cook it very much at home by myself. How do I cook chicken, and how do I cook it where I can be sure it's done without it getting so dry? Also, I do not have a meat thermometer, which would be probably a very simple resolution to this issue. And what are some really good, foolproof recipes? Thank you.

Samin: I don't know what the symptoms of having salmonella poisoning are, but I can imagine they suck.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: So I'm really sorry, and I can totally understand that you don't want to risk that again, because I've had regular food poisoning that's been so bad I've been totally debilitated. And I understand that that fear is real. But we're going to rid you of that, and the way we're going to rid you of that is with chicken thighs.

Hrishi: Why is that?

Samin: Okay. So, chicken breast is the thing that's going to get dry if you overdo it, and that's often the part of the chicken that gets undercooked, if people are so worried that they're going to overcook it. So I say just for now, avoid chicken breast for a while, and just stick to chicken thighs. Because the thing about chicken thighs is, they take a really long time to get to that point where the meat is falling off the bone tender, but if for any reason you pull them out of the oven or out of the pan before that, they're still cooked through, and you're not going to get food poisoning from them. The only thing that's going to happen is like you're going to have to sort of... Your teeth are going to have to work harder to get that meat off the bone. You know?

Hrishi: Yeah. Okay. Samin, guess what?

Samin: What?

Hrishi: Chicken butt. But more importantly, guess why?

Samin: Chicken thigh.

Hrishi: Exactly.

Hrishi: Okay. You may continue, now that I've gotten that off my chicken chest.

Samin: Okay. You had to really get that one out. Okay.

Hrishi: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Hrishi: Okay, so you take your chicken butt.

Samin: You take your chicken butt... I will say, chicken butt is also quite delicious. It's called the pope's nose.

Hrishi: Oh my God. The title of this episode might be-

Samin: I know, I know.

Hrishi: ... Guess What? Chicken Butt is Delicious.

Samin: Oh my gosh. We are monsters. We're monsters.

Hrishi: I'm not the one eating chicken butt. I think there's only one monster here.

Samin: No. A chicken... Okay. I don't know if it's the butt, but on the back of a chicken... On the back of a chicken, like if you make a roast chicken and you flip it over?

Hrishi: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Samin: There's like this little pointy bit sticking out through where the tail bones, tail feather would be, which one might consider to be the butt. It is called the pope's nose. It is largely made out of cartilage, and it often-

Hrishi: Wow, pope's nose. Rude.

Samin: No, just look. That's the sort of cook's term for it, I guess?

Hrishi: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Samin: Because it's this kind of like funny-shaped nose thing, nose-shaped, like ancient Rome nose.

Hrishi: Yeah, but why do you have to bring

Samin: The Pope into it?

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: Listen, it's very delicious. And it's often the part that the cooks fight over in the kitchen. Okay. Sonal. All right. Forget about the chicken butt. Forget about the pope's nose. Forget about all that stuff right now. Just focus on chicken thighs. Go buy yourself some bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs. Salt them, preferably a day in advance, but no worries if not. The very simplest way that you can cook them, is to just roast them. To put them on a pan. You could use a cast iron pan or a baking sheet. If you're using a baking sheet, I suggest lining it with parchment paper. Stick those chicken thighs on there, skin side up, and throw them in the oven at 425. They'll be done in about 45 minutes, when they're like really beautifully brown and the skin is crisp. And if for any reason you pull them out earlier, they'll be cooked after about 20 minutes. But they'll be really tender, and the meat will be falling off after about 45. You know, the way to check that meat's done, like bone-in meat is done, is just to sort of prick it at the bone with a knife or a fork, and see if that meat is peeling off the bone, if it's falling off the bone. The other thing is, you don't need a thermometer. What you can use is a fork, but it has to be a metal fork. So, stick that metal fork right into the center of the chicken thigh, right by the bone. Leave it in there for like 30 seconds, and then pull it out, and then touch the tines of the fork to your hand, to the skin on the top of your other hand. If it's warm or hot... You know. Really, you want it to be kind of like very warm or hot... then you know that the meat's cooked. It's kind of like a sensory thermometer.

Hrishi: Right, and she's not going to burn herself if she does that?

Samin: No, it will never be hot enough to burn yourself. It's either going to be cold, lukewarm, or warm. And if it's cold or lukewarm, it means

the meat is not cooked. If it's warm, it means the meat is cooked. If it's hot enough to burn yourself, it means that the chicken thighs have been in the oven at 500 degrees for 400 years. So it will never get that hot. And that's just the most basic way to start cooking chicken thighs. And I think once you do that, then you can expand to things like braises, you can then shred your chicken. Anything where the meat is shreddable that it's cooked through so you can shred it for tacos, you can shred it for enchiladas. You can shred it to put into a noodle salad or anything like that. I have a recipe that I really love in my book. I'm sure it's online. We'll find a version of it that's these five spiced chicken thighs that I used to make all the time and eat so much. So we'll link to that also.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: But chicken thigh is the way to get you out of your fear.

Hrishi: Awesome. Okay. Here's another question. There's no audio for it, but I'll just read it. It comes from someone who ate undercooked salmon and got chickenella.

Samin: I'm going to kill you. I can't even take it.

Hrishi: Okay. Moving on. Here's a question that we got from Heather.

Heather: I just moved into a new apartment right before the coronavirus pandemic hit. And my new roommate is vegan. My boyfriend, on the other hand, is more of a meat and potatoes kind of guy. So I'm wondering: What can I cook to please both of these people and myself, of course?

Samin: I love this problem because it's the story of my life. I also want to say even before I answer the question fully, which is as a person who eats meat and also is trying to be a little more thoughtful and careful about my own effect on the environment and the world, I really am trying to limit my own meat intake. So I think if you're a person who thinks that every meal should have meat, maybe rethinking that now that our food system is in such peril is not the worst idea. But far be it from me to tell you what to do. I'm just going to suggest some things. So I think there are going to be some meals that are going to be really, really satisfying for everyone. But I think there are things like making a whole roasted cauliflower. That can be so satisfying and you get to carve it like a piece of

meat, and you eat that together with one million sauces. And that can feel really filling. And my two favorite modulars, maybe my three favorite modular areas, obviously number one, I'm going to say tacos. There are things like rice and beans are going to be enough to make a really satisfying taco with some salsa. But then you can also make a little bit of shredded chicken, or shredded pork, or carnitas, or whatever, for meat eaters. So things like that I think are really wonderful. I love having a meal where it's made up of many parts on the table and every bite or every part of the meal gets to be a little bit different. So having multiple kinds of salsas, cheese, cream, any of that kind of stuff, cabbage slaw, so that every taco can be slightly different is always really fun for me. It's kind of a lot of work to make all of those parts. But then once you do, you have it for several meals. And then you can make chilaquiles the next day, stuff like that, so that's one option.

Hrishi: Maybe you could do a pasta where the meat in the pasta sauce, you do two batches of the sauce. You do one big thing of pasta, but then you do two sauces, one that has real meat in it and one that has vegetarian meat substitute. But you could basically be eating the same thing. But then I realized this is not answering the meat and potatoes kind of requirement. That's what really stumped me about it.

Samin: Oh, interesting. I think I'm taking the meat and potatoes really quite loosely. What I think of is more you put many things on the table and you let people choose the parts that make sense to them. So another idea that I had that I think is super tasty is to make sort of the Middle Eastern version of tacos, of a taco dinner, which is to have hummus and maybe falafel. You could even leave the falafel out honestly if you don't want to make it. But you can make several vegetable salads. You can make a carrot and raisin salad. You can make a beet salad, just marinated beets, a yogurt sauce, a tahini sauce. And then you could make chicken kabobs. Or there's a really classic version of hummus that has ground sauteed lamb on top that's really, really tasty, kind of like kima, so that there would be a meat option for somebody who doesn't feel like a meal is complete without that. But then there's also harissa sauce and zhug and all of these other sauces that just add so much flavor into a meal and can give you a really colorful and vibrant plate without any meat, and really without any dairy.

Hrishi: The idea that I had for them was just as simple of a switcheroo, I was really trying to think about taking the meat and potatoes part



literally, where I imagine you have some kind of potato side dish, like french fries or tater tots. And then for the carnivores, you make burgers. And for the vegans, you have a meatless burger. Again, you have your plate of fixings like you were describing, and so everybody can kind of make their own version of the burger. And the only thing that's changing is what the patty is.

Samin: Totally. I think that's a great idea and it's super simple. I also think there are a lot of really satisfying non meat burgers. And I don't mean fake meat. I mean things like portobello mushroom.

Hrishi: Oh for sure.

Samin: The one I really love, the mushroom is sliced in half crosswise, so it's thin, so you're not biting into quite as much mushroom. And then it gets battered in buttermilk and flour. If you're vegan, you can batter it some other way, and then deep fried. And so you have this, it's kind of like eating a fried chicken sandwich. It's kind of like eating a burger.

Hrishi: Wow. That sounds amazing.

Samin: I hope that helps.

Hrishi: Yeah. Thanks, Heather.

Samin: With the vegan and carnivore détente.

Hrishi: Let's meet in the middle about whether or not to have meat in the middle. Samin, we also got some questions about some specific ingredients that I thought were pretty interesting. There's one that we got from Morgan. She wrote, "I asked my spouse to order a piece of ginger to have on hand from our local grocery's online ordering portal. Instead of purchasing one unit of ginger, he purchased one pound." Friends have suggested I make ginger ale, but that does not sound appealing. Any tips?

Samin: Yes, sister.

Hrishi: First of all, your first instinct, a pound of ginger. Does that sound like a lot of ginger to you?

Samin: A pound of ginger's not a small amount, but it's also not a world ending. What am I going to do with all this ginger? I accidentally bought 50 pounds of oranges kind of thing. So also, the good thing about ginger is it lasts for a very, very long time. And I think we may have even said this earlier, but you can always peel and slice and freeze the ginger for future use if needed, so there's that. But if you don't feel like doing that, what I would suggest doing is making some fresh ginger cake. I have a recipe in my book that's based on the Chez Panisse recipe for the fresh ginger and molasses cake. Also, David, the Chez Panisse recipe is David Lebovitz's recipe, the great pastry chef and blogger and cookbook author. So we'll link to his ginger cake. It's so delicious. There's nothing like fresh ginger cake. It's so good. And because it's made with molasses, it kind of has this dark acidity to it. And you can use, I think minimum, four ounces in there,

Hrishi: And you make it with fresh ginger, not powdered ginger.

Samin: Yes. I mean, you bulk it up with some ... I think it's really nice to add also some powdered ginger as well, but the fresh ginger just makes it so spicy and lovely and delicious, so that's one thing. Another thing I think you could make some of and just sort of store and use over the course of a week, maybe not much longer, is you can make some ginger and garlic paste, which is a really sort of go to ingredient in a lot of Indian and subcontinental cooking. And if you don't want to make the complicated dish with 55 steps, you just make some ginger and garlic paste by either pounding it up or putting it in the food processor, equal amounts of raw ginger and raw garlic, and then covering them with some oil and keeping them in the fridge for I would say no longer than a week, because then botulism enters the picture. And I love using that at the beginning of when I'm about to saute some very fresh vegetables, so things like spinach that wilt really quickly, or at this time of year, we are starting to see asparagus and snap peas and even English peas. If you can't get fresh ones, you could use frozen English peas. But you just want to sizzle that fat and ginger and garlic really, really quickly. Oh, green beans is another really yummy place to do that. And then you get this really flavorful, aromatic, delicious vegetable side dish, so that's a yummy place to use it. What do you got?

Hrishi: Even though Morgan said she is not so thrilled about the idea of ginger ale, I would say as a non alcohol partaker, ginger has been my go to ingredient often when trying to have a fun drink while

everybody else is having their version of a fun drink. And so you don't have to have ginger ale, but you could use ginger in a beverage and make it really nice, like ginger and lime.

Samin: Ginger lemonade, yeah, ginger lime. Or the other thing, which I'm guessing if you don't like ginger ale, you might not like this either, but kombucha, you can use a lot of ginger in your kombucha.

Hrishi: We got another question about an ingredient that like ginger might be very commonplace to some people and very exotic for others.

Samin: I can't wait.

Hrishi: This person did not leave their name, so

Samin: Mystery caller.

Hrishi: Here we go.

Mystery Caller: My question is, "How do you incorporate kimchi in your cooking? Any ideas or recipes for me because it's very healthy. Thanks."

Samin: I love kimchi. I currently have three jars of it in my fridge. And actually also, one of them has ginger in it. And ginger I think really is a nice compliment to kimchi and to Korean cooking. So Morgan, if you want to jump in on the kimchi train, feel free. What I do most commonly with it, I often just eat it as the condiment to some sort of quick fried thing, or put it on top of eggs, or something like that. But I love it in grilled cheese. I think it makes a delicious grilled cheese.

Hrishi: Whoa.

Samin: I make a lot of kimchi fried rice with leftover rice and eggs and kimchi and whatever frozen vegetables I have, often peas make their way in there. If I have leftover spinach or broccoli, I throw that in there, or carrots. I think that's a really, really tasty kind of yummy quick breakfast or lunch.

Hrishi: I want to go back to the grilled cheese for a second. You put the kimchi in with-

Samin: Inside.

Hrishi: Inside while you're grilling it.

Samin: Correct.

Hrishi: Wow.

Samin: It has precedent with like a Reuben. Huh?

Hrishi: Oh, right. I was just thinking because of how I normally eat kimchi from the fridge, and so I think of it as a cold food, even as a condiment, not something that you would heat up.

Samin: No, there's so many things you can do. You can put it in your grilled cheese. You can put it in your fried rice. You can chop up kimchi, to return to an earlier question, and put it in your dumplings. My thing that I am currently obsessed with, and literally last night I went to bed thinking of this and how I was going to make this thing today. I am obsessed with kimchi pancakes from my local Korean restaurant. It's so good. So my number one source for Korean cooking, recipes and tips and information is Maangchi. I think she's a lot of people's number one source. She is a YouTube sensation. So in her kimchi pancake recipe, there's just kimchi, scallions, a little bit of sugar, flour, and water. So you basically just mix all that stuff up and fry it in a nonstick pan in abundant oil, and it gets this really crisp exterior and really satisfyingly chewy interior. I think that would probably be my number-one thing I would suggest that you make.

Hrishi: Oh yeah. I love kimchi pancakes. That's obviously a place I've had cooked kimchi.

Samin: You know, kimchi is definitely... its probiotic benefits are much stronger if you eat it raw, but they're not... I did do some reading about this, and they're not completely destroyed if you cook it. I usually cook it with a light touch, but even just the fiber, that fiber, it's good for you.

Hrishi: I have kelp kimchi in the fridge right now and I ate it the other day with not a Korean pancake but a pancake that Lindsey made from the sourdough starter. Every time she goes to feed it, she's been

making just one pancake that we share. It's not very big, but it's super good. She puts a little-

Samin: It sounds like wartime. She makes just one pancake, a little one that we share.

Hrishi: Yeah, it's true, but it's really good. She puts green onion in the pan and then pours the... and then makes the pancake on top of that and then takes it out and puts dill on top, and then we put a fried egg on top and chili oil and then we have kimchi on the side.

Samin: That sounds super good. Does she just use the straight starter or does she add other stuff or you wouldn't know?

Hrishi: I wouldn't... Hold on. Let me ask her. Let me go get her. Okay, we're back.

Samin: Oh, hello, special guest, Lindsey Hirway. Come tell us. When you use up the discard of the sourdough to make a pancake, do you just cook the straight discard or do you mix it with other flour and other stuff?

Lindsey: No, no, no. I just do the straight-up starter.

Samin: That's amazing. I did not know that you can do that. Now I want to try. Because you have to throw away so much flour.

Hrishi: Okay, Lindsey who is by the way so uncomfortable with being on the microphone she has already taken off the headphones and she's leaving.

Samin: Oh, Lindsey is gone?

Hrishi: Oh, goodbye.

Samin: Bye.

Hrishi: Okay. Mystery guest, I hope that answered some questions for you about what to make with kimchi. I'm gonna try it in a grilled cheese.

Samin: It's my preferred fermented cabbage. Don't at me, Germans.

Hrishi: Okay, joining us now is Yo Yo Ma. He is a legendary cellist who has 18 Grammys, a Presidential Medal of Freedom, and an incredibly generous spirit as I think you'll hear. I met Yo Yo Ma a couple years ago when I made an episode of my other podcast Song Exploder with him. And when the stay at home orders came down he started posting videos of himself on Twitter playing cello. He said "In these days of anxiety, I wanted to find a way to continue to share some of the music that gives me comfort. And you know, providing comfort is so much at the heart of cooking, and at the heart of what we wanted to do with this podcast. He said, he doesn't really cook but he'd be happy to talk to us.

Samin: Let's give him a call.

Yo Yo Ma: This is so much technology, I can't believe it.

Hrishi: I know. The video chat is happening on one device and then you have to record on the other, but you are recording?

Yo Yo Ma: Yes

Hrishi: Perfect.

Samin: Yeah. This is what Hrishi did to his dad.

Yo Yo Ma: Hrishi is a fanatic. He is a fanatic techno perfecto maniac.

Samin: Coming from you this is really, really putting things into perspective, because I definitely know him as a perfectionist, but if you're saying that.

Hrishi: Okay, let's talk about food.

Samin: Oh my gatos, For you, I'm so curious, because I know you don't think of yourself as much of a cook. We all eat, so I'm wondering what maybe is your comfort food during this time.

Yo Yo Ma: You know, I've been thinking a lot about how we imagine things. And one of the things I know that we all do really well is that we can imagine food. We can almost taste it. And I know my wife jokes with me because if she starts talking about food, and she'll look at me, says, "Aha. I see you salivating." It actually releases something physical. It just goes straight into like I'm salivating right now. I'm not even imagining a specific food. I was thinking before our call how if someone were trying to sell a house one of the things they do is say why don't you roast a chicken. People walk into the house, and they smell, "Ah, home cooking. Here's our home darling. We're moving in." And for me, it's the smell of a bakery. Because I was born in Paris, and where people do baking onsite, in the boulangerie, patisseries. At 5:00 in the morning you go out in the street and you can get this overwhelming smell of people making bread and French bread. As a child, I used to eat the croissants. As an old man, I'm still eating those croissants. But somehow ...

Samin: Me too. Me too.

Yo Yo Ma: ... they taste best there for some reason. That's a really, really strong early memory. You just can talk to me about a baguette or a croissant and you get this physical reaction from me, because it's right there.

Hrishi: If you can go back to that memory of comfort and the smell of the bakery and the taste of that Parisian croissant, what's the music that you hear? What's the music that goes along with that feeling?

Yo Yo Ma: Oh my gosh. I think of the apartment building that my parents lived in. We lived right next to the Sorbonne in the Latin Quarter. I could hear, the bells that would be ringing every quarter of an hour. So I could remember those sounds. I remember the sound of the radio. My parents would turn on a radio station where I think at 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening there would be a piece, I think it's Appalachian Spring. Then it would say, "Ici New York." Yes, associations of the songs I heard. Jacques Brel and Edith Piaf and all of those, the chansonnier. That music is very, very much this, "Ah." If I listen to it oh my gosh, I'm there.

Samin: That's so beautiful. I think of it for myself, I always talk about having a filing cabinet, like a flavor files. They're called flavor files. For me

as a cook, I have this thing where I want to travel everywhere and taste the real version of the thing in its place, so that I can file that away and then try and cook toward that when I get home. A big part of that is all of these memories and these very specific times that things brought me such joy or pleasure. That's what I'm trying to recreate for myself and for the people around me, or now that I write recipes and try and communicate that to others through my writing. I don't know. It's so beautiful.

Yo Yo Ma: It's wonderful that you talk about those memories, because I think for me a piece of music is not about so much notes or playing it, it's about actually creating or recapturing an emotional state of mind. Every piece actually is almost like a pill that takes you to a very specific state of mind. If you're in that state of mind, you can recreate it and if something doesn't go right, that doesn't matter. It means you don't worry about perfection. If I'm playing for somebody, it's very personal. I think it's like if you're cooking for somebody, I imagine it's the same thing. It's like you're giving them love. You're offering them something that you know might be useful. In fact, whenever I perform, I think I am throwing a party. Everybody that comes into a room is my guest, and I am the host. So instead of food, I'm offering them sounds. Those sounds are designed for them to have to get to a certain state of mind. That's part of the communing.

Samin: I totally agree with that.

Yo Yo Ma: What about, Samin, for you, do you have incredible memories of smells from your mother's cooking?

Samin: Absolutely, My mom used to pack these amazing picnics. Iranians are big into picnics. One of our biggest holidays in the year is a national picnic day. My mom, she was really a master at packing the cooler full of things. There was always flatbread and feta cheese and cucumbers and very, very cold fruit. Those more than even anything that my mom cooked, and she's an amazing cook, I think are the warmest and happiest childhood memories for me.

Yo Yo Ma: That's fantastic. What about you, Hrishi? Do your early memories comprise of foods?

Hrishi: Food was really the central language of love in my upbringing. My mom is an incredible cook and this was the way that she expressed



her affection for us and for people who would come visit us. Also, my house got the reputation for having the best food. All my friends would always come over to my house. We would hang out and then my mom would make us snacks or make us dinner. And because of that, I've been constantly searching to find a way to replicate those kind of conditions as an adult. I always want people to come to my place. That idea of comfort is being gathered with a bunch of people and really delicious food.

Yo Yo Ma: Did your mother make snacks?

Hrishi: Mine did.

Samin: What did your mom make?

Hrishi: My mom, she would make Indian snacks for sure, but then she got just into all kinds of snacks. My mom could make the greatest plate of nachos you've ever had in your life.

Yo Yo Ma: Wow!

Samin: Tell us more.

Hrishi: This was sort of like the Friday night hanging out, movie, snack in our house. One of the things that was special about it, too, was she would use red kidney beans. But she would treat them like Indian beans, like it would be rajma and that would be one of the layers along with the melted cheese and the jalapeno and the fresh tomatoes and the fresh red onion. It was a level beyond what I think any of my friends ever expected out of nachos, which was Velveeta and Tostitos.

Yo Yo Ma: That's fabulous.

Samin: I want your mom's nachos. Man, that sounds good. So have you had any fresh baked bread while you've been home?

Yo Yo Ma: Yes. Well, actually my wife started making some and that is amazing. Because I get very hungry and I have to resist immediately diving in and hogging the loaf, because it's not polite.

Lately I think because there's less food and when she's baking or making something. I just feel so grateful for every morsel of food I put in my mouth.

Samin: Thank you so much. It's been so nice to chat with you.

Hrishi: Thank you so much.

Yo Yo Ma: Samin, Hrishi thank you so much. Both of you, very very nice people.

Samin: Thanks so much to YoYo-Ma for joining us. You can follow him on Twitter @YoYo\_Ma

Hrishi: That's also where you can find his Songs of Comfort series, this music is from the first video he posted. It's Dvorak's Going home. You can find them with the #SongsofComfort.

Samin: Also, one of my personal favorite interviews with him is his Song Exploder episode.

Hrishi: We'll put a link to that and to his Twitter up on the Home Cooking website.

Hrishi: When we were talking to Yo Yo Ma, I noticed that I did something I noticed that I--well let me ask you this. How do you pronounce? C-R-O-I-S-S-A-N-T.

Samin: Okay, so this has been a lifelong issue for me also because there's a weird obsession with French in Iranian culture and, in Farsi, there's a lot of French words, so there's a lot of faux French pronunciation. I am like that fool who goes like... we'll be saying in English... I'll be like, "Oh, I'll take two cookies, three muffins and a croissant,"

Hrishi: Because that's what I did. I did that in..

Samin: It just hurts me to say croissant even though there are so many other French and words from other languages that I pronounce completely wrong. If we were just talking, I'd be like, "Da, da, da, da, da, and a croissant." I would sort of make it C-W-S-S-A-N-T.

Hrishi: It's tricky line to walk for me because, on the one hand, I don't want to sound like a pretentious jerk, and on the other hand, I don't want to sound like I am completely culturally insensitive to the correct way that things are pronounced. Food is such a great ambassador to other cultures, but then how do you treat that relationship respectfully while also making it feel like you don't have to be fluent in the language of the region where it comes from in order to be able to say the thing?

Samin: Okay, this is another podcast. That's a whole other podcast. Okay?

Hrishi: Yeah, yeah. Okay.

Samin: It's just very complicated. The end.

Hrishi: Well, it leads me to one more question that we got that comes from Jessica, because the first part of her question is just how to pronounce the thing that she's writing about, which I love.

Samin: Okay.

Hrishi: She writes, "First of all, how do I pronounce this word?" It's C-O-N-F-I-T.

Samin: Okay. I pronounce it confit, which is how I heard it way back when. I don't really know that there's another way to pronounce it. It's definitely not con-fit. If you said con-fit, I would have no idea what you're talking about.

Hrishi: You would throw a con-fit. Second, she says, "What does it taste like? Isn't it really oily? And is it possible to confit things that are not duck? Related question, can you use confit as a verb?"

Samin: Yes. Oh, this is fun. This is fun. Let me answer some of your more simple questions first. Jessica, you can absolutely use confit as a verb. Really, what it means is to cook slowly in fat, often the animal or ingredient's own fat, but some ingredients don't come with their

own fat, so we have to use another form of fat. I just think of it as poaching very slowly in fat until the thing is silky and soft and luscious in texture. You can make tuna confit, which I think of as just like poaching tuna in olive oil. You can make vegetable confits. One of my favorites in the summer is tomato confit, which is tomatoes that are very slowly cooked in olive oil until they're falling apart. They actually don't look like they're falling apart. They look held together, but the second they land on your tongue or on your plate and your fork hits them, they explode into a delicious, juicy mess. You can make artichoke confit. Probably, the classic form of confit is with duck. In the South of France in the mountain regions where, let's say, butter is less used and other fats are more used, duck confit is a really traditional dish, and it's made to preserve the duck for later use. The breast is usually eaten first, and then the leg is cooked very slowly in rendered duck fat and then preserved, pre-refrigeration preserved in the basement or in a cool cave under a comfy blanket.

Hrishi: Did you say a confit blanket or a comfy blanket?

Samin: A confit blanket. Oh God.

Hrishi: Confit? Okay.

Samin: It's a really tasty way to preserve your own duck at home, and you don't even need to wait weeks or months to eat it. You can eat it that same day. While there's a lot of fat involved in the preparation, you typically melt off all of the fat and save that for another use like cooking potatoes or making another round of confit. It's not that the meat that you're eating is super greasy. It's, of course, rich, but it's not any fattier than any other sort of pan fried or sauteed kind of dish. Another version of this dish that comes from another culture that we're probably all quite familiar with is carnitas, which is pork shoulder that's cooked very slowly in rendered pork fat, also known as lard. Then once it's so tender, falling-off-the-bone tender, it gets fried at a higher temperature to get crispies on the outside. Same thing as my favorite thing for duck confit, is once it's cooked, you sort of cook it skin-side down to render all of the fat out of the skin and get really crispy duck skin, and then you have the sort of melt-in-your-mouth bits that come from the leg and fall off the bone. It's super tasty.

Hrishi: So, was that our last question?

Samin: No, no, no. I don't want to end. How are we gonna end this thing?

Hrishi: That's a good question.

Samin: I just feel like we have to take a break on the podcast because if I give one more bean recipe, people are going to start calling me a has bean.

Hrishi: Now I know what it's like, and I like it.

Samin: It just doesn't feel very good, does it?

Hrishi: It feels great. I appreciate it. Well that's it for this episode Samin. And again, I guess this is the end of our four part mini series. When we first started talking about doing this show, the future was pretty uncertain. It did not seem like the quarantine was going to last this long, that we'd be stuck in our homes for this long. So four episodes seemed like plenty.

Samin: I know, and yet here we are. There's a lot of uncertainty in terms of what our lives are going to look like. And there is also a little bit of uncertainty in terms of if we're going to do more episodes, but puns not withstanding, I've had fun.

Hrishi: You don't have to say it with so much enthusiasm.

Samin: I mean I've had less fun hearing the puns. I've had more fun hearing from people all over the world about how they're cooking and what obstacles they're facing. And I have loved the idea that our stupid jokeys have brought people some comfort and joy and relief. I hope that we get to do it again. In some weird way, and maybe it'll be under better circumstances. But don't leave us because you never know what we are going to put in the feed.

Hrishi: That's right. Thanks so much Samin for doing the show with me. I also want to thank all the people who helped us make the show, Zach McNeese, our mixer, Margaret Miller, our editor, Gary Lee and Casey Deal.

Samin: And Mamie Reingold who made us our wonderful logo and all of the episode art.

Hrishi: Thanks to Richard Parks for the sound design in this episode and thanks to the Radiotopia podcast network for taking us under their wing.

Samin: And thanks to everyone who sent messages and questions

Hrishi: If we didn't get the chance to answer your question, I'm sorry but every single email was really appreciated.

Samin: We're going to leave the website up with lists of resources and every dish that we talked about and also links to buy the magnet and support our fundraiser for No Kid Hungry.

Hrishi: Our website again is Homecooking.show

Samin: If you want to support the show, you can leave us a rating or review on Apple podcasts, five stars only. That's what I say every time I put food out for my neighbors. I put out tapioca pudding, I'm like, "Leave us a review on Yelp, five stars only."

Hrishi: That's great. Follow us on social media so we can stay in touch.

Samin: I'm at Ciao Samin.

Hrishi: And I'm at Hrishi Hirway

Samin: Hrishi, happy cookies.

Hrishi: Samin, happy lasagna.

Samin: If you say happy lasagna, I'll kill you.

Hrishi: I said lasagna escape.

Samin: Well I hope to talk to you soon and in the meantime, stay healthy, eat well and take care of each other.

Hrishi: Thanks so much for listening! This has made quarantine so much more bearable. I hope you have lots of great meals and snacks between now and when the quarantine ends which will hopefully be soon.

Samin: Until then, I'm Samin.

Hrishi: and I'm Hrishi.

Samin: And we'll be home cooking.