

Matthew May's

TEACHING KITCHEN

BETTER LIVING THROUGH FOOD

“Bourbon, BBQ, and Blues”

Mach 8, 2025

BACON JAM (for brie crostini)

- 1 ½-pounds smoked bacon
- 2 medium sweet yellow onions, cut in ribbons (pole-to-pole)
- ½-cup plus 2 TBSP. balsamic vinegar
- ¼-cup bourbon (optional)
- ½-cup brown sugar
- 1-tsp. ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 400°F. Lay bacon slices out in a single layer on a foil-lined baking sheet. Bake for about 14 minutes, or until the bacon is browned and crispy. Transfer the cooked bacon to a paper towel-lined baking sheet, then transfer the rendered bacon fat into a small bowl. In a medium to large skillet, add 2 TBSP. of bacon fat to skillet and heat over medium-low heat. Add the onions to skillet and sauté onions for nearly an hour, while checking every ten minutes to stir and scrape up any brown bits that might form on the bottom of the pan. Once the onions are a dark golden brown in color, deglaze the pan with 2 TBSP balsamic vinegar and optional bourbon. **NOTE: bourbon is extremely flammable! Be sure to turn off the burner if working over a gas flame.** Add the remaining balsamic vinegar, brown sugar, and pepper. Stir until a thick glaze forms, about 5 minutes. At this point you may transfer you bacon jam to a food processor and puree the mixture into a smooth jam. I prefer to use it unprocessed. Store in a sealed container in the refrigerator up to 3 months.

SPICY BOURBON AND BROWN SUGAR SHRIMP

- 1-pound 16/20 shrimp (16-20 per pound), peeled, deveined, rinsed, and patted dry
- ¼-pound unsalted butter (1 stick)
- ½-tsp. “Barbecues Best” sea salt (found at www.eastcoastsaltcompany.com)
- ½-cup brown sugar
- 1/8-tsp. “Bourbon Smoked Red Chili Flakes” (found at www.eastcoastsaltcompany.com)
- ½-cup your favorite bourbon

In a large skillet, add butter while the pan is still cold. Heat skillet to medium-high heat. When the butter begins to melt, add the brown sugar, chilis, and Barbecues Best sea salt; stir. The water in the butter will dissolve the brown sugar and salt, while the fat in the butter will “bloom” the chilis (capsaicin). Turn off the heat. Add bourbon; stir. Bourbon is very flammable...so **DO NOT ADD BOURBON WHILE OVER A GAS FLAME BURNER!** Once the steam vapor has dissipated, return your pan to medium heat; stir. Continue to stir the entire time. Drag a wooden spoon along the bottom of the pan (this is called “making a trail”. This action will tell you when the sauce has reached the proper viscosity (thickness). Make a trail every minute or so, until the sauce slowly fills in the space made by the wooden spoon. Add shrimp and spread evenly along the bottom of the pan. Each shrimp should be touching the bottom of the pan and not on top of one another. Cook shrimp for about 1 minute, then turn shrimp over to cook the other side for another minute. *Total cooking time for shrimp should not be any more than 3-4 minutes, so be sure to have all your ingredients ready to go! Remove from heat and serve. Of course, you may add more chilis or leave it out altogether.

BBQ BACON & BOURBON MEATBALLS

- 2-pound lean ground beef (85%-86% lean is recommended)
- ½-pound smoked bacon, chopped

1 medium onion, minced
¾-cup fine breadcrumbs
½-cup whole milk or cream
¼-cup your favorite bourbon
¼-cup ketchup
¼-cup brown sugar
2 TBSP. your favorite hot sauce
2 TBSP. Worcestershire sauce
3-tsp. salt
1-tsp. ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a small bowl, combine breadcrumbs, milk, bourbon, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper and hot sauce. Stir to combine and set aside for about 10 minutes to allow breadcrumbs time to absorb the liquid (this is called a 'panade' and is used mainly for dishes made with ground beef to ensure that your finished product will remain juicy and not dry). In a large mixing bowl, combine all other ingredients and the panade. Using your hands, mix thoroughly until you don't see any clumps of the breadcrumb mixture. Measure out 2-3 TBSP. portions and roll them into balls. Place raw meatballs on a sheet pan or cookie baking pan. Once you have used all the meatball mixture, try to space the meatballs slightly separate from each other to allow more even baking. This allows the hot air to circulate more evenly around the meatballs. Bake for about 20 minutes. Rotate the pan 180°. Rotating the pan halfway through cooking allows for even browning. Bake for an additional 15-20 minutes. Insert a stemmed thermometer into one of the meatballs in the center of the pan. You are looking for an internal temperature of about 160°F at this point. The meatballs around the outer edge of the pan will cook faster than those on the inside of the pan. Once the meatballs on the in the center of the pan have reached a temperature of 160°F, remove the meatballs from the oven. Allow them to rest for 5-10 minutes. The temperature of the meatballs will continue to climb as they rest. This is called "carry-over-cooking". Remove from pan and serve.

APPLE or PEACH BOURBON BREAD PUDDING

bourbon sauce

¼-cup brown sugar
4 TBSP. butter
¼-cup bourbon
Dash of Matthew's Bourbon & Brown Sugar Sweet Salt (found at www.eastcoastsaltscompany.com)

bread pudding

1 large egg
¾-cup heavy cream, light cream, or half and half
1 TBSP. sugar
¼-tsp. ground cinnamon
½-tsp. vanilla
2-cups dry, leftover bread, 1" cubes
1 Granny Smith apple; peeled, cored, diced OR 1-cup peaches; peeled and sliced
Additional butter to grease the baking pan
Fresh whipped cream (optional)

In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, add butter, brown sugar, bourbon, and sweet salt. Stir and allow to simmer slightly. Sauce will become slightly foamy. Remove from heat and set aside.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Thoroughly butter the bottom and sides of a 3X9-inch loaf pan. In a medium sized mixing bowl, whisk together eggs and heavy cream; add sugar, cinnamon, and vanilla. Add the cubed bread and apples or peaches, stir to fully distribute the cream and egg mixture. Allow enough time for the bread to absorb the custard (about 5-7 minutes) before proceeding. You may need to add a little more cream if you notice any bread that has not absorbed the custard. Transfer mixture to the prepared baking dish. Bake on middle/center oven rack for about 20-30 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove from oven, run a knife around the perimeter of the bread pudding to create space around the outer edge. Pour bourbon sauce over the top of the hot bread pudding, being sure to include the outer edges. Sauce will be absorbed into the hot bread pudding. Serve warm with ice cream or whipped cream. This is my absolute favorite! Option: use peaches instead of apples!!! You're welcome!