

DINNER

CHANGING THE GAME



มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลพระนคร

ห้องสมุดสาขาโชติเวช



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MELISSA CLARK

Dinner showcases the inventive yet unfussy approach to cooking that will make anyone a better and more confident cook.

Dinner has the range and authority—and the author's trademark warmth—of an instant classic. With more than 200 all-new recipes, *Dinner* is about options: inherently simple recipes that you can make any night of the week.

Each recipe in this book is meant to be dinner—one fantastic dish that is so satisfying and flavor-forward it can stand alone—maybe with a little salad or some bread on the side. This is what Melissa Clark means by changing the game. Organized by main ingredient—chicken, meat, fish and seafood, eggs, pasta and noodles, tofu, vegetable dinners, grains, pizza, soups, and salads that mean it—*Dinner* covers an astonishing breadth of ideas about just what dinner can be. This is the kind of easy cooking that makes the most of a few ingredients and simple techniques. Many nights you'll need only a sheet pan or one pot, other times you'll have the benefit of a make-ahead dish that requires just a little time in the oven.

Melissa Clark's mission is to help anyone, whether a novice or an experienced home cook, figure out what to have for dinner without ever settling on fallbacks.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most thrilling moments of culinary discovery in my life was when, at age 16, a friend and I took ourselves out to dinner at a “fancy” restaurant with our babysitting money.

We were paying. We were without any grown-ups. And we could eat anything we wanted.

For the first time in my life, I didn’t have to order a “proper meal.” I didn’t even have to get an entrée. What I craved was two appetizers, the crab salad and the rustic pâté. Then my friend and I split three desserts. It felt both rebellious and liberating, and very adult.

I think these days a lot of us eat this way at restaurants, putting meals together from a variety of small plates and side dishes and splitting entrées and desserts. We aren’t afraid to mix it up to get what we really want.

But at home, dinner still often means a protein and two sides. A meat-and-two-veg. And this can make cooking dinner night after night a challenge because it ignores our evolution as a food culture. That’s not how most of us eat—or want to eat—on a daily basis. Today’s dinner can take a lot of different forms. But the conundrum for cooks is that we haven’t defined what those forms are. So it’s left many of us struggling in a void between what we *think* a proper meal should be, and what we actually *want* to cook and eat for dinner.

But the fact that our collective tastes have changed is a boon for the cook, an excuse to get creative. We’ve fallen love with all kinds of diverse ingredients: preserved lemons, kimchi, miso, quinoa, pork belly, panko. And now that these ingredients are becoming more available, they can become kitchen staples, expanding our horizons once we figure out how we like to use them.

And they’re a path out of the tyranny of a perfectly composed plate with three distinct elements in separate little piles. The chicken, the carrots, the rice. The meatloaf, the mashed potatoes, the peas.

At least for me, even more pleasing is a giant salad filled with oozing, creamy Burrata cheese, ripe juicy tomatoes, and peaches (page 344). Serve it with a baguette you picked up on the way home or squirreled away in your freezer, and maybe some salami and that’s all you need for a meal. Likewise, a grain bowl made from brown rice or red quinoa and topped with corn, black beans, and avocado, or fried tofu and kimchi. Or

how about curried lentils with runny eggs and cool spiced yogurt? Or a simplified chicken pho with rice noodles and crispy chicken skin?

These are one-pot (or bowl) meals that reach a very high bar, both in terms of taste and also preparation. Less is more here. More flavor, less work.

That's what this book is about. It's designed to help you figure out what to make for dinner without falling back on what you've eaten before. It's about giving you options, lots of options. Are you a vegetarian or just a vegetable lover? I've got you covered. A die-hard meat lover? A fish enthusiast? A pasta aficionado? A culinary explorer ready to take on a challenge? Or the kind of cook who wants to revel in the comforting and familiar, but with a twist—a dash of Sriracha, a sprinkling of Turkish chile, a spoonful of minced preserved lemon or Indian lime pickle. Adding flavor in unexpected ways using condiments makes dinner better, but without any extra work once you've stocked your pantry (see pages 17 to 19). And the payoff is exponential.

In these pages, it's all here for you.

With the exception of the go-withs (which you can take or leave—or turn to when you're having friends over), each recipe in this book is meant to *be* your dinner—one fantastic dish that shines bright on the table. Maybe you'd prefer to round it out with a simple salad and some crusty bread. Or maybe that pizza with broccoli rabe and chile flakes is all you want and need.

It's up to you.

Giving you choices and helping you to expand the way you think about dinner is what I mean by changing the game.

It's about retooling one's mindset. It's about acquiring new muscle memory. This can be hard. But with more than 200 recipes and ideas from which to choose, it becomes at least a little less daunting.

Even better, once you get into the groove, cooking dinner can morph from a dreaded chore into a beautiful dance.

Case in point: the first time you make Cacio e Pepe with Asparagus and Peas (page 179), a springtime staple in my house, it might take 30 minutes. The second time, 25 minutes. And by the third time it will take you exactly 2 minutes longer than it took the pasta to cook. Along

the way you'll have developed the skills necessary to make any pasta dish in this book—or to develop your own personalized recipe.

Here's what this kitchen choreography can look like:

First, you make a bold entrance. Eduoard de Pomiane, the great French chef and author of the famous *French Cooking in Ten Minutes*, first published in 1930, suggested that as soon as you walk in the house, before you've even taken your hat off (they all wore hats back then), you should put a pot of water on to boil. Chances are you will need it for something in your meal, and if not you can at least use it to make your coffee when you're done (they all drank coffee after dinner back then; I would make mint tea).

While the water comes to a boil, you're trimming and slicing your asparagus and heating up your skillet. Water boils, salt and pasta go in, butter goes in the skillet followed by plenty of coarsely ground pepper—enough to make you sneeze if you're sensitive like that. Sauté for a minute, then add your pasta and peas or asparagus. Stir in your cheeses and butter and a little more pasta water. Voilà, you're a Cordon Bleu chef in ten minutes.

Of course you're drinking wine and chatting with your loved ones while you do this. Or maybe you're rocking out to your favorite jams while you chop. Or you're enjoying a precious moment of serenity and quiet before dinner.

Engineer your cooking time so that it's one of the most satisfying and loveliest moments of the day. That sweet spot—the glass of wine, the conversation, the good food—is what I look forward to all day long. It's my daily equivalent of the weekend, when I can exhale and relax.

I've written this book to guide and inspire you to this happy and delicious place, but really, once you learn the basic dance, you can take the lead. After all, no matter what you read or what recipes you follow, it's you who is in command of your nightly meal. Take charge, go forth, and conquer. And, most of all, enjoy!

INGREDIENTS TO KEEP ON HAND

FOR GETTING DINNER TOGETHER EASILY

A well-stocked pantry is your key to dinner freedom. With a bevy of condiments, sauces, and spices to choose from, you will always have options. The next time you pick up a piece of chicken or fish or tofu on the way home from work without a plan, you'll know you've got what it takes to make it come out great. Below are the ingredients I like to keep on hand. Most are easy to find, and if you lay them in you'll be able to make pretty much any recipe in this book. And having them there will be an added enticement to try—or create—something new.

EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

You'll need two kinds: an inexpensive supermarket oil for cooking, and a more expensive high-quality oil to use for drizzling and salads. Use the cheaper oil when you're going to heat it up (which destroys some of the nuances) and the good stuff raw when its flavor really counts.

LEMONS AND LIMES

Keep citrus in the fridge for making salad dressings and also for adding brightness to any dish that needs a lift. If a dish seems to be lacking a little something but you aren't sure what, try a squeeze of lemon or lime and a pinch of salt. That should do it. Buy organic so you can use the zest as well as the juice.

GARLIC

Of course you should always have garlic on hand. Store it out of the light in a cool place. Mine is in a mesh basket tucked away in a kitchen drawer.

FRESH GINGER

I always keep some in the fridge in a sealed container for longer storage. It

lasts for weeks if you buy it when it's fresh and plump.

MUSTARD

You need two types of mustard: smooth, sharp Dijon and crunchy, whole-grain mustard. For the Dijon, a bright, vibrant yellow indicates a higher quality and fresher mustard. I like extra-spicy Dijon for salad dressings, marinades, or just dipping and spreading. Grainy mustard is nice when you want texture and crunch.

VINEGARS

Vinegar adds acidic punch whenever you need to balance sweet and salty. There are many vinegars out there, but here are the essentials:

- **White wine vinegar** works well for adding a mild hit of acid to delicate dishes and baby lettuces.
- **Red wine vinegar** has more of a zing to it but also an underlying fruitiness. Use it where you want a more pronounced, wine-y flavor.
- There is a range of **balsamic vinegars** out there—some sweeter

and richer, some brighter and more tart. The best come from Modena and tend to be more expensive. Use the higher-quality stuff when you're using a drizzle of balsamic to finish a dish. Inexpensive supermarket brands are fine for cooking. I always have one of each.

- **Cider vinegar** has a fruity, mild flavor. It goes well with mustard for salad dressing. And it's my favorite way to add sourness to a fruit-filled meat dish, like a roast pork with apples. Raw (unpasteurized) cider vinegar has more flavor than pasteurized and will last for months in your cupboard.
- **Rice vinegar** is a staple in Asian cuisine, but don't limit yourself there. It has a mild, citrusy flavor that works well with starches, vegetables, and meat.
- **Sherry vinegar** is nutty, oxidized, and a bit honeyed. It is sharper than red wine vinegar and deeper tasting, too.

- **Chinese black vinegar** Also known as Chinkiang vinegar after the Chinese province from which it comes, this tart, deep brown liquid is often served with soup dumplings at Chinese restaurants. It might look like soy sauce, but expect something totally different. Vaguely reminiscent of balsamic vinegar in its sweet/acid balance, it's also more pungent, with an earthy note. You can find black vinegar at specialty food stores or Asian markets. If you can't find it, substitute balsamic, though the dish won't be quite the same.

SOY SAUCE

There is light and dark soy sauce, and both are equally salty. Dark soy sauce is thicker and richer tasting, with more going on. Never buy reduced sodium soy sauce; it's just watered-down soy sauce, which you can do yourself if you're watching your salt intake. Japanese soy sauces tend to be a bit sweeter than Chinese soy sauces. Tamari is a dark and slightly thick Japanese soy sauce.

ASIAN FISH SAUCE

Fish sauce is the salty, funky key to Asian cooking. It is made by fermenting salted fish that have been packed into jars and left in the sun. The pungent liquid that collects in the jars after several months is what gets bottled and sold. A tablespoon or two adds an incredible depth to stocks, vinaigrettes, marinades, and sauces. You can find fish sauce

at most supermarkets or specialty food stores. When shopping, look for *nuoc mam* or *nam pla* fish sauce. It should be a caramel-colored liquid made from fish, salt, and water alone (without preservatives).

POMEGRANATE MOLASSES

This is an intensely sour syrup with a fleeting, caramelized sweetness. It's made by cooking down pomegranate juice, water, sugar, and lemon juice or citric acid until the mixture turns dark brown and sticky. It's usually drizzled over salads, dips, and cooked dishes as a finishing condiment in Turkish and Middle Eastern cuisine, but you can also add it to pan sauces for a sweet tang. Balsamic vinegar can work as a substitute.

SUMAC

Sumac berries, which are grown on trees native to the Mediterranean, North Africa, and Asia, are dried and ground into a purplish powder that adds color and a subtle, fruity smack of flavor to all kinds of dishes. Sprinkle it on soup, grilled meats, roast vegetables, dips, and crostini. If you've ever tried za'atar, you've tried sumac, one of its key components.

TURKISH CHILE FLAKES

There are several varieties of chile flakes from Turkey and nearby Syria, including Aleppo, Ufra, and Maras. They are moister, stickier, and saltier than the standard chile flakes or powder we are used to, with

a smoky, complex, and somewhat milder heat. **Urfa** is the richest and darkest of the three, with a bitter chocolate character, while **Aleppo** and **Maras** are redder and more fruity and bright. I like to use them as a garnish to add color and a gentle bit of heat to soups, stews, and dips (and eggs, they are wonderful on fried eggs). If you can't find them, substitute ground smoked paprika or cayenne pepper in smaller amounts.

SICHUAN PEPPERCORNS

This reddish-brown spice comes from the Sichuan province of China, and is not, in fact, related to true peppercorns or chiles, as they are from another variety of plant entirely. They pack an intense, mouth-numbing heat and an earthy, camphor-like taste that is indispensable in many Sichuan dishes. They will keep for years in your spice bin, as long as you don't grind or pound them until right before using.

HARISSA

Harissa paste combines chiles, caraway, coriander, cumin, garlic, and sometimes mint, lemon, and tomato, all in one tube (or jar, depending on the brand). It comes from North Africa, where it is used as a fiery condiment for tagines, couscous, and falafel, and as an ingredient in marinades, dips, soups, and sauces. Harissa is quite spicy and smoky, so use it sparingly when cooking.



SRIRACHA CHILE SAUCE

This is a bright red, smooth sauce of chile peppers, sugar, salt, garlic, and distilled vinegar. It's one of the most approachable sauces because it's not very spicy and has a mildly sweet undertone. Because it's pureed, it gives you an even heat so you don't have to fear biting into an incendiary hot pepper seed when you weren't expecting it. Sriracha is most popular as a condiment, but you can also use it as an instant marinade or add it to dips (Sriracha mayonnaise is one of my favorites; mix the two to taste).

CHILE GARLIC PASTE

Chunkier and more garlicky and pungent than Sriracha, chile garlic sauce also packs more heat because of chile pepper seeds throughout.

SAMBAL OELEK

Similar in texture to chile garlic sauce, *sambal oelek*, from Indonesia, lacks garlic—just chiles, vinegar, and salt. Use it in dressings, sauces, and marinades, or as a condiment on rice bowls or for soups.

THAI RED CURRY PASTE

This paste is meant to give you a head start on Thai red curry: mix it into hot coconut milk, add vegetables, and you've got dinner. The basic red curry paste you'll find at the supermarket is a blend of dried red chiles, lemongrass, galangal, kaffir lime, and spices like cumin, coriander, and black pepper. With one spoonful, you get all these

flavors into your pot. An opened jar keeps for months in the fridge, especially if you top it with a layer of oil to help preserve it.

PRESERVED LEMONS

These are lemons that have been fermented in their own juice along with plenty of salt and often spices like peppercorns, bay leaves, and cardamom or dried chiles. They are a staple in Moroccan and Middle Eastern cooking but shouldn't be reserved for just that—they add a zesty, saline, and slightly musky flavor anywhere you use them.

Always remove the lemon seeds before mincing up the flesh and peel altogether to add to dishes, or spoon off some of the pungent juices to stir in. They will last for years in the fridge once you get a jar. So don't be afraid to buy a big one.

INDIAN PICKLES

Funky, spicy, salty Indian pickles are an acquired taste, but if you're as hooked as I am, you'll want to keep a jar on hand in the fridge, where it will pretty much last forever. They are fermented in the same way as preserved lemons, but with added chiles and spices, making them much hotter and more pungent. Lime and lemon are the most popular kinds, but look for carrot, garlic, and mango pickles as well. You can find them at Indian markets or online.

KIMCHI

There are many types of kimchi in Korean cuisine (cucumber, radish, chive), but in this book when I call for kimchi, I mean pickle-y fermented cabbage, which is what you're most likely to find in supermarkets as well as Asian groceries. Most kimchis contain some kind of fishy element—dried shrimp or fish—that have been fermented along with the vegetables and chiles. If you're a vegetarian, look for jars specifically labeled as vegetarian kimchi. Use kimchi as a condiment alongside grain and rice dishes, or chopped up and added to soups and stews. Its slightly sour, fiery flavor adds depth, heat, and a little crunch.

ZA'ATAR

This is a Middle Eastern herb and spice blend that usually contains some combination of thyme, oregano, sesame seeds, and sumac. You can order it online from a spice market if you can't find it at your local (large) supermarket. Since your za'atar may or may not contain salt, taste it before using. If it's very salty, reduce the salt in the recipe.

If you can't find za'atar, combine equal parts of dried thyme, dried oregano, and sesame seeds in a small bowl, and then add a large pinch of ground sumac if you have that on hand.

ROAST A CHICKEN AND YOU'LL ALWAYS HAVE DINNER

Roast chicken is the iconic home-cooked meal, what we picture when we think of Dinner with a capital D. Learning how to make an excellent roast chicken—from the simplest salt and pepper version on page 24, to more elaborate recipes—is the one surefire thing you can do to up your dinner game for the better.

SOME ROAST CHICKEN TIPS

CHOOSE A GOOD BIRD

Look for **air-chilled organic birds**. The air-chilling means they aren't processed with water after slaughter, which dilutes their flavor and makes the skin soggy. Organic ensures a better diet, which in turn makes the bird taste better.

PREP THE CHICKEN

I never truss my chickens, but if you would like to, do so after seasoning the bird. I roast breast side up and never turn my chicken as it cooks. If your chicken comes with a bag of offal tucked inside the cavity, freeze the gizzard and neck for stock, and sauté the liver in butter with a rosemary branch for a snack if you like. Then pat the chicken down and trim off any large blobs of fat from the cavity. I leave the wing tips on my chickens because I like to eat them, but you can cut them off with kitchen shears if you prefer.

USE PLENTY OF SALT AND SEASON AHEAD

You need to make sure you add enough salt to season your chicken before you start roasting. You'll need approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoons coarse kosher salt per pound of chicken—or slightly less if you're using fine sea salt (this ratio works for any bone-in chicken recipe, by the way, not just for whole chickens). I prefer Diamond Brand, which is a bit fluffier and coarser in texture than other kosher salts. Ideally, before roasting you'd let your seasoned bird rest uncovered in the refrigerator overnight. The cold

refrigerator air helps to dry out the skin, which in turn will crisp up more delightfully when you roast it.

But even letting your seasoned chicken rest for half an hour makes a difference. You can leave the salted bird on the counter at room temperature for up to 30 minutes. Any longer than that, stick it in the fridge.

CRANK UP YOUR OVEN

For the most gorgeously browned bird, roast it in a very hot oven. I generally call for 450°F, but if your oven has a tendency to smoke at high temperatures, you can roast at 425°F instead. The bird might need a few extra minutes, so watch it carefully. It's done when it's burnished and crisp all over, and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the breast reads between 145 and 155°F. I pull it at 150°F because the temperature continues to rise when the chicken rests, so don't go above 155°F. And if you don't have a thermometer, use a paring knife to make a small slit into a chicken thigh near the joint and look to make sure neither the juices nor the meat itself is pink.

GIVE IT A REST

Before carving, always let your bird rest for about 10 minutes. If you like you can tent it with foil to keep it warm. But that will diminish the crispness of the skin as the steam rising off the bird gets trapped by the foil. So I never cover it. I'd rather keep the crunch at the expense of some heat.

MAKE A ROASTING GAME PLAN

In this book, I give you my three favorite options for roasting a chicken: whole, spatchcocked, and splayed. Each option has its virtues and I recommend giving them all a try at least once.

WHOLE ROASTED

A **whole roasted chicken** is the most classic version and will give you an elegant and traditional looking bird. But it does take the longest to cook through, and can, if you're not careful, cook unevenly, with the breast reaching doneness, and drying out, before the thighs are finished. Always watch a whole bird carefully to catch the sweet spot when all the flesh is perfectly cooked.

SPATCHCOCKED

Spatchcocking your bird (also called butterflying), gives you **particularly burnished crispy skin** and cooks the bird more quickly, too, in under 45 minutes. You can ask your butcher to spatchcock your chicken for you, or you can do it yourself. It's actually not that hard, and it's a nifty and useful skill to possess.

To spatchcock a chicken, place the bird on a work surface, breast-side down. Using a sharp knife or kitchen shears and starting at the tail end, cut along one side of the backbone. Open up the chicken, flip it over, and press it down like an open book. Press firmly on the

breastbone to flatten it; you'll feel it pop.

SPLAYED

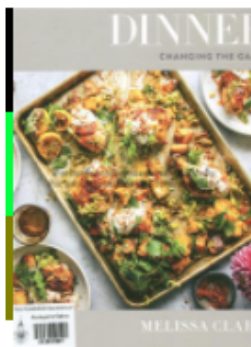
Splayed chickens are my own personal twist on a skillet-roasted chicken, and the technique gives you succulent white meat and perfectly cooked dark meat all at once. The thighs, usually the last part of the chicken to finish cooking, get a jump start by being pressed into a preheated skillet. Then the breast cooks more slowly.

To splay a chicken, place the bird on a cutting board. Using a sharp knife, cut the skin connecting the legs to the body. Splay (or pull) the thighs open until you feel the joint pop on each side. Spread the thighs out so they can lie flat against the bottom of the pan when you put them in the skillet.



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