

A new take on fried rice

Last year, in the springtime, I had a conversation with a friend that went something like this: “I only eat fried rice if I make it. I never order it out.” Then I met BDN writer Kathleen Pierce for lunch at Empire Chinese Kitchen in Portland and saw a duck-fried rice on the menu that I had to try.

Honestly, I broke my personal rules because I love duck, which isn’t something I ever make at home.

And I am so glad I did. That fried rice was richly seasoned and filled with veggies and duck. Practically addictive, I ate as much as I could and then brought the

rest home, where both my kids tried it. And ultimately, my daughter confiscated it as her own.

As I started working on the recipe for this week’s column, I thought of that fried rice. It broke the rules of what fried rice typically is. Instead of a slightly greasy blend of white onions and meat bits, it was a hearty dish with duck, ginger, green beans and bean sprouts. It had the essence of traditional American Chinese restaurant fried rice but with a more sophisticated feel.

This fried rice also breaks the rules. It’s vegan — no meat or meat products are in this — and it’s primarily made with veggies from the farmers market. And speaking of veggies, it has a lot. Particularly a lot of beets.

Mmm ... beets.

But let’s be clear: If you hate beets, this recipe isn’t going to convert you into a beet lover. Really, it’s not for you.

If you do love beets though, this is a real treat ... a completely different way of enjoying them with their flavor enhanced and altered with new flavors. Try this. Love it. My kids and I do.

This recipe is for those of us who love the earthy sweetness of beets, who appreciate both the firm, meaty portions and the earthy leaves. It’s for those of us

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Delicious escapades with scapes

If you grow garlic, you know that the plant sends up a fetching coiled stem with a long-billed flower bud, which, if you leave it on the plant, will bloom and prevent proper formation of an underground bulb. You really have to take the scapes off the plants, and you might as well use them for something. Or perhaps you don’t grow garlic, but see scapes for sale at the farmers market or in your CSA box.

For an early season blast of fresh garlic flavor, scapes are terrific, or if you don’t want to cook with them, they are gorgeous in a flower arrangement.

Scapes are useful, chopped finely, for everything from omelets to stir fries, spaghetti sauce or chili, anything that calls for garlic.

Each year, I cut mine off and make several batches of scape pesto. Twenty-four scapes produce a pint of pesto; I chop off the tough part of the lower stem and the fibrous bill, keeping the flower bud and chunk it up into 3- to 4-inch pieces. I toss those into the food processor, add a drizzle of olive oil, and whirl it into a paste that I put into half-pint jars to keep in the freezer.

When I run out of garlic cloves in the spring (or when the older bulbs dry out or start sending up little green shoots), I use the scape pesto for garlic flavor wherever I need it. That is my single most useful scape product.

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SARAH WALKER CARON
MAINE COURSE



LINDA COAN O'KRESIK | BDN

Scott Magnan, a brew master at Mason’s Brewing Co. in Brewer, uses a refractometer to check the gravity of a hefeweizen recently.

From basement to brew pub

Mason’s offers craft beers for everyone at waterfront spot

BY SHELBY HARTIN
BDN STAFF

Scott Magnan keeps a careful eye on the mash tun, an enormous vessel in his workspace at Mason’s Brewing Co. His gaze shifts between it and the brew kettle on his other side, continuously monitoring their progress. In the mash tun, water runs through a grain bed to extract wort, which runs off into the brew kettle, where hops have been added. The mixture eventually will come to a boil and then be cooled, a yeast strain will be added to the fermenter and then the waiting begins.

After a span of between 16 and 30 days in the fermentation vessels, the result is conditioned and finally becomes a drink that has been around in one way or another for thousands of years.

Beer.
On this particular Thursday, Magnan and Forrest Brown, both brewery operators at the company, will put in about nine hours to prepare a hefeweizen. They work methodically, Magnan said, and perhaps a bit slower than others, but they want to make sure they do it right.

“You want to get the grain bill, the hop amount and the yeast to come together into one big, happy unit to make a well-rounded beer,” Magnan explained.

Both Magnan and Brown wear safety goggles and heavy-duty work clothes. They look like they’re undertaking a grand-scale science experiment — and in reality, that’s what brewing beer is: scientific.

Magnan started home brewing in 2005, which isn’t quite as long as his brother-in-law Chris Morley, who is also the company’s owner.

“This is a glorified version of my basement. I built a building that I would want to sit and hang out in. I drink beer that I would want to drink more than one of, and I eat what I would want to eat when I go

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LINDA COAN O'KRESIK | BDN

A view overlooking the Penobscot River out the dining room windows at Mason’s Brewing Co. in Brewer.



Mason’s Brewing Co. opened in May along the Penobscot River in Brewer.



ABEL URIBE | CHICAGO TRIBUNE | TNS

Remember geometry’s plane – the way it’s all surface, no depth? Applied to the burger, it produces infinite sizzle.

Smashed burgers: You’ve got to try ’em

BY LEAH ESKIN
CHICAGO TRIBUNE (TNS)

Sizzle is the best part of the burger. But it’s limited to side A and side B. In between lurks the granular middle — it’s a lot of ground to cover.

Solved by the genius of math. Remember geometry’s plane — the way it’s all surface, no depth? Applied to the burger, it produces infinite sizzle.

Here’s how to work the equation: Divide ground beef by two, roll each half into a sphere and,

in a hot pan, smash with a spatula. The flattened patty plane browns to a sizzle on side A, sizzle on side B — no middle. Stack patty 1 on patty 2, sandwiching a slice of American cheese.

The result is a four-sided burger with a molten core.

How’s that for higher math? Provenance: This recipe, which uses a technique popularized by the chain Smash Burger, is adapted slightly from Food 52, which credits food scientist J. Kenji Lopez-Alt and the website Serious Eats.

Smashed Burger

Makes: 1 serving

- 1 hamburger bun (preferably a Martin’s Potato Roll)
- Butter, softened
- Fixin’s — mayo, mustard, ketchup, onion, tomato, etc.
- 4 ounces ground beef chuck or other ground beef (not lean)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 1-ounce slice American cheese

1. Toast: Spread inner faces of the bun with butter. Heat a skillet or griddle over medium. Toast bun, butter-side down, until golden, one to two minutes.
2. Prep: Set the bun on a plate, open-faced. Pile fixin’s of choice on the bottom bun.
3. Roll: Divide beef and roll into two 2-ounce balls. Heat a dry skillet over medium-high.

4. Smash: When skillet is very hot, add the two beef balls. Immediately smash each with the back of a stiff metal spatula (use some muscle), creating two very thin patties, each a little wider than the bun. Season each with salt and pepper. Cook until browned on the bottom and a mottled gray/pink on top, about 45 seconds.

5. Flip: Scrape up and flip both patties. Top one with cheese. When the patty bottoms have browned (about 15 seconds) stack the patties so the cheese is sandwiched in between. Slide this cheese-filled burger onto the prepared bun. Close bun, squish gently. Burger perfection is yours.

Prep: 10 minutes
Cook: 1 minute
Note: This burger doesn’t hold — make one at a time.