

\$60 Dinner Party

Menu

(Serves 6)

- ♦ Baguette with Minty-Pea Dip & Baguette Cheese Twists
- ♦ Pasta with Yogurt and Caramelized Onions
Roast Carrots with Orange and Herbs
- ♦ Chocolate Pudding with Whipped Cream

Shopping List

Prices listed are based on Trader Joe's. If you are shopping in a generic supermarket, prices will be slightly higher, but your total should still easily clear the \$60 mark, assuming you have at least one of the big ticket items – olive oil, cocoa powder, vanilla extract, or Parmesan. (Use the prices listed here as a loose guide for budgeting as you shop in your supermarket.) If you do this shop at Trader Joe's and already have a decently stocked pantry, you might even clear \$50.

PRODUCE

Fresh mint \$1.69
Fresh thyme \$1.69
1 lemon .49
2 pounds yellow onions \$2.99
3 pounds carrots \$2.98 (3 x .99)
1 small navel orange .89

PANTRY/DRY GOODS (you might have a lot of this already)

1 1/2 pounds fettuccine or tagliatelle \$1.98 (two 1-pound boxes x .99)
Cheese twists \$2.99 (or something salty from the snack aisle)
unsweetened cocoa powder \$7.50
olive oil (you'll need a little more than a cup total) \$3.49
vanilla extract \$9.99
salt & pepper
sugar (enough for 1 cup)
corn starch (enough for 3 tablespoons)

DAIRY

Fresh Parmesan (1/2 pound) \$8.00
16-ounce container whole milk Greek-style plain yogurt \$2.49
1 quart whole milk \$1.29
1/2 dozen eggs \$2.49
12 ounces heavy whipping cream \$2.99

FROZEN/MISC

1 bag frozen peas \$1.99
French baguette \$1.69

Recipes

Minty Pea Dip

In a food processor (preferably a mini food processor) whirl everything (except baguette) until it is the consistency of textured guacamole:

1 1/2 cups frozen peas, thawed
handful fresh mint leaves
3 tablespoons grated fresh Parmesan
juice from 1/2 lemon
1/3 cup olive oil
salt
baguette, sliced

Garnish with some more shredded Parmesan and a drizzle of olive oil. Transfer to a bowl, and serve with baguette.

Pasta with Yogurt and Caramelized Onions

Serves 6

This is adapted (only slightly) from the Diane Kochilas classic. I always make more onions than what she originally called for because they are crucial and when I have time, I cook those onions on super low heat up to two hours more longer than instructed – they get so jammy and sweet that way. Also: Don't forget to reserve the pasta water before straining, I always do!

5 tablespoons olive oil
2 pounds (about 8 cups) coarsely chopped onions
kosher salt
1 1/2 pounds tagliatelle or fettuccine (usually about 1 1/2 boxes)
2 cups thick, strained whole milk Greek-style plain yogurt (see note)
1 cup grated or shaved Parmesan (about 4 ounces)

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat and add the onions. Reduce the heat to medium low and cook, stirring frequently and seasoning with salt to taste as you go, until the onions are soft and golden brown, 20 to 30 minutes. (If you have time, you can

turn down the heat to super low and keep them cooking up to 2 more hours, stirring every 20-30 minutes.)

Meanwhile, fill a large pot with water and bring to a boil. As the water heats, add enough salt so that you can taste it. Cook pasta according to package directions, reserving 1/2 cup pasta water. Combine the yogurt with 1/4 cup cooking water and mix well. Add more of the reserved pasta water as needed to get the sauce to desired saucy thickness. Drain the pasta and toss with the yogurt mixture.

Serve the pasta immediately, topped with caramelized onions and their juices, and sprinkled generously with cheese.

Note: It's important to use full-fat yogurt here to prevent curdling and breaking. If you're not using thick Greek yogurt, line a colander with cheesecloth and set over a bowl or in the sink. Add the yogurt and let drain for 2 hours. If you have access to Sheep's Milk Yogurt, that'll be just as good, if not better.

Roast Carrots with Lemon and Herbs

Serves 6

Do you have to buy a bunch of thyme just for three sprigs? No, you can just as easily omit and then use leftover mint (from your dip) to garnish at the end. But I love the combination of orange and thyme with the carrots and there was room in the budget, so...

3 pounds carrots, washed and halved both lengthwise and cross-wise, as shown
1/4 cup olive oil
kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
leaves from three sprigs of thyme
1 small orange, halved across its belt
handful mint leaves, torn

Preheat oven to 425°F. Toss carrots with olive oil, salt, pepper, thyme leaves. Lay out on a foil-lined baking sheet. Nestle in orange halves, cut-side up. Roast for 35-40 minutes, until carrots look toasty. Plate on a large platter and squeeze the juice from one orange half all over. (Be careful, the orange will be hot.) Place the remaining orange half on the platter so it looks pretty! Garnish with mint.

Chocolate Pudding with Whipped Cream

Serves 6

Hopefully you already have most of what you need in the pantry for this -- it's my favorite for that reason. (And also for the it's-delicious reason.) All you have to do when the guests are there is whip the cream. And if you even forgo that and spend 50 cents more on the Cabot spray bottle, we won't love you any less.

3 cups milk
3 egg yolks
1 cup sugar
6 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
3 tablespoons cornstarch
3/4 teaspoon salt
3 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 1/2 cups heavy whipping cream

Whisk together milk and yolks. (I do this in a large measuring cup to save a dish.) In a heavy medium saucepan, whisk sugar, cocoa, cornstarch and salt. Whisk in milk mixture and turn heat to medium. Whisk until pudding thickens and comes to a boil, about 5 minutes. Continue boiling one more minute, whisking constantly so it stays smooth. Remove pudding from heat and add 2 teaspoons vanilla extract. Divide pudding into six small serving bowls or glasses, and allow to cool. Cover with plastic wrap, laying plastic down directly on the surface of the pudding, and chill for at least two hours.

In a medium mixing bowl, using an electric mixer (or pass your bowl and whisk around the table), whip the cream and remaining extract until stiff peaks form. Add a nice messy scoop to each serving.