



Along with eel and butter beans, marsh rat was one of the main ingredients of early Valencian paellas

EAT SMART

Pumpkins

Come summer and it is the squash family to the rescue. Pumpkin, a prominent member of this family, has a bright orange colour which indicates that the veggie is rich in beta-carotene. Its seeds, which are edible, are rich in phytosterols, which when present in sufficient amounts, reduces blood cholesterol. The seeds also help in maintaining prostate health and the zinc it contains protects against osteoporosis.



KITCHEN FUNDAS

Velveting chicken

Velveting chicken is a Chinese cooking technique used in stir frying. The chicken breast is coated in a mixture of egg white and cornstarch and marinated for up to 30 minutes. It is then cooked in hot oil until the colour turns white. The chicken is then added to the stir fry as per the recipe. Velveting chicken helps because the egg white and cornstarch mixture prevents the chicken from overcooking.



FOOD GEEK

Miracle berries

The red-coloured miracle berries were discovered in 1725 in West Africa where members of a tribe would consume them before eating fermented wild plants. The berries contain a glycoprotein called miraculin that binds itself to the sour and bitter receptors in the mouth preventing these flavours from being tasted. Thus, the mind is tricked into thinking that the food is sweet.



Pic for representational purpose only

Paella served Valenciano style

Spain's national dish is best relished when the setting is decidedly communitarian, writes **Sonia Nazareth** from Valencia



Twist like a Babka



BAKE OUT

SHAHEEN PEERBHA
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If baking bread seems daunting, you can start with the Babka which is a cross between a cake and bread

Do you remember that *Seinfeld* episode that saw Jerry and Elaine fight for the last Chocolate Babka in the store? The Babka looked scrumptious, but you always wondered what on earth it really was, and, more importantly, how you could eat it. Well, the Babka is a popular Eastern European festival bread. Its etymology is interesting. *Babushka* is Russian for grandma, while *Babcia* (pronounced bapb-cha) is Polish for grandma. And that's where this glorious golden

loaf, swirled with spice, chocolate, nuts and other good things, gets its name from. The Babka dough is enriched with butter and egg yolks, and that makes it similar to the French Brioche, the Austrian Kugelhupf and the Israeli Kranz cake. Amongst all these varieties, the Kranz cake is the one that has the best visual appeal. The bread shaped using this method looks spectacular with the filling oozing out of exposed swirls of the braided loaf of bread. Traditionally, the Babka filling is made up of nuts and raisins but in this case, veering away from the norm and using chocolate and cinnamon is a change for the better. This is the kind of bread you want to try your hand at when you want to take the leap from baking cakes to baking bread. Cakes are sim-

pler — they don't need the finicky yeast, nor do they need all the waiting time for the dough to rise and develop in flavour and structure. Breads, on the other hand, come with all those hassles in addition to the nagging fear of all the effort falling flat — quite literally. As daunting a task as it might seem, this recipe is easy, because the technique is a cross between that of making cake and bread. You begin with creaming sugar and butter, adding the egg yolks, mixing in the flour, and pouring in the milk with yeast in it. Before you know it, your experiment comes together in the form of supple golden dough waiting to be baked two hours later. And the bonus? You'll have melted chocolate perfumed with cinnamon in every bite, and in your fingers while baking.

Chocolate Cinnamon Babka

Yield: 2 loaves

Ingredients:

- Instant yeast, 2 tbsp / 19g
- Lukewarm milk, 3/4th cup / 170g
- Butter, 6 tbsp / 85g
- Sugar, 6 tbsp / 85g
- Vanilla extract, 1 tsp
- Egg yolks, 4
- All-purpose flour, 3.5 cups / 425g
- Salt, 1 tsp

For the filling:

- Dark chocolate, coarsely grated, 1.5 cups / 225g
- Ground cinnamon, 1 tsp
- Butter, 1/4th cup / 55g

Method:

- Whisk the yeast into lukewarm milk and set aside for about 5min.
- In a large bowl, cream together the sugar and butter until smooth.
- Add the yolks to the bowl, one at a time, mixing constantly for 30s between each addition. Add vanilla and mix until light and fluffy.



— Shaheen Peerbhai

- Add the flour and salt and continue to mix until it all comes together.
- Now mix in the milk and yeast mixture and knead together to form a soft, supple dough.
- Let this rise for about 2 hours, or refrigerate overnight, making sure to remove it from the fridge two hours before baking.
- For the filling: mix the chocolate, butter and cinnamon together in a bowl.
- Once the dough has risen, roll it into a sheet with a thickness of 1/8th to 1/4th inch. Ensure the sheet is well-dusted with flour at all times.
- Spread the chocolate mixture over it.
- Roll the dough like a Swiss roll cake and then pinch the seams to seal it. Cut it into half along the width for two medium loaves.
- For the twisty shape, cut the log down the middle lengthwise, making sure to keep half an inch at the top end attached. Twist each leg over each other alternately to get the braided look.
- Now, keep it aside for

- another 45 minutes to let it rise.
- Preheat the oven to 175 degrees Celsius and bake for 15-20 min.

Babka is best served with a cup of coffee or sliced and slightly toasted the next day for breakfast. **Some pointers:** If you're going to be baking a lot of bread, I recommend using instant yeast. It is available at the Tower Store at Crawford market and lasts over a year when refrigerated. Another option would be to ask your local bakery for some fresh yeast worth Rs 5-10. Shape the bread on the baking pan — this is the best way to keep the shape intact instead of transferring from work surface to baking sheet. The Babka tends to brown quickly because of the addition of sugar. Cover it with a sheet of foil if you'd like to avoid this. I don't because I feel that it lends a warm glow to the bread. **Adapted from:** *Artisan Breads Everyday* by Peter Reinhart themag.dnaindia.net



BEST CELLARS

MAGANDEEP SINGH

Beyond wine jargon

Some time back I was reading a book about wine philosophy, and it made a very valid point about wine tasting and that self-styled clan referred to as 'wine critics'. The question is whether wine tasting really helped bring the best wines forward, or was it just a way for the elite to look busy and feel important? I admit that I too would be inclined to go with the latter choice. How difficult can it really be to sip a few wines first thing in the morning and then write something hifalutin and indecipherable about them? I, too, was quite the sceptic, but then I read this article. This is what it mostly said. A wine, as a tangible thing is an absolute. It is a chemical emulsion with a fixed set of compounds in it. In that sense, the aromas that a wine emits are fixed and dependent on the constituent compounds — this is to say that for a wine to smell like apples, it must contain one of the many esters that make up the smell of apples. So, the basic set of aromas in a wine is not just the function of one man's command of the English vocabulary combined with a vivid imagination. A wine is a piece of canvass, but not a blank one; it has been painted over by the winemaker and although it may evoke a different personal sentiment in each per-



son who takes it in it still remains an absolute; a solid and set entity in itself. So when wine-tasters congregate and start describing a wine they are not shooting arrows in the dark. They are trying to identify that which is already there. It is more a game of scrabble where the letters are given and you try to unscramble them into something meaningful, or Pictionary, where we try and transfer from one sense (visual) onto another (verbal). Given this basic perimeter you should now see how a wine evaluation is not a subjective exercise, when done right that is. If done wrong then prejudice and personal preference take up all the space and there is no room left for judging a wine for how good it is and for what it represents. All in all, I am here judging at two of the most prestigious wine competitions in the world, the Decanter World Wine Awards and the International Wine Challenge and having spent some time with some of the most amazing critics in the universe, I can assure you this, wine judging is a valid job. Also, it can be quite a hard job, especially when flights after flights of wine keep coming at you. I was trying to make a point, which I somewhat did, and then somehow obfuscated. Wine can do that. Which is why the first rule of wine judging is this: Spit! themag.dnaindia.net

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