CHAPTER FOUR

Slow Sundays

Three dishes that reward the one thing a weekday never gives you: unhurried time. None of them needs watching. All of them are better on the second day.

Braised Short Rib with Orange and Star Anise — 4 hours, mostly unattended

Chickpea and Preserved Lemon Tagine — vegetarian, freezes well

Buttermilk Roast Chicken with Bread Salad — the Sunday standard

RECIPE 1 · NORTHERN ITALY, ADAPTED

Braised Short Rib with Orange and Star Anise

Deep, glossy and forgiving — the oven does everything after the first twenty minutes.

Prep 25 min · **Cook** 3 h 30 min · **Serves** 4–6 · **Difficulty** Moderate

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE BRAISE

1.6 kg	bone-in beef short rib, cut into single bones
2 tbsp	neutral oil
2	onions, halved and sliced
2	carrots, in thick coins
4	garlic cloves, smashed
2 tbsp	tomato paste
350 ml	dry red wine
500 ml	beef or chicken stock
1	orange, peel in wide strips + juice
2	star anise
3 sprigs	thyme

TO FINISH

1 tbsp	red wine vinegar
2 tbsp	flat-leaf parsley, chopped
	flaky salt and coarse black pepper

1. **Dry and season.** Pat the ribs completely dry and season them heavily an hour ahead if you can, or at least twenty minutes before they meet the pan. Wet meat steams instead of browning, and the browning is where most of the flavour is decided.

   DRY SURFACE = REAL CRUST

2. **Brown in batches.** Heat the oil until it shimmers and brown the ribs on every surface, three or four pieces at a time. Crowding drops the pan temperature and you will get grey meat and a thin sauce. Set the browned ribs aside on a plate; keep whatever juices collect.

3. **Build the base.** Pour off all but a tablespoon of fat. Soften the onions and carrots over medium heat for eight to ten minutes, then add the garlic and tomato paste and cook for two minutes more, until the paste darkens from red to brick.

4. **Deglaze.** Add the wine and scrape the bottom of the pan clean while it reduces by half. Everything stuck to the base belongs in the sauce.

   REDUCE BY HALF — ABOUT 6 MIN

5. **Assemble and braise.** Return the ribs and their juices, add stock to come two-thirds of the way up the meat, then the orange peel and juice, star anise and thyme. Bring to a bare simmer, lid on, and transfer to a 150 °C oven for three hours. Turn the ribs once at the halfway mark.

   150 °C · 3 HOURS · LID ON

6. **Rest and skim.** The ribs are done when a fork meets no resistance but the meat still holds its shape. Lift them out, strain the liquid, and let it settle for ten minutes so the fat rises. Skim it off — there will be a great deal.

7. **Reduce and sharpen.** Simmer the strained liquid until it coats a spoon, then add the vinegar off the heat and taste. If it tastes flat, it needs acid before it needs salt. Return the ribs to warm through, and scatter with parsley to serve.

Braised Short Rib with Orange and Star Anise

CHEF'S NOTE

Braises improve overnight, and the fat is trivially easy to remove when it is cold and solid. If you have the day before, cook it the day before — chill the whole pot, lift the fat cap off in one piece, and reheat gently. The meat also reabsorbs some liquid, which is exactly what you want.

MAKE IT YOURS

- Swap the star anise for a cinnamon stick and a strip of lemon for a rounder, less aniseed profile.
- Beef cheeks work beautifully and need only two and a half hours.
- For a non-alcoholic version, replace the wine with an equal quantity of stock plus a tablespoon of balsamic vinegar.

EQUIPMENT

- Heavy lidded casserole, 5–6 L
- Tongs
- Fine sieve

610	42 g	12 g	41 g	1.9 g
KCAL	PROTEIN	CARBS	FAT	SALT

RECIPE 2 · MOROCCO, ADAPTED

Chickpea and Preserved Lemon Tagine

Bright, aromatic and entirely make-ahead — a vegetarian centrepiece that does not apologise for itself.

Prep 20 min · **Cook** 55 min · **Serves** 4 · **Difficulty** Easy

INGREDIENTS

BASE

3 tbsp	olive oil
1	large onion, finely diced
3	garlic cloves, sliced
1 thumb	ginger, grated
1 tsp	ground cumin
1 tsp	sweet paprika
½ tsp	ground cinnamon
pinch	saffron threads, bloomed in warm water

BODY

2 × 400 g	chickpeas, drained and rinsed
400 g	chopped tomatoes
400 ml	vegetable stock
250 g	butternut squash, in 2 cm cubes
1	preserved lemon, pulp discarded, rind slivered
80 g	green olives, pitted

TO SERVE

handful	coriander and mint, roughly torn
2 tbsp	toasted flaked almonds

1. **Sweat the onion properly.** Over medium-low heat, cook the onion in the oil for twelve minutes until soft and sweet but not coloured. This is the longest step and the one most often rushed; a pale, sweet onion base is what separates a tagine from a stew.

2. **Bloom the spices.** Add the garlic and ginger for one minute, then the cumin, paprika and cinnamon. Stir constantly for thirty seconds until fragrant, then add the saffron with its soaking water before the spices catch.

   30 SECONDS — NO LONGER

3. **Build.** Add the tomatoes, stock, squash and chickpeas. Bring to a simmer, cover, and cook for twenty-five minutes, until the squash yields to a knife tip but has not collapsed.

4. **Add the sharp things late.** Stir in the preserved lemon and olives and simmer uncovered for a further ten minutes to thicken. Added at the start, the lemon turns bitter and the olives go grey.

5. **Rest, then finish.** Take the pan off the heat and let it sit for ten minutes — the sauce tightens and the flavours settle. Scatter the herbs and almonds just before it reaches the table.

   REST 10 MIN BEFORE SERVING

Chickpea and Preserved Lemon Tagine

CHEF'S NOTE

If you have no preserved lemon, do not substitute fresh — the character is completely different. Use the zest of a whole lemon plus an extra tablespoon of brine from the olive jar, added at the same late stage.

MAKE IT YOURS

- Add 100 g dried apricots with the tomatoes for a sweeter, more festive version.
- Stir through 200 g baby spinach in the last two minutes for colour and iron.
- Serve over couscous, or with flatbread and thick yoghurt for a lighter meal.

EQUIPMENT

- Wide lidded pan or tagine
- Microplane or fine grater

430	16 g	52 g	17 g	1.4 g
KCAL	PROTEIN	CARBS	FAT	SALT

RECIPE 3 · CALIFORNIA, ADAPTED

Buttermilk Roast Chicken with Bread Salad

A two-day marinade, a single roasting tin, and bread that soaks up everything the bird gives off.

Prep 20 min + 24 h marinating · **Cook** 1 h 10 min · **Serves** 4 · **Difficulty** Moderate

INGREDIENTS

CHICKEN

1	free-range chicken, 1.6–1.8 kg
500 ml	buttermilk
2 tbsp	fine salt
1 tbsp	honey
2	bay leaves, crushed

BREAD SALAD

250 g	day-old sourdough, torn into large pieces
4 tbsp	olive oil
60 g	currants, soaked in warm vinegar
50 g	pine nuts, toasted
2	spring onions, sliced
2 handfuls	bitter leaves — escarole or frisée
2 tbsp	red wine vinegar

1. **Marinate, ideally for a full day.** Whisk the salt and honey into the buttermilk with the crushed bay, submerge the chicken, and refrigerate for 24 hours. Twelve will do; forty-eight is too many and the texture turns soft.

   24 HOURS IN THE FRIDGE

2. **Temper and drain.** Take the bird out an hour before roasting. Scrape off the excess marinade with your hand — leave a thin film, not a coating, or it will burn before the skin crisps.

3. **Start hot.** Roast at 220 °C for twenty minutes to set the skin, then drop to 190 °C. Turn the tin once at this point; almost every domestic oven has a hot corner.

   220 °C → 190 °C

4. **Add the bread.** Twenty-five minutes before the end, toss the torn sourdough with the olive oil and tuck it around the bird so it catches the rendering fat. Anything not touching the tin will stay dry, so spread it in one layer.

5. **Check the temperature, not the clock.** The thickest part of the thigh should read 74 °C. Total time will be around seventy minutes for a 1.7 kg bird, but ovens lie and birds differ.

   74 °C AT THE THIGH

6. **Rest and dress.** Rest the chicken on a board for fifteen minutes. Meanwhile toss the roasted bread with the drained currants, pine nuts, spring onions and leaves, then dress with the vinegar and all the resting juices from the board.

Buttermilk Roast Chicken with Bread Salad

CHEF'S NOTE

The buttermilk does two jobs: its acidity tenderises the surface of the meat, and its sugars accelerate browning. That second effect is why the skin colours faster than you expect — if it is dark at the twenty-minute mark, drop the heat early rather than covering the bird with foil, which steams the skin you just built.

MAKE IT YOURS

- Spatchcock the bird and roast at 200 °C for 45 minutes for a faster, more even result.
- Add a head of garlic, halved across the equator, to the tin with the bread.
- Out of buttermilk: 500 ml whole milk with 2 tbsp lemon juice, left to stand for ten minutes.

EQUIPMENT

- Large zip bag or non-reactive bowl
- Heavy roasting tin
- Instant-read thermometer

720	48 g	38 g	42 g	2.3 g
KCAL	PROTEIN	CARBS	FAT	SALT