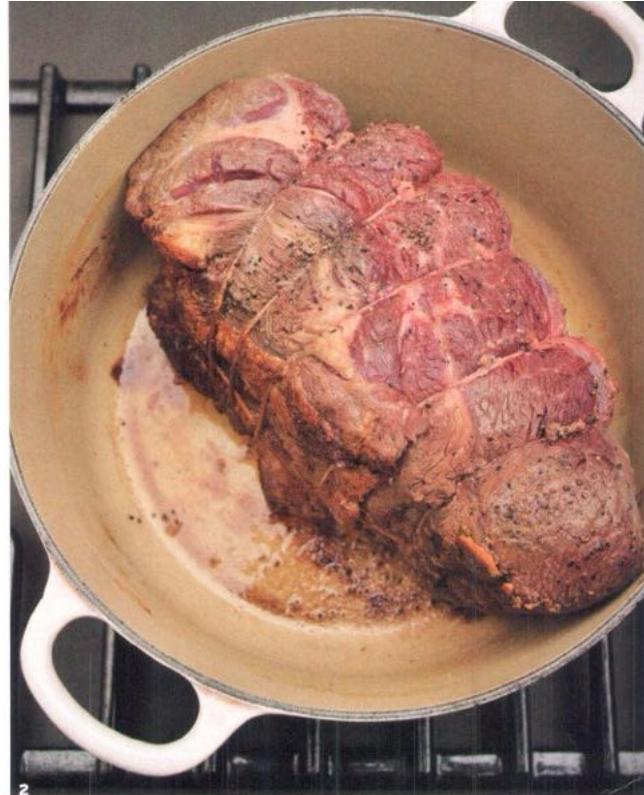




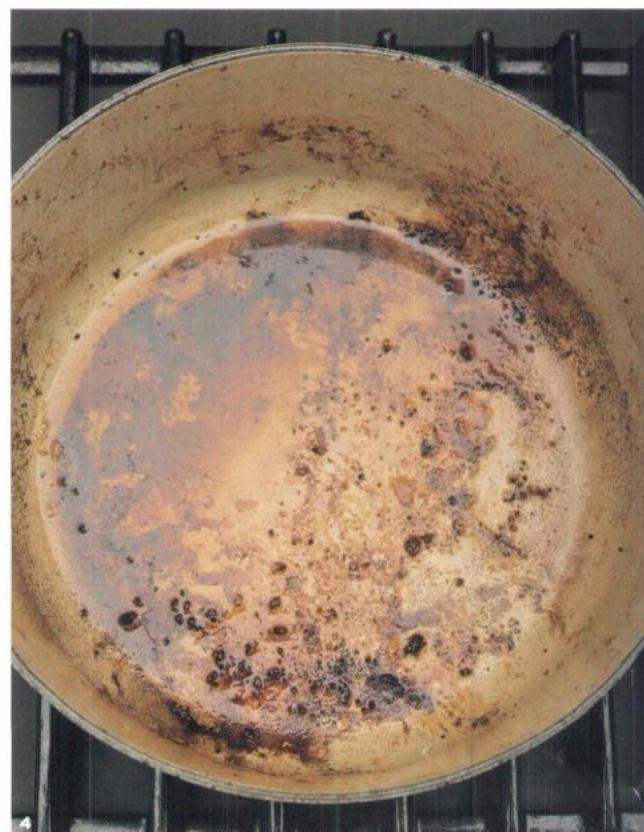
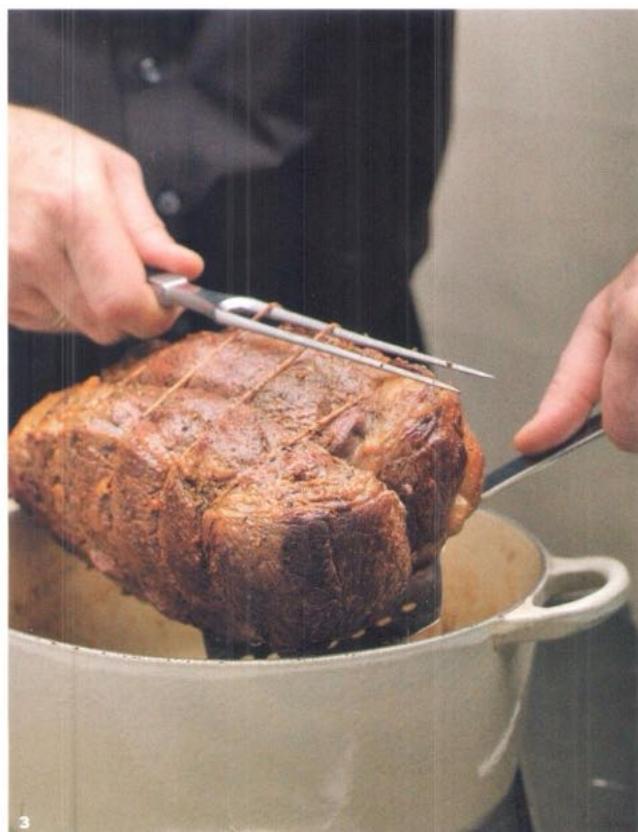
# COOKING CLASS

BRAISING A TOUGH CUT OF MEAT UNTIL IT IS SEDUCTIVELY TENDER AND DEEP-FLAVORED IS CULINARY ALCHEMY. ONCE YOU UNDERSTAND A FEW FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES, IT'S ALSO AN INVITATION TO IMPROVISE TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT. BY JANE DANIELS LEAR PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROMULO YANES



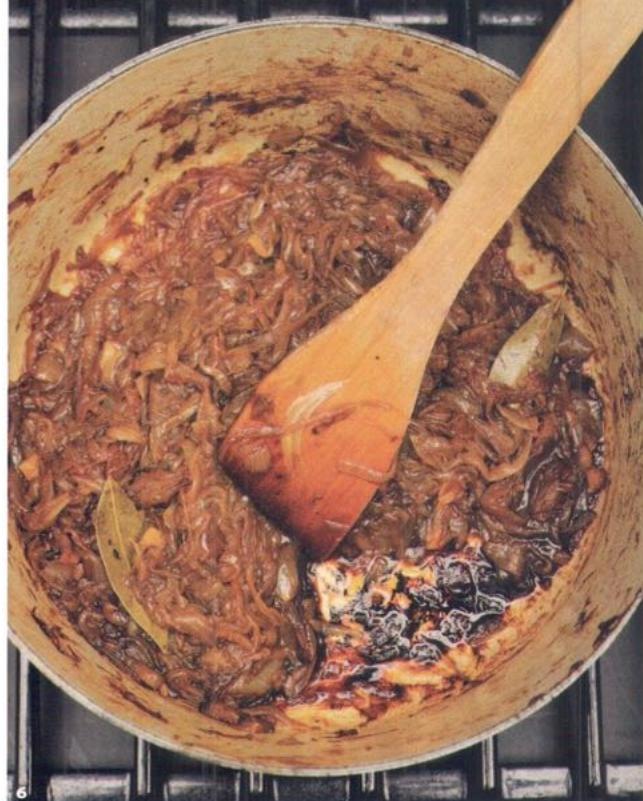


Making a pot roast is something most of us can do in our sleep, but it's all too easy to rely on the same recipe again and again. When you break down a braise—which is all a pot roast is—into separate steps, however, it will give you the confidence to turn any cheap cut of meat that's full of sinew and other connective tissue into something delicious. Almost every recipe for a braise, including the one on page 30, calls for onions for their combination of savoriness and sweetness. (1) We like to halve the onions lengthwise, then cut the halves lengthwise. Sliced crosswise, they'll disintegrate into mush once they've cooked down. (2) We've seared one (long, narrow) side of a chuck roast until it's dark brown (to add complexity and color) and have just turned it. Always pat the meat dry before seasoning and adding it to the hot oil. If it sticks when you try to turn it, give it a minute more and it will release. A heavy pot just large enough to hold the meat snugly will conduct heat evenly. After (3) transferring the beef to a plate, it's time to cook the onions and other aromatics. (4) The brown bits left behind are bullets of pure flavor. ▶



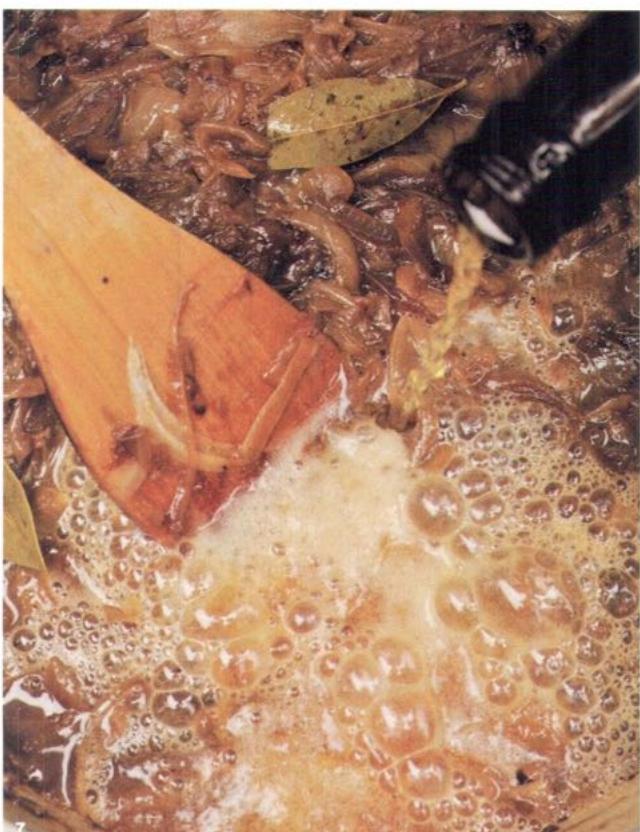


5

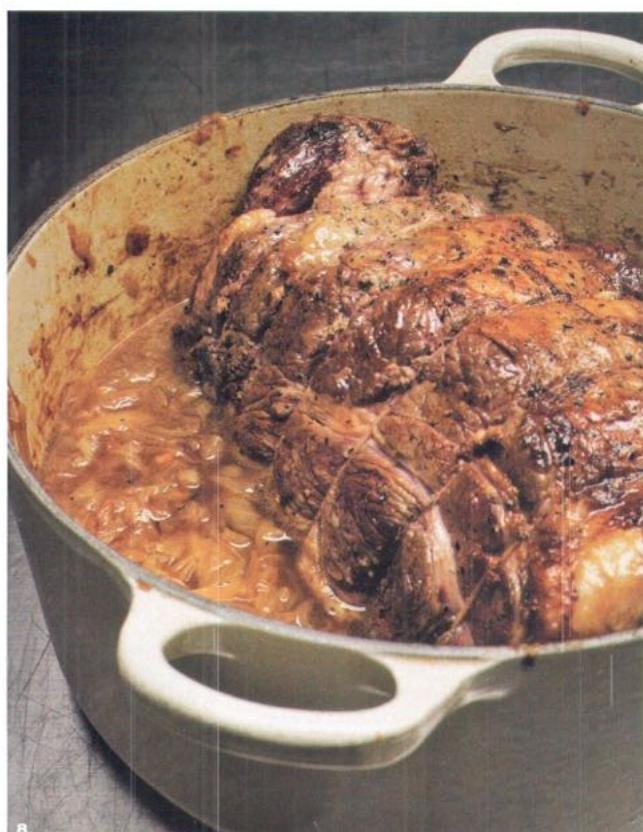


6

(5) You'll want a vast amount of onions to cook down on top of the brown bits because (6) they reduce so dramatically. We've added salt and a couple of bay leaves to the mix, but you could substitute carrots and garlic or even ginger, star anise, and/or dried red chiles if you're going in an Asian or Indian direction. Aromatics are the underpinnings of the braise; as with browning the meat, cooking them intensifies the overall flavor and shouldn't be rushed. (7) Here, we want to play on the famous Flemish preparation called carbonnade, so we're using a pilsner-style beer (a dark brew is too heavy) plus a little vinegar to spike the mellowness. (8) When you return the chuck roast to the pot, the liquid should come no more than halfway up its side; there should be enough room for steam to rise, condense, and, in essence, baste the meat. Putting a round of parchment paper between lid and meat helps prevent the top from drying out. It's crucial to cook the beef at a barely perceptible simmer rather than a boil: The collagen-rich connective tissue will dissolve into molecules of gelatin, which will cling to the meat fibers, turning them



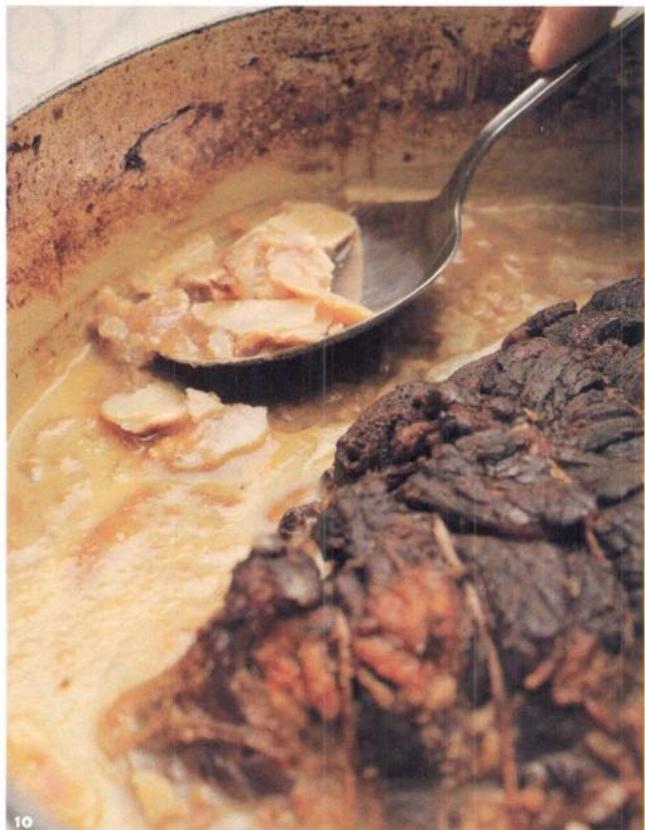
7



8



9

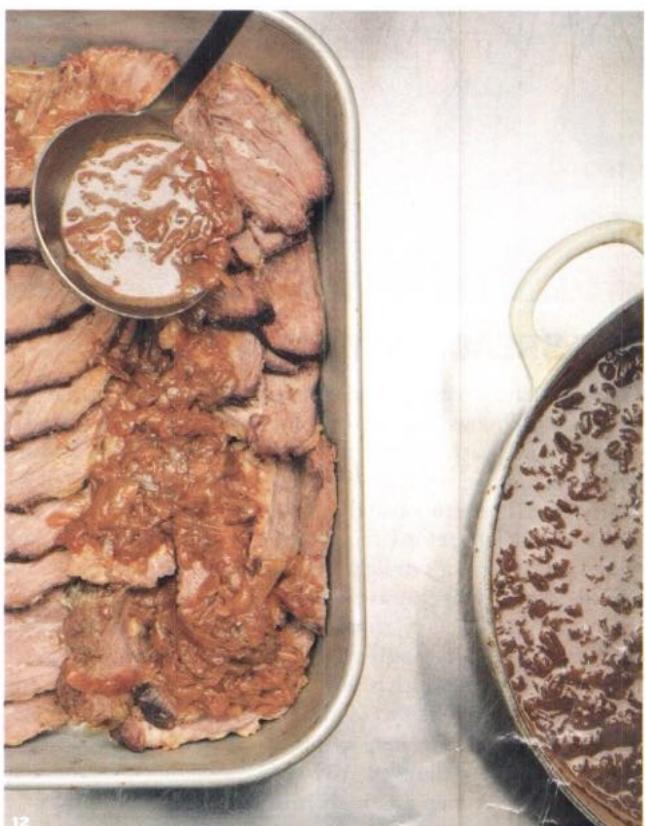


10

satinly and succulent. Braising in the oven is easier than braising on top of the stove: Regulating the temperature isn't as difficult, and the heat surrounds the pot. Not only does the relatively low, moist heat encourage the collagen to dissolve slowly, it also coaxes the juices out of the chuck roast to mingle with the aromatic liquid and then find their way back into the loosened meat fibers. (9) By the end of cooking, the beef will have given its flavor to the braising liquid, and the liquid, in turn, will have replenished the beef. When testing for doneness, slide a meat fork in and out of the center: It should meet with absolutely no resistance. A braise can be enjoyed immediately, but if you make it a day or so before, all those nuanced flavors will have time to meld. Cool the chuck roast, uncovered, in the sauce and then, (10) after it's spent some time in the refrigerator, lift off the hardened fat. (11) If neat slices are important, cut the meat when it's cold. Arrange the slices in a shallow baking dish and (12) ladle the gelled sauce over top. Cover tightly with foil before reheating. (You can also reheat the uncut meat in the sauce, covered.) **FOR THE RECIPE, SEE PAGE 108.**



11



12

# KITCHEN NOTEBOOK

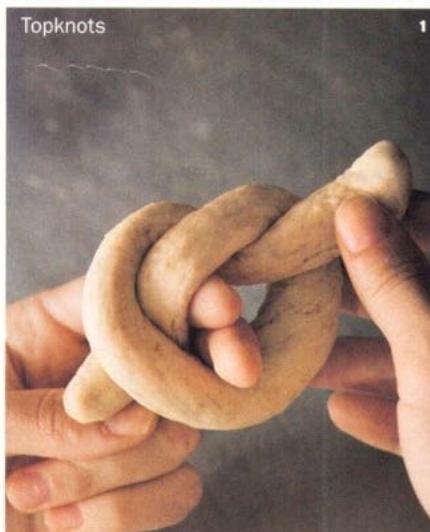
Bringing down the house: How to form three yeast dinner rolls ... perfecting paprika sauce, the delicate dumplings called galushkas, and a fancy cold terrine. BY JANE DANIELS LEAR



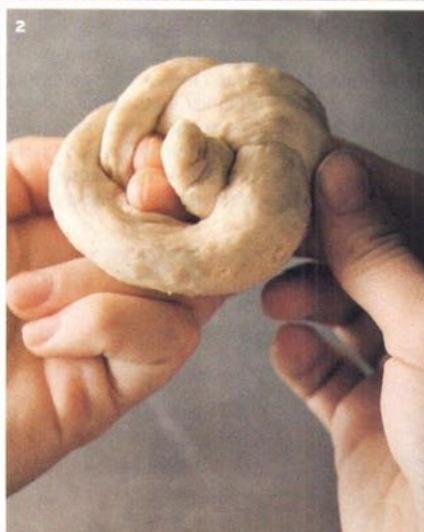
1 Cornstalk rolls



1 Fantails



1 Topknots



2



2

## LIKE BREAD, ONLY BETTER

Odds are that no matter what else you serve for dinner, what everyone will remember are the rolls. Fresh from the oven and fragrant with yeast, they are the symbol of honest effort and are delicious anytime, anywhere. The fact that they freeze so well is a huge plus: An afternoon in the kitchen pays dividends for weeks. The **cornstalk rolls** at top left and on page 86 have a Grant Wood sort of grandeur that's straight from the heartland, yet the finished "stalk" is as easy as pie to form. After you snip the individual "ears of corn," simply separate them so that they don't glom on to one another as they bake. Steam is the real secret to these rolls, though, which is why the recipe calls for a spray bottle filled with water. When you spritz the dough, steam condenses on the surface, keeping it moist and elastic so the rolls can rise faster and longer in the oven. And when the steam evaporates, the top dries and becomes invitingly firm and crusty. The **fantails** (also called fan-tans) at top right, bottom right, and on page 86

are one of the most popular shapes for rolls. Working with half of the dough at a time, roll it out into a 12-inch square. (If it fights back, let it rest for a few minutes.) Brush the square with melted butter and cut it into six equal strips. (1) Stack the strips, buttered sides up, and (2) cut the stack crosswise into six equal pieces. Turning the stacks so that a cut side is up, nestle them into buttered muffin cups and separate the layers so that they will spread outward during baking. The cracked-wheat **topknots** at bottom left, bottom center, and on page 87 are the most involved shape to form, but if you've had any experience with Play-Doh, you'll get the hang of it quickly. After rolling a piece of dough with your (floured) palms into a 12-inch-long rope, (1) make a loop around two fingers of one hand, then pull the rope through. (2) Loop the rope one more time, leaving one end in the center on top and tucking the other underneath. With a little practice, you'll be taking home a blue ribbon at the next county fair.

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 79**

**MAKE PASTRY:** Pulse toasted almonds and sugar in a food processor until nuts are finely ground. Sift together flour, salt, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves into a bowl, then add to ground nuts in processor and pulse to combine.

► Lightly beat yolks, extracts, and zest in a small bowl with a fork. Add to food processor along with butter, then pulse until dough forms a ball. Form one third of dough into a disk, then roll out between 2 sheets of plastic wrap into a 10-inch round. Transfer to a baking sheet and chill until firm, about 10 minutes. Roll out remaining dough between 2 sheets of plastic wrap into a 12-inch round, then transfer to another baking sheet and chill until firm, about 10 minutes.

**MAKE FILLING:** Simmer water, sugar, brandy, and apricots in a small saucepan, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until apricots are tender and liquid is syrupy, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer mixture to cleaned food processor and pulse until almost smooth. Spread mixture onto a plate and chill 15 minutes.

**BAKE TORTE:** Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle.

► Remove bottom of springform pan and invert, then lock on side. Remove larger dough round from refrigerator and peel off top layer of plastic wrap, then invert round into pan (pastry will break in spots). Press dough evenly onto bottom, then discard plastic. Fold in edge of dough and press ½ inch up side of pan (side will be thicker than bottom). Press gently to close any cracks.

► Bake pastry until lightly browned, about 20 minutes, then cool completely on a rack, about 30 minutes. (Dough will puff up as it bakes but will settle as it cools.)

► Spread filling into crust with an offset spatula or back of a spoon.

► Peel top layer of plastic wrap from smaller dough round, then cut round into ½-inch-wide strips. (Chill strips again if necessary.) Arrange half of strips over filling about 1 inch apart, pressing ends onto edge of torte. Arrange remaining strips across first strips to form a simple lattice. Press edges together with your fingertips.

► Bake until top is browned, 40 to 50 minutes. Cool completely, about 2 hours.

► Before serving, remove side of pan and dust edge of torte with confectioners sugar.

**COOKS' NOTE:** Torte (without confectioners sugar) can be made up to 2 days ahead and kept, covered, at room temperature. ■

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 99****BEER-BRAISED BEEF AND ONIONS**

**SERVES 6 TO 8**

**ACTIVE TIME: 40 MIN START TO FINISH: 4 ¾ HR**

*Long, slow cooking turns a supermarket chuck roast into something gloriously tender, flavorful, and aromatic. Leftovers are delicious shredded, heated in the sauce, and served over egg noodles.*

**3 lb onions**

**1 (5-lb) boneless beef chuck roast, tied**

**2 Tbsp vegetable oil, divided**

**2 Turkish bay leaves or 1 California**

**2 (12-oz) bottles pilsner-style beer  
such as Budweiser**

**2 Tbsp red-wine vinegar**

► Halve onions lengthwise, then slice lengthwise ¼ inch thick.

► Pat beef dry and season all over with 2½ tsp salt and 1 tsp pepper. Heat 1 Tbsp oil in a wide 5- to 6-qt heavy pot over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Brown beef on all sides, about 15 minutes, then transfer to a plate.

► Cook onions with bay leaves and ½ tsp salt in remaining Tbsp oil in pot, scraping up brown bits from bottom and stirring occasionally, until onions are well browned, about 25 minutes.

► Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle. Cut a round of parchment paper the diameter of the inside of pot (near the top). Set parchment round aside.

► Add beer and vinegar to onions and bring to a boil, stirring and scraping up brown bits. Add beef and meat juices from plate and return to a boil.

► Cover with parchment round and lid and braise in oven until meat is very tender when pierced in several places with a meat fork, about 3½ hours.

► Transfer beef to a cutting board and let stand, loosely covered, 20 minutes.

Cut off string, then slice meat. Skim off fat from sauce and discard bay leaves.

Reheat if necessary. ► Serve braised beef with onions and sauce.

**COOKS' NOTE:** Beef improves in flavor if made at least 1 day ahead (up to 4 days) and chilled in sauce (covered once cool). Discard solidified fat. To reheat, remove meat from sauce and slice, then spoon gelled sauce over meat in a shallow baking dish. Cover tightly with foil and heat in a 325°F oven, about 45 minutes. Alternatively, you can reheat meat, unsliced, in sauce. ■

**MEASURE LIQUIDS** in glass or clear plastic liquid-measuring cups and **DRY INGREDIENTS** in nesting dry-measuring cups that can be leveled off with a knife. **MEASURE FLOUR** by spooning (not scooping) it into a dry-measuring cup and leveling off with a knife; do not tap or shake cup.

**DO NOT SIFT FLOUR UNLESS** specified in recipe. If sifted flour is called for, sift before measuring. (Disregard "presifted" on the label.)

**SALT:** Measurements are for table salt unless otherwise specified.

**BLACK PEPPER** is always freshly ground.

**SPICES:** Store away from heat and light; buy in small quantities.

**TOAST WHOLE SPICES** in a dry heavy skillet over medium heat, stirring, until fragrant and a shade darker, 3 to 5 minutes.

**TOAST NUTS** in a shallow baking pan in a 350°F oven until golden, 5 to 15 minutes.

**TOAST SEEDS** either way.

**MELT CHOCOLATE** in a metal bowl set over barely simmering water, stirring; or microwave at low to medium power for short intervals (30 seconds or less; stir to check consistency).

**BAKING PANS:** We prefer light-colored metal. (If you are using dark metal, including nonstick, your baked goods may brown more, and the cooking times may be shorter. Lower oven temperature 25°F to compensate.)

**NONREACTIVE COOKWARE** includes stainless steel, glass, and enameled cast iron; avoid pure aluminum and uncoated iron, which can impart an unpleasant taste and color to recipes with acidic ingredients.

**WATER BATH FOR BAKING:** Put filled pan in a larger pan and place in oven, then add enough boiling-hot water to reach halfway up side of smaller pan.

**PRODUCE:** Wash well and spin-dry before using.

**GREENS AND CHOPPED/SLICED LEEKS:** Wash in a large bowl of water, agitating them, then lift out and drain.

**FRESH HERBS OR GREENS:** Use only the leaves and tender stems.

**CITRUS ZEST:** Remove the colored part of the rind only (avoid the bitter white pith). For strips, use a vegetable peeler. For grating, we prefer a rasplike Microplane zester, which results in fluffier zest, so pack to measure.

**CHILES:** Wear protective gloves when handling.