

STILL HUNGRY? DINING

Solo
story by **CULLEN CURTISS**



Did you know there are more people living alone now than at any other time in history? Even in Paris, the fabled city of lovers? *Oui, oui!* So what does this mean right now during the month of love and romance? It means: love thyself right on up to your eyeballs by cooking delicious, soul-hugging food for your table of one. On our hunt to get you started, we plucked four cookbooks, among a surfeit of options, that stand out for their inventive recipes, charming stories and practical tips...and each is designed for the solo cook. The following books (and highlighted recipes) will help you not just cook, but feast!...as well as eschew take-out, plan, shop and store wisely, prep and be thoroughly sated and nourished by cooking for No. 1.



Cooking for One: A Seasonal Guide to the Pleasure of Preparing Delicious Meals for Yourself, by Mark and Lisa Erickson—yes, they're married, but they live apart because he's provost at The Culinary Institute of America in New York, and she's in Atlanta—is seasonally organized with periodic his-and-her modifications. It's designed to shift the solo person's thinking from cooking-is-a-chore to cooking-is-a-celebration. Heed the Ericksons' words to you: reduce waste, operate in a mise-en-place fashion and feast throughout the week on what they call planned-overs (featured).

SOUTHWESTERN BEEF STEW

2 teaspoons canola oil, divided use
1 ½ teaspoon finely chopped garlic
2/3 cup chopped onion
2 ½ pasilla or ancho chiles, stemmed, seeds and veins removed
¾ water
1 cup homemade chicken stock
8 to 10 ounces beef stew meat, cut into 1 ½-inch pieces
Salt and freshly ground pepper as needed
1 cup large-diced Yukon gold potato
Warmed corn tortillas

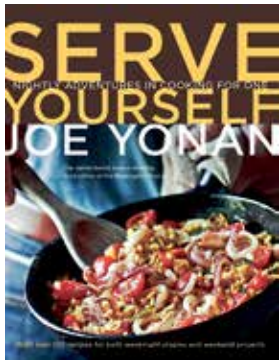
Preheat the oven 325° F
Heat ½ teaspoon of the canola oil in a small pot over medium-low heat. Add the garlic and onion and sauté, stirring frequently until the onion is golden, about 5 minutes. Add the chiles and sauté until aromatic, about 1 minute. Add the water and stock and bring to boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until flavorful, 3 minutes. Remove from the heat, let it sit for 30 minutes to cool and then pureé it in a blender until smooth. Set the sauce aside.

Heat the remaining canola oil in a small Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Season the beef with salt and pepper and add it to the hot oil. Sauté until browned on all sides, turning the beef as necessary, about 6 minutes.

Add the reserved sauce and bring it to a boil. Cover the Dutch oven and place it in the oven for 45 minutes, adjusting the temperature as necessary to maintain a simmer. Add the potatoes, return the casserole to the oven, and cook until the potatoes are tender and the beef is very tender when pierced with a fork, another 25 to 30 minutes.

Remove the casserole from the oven and skim off any fat that has risen to the surface. Taste the stew and season with salt and pepper. Serve hot with warmed corn tortillas.

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With sections devoted to sweet potatoes, sandwiches, tacos and condiments, *Serve Yourself* by two-time James Beard Award-winning food and dining editor of *The Washington Post* Joe Yonan is refreshing throughout. He positions himself as the opposite of Miss Lonelyhearts, who, when seated alone at a table for two in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, raises her glass and tries to conjure a smile in the direction of her phantom lover. No forced smiles when dining solo, Joe writes, "I gotta eat, I gotta cook, and I am determined to do both well." Enjoy his 100 recipes—so sensible, inventive and globally inspired—as well as his confessional anecdotes, which will make you revel in singledom.

PERSONAL PAELLA WITH SQUID AND SCALLIONS

1 cup seafood stock or clam juice
 Small pinch of crumbled saffron
 ¼ teaspoon pimento (smoked Spanish paprika)
 4 to 5 ounces cleaned squid, bodies cut into ¼-inch rings and tentacles halved lengthwise
 Kosher or sea salt
 Freshly ground black pepper
 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
 1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes, or more to taste
 2 scallions, white and green parts, thinly sliced
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1/3 cup Arborio, Bomba, or other short-grain rice
 4 large cherry tomatoes, quartered

Preheat the oven to 400°F
 Combine the seafood stock, saffron, and pimento in a small saucepan over medium heat and bring to a simmer; reduce the heat to very low and cover.

Lightly season the squid with salt and pepper. In an 8-inch cast-iron or other heavy skillet, heat 1 teaspoon of the olive oil over medium-high heat. When it shimmers, add the squid and cook, stirring frequently, just until the squid lose any translucence and exude their juices, 30 to 60 seconds. Transfer the squid to a plate and decrease the heat to medium.

Add the remaining 1 teaspoon of oil, then the red pepper flakes, scallions, and garlic, and sauté until the scallion starts to soften, another 2 to 3 minutes. Add the rice and cook until the grains are well coated with the pan mixture, 1 minute.

Pour the hot broth and bring to a gentle boil. Decrease the heat to medium-low. Taste the liquid and add salt to taste, then let it continue to gently bubble, swirling the pan occasionally, for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the rice has swelled and absorbed much of the liquid; it should still be slightly soupy.

Stir in the squid and the tomatoes. Transfer the pan to the oven and bake, uncovered, for 10 to 15 minutes, until the rice is al dente, or mostly tender but with a little resistance in the center.

Remove the pan from the oven, cover with a lid or aluminum foil, and let it sit for about 5 minutes, until the rice is tender. Uncover and return it to the stovetop over medium-high heat and cook about 2 more minutes, to brown the bottom of the rice.

Spoon it out onto a plate, and eat. Don't worry if it sticks. Just scrape it up and know that this is what the Spanish call *soccarart*, the crispy pieces that are considered a sign of a great paella.

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Cooking Solo author Klancy Miller

unabashedly acknowledges her happy single life and reminds you that, as a single person, you only have yourself to please—in the kitchen and otherwise. Organized by meals that can be cooked in 30 or so minutes, find international influences inspired by Klancy's globetrotting childhood. During her France stint, she earned a Diplôme de Pâtisserie at Le Cordon Bleu Paris. Her friend's response to the dinner she'd made for herself—a salad of sautéed smoked duck breast with frisée, mâche, carrots, orange zest, and lardons? "Tu t'aimes bien." Translation: *You really love yourself.*

ROASTED CHICKEN WITH MANGO CHUTNEY ON RYE (THE TINA FEY)

For the chutney:

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
 2 Tablespoons chopped red onion
 1 cup chopped ripe mango
 1 Tablespoon apple cider vinegar
 1 teaspoon light brown sugar
 ¼ teaspoon seeded and minced Thai chile
 ¼ teaspoon curry powder
 Salt
 1 teaspoon chopped fresh cilantro (optional)

For the sandwich:

2 slices rye bread
 4 thick slices roasted chicken
 2 lettuce leaves

1. For the chutney: Heat the olive oil in a small saucepan over medium heat, tilting the pan to coat the bottom. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the mango, vinegar, brown sugar, chile, curry powder, and pinch of salt. Simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally, until the mango is slightly mushy, 6 to 8 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning, if desired. Remove the chutney from the heat, and stir in the cilantro, if desired.

2. For the sandwich: Toast the bread. Spread a tablespoon of mango chutney on each slice. Top it with the chicken and the lettuce, close the sandwich, and enjoy.

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