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NEW YORK
TIMES
BESTSELLER



ina garten
make it ahead

a barefoot contessa cookbook



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Photographs by Quentin Bacon

Garden photographs by John M. Hall



CLARKSON POTTER/PUBLISHERS

New York



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Published in the United States by Clarkson Potter/Publishers, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House LLC, a Penguin Random House Company, New York.

www.crownpublishing.com

www.clarksonpotter.com

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Make it ahead / Ina Garten.

pages cm — (A Barefoot Contessa cookbook)

I. Make-ahead cooking. 2. Barefoot Contessa (Store) I. Title.

TX714.G3644 2014

641.555—dc23 2014004486

ISBN 978-0-307-46488-0

Ebook ISBN 978-0-7704-3449-6

Design by Marysarah Quinn

Photographs by Quentin Bacon

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v3.1



contents

thank you!

make it ahead

cocktails

to start

lunch

dinner

vegetables

dessert

breakfast

make-ahead menus

index

recipe index

Barefoot Contessa complete recipe index

thank you!

When I wake up in the morning, I sometimes ask myself, “What do I feel like doing today?” Happily, the answer is, “I feel like testing recipes!” My team, Barbara Libath and Lidey Heuck, and I work really hard but we also have a wonderful time together. There is no way these recipes would be so accurate if, after I was done working on them, they didn’t retest them over and over again. I’m as grateful for their constant support and counsel as I am for the joy they bring to work.

Next is the team of people at Clarkson Potter/Publishers, which has been my home since my first book; I can’t imagine a happier place. I’m so grateful to Maya Mavjee, the lovely president of the Crown Group; Pam Krauss, the amazing publisher of Clarkson Potter; Marysarah Quinn, the creative director of Crown who also designs my books with such creativity; Rica Allannic, my wonderful editor; and Kate Tyler, who handles all the publicity so brilliantly. They are all extraordinary women and so good at what they do. Thank you!

Then there is the amazing team of people who help create the photographs for my books. We spend weeks on end together cooking, baking, styling, and photographing the food. Quentin Bacon takes the most gorgeous food photographs! It may look easy when he does it but anyone who has taken a snap of their dinner for Instagram knows how hard it is to make food look that luscious! Cyd McDowell and Vivian Lui cook and bake gorgeous food for the photographs—and no tricks with motor oil are allowed! (In fact, after Quentin takes the picture, we often sit down and eat it!) Thank you also to my dear friend Sarah Chase, who constantly inspires me with new ideas and recipes. And my thanks to Barb Fritz, for finding the simplest, most stylish plate or bowl for us to use. These are some of the happiest days I have working on my books. Also, John Hall is a genius at

photographing my garden at all times of the year. And one of the most exciting experiences of my life was being photographed by the incomparable Brigitte Lacombe for the book cover! I will always cherish that day that we spent together.

Finally, there is the extraordinary support from my wonderful agent, Esther Newberg, who takes such good care of me so I can concentrate on writing books. And of course to my husband, Jeffrey: I can honestly say that none of this would be possible without you. Thank you for your unconditional love and your inspiration over the past fifty years.



make it ahead

When I started thinking about this book, I asked my assistant Barbara Libath, “What’s the most common cooking problem that people write to us about?” “That’s easy!” she exclaimed. “We get the same question all the time: ‘Can I make it ahead?’ ” Wonderful, I thought, because I’ve had so much experience with cooking ahead! When I had a specialty food store in East Hampton, New York, that’s basically what we did—we prepared all kinds of savory dishes and baked goods and people took them home and served them that night or the next day. During the twenty years that I ran the store, I learned so many tricks for preparing the kinds of recipes that you really *can* make ahead, and we made them in a way that ensured the food would taste fresh and delicious whenever it was served.

We all have the same dilemma—we want to entertain with ease. One of my great pleasures is cooking a wonderful meal for Jeffrey and my friends; but, like everyone else, I have so much going on that it’s hard to find a whole day to cook just for the fun of it. There are two things I like about cooking ahead. First, the task of making a three-course dinner over several days seems so much less daunting and anxious-making than cooking everything on the actual day of the party. Second, when surprises happen—and they always do!—I have time to fix them. Maybe one of those onions I got for the stew is brown inside and I need to run to the store for a fresh one. Or the store was out of my favorite Pernigotti cocoa powder so I need a day or two to order it online. We’ve all had FedEx deliveries that got held up in a snowstorm in Memphis and arrived a day late. When it’s your Thanksgiving turkey, though, you don’t want to be stuck at the last minute without the main course! If I’m making everything in advance, I’m relaxed because I have time to fix a problem or even change the menu. Each recipe in this book is designed to make and serve right away, plus I give easy

instructions so you know not only *how* to make it ahead but also *how far in advance* you can make it.

Of course, there is ahead of time and there's *way* ahead of time. I'm often asked some variation of "Can I bake my holiday cookies in August and defrost them for Christmas?" The answer, sadly, is no. Cookies will be soggy and tasteless after months in the freezer. What you *can* do, however, is make the dough, cut out the cookies, freeze them unbaked, and *then* bake them at Christmastime as I do with my [Ginger Shortbread](#). Everyone who has roasted a chicken knows that if you cook it on Wednesday, refrigerate it, and serve it on Friday, it'll never taste as moist and delicious as it would have if you'd served it hot right out of the oven. On the other hand, the chicken will be *even better* if you season and prep it on Wednesday so it's ready to simply throw into the oven an hour and a half before dinner on Friday. What's important about learning to cook ahead is to know what you can make in advance and what you need to do at the last minute. Some dishes, such as soups and stews, can be cooked ahead completely and simply reheated before dinner, but it doesn't work for everything. In this book, I'll recommend which method works best for each recipe. In addition, I've tried to include in each chapter a recipe for something that you *think* you can't make ahead, such as mashed potatoes and whipped cream, but even there, I've figured out a way!



cooking ahead

I didn't just want to write recipes that were *okay* when they're made ahead, I wanted to write recipes that were actually *better* if they're made ahead. A dish like [Moroccan Lamb Tagine](#) derives its rich depth of flavor from roasting for hours and hours—and if you plan it right, it will be ready to serve just as your guests are sitting down to dinner. But I also include instructions on making it in advance and simply reheating it before dinner. Other recipes, like [Jalapeño Margaritas](#) and [Dark Chocolate Terrine with Orange Sauce](#), actually taste better after the flavors have time to meld.

I've been making dishes in advance for years—I just never thought about them as “make-ahead” dishes. When I owned my store, Barefoot Contessa, we prepared soups, salads, dinners, and desserts for our customers to take home. It didn't matter what those dishes tasted like right out of *our* oven because most people wouldn't be eating them right away. What *really* mattered to me was how those dishes were going to taste several hours—or even days—later when customers reheated them in *their* ovens to serve at home.

At the store, customers loved appetizers like [Truffled Chicken Liver Mousse](#) that could be stored in the fridge for a week. [Cauliflower & Celery Root Soup](#) could be quickly reheated for a satisfying lunch or dinner. Pot pies were a staple at the store. We prepared and froze them unbaked so customers could put them in the oven whenever dinner guests showed up. I've included lots of those recipes in this book, including my [French Chicken Pot Pie](#), which is similar to my classic Barefoot Contessa chicken pot pie but has been ramped up with leeks and fresh tarragon. Another favorite at the store was [Baked Polenta with Mushrooms & Blue Cheese](#), which we assembled and packed in baking trays so it was ready to heat and serve at home. Because we had already simmered the polenta and roasted the mushrooms, customers were able to pop the dishes into their own ovens for an easy, freshly baked dinner. The wonderful aromas wafting through the house probably weren't so bad, either! That's exactly what I want you to be able to do with the recipes in this book—to prepare them in advance and

pop the dishes in the oven before dinner. Every recipe has all the tips that I learned over those years at the store.



baking ahead

Baked goods are particularly easy to make in advance, as long as you know a few tricks. Cakes such as pound cakes that are moist and dense refrigerate very well (though you want to serve them at room temperature). While cakes that are light, such as sponge cakes, freeze well, it's best to defrost them slowly overnight in the fridge. [Sour Cream Corn Bread](#) can be baked, then sliced and toasted the next day. Even better!

Here's another reason that I love baking in advance: I'm a really messy baker! After I'm done whipping up a few cakes, I usually end up with sugar on the floor and flour all over me. When I have guests coming in five minutes, I don't want to be cleaning the kitchen or getting some stray molasses out of my hair. And, contrary to people's expectations, if you know which kinds of recipes to choose, baking ahead doesn't have to result in gooey messes and weeping frosting.

My [Lemon Poppy Seed Cake](#) is delicious when it comes out of the oven but the recipe includes a lemon syrup that soaks into the cake while it is cooling and a lemon glaze that brightens its flavors even more. Best of all, if it's stored properly, the cake is actually *moister* and more lemony the next day. And then there's breakfast! Who wants to get up at 5am to surprise houseguests with something special for breakfast? At Barefoot Contessa, where we baked thousands of muffins every day, I discovered that if we mixed the muffin batters the night before and scooped them into muffin pans the next day, we could have freshly baked muffins all day long. The best part is that the muffins tasted exactly the same as if we'd whipped up a new batch of batter each time we baked them. The same system works at home. [Blueberry Bran Muffins](#) can be mixed the night before and baked the next morning so you can serve hot muffins when you're still half asleep. All the pleasures of freshly baked muffins and no mess!



entertaining ahead

Recently, I had a dinner party for eight and I made a plan to cook everything ahead. My goals were that each recipe be prepared almost completely and that the only instructions I would need in the last hour could fit on a yellow Post-it note. First, I made [Warm Fig & Arugula Salad](#). I prepped the greens and whisked the vinaigrette and refrigerated them separately. Just before dinner, I roasted the walnuts and figs for a few minutes, tossed the greens and vinaigrette, and put the warm fruit and nuts on top.

Next, for the main course, I made [Slow-Roasted Spiced Pork](#), Maple Baked Beans (from *Barefoot Contessa at Home*), and [Winter Slaw](#). The pork and baked beans each roasted for 6 or 7 hours, and I prepped all the components of the slaw in advance: The kale, radicchio, Brussels sprouts, and shaved Parmesan went into plastic bags and the lemon vinaigrette went into a container and they all went into the fridge. When the pork was done, I sliced it onto a big serving platter with wedges of lime, the baked beans were served in the Le Creuset pot they cooked in, and the slaw ingredients were simply tossed together in a big bowl. Easy!

Finally, for dessert, I made [Coffee Granita](#), which was light and refreshing after the rich pork dinner. All I needed to do was take the granita out of the freezer, scrape it with a fork, and serve it in martini glasses with a big dollop of whipped cream—which, of course, I'd also made ahead. An hour before dinner—when I'm usually saying to Jeffrey, "*Don't talk to me!*"—I literally had nothing to do. I almost felt guilty, but it was wonderful. You can imagine how pleased I was when one of my guests not only commented that it was one of the best dinners he'd ever eaten, but also asked if I would make the same menu again next Saturday!

I was hooked. I could actually give a dinner party and not be completely exhausted by the time the first guest arrived. The meal was not only *okay*, in fact, it was *even better* because I'd made it ahead! Who wouldn't want all their dinner parties to be like that?

