

Magnolia Table

A COLLECTION OF RECIPES FOR GATHERING | VOLUME 2



JOANNA GAINES

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMY HEUNSINGER



WILLIAM MORROW

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Dedication

To my mother:

You have taught me that a home-cooked meal is a warm extension of love and care for your family. Some of my fondest memories are with you in the kitchen, and many of my favorite meals are the ones you and I have made side by side.

To my mother-in-law, Gayle:

*The way you've always opened up your home to family, friends,
and even strangers has inspired me over the years to be intentional
about the details when it comes to making my own dinner table a
place for people to gather and feel welcome.*





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[**Introduction**](#)

It's no secret that I'm a creature of habit. When I find a routine, a rhythm, or really *anything at all* that works and feels right, I cling to it with two steady hands. It is precisely the sure and steady part of my personality that has always been drawn to food, less for the thrill of a really good flavor combination or the plentiful health benefits, both of which I have grown to place great value in, but more because food, to me, has long represented comfort and familiarity. When I've been far from home, or just moved into a *new* home, whipping up a familiar family recipe would instantly give me a sense of place, wherever I happened to be. Ideally in the form of cheesy bread and homemade dumplings—or, better yet, chocolate cake!

Back when Chip and I were young parents, raising four kids under the age of four, food became a survival tool, a physical means of nourishing six bodies three times a day. I longed for *easy*, not new, so I leaned in to the food I grew up with, the no-fail recipes that I could be confident I wouldn't mess up while four hungry babies stared up at me. During those years, dinner was rarely elaborate or impressive. But it was, on most days, the only time we could all sit around the table and be intentional about sharing a meal together. I

started to notice a pattern that followed this nightly rhythm: When dinner was served, the house quieted, stories were told, and when it was time to excuse ourselves, everyone was fed in more ways than one. If not for the warm food on the table, those sacred evenings wouldn't have happened. And so, every day, it seemed, I found myself anticipating dinner around the table, which soon turned into thinking ahead about what I might serve and how I could set the table to make dinnertime feel a little more special. And that's when I began to see the kitchen differently—for what it had to offer my family beyond being the place where we stored our produce and stacked our plates. What had once been a place I often dreaded, I now saw as a gift, there to equip me with the space and tools I needed to make these meals possible.

So, slowly, I began to spend more time in our kitchen, messing with ingredients and practicing using new tools and recipes. I was still a ways away from feeling confident in this space, but something deep inside me told me that the life that was happening around our table every night was worth the effort. I started to pay attention to the foods my kids favored and practiced making meals that would support, but also oftentimes challenge, their palates.

Gradually, I started to feel like I actually belonged in this space.

Though there was, *and still is*, plenty of ordering in on nights when I just don't feel like cooking or when a meal inevitably burns.

That mind-set shift was a pivotal turning point for me. It led me to actually enjoy the creative part of cooking a meal, but even more, it opened my eyes to how much I treasured what came next—when everyone gathered around the table—whether it was among family, friends, or mixed company. Since then, it has been the soul and substance that resounds at the table—of stories being told while glasses clink and hands pass bowls, the excitement that murmurs when I confirm there is in fact dessert tonight, and always the lingering conversations—that has made the table itself one of the most familiar places in my world. The life that unfolds around it day after day continues to be potent enough to draw me back again and again.

My first cookbook, *Magnolia Table*, was a celebration of this very thing, an ode to bringing people around the table with recipes I knew intimately and had used to gather loved ones around my own table for years. From the start, I knew that I wanted to fill its pages with all my favorites: really good, easy-to-execute recipes that I

had been relying on for years, including dishes from dear friends or favorite recipes from family traditions. Once that book was put out into the world, and I saw so many of you making the same recipes that have been around my own table, friends' tables, and tables of generations past, it impressed upon me a profound commitment to the value of food being shared, of worn-in recipes being handed down. Watching my family's favorite meals become a part of the fabric of your families taught me so much more than I thought I knew about the power of food. Yes, food is personal. Yes, it can nourish our bodies. But it can also bridge strangers across state lines and beyond language barriers. My family's dinner table became hitched to yours, and yours became hitched to the table of someone entirely new. And the old adage— *a shared table is a shared life*—never felt more true.

But this experience was entirely unlike the first. In short: *This book stretched me*. Because most of my tried-and-true recipes were already out in the world, this process required me to get in the kitchen and start from scratch. This time around, my team and I worked to develop new recipes, which required me to study cooking in a way that I never had in order to learn how to go about

refining dishes that I'd always craved but couldn't put a name to.

Once again, I was faced with an opportunity to push myself beyond my comfort zone and stretch my palate. On many days, standing in my kitchen flour-clad and deep in recipe development took me back to those early years in my first tiny kitchen, giving myself pep talks when it came to learning how to use new tools and discern ingredients. But just as I eventually realized back then, within the safety of my own walls, I felt free to try and fail and make messes. Both times, confidence was earned by trial and error; and both times have reminded me that a sweet reward of cooking is not only in what's created, but also in the simple act of getting to create. For this, I have become convinced that there should always be space for grace in the kitchen—along with plenty of takeout menus. While it would certainly be the easy choice to fill a week of dinners with my family's favorite dishes and call it good, deep down that's not what I want for any of us. Taking a chance on ourselves and trying something new is how we get to experience possibility and how we stay enamored with the world around us. Being open to change and growth refines who we are and makes us all more gracious and understanding humans. And who knows, it might

even lead to raising kids who become the kind of adults who love to bring people around their own tables.

To me, those things make being stretched worth it, even when it goes against every natural fiber of my being. But because growth by its very nature requires change, and I don't get to have one without the other—they are wisely and intricately woven together—it means being willing to learn from those who know more than I do, and to invite my food tastes and preferences to evolve.

So that's what I did. I tried and failed, and I tried again, and every week we got closer and closer. Of course, not every recipe was a win, nor did each one make it into the final book, but with each small victory—a flavor perfected or a dish that Chip and the kids were suddenly asking for every night—a quiet confidence grew in me. And, gradually, that confidence began to drum louder than any self-doubt. In the end, we developed an entire book of recipes that now feel just as familiar and special as the ones I grew up with.

Because that's what food does. We get to know it and it changes us, for better or worse. We try, we taste, then we toss away or we fall in love. That's how unfamiliar ingredients become pantry staples and new recipes become family favorites.

In my first cookbook, I shared that food is my family's love language, and through the process of putting together this one, I've grown to realize that this is likely true for all of us. Food is the musical soundtrack of our lives; it bolsters our traditions; it maintains our fondest memories and our notion of home and family and, in the most basic sense, our ability to live and breathe day in and day out. It is around food that we gather in joy and in grief; it is an offering that comforts us in bad times and enriches the good times. No other thing in the living world nourishes us physically while also affecting us on an emotional level the same way that food does. All I'm really hoping to convey is that food matters. It's an honor and a privilege to feed the people in our lives, and to gather around a table where there is always, *always* home to be found.



Photograph by John and Maura Stoffer



[The Art of Gathering](#)

I love to eat; but my absolute favorite purpose of food is that it gives us a reason to gather. Call it entertaining, call it hosting, call it dinner at seven and bring whoever you want. A gathering of any kind is time well spent, whether it's a simple meal around the kitchen table, a casual get-together, or a boisterous house full of family and friends.

The Art of Gathering

The initial intention of these beginning pages was to create somewhat of a guide to entertaining. I worked and worked on it, jotting down a few tips I'd learned over the years, but there was something about listing out rules and how-tos on a topic that can be so personal and vulnerable that just didn't feel right to me. As I thought more deeply about what exactly I'd want to convey, I realized that my heart for gathering has little to do with *how* I actually pull it off and everything to do with *why* it matters. So, this isn't a hosting how-to. There won't be a takeaway of my top ten tips for throwing a party your friends will never forget. Nor will you learn a trick for remembering which side of the plate to put the fork on. Because in all transparency, I still have to google

that myself on evenings when I feel like it matters, which isn't often. Instead, I want these pages to be an encouragement, a gracious reminder that the most valuable thing you can do when it comes to gathering, whether it's an intimate meal with your family, a last-minute dinner with friends, or an event with guests, is to free yourself from the burden of expectations. And to lean into all the life and goodness and beauty that awaits at our dinner tables.

I think it's part of our human nature to seek connection. I believe that our hearts are naturally drawn toward one another to be in community. But I've also come to realize that it's not uncommon for people to feel immobilized when it comes to inviting people into their homes. I can understand why. It's a vulnerable thing to share our most intimate spaces with others. And sure, some people may have a knack for hosting and setting a table beautifully, so it can be really easy to look wistfully at the spaces we see in magazines or on social media and feel defeated that ours will never compare. We can get so bogged down by these comparisons that we forget the beautiful simplicity of sharing a meal and swapping stories.

This is a lesson I had to learn the hard way and have continued to

relearn over the years. When our kids were young and I was in a season of seeking perfection for just about every area of my life—as a wife, a mom, a designer, and a cook—whenever we’d host a dinner party or family gathering in our home, it became a rhythm for the evenings to end with me feeling completely depleted from cooking, hosting, and then stressing over how it all turned out. I never let myself indulge in the part that was meant to fill me up because I was too busy staring at the placement of the platters on the table, evaluating which ones needed fixing. I grew tired of feeling like my intentions weren’t aligning. There was something in me that cared deeply about creating a space where people could feel at ease and at home within our walls, yet when the doorbell would ring I suddenly started piling on expectations that everything go perfectly.

Thankfully, there was a moment after one of our family get-togethers when I finally asked myself, “Why am I doing this?” If the answer was for my own pride or the approval of others, I knew it wasn’t sustainable. There’d be no escaping that nagging feeling that I was falling short somewhere. So I started placing more significance on the why than the how and I began to anticipate

simple weeknight dinners with my family in the same way I would a more elaborate gathering—for the simple sake of a mutually shared experience around the table, as well as for the significance I found in nourishing and being nourished.

Since then, meals in our home have looked and felt different for every kind of occasion. When it comes to simple weeknight dinners at home, it can sometimes feel like a victory in and of itself just to get dinner on the table for seven people after a full day of work, school, and the kids' practices. Sometimes it's fun to make dinner feel like a celebration. Even if I'm cooking something fairly simple like pasta, I'll light a few candlesticks on the table and lay out pretty linen napkins. Just those two really simple details is enough to make the meal feel a little bit more special, no matter what's being served.

On weekends, it's not uncommon for a friend or relative to stop by for a few hours and then, suddenly, it's dinnertime. It's important to me that people feel welcome to stay as long as they're comfortable—and to never feel like they're intruding on a meal they weren't invited to. So I've learned to keep on-hand ingredients for a handful of recipes that can feed a group. And I'm always up

for a balanced meal of takeout and homemade. Perhaps it makes more sense to order out for a last-minute dinner while I make something sweet for dessert. When that's the case, Chip orders a pizza and I know I have the ingredients for at least three different kinds of cookies or cakes stocked in the pantry.

When I look back on some of the dinner parties and family gatherings we hosted early in our marriage, I can't help but wonder if our guests truly felt comfortable in our home. I can imagine it wasn't hard to see the anxiety written all over me. And over the years, I've watched and witnessed how my own demeanor, even the way I greet a guest in our entryway, can either set someone at ease or cause them to put up their guard.

Nowadays, when I've intentionally invited guests over for dinner, I know that the way my home feels and what it's communicating to people when they walk in is more important than what's on the menu. I've let go of the idea that the couch and pillows need to be spruced or that the floors need to be vacuumed, and instead choose to focus my time and energy on ways to make the environment feel inviting, like playing music, lighting a candle in the background, and turning on a few low lights; really anything that makes my

home feel like a warm respite from the outside world and familiar enough that people want to settle in and stay awhile.

For me, the art of gathering isn't about appearance or aesthetics.

It's about the way people feel when they're in my home and around my table. Whether it's my own kids or new friends, I want them to leave at the end of the night with light hearts and full stomachs.

Not just from the food we shared but from the time well spent in each other's company.



[Guide to Herbs, Seasonings & Substitutions](#)

The reality is, we all need food. We can't survive without it, and I've never met anyone who'd want to. Because food fuels and satisfies. We wake up hungry for a morning meal because it breaks our fast and fills us up. We anticipate dinner because it gathers us at evening's end and declares another day done. Aside from its sustaining power, food is also creative work. Individual ingredients come together to create something distinctly delicious—especially in the form of fresh herbs and flavorful seasonings.



Fresh Herbs

This guide features some of the most common herbs available in supermarkets and farmers' markets. You can use this to get an idea of their flavors and the best ways to use them.

Italian basil

FLAVOR: *anise, cloves, mint*

USES: *pasta sauce, pesto, salad*

bay laurel

FLAVOR: *aromatic, vanilla, cardamom*

USES: *beans, braised meat, poultry, soup, stew*



chives

FLAVOR: *oniony*

USES: *dips, eggs, vegetables*

cilantro

FLAVOR: *citrus, pungent*

USES: *marinades, Mexican and Thai dishes, salsa*

dill

FLAVOR: *grassy, mild*



USES: *eggs, fish, poultry, vegetables*

mint

FLAVOR: *menthol, icy, zesty*

USES: *cocktails, lamb, salads, tea*

oregano

FLAVOR: *anise, cloves, mint*

USES: *chili, grilled or roasted meat, pasta sauce*

parsley

FLAVOR: *bitter*



USES: *most meats and vegetables*

rosemary

FLAVOR: *aromatic, piney*

USES: *apples, pears, potatoes, red meat, stuffing*

sage

FLAVOR: *smoky, woody*

USES: *meat, poultry, sausage, stuffing*



tarragon

FLAVOR: *anise, exotic, sweet*

USES: *asparagus, béarnaise sauce, fish, peas, poultry*

thyme

FLAVOR: *earthy, fragrant, mild lemon*

USES: *meat, poultry, sauces, broth, vegetables*

Herb Pairings

Fresh herbs are perfect on their own, but mixing and matching them produces comforting combos and sometimes even unexpectedly wonderful results. Whether you are clipping from a garden or pot or you have bounty from the market, give these combinations a try.

HERBS

PAIRING SUGGESTION

cilantro & dill Add dill to dishes that use fresh cilantro—think Mexican and Thai

—for a subtle but distinct shift in flavor.

dill & chives

Stir this pair into a cold chicken salad or egg salad, toss with lightly sautéed summer vegetables, or top sliced fresh tomatoes.

mint, oregano Parsley marries the distinct flavors of mint and oregano to add a

& parsley

Mediterranean or Middle Eastern take on grain salads and marinades for grilled meats.

parsley,

These herbs create a classic comfort-food combo. Use them with

rosemary &

roasted or braised meat or chicken (rub it under the skin), in

thyme

stuffing, and with roasted vegetables.

sage &

With their warm blend of flavors, this duo works with creamy

parsley

risotto, roasted winter squash, stuffing, and roasted or braised meats.

thyme &

This combo goes best with mild foods. Stir them into a sour cream

tarragon

or mustard sauce to spoon over fish and fresh spring vegetables.

Or toss them chopped into scrambled eggs or omelets.

basil & thyme Add these reliable herbs to tomato-based sauces, eggplant dishes

(ratatouille or caponata), quiche, and fresh salads.

basil & mint

Use equal amounts of each herb to make pesto to drizzle over tomatoes, toss with pasta, or whisk into a vinaigrette dressing. Or sprinkle this chopped herb combo over a plate of sliced mixed melon for a refreshing salad.

Seasoning Blends

Making your own spice blends produces the freshest flavors in recipes and allows you to adjust seasoning levels to your personal preference. These formulas all make about ¼ cup. Once prepared, store them in small glass jars in your pantry for up to 1 year.

apple pie spice

2 tablespoons ground cinnamon

1 tablespoon ground nutmeg

1 teaspoon ground ginger

½ teaspoon ground cloves

Use to season apple pie and other baked goods. Add to French toast and pancakes. Sprinkle on yogurt and blend into smoothies.

chai spice

4 teaspoons ground cardamom

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

2 teaspoons ground ginger

1 teaspoon ground allspice

1 teaspoon ground nutmeg

½ teaspoon anise seeds, ground

½ teaspoon ground cloves

Steep a spoonful with your tea or blend into a smoothie. Stir into hot oatmeal.

Add to banana bread batter.

pumpkin pie spice

2 tablespoons ground cinnamon

1 tablespoon ground ginger

2 teaspoons ground nutmeg

1 teaspoon ground allspice

½ teaspoon ground cloves

Use in pumpkin or sweet potato pie. Add to a latte or whipped cream.

Cajun seasoning

1 tablespoon sweet paprika

2 teaspoons garlic powder

1½ teaspoons dried oregano

1 teaspoon onion powder

1 teaspoon black pepper

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ to 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

½ teaspoon dried thyme

½ teaspoon white pepper

Use in Cajun and Creole dishes, such as jambalaya. Season shrimp skewers, crab cakes, and fish. Sprinkle on popcorn or your favorite snack mix.

Greek seasoning

5 teaspoons dried oregano

1 tablespoon dried thyme

2 teaspoons dried marjoram

2 teaspoons dried minced onion

1 teaspoon dried basil

1 teaspoon dried minced garlic

1 teaspoon dried lemon peel

1 teaspoon kosher salt

Season chicken thighs and pork tenderloin. Stir into orzo with tomatoes and feta. Sprinkle over salads or add to vinaigrette.

Italian seasoning

1 tablespoon dried basil

1 tablespoon dried oregano

1 tablespoon dried thyme

1½ teaspoons dried marjoram

1½ teaspoons dried rosemary

½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

Add to pasta sauces, meatballs, soups, salad dressings, and roasted vegetables.

Southwest seasoning

1 tablespoon ground ancho chile

1 tablespoon sweet paprika

1½ teaspoons dried Mexican oregano

1½ teaspoons onion powder

1 teaspoon ground chipotle

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon ground coriander

½ teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon kosher salt

Season grilled meats. Stir into rice and bean blends or sautéed vegetables.

Add to scrambled eggs.

poultry seasoning

1 tablespoon dried sage

1 tablespoon dried thyme

2 teaspoons dried marjoram

1 teaspoon dried rosemary

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon dried dill weed

½ teaspoon dried lemon peel

½ teaspoon black pepper

¼ teaspoon ground allspice

Rub under the skin of roast chicken and turkey. Stir into stuffing and soups.

Work into ground chicken to make burgers.

steak seasoning

4 teaspoons kosher salt

1 tablespoon cracked black pepper

2 teaspoons dried minced garlic

1½ teaspoons dill seeds

1 teaspoon onion powder

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon dried lemon peel

Sprinkle on steaks and pot roast. Stir into stews. Toss with vegetables.

barbecue seasoning

5 teaspoons chili powder

1 tablespoon smoked paprika

2 teaspoons mustard powder

2 teaspoons dried minced onion

½ teaspoon garlic powder

½ teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon black pepper

Rub on ribs and chicken. Sprinkle over roasted vegetables. Stir into baked beans and sauces.

chili seasoning

2 tablespoons chili powder

2 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder

2 teaspoons dried minced onion

1 teaspoon dried Mexican oregano

1 teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon garlic powder

½ teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon black pepper

Add to your favorite chili or baked beans. Sprinkle on oven fries.

fajita seasoning

1 tablespoon chili powder

2 teaspoons sweet paprika

2 teaspoons dried Mexican oregano

1½ teaspoons onion powder

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon ground cumin

¼ teaspoon black pepper

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Rub on chicken, beef, shrimp, and pork. Stir into black beans or rice.

lemon-pepper seasoning

2 tablespoons dried lemon peel

1 tablespoon cracked black pepper

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon onion powder

Sprinkle over salmon and chicken. Season popcorn and snack mixes. Add to marinades.

pizza seasoning

1 tablespoon dried basil

1 tablespoon dried oregano

2 teaspoons dried parsley

1½ teaspoons dried minced garlic

1½ teaspoons fennel seeds

1½ teaspoons dried minced onion

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

Sprinkle over homemade or store-bought pizza.

taco seasoning

1 tablespoon chili powder

2½ teaspoons ground cumin

2 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon dried Mexican oregano

½ teaspoon black pepper

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

Stir into ground meat with water to make taco meat. Sprinkle over chicken, shrimp, or fish. Stir into sour cream for an easy dip.

everything bagel seasoning

4 teaspoons poppy seeds

2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds

2 teaspoons dried minced garlic

2 teaspoons dried minced onion

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

Top bagels with lox and cream cheese. Sprinkle on eggs, avocado, and tomatoes.

Substitutions

When you find yourself in the middle of a recipe and discover you're missing a key ingredient, check here to see if you can save yourself a trip to the store.

INGREDIENT

SUBSTITUTE WITH

baking

powder

1 teaspoon

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cream of tartar + $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda

balsamic

vinegar

1 tablespoon

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar + $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon brown sugar

bread

crumbs, *fine*

dried

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup soft bread crumbs (1 slice of bread)

broth

beef,

chicken,

or

vegetable

1 cup

1 teaspoon broth base or bouillon granules + 1 cup hot water

buttermilk

1 cup

1 tablespoon vinegar or lemon juice + enough milk to make 1 cup

(stir and let stand 5 minutes)

cornstarch

(for

thickening)

1 tablespoon

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

corn

syrup

(light)

1 cup

1 cup granulated sugar + $\frac{1}{4}$ cup hot water

crème fraîche

1 cup

1 cup sour cream or plain Greek yogurt

egg

1 whole

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup refrigerated or frozen egg product; or, for baking, 1

tablespoon flaxseed + 3 tablespoons water (beat together and let

stand for 5 minutes)

flour, cake

1 cup

1 cup minus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour, sifted

flour,

self-

rising

1 cup

1 cup all-purpose flour + 1 teaspoon baking powder + $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon

kosher salt + $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda

garlic

1 clove

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon bottled minced garlic or garlic paste, or $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon

garlic powder

ginger, grated

fresh

1 teaspoon

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground ginger

half-and-half

or light cream

1 cup

1 tablespoon melted butter + enough whole milk to make 1 cup

lemon juice

1 tablespoon

1½ teaspoons apple cider vinegar or white wine vinegar

milk

1 cup

1 cup plant milk (unsweetened, unflavored plant milk, such as almond, cashew, oat, soy)

mustard

powder

1 teaspoon

1 tablespoon yellow mustard (in cooking)

onion,

chopped

½ cup

½ cup chopped green onions or shallots, or 2 tablespoons dried minced onion

sour cream

1 cup

1 cup plain Greek yogurt or regular yogurt

sugar, brown

1 cup packed

1 cup granulated sugar + 2 tablespoons molasses

sugar,

granulated

1 cup

1 cup packed brown sugar, or 2 cups sifted powdered sugar

tomato sauce

1 cup

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup tomato paste + $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water

vanilla bean

1 whole

1 tablespoon vanilla bean paste or pure vanilla extract

wine, red

1 cup

1 cup broth (beef, chicken, or vegetable) in savory recipes, or 1

cup 100% cranberry juice (for baked recipes)

wine, white

1 cup

1 cup chicken broth in savory recipes, or 1 cup apple juice in