

Matters

M A G A Z I N E

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The Magazine of Maplewood and
South Orange since 1990



Can Do Fondue!

BY BEN SALMON,
Kitchen a la Mode, South Orange

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*Party Cake, Party Cake and
LH Event Design, Maplewood*

THE SECRET

Ever try to melt your cheese or chocolate in a fondue pot sitting over a tea light candle? Forget it. Using a can of Sterno can work, but that's an extra purchase, chemicals, an open flame and a specific kind of fondue pot... And you still might not end up getting that fully melted pool of silky deliciousness. When using a fondue pot, the best bet is to make your fondue in a pot or Dutch oven on the stove and then transfer it. But that's not necessary and only results in more pots to clean. Go the oven to table route (all you need is a trivet!), serve it right from the stovetop or spoon it onto individual plates or into ramekins and sell your fondue pot at the next garage sale.

Fondue is a fun and interactive way to mix up typical entertaining. But we've been doing it wrong. And we've been oversold. You don't need a fondue pot—or four—just to have a memorable dinner party. Besides, you shouldn't have to take up precious kitchen storage with something you're likely to use just twice a year. All you need to make this mid-century modern classic work in today's world is a good pot and some essential tools you either already have or should invest in. You'll find that preparing for a fondue party is easier than making most meals. Since your guests assemble their own food, you won't have to tinker in the kitchen while everyone else is enjoying the martini and garnish bar.



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THE METHOD

Cheese on cheese action! Mix things up a bit and dip one kind of cheese into another! Like gruyere but don't want to drop a fortune on fondue? Make the cheese sauce with less expensive cheddar and splurge on a small hunk of gruyere to cube and dip.

Get creative with cheese fondue! Vegetables like radish and endive add bite and stand up well to the cheese. Pickles also work surprisingly well. Want to go a little crazy? Pop up some popcorn for dipping!

Kirschwasser, a clear cherry brandy, is a traditional ingredient in cheese fondue. Embrace your wild side and substitute bourbon in its place. That way you won't have that bottle of Kirsch sitting on your bar for the next three years (I just wiped the dust off mine). Besides, bourbon adds a little sweetness and cuts through the sharpness of cheddar well, a good substitution for more expensive classic fondue cheeses. Throw in some spices like smoked paprika and white pepper to complement the flavors and really make it sing.

How to do it: Combine 1 tablespoon butter, 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire Sauce, 1 cup white wine and 3 tablespoons bourbon into a pot on low to medium low heat until it simmers, approximately five minutes. In a bowl, toss 1 1/4 cups grated cheddar cheese (I mix three different varieties) with 1 1/2 tablespoon cornstarch, 1/2 teaspoon each of smoked paprika and white pepper, and 1 teaspoon each mustard powder, onion powder and garlic powder. On low heat, whisk the cheese mixture into the pot in four batches, allowing the cheese to melt in between each. Stir until the fondue starts to bubble. Add salt to taste and serve.

Worried the handles of your Dutch oven are too hot? I tie a dish towel through each handle to have something to grab onto while dishing out the goodness within.

You can never have enough ramekins! Keep a collection of a variety of sizes and you'll be surprised at how often they come in handy, from prepping to serving to baking. Just ask *Matters Magazine* publisher Karen Duncan, who has a whole shelf in her kitchen of a dozen different sizes.



Bulleit Bourbon, \$28.99, Maplewood Wine & Liquor, 3 Highland Place, Maplewood.

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Susan is a caregiver who has a stressful job. But her work does not stop at 5:00 p.m. In addition to raising her own family, she is responsible for the care of her aging mother who is physically disabled, and showing signs of increasing forgetfulness and confusion.

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Surf & Turf

HOW TO DO IT

Main course fondue with broth or oil is difficult to pull off at home, especially if you don't want to go through the hassle of precooking all your ingredients. The trick is to choose items that cook quickly and to slice them as thinly as possible. Thinly slice steak, shrimp, purple cabbage and mushrooms and arrange them in bowls. Get your beef stock to a rolling boil and pour it over the ingredients, submerging them entirely. Sprinkle some chopped scallions on top. Cover your bowl with a plate until meat is cooked thoroughly, approximately five minutes. If the shrimp is pink and the exterior of the meat is brown, the shrimp will be cooked through and the steak will be perfectly rare to medium rare.

- Arrange your protein and veggies in a bowl.
- Pour boiling beef stock over all.
- Cover for about 5 minutes.



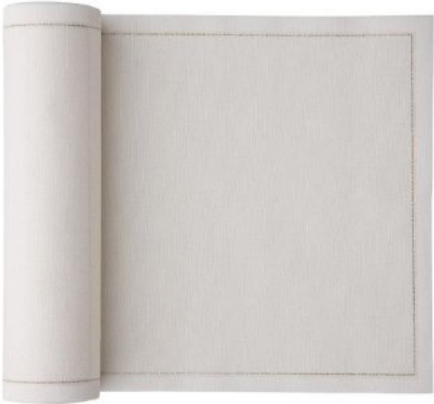
White ceramic lion's head bowls are dishwasher, freezer, oven and microwave safe, \$8.95



White ceramic 4 oz. shaped bowls, \$4.99



Lafayette hammered spoons, \$2.99 each



Roll of tear-off linen napkins, various sizes and colors from which to choose.

Turf Fondue

Not able to dedicate an afternoon to making your own beef stock? No problem, just pick up a box of good quality stock at the grocery store. The broth isn't the star of the show anyway!

Want to make broth on your own schedule instead of when you have the right scraps on hand? Use your freezer! From chicken carcasses to steak bones to parsley and kale stems to carrot and celery ends, collect full-flavored scraps in freezer bags until you're ready to make a big batch of broth. Waste not, broth not! Freeze broth in ice cube trays before it goes bad. Transfer the cubes to freezer bags and have as little or as much broth ready to go whenever you need it!



Red cube silicone mini ice block tray, \$9.95

Boneless short ribs or minute steak works well for broth fondue. Slice it across the top for thin, even slices that cook quickly and stay tender.

If you bought a big set of knives for \$199, chances are the store and the manufacturer won and you lost. Two or three good knives for the same price will always be better than a big set that's barely sharp enough out of the box to cut through a tomato. You truly don't *need* more than three knives in your kitchen (chef's, bread and paring/utility knife). When it comes to kitchen knives, less is definitely more. Buy your knives a la carte and add to the collection as your needs dictate.

The most dangerous tool in the kitchen is a dull knife. It's more likely to slip and slide and doesn't always go where you intend. But a sharp knife is predictable and actually takes the exact path you put it on. Knives should be fully sharpened—not just honed on a steel—at least once a year. Sharpen at home on a quality sharpener or at a store that offers the service, like Kitchen a la Mode's on-premises, overnight sharpening service.



Red-handled fire utility knife with baked acrylic handle, made in the USA, \$99.95

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DELICIOUS AT ROOM TEMPERATURE

We've been lied to! Forget the hassle, chocolate fondue does not need to be served warm over a flame. The chocolate fondue for our photo shoot was made several hours in advance and we couldn't stop eating it! It was *perfect* at room temperature.

Want to turn your chocolate fondue into a special adult delight? Booze it up! So many different liqueurs can be added to make the perfect adult treat: Raspberry, cream, coffee, orange and mint can all work beautifully. Here we used chocolate liqueur for extra sultry richness.

How to do it: Simmer 1 ½ tablespoons unsalted butter, 1 cup whole milk and 1 teaspoon quality vanilla extract over low heat. Melt in 10 ounces dark chocolate and two to three tablespoons liqueur of your choice. It's the easiest dessert you'll ever make!

Candied bacon pairs blissfully with dark chocolate for dessert; the perfect combination of salty, sweet and bitter! But you must candy the bacon when you make it or the flavors won't wed as well.

How to do it: Grab a half-sheet baking pan, a cooling rack that fits inside it and preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Lay the bacon slices out on the rack; you can fit a whole package of bacon on there! Rub a couple pinches of brown sugar on the up-facing side of each piece and bake until crisp, approximately 25 minutes.



White 2 qt. enamel-on-steel saucepan where the lid is a trivet and so that the chocolate is then served room temperature, \$79.95

Strawberry huller, \$8.95

White ceramic 4 oz. shaped bowls, \$4.99



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Shake up your martini service with a garnish bar: Gherkin pickles, blue cheese-stuffed olives, skewers of mixed olives, lemon twists, thin lime wheels and grapefruit wedges all work well with vodka martinis and bring something a little different to the party.

Making the perfect martini: How dry can you go? There's nothing worse than a martini with too much vermouth. Like it extra dry? Pour a little vermouth into your empty martini glass, swish it around and dump it out. A little less dry? Pour the vermouth into your ice-filled cocktail shaker, give it a couple good shakes and pour it out. Just enough vermouth will cling to the ice. Or you can do what I do: Pick up the vermouth bottle and put it down again without opening the top.

A well-stocked bar starts with good liquor. All of ours were found at Maplewood Wine & Liquor, 3 Highland Place, Maplewood.



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