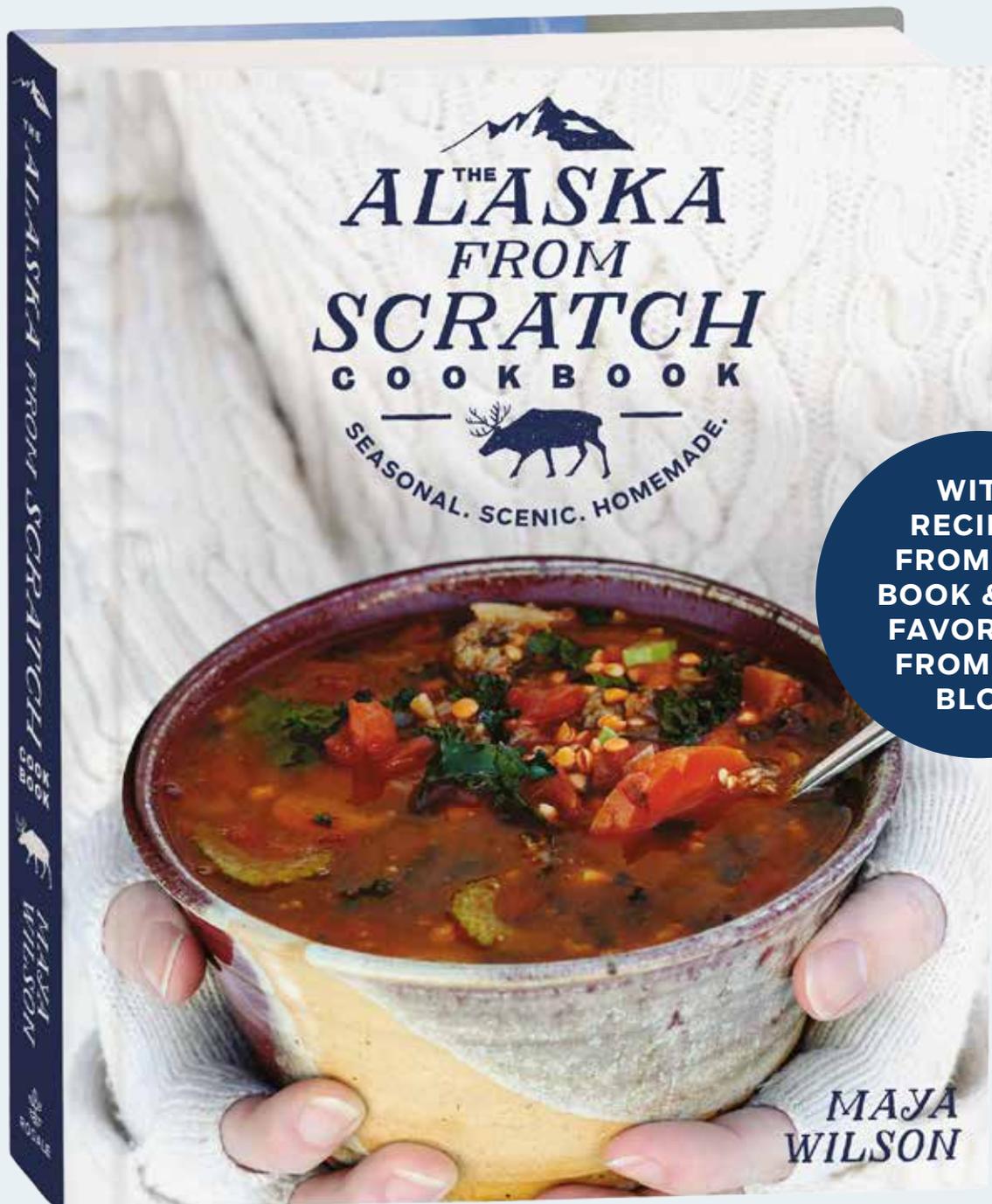


A TASTE OF ALASKA

A SNEAK PEEK AT
ALASKA FROM SCRATCH



WITH
RECIPES
FROM THE
BOOK & FAN
FAVORITES
FROM THE
BLOG

MAYA
WILSON



FOREWORD

MAYA WILSON'S BELOVED BLOG, *ALASKA FROM SCRATCH*, INTRODUCED ME TO A WOMAN WHO

had uprooted her life from the sunny shores of California to the wilderness of Southcentral Alaska. In her kitchen on the Kenai Peninsula, she found both a place to call home and a sounding board for a voice that for too long had been silenced.

When I first met Maya, I, too, had recently moved to Anchorage, a place that had never been on my wanderlust radar or bucket list. Of the large and rowdy group of food lovers and chefs, I was most drawn to Maya's calm energy; I understood in that first evening that here was a woman who had lost so much and yet in her new home had found a way to transform grief into something nourishing and joyful.



“Some losses are huge and sudden,” Maya writes. “The kind that shock you and take your breath away, happening in a moment and leaving you never the same. . . . It’s hard to know who you might have been without the loss because it has seemingly always been there.”

If we are lucky, we are able to look through to the other side, to all that there is to gain and the joy to be had from that discovery. Maya came to joy later in life—she, like myself, came to accept that happiness can sometimes be something we choose. And in this case, the old adage is true: Better late than never.

Alaskans can be welcoming yet wary of the outsider; once they let you in, however, they can be at turns warm and quirky, frank and exuberant. To embrace this land is to embrace its harsh beauty—the majestic peaks of the mountain ranges, a back country that is unforgiving but will reward you with a lifelong bounty of indelible moments rich with surprise and beauty.

Not only is this book a love song to the wondrous landscape that is Alaska, but Maya's story and recipes—everything from Smoked Salmon Pot Pie and Chocolate Mint Earthquake Cake to Key Lime Cheesecake with Pretzel Crust and Cashew Horchata—that she has so generously shared burst with flavor and color.

It took me some time and lots of exceptional five-element acupuncture to finally understand that in order to live this life, in this place, mindfully and joyfully, I needed to no longer lament all that was missing—friends in other parts of the world, readily available ingredients from warmer climes—and

finally open my eyes to all that I had gained, including new, deep friendships; the privilege of living in one of the most beautiful landscapes; and a new family.

Maya is one of those important friendships. And this cookbook, like she, is no ordinary adventure. She has taken what's “missing” or “unavailable” in Alaska and, true to the kitchen wizard that she is, created her own food, and a new life. Hers is the story of an arduous emotional journey, a tale of caution to those of us who ignore what's deepest and true inside our hearts.

Because she is like many of us who find solace in the kitchen, in the act of creating a dish to feed and nurture, Maya is right there with us. She's an authoritative guide who offers her own story, unvarnished. Whether guiding us through the healing process of making gnocchi or sharing her sheer delight in baking a cake from scratch, Maya folds us into the warmth of her home like the many layers of a rich and buttery puff pastry.

“In all of the hardest moments of my life,” she writes, “cooking has always helped me find my way back home.”

Alaska from Scratch could also be called *Life from Scratch*. We live in shaky times, on shaky ground, but cooking is inclusive, a way of gathering disparate cultures and people to a common table. The kitchen is Maya's terra firma where she generously offers up a menu of comfort foods that both ground and transport. So, wherever you may be in the world, as you cook your way through this book, may you find your own sense of home.

—KIM SUNÉE, 2017

GINGER BAKED OATMEAL WITH BLUEBERRIES AND PEARS

— Makes 4 to 6 servings —

As a child, I didn't realize how lucky I was that Grandma Susan always kept a full collection of hot cereal options in her pantry, from Cream of Wheat to Malt-O-Meal, and from grits to old-fashioned rolled oats.

I might have even protested and asked why I couldn't eat cold, colorful, sugary cereals like other kids. How fortunate I was to have someone make me a hot, wholesome breakfast, studded with plump raisins and nuts. Later on, when I no longer lived with Grandma, I missed the hot breakfasts and the care and safety that came with them. As an adult, I often crave a steaming bowl of hot cereal, particularly when I am not feeling well and am in dire need of a dose of comfort and a hug from Grandma.

When it comes to oats, slow and steady wins the race. I opt for the longer-cooking rolled oats over quick oats every time, as quick oats are almost always gluey in texture. But if you're not interested in standing over the stove boiling and stirring your oats in the morning, baking them like this is a great option, particularly if you're cooking for a crowd.

1 large Bartlett pear,
quartered and cored

1 cup blueberries

1½ cups rolled oats

¾ teaspoon ground
cinnamon

¾ teaspoon ground ginger

¼ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon baking powder

1½ cups milk

2 eggs

4 tablespoons butter,
melted

⅓ cup pure maple syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

FOR SERVING:

Milk

Brown sugar

- 1 Preheat the oven to 375°F. Grease a 13" x 9" baking dish.
- 2 Chop three-quarters of the pear into bite-size pieces. Sprinkle the chopped pears evenly in the bottom of the baking dish. Slice the remaining quarter of the pear into thin slices and set them aside to top the oatmeal. Sprinkle ½ cup of the blueberries into the pan with the pears, reserving the rest of the blueberries to put on top.
- 3 In a mixing bowl, stir together the oats, cinnamon, ginger, salt, and baking powder until combined. Scatter the oat mixture evenly over the fruit in the pan.
- 4 In another bowl, whisk together the milk, eggs, butter, maple syrup, and vanilla until smooth. Pour the milk mixture evenly over the oats. Top with the pear slices and remaining ½ cup blueberries.
- 5 Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until golden and set. Spoon generous heaps of the baked oatmeal into serving bowls. Pour milk over top of the oatmeal and serve with brown sugar on the side to sweeten, if needed.



ZUPPA TOSCANA (CREAMY POTATO & KALE SOUP WITH ITALIAN SAUSAGE)

— Makes 6 servings —

The big news around here is that our family is moving into a new home just down the road a ways from where we currently live. While I am excited about this new chapter – having friends as neighbors on all sides and enjoying a priceless view of Cook Inlet and the Mt. Redoubt volcano for starters – I will be somewhat sad to see our current house go. We have lived in this house longer than any other; it has been our only Alaska home and it has been my favorite house yet. We have countless memories here of all the ways that our Alaska life has taken shape, the friends and family who have enjoyed meals at our table, the holidays and birthdays and the everydays, and all the growing and healing and changing that has occurred in the lives of people under this roof.

One of the most bittersweet things about this move is that this is the place where Alaska from Scratch came to be – the kitchen where I rekindled my passion nourishing people through food, and day after day, gradually and steadily, a food blogger was born here. This kitchen and I have a rhythm. I love the way the sunlight casts golden beams through the window over the spacious stainless steel farm sink, daily creating a natural and beautiful staging place for food photography. I adore the ample pantry with her sliding shelves and the recipe notes I've taped to the inside of the door. I have a particular fondness for the way the gas range can sear a piece of salmon or the way the oven bakes a perfectly golden chewy-soft cookie. I will miss the open counter space where I've tested and tasted so many recipes I've happily lost track of all time and quantity. These pale wood floors and these white walls and these stainless steel appliances all tell a marvelous story – of food filled with love, a kitchen filled with music, a woman who found her voice, and all the readers who showed up and listened.

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 pound italian sausage

¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes (or to taste)
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 onion, diced

4 cups chicken broth
3 small russet potatoes, thinly sliced
2 cups kale, finely chopped

1 cup heavy cream
Salt and pepper to taste

To a large pot over medium heat, add the olive oil. Brown the sausage until no longer pink. Add the red pepper flakes, garlic, and onion and cook, stirring often, until the onions are translucent and the garlic is fragrant, about 4 minutes. Add the chicken broth, potatoes, and kale. Bring the broth to a simmer, reduce the heat to medium-low, and cook until the potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes. Remove the soup from the heat, stir in the cream, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Ladle into soup bowls and serve.

Adapted from Damn Delicious:

<http://damndelicious.net/2013/12/07/olive-garden-zuppa-toscana-copycat-recipe/>



TOMATO BASIL SPAGHETTI SQUASH BAKE

This spaghetti squash bake is fab – garlic, olive oil, fresh basil, parmesan, tomatoes, and mozzarella all baked together with tender roasted squash. We enjoyed it as a light, meatless dinner with a spinach salad. It would also make a very tasty side dish. In the photo, I finished it with a drizzle of good balsamic.

1 whole spaghetti squash, roasted, seeds removed, and scooped out
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
¼ cup fresh basil leaves, finely sliced

Salt and pepper
¼ cup parmesan cheese, grated
1 whole ripe tomato, sliced

½ cup mozzarella cheese (or more if you prefer)

- 1 Preheat oven to 375. Lightly grease an oblong shallow casserole dish (or similar).
- 2 To a mixing bowl, add the cooked squash “noodles,” olive oil, garlic, basil, a generous amount of salt and pepper, and the parmesan cheese. Toss to coat (more olive oil can be added if needed - you want it moist, but not dripping).

Spread mixture into the casserole dish. Lay tomato slices on top and season them lightly with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with mozzarella cheese and a little bit more freshly grated parmesan. Bake 25-30 minutes or until cheese is bubbly and beginning to brown. Serve promptly (a drizzle of balsamic and some more fresh basil on top is tasty, but optional).



BLACK COD OVER UDON WITH BABY BOK CHOY

— Makes 2 servings —

Black cod is like the pork belly or bone marrow of the ocean, deeply rich and decadent. Because of its unctuous nature, it goes well with this vinegar-forward umami broth and some tender-crisp bok choy. One trick about preparing black cod is that the bones are notoriously difficult to remove; it's best to attempt to tackle the bones after the fish has been cooked.

FOR THE UDON:

8 ounces udon noodles
1 cup vegetable broth
¼ cup soy sauce
¼ cup seasoned rice vinegar

1 tablespoon honey
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh ginger
1 clove garlic, minced
1 green onion, sliced thickly on the bias

FOR THE BLACK COD:

2 tablespoons hoisin
1 teaspoon sambal oelek
2 teaspoons vegetable oil
2 fillets (4–5 ounces each) Alaska black cod

FOR THE BOK CHOY:

2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
2 baby bok choy, sliced in half
1 teaspoon sugar
Kosher salt

- 1 Preheat the oven to 450°F.
- 2 *To make the udon:* Prepare the udon noodles according to package directions. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan over medium-low heat, stir together the vegetable broth, soy sauce, vinegar, honey, ginger, and garlic. Bring to a simmer. Keep the broth warm while completing the other steps.
- 3 *To make the black cod:* In a small bowl, stir together the hoisin and sambal oelek. Set aside. In an ovenproof skillet, heat the vegetable oil over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the black cod fillets skin side up and sear for 2 minutes, or until golden brown on the bottom. Carefully turn the fillets. Turn off the heat. Using a spoon, spread the hoisin mixture over the top of each fillet. Transfer the pan to the oven and roast the fillets for 5 minutes.
- 4 *To make the bok choy:* While the fish is in the oven, in a skillet, heat the sesame oil over medium-high heat. Sprinkle the cut side of the bok choy with the sugar. Place them cut side down into the hot sesame oil. Cover and sear for 2 minutes, or until caramelized. Turn the bok choy over and add ¼ cup water to the pan. Cover and allow the bok choy to steam for 3 minutes. Season with salt to taste.
- 5 Debone the fish with fish tweezers or using your fingers.

- 6 To assemble the dish, divide the cooked udon between 2 bowls. Pour half of the hot broth mixture over each bowl of udon. Top each with a fillet of black cod and 2 halves of bok choy. Sprinkle with green onions and serve.



CHAI HOT TODDY

— Makes 4 servings —

My friend Jacob is quite the jet-setter, so when he came to Alaska for Christmas one year, he came to hibernate and reboot. For his visit, our list of to-do's during the darkest, coldest time of the year was: wear cozies, binge-watch Netflix, write Christmas postcards, snuggle under blankets, wrap presents, and drink hot toddies. Hot toddies have long been thought to not only warm you up from the inside out but also to have healing qualities to soothe those winter colds and flus. Jacob made a magical concoction he called broth that steeped on the stove for hours and filled the house with the coziest smell imaginable. This broth became the base for his hot toddies—a perfect mixture of honey, lemon, Chai tea, and whole spices. Grab a sturdy mug, add a shot of bourbon, kick your feet up, and settle in.

2 cups water
2 Chai tea bags

¼ cup honey
2 cinnamon sticks

3 whole cloves
3 lemon slices

4 shots bourbon

1 In a small saucepan over low heat, combine the water, tea bags, honey, cinnamon sticks, cloves, and lemon slices. Stir to dissolve the honey. When the mixture is hot, remove the pan from the heat. Allow the mixture to steep for 15 minutes. The liquid should be a deep amber color, fragrant, and steaming. Remove and discard the tea bags and cloves. Keep hot.

2 To make a hot toddy, add a ladle of the hot Chai mixture to a mug. Top with a shot of bourbon. Serve with a cinnamon stick or lemon slice, if desired. Add more honey as desired to sweeten to taste.



CHOCOLATE MINT EARTHQUAKE CAKE

Makes 8 to 10 servings

One of the things Alaska is known for are its earthquakes. There is an average of 1,000 earthquakes in the state each month, and we feel them frequently here on the Kenai Peninsula. The largest earthquake I've experienced in my lifetime was here in 2016, a magnitude 7.1 that was prolonged and jolting. And of course, there is the famous Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964, a whopping 9.2 magnitude, the largest ever recorded in North America. That quake caused tsunamis and massive landslides and shifted the elevation and geography of several parts of the state.

When I read about this flourless Earthquake Cake in Anne Byrn's stunning historical cookbook, *American Cake*, I couldn't think of a better dessert to adapt for this book. The tall outer edges of the cake jut up like snow-dusted mountain peaks, giving way to the shattered ground in the center, dense and rich in chocolate, like moist, moveable earth. The cake, like Alaska, is formidable and stunning to behold, yet imperfect and fragile at the same time. This recipe is a little high maintenance (using your oven timer for precise times will be crucial), but it's also the best flourless chocolate cake I've ever tasted, so it's absolutely worth it.

1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder
10 ounces bittersweet chocolate

½ cup butter
6 eggs, separated
1 cup granulated sugar, divided

3 tablespoons crème de menthe liqueur

FOR SERVING:
Confectioners' sugar

- 1 Position an oven rack in the center position. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Grease the bottom and sides of an 8" springform pan. Dust the pan with the cocoa.
- 2 Break the chocolate into pieces and cut the butter into cubes. In a saucepan, combine the chocolate and butter over low heat. Cook, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes, or until the chocolate melts and the mixture becomes smooth. Remove the pan from the heat and set aside.
- 3 Place the egg yolks in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Beat on medium-high speed, gradually adding ¾ cup of the granulated sugar. Continue beating for 1 to 2 minutes, or until the yolks are pale yellow and thick. Reduce the mixer speed to the lowest setting and gradually add the chocolate mixture until just combined, scraping the sides and bottom of the bowl as needed. Add the crème de menthe and beat until just combined. Set aside.
- 4 Add the egg whites to another mixing bowl. Fit the stand mixer with the whisk attachment.

Beat on high speed for 2 minutes, or until soft peaks form. Add the remaining ¼ cup granulated sugar and beat for 1 minute, or until stiff peaks form. Using a rubber spatula, gently fold the whites into the chocolate mixture. Pour the batter into the springform pan.

- 5 Bake the cake for 15 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F and bake for 15 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature again to 250°F. Bake for 20 minutes, or until a firm crust forms on top and the cake wiggles slightly to the touch. Turn off the oven, leaving the cake inside. Using a folded kitchen towel, prop open the oven door. Let the cake rest inside the oven with the door propped open for 25 minutes.

- 6 Move the cake to a wire rack and let cool on the counter for 30 minutes. The cake will collapse as it cools. This is what you want. Gingerly run a butter knife around the edge of the pan before releasing it from the springform sides. Dust the cake with confectioners' sugar. Slice with a sharp knife. Best served warm or at room temperature.





Don't forget to follow Maya on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter: [@alaskafromscratch](https://twitter.com/alaskafromscratch) and use [#AlaskaFromScratch](https://twitter.com/hashtag/AlaskaFromScratch) to share photos of your own creations!