

A la Beer: 8 Ingredients or Less

By [Christopher Staten](#)

DRAFT
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Unless you're June Cleaver or Wolfgang Puck, your pantry probably isn't brimming with exotic spices and fine cuts of meat. Still, that doesn't mean you can't have tasty dishes on the fly. We turned to veteran chef Daniel Stern, who recently opened MidAtlantic Restaurant & Taproom in Philadelphia, to give us the skinny on the bare essentials -- that is, the minimum ingredients every kitchen should contain. Clip the roster below to your grocery list; with these nine items in stock, you won't go hungry.

Stern has several suggestions for making this bare-bones list sustain you: Cut the chicken up and add veggies, garlic, potatoes, wine, and water, and you're on your way to a stew. Roast the chicken whole with a healthy topping of garlic and aged cheese, and you've got a delectable dinner in the works. Shred the meat, add garlic and cheese -- plus tortillas if you've got some hanging around --and suddenly, it's Mexi-night. To

punch any dish up a notch or two, Stern swears by a bottle of Tabasco sauce: "As much as I hate to say it, Tabasco sauce is one of the best sauces ever invented," he admits. "Whether you're making Chinese, Mexican, or pizza, it gives such a good kick, and it's not just hot; it has a good flavor. You can roast a piece of meat, put some wine in it, and let it cool down, then add some Tabasco sauce and you end up with a really complex set of flavors."

If you don't have Tabasco sauce on hand -- shame on you -- Stern says you can always settle with a dash of lemon juice, which "really brings the flavors into focus. Put it on something you wouldn't normally think of; it draws out flavors and adds a new dimension."

So perhaps fine cooking isn't always about buying armfuls of hard-to-pronounce veggies, esoteric spices or bizarre cuts of meat. Sometimes, just the basics (and a dash of Tabasco) are all you need to get you through dinner. --Christopher Staten

PANTRY MUST-HAVES

1. salt
2. butter
3. Tabasco sauce
4. potatoes
5. garlic
6. canned veggies or beans
7. aged cheese
8. a whole chicken or ground beef
9. beer or wine

Chef Dennis D. Martinez

[SanTan Brewing Co.](#) -- Chandler, Ariz.

When he's not carefully plotting his monthly beer dinners -- like a recent side trip into suds and soul food -- executive chef Dennis Martinez is in the kitchen, whipping up food as stellar as this small brewery's beer. Located in the heart of historic Chandler, Ariz., SanTan Brewing's churned out hand-crafted beer since 2007, and its peckish patrons know the brewpub fare -- namely the HopShock I.P.A.-battered wings, locally famous Chandler Street Tacos and a soft pretzel served with beer mustard -- is just as reliable as the pints. For DRAFT, Martinez went off-menu with a simple yet satisfying stew made with a pint of the brewery's Gordo Stout for good measure.

Spring Lamb Stew with Gordo Stout and Parsnips

Serves 4 to 6

2 pounds lamb shoulder blade steaks or leg meat cut into 3/4-inch cubes

32 ounces natural beef broth

1 pint SanTan Brewing Gordo Stout

1 1/2 pounds parsnips, peeled and diced into 3/4-inch pieces

1/4 pound unsalted butter

1 large yellow onion, diced into 3/4-inch pieces

1/3 cup flour

- In a large bowl, season the lamb with 1 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon black pepper. Toss to coat evenly. Coat the lamb with 2 tablespoons of the flour.
- Melt the butter in a heavy-bottomed pan over medium-high heat. Add the lamb to the pan and cook while stirring until evenly browned, about 5 minutes. Add the chopped onions and stir; cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Pour the remaining flour into the pan and stir constantly to prevent scorching, about 2 minutes.
- Add the beef broth and stout, and stir until the flour dissolves into the broth, scraping up any browned bits of meat and flour stuck to the bottom of the pan. Add the chopped parsnips and turn heat to high until the stew begins to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer 25 minutes or until the lamb and parsnips are tender.
- Remove from heat, season with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper, and serve in bowls with crusty bread.



Chef Nick Millione

[Sly Fox Brewing Co.](#) -- Phoenixville, Penn.

No stranger to the á la beer method, chef Nick Millione uses some of the brewery's best beers for his trademark dishes, like Royal Weisse Mushroom Chicken and beer-battered fish and chips. Perhaps no menu item receives as much attention -- and scrutiny -- as the Sly Fox Onion Soup. According to founder Pete Giannopoulos, "The local monsignor, who's traveled around the world, claims it's the best he's ever had. He was even instrumental in getting involved in our internal quality control, as he insisted that they didn't taste the same at both restaurants. Being a man of God, I thought we had better ensure that he could get exactly the same superb reaction at both places, and that was accomplished."

Sly Fox Onion Soup

Serves about 10

5-6 medium-large Spanish onions, julienned

1/2 cup granulated sugar

16 ounces O'Reilly's Stout

6 ounces salted butter

4 ounces Minor's beef base

10 slices Swiss cheese

20 slices Provolone cheese

1 loaf brioche bread

- Place chopped onions, granulated sugar and butter into a large stockpot and sweat the onions over medium heat until soft and translucent, about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, mix the beef base with a 1/2 gallon of hot water to create a concentrated beef stock. Add the beef stock and stout to the stockpot and simmer 5 minutes.
- Remove the mixture from heat and pour into a large storage container. Add more water to bring mixture to roughly 2 gallons of soup. Stir soup with an ice paddle until warm and refrigerate.
- When ready to serve, place 2 to 3 croutons of sweet brioche bread in a 6-ounce ramekin and fill with soup. Top with 1 slice of Swiss cheese and 2 slices of provolone cheese and place under a broiler for 3 to 5 minutes, or until cheese is blistered and golden brown. Garnish with sliced green onions and serve.



Chef Bart Proffitt

[Wynkoop Brewing Co.](#) -- Denver

Serving the greater Denver area since current mayor John Hickenlooper opened its doors in 1988, Wynkoop Brewing's an institution known for its fine ales, "Beer Drinker of the Year" award and top-notch cuisine. Some choose to pick away at lighter fare like the steamed mussels or the

hummus plate, but regulars know to dive face-first into a menu of Koop Specialties like stout-braised pot roast, buttermilk fried chicken and gumbo. Executive chef Bart Proffitt prepared something light and beery for DRAFT, perfect for the spring sun -- although it's got plenty of heat on its own.

Patty's chile beer granita

Serves 5

6 cups Wynkoop Brewing Patty's Chile Beer

2 cups granulated sugar

7 limes, juiced

1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

- Combine all ingredients in a mixing bowl and stir until sugar is completely dissolved.

Refrigerate mixture at least 6 hours.

- Freeze in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's directions.

- Remove the sorbet from the bowl and freeze until set, about 4 hours.