

# Simple Recipes for the Sometimes Sleuth

Convenience Cooking from the  
Pages of the **Sarah Blair Mysteries**  
by **Debra H. Goldstein**





Readers,

They say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Thank goodness that wasn't the path I needed to catch my husband. Like Sarah Blair, the kitchen is my least favorite room in the house. I quake at the thought of having to make a meal, but Sarah is even worse – she finds being in the kitchen more frightening than murder. Somehow though, for each book in the Sarah Blair series – *One Taste Too Many*, *Two Bites Too Many*, *Three Treats Too Many*, and *Four Cuts Too Many* – I managed to include easy, tasty, and often funny recipes. This cookbook, a compilation of those recipes, is Sarah and my gift to you as a way of saying thank you for being there for us.

Debra

RahRah's Thoughts –

*Can you believe Sarah Blair and her author, Debra H. Goldstein, have put together this cookbook of recipes? When I first went to live with Sarah in One Taste Too Many, she was twenty-eight, newly divorced, and found being in the kitchen more frightening than murder. During the past year, she's managed to solve a few mysteries, but her kitchen skills haven't improved. The food she serves me isn't too bad, but she lives on take-out, care packages from her twin sister, a professional chef, and the few recipes she makes using pre-made ingredients.*

*Sarah is the last person I expected to open, let alone write a cookbook, but she and Debra put together their favorite recipes from One Taste Too Many, Two Bites Too Many, Three Treats Too Many, and Four Cuts Too Many. They weren't sure what they were going to do with the book, but being the alpha cat I am, I made the executive decision to share it with you.*

*Each recipe is easy, some like Jell-O in a Can are funny, and all are tasty. Enjoy!*



RahRah

Recipes from  
***One Taste Too Many***  
by Debra H. Goldstein

### **Sarah's Spinach Pie**

A family friend makes this with an honest to goodness thinly sliced onion and diced mushrooms that she browns in oil, drains, and uses in the layers, but Sarah's recipe is one of convenience.

#### Ingredients

- 1 c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 pie crust (deep dish)
- 1 package Durkee's French Fried Onions
- 1 can or jar of diced or sliced mushrooms, drained
- 2 pkgs. Stouffer's frozen spinach soufflé

#### Directions

1. Spread a layer of cheese in the bottom of the raw pie crust.
2. Spread onions and mushrooms next.
3. Repeat until you've used almost all of the cheese, onions, and mushrooms.
4. Retain some cheese and onions to top off the pie – place these to the side.
5. Place thawed soufflé in pie crust and mush it around to cover the layer below.
6. Bake 50 minutes at 350 degrees
7. Sprinkle the remaining cheese and onions on top and finish for 7–10 minutes.

8. For best results, let stand for 10 minutes before cutting.

***Delicious as a leftover!***

## **Jell-O in a Can**

In the 1950s, Jell-O and Dole Pineapple joined forces to create the Jell-O in the Pineapple Can recipe.

### Ingredients

- 1 20 oz. can of sliced pineapple
- 1 3 oz. pkg. of Jell-O gelatin, any flavor choice
- 1 cup boiling water
- Optional: 1 banana or other type of fruit

### Directions

1. Open the can and pour off the pineapple juice but leave the pineapple in the can.
2. Dissolve the Jell-O in boiling water and permit it to cool slightly before pouring the Jell-O and water mixture into the can, over the pineapple.
3. If desired, place the banana or other fruit in the center of the rings of pineapple.
4. Chill until set.
5. To serve, run a knife around the inside of the can and tip it out. (Before rimmed flip-top cans, one pushed the jelled mixture through and out using the bottom of the can.)
6. Slice between the pineapple rings and serve.

Recipes from  
***Two Bites Too Many***  
by Debra H. Goldstein

**Sarah's Sweet Potato Puffs –  
The Convenient Way**  
*(makes 4 small servings)*

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon cumin
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Dash or two of cayenne depending on your love of spice
- 1 20-ounce bag sweet potato puffs

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400° F.
2. Mix the brown sugar, chili powder, cumin, salt, and cayenne together.
3. After spraying a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray, empty the bag of frozen sweet potato puffs on it.
4. Lightly spray the puffs with the nonstick cooking spray and then sprinkle them with the spice mixture.
5. Toss the puffs until well-coated with the spices and bake 20–22 minutes. Voilà!

## Classic Wine Spritzer

### Ingredients

Classic wine spritzers mix the following:

- Chilled wine
- Ice
- Either club soda **or** sparkling water

### Directions

1. Chill wine 30 minutes to one hour.
2. Place ice (small pieces are preferred to large cubes) into glass.
3. Depending upon strength desired, add three to six ounces of white wine.
4. Fill remainder of glass with club soda or sparkling water.
5. Garnish with lemon or lime slice, if desired.

## Howellian Catnip

The Howellian Catnip gets its name because it barely contains a taste of wine! (Although having only a nip of wine makes the Howellian Catnip an economically savvy drink, it should not be served to children.)

### Ingredients

- A dash of chilled white wine (fruity preferred)
- ½ cup ice
- Chilled Sprite, 7UP, or any type of lemon-lime soda.
- A touch of food coloring (optional).

### Directions

1. In a glass, mix the chilled wine and ice.



2. The remainder of the glass is filled with chilled Sprite, 7UP, or any type of lemon-lime soda.

Recipes from  
***Three Treats Too Many***

by Debra H. Goldstein

**E's Crock-Pot Butternut Squash Soup**

*(makes 10 servings)*

Ingredients

- 1–2 10-12 oz bags of cut butternut squash
- 1 large onion
- 1 large, sweet apple (red delicious or granny smith work well)
- 1 large red pepper
- 1 32oz box vegetable stock
- Spices (sage, garlic, cumin, salt, pepper, etc.)

Directions

1. Chop an onion, an apple, and a red pepper (more if desired).
2. Put all in the Crock-Pot.
3. Add 1 box of vegetable stock.
4. When everything is soft, blend or puree.
5. Season with sage, garlic, cumin, salt, or pepper (whatever you prefer to your taste).
7. Add 1 can coconut milk into the Crock-Pot just before
8. serving.

## **Jane's Chilled Zucchini Soup**

*(makes 6 servings)*

### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 3/4 teaspoon sea salt (this can be increased to taste)
- 3 1/2 pounds zucchini, quartered lengthwise, then cut crosswise into 1/2-inch pieces
- 2 chopped cloves garlic
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper or red pepper flakes
- 6 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- 2 cups tightly packed baby spinach leaves
- 1/2 cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice (can be increased to taste)
- 2 tablespoons plain, full-fat Greek yogurt

### Directions

1. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat.
2. Add the onion and a pinch of the salt. Sauté about 6 minutes, until golden.
3. Add the zucchini, garlic, black pepper or red pepper flakes, and 1/4 teaspoon salt.
4. Sauté for 4 minutes.
5. Deglaze the pan by pouring in 1/2 cup of the stock.
6. Stir to loosen any bits stuck to the bottom.
7. Cook until the liquid is reduced by half and then remove from the heat.
8. Pour 1/3 of the remaining stock into a blender.

9. Add 1/3 of the zucchini sauté, 1/3 of the spinach, and 1/3 of the basil.
10. Blend until smooth.
11. Transfer the mixture to a pot over low heat.
12. Repeat the above process twice more.
13. Stir the lemon juice and remaining salt into the soup.
14. Chill the soup in the refrigerator for 2–3 hours.
15. Serve garnished with a dollop of the yogurt.

***The soup can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.***

## **Emily's Lasagna Casserole**

This can be made with store-bought sauce and noodles, but if you're willing to spend a little time on the sauce . . .

### *For the Sauce*

#### Ingredients

- 2 28-ounce cans whole peeled tomatoes
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup crème fraîche

#### Directions

1. In a large bowl, crush the tomatoes until pieces are bite-size.
2. In a large saucepan, warm the olive oil over medium heat.
3. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, until the mixture sizzles (about 1 minute).

4. Add the tomatoes and 1 teaspoon salt and bring to a boil.
5. Lower the heat and let the sauce simmer, stirring often, about 30 minutes, until it is slightly reduced.
6. Whisk the crème fraîche into the sauce and season to taste with more salt, if desired.
7. Let the sauce cool to room temperature.

### *For the Lasagna*

#### Ingredients

- Use a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.
- Tomato sauce, at room temperature
- 12 no-boil lasagna noodles
- 1 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 1/2 cups coarsely grated whole-milk mozzarella cheese
- 2 large handfuls fresh basil leaves torn into small pieces

#### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Ladle a thin layer of the room-temperature sauce onto the bottom of the baking dish.
3. Spread the sauce to cover the surface of the dish using a spoon.
4. Add a layer of the noodles.
5. Spoon just enough tomato sauce to cover the pasta and scatter some of the Parmesan, mozzarella, and basil over the sauce.
6. Repeat the layer process until all ingredients are used. **Note: Make sure to end with sauce and cheese! Pasta and basil burn if exposed, so they must be covered.**

7. Bake 35–40 minutes until browned and the edges are bubbling.
8. Rest at room temperature for fifteen minutes.
9. Sprinkle some fresh basil over the top for garnish.
10. Slice and serve.

## **Pumpkin Quinoa Muffins**

*(makes 9 muffins)*

### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon flaxseed meal
- 3 tablespoons water
- 1 1/4 cup oat flour oats ground in a blender
- 1/2 cup quinoa flakes (plus extra for topping, optional)
- 1/2 cup blanched almond flour
- 1/4 cup coconut sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla bean powder or 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup pumpkin puree
- 1/2 cup mashed banana (use either 1 large or 2 small)
- 1/4 cup nondairy milk
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- pumpkin seeds (optional)

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Grease a 12-cup muffin tin.
3. Combine the flaxseed meal and water. Set the mixture aside to gel while preparing the remaining ingredients. (This makes a flax egg, which is the vegan substitute for an egg.)
4. In a large bowl, whisk the remaining dry ingredients together (minus vanilla extract).
5. In a separate bowl, beat the pumpkin, milk, banana, and syrup together. Whisk in the wet flaxseed mixture and pour the wet ingredients into the dry.
6. Stir to completely combine. Note: The batter will be thick but soft. It can still be stirred.
7. Fill each cup  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way full.
8. Add water to the empty muffin holders (3).
9. If desired, sprinkle the tops of the muffins with pumpkin seeds and quinoa flakes.
10. Bake on the center rack of the oven for 23–25 minutes. You should be able to insert a cake tester and have it come out clean.
11. Let muffins cool in the pan for 5 minutes.
12. Transfer to a wire rack and cool.

Recipes from  
***Four Cuts Too Many***  
by Debra H. Goldstein

### **Emily's Egg Salad**

*(makes 3–4 servings)*

#### Ingredients

- 6 large, hard-boiled eggs
- 4 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon yellow mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon finely grated Vidalia onion

#### Directions

1. Peel the eggs and place them in the food processor.
2. Pulse a few times, stopping when the eggs are finely chopped.
3. In a medium bowl, mix the other ingredients.
4. Once they're mixed well, add the chopped eggs and mix until just combined.  
Can be garnished with a touch of paprika.

### **Sal and Laurie's Tiramisu**

#### Ingredients

- 3 egg yolks
- 7 tablespoons powdered sugar



- 2 tablespoons rum
- Brew 4 cups strong coffee
- 500 gm mascarpone
- 2 packs ladyfingers
- 1/2 of a large container of Cool Whip
- Cocoa for sprinkling as topping/garnish

### Directions

1. Add 2 tablespoons of the sugar to the egg yolks and mix until the color of the mixture becomes whiteish.
2. Add the mascarpone and mix for five minutes.
3. Add the rum, remaining 5 tablespoons of powdered sugar, and the Cool Whip. Mix thoroughly.
4. Using the coffee completely cooled, dip the ladyfingers in the coffee quickly, without soaking them.
5. Layer them in a dish and cover them with the above cream mixture.
6. Dip more ladyfingers into the coffee and layer them over the cream mixture.
7. Apply another layer of cream.
8. Sprinkle with cocoa and cool in the refrigerator.

## **Stained-Glass Jell-O**

This can be made with up to four different colors of Jell-O or store brand gelatin.

### Ingredients

- 4 small boxes (3 oz. each) or 2 large boxes (6 oz. each— if only using two flavors) of Jell-O or store brand gelatin.
- 1 (14 oz) can sweetened condensed milk (Don't use evaporated milk!)
- 2 envelopes unflavored gelatin
- Water

### Directions

1. Dissolve each small box of Jell-O in one cup boiling water (keep flavors separate). If only using two flavors, prepare the two flavors from the large boxes separately.
2. Chill at least three hours, until firm. (Overnight works well.)
3. After chilling the flavors, cut them into small blocks.
4. Carefully mix the small blocks or cubes of Jell-O in a 9-by-13-inch pan, using your hands to gently toss the colors.
5. In a separate bowl, measure 1/2 cup cold water.
6. Sprinkle the 2 envelopes of unflavored gelatin on top. Let the gelatin thicken for a few minutes.
7. Once thickened, add 1 1/2 cups of boiling water. This will dissolve the gelatin.
8. Add the can of condensed milk.
9. Stir and allow to cool to room temperature.
10. Make sure the milk gelatin is cooled to room temperature and then pour it over the colored Jell-O cubes. **NOTE: If the milk gelatin mixture isn't cooled enough, it will cause the colors to run.**
11. Chill overnight. Cut into blocks and serve.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Judge **Debra H. Goldstein** writes Kensington's Sarah Blair mystery series. She is also the author of *Should Have Played Poker* and IPPY Award winning *Maze in Blue*. Her short stories, including Anthony and Agatha nominated "The Night They Burned Ms. Dixie's Place," have appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies. An active Birmingham, Alabama, civic volunteer, Debra also serves on the national boards of Sisters in Crime and Mystery Writers of America and is president of SEMWA and past president of SinC's Guppy Chapter.


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