

## EATING &amp; DRINKING

# Find Your Marbles

Groovy swirls aren't just for T-shirts. Marbled patterns of contrasting batters are all the rage in baked goods right now, as tasty as they are striking.

By GABRIELLA GERSHENSON

**W**E'RE HAVING a swirly moment. Tie-dye is back with a vengeance. Murano glass is once again a hot commodity. And marbled desserts—edible tie-dye, if you will—are experiencing a resurgence of their own.

Marbling involves taking two or more contrasting doughs or batters and swirling them together. Sounds simple enough, but watching someone marleize a dessert can be hypnotic. The Instagram account of Joanne Chang, co-owner of Flour Bakery and Cafe and Myers + Chang in Boston, has some especially mesmerizing examples. In one video, a baker drags the tip of a chopstick through zigzag stripes of raspberry coulis on a cheesecake, resulting in a pattern that Ms. Chang calls “chevron” (referred to elsewhere as

Cooks with an eye for the dramatic swirled together a spiced molasses-tinted dough with a lighter colored one to make a two-tone take on the sweet, yeasted cake kugelhopf. The same technique was later applied to sponge cakes. Spiced marble cakes made their way to the U.S. with German immigrants around the time of the Civil War, but it wasn't until the late 19th century, when chocolate became more widely available to home cooks, that it started to replace the molasses. The combination stuck, and it has been in the American canon ever since.

Because the method is so customizable, it has continued to adapt to trendy tastes. In the '80s, chocolate-marbled cheesecake, cream-cheese-swirled brownies and black-bottom cupcakes were the marbled desserts of the day. During our recent tahini craze, London chef Yotam Ottolenghi marbled the sesame paste into brownies, while cookbook au-

**Marbling is a technique worth mastering because it's the whole package—equal parts flavor and aesthetics—and easy to do.**

“feathering”). In another clip, raspberry coulis is swirled, freestyle, into a snow-white meringue. In a third case, a skewer gently pulled through round dollops of coulis on cake batter transforms them into hearts.

For the beginner, Ms. Chang recommends a more structured swirl. “Even though it might seem like the random swirling would be easier, I think it's easier to make a pretty chevron pattern,” she said. “The random pattern requires the baker to have a little bit of confidence about where to go. It's like improvising on a piano: It's easier to give someone sheet music.”

Marbling is a technique worth mastering because it's the whole package—equal parts flavor and aesthetics—and easy to do. “Usually, there will be layers of the cake and the frosting, so the flavors are very distinct and separated,” said Zoë François, author of the new cookbook “Zoë Bakes Cakes,” which includes a marbled vanilla-chocolate pound cake among about a half-dozen swirly recipes. “A marble cake offers a great way to introduce flavors by swirling them in.” Marbling also eliminates the need for icing. Why cover up that beautiful pattern?

In the “Encyclopedia of Jewish Food,” the late food historian Gil Marks traces the roots of marble cake to 19th-century Germany.

thor Jake Cohen swirled it into cheesecake. Meanwhile, our fascination with matcha materialized in pound cakes and blondies with green tea swirls.

“If the flavors complement each other in some sort of way, I'll try to marble or swirl them,” said Irvin Lin, author of the cookbook “Marbled, Swirled and Layered.” “Combos that I love include vanilla and chocolate, grape and peanut butter, lemon and nearly any berry, and chocolate and raspberry.”

Nadiya Hussain, host of the Netflix cooking show “Time To Eat” and creator of the spectacular sheet-pan pancake with peanut butter and jelly swirls at right, believes texture is key to success. “Whenever you want to marble something, the trick is to have something quite viscous,” said Ms. Hussain. “You want a natural movement when you run the skewer through.” She also favors bold colors: “Don't go for a clear marmalade—go for a grape or blueberry or blackberry or strawberry jam.” And sometimes, less is more. “There is a point you have to stop swirling before it's a marbly mess,” she said. Perhaps most important of all, have fun. “For me, it's a homespun natural kind of look,” said Ms. Hussain. “I try not to be overly precise. What I love about marbling is that you never make the same thing twice.”



ALEX LAU FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. FOOD STYLING BY TYNIA HOANG. PROP STYLING BY BETH PAKRADOON

**SQUARE DEAL** This simple recipe swirls the ever-popular combination of PB&J into an eye-catching sheet cake.

## Peanut Butter and Jelly Sheet-Pan Pancake

*This easy baked pancake recipe with peanut butter and jelly ribbons swirled through the batter is like a PB&J tapped with a magic wand. For beautiful swirls, space alternating dollops of peanut butter and jam evenly on the batter, then pull a skewer or the end of a spoon through to create a pretty marbled pattern. Use a deeply colored jam for maximum color contrast.*

**Active Time** 10 Minutes  
**Total Time** 25 Minutes  
**Makes** 16 Squares

**3 heaping tablespoons jam of your choice, such as a berry jam**  
**3 tablespoons crunchy or smooth peanut butter**

**Cooking oil spray**  
**2 cups all-purpose flour**  
**1 teaspoon baking powder**  
**½ teaspoon salt**  
**3 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**¾ cup whole milk**  
**2 large eggs**  
**2 tablespoons vegetable oil**  
**Confectioners' sugar, for dusting (optional)**

**1.** Place jam in a microwave-safe bowl and heat in 10-second bursts, stirring each time, until mixture is liquid enough to swirl around. (We're not trying to warm it up.) Repeat this process with peanut butter, taking care to avoid adding too much oil from the jar, as

this will make the pancakes greasy. Set jam and peanut butter aside.  
**2.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray an 8-inch square baking pan with cooking oil spray.  
**3.** In a mixing bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar. Make a well in the center and add milk, eggs and oil. Whisk together until you have a thick batter. (You can make the batter in advance and store it in the fridge overnight.)

**4.** Pour batter into prepared pan and spread out evenly. Take dollops of jam and spoon them in sporadically. Repeat with peanut butter. With the end of a spoon or a

skewer, swirl the dollops together slightly to create a marbled effect.  
**5.** Bake in oven until the surface of the pancake looks matte and is not wobbly anymore, about 25 minutes. As soon as pancake is done baking, remove it from oven and cut into squares. Dust with confectioners' sugar, if using, and serve. These are great on the go, but you can also freeze any leftover squares in plastic wrap.

—Adapted from “Time To Eat” by Nadiya Hussain (Clarkson Potter)

► Find a recipe for marble pound cake at [wsj.com/food](https://www.wsj.com/food).

## SLOW FOOD FAST / SATISFYING AND SEASONAL FOOD IN ABOUT 30 MINUTES



### The Chef

Meherwan Irani

### His Restaurants

Chai Pani, in Asheville, N.C., and Decatur, Ga.; Botiwalla, in Charlotte, N.C., and Atlanta; Buxton Hall Barbecue and Buxton Chicken Palace, both in Asheville; Nani's Rotisserie Chicken, in Asheville and, soon, Atlanta.

### What He's Known For

Fresh takes on Indian street food. A growing collection of restaurants ranging from inventive Indian cooking to Eastern-Carolina-style BBQ.

## Grilled Salmon With a Spicy Piri Piri Rub

**IMAGINE TASTING SALMON** for the first time. “I'd never had it until I came to this country,” said chef Meherwan Irani. “And I immediately loved it.” When he was growing up in India, other types of fish were occasionally served at home, but they were never grilled. He's making up for it now.

In his third Slow Food Fast recipe, Mr. Irani slathers grilled salmon fillets in a spicy piri piri rub punched up with fresh herbs. Made with smashed chiles, cilantro, garlic, vinegar and a little brown sugar, it's moist and tacky, so it clings to the fish during cooking.

Over live fire, the seasonings harden and caramelize, forming a spicy-sweet

coating that helps keep the salmon tender and succulent. “Salmon can take this rub because its big flavors meet the fish and complement it,” said Mr. Irani. You don't want to leave the fish on the fire too long. “Don't cook this past medium,” Mr. Irani advised. “Once the exterior sets on all sides, I pull the fillets from the grill.”

This recipe is in regular rotation at Mr. Irani's house, especially during the summer months. It's easy and versatile; any number of side dishes can round out the meal. “I do an Israeli couscous with dried fruits and nuts. Or just plain rice,” he said. “This is also great on a weeknight with a green salad.” —Kitty Greenwald

**Total Time** 20 minutes  
**Serves** 4-6

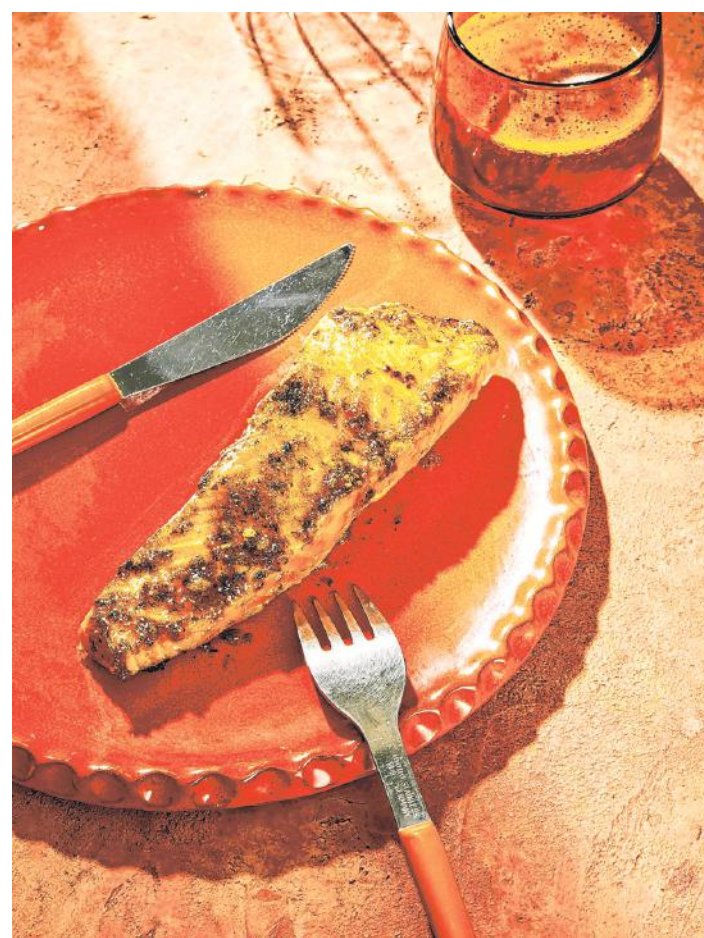
**4 fresh red bird's eye, red cayenne or red serrano chiles**  
**6 cloves garlic**  
**1 lemon, juiced**  
**2 tablespoons white vinegar, plus more as needed**  
**½ cup chopped cilantro**  
**2 tablespoons brown sugar**  
**1 teaspoon smoked paprika**  
**1 teaspoon chopped fresh or dried oregano**  
**1½ tablespoons olive oil, plus more for brushing salmon**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**4-6 (6-ounce) center-cut salmon fillets**  
**Cooked rice or a green salad, to serve**

**1.** Preheat a grill to medium-high.  
**2.** Meanwhile, make the rub: In a blender, or small food processor, pulse chiles with garlic, lemon juice, vinegar and cilantro to form a uniform, spreadable paste. If necessary, loosen mixture with small splashes of extra vinegar. Add brown sugar, paprika, oregano and olive oil,

and pulse until well incorporated. Season with a pinch each salt and black pepper, and pulse to combine.

**3.** Pat salmon dry. Slightly fillets with rub until lightly coated all over. Lightly brush skin side of fillets with oil and season with salt. Lay salmon onto grill grate, skin-side down, and cook until skin crisps and flesh starts to firm up, 3-4 minutes. Drizzle top of fillets with more olive oil and flip. Continue cooking until exterior sets and interior cooks to medium or medium-rare, 3-4 minutes more. Serve with rice or a green salad.



**HERE'S THE RUB** A coating of herbs and spices flavors and protects the salmon during cooking. The results are remarkably succulent.

JENNY HUANG FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. FOOD STYLING BY PEARL JONES. PROP STYLING BY BETH PAKRADOON; MICHAEL HOEWELER (PORTRAIT)