

# FABULOUS CALIFORNIA FIGS

*Recipes from Cooks Country from America's Test Kitchen*



*Cook's Country*  
FROM AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN



At *Cook's Country from America's Test Kitchen*, we love creating recipes with whole-fruit ingredients like California Dried Figs from Valley Fig Growers. Healthy and tasty, California Figs are packed with essential nutrients, fiber, and rich fruit flavor. Grown under the watchful eye of dedicated California growers, figs are sweet, versatile, and available year-round.

This season, reach for California Dried Figs to bring natural, fruity goodness to appetizers, entrées, side dishes, and desserts. Valley Fig Growers and *Cook's Country from America's Test Kitchen* partnered to create these six recipes packed with fruits, vegetables, grains, lean meat, and fish. Featuring California Dried Figs, the recipes include a fresh take on tuna salad and a relish chock-full of apples, figs, and nuts.

Valley Fig Growers' new fig spreads—California Orange, Organic Mission, Port Wine, and Balsamic Pepper—are featured in the recipes for Choco-Fig Muffins and Fig-Glazed Grilled Chicken with Wild Rice. These spreads also make an elegant appetizer when paired with cheese. The possibilities for enjoying these sweet, earthy California Fig Spreads are endless.

Whether you create your own recipes or turn these pages and discover one of our favorite fig dishes, you can count on California Dried Figs to take recipes from good to great. Look for Blue Ribbon® Orchard Choice® and Sun-Maid® California Dried Figs and Orchard Choice® California Fig Spreads. You'll find more delicious recipes from *Cook's Country from America's Test Kitchen* to share with friends and family at **ValleyFig.com**. Join the conversation with Valley Fig Growers online: Get pinspired on Pinterest at **pinterest.com/valleyfig**. Discover new ideas for how to use figs on Facebook at **facebook.com/valleyfig**.

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 [valleyfig.com](https://valleyfig.com)



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### **CALIFORNIA FIGS** ARE MORE THAN JUST A TASTY FRUIT. FIGS ARE:

- Gluten-free
- High in fiber
- Cholesterol-free
- Sodium-free
- Non-GMO
- Vegetarian
- Nut & allergen-free
- Kosher



# Fig and Apple Relish With Almonds and Cumin

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** This fruit relish recipe made with fresh apple and dried figs is particularly good as an accompaniment to pork dishes, as well as mildly flavored fish like mahi-mahi. Rehydrating the figs in wine and water enhances their flavor and texture.

## MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS

This recipe works equally well with dark purple Mission or Golden Figs.

- 2 cups Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice or Sun-Maid California Figs, stemmed and sliced ¼ inch thick**
- ¼ cup dry red wine**
- ¼ cup warm water**
- 1½ teaspoons minced fresh ginger**
- 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, halved, and sliced thin**
- ¼ cup slivered almonds, toasted**
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar**
- 1½ teaspoons coriander seeds, toasted and ground**
- 1½ teaspoons cumin seeds, toasted and ground**
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper**
- 2 tablespoons lime juice**
- 2 tablespoons orange juice**
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro**
- Salt and pepper**



PHOTO CREDIT: Daniel J. van Ackere

1. Place figs, wine, and water in medium bowl; cover and microwave until liquid begins to boil, about 1 minute. Let stand until figs are softened and plump, about 5 minutes. Stir remaining ingredients into softened figs. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

## FASCINATING FIG FACTS

California Dried Figs are great additions to plant-based diets. Naturally sweet, with a robust, chewy texture, figs offer a unique and highly desirable nutrition profile that includes calcium, iron, vitamin B6, magnesium, potassium, and copper. Just 3 to 5 figs provide a whopping 5 grams of dietary fiber.



# Choco-Fig Muffins

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** Tasters loved the unique combination of figs and chocolate in this recipe. To keep the muffins light, the quick bread mixing method worked best. This involved combining the dry and wet ingredients independently and then folding them together. Folding in the chocolate chips and figs after the batter was blended ensured that the wet and dry ingredients were properly incorporated and each muffin had pieces of each of the fillings.

## MAKES 12 MUFFINS

We prefer to make this recipe with Golden Figs, but dark purple Mission Figs can be substituted.

### MUFFINS

- 2 cups (10 ounces) all-purpose flour**
- ⅓ cup (2⅓ ounces) granulated sugar**
- ⅓ cup (2⅓ ounces) packed light brown sugar**
- 2 teaspoons baking powder**
- ½ teaspoon baking soda**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup sour cream**
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly**
- 2 large eggs**
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ½ teaspoon almond extract**
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips**
- 1 cup Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice Golden California Figs, stemmed and chopped into ¼-inch pieces**
- ⅔ cup sliced almonds**

### FASCINATING FIG FACTS

Fig trees have no blossoms on their branches. The blossom is inside the fruit! Many tiny flowers produce the crunchy little edible seeds that give figs their delightful texture.



PHOTO CREDIT: Daniel J. van Ackere

### FILLING AND TOPPING

- ¼ cup (1¾ ounces) sugar**
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- ⅓ cup Orchard Choice Organic Mission California Fig Spread**

**1. FOR THE MUFFINS:** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Grease and flour 12-cup muffin tin. Whisk flour, sugars, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in large bowl. Whisk sour cream, butter, eggs, and extracts together in second bowl until smooth. Stir sour cream mixture into flour mixture until combined, then fold in chocolate chips, figs, and almonds.

**2. FOR THE FILLING AND TOPPING:** Combine sugar and cinnamon in small bowl. Spoon half of batter into prepared muffin tin, place rounded teaspoon fig spread in center of batter, and top with remaining batter. Sprinkle with sugar mixture.

**3. Bake** until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Let muffins cool in muffin tin for 10 minutes, then carefully transfer muffins to wire rack and let cool completely. Serve. (Muffins can be stored in airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days.)

# Fig-Basil Tuna Salad

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** For a fresh take on tuna salad, we added figs and basil. Lemon juice and Dijon mustard provided brightness and complexity.

## SERVES 4

This recipe works equally well with dark purple Mission or Golden Figs. If you can't find Bibb lettuce, substitute red or green leaf lettuce.

- ¾ cup mayonnaise**
- 1 cup Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice or Sun-Maid California Figs, stemmed and chopped fine**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil**
- 2 tablespoons minced shallot**
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice**
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard**
- Salt and pepper**
- 3 (5-ounce) cans solid white tuna in water, drained and flaked**
- 2 heads Bibb lettuce (1 pound), leaves torn into bite-size pieces**
- Extra-virgin olive oil**



PHOTO CREDIT: Daniel J. van Ackere

**1.** Combine mayonnaise, figs, basil, shallot, lemon juice, mustard, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper in large bowl. Stir in tuna until fully combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

**2.** Evenly distribute lettuce among 4 plates. Drizzle lettuce with oil and season with salt and pepper. Divide tuna salad among 4 plates of lettuce. Serve.

## FASCINATING FIG FACTS

California Golden and Mission dried figs can be used interchangeably in most recipes. Size, texture, and color are characteristics to consider when choosing your figs.





# Fig-Glazed Grilled Chicken with Wild Rice

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** With minimal cooking, fig spread transforms into a thick, clingy glaze for the grilled chicken thighs.

## SERVES 4

This recipe works equally well with dark purple Mission or Golden Figs.

- 2 packages Uncle Ben's Long Grain and Wild Ready Rice**
- 1 teaspoon grated orange zest plus  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup juice (2 oranges)**
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup Orchard Choice Organic Mission California Fig Spread**
- 1 shallot, minced**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme**
- Salt and pepper**
- 8 (5- to 7-ounce) bone-in chicken thighs, skin removed, trimmed**
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice or Sun-Maid California Figs, stemmed and quartered**
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sliced almonds, toasted**



PHOTO CREDIT: Daniel J. van Ackere

**1.** Cook rice according to package directions. Meanwhile, combine orange zest and juice, fig spread, shallot, thyme,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper in small saucepan and bring to boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer until thickened, about 5 minutes.

**2.** Season chicken with salt and pepper. Grill chicken skinned side up over medium-hot fire, covered, until underside is browned and sides are beginning to firm up, 8 to 10 minutes. Flip chicken and cook until well browned and chicken registers 175 degrees, 6 to 8 minutes. Brush chicken all over with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of glaze and transfer to platter; tent with aluminum foil and let rest for 5 minutes.

**3.** Transfer rice to bowl and stir in figs and almonds. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve rice with chicken, passing remaining glaze separately.

## FASCINATING FIG FACTS

California Whole Figs and Fig Spreads pair well with a wide variety of cheeses, including blue, Gorgonzola, Brie, Manchego, and goat, for a great impromptu appetizer.



# Rice and Pasta Pilaf with Figs and Walnuts

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** This elegant version of rice pilaf combines rice with pieces of vermicelli that have been toasted in fat to add richness and a nutty flavor. In order to produce a rice pilaf with rice as perfectly cooked as the pasta, we had to get the rice and pasta to cook at the same rate. Soaking the rice in hot water for a mere 10 minutes softened its outer coating and let it absorb water quickly. Once the pasta and rice were cooked, we let the pilaf stand for 10 minutes with a towel under the lid to absorb steam. Then we fluffed it with a fork and stirred in fresh herbs.

## SERVES 4 TO 6 AS A SIDE DISH

Use long, straight vermicelli or vermicelli nests. This recipe works equally well with dark purple Mission or Golden Figs.

- 1½ cups basmati rice or long-grain white rice**
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 2 ounces vermicelli, broken into 1-inch pieces**
- 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger**
- 2½ cups chicken broth**
- 1¼ teaspoons salt**
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin**
- 1 cup Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice or Sun-Maid California Figs, stemmed and chopped into ¼-inch pieces**
- ½ cup walnuts, toasted and chopped coarse**
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro**
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice**

## FASCINATING FIG FACTS

Valley Fig Growers keep a watchful eye over their orchards all year round. They are continually working the soil, monitoring the irrigation, and pruning the trees to ensure that consumers have the best quality figs.



PHOTO CREDIT: Daniel J. van Ackere

**1.** Place rice in medium bowl and cover with hot tap water by 2 inches; let stand for 15 minutes.

**2.** Using your hands, gently swish grains to release excess starch. Carefully pour off water, leaving rice in bowl. Add cold tap water to rice and pour off water. Repeat adding and pouring off water 4 to 5 times, until water runs almost clear. Drain rice in fine-mesh strainer.

**3.** Melt butter in large saucepan over medium heat. Add pasta and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 3 minutes. Add ginger and rice and cook, stirring occasionally, until edges of rice begin to turn translucent, about 3 minutes. Add broth, salt, and cumin and bring to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover, and cook until all liquid is absorbed, about 10 minutes. Off heat, remove lid, fold dish towel in half, and place dish towel over saucepan; replace lid. Let stand for 10 minutes. Fluff rice with fork; stir in figs, walnuts, cilantro, and lemon juice; and serve.



# Salad with Apples, Walnuts, Figs, and Herbed Baked Goat Cheese

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** Warm goat cheese salad, a French classic, can easily misfire, becoming nothing more than flavorless, oozing cheese melted onto limp greens. We wanted creamy cheese infused with the flavor of fresh herbs, surrounded by crisp, golden breading, all cradled in lightly dressed greens. For cheese rounds with an exceptionally crisp crust, we found that white Melba toast crumbs beat out fresh bread crumbs and other cracker crumbs. Freezing the breaded goat cheese rounds for 30 minutes before baking them ensured a crunchy coating and a smooth—but not melted—interior. Just like in the finest French bistros, we served our warm breaded goat cheese on hearty greens, lightly dressed with a classic vinaigrette.

## SERVES 6

This recipe works equally well with dark purple Mission or Golden Figs. Hearty salad greens, such as a mix of arugula and frisée, work best here. The baked goat cheese should be served warm. Prepare the salad components while the cheese is in the freezer, and then toss the greens and vinaigrette together while the cheese cools a bit after baking. Since the recipe makes 12 goat cheese rounds, you can serve the salad with 1 piece of goat cheese and keep the rest in the freezer for later use. Or, for a heartier salad, serve with 2 pieces of cheese.

## GOAT CHEESE

- 3 ounces (2 cups) white Melba toasts**
- 1 teaspoon pepper**
- 3 large eggs**
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives**
- 12 ounces firm goat cheese**
- Extra-virgin olive oil**

## SALAD

- 1 cup Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice or Sun-Maid California Figs, stemmed and quartered**
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard**
- 1 teaspoon minced shallot**
- Salt and pepper**
- ¼ teaspoon sugar**



PHOTO CREDIT: Daniel J. van Ackere

- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 14 ounces (14 cups) mixed hearty salad greens**
- 2 Granny Smith apples, cored, quartered, and sliced ⅛ inch thick**
- ½ cup walnuts, toasted and chopped**

**1. FOR THE GOAT CHEESE:** Process Melba toasts in food processor to fine, even crumbs, about 1½ minutes; transfer to medium bowl and stir in pepper. In separate medium bowl, whisk eggs and mustard together. In third medium bowl, combine thyme and chives.

**2.** Using cheese wire or dental floss, slice cheese into 12 equal-size pieces. Roll each piece of cheese into ball, then roll in herbs to coat lightly. Working with 6 pieces at a time, roll in egg mixture, then coat with crumbs, pressing to help coating adhere. Flatten each ball into 1-inch-thick disk and lay on large plate. Freeze cheese until firm, at least 30 minutes. (Breaded goat cheese can be kept in freezer for up to 1 week.)

**3. FOR THE SALAD:** Soak dried figs in ½ cup hot water in bowl until plump, about 10 minutes; drain. Combine vinegar, mustard, shallot, ¼ teaspoon salt, and sugar in large bowl. Whisking constantly, drizzle in oil. Season with pepper to taste.

**4.** Adjust oven rack to top position and heat oven to 475 degrees. Brush tops and sides of cheese evenly with oil. Bake until crumbs are golden brown and cheese is slightly soft, 7 to 12 minutes. Using thin metal spatula, transfer cheese to paper towel-lined plate and let cool for 3 minutes.

**5.** Combine greens and dressing in large bowl, toss gently to coat, and divide among salad plates. Sprinkle with figs, apples, and walnuts. Arrange warm goat cheese on top of salad and serve.