



**The
Albino Asian
Cookbook**

LUKE GRAY

The Albino Asian Cookbook

By
Luke Gray

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About *The Albino Asian Cookbook*:

This is not your typical cookbook—you know, the one with one hundred recipes, ninety-five that you will never use, and fifty that you'll never even browse through because who really needs five different recipes for meatloaf or even believes that half of those recipes are good. Such cookbooks end up shoved into a corner somewhere taking up space that would be better allocated to something else, like paper towels. End rant.

This isn't truly a cookbook in the traditional sense; neither is it a comprehensive list of Asian recipes. It's more like a personal greatest hits listing. These are recipes that I make over and over, and have fine-tuned year after year, the recipes that my friends and family consistently request.

Along the way, I'll introduce or explain some of the ingredients that Americans may not know or understand. Also there will be some wit and sarcasm—it makes the food taste better.

Note: This is the first edition, and I'm already starting to develop the second. Along with upgrading the interior design and pictures, I would like to add several recipes:

1. Fried Rice
2. Pepper Steak
3. Fried Dumplings
4. Pancit Canton
5. Beef Lumpia with Sweet and Sour Sauce
6. Sauce recipes for Sesame Chicken, Orange Chicken, and Lemon Chicken (alternative flavors for the General Tso's Chicken template)
7. Banana Lumpia
8. Sticky rice

Be on the lookout for the next edition.

About the Author

I was born and raised in the Philippines, hence my love for Asian food. I have eight brothers and sisters because my parents are, as my father says, “Passionate Protestants.” I live in Hendersonville, North Carolina, just south of Asheville, and my wife and I have four children four and under, last I checked.

Words of Advice

As you venture into the following recipes, I encourage you to shop at your local Asian store.

There are three reasons for this:

1. A normal grocery store does not carry all the ingredients these recipes use, and those they do carry are often an Americanized brand rather than the genuine ingredient.
2. Because a large number of Asians are frugal, Asian stores, with few exceptions, are priced competitively. On the rare occasion when I can find the exact same brand of Asian ingredient in a traditional grocery store, it is typically drastically more expensive. This is especially true of items like ginger, which tends to be considerably cheaper in an Asian store.
3. Many people who work in Asian grocery stores are experienced cooks, and they are eager to share their insights. A couple of the following recipes benefited from suggestions gleaned while checking out at my local Asian grocery store.

Here's a breakdown of my preferred brands for the sauces and other ingredients that I use:

- i. Soy Sauce: Mely
 - ii. Oyster sauce: Lee Kum Kee
 - iii. Fish sauce: Viet Huong
 - iv. Hoisin sauce: Lee Kum Kee
 - v. Rice Wine: Asian Taste
 - vi. Rice Vinegar: Marukan
 - vii. Banana ketchup: Jufuran
 - viii. Coconut milk: Savoy or Chaokoh
4. One note on rice: Don't buy a rice cooker; buy an Instant Pot pressure cooker. They are durable, reliable, faster, more versatile, and simple to use (1 cup water to one cup rice). I don't subscribe to the Instant Pot cult. Still they have numerous strengths and make an excellent rice cooker.

Filipino Chicken & Pork Barbecue

Introduction: This is a simple marinade that blends sweet, salty, and spicy with a little acidity. It is an easy hit. Serves 2-4.

Not-So-Pro Tip

Wear a glove when chopping Thai chili peppers. If you are too cheap for gloves, use a plastic bag. If you are too classy for a plastic bag and too cheap for gloves, use a couple knives to mince the chili so that your hands do not touch them.

If you forget, wash your hands in a manner that would impress a doctor, twice. Whatever you do, do not—I repeat, do not—go to the comfort room and handle your delicate regions or there will be no comfort anywhere in your near future. Seriously, it is a wonder I can have kids.

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds pork (either chops or 1.5" chunks) or cut up chicken

Marinade:

- ½ cup vinegar
- ½ cup soy sauce
- ⅓ cup lime juice
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 5 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1-3 Thai chili peppers*
- 1 red onion, chopped

Directions:

1. Mix all the marinade ingredients in a bowl, and add the meat.
2. For pork, marinate for at least two hours. For chicken, or if using a tougher cut of pork like Boston Butt, marinate overnight.
3. Barbecue the meat and serve with rice.

***Feature ingredient: Thai chili pepper or bird's eye pepper**

The Thai chili can be anywhere between ten to fifty times hotter than a jalapeño pepper while about one third to half the potency of a habanero pepper. The smaller peppers are hotter.

The Thai pepper has a clean tasting heat, unlike the jalapeno, which has a green flavor. If used in stir fry, add it at the end.

Savory Pork Chops

Introduction: This was my favorite childhood recipe. It is salty and savory with more than a hint of pepper. Serves 3-4.

Ingredients:

- 3 pounds pork chops

Marinade:

- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup oyster sauce
- juice from two limes
- 1 teaspoon seasoned pepper
- 1 tablespoon sugar

Basting sauce:

- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons oyster sauce

Directions:

1. Marinate the pork chops for half an hour.
2. Remove the pork chops from the marinade and grill at a high temperature of 400° or higher.

Grilling instructions:

- The critical element to this recipe is to swiftly sear the pork chop, developing a nice crust, before basting the meat and continuing to grill long enough to allow the sauce to crisp up without burning or overcooking the meat. The recipe is simple, but the technique makes a big impact.

*Feature Ingredient: Oyster sauce:

As its name suggests, oyster sauce is made from oysters, which have been slowly sautéed and then allowed to ferment. The taste is salty and a little sweet, and carries a heavy umami flavor. Used in combination with other sauces, oyster sauce helps to create some of the iconic Asian flavors, such as the sauce in Beef and Broccoli.



Beef and Broccoli

Introduction: This is my favorite beef and broccoli. It takes a simple dish and enriches and broadens the flavor profile. Serves 2-3.

Ingredients:

Sauce:

- 1/4 cup cold water
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 3 tablespoons oyster sauce
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons peanut oil
- 1 tablespoon ginger, minced
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Broccoli stir fry:

- 3/4 pounds beef sirloin
- 1 pound fresh broccoli

Directions:

1. Dissolve the cornstarch in the water and add the oyster and soy sauces.
2. Set a pot of water to boil.
3. Slice the beef into 1/4 inch strips, cutting across the grain.
4. Cut the broccoli into pieces, blanch it in the boiling water for 12 seconds, and set it aside.
5. Heat one tablespoon of oil in a pan. Sear the beef on both sides. Place the beef in a bowl.
6. Add the remaining oil to the pan. Sauté the ginger until it starts to turn gold. Add the garlic, sugar, and pepper. Stir briefly.
7. Add the broccoli and stir, reduce the heat to medium low, and stir occasionally for about fifteen seconds.
8. Mix the sauce to make sure the cornstarch mixture has not separated. Add the sauce to the pan, coat the broccoli, and put a lid on the pan, steaming until the broccoli is almost cooked. If the pan is too hot when the sauce is added and the sauce thickens too much, add a few tablespoons of water.
9. Add the meat, stir, cover, and cook for a couple minutes until the broccoli is finished. If you want your broccoli to be crunchy, add the meat in sooner.



Chicken Adobo

Introduction: I have made a number of variations of this dish over the years, some with twice the ingredients. Ultimately, I come back to this basic method instead because it is flavorful, cheap, and easy. Serves 4-6.

Ingredients:

- 4 pounds chicken thighs or drumsticks
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 1/2 cup vinegar
- 1 cup water
- 1 head of garlic, broken in half
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 bay leaves

Directions:

1. Add all the ingredients to a pot, and bring to a boil.
2. Simmer 15 minutes, turn the meat over, and simmer for another 15 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked.

What Not to Do

I opened the door to the screened front porch because I was smoking up the kitchen searing on a cast iron pan. The toddlers are always eager for a different play space and came waddling, so I locked the screen door and went back to smoking up the kitchen.

A little while later my wife came by calling for Lizzy.

"Playing on the porch," I said.

"Did you notice that she was naked?"

The answer is no.

A note on soy sauce:

Most people are familiar with soy sauce, but it can have a level of confusion. Just like not all Asians are alike, neither are their soy sauces. Beyond regional flavor differences, there are three main categories of soy sauce: light (or regular) soy sauce, dark soy sauce, and sweet soy sauce.

Light soy sauce is what Americans typically think of when they ask for soy sauce, and it is saltier and less viscous. This is different than lite sodium soy sauce.

Dark soy sauce is less salty, darker, aged longer, and often contains molasses or caramel and cornstarch.

Sweet soy sauce or thick soy sauce, is thicker and sweeter while less salty. It has more sugar added to it. Unfortunately, people tend to mix up dark soy sauce and sweet soy sauce, using the terms interchangeably. I prefer light soy sauce in most recipes.

Ginger Chicken

Introduction: I rarely equate Thai chili and comfort food, but this dish has a rich, spicy chicken broth base and is loaded with onion, garlic, and ginger. Some people make chicken soup when they do not feel well, but I make ginger chicken instead. Serves 2-3.

Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons peanut oil
- 1/3 cup ginger, julienned
- 1 1/2 tablespoons garlic, minced
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, sliced in 1/4 inch strips
- 1 medium onion, sliced into strips
- 1 cup mushrooms, sliced
- 1 bell pepper, sliced
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons oyster sauce
- 1/3 cup chicken broth
- 1/4 cup green onions, chopped
- 1 Thai chili, minced
- 1 tablespoon sriracha sauce.

Directions:

1. Sauté the ginger in 2 tablespoons oil until golden brown. Remove and set aside.
2. Add more oil to the pan and sauté the garlic. Increase the heat to medium high. Add the chicken and sear it quickly on both sides. Add the onions. Cook for about two minutes, mixing occasionally.
3. Add the mushrooms, ginger, and sauces. Reduce the heat to medium and cover. Cook for a minute, add the broth and bell pepper, cover, and cook for another minute or until the chicken is done.
4. Remove from heat. Garnish with the green onions.
5. Mix the Thai chili and sriracha, and season with it as desired.



*Feature Ingredient: Fish sauce

Fish sauce is essentially fermented fish. Off-putting as it may sound, fish sauce adds unique flavor to dishes and is extremely common in Asian cooking. A number of Asian recipes use fish sauce instead of salt. Some people also use fish sauce as a substitute for MSG.

Pinoy Pork BBQ

Introduction: This is a classic Filipino street vendor offering and common party entree that mixes sweet, savory, and spicy with barbecue smoke. Serves 3-4.

Ingredients:

- 3 pounds fatty pork (like Boston Butt)

Marinade:

- ½ cup soy sauce
- ½ cup banana catsup
- ½ cup of 7up
- ¼ cup lime juice
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 5 tablespoons brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 small onion, chopped



In Defense of Fish Sauce

I know what you're thinking: Fermented fish sounds disgusting. I am not asking you to drink it; just give it a chance. You may be surprised just how well a little fish sauce enhances a dish.

Besides, fish sauce is the parent of ketchup, and plenty of people must have thought flavoring their food with tomato blood was distasteful before freeing their taste buds.

Also consider that the United States has plenty of fermented ingredients like yogurt, wine, and cocoa. Even Congress is largely composed of individuals who started fermenting long ago.

Directions:

1. Slice the pork into ½ inch thick pieces. Do not remove the fat as it soaks up the marinade flavor.
2. Combine all the marinade ingredients, add the pork, and marinate up to two days.
3. Grill the pork.

* Feature ingredient: banana catsup

Banana Catsup is a Filipino ketchup equivalent, using bananas instead of tomatoes. Banana catsup is sweeter and spicier than its western equivalent. Filipinos use this condiment with fries and burgers and in spaghetti.

Star Anise Braised Pork

Introduction: I refer to this dish as “licorice bacon candy.” A subtle sweet and salty taste is imbued with the pungent licorice flavor of star anise. It is a favorite with my wife. Serves 2-3.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ pounds Boston Butt cut into ½ inch strips

Marinade:

- 1 ½ tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 ½ tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon Chinese five-spice powder*

Other ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 star anise*
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 ½ tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 cup chicken or pork broth

Directions:

1. Combine the marinade ingredients and coat the pork. Marinate for one hour.
2. Heat oil in a pan. Sauté the onion, garlic, star anise, and sugar for a couple minutes, until light brown. Remove from pan.
3. Sear the pork on all sides, including the marinade. Add the onion, garlic, star anise, and sugar back in.
4. Pour in the broth and soy sauce. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer. Cook until the pork is tender, typically two hours.

* Feature ingredients: Star Anise

Star Anise is the dried fruit of an oriental tree. This ingredient imparts a licorice flavor, and can be used whole or ground into a powder.

* Feature ingredients: Chinese five-spice powder

Chinese five-spice powder is an iconic seasoning based around cinnamon, cloves, fennel seed, peppercorns, and star anise, though many varieties will include other ingredients like turmeric or ginger.

Chinese Five-Spice Beef with Hoisin Sauce

Introduction: A Chinese friend of mine described this dish as the most Chinese meal he had eaten in America. I enjoy it because the flavor profile, largely dominated by the hoisin sauce, is so different from many of the recipes I cook. Serves 2-3.

Ingredients:

- 1 pound beef sirloin, sliced into 1/4 inch strips (pork also works well)
 - 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
 - 1/2 onion, sliced into wedges
 - 4 green onions, whites minced and greens cut into 1/2 inch strips
 - 1/4 cup hoisin sauce
 - 3 tablespoons soy sauce
 - 2 tomatoes cut into wedges
 - 1 teaspoon Chinese five-spice powder
 - 1 teaspoon brown sugar
 - 1 sprig basil, chopped
 - 1 Thai chili, minced (optional)
- Marinade:*
- Remaining ingredients:*
- 2 tablespoons oil

Directions:

1. Marinate the meat while preparing the other ingredients.
2. Preheat half of the oil, and add the sugar. Once the sugar caramelizes, toss in the tomatoes and sauté for a minute, flipping occasionally. Set the tomatoes aside (omit this step and the brown sugar if the tomatoes are in season and sweet).
3. Add the remaining oil, and sauté the garlic, onion, and minced green onion until golden (make sure to save the 1/2 inch green onion strips for later).
4. Increase heat to high. Sear the beef on both sides, and reduce the heat to medium. Cook until the beef is almost done, about two more minutes.
5. Stir in the tomato. Cook for another minute.
6. Remove from heat and garnish with the green onion strips, basil, and Thai chili.

* Feature ingredient: Hoisin sauce

Hoisin sauce is an iconic Chinese sauce with a sweet, salty, and pungent taste, almost like barbecue sauce but richer.

Fish with Filipino Spicy Dipping Sauce

Introduction: This is a simple but classic way to cook fish, providing powerful flavor for minimal effort. Serves 2-4.

Ingredients:

- 2-3 pounds of fish, whole or fillets
- Seasoned salt
- Seasoned pepper

Dipping sauce:

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup vinegar
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 teaspoon pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons red onion, chopped
- 1 green onion, finely sliced
- 1 Thai chili, minced (optional)

Directions:

1. Season the fish liberally with the salt and pepper.
2. Combine the dipping sauce ingredients.
3. Grill or fry the fish and serve with the dipping sauce.



General Tso's Chicken

Introduction: I have been fascinated with creating the perfect General Tso's Chicken for almost a decade. There are a myriad of elements that make this dish challenging: Is the sauce too bland, sweet, spicy, or viscous? Is the batter too thick or thin? Is there enough crunch? Does the breading get soggy quickly?

Only recently did I settle on a recipe that satiates my obsession. This chicken has a light but crunchy breading, bolstered by a sweet and spicy sauce with a complex flavor profile. Serves 2.

Ingredients:

Sauce:

- 2 tablespoons rice wine*
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar*
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons hoisin sauce
- ¼ cup chicken broth
- 1 ½ teaspoons corn starch
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon peanut oil
- 1 tablespoon ginger, minced
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 3-5 dried chili peppers

Tempura mix:

- 2 cups flour
- ¼ cup corn starch
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon white pepper

Other Ingredients:

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into roughly ½ x ½ x 1 inch pieces
- ¼ cup 80 proof light rum or vodka (using liquor instead of water will make the batter extra crispy)
- oil for frying
- ½ pound steamed broccoli (so you can pretend this recipe is healthy)

The Truly True History behind General Tso's Chicken

There is a buffet of bad information served up about the origin of General Tso's Chicken.

General Tso was not a general, and neither was he Chinese. Rather he was a failed southern cook whose fried chicken was roasted by critiques who sputtered that it was, "Generally so-so chicken."

Rather than quit, this failed chef created a Chinese sauce to slather on his chicken and rebranded. The rest is history.

Directions:

1. Combine the tempura ingredients, mixing thoroughly.
2. Mix the wine, vinegar, sugar, hoisin sauce, broth, and 1 ½ teaspoons cornstarch.
3. Heat the peanut and sesame oil. Sauté the ginger for about fifteen seconds. Add the garlic and pepper pods, and cook until the garlic starts to brown. Add the sauce mix and bring to a simmer, stirring continually, being careful not to let the sauce boil and caramelize. Remove from heat and extract the pepper pods (optional).
4. Start heating the frying oil (the frying temperature should be between 325-375 °F).
5. In a large bowl, add the liquor to 1 cup of tempura. Whisk the mixture until the batter clumps into little balls about half the size of a peppercorn or smaller.
6. Add the chicken to the tempura and liquor breading mixture, and coat the chicken evenly.
7. Working in batches, coat the chicken in the remaining dry tempura, and add to the frying pan.
8. Fry the chicken for 3-4 minutes, placing the pieces on absorbent paper when you are finished. Repeat steps 7 and 8 until all the chicken is fried.
9. Heat a large pan to a medium heat. Add the chicken and steamed broccoli. Spoon the sauce onto the chicken and broccoli, mixing as you go so the sauce coats the chicken and broccoli evenly. Do not heat the pan too hot or the sauce will clump up or burn instead of coating the chicken and broccoli. Remove from heat.

*** Feature ingredient: Rice cooking wine**

Rice cooking wine adds acidity to recipes and helps tenderize meat while adding flavor. I typically use Shoaxing rice wine, which is a little different than the clear Chinese rice wine. Japanese rice wines, sake and mirin, are both going to have different flavor profiles—mirin, for instance, will have a stronger flavor.

*** Feature ingredient: Rice vinegar**

Rice vinegar is a less potent version of its western counterpart. Rice vinegar is sweeter while traditional American vinegar is more sour and acidic.

Vietnamese Lemongrass Chicken

Introduction: This is a simple and flavorful marinade makes a great party dish. Serves 3-4.

Ingredients:

- 3 pounds chicken thighs or drumsticks

Marinade:

- 2 tablespoons garlic, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2-3 stalks lemongrass chopped*
- 2-3 sprigs of cilantro, including the roots, chopped
- ¼ cup ginger, sliced
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup lime juice
- ¼ cup peanut oil
- ½ cup fish sauce

Advice for the Preservation of Ego

There is one especially good reason to cook ethnic dishes: If someone doesn't enjoy a recipe, you can simply tell yourself that they are uncultured and your culinary confidence is left unscathed.

This is especially true when cooking for an age demographic whose idea of fine dining includes hotdogs and cheese sticks.

Directions:

1. Combine the marinade ingredients.
2. Pierce the chicken repeatedly with a fork and marinate overnight.
3. Grill the chicken, using the leftover marinade to baste the chicken for the second half of the grill time.

*** Feature ingredient: Lemongrass**

Lemongrass does not taste as much like lemon as one might initially think. It has a light citrusy flavor and a spicy, herbal quality, without any acidity. When cooking with lemongrass, cut off the hard bulb and discard the tough outer leaves. Use the inner yellowish leaves, roughly the lower two-thirds of the stalk.

Thai Pork with Dipping Sauce

Introduction: This recipe pairs a sweet, salty and savory pork marinade with an explosively flavorful dip sauce built around sweet, sour, salty, spicy, and bitter ingredients. Serves 2.

Ingredients:

- 1 pound Pork chops or pork loin

Marinade:

- 1 sprig cilantro with roots
- 1 stalk lemongrass chopped
- 2 teaspoons garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 ½ tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 ½ tablespoons brown sugar

Dipping sauce:

- 1 teaspoon black glutinous rice
- 1 chopped Thai pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1 ½ tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 ½ tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon tamarind juice*



Directions:

1. Combine the marinade ingredients, and marinate the pork overnight.
2. Toast the black glutinous rice and grind it. Add the remaining ingredients and stir until the sugar dissolves.
3. Grill the pork and serve with the dip sauce.

***Featured Ingredient: tamarind juice**

Tamarind juice is a sweet and sour derivative of the tamarind tree's pod-like fruit. The juice is a sweet, tangy version of lime juice.

Seafood Curry

Introduction: Introduction: This is easily my favorite way to eat seafood. Coconut milk pairs beautifully with seafood, and the other ingredients build a complex taste. Serves 2-3.

Ingredients:

- 1 pound seafood (crab, mussels, shrimp, squid, and scallops all work well)
- 1 tablespoon peanut oil
- 1 tablespoon ginger, julienned
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 medium chayote, peeled, seeded, and chopped into 1/2 inch cubes*
- 1 can (roughly 1 3/4 cups) coconut milk
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon fish sauce
- 1/2-1 teaspoon curry paste
- 1/4 teaspoon cumin powder
- 1/4 teaspoon fennel powder
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 2-4 green onions, chopped into 1/4 inch slices
- 1 tablespoon basil, minced
- 1 Thai pepper, minced (optional)



Directions:

1. Using medium heat sauté the ginger in the peanut oil until it begins to turn golden. Add the garlic and onion.
2. Once the garlic starts to turn golden, add the chayote, coconut milk, soy sauce, fish sauce, curry paste, cumin, fennel, turmeric, white pepper, and salt. Mix thoroughly and bring to a boil.
3. Reduce the heat to a simmer, and let the chayote cook. In about 18 minutes, the chayote should be mostly cooked (it should still take a little pressure to pierce with a fork).
4. Increase the temperature to medium heat, and add the seafood and bell pepper. Cook for 2-3 minutes, or until the seafood is cooked. Remove from heat.
5. Garnish with green onion, basil, and Thai pepper.

*** Feature ingredient: Chayote**

Chayote is a member of the gourd family. While chayote can taste bland on its own, it works especially well with coconut milk, absorbing the sweet, creamy flavor and becoming a feature ingredient.

Challenge Accepted

If you are ever feeling overconfident in your culinary abilities, simply add a few children to the process. I was cooking a recipe I've made dozens of times, while watching Daniel (2 years) and Lily (4 months).

Lily only napped for about twenty minutes and then needed a bottle. Daniel cried three times (he didn't get to go with Mama and the older siblings to Awana, I wouldn't let him play in the pantry, and he hit himself in the head with the baby gate).

Despite all this, dinner was only going to be twenty minutes late. Then the burner pan started smoldering, my wife walked in the front door to smoke billowing from the kitchen, and the burner pan burst into flames.

"Welcome home, babe. Would you please pass the fire extinguisher?"