

# A plucky tale

Janice Cole explains how her passion for poultry led to her own urban chicken coop



Saying that Janice Cole loves to get cracking is an understatement. The Minneapolis-based cookbook author has adored eggs since childhood, and in 2007 she took her fondness to a new level: she started raising her own chickens. “I wanted ultra-fresh backyard eggs,” she explains nonchalantly, as if her hobby were nothing out of the ordinary. “But where could I go and get eggs that were minutes old?”

The answer was to buy three baby chicks and a chicken coop, and then spend months caring for the flock until they started laying eggs. Although it may have seemed like an impulsive decision, Janice had been contemplating raising chickens in her backyard – which, for the record, is located in the city, not on a farm – for nearly a decade.

As it turns out, she’s never regretted it. The effervescent foodie has enjoyed the bounty of her chick-raising experience so much that she recently penned *Chicken and Egg: A Memoir of Suburban Homesteading With 125 Recipes*, which is filled with delicious dishes and includes a detailed account of raising birds for both eggs and meat.

Understandably, for those close to Janice, this passion for chickens has taken a little getting used to. In the book, Janice explains that her husband of 38 years – her high-school beau Marty – thought she’d cracked up when she proposed her urban farming adventure. “You’re crazy!” he teased.

“He wasn’t keen on doing this,” the charismatic author explains with a laugh. “But he’s a sweetheart. And he’s never surprised by the things I come up with anyway. So he’s learned to

results. Sprinkle a pizza paddle or large baking sheet with cornmeal and set aside.

## TOPPING

**1** Toss the chicken in a small bowl with 1 tablespoon of the oil and the fennel, dried basil, oregano and red pepper flakes. Combine the remaining 1½ tablespoons of oil with the garlic in a cup. When the dough has doubled in size, gently deflate and roll out on a lightly floured surface to a 15-inch round. Place the pizza dough on the cornmeal-strewn pizza paddle. Shake the pizza to make sure it doesn’t stick, and add more cornmeal if necessary. Brush the dough with the garlic oil mixture and spread the pizza sauce over the surface of the dough. Top with the seasoned chicken, artichoke hearts, tomatoes, red onion and fresh basil. Sprinkle with the mozzarella.

**2** Slide the pizza directly onto the pizza stone and bake for 9 to 11 minutes, or until the crust is light golden brown on the edges and the bottom. Cut into wedges and serve.

## INGREDIENTS serves 8

- 1** sheet frozen puff pastry (from a 500g package)
- 4 tbsp** unsalted butter
- ½ cup** chopped shallots
- 3** garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup** all-purpose flour
- 2 cups** reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 cups** sliced mushrooms
- 2 cups** unpeeled small red potatoes (4 to 5), diced
- 1 cup** carrots, halved and sliced
- 1 tbsp** chopped fresh rosemary
- ½ tsp** kosher salt
- ¼ tsp** freshly ground pepper
- 3 cups** chopped cooked chicken (¾-inch pieces)
- ¾ cup** frozen baby peas

**1** Thaw the puff pastry according to the package directions. Preheat the oven to 400° F. Grease an 11- by 7-inch glass baking dish.

**2** Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Sauté the shallots and garlic for 30 to 40 seconds, or until they begin to soften and smell fragrant. Stir in the flour and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Whisk in the chicken broth and bring to a boil. Stir in the mushrooms, potatoes, carrots, rosemary, salt and pepper, and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in the chicken and peas and simmer for 3 minutes. Spoon the chicken mixture into the baking dish.

**3** On a lightly floured surface, roll the puff pastry into a 13- by 9-inch rectangle. Drape over the baking dish, gently pressing the pastry where it touches the rim of the dish.

**4** Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until the pastry is golden brown.

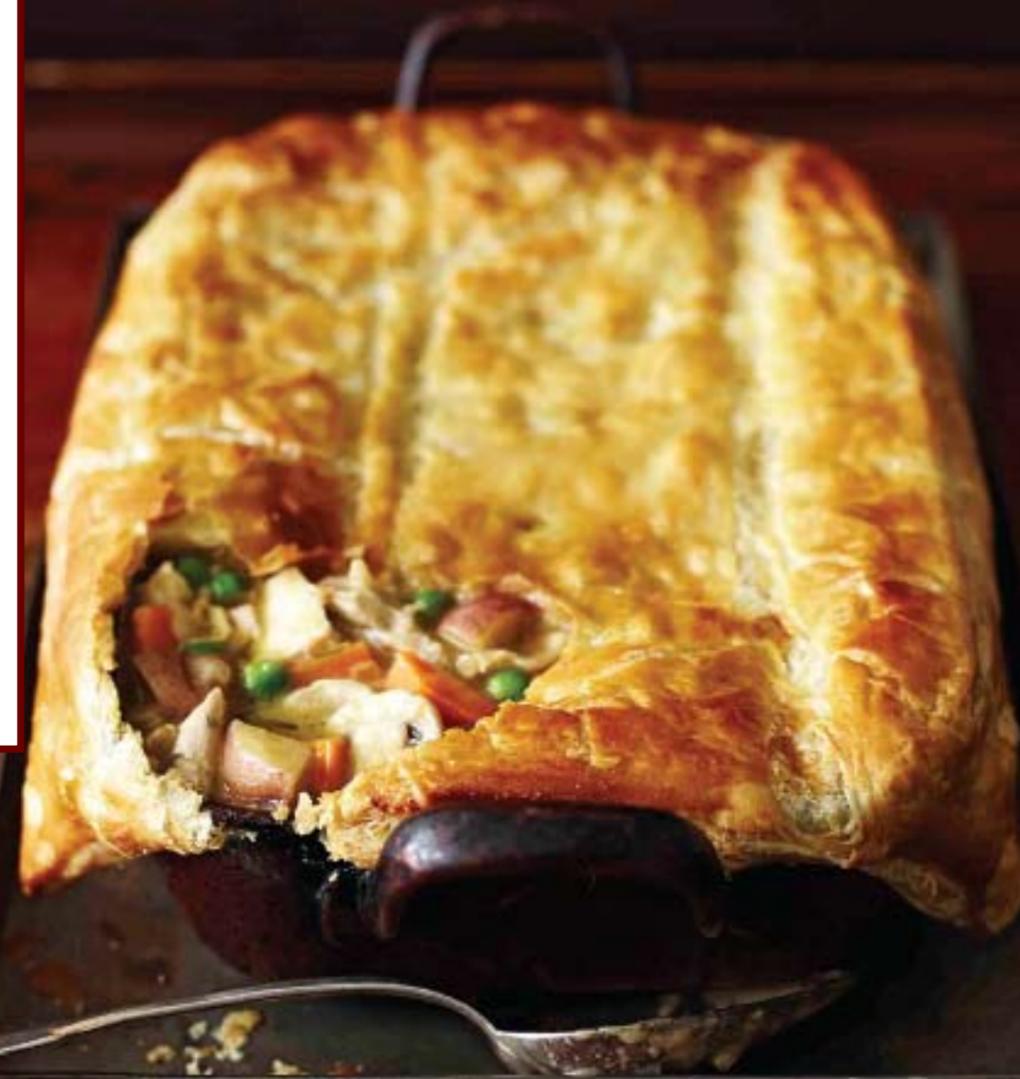
**5** Remove from the oven and let sit for 5 minutes before serving. Use a spoon to scoop out the chicken mixture, topping each serving with a piece of pastry.

be tolerant.”

Janice’s children, Andrew and Adam – a soon-to-be MBA student and a law-school student, respectively – have found her passion for poultry similarly astonishing. “They did not tell their classmates,” confesses Janice. Still, the boys came around more quickly than their father. Once Janice’s sons discovered that their pals thought “it was cool” that their mom raised poultry, they started bringing friends by the house again. Adam, who also loves to cook, helps Janice test new chicken and egg recipes, including those for the book.

Becoming a cookbook author is not a huge departure for Janice, whose first job was as a cook. The gourmand passed her youth working in St. Paul-Minneapolis-area restaurants and trained at London’s Le Cordon Bleu culinary school. She even launched a catering company with a partner before her sons were born. After becoming a mother, however, she switched course, and she ▶

# Chicken potpie in a blanket of puff pastry



# Spicy chicken and artichoke pizza

## INGREDIENTS serves 4

### DOUGH

- ¾ cup** warm water (110° to 115° F)
- 1¼ tsp** active dry yeast
- ¼ cup** whole-wheat flour
- 1 tbsp** extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp** kosher salt
- 1¾ to 2 cups** bread flour
- cornmeal for sprinkling

### TOPPING

- ½ cup** diced cooked chicken (½-inch dice)
- 2½ tbsp** extra virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp** fennel seeds, crushed
- ½ tsp** dried basil
- ¼ tsp** dried oregano
- ½ tsp** red pepper flakes
- 1** garlic clove, minced
- ½ cup** prepared pizza sauce
- ¾ cup** quartered canned artichoke hearts

- ½ cup** diced plum tomatoes
- ¼ cup** chopped red onion
- 2 tbsp** chopped fresh basil
- 1¼ cups** shredded mozzarella cheese

## TO MAKE THE DOUGH

**1** Pour the water into a large bowl and sprinkle with the yeast. Let sit for 10 minutes, or until foamy. Beat in the whole-wheat flour with an electric mixer at low speed, using the flat paddle if available. Add the oil and salt, mixing until blended. Slowly beat in enough of the bread flour so that a dough forms and begins to pull away from the sides of the bowl (the dough will be sticky, but resist the urge to add more flour). Beat for 5 minutes on medium speed to knead. (Alternatively, you can mix and knead the dough entirely by hand.) Lightly oil a large bowl, put in the dough, cover and let rise in a warm place for 1 hour or until doubled in size. Meanwhile, place an oven rack in the bottom position of the oven. Place a pizza stone on the rack and preheat the oven to 475° F. The oven should preheat for at least 45 minutes for the best

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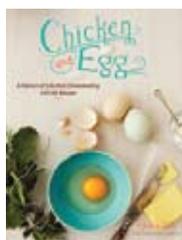


## Key-lime cream pie with billowy meringue

has spent much of the past two decades writing about food and styling mouth-watering meals for print publications. Janice currently serves as food editor for *Cooking Pleasures* magazine.

Though she was always interested in creating dishes that draw on local ingredients and culinary traditions – with a French twist – she is now all about chickens and eggs. “This is something I didn’t foresee,” she admits with a laugh.

All of Janice’s family, friends and neighbours are now more than happy to embrace her colourful career choice. Her current flock of four chickens produce a large supply of eggs every week, and so Janice ends up giving away a lot of farm-fresh, delicious treats, making her one popular lady. Four years after her offbeat experiment began, she can now say that her husband is content, her kids are thrilled and all is well on the home front. And for her part, Janice still can’t get enough of eggs. “It’s one of the most versatile foods there is,” she says with a smile. **H**



While *Chicken and Egg: A Memoir of Suburban Homesteading With 125 Recipes* (Chronicle Books) contains loads of scrumptious recipes – such as lemon-tarragon devilled eggs and rosemary chicken burgers – the cookbook also focuses on how and

why author Janice Cole took up the unconventional hobby of raising chickens in her backyard. As such, the beautifully illustrated volume is part cookbook and part memoir, with the Minneapolis food expert sharing all manner of entertaining anecdotes. The quick and easy chicken- and egg-based dishes are delicious enough to make you consider getting chickens of your own!

### INGREDIENTS serves 8

#### CRUST

**1½ cups** graham cracker crumbs  
**¼ cup** packed light-brown sugar  
**2 tsp** grated lime zest  
**6 tbsp** unsalted butter, melted

#### FILLING

**½ cup** heavy (whipping) cream  
**6** egg yolks  
**1** 14-oz can sweetened condensed milk  
**2 tsp** grated lime zest  
**¾ cup** key-lime juice

#### MERINGUE

**1 tbsp** cornstarch (see note)  
**⅓ cup** water  
**6** egg whites  
**¼ tsp** cream of tartar  
**¾ cup** granulated sugar

**1** To make the crust: Preheat the oven to 350° F. Stir together the graham cracker crumbs, brown sugar and lime zest with a fork in a medium bowl until blended. Pour in the butter and stir until all of the crumbs are moistened. Press the crumb mixture over the bottom and up the sides of a 9-inch glass or metal pie plate with your fingers. Use a small measuring cup to press the crumb mixture evenly against the bottom and sides of the dish to firm the crust. Bake for 10 minutes, or until set and slightly deeper brown in colour. Cool on a wire rack. Leave the oven on.

**2** To make the filling: Beat the cream in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until soft peaks form. In a large bowl, whisk the egg yolks until smooth. Whisk in the condensed milk and the lime zest until blended. Slowly whisk in the lime juice. Gently fold in the whipped cream. Pour the filling into the cooled pie crust.

**3** Bake the pie for 15 minutes, or until the filling is set but still quivers when gently shaken. Leave the oven on.

**4** To make the meringue: While the filling is baking, dissolve the cornstarch in the water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat and boil for 30 seconds – or until very thick – stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and cover to keep warm. Beat the egg whites and cream of tartar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium-low speed until the whites are frothy. Increase the speed to medium and beat until soft peaks form. With the mixer running, slowly beat in the granulated sugar. Continue beating while slowly adding the warm cornstarch mixture, one spoonful at a time. Increase the speed to medium-high and beat until the egg whites are glossy and will hold a stiff peak.

**5** As soon as you remove the baked pie from the oven, immediately spoon half of the meringue over the hot filling, carefully and gently spreading the meringue so it touches the crust all around (this will keep it from shrinking). Pile the remaining meringue on top and swirl decoratively.

**6** Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, or until the meringue is dry to the touch and light brown. Cool on a wire rack to room temperature, about 2 hours. Refrigerate for 3 hours or until cold before serving. Store any leftovers in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

**NOTE:** The addition of the cornstarch mixture to the meringue is a food styling technique that helps stabilize the egg whites. It produces a tender meringue that is less likely to shrink from the edges, bead up or weep on a humid day.