

WOODFIRED LIFE

Cooking with Fire

----- VANESSA NIÑO

I am a home cook, wife, and mother, passionate about cooking over an open fire and sharing my experiences with others.

When my husband and I built our wood-fired oven in 2020, I knew it wouldn't just be a "pizza oven." It became a way for me to showcase my passion for cooking, experiment with new recipes, and connect with others.

My oven has served all those purposes and more! We quickly added a wood-fired grill in 2021, and in 2023, we added a wood-fired smoker. The three pieces work together perfectly to create fabulous meals.

This bulletin is designed to encourage you to connect with me and other wood-fired oven owners. Let's exchange recipes, cooking tips, photos, and more!

I hope you enjoy it and connect with me via Instagram

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Cooking with Fire



Day and Night



My oven is set up in our backyard, which is the perfect location to enjoy cooking something delicious with our friends and family.



SOURDOUGH BREAD



In 2020, a global trend for home cooking emerged. Thanks to social media, we saw countless stories of people discovering their hidden passion for cooking or finally

having the time to explore it. Suddenly, flour became a prized commodity, yeast was hard to find, and homes around the world were filled with the delightful aromas and flavors of freshly baked bread.

Among the various types of bread that gained popularity, sourdough stood out. I wasn't immune to this trend and began experimenting with my own sourdough loaves. Some of my attempts were magnificent, while others... well, let's just say I struggled with the patience required for sourdough. I tend to prefer immediate gratification, and waiting 24 hours felt too long. After several tries, I put it aside but

revisited it every Thanksgiving, managing to create some delicious loaves worthy of Instagram posts. However, I hadn't quite mastered the art of sourdough.



This year, my husband decided to “try his luck” with this culinary delicacy, and I'm glad he

did! Since January 2025, he has been baking, and every loaf he makes is perfect. He masters new flavors effortlessly—I should have asked him to take over this craft long ago! I have learned from him that patience is key! Photographed are some of the loaves he has created, and of course, while he bakes sourdough, I still make the occasional French baguette, traditional Colombian cassava bread (Pan de Yuca), or Brazilian cheese bread (Pão de Queijo) in my wood-fired oven!



WOODFIRED MEALS



When we built our oven, I knew that meals would be transformed into something special. I anticipated that I would be able to experience more authentic flavors in my Colombian and Brazilian dishes simply by adding fire.



Meats, vegetables, and potatoes all took on a flavor of their own, and I became fixated on achieving even more with ingredients I hadn't tried before and techniques that were new to me. I began with more traditional methods that I could replicate in my home oven. As I read and learned more, I started to experiment with techniques that were unfamiliar to me, such as vegetable charring, cooking meats over embers, and placing fish directly on the coals. The results were astonishing—the flavors were beyond anything I had ever tasted!



I learned I could char a pumpkin and turn it into chunks or blend it into a soup, and even though it is the same ingredient, the flavor profile of each preparation was unique.

RECIPE

CHARRED PUMPKIN CREAM

Recipe by: Vanessa Niño

Unlike its name suggests, this recipe contains no cream. You can prepare it in a wood-fired oven, on a wood-fired grill, or even in your home chimney! It's simple and delicious. You can roast the seeds and use them as a garnish or enjoy them as an appetizer.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large yellow onions
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium-sized pumpkin (such as sugar pumpkin)
- Salt, to taste
- 1 cup vegetable stock (more if the pumpkin is large and the mixture is too thick)
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika

PREPARATION

1. Preheat your oven to a medium-hot roasting temperature (about 575°F or 300°C).
2. Peel the onions and trim the root ends. Place the onions and garlic clove on a large rectangle of aluminum foil. Drizzle olive oil over and around the onions.
3. Enclose the onions in the foil by squeezing the sides tightly. You may leave the top open to allow the onions to caramelize slightly, which will add a nice smoky flavor to the cream.
4. Roast the foil packets directly on the floor of the wood-fired oven opposite the fire, turning occasionally so all sides receive heat. The onions will be ready when a skewer inserted into them meets little resistance, which should take about 20 minutes.
5. While the onions are roasting, place the whole pumpkin on an aluminum tray opposite the fire, keeping the onions closer to the door of the oven for easy access. Rotate the pumpkin every 10 minutes to ensure even charring. Cooking times will vary; the pumpkin is ready when it is completely charred and a knife inserted into it encounters no resistance. Remove it from the oven and allow it to cool.
6. Once cooled, cut the pumpkin in half, remove the seeds (set them aside if you plan to roast them), and scoop out the flesh. Place the pumpkin flesh in a blender or food processor along with the roasted onion and garlic, then blend until smooth.
7. Transfer the blended mixture to a Dutch oven or cast-iron pot. Add salt, vegetable stock, and smoked paprika, then cook until heated through.
8. Serve immediately; you may garnish with roasted pumpkin seeds, roasted hot pepper flakes, and freshly chopped dill.

