

5 ideas for... BALSAMIC VINEGAR

Take this salad-dressing staple to the stove to make quick, savory sauces for one-dish dinners. Or toss it with sweet-tart fruits or vegetables to brighten their juicy flavors. Tangy with hints of caramel, the versatile vinegar keeps indefinitely, and there's no need to splurge on pricey, traditionally-aged *aceto balsamico*: We tested these dishes with a variety of regular supermarket brands, and they're delicious.

1 Sweet & Spicy Glaze In 1 qt. saucepan, heat 1 c. vinegar; ½ c. packed dark brown sugar; 2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard; 2 cloves garlic, crushed with press; ½ tsp. crushed red pepper; ½ tsp. black pepper; and ¼ tsp. salt to boiling on medium, stirring to dissolve sugar. Simmer 15 minutes or until reduced by half. Serve over grilled vegetables or meat. Makes ¾ cup.

2 Creamy Chicken Sauté In 12-in. skillet, heat 1 Tbsp. olive oil on medium-high. Add 1 lb. skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut into 1-in. chunks, and sprinkle with ¼ tsp. each salt and pepper. Cook 3 to 4 minutes or just until golden on all sides, stirring occasionally. Stir in 2 yellow squash, chopped, and cook 3 minutes or until just tender. Stir in ¼ c. heavy cream and 2 Tbsp. vinegar. Reduce heat to low and cook 3 minutes or until sauce thickens. Makes 4 main-dish servings.

3 Pepper Steaks In 12-in. skillet, melt ½ Tbsp. butter on medium-high. Sprinkle 2 strip steaks (each 12 oz. and ¾ in. thick) with ½ tsp. each salt and pepper. Add to skillet and cook 7 to 9 minutes for medium-rare, turning once. Transfer to cutting board. To skillet, add 1 sm. onion, thinly sliced, and 1 sm. red pepper, thinly sliced. Cook 2 minutes or until softened, stirring. Add ⅓ c. vinegar and 2 Tbsp. water. Cook 2 minutes or until reduced by half. Remove from heat and immediately stir in ½ Tbsp. butter until it melts. Makes 4 main-dish servings.

4 Fresh Berry Sauce In med. bowl, stir together 2 Tbsp. sugar and 1 Tbsp. each vinegar and water until sugar dissolves. Stir in 1 pt. blackberries. Serve with vanilla ice cream. Makes 2 cups sauce.

5 Smoky Grilled Tomatoes Preheat outdoor grill on medium-high. On 30" by 12" sheet of heavy-duty foil, combine 2 pts. cherry tomatoes, each cut in half; 2 Tbsp. vinegar; 2 Tbsp. olive oil; 2 sprigs fresh thyme; and ¼ tsp. each salt and pepper. Fold in half and crimp foil edges all around to create a long, narrow sealed packet. Place packet on grill and cook 8 minutes. Makes 4 side-dish servings.

