

Rachel's Food for Living



Rachel Allen

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Аннотация

Bestselling author and TV chef Rachel Allen is back with a celebration of favourite foods for making memories. Ever feel rapture over a pudding? Fall in love over a romantic meal? Can you remember the smell of baking in your grandmother's kitchen? Food has the power to conjure up many emotions – it can make us feel happy or energetic, nostalgic or loved. Cooking and enjoying great food with others is part of how we relish life and in her new book, Rachel Allen provides the mouth-watering recipes to help you do just that. Rachel explores the foods that stir these wonderful feelings. She provides inspiring and easy-to-achieve suggestions for all kinds of occasions whether you want to make an indulgent celebratory meal for someone special, create memories with your kids, or need a little healthy boost...or a sneaky treat! This is the food that will make you smile. Rachel's Food for Living includes over 100 new recipes such as Greek Lamb, Onion and Butter Bean Stew; Korean Beef with Avocado Rice; Spanish Chorizo and Chickpea Soup; Little Mocha Kisses. Contents include: 1 Food for the soul 2 Childhood favourites 3 Making memories 4 Something to celebrate 5 The Lazy Sunday 6 An elegant afternoon 7 Pleasure without the guilt 8 Food for romance 9 For the love of chocolate 10 Classic dishes

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Rachel Allen



Collins

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my Grandmother, Sheila O'Neill, and my Grandfather, Hans Reichenfeld, with love.

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Introduction

Food has the amazing potential to be comforting, uplifting, restorative, nurturing, energising and many other things besides. It plays a hugely significant role in our personal lives, both physically and emotionally and can lift us up when we are low and keep us up when we are on top of the world. Eating can be steeped in ritual or be utterly spontaneous but one thing is for certain – the feelings that food stirs go far beyond mere biology.

I love the way that certain aromas and flavours can instantly conjure up vivid memories. They send us back to our childhood kitchens, tugging at our grandmothers' apron strings, or to other times and places in our lives that hold special significance. For me it is the smell of roast stuffed chicken and potatoes that fills me with joyful recollections of my mother's incredible Sunday dinners.

Food makes the best gift, whether it's hot buttered toast for someone with the blues or an elaborate three-course romantic feast for the one you love. The time we take to lovingly prepare a meal can pay dividends in the way it makes others feel cared for.

Even the simplest foods are enough to inspire a happy social occasion. One of my greatest pleasures is catching up with girlfriends over tea and sympathy (and a big pile of biscuits!). We all know that, 'Come round for a cuppa' really means, 'Come round and let's chat for hours and laugh until it hurts.'

This book is filled with foods that have special meaning for me or for my family and friends. I hope that these recipes will make for fun and memorable cooking and eating for you, too!

p.s. The oven temperatures in this book are for a conventional oven, but if I am using a fan oven, then I usually reduce the temperature by 10 per cent.

Food for the Soul

A chalkboard with a decorative white border. The text is written in green chalk. The text reads: Rachel's
food for
Living

Rachel's
food for
Living



There are times when we all need a bit of comfort in a bowl. These are the times when you want food that makes you feel as though you're wrapped up in a blanket, food that gives you a warm and cosy feeling, food that restores both mentally and physically. Each of us has our own comfort foods. For some, this might be as simple as tea and toast, for others it might be more substantial, such as a big meaty stew eaten while curled up on the sofa. Whatever they are, they're sure to make you feel safe and nurtured. This chapter includes some of my favourite foods to beat the blues!

Spanish Chorizo and Chickpea Soup

This is such a soothing soup on a rainy day, and the flavours always remind me of sunnier summer days. It's a substantial soup, but not too heavy – perfect for a meal in itself. This soup reheats well, in fact the flavours even improve. And of course you don't need to use imported chorizo – there are many wonderful locally produced versions which are equally delicious.

SERVES 4–6

1 tbsp olive oil

125g (5oz) chorizo, diced

1 onion, peeled and finely chopped

2 celery stalks, finely chopped

2 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed or grated

1 x 400g tin of chickpeas, undrained

2 x 400g tins of chopped tomatoes (or 8 fresh ripe tomatoes, peeled and chopped)

1 litre (1¾ pints) chicken stock

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

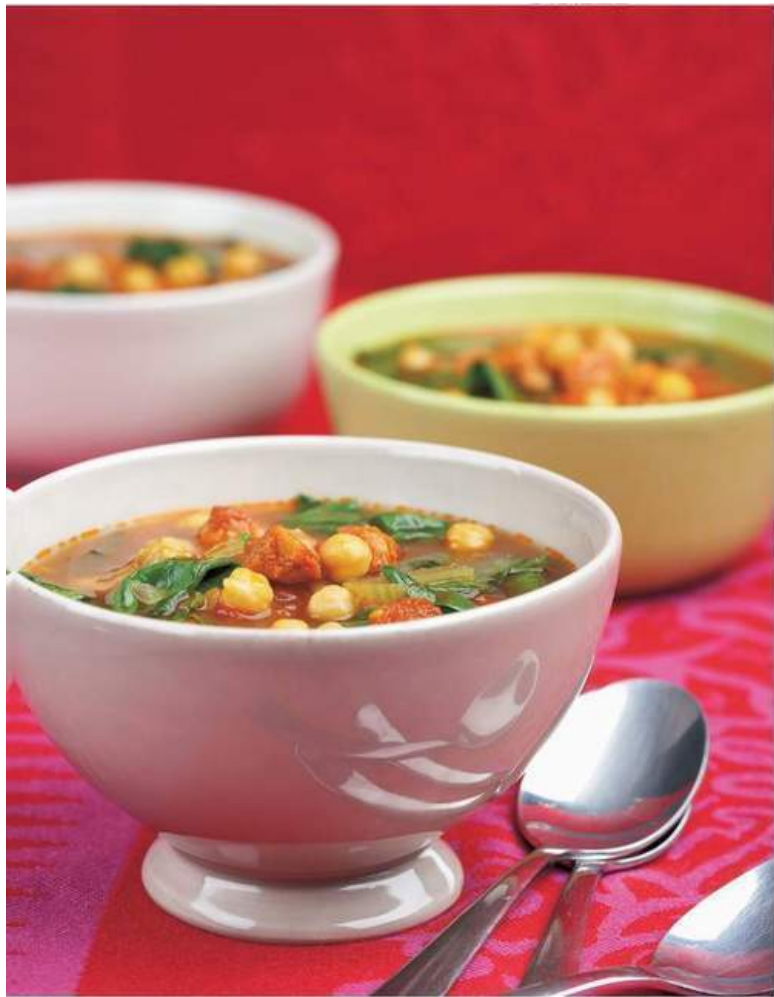
250g (9oz) spinach, destalked and finely chopped, or baby spinach leaves left whole

1 Place the olive oil in a large saucepan on the heat and add the diced chorizo. Cook for 1–2 minutes until the chorizo releases its oils, then add the chopped onion, celery and garlic. Cook on a

gentle heat with the lid on until the onion is completely cooked, about 10 minutes, then remove the lid and turn up the heat and cook for a minute to slightly brown the onion.

2 Add the chickpeas and their liquid, chopped tomatoes and the stock. Season with salt and pepper and bring up to the boil. Simmer for about 20 minutes until the tomatoes are soft and the chickpeas have absorbed all the flavours. Taste for seasoning, adding more salt and pepper if necessary.

3 While the mixture is still simmering, add the spinach and cook for 1 minute, until the spinach is soft. Serve in big, warm bowls.





Leek, Potato and Blue Cheese Soup

I love this soup – it's rich, smooth and velvety. This makes a lovely meal on its own with some crusty bread on the side, or serve as a starter for a wintery dinner party.

SERVES 4–6

VEGETARIAN

25g (1oz) butter

2 leeks (about 300g/12oz), dark green tops removed, white bits thinly sliced

2 potatoes (about 175g/6oz), peeled and chopped

2 bay leaves

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 litre (1¾ pints) light vegetable or chicken stock

75ml (2½fl oz) single cream

100–150g (4–5oz) blue cheese, such as Cashel Blue, Stilton, Gorgonzola or Roquefort, crumbled (see handy tip), plus 25g (1oz) for serving

1 Melt the butter in a medium-sized saucepan, add the leeks, potatoes and bay leaves. Season with salt and pepper and cover. Turn the heat down to low and let the vegetables sweat for 10 minutes, stirring every now and then to ensure they don't burn (see also the handy tip below).

2 After 10 minutes add the stock, increase the heat and simmer for a further 8–10 minutes until the potatoes and leeks

are soft. Remove the bay leaves, add the cream and the crumbled blue cheese and transfer to a liquidiser. Whiz the soup until it is smooth and velvety. Return to the saucepan to re-heat, tasting and seasoning if necessary.

3 To serve, pour the soup into warm bowls and sprinkle with the extra crumbled blue cheese.

Rachel's handy tips



If making this soup with a strong blue cheese like Roquefort or Gorgonzola, I only add 100g (4oz), but if you are using a milder blue cheese like Cashel Blue, you might need 125–150g (4½–5oz).



When sweating onions or other vegetables for a long time, I like to cover them with a butter wrapper or a piece of greaseproof paper as well as the saucepan lid. This helps to retain the moisture and makes sure they don't burn.

Italian Baked Pancakes with Cheese and Tomato

This recipe was inspired by a conversation I had with the great Italian chef Aldo Zilli. He told me a wonderful story about his mother using light pancakes as an alternative to pasta in certain dishes, and I've discovered they work wonderfully with rich tomato sauces. This recipe uses the pancakes in place of lasagne sheets, which adds a fluffiness to the dish. I love the way it comes out of the oven, sizzling and bubbling to the table. It's a perfect family dinner.

SERVES 4–6 VEGETARIAN

FOR THE PANCAKE BATTER (MAKES 8)

125g (5oz) flour

Pinch of salt

2 eggs

125ml (4fl oz) milk

125ml (4fl oz) water

15g (½oz) butter, melted

Sunflower oil, for oiling the frying pan

FOR THE TOMATO SAUCE

3 tbsp olive oil

1 onion, peeled and finely sliced

4 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed or grated

Salt, freshly ground black pepper and sugar

2 x 400g tins of chopped tomatoes or 900g (2lb) fresh tomatoes, peeled and chopped

3 tbsp torn fresh basil leaves

FOR THE FILLING

300g (11oz) fresh mozzarella, grated

100g (4oz) ricotta

25g (1oz) Parmesan cheese, finely grated, plus a bit extra for sprinkling

1 First make the pancakes. Place the flour and salt in a bowl. Make a well in the centre and drop in the eggs. Start to whisk, gradually add in the milk and water, whisking all the time, until the batter is smooth and free of lumps. Add in the melted butter and set aside. The batter can sit like this in the fridge for 24 hours.

2 Next make the tomato sauce. Place the olive oil in a wide saucepan, add the onion and garlic, season with salt and pepper, then cover and cook on a low heat until the onions are completely soft. Add the tomatoes and half the basil, leave uncovered and cook for about 20 minutes until the tomatoes are soft and the sauce has thickened. Add the remaining herbs and season to taste with salt, pepper and a pinch of sugar.

3 While the tomato sauce is cooking, you can make the pancakes. Place a medium-sized frying pan on a high heat and allow to become very hot. Pour the batter into a jug for easy pouring. Wipe the frying pan with an oiled piece of kitchen paper. Pour in just enough batter to cover the base of the pan –

it will start to cook as soon as it hits the pan so swirl it around the base immediately.

4 Cook on a high heat for 30 seconds–1 minute until the pancake is golden brown around the edge. Using a fish slice or palette knife, carefully but quickly flip the pancake over (you might need to take the pan off the heat while you do this) and cook the other side for another 30 seconds–1 minute until golden brown. Remove to a plate and cook the remaining pancakes in the same way. You will need a total of eight pancakes.

5 Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F), Gas mark 4.



6 Mix the cheeses together in a bowl, to make a spreadable paste.

7 To assemble the dish, place a pancake on the bottom of a 25cm (10in) square or round ovenproof dish, spread with a thin layer of the cheese mixture, top with another pancake and continue assembling, alternative seven layers of pancake and filling. Finish with a top layer of pancake. Pour the tomato sauce over the top, sprinkle with the remaining 25g (1oz) grated Parmesan.

8 Place in the oven (though it can also be stored in the fridge overnight or frozen at this stage). Bake for 30–40 minutes until the sauce is bubbling around the edges and the centre feels hot when a skewer is inserted. Take out of the oven, cut into wedges and serve with a lovely green salad.

Rigatoni with Courgettes, Lemon and Basil



This is one of my all-time favourite comfort foods. It's surprisingly refreshing for a pasta dish due to the fresh flavours of the lemon, courgette and basil, but the mascarpone and cream cheese are warmly satisfying.

SERVES 4

VEGETARIAN

450g (1lb) rigatoni or other pasta shapes

2 tbsp olive oil

4 small or 2 medium courgettes, halved lengthways, seeds removed and thinly sliced at an angle

100g (4oz) mascarpone cheese or soft cream cheese

3 tbsp milk

Finely grated zest of ½ lemon 3 tbsp torn or sliced fresh basil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Bring a large pot of water to the boil with a good pinch of salt, then cook the pasta according to the packet's instructions.

2 While the pasta is cooking, heat the olive oil in a medium-sized frying pan over a high heat, then add the courgettes. Cook for 3–4 minutes until just softened and lightly golden. In a bowl, mix together the cheese, milk, lemon zest and 1 tablespoon of the basil. Add to the courgettes in the pan and toss together on the heat for 1 minute, until the cheese has melted. Season to taste.

3 Drain the pasta and return to the large pot. Add the creamy courgettes and gently stir to mix. Then pour into a warm serving bowl and scatter with the remaining basil. Serve immediately.

Rachel's handy tip

If the courgettes are 12cm (4½in) or smaller, there is no need to halve them lengthways or remove the seeds. Just remove the ends and slice thinly.

Creamy Coconut Prawns with Spiced Banana Raita

This is an absolutely divine Bengalese recipe, given to me by a friend, Arun Kapil, who imports spices from his family in India. Seafood is central to the region's cuisine – every day the locals catch the freshest fish and the plumpest prawns in the Bay of Bengal and typically combine them with tamarind, mild spices and coconut, according to traditional family recipes. Here, Arun has devised this deliciously simple recipe combining prawns, creamy coconut milk, exotic tamarind and an Indian spice blend, panch puran.

SERVES 4

FOR THE PANCH PURAN

- 1 tsp brown mustard seeds
- 1 tsp whole nigella seeds
- 1 tsp ground fenugreek seeds
- 1 tsp ground fennel seeds
- 1 tsp ground cumin seeds
- 2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 level tsp salt

FOR SPICED BANANA RAITA

- 400ml (14fl oz) natural yoghurt

½–1 tbsp Garam Masala spice

2 good handfuls of raisins (optional), soaked in boiling water for 10 minutes, then drained

2 tbsp freshly chopped mint

1 banana, very thinly sliced

Juice and zest of ½ lime

FOR THE COCONUT PRAWNS

4 tsp mustard oil (or sunflower or corn oil)

1kg (2lb 4oz) peeled tiger prawns

1 tbsp butter, clarified butter or vegetable oil

1 heaped tbsp gram flour (or 1 tbsp of plain flour)

1 x 400ml tin coconut milk

1 generous tbsp tamarind paste mixed with 2 tbsp hot water till mushy, then pushed through a sieve to get rid of the stones

1 chilli, deseeded and diced

450ml (16fl oz) fish stock or water

Salt, to taste

Handful of fresh coriander, chopped

1 To make the panch puran spice blend, mix together all of the ingredients in a small bowl.

2 Then, in a medium-sized bowl, mix the mustard oil and 1 teaspoon of the spice blend. Add the tiger prawns, mix well and set aside for 30 minutes.

3 Make the raita by mixing the ingredients in a medium bowl. Add seasoning to taste and keep to one side.

4 In a large, heavy-bottomed frying pan or wok, heat the

clarified butter or oil to smoking point and add the rest of the dry spice blend. Reduce the heat and toast for 10–15 seconds, constantly stirring. Add the flour and stir or whisk until smooth (this should only take about 2 minutes). Don't worry how it looks at this stage – you're making a kind of roux and it's supposed to be a dry(ish) paste.

5 Add the coconut milk, tamarind paste, diced chilli and a good pinch of salt, and keep stirring or whisking until it's smooth (another couple of minutes). Add the water or fish stock bit by bit until it's the thickness of double cream.

6 Add the prawns, turn up the heat and bring rapidly to the boil. Turn the heat back down and simmer for only 1 minute until the prawns are just cooked; any longer and they become rubbery.

7 Turn off the heat, add the coriander and a squeeze of lime juice and season to taste. Serve immediately with plenty of basmati rice and the raita.



Rache's handy tips

You can buy panch puran ready-made from many Asian shops or big supermarkets if you're short on time. You can also serve this with the Yoghurt and Cucumber Raita on page 119; use half the quantity.

Pasta with Roasted Peppers and Mozzarella



Sometimes the simplest recipes make the best pick-me-ups. This is such a quick and easy meal, and you can just close your eyes and dream of the Tuscan hills. If you keep roasted peppers in the fridge, it's all the faster to make!

SERVES 4–6

VEGETARIAN

FOR THE ROAST PEPPERS

Olive oil

2 peppers, choose from red, yellow or orange (green peppers can be bitter)

FOR THE TOMATO SAUCE

3 tbsp olive oil

1 onion, peeled and sliced

1 clove of garlic, peeled and crushed

1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes (or 450g/1lb tomatoes, peeled and chopped)

2 tbsp chopped herbs, such as basil, parsley, marjoram or tarragon

Salt, freshly ground black pepper and sugar

TO SERVE

450g (1lb) dried pasta, such as penne, fusilli or farfalle

1 x 150g (5oz) ball of mozzarella, broken into little pieces of 1cm (1/2in)

1 Preheat the oven to 230°C (450°F), Gas mark 8. Rub some olive oil over the peppers, then pop on a baking tray or glass

plate and put into the hot oven. Cook for about 40 minutes or until very soft and a bit black. Take out of the oven, put into a bowl, cover with cling film and let cool. When cool, peel the skin off the peppers. Don't rinse in water, or you'll lose the flavour. I find it helps to have a bowl of water nearby in which to rinse my hands. Using a butter knife, scrape out the seeds. Tear or slice the peppers into strips.

2 To make the tomato sauce, heat the olive oil in a medium-sized saucepan. Add the onion and garlic, toss until coated, cover and sweat over a gentle heat until soft and a tiny bit golden. Add the tomatoes and half the chopped herbs, mix and season with salt, pepper and a pinch of sugar. Gently simmer, uncovered, for approximately 30 minutes or until softened. Add the remaining chopped herbs at the end.

3 Cook the pasta in a large pot of salted boiling water until just cooked, then drain and toss with the tomato sauce, add the roast peppers and mozzarella, season to taste and serve.

Slow-cooked Lamb Shanks with Piperonata

There are times when perfectly cooked lamb seems the cure for just about anything. I love lamb shanks for their tender, succulent texture and sweet, delicious flavour. They're best cooked at a low temperature for a long time, about 3–4 hours, by which time the meat will be falling off the bone. The piperonata is a wonderful pepper and tomato stew that is very versatile. Serve it as a vegetable accompaniment to a roast as here, or with egg dishes such as omelettes. It can be made in advance and frozen. I often serve this dish with mashed potato (see page 27).

SERVES 4

FOR THE LAMB SHANKS

125g (5oz) streaky bacon, chopped into 1cm (½in) pieces

2 tbsp olive oil

4 lamb shanks

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 large onion, peeled and chopped

4 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed or grated

2 stalks of celery, chopped

2 carrots, peeled and chopped

1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes

225ml (8fl oz) red wine

225ml (8fl oz) lamb or chicken stock

2 sprigs of fresh rosemary or 4 sprigs of fresh thyme

1 bay leaf

2 strips of orange peel (removed with a peeler)

Caster sugar

FOR THE PIPERONATA

3 tbsp olive oil

1 small onion, peeled and sliced

2 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed or grated

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 small red peppers

1 small yellow pepper

1 x 400g tin of chopped tomatoes or 4 large ripe tomatoes, peeled and sliced

1–2 tsp sugar

2 tbsp torn fresh basil or chopped fresh marjoram

1 First prepare the lamb shanks. Preheat the oven to 150°C (300°F), Gas mark 2.

2 Boil the bacon in boiling water in a small saucepan for 1 minute, then rinse in cold water.

3 Place an ovenproof medium–large casserole pot or heavy large saucepan on a medium heat, pour in the olive oil and put in the lamb shanks, season and allow to brown slightly on all sides. Add all the remaining ingredients, season with salt, pepper and a couple of good pinches of sugar.

4 Bring up to the boil, then place in the oven and cook for

3 hours or until very tender – the meat should be almost falling off the bone.

5 While the lamb is cooking, make the piperonata. Heat the olive oil in a medium-sized casserole or saucepan. Add the onion and garlic, season with salt and pepper and cover (see the handy tip on page 15). Allow to cook gently on a low heat until the onion is soft, about 8 minutes.

6 Meanwhile, slice the peppers. Cut the peppers into quarters from top to bottom, remove the stalk and seeds, then cut into short slices crossways or cut into squares about 3cm (1¼in).

7 When the onion is soft, add the peppers, toss to mix, replace the lid and cook for another 8 or so minutes until the peppers are very soft.

8 Add in the tomatoes and season with salt, pepper and sugar. Cook uncovered for 15–20 minutes on a low heat until the sauce has



thickened and all the vegetables are cooked. Add the chopped herbs and season to taste.

9 When the lamb is cooked, take it out of the oven. I like to remove half of the sauce and liquidise it before adding it back into the pot.

10 Season to taste and serve together with the piperonata and mashed potato or bread, or allow to cool and reheat gently the following day.

Rachel's handy tips



To peel fresh tomatoes, cut a cross through the skin, drop them into boiling water for 10–15 seconds, then drain, cool and peel.



I sometimes add chopped chilli and fresh coriander into the piperonata instead of basil or marjoram. If I don't have any fresh herbs to hand, I add a dollop of pesto in at the end, for that lovely basil flavour.



Perfect Mash

Sometimes there is nothing better than plain old mash, even just on its own! Of course, it's delicious with so many foods, best of all with stews or roasts. You can leave it plain, or add buttered cabbage to make traditional Irish Colcannon, or add peas boiled in milk to make Irish Champ. Mash is incredibly versatile and marries well with so many flavours, so experiment with your additions, such as grated cheese, chopped herbs, spices (such as turmeric), crushed garlic, mustard, even horseradish! Mash also makes a great topping for pies and casseroles (see the recipe for Smoked Fish Pie on page 213).

SERVES 4

VEGETARIAN

1kg (2lb 4oz) floury potatoes (new potatoes are too waxy for mashing)

50g (2oz) butter

200ml (7fl oz) boiling milk, or 150ml (¼ pint) boiling milk and 60ml (2fl oz) single cream

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Clean the potatoes, but do not peel them. Place in a saucepan of cold water with a good pinch of salt.

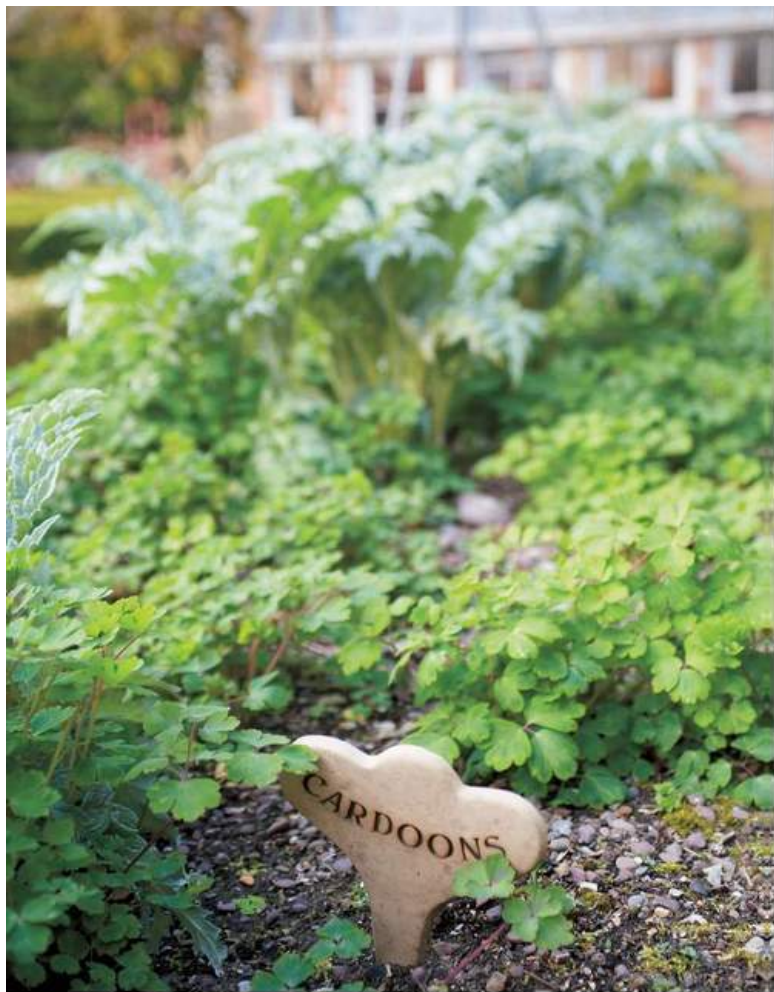
2 Bring the water up to the boil and cook for 10 minutes. Then pour out all but about 4cm (1½in) of the water and continue to

cook the potatoes on a very low heat. Do not be tempted to stick a knife into them – the skins will break and they will just break up and get soggy if you do. About 20 minutes later, when you think the potatoes might be cooked, test them with a skewer; if they are soft, take them off the heat. I find that cooking potatoes in their skins is the best way to make fluffy potatoes, ideal for mashing.

3 Peel the potatoes while they are still hot, holding them in a tea towel to prevent scalding your hands. Mash them immediately. Add the butter, but don't add any milk until they are free of lumps. When the potatoes are mashed, add the boiling milk (or milk and cream) – you may not need it all, or you may need more, depending on the texture of the potatoes. Add some salt and pepper to taste.

Rachel's handy tip

If you want to make the mash in advance, add a little extra milk, as the potatoes dry out as they sit. The mash keeps well in a warm oven as long as it is covered with a lid, plate or tin foil.





Pork and Mushroom Pie with Gentle Spices

Savoury pies always rank very high on people's lists of soothing foods. This is a great dish to make in advance, giving the aromatic spices even more time to infuse into the meat.

SERVES 4

FOR THE ROUX

100g (4oz) butter

100g (4oz) plain flour

FOR THE FILLING

25g (1oz) butter

2 onions, peeled and chopped

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp ground coriander

680g (1½lb) pork, cut into 1–2cm (½–¾in) cubes (shoulder or leg, fat removed)

250ml (9fl oz) chicken stock

1 tbsp olive oil

300g (11oz) button mushrooms, wiped and sliced or left whole or quartered if they are small

250ml (9fl oz) single cream

1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

FOR THE TOPPING

300g (11oz) puff or flaky pastry, rolled to 5mm (¼in) thick

1 egg, beaten

OR

1.25kg (2lb 12oz) mashed potato (see page 27)

1 To make the roux, heat a medium-sized saucepan over a medium heat and melt the butter, then add the flour, continuing to stir. Allow it to cook for 2 minutes. Pour into a small bowl and use straight away, or allow to cool and put in the fridge. Preheat the oven to 160°C (325°F), Gas mark 3.

2 Melt the butter in a medium-sized casserole and add the onions and seasoning. Cover and sweat on a low heat for 5 minutes. Turn up the heat, add the ground spices and pork. Toss for a few minutes until the pork changes colour, then add the stock. Cover and cook in the oven for 45–60 minutes or until the pork is tender.

3 While the pork is cooking, heat the olive oil in a pan on a high heat and toss in the mushrooms. Cook for a few minutes until they are pale golden and then add to the pork after 30 minutes.

4 When the pork is cooked, remove the pork and mushrooms from their cooking liquid and set aside in a dish in a warm place. Add the cream to the juices in the pot and boil with the lid off for a few minutes until the flavour strengthens. To thicken the sauce, slowly whisk in about 2 tablespoons of roux while the

mixture is boiling. Add the chopped parsley and return the pork and mushrooms. Season to taste and place in individual dishes or a large pie dish.

5 For a pastry topping, preheat the oven to 230°C (450°F), Gas mark 8. For a mashed potato topping, preheat it to 180°C (350°F), Gas mark 4.

6 For a pastry top, cut the pastry to the same size as the top of the pie dish and arrange over the filling. Make a hole in the centre for steam to escape. Brush with the beaten egg to glaze. Cook in the oven for 10 minutes, then turn down the temperature to 190°C (375°F), Gas mark 5 and cook for about 20 minutes, until the pastry is golden brown.

7 For a mashed potato top, arrange the mashed potato on top of the filling and lightly score the surface. Cook in the oven for 30–40 minutes or until golden brown on top and bubbling hot.



Greek Lamb, Onion and Butter Bean Stew



This is a rich and wonderful recipe from my mother-in-law, Darina, that I absolutely adore. We often make it at the cookery school. Like many other stews, it becomes even more delicious if made a day or two in advance. Serve with just a green salad, some mashed or boiled potatoes, or rice.

SERVES 4–6

2 tbsp olive oil

1.1kg (2½lb) shoulder of lamb, cut into 4cm (1½in) cubes

700g (1½lb) baby onions, peeled, or large onions, peeled and cut into quarters

6 cloves of garlic, peeled and chopped

2 x 400g tins of cooked butterbeans, drained, or 225g (8oz) dried butter beans (see the handy tip for cooking instructions)

2 bay leaves

Generous sprig of fresh thyme

450ml (16fl oz) lamb or chicken stock

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 tbsp coarsely chopped fresh parsley

1 Heat the olive oil in a medium-sized frying pan. Toss the meat, onions and garlic in the hot pan in batches until light golden, then transfer to a medium–large ovenproof casserole.

2 Drain the butter beans and add to the casserole with the bay leaves and thyme. Pour in the stock, to come about halfway up the meat, and add some salt and pepper.

3 Bring to the boil and simmer for 1–1½ hours, either on a low

hob or in an oven preheated to 160°C (325°F), Gas mark 3, until all the ingredients are tender and juicy. Taste the stew – it may need more seasoning. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve.

Rachel's handy tip

If you are using dried butter beans, soak them in water for 5–6 hours or overnight. Drain and cover with fresh cold water and simmer in a medium-sized saucepan for 35–40 minutes until they are cooked through. Do not add salt because this will toughen the beans' skin.

Bacon and Sausage Stew with Beans

This is simply heaven in a casserole dish! It is a hearty meal, and the perfect reward after a long winter walk.

SERVES 4

75g (3oz) dried black turtle beans (or black-eyed beans)

75g (3oz) borlotti beans or kidney beans

75g (3oz) cannellini beans or haricot beans or 2 x 400g tins of cooked beans, drained

8 rashers smoked bacon (about 300g/11oz), sliced into lardons

2 tbsp olive oil

4 cloves of garlic, peeled and chopped

2 x 400g tins of chopped tomatoes or 800g (1lb 12oz) fresh tomatoes

1.2 litres (2 pints) chicken stock

225g (8oz) cabbage (preferably green, such as Savoy), thinly sliced

300g (11oz) smoked sausage, sliced into 5mm (1/4in) thick pieces

2 tsp chopped fresh thyme

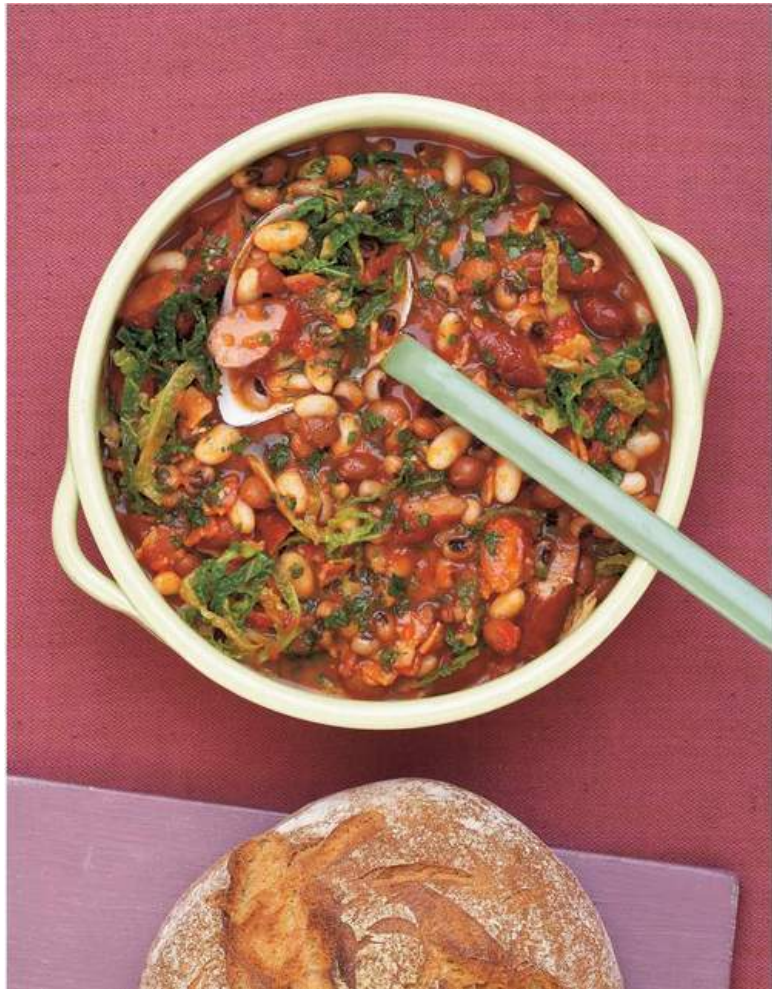
1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 If using dried beans, soak them in cold water for 5–6 hours or overnight, then drain, cover with fresh cold water and simmer for 35–40 minutes until they are cooked through.

2 Sauté the bacon in 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a flameproof casserole on a medium–high heat for a few minutes until golden. Add the garlic and cook for a few seconds, then add the tomatoes and the stock and simmer for 10 minutes.

3 Add the cooked, drained beans, then add the cabbage and sliced sausage and cook for a further 4 minutes. Add the chopped herbs, taste and correct the seasoning.



Childhood Favourites



We all have those special foods that conjure up warm, nostalgic feelings of childhood – meals that instantly transport you back in time in just one bite, whether they're the favourite dinners you begged your mum to make (and still do), or the treats that you used to create with cherished family members. For me, every time I eat poached egg on buttery toast I think of nothing but my dad's great weekend breakfasts before I went off to a hockey match. It's amazing quite how powerful and wonderful these taste memories can be. These are a few favourites from my own family – perhaps they'll become yours too.

Dad's Brown Bread

My dad cooked few things when we were growing up, but he was famous for his amazing brown bread. I love big, thick slices of it, buttered and spread with jam. Though you can halve the quantities to make just one loaf, I usually make two loaves and freeze one.

MAKES 2 X 900G (2LB) LOAVES VEGETARIAN

Sunflower oil, for greasing

350g (12oz) wholemeal flour

350g (12oz) plain flour

75g (3oz) bran

50g (2oz) wheatgerm

50g (2oz) pinhead oatmeal or oats

50g (2oz) brown sugar

1½ tsp salt

2 tsp baking powder

1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

2 eggs

1 litre (1¾ pints) buttermilk

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F), Gas mark 6.

2 Grease 2 x 900g (2lb) loaf tins with sunflower oil or line with parchment or non-stick paper.

3 Place the flours, bran, wheatgerm, oatmeal, sugar and salt in a large bowl. Sift in the baking powder and bicarbonate of soda.

Mix thoroughly.

4 Whisk the eggs in a separate bowl and add the buttermilk. Make a well in the centre of the dry ingredients and pour in the eggs and buttermilk. Using one hand with your fingers open and stiff, mix in a full circle, bringing the flour and liquid together. The dough should be soft and sloppy.

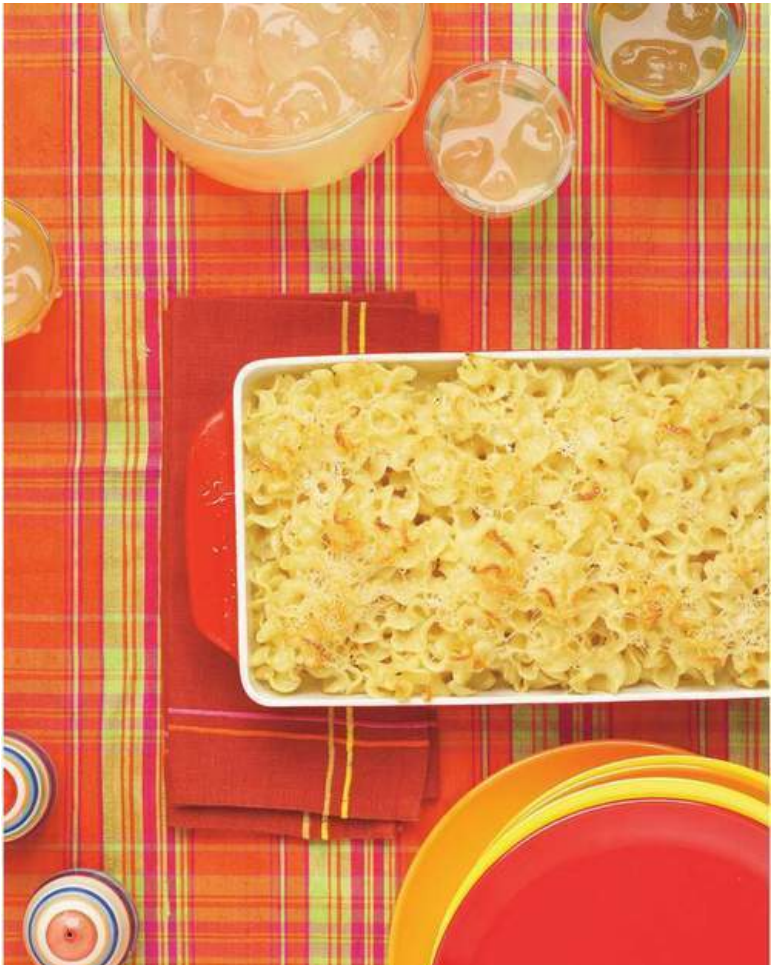
5 Divide the dough between the prepared tins and place in the centre of the oven. Bake for 1 hour, then remove the bread from the tin and place back in the oven again without the tins for another 10–15 minutes until the loaves sound hollow when you tap them on the bottom.

Rachel's handy tip

If you slice your bread before you freeze it, then all you have to do is take a piece out of the freezer whenever you want toast.



Baked Cheesy Pasta



My sister and I absolutely loved this kind of cheesy pasta when growing up, and now I make it for my children. Sometimes I add chopped parsley. This can be prepared in advance and baked just before you are ready to eat.

SERVES 4–6

VEGETARIAN

375g (13oz) dried pasta, such as conchiglie shells, fusilli or macaroni

300ml (½ pint) single cream

125ml (4fl oz) vegetable or chicken stock

1 tsp Dijon mustard

150g (5oz) Gruyère cheese, grated

150g (5oz) Cheddar cheese, grated

50g (2oz) Parmesan cheese, grated

Freshly ground black pepper

MAKES 750ML (1¼ PINTS)

VEGETARIAN

150g (5oz) honey

600ml (1 pint) water

Juice of 4 lemons

TO SERVE

Ice

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F), Gas mark 4.

2 Cook the pasta according to the instructions on the packet.

Drain.

3 Meanwhile, place the cream and stock in another saucepan and bring to the boil. Take off the heat and add the mustard, the Gruyère and Cheddar cheeses and half of the Parmesan. Stir to melt all the cheese. Season with some pepper (it may not need any salt). Pour into the drained pasta and stir to mix.

4 Pour into a 25cm (10in) square or similar rectangular ovenproof gratin dish and sprinkle with the remaining Parmesan cheese. When you are ready to eat, place the dish in the oven and cook for 15–20 minutes or until brown on top and bubbling around the sides.

Old-fashioned Lemonade

This lemonade always reminds me of long, hot summers spent outdoors without a care in the world. The honey adds a much more interesting flavour than sugar. You can add fresh lime juice if you wish, but I love the simple lemon and honey flavours.

1 Place the honey and 60ml (2fl oz) of the water in a saucepan and heat up just enough to liquefy the honey. Then pour into a jug and allow to cool slightly.

2 Add the rest of the water together with the lemon juice and serve with ice.

Sesame Goujons of Fish with Mushy Peas and Oven Roast Chips

Fish 'n' chips are a rite of passage. They're such a great and simple combination, and so universally loved. How can you eat mushy peas and not feel like a six-year-old again? The finger-size goujons and the sesame seeds just add a little twist to this old favourite.

SERVES 4

4–6 fillets (about 450g/1lb) of plaice or lemon sole

Sunflower oil, for frying

300ml (½ pint) milk

100g (4oz) plain flour

Pinch of salt

3 tbsp sesame seeds

FOR THE OVEN ROAST CHIPS

4–8 potatoes, peeled

30ml (1fl oz) olive oil

FOR THE MUSHY PEAS

225g (8oz) peas (can be frozen)

15g (½oz) butter or 1 tbsp olive oil

1 Prepare the fish by cutting it lengthways or at an angle into goujons (finger-sized pieces), about 1cm (½in) wide and 10cm (4in) long. Place the fish in a small bowl with the milk. Place the

flour, salt and sesame seeds in another bowl. Preheat the oven to 220°C (425°F), Gas mark 7.

2 To make the oven roast chips, cut the peeled potatoes into chips, about 1 cm (½in) wide. Place in a medium-sized saucepan, cover with boiling water from the kettle and boil for 1 minute, drain and spread out on kitchen paper to dry. Put the dried potatoes in a bowl and toss with the olive oil, spread out in a single layer in a baking tray and cook in the oven for 15–20 minutes or until golden and cooked.

3 Meanwhile, make the mushy peas. Bring a medium-sized saucepan with 500ml (18fl oz) water to the boil, drop in the peas, cover with the lid just until the water comes back to the boil on a high heat. Then remove the lid and boil for 1–2 minutes until the peas are just cooked but still bright green. Immediately drain them (reserving some of the liquid) and whiz them in a food processor with the butter or olive oil; you may need to add a tiny drop of the cooking liquid or cream if the mixture is too thick. Return the mushy peas to a saucepan for reheating later.

4 Next cook the fish. Heat a deep fat fryer with sunflower oil or a large sauté pan with about 2cm (¾in) oil. Take the fish out of the milk and drop it into the sesame flour. Toss it in the flour to completely cover each piece of fish and carefully place the fish into the pan of hot oil. Turn them after a minute and cook for 1 minute more – when the flour coating is golden, the fish should be cooked.

5 To serve, place the crispy goujons of fish on plates with the

oven roast chips and mushy peas.



Irish Stew



The definitive recipe for Irish stew simply doesn't exist as in the past each household would have had its own family recipe. It is said, however, that people in the south of Ireland always add carrots, but people north of County Tipperary do not. Many people make their stew by placing alternate layers of meat, onions, carrots and potatoes in a pot, seasoned with salt and pepper, covered with water and stewed gently for a couple of hours. If you sear the meat and vegetables before stewing, as we do at Ballymaloe, it seals in the delicious sweet flavour.

SERVES 4–6

1.5kg (3lb 5oz) mutton chops from the neck or shoulder, still on the bone, cut about 1.5cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ in) thick

3 tbsp olive oil

3 carrots, peeled and cut into thick slices at an angle, or 12 small baby carrots, scrubbed and left whole

12 baby onions, peeled, or 3–4 medium onions, cut into quarters through the root, which should keep the wedges intact

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

400ml (14fl oz) lamb or chicken stock or water

8–12 potatoes, peeled and halved if very large

Sprig of thyme

1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

1 tbsp snipped fresh chives

1 Preheat the oven to 160°C (325°F), Gas mark 3.

2 Cut the chops in half, but keep the bones intact as they will give great flavour. Heat a medium-large ovenproof casserole pot or large saucepan with the olive oil until hot, then toss in the meat and cook for a minute on either side until it is nice and brown. Remove the meat and set aside and then cook the carrots and onions in the hot oil for a couple of minutes, seasoning with salt and pepper. Return the meat to the pot.

3 Add the stock and bring to the boil. Put the potatoes and sprig of thyme on top and transfer to the oven for 1½–2 hours or until the meat is very tender. When it is cooked, pour off the cooking liquid and allow it to sit for a minute until the fat floats to the top – adding a cube of ice will help speed this up. Spoon off the fat and pour the juices back over the stew. Add the chopped herbs and serve.

Rachel's handy tip

If the potatoes are quite small, add them 20–30 minutes after the stew starts cooking to avoid them breaking up.





Pork Chops with Apple Sauce and Mustard Mash

This is just such a wonderful, old-fashioned family favourite and is destined to be so forever. I remember it well from our own family dinners. My mum used to serve the mustard and the mash separately on the plate and I would mix the mustard into the mash, even though this wasn't her intent! It's now evolved and I serve it as 'mustard mash', demonstrating that family recipes often change over time.

SERVES 4-6

FOR THE MUSTARD MASH

Follow the Perfect Mash recipe on page 27

2-3 tbsp grainy mustard

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE APPLE SAUCE

1 large cooking apple (350g/12oz), peeled, cored and roughly chopped

1 tbsp water

Tiny pinch cinnamon (optional)

25-50g (1-2oz) caster sugar

FOR THE PORK CHOPS

1-2 pork chops per person

Olive oil

1 First prepare the mash on page 27, then stir in the grainy mustard to taste and add some salt and pepper.

2 Next make the apple sauce. Place the apple in a small saucepan with the water. Put the lid on and cook over a gentle heat (stir every now and then) until the apple has broken down to a mush. Add the cinnamon, if using, and sugar to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.

3 To cook the chops, remove excess fat from the chops and then drizzle with olive oil and freshly ground black pepper. Place a large frying pan on a high heat. When it's good and hot, add the pork chops and sprinkle with a little sea salt. Cook for approximately 5 minutes on each side. Remove to a plate, cover and rest in a warm oven for 5 minutes.

4 To assemble, remove excess fat from the chops if you wish and place the chops on a serving plate with some mustard mash and a little apple sauce on the side.



Flapjacks

These flapjacks really remind me of when I was little, cooking with my sister and mum. The flapjacks were never safe from us – we used to eat most of them before they had even cooled! Perfect with a glass of cold milk.

MAKES 25–30 FLAPJACKS VEGETARIAN

350g (12oz) butter

2 generous tbsp golden syrup

175g (6oz) light muscovado or soft light brown sugar

1 tsp vanilla extract

75g (3oz) plain flour

375g (13oz) oats

1 Preheat the oven to 180oC (350oF), Gas mark 4.

2 Place the butter, golden syrup, sugar and vanilla extract in a large saucepan. Bring up to a simmer and stir, allowing the butter to melt. When the mixture is smooth, take off the heat and add in the flour and the oats. Stir to mix and spread into a Swiss roll tin measuring 25 x 38cm (10 x 15in).

3 Bake in the oven (not too close to the top or it will burn) for 20–25 minutes or until golden. Cut into squares or fingers while still warm. Remove from the tin carefully while they are still slightly warm and allow to cool on a wire rack.

Variations

This is a great basic recipe to which you can add the following

for a change:

Fruity flapjacks: 100g (4oz) of raisins, sultanas or chopped dates – or even chocolate chips!

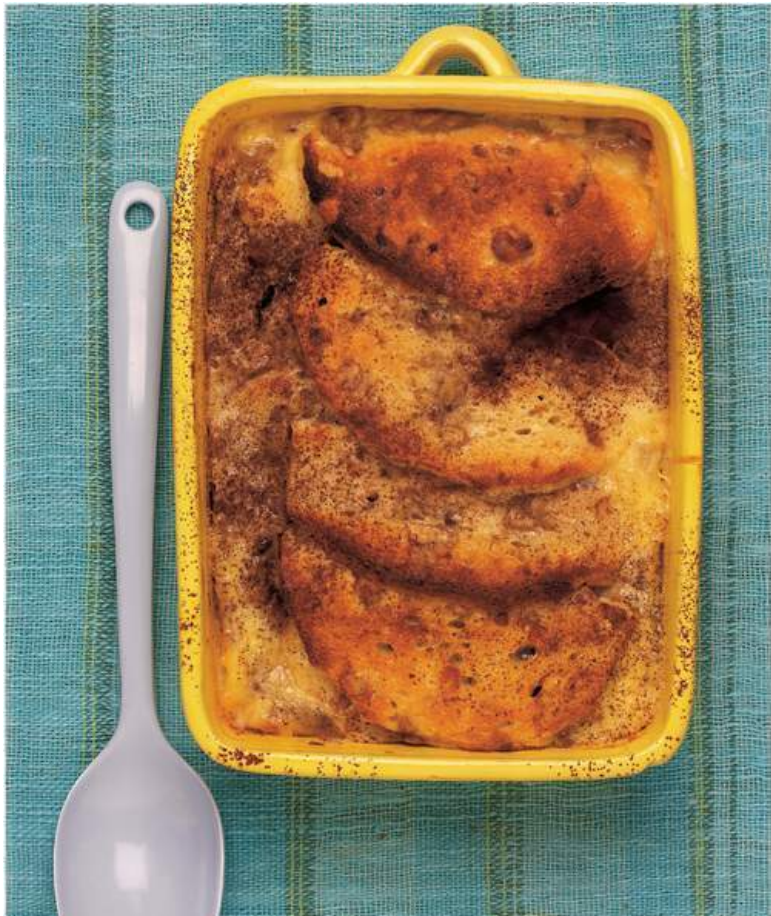
Banana flapjacks: 1 mashed banana added into the wet ingredients (also good with chocolate chips!).

Flapjacks with seeds: 75g (3oz) seeds, such as pumpkin or sesame.

Ginger flapjacks: 75g (3oz) finely chopped crystallised ginger.



Banana and Chocolate Bread and Butter Pudding



This is a variation of classic basic bread and butter pudding that my mum used to make for me as a special treat, particularly if I was feeling under the weather. The banana flavour isn't overpowering, it just adds a delicious sweetness.

SERVES 4–6

VEGETARIAN

2 tbsp chocolate spread

12 slices of white bread, crusts removed

350ml (12fl oz) single cream

350ml (12fl oz) milk

4 eggs

Pinch of salt

100g (4oz) caster sugar

2 bananas

2 tbsp granulated sugar, for topping

TO SERVE

Cocoa powder

Softly whipped cream (optional)

1 Spread a very thin layer of chocolate spread on the slices of bread. Arrange four slices, chocolate-side down in a 25cm (10in) square or similar rectangular gratin dish, or a similar-sized dish. Top with another four slices of bread, chocolate-side down, and finish with the last four slices, also chocolate-side down.

2 Place the cream and milk in a saucepan and bring to just

under the boil.

3 While they are heating up, whisk the eggs, salt and sugar in a medium-sized bowl. Mash the bananas on a plate with a fork and add them to the eggs, then whisk in the hot cream and milk. Pour this custard over the bread and leave to soak for 10 minutes. When you are ready to cook, sprinkle the sugar over the top.

4 Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F), Gas mark 4.

5 Place the gratin dish in a bain-marie (a larger ovenproof dish that has enough water in it to go 2.5cm [1in] up the sides of the gratin dish) and cook in the oven for 45–50 minutes or until it feels just set in the centre. Remove from the oven and serve warm with a light dusting of cocoa powder and some softly whipped cream, if you wish.

Rachel's handy tip

If you want to prepare this pudding a day ahead of serving, don't heat up the cream and milk – just pour it cold over the bread and store in the fridge until ready to cook.

Ballymaloe Balloons

‘Balloons’ are like doughnuts and are one of my husband, Isaac’s, very favourite childhood treats. This is a recipe from Isaac’s grandmother, Myrtle Allen, who used to make these with her own mother when she was a child. She made them regularly for all the Allen grandchildren, and she still quite often makes these for the little guests staying at Ballymaloe for children’s tea (and occasionally still for Isaac!). They’re very simple and quick to make.

MAKES ABOUT 12 BALLOONS VEGETARIAN

140g (scant 5oz) plain flour

2–4 tsp caster sugar, plus 25g (1oz) for tossing the balloons

Pinch of salt

1 level tsp baking powder

200ml (7fl oz) milk

1 Heat a deep fat fryer to 190oC (375oF). Place the dry ingredients in a bowl and whisk to mix. Add the milk gradually, whisking all the time until you have a thick batter.

2 When the oil is hot in the deep fat fryer, take a dessertspoonful of the mixture and push it off gently using another spoon, so that it drops in a round ball into the oil. Repeat with the remaining batter to make about 12 balloons. Fry until deep golden, about 4–5 minutes, turning over halfway through cooking. Remove, drain on kitchen paper and toss in caster sugar

(I sometimes add some ground cinnamon to the sugar), and serve warm.

Rachel's handy tip

If you don't have a deep fat fryer, you can fry the balloons in a wide sauté pan in the same way as the Sesame Goujons of Fish on page 42.



Rhubarb and Custard Tart

Rhubarb and custard make such a great old-fashioned combination, and I love making them into a tart. As a child, we always made this with our own rhubarb, fresh from the garden. We always knew summer was approaching when the first rhubarb appeared.

SERVES 4–6 VEGETARIAN

FOR THE PASTRY

150g (5oz) plain flour

25g (1oz) icing sugar

100g (4oz) butter

1 egg, whisked

FOR THE FILLING

4 egg yolks

4 generous tbs honey (about 100g/4oz)

300ml (1/2 pint) double cream

225g (8oz) rhubarb, trimmed and sliced into 2cm (3/4in) lengths (if the stalks are very wide, cut them in half lengthways first)

1 First, make the pastry. Place the flour and icing sugar in a medium-sized bowl. Rub in the butter, then add most of the egg (you probably won't need it all) to make the dough come together. Add a tablespoon of water to the remaining egg to make egg wash, and reserve. Slightly flatten the pastry, cover and place

in the fridge for about 30 minutes (or 10 minutes in the freezer), until chilled.

2 Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F), Gas mark 4. Grease a 23cm (9in) shallow tart tin with a removable base with a little butter.

3 When you are ready to roll out the pastry, remove it from the fridge and place between two sheets of cling film that are larger than your tart tin. Using a rolling pin, roll out the pastry until it's about 5mm (1/4in) thick and large enough to line the base and sides of the prepared tin. Remove the top layer of cling film and place the pastry upside down (cling film side facing up) in the tart tin. Press into the edges, cling film still attached, and, using your thumb, 'cut' the pastry on the edge of the tin to give a neat finish. Remove the cling film and pop the pastry in the freezer for at least 10 minutes.

4 Next, 'blind bake' the pastry case to partially cook it before adding its filling. Line the pastry with greaseproof paper (leaving plenty to come up the sides), fill with baking beans or dried pulses (you can use these over and over), and bake for about 10 minutes in the oven, until the pastry feels dry. Remove the paper and beans, brush with a little egg white and return to the oven for 4–5 minutes. Take out of the oven and put to one side while you prepare the filling.

5 In a medium-sized bowl, whisk the yolks with the honey, add the cream and mix. Pour the custard into the case almost to the top, then arrange the rhubarb on top. It can be easier to do

all this while the case is sitting on a rack in the oven to avoid spilling the mixture. Bake for 30 minutes or until just set. Let cool to room temperature.



Making Memories



So many of our own memories of childhood often centre around the kitchen. One of the joys of being an adult is sharing those experiences with our own children and teaching them new skills that they will hopefully pass on to their own children. Even simple tasks, such as mashing potatoes, can plant the seeds for future memories. It's more about spending time together and helping children gain confidence which will carry over into so many other parts of their lives. It helps to choose recipes in which they can take an active part or get creative so they can be proud of their work. Have fun and enjoy!

Cheesy Sodabread



All children love playing with dough, and with this Irish soda bread dough you can be as creative as you like. I often leave out the herbs; sometimes I leave out the cheese and replace the herbs with a handful of chopped milk or dark chocolate, or even raisins or dried cranberries. These scones can be cut into any shapes that your little ones like, though if handled and kneaded too much they will get slightly tough.

MAKES ABOUT 16 SCONES VEGETARIAN

450g (1lb) plain white flour

1 level tsp salt

1 level tsp bicarbonate of soda

1 tbsp chopped fresh herbs, such as rosemary, thyme, sage, parsley or chives

400ml (14fl oz) buttermilk or sour milk (to sour milk, add 3 generous tbsp natural yoghurt or juice from 1/2 lemon to 400ml/14fl oz fresh milk)

About 75g (3oz) Cheddar or Gruyère cheese, grated

1 Preheat the oven to 250°C (475°F), Gas mark 9.

2 Sieve the dry ingredients into a bowl, then mix in the chopped herbs. Make a well in the centre. Pour in all the milk at once. Using one hand, with your fingers outstretched like a claw, stir in a full circular movement from the centre to the outside of the bowl. The dough should be softish, though not too wet and sticky.

3 When the dough comes together, turn it out onto a well-

floured surface. Pat the dough until it is about 2cm (3/4in) thick. Cut into round or square shapes about the size of a scone, then place on a floured baking tray. Generously sprinkle each sodabread scone with the grated cheese.

4 Place the tray in the oven. Cook for 10-20 minutes (depending on size) until golden and sounding hollow when tapped on the bottom. Turn the oven down to 200°C (400°F), Gas mark 6 after 10 minutes if they are already golden.

Variations

To make chocolate chip sodabread, omit the cheese and replace the herbs with 75-100g (3-4oz) of chopped dark or milk chocolate or chocolate chips. You could also add an egg to the buttermilk and 1 tablespoon of caster sugar to increase the richness. It's also delicious with 100g (4oz) of raisins or dried cranberries.

Wholemeal Honey Bread

Making yeast bread from scratch is becoming a lost art, but it is the perfect thing both for teaching new skills and for having fun with your children. Even if you've never made bread before, why not spend the time together as a family learning to get it right? Children always have such fun watching and waiting for the dough to rise and then punching it down. Although you should put aside a whole morning or afternoon for this, you'll be able to get on with plenty of other things while the bread is rising. This is a simple and tasty bread, and once you have mastered it you'll want to move on to other flavours and combinations (see variations, opposite).

MAKES 2 X 900G (2LB)

LOAVES

VEGETARIAN

450ml (16fl oz) warm water

3 tbsp honey

3 tsp dried or fast-acting yeast or 40g (13/4oz) fresh yeast

600g (1lb 7oz) strong white flour

300g (11oz) wholemeal flour

2 tsp salt

100g (4oz) butter, cut

into cubes

1 In a small bowl, mix the warm water with the honey, add the yeast and leave to stand for 5 minutes until slightly frothy.

2 Place the flours in a big mixing bowl (or the bowl of an electric food mixer) and mix in the salt and then rub in the butter. Pour most of the frothy liquid into the flour and mix to a dough – it should not be too wet and sticky; if it's too dry, add more warm water and if it's too wet, add more flour.

3 Knead by hand on a floured surface or in the mixer for about 10 minutes (it may only take 5 minutes in the mixer) until the dough is smooth and springy. Place in a large oiled bowl, cover with cling film and leave somewhere warm (like a warm spot in your kitchen) for 2–3 hours until it's doubled in size. It has risen enough when it does not spring back when you push your finger onto the dough.

4 When it's risen, knock it back by punching it down in the bowl (my children love this bit!) and kneading on the floured surface for 1 minute. Allow to rest on the work surface, covered with a tea towel for 5 minutes before shaping it. I usually shape this into two round or oval loaves but, of course, you can make individual rolls if you wish (you would get about 20 rolls). Slash the loaves four or five times over the top with a sharp knife (I don't do this with rolls). Do make sure you flatten the loaves and rolls to about 4cm (1 1/2in) high because they will rise.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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