

Tasty. Simple. Healthy.

Delicious and easy meals that are  
nutritious... and sometimes indulgent.

Melanie Hobson

# Table of content

7 INTRODUCTION

## **9 Breakfast**

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10 Breakfast fruits

13 Extra Tasty Porridge

## **14 Snacks & starters**

---

16 Beetroot and Warm Goat Cheese Salad with Chilli Balsamic Dressing

19 Green Soup with Halloumi Croutons

20 Hummus

23 Samphire with Pink Peppercorns

24 Sprout & Leek Hash

## **27 Sides and mains**

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28 Walnut, Pumpkin Seed & Caper Bread

31 Cauliflower, Leek & Fennel Gratin

32 Courgette “Spaghetti” with Pesto Stir-fried Veggies

35 Spicy Dal

36 Twice-baked Garlic Potatoes

39 Miso ocean trout, noodles and Asian leaves

## **41 Desserts**

---

42 Pecan chocolate bread and butter pudding

45 Rhubarb & Pear Crumble



## INTRODUCTION

I'm not sure when I actually started to like cooking but I've always loved the idea of it. For years I collected cookery books but mostly I used to just look at them and admire the recipes and photographs without actually trying them. Most of the time I went for the easy option of cooking what I knew. That has changed in recent years as I've found the time to be more adventurous and discovered it was fun. Now I cook more and come up with my own recipes.

I was brought up on home made food and home-baked bread. I guess some of my mother has rubbed off on me, and she certainly is a good role model in the kitchen. She uses vegetables that my father grows on his allotment so things are seasonal. I don't share their love of runner beans though!

I sometimes find it hard if I'm only cooking for myself but I love cooking for other people. I find it much more satisfying to cook for others as it makes it a more social occasion, even if it's just a quick midweek meal. It helps having someone at home who is happy to test out whatever I cook. He also likes healthy "green" food which saves me from making too many bad food choices — and from baking cakes.

My guilty pleasures are cheese and chocolate. I prefer chocolate in bar form rather than in desserts so it doesn't feature here. However, cheese features a lot... maybe too much!

I try to keep food miles down so I tend to use vegetables in season and buy from local food markets or check the origin labels in supermarkets.

For me, cooking is therapeutic. It's something I prefer to do at a leisurely pace. I can spend a whole day cooking and baking bread, sometimes making meals for a few days ahead or for the freezer.

The recipes in this book are easy and on the whole quick and the ingredients are all widely available.

Happy cooking!

MH

# BRE AK FA S T



# Breakfast fruits

Preparation ⌚ 15 minutes | Cooking ⌚ 5 minutes | Serves 👤👤👤

These macerated fruits, served with coffee pancakes, will take your weekend brunch to a whole new level.

1 orange, zest removed with a zester, flesh segmented

100g caster sugar

1 vanilla bean, split, seeds scraped

Pulp of 1 passionfruit

½ papaya, peeled, sliced

250g strawberries, hulled, halved

¼ cup blueberries

- Place the zest in a saucepan with the sugar, vanilla pod and seeds, and 300ml water.
- Stir over low heat until the sugar dissolves, and simmer for 2-3 minutes.
- Pour into a dish and cool slightly, then stir in passionfruit and cool completely.
- Add the orange segments and remaining fruit. Serve with the pancakes.





## Extra Tasty Porridge

Serves  | Preparation time a few minutes | Cooking  15 minutes | 

Great for filling you up in the morning, the slow release energy will keep you going without snacking until lunch.

130g jumbo oats

40g wheat germ

300ml almond milk

500ml water

1 banana, sliced

4 tablespoons tahini

40g pistachios (or other nuts of your choice)

2 tablespoons pumpkin seeds

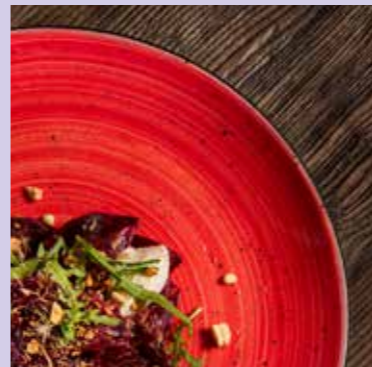
- Add the oats, wheat germ, banana, milk and water to a large saucepan and bring to the boil using a medium heat. Reduce heat, stir in the tahini and simmer for about 10 minutes until the liquid has been absorbed and the consistency is how you like it.
- Whilst the porridge is simmering, dry fry the pistachios and pumpkin seeds until lightly toasted.
- Divide the porridge into bowls and sprinkle with the nuts and seeds. Add extra fresh or dried fruit if you'd like.

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# Beetroot and Warm Goat Cheese Salad with Chilli Balsamic Dressing

Serves  as a starter | Preparation  15 minutes | 

A simple, but impressive looking starter. The balsamic reduction adds a bit of zing. Careful with the beetroot—it can be a bit messy!

100g goat cheese cut into 4 slices

80g rocket

50g walnuts

1 small beetroot, peeled and grated

80ml balsamic vinegar

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon hot chilli powder

Juice of  $\frac{1}{2}$  a lime




- Preheat the oven to 200°
- Put the balsamic vinegar, chilli powder and lime juice in a saucepan. Bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for about 15 minutes until thickened, stirring regularly.
- Spread the walnuts on a baking tray and put in the oven for 10 minutes.
- Put the goat cheese in a dish lined with baking paper and add to the oven for the last 5 minutes.
- Mix together the rocket, grated beetroot and walnuts and divide between 4 plates or salad bowls.
- Top each with warmed goat cheese and drizzle with the dressing.







## Green Soup with Halloumi Croutons

Serves  | Prep time 5 minutes | Cooking  20 minutes | 

This is such a beautiful shade of green, you can't help but feel healthy eating this. Omit the 'croutons' if you want to be really healthy. It's so quick and easy, and blitzed in the saucepan at the end so not much to wash up. Use a deep saucepan/crock-pot to avoid splashing.

A few sprays of cooking oil

3 cloves of garlic, sliced

1 onion, roughly chopped

2 medium potatoes, cubed

800ml vegetable stock

200g watercress

250g frozen peas

1 250g packet halloumi,  
cut into 1cm cubes

- Heat a few squirts of cooking oil in saucepan and fry the garlic and onions for about 3 minutes.
- Add the cubed potatoes and vegetable stock, bring to the boil, cover and cook for about 10 minutes until the potatoes are tender.
- Add the watercress, reduce the heat and simmer for 3–4 minutes.
- Add the peas, bring back to the boil and simmer for a minute or so until the peas are tender.
- Season with salt and pepper.
- Use a hand blender to blitz to a smooth consistency.
- If serving with Halloumi, heat a couple of squirts of oil in a frying pan, add the cubes of cheese and fry, stirring regularly until browned.

# Hummus

Makes a good sized bowlful | Make in under ⌚ 10 minutes | 🍴

It's convenient to pick up a tub of hummus in the supermarket but it's so easy to make, and you can adjust the flavourings to your liking. If you don't have any yoghurt to hand it's not essential, but it does add creaminess.

400g can chickpeas, drained

Juice of 1 lemon

4 tablespoons of extra  
virgin olive oil

3 cloves of garlic, peeled

3 tablespoons tahini

2 teaspoons cumin

2 tablespoons Greek yoghurt

Salt and pepper to season

- Simply put all the ingredients in a food processor and blend until smooth.
- Adjust seasonings to your taste.
- For chilli hummus add a couple of de-seeded fresh chilli's to the food processor.






## Samphire with Pink Peppercorns

Serves  as a side dish | Cooking  5 minutes |  

Super quick and easy, with the added bonus that samphire is rich in vitamins and minerals. The peppercorns perfectly compliment its naturally salty taste.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>180g samphire</p> <p>2 tablespoons pink peppercorns</p> <p>1 large clove of garlic, crushed</p> <p>2 tablespoons olive oil</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heat the oil in a frying pan or wok and add the garlic and peppercorns. Stir fry for a couple of minutes.</li><li>• Add the samphire and cook for another couple of minutes stirring well.</li></ul> |
|---|--|

# Sprout & Leek Hash

Serves  | Preparation ⌚ 10 minutes | Cooking ⌚ 8 minutes | 🍞 (if you don't use the bread to serve)

I love the simplicity of this recipe, only 4 ingredients and very quick to make. It could be served as a vegetable dish to accompany a roast or as part of a breakfast fry-up. I like it served simply with toast. I used to add pumpkin seeds to the hash but now I serve it with them in the bread instead. The recipe for walnut, pumpkin seed and caper bread is over the page.

4 cloves of garlic, chopped.  
(Feel free to adjust according to your taste)

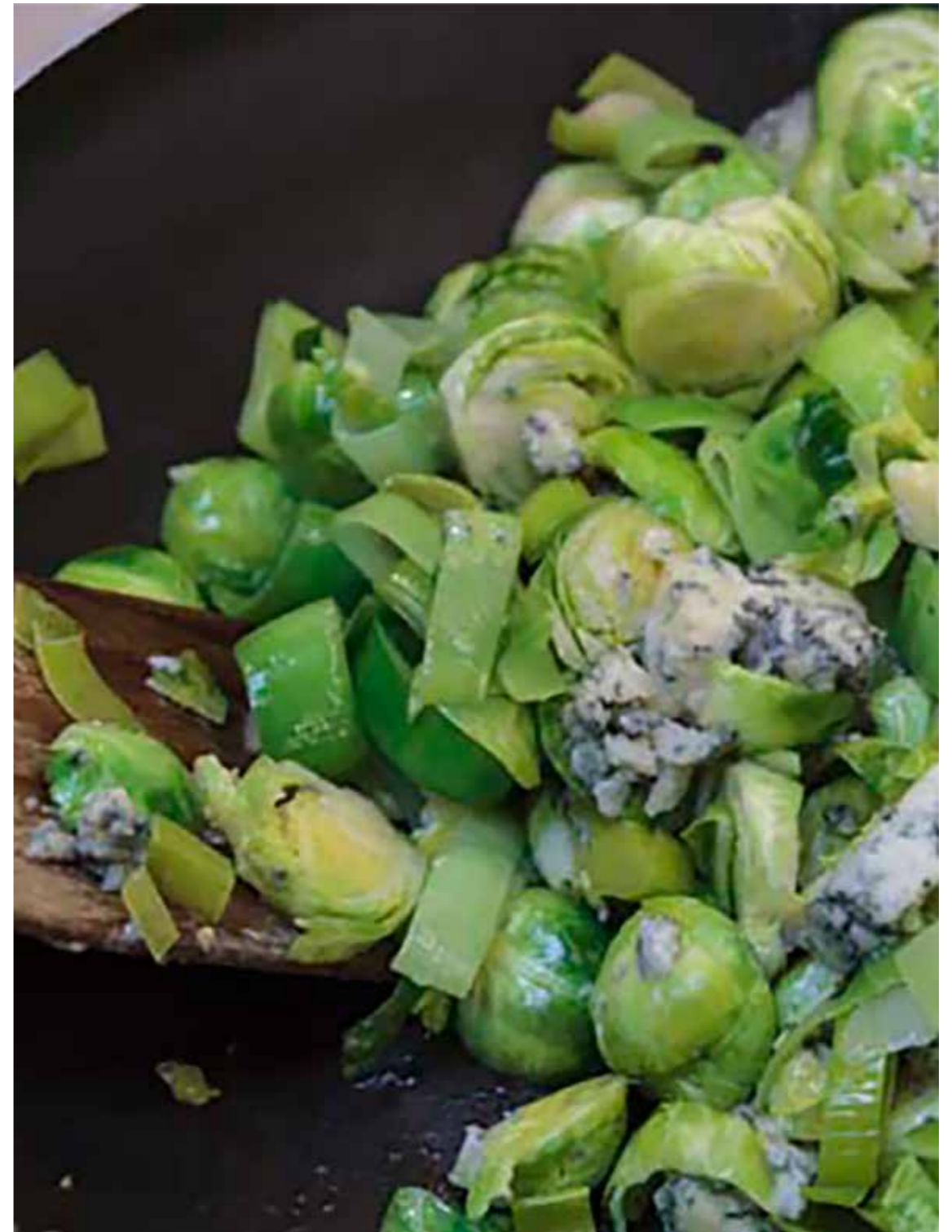
250g leeks, sliced

250g Brussels sprouts,  
each cut into 3

120g Stilton, roughly crumbled

Oil to cook. I use a  
teaspoon of coconut oil

- Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add the garlic and leeks and cook for 3–4 minutes.
- Add the sprouts and cook for a further 2 minutes. The sprouts should retain their crunch.
- Turn off the heat and add the crumbled cheese. Stir through and serve.



# MAI INS



# Walnut, Pumpkin Seed & Caper Bread

Makes one loaf. Preparation time around ⌚ 30mins | Resting and proving ⌚ 2 hours | Baking ⌚

30 minutes | 🍷

I love seedy, nutty bread and the addition of capers adds a lovely saltiness. Bread isn't hard to make but it does need to sit for a while so be sure to plan a good time to make it. You can knead it by hand or use a food processor with a dough hook. You can use a loaf tin although I choose not to. I just shape the dough into a 'loaf' shape and leave it to its own devices!

500g strong white bread flour

1 teaspoon of salt

1 teaspoon of easy-  
blend dried yeast

1 tablespoon of extra  
virgin olive oil

330ml warm water

40g pumpkin seeds toasted in the  
oven for 10 minutes at 180°C

150g walnuts

4 tablespoons capers,  
drained and roughly dried

- Mix the flour, salt and yeast in a large bowl. Add the oil and water and mix
- Remove from bowl and knead for about 10 minutes, incorporating air, until a smooth dough has formed.
- Add the walnuts, pumpkin seeds and capers, and knead to distribute evenly.
- Flour a clean bowl and add the dough. Cover with a tea towel and leave in a warm place until the dough has almost doubled in size. Around an hour and a half.
- Tip the dough out of the bowl and stick your fingers in it to reduce the volume back again.
- Either put it into a greased loaf tin or shape as you like and cover with a tea towel and leave again for 30 minutes.
- Meanwhile preheat the oven to 220°C.
- Dust the loaf with flour and bake at 220°C for 10 minutes then



reduce the heat to 180°C and bake for a further 20 minutes.

- Remove from the oven and cool on a wire rack. Try to let it cool a little before slicing...it's not easy!





## Cauliflower, Leek & Fennel Gratin

Serves 4 🧑🧑🧑🧑 | Preparation time ⌚ 20 minutes | Cooking time ⌚ 35 minutes

This is great served with a simple green salad, or some steamed carrots or sweet potatoes to add some colour. It also makes a great side dish to serve with a roast.

- 1 medium leek thinly sliced
  - 1 bulb of fennel, sliced
  - 1 medium cauliflower, separated into florets
  - 1 large clove of garlic, sliced
  - A teaspoon of fresh thyme, chopped
  - Few sprays of oil
  - Freshly ground pepper
  - 3 tablespoons olive oil or butter
  - 3 tablespoons plain flour
  - 600mls milk. (I used semi skimmed)
  - 100g mature cheddar cheese, grated
  - 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
  - 1 bay leaf
  - 60g wholemeal breadcrumbs
  - 2 teaspoons black onion seeds
- Preheat the oven to 200°C
  - Heat a few sprays of oil in a large frying pan or wok and brown the garlic. Add the thyme, fennel and leek cook for 5 minutes, stirring regularly. Set aside.
  - Steam the cauliflower for 3–4 minutes until slightly tender.
  - In a large saucepan gently heat the oil or butter. Stir in the flour and bay leaf then add the milk stirring constantly.
  - When the milk has thickened, remove the bay leaf and add the cheese and mustard. Continue to stir until the cheese has melted into the sauce. Season with black pepper.
  - Combine the breadcrumbs and onion seeds in a bowl.
  - Put the cauliflower, fennel and leek into a large oven proof dish. Cover with the sauce and then top with the breadcrumb mixture.
  - Bake in the oven for 35 minutes.

# Courgette “Spaghetti” with Pesto Stir-fried Veggies

Serves  | Preparation  10 minutes | Cooking  15 minutes | 

Use a spiralizer to create gorgeous green healthy “spaghetti” as an alternative to regular pasta. Also great cold as a salad dish.

4 courgettes  
200g broccolini  
200g asparagus  
100g closed cup mushrooms sliced  
100g French beans cut in half  
2 cloves of garlic sliced finely  
50g pine nuts  
100g (vegetarian friendly) pesto  
1 x 400g packet of halloumi, cubed  
A few sprays of cooking oil  
A tablespoon of coconut oil



- Make the “spaghetti” by processing the courgettes through your spiralizer.
- Heat a few sprays of oil in a frying pan and add the halloumi. Fry for several minutes stirring regularly until browned. Set aside.
- Melt the coconut oil in a large frying pan and add the sliced garlic and mushrooms. Cook until the mushrooms are browned.
- Add the beans, broccolini, asparagus and pine nuts and continue to cook for a couple of minutes stirring all the time.
- Add the spaghetti and cooked halloumi and cook for a further minute or two until heated through.
- Transfer to a large serving bowl and stir in the pesto. Serve immediately.







## Spicy Dal

Serves  | Preparation and cooking  35 minutes | 

I was a late comer to Indian food but when I started, I started on dal. It's still my favourite today and so easy to make. It's forgiving too, spices can be varied depending on what you have. This recipe is simplified by using the already blended garam masala instead of lots of different spices. Serve it simply with a dollop of natural yoghurt, rice or naan. I'm a sucker for a poppadom, so that's how I eat mine. Traditionally the spices are fried using a much larger quantity of oil but I don't like to use much so I just add water at this stage to prevent burning. Not traditional but kinder on the heart!

- 150g red lentils
  - 100g urid dal
  - 100g mung dal
  - 1 litre boiled water
  - 5 cloves of garlic
  - 3 red chillis, (leave the seeds in)
  - 1-2 cm chunk of ginger, peeled
  - 1 tablespoon garam masala
  - 2 teaspoon turmeric
  - 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
  - 2 medium red onions, sliced
  - 2 tablespoons tomato purée
  - 1 teaspoon coconut oil
  - Fresh coriander to serve
- Put the lentils and dal in a large stock pot and rinse at least 4 times with warm water
  - Add the water and bring back to the boil. Then lower the heat, partially cover and cook for about 30 minutes until the lentils are tender and have more or less absorbed the water. Stir them occasionally and add more water if necessary.
  - Meanwhile, put the garlic cloves, chilli and ginger in a food processor and blend. If you don't have a food processor just chop them finely or crush using a pestle and mortar.
  - Heat the coconut oil in a large frying pan and add the mustard seeds, then the garlic mixture and cook for about a minute. Then add the garam masala and turmeric. At this stage the spices will have absorbed the oil.
  - After a couple of minutes remove from the heat and set the spices aside in a dish. Return the saucepan to the heat and add the onions. Cook on a medium heat for about 5 minutes until softened.
  - Add the tomato purée and stir.
  - When the lentils are ready, add the spices and onions and stir through. Sprinkle with chopped coriander to serve.

# Twice-baked Garlic Potatoes

Serves 2 | Preparation 10 minutes | Cooking 1 hour 45 minutes

Fluffy potatoes, the ultimate comfort food. These can be eaten as an accompaniment to another dish or enjoyed simply on their own. Garlic mellows with thorough cooking and is easier to digest than it is raw.

Medium-large potatoes, King Edward or Maris Piper are ideal

A drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkling of sea salt

1 large bulb of garlic

Milk

Salt and pepper

Spring onions, sliced thinly

- Preheat the oven to 200°C
- Wash the potatoes, dry them and prick them with a fork several times.
- Put a tiny bit of olive oil on your fingers and rub over the potato skins. Then rub in the salt.
- Bake for about 1 hour 30 minutes until a knife will slide into the potato easily.
- Whilst the potatoes are cooking prepare the garlic. Take the outer papery covering off the garlic but leave the skins covering the cloves in place.
- Cut the top off the cloves exposing the garlic. Rub the exposed areas with a little olive oil and put the bulb in a ramekin dish, exposed side up. Cover with foil.
- After the potato has been cooking for about 45 minutes, put the garlic in the oven.
- Take the garlic out of the oven about 5 minutes before the potatoes to allow it to cool slightly. Then remove the cloves from their skins. I find it easiest just to squeeze them out.
- When the potatoes are cooked, cut them in half and scoop



out the potato flesh whilst leaving the skins intact.

- Put the potato in a bowl with the garlic, and mash, with a little milk if desired.
- Season with salt and pepper.
- Spoon the mash back into the skins and sprinkle with the spring onions.
- Return to the oven for about 10 minutes. You can put the potatoes under the grill for the last couple of minutes if you'd like the top browned.



## Miso ocean trout, noodles and Asian leaves

Preparation ⌚ 15 minutes | Cooking ⌚ 30 minutes | Serves 🧑🧑🧑🧑

This Asian-style fish is super fresh and super impressive. Bound to go down a treat.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>2 tbs white miso</p> <p>2 tbs mirin</p> <p>1 tbs sake</p> <p>1 tbs honey</p> <p>1 tbs finely grated ginger</p> <p>800g ocean trout fillet (or salmon), skin on, deboned</p> <p>½ lemon, thinly sliced, plus juice of 1 lemon</p> <p>2 tbs macadamia oil</p> <p>1 tbs soy sauce</p> <p>½ red cabbage, thinly shredded</p> <p>½ tbs rice vinegar</p> <p>200g rice noodles</p> <p>3 spring onions, finely sliced</p> <p>1 bunch shiso leaves (or basil leaves)</p> <p>Black and white sesame seeds to serve</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preheat the oven to 150°C.</li> <li>• In a medium bowl, place miso, mirin, sake, honey and ginger. Stir to combine. Place fish on a baking tray. Brush half the mixture over both sides of the fish. Then, with fish skin-side down, top with slices of lemon.</li> <li>• Cover with foil. Bake for 20-25 minutes until fish is just cooked through. Set aside for 10 minutes to rest.</li> <li>• Meanwhile, make the dressing. To the remaining miso mixture add lemon juice, macadamia oil and soy sauce. Stir to combine and set aside.</li> <li>• In a large bowl, place the shredded cabbage and vinegar. Toss to coat and set aside for 5 minutes.</li> <li>• Meanwhile, bring a saucepan of water to the boil. Add noodles and cook to packet instructions. Drain. Add noodles to the cabbage mixture, then add half the spring onion, half the shiso and half the dressing. Toss to combine.</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

# DESSERTS

# START



# Pecan chocolate bread and butter pudding

Preparation ⌚ 35 minutes | Cooking ⌚ 40 minutes | Serves 🧑🧑🧑🧑🧑🧑 | 🍷

This chocolate bread and butter pudding makes use of any leftover bread.

550g thick-sliced white bread, crusts removed

Unsalted butter, at room temperature

6 eggs, lightly beaten

60g caster sugar

2 tsp cocoa, sifted, plus extra to serve

140g dark (70%) chocolate buttons

300ml pure (thin) cream

1 tsp vanilla bean paste

Finely grated zest of 1 orange

300ml milk

¼ cup (30g) chopped pecans

30g sultanas

- Vanilla ice cream, to serve
- Preheat oven to 160°C. Grease a 25cm (1.25L capacity) round baking dish and line the base and side with baking paper (the lining here is optional).
- Spread both sides of the bread with butter and cut each slice in half widthwise. Set aside.
- Place the eggs and sugar in a large bowl and whisk until combined, then stir in cocoa and half of the chocolate.
- Place the cream, vanilla and orange zest in a small saucepan over medium-high heat and bring just to a simmer. While stirring gently with a whisk, pour the hot cream mixture over the egg mixture and stir continuously until the chocolate has melted. Stir in the milk to cool the mixture, strain through a fine sieve and set aside.
- Arrange bread upright in prepared pan, sprinkling pecans, sultanas and remaining chocolate between each piece. Pour chocolate cream mixture over, making sure all bread is coated. Set aside for 15-20 minutes for bread to soak up mixture. Bake for 35-40 minutes until edges are set but centre has a wobble. Remove from oven and set aside to cool slightly. Dust with cocoa and serve with ice cream.





## Rhubarb & Pear Crumble

Preparation ⌚ 15 minutes | Cooking ⌚ 30 minutes | Serves 👥👥👥👥👥 | 🍷

The sweetness of the pears compliments the rhubarb perfectly.  
Serve with custard or a refreshing sorbet.

2 pears, peeled, cored and sliced

4 stalks of rhubarb

A teaspoon of grated ginger

Juice of an orange

120g ground almonds

200g oats

50g pecans, roughly chopped

2 tablespoons coconut oil

80ml maple syrup

- Preheat oven to 180°.
- Heat the coconut oil and maple syrup in a saucepan over a low heat until the coconut oil has dissolved.
- Mix the ground almonds, oats, and pecans together then stir in the oil and syrup.
- Chop the rhubarb into 2 cm chunks and put in a baking dish. Add the orange juice
- Add the prepared pears and grated ginger.
- Cover with the crumble mix and bake in the oven for 30 minutes.

# Index

## A

Almond milk 13

## B

Brussels sprouts 24

## C

### Cheese

Cheddar 31

Goat cheese 16

Courgettes 32

## D

### Dal

Mung dal 35

urid dal 35

Dark (70%) chocolate 42

## G

Greek yoghurt 20

## J

Jumbo oats 13

## M

Milk 42

*See also* Almond milk

## N

### Noodles

Rice noodles 39

### Nuts

Pecans 42

Pistachios 13

Walnuts 16, 28

## O

Oats 45

### Oils

Coconut oil 24, 35, 45

Macadamia oil 39

Olive oil 23, 31, 36

Virgin olive oil 20, 28

## P

passionfruit 10

peas 19

Potatoes 19, 36

## R

Rhubarb 45

## S

samphire 23

### Seeds

Black onion seeds 31

Mustard seeds 35

Pumpkin seeds 13, 28

### Spices

Chilli powder 16

Coriander 35

Turmeric 35

strawberries 10

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