

The Burning Kitchen Cookbooks



HOME *^ Cooking*
FOR CHRISTMAS

Tang Bee Leng

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Bee Leng is a co-founder of The Burning Kitchen, a curated recipe and cooking blog featuring Singaporean home-style recipes and cooking tips, which are written in an engaging and easy-to-follow manner for home chefs of all abilities.

She embarked on her culinary journey at the age of 7, and has been cooking for several decades. She is passionate about authentic home cooking and about passing down traditional, time-honoured recipes and long-held cooking secrets and 'tricks of the trade'.

She is based in Singapore and is married with three daughters and four grandchildren.

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APPETISERS

CREAMY MUSHROOM SOUP



SERVES 8 | PREP TIME: 20 MIN | COOK TIME: 30 MIN

Ingredients

Fresh Button Mushrooms, 600 g
Yellow Onion, 1 Medium-Sized
Celery, 1 Stalk
Garlic, 2-3 Cloves
Parsley, 1 Stalk
Butter, 50 g
Chicken Stock, 1 Litre
Water, 1 Bowl
Milk, 200 ml
Salt, ½ Tsp (Optional)
Heavy Full Cream, 150 ml
Freshly Ground Black Pepper, To
Taste (Optional)



Preparation Method

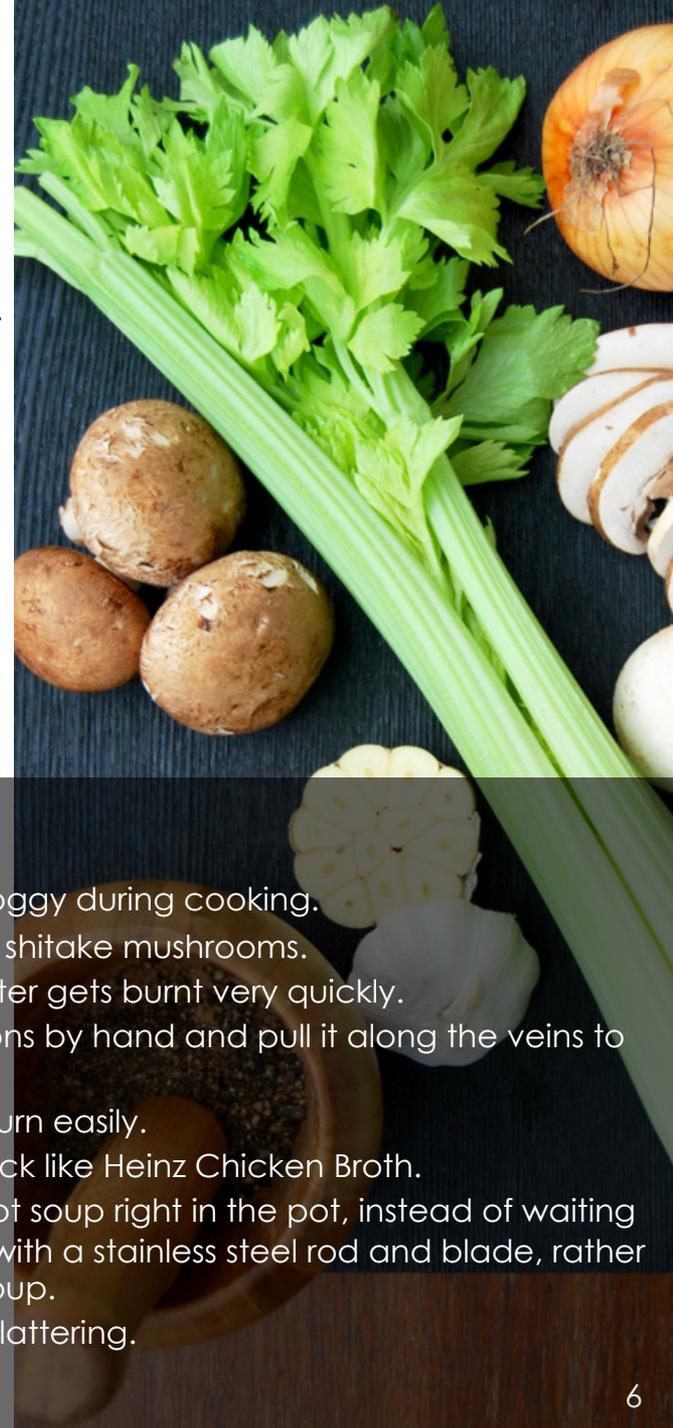
- 1 Use a soft brush to lightly brush off any dirt from the mushrooms. Then slice the mushrooms thinly.
- 2 Wash, peel and slice the onion into thin strips.
- 3 Remove the fibrous veins from the celery by breaking it into small sections by hand and tearing along the veins. Once the fibres are removed, wash and slice the celery into thin strips.
- 4 Wash, peel and chop the garlic finely.
- 5 Wash the parsley, pat dry and cut into ½" lengths.

Cooking Method

- 1 In a large pot, melt 20 g of butter over low heat and add the mushrooms. Sauté for 2-3 minutes, then transfer to a bowl.
- 2 In the same pot, melt 30 g of butter over low heat and add in the onions. Fry until caramelised.
- 3 Add in the garlic and the celery. Fry for a few minutes until the celery is soft.
- 4 Add in half the bowl of cooked mushrooms (leaving the other half as garnishing), 1 litre of chicken stock and 1 bowl of water to the mixture.
- 5 Continue to simmer at medium heat for 15-20 minutes. Remove from heat.
- 6 Use a hand-held blender to blend the soup in the pot until smooth.
- 7 Bring the pot of soup to a boil again over medium heat.
- 8 Add in the 200 ml of fresh milk and stir well. Then remove from heat.
- 9 Taste the soup and add salt if preferred, stirring well.
- 10 When ready to serve, ladle the mushroom soup into individual bowls. Add 1 TBsp of heavy cream in the centre and top with the mushroom slices, fresh parsley and a sprinkle of ground black pepper if desired. Serve hot.

Tips and Tricks

- 1 Avoid washing the mushrooms, otherwise they will absorb water and turn soggy during cooking.
- 2 For a more 'East-meets-West' flavour, mix the button mushrooms with some shitake mushrooms.
- 3 When using butter to fry anything, always turn the heat to low because butter gets burnt very quickly.
- 4 To avoid the soup becoming fibrous, break the celery stem into small sections by hand and pull it along the veins to remove the fibres before chopping.
- 5 Avoid boiling the soup vigorously once the milk is added, as milk tends to burn easily.
- 6 Save cooking time by using ready-made (preferably MSG free) chicken stock like Heinz Chicken Broth.
- 7 Save washing up and waiting time by using a hand blender to blend the hot soup right in the pot, instead of waiting for the soup to cool before transferring to a food processor. Use a blender with a stainless steel rod and blade, rather than plastic ones, so it can withstand the high temperature of the boiling soup.
- 8 Turn the hand blender speed to low initially to prevent the hot soup from splattering.



WARM POTATO AND SQUID SALAD

SERVES 6 | PREP TIME: 20 MIN | COOK TIME: 40 MIN

Ingredients

Squid, 6 Medium Sized
Granola Potatoes, 6-8
Yellow Onion, 1 Large
Oil, 5 TBsp
Butter, 2 TBsp
White Wine, A Dash
Dill, 2 Sprigs (Optional)
Cooked Chorizo, 1-2 (Optional)
Rocket Salad Leaves (Optional)
Lemon Juice, A Dash (Optional)



Preparation Method

- 1 Wash and peel the potatoes. Cut into quarters.
- 2 Wash, peel and chop the onion into strips.
- 3 Slice the chorizo diagonally to elongate the surface of each slice.
- 4 Wash the squid and remove the spine, mouth, eye, dirt sac and ink sac. You may choose to peel off the skin or leave it on depending on your preference.

Cooking Method

- 1 In a medium pot, boil the potatoes until fork tender, then drain.
- 2 In a non-stick pan, add 3 TBsp of oil over medium heat. Add the potatoes in a single layer. Remove when browned.
- 3 Starting with a clean pan over medium heat, add 2 TBsp of oil and the sliced onions. When the onions start to caramelize, add in the chorizo and fry for 2-3 minutes.
- 4 Remove the onions and chorizo from the pan.
- 5 Immediately add in 1 TBsp butter into the pan at medium heat. It should start to sizzle. Immediately add in 3-4 squid bodies, and fry for about 3-4 minutes on each side. The squid should be nicely browned on both sides while the inside is still slightly moist and translucent (3/4 cooked).
- 6 Add more butter, and repeat with the remaining squid bodies, reserving the tentacles for the final batch (they crisp extra nicely!)
- 7 Use a pair of scissors to cut the squid bodies into 2 inch pieces.
- 8 Add a dash of white wine to deglaze the pan used to fry the squid. Then add back the onions, chorizo, potatoes and squid and mix well to soak up the glaze, or until the squid is fully cooked (2-4 minutes).
- 9 Transfer the contents to a serving plate and garnish with dill.
- 10 Optional: mix in rocket leaves and dress with a dash of lemon juice.

Tips and Tricks

- 1 To get nicely browned potatoes, spread them in a single layer and don't turn them until the edges start to brown. To increase the surface area of crisp potato, try this: after draining the potatoes, cover the pot and shake it vigorously to create a "crumbly" potato surface. This makes the potatoes extra fluffy.
- 2 To get browned squid without overcooking, use a heavy pan that's well heated through by Step 3 above.
- 3 Add in the squid immediately into the sizzling butter, otherwise the butter will get burnt.



COLD CRAB SALAD IN CITRUS DRESSING



SERVES 6 | PREP TIME: 10 MIN | COOK TIME: 15 MIN

Ingredients

Mesclun Salad Mix, 250g
Baby Spinach Leaves, 120g
Oranges, 2
Cherry Tomatoes, 10
Red Onion, 1 Large
Ripe Avocados, 2 Large
Eggs, 4
Pine Nuts, 1 Small Pack
Premium Canned Crab Meat, 1
Pimentos in Brine, 3 TBsp

CITRUS DRESSING

Olive Oil, 8 TBsp
Orange Juice, 2 TBsp
White Wine Vinegar, 1 TBsp
Honey, 2-3 TBsp
Garlic Cloves, 3
Dijon Mustard, 2 Tsp



Preparation Method

- 1 Wash and drain dry the mesclun and baby spinach salad leaves.
- 2 In a lidded jar, add all the citrus dressing ingredients – garlic cloves should be crushed with the flat of a spatula and added whole.
- 3 Peel and cut the 2 oranges into bite-sized chunks
- 4 Wash and slice the cherry tomatoes in half.
- 5 Wash, peel and slice onion into strips.
- 6 Just before serving, slice the avocado in half, then use a large metal spoon to scoop out bite sized chunks of avocado.

Cooking Method

- 1 Put the eggs in a small pot and fill with water. The water level should be 2 inches above the eggs. Add a pinch of salt, spreading the salt over the eggs. Boil over low heat for about 10 minutes until cooked. Remove the shell and cut the eggs into wedges.
- 2 Add the mesclun, spinach leaves, cherry tomatoes, pine nuts, onions, oranges into a large mixing bowl.
- 3 Put on the lid of the jar, and give it a vigorous shake to emulsify the citrus dressing.
- 4 Add the citrus dressing to the mixing bowl, then toss the salad to ensure it is evenly coated with the dressing.
- 5 Arrange the salad in a large serving bowl.
- 6 Top with crab meat, egg, avocado and pimentos.
- 7 Optional: Add croutons



Tips and Tricks

- 1 Use the most premium crab meat (colossal crab claw or jumbo lump) you can afford. It makes a huge difference because the more premium it is, the sweeter and more chunky the crab meat.
- 2 Use a lidded jar to mix the salad dressing to save on washing up time.
- 3 Ensure that the eggs are at room temperature before boiling, otherwise the sudden change in temperature may cause the eggs to crack.
- 4 Add a little vinegar to the pot of water when boiling the egg. This prevents the egg from leaking out in case the shell cracks.
- 5 To check if the egg is hardboiled, twirl it on a flat surface; it should rotate on the spot rather than wobble all over.



MAINS

ROSEMARY LAMB CUTLET WITH MINT SAUCE



SERVES 8 | PREP TIME: 20 MIN | COOK TIME: 30 MIN

Ingredients

Lamb Cutlets, 16 Pieces

Salt, A Pinch (Optional)

Black Pepper (Freshly Ground), To Taste

Fresh Rosemary, 4-6 Sprigs

Olive Oil, 4 TBsp

BED OF VEGETABLES

Baby Carrots, 8

Asparagus, 8 Large

Broccolini, 16

Garlic, 1 Whole Bulb + 2 Cloves

Yellow Onion, 1 Large

Cherry Tomatoes, 2 Vines

MINT SAUCE

Mint Leaves, 100 g

Castor Sugar, ½ TBsp

Hot Boiling Water, 1 ½ TBsp

Honey, 1 ½ TBsp

White Wine Vinegar, 4 TBsp

Salt, A Pinch



Preparation Method

- 1 Wash and peel the carrots. Slice off the ends and discard.
- 2 Wash the asparagus. Slice off the ends (about 1") and discard. Remove any tough fibrous skin near the base, then cut the asparagus in half.
- 3 Wash the broccolini and drain.
- 4 Wash and slice the bulb of garlic skin-on cross-sectionally into half.
- 5 Wash and slice the 2 cloves of garlic diagonally about ½" from the root.
- 6 Wash, peel and slice the onions into thin strips
- 7 Rub the lamb cutlets with a little salt and a dash of black pepper.
- 8 Wash the mint leaves and pat dry with a kitchen towel. Pluck off the stems and discard, then chop the leaves very finely.

Cooking Method

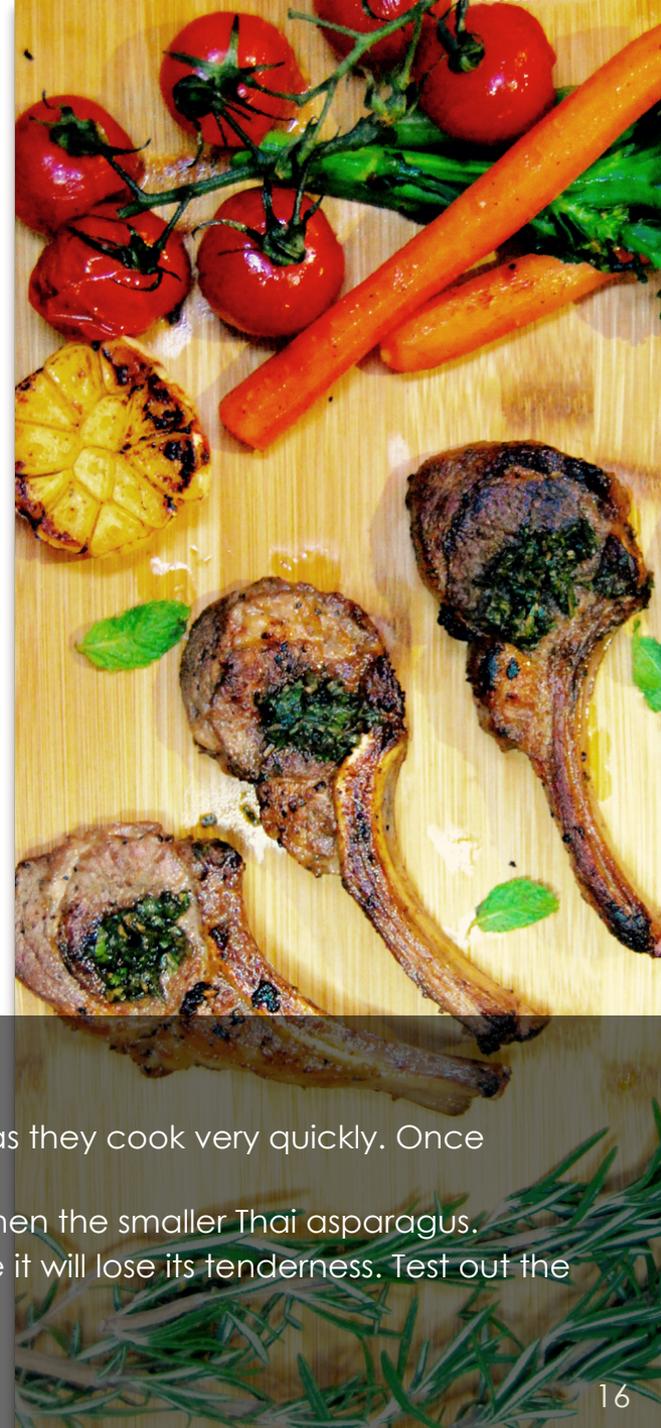
- 1 Parboil the carrots until soft. Blanch the broccolini and asparagus.
- 2 Place the carrots, capsicums and the 2 halves of the garlic bulb in a baking tray. Sprinkle 2 TBsp of olive oil over it and bake at 160°C for 10-15 minutes or until slightly caramelised.
- 3 Add the asparagus and broccolini to the tray and bake for another 2 minutes. Then remove the tray from the oven.
- 4 In a non-stick pan, heat up 2 TBsp of olive oil over high heat.
- 5 Add in the lamb cutlets a few at a time. Fry for 3 minutes on each side or until slightly browned. During frying, rub the lamb cutlets all over with the cut end of the garlic cloves. Then use 2-4 sprigs of rosemary to brush the cutlets on both sides. Remove from heat and let stand for a few minutes.
- 6 Sear the whole vines of cherry tomatoes in the same pan until they turn slightly limp. Transfer to the tray of baked vegetables and pour the juices of the lamb over the baked vegetables.
- 7 Plate the lamb cutlets and vegetables, garnish with rosemary and serve immediately with mint sauce.

MINT SAUCE

- 1 Add the castor sugar and hot water to the chopped mint leaves. Mix well until the sugar dissolves.
- 2 Add the honey, white wine vinegar and a pinch of salt to the mixture, and mix well. Then transfer to a sauce dish.

Tips and Tricks

- 1 The asparagus and broccolini should be added last to the tray for roasting as they cook very quickly. Once overcooked, they will become too soft.
- 2 The larger Australian or Holland asparagus are a better choice for this dish than the smaller Thai asparagus.
- 3 Do not overcook the lamb, aim to get it medium rare or just done, otherwise it will lose its tenderness. Test out the heat and timing by cooking one piece first to get your preferred doneness.
- 4 Save on cooking time by using ready-made mint sauce.



CRISPY ROAST CHICKEN WITH FESTIVE GREENS



SERVES 5 | PREP TIME: 30 MIN | COOK TIME: 30 MIN

Ingredients

Whole Chicken, Medium (1-1.2kg)

Soya Sauce, 1 TBsp

Five-Spice Powder 1 TBsp

Salt, 1 ½ Tsp

Olive Oil, 5 TBsp

Pumpkin, 800 g

Carrots, 400 g

Tomatoes, 400 g

White Mushrooms, 400 g

Baby Spinach Leaves, 125 g

Preparation Method

- 1 Wash and clean the chicken. Then rub it all over (inside and outside) with 1 TBsp of soya sauce and marinate for 20 minutes.
- 2 Wash and slice the pumpkin.
- 3 Wash and cut the tomatoes into halves.
- 4 Use a soft brush to brush clean the mushrooms.
- 5 Wash, peel and cut the carrots into large chunks.
- 6 Arrange the vegetables on a large baking tray.
- 7 In a small bowl, mix the 5 TBsp of olive oil with 1/2 tsp of salt. Then drizzle the oil mixture evenly over the tray of vegetables.
- 8 In another small bowl, mix the 1 TBsp of five-spice powder and 1 tsp of salt together. Then rub the powder mixture into the chicken including all the folds and the cavity of the chicken.
- 9 Stand the chicken in a vertical roasting rack if you have one. Otherwise just lay it flat on a horizontal metal rack.
- 10 Preheat the oven at 220°C.



Cooking Method

- 1 Place the tray of vegetables on the lowest rack and the chicken above it.
- 2 Roast the vegetables and chicken in the oven with the fan setting turned on for about 15 minutes at 220°C, then rotate base of the chicken roaster so it browns evenly.
- 3 Roast for another 15 minutes. Check periodically on the chicken to ensure the skin does not get burnt. If the skin is already browned, you can turn the temperature down to 200°C.
- 4 Remove the chicken and the vegetables from the oven.
- 5 Sprinkle a few baby spinach leaves over the roasted vegetables to add a burst of festive colour, and drizzle the juices of the roasted chicken over the vegetables.
- 6 Remove the chicken from the vertical roaster and place it on the tray of roasted vegetables. Serve immediately while the skin is still crispy.

Tips and Tricks

- 1 Clean the chicken thoroughly by removing all feathers, blood clots and organs, and exfoliating the skin with 2 TBsp of coarse salt to remove dead skin. Chickens which are not properly cleaned tend to have an unpleasant odour after cooking. Make sure you wash away the salt thoroughly after exfoliating, otherwise the chicken will be too salty.
- 2 Use a vertical chicken roaster to ensure the skin of the chicken is crispy all around. Using a horizontal rack usually results in one side of the chicken becoming soggy due to the chicken drippings.
- 3 Leave the pumpkin skins on when roasting. It is edible, it also gives a beautiful presentation to the dish. Use the sweeter varieties like Australian pumpkin or butternut squash.
- 4 Before roasting, fold the wings tips of the chicken backward to form a tight triangle shape. This makes it easy to lift the chicken from under the wings later on after roasting to avoid breaking the skin.
- 5 The cooking time may vary slightly depending on the size of the chicken. To check if the chicken is cooked, use a chopstick to pierce through the thickest part of the thigh. If the juices run clear, the chicken is cooked.
- 6 Use an oil separator to remove the oil from the chicken drippings, then sprinkle the drippings over the roasted vegetables.
- 7 Use a pair of sharp kitchen scissors to easily cut the chicken into parts when serving.



ROAST CRACKLING PORK BELLY



SERVES 10 | PREP TIME: 30 MIN | COOK TIME: 2 H 15 MIN

Ingredients

Pork Belly, 3 kg
Coarse Salt, 2 TBsp
Fine Salt, 1 Tsp
Bay Leaves, 15
Star Anise, 5
Cloves, 2 TBsp
A Roll of String
Olive Oil, 2-3 TBsp
Sea Salt, ½ TBsp
Black Pepper, A Dash (Optional)
Green Apples, 6
Red Capsicum, 1
Yellow Capsicum, 1
Pumpkin, ½ A Small Pumpkin
Garlic, 6 Cloves



Preparation Method

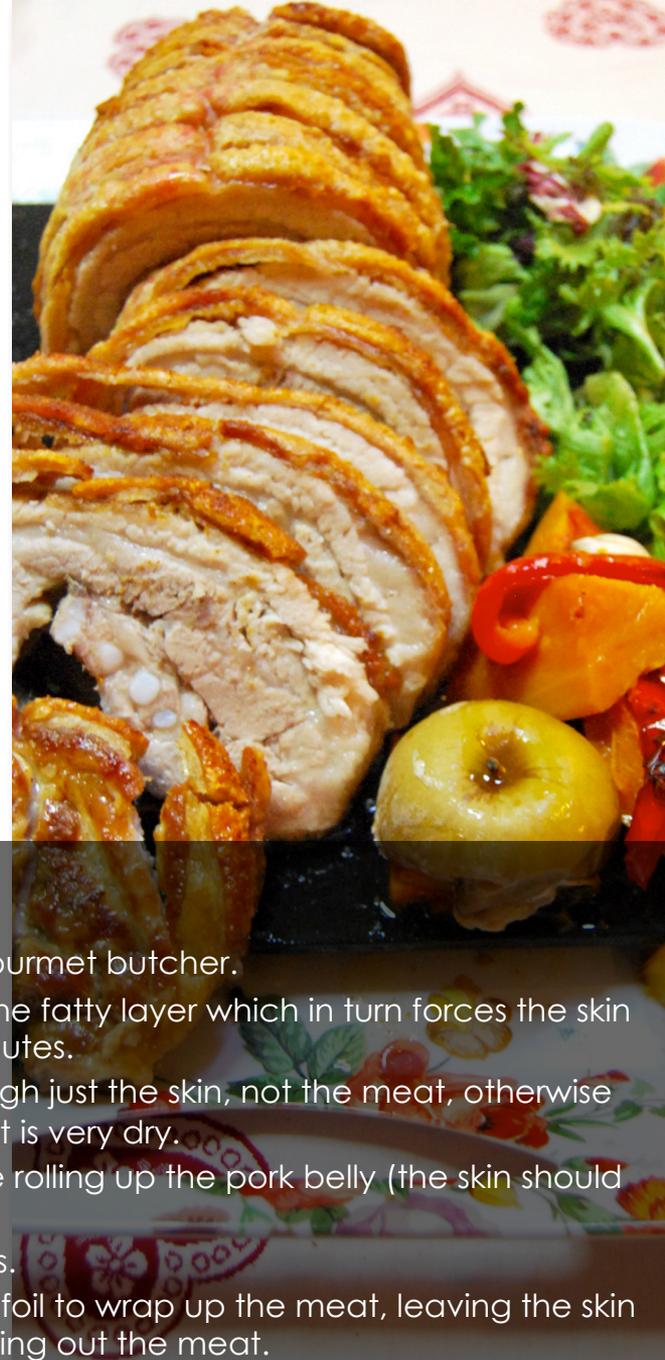
- 1 Rub the pork belly with the coarse salt both on the skin and the meat. Wash thoroughly and pat very dry with a piece of kitchen towel.
- 2 Rub the fine salt all over the meat and place the pork belly in a square tin skin side up. Leave it in the fridge for 2 days to dry the skin.
- 3 When the skin is thoroughly dry, use a sharp utility knife to score the skin width-wise about ½" apart.
- 4 Turn the pork belly skin side down and place on a dry baking tray. Place 10 bay leaves, 3 star anise and 2 TBsp of cloves on the surface of the meat spreading them all over.
- 5 Roll up the pork belly like a log. Then tie the pork belly with the string spacing it about ½" apart according to the score line.
- 6 Preheat the oven to 240°C. Brush some olive oil all over the skin, then sprinkle sea salt and black pepper all over.
- 7 Wash the apples, capsicum, and pumpkin. Cut the apples into half cross-sections. Cut the pumpkin into large chunks and cut the capsicum into thick strips (seeds removed). Place the apples, capsicum and pumpkin on a baking tray and drizzle with 1-2 TBsp of olive oil.
- 8 Smash the garlic lightly, leaving the skin on.

Cooking Method

- 1 Place the tray of pork belly in the centre of the pre-heated oven. Roast for 30 minutes at 240°C. You should see the skin start to crackle.
- 2 Turn the oven heat to 180°C and roast for another 1 hour and 15 minutes.
- 3 Next, add the remaining bay leaves and star anise, and 6 cloves of garlic to the tray of the pork belly. Then, place the apple and vegetable tray in the same oven as the pork belly.
- 4 Continue to roast the pork belly and vegetables for another 30 minutes. The apples and vegetables should become caramelised by this time.
- 5 Insert a sharp skewer through the side of the pork roll. If the juices run clear, it is cooked. If not, remove the apples and vegetables from the oven and continue to roast the pork belly for another 15 minutes.
- 6 Remove pork belly, apples and vegetables from the oven. Drizzle the juices of the crackling pork belly over the baked apples and vegetables.
- 7 Transfer the pork belly onto a dry chopping board to rest for at least 20 minutes before carving. Then remove the string and carve the pork belly along the score lines, making sure the crispy skin does not touch the juices.
- 8 Plate the crackling pork belly, baked apples and vegetables. Serve hot.

Tips and Tricks

- 1 Save on preparation time by getting pre-prepared crackling pork from a gourmet butcher.
- 2 Scoring is very important because it allows the heat to penetrate through the fatty layer which in turn forces the skin to crackle. This is why the oven must be at maximum heat for the first 30 minutes.
- 3 Use a sharp utility knife to score the skin. Adjust the utility knife to score through just the skin, not the meat, otherwise the meat will dry out during cooking. It is a lot easier to score the skin when it is very dry.
- 4 Use a hairdryer to make absolutely sure that the skin is thoroughly dry before rolling up the pork belly (the skin should turn slightly darker in colour), otherwise it will not crackle nicely.
- 5 If the skin gets slightly burnt, just use a knife to lightly scrape off any burnt bits.
- 6 Any left over crackling will become rubbery by the next day. Use aluminum foil to wrap up the meat, leaving the skin exposed. Toast for a few minutes and the skin will crisp up again without drying out the meat.





DESSERT

CHEWY GINGERBREAD COOKIES



SERVES 5 | PREP TIME: 10 MIN | COOK TIME: 15 MIN



Ingredients

Butter, ½ Cup

Sugar, ¼ Cup

Liquid molasses, ½ Cup

Egg yolk, 1

Plain flour, 2 Cups

Salt, ½ Tsp

Baking powder, ½ Tsp

Baking soda, ½ Tsp

Ground Ginger, 2 Tsp

Preparation Method

- 1 Take the butter out ½ hour ahead of time and leave at room temperature.

Cooking Method

- 1 Cream the butter and sugar together until pale yellow and fluffy.
- 2 Stir in the liquid molasses and egg yolk.
- 3 Combine the flour, salt, baking powder, baking soda, and ginger; blend into the wet mixture above until just mixed in.
- 4 Put the mixture in between two sheets of baking paper and roll to about 1/2 " thickness. Place in the freezer for half an hour.
- 5 Preheat the oven to 180°C.
- 6 Using the frozen sheet of dough, quickly cut out the gingerbread man shapes and place onto a baking tray lined with baking paper.
- 7 Bake for 10-12 minutes in a pre-heated oven, until only slightly soft in the centre when pressed.
- 8 Remove and cool on wire racks.

Tips and Tricks

- 1 Leave the butter out at room temperature for ½ hour to make it easier to cream (especially if you're doing it by hand rather than an electric mixer)
- 2 For greater flavour, replace ginger with pumpkin pie spice mix which also has nutmeg, cinnamon, and cloves.
- 3 Find trays that fits your freezer, and simply smooth out the dough between two sheets of paper placed in the trays to maximise useable dough surface area for cutting out cookie shapes
- 4 To save time, give gingerbread man shapes a miss and instead roll the dough into a log shape and cut off slices as cookie rounds
- 5 If the cookies are slightly undercooked, leave them on top of your oven on a baking sheet while baking the next batch of cookies, so the gentle heat can continue to cook the cookies through.

STRAWBERRY TRIFLE



SERVES 8 | PREP TIME: 10 MIN | COOK TIME: 20 MIN

Ingredients

Evaporated Milk, 1 Can
Strawberry Jelly Powder, 2 Packets
Boiling Water, 570 ml
Lemon Juice, ½ Lemon
Sugar, 4 TBsp
Strawberries, 12
Whipping Cream, 500 ml

CUSTARD LAYER (OPTIONAL)

Custard Powder, ½ Cup
Milk, 1 Cup
Water, 1 ½ Cups
Sugar, ½ Cup
Finger Sponge, 10-12

Preparation Method

- 1 Refrigerate the whipping cream beforehand.
- 2 Place the tin of evaporated milk in the freezer 1 hour ahead of time.
- 3 Wash the strawberries and pat dry. Cut into halves and refrigerate.
- 4 Squeeze the juice of ½ lemon and set aside.

Cooking Method

- 1 In a glass jug, add 1 packet of jelly powder, 285 ml of boiling water, 2 TBsp of sugar and the lemon juice. Stir until the jelly and sugar dissolve.
- 2 Pour it into a large glass bowl and allow to set in the fridge for 1 hour.
- 3 In a glass jug, add the second packet of jelly powder and 285 ml of boiling water. Stir until the jelly powder is dissolved. Set aside to cool.
- 4 Once the jelly in the fridge has set, pour the evaporated milk into a mixing bowl and mix with a hand mixer at high speed until it doubles in volume.
- 5 Add the jelly mixture to the mixing bowl and mix well at medium speed.
- 6 Pour the evaporated milk mixture over the set jelly layer and allow to set in the fridge for another 1 hour.
- 7 Just before serving, whip the fresh cream with the hand mixer until it forms a peak when the mixer is lifted. Pipe the fresh cream over the mousse layer, decorate with strawberries and serve immediately.

CUSTARD LAYER (Optional; To be added between cooking steps 3 and 4)

- 1 Add ½ cup of milk to the custard powder. Mix well until there are no lumps. Then add the rest of the custard ingredients (except the finger sponge).
- 2 Cook the custard mixture over medium heat stirring constantly until it starts to thicken. Lower the heat and continue to cook until the custard becomes very thick and smooth. Remove from heat.
- 3 Place the finger sponges on top of the bowl of set jelly. Then scoop a layer of custard over the finger sponge and allow to set in the fridge for 1 hour.



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