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Happy Christmas at Home Recipes + DIY Christmas Crackers

Beef Wellington – BBC Food

Christmas nut roast with mushroom gravy – BBC Food (also Google Hairy Biker's nut roast for an alternative recipe)

Ultimate Roast Potatoes – BBC Good Food

Eighteenth-century chestnut stuffing – Delia Online

Roast chestnuts – BBC Good Food

Maple-roast parsnips – BBC Food

Shredded Brussels Sprout salad with walnuts and currants – Fine Cooking

Mini Yorkshire puddings – Prue Leith

Christmas pudding – BBC Food

Best-ever mulled wine – The Hairy Bikers

Iced Christmas pudding with glace fruits – Delia Online

Homemade Christmas mincemeat (filling for mince pies) – Delia Online

*Note: substitute frozen, grated Crisco or butter sticks for shredded suet

Black buns – King Arthur Flour

Make your own Christmas Crackers – directions

*Note: A4 size paper is very close to US letter paper, and toilet rolls are centers of toilet paper

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Beef Wellington



Preparation time

1-2 hours

Cooking time

1 to 2 hours

Serves

Serves 6-8

Beef Wellington traditionally has pâté spread over the top of the fillet, which makes it very rich. This recipe is lighter, but with a lovely taste from the tarragon.

By Mary Berry

From Mary Berry's Foolproof Cooking

Ingredients

1.3kg/2lb 14oz middle-cut fillet of beef
1 tbsp oil
1½ x 375g packets all-butter puff pastry
plain flour, for dusting
1 egg, beaten with a dash of milk
salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the topping

large knob of butter
350g/12oz mixed mushrooms (such as button, chestnut, wild), thinly sliced
50g/1¾oz Parmesan, finely grated

1 tbsp finely chopped tarragon
2 tsp Dijon mustard
1 egg yolk

For the tarragon sauce

small knob of butter
100g/3½oz button mushrooms, finely sliced
1 tbsp plain flour
400ml/14fl oz full-fat crème fraîche
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
1 tbsp freshly chopped tarragon
a pinch sugar

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 220C/200C Fan/Gas 7.
2. Season the beef with salt and pepper. Place a large frying pan over a high heat, add the oil and fry the beef on all sides until browned. Transfer to a baking tray and roast in the oven for 15–18 minutes. Turn the oven off and remove the beef. Leave to cool, reserving any cooking juices, and then chill in the fridge for at least 1 hour (see tip).
3. Next make the topping. Melt the butter in the same pan and fry the mushrooms over a high heat for 5–10 minutes – you may need to do this in batches. Tip the mushrooms into a sieve set over a bowl to collect the juices and reserve these for the sauce. Transfer the mushrooms to another bowl and allow to cool before mixing with the Parmesan, tarragon, mustard and egg yolk. Season with salt and pepper and chill in the fridge for 30 minutes.
4. Line a baking sheet with baking paper. Sit the single 375g packet of pastry on a floured work surface and roll out to a square about 40cm/16in in size, then transfer it to the baking sheet. Place the cooked beef to one side of the pastry and spoon the mushroom mixture on top. Fold over the ends of the pastry and then fold the longest edge over the beef, sealing along the side with a little of the egg wash. Chill in the fridge for 30 minutes. While it is chilling, preheat the oven again to 220C/200C Fan/Gas 7.
5. Brush the top of the chilled beef Wellington with egg wash. Roll out the remaining half block of pastry and cut into 8 thin strips: lay 4 strips diagonally, and evenly spaced, across the top of the beef Wellington, and 4 strips across these to create a lattice pattern. Brush the lattice with egg wash and then roast in the oven for 30–35 minutes or until the pastry is golden-brown and crisp.
6. Meanwhile, make the tarragon sauce. Melt the butter in the same frying pan and fry the mushrooms over a high heat for 5–10 minutes or until the juices evaporate. Sprinkle in the flour and add the crème fraîche with the reserved mushroom juices (from the topping), the mustard and tarragon. Season with salt, pepper and sugar and bring to the boil, stirring. Simmer for 3 minutes until reduced slightly and add any beef juices from the original baking tray. Keep hot.
7. Allow the beef Wellington to rest, covered with foil, for 15 minutes before carving. Slice into thick slices and serve with the hot tarragon sauce.

Recipe Tips

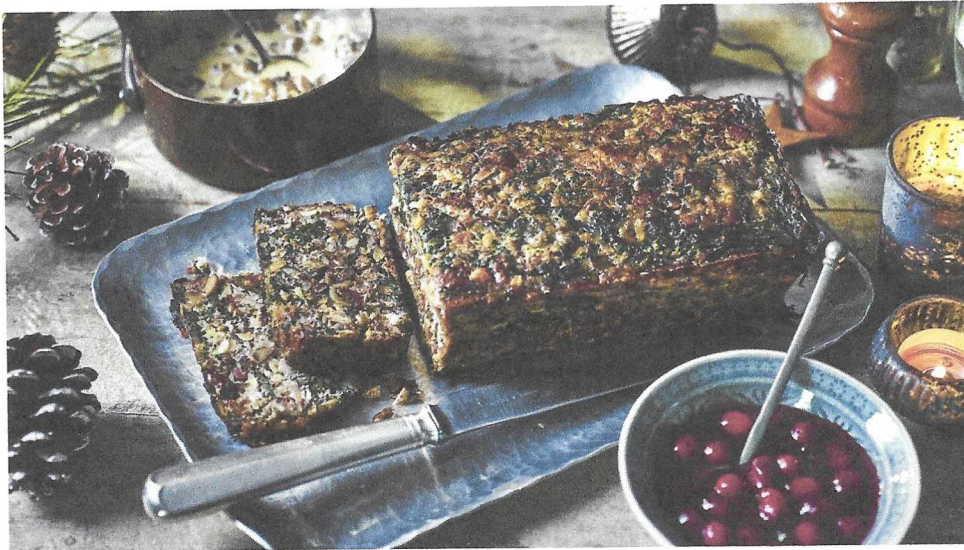
Always buy the French tarragon as Russian tarragon grows well, but has no flavour.

To ensure even cooking of the beef, try to buy a piece of beef fillet that's from the middle section, with a similar circumference all the way along the piece of meat.

There are lots of chilling stages – this is so important as it ensures the temperature is always correct to give pink, rare beef and cooked pastry. For medium, add 5 minutes to the initial roasting time and for well done, add another 5 minutes.

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Christmas nut roast with mushroom gravy



Preparation time

less than 30 mins

Cooking time

1 to 2 hours

Serves

Serves 8–10

Dietary

Perfect for a vegetarian Christmas, this nut roast recipe is served with creamy mushrooms, spinach and tangy sherry-soaked cranberries.

Equipment: You will need a 1kg/2lb 4oz loaf tin.

By The Hairy Bikers

From The Hairy Bikers Home for Christmas

Ingredients

300g/10½oz spinach or chard leaves

50g/1¾oz dried cranberries

50ml/2fl oz oloroso sherry

1 tbsp olive oil

15g/½oz butter

1 onion, finely chopped

200g/7oz chestnut mushrooms, roughly chopped

1 large parsnip, coarsely grated (around 250g/9oz)

2 garlic cloves

1 tsp dried sage
1 lemon, zest only
1 thyme sprig
150g/5½oz cooked freekah or spelt grains
100g/3½oz mixed nuts, roughly chopped
100g/3½oz cooked chestnuts, roughly chopped
25g/1oz fresh breadcrumbs
3 free-range eggs
25g/1oz butter

For the gravy

1 tbsp olive oil
15g/½oz butter
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 garlic clove
few thyme leaves
250g/9oz chestnut or portobellini mushrooms
100ml/3½fl oz oloroso sherry
250ml/9fl oz vegetable stock
50ml/2fl oz single cream

For the cranberry sauce

250ml/9fl oz cranberries (fresh or frozen)
100g/3½oz caster sugar
1 large orange, juice and zest

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/180C Fan/Gas 6. Line the loaf tin with baking paper.
2. Wash the spinach in plenty of water and put into a saucepan. Heat gently until it has wilted down, stirring a couple of times, then drain over a sieve. Leave to cool, then roughly chop.
3. Put the cranberries into a small saucepan and cover with the sherry. Bring to the boil, remove from the heat and set aside until the cranberries have plumped up and absorbed most of the sherry.
4. Heat the olive oil and butter in a frying pan. Add the onion and mushrooms and cook over a medium heat until any liquid coming out of the mushrooms has evaporated and the onion has softened. Add the parsnip and continue to cook until the parsnip has reduced in volume and the onion has started to caramelize. Add the garlic, dried sage, thyme and lemon zest, then cook for a couple more minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to cool slightly.
5. Put the freekah or spelt into a large bowl along with the mixed nuts, chestnuts, breadcrumbs, spinach, cooked vegetables and the eggs. Season well with salt and pepper and mix thoroughly.
6. Spoon into the lined loaf tin and dot over the butter. Smooth down, but do not pack too tightly. Cover with a layer of greaseproof paper and bake in the oven for about an hour or until piping hot.
7. Meanwhile, to make the gravy, heat the olive oil and butter in a saucepan. Add the onion and cook for several minutes until starting to caramelize around the edges. Add the mushrooms and cook for 5 minutes, stirring regularly. Add the garlic and thyme season well and continue to cook for a couple of minutes. Turn up the heat and pour in the sherry. Allow to bubble until almost completely evaporated, then

add the stock. Simmer, covered, for 10 minutes. Stir in the cream just before serving.

8. To make the cranberry sauce, put the cranberries into a saucepan with orange juice and zest and the sugar. Gently heat until the sugar has dissolved then turn up the heat and simmer until the cranberries have softened and started to burst. Stir and remove from the heat – you should have a mixture of whole and broken down cranberries. Allow to cool and store in the fridge until needed.

Ultimate roast potatoes



Prep: 15 mins - 20 mins
Cook: 50 mins



Easy



Serves 4



Ingredients

1kg Maris Piper potatoes

100g duck or goose fat (for a luxurious taste),
or 100ml/3½fl oz olive oil

2 tsp flour

Maldon salt, to serve

Method

- Step 1** Put a roasting tin in the oven (one big enough to take the potatoes in a single layer) and heat oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6.
- Step 2** Peel 1kg potatoes and cut each into 4 even-sized pieces if they are medium size, 2-3 if smaller (5cm pieces).
- Step 3** Drop the potatoes into a large pan and pour in enough water to barely cover them.
- Step 4** Add salt, then wait for the water to boil. As soon as the water reaches a full rolling boil, lower the heat, put your timer on and simmer the potatoes uncovered, reasonably vigorously, for 2 mins.
- Step 5** Meanwhile, put 100g duck or goose fat or 100ml olive oil into the hot roasting tin and heat it in the oven for a few mins, so it's really hot.
- Step 6** Drain the potatoes in a colander then shake the colander back and forth a few times to fluff up the outsides.
- Step 7** Sprinkle with 2 tsp flour and give another shake or two so they are evenly and thinly coated.
- Step 8** Carefully put the potatoes into the hot fat – they will sizzle as they go in – then turn and roll them around so they are coated all over.
- Step 9** Spread them in a single layer making sure they have plenty of room.
- Step 10** Roast the potatoes for 15 mins, then take them out of the oven and turn them over.
- Step 11** Roast for another 15 mins and turn them over again. Put them back in the oven for another 10-20 mins, or however long it takes to get them really golden and crisp. The colouring will be uneven, which is what you want.



EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CHESTNUT STUFFING

10 MINS TO COOK

Bottom image: This recipe is adapted from one I first came across in the cookery book written by the eighteenth-century writer, Hannah Glasse.

Peeling chestnuts is a chore at the best of times, but with the pressures of Christmas it can seem even more tiresome. So, if you can get hold of peeled chestnuts in a vacuum pack or container, that will make life infinitely easier.

This recipe is from Delia's Happy Christmas. Makes enough for a 12-14 lb (5.5-6.5 kg) turkey but would actually be okay for any size of bird

METHOD

Melt the butter in a large frying pan and cook the onion, bacon and chopped turkey liver for 10 minutes or so, until the onion looks transparent and everything is tinged gold at the edges.

Now tip the contents of the pan into a large mixing bowl and add all the remaining ingredients. Season with salt and pepper, and mix very thoroughly.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb (450 g) peeled chestnuts, cooked and very finely chopped
salt and freshly milled black pepper
1 large onion, finely chopped
4 oz (110 g) smoked streaky bacon, finely chopped
the liver from the turkey, chopped small
1 oz (25 g) butter
4 level tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
1 level dessertspoon chopped fresh thyme
¼ level teaspoon ground mace
8 oz (225 g) best-quality pork sausagemeat, or finely minced pure pork

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Roast chestnuts



Prep: 10 mins
Cook: 30 mins



Easy



Makes 16



Ingredients

16 chestnuts (or as many as you need), choose large, shiny looking nuts

Method

- Step 1** Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Put each chestnut flat-side down on a chopping board. Hold the chestnut carefully and, using a sharp knife, cut a long slit or a cross in the top. Make sure you cut through the shell but not the nut inside. The shell is tough and flexible like a skin rather than rock hard like other nut shells, so a small kitchen knife works well.
- Step 2** Tip the nuts onto a baking sheet or into a roasting tin and arrange them cut-side up. Roast for 30 mins. The cuts should open up and the shell will start to peel back.
- Step 3** Leave the nuts in the tin to cool down to warm – they will be very hot inside. Put a board on top of the tin while they cool to trap the steam and make them easier to peel. Serve as they are for people to peel, or peel them yourself to use in a recipe.
- Step 4** If you peel them, you may want to remove the inner, slightly fluffy, membrane as well. If the membrane is difficult to get off (it shouldn't be if you steam them as they cool), you can soak the nuts in boiling water for a minute to loosen. Drain and peel.

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Maple-roast parsnips



Preparation time
less than 30 mins

Cooking time
30 mins to 1 hour

Serves
Serves 8

Dietary

Nigella's easy roast parsnips with a generous glug of maple syrup. A wonderful Christmas dinner accompaniment.

By Nigella Lawson
From Nigella's Christmas Kitchen

Ingredients

1kg/2¼lb parsnips
125ml/4fl oz vegetable oil
80ml/3½fl oz maple syrup

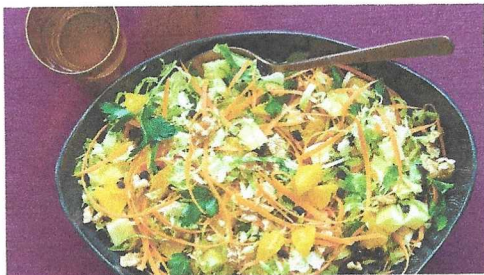
Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/180C Fan/Gas 6.
2. Peel the parsnips and then halve them crosswise, then halve or quarter each piece lengthwise. Place the parsnips into a roasting tin.
3. Pour the oil over the parsnips and mix them well so that the oil covers all of the pieces. Pour the maple syrup over the parsnips and roast for 35 minutes, or until they are tender and golden-brown. To serve place on a clean serving dish.

Shredded Brussels Sprout Salad with Walnuts and Currants

By Joanne Smart October/November 2019 Issue

Featured in our
2021 Thanksgiving
Guide



Servings: 8 to 10

No one really wants a salad course at Thanksgiving, but it's nice to have something bright and fresh on the plate. That's where this slaw-like salad comes in. As a bonus, this dish tastes best when made a day ahead, which will certainly make your life easier on the big day.

Ingredients

8 oz. Brussels sprouts, halved or quartered and sliced thinly by hand or shredded in a food processor

Kosher salt

1 cup (3 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.) coarsely chopped walnuts

2 tsp. granulated sugar

2 pinches cayenne

1 large orange, plus more fresh orange juice to taste

1 cup (4 $\frac{1}{4}$ oz.) dried currants

1 Golden Delicious apple, chopped to yield about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup

1 medium carrot, grated to yield about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

2 Tbs. finely chopped white onion

2 tsp. apple-cider vinegar

1 tsp. Dijon mustard

3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

1/2 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Preparation

In a medium bowl, toss the sprouts with 1 tsp. salt. Set aside.

Toast the walnuts in a dry medium skillet over medium heat until they just start to darken and smell toasty, about 2 minutes. Sprinkle with the sugar and cayenne, and toss until the sugar coats the nuts. Transfer to a plate to cool.

Meanwhile, cut the ends off the orange. Stand it on one cut end, and slice off the outer skin in strips, following the natural curve of the fruit from top to bottom. Try to remove all of the bitter white pith without sacrificing too much of the sweet flesh. Working over a bowl to catch the juice and using the membranes as guides, cut the segments free from the membranes, letting each one fall into the bowl as you go. Working over the bowl, squeeze the empty wheel of membranes as well as any skin holding flesh to extract the last drops of juice. Remove the segments from the juice and reserve the juice. Cut the segments into bite-size pieces, and add to the bowl with the Brussels sprouts. Add the walnuts, currants, apple, carrot, and onion, and toss to combine.

In a small bowl, whisk the orange juice, vinegar, and mustard. Add the oil, and whisk to combine. Add the vinaigrette to the salad, and toss to coat. Add the parsley and toss again. Season to taste with salt, if you like. While you can serve right away, the dish is best refrigerated for up to 1 day. Let come to room temperature, and season to taste with salt before serving.

Tip

To Make Ahead: Prep all of the elements of the salad 1 day ahead of combining. Refrigerate all but the walnuts. Or dress and refrigerate the salad for up to 24 hours. For best flavor, let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before serving.

fine
Cooking

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PRUE LEITH'S MINI YORKSHIRE PUDDINGS



Prue Leith

A miniature twist on a Sunday Roast! Made with a silky smooth batter cooked in smoking hot oil, these light and fluffy bites are filled with seared beef filet and spicy horseradish cream.

Serves:	Difficulty:	Hands-On Time:	Baking Time:
16	Easy	40 mins	20 mins

INGREDIENTS

For the Yorkshire puddings:

50g plain flour

¼ tsp salt

Ground black pepper

1 medium egg, beaten

50ml milk

60ml vegetable oil

For the steak:

1 tbsp vegetable oil

450g fillet steak

Salt and pepper, to taste

For the horseradish cream:

100ml crème fraiche

1 – 2 tsp fresh horseradish root, grated

1 – 2 tsp horseradish cream, to taste

METHOD

Step 1

Heat the oven to 210°C/190°C fan/415°F/Gas 7. For the batter, place the flour in a bowl, add the salt and season with ground black pepper. Add the egg and whisk to a smooth paste. Slowly add the milk, whisking continuously to a smooth batter. Pour into a jug and leave to rest for 15 minutes.

Step 2

Add 1 tsp vegetable oil to each hole of a 12 hole mini muffin tin. Place the muffin tin in the oven heat for 5 - 10 minutes until very hot.

Step 3

Remove the tin from the oven and fill each hole halfway with batter, acting quickly so the oil doesn't cool down too much. Bake for 12 minutes until risen and golden, then remove from the oven and place on a wire rack to cool completely.

Step 4

For the steak, heat the vegetable oil in a frying pan over a high heat until hot. Season the steak on both sides with salt and pepper, then add to the hot pan. Cook for 3 minutes on each side, then remove from the pan and leave to rest until ready to slice.

Step 5

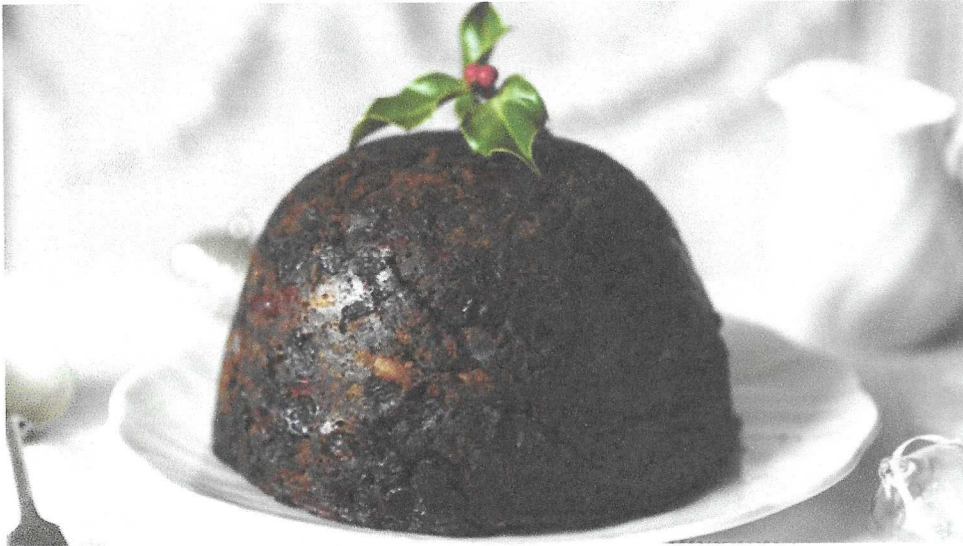
For the horseradish cream. Spoon the crème fraiche into a small bowl, add the grated horseradish and horseradish cream to taste. Lightly mix then spoon into a piping bag and set aside.

Step 6

To assemble, place the cooled Yorkshires on the presentation tray. Slice the steak in to 12 strips along the longest length. Once sliced, roll up into rosettes. Snip the tip of the horseradish cream piping bag and pipe approx. 1 tsp into the bottom of each Yorkshire. Top the horseradish cream with a rosette of beef and then pipe another small dot of cream on top of the beef and garnish with a spring of watercress. Serve.

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Christmas pudding



Preparation time
overnight

Cooking time
over 2 hours

Serves

Dietary

Makes 1 x 1.2 litre/2 pint pudding

Get motivated in November to make your Christmas pudding to have it mature in time for Christmas.

Equipment and preparation: You will need a 1.2 litre/2 pint pudding basin, baking paper, foil and kitchen string.

By Thane Prince

Ingredients

350g/12oz mixed dried fruit (raisins, currants, sultanas)
100g/3½oz pitted ready-to-eat prunes, chopped or left whole
100g/3½oz dark muscovado sugar
4 tbsp dark rum
100ml/3½fl oz stout
100g/3½oz chopped walnuts
100g/3½oz blanched almonds
100g/3½oz ground almonds
100g/3½oz fresh white breadcrumbs
50g/1¾oz plain flour

100g/3½oz frozen butter, grated, plus a little extra for greasing
½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
1 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tsp mixed spice
100g/3½oz chopped glacé cherries (or left whole if you prefer)
3 large free-range eggs, beaten

Method

1. Combine the mixed fruit, prunes, muscovado sugar, rum and stout in a mixing bowl. Stir well to mix, cover and leave for 24 hours to soak.
2. After 24 hours, mix the walnuts, almonds, ground almonds, breadcrumbs, flour, butter, spices, cherries and eggs along with the soaked fruit mixture in a large mixing bowl, making sure you include all the soaking liquor from the soaked fruit. Mix well until completely combined (let all the members of the family have a stir and make a wish).
3. Cover with cling film and leave to stand in a cool place for 24 hours.
4. After 24 hours, grease a 1.2 litre/2 pint pudding basin with butter. Cut a circle of baking paper and place into the bottom of the pudding basin and then grease it with a little more butter. Pack the pudding mixture into the pudding basin, pressing as you add it. Fold a pleat into the middle of a large piece of baking paper and place over the pudding. Cover with a large piece of pleated foil, ensuring the pleats are on top of one another. Secure tightly with kitchen string tied under the lip of the pudding basin.
5. Place an upturned saucer into a large saucepan one-quarter full of water. Fold a long piece of foil into quarters lengthways to create a long strip and place the pudding basin in the middle of the strip. Bring the sides of the strip up the sides of the pudding basin and lower into the saucepan. Ensure the water in the saucepan comes one-third of the way up the side of the pudding basin, but nowhere near the top of the basin. Leave the ends of the foil strip hanging over the side to make it easy to remove the pudding later.
6. Bring the water to the boil and then reduce the heat to a gentle simmer. Simmer gently for 5-6 hours, topping up the water level as necessary throughout cooking (do not allow the pan to dry out).
7. Once the pudding is cooked, remove from the pan and set aside to cool. The pudding can be stored for up to two years in a cool, dry place. To serve, reheat the pudding by steaming again (in the same way) for two hours, or until hot all the way through. Alternatively, remove the foil and reheat in the microwave.

Recipe Tips

There is a simple secret to making a good Christmas pudding. Use only the best fruit and freshest nuts and spices and steam it for as long as you can bear to! It really makes a huge difference to the colour and taste of the pudding if you can steam for eight or so hours. Don't panic this does not need to be done in one day - the puddings can be cooked over two or three days.

Best-ever mulled wine

Eat, drink and be merry with the Bikers' winter warmer.

From: The Hairy Bikers, www.hairybikers.com

INFO

Serves 12

Prep time

Less than 15 minutes

Cooking time

2 - 4 hours

INGREDIENTS

- *4 tangerines, clementines or satsumas*
- *1 [vanilla pod](#), split lengthways*
- *8 [cloves](#) and 8 [allspice berries](#)*
- *2 [cinnamon sticks](#)*
- *3 [star anise](#)*
- *3 bay leaves*
- *300g caster sugar*
- *2 x 75cl bottles of red wine*
- *200ml brandy*

METHOD

1. Cut the tangerines into 4 or 5 thick slices and put them in a large saucepan. Add the vanilla pod, cloves, allspice, cinnamon, star anise and bay leaves. Stir in the sugar. Pour over the wine and brandy and place the pan over a low heat. Bring to a gentle simmer and bubble over a very low heat for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Remove the pan from the heat and set aside for 1-4 hours before serving to allow the flavours to blend. Heat through gently without boiling, then strain, leaving some of the larger spices for decoration, and ladle into heatproof cups.



ICED CHRISTMAS PUDDING WITH GLACE FRUITS

If you would like to offer your guests a frozen alternative to Traditional Christmas Pudding, then this is unbeatable.

It consists of creamy textured ice cream made with dark rum and creamed coconut, interspersed with chunks of glacé fruits that have been soaked in dark rum. Because this ice cream is soft in texture there is no need to remove it from the freezer in advance of serving. Any ice cream pudding left over after serving must be returned immediately to the freezer and taken out again for second helpings.

This recipe is taken from Delia Smith's Christmas **Serves 8**

METHOD

Marinate all the fruits in the rum overnight.

Next day, in a bowl, whisk the egg yolks and sugar together. Then in a small saucepan bring the cream up to simmering point and add the grated coconut to it, stirring until the coconut has dissolved completely. Now pour the cream and coconut mixture on to the egg mixture, whisking all the time – it should thicken like light egg custard.

Allow it to cool slightly before adding the yoghurt. Stir everything well and leave to get cold before adding the marinated fruits together with the rum. Stir well again, then pour the whole mixture into the pudding basin, cover with clingfilm and place in the freezer until almost set – this is when the ice cream has the consistency of 'soft scoop', and it can take up to 7 hours to set to this stage.

At this point stir it very thoroughly to distribute any ice crystals and make sure the fruits are evenly distributed. Return to the freezer overnight. The ice cream will freeze, but still remain soft in texture. To turn it out, dip the bowl briefly in hot water, then slide a palette knife around the edge.

Serve at once, cut into slices.

INGREDIENTS

For the rum-soaked fruit:

2½ oz (60 g) candied peel (orange, lemon and citron), cut into small chunks
1 oz (25 g) raisins
3 glacé cherries, cut into quarters
6 tablespoons dark rum

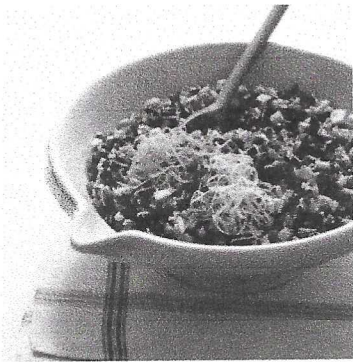
For the ice cream:

4 egg yolks, from large eggs
4 oz (110 g) caster sugar
15 fl oz (425 ml) thick double cream
1½ oz (40 g) creamed coconut, grated
7 fl oz (200 ml) Greek yoghurt

EQUIPMENT

You will also need a 2½ pint (1.5 litre) pudding basin.

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HOME-MADE CHRISTMAS MINCEMEAT

3 HRS TO COOK

VEGETARIAN

Once again, over the years we have never found a match for this mincemeat recipe, so if I can persuade you to make it, you will never want the bought stuff ever again.

It really is dead simple to make, though in the past people used to have trouble storing it. This was because the high percentage of apples oozed too much juice and the juice started to ferment. In the following recipe the mincemeat is placed in a barely warm oven and so the suet gradually melts and as this happens it coats all the fruits, including the apples, sealing in the juices.

Vegetarians see note at the end of the Method

This recipe is from *Delia's Happy Christmas*. Makes 6 350ml jars (recipe can be halved if preferred)

METHOD

All you do is combine all the ingredients, except for the brandy, in a large mixing bowl, stirring them and mixing them together very thoroughly indeed.

Then cover the bowl with a clean cloth and leave the mixture in a cool place overnight or for 12 hours, so the flavours have a chance to mingle and develop. After that pre-heat the oven to 120C/gas mark ¼. Cover the bowl loosely with foil and place it in the oven for 3 hours, then remove the bowl from the oven and don't worry about the appearance of the mincemeat, which will look positively swimming in fat. This is how it should look.

As it cools, stir it from time to time; the fat will coagulate and, instead of it being in tiny shreds, it will encase all the other ingredients. When the mincemeat is quite cold, stir in the brandy. Pack in sterilised jars (see below). When filled, cover with waxed discs and seal. It will keep in a cool, dark cupboard indefinitely, (I have kept it for up to 3 years), but I think it is best eaten within a year of making.

Vegetarians can make this mincemeat happily, using vegetarian suet. And if you don't want the full quantity, make half.

NOTE: To sterilise jars, wash the jars and lids in warm soapy water, rinse well, then dry thoroughly with a clean tea cloth, place them on a baking tray and pop into a medium oven, gas mark 4, 350°F, 180°C, for 5 minutes.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb (450 g) Bramley apples, cored and chopped small (no need to peel them)
2 oz (50 g) whole almonds, cut into slivers
4 level teaspoons mixed ground spice
½ level teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ level teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
6 tablespoons brandy
8 oz (225 g) shredded suet
12 oz (350 g) raisins
8 oz (225 g) sultanas
8 oz (225 g) currants
8 oz (225 g) whole mixed candied peel, finely chopped
12 oz (350 g) soft dark brown sugar
grated zest and juice 2 oranges
grated zest and juice 2 lemons

EQUIPMENT

You will also need 6 x 1lb (350ml) preserving jars and 6 waxed discs.


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Black Buns

A Scottish tradition for centuries, this fruit-filled bread is found in the windows of bakeries during the holidays. Home versions these days are often made with pie pastry surrounding a fruitcake, but here we hark back to the older, yeast-based version, baked up as smaller, gift-sized loaves.



	PREP	BAKE	TOTAL	YIELD
	1 hr	55 mins to 1 hr	4 hrs 50 mins	6 small breads

Ingredients

Dough

- 2 teaspoons instant yeast or active dry yeast
- 1 1/2 cups (340g) milk
- 2 tablespoons (25g) sugar
- 5 cups (600g) King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons (9g) salt
- 8 tablespoons (113g) unsalted butter, at room temperature

Filling

- 2 tablespoons (43g) molasses
- 1 large egg yolk (save the white for the egg wash)
- 1 cup (113g) dried cranberries
- 1 cup (170g) raisins, packed
- 1 cup (113g) diced prunes
- 1/2 cup (74g) diced dried figs or chopped dates
- 1/4 cup (85g) orange marmalade
- 1/2 cup (57g) sliced almonds
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon cardamom or mace
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons (28g) whiskey

Glaze (optional)

- 1 cup (113g) confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 tablespoon (14g) whiskey
- 1 tablespoon (14g) heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions

- ① **To make the dough:** Weigh your flour; or measure it by gently spooning it into a cup, then sweeping off any excess. Combine all of the dough ingredients, mixing and kneading until a soft dough forms. Cover and let rise until doubled, 1 1/2 to 2 hours.
- ② Divide the dough in half. Put half into a bowl, cover, and refrigerate. Put the remaining half back in the mixing bowl, and mix in all of the filling ingredients. This will be quite messy at first, but the dough will come together as you continue mixing.
- ③ Once the filling is thoroughly mixed into the dough, divide it into six equal pieces. Shape each piece into a ball as best you can; it will be sticky; wetting your hands first will help with this.
- ④ **To assemble:** Remove the reserved dough from the refrigerator and divide it into six equal pieces. Round each into a ball, cover, and let rest for 10 minutes.
- ⑤ Grease the wells of an oversized muffin pan, or line a baking sheet with parchment.
- ⑥ Roll each ball of dough into a 6" round, about 1/2" thick; make the edges thinner if you can (a tapered pastry pin is best for this). Place one of the balls of filling in the center, and bring the edges up and around to meet on the top, overlapping to enclose the filling as needed. Pinch the dough together and place, pleated side down, in the wells of the prepared pan or on the baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling.
- ⑦ Cover the buns with greased plastic and let them rise for 40 minutes. Halfway through the rising time, preheat the oven to 350°F.
- ⑧ At the end of the rise time (the buns won't look very different; that's OK), brush the tops with the reserved egg white beaten with a tablespoon of water. Score or poke the tops of the buns in a decorative pattern.
- ⑨ Bake the buns for 50 to 55 minutes, until the tops are golden brown (check after 35 minutes and tent with foil if needed), and the center measures 195°F when measured with a digital thermometer. Remove them from the oven, tilt them out of the pan, and cool on a rack.
- ⑩ **To make the glaze:** Whisk together all of the ingredients to make a smooth glaze; drizzle over the tops of the cooled buns.

Make your own Christmas crackers



ENGLISH HERITAGE



You will need:

- Thin card
- A4-sized wrapping paper
- Ruler
- Double-sided tape
- Sticky tape
- Cracker snap
- Pencil
- Three toilet rolls
- Scissors
- Ribbon
- Small gifts and joke

How to make your crackers



Step 1

Place the three toilet rolls on the wrapping paper end to end, with a 3.5cm gap between them. Mark the tubes where they meet the edge of the paper.



Step 2

Using that mark to work out the size, cut two strips of thin card. These will form the ends of the cracker.



Step 3

Place one piece of double-sided tape in the middle of the bottom edge of the paper, and three pieces along the top. Stick a toilet roll to the tape on the bottom edge, and roll up the wrapping paper so that it sticks together.



Step 4

Thread the cracker snap through and tape it to the inside of the cracker. Roll up the two pieces of card and place them in either end.



Step 5

Scrunch up one end of the cracker and tie a ribbon around it.



Step 6

Put your jokes and gifts into the cracker.



Step 7

Scrunch up the other end and tie it with a ribbon.

For more Christmas craft ideas, visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/magazine