



Purple sprouting broccoli fritters

Sprouted broccoli is one of my favourite vegetables. It has a relatively short commercial cropping season, but in my garden it tends to be bi-annual and I usually do two harvests, one in the early spring and again in the late autumn. These fritters are utterly delicious and the batter is very light and versatile. Scale up the recipe for bigger batches. Serves 4

125g light brown self-raising flour

1 tbsp sesame seeds

½ tbsp cumin seeds

½ tsp salt

50 – 7gml sparkling water

8 sprouted broccoli florets, trimmed to an even size, around 5cm long

500ml hot vegetable oil

1. Place the flour, cumin and sesame seeds into a large bowl and mix together the batter should nicely coat the back of a spoon but not be too gloopy
2. Add the sparkling water and whisk vigorously to form a batter.
3. Heat the vegetable oil in a deep heavy-bottomed saucepan until hot 165°C is ideal.
4. Dip the broccoli florets into the batter and carefully place into the hot oil and deep-fry in batches, so as not to overcrowd the pan.
5. Carefully remove with a slotted spoon and drain onto kitchen towels.

Broad bean pate'

This pate' takes a few minutes to make and will keep for two days if refrigerated. You can use it as a pate', or thin it out with a little lemon to make a dip, or use it as the base for a stir through pasta sauce. If you use quark, this dip is virtually fat free. You can add stronger flavoured herbs like rosemary and thyme, but in smaller amounts. A couple of tbsp of chopped olives or sundried tomatoes makes a delicious addition to this dish Makes 400g

2 handfuls fresh or frozen broad beans

1 small bunch of parsley

1 small bunch mint

250g low fat cream cheese (2%) Or 250g quark (fat free curd cheese)

1 tbsp lemon juice or vinegar

Salt and pepper

1. Steam the broad beans until tender and then refresh in cold water.
2. Wash, dry and finely chop the herbs.
3. Mash the beans together with the herbs, lemon juice or vinegar, cream cheese and season with salt and black pepper





Kale, leek and mushroom rissole

I like to make this dish after the first frosts or in the spring when all that's left in my garden are leeks and kale. This dish is quick to prepare yet very impressive with bold, deep flavours. It lends itself to countless variations and can be prepared in advance and finished off just before serving. For children stuff a smaller sized chestnut mushrooms. Serves 4

4 large Portobello or 16 Chestnut Mushrooms
1 cup chopped kale
2 cups of chopped leeks
½ cup toasted hazelnuts, crushed or chopped
150 g strong cheese such as stilton or mature cheddar
2 cloves garlic (sliced finely)
1 tbsp olive oil
Salt and pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 180c/380f and prepare the mushrooms by removing the stalks and dusting off any visible dirt.
2. Heat 1 tbsp of olive oil in a pan and slowly fry the leeks, chopped up mushroom stalks and garlic for 5 minutes.
3. Add the kale, season with salt and pepper and cook for a minute or two more.
4. Transfer the leeks and kale to a bowl and mix together with the nuts and half the cheese.
5. Spoon the leek mixture equally into the mushrooms with the remaining cheese on top.
6. Place mushrooms into an oiled baking tray and bake in the oven for 20 - 25 minutes or gently fry in a heavy pan and finish off under the grill

Parsley pesto

The fresh and earthy flavour of the parsley is complemented by the pungency of the garlic and capers and tempered by the nutty sweetness of the seeds. Parsley is rich in vitamin C, calcium, iron and carotene. The raw garlic and sunflower seeds are also powerful antioxidants with lots of vitamin E, minerals and heart protecting properties, which together makes this pesto a delicious tonic for your immune system.

1 large bunch parsley (about 250g)
50g toasted sunflower seeds
1tbsp capers
2 tbsp olive oil
1 cloves garlic
1 tbsp Balsamic vinegar

1. Wash and dry the parsley. Toast the sunflower seeds and cool
2. Place all of the ingredients except the oil in a food processor and start to blend. Pour the oil in, a little at a time, until the pesto has emulsified. Add salt and pepper to taste and thin with a little water if need be.





Honey-glazed carrots in spicy egg wraps

500g carrots cut into thin batons

1 tbsp sunflower oil

½ tbsp toasted sesame oil

2 tbsp honey

1 tsp fennel seeds

4 large free-range eggs

½ fresh red chilli, chopped

Sunflower oil

Chopped coriander to garish

For the carrots:

1. Heat the oils in a wok or large frying pan and stir-fry the carrots for a minute, then add the fennel seeds, cook very briefly.
2. Add 3 tbsp of water and the honey, stir, and cook for 5 minutes until the liquid has evaporated and the cabbage has begun to glaze.
3. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.

For the omelettes:

1. Heat a large non-stick pan and brush with oil
2. Add a pinch of chilli and fry for 30 seconds.
3. Beat one egg with a pinch of salt and add to the pan.
4. Move the egg around the pan with a circular movement until you have a wafer thin omelette.
5. Allow the egg to set and turn over with a spatula to cook for a further minute.
6. Repeat with the remaining eggs until you have 4 wafer thin omelettes

To serve:

1. Line the omelette up on warm plates plate or a chopping board
2. Divide the carrots into 4 and spread over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the omelette leaving a $\frac{1}{4}$ free of stuffing.
3. Roll the omelette up towards the un-stuffed edge as you would for a Swiss roll.
4. You can seal this edge with a light spreading of honey, but this is not essential.
5. Slice the omelette into bite size pieces, secure with toothpicks and serve.





Eating bird food

Seeds and nuts are a true wonder of nature. They represent perfect design and the pure potential of plants to survive and thrive. From a nutritional point of view they are fantastic because they contain protein, carbohydrates and healthy fats all packed together. They also contain most of the vitamins, minerals and micro-nutrients we need for a healthy body. Because seeds and nuts are such “power plants” of nutrients and energy, they are high in calories, so moderate the amount you eat if you are trying to reduce your total calorie intake.

Lime and soy seared seeds

4 tbsp sunflower seeds

4 tbsp pumpkin seeds

2 tbsp sesame seeds

1 tbsp soy sauce

Juice of 1 lime (lemon works equally well)

1. On a medium temperature, heat a large frying pan and add the sunflower seeds.
2. Keep stirring for two minute and then add the pumpkin and sesame seeds.
3. Cook for a minute or so, until all of the seeds are toasted, and then add the soy sauce and lime juice. Keep stirring, allowing the natural sugars in the lime juice to caramelize and coat the seeds.
4. Remove from the heat and allow the seeds to cool in the pan

Crunchy clusters:

2 tbsp chopped mixed nuts

2 tbsp pumpkin seeds

2 tbsp sesame seeds

2 tbsp sunflower seeds

2 tbsp barley malt syrup or runny honey (one of each if you have both)

1. Line a baking tray with greased paper or a light coating of sunflower oil. Put a metal tablespoon into a cup of very hot water and have a mixing bowl ready.
2. Start by dry toasting the nuts and seeds in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add the sunflower, pumpkin seeds and nuts to the hot pan and dry fry, stirring constantly until they go a shade or two darker.
3. Transfer into a bowl, and straight away add the honey or malt syrup or a spoon of each. Alternatively, ignore the bowl and add the sweetening directly to the pan and stir well;
4. For the clusters, Wet your hands and then using the wet, heated tablespoon take a spoon full of the mix and roll into little balls between your hands. Lay the clusters onto the baking tray and let them cool down. As they cool, the malt and honey hardens and the clusters become crunchy.
5. You can also make crunchy slabs, follow steps 1 -3 and then pour the hot, sticky seeds onto an oiled plate or baking paper. With wet hands, mould into a disk and push gently down. When dry, cut the slab into slices or wedges.





Naan bread - yeasted

Naan breads are one of the quickest and easiest flatbreads to make from scratch. It is traditionally eaten in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan but one also finds versions of this bread in the Middle East and in some Mediterranean countries. This naan bread recipe is inspired by the types of breads I've had in "Indian" restaurants in the UK, I've personally never found this style of bread in India, but I'm sure it exists . . . makes 6 breads

150ml warm milk
2 tsp caster sugar
1 tsp dried yeast
450g plain flour (strong flour will work, but the bread will be less soft and cakey)
½ tsp salt
1 tsp baking powder
2 tbsp vegetable oil, plus a little extra
125ml natural yogurt
1 large egg, lightly beaten

1. Dissolve the sugar and the yeast in the warm milk and set aside for 15-20 minutes or until the mixture is frothy.
2. Sift the flour, salt and baking powder into a large bowl. Add the yeast mixture, 2 tbsp vegetable oil and the yogurt and egg. Mix and form sticky dough.
3. Empty the dough on to a clean surface and knead it until it is smooth, satiny and glutinous. Form into a ball and place into an oiled bowl. Cover the bowl with a piece of cling film and set aside in a warm, draught-free place for an hour or until the dough has doubled in bulk.
4. Pre-heat your oven to the highest temperature. Put a heavy baking tray in to heat in the oven. Pre-heat your grill.
5. Punch down the dough and knead it again. Divide into 6 equal balls. Keep 5 of them covered while you work with the sixth. Roll this ball into a tear-shaped naan, about 25cm in length and about 13cm at its widest.
6. Remove the hot baking tray from the oven and slap the naan on to it. Put it immediately into the oven for 3 minutes. It should puff up in an irregular way.
7. Now place the baking tray and naan under the grill, about 10cm away from the heat, for about 30 seconds or until the top of the naan browns slightly. Wrap the naan in a clean tea towel. Make all the naans this way and serve hot.





Go Wild – the sourdough adventure

Sourdough refers to dough or batter which is fermented by naturally occurring wild yeast. Our ancestors have made bread this way since ancient times and the simple technologies and bacteria have not changed much. I made my first sourdough starter out of necessity rather than desire. I was stuck up a mountain in a little hut surrounded by snow, with a wood fired oven, lots of wheat but no yeast. The “alchemical” process was recounted to me by a roguish friend and his method is now my method. People who make sourdough bread will generally be able to send a little starter your way to get you up and baking, but if you want to do things from scratch, it is simple to get a “**mother**” sourdough going and with a little care and attention very easy to keep her alive and productive.

Getting your “Mother” started:

This process takes 4 – 5 days and will result in a sprightly “mother” starter or leaven. You can make this starter with wheat or rye flour. My preference is rye as it tends to be more resilient and versatile than wheat.

Day 1: Mix 2 heaped tbsp of strong wholemeal wheat or dark rye flour with 3 tbsp of warm (40’c) spring water in bowl, to make a sloppy batter. (Tap water is chlorinated and hence does not encourage the growth of microorganisms) Cover with a muslin and keep in a warm space (25 -30’) like an airing cupboard for 24 hours

Day 2: Mix day ones’ batter with 2 tbsp more of your chosen flour and 3 tbsp warm spring water. Mix well, cover with the muslin and return to the warm place.

Day 3: You should start to see a little action in your batter now, some bubbles starting to form and a slightly sour smell developing. If using wheat, add 2 tbsp of **white** strong flour and 3 tbsp of warm water. For rye, continue as per day 2. Mix well, cover and return to the warmth.

Day 4: Things should really be happening now, more bubbles and a distinct sour smell. This is what I would call the sourdough “**Mother**” and with her by your side, you are ready to start the process of making naturally leavened bread.

Refreshing “Mum”: The first thing you will need to do before making your dough is to refresh your “**Mother**” and make what is known as a **production batter or leaven**. This means adding extra water and flour which both provides extra fermentable sugar for the culture to feed on and also introduces new wild yeasts to the starter. You will need to make this **production batter** each time you want to bake.

For rye production: Take 50g of the “**Mother**” starter and add 150g of rye flour and 300g of water. Mix this and allow it to ferment for at least 12 hours.

For a wheat production, add 50g of “**Mother**” starter to 100g of wholemeal flour and 65g of water. Mix well and allow it to ferment for 4 – 6 hours before use.

Keeping “Mum”: I keep my mother in a 500ml jar with a tight fitting lid and I store this in the fridge. So long as I refresh her every few weeks, she always comes back to full sprightliness. If you have too much starter, encourage others to **go wild** and give some away.





Making your bread

Sloppy Rye: The easiest of all sourdough breads to make is what I call “sloppy rye”, so called because it is more a batter than a dough and as such requires no kneading. It rises for about 8 hours and therefore is perfect for getting ready before bed and baking first thing in the morning. Makes 1 large or 2 small loaves

1. Take 250g of refreshed “**Mother**” and mix with 225g of rye flour, 125g-150g of warm water and 1tsp salt. Mix this together well to form a fairly sloppy dough/batter with the consistency of 4:1 cement.
2. Grease a large bread tin, with wet hands mould the dough into a rough loaf shape and plop into the tin so it occupies about half of the volume. Dust the top with more flour, and place the tin into a large plastic bag. I blow the bag up and secure the ends to create a warm damp proving space where the plastic doesn't touch the rising dough. Allow this to rise in a warm place for up 4 hours or a cool place for 8, by which time the dough should have doubled in size.
3. Preheat the oven to its hottest setting and bake hot for 10 minutes and then turn the heat down to 200°C. Bake for a further 30 – 40 minutes to ensure a thick crust.
4. Turn out of the tin and allow it to cool fully before cutting. The crumb will be chewy at first, but will dry out after a few hours. This bread is best on the 2nd day.

Country Cob: This recipe is loosely based on a French Country Bread - **Pain De Campagne**, it is easy to make but kneading can be a challenge for those who don't enjoy the sensory joys of sticky hands . . . I generally use a rye starter and a mix of strong white and whole wheat flours, but a wheat starter works just as well. Makes 1 large or 2 small loaves

1. Take 150g refreshed rye “**Mother**” and mix with 400g of strong white flour and 150g wholemeal brown flour, 325g of warm water and 1tsp fine salt to form fairly sticky dough. Mix this really well with a spoon and allow it to rest for five minutes before attempting to knead it.
2. Turn this onto a dusted surface and knead with vigour for about 10 minutes. The dough should be loose and sticky so try not to add too much flour. A dough scraper is very handy at this time. It will tighten up – have faith and trust in the process.
3. Return your dough to a bowl, cover and place in a warm space to ferment for a minimum of two hours – a longer ferment is preferable – up to 12 hours in a cool environment.
4. Dust or oil your surface and turn out the dough. Gently ease out the dough, stretch it out and fold it over in three. Form the dough into a shape of your choice and place onto a baking tray or place into linen lined bread basket or in an oiled tin. Sourdough can be less tensile than yeasted dough's which is why people often proof sourdough breads in tins or baskets. Prove in a warm place for up to two hours.
5. Preheat the oven to its hottest setting. If using a basket for rising, turn the bread carefully out onto an oiled tray. Dust the top of the loaf with flour and cut a few slashes across the top of the bread and place into the oven.
6. Bake hot for 10 minutes and then turn the heat down to 200°C. Bake for a further 30 minutes to ensure a thick crust. Cool completely before slicing.

