

EATING WITH CONFIDENCE

RECIPES FROM AN ORAL CANCER SURVIVOR

COOK BOOK



PRODUCED BY

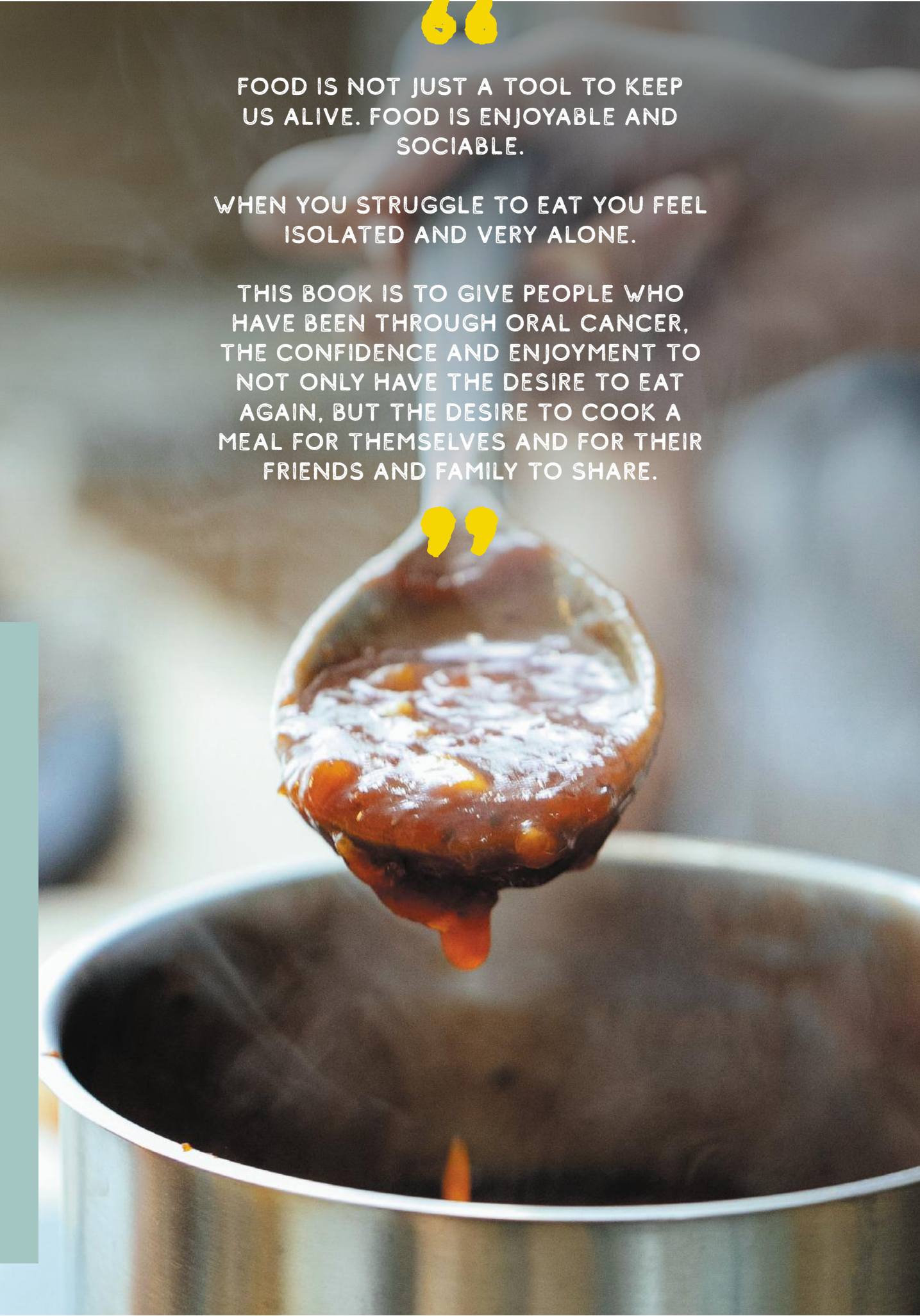


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WRITTEN BY

LAURA 'DIZZ' MARSTON



“
FOOD IS NOT JUST A TOOL TO KEEP
US ALIVE. FOOD IS ENJOYABLE AND
SOCIABLE.

WHEN YOU STRUGGLE TO EAT YOU FEEL
ISOLATED AND VERY ALONE.

THIS BOOK IS TO GIVE PEOPLE WHO
HAVE BEEN THROUGH ORAL CANCER,
THE CONFIDENCE AND ENJOYMENT TO
NOT ONLY HAVE THE DESIRE TO EAT
AGAIN, BUT THE DESIRE TO COOK A
MEAL FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR THEIR
FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO SHARE.

”

THANK YOU



Without the amazing treatment and support from my Head and Neck Clinic team at The Royal Marsden Hospital, the encouragement from my family and friends, and the love from JK, I would never have gotten this far.

Thank you to everyone who has been instrumental in getting me here.

YOU'VE ALL HELPED ME LIVE AGAIN.

LAURA



LOOK OUT FOR
MY RECIPE INFO
AND TOP TIPS!

HI THERE!

**I'M DIZZ
(LAURA)**

AND I'M AN ORAL
CANCER SURVIVOR

In 2019 I was diagnosed with stage 4 advanced oral cancer.

I had a 5.5cm tumour, which I named Larry, invading my tongue. He had to go, but with it he also took my tongue. I was told that I would never eat or speak again, unless I used a machine to speak and a tube into my stomach for liquid nutrition to be pumped through.

I refused to accept that my life would be that drastic, so I pushed and pushed myself to learn to swallow, speak and then finally eat.

After many long months of tears, frustration, anger, grit and determination, I did it. I achieved my objective of all of the above. I am not living a life of soups and smoothies, even though they are very tasty, but I can have stews, fried chicken, salads and stir-fries. I can also talk and people actually understand me.

Learning to eat was slow and not always successful. It was ongoing trial and error. There weren't any videos of people who have had a total glossectomy eating food. The Speech and Language Therapy teams were as helpful as they could be, but unless you have this problem then it's difficult to be able to find what works for each individual.

So, using my food background and passion for food - and my passion for feeding people - I set myself the challenge to eat. Once I learnt which method worked for me I was able to move from soups to stews to well, pretty much anything, over several months.

Radiotherapy in the mouth compromises the saliva and can eradicate taste buds, but every person experiences different side effects and permanent changes from their treatment.

Some people are no longer able to eat tomatoes in one form or another yet some can, some are unable to take spices no matter the strength, whereas some people can take ridiculously spicy hot food. Some people lose their taste buds altogether.

This book is a guide, a tool to help you get that desire to eat again and to be able to curb your craving. There are hints and tips on how to make the food challenge your mouth during its rehabilitation period, but also make food sociable again.

LAURA

SOUPS



Hearty meals
in a bowl

SMOOTHIES & SHAKES



For when you're on
the go or want
something quick

SAUCES & GRAVIES



Adding flavour and
moisture to every meal

LIGHT BITES & SIDE DISHES



Small meals for the
small appetite

MAINS



Meals to share with
family and friends

ALL THE SWEET THINGS



Desserts to satisfy a
sweet tooth

KITCHEN MEASUREMENT AND CONVERSION CHARTS

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Hello from The Swallows

Head and Neck Cancer Charity

The Swallows Charity supports all people affected by head and neck cancers, patients, carers friends or relatives. The patient is the focus for support, help and signposting, however the role of caregivers and others is vital too, with their own support needs often overlooked.

We are delighted to be supporting Laura with the production of this fantastic cook book, and we hope many patients will find it useful during their cancer journeys.

24/7 Patient and Carer support line service:


 **07504 725 059**

Within the UK we are involved with Health Professionals at all levels to help them give that support you will need throughout your journey.

Please feel free to call the 24/7 support line, or alternatively my details are listed below.

I hope your journey has a positive outcome and remember when you can't see the light, you can always give us a call.



Chris Curtis
Chief Executive Officer,
Honorary Senior Lecturer within the School of Health
Sciences (UCLan)
The Swallows Head & Neck Cancer Support Charity
 chris@theswallows.org.uk



Support for all affected by
**Head and Neck
Cancer**

Support Services

24/7 Support Line

It is our intention for every person affected by head and neck cancer to have access to support at the point they need it and by the method of their choice on a 24/7 basis. This could be by telephone, email or social media. This is the core activity of the Swallows Charity and provides a unique resource to enable you or the caregiver to talk to another Survivor or Caregiver by calling our 24/7 Support Line (not a call centre).

Call us any day, any time:

 **07504 725 059**



Our Monthly Meeting

Currently, we have several Support Groups in the UK. Our aim is to increase this number over the coming years. The monthly meeting at which patients, caregivers, family and friends can attend to discuss their issues. You are given the opportunity to talk about these matters collectively or separately in a safe environment. Our experience and feedback gathered from attendees is that they value this time spent together to talk about their own specific issues in an open and honest way and to receive support. We aim to give the caregivers time as a group to have more open and frank exchange which results in people in similar situations being able to offer much valued support and guidance.

Other services available

- Providing a wide range of patient & caregiver information books, awareness leaflets, early detection, signs & symptoms leaflets and posters, self-screening leaflets, human papilloma virus awareness leaflets to patients, carers, relatives, GPs, professors, surgeons, clinical nurses, chemists and dentists.
- Patient Communication tools such as the Boogie Board.
- Personal meetings subject to availability.



Keep up to date

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For general enquiries email: info@theswallows.org.uk



Keep up to date with the latest news and resources: www.theswallows.org.uk

BOOSTERS

Boosters are things that you can add to gain extra flavour or extra calories. Food writer Jack Monroe suggests keeping a tin to put orange peel in, once you've finished with the orange. When the tin is full pop the orange peel into the oven to dry out, then blitz the dried peel to create a very intense orange flavouring. You can do the same with all citrus fruits. Sprinkle the powder in smoothies, shakes or add to puddings.

For extra calories you can make smoothies, jelly, blancmange, Angel Delight and Dream Topping with Ensure, Fortisip, Fresubin or with Scandishake that has been made with full fat milk. Use the vanilla ones as milk in your warm drinks.

To enrich soups for calories, add in some single cream just before serving or use the neutral flavoured nutrition drinks, or add butter.

Slow cooked caramelized onions are great for putting onto meat as they give the meat moisture. Chop up a few onions and slowly cook in a large pan with a lot of butter. It takes a good hour to caramelize onions, and you have to stir them every so often to stop them from sticking.

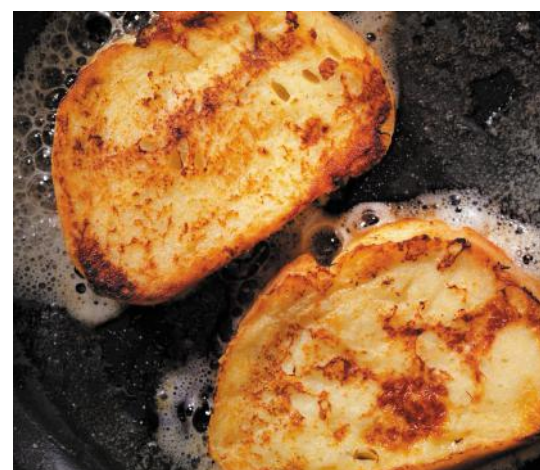
If you're having rice with your meal, pour some melted butter or ghee over the top before serving. The hot rice will soak up the butter and make it taste amazing.

If your medication is making you a bit bunged up, you need to have more fibre in your diet. Adding a Weetabix Protein biscuit into a smoothie, or using chia and flax seeds sprinkled on foods will give a much needed fibre boost without changing the texture of your food.

Slow cooked fatty meats are better for head and neck cancer patients and survivors, so slow cooked lamb shoulder, roasted pork belly and chicken thighs are all great meats. If you want to roast a whole chicken, grab yourself some softened butter and put into a piping bag. Carefully separate the chicken skin from the bird, but don't remove it. Push the piping bag under the skin and pipe the butter in between the skin and the flesh. When it's roasting, the butter will help to flavour and soften the meat.

Melted butter poured over porridge is a Scandinavian breakfast. It really helps with swallowing and adds extra protein and calories.

Fried bread is wonderful. It melts in the mouth, it's full of calories, and yet it's very satisfying. Fry the bread in lard or dripping for extra flavour and calories. If you struggle with crunchy bread, soak the fried bread in soup, gravy or a sauce.



EQUIPMENT

ELECTRIC STICK BLENDER

I use an electric stick blender to blend my soups. It is JK's but I've used it so much since my diagnosis and treatment. I use it to blend so many things, not just soup. It's really easy to clean.



BALLOON WHISK



I use a balloon whisk for when I need to hand whisk something or make a sauce. I never understand why recipes call for a wooden spoon when a whisk will prevent lumps from happening. Ban the wooden spoon!

SPATULAS



I have a set of spatulas that are different sizes and shapes. They are brilliant for scraping the bottom of a jug or bowl, stirring things in pots and woks, and for folding in flour or egg whites. I have a small, long, scraper that looks a bit like a palette knife. I use that for scraping out the dregs from a jar.



NUTRIBULLET BLENDER

I use a Nutribullet blender for smoothies and shakes. I do use it for other things too such as crushing ice, making hummus and guacamole. I did have a Breville Actiblend, but I burnt the motor through overuse!

STAND MIXER

I love my stand mixer. It has a whisk, a paddle and a dough hook. I use them all. It's such a versatile machine.



WILTSHIRE

EST. FARM 1991

FOODS

Meals for
swallowing
difficulties

FLAVOURS YOU LOVE IN A TEXTURE YOU NEED

Enjoy good food every day in a texture that's right for you with the **Softer Foods** range by Wiltshire Farm Foods. Carefully created meals for those experiencing swallowing difficulties.

Made by award-winning chefs from quality ingredients, we have something for every meal of the day. Each dish is nutritionally balanced and made in line with IDDSI guidelines, so that you can eat with confidence. Just simply cook from frozen and serve - it's that easy.



- ✓ **Available in three textures,**
Puréed, Minced and Soft & Bite-Sized.
- ✓ **Over 85 delicious dishes**
in flavours you know and love.
- ✓ **Delivered straight to your door**
by friendly local drivers.
- ✓ **Easy to order**
by phone, online or with your driver.
- ✓ **No contract. No commitment.**

For your **FREE** brochure call **0800 680 0655**
or visit us at: www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com



WILTSHIRE

EST. FARM 1991

FOODS

HOW TO EAT WELL WITH SWALLOWING DIFFICULTIES

Having dysphagia (also known as swallowing difficulties) shouldn't get in the way of anybody's road to recovery. It can be difficult to manage changing the texture of food as well as ensuring that individual eats enough food and drinks enough fluid to maintain a healthy, balanced diet. Eating food that isn't the right texture can have frightening and dangerous consequences.

Whilst some people can successfully blend their own foods to a safe texture, this is not always possible for most, and can lead to the meal becoming unsafe. It can also be a time consuming and stressful experience; not only making sure the food remains hot, but ensuring it is nutritious as well as delicious is hard for most to achieve.

In addition, the nutritional content can also be significantly reduced when water or other fluids are added. Whilst the texture needs to be safe first and foremost, ensure small quantities of water are added at a time, so as to avoid any reduction in nutritional value.

It's really important that meals look as good as they taste, and unfortunately home blended food can often not look as appetising. If meals don't look good, we tend to not eat as much of them and this can mean we're not getting the vitamins, minerals and calories we all need. There are different consistencies of food that you may be recommended to eat and these will depend on what texture a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) has suggested to you. For example, a Puréed diet, Minced diet, or a Soft and Bite-Sized diet. If you have been recommended to have a purée consistency by your SLT, your food should meet several criteria, such as to all be of a consistent puréed texture, without any lumps, and not require any chewing. This can be very difficult to achieve using home-blending equipment.

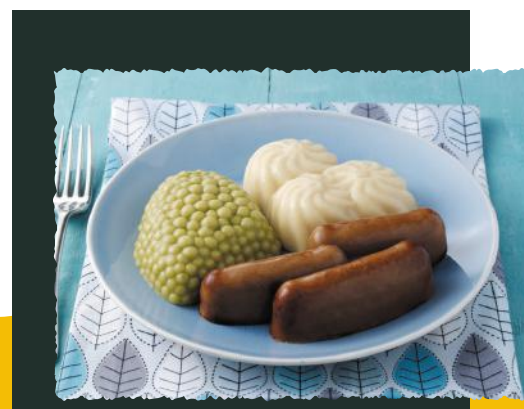
Did you know you can get ready meals that are specifically made for those with swallowing difficulties? Not only is the nutritional content great for those in recovery and available to view on the packaging, great care is also taken to ensure the meals look appetising. When texture modified meals resemble the appearance of regular food as much as possible, it makes it easier to enjoy a meal with friends or family.

Just because someone has a swallowing difficulty, it doesn't mean they should have to compromise when it comes to flavour. Do you miss fish & chip Fridays? Or your regular weekend curry?

The award-winning Softer Foods range from Wiltshire Farm Foods has plenty of variety, including its Purée Petite Steak and Chips with an innovative finish on the steak making it look grilled to perfection; Purée Chicken Tikka Masala with the ground-breaking addition of shaped rice and snacks such as Purée Beans on Toast and the nation's favourite: a Purée Bacon Sandwich.

By having a great looking and tasting Softer Foods ready meal you can join in with family Fish & Chip Fridays! You'll probably even be eating more too, getting those vital calories you need.

Food is one of life's greatest pleasures – why compromise when you don't have to?



Visit us online at wff.link/swallows

Enjoy flavours you love at a texture you need.

SAUSAGES FOR EVERYONE!



“
THIS BOOK IS A GUIDE,
A TOOL TO HELP YOU GET
THAT DESIRE TO EAT AGAIN
AND TO BE ABLE TO CURB
YOUR CRAVINGS.

THERE ARE HINTS AND TIPS
ON HOW TO MAKE THE FOOD
CHALLENGE YOUR MOUTH
DURING ITS REHABILITATION
PERIOD AND ALSO MAKE FOOD
SOCIABLE AGAIN.
”



SOUPS

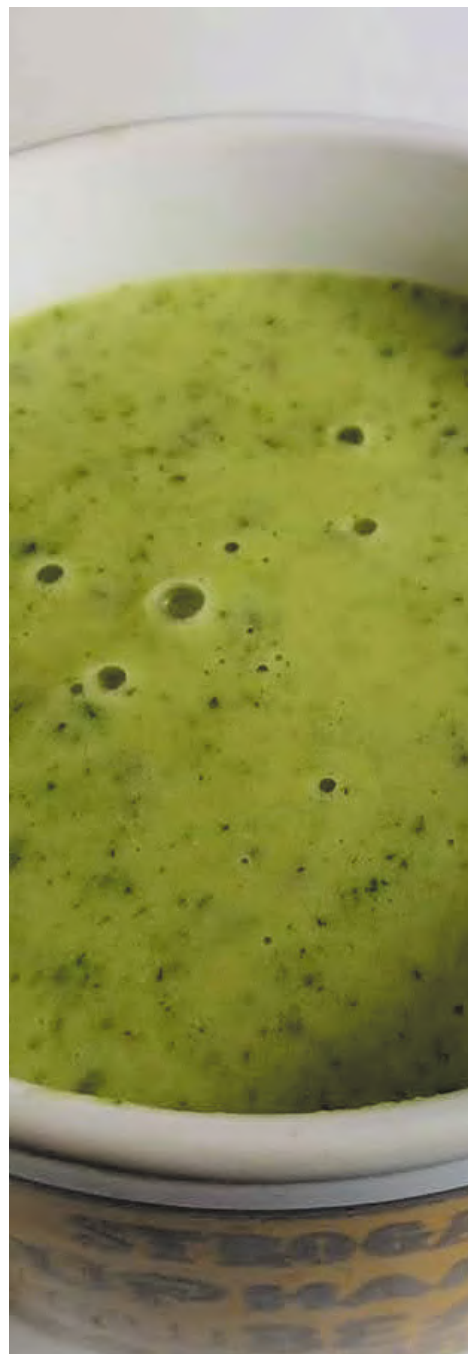


Soups aren't just tomato or cream of chicken, although those are very tasty flavours. With imagination and creativity you can make the most superb soups that are tasty and filling.

I found that I would watch people eat, craving what they were eating - pizza, fish pie, roast potatoes to name a few of these. When recovering after radiotherapy, what I wouldn't have given to be able to enjoy roasted potatoes, pizza or cauliflower cheese.

So I experimented. I played around with recipes or meals that I really enjoyed, but added stock and sometimes cream and lots of butter, to turn these meals into fabulous soups. Once you are skilled at making the soups, feel free to change the recipes and play around with the flavours. You can add extra bits, take bits away, make them your own recipes to suit your tastes or your needs and to work with your mouth in whatever stage of treatment you are in.

In this chapter you will be able to make the following soups to satisfy those cravings of solid food.



PEPPERONI
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PEPPERONI PIZZA SOUP

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I had such a craving for Pepperoni pizza one night after my husband had pizza for dinner. The craving was so strong but I didn't know how I could satisfy it. Then I had an idea and headed to the supermarket to purchase the items I needed. My experiment worked!

Every mouthful was satisfying. I took the leftover sour cream and chive dip pot that my husband had from his pizza meal and used it as a drizzle for the top

and could almost imagine that I was eating a pepperoni pizza.

If you have a sensitive mouth from radiotherapy, this soup won't be for you just yet as the seasoning in the pepperoni does give this a little bit of heat. Sour cream does help to combat it but I wouldn't advise it just yet. Keep it for when you are a few months post radiotherapy as your treat to getting through that ordeal.

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan). Place the tomato halves on the baking tray, cut side facing up. Push half a clove of garlic into each half of the tomato until it's covered by the flesh. Season with pepper.

Put the quartered peppers, flesh side down, onto the same tray as the tomatoes and drizzle all with oil. Place into the oven. Cook until the tomatoes are soft and slightly shrivelled and the skins of the peppers are blistering.

Whilst the peppers and tomatoes are in the oven, melt the butter in a large saucepan. Once the butter has melted add the onions and put on a low heat to caramelize. Stir until the onions are coated in the butter. Once the onions have caramelized, add the pepperoni slices to release the oil. By this time your tomatoes and peppers should be ready, so take them out of the oven to cool a bit.

Add the salsa into the pepperoni and onion mix and stir to coat everything in salsa. Tip the garlic tomatoes and peppers, plus any juices on the tray, into the saucepan. Stir everything together and turn up the heat to medium.

Once everything has been mixed through, add the tinned tomatoes. Bring to the boil and allow to simmer for 10 minutes with the lid on the pan.

After 10 minutes, give the soup a good stir and add the chicken stock. Stir it through and add the chunks of brie, a little at a time, stirring through each addition and then add the mozzarella in the same way.

Once the two cheeses have melted into the soup, take it off the heat and blitz in a blender or with a stick blender, whichever you have. Blitz until the soup is your desired consistency. If the soup is too thick then add some more water or milk to thin it out. Season to taste with soy sauce and black pepper.

You can play about with flavours if pepperoni isn't your thing. You can omit the meat and add basil for a margherita pizza, mixed peppers and mushrooms for a vegetarian pizza, remove the meat and the cheese and add tofu, vegan cheese and vegetable stock for a vegan version.

To serve, I added a dollop of sour cream. If you're able to eat something a bit more solid, then some small cubes of bread, buttered or bare, placed on top or the bottom of the bowl, so it soaks in, is heavenly.

Just have a look at a pizza menu and see what takes your fancy. Please let me know how they turn out.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 2 red peppers, cut into quarters
- 6 large tomatoes, cut in half
- 6 cloves of garlic, cut in half lengthways (fiddly but worth it)
- Drizzle of vegetable oil
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 pack sliced pepperoni
- 800g chopped tomatoes (2 tins)
- 3 tbsp tomato salsa
- 500 ml chicken stock (hot water with 2 chicken Oxo cubes is just fine)
- 1 ball mozzarella, ripped up
- 150g brie cut into chunks (or a soft cheese of your liking. Camembert would work well)
- Light soy sauce to taste
- Black pepper to taste

TOP TIP

You can play about with flavours if pepperoni isn't your thing. You can omit the meat and add basil for a margherita pizza, mixed peppers and mushrooms for a vegetarian pizza, remove the meat and the cheese and add tofu, vegan cheese and vegetable stock for a vegan version.

GARLIC ROAST POTATO SOUP



A VIEW FROM LAURA



Roast potatoes, oh how I missed them in my first year after my surgery. I didn't feel confident trying to eat them as I was worried about choking. This soup was my saviour. It's creamy and full of potatoes. The addition of roasted garlic and

roasted onion lifts the flavour beautifully. The addition of Marmite, or other yeast extract products, enhance the umami flavour without taking away the flavour of roast potatoes.

METHOD

Place the potatoes in a pan of salty water and bring to the boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until the potatoes are nearly falling apart. Drain, give a shake to fluff up the edges and leave to cool. As they cool down, cracks appear in the potatoes. These cracks will allow more oil to be absorbed and create those glorious roasted bits that taste so good.

As they are cooling down, preheat the oven to 200°C (fan) and put the fat into a roasting tray. Put the tray in the oven to heat the oil.

Put the onions, cut side down, onto a baking tray and drizzle with oil or duck/goose fat. Wrap the bulb of garlic in foil, but drizzle with a drop of fat before scrunching the foil shut, placing it on the same tray as the onions. Put the tray on the lower shelf in the oven.

Take the tray of hot fat out of the oven (be careful as it will be incredibly hot). Pour the potatoes into the fat. It will sizzle. Using a spoon and a fork, roll the potatoes into the fat until they are fully coated. Pop the tray on the top shelf in the oven.

They should take about an hour to roast. If they take longer, then they take longer, if it's less time, then so be it. You want the potatoes to be golden brown and crunchy and ever so inviting.

The onions should be really soft, the petals will be coming apart when you try to pick them up. Wait until they are cool before you do anything though.

When they have cooled a little, pull the cooked onion away from the root and the skin, you might have to cut them but usually they will pull away. Put into a large saucepan. Add the potatoes and any oil left in the pan. Unwrap the foil from around the garlic. Take the garlic out and cut in half. Squeeze the soft garlic paste into the pan with the onions and roasties and add the butter.

Add the Marmite into the stock, then pour the stock and cream over the contents of the pan. Leave to soak in for at least 3 hours, or overnight. This will allow the flavours of the vegetables to flavour the stock and cream.

After waiting for however long you chose, blitz until your desired consistency. If you need the soup to be a thinner consistency just add more cream or milk.

I like serving this with either a dollop of garlic butter or some cream cheese and a sprinkling of dried crispy onions. On it's own is just as fabulous.

To make it vegetarian, change the chicken stock for vegetable stock and use Vegemite in place of the Marmite.

When you are starting to introduce solid food into your diet, this works really well. Just keep some potatoes to one side before adding into the soup and blitzing. Chop the potatoes up into the desired size, start small and work your way up to bite sized chunks then a little bigger so that you can bite into a piece if it were on a fork, then add into the soup and stir through.

INGREDIENTS

- 2kg roasting potatoes, peeled and cut into similar sizes
- 2 large onions cut in half, leaving the outer skin and the root on
- 1 bulb elephant garlic or 2 bulbs of regular garlic
- 5 tbsp of duck or goose fat
- 300ml single cream
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 litre chicken stock
- 2 tsp Marmite or other yeast extract
- Salt and pepper to taste

TOP TIP

To make it vegetarian, change the chicken stock for vegetable stock and use Vegemite in place of the Marmite.

HONEY ROAST PARSNIP SOUP

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I had just come out of hospital for the second time. When I came out, feeling much better, I started craving roasted vegetables. My sister Eve suggested roast parsnip soup as the parsnips are full of flavour and they break down really easily.

I had looked at a few recipes and saw one with honey roasted parsnips. I really liked the idea but the recipe had so many ingredients and was such a faff that I created my own. If you serve this slightly warmed, it is soothing on a sore mouth and throat.



METHOD

Heat the oven to 200°C (fan).

Cut the parsnips into similar sized chunks (no need to peel them first) and put into a roasting pan.

Drizzle vegetable oil over and then cover all the parsnips in the oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Pop the pan into the oven and roast until soft. Take out of the oven and pour the honey over. Be careful as they will be hot, but using a spoon, try to cover the parsnips completely in the honey. Pop the tray back into the oven to roast the parsnips for another 6 - 10 minutes.

Whilst the parsnips are cooling, heat some oil in a large saucepan and add the onions. Soften for a few minutes and then add the garlic. You don't want any colour on them, so if they start to go golden, take the pan off the heat, add a splash of water and then lower the heat.

Add the ramen broth. You can use a litre of vegetable stock in place of the ramen broth if you can't get hold of it.

Add the parsnips to the broth and the milk. Keep off the heat, but stir everything together and leave to sit for an hour to allow the parsnips to infuse the liquid.

Season to taste and then blitz until smooth.

Serve with a drizzle of single cream, natural yoghurt or garlic butter.

**Ramen broth is high in iodine*

INGREDIENTS

- 500g of parsnips, washed but not peeled
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 4 cloves of garlic
- 500 ml whole milk
- 1 litre ramen broth* - You can buy ready-made ramen broth from most supermarkets in the world food section but vegetable stock works just as well
- Oil for roasting
- Runny honey for coating the vegetables

TOP TIP

Serve with a drizzle of single cream, natural yoghurt or garlic butter.

PEANUT BUTTER CHICKEN SOUP (PBC)

INGREDIENTS

- 500ml chicken stock, heated
- 8 chicken thighs, bone and skin on
- 340g jar smooth peanut butter
- 2 onions, halved and thinly sliced
- 3 tbsp sunflower oil
- 3 tbsp finely chopped ginger
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 5 fresh tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 3 sweet potatoes, cut into chunks
- 200g green beans, sliced
- 2 red bell/salad peppers, de-seeded and cut into chunks
- Salt and pepper to season

TOP TIP

Serve with a topping of crispy onions, sour cream or a soft-boiled egg, or even on its own as it's so tasty.

A VIEW FROM LAURA



My dad makes this really tasty peanut butter chicken stew which he serves with his famous cheesy broccoli pasta. It is usually spicy, but alas I'm not great with spices anymore thanks to radiotherapy, so if you are someone who can tolerate

a bit of spice, then feel free to add in pepper sauce or some fresh chillies to your taste.

METHOD

Heat a large pan and brown the chicken thighs. Once brown, remove from the pan and put to one side.

In the same pan add the onions. Fry until soft, then add the ginger, tomato paste and fresh tomatoes. Cook for 5-7 minutes. Slowly add the stock, scraping up any bits stuck to the bottom of the pan as they will add extra flavour.

Add the bay leaves, canned tomatoes and the peanut butter. Add some warm water to the jar, put the lid on and give it a good shake to get every little bit out of the jar. Pour into the pan.

Gently add the chicken pieces and season with salt and pepper. Put the lid on the pan and simmer for 30 minutes.

Take the lid off and give the soup a stir. Add the sweet potatoes, peppers and green beans, stir through and simmer for another 30 minutes.

When the 30 minutes is up, take the lid off and give it a stir. The chicken should be really tender. Take the pan off the heat.

Using a slotted spoon or some tongs, remove the bay leaves, the chicken thighs and a few of the chunks of sweet potato. Leave to cool.

When the chicken is cool enough to handle, pull the chicken and skin off the bone. Leave the meat from two of the thighs to one side with the sweet potato, and add the rest of the meat and skin to the pan. Blitz with a stick blender until smooth.

Shred the remaining chicken and cut the cooked sweet potato into smaller pieces. Add to the pan and stir through.

Serve with a topping of crispy onions, sour cream or a soft boiled egg, or even on its own as it's so tasty. You can even mix in some cooked rice for a boost of carbs.

If you are a foodie, then I suggest removing the chicken skin right at the start and dry frying or oven roast it until it's beautifully crispy. Leave to cook and chop it up into slivers and use for a delicious topping either on its own or mixed with some crispy onions.



I like playing around with toppings for soup. This is PBC where I've added diced tomato, red onion, crispy onion and a tiny drizzle of sweet chilli sauce.

PEA, HAM AND WATERCRESS SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 potatoes (about the size of a medium fist) skin on, diced
- 500g frozen peas
- 300g ham, roughly chopped
- 500ml chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 bag watercress
- Salt and pepper to taste

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I've always found that pea and ham soup was missing something. Watercress adds a wonderful subtle pepperiness that enhances the pea and ham really well, but without the heat of pepper which is

great news for radiotherapy patients. The watercress also turns the soup into a beautiful green colour.

METHOD

Melt the butter in a large pan and add the sliced onion. Cook until nice and soft.

Add the potatoes and cook for 15 minutes until starting to cook through. These will help thicken your soup.

Add the ham and peas and cook for around 10 minutes, until everything is hot and coated in the butter.

Add the stock and bring to the boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Turn off the heat, add the watercress and put the lid on the pan. This will wilt the watercress without overcooking it so that the flavour remains fresh. Leave for 20 minutes. Blend until smooth and then season to taste.

This is lovely both warm and chilled for those warm days or when you're going through radiotherapy and need something to cool down your mouth and throat.

Add a spoonful or two of sour cream, single cream or some creamy cheese and chive dip to add protein, flavour and soothing properties.

CAULIFLOWER CHEESE SOUP

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Whilst I could only have liquids, I found I was craving vegetables and umami. I'd been living on Ensure drinks for what felt like far too long, and they are super sweet. My meagre tastebuds needed a break from the sugar. I love a warming bowl of cauliflower cheese when the days are chilly and wet, so it was super

easy to turn one of my favourite comfort foods into a bowl of liquid comfort. Roasting the cauliflower gives you such a great flavour that works well in the soup and also if you want to keep it as cauliflower cheese (don't add the stock if that's the case).

INGREDIENTS

- 2 heads of cauliflower
- Drizzle of vegetable oil
- 25g butter
- 25g plain flour
- 300ml whole milk, warmed up to prevent lumps
- 2 tsp English mustard powder
- 100g cream cheese
- 200g of Cheddar or Gruyère cheese, grated
- 125g ball of mozzarella, shredded
- 100g Parmesan, grated
- 200ml vegetable stock
- Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Heat the oven to 210°C (fan).

Take your cauliflowers and remove the leaves and stems, keeping them to one side for later. Cut the cauliflowers in quarters and then cut the quarters so you have a few flat sides. The sides will caramelize in the oven, so you want more than one as that will bring lovely flavour.

Put the cauliflower and the stem onto a roasting tray and drizzle with vegetable oil, rubbing it all over to ensure they are completely coated. Add some salt and pepper too. Pop it in the oven for 10 minutes.

After 10 minutes turn the cauliflower onto another side, using tongs to prevent your fingers from getting burnt. Put it back in the oven for another 10 minutes. Keep doing this until all of the sides are golden brown in places.

Once cooked, remove from the oven and allow to cool down. If you want to add a scant shaving of Parmesan at this point, feel free.

Now onto the cheese sauce.

Melt the butter in a pan on the stove. Once the butter has started to sizzle add the flour and stir until it forms a thick paste. Using a whisk, gradually add in the milk, until you have a lovely smooth liquid. Sprinkle in the mustard powder, the grated cheeses and the mozzarella followed by black pepper to taste.

In a large pan add the roasted cauliflower and pour over that gorgeous cheesy sauce. Give it all a good mix and add half of the vegetable stock. Blitz it up and use the remaining stock to thin it out if it's too thick. Taste it and add salt and pepper if required.

Serve with some crispy onions on top and some toast soldiers.

You can also try this with different cauliflowers such as purple, green or Romanesco.

TOP TIP

You can also try this with different cauliflowers such as purple, green or Romanesco.

SAUSAGE, TOMATO AND MIXED PEPPER SOUP



A VIEW FROM LAURA



This recipe helped me chew larger chunks of food and it also made me realise that I could eat tomatoes after radiotherapy. It's a lovely hearty soup that I enjoyed hot and cold.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp butter or oil
- 6 Heck! pork sausages, each cut on the diagonal into 3 pieces
- 4 mixed peppers, de-seeded and cut into chunks
- 2 white onions, cut into chunks
- 6 fresh tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 400g tins chopped tomatoes
- 1 tbsp tomato ketchup
- 1 tsp Marmite, heaped
- 600ml chicken stock
- Salt and pepper

METHOD

Melt the butter in a large pan. When it starts to sizzle, reduce the heat and add in the sausages. Cook until browned all over. Remove with a slotted spoon and fry the onions for a couple of minutes until they start to soften. Tip in the garlic and peppers. Keep frying until they are starting to colour and become fragrant.

Add the chopped tomatoes and browned sausage chunks (including any juices), then increase the heat a bit more. You want the tomatoes to fall apart.

Then add the tinned tomatoes, Marmite and tomato ketchup. Combine everything together and pour in the stock. Bring to the boil and then reduce to a gentle simmer. Simmer for 15 minutes until the sausages are cooked through.

Taste and season accordingly.

Everything should be nice and soft to bite. If you are unable to bite and chew, blend until it's the desired consistency. You can add water to thin it down, or milk/cream to enrich.

It's also great to add a little bit of smoked paprika for a lovely smoky taste. You can replace the ketchup for some BBQ sauce. Add in some kidney beans and chickpeas for extra texture.

Make it veggie by replacing the sausages with Heck! Meat-Free Magic Chipolatas or Veg With Edge Vegan Frankfurter, and use vegetable stock to replace the chicken stock.

In the picture I've shown the soup after I had blended it and then added a chopped cheese slice for extra flavour. I am now able to eat bread but when I was in recovery I would allow the bread to soak in the soup until it nearly dissolved.

TOP TIP

Make it veggie by replacing the sausages with Heck! Meat-Free Magic Chipolatas or Veg With Edge Vegan Frankfurter, and use vegetable stock to replace the chicken stock.

FISH PIE SOUP

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I made this purely by accident and it was so lovely. I had made myself and JK a fish pie for dinner. It would be the first meal we ate, that was the same, in over nine months. The expectation was high. Sadly, I couldn't eat it. My mouth wasn't playing ball and I just couldn't manage more than a couple of mouthfuls. I was heartbroken and vowed I would never

eat again! The next day was a new day, and I wondered what it would be like to add some fish stock and a drop more milk to it and then blend it into a soup. It tasted pretty good. Adding the mashed sweet potato into the bowl before pouring on the soup was fab and it made me feel like I was eating a fish pie.

METHOD

Warm the milk and the fish together in a saucepan for 10 minutes. Allow the fish to sit in the warm milk, off the heat, for another 10 minutes to infuse the milk. Pour the milk into a jug and put the fish to one side, adding in the smoked salmon bits.

Melt the butter in a pan and stir in the flour until you make a paste. Add the spring onions and stir for around a minute or two.

Slowly whisk in the warm milk, and bring to the boil. Keep whisking to ensure there are no lumps. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook through for 5 minutes. Add the mustard and stir through, then gently add all of the fish.

Blitz together, slowly adding the vegetable stock until it's the desired consistency. Add the mixed veg and some seasoning to taste then combine all together.

This is a great soup that goes well with a soft boiled or poached egg on top, a dollop of mashed potato, mashed sweet potato or mashed veggies such as swede, carrots or parsnips.

Add a sprinkling of cheese and some dried onions and you have a hearty dish. If you're feeling adventurous, then pour the soup in an oven proof bowl, carefully smooth on the mashed veggie of your choice, sprinkle on the cheese and put under the grill or in the oven to get the closest fish pie you can get.

Once your swallow gets stronger, you can thicken the soup up by reducing the amount of vegetable stock, and also leave some of the cooked fish to stir through after blending.

Gradually increase the textures to give you something to chew and swallow.

INGREDIENTS

- 400ml whole milk
- 25g butter
- 25g plain flour
- 4 spring onions, finely sliced
- 1 pack fish pie mix (around 350g - 400g)
- 100g smoked salmon
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 300ml vegetable stock
- 150g mixed frozen veg, defrosted - the one that has tiny bits of veggies

TOP TIP

Once your swallow gets stronger, you can thicken the soup up by reducing the amount of vegetable stock, and also leave some of the cooked fish to stir through after blending.

ROASTED VEGETABLE SOUP WITH CRISPY SAGE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cauliflower
- 3 parsnips (large)
- 2 leeks
- 4 cloves of garlic
- 1 large onion, quartered
- 3 potatoes
- Pack of fresh sage
- 1.5 litres vegetable stock
- Parmesan rind (chunk of the rind from a block of Parmesan) optional
- 1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 50g grated Parmesan
- Salt and pepper to taste

TOP TIP

You can add some truffle oil, cream or melted butter on the top with the crispy sage.

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Most of the nutrition things you are given are sweet, super sweet. When your taste-buds are trying to come back, the sweetness is a good thing as it's something you can sort of taste. However, when/if they do come back, you realise

just how sweet they are. I was craving vegetables like mad. This soup fills that craving really well. The sage is perfect just to finish it off.

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan).

Chop the cauliflower, parsnips and leeks and place in a large roasting pan. Cut the potatoes into cubes (no need to peel) and add to the pan with the onion and garlic and slice and toss everything together. Drizzle over olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast for 20 minutes.

Give everything a good toss and then roast for a further 30 minutes, or until everything is nice and tender and cooked through. Remove from the oven.

Add the stock to a large saucepan with the Parmesan rind and heat until it is simmering. Remove rind and pour the stock into the roasting pan and scrape to release any flavours from the pan.

Blend everything for a minute or so before adding four sage leaves, grated Parmesan, mustard and more salt and pepper to your taste and then blitz until smooth. Pour back into the saucepan and warm through.

In a pan fry some sage leaves in oil until crispy and use as a topping to serve.

You can add some truffle oil, cream or melted butter on the top with the crispy sage.

BROCCOLI AND STILTON SOUP

A VIEW FROM LAURA



It took me a long time to like blue cheese. Whilst I don't love it, I do enjoy it. I was so surprised at how well broccoli and Stilton work together, and also how mellow the cheese becomes when it's heated up.



METHOD

Heat the butter in a large pan and add the onions.

Cook over a medium heat until the onions are soft, but not coloured. Season with salt.

Chop the broccoli into florets and chop the stalk up into very small pieces. Add to the softened onions and cook for 6 minutes.

Pour the chicken stock over the mixture and bring to the boil.

Cook until the broccoli has softened.

Add the Stilton and the cream - stir until the cheese has completely melted through.

Return to the boil then blitz until smooth. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

This soup goes really well with smoked ham and a soft boiled egg, or bread with lashings of butter.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 broccoli head
- 100g Stilton, crumbled
- 500ml chicken stock
- 100ml double cream
- Salt and pepper

TOP TIP

This soup goes really well with smoked ham and a soft-boiled egg, or bread with lashings of butter.

ROAST CHICKEN SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 100g softened butter
- 1.5kg whole chicken
- Vegetable oil
- 4 potatoes, peeled and cut in half
- 2 large carrots, scrubbed and cut into large chunks
- 2 large parsnips, cut into chunks
- 1 bag broccoli and cauliflower florets
- ½ bag shredded cabbage and leek
- 1.2 litres chicken stock
- Small pack sage and onion stuffing mix
- Salt and pepper

TOP TIP

If you're starting to boost up your chewing, pour the soup into a large Yorkshire pudding with the stuffing balls.

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Lots of people say that chicken soup is good for the soul. For me, this was the soup that made me realise I was properly on the road to recovery. I guess it's more of a stew that has been blended into a soup, so it's entirely up to you at

what stage to blend it. It definitely made me feel like I'd eaten a Sunday roast. Absolutely satisfying bowl of yumminess.

METHOD

Heat the oven to 170°C (fan).

Very carefully, put your hand between the skin and the flesh of the chicken. Be gentle and take your time. Separate the skin from the flesh then smear half of the butter underneath the skin. This will help the meat be tender and flavoursome. Coat the outside and the cavity with the rest of the butter, and season with salt and pepper all over, as well as inside the bird.

Place a few chunks of carrot and parsnip in the centre of a roasting pan and place the chicken on top. Put the tray with the chicken and veggies into the oven for around 1 hour 20 minutes. To check that it's done, pierce the thigh with a knife. The juices should be clear.

Whilst the chicken is in the oven, par boil the potatoes in salty water, until they are nice and tender. Heat a roasting pan with some oil in.

Once the potatoes are done, drain off and allow to air dry for a little bit. Once the oil is nice and hot, tip in the potatoes, carrots and parsnips. Roast until the potatoes are golden and the carrots and parsnips are soft and sticky.

Leave the roasted veg and the chicken to cool. When the chicken is cool enough to touch, strip off all of the meat, including the skin. Pour any juices into a jug to be used later. Keep the bones. Cut the roasted vegetables into bite size chunks.

Place the chicken roasting pan over heat and add in a touch of water to loosen off any bits stuck to the bottom of the pan. This is called 'deglazing'. Once the pan is deglazed, pour the liquid into the jug and do the same with the roasted veg pan. All of these bits from both pans are flavour that will boost your soup.

In a large saucepan add the chicken bones and stock. Bring to the boil and simmer for 50 minutes. Discard the bones and pour the stock into the jug with the juices in.

Wipe the pan and add a tablespoon of vegetable oil, fry the cabbage and leek mix until softened. Add the roasted vegetables, broccoli and cauliflower and stir through to coat everything in the oil. Pour over the stock and any juices. Bring to the boil and reduce to a simmer, leave for 15 minutes. Add the chicken and chicken skin. Season and stir to combine then leave to sit for 30 minutes.

Make the stuffing mix according to packet instructions, making into stuffing balls. Once the stuffing is cooked, leave to one side to cool down.

When the soup has cooled you can either leave it as it is or blitz it into soup. To serve, crumble up the stuffing balls and scatter over the top, or put a couple in a bowl and pour the soup over the top.

If you're starting to boost up your chewing, pour the soup into a large Yorkshire pudding with the stuffing balls.



SMOOTHIES & SHAKES



A liquid diet is super easy for when you can't eat solid foods. It's also great for when you have those endless appointments and have to get up early. I need a good hour and over a litre of water with every meal, so if I have an early hospital appointment then I have absolutely no chance of being able to eat something decent, unless I get up at stupid o'clock. Smoothies and shakes are a good go-to meal. I've worked out recipes to be manageable on the throat, flavoursome, and also full of protein, which is key for recovery.

I started off with a Breville Blend Active blender, but it died through overuse. I spoke to several friends about what their choice of blender was, and the majority said Nutribullet is great as it holds a good volume of liquid and it's easy to clean. I did a bit of research into it and discovered that it's great for crushing ice, blending cold soup (not good for warm liquids as they warm up in the blender slightly and cause a vacuum, which once released, causes the liquid to go everywhere), making hummus etc.

In this chapter you will be able to find the following recipes:

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KEY LIME PIE
THICK SHAKE

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FRUITY THICK
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BANANA PIE
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SMOOTHIES & SHAKES

CHOCOLATE ORANGE THICK SHAKE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I got bored with the same six flavours of Ensure Plus and Ensure Juice Plus, so I decided to play around with some of the flavours to see if I could get some tasty combos. The orange chocolate thick shake tastes very similar to a well known chocolate orange.

INGREDIENTS

- Ensure Juice Plus Orange
- Ensure Plus Chocolate
- ½ tbsp cocoa powder
- 150ml milk
- Ice

METHOD

In the blender cup add in all of the ingredients and top with ice up to the line.

Blend for 40 seconds.

SMOOTHIES & SHAKES

KEY LIME PIE THICK SHAKE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I was so surprised at just how well this came out. The addition of a ginger biscuit for the gingery biscuit base was wonderful. If you're feeling indulgent, add a dollop of squirty cream on top.

INGREDIENTS

- Ensure Juice Plus Lemon & Lime
- Ensure Plus Vanilla
- 150ml milk
- 2 ginger biscuits
- Ice
- Squirty cream (optional)

METHOD

Add all ingredients, except the cream, to the cup.

Top up with ice to the line and blend for 40 seconds.

Add some cream on top, if you want to serve.

FRUITY THICK SHAKE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Wonderfully fruity, especially when a lot of nutrition shakes are chocolate, vanilla or banana.

INGREDIENTS

- Ensure Juice Plus Fruit Punch
- Ensure Plus Vanilla
- 100ml milk
- Handful of frozen berries
- Ice

METHOD

In the cup add all the ingredients, adding the ice up to the line.

Blend for 45 seconds.

This works well with some cinnamon added before blending.

If you're not using Ensure then mix 100ml red fruits yoghurt and increase the milk to 200ml.

BANANA PIE SHAKE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Once again, a couple of biscuits blended in made the shake taste more like a pie. Perfect!

INGREDIENTS

- 50ml banana yoghurt
- 2 scoops vanilla ice cream
- 150ml milk
- 1 banana, peeled and frozen in chunks
- 2 digestive biscuits
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- Squirty cream (optional)

METHOD

Add all of the ingredients, except the squirty cream, into the blender.

Top up with ice to the line.

Blend for 35 seconds. You want it thick.

Add some squirty cream on top.

Enjoy!

SMOOTHIES & SHAKES

CHOCOLATE SMOOTHIE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



This is really rich, almost luxurious and velvety. It's definitely for those days where you can't face eating but need to keep up with your calories and protein intake.

METHOD

Chop up the protein bar into small pieces.

Add all the ingredients into the blender cup. Top with ice to the line.

Blend for 40 seconds.

Drink. If it's too thick, stir in more milk

INGREDIENTS

- 1 serving vanilla protein powder
- 1 chocolate protein bar (I used Vive protein bars)
- 250ml milk
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 2 scoops chocolate ice cream
- 1 tbsp chocolate spread
- Ice

SMOOTHIES & SHAKES

CHILLED CHAI LATTE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Cold brewing in milk is easy to do and it meant I could get some things that I really wanted to drink and gave me a bit of control over what I was consuming. If you're using nutrition shakes then you can cold brew, using the vanilla or neutral flavours to make a tasty change.

METHOD

In a large jug add the milk and either the chai tea bag or a large portion of the loose chai.

Cover and leave in the fridge overnight.

The next day remove the tea bag or strain the liquid into a blender cup.

Add milk, chia seeds and frozen banana to the cup and then fill up to the line with ice. Blend.

This also works well with coffee ice cream or cardamom kulfi.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 scoops vanilla ice cream
- 1 chai tea bag or loose tea (I used Bimble Chai Tea, which you can buy online)
- 200ml milk
- 1 frozen banana
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- Ice



Left to right: Carrot Cake, Cafe Latte, Fruity Shake

SMOOTHIES & SHAKES

CAFE LATTE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



This is another cold brew recipe. Cold brewing coffee overnight means that it doesn't taste like leftover coffee, and you get a mellower flavour.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tsp coffee powder (used for coffee machines or cafetières)
- 2 x Ensure Plus Vanilla (or 3 scoops of vanilla ice cream)
- 1 serving vanilla whey powder
- 200ml milk
- Ice

METHOD

Pour the Ensure or ice cream into a jug and add the coffee powder. Stir and then cover. Leave in the fridge overnight. The next day, strain out the grounds and pour the coffee liquid into a blender cup. Add the remaining ingredients, making sure the ice is to the top of the line. Blend for 35 seconds.

If you like it with more coffee, I recommend making up a batch of coffee and freezing it in ice cubes. Swap the ice cubes for some of the coffee cubes. If you use instant coffee, then mix up 2 teaspoons of instant coffee with some hot water to make a thick paste. Add that into the Ensure and leave overnight in the fridge as it saves faffing about in the morning.

You can also make a salted caramel coffee version by adding in a pinch of salt and a teaspoon of caramel into the mix just before blending. Vive produces a great caramel protein bar which you can cut up and add to the mix to increase your protein and boost the flavour.

SMOOTHIES & SHAKES

PEANUT BUTTER AND BANANA SMOOTHIE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



It's a classic combination and so easy to make. I've added a different type of peanut butter so that the smoothie isn't too sweet, but you can change the ingredient to normal smooth peanut butter if you are unsure of the product.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 frozen banana
- 2 tbsp Marmite Peanut Butter (it tastes like dry roasted peanuts)
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- 1 serving vanilla whey powder
- 1 Vive Peanut Butter Protein Bar
- 1 Müller Light Banana & Custard Yoghurt
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 200ml milk
- Ice

METHOD

Add all ingredients in a blender, making sure the ice goes up to the line.

Blend for 30 seconds.

SUNSHINE SMOOTHIE

A VIEW
FROM LAURA

This is a bright and happy smoothie that is also dairy free. The colour is gorgeous and makes me want to be on a beach in the sun. It's definitely a smoothie for a really hot summer day.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 chopped carrots
- 1 frozen banana
- 1 kiwi fruit, peeled
- 1 eating apple - peeled, cored and sliced
- 1 small tin of pineapple chunks in natural juice
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 serving vanilla whey powder
- Ice

METHOD

Put all of the ingredients into a blender and blitz until smooth.

I suggest adding extra ice after blending, to keep everything nice, cool and fresh.

You can buy frozen kiwi fruit, which is great for this as it adds extra coldness to the smoothie.

The easiest way to core an apple is to cut the apple in half lengthways - then using a melon baller, scoop out the core.

You can cut out the stalk and that is it! So easy, no faff and barely any wastage.

TOP TIP

The easiest way to core an apple is to cut the apple in half lengthways.

CHOCOLATE & COCONUT SMOOTHIE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



This tastes like a well known coconut chocolate bar, but without the effort of actually having to chew it.

INGREDIENTS

- Alpro Soya Dessert with Coconut
- 2 tbsp Nutella
- 240ml coconut milk (chilled)
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 33g vanilla protein powder
- 1 tbsp cocoa powder
- Ice

METHOD

Put everything in a blender cup, filling the ice last and to the line.

Blitz for 35 seconds.

This is great if you pour into ice lolly moulds and freeze it.

When you are ready to eat, remove from the mould and dip in some melted dark chocolate and toasted coconut flakes.

CARROT CAKE SMOOTHIE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Another surprise was how well this came out. I was pondering what to have for breakfast and I had a glut of carrots from some soup I had made.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp porridge oats
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp nutmeg
- 4 prunes (no stones)
- 240ml canned coconut milk
- 1 frozen banana
- 2 large carrots, grated
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- Ice

METHOD

In the blender cup soak the porridge oats, prunes, cinnamon, and nutmeg in the coconut milk.

Leave in the fridge overnight. The soaking will help the oats blend better and aid digestion.

In the morning add the rest of the ingredients to the cup and blend until smooth and frothy.

If it's a bit thick, as the oats may have absorbed more than expected, add a splash of cold water.

SAUCES & GRAVY (BABY!)



You eat a lot of sauces and gravies after going through oral cancer treatment. It could be down to having compromised or no saliva, no tongue or a combination of both. You will always need a drink to help with swallowing, but adding extra sauces or gravies makes the meal tastier. Dunking a sandwich in soup or a mug of gravy was a huge game changer for me. It meant I could eat a sandwich again. Warm (or cold) custard helps with most puddings, especially cakes or tarts.

In this chapter you will find recipes for savoury and sweet sauces or gravies. I'm not one for making my own stock, so it'll always come from a cube or a packet. If you make your own stock for a sauce, please let me know what you make and how it tastes!

In this chapter you will find the recipes for the lovely sauces and gravies below:



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BLUEBERRY
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BEEF GRAVY

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I discovered during one stay in the hospital how a mug of gravy on the side works really well. When I got home I found that I couldn't taste the gravy we use, so I had to add extra flavouring to be able to taste it. Months later my taste

buds returned, but I still use this recipe as it's lovely.

The recipe below is about giving you a lot of flavour to enjoy without cooking for hours on end.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 heaped tsp beef instant gravy granules
- ½ beef stock cube
- 1 tbsp Beef Bovril
- 1 tbsp Marmite
- Black pepper
- Knob of butter
- 450ml boiling water

METHOD

In a jug mix the gravy granules, pepper and stock cube together until they are well combined.

Add the butter, Bovril and Marmite and give a good stir.

Pour on the boiling water and whisk together with a small whisk or fork until it thickens up.

If it is too thick for you add a drop more water, a little at a time until it's the desired consistency.

Give it a taste and add more pepper if you need to. It should be really rich in flavour and really glossy in appearance.

It goes well on so many things. I've made a watered down version before and used that as my additional liquid to help me swallow.

It goes well on mashed roasted veggies, minced meats or just with some fried onions added in for a beefy onion soup.

TOP TIP

This goes well on mashed roasted veggies, minced meats or just with some fried onions added in for a beefy onion soup.

VEGETABLE GRAVY



A VIEW FROM LAURA



This is so flavourful and makes a wonderful change from meat-based gravies and sauces. A great tip from food writer Jack Monroe is to save up all vegetable scraps and peelings in a bag and place into the freezer.

Keep adding scraps until the bag is full and then put into a large saucepan, cover with water and bring to the boil. Let it simmer for 10 minutes and then allow the liquid to cool down with the vegetable bits in. Once it's completely cold, strain off. You'll have a lovely vegetable stock at no cost.

INGREDIENTS

- ½ kilo mixed veg (I used potato, carrot, onion and parsnip)
- Vegetable oil for roasting
- 750ml vegetable stock (either home made or from a stock cube)
- 20g cornflour
- Salt and pepper

METHOD

Heat the oven to 200°C (fan).

Quarter the onion, but keep it in the skin, and cut the carrot, parsnip and potato into similar chunks. Place into a roasting tin, coat with vegetable oil and roast until they are soft and golden. Every 10 minutes give the vegetables a good turn to ensure they are cooking evenly.

When they have cooked put the tray onto a low heat on the hob and add a little of the stock. Using a spatula you want to lift all the stuck bits of vegetables. This is called deglazing the pan.

Slowly add half of the stock and stir everything together, then start squashing the vegetables so it all becomes a liquid mush. Take off the heat and leave to cool for a few minutes.

Place a sieve over a large bowl and slowly pour the contents of the pan into the sieve. You will get a build up of vegetables which you now want to squidge into the sieve using the back of a spoon. If the skins from the onions are in the way then you can remove them to allow more vegetable goodness to pass through the sieve.

Once you have exhausted all of the vegetables, put the bowl to one side and mix the cornflour with some of the leftover stock until you have a white liquid. Put the cornflour mix and the leftover stock into a saucepan with the vegetable mix from the bowl.

Slowly bring everything to a boil whilst whisking everything to combine and prevent lumps from forming.

CHICKEN GRAVY

A VIEW FROM LAURA



The addition of some herbs into this gravy gives it a good lift in flavour and mixing instant gravy with ready-made chicken stock is wonderful. The chicken liver pâté adds a richness to it, plus extra calories should you need them.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 heaped tsp chicken gravy granules
- 500ml ready-made chicken stock
- 20g chicken liver pâté
- 1 tsp Marmite
- 2 tsp dried sage
- 1 tbsp dried onions

METHOD

Heat the stock until it boils. Add the rest of the ingredients into a large jug and combine together using a fork. Pour in the boiling stock and stir through.

Leave it to sit for 5 minutes so the onions and sage flavour the rest of the gravy.

Give it a blitz to make it nice and smooth. If it's too thick for you, just add some extra stock or hot water to thin it down

You can use this to dip toast or bread in, roasted veggies, mashed veggies, or drink it.

WHITE SAUCE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



A white sauce is the base of so many great foods. Add wholegrain mustard and you've got a mustard sauce which is great with chicken, warm the milk up with sliced mushrooms and you've got a mushroom sauce etc. It's great poured over cooked vegetables instead of gravy, as it makes a nice change from the meaty sauces. Plus it's really easy to make as the quantities are easy to remember and the ingredients are few.

INGREDIENTS

- 500ml whole milk (or whatever alternative milk you prefer to use)
- 40g plain flour
- 40g butter (also works well with vegan spread)
- Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Gently melt the butter in a pan, stirring it with a whisk every so often to ensure it melts quickly and evenly. Add the flour and keep stirring it with the whisk, cooking for 1-2 minutes.

Remove from the heat and slowly add the milk, whisking as you go to prevent lumps. Once all of the milk has been added, put back on a medium heat and cook until the mixture has thickened, continuing to whisk as it cooks. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

If you warm the milk first and add an onion studded with a few cloves and a bay leaf, it becomes a bechamel sauce. Add fried onions and you've onion sauce.

THREE CHEESE SAUCE



Shop bought gnocchi smothered in cheese sauce and a large sprinkling of crispy onions.

A VIEW FROM LAURA



This sauce is so tasty. It goes well with soft pasta, over roasted vegetables or a dip for bread or just put it in a bowl and have that as a meal on its own.

It's completely up to you.

Once you have mastered making the cheese sauce you can then play around with different cheeses and other flavourings. Whatever you make, make it tasty.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 batch of white sauce
- 30g brie (rind removed)
- 40g medium Cheddar (grated)
- 30g Gruyère (grated)
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard

METHOD

Make the white sauce as described on page 39.

When the sauce is made, put the heat on low and gradually whisk in the cheese and the mustard, ensuring the cheese is well incorporated before adding any more.

Finish with a dash of pepper to taste and it's all ready for you.

I did try this with gnocchi, which are little balls of potato pasta. They're really soft and work ever so well drenched in cheesy sauce goodness.

As you can see in the picture, I have smothered my gnocchi in sauce and sprinkled some crispy onions on top.

They go soft after a while, but they melt in the mouth and leave a wonderful onion flavour.

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Smooth, rich and delicious. Another sauce that sounds like it's ridiculously hard to make, but actually is fairly simple and doesn't take too long. The secret in a good hollandaise is to use clarified butter (also known as ghee, which is used in curries) or to use beurre noisette. Both remove the water content from the butter as water is one of the major causes of a hollandaise splitting during cooking. I've put down the old-fashioned way of making a hollandaise, and that's over a pan of simmering water, using a hand whisk. You can use a food processor or blender, but sometimes it's good not to use gadgets and just get on with hand whisking.



Shop bought salmon fish cake served with roasted tray vegetables and hollandaise sauce, a sprinkle of cayenne pepper for seasoning.

METHOD

Have a saucepan with a little bit of simmering water in the bottom.

Whisk the egg yolks and cold water together in either a glass or metal dish for a couple of minutes.

Once it becomes pale and foamy, whisk in a couple of drops of lemon juice.

Put the bowl on top of the saucepan with the simmering water and whisk for a few minutes until the mixture becomes thick.

Remove from the heat and place the bowl onto a folded up tea towel for stability and add the liquid butter, a little at a time whilst continuously whisking.

As the sauce gets thicker, pour the butter in a thin stream, still whisking - you can increase the speed of the whisking.

Once all of the butter is in, whisk in the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper.

If you don't like the black flecks of pepper in your sauce then use white pepper for seasoning.

Pour over eggs or ham.

Use it as a dip for vegetables.

It's really lovely poured over an omelette with cheese on top.

INGREDIENTS

- 125g ghee or unsalted butter - warm so it's liquidy
- 2 egg yolks (keep the whites for meringue)
- 1 tbsp very cold water
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

TOP TIP

It's really lovely poured over an omelette with cheese on top.

BREAD SAUCE



Bread sauce and a garnish of crispy sage.

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Who ever said that bread sauce is for Christmas only? Not me that's for sure. This will knock your socks off!

Packet mixes/instant mix are nowhere near as flavoursome as making your own. I am not a fan of cloves, so I combine cloves and nutmeg for the flavour that makes me happy.

Feel free to play around with the nutmeg and cloves to get the right flavour for you.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium onion, peeled
- 3 cloves
- 1 bay leaf
- 8 whole black peppercorns
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- 570ml whole milk
- 3 slices of bread turned into breadcrumbs (I used sunflower and pumpkin seed, but you can use whichever bread you have to hand)
- 50g unsalted butter
- Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Stud the bay leaf to the onion with the cloves. Pour the milk into a saucepan and place the studded onion, the peppercorns and nutmeg in the pan.

Bring to the boil and then remove from the heat. Let the flavours infuse the milk for 20 minutes.

After that time pour the milk into a bowl through a sieve so that it catches the onion and peppercorns. You can discard those.

Now add the breadcrumbs into the milk and return to the saucepan.

On a low heat cook the bread sauce for 10 minutes until the sauce is a lovely thick consistency.

Keep stirring during this time so that the bottom of the sauce doesn't catch. Once the sauce is at the desired thickness, add the butter and season to taste.

You can make it more indulgent by adding cream towards the end.

TOP TIP

If the sauce is a bit too thick then add more milk (or cream). If it's too runny then pop it back on the heat to allow the milk to reduce.

BEURRE NOISETTE (AKA BROWN BUTTER)

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Browned butter makes so many things taste incredible. If you need to keep your calories high then brown butter is the way forward. It works well poured over a steaming bowl of mashed veggies, or drizzled over porridge to give you a warming boost. It tastes amazing in a cup of coffee too. I had browned butter on a daily basis for weeks as I couldn't keep the calories up or the weight on.

INGREDIENTS

- 100g unsalted butter (diced)

METHOD

Put the diced butter into a saucepan and melt on a low heat, stirring every so often to make sure it melts evenly.

Increase the heat and bring to the boil.

It'll start to foam up - this is normal as it's the water being cooked out of the butter.

Keep stirring and you'll see that the liquid will start to go a dark golden colour with darker bits at the bottom.

Continue to stir to maintain an even distribution of butter.

Once the whole pan is a lovely rich, dark, golden brown take off the heat and use however you want to. Enjoy!

SALTED CARAMEL SAUCE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



A drizzle of salted caramel sauce improves the flavour of so many things. Poured onto yoghurt and soft fruit, drizzled over bananas, dipped into French toast, or even add into your coffee instead of sugar. You can fold it into whipped cream or buttercream to use on cakes/desserts, or even add it into the custard on page 44 (just omit the chocolate, or keep it in if you're feeling indulgent).

INGREDIENTS

- 100g granulated sugar
- 30g unsalted butter (cut into cubes)
- 60ml single cream
- ¼ tsp fine sea salt

METHOD

Put the sugar into a heavy based saucepan and make sure it is evenly spread across the bottom. Turn on the heat but keep it on a medium heat. Once the sugar has started to melt, very carefully move it in the pan using a spatula until all of it has melted.

Keeping it on the heat, gently move the sugary syrup until the caramel turns a light brown all over. Once it is nice and brown, drop in all of the butter and quickly stir through until everything is nicely combined.

Turn off the heat and quickly stir in the salt and cream until you have a lovely luscious sauce. Pour into a sterilised jar and use as and when you need it.

You can reheat it by popping the jar in a pan of warm water, or spooning out and warming in a pan or in the microwave.

CHOCOLATE CUSTARD



A VIEW FROM LAURA



I find when I'm having a cakey pudding, I need something wet with it. Cream is OK but I'll always choose ice cream or custard before I choose cream (unless it's tinned peaches).

The custard I make is from a Mary Berry recipe that I've used for years and adapted to make it chocolatey.

INGREDIENTS

- 570ml whole milk
- 55ml single cream
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- 4 egg yolks
- 30g caster sugar
- 2 tsp cocoa powder
- 2 level tsp cornflour
- 50g dark chocolate (70% or higher), chopped

METHOD

Put the milk and cream into a saucepan and bring to a simmer over a low heat.

In a separate bowl whisk the egg yolks, caster sugar, cocoa powder and cornflour together until it's all nicely blended.

Pour the hot milk mixture over the egg mixture and whisk lightly to combine.

Pour back into the saucepan, add the vanilla extract and heat over a low heat. Gently stir using the whisk until it's nice and thick.

Remove from the heat and add in the chocolate. Stir with the whisk to combine.

Great additions are almond extract for a lovely flavour or fresh mint (at the same time you add the chocolate).

Try changing the chocolate for other flavours, there are so many wonderful varieties and even white chocolate works.

TOP TIP

Try changing the chocolate for other flavours, there are so many wonderful varieties and even white chocolate works.

BLUEBERRY SAUCE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



The first fruit I ate raw was a blueberry. A little purpley-blue berry of wonderful flavour. I actually giggled when I chewed it and swallowed (with the obligatory drop of milk).

Blueberries make an amazing sauce that can easily be eaten on its own, on porridge, in shakes, yoghurts, over ice cream. Mix it into some yoghurt and pour into lolly moulds and freeze for a tasty cooling treat.



METHOD

Put the blueberries, water, sugar and lemon (or orange) juice into a saucepan, place onto a medium heat and bring to the boil.

Once boiling, reduce the heat to low and allow the sauce to simmer gently.

Mix the cornflour paste into the sauce and keep stirring until the sauce is lovely and thick.

Use straight away or pour into a sterilised jar and use as and when required.

INGREDIENTS

- 400g blueberries (fresh or frozen, it doesn't matter)
- 150ml water
- 150g sugar (any sugar is OK to use)
- 2 tbsp lemon or orange juice
- 1 ½ tbsp cornflour mixed into a paste with 2 tbsp water

LIGHT BITES & SIDE DISHES



When you're learning to eat again, everything is much of an effort.

Eating really tires you out and so smaller meals, light bites and what seem to be random foods really help the feeling of normality.

By the time I was feeling ready to try solid foods, I was also getting fed up with only being able to either drink my meal or eat with a spoon.

Some of these dishes do require a spoon, the rest you can use your fingers or your cutlery of choice.

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POACHED EGG ON YOGHURT WITH BROWN BUTTER



A VIEW FROM LAURA



Discovering this wonderful dish was an absolute blessing in a bowl. Food with texture but which was soft on my mouth and, above all, was a proper meal.

Yes, it isn't a big meal but the first time I ate this dish it took me nearly an hour. Every spoon had a tiny bit on it as I wasn't sure how much I could swallow. That hour was worth it though.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 duck egg (at room temperature)
- A squeeze of lemon
- 1 small pot of natural yoghurt
- 3 tbsp Beurre Noisette (recipe on p.43)

METHOD

Crack the egg into a small cup or bowl and leave to one side. To poach the egg fill a small saucepan halfway with water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat so that there is barely any movement in the water.

Add the lemon juice and then you can do one of two things: either whisk the water to create a hole in the middle and, whilst whisking the water, pour in the egg and stop whisking at the same time; or gently slip the egg into the very gently simmering water.

Both will poach the egg but they will look a little different from each other. Personally I prefer to slip the egg into the gently simmering water. It creates a flatter egg that looks a bit like a fried egg. It should take around 3 minutes for a softly poached egg.

Whilst the egg is poaching make the beurre noisette and pour into a cup to keep it warm. Without washing the pan you've just used, pour the contents of the tub of yoghurt into it and warm it up over a low heat. Give it a stir to combine the butter.

When the egg is ready and the yoghurt is warm, pour the yoghurt into a bowl and, using a slotted spoon, remove the egg from the water and gently place it onto the yoghurt. Pour over the beurre noisette, season with salt and pepper and enjoy.

As your confidence with eating builds, you can start adding toppings to the dish, such as finely chopped peppers or spring onions. I like to grate half a clove of garlic into my yoghurt before warming it up and then topping the egg with crispy onions or tiny bits of crispy bacon.

In the picture I added some chopped sliced chicken and I had two eggs for some brain power whilst I was at work.

AVOCADO, SOFT BOILED EGG & ROE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Roe brings a wonderful saltiness to the egg and avocado - and you can buy jars of roe from the supermarket.

A nice ripe avocado has a wonderful texture that pairs well with the egg. Use your fingers or practise using a fork with dinner.



METHOD

Put a pan of water onto boil.

Once it has reached boiling, slowly add the duck egg (I place it on a large spoon and lower it into the water).

Gently boil for around 6 ½ minutes for a soft-boiled egg.

Whilst the egg is cooking, slice the avocado into nice slivers and coat in the lemon juice to prevent it from going brown.

Place onto a plate and leave to one side.

When the egg is cooked cool it down in cold water and carefully peel off the shell.

Cut in half and place on the plate with the avocado.

Top the egg with some roe.

A drizzle of honey-mustard salad dressing works really well.

To make this vegan, replace the egg with soft tofu. Once you can chew firmer foods, smoked tofu is delightful.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 duck egg
- ½ ripe Hass avocado
- Squeeze of lemon juice
- Dollop or 2 Onuga herring roe

TOP TIP

To make this vegan, replace the egg with soft tofu. Once you can chew firmer foods, smoked tofu is delightful.

PATÉ NIBBLES



A VIEW FROM LAURA



Whilst I was watching some food programmes, the chefs were making canapés and I realised just how delightfully small they are. Whilst the canapés weren't on my menu, the concept of small bites made me think about what I can do to make eating enjoyable and not too much of a chore.

My diet was still pretty much nutrition shakes and smoothies, so there was a lot of sweetness going on. I really wanted something small and savoury that would almost melt in my mouth.

INGREDIENTS

- 100g paté of choice (keep it smooth for your first go)
- 2 slices of cucumber, thinly sliced and cut into quarters
- 1 cherry tomato, halved
- Chutney of your choice

METHOD

Cut the paté into chunks and place on a plate.

With the back of a teaspoon, push the centre of each paté chunk so that there is a dip.

Now it's up to you what you fill the dip with.

You can add a small dollop of chutney, a cherry tomato half and a quarter of cucumber.

Mix up the toppings so that you have different combinations.

You can also change the toppings to suit your tastes. I've used a variety of different topping combinations.

CONGEE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Congee is a savoury rice pudding. The rice gets cooked down so much that it creates a smoothish pudding. It's a great step up from soups when you need something thicker to challenge your throat and swallow, plus it's another savoury dish where you can play around with the flavours to satisfy your craving.

METHOD

In a large pot add the washed rice, salt, ginger and stock. Bring to the boil and then simmer on low for an hour, stirring occasionally to prevent the rice from sticking or clumping.

Once the congee is thick and creamy remove from the heat.

To serve add a spoonful into a bowl and top with a drizzle of sesame oil, soy sauce and spring onions.

Extras: Shredded chicken thigh, flakes of cooked fish, cream of corn, tofu, a soft boiled or poached egg, crispy onions, diced tomato, sautéed onions with peppers or mushrooms are all great toppings for this.

You can also do something similar with sweet rice pudding, just use either pudding or long grain rice and cook in a lot of milk for a long time before putting into a dish to bake.

INGREDIENTS

- 200g long grain/jasmine rice, rinsed in water a couple of times
- 1.4 litres vegetable stock
- 1 thumb-size ginger root, peeled & thinly sliced
- 1 spring onion, thinly sliced for garnish
- Pinch salt for seasoning
- Sesame oil and either light or sweet soy sauce

'GARLIC BREAD' ROAST CAULIFLOWER

A VIEW FROM LAURA



This isn't deliciously crunchy and soft buttery garlic bread, however it is a good way to curb that craving for garlic bread. The cauliflower softens up beautifully in the oven and absorbs the garlic butter flavour so well. A friend of mine who is not a cauliflower fan rather enjoyed it.

METHOD

Mix the soft butter with the parsley, garlic, salt and pepper and leave to one side for an hour minimum (you can make the butter up in larger batches, roll it up in greaseproof paper and cling film, put it in the freezer and slice off when you need it).

When the butter is ready bring it up to room temperature. Heat the oven to 180°C (fan). Place the cauliflower on a large piece of foil. Coat it in the garlic butter, really getting it into all the nooks and crannies. Wrap in foil and place on a roasting tray. Put in the oven and roast for 50-60 minutes, until the cauliflower is feeling soft.

Let it rest for 10 minutes still wrapped in the foil. The cauliflower will remain in its shape until you either cut it with a knife or a spoon. Drizzle a portion with some of the garlic butter that is sitting in the bottom of the foil.

This goes really well with cheese sauce. You can also use a head of broccoli.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cauliflower, leaves removed and washed then patted dry
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 100g unsalted butter, softened
- ½ bunch fresh parsley, finely chopped
- Pinch salt and pepper

INSTANT NOODLES



Chicken noodles topped with cheese slice, sliced spring onions, crispy onions and kimchi

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Instant noodles are great as you can whip up a meal quickly or add other bits to it to bulk it up - all for not much money or time.

It's one of my go-to lunches as I can eat it whilst I'm working, plus I can eat it almost at normal speed and the liquid it sits on helps the noodles go down.

I've played around with a variety of noodles to find what suits my mood. You don't have to rely on one brand - there are some great flavours available.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pack chicken noodles
- 1 spring onion
- 1 cheese slice
- 1 dsp crispy onions
- 1 tsp kimchi
- Any other toppings that you would like

METHOD

Make up the noodles as per the instructions.

Follow the instructions but don't simmer away all of the liquid.

As soon as the noodles are cooked but there is still liquid, turn off the heat and cover with a lid and leave for a minute.

Whilst the noodles are cooking, prepare your toppings. If you're using the toppings I have listed, then you need to remove the cheese slice from its wrapper and finely slice the spring onion.

When the minute is up, place the noodles in your serving bowl and pour the liquid on top.

Add the cheese slice first, then place the other toppings around the sides.

Season with a little pepper and tuck in.

Mix everything together if you wish.



This is a bowl of instant ramen noodles with cheese slice, spring onions, lettuce, crispy onions, tomato and a tiny drizzle of sriracha mayonnaise.

SAVOURY POTATO CAKE

INGREDIENTS

- 500g Maris Pipers potatoes, peeled
- 50g unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing
- Sage leaves for garnish

TOP TIP

Try with other vegetables or add flavoured butters and different herbs for variety.

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I get a lot of my recipes from BBC Good Food website and magazines. I saw this dish and knew that it would be perfect as a side dish, but it also looked so pretty for

when I felt comfortable eating with friends and inviting them over. It is such a simple dish yet it looks striking on the table.

METHOD

Using some extra butter, grease a 15cm springform tin. Heat the oven to 200°C (fan).

Keeping the potatoes whole, parboil them for 7 minutes in salty water. Drain and leave to cool for 20 minutes.

Once cool, thinly slice the potatoes to no more than 3 mm thick. Place some of the sage leaves at the bottom of the cake tin. Your leaf pattern should face the bottom as it will show when the potato cake is cooked and turned over for serving.

Melt the butter and put to one side. Carefully layer the slices of potato, covering the outside first, then the middle. Once a layer is complete, coat with some melted butter and season with salt and pepper. Push everything down with a fish slice.

Repeat with the rest of the potato slices, ensuring each layer gets coated with butter and seasoning and then pressing down before the next layer is added.

Once all the potatoes have been used, take a small side plate and push everything down. Remove the plate and then put the tin in the oven.

Every 20 minutes, turn the tin round for an even bake, and flatten the cake down.

Bake for 1hr 10 to 1hr 20 minutes. It should be golden brown on top, and all soft inside.

When baked, remove from the oven and place the side plate on top, leave like this for 10 minutes. Invert the tin onto a serving plate or board.

Be mindful of the hot butter that will spill out when you turn the tin over.

Try with other vegetables or add flavoured butters and different herbs for variety.



PORRIDGE



Diced apple and some ground cinnamon went into the porridge at the soaking stage, then apple and chia seeds were used for a topping.

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Porridge can be incredibly bland or cement like. However there are a few tweaks that can be made to make porridge into a very tasty meal, whether it's for breakfast or because you want something to eat, but don't know what to have.

INGREDIENTS

- 50g porridge oats
- 400ml milk, of your choice
- 1 tsp ground ginger/cinnamon
- 1 tsp honey
- Pinch salt
- 1 tbsp chia seeds

METHOD

At least an hour before your meal, soak the porridge oats and ginger/cinnamon (or whatever flavouring you wish to add) in 100ml of the milk.

Soaking prior to cooking helps to soften the oats which makes a creamier porridge. You don't have to do this stage if you don't want to.

When you are ready, pour the soaked, flavoured oats into a saucepan and add the remaining milk, honey and salt on top.

Give it a good stir to combine and heat over a low to medium setting to cook the oats slowly.

Stir every so often to prevent the oats from sticking to the bottom.

Bring to the boil and then simmer for around 5 minutes.

Once cooked serve with the chia seeds on top.

Topping suggestions: Blueberry sauce, sliced apple, frozen soft fruits, melted butter, sliced banana, nut butter of your choice, flax seeds, yoghurt, honey, flaked coconut and stewed fruits are all lovely.

SOFT SCRAMBLE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



When you are recovering from surgery, radiotherapy or chemotherapy, you need to help your body heal. Protein is the main source of healing aid for the body.

I had to double the average daily requirement. Eggs and tofu are fantastic in giving you a well needed protein boost with there being 8g protein per 100g of tofu and 13g protein in a duck egg. Both are great at being scrambled and work well with so many accompaniments to give you a lovely meal.



Scrambled duck eggs with a cheese slice, roasted tomatoes, red onion and kimchi.

TOFU SCRAMBLE METHOD

Roughly chop up the tofu and then mash with a fork with the liquid it comes in. Heat the oil in a frying pan and add the mashed tofu, salt, pepper and turmeric. Stir to combine and cook over a medium heat for around 10 minutes.

Top with the roast tomato halves, onions, kimchi and vegan cheese. Any leftovers will keep in the fridge for up to four days. Reheat in a hot pan with a tablespoon of water.

Try it with other roasted vegetables such as mixed peppers, courgette, aubergines, mushrooms etc. If you need extra calories add some single or double cream when you are cooking the eggs. If you are vegan a dash of oat cream or soya cream will work.

TOFU SCRAMBLE INGREDIENTS

- 250g firm tofu
- Pinch salt
- Pinch pepper
- Pinch ground turmeric
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 roast tomato halves
- 2 roast red onion quarters
- Handful of vegan cheese
- 1 tsp kimchi

EGG SCRAMBLE METHOD

Melt the butter in a saucepan over a medium heat. Once the butter has melted, add the eggs and stir to break them up and combine with the butter. Stir every so often to scramble the eggs. When the mix is still wet, remove from the heat.

Stir regularly until the heat of the pan has firmed the scramble up to your desired texture. Pour into a bowl and serve with the cheese slice, tomatoes, onions and kimchi.

Try it with other roasted vegetables such as mixed peppers, courgette, aubergines, mushrooms etc. If you need extra calories add some single or double cream when you are cooking the eggs. If you are vegan, a dash of oat cream or soya cream will work.

EGG SCRAMBLE INGREDIENTS

- 2 duck eggs
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 cheese slice
- 2 roast tomato halves
- 2 roast red onion quarters
- 1 tsp kimchi

BAKED MASHED POTATO



A VIEW FROM LAURA



Mashed potato is a wonderful foodstuff. Actually any mashed veggies are superb. Enrich them with a splash of whole milk or cream, stir in cheese or toasted seeds, combine different mashed veggies for ultimate flavour.

Roasting them gives you such a deeper flavour. It also means there is no peeling or chopping involved at the start, and the less time I have to spend peel veggies, the better!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 potato, large
- 1 tsp vegetable spread
- Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Heat oven to 220°C (fan).

Wash and dry the outside of the potato.

Prick the potato a couple of times with a fork for steam release.

Place directly onto the wire shelf in the oven and bake for 55-60 minutes, until the outside is crispy but the inside feels soft.

Leave to cool for 5 minutes before cutting in half.

Scoop out the flesh and add to a bowl. Mash a couple of times before adding the vegetable spread and mashing through.

Add in the salt and pepper and beat it through using a spatula.

This makes quite a dry mashed potato.

If you like it a bit more gloopy, add in more butter and some double cream.

If you are unsure that the potato is as smooth as possible, then put the potato through a potato ricer before you add the butter.

Potato ricers are great for making perfectly smooth mash such as you get in a restaurant.

This is great on its own with some beurre noisette, fried egg and fried onions, or as part of a meal.

Sweet potato, pumpkins and squashes all roast and mash well using the same method.

TOP TIP

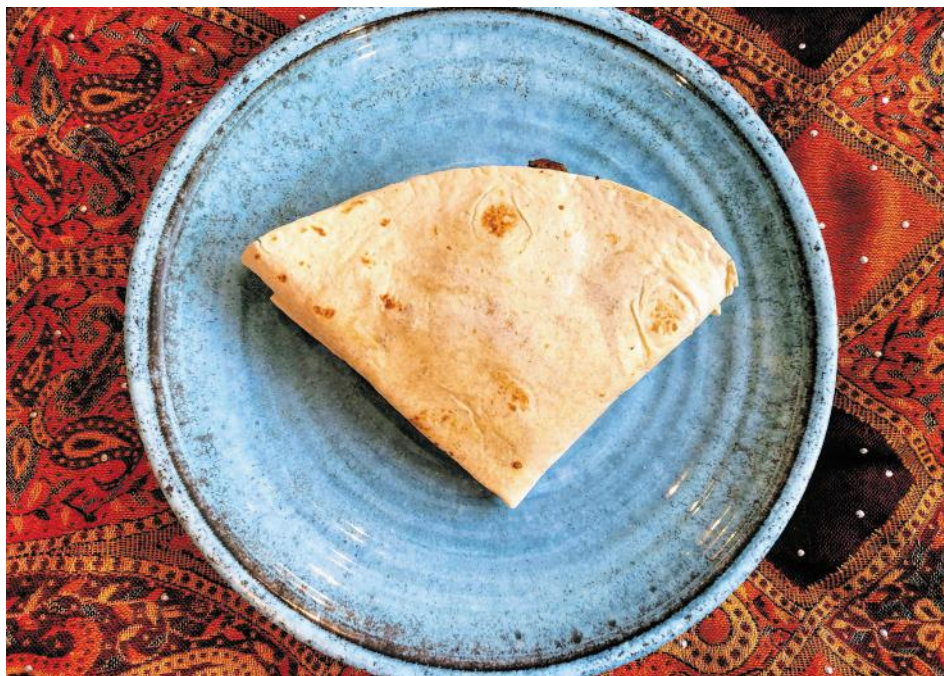
Potato ricers are great for making perfectly smooth mash such as you get in a restaurant.

KEBAB TRIANGLE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I struggled with bread for a while. I found that it would ball up in my mouth and would be hard to swallow. Tortilla wraps and pita bread really helped as they are thinner than bread and not as doughy. I still like wraps now even though I can now eat bread. Wraps are still easier for me to eat than a sandwich. This is my take on that fast food delight, but using a plant based meat alternative for something soft to chew on, rather than lamb which can dry out.



METHOD

Heat up the kebab style Quorn, following the instructions on the pack, and put to one side.

Mash the avocado in a bowl and mix in the lemon juice, spring onions and tomato until it's all combined.

Warm the frying pan on low after wiping it clean from cooking the kebab Quorn.

Cut halfway down a wrap fold into 4, then unfold and place it in the warm pan. Add some of the salsa on one quarter of the tortilla, some hummus and Quorn on another quarter, some cheese on another quarter and then some avocado mix onto the final quarter.

Fold everything into itself so that you have a triangle layered tortilla wrap. Press down and fold over as one side should be ready.

Warm through on the other side for a minute and remove.

Depending on how hungry you are, decide on whether you eat two or not. You can put them, unwarmed, wrapped up and into the fridge. Just warm both sides up in a dry frying pan when you want them.

They go really well with a bowl of soup. You can play around with different flavours.

If you don't want cheese, then add something else. You can make a version of croque monsieur, with sliced ham, bechamel sauce, grated cheese and some fried onions should you want to do so.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pack kebab style Quorn
- ½ ripe Hass avocado
- 4 spring onions, finely sliced
- 1 tomato, finely diced
- Squeeze lemon juice
- 4 tortilla wraps
- 4 tbsp hummus
- 4 tbsp tomato salsa
- 4 slices of cheese (or some grated vegan cheese)

MAINS



The first few months of recovery and rehabilitation meant I was either drinking smoothies or using a spoon for soup. I was so excited the day I made a meal where I used a fork. It felt like such an achievement.

When you're feeling more confident and want to be able to eat meals with family or friends, or just batch cook to stock up the freezer for when you've had those long days at the hospital and just want to pop something in the microwave or oven, this is the chapter for you.

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COTTAGE PIE

A VIEW
FROM LAURA

Cottage pie and shepherd's pie are both homely and comforting meals. If you use beef mince then it's cottage pie; if you use lamb mince then you have shepherd's pie. Top with buttery, mashed vegetables of your choice and serve with plenty of gravy. Perfect for those chilly months.



METHOD

In a large pan, brown the beef with the onions. You don't need to add any fat as the beef will have plenty.

Once browned through add the Marmite and stock, bring to the boil and then reduce to a simmer.

Simmer until most of the liquid has gone and then stir through the peas.

Remove from the heat and pour into an oven proof dish. Pour the gravy over the meat and leave to one side.

Whilst the mince is cooking, bake the sweet potato and potato in the oven until they feel soft when you squeeze them.

Once cooked, remove the flesh and put into a bowl.

Add butter, salt and pepper, and mash to the two together to create a soft, buttery mash.

Dollop them onto the mince in the dish.

Run a fork through the mash for a pretty pattern, and bake at 180°C (fan) for 25 minutes, or until it is brown on top and the liquid is bubbling away inside.

Serve with thick gravy and some softly roasted vegetables.

INGREDIENTS

- 500g beef mince
- 1 onion, finely diced
- 500ml beef stock
- 1 tsp Marmite
- 200g frozen peas
- 200ml beef gravy
- 1 sweet potato, large
- 1 potato
- 1 tbsp butter, unsalted

MEATBALLS WITH TOMATO SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

MEATBALL INGREDIENTS

- 250g beef mince
- 250g pork mince
- 1 egg
- 1 onion, finely diced
- 50g breadcrumbs
- 1 tsp garlic granules
- Salt and pepper to season

SAUCE INGREDIENTS

- 1 onion, finely sliced
- 2 tbsp tomato puree
- 2 garlic cloves, finely sliced
- 1 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 tsp dried Italian mixed herbs
- 1 tsp caster sugar
- Salt and pepper to taste

TOP TIP

If tomatoes cause a bit of an issue in your mouth then some natural yoghurt works very well as an accompaniment.

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Polish, Italian or just made up meatballs are all my favourites. I just love them. You can have them with rice, spaghetti, mashed vegetables in a wrap or sub for a tasty lunch. They are so versatile.

They can be made with any minced meats, fish or even plant-based mince. Just perfect.

METHOD

In a bowl mix all the ingredients together.

If it feels too stiff, add a tablespoon of cold water.

Squidge together and roll out into balls.

Fry, in a little bit of oil, to brown and put to one side to rest.

In the same pan that you browned the meatballs, brown off the onions using the oil from the meatballs.

When brown add in the garlic and tomato purée.

Cook for a minute and then add in the can of chopped tomatoes, 1 can full of water, the sugar and the mixed herbs.

Allow to simmer until reduced. If you like a smooth sauce, now is the time to blend it.

When at the right thickness lower the meatballs in, put the heat on low and cover the pan with a lid. Cook everything together for 20 minutes.

Serve with rice, spaghetti or mashed veggies.

If tomatoes cause a bit of an issue in your mouth then some natural yoghurt works very well as an accompaniment.

ROAST VEGGIE TRAY

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I love roasted vegetables. It's easy to chuck everything in one pan and they take on a lovely sweetness that compliments each vegetable.

If you want crispy roast vegetables then you need to give each piece of veg a lot of space. If you want them soft and sticky, then close together works really well.



METHOD

Heat the oven to 200°C (fan).

Peel the vegetables if they need it and cut everything up to roughly the same size, taking into consideration how thick each vegetable is.

Coat in oil and season with salt and pepper.

Roast in the oven for 50 minutes, or until everything is soft and going brown on the edges.

You can eat these on their own as a meal, with some sauce or gravy, or you can have them as a side dish.

INGREDIENTS

- Mixed vegetables such as celery, red pepper, onion, leek, sweet potato, cauliflower, brussel sprouts, etc - how much you need will depend on the size of your tray
- Vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper

SLOW COOKED LAMB CASSEROLE WITH DUMPLINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 300g lamb shoulder, diced
- 100g and 3 tbsp plain flour
- 1 tsp oil
- 1 sliced onion
- 1 carrot, sliced (the larger slices cut in half)
- ½ swede, peeled and diced
- 2 potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 tbsp mint jelly
- 1 litre lamb stock
- Pepper
- 50g suet
- 3 tbsp cold water

TOP TIP

This blends really well should you need something a little less chunky.

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I adore slow cooking foods. Lobbing everything together in one pot and leaving it for eight hours is just wonderful.

If you've been out all day, coming home to a house smelling of delicious food

is great and you feel happy that you thought about doing this. Lamb is a great meat to eat for oral cancer patients, as it's fatty and the fat not only adds flavour, but helps us to break down and swallow without too much of an effort.

METHOD

In a bowl mix the lamb and 3 tbsp plain flour together. Mix until the lamb is completely coated.

Heat a frying pan and brown the lamb. Put back in the bowl with the lamby flour.

In the same saucepan, add the oil, carrots, onion, swede and potato. Stir everything until it starts to go soft.

Tip the contents of the saucepan and the lamb bowl into the slow cooker pot and stir to combine.

In the saucepan, add a little of the stock to deglaze the bottom and to remove any bits that are stuck. Add the mint jelly and melt down.

Pour the stock from the pan and the remaining stock into the slow cooker. Season with some pepper, add the lid and cook on high for 6 hours.

When you've reached the 6th hour, it's time to make your dumplings.

Mix the suet, 100g plain flour and the 3 tbsp cold water together to make a wet dough. Roughly roll into 6 balls.

Lift the slow cooker lid and carefully place the dumplings on top of the casserole. Put the lid back on and cook for the last hour.

Serve in a bowl with a helping of mint jelly, snuggled on the sofa with a blanket.

It blends really well should you need something a little less chunky.



RAGU

A VIEW
FROM LAURA

Ragu is the basis of so many minced beef dishes, so it's a good recipe to have that you can then chop and change to your liking and menu plan, whether you're making lasagne or wanting it on a jacket potato.

Plant based mince is fabulous for boosting your protein intake, but it is also really soft and breaks down really well so that you don't feel like you're choking on clumps.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 celery stick, finely diced
- 1 carrot, finely sliced
- 1 onion, finely sliced
- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 260g plant based mince
- 2 tbsp tomato puree
- 1 tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 mushroom stock cube
- 1 tsp Italian herbs
- Worcestershire sauce
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 100ml oat milk (optional)

METHOD

Heat the oil in a large pan or wok.

Fry the celery, carrot and onion together until soft and fragrant.

Add the garlic and stir through, cooking for a minute.

Add the plant-based mince.

You need to break it up as you cook. I use a cutting motion using a rubber spatula.

Once everything is cooked and the mince has broken up and cooked through, add the tomato purée and cook for another minute.

Add the tinned tomatoes and a can full of water, the crumbled stock cube, herbs and a dash of Worcestershire sauce.

Stir through and allow to simmer for 10 minutes.

Season with salt and pepper and stir through the oat milk if you wish to use it (this will enrich your ragu and make it slightly creamy).

Serve on pasta or rice, on toast or with some mashed vegetables.

TUNA GUNGE

A VIEW
FROM LAURA

My oldest childhood friend is Jenny Phillips. We have been friends for over 38 years. Tuna Gunge is the meal that Jenny's dad, Martin, used to make for us. When I got older and wanted to know more about creating food, Martin told me how to make it.

This has been my go-to bowl of joy for a very long time. It's great hot or cold and it does reheat really well. I have tweaked it to make it my own, but the basis of the dish remains the same - a white sauce, tuna, sweetcorn and pasta.



METHOD

Cook the pasta according to the instructions on the packet, although leave a little longer than al dente. Once cooked, drain and leave to one side.

Hold the bay leaf onto the onion and secure it with the 2 cloves, so that they pierce the onion. Place the onion into a small saucepan and add the milk.

Bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Leave to cool so that it becomes warm to the touch before straining out the onion, cloves and bay. Put to one side.

Melt the butter in a saucepan. Add the flour and cook through for a couple of minutes. With a hand whisk, carefully blend the warm milk into the flour and butter paste.

Once the milk is combined put the pan back on the heat and warm up. Keep stirring with the whisk to prevent any lumps from forming or from sticking to the bottom.

Once the sauce is nice and thick, put to one side

In a large pan or wok heat the oil and fry the diced vegetables so that they become soft. When nice and soft add the drained sweetcorn and the drained tuna then pour over the sauce. Stir through to coat everything in the sauce.

You can either put the pan back on the hob to warm through or pour the contents into a deep tray, add breadcrumbs, grated cheese or crushed crisps on top and bake in the oven for 20 minutes.

INGREDIENTS

- 100g pasta, uncooked and any shape
- 450ml milk
- ½ onion
- 2 cloves
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 tbsp plain flour
- 1 tsp oil
- 1 celery stick, finely diced
- 1 onion, small and finely diced
- ½ red pepper, finely diced
- Small can sweetcorn, drained
- 2 tins tuna in sunflower oil, drained

TOP TIP

Try this with different vegetables or replacing the tuna with shredded chicken thigh, or firm tofu.

SHAKSHUKA

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 1 jar roasted peppers, drained and sliced
- ½ jar artichoke antipasto, drained and sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- Handful parsley, chopped
- 4 duck eggs

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Baked tomatoes, peppers and onions with garlic, herbs and eggs in one pan. Serve with some bread to dip and mop up the sauce, throw in some cheese (feta works but so does soft cheese). It works really well for any meal of the day.

If you're making this for one, halve the recipe down as it's not great reheated, due to the addition of baked eggs. You can make it the day before, but don't add the eggs in.

METHOD

Heat the oven to 200°C (fan).

Warm the oil in an oven proof pan.

Add the onions and cook until soft.

Add the sliced peppers and artichokes and warm through. It'll take about 5 minutes.

Add the garlic, tomato purée and smoked paprika and combine.

Season with some salt and then stir in the tinned tomatoes.

Bring to the boil and then simmer for 5 minutes before stirring in the parsley.

Make four wells in the mix and crack an egg into each, covering the whites with some tomato liquid to help them cook. Cover with foil and put in the oven to bake.

Check after 6 minutes to see if the eggs are setting. Leave a little longer.

You want the whites to be solid but the yolk to jiggle. Sometimes I leave this bit and just add a fried or poached egg on top.

Once the eggs are cooked, remove from the oven and serve.

If you can take chilli heat then add some finely sliced chilli or some chilli flakes to season.

This also goes well with sour cream and guacamole on the side.

TOMATO AND SPINACH KITCHARI

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Lentils are fabulous as they cook down to a lovely creamy texture and they will absorb whatever flavours they are being cooked with. I discovered this when I was staring at the cupboard one day, wondering what to have for dinner. My mouth was feeling achy so I didn't want anything too challenging.

I always keep some red split lentils in the cupboard as they're great for bulking out soups, stews and mince dishes. I saw the lentils as the perfect thing to eat and then had a look on BBC Good Food website. This recipe popped up and I had all of the ingredients in my cupboard, even a bag of baby spinach that I had received in my veg box that day.



METHOD

Pour the rice and the lentils into a large sieve and rinse under cold water for a minute. Leave to one side to allow the water to drain away.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan or casserole dish. Add the onion, celery and red pepper. Fry on a medium heat until everything is starting to colour.

Add the ginger, garlic, coriander, cumin seeds and chilli powder, and cook for a minute.

Add the tomatoes, rice, lentils and the stock into the pan and bring to a simmer.

Put on the lid, reduce the heat to low and cook for 25 minutes, stirring every so often to prevent it from sticking to the bottom.

10 minutes before serving, stir the spinach through.

To keep veggie or vegan, serve with homemade flatbread and a dollop of oat natural yoghurt.

If you want to ramp up the heat then add a diced green chilli at the same time that you add the vegetables.

You can stir soft or firm tofu through this at the same time that you stir the spinach through.

I have served this as a side dish to some breaded chicken for my husband. It also works well on toast either hot or cold. It freezes well.

INGREDIENTS

- 100g basmati rice
- 100g split red lentils
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 onion, finely sliced
- 1 celery stick, finely sliced
- ½ red pepper, finely diced
- 2 tsp ground ginger
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tsp turmeric
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 tsp mild/medium chilli powder
- 1.2 litres vegetable stock
- 150g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 200g baby spinach

LIVER, ONIONS AND GRAVY

INGREDIENTS

- 225g bacon, cut into large pieces.
- 2 onions, halved & sliced
- 175g mushrooms
- 450g lambs' liver
- 25g butter
- 2 tbsp sunflower oil
- 2 tbsp plain flour
- 1 tbsp soy sauce or vinegar if preferred
- 130ml chicken stock
- Seasoning

A VIEW FROM LAURA



This recipe was given to me by fellow oral cancer survivor Alan Greenwood. Whilst the recipe was out of a book, Alan has added some vinegar to it, just like his nan used to do as it makes it taste wonderful.

He says that before he eats he'll run his hands around his neck as it seems to help "get the juices running". Alan also reminded me to keep up with neck and swallow exercises to keep everything functioning as well as it can be.

METHOD

Heat oil in a deep frying pan or wok. Cook the bacon till almost crisp then add the onions and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Add the mushrooms and cook for a further minute.

With a slotted spoon remove the solids and keep them warm.

Increase the heat to high and add the liver, cook for 3-4 minutes turning to ensure it is sealed.

Remove the liver and add it to the warm bacon, onions and mushrooms.

Melt the butter into the pan, stir in the soy sauce or vinegar followed by the stock and bring to the boil until it thickens a bit.

Add the liver, bacon and mushrooms to the pan, stir on a high heat for just over a minute and season to taste.

Serve with beans, potatoes and more gravy.

Alan always finds this recipe delicious!

TERIYAKI STIR-FRY

A VIEW FROM LAURA



JK and I love stir-fries but chicken breast meat no longer breaks down when you've gone through oral cancer treatment. You need meats with a high fat content - so chicken thigh, lamb, minced meat, pork belly etc work well.

I wanted to explore other avenues of what's available to stir-fry for protein, and I discovered that a lot of plant-based proteins are nice and soft and remain soft throughout cooking. As I was using plant-based protein, I wanted to keep this recipe vegan.



METHOD

Heat the oil in the wok. Add the onions and peppers.

Stir fry them until soft. Add the meat free beef style pieces, the bean sprouts and water chestnuts and stir through to combine for a couple of minutes.

Add the sauce and stir through for 2 minutes. Serve with rice or rice noodles.

If you need more sauce add 100ml warm water at the same time as the sauce.

Stir through to combine.

You can replace the plant-based protein with chicken thigh meat.

Just brown it first and put to one side before frying the vegetables.

Then add the partially cooked meat at the same time you would put in the beef style pieces.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 onion, sliced
- ½ red pepper, sliced
- ½ yellow pepper, sliced,
- ½ tin beansprouts
- ½ tin water chestnuts, sliced
- 200g meat free beef style pieces (I used Plant Chef)
- 240g teriyaki sauce (I used Blue Dragon)

LEFTOVERS PIE

A VIEW
FROM LAURA

I hate throwing food away. After all of the treatment I have needed, my mouth dictates to me whether it's going to be a good eating day or a bad one. A bad one is where you have a mostly liquid diet. However you don't find this out until you try to eat the meal you have cooked, and your mouth refuses to chew properly or swallow. Maybe your saliva disappears. Maybe something is too salty or too spicy. It doesn't matter that you could eat it two days ago, today it's not happening. So, rather than throw it away, I'll do my best to make a new meal out of it. Pie is one of those great dishes you can make with leftovers as you can add lots of sauce and serve it with plenty of gravy.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 leek, finely sliced
- 1 carrot, sliced
- 500g cooked meat, shredded or cubed (I used roast chicken drumsticks and roast pigeon breast wrapped in bacon)
- 300g mixed cooked vegetables cut into chunks, such as roast potatoes, cabbage, parsnip, sprouts etc
- 2 tbsp plain flour
- 400ml chicken stock
- 1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 100ml milk
- Salt and pepper to season
- 1 pack sage and onion stuffing
- 500g puff pastry
- 1 egg

METHOD

In a large saucepan or wok melt the butter. Add the leek and carrot to the butter. Fry until starting to colour.

Add in the cooked meat and the cooked vegetables. Stir through to combine and then add the flour. Coat everything in the flour before pouring the chicken stock over it. Bring to the boil and then reduce to a simmer.

Leave for 10 minutes before adding in the mustard and milk, season to taste and leave to cool. Whilst the filling is cooling, make the stuffing mix up following the instructions. Use 100ml more water than the packet says to as you want the stuffing to be spreadable.

Preheat the oven to 200°C (fan).

Use two pie dishes or two 15 cm shallow cake tins. Split the pie filling between the two tins. Spread the top of each pie with the stuffing mix.

Roll out the pastry so that it is the thickness of a £1 coin (3mm). Cut lids that will fit over the pies. Crack the egg into a cup and beat it.

Use some egg wash to stick the puff pastry lids to the pies.

Egg wash the top of each pie, place the tins on a tray and bake for 45 minutes.

If you don't want to bake both pies, wrap one in foil and pop it in the freezer after the egg wash stage.

It means you won't have to egg wash it when you take it out later on. It cooks well from frozen, just add 10 minutes onto the cook time.

Serve in a bowl with lots of gravy and the sauce of your choosing.



ALL THE SWEET THINGS



Sweet things such as cake, custards and puddings are the easiest thing to eat. They break down a lot more easily than veggies and meat. I couldn't write a recipe book without adding in a sweet section! These are all things that make me happy when I receive a bowl of one of them. They are also things that you can eat with your family and friends for that wonderful feeling of inclusiveness that you get from sharing food.

In this chapter you will be able to make the following sweet things to satisfy your sweet tooth:



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CHOCOLATE ORANGE MOUSSE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Chocolate mousse is so easy to make. It lasts well and takes no effort to eat. This recipe is one that I use with different chocolate bars - you don't have to keep to orange chocolate.

If you use a really dark chocolate then add in some icing sugar to sweeten it up. Icing sugar dissolves really easily in liquid.

INGREDIENTS

- 500ml double cream
- 250g orange chocolate, chopped (or chocolate of your choice)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

METHOD

Heat half of the cream in a saucepan until bubbles begin to form around the edge of the pan. Add the vanilla.

Put the chopped chocolate in a bowl. Pour the vanilla cream over it.

Whisk the mixture until the chocolate has melted and all the cream has been stirred through to create a glossy liquid.

Add the rest of the cold cream and whisk until well combined and it has a luxurious mousse texture.

Taste the mixture and if you want to add sugar do it now to sweeten to taste.

Cover the bowl and leave in the fridge overnight to chill and set.

Grated orange zest really ramps up the orange flavour.

Make a white chocolate mousse and grate in some pink grapefruit or lemon for a dessert that isn't too sweet.

Grate in lime zest and stir through crushed ginger biscuits for a key lime pie mousse.

Stir through fresh or frozen berries at the time of serving for a lovely treat.

You can even swirl two different mousses together for contrast, or add some cream on top garnished with a chocolate of your choice.

TOP TIP

Make a white chocolate mousse and grate in some pink grapefruit or lemon for a dessert that isn't too sweet.

UPSIDE DOWN PUDDING

INGREDIENTS

- 600g strawberry and vanilla Swiss roll
- 210g tinned strawberries, in syrup
- 1 sachet strawberry blancmange
- 568ml milk
- 2-3 tbsp caster sugar
- 1 pack raspberry jelly

A VIEW FROM LAURA



This is loosely based on a Charlotte royale, which is a type of swiss roll filled with a strawberry mousse. It's really summery but I fancied it in December - strawberries aren't in season in December!

Tinned fruit is perfect for soft food diets as they are full of nutrients and flavour, plus they tend to be nice and soft.

METHOD

Line a two litre pudding basin with cling film.

Make the blancmange according to the packet instructions using the syrup from the tinned strawberries with the milk to make up the 568ml of liquid.

Leave it to cool down for a while.

Cut the Swiss roll into slices. You should need around 16 slices.

Lay the slices of Swiss roll inside the bowl to make a bowl of cake.

Try to fill any gaps with any left over bits of Swiss roll.

Chop the strawberries up and mix in with the blancmange. Pour into the bowl. Place a layer of cling film over the blancmange and bowl and chill until firm.

Make up the raspberry jelly according to the packet instructions. Leave to cool.

When the jelly is cool, take the pudding out of the fridge and remove the covering of cling film.

Pour the jelly carefully over the blancmange. Pour it over a spoon so that it spreads the liquid out and doesn't cause the blancmange to split.

Cover in cling film or a plate and pop back in the fridge to set overnight.

When you want to serve, place a plate over the bowl and turn out onto the plate.

Carefully peel off the cling film.

Slice in wedges and serve with slightly whipped cream.



MINCE TARTS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pack sweet pastry, ready to roll
- 1 jar mincemeat
- 1 egg, beaten
- Granulated sugar or icing sugar for decoration (optional)

TOP TIP

Serve with brandy butter, cream or lots of lovely custard.

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I love Christmas. I love the smell of orange and spices. I love the taste of spices and Christmas cake. 2020 was the first Christmas where I could eat anything, so I indulged myself. I adore mince pies but was finding that a rogue

sultana or two were getting stuck in my throat, and whilst they weren't a choking issue, they were annoying and causing me some concern. Making my own and blending the mince pie filling worked very well.

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan).

Grease a twelve hole tart tin and unroll your pastry, keeping it on the paper it's rolled in.

Using a fluted round cutter, the same size as the holes in the tin, cut out twelve rounds, pop them in each hole and flatten them in slightly so that they take the shape of the tin.

With the leftover pastry, re-roll and cut lids in any shape you wish. Stars look lovely for Christmas. Leave the bases and the lids to one side.

Put the contents of the mincemeat jar into a bowl or food processor. Blitz in the food processor or with a stick blender until you have a paste. Put 2 tsp of mincemeat in each pastry base.

Place the lid on top and egg wash any part of the pastry that you see.

You can either leave the top with just egg wash for a shine; sprinkle icing sugar (which will melt in the oven giving a sugar glaze), or sprinkle granulated sugar on top (which will give a sugary crust). It's up to you.

Bake for 15-18 minutes, or until the pastry is golden and the filling is starting to bubble.

Add grated ginger into the filling for a variation, and top with ginger biscuit. Grate orange zest into the filling and then top with marzipan for the lid.

Leave without a lid for a jam tart inspired mince tart.

Serve with brandy butter, cream or lots of lovely custard.

BANOFFEE NO PIE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Banoffee pie is a pudding of utter indulgence, but what if it wasn't so sweet or creamy?

You could have it for breakfast, or anytime of the day. It's called 'No Pie' as there isn't any pie base or top to make it a pie, more of an assembly of lovely flavours combined to make a satisfying sweet.



METHOD

Layer the slices of banana with kefir, then caramel spread, then some crushed Weetabix in a bowl.

Keep going until you run out of everything. Dig in with a spoon and enjoy.

You can change the banana for apple or pear purée or, replace the caramel with a nut butter or chocolate spread.

Additional toppings could include chopped toasted nuts, mixed seeds, stewed fruit, grated chocolate, cream, ice cream, cinnamon, cardamom or chia seed.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ripe banana, sliced
- 100ml natural kefir
- 1 tbsp salted caramel chocolate spread (I used M&S)
- ½ Weetabix protein biscuit, crushed

INDULGENT BROWNIES

A VIEW
FROM LAURA

It took me four years to perfect this brownie recipe. I played with different sugars to get the right level of fudginess. Don't take it out of the oven too soon. It still needs a little wobble in the centre to get the brownie texture. Any longer and you've just got a tray bake cake rather than a brownie.

I don't usually add a topping to my brownies but I wanted to make this pretty for some friends we were visiting.

INGREDIENTS

- 150g golden caster sugar
- 100g light muscovado sugar
- 50g dark brown muscovado sugar
- 250g unsalted butter, room temperature
- 200g dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids)
- 100g dark chocolate (80% cocoa solids)
- 100g milk chocolate chips (or chopped chocolate)
- 3 duck eggs plus 1 yolk, beaten together
- 60g plain flour
- 1 tsp cornflour
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 100g white chocolate
- Assortment of sprinkles

METHOD

Heat the oven to 160°C (fan). Grease and line the bottom of a 23cm x 23cm baking tin.

Cream the butter and all of the sugars together until you have a light, whipped sweet butter. Whilst this is whipping, break up all of the dark chocolates, except the chips, and melt either in the microwave or over a bain marie. Leave to cool.

Slowly add the beaten egg to the whipped butter, a little at time before mixing well. Stir in the chocolate chips and the cooled melted chocolate before sieving in the plain flour, cornflour and baking powder. Fold in with a spatula until everything is combined.

Pour into the prepared tray and bake in the oven for 30-40 minutes. Check after 30 minutes by giving the tray a jiggle and poking the centre with a skewer. If the brownie wobbles gently and the skewer comes out with no raw mixture on it, remove from the oven and leave to cool in the tin. If raw mixture appears on the skewer, pop back in the oven for a few more minutes.

Once the brownie is cold in the tray, turn out onto a wire rack and allow it to cool completely.

When it is cold, melt the white chocolate, either in the bain marie or the microwave. Use a fork and dip it into the white chocolate to drizzle all over the cold brownie. Add sprinkles and cut into decent sized slices.

Serve with a nice warm beverage or a glass of milk.

Experiment with different ratios of milk and dark chocolate or just play around with different chocolate to get the flavour you enjoy.

TOP TIP

You can add other things to the brownie, such as nuts or fruit - I have added some freeze dried raspberries before and that was very nice.

ALL THE SWEET THINGS

FIZZY JELLY

A VIEW FROM LAURA



I had this when I was a child - and I also loved it through recovery as the jelly remains slightly fizzy when it's set, so you get a lovely feeling in the mouth. Play around with different fizzy flavours. I love to match orange soda with orange jelly, or lemon jelly with lemonade. Add cola to cherry jelly and you have a fab tasting cherry cola jelly that works very nicely with a scoop or two of vanilla ice cream.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pack lime jelly
- 150ml boiling water
- 300ml lemon and lime soda, cold

METHOD

Break up the jelly, put into a bowl and pour over the boiling water to dissolve.

If it's taking ages to dissolve, heat over a pan of simmering water until fully dissolved.

Once the jelly has dissolved, pour in the soda and stir slowly to combine both liquids.

Pour into a mould, bowl or bowls and leave in the fridge to set.

Enjoy the fizziness in your mouth.

Cold evaporated milk or ice cream goes really well with fizzy jelly.

ALL THE SWEET THINGS

CINNAMON CARAMEL APPLES

A VIEW FROM LAURA



When I was working in the office, I would have an apple and a banana most days. A banana is easy to adapt to soft eating as it is already soft. Apples don't often appear in soft food diets which is a shame as they are versatile and they stew down really well. You can mix different apples together to get a good balance of sweet and sharp. Play around to find the right combination for your taste.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Bramley apple, peel cored and diced
- 2 eating apples, peeled cored and diced
- 50g unsalted butter
- 50g light brown sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon, ground
- 150ml double cream

METHOD

Melt the butter in a saucepan and add the sugar and cinnamon to combine.

Add the apple chunks and warm through until the sugar and butter starts to caramelize and the apples start to go soft.

Pour in the cream and stir through to combine.

Serve with ice cream, yoghurt, caramel sauce, or just on its own.

MAGIC LAYER CAKE



A VIEW FROM LAURA



I saw this recipe in the Co-op and had to try it. I can't believe just how well it works - and it is so soft. One batter will create a three layered cake with a thin, almost pastry layer at the bottom, a custard layer in the middle and then a thin sponge cake on top. It lasts well for up to four days and it tastes better at room temperature.

INGREDIENTS

- 125g unsalted butter - melted and cooled, plus a little extra for greasing
- 500ml milk
- 4 eggs, separated
- 150g golden caster sugar
- 65g plain flour
- 50g cocoa powder, plus extra for dusting at the end

METHOD

Heat the oven to 160°C (fan). Grease and line a 20cm spring form or loose bottom tin.

Warm up the milk and leave to the side.

In one bowl, whisk the egg whites until they are stiff. In another bowl whisk the egg yolks with 1 tbsp cold water and the sugar until it becomes light and frothy.

Stir in the melted butter, flour and cocoa powder until everything is just mixed.

Slowly pour in the warm milk, stirring it constantly with the whisk.

Using a large metal spoon or rubber spatula, fold in the egg whites in three stages, taking care not to knock out any of the air. This will be very liquidy at this stage. Do not worry. It is not the prettiest of batters.

Pour into the prepared tin and carefully slide it into the oven. Bake for 55-60 minutes. It should have a slight wobble in the centre, but be completely set.

Leave to cool in the tin and then put in the fridge to chill down completely. Overnight is the best.

Carefully remove from the tin and dredge with cocoa powder.

For a vanilla cake replace the cocoa powder with equal plain flour (so then the flour becomes 115g) but add in 2 tsp of vanilla extract.

ALL THE SWEET THINGS

COFFEE CHEESECAKE

A VIEW FROM LAURA



You can easily make a batch of this and freeze it in portions so you don't have to eat it all over a day or two. It's nice to have that little tasty surprise in the freezer for those tough days. It tastes rather like a tiramisu as I have added in mascarpone instead of cream, but the coffee is mixed into the cheese mixture, rather than having coffee soaked sponges.

INGREDIENTS

- 100ml espresso coffee
- 75g golden caster sugar
- 70g mascarpone cheese
- 70g full fat soft cheese
- 2 tsp vanilla extract

METHOD

Put the espresso and 50g of caster sugar into a saucepan and heat up together.

When the sugar has melted and the coffee is syrupy, turn off the heat and leave to cool.

Combine both cheeses, vanilla extract and the remainder of the sugar, beat them until they become soft and fluffy.

Remove half of the mixture and mix with the coffee syrup. Stir the coffee flavoured cheesecake mixture with the vanilla flavoured one so that you create a marbled effect.

Serve piled in a bowl either on its own or with chocolate or caramel sauce drizzled over the top. If you are able to eat more solid food, spread on a piece of cake or sponge fingers.

ALL THE SWEET THINGS

CAKE POPS

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Cake pops are a great way to use up scraps and off cuts of cake. They're quite easy to eat and they are fun to

make. You can buy moulds to shape them in but you can roll the mix in your hands if you don't have a mould.

INGREDIENTS

- 500g cake sponge
- 250g buttercream
- 200g white chocolate or candy melts
- Different toppings

METHOD

Break the cake up into crumbs either by hand or in a blender.

Mix in the buttercream until you have a cake-like dough.

Roll the dough into balls, pushing each one onto a lolly-pop stick.

Put the cake pops in the freezer to set for 30 minutes.

Melt the chocolate or candy melts in the microwave or over a bain marie.

Dip the cake pops into melted chocolate or candy melts and then coat with sprinkles.

Leave to set in the fridge.

COFFEE WHIP



A VIEW FROM LAURA



At the beginning of lockdown in 2020 this became quite the rage. It is so easy to do and is dairy free, gluten free, egg free and carb free tasty-tasty goodness.

INGREDIENTS

- 10g instant coffee
- 75g caster sugar
- 60ml ice cold water

METHOD

Put all of the ingredients in a bowl and whisk on high for a few minutes until a wonderful cloud appears in the bowl.

Put some in a cup and top with milk for an iced coffee.

Pipe onto brownies or on the magic layer cake.

This holds its shape well for around six hours.

After that it will start to lose its shape and become watery.

ANGEL DELIGHT

A VIEW FROM LAURA



Angel Delight isn't just for kids. It's a great way to give you something else to eat that you can add bits in to make it your own. Who cares if it comes from a packet?

Some days the tiredness is so strong that I don't want to spend too long on my feet in the kitchen. Something quick and easy like this is perfect.



METHOD

Follow the instructions on the back of the packet to make up the Angel Delight, adding in the cocoa powder and the mint essence at the same time.

Finely shred 5 of the 6 mint leaves, leaving the best one for a garnish.

Sprinkle half of the chopped mint into the Angel Delight and stir through. Pour into serving dishes and leave to set.

When it has set garnish with the rest of the cut mint leaves, the whole mint leaf and the mint chocolate.

Change the flavour up by adding grated orange zest and topping with a chocolate orange.

With other flavours of Angel Delight you can add diced fresh or tinned strawberries or raspberries - or replace the milk with strawberry milkshake.

The butterscotch flavour can be served with some caramel sauce marbled through it and with some tinned peaches, cinnamon apples or sliced bananas.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pack chocolate Angel Delight
- 1 tbsp cocoa powder
- 500ml milk
- 1 tsp mint essence
- 6 mint leaves
- 1 mint chocolate

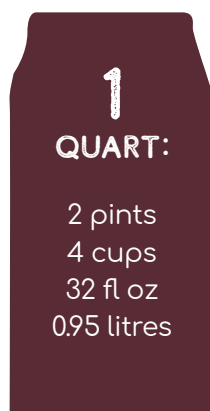
KITCHEN MEASUREMENT AND CONVERSION CHARTS

DRY WEIGHTS



1/2 oz	1 Tbsp	1/16 C	15g	
1 oz	2 Tbsp	1/8 C	28g	
2 oz	4 Tbsp	1/4 C	57g	
3 oz	6 Tbsp	1/3 C	85g	
4 oz	8 Tbsp	1/2 C	115g	1/4 lb
8 oz	16 Tbsp	1 C	227g	1/2 lb
12 oz	24 Tbsp	1 1/2 C	340g	3/4 lb
16 oz	32 Tbsp	2 C	455g	1 lb

LIQUID CONVERSIONS



LIQUID VOLUMES

1 Tsp: 5ml

1 Tbsp: 15ml



1/2 oz	6 Tsp	2 Tbsp	30 ml	1/8 c		
1 oz	12 Tsp	4 Tbsp	60 ml	1/4 c		
2 oz	16 Tsp	5 Tbsp	80 ml	1/3 c		
3 oz	24 Tsp	8 Tbsp	120 ml	1/2 c		
4 oz	32 Tsp	11 Tbsp	160 ml	2/3 c		
8 oz	36 Tsp	12 Tbsp	177 ml	3/4 c		
12 oz	48 Tsp	16 Tbsp	237 ml	1 c	1/2 pt	1/4 qt
16 oz	96 Tsp	32 Tbsp	470 ml	2 c	1 pt	1/2 qt
32 oz	192 Tsp	64 Tbsp	950 ml	4 c	2 pt	1 qt

SAFE COOKING MEAT TEMPERATURES

Minimum temperatures:



UK £1
COIN



Diameter: 23.43mm
Thickness: 2.8mm



EATING WITH CONFIDENCE



WRITTEN BY
LAURA 'DIZZ' MARSTON



This book is the food history of my rehabilitation, from being reliant on a feeding tube to being able to cook and share meals with the people I love.

It wasn't an easy journey but finally being able to taste, swallow and chew these foods gave me the passion for food I had lost whilst I had cancer and was going through the treatment.

If it helps you then this book has been successful - that will make me very happy!

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