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summer plates

Summer Plates

When I think of summer, the food that lands on my plate year after year is one of the first things that comes to mind. Sharp lemon against cool mint, lashings of olive oil among mounds of tangy feta, sourdough bread piled high with hummus and olives. Summer has a taste.

As August lands on our shores I wanted to pull together a selection of recipes that have made their way through my kitchen in some iteration for many summers. Some have evolved over years to become what they are today, some have just happened by way of a happy accident. Summer Plates has 11 dishes I hope will see you through the final stretch of the season and maybe even into the mellow days of what comes next.

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Easy Yoghurt Flatbreads

These easy 3 ingredient flatbreads are a great recipe to have in your back pocket.

Over the years I've played around with the recipe to include everything from chopped herbs to nigella seeds. Once you've mastered the basic recipe, feel free to adapt it as you please.

Makes 4
200g Plain Flour, plus extra for dusting
1 tsp Baking Powder
200g Greek Yoghurt
Sea Salt

Combine the flour, baking powder and yogurt in a bowl until a dough has formed. Tip out onto a floured work surface and knead it for 1-2 minutes.

Once you have a smooth ball of dough, dust a bowl lightly with flour and place the dough inside. Cover with a tea towel or plate before putting to one side for 15 minutes.

You're not waiting for it to rise like a loaf, but it should grow slightly. Dust your work surface and a rolling pin with flour, before tipping out the dough ball. Split into 4 equal pieces and roll each out to a rough circular shape, they should be slightly smaller than a dinner plate and around 2mm thick.

Heat a frying pan on the hob, with no oil. Sprinkle your sea salt flakes onto each flatbread before taking it to the pan. Each flatbread will take around 1-2 minutes per side. You're looking for it to go slightly golden in colour and puff up slightly.

The flatbreads will keep for several days in an airtight container and can also be toasted.

Pesto Topped Hummus

Hummus is one of my absolute favourite things in life. This fresh, summer take on it features pesto both in the hummus itself and swirled through to serve. Roasting the garlic ahead of making any kind of hummus adds an amazing depth of flavour.

Serves 4
1 400g Tin of Chickpeas
Tahini
Olive Oil
Salt & Pepper
1 Lemon
2 Garlic Cloves
Green Pesto
Pine Nuts to Serve, Optional

In a preheated oven, gently roast your garlic cloves by drizzling them in oil and placing on a baking sheet. This should take no more than 8 minutes in a 180 Fan oven. Take out and leave to cool slightly.

Drain and rinse your chickpeas, but hold onto the water they came in.

In your food processor tip in the drained chickpeas and a splash of the reserved liquid. Add in 1 and half tablespoons of tahini, the zest of the full lemon, along with the juice from half, a good sprinkling of salt and pepper, an initial glug of olive oil (not too much to begin with), your garlic cloves and a tablespoon of pesto.

Blitz and slowly begin to add in a little more olive oil to slacken out the mixture. Try not to use too much oil to get the consistency you want, instead go back to the chickpea water. Once you've got a smooth, thick hummus tip out into a bowl.

In a bowl take another tablespoon of hummus and mix with some olive oil and a little water to produce something you can drizzle through your hummus.

In a dry pan gently toast your pine nuts and add to the hummus before serving.

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Roasted Garlic Whipped Feta Dip

When I first posted the recipe for whipped feta over on Instagram it went down a treat. This version uses the same simple recipe, but brings roasted garlic into the mix. Try using sundried tomatoes or olives too.

Serves 4
100g Greek Yoghurt
250g Feta Cheese
Olive Oil
1 Lemon
2 Garlic Cloves, Roasted

In your food processor first add in the Greek yoghurt, followed by the crumbled feta, zest of your lemon, roasted garlic cloves and a little olive oil.

As everything begins to combine, drop in further olive oil until your starter to see it whipping up to a smooth, creamy consistency.

To serve, add to a bowl with a swirl of olive oil and some freshly ground black pepper.

Lemony Courgettes with Burrata and Mint

I personally love a courgette. I feel like sometimes they get a bit of a raw vegetable deal. That 2015 spiralizing thing didn't help I'm sure.

Serving them with lemon brings so much fresh flavour to your plate, contrasted perfectly by the creamy burrata.

Serves 4

1 Ball of Burrata Cheese

1 Lemon

1 Garlic Clove

Broad Beans or Peas (frozen works fine)

Salt & Pepper

Olive Oil

Fresh Mint

Start by zesting your lemon and popping this to one side - you'll use it to serve later.

Slice your courgette, aiming for slices about as thick as a pound coin. In a shallow pan add some oil and bring to a medium heat. Scatter in your courgette slices along with your beans or peas.

You want the courgette to retain its texture, rather than go too mushy in the centre. After 2 minutes, add in the garlic clove and give everything a good mix around.

Take your lemon and squeeze the juice of the whole thing into the pan. Be careful, it will likely cause some sizzling. Give everything a thorough mix and pop to one side.

In a small bowl chop a good handful of mint and drizzle in some olive oil. To serve, layer your courgette slices on a plate, before topping with the burrata and drizzling over your mint sauce, finishing with the lemon zest to serve.

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Gin and Elderflower Cooler

Gin and elderflower are a match made in heaven. This cooler uses an elderflower-infused apple juice with soda water to create something super fresh for summer.

Soda Water
Dry Gin
Fresh Mint
Cucumber
Apple & Elderflower Fresh Juice
Ice

In your pitcher first add the ice cubes and mint leaves. Take the cucumber and cut off a small section for the end, slicing into thin rounds to use as garnish on your glasses.

Using a potato peeler, create ribbons with the remaining cucumber and place these in the pitcher, draping them around the ice cubes and against the glass.

Your soda/juice mixture should be 2 parts soda water to 1 part fruit juice, though feel free to change this as desired. A standard pitcher should give you enough for 4 glasses, so with this in mind I add in 8 25ml measures. Again, this is open to interpretation.

In your glasses add a ribbon of cucumber and some mint leaves, before pouring in your cooler, finishing with a cucumber coin on the side of the glass.

Salmon is my go-to in the summer months. It's incredibly versatile. These greaseproof paper parcels need very little prep work, making it all in all a super simple midweek meal.

Serves 2
2 Salmon Filets
700g Jersey Royal Potatoes
100g Tenderstem Broccoli
100g Samphire
6 Caper Berries
Crème Fraîche
1 Lemon
Fresh Chives
Fresh Dill

Start by bringing a pan of salted water to the boil, dropping in your Jersey Royals once it's at a roiling boil. Preheat the oven to 190 Fan.

Boil the potatoes for around 8-10 minutes, until softened but not fully cooked.

Drain and add to a baking sheet. Using a potato masher, gently press down on each potato until it bursts slightly. Drizzle with olive oil and season, returning to the oven for around 15-20 minutes.

Cut 2 large rectangles of greaseproof paper from the roll. Slice half of your lemon into rounds, juice the other half.

Start your parcels by adding two slices of lemon to each, along with the tenderstem broccoli, caper berries and samphire. Add on your salmon filet, sprinkle chopped dill and chives over the salmon, along with a pinch of salt and split the lemon juice over the two. Drizzle everything with some olive oil before folding up the package, twisted the ends to keep it sealed.

Cook for 12-15 minutes. To serve, open up the parcel and add a dollop of crème fraîche and a final drizzle of olive oil.

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Balsamic Roasted Tomato Feta Tart

Feta is for me one of the true tastes of summer. This tart pairs it with tomatoes roasted in balsamic vinegar, along with fresh thyme leaves. I love it paired with a peppery salad as a light lunch.

Serves approximately 10
375g Shortcrust Pastry, Pre-Rolled
(taken out of the fridge 20 minutes before use)
3 Large Eggs
250g Feta Cheese
Bunch of Fresh Thyme
(leaves picked from the stalks)
Balsamic Vinegar
200ml Double Cream
300g Plum Tomatoes
Salt & Pepper
Flour for Dusting
Butter for Greasing

Preheat the oven to 200C Fan. Take a 25cm tart tin with a loose bottom and lightly grease it.

Drape the pastry over the case and gently ease it into the corners and grooves. Leave a pastry overhang on the edges for now. Use a fork to gently prick several holes across the base.

Fill the pastry case with greaseproof paper and tip in baking beans. If you don't have any, you can use dried lentils or even rice. Fill it up so the paper is weighted fully into the case. Pop in the oven for 15 minutes, before removing the greaseproof paper and beans, and cooking for a further 5 minutes into lightly golden. One out of the oven, use a knife to run along the edge of the case, cutting off the cooked overhang easily.

To make the filling, halve the plum tomatoes and spread out on a baking sheet. Drizzle with balsamic vinegar generously and sprinkle with salt. Pop in the oven for around 10 minutes until they have started to reduce.

In a bowl mix the eggs, cream and thyme leaves. Use a whisk to beat it together with some seasoning. Pour into the cooled pastry case and crumble in the feta cheese. Take your roasted tomatoes and carefully arrange them in the egg/cream mixture in neat circles. You want them to be half submerged.

Pop in the oven for 25 minutes until golden.

Leave in the tin to cool if you can. If you want to slice it straight away, pop it in the fridge first to make this easier.

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Peach and Blue Cheese Salad

When peaches are at their sweetest they are the perfect match for blue cheese. This riff on a panzanella salad has a sherry vinegar dressing, giving the peaches an extra bite.

Serves 4
2 Ripe Peaches
Ciabatta or Sourdough Bread
Olive Oil
Sherry Vinegar
Fine Green Beans
Saint Agur Blue Cheese
Rocket & Spinach Salad Leaves

Either tear or slice your bread into chunky cubes, before adding them to a pan on a medium heat with some olive oil. Continue to toss them in the pan for several minutes until golden.

Slice the peaches in half, twisting at the pip. Slice into thin wedges and set to one side.

In a large bowl or plate arrange your spinach and rocket leaves, along with the trimmed green beans. If you'd like to quickly blanch the beans, do so and let cool before using.

Tear the blue cheese and scatter across the plate, before adding in your bread and peach slices.

In a small bowl mix a good glug of olive oil with sherry vinegar and season. Drizzle over the salad, paying particular attention to the bread and peach segments. Serve immediately to avoid the bread getting too soggy.

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Sea Bass with Chorizo and Butter Beans

Sea Bass is never better than when it's simply pan fried with butter and salt. This dish does exactly that, but sets it atop a summer stew of butter beans and smokey paprika.

Serves 2

2 Fresh Sea Bass Filets

1 x 400g Tin Butter Beans

100g Chorizo Cubes (or vegetarian alternative)

5 Sundried Tomatoes

Fresh Rosemary

1 tsp Smoked Paprika

Salt & Pepper

1 500g Tomato Passata

1 Red Pepper

1 Red Onion

Olive Oil

Butter

2 Garlic Cloves

Finely dice the onion and pepper and saute in a pan with olive oil and a pinch of salt. Strip the leaves from two rosemary stalks and finely chop.

Add this to the onions, along with the crushed garlic cloves and the smoked paprika. Roughly chop up your sundried tomatoes and add in, along with the chorizo cubes. Leave to cook for 3-4 minutes.

Drain your butter beans and add into the pan, along with the tin of chopped tomatoes. Half fill the tin with water, swirling it around, before adding it into the pan too. Leave to cook for 15 minutes.

In a shallow frying pan heat up a sizeable knob of butter. Dry your sea bass filets on a tea towel and season each side. Add to the pan, skin side down. Cook the sea bass on each side for approximately 2 minutes.

To serve, nestle the sea bass atop a bowl of the butter bean stew, with a few slices of sourdough to make the most of that amazing fiery red liquid.

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Orange and Rosemary Loaf Cake

A simple move on from the classic lemon drizzle, this loaf cake teams fresh orange zest with fragrant rosemary. It's an absolute delight for a summer's afternoon.

Serves 10
2 Oranges
4 Stalks Fresh Rosemary
300g Golden Caster Sugar
200g Unsalted Butter - Softened
3 Eggs
270g Plain Flour
1 1/2 tsp Baking Powder
Pinch of Salt
2 tbsp Milk
50g Icing Sugar

Preheat the oven to 180C Fan and line a standard 900g loaf pan with greaseproof paper.

Zest both oranges, reserving a handful of the zest to decorate with at the end. Strip the leaves from two stalks of rosemary and chop finely.

In a bowl add the butter, remaining orange zest, chopped rosemary and 250g of the sugar, creaming together until light and fluffy. Add in the eggs one by one, mixing each time.

Combine the flour, salt and baking powder, incorporating into the mixture and mixing until smooth. Add to the prepared tin and pop in the oven for around 60 minutes, checking after 50. It should be golden; try not to over cook.

Whilst the cake cooks, add the remaining 50g sugar to a pan with the juice of one orange and a sprig of rosemary. Bring to the boil until a syrup forms. Set to one side and remove the rosemary sprig.

When the cake is out of the oven, take a skewer and pierce the cake repeatedly before drizzling the sugar syrup over the cake, letting it trickle into the holes. Leave in the tin to cool.

To create your icing, mix the icing sugar with the juice of half an orange. You want it thick enough to slowly drip, but not too thin it just runs off the cake. Pour over the loaf cake and top with the reserved zest and finely chopped rosemary leaves.

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Blackberry and Bay Crumble Poti

August is blackberry season, which means these jeweled beauties should be around in abundance very soon. If it's not quite time, fear not. Frozen blackberries are easy to come back and work just as well.

Serves 4

225g Blackberries (a handful thawed, if frozen)

1 Bay Leaf

85g Unsalted Butter

140g Golden Caster Sugar

225g Plain Flour

Vanilla Extract

150g Whipping Cream

150g Greek Yoghurt

Preheat your oven to 190C Fan

Add all but a reserved handful of blackberries to a pan, along with 40g of the sugar, bay leaf and a dash of water. Reduce to make a jam, stopping before the blackberries break down entirely. Set to one side.

Add the cream, along with a few drops of vanilla essence to the bowl of a mixer and mix until stiff. Fold in the Greek yoghurt and divide between your bowls. Pop in the fridge for now.

In a bowl combine the remaining sugar, flour and diced butter. Use your hands to rub together to create the crumble, allowing it clump together. Line a baking sheet and tip the crumble mixture onto it. Go through with your fingers and create additional clumps if needed. You can break these up later.

Pop in the oven for 20 minutes until golden brown and then leave to cool.

To assemble, take your yoghurt and cream mixture and swirl in the blackberry syrup - removing the bay leaf. If it's set a little, slacken out with a tiny bit of water and return to a gentle heat.

Take your cooled crumble and begin to break it on top of the syrup, finishing with the reserved blackberries.



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