

Helen's recipes – WI, 9th August 2018

Gazpacho

A staple of Southern Spain – makes use of a glut of lovely ripe tomatoes in the summer months. I often have a refreshing bowl – or a glass – immediately when I get in starving after dog-walking. Good way to pile in some of your five-a-day and probably makes me eat less for lunch.

1-2 slices slightly stale crusty white sourdough bread, soaked in cold water for 20 mins

1kg very ripe tomatoes, diced

1 ripe red pepper and 1/2 green pepper, deseeded and diced

1 cucumber, peeled and diced

2 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed

4 -5 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

2 tbsp sherry vinegar or red wine vinegar

Salt, to taste

1. Mix the diced tomatoes, peppers and cucumber with the crushed garlic and olive oil in the bowl of a food processor or blender. Squeeze the water out of the bread, tear it roughly into chunks, and add to the mixture.
2. Blend until smooth, then add the salt and vinegar to taste and stir well.
3. Pass the mixture through a fine sieve, then cover and refrigerate until well chilled.
4. Serve topped with garnishes of your choice, such as: basil leaves; croutons; diced black olives; diced cucumber and pepper; or spring onion.

If you have time, make a few gazpacho ice-cubes to add when serving.

Serves 4-10 depending on whether it's a full-sized starter or just shot glasses to serve with olives etc as an aperitif.

Approx calories: 750 for the entire recipe. So 175 per bowl if serving four people.

(While you've got the sourdough bread handy, toast a slice, then rub it with a peeled clove of garlic and a halved fresh tomato. Possibly a drizzle of good olive oil.... Some salt and pepper. Eat it with your gazpacho. Yum.)

Quorn Green Thai curry

If you haven't cooked with Quorn chicken-style pieces before, this is a quick and easy introduction. High in protein, low in fat, gluten free, and no animals are harmed! A 500g bag is 500 calories, compared to about 825 for the same amount of chicken breast.

The beauty of this as a quick mid-week supper is that all you need fresh is some green veg. The Co-Op's whoopsie section is usually a good hunting ground. Or frozen would do in an emergency. Everything else can be in your cupboard or freezer, and the beauty of Quorn is you can cook it from frozen in 12 minutes, so no pre-planning required.

Because this dish cooks in about 12 minutes, I don't really want to be waiting for rice to cook, so I use Tilda microwave pouches – 2-mins in the microwave. Usually on offer at £1 each. With this dish I would recommend the Coconut, Chilli and Lemongrass basmati one.

2 x 400ml cans Kingfisher light coconut milk (or 1 x can of full-fat + a can-ful of water)
2 x Blue Dragon Green Thai curry paste 'cassettes'
300g mixed green veg – tenderstem broccoli, mangetout, runner beans, etc.
1 x 500g pack of frozen Quorn chicken-style pieces
2 x Tilda Microwave rice pouches
Bunch of fresh coriander

Heat the coconut milk in a pan and add the Thai Green Curry paste and stir wait until it 'melts'. Add the quorn chicken style pieces straight from the freezer, and then heat through for 6 minutes, then add the veg and chopped coriander stalks and cook for a further 5-6 minutes. Tear open the rice pouch about an inch and heat in the microwave for 2 mins. Serve on half a rice pouch per person, sprinkled with coriander leaves.

Approx 544 calories per serving, including the rice.

Broad bean and pesto risotto

Here's another evening meal you can make when you get home and "you've got nothing in".

I measure the rice in a measuring jug, so I don't know the weight.... I use ready-made vegetable stock in a pouch which has a long sell-by date so I'm usually sure I have one in the fridge. Otherwise, you could make up your own stock with Bouillon powder. I use frozen baby broad beans. You can use fresh ones, but the 'skins' can be a bit leathery.

Ingredients

Italian Arborio or Carnaroli risotto rice, measured to 225ml/ 8 fl oz level in a measuring jug
500ml vegetable stock
1 x 190g jar green pesto
175g frozen baby broad beans

To serve

Chopped spring onion
Lemon juice
Grated Grana Padano
Torn basil leaves

Measure the rice and tip into a saucepan. Use about a third of the jar of pesto to coat the rice grains, and heat gently for a few seconds. Heat the stock in the microwave to nearly boiling and add to the rice. Stir and bring to the boil. Add the frozen baby broad beans. Turn the heat down and cook for about 15 mins stirring occasionally, depending on how firm/slushy you like your risotto. At the end, add the remaining pesto and stir through.

Serve topped with the chopped spring onions, torn basil leaves, lemon juice, and a sprinkling of grated Grana Padano*.

(Grana Padano is exactly like Parmesan, but cheaper!)

Serves 4 as a starter, or 2 hungry people as a main course.

Calories: I'm guessing at about 750 if serving 2 as a main course...

Main course salads with fruit

No real recipes for these, it's more about ideas.

Get a huge bowl, add a whole bag of baby salad leaves. Then experiment.

Fruit

Fresh figs
Mango
Watermelon
Pomegranate seeds
Peaches

Nuts

Toasted pine nuts (nice if still warm)
Walnuts

Protein

Crayfish tails
Tuna steaks
Grilled halloumi
Feta
Salmon fillets
Prawns

Dressing

1 tbsp Extra virgin olive oil
1 tbsp Red wine vinegar
1 tsp wholegrain mustard
1 tsp honey
Salt and pepper

If you've got some raspberries in the fridge, chuck one in and crush it. Best made in an old jam jar with a lid so you can give it a good shake, and store any leftover in the fridge.

- Aldi do 4 frozen tuna steaks which work out at about 75p each. There are four in a pack, all individually sealed, so you can just pop one or two into the fridge when you know you might want them in the evening. They are not huge, but they are perfect for one person.

Guacamole

I have mani-pedi afternoons at my house from time to time and everyone always wants me to make 'my guacamole'. Have any of the ladies ever re-created 'my guacamole' at home, despite loving it better than any shop-bought mush.... Nah....!

2 large ripe avocados

2 tomatoes, chopped

1 small red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

Juice of 1 -2 limes

Large bunch of fresh coriander, finely chopped

Mash with a potato masher, job done!

If saving for later, put the avocado stones back in the mixture and cover with cling film.