

THE NÖMLAB
JOURNEY TO FLAVOUR
VEGAN COOKBOOK



**A PLANT-BASED TASTE ADVENTURE
FOR THE BODY, SOUL AND PLANET**

DEV MUKHERJI



Dev's story is moving & authentic, his passion for healthy, flavoursome fusion food, shines through each page.

Karim Amer, Brand Director

Dev's food not only delivers on beautiful vibrant colours but is big on flavours too. A rare gem of a combination!

Helen Granell-Watson, Former MasterChef Contestant and founder of Dulce Mama Cupcakes

A timely book of mouth-watering recipes that are both good for our health and the planet.

Jennifer Barclay, Author of The Taverna by the Sea

Journey to Flavour

A Plant-Based Taste
Adventure
for the Body, Soul
and Planet

Dev Mukherji



Foreword

How often do we stand in awe, admiring the vast night sky full of stars, or notice a wild flower and appreciate its beauty and fragrance?


Our modern lives, so full of distractions and convenient solutions, often leave us feeling a bit empty. However, the Covid-19 crisis taught us what we truly value: a sense of community, caring for our loved ones, our wellbeing, investing in our gifts and talents, and appreciating life's simple joys like nutritious and delicious home-cooked meals, good company and good health.

Through my various travels around the world and my own life story, I have come to realise that the secret to happiness lies in prioritising purpose and joy in our lives, eating wholesome and nutritious meals, living an active lifestyle and enjoying a supportive social network.

I feel there has never been a more important time for us to consider a lifestyle that balances our personal wellbeing with that of society and the planet.

We are now increasingly aware of our impact on the planet's health. The COP26 Climate Summit has fired the warning shot; the predictions are dire, and it is up to us how we chose to avert impending disaster. A plant-focused diet can certainly help to reduce our CO2 footprint.

I hope the wholesome plant recipes will inspire you to take the first step towards a more enjoyable and wholesome plant-based lifestyle. Welcome to the JOURNEY TO FLAVOUR!

A man with short, dark hair and a slight smile is sitting on a large, weathered log. He is wearing a dark, short-sleeved button-down shirt and dark trousers. He is looking out over a body of water towards a line of trees in the background. The scene is outdoors, likely in a park or near a lake, with soft, natural lighting.

About The Author:

Dev is a former MasterChef contestant, passionate about creating sensationally vibrant fusion food that packs big flavours. Dev's food inspiration comes from his travels around the world, his heritage and his boundless curiosity for exploration. He cares about the impact food has on our health and environment – and believes that food is our medicine. Dev uses minimally processed and local ingredients as much as possible. If he had to sum up his food in three words, it would be HEALTHY, EXCITING & SUSTAINABLE.

Dev lives outside London. As well as hosting his successful social channels @thenomlab, Dev works with retailers and manufacturers to develop product strategies and plans to help meet the ever-changing needs of consumers and shoppers.

About The Book:

JOURNEY TO FLAVOUR is a narrative as well as a recipe book; an authentic account of how my personal story has influenced my cooking, my lifestyle and philosophy. I break it into ten mini-stories and provide recipe inspiration along the way.

This is NOT an instruction manual for re-creating recipes. I hope to inspire you to explore sensational plant-based ingredients and make your mealtimes a fun and delicious experience. It's important also to put your personal twist on the dishes to make them your own!

You will see that wholesome ingredients and gut health are especially important to me; for this reason, most of my recipes are fibre-rich, varied and nutritious. A plant-based lifestyle is kinder to the planet and plants taste great too. I hope you can use this book to manage your flexitarian, vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. I believe our enjoyment of food is a deeply sensory experience, so we have tried to capture the richness and vibrancy of the recipes through visuals, thanks to David Silver's excellent photography.

Join our taste adventure that is good for the body, soul and planet!



VEGAN
JOURNEY TO FLAVOUR
COOKBOOK

It was 2006. That winter, as I left my parents' home to catch a flight back to London, my mother gave me her gold pendant that her father had given her, saying, 'Take this, this will keep you safe.' Little did I know that it would be the last time I would see her healthy and well. In 2007, after a brief illness, she passed away. I had left for London again the evening before she died.

The pressures of work and life prevented me from grieving for her, and I carried on as normal, although I was weary and torn within.

My mother always encouraged me to pursue my creative pursuits.
I dedicate this book to her.
I am also thankful to my friends David, Karim and Yvonne for their inspiration and support



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CHAPTER 1

BEAUTIFULLY BALANCED
MEALS THAT LOOK GOOD
AND TASTE GREAT

BAKED TOFU, PEACHES AND
ASPARAGUS

BELUGA LENTILS ON
PORTOBELLO MUSHROOMS
WITH
MISO ONION GRAVY

JACKFRUIT AND BLACK BEAN CHILLI

CHICKPEA MEATBALLS WITH
BASIL AND SUN-DRIED
TOMATOES

MUSHROOM AND BLACK BEAN
STEW WITH WHOLEWHEAT PASTA

EASY ONE POT PAD THAI WITH
TEMPEH

VEGETABLE AND TOFU
JAMBALAYA

A Rocky Start

Balanced nutrition

Before my arrival in this world, my parents had had two boys, so after a couple of decades they tried for a girl. My mother wanted a girl desperately for companionship, having lived in an all-boys house all her life and been a teacher in a convent school for girls most of her career. It was a February afternoon when my mother was rushed from her school to the hospital where I was born. She did not want to look at me – her hopes of a girl child had been dashed. My brothers took me to the house and cared for me the best they could. There were even talks of giving me away to a childless couple who were friends with my parents, but my mother changed her mind in the last moments.

It was the mid-1970s. My parents had moved from Bombay to Calcutta prior to my birth; my father was a government official and had a transferable job. I grew up in the government quarters in Calcutta. My earliest childhood memories were chasing yellow butterflies in the garden, talking to green caterpillars, and pestering my nanny to tell me fairy tales.

But my early years were no fairy tale – when I was three, I succumbed to a deadly throat infection. Medication stopped working; I was too poorly, and the doctors warned my parents to say their last goodbyes. Finally, the doctors decided to experiment with a new antibiotic. It worked a treat and miraculously saved my life.

So strange is life, with so many twists and turns; my story would have been vastly different (and much shorter) had the doctor not treated me with the life-saving drug that night. My parents said my personality changed after my near-death experience; I became a more sensitive, reflective, artistically inclined child. I had a strict upbringing, and following my illness, my mother kept a close eye on my diet – fresh vegetables, fruit and legumes were pretty much a staple at every mealtime. The rest of my childhood was mostly illness-free, and I enjoyed robust health.

My mother had been born in 1938 in Calcutta, in the British Colonial India; she lost her father when she was only four and her mother, Dorothy, who was half-French, was left to bring up three children on her own with whatever her husband left her. Subsequently my mother, the youngest, was packed off to a Catholic boarding school. Her childhood was tough and regimented, and as an adult she ran her household like clockwork, with military precision. Despite the strict house rules we followed, meals were always eaten together.

Although we mostly ate wholesome, fresh food as a family, we never compromised on flavour. My mother was a magician, infusing simple meals with subtle flavours to make them taste great. Even condiments were made from scratch: each year, my mother would make a huge batch of spiced ketchup using a family recipe with fresh tomatoes, chillies and spices such as cinnamon, cloves and star anise – it was a dollop of delicious magic. The memories of those delightful tastes have formed the backdrop for my own JOURNEY TO FLAVOUR.

THERE WERE EVEN TALKS
OF GIVING ME AWAY TO A
CHILDLESS COUPLE WHO WERE
FRIENDS WITH MY PARENTS,
BUT MY MOTHER CHANGED HER
MIND IN THE LAST MOMENTS.

BAKED TOFU, PEACHES AND ASPARAGUS



TIME

40 MINUTES



SERVING

2-3 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

A sweet, savoury and spicy tofu dish with juicy caramelised peaches.

INGREDIENTS

300g firm tofu, grated
400g tinned peach
halves, juice from can

Marinade:

2 tablespoons maple syrup
2 teaspoons smoked
paprika
½ teaspoon cumin powder
½ teaspoon coriander
powder
1 tablespoon soy sauce
2 tablespoons olive oil
½ teaspoon sea salt
½ teaspoon garlic salt
2 teaspoons chilli flakes
1 tablespoon soy sauce
2 tablespoons peach juice

8-10 asparagus spears,
trimmed to remove the
woody ends
2-3 tablespoons
almonds, crushed

Mix the marinade ingredients in a bowl and give it a good stir.

In a bowl mix the grated tofu and marinade and let it rest for 10 minutes.

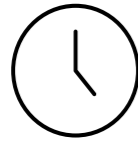
Heat a saucepan and add a splash of peach juice. When it bubbles up add the peach halves and give the saucepan a good shake. Cook for several minutes till the peaches take on a bit of colour and start to caramelise. Set it aside.

Preheat the oven to 180C. Meanwhile lightly grease a medium tray with olive oil and spread out the marinated tofu, then arrange the peach halves on top and scatter the asparagus spears over them. Sprinkle with crushed almonds.

Bake in the oven for 20 minutes. Serve on its own as a starter or with some salad as a main.



BELUGA LENTILS ON PORTBELLO MUSHROOM WITH MISO ONION GRAVY



TIME
40 MINUTE



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

This is such an elegant dish, and just so perfect for dinner with friends and family.

INGREDIENTS

For the mushrooms:

4-6 portobello mushrooms
1 clove garlic, minced
1 teaspoon thyme, chopped (or use dry thyme)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 pinch sea salt

Lentil topping:

1 cup cooked beluga lentils (use precooked or cook as per packet instructions)
1 tablespoon olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons thyme, finely chopped
1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
4-6 chopped dates
1 pinch sea salt

For the onion and miso gravy:

1 large white onion, sliced
1 tablespoon olive oil
½ tablespoon brown miso paste
1 tablespoon maple syrup
8 cracked black peppercorns
1 teaspoon cornflour
1 pinch sea salt

Wipe the portobello mushrooms clean and remove the stems. Lightly oil a baking dish and place the mushrooms gill side up. In a small bowl mix together the oil, garlic, thyme and a little salt. Divide the mixture between the mushrooms and drizzle over. Bake the mushrooms for around 15 minutes at 180C till tender.

While the mushrooms are in the oven, heat some olive oil in a pan and fry the minced garlic till lightly golden. Next add the minced herbs, lentils and chopped dates and fry for 5-7 minutes on medium heat till it smells nutty. Add splashes of balsamic vinegar and cook for a further 3-4 minutes. Add a pinch of salt to taste.

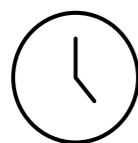
Take the mushrooms out of the oven, top with the lentil mixture using a spoon, pressing the mixture down but without overfilling the mushrooms. Now pop them back in the oven for a further 5 minutes.

For the gravy, fry the onions in olive oil on medium heat for 10 minutes, stirring often, so that they take on a lovely even golden colour. Add a pinch of cracked pepper and the maple syrup and stir well. Now add the miso paste and cook the onions for a further 2-3 minutes, then cover with 2 cups of water and let it simmer for another 7-10 minutes, till the gravy reduces. To thicken, mix the cornflour with a little bit of water and add it to the pan. Stir well so it is evenly mixed.

Place the mushrooms on a plate and pour the gravy around them. Perfect with some toasted sourdough bread.



JACKFRUIT AND BLACK BEAN CHILLI



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

A simple chilli dish with lovely smoky flavours and lots of texture, thanks to the addition of jackfruit.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 large white onion, chopped
3 tablespoons paprika
1 tablespoon cumin

1 400g can jackfruit, drained
2 tablespoons cider vinegar
2 tablespoons maple syrup
2 400g cans chopped tomatoes
1 400g can black beans, rinsed and drained
sea salt to taste

¾ cup pitted and chopped black olives (optional)
1 small bunch rosemary, finely chopped
1 small bunch oregano, finely chopped

In a large pot heat the olive oil and fry the garlic and onions on low heat for 7–10 minutes till glossy and soft.

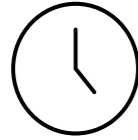
Add the herbs and spices, cook for a few minutes, then add the vinegar, maple syrup, tomatoes, beans and jackfruit and 2 cups of water. Stir well and bring to a simmer. Then reduce heat and let it cook for 30–40 minutes till the jackfruit is softened and the liquid is reduced.

Press down each of the jackfruit pieces with the back of a wooden spoon till the fibres separate. Cook for a further 5 minutes.

Serve with rice and salad..



CHICKPEA MEATBALLS WITH BASIL AND SUN-DRIED TOMATOES



TIME
60 MINUTE



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

Juicy chickpea meatballs in a rich sun-dried tomato gravy with fresh basil – simply fabulous!

INGREDIENTS

For the chickpea meatballs:

1 400g can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 cup panko breadcrumbs
1 red onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 small bunch oregano, chopped

For the sauce:

1 cup water
1 teaspoon corn starch
½ cup of sun-dried tomato paste
2 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons hot sriracha sauce
2 tablespoons dark soy sauce

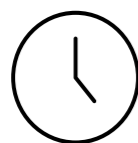
Pulse the chickpea meatball ingredients in a blender. Don't over-blend, leave some texture as it will add bite. Now form small meatball shapes by rolling in your palms, brush with a little olive oil and place on a tray lined with parchment paper. Bake at 180C for 30 minutes, turning halfway through.

Mix the sauce ingredients in a bowl and heat on medium heat, till it turns thick and glossy. Take it off the heat, place the meatballs in it and let them soak in the sauce for 10 minutes before serving.

Garnish with some chopped parsley if you wish. Goes wonderfully with steamed rice or toasted sourdough bread.



MUSHROOM AND BLACK BEAN STEW WITH WHOLEWHEAT PASTA



TIME
60 MINUTE



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

A bowl of comforting goodness perfect for a cold winter evenings

INGREDIENTS

1 400g can of black beans, drained	2 tablespoons smoked paprika	6-8 tablespoons tomato paste
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil	1 pod star anise	300ml water
200g chestnut mushrooms, chopped	1 stick cinnamon	4 teaspoons chilli flakes
2 large onions, sliced	1 small handful black olives	sea salt to taste
6-8 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped	1 sprig rosemary, finely chopped	3-4 cups whole wheat pasta, cooked as per packet instructions
1 large handful black kale (cavolo nero), chopped finely	3-4 bay leaves	

Heat some olive oil in a pan, add the cinnamon stick, bay leaves and star anise to create a fragrant aroma. Now add the garlic and onions and sauté on medium heat for 7-10 minutes till they turn glossy. Now add the mushrooms and kale and cook for 5-8 minutes. Now add the paprika and chilli flakes and cook for another minute.

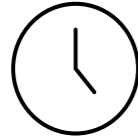
Add the drained beans, tomato paste, rosemary, black olives and water and stir well. Cover and cook on low heat for 30-40 minutes, till the gravy thickens. Add the cooked pasta to the dish and stir it in. Season to taste.

Note: remember to take out the whole spices (cinnamon, bay leaves and star anise) after cooking.

Serve in little bowls with some chopped parsley on top.



EASY ONE-POT PAD THAI WITH TEMPEH



TIME
40 MINUTE



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

This dish is so lively and fresh and bursting with flavour!

INGREDIENTS

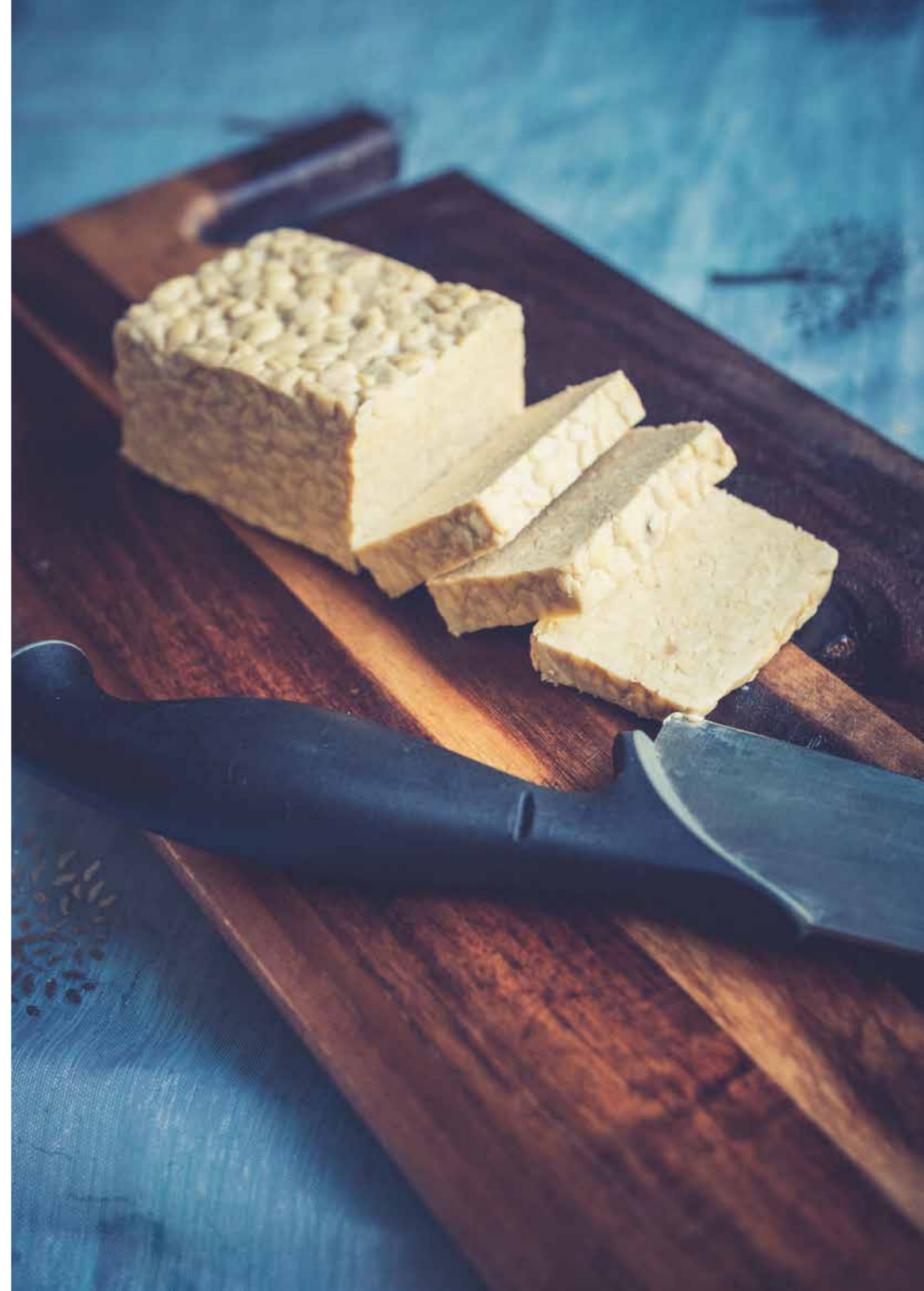
4 cups rice noodles, cooked as per packet instructions	2 red chillies, finely sliced	1 tablespoon tamarind paste
200g tempeh, cut in small cubes	4 tablespoons soy sauce	2 teaspoons black pepper powder
2 teaspoons corn starch	1 tablespoon sesame oil	1 tablespoon coconut sugar
2 cups broccoli florets	1 tablespoon coconut oil	1 small bunch fresh coriander, chopped
1 red bell pepper	2 limes, juiced	1 small bunch Thai basil, chopped
1 handful whole baby corn cobs	1 tablespoon rice vinegar	½ cup roasted peanuts, crushed
6 cloves garlic	3 tablespoons smooth peanut butter	
1 small bunch green onions, chopped	4-6 tablespoons sriracha sauce	
	1 thumb ginger, grated	

Place cubed tempeh in a bowl and add the sesame oil and 2 tablespoons of soy sauce. Stir well. Then add the corn starch, making sure all the cubes are covered. Lay them out on a lined tray and bake for 25 minutes, tossing halfway. The tempeh should be crispy.

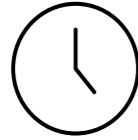
Heat some coconut oil in a large wok, add the garlic, green onions, ginger and chillies and cook for 2-3 minutes. Add the chopped vegetables and cook for 5 minutes.

To make the sauce, combine 2 tablespoons of soy sauce, lime juice, rice vinegar, peanut butter, sriracha sauce, black pepper, tamarind paste and coconut sugar in a bowl and stir well.

Add the cooked noodles and sauce to the vegetables, then add the sauce and stir it through. Finally add the crispy tempeh and crushed peanuts and mix it lightly. Sprinkle the chopped coriander and Thai basil.



VEGETABLE & TOFU JAMBALAYA



TIME

40 MINUTES



SERVING

2-3 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

This fragrant rice and tofu dish, will tickle your tastebuds and make them sing

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil
200g firm tofu, crumbled
2 teaspoons smoked paprika
2 onions, finely chopped
4 garlic cloves, crushed
2 red peppers, diced
2 celery sticks, chopped

1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
1 teaspoon dried oregano
½ teaspoon sea salt
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
½ teaspoon mustard powder
1 pinch white pepper

300g long-grain rice
400g cherry tomatoes, chopped
300ml vegetable stock
1 small bunch parsley, chopped
4 spring onions, sliced

Heat the olive oil in a casserole dish. Add the onions and cook till slightly brown. Add the garlic, peppers, celery, thyme, oregano and bay leaf and cook for 2 minutes. Then add the crumbled tofu, stir in and cook for 2–3 minutes more.

Now add the salt, paprika, cayenne, mustard powder and white pepper and cook for 2 minutes till

fragrant. Stir in the rice, then the chopped tomatoes. Add the stock and bring to the boil, then cover with a lid and put in a preheated oven at 180C for 25 minutes.

Take the dish out of the oven and fluff up the rice with a fork. Sprinkle with the parsley and add an extra dash of paprika and a handful of spring onions. Serve with a freshly made onion, cucumber and tomato salad on the side



CHAPTER 2

EAT THE RAINBOW -
AMAZINGLY FRESH AND
VIBRANT FOODS

APPLE, MANGO AND
POMEGRANATE SALAD

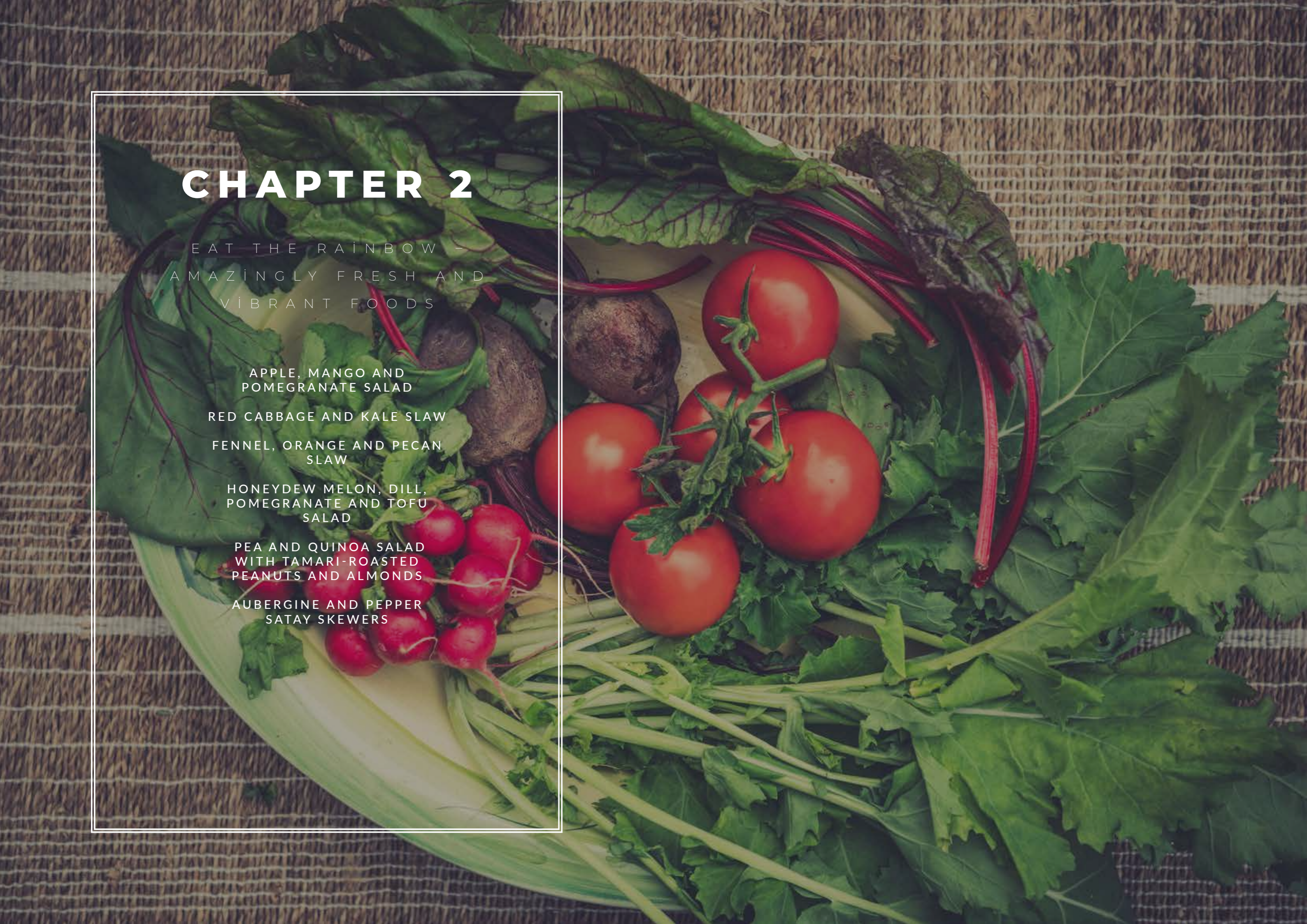
RED CABBAGE AND KALE SLAW

FENNEL, ORANGE AND PECAN
SLAW

HONEYDEW MELON, DILL,
POMEGRANATE AND TOFU
SALAD

PEA AND QUINOA SALAD
WITH TAMARI-ROASTED
PEANUTS AND ALMONDS

AUBERGINE AND PEPPER
SATAY SKEWERS



My Journey to Flavour Begins

Eat fresh

Remembering Calcutta in the 1980s makes me think of the sickly-sweet smell of overripe mangoes and stale sweat. On Sunday mornings, I usually got woken up at 5.45 a.m. by ice-cold water thrown at my face, so we could get ready for church wearing our Sunday best.

It wasn't all bad: Sunday lunch was usually a scrumptious chicken curry, a roast or spicy sausages and mash. My mother was an inventive cook and there always was a twist to her dishes – that unusual herb that was not meant to be there, or a clever replacement of recipe ingredients... Every meal was a flavour adventure.

When I was still a child, each summer we would travel to Shillong, a hill station in northeast India, to visit my granny. My granny was an eccentric, clever feminist, who had had a wild and crazy youth. Her favourite story was how as a young girl in 1912, she succeeded in challenging Mahatma Gandhi on women's education at a political rally in Calcutta. A talented violinist with a love for Bach, Chopin and Elgar, in 1920 she wooed and then married my granddad – an army officer in the British army – and went on to pick up plenty of Anglo-Indian recipes from other army officers' wives at the many tea parties whilst their husbands were fighting wars halfway around the globe. Her recipes would be classed as fusion cuisine today. I learnt a lot from her.

I loved visiting my granny in Shillong, where the mountain air was crystal clear, the water was sweet, the skies were the deepest blue; and the soil was the blackest black that nurtured the most aromatic, richly vibrant produce I have known. The simplest vegetable dishes tasted divine. The food we ate was local, seasonal and tasted delicious, and it's easy to see how it benefited us, the local farmers and the community – you could say it was food with a soul!

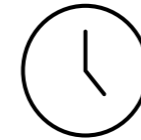
My love affair with food started then. I would go wandering in the hills smelling the wild herbs, flowers, mosses and woodlands, the slightly metallic aroma of a mountain stream, the bright fragrance of the orange blossoms... and all that fired a million happy neurons in my brain.

I would also spend my summer holidays reading the fascinating stories of the ancient Greek heroes. The adventures of Odysseus particularly resonated with me. I always imagined I would travel the world and see the most amazing sights and taste the most amazing food. I only had limited exposure to world cuisine then, but I had boundless curiosity for foreign foods and flavours. I had read about pasta in a magazine, so once when my mother was making flatbreads, I insisted we should cut it up in long strips with a knife and boil it in salted water to make pasta. We then proceeded to cobble together a sauce with garlic, tomatoes, chillies and fresh cilantro. It tasted great, though it wasn't a pasta dish as most people know it. My mother encouraged me to mix and match flavours, and I enjoyed it immensely.

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ORANGE BLOSSOMS.



APPLE, MANGO AND POMEGRANATE SALAD



TIME
10 MINUTE



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

This salad reminds me of holidays and sunshine. It is super easy to make, with an electric zing and bursts of sweetness.

INGREDIENTS

2 medium green apples
1 large, firm-fleshed
mango (slightly unripe,
so you can grate it)
juice and zest of 2
limes

1 tablespoon maple syrup
½ medium pomegranate
1 teaspoon cinnamon
powder
1 teaspoon nutmeg powder

¼ teaspoon sea salt
1 small bunch mint
leaves, finely chopped
8 cracked black
peppercorns

Grate the apples. Use a cheesecloth to squeeze out the juice. We will only use the shredded apple. Use the strained apple juice in a smoothie perhaps?

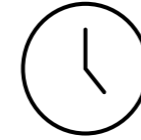
Peel and grate the mango. If the flesh of the mango isn't firm, it will turn mushy, so make sure the mango is a bit unripe and the flesh has a slight crunch to it.

Extract the seeds from the pomegranate by tapping it against a hard surface and using your fingers to pluck them out.

Now mix all the ingredients in a large bowl, stir well and let it chill in the fridge for 20 minutes, longer if you have the time.



RED CABBAGE AND KALE SLAW



TIME
10 MINUTES



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

Delightfully vibrant and antioxidant-rich salad that is perfect for a summery lunch

INGREDIENTS

1 cup curly kale, stemmed and sliced
sea salt to taste
1 green apple, cored and finely diced
2 cups red cabbage, finely sliced or shredded

¼ cup walnuts, finely chopped
½ tablespoon sherry vinegar
juice and zest of 1 lime
1 teaspoon cinnamon powder

1 small garlic clove, minced
1 tablespoon maple syrup
¼ cup dried cranberries
1 teaspoon smoked paprika

Blanch the kale in boiling water for 5–10 seconds. It will wilt and turn bright green. Drain and reserve.

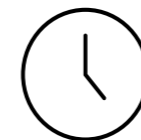
In a large bowl mix the cabbage and kale well together, add the lime juice and vinegar and use a fork to mix it really well so every bit of the cabbage and kale is coated. Let this rest for 5 minutes.

Now to this bowl add all the other ingredients, reserving some of the walnuts and cranberries for garnishing.

Stir well and let it chill in the fridge for 20 minutes before serving..



FENNEL, ORANGE AND PECAN SLAW



TIME
10 MINUTES



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

This wonderfully fragrant salad smells like a Mediterranean garden on a summer's day

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh orange juice and 1 teaspoon zest
1 teaspoon pink Himalayan salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
1-2 red chillies, finely sliced
2 medium fennel bulbs with stalks
1 large orange, segmented

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup pitted green olives, coarsely chopped
1 teaspoon capers
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pecans, chopped
1 tablespoon maple syrup

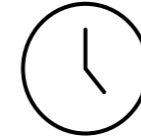
Trim the outer leaves from the fennel and mince the feathery fronds. Remove and discard stalks. Cut fennel bulb in half and discard core. Thinly slice or grate the bulb. Add fronds, fennel slices and orange sections to a bowl and combine.

Now add the other ingredients to the bowl and stir well.

Let it chill in the fridge for 20 minutes before serving.



HONEYDEW MELON, DILL AND TOFU SALAD



TIME

10 MINUTES



SERVING



DIFFICULTY

EASY

Honeydew melon, capers, olives and dill are a curious combination – but the flavours work harmoniously. This salad has a complex flavour profile with different sweet and salty notes working together to deliver a taste explosion.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
1 medium honeydew melon
1 teaspoon pink Himalayan salt

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1-2 red chillies, finely sliced
1 cup pomegranate seeds
200g tofu
½ cup pitted green olives, coarsely chopped

2 teaspoons capers
1 small bunch dill, finely chopped
¼ cup walnuts, chopped
1 tablespoon maple syrup

Peel the melon, slice into bite-sized pieces and transfer to a large bowl.

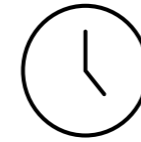
Squeeze the water from the tofu using a cheesecloth. Then use your fingers to tear apart and crumble.

Now combine all the other ingredients, reserving some dill and pomegranate seeds for garnishing.

Stir well. Let it chill in the fridge for 20 minutes before serving.



PEA AND QUINOA SALAD BOWL WITH TAMARI-ROASTED PEANUTS AND ALMONDS



TIME

40 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

A substantial, moreish salad with lots of texture and crunch, perfect as a wholesome light lunch or snack.

INGREDIENTS

For the nuts:
3 teaspoons tamari soy sauce
¼ cup almonds
¼ cup peanuts
4 teaspoons olive oil

Salad ingredients:
3 tablespoons vegan pesto
juice and zest of 2 lemons
1 tablespoon tamari soy sauce
1 cup fresh peas
3 cups cooked quinoa
¼ teaspoon cumin powder
1 small carrot, finely diced
1 red pepper, finely diced

2 teaspoons smoked paprika
½ cup pitted green olives, coarsely chopped
1 small bunch coriander, finely chopped
½ teaspoon sea salt
1 tablespoon maple syrup

Cook the quinoa as per packet instructions.

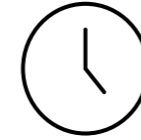
Add the fresh peas to a pan of boiling water, simmer for 3 minutes, then drain.

Coat the almonds and peanuts in a mixture of olive oil and tamari soy sauce and spread them out on a pan. Place the pan in a preheated oven at 180C for 5 minutes. Check to see if done and put it back in the oven for another 3 minutes if the nuts need further roasting.

Now add all the ingredients in a large bowl and mix well.



AUBERGINE AND PEPPER SATAY SKEWERS



TIME
3 HOURS



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

This dish does need some preparation time, but it's so satisfying! Lovely as a sharing treat or even for a bit of 'me time'.

INGREDIENTS

For the aubergine skewers:

3 medium aubergines, cut in bite-sized 2cm chunks
2 red bell peppers, chopped in bite-sized pieces
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
1 tablespoon miso paste
2 tablespoons light soy sauce
3 tablespoons maple syrup
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon sesame seeds
olive oil to drizzle

For the peanut sauce:

½ cup creamy peanut butter
½ cup water
1 tablespoon dark soy sauce
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated
1 teaspoon brown sugar
1 teaspoon garlic, minced
1 teaspoon rice wine vinegar

Whisk together the sesame oil, rice wine vinegar, soy sauce, maple syrup, ginger, garlic, sherry vinegar, miso, and sesame seeds. Add the aubergine and red pepper pieces and coat, then cover and marinate for 2 hours.

Thread the marinated aubergines onto the skewers. Put a griddle pan over a high heat and drizzle the pan with a little olive oil before cooking. Make sure the aubergine and peppers are nicely cooked through on all sides. Remove the skewers from the grill and drizzle with some more maple syrup.

For the peanut sauce, blend all the ingredients to a smooth paste. Serve the aubergine skewers with peanut sauce on top.

CHAPTER 3

SIMPLE EVERYDAY
GOODNESS

LENTIL PASTA IN
COCONUT MILK,
LEMONGRASS AND RED CURRY
PASTE

VEGAN SAUSAGE, BEAN AND
BLACK KALE
CASSEROLE

RED LENTIL
KEDGEREE
WITH RED PEPPERS, GREEN
BEANS AND AUBERGINES

BAKED BROCCOLI BHAJIS WITH
BANG BANG SAUCE

SWEET POTATO,
CHICKPEA AND SPINACH CURRY
WITH SAUTÉED GINGER



Fried Onion Sandwich

Elevating everyday food

I must have been around seven or eight years old when my father took retirement. I still remember the last three months prior to it as my parents attended so many farewell parties. On a few evenings when they had forgotten to prepare my dinner before leaving, I got rather hungry and decided to make my own.

Having found a couple of onions in the pantry, I chopped them up roughly, fried them until they turned golden brown, added some salt, black pepper and ketchup, then stuck it between a couple of slices of bread and chomped away. It was delicious! I realised then how easy it was to knock up a meal with just a few simple ingredients. That is when I started experimenting with more and more flavours and ingredients in the kitchen.

As a child I loved to paint and even won a few awards for my artistic creations, but I never really took it up as a serious hobby. However, when I started combining flavours it felt no different to mixing and matching colours on a painter's palette. I always suspected I had a mild form of synaesthesia; I associate flavours with colours and for me cooking often feels like painting with flavours.

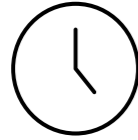
In school I loved experimenting with all sorts of different substances in my school chemistry lessons, and even had a miniature chemistry lab at home. The anticipation and excitement of mixing chemicals to witness a reaction was priceless. Perhaps it is this love of experimentation that fuels my curiosity. The serendipitous discovery of insanely delicious flavour combinations is exhilarating.

For example, I discovered through my experiments that olives and coconut can work harmoniously together in a curry sauce; blackcurrant and coffee can be combined to make the most delectable compote; blueberries and green cardamon work together like a charm in a smoothie; cinnamon, lemon balm, orange zest and maple syrup can make a divine tea; lemongrass, sundried tomatoes and smoky paprika can make the most irresistible cooking sauce; figs, sumac spice and port wine make intense sweet and sour sauces. There is real alchemy of flavours here! Often a limitless list of taste combinations whirr away in my subconscious; I use a bit of creativity to fish out the combinations I like best when I feel inspired.

Sadly, creativity in general is not massively celebrated in our contemporary culture. At school we are mostly taught to colour inside the lines, and within our social circle we are taught how to 'fit in' and live our lives based on a template rather than being who we really are. A huge part of cooking a new dish is down to curiosity and creativity.

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PAINTER'S PALETTE.

LENTIL PASTA IN COCONUT MILK, LEMONGRASS AND RED CURRY PASTE



TIME
40 MINUTES



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

A delicious and healthy pasta dish in a creamy red Thai sauce ready in no time.

INGREDIENTS

4 cups lentil pasta,
cooked as per packet
instructions
1 medium onion, sliced
2 tablespoons olive oil
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 thumb ginger, grated
1 red chilli, finely sliced
1 yellow pepper, sliced
2 tablespoons red curry
paste

1 medium courgette,
grated
1 lemongrass stick, finely
sliced
1 300g can coconut milk
1 teaspoon turmeric
¼ teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons maple syrup
sea salt to taste

Garnish:
Small bunch of fresh
Thai basil, chopped

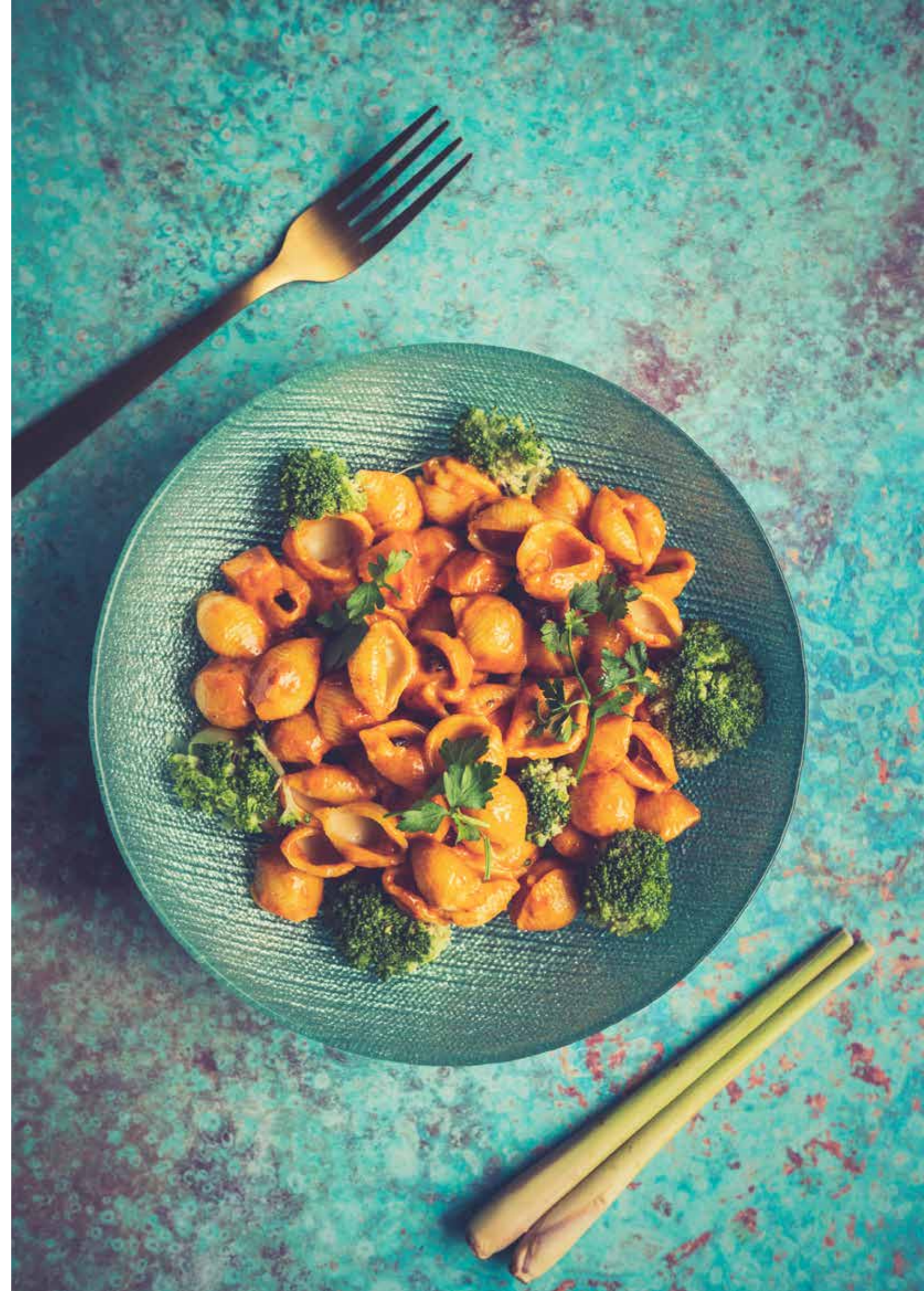
In a wok over medium heat, fry the onion in oil till soft. Add the garlic, ginger, chili, lemongrass, red curry paste and yellow pepper and stir. Cook for a few minutes till soft.

Add the grated courgette, coconut milk, turmeric, black pepper and maple syrup.

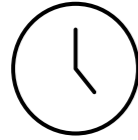
Cook till courgette is soft.

Add cooked pasta to wok and stir to combine.

Garnish with Thai basil.



VEGAN SAUSAGE, BEAN AND BLACK KALE CASSEROLE



TIME
60 MINUTES



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

A sweet and smoky sausage stew that is just pure goodness in a bowl.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1 medium stick celery,
finely chopped
2 red peppers, chopped
8 vegan sausages
(about 500g)
3 fat garlic cloves,
chopped

3 teaspoons sweet smoked
paprika
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 tablespoon mixed dried
herbs
125ml white wine
1 cup tomato paste
2 sprigs fresh rosemary,
finely chopped

300ml vegetable stock
2 cups black kale,
chopped
1 400g can black
beans, drained and
rinsed
1 small bunch parsley,
chopped
black pepper
sea salt to taste

Heat olive oil in a heavy bottomed pan and cook onions and garlic gently for 5 minutes. Now add celery sticks, chopped pepper and kale and cook for a further 5 minutes. Add sausages and fry for 5 minutes.

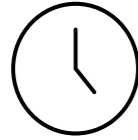
Now add the sweet smoked paprika, ground cumin, mixed herbs and freshly chopped rosemary and fry till the aromas are released. Add the white wine and use a wooden spoon to remove any residue stuck to the pan.

Now add the tomato paste, vegetable stock, drained beans and stir well. Cook on low heat for 30–40 minutes till the gravy thickens.

Season with salt and black pepper and sprinkle some chopped parsley.



RED LENTIL KEDGEREE WITH RED PEPPERS, GREEN BEANS AND AUBERGINES



TIME
60 MINUTES



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

During the monsoons when it rained continuously, my mother made kedgerree and served it up with aubergine bhajis and a yogurt dip on the side. It is the perfect comfort food for gloomy days.

INGREDIENTS

200g red lentils
200g basmati rice
4 tomatoes, chopped
2-3 cups of mixed vegetables (red peppers, green beans and aubergines), chopped
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon cardamom powder

1 stick cinnamon
3 cloves
3 dried red chillies
4 bay leaves
2 teaspoons ginger paste
1 teaspoon turmeric powder

2 teaspoons coconut sugar
5 tablespoons coconut oil
1 teaspoon garam masala powder
500ml hot water
sea salt to taste
fresh coriander leaves, chopped (optional)

Dry roast the lentils in a pan and stir continuously till they give off a nutty aroma.

Transfer to a bowl.

In the same pan heat 1 tablespoon of coconut oil and fry the rice for about 4-5 minutes, stirring frequently, till it takes on a glassy look. Transfer to a bowl.

In the pan place 3 tablespoons of coconut oil and fry the cinnamon, cloves, chillies and cumin seeds. Now add the chopped vegetables and cook for 5 minutes till they are softened. Now add the ginger paste, turmeric powder, cardamom powder, coconut sugar and cook for another minute.

Add the tomatoes and cook for about 2 minutes.

Next add the roasted lentils and rice to the pan and cover with 500ml of hot water.

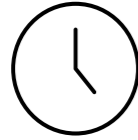
Let it cook on low heat for 40-50 mins. Check and stir occasionally. If the liquid is absorbed keep adding little amounts of water and continue to stir gently. Once the rice and lentils are fully cooked, take them off the heat and season with salt.

Add a tablespoon of coconut oil on top right at the end (optional), sprinkle the garam masala and stir it in.

Garnish with some freshly chopped coriander leaves if you like.



BAKED BROCCOLI BHAJIS WITH BANG BANG SAUCE



TIME

30 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

Baked broccoli bhajis go so well with piquant bang bang sauce made with the sweet and spicy sriracha – it truly brings the bhajis to life.

INGREDIENTS

Broccoli bhajis:
1 head broccoli cut into florets
1 cup chickpea flour
1 teaspoon garam masala
1 teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon chilli flakes
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup plant milk
1 cup panko breadcrumbs
sea salt to taste

Bang bang sauce:
¼ cup tahini
2 tablespoons sriracha sauce
juice and zest of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon sweet chili sauce
4-6 tablespoons water

Preheat the oven to 200C and line a baking tray with parchment paper. Create a batter by combining the chickpea flour, milk, olive oil, spices and salt in one bowl and put the panko breadcrumbs in another.

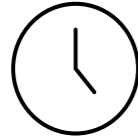
Dip the broccoli florets in the batter, then coat with panko. Transfer to your baking sheet one piece at a time. Bake for 20 minutes till golden.

Create bang bang sauce by whisking the tahini, sriracha sauce, chili sauce, lemon juice and water.

Pour the bang bang sauce in a bowl, place the bowl on a large plate, then arrange the broccoli bhajis around it. .



SWEET POTATO, CHICKPEA AND SPINACH CURRY WITH SAUTEED GINGER



TIME
40 MINUTES



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

I love the bright and vibrant colours in this dish and it is super easy to make. If you're craving a mid-week curry, this could just do the trick.

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 cups sweet potato, peeled and diced
1 cup red pepper, chopped
3 cups light coconut milk from a can

2 cups chickpeas from a can
1 handful fresh spinach leaves
Sea salt to taste
coriander leaves for garnish
thumb of ginger, finely grated

Curry paste:
1 tablespoon good quality curry powder
1 medium white onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, peeled
1 red chilli, sliced
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon fennel seed
1 teaspoon ground black pepper

Blend the curry paste ingredients to a smooth paste.

In a pan heat the oil and add the grated ginger, then stir till it turns golden-brown and a little crispy. Take it out of the pan for use later.

In the same pan stir in the curry paste and cook for 5 minutes on medium heat till it turns golden. Now add the chickpeas, sweet potatoes and coconut milk to the pan with a pinch of salt. Cover and cook on low heat for 20–30 minutes till the sweet potatoes are tender. Add salt to taste.

Now take it off the heat and add the fresh spinach, red pepper and coriander leaves. Top with the sautéed ginger.

Enjoy with steamed jasmine rice.



CHAPTER 4

PROTEIN AND FIBRE
RICH PLANT-BASED
DISHERS FOR A HEALTHY
BODY AND HAPPY GUT

SPICED PUY LENTILS WITH
SEARED GRAPEFRUIT AND
BALSAMIC GLAZE

BAKED KALE, BLACK OLIVES AND
ARTICHOKE ON A WHITE BEAN
AND MISO DIP

ROASTED AUBERGINES, YELLOW
PEPPERS AND EDAMAME WITH
COCONUT MILK

BLACK BEAN, CORN AND SALSA
VERDE IN RED LENTIL TORTILLAS

HARISSA AUBERGINE, SWEET
POTATO, CHICKPEA AND TAHINI
TRAYBAKE

GLUTEN-FREE CHICKPEA AND
OLIVE BREAD

RUNNY CASHEW AND
CRANBERRY CHEESY DIP WITH
SOURDOUGH BREAD

PUY LENTILS WITH MISO, SOY,
CRISPY GINGER AND SEARED
PEACHES



Switch to a Plant-Focused Diet

Protein-rich foods

As a child, I would accompany my mother to the weekly bazaar, where the farmers bought their produce from the villages. It was a crazy place, full of vibrant smells and colours, chaos and commotion.

I remember my mother looking at me sternly one day, saying, 'You need to learn where the meat comes from.' I nodded in excitement; little did I expect to see a chicken shrieking as the butcher pulled it out of a cage before decapitating it. I was left traumatised. I declared to my family that evening that I was not going to eat meat ever again. My mother replied, 'Well then, you have to go hungry.' In time I got over the episode, but the idea of eating animals always bothered me a little bit.

I have transitioned to a mainly plant-oriented diet over the last two years. I find a lot of commercial meat substitutes available in the supermarkets are full of ultra-processed ingredients, sadly – but there are a multitude of natural and minimally processed options to choose from that taste delicious too! Fortunately, there's an incredible variety of great-tasting and high-quality plant protein available to us such as tofu, tempeh and seitan to name but a few. I delight in unlocking the natural flavours in plant proteins using a subtle blend of spices. For example, asafoetida, a sulphurous-smelling gum resin extracted from the Ferula plant, can add a burst of flavour to plant-based protein dishes. I also discovered tahini and nut butters deliver a satisfying, well rounded mouth-feel to tofu and tempeh dishes.

In the West, tempeh and seitan may seem like new news in the plant-protein world, but there is a rich tradition of using these ingredients in delicious recipes in the East. Banana blossom and jackfruit are also enjoying their moment of glory as exciting fish and meat substitutes – these ingredients are part of the established food fabric in several countries, and I think this 'discovery' is wonderful! Interestingly, some everyday waste products can also make amazing meat substitutes – banana skin is a great case in point.

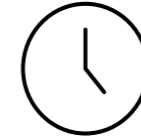
A plant-focused diet makes even more common sense when we consider climate change. A temperature rise of +3 degrees Celsius in this century is a realistic possibility, experts say, with sea level rises that would drown vast swathes of densely populated low-lying areas all across the globe, making them uninhabitable. The pain and misery this will cause to humanity is beyond imagination. The COP26 Climate Change Summit highlighted the importance of a sustainable lifestyle to reduce CO2 emissions. Transitioning to a plant-based or flexitarian diet along with various other lifestyle changes can undoubtedly help to reduce carbon emissions, aiding our fight against climate change.

The climate crisis on top of increasing levels of obesity, poor diet and lifestyle choices means our children now inhabit a very different world, with imminent risk to their health and wellbeing. Given that, it makes sense to equip them at school with valuable life skills such as exercise, managing their mental wellbeing, cooking from scratch and living sustainably. Indeed, this should be deemed just as important as learning to read and count.

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BEFORE DECAPITATING IT.



SPICED PUY LENTILS WITH SEARED GRAPEFRUIT AND BALSAMIC GLAZE



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

A wonderfully fragrant and refreshing dish, with a juicy zing from the grapefruit, complemented by the earthy and nutty lentils.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups cooked Puy lentils (cook per packet instructions or use precooked pack)
1 stalk lemongrass, finely chopped
2 shallots, finely sliced
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 Thai red chilli, finely sliced

1 small bunch mint, finely chopped
1 small bunch coriander, finely chopped
½ teaspoon nutmeg powder
1 cup freshly squeezed grapefruit juice

1 teaspoon sea salt
2 tablespoons maple syrup or date nectar
1 grapefruit, peeled and chopped into thin round slices
1½ tablespoons olive oil

Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a pan, add the chilli and shallots and fry till fragrant.

Add the cooked lentils for 5–7

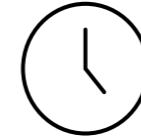
minutes on medium heat till they smell nutty. Now turn up the heat, add the balsamic vinegar and stir, then let it cook off and reduce. Now add the grapefruit juice and let it cook off and reduce.

Add the maple syrup, chopped herbs, nutmeg powder and salt and cook till all the pan juices are reduced and the lentils are coated and glossy. Reserve the cooked lentils.

Now add a tablespoon of maple syrup to the grapefruit slices and rub it in with your fingers so every bit is coated well in the syrup. Heat a pan to high heat, add just a little bit of olive oil and let it coat the pan, then add the grapefruit slices. It will start to sizzle and turn amber. Give the pan a shake and ensure all sides are well seared.

To serve, arrange the seared grapefruit on a plate, so that each slice alternates with some of the lentils.

BAKED KALE, BLACK OLIVES AND ARTICHOKE ON A WHITE BEAN AND MISO DIP



TIME

30 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

A creamy and indulgent dip with Mediterranean and Asian flavours.

INGREDIENTS

1 400g can Cannellini
beans, drained
1 tablespoon miso paste
3 tablespoons olive oil

2 cups sliced kale leaves
(discard the tough stems)
Sea salt to taste
½ cup black olives, pitted
and chopped

¼ cup pickled
artichokes from a jar,
chopped
1 sprig rosemary,
finely chopped
4 slices sourdough
bread

To make the white bean and miso dip, blend together the olive oil, drained beans, salt, miso paste and rosemary to a fine puree.

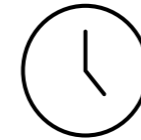
Lightly coat the kale leaves with olive oil and rub it in with your fingers so all sides are well covered, add a pinch of salt and lay them out on a large tray. Place in a preheated oven at 175C for 10–15 minutes till roasted.

Toast the sourdough bread slices and top with the white bean dip, olives, artichokes and kale.





ROASTED AUBERGINES, YELLOW PEPPERS AND EDAMAME BEANS SAUTEED WITH COCONUT MILK



TIME

40 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

This is pure comfort food and visually stunning. If you are looking for an easy Friday night treat, then you must try this recipe.

INGREDIENTS

6-8 curry leaves
(optional, but adds a lot of flavour)
1 teaspoon ginger paste
1 teaspoon chilli paste
1 teaspoon lemongrass paste
1 teaspoon turmeric
2 shallots, finely sliced

1 cinnamon stick
1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
1 400g tin coconut milk
2 cups of water
2 cups shelled edamame beans
1 yellow pepper, diced

1 aubergine
1 pinch black pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
chopped coriander leaves to garnish
1 tablespoon maple syrup
3 cups jasmine rice, cooked as per packet instructions
sea salt

Cut the aubergine lengthwise in half, score the soft white flesh with a knife in a criss-cross pattern and use a tablespoon of olive oil to coat. Rub the oil thoroughly on the surface and sprinkle some salt and pepper. Now place it in an oven pre-heated to 240C with the flesh side up for 20 minutes, then flip to the other side and roast for another 10 minutes. The flesh should be nice and squidgy inside and the skin leathery.

In a pan heat a tablespoon of olive oil, add the black mustard seeds, curry leaves and cinnamon stick. It will start to splutter. At this point add the ginger paste, lemongrass paste, shallot pieces and chilli paste and let it cook on medium heat for 3 minutes till fragrant. Add the turmeric powder and stir it in. Now add the coconut milk, water and maple syrup and bring to a simmer.

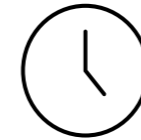
Now place the aubergine pieces in the pan, let them coat well in the juices and cook on medium heat for 10 minutes. Add the edamame beans and yellow pepper and let simmer for 3 minutes.

Note: if the liquids reduce a lot during the cooking process, add ½ cup water and stir in.

Sprinkle with chopped coriander leaves and serve with cooked jasmine rice.



BLACK BEAN, CORN AND SALSA VERDE IN RED LENTIL TORTILLAS



TIME
7 HOURS



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

These wraps are protein-packed, and the salsa has a lovely fresh and zingy taste. It's very easy to make a small batch to enjoy as a snack or a light meal.

INGREDIENTS

Salsa verde:
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 small bunch flat-leaf parsley
1 bunch fresh basil
1 handful fresh mint
1 small handful capers
a few gherkins in sweet vinegar
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
3 tablespoons sherry vinegar
5 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Lentil tortillas:
1 cup red lentils
2 cups water

Filling:
1 cup black beans, drained from can
½ red onion, finely sliced
½ cup corn from can
½ red pepper, finely diced
juice of 1 lime
salt to taste

For the lentil tortillas, soak 1 cup of lentils in 2 cups of water for 6–8 hours. Then blend to a smooth puree with the soaking liquid (no additional water required). Heat non-stick pan and add a dollop of the lentil puree, smoothing it out using a circular motion with the back of the spoon to about 4mm thick. Let it turn golden-brown, then flip and cook the other side. Continue the process.

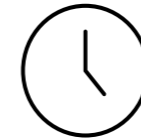
For the salsa verde, carefully pick the leaves from the herbs and then chop them down finely on a cutting board. Transfer to a bowl, add the other ingredients, then puree to a smooth paste. Add salt and pepper to balance out the flavours.

Mix the filling ingredients in a small bowl and let it rest for a few minutes.

Now lay a wrap flat, add some of the salsa verde and some of the filling mixture and roll it up.



HARISSA AUBERGINE, SWEET POTATO, CHICKPEA AND TAHINI TRAYBAKE



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

This dish looks pretty as a picture – if you are on a mission to impress your friends and family, or prepping for a dinner date, then this is the dish for you!

INGREDIENTS

Marinade:

3 tablespoons tahini
1 tablespoon harissa paste
2 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons plant milk
1 sprig rosemary, finely chopped
8 black peppercorns, cracked

2 medium aubergines, halved lengthways, then criss-crossed on the flesh side with a sharp knife
2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut in cubes
1 cup chickpeas from can

Pink peppercorns, pomegranate seeds and rosemary for garnish
½ cup coconut yogurt

Mix the marinade ingredients well in a small bowl.

Grease a baking dish lightly with some oil and transfer the aubergines, sweet potato and chickpeas, then pour the marinade on top. Make sure the vegetables are coated evenly with the marinade.

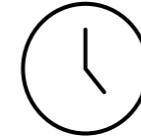
Now place the dish in an oven preheated to 200C. Bake for 20 minutes, then stir the sweet potatoes and chickpeas and flip the aubergines.

Roast for another 10–15 minutes till the sweet potatoes are cooked through and the aubergines are lovely and squishy inside. Stir the tray ingredients well and tear up the squishy flesh of the aubergines with a fork so it is coated in the juices. Top with fresh rosemary, pomegranate seeds and pink peppercorns.

Dollop some coconut yogurt on the traybake just before serving. You can take the baking dish to the table as a centrepiece for the main meal to impress your dinner guests.



GLUTEN-FREE CHICKPEA AND OLIVE BREAD



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

This is a deliciously rich bread that goes brilliantly with savoury bean dishes. It also tastes amazing with a simple topping of extra-virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups chickpea flour,
available in most health
stores
½ cup extra-virgin olive
oil
½ cup vegan green
olive pesto

12 black peppercorns,
cracked
1 teaspoon of sea salt
2 tablespoons chia seeds
soaked in ½ cup vegan
milk
1½ teaspoons baking soda

a few sprigs rosemary,
finely chopped
(discard the tough
stems, chop the
leaves)
2 teaspoons fennel
seeds
black sesame seeds
and fennel seeds for
topping

In a large bowl mix the chickpea flour and baking soda well.

Now add all the wet ingredients (i.e. green olive pesto, oil and milk with chia seeds) into the flour bowl. Mix the batter well using a wooden spatula. It should look similar to cake batter. Season with salt and pepper. Now add the fennel seeds and chopped rosemary and mix it in the batter.

Finally pour the batter into a greased loaf tin, top with the black sesame seeds and fennel seeds. Place in a preheated oven at 180C for 30–40 minutes till the top is golden and an inserted fork comes out clean.



RUNNY CASHEW AND CRANBERRY CHEESY DIP WITH SOURDOUGH BREAD



TIME
30 MINUTES



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

Looking for a super-indulgent treat to share? I think you may have found the one. However, this dish does require some preparation and waiting time, so do plan in advance.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup raw cashews
½ cup plain soy yogurt
½ cup coconut oil
1 teaspoon nutritional yeast

1 teaspoon salt (preferably black Himalayan salt)
1 cup water
1 teaspoon tahini
1 teaspoon mild miso paste

½ cup dried cranberries
2 tablespoons tapioca flour
1 teaspoon agar-agar flakes
sourdough bread slices

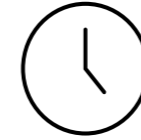
Bring a saucepan of water to a boil. Add the cashews and boil for 30 minutes, then drain.

Place the boiled cashews, yogurt, coconut oil, nutritional yeast, salt, tahini, miso paste and water in a blender. Blend till smooth. Transfer to a bowl, then cover with a kitchen towel and let sit at room temperature for 12 hours. Now heat mixture in a saucepan over medium-high heat and add tapioca flour, cranberries and agar flakes. Cook, whisking constantly, for about 5 minutes, till the mixture is thick and pulls away from the sides of the pan.

Line a small round baking dish with cheesecloth and pour in the hot mixture. Cover with the cheesecloth. Let cool in the refrigerator till firm, 4–8 hours. Enjoy with toasted sourdough bread.



PUY LENTILS WITH MISO, SOY, CRISPY GINGER AND SEARED PEACHES



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

This dish is simply perfect when you are craving something elegant, spicy and wholesome

INGREDIENTS

2 cups cooked Puy lentils
1 handful fresh asparagus tips
1 small bunch oregano, chopped
1 small bunch coriander, chopped
1 teaspoon coriander seeds (optional)

juice and zest of 1 lemon
1 cup peach slices from can
3 cloves garlic, minced
3 teaspoons miso
1 red chilli

1 tablespoon dark soy sauce
1 pinch salt
1 teaspoon dark muscovado sugar
2 tablespoons olive oil
½ tablespoon coconut oil
1 thumb ginger, grated

Bring a pan of salted water to boil, reduce the heat and add the asparagus. Let simmer for 2–4 minutes till it turns a bright green. Immediately wash the asparagus in cold running water to retain the colour. Reserve for use later.

Heat a pan to high and add ½ tablespoon of coconut oil, then add the peach slices and cook till they start to sizzle and caramelize. Once they are evenly caramelised, transfer to a bowl.

Heat olive oil in a pan, add the ginger, stir and cook until it turns brown and crispy. Transfer to a bowl for topping later.

In the same pan place the chilli, coriander seeds and garlic and let sizzle and cook for a few minutes. Next add the miso paste and stir in the lentils. Add the soy sauce and let cook on medium heat for 7–10 minutes. Finally add the herbs, sugar, lemon juice and zest.

To serve, create a bed of the cooked lentils and top with the caramelised peaches, blanched asparagus and crispy ginger.

CHAPTER 5

TAKE YOUR PALATE ON
AN ADVENTURE WITH
THESE UNUSUAL
FLAVOURS AND
INGREDIENTS

MAPLE PLANT HAM WITH
ORANGE GLAZE

VEGAN COOKIE DOUGH WITH
CRYSTALLISED GINGER AND
DARK CHOCOLATE CHIPS

THAI GREEN BANANA BLOSSOM
FISHCAKES

BANANA PEEL IN RENDANG
SAUCE

PURPLE YAM AND BELUGA
LENTIL LOAF

VEGAN CREAMY, GARLICKY
SCALLOPS IN WHITE WINE SAUCE

CARROT BACON WITH GARLICKY
PUY LENTILS

RICE PAPER BACON WITH
SRIRACHA AND PEANUT BUTTER
DIP

COFFEE, BANANA AND BLACK
CHERRY NICE CREAM IN
ESPRESSO CUPS

CREAMY CHILLI CHOCOLATE
MOUSSE WITH AQUAFABA



Food Adventure

Exciting Quest

My best friend when I was ten was Sujit, a village boy who I met on my summer holidays in the hills when visiting my granny. A wild child with dark, flowing locks and bright, darting eyes, he always carried a penknife around his waist. A bit like Tarzan, he could climb trees, swing from vines, make spears out of bamboo, chop down banana trees and make a raft within an hour, and do all sorts of wonderful things that to a city boy seemed utterly magical.

I would follow him around like a dog, trying to copy his myriad skills with limited success. We would go on exciting quests, dig up wild yams and roast them on fires made by burning driftwood beside streams. He would show me medicinal herbs and rare orchids that grew high up on the trees. We would mimic the bird calls and they would reply to us, their sounds reverberating around the hills.

There is a certain primal joy you feel when you hunt and gather food in the wild; perhaps our ancient hunter-gatherer tendencies never truly left us, but resurface under the right conditions to acquaint us to our evolutionary past.

All this birthed a passion for adventure and travel deep within me. The next summer, I was looking forward to more escapades with Sujit, but learnt he had passed away over the winter. I was very sad, of course. However, that spirit of adventure ignited in my early childhood was alive and well.

Years later, when I gazed upon the majesty of the Hagia Sofia in Istanbul, something stirred within my soul. On a peaceful and hot summer's day when I saw a group of monks crossing a dry riverbed in the Kunlun Mountains in Cambodia, it left a trail of orange etched in my memory. When I witnessed the faintest glimmer of the morning sun peeking through the mist atop Mount Kintamani in Bali, I was mesmerised. And when I saw the mirrored caldera in its blaze of gold at dusk in Santorini, it spoke to me... Again.

Since I associate flavours with colours, often when I am inspired by the colours and forms in beautiful places I dream up unique flavour combinations which are indelibly associated in my mind with the memories of my travels. However, I am also painfully aware of the environmental impact of travel, hence I have reduced it a lot in recent years, and when I do travel, I stay longer and fully engage with the place and appreciate the local food and culture it has to offer.

THERE IS A CERTAIN PRIMAL
JOY YOU FEEL WHEN YOU
HUNT AND GATHER FOOD
IN THE WILD; PERHAPS OUR
ANCIENT HUNTER-GATHERER
TENDENCIES NEVER TRULY LEFT
US.

MAPLE HAM WITH ORANGE JUICE



TIME

80 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

This plant-based 'ham' can make a stunning centrepiece for a family meal. Serve it up with roast potatoes, steamed vegetables and onion gravy for a cosy, comforting meal.

INGREDIENTS

800g firm tofu – use a cheesecloth to squeeze out as much water as possible
2 cups breadcrumbs
1 tablespoon garlic paste
2 tablespoons maple syrup
3 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 tablespoon smoked paprika
2 tablespoons peanut butter
1 teaspoon pink Himalayan salt

Orange Glaze:
4 tablespoons orange marmalade
4 tablespoons soy sauce
3 tablespoons tomato paste
1 teaspoon nutmeg powder

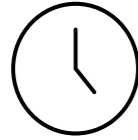
Place the pressed tofu in a food processor with the rest of the ingredients and pulse till well combined. Then knead it like dough to form the shape of a ham. Score the surface with a knife.

Now make your glaze by combining the listed ingredients and brush glaze onto the ham evenly, leaving just a bit for further glazing after it is baked.

Bake at 200C for an hour until firm. Remove from the oven, brush on more glaze, cool, then serve..



VEGAN COOKIE DOUGH WITH CRYSTALLISED GINGER AND DARK CHOCO CHIPS



TIME
45 MINUTES



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

A simple yummy dish that you can prepare for an occasional treat.

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups chickpeas
¼ cup oat flour
1 teaspoon vanilla
extract

2 teaspoons cinnamon
powder
½ cup maple syrup
¼ cup tahini

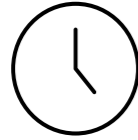
3 tablespoons chopped
crystallised ginger
1 cup dark chocolate
chips

Combine all ingredients apart from the chocolate chips and crystallised ginger in a high-speed blender. Fold in the chocolate chips and ginger crystals, then chill in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Serve in little glass bowls or wine glasses for an added twist.



THAI GREEN BANANA BLOSSOM FISHCAKES



TIME

40 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

These versatile and yummy banana blossom fishcakes go so well with a crunchy green salad or placed within a bun with some salad, slices of red onion and a sauce of your choice.

INGREDIENTS

1 400g can organic banana blossoms
1 tablespoon Thai green curry paste
1 teaspoon fresh ginger, finely grated
2 cloves garlic, finely minced

zest and juice of 1 lime
½ teaspoon cracked black pepper
small bunch fresh coriander, finely chopped
1 red chilli, finely chopped
1 cup mashed potatoes

For frying:
½ cup panko breadcrumbs
olive oil

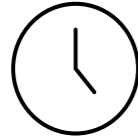
Drain the banana blossoms, squeezing the water out using a tea towel, then chop. Combine the rest of the fishcake ingredients in a bowl. Mix well, then divide into 3 or 4 patties, shaping by rolling in your palms.

Now place the panko breadcrumbs in a bowl. Then gently place the patties in the bowl and press down on each side of the patties till the crumbs stick to the surface, making sure all sides are coated well.

Heat a frying pan over a medium heat and add a drizzle of olive oil. Fry for a few minutes on each side till they turn golden.



BANANA PEEL IN RENDANG SAUCE



TIME

40 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

You would not believe this ridiculously tasty dish is made with banana peel. Sweet, sticky, hot and sour and pleasantly chewy – it's simply finger-licking good!

INGREDIENTS

peels from 3 ripe medium-sized bananas

olive oil for frying

Marinade:
3 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons good quality rendang paste
¼ cup fresh coconut chunks
3 small shallots
1 teaspoon ginger, freshly grated
juice and zest of 1 lime
1 fresh red chilli, deseeded

Blend the marinade into a smooth paste.

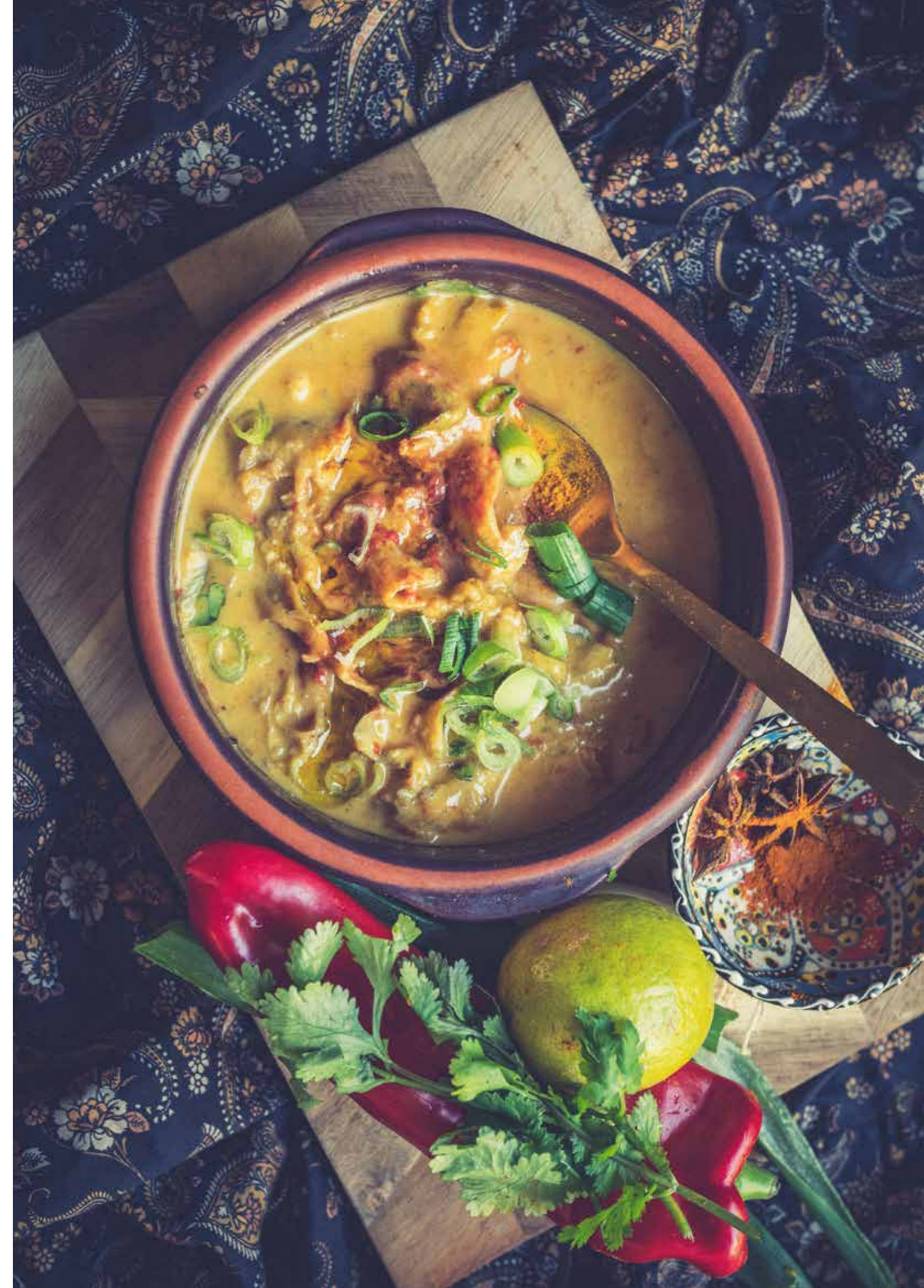
Now cut the top and end bits off the banana peels. Place each flat on a wooden cutting board and hold firmly with one hand, then cut into long, thin strips by running a knife firmly along the entire length of the peel. Repeat the process with the other peels.

Now place the strips of peel in a mortar and use the pestle to crush them till the peel is battered and bruised and the fibres start to show and it turns a bit pulpy. Take the bruised peel and squeeze out the juice by pressing it on a sieve.

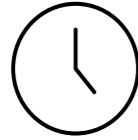
Now add the marinade to the peel and rub it in with your fingers so every bit of the peel is coated and drenched in the marinade, then rest for up to an hour.

Drizzle some olive oil in a pan and heat it to medium-hot. Fry the banana peels for 7–10 minutes till they soften and start to smell fragrant.

Perfect served with salad and steamed rice or rolled up within a wrap with finely sliced carrots, red onions and salad leaves.



PURPLE YAM AND BELUGA LENTIL LOAF



TIME

120 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

I invented this loaf while on a fitness regime, driven to create the most protein-rich bread that tasted amazing and looked stunning too. I use purple yam but if you can't find it sweet potatoes make a great alternative

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups beluga lentils,
cooked
2 cups plant milk
400g tofu

1 cup wholemeal flour
1½ teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon sea salt

1 sprig rosemary,
chopped
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup mashed purple
yam (or sweet potato)

First boil the yam (or sweet potato) whole for 20–30 minutes till a fork can go through it easily, then peel and mash it.

Blend milk, tofu and the purple yam to a creamy paste.

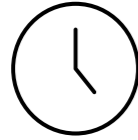
Transfer to a bowl and mix in all the other ingredients to form a firm batter.

Transfer to a lined loaf tin and bake at 180C for 1 hour–1 hour 15 minutes, until a fork comes out clean when you pierce the loaf. Cool on a rack for 1 hour minimum, then cut into it and enjoy.

Goes brilliantly with onion gravy.



VEGAN CREAMY, GARLICKY SCALLOPS IN WHITE WINE SAUCE



TIME

30 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

An elegant dish that works beautifully as a starter for those special occasions

INGREDIENTS

4 king oyster mushrooms with stems on
5 cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons fresh parsley leaves, finely chopped
1 pinch cracked black pepper

2 cups white wine
1 pinch nutritional yeast (which adds a lot of umami flavour to your dish)
2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons coconut cream
1 teaspoon corn starch
sea salt to taste
water

Cut across the thick stems of the oyster mushrooms to make scallop-sized pieces, then score the sliced surfaces in a criss-cross shape.

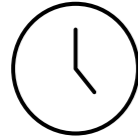
In a pan heat the olive oil till hot, then add the mushroom pieces, minced garlic, black pepper, parsley and salt to the oil which will flavour it. Brown the mushrooms for about 2 minutes and transfer to a dish.

In the same pan place 2 cups of white wine and let simmer till reduced to about half, then stir in the coconut cream, the nutritional yeast and the corn starch mixed with a tiny bit of water. The sauce will thicken. Grind in some more black pepper if you wish and garnish with some more fresh parsley.

To serve, spoon some sauce on a plate and place the scalloped mushrooms on top.



CARROT BACON WITH GARLICKY PUY LENTILS



TIME

40 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

A tasty little dish with a smoky flavour, effortlessly simple and delightful!

INGREDIENTS

For the carrot bacon:
1 carrot, ribboned using a potato peeler
1 tablespoon maple syrup
1½ tablespoons dark soy sauce
1 tablespoon olive oil
½ teaspoon mustard powder
½ teaspoon smoky paprika

For the Puy lentils:
2 cups cooked Puy lentils
1 tablespoon parsley, finely chopped
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon olive oil
sea salt to taste

Prepare the marinade by combining soy sauce, maple syrup, paprika, olive oil, mustard powder in a bowl.

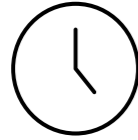
Place the ribboned carrots on a baking tray lined with parchment paper and brush with the marinade on each side. Place in the oven at 200C for 20 minutes, turning halfway through, until a bit crispy and browned.

In a pan heat olive oil, add the garlic and parsley and cook for 3-5 minutes. Next add the balsamic vinegar and let it simmer away until significantly reduced and glossy. Add the cooked Puy lentils to this reduced balsamic sauce, stir gently until the lentils are warmed and nicely coated.

To serve, place the lentils in little bowls topped with the carrot bacon..



RICE PAPER BACON WITH SRIRACHA AND PEANUT BUTTER DIP



TIME
30 MINUTES



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

If you're looking for a sweet and savoury treat, these tasty bacon bites will do the trick!

INGREDIENTS

For the bacon:
8-10 rice paper sheets

For the Marinade:
2 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons soy sauce
3 tablespoons nutritional yeast
½ teaspoon liquid smoke
1 teaspoon miso paste
1 tablespoon maple syrup
1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
1 teaspoon paprika

For the peanut and sriracha dip:
4 tablespoons peanut butter
2 tablespoons sriracha sauce
juice of 1 lime
4 tablespoons water

Preheat the oven to 200C. Whisk together the ingredients for the marinade in a bowl and prepare a second wide bowl filled partway with water. Prepare an oven-safe rack with a sheet of parchment paper.

Cut rice paper into thick strips. Take two strips and stack them. Holding them together, dip them very quickly into the water. They should then start to stick together on their own. Gently squeeze excess water from the fused pair of rice paper strips. Dip the fused pair of rice paper strips into the marinade and coat them, then place them onto the parchment paper.

Repeat till all the marinade is used up.

Bake for about 7-9 minutes, or until crisp.

Mix the ingredients for the dip to a smooth consistency. Serve with the rice paper bacon. You can also serve the bacon in a toasted sourdough bun with some vegan mayo for a super yummy treat.



COFFEE, BANANA, BLACK CHERRY NICE CREAM IN ESPRESSO CUP



TIME
30 MINUTES



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

OK, so you're craving that full-fat ice cream. But not quite ready to give in to the temptation? I think this 'nice cream' is just so delicious and rich, you will not feel you're missing out at all!

INGREDIENTS

6 ripe bananas, peeled
and chopped
1 small handful pecans,
crushed

1 shot freshly made
espresso

3 tablespoons black
cherry jam
Chopped cherries and
a little sprig of mint
for garnish

Freeze the chopped bananas for 8 hours, then blitz until they form a creamy ice cream texture. Add a shot of espresso and mix it into the 'nice cream' with a spoon.

Now roughly mix in the cherry jam. Don't mix it evenly, leave some pockets of jam in the nice cream and sprinkle the crushed nuts on top.

Now transfer this to a bowl and place it in the freezer for another 15–20 minutes. Take it out of the freezer and serve in little espresso cups.

You may want to garnish with some freshly pitted and chopped cherries and a little sprig of mint.



CREAMY CHILLI CHOCOLATE MOUSSE WITH AQUAFABA



TIME

8 HOURS



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

A light and silky-smooth chocolate mousse made with aquafaba (chickpea water) and dark chocolate? Yes, the water from your can of chickpeas, that you normally throw away, can make delicious desserts! Aquafaba can be used as a replacement for beaten egg whites in baking too.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup aquafaba (from a tin of low-sodium chickpeas)
1 teaspoon lemon/lime juice

200g dark (70% cacao) vegan chocolate
1 heaped tablespoon muscovado sugar
1 pinch hot chilli powder

To garnish:
1 tablespoon chocolate shavings
1 handful dried cherries
1 handful chopped pistachios

Break the chocolate into smaller chunks and place them in a glass or metal bowl. Place the bowl over a hot water bath and allow the chocolate to heat up slowly till it melts, then take the bowl off the heat and allow it to cool down a little.

Open a tin of chickpeas and drain the water, making sure it is at room temperature. Now use an electric whisk and beat for up to 10 minutes until it reaches stiff peaks. Add a teaspoon of lemon juice to stabilise the aquafaba and beat it a bit more to incorporate the lemon juice.

Now start adding sugar a little at a time, whipping the whole time. If the sugar has caused the stiff peaks to deflate, whip the mixture until you get stiff peaks again.

Check that the chocolate has cooled down sufficiently – it should not be warm to the touch. Now gently fold melted chocolate into the whipped aquafaba using a spatula. Add a dash of chilli powder and mix it in well.

Divide the mixture between 4 glasses and top with garnish. Put the glasses into the fridge overnight for the mousse to set.



CHAPTER 6

DELICIOUS BLENDS,
FUSING FLAVOURS FROM
DIFFERENT CUISINES

BAKED MISO AND ORANGE
AUBERGINES

FRIEDRICE PAPER DUMPLINGS
AND PEANUT SAUCE

GLUTEN-FREE, BOILED ORANGE
AND DARK CHOCOLATE CAKE

MUSHROOMS STUFFED WITH
HERBY VEGETABLES AND
BALSAMIC LENTILS

THAI GREEN CURRY WITH
TEMPEH

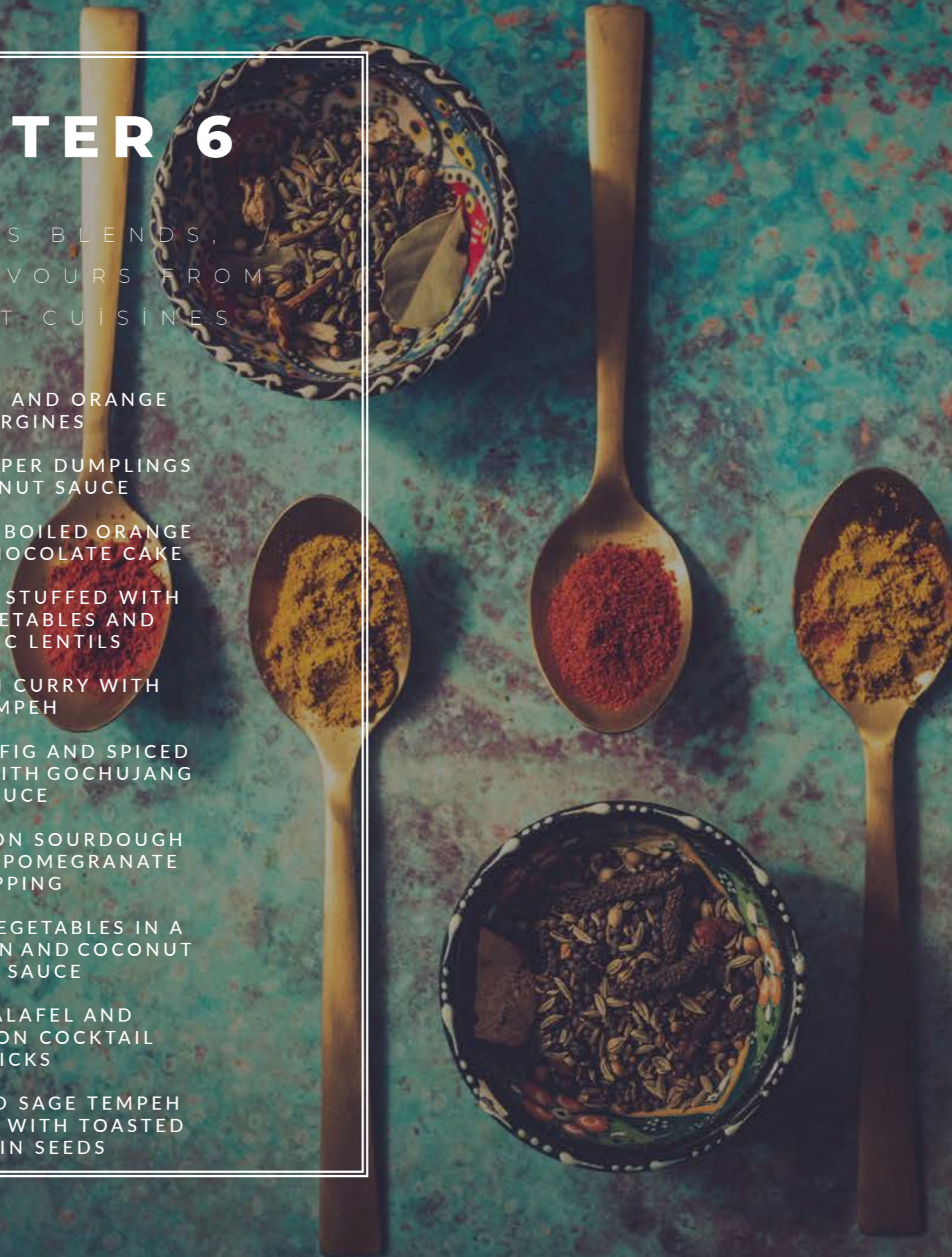
GREEN BEAN, FIG AND SPICED
TOFU SALAD WITH GOCHUJANG
SAUCE

LABNEH DIP ON SOURDOUGH
BREAD WITH POMEGRANATE
TOPPING

STIR-FRIED VEGETABLES IN A
PANCH PHORAN AND COCONUT
MILK SAUCE

BAKED FALAFEL AND
MANGOES ON COCKTAIL
STICKS

PUMPKIN AND SAGE TEMPEH
KATSU CURRY WITH TOASTED
PUMPKIN SEEDS



A Melting Pot of Flavours

Fun flavour blends

After my schooling in the mid-nineties, I travelled from Calcutta to Nagpur in Central India to study electronics engineering. Although I enjoyed theoretical physics, I quickly realised I wasn't cut out to be an engineer, but I did complete my degree. While studying in Nagpur I came across students from the length and breadth of India, with food habits and cultures that were entirely foreign to my own. The summers were oppressive, but the locals ate extremely hot food to 'cope with the heat'; which seemed counterintuitive to me. After finishing engineering, I spent most of 1999 taking the first year of my business studies in Delhi, with the plan to complete the rest of the course in London.

London, New Year's Eve, 2000. I had recently come from Delhi to London. That evening, the skies lit up in a blaze of colour. I stood on Westminster Bridge amazed by the fireworks. London was such an exciting place, I soaked up the culture like a sponge.

My Greek friend Maria in my first year at university introduced me to the glorious world of Greek cuisine. Often the ingredients she used were so simple, but she always used the best quality and treated them with love and care to bring out their natural flavour. A simple dish of chickpeas, lemon and herbs she prepared would taste divine.

During my time at university, I had contact with students from all over the world, and there are some condiments that have since become firm favourites. For example, I often use miso paste (a fermented bean paste used extensively in Asian cuisine), gochujang (fermented chilli paste used in Korean cuisine) and truffle oil to add depth and intensity to my tofu dishes.

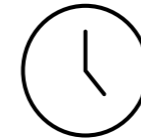
After completing my studies, as a young graduate I often lived in shared family homes as a lodger and had the benefit of learning a lot about different cultures, cuisines and customs. I still remember how, while living with a Chinese family in Stratford, London, the dishes they prepared within thirty minutes with the freshest ingredients always looked great and tasted wonderful. Similarly, living with a Japanese family in Kent, I learned how easy it was to create delicious meals from scratch in very little time.

I often came home late after work and I developed a particular affinity for one-pot meals or traybakes that could be created with little effort. I discovered how the spices and herbs I encountered during my travels could elevate a mundane dish into something special and memorable.

MY GREEK FRIEND MARIA
IN MY FIRST YEAR AT
UNIVERSITY INTRODUCED ME
TO THE GLORIOUS WORLD OF
GREEK CUISINE. OFTEN THE
INGREDIENTS SHE USED WERE
SO SIMPLE, BUT SHE ALWAYS
USED THE BEST QUALITY AND
TREATED THEM WITH LOVE
AND CARE TO BRING OUT THEIR
NATURAL FLAVOUR.



BAKED MISO AND ORANGE AUBERGINES



TIME

40 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

Loaded with lovey smoky umami flavours, this miso aubergine dish is a complete winner!

INGREDIENTS

2 small aubergines
2 tablespoons vegetable
oil or other neutral oil
¼ cup red miso paste

2 tablespoons fresh orange
juice and 3 teaspoons
orange zest
2 tablespoons mirin
1 tablespoon muscovado
sugar
1 tablespoon sake

1 teaspoon ginger,
grated
2 cloves garlic,
crushed
a few sprigs dill,
crushed pistachios
and pomegranate
seeds to garnish

Slice aubergines in half and, using a knife, score the inside in small squares.

In a pan over high heat, add oil and put in the aubergines with the skin facing down. Cook for a few minutes until the skin is brown. Turn the aubergines over and cover with a lid. Cook until the aubergines are cooked through (about 3–4 minutes).

Meanwhile, in a bowl, mix miso, mirin, sugar, sake, orange juice and zest, garlic and ginger.

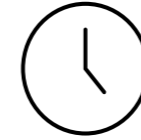
Cover a cooking tray with foil and place the aubergines on top. Brush miso mix on top of each piece until all the surfaces are coated. Pour the excess over the top of the aubergines.

Put in the oven for 20 minutes at 180C. The miso mix should be bubbling when you take it out of the oven.

Sprinkle with a garnish of chopped dill, crushed pistachios and pomegranate seeds.



FRIED RICE PAPER DUMPLINGS WITH PEANUT SAUCE



TIME

40 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

Little parcels of joy to tickle your tastebuds!

INGREDIENTS

2 cups shredded and finely chopped mixed vegetables and chopped herbs. You can use pretty much anything. I use shredded carrots, chopped green salad leaves, shredded courgettes, bean shoots and chopped Thai basil
1 cup tofu, crumbled
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon soy sauce
2 teaspoons ginger paste

3 teaspoons sesame oil
sea salt to taste
grated black pepper
3 tablespoons roasted peanuts, crushed
10-15 rice paper sheets
2 tablespoons olive oil

Peanut sauce:
2 tablespoons peanut butter
2 tablespoons light soy sauce
1 tablespoon sriracha sauce

Add the shredded vegetables, tofu, garlic, ginger, soy sauce, sesame oil, sea salt, crushed peanuts and pepper to a bowl. Stir the mixture together with a fork until well combined.

Soak the rice paper: Fill a shallow dish with warm water and soak the rice papers for 5 seconds or until slightly softened (they will continue to soften after taking them out of the water) and then place them on your working surface.

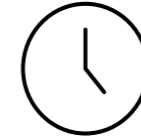
Wrap: Place about 2 tablespoons of the filling into the middle of the rice paper sheet. Fold the top of the rice paper down, fold the left side over to the right, the right side over to the left and then bring the bottom portion of the rice paper up to seal. Repeat one more time for a double layer to ensure it does not break when cooking.

Cook: Heat a pan over medium heat. Add enough oil to coat the pan. Place the dumpling in the pan and cook until golden brown (you can cover the pan if you wish). Flip and cook the other side until golden-brown.

For the sauce, mix the ingredients in a bowl.



GULEN-FREE, BOILED ORANGE AND DARK CHOCOLATE CAKE



TIME

90 MINUTES



SERVING

6 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

This is my favourite cake, which you must try at least once! The moist orange cake and dark chocolate work like magic.

INGREDIENTS

2 Seville oranges
2 lemons
2 cups blanched almonds

egg replacement: 4
tablespoons linseed
powder mixed with 12
tablespoons water
1 pinch sea salt
1½ cups caster sugar
80ml olive oil, plus extra
for greasing

1½ cups polenta
2 teaspoons baking
powder
1 cup dark chocolate
chips

Preheat the oven to 180C. Grease a 23cm springform cake tin.

Put 1 orange and 1 lemon into a large pan, cover with water and place a circle of greaseproof paper over the top so the fruit sits under the water. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for about 30 minutes. Take off the heat.

Toast the blanched almonds in a dry frying pan. Put them in a food processor and blitz until finely ground.

Take the cooked orange and lemon out of the pan. Cut them in half and pick out the seeds. Juice the other fresh orange and lemon (throw away the skins). Put the cooked fruit (skins and all) and extra freshly squeezed juice in the food processor and blend to make a paste.

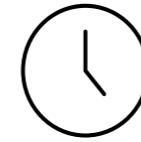
In a large bowl mix the egg replacement. Add the sugar and beat, then add the orange paste, almonds and olive oil.

In a separate bowl mix the polenta and baking powder, then gently fold this into the orange mixture until it is all mixed together. Finally add the dark chocolate chips.

Pour the mixture into the greased tin and bake for 50 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.



MUSHROOMS STUFFED WITH HERBY VEGETABLES AND BALSAMIC LENTILS



TIME
60 MINUTES



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

A posh starter that will blow the socks off your dinner guests!

INGREDIENTS

1 small onion, finely chopped
2 carrots, finely diced
1 celery stalk, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced

rosemary and thyme, chopped
1 teaspoon fennel seeds
10 peppercorns
6 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons maple syrup

1 cup cooked beluga lentils
4 large portobello mushrooms with stalks removed
2 tablespoons olive oil
fresh herbs for garnish

Preheat the oven to 200C. Gently heat the oil in a pan with the fennel seeds, herbs and peppercorns. When the oil is fragrant add onions, carrots, celery and garlic and cook until vegetables are tender.

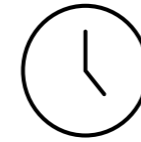
Stir in lentils and season with salt and pepper to taste. Add the balsamic vinegar, maple syrup and let it bubble away, stirring till it is absorbed by the lentil mixture.

Transfer lentil vegetable mixture to a large bowl. Wipe pan clean and add 1 tablespoon olive oil. Cook mushrooms for about 2 minutes per side till they start to soften.

Place the mushrooms, caps down, in a baking dish. Fill mushrooms with lentil mixture. Drizzle with a little olive oil if dry. Place in the oven for 15 minutes. Garnish with fresh herbs.



THAI GREEN CURRY WITH TEMPEH



TIME
30 MINUTES



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

This incredibly moreish protein-packed meal can easily become one of your favourites. It is one of my favourites!

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons coconut oil
1½ teaspoons ginger, grated
2 garlic cloves, minced
3 tablespoons Thai green curry paste

1 can full-fat coconut milk
½ cup water
1 tablespoon palm sugar
2 teaspoons nutritional yeast
½ teaspoon sea salt
3 cups chopped vegetables (I use aubergines, carrots and green beans)

300g tempeh, chopped into cubes
zest and juice of 1 lime
freshly chopped coriander, red chillies and slices of lime to garnish

Combine coconut oil, ginger and garlic in a large saucepan over medium-low heat. Sauté for 1 minute.

In a separate pan heat a little bit of coconut oil and brown the tempeh. It will smell nutty.

Add the Thai green curry paste. Sauté 1 minute longer.

Stir in the coconut milk, water, sugar, nutritional yeast and salt. Increase the heat to high and bring to a boil.

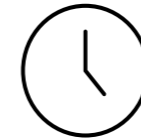
Add the vegetables and browned tempeh once the curry reaches a boil, cover and reduce to a low heat.

Simmer for 10 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.

Turn off the heat, then stir in the lime juice and zest. Garnish with coriander, slices of lime and red chillies.

Serve with cooked jasmine rice.

GREEN BEAN, FIG AND TOFU SALAD WITH GOCHUJANG SAUCE



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

I invented this dish quite by accident as I tried to use up leftover fruit and veg in my fridge, but it turned out so well that I often make it to impress friends at dinner parties.

INGREDIENTS

Green beans al dente
6 fresh figs

Spiced Tofu:
400g tofu, cubed
3 teaspoons sesame oil
1 tablespoon gochujang
paste
juice of 1 lime
1 tablespoon tamari soy
sauce
1 pinch black Himalayan
salt
2-3 heaped teaspoons
smoked paprika
1 tablespoon maple syrup

Baked fig, balsamic
and red wine jus:
1 cup red wine
½ cup balsamic
vinegar
4 figs
2 teaspoons brown
sugar
1 pinch of sea salt

Mix the spiced tofu ingredients in a bowl, then bake at 180C for 40 minutes. The outsides of the baked tofu should be golden brown and the insides should be moist. If the tofu is still wet, bake for another 10 minutes till all the juices run dry.

Bake 4 figs in a tray for 20 minutes.

In a small pan boil the ingredients. Mash up the figs while they cook. Reduce the liquid till it starts to caramelise. Now add another 1/2 cup of water and bring it to boil. Now blend everything to a smooth sauce. Place the blended sauce in the pan again, let it reduce and caramelise again to make it jammier. Now add another 1/2 cup of water and let it reduce to the required consistency.

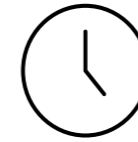
Bring a pan of salted boiling water to boil, throw in a couple of handfuls of trimmed green beans, boil for about 5 mins till tender but still retaining colour and bite. Now wash beans immediately with ice cold water. Drain.

Take 6 fresh figs. Chop off the stem and make a 'X' incision on top. Spread out the segments.

To serve: open up the figs, top with baked tofu, drizzle fig jus, serve with green beans.



LABNEH DIP WITH POMEGRANATE TOPPING



TIME
24 HOURS



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

This is a truly indulgent treat. It is a bit calorie dense, so I save it for those special moments

INGREDIENTS

4 cups rich coconut yogurt
1 pinch sea salt
2 teaspoons za'atar spice mix

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
4 slices sourdough bread, toasted
½ cup pomegranate seeds

chopped mint
freshly ground black pepper
squeeze of lemon

Pour the yogurt into a large bowl. Stir in salt.

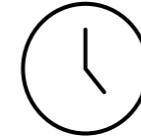
Line another large bowl with a linen or muslin towel. Pour the yogurt mixture into the towel. Pick up the edges of the towel, tie it at the top and hang for 24–48 hours.

To serve, spread labneh in a bowl and top with extra-virgin olive oil, za'atar spice. Scoop some on toasted sourdough bread, garnish with pomegranate seeds, mint and black pepper.

Squeeze some fresh lemon juice.



STIR FRIED VEGETABLES IN A PANCH PHORAN AND COCONUT MILK SAUCE



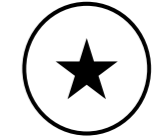
TIME

30 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

This is an unbelievably simple but delicious dish made with panch phoran – a spice mix from Bengal. For me this is a taste of home.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups potato, diced
1 cup sweet potato, diced
1 cup green beans, chopped

1 cup radishes, chopped
1 cup carrot
1 cup aubergines, diced
1 tablespoon coconut oil

Spices:
3 teaspoons panch phoran
1 teaspoon powdered turmeric
1 teaspoon ginger paste
sea salt to taste
3 cups coconut milk
½ teaspoon mustard seeds
2 bay leaves
2 dry red chillies

In a pan heat some oil, add the panch phoran and mustard seeds till they start to splutter. Now add the bay leaves, red chillies, ginger paste and turmeric and cook on medium heat for a minute.

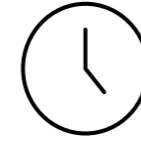
Now add the vegetables to the pan, stir gently till well combined with the spices and cook on medium heat for a couple of minutes.

Now cover with the coconut milk and gently cook for 20 minutes in low to medium heat till all the vegetables are fork tender and the gravy has reduced a bit. Add salt to taste.

Enjoy with steamed rice.



BAKED FALAFEL AND MANGOES ON COCKTAIL STICKS



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

This is a lovely appetizer for an informal meal. Perfect for snacking too.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 small onions, finely chopped
2 400g tins chickpeas, rinsed and drained
4 garlic cloves, grated
3 teaspoons ground cumin

2 teaspoons ground coriander
2 teaspoons sea salt flakes
1 small bunch coriander leaves, roughly chopped
1 small bunch flatleaf parsley leaves, roughly chopped

2 tablespoons plain flour
freshly ground black pepper
3 cups freshly cubed mangoes
cocktail sticks

Preheat the oven to 230C and line a baking tray with baking parchment.

Heat the olive oil in a small frying pan over a medium heat. Add the onions and cook for about 10 minutes till softened. Remove from the heat and leave to cool. Then put the onions, chickpeas, garlic, spices, salt, chopped herbs, flour and some pepper in a food processor and pulse until the mixture is smooth.

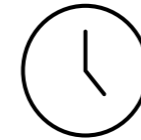
Divide the mixture into 12–15 equal portions and shape into patties. Place on the prepared baking tray and brush the patties with oil. Cook in the oven for 20–25 minutes, or until golden-brown.

Lower the oven setting to 200C and move the tray of falafel to the bottom shelf of the oven. Bake for a further 20 minutes, until cooked through.

Arrange the falafel and mangoes by alternating them on the sticks.
Goes great served with hot sauce.



PUMPKIN AND SAGE TEMPEH KATSU CURRY WITH TOASTED PUMPKIN SEEDS



TIME

40 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

This is the perfect katsu curry for autumn, deliciously moreish and comforting!

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons olive oil
1 large onion, diced
5 garlic cloves, finely diced
3 teaspoons ginger, finely grated
2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced
2 cups pumpkin, cubed

1 heaped tablespoon white miso
1 tablespoon curry powder
1 teaspoon garam masala
4 teaspoons tamari or soy sauce
2 teaspoons rice vinegar

2 teaspoons maple syrup
1 tablespoon peanut butter
250g tempeh, cubed
3 cups plant milk
sesame seeds to garnish

Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a frying pan, add diced onion and sauté until almost transparent. Add garlic and ginger and fry for another minute or two. Add sliced carrot, cubed pumpkin, curry powder and garam masala. Stir around and fry off for a minute or two. Now add the miso paste, peanut butter, vinegar, maple syrup, soy sauce and stir it in and fry another minute.

Now add the plant milk to the pan and let it simmer for 20–25 minutes on gentle heat till the pumpkin and carrot are softened and cooked through. Now cool this mixture a bit and blend to a smooth and creamy sauce. The sauce should be salty from the soy sauce and miso paste but add a bit more salt if required.

In a separate saucepan heat a tablespoon of olive oil and add the cubed tempeh and fry till the surfaces are a little browned. It should smell nutty. At this point add in the pumpkin katsu sauce and mix it in with the tempeh, heating it up gently till piping hot. Sprinkle sesame seeds to garnish.

Serve with rice, a simple green salad and a generous amount of curry sauce.

CHAPTER 7

FRESH AND NATURAL,
FEEL-GOOD FOOD

COLLARD WRAPS

MAPLE-SEARED PEACHES,
TOFU AND ROCKET SALAD

BABY POTATO AND PEA
SHOOTS SALAD SPICED
WITH TURMERIC AND PANCH
PHORAN

QUINOA, PESTO, APPLE,
CELERY AND BLACK GRAPE
SALAD

MANGO, BLUEBERRY AND
AVOCADO SALAD

Back to Nature

Eat natural

It was 2006. That winter as I left my parents' home in Calcutta to catch a flight back to London, my mother gave me her gold pendant that her father had given her, saying, 'Take this, this will keep you safe.' Little did I know that it would be the last time I would see her healthy and well. In 2007, after a brief illness, she passed away. I had left for London again the evening before she died. The pressures of work and life prevented me from grieving for her, and I carried on as normal, although I was weary and torn within.

The following year, my health started deteriorating in inexplicable ways. I was constantly tired; I had a throat infection that would not get better. I was prescribed antibiotics, but unlike in my childhood where the antibiotics saved my life, on this occasion they severely depleted the good bacteria in my gut and I was left unwell. In time I got better, but a few years later in 2013, following another round of antibiotics for a chest infection, I developed chronic fatigue and serious issues with my digestion.

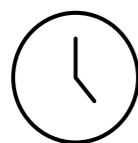
The wholesome food habits I grew up with were, sadly, eroded in my adult life, and poor food habits started to get a grip on me. I lived on my own, and although I really enjoyed cooking, there would be days when I would fuel my day with only crisps, sugary juices and biscuits. I didn't think about it much then. Relatively cheap, tasty convenience food in brightly coloured packaging seemed to be the answer to life's hectic pace. Slowly, I started to notice my health crumbling – feeling unwell often, especially in stressful situations. My immune system, it seems, was not thriving so well under the influence of our modern, processed diet and stressful lifestyle, but I didn't quite realise it at that time.

It was at this time that I seriously started looking into healthy nutrition and alternative medicine. I eliminated processed foods and introduced healing plants, herbs and spices to my diet. Spices such as turmeric, black pepper, paprika, garlic, ginger, nigella, oregano and cinnamon became staples in my spice cabinet. My fridge was loaded with colourful vegetables like kale, blueberries, red peppers, beetroot and cabbage. I eliminated over-processed carbohydrates like bread in favour of sweet potatoes, quinoa and buckwheat. I replaced processed seed oils like sunflower oil with virgin coconut and olive oils. I introduced wholesome plant proteins like black eyed beans, chickpeas and mung lentils to my diet. I reduced my consumption of processed sugars. I replaced sugary juices with homemade water kefir, a gut-friendly probiotic drink. I even dabbled with medicinal herbs such as Siberian ginseng, goldenseal, ashwagandha and rhodiola after consulting a herbalist. After about six months I realised my health was improving. I started to feel like a new person. The adoption of new foods not only improved my health – it opened a new spectrum of flavours that became a part of my meal creation. I realised that natural, unprocessed food can be delightfully delicious with the addition of spices.

One thing I learned from all of this was the power of a simple routine that involves healthy eating, daily exercise, nurturing supportive relationships and making time for our passions and purpose. Because it's when things get really tough that routine keeps you going.

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COLLARD WRAPS



TIME

20 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

These wraps are so vibrant and fresh – perfect for arranging on a platter if you're serving guests, or as a lunchbox treat.

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons vegan pesto
juice and zest of 2 lemons
1 tablespoon tamari soy sauce
1 cup fresh peas
3 cups cooked quinoa

¼ teaspoon cumin powder
1 small carrot, finely diced
1 red pepper, finely diced
2 teaspoons smoked paprika
½ cup pitted green olives, coarsely chopped

1 small bunch coriander, finely chopped
½ teaspoon sea salt
1 tablespoon maple syrup
4–6 collard leaves

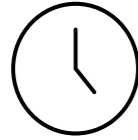
Collard stems are tough, so first chop them off the leaves then shave the ribs of the leaves down with a knife so they sit flat with the work surface. Now blanch the leaves in boiling hot water for 5–10 seconds till they turn bright green.

Place a small amount of filling in the centre of each leaf. Carefully roll the collard wraps, just like a burrito, tucking in the ends as you go so that the filling stays inside.

Finally, cut your collard wraps in half and enjoy!



MAPLE-SEARED PEACHES, TOFU AND ROCKET SALAD



TIME
30 MINUTES



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

Deliciously caramelised and juicy peaches with a hint of cinnamon, served with crumbled tofu and rocket.

INGREDIENTS

2 400g cans peaches
1 cup rocket leaves
300g silken tofu, which
is softer and creamier
than normal tofu

zest and juice of 1 lemon
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon coarse salt
1 tablespoon balsamic
vinegar

¼ cup flaked
almonds
2 tablespoons
maple syrup
1 tablespoon
coconut oil

Drain the juice off the canned peaches and transfer the peach halves to a large bowl. Add the lemon zest and juice, maple syrup, cinnamon and a sprinkling of salt.

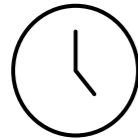
Heat the coconut oil in a pan till it almost starts smoking, then add the peaches. It will start to splutter and sizzle, so bring the heat down and cook the peaches on a medium heat until they turn nicely golden all over. Now add a small splash of balsamic, give the peaches a stir and transfer to a bowl.

Squeeze the water out of the tofu and crumble it with your fingers, then add a splash of balsamic vinegar and mix.

Now on a plate arrange the peach halves, scatter the rocket and tofu around it, and sprinkle the flaked almonds on top.



BABY POTATO AND PEA SHOOTS SALAD SPICED WITH TURMERIC AND PANCH PHORAN



TIME
30 MINUTES



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

Panch phoran (or 5-spice mix, consisting of fenugreek, nigella, cumin, black mustard and fennel seeds) is a versatile spice that is extensively used in Bengal and India. It has a harmonious mix of sweet, bitter, citrusy and woody notes that can elevate the humble potato to something very special.

INGREDIENTS

600g baby potatoes
1 teaspoon panch
phoran spice mix
½ teaspoon turmeric

½ teaspoon coarse sea salt
½ teaspoon cracked black
pepper
1 tablespoon olive oil

2 cups pea shoots
¼ cup peanuts
juice of 1 lime

Bring a pan of water to the boil and simmer the potatoes for 20 minutes (pierce with a fork and if it goes through easily, the potatoes are done). Drain off the water and halve each potato.

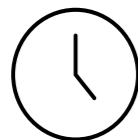
Heat some olive oil in a heavy-bottomed pan and add the panch phoran. When it starts to splutter, add the potatoes, bring down the heat and gently cook the potatoes until coated in the flavoured oil. Now add the turmeric, salt and black pepper and cook for a further 3–4 minutes. Then take off heat, stir in the lime juice and set aside.

Heat a pan till very hot, add the peanuts to it and dry roast them for 3–5 minutes till they turn a little golden. Using a pestle and mortar, crush the roasted peanuts coarsely and set aside.

In a plate arrange the potatoes, drizzle over some of the pan juices, scatter the pea shoots, then sprinkle the crushed, roasted peanuts on top..



QUINOA, PESTO, APPLE, CELERY AND BLACK GRAPE



TIME
30 MINUTES



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

This is a really simple and easy-to-prepare salad that looks elegant and tastes absolutely lush – a perfect complement to roasted vegetables, lentils or stews.

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons vegan pesto
½ tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
juice and zest of 2 limes
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
3 cups cooked quinoa

¼ teaspoon cumin powder
1 green apple, chopped
2 sticks celery, chopped
1 small bunch black grapes, halved with a knife
1 small bunch parsley, finely chopped

½ teaspoon sea salt
1 tablespoon maple syrup
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 cup silken tofu, cubed

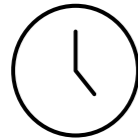
Cook the quinoa as per packet instructions. Transfer to a large bowl.

Add in the other ingredients and mix well.

Serve as an accompaniment with a main or on its own as a starter..



MANGO, BLUEBERRY AND AVOCADO SALAD



TIME
40 MINUTES



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

A colourful and zingy salad to tease your senses.

INGREDIENTS

2 medium firm-fleshed mangoes
150g blueberries
1 large slightly firm avocado
1 tablespoon maple syrup

1 teaspoon cardamom powder
1 teaspoon nutmeg powder
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt
juice and zest of 2 limes

1 small bunch mint leaves, finely chopped
1 teaspoon coriander seeds
1 teaspoon muscovado sugar

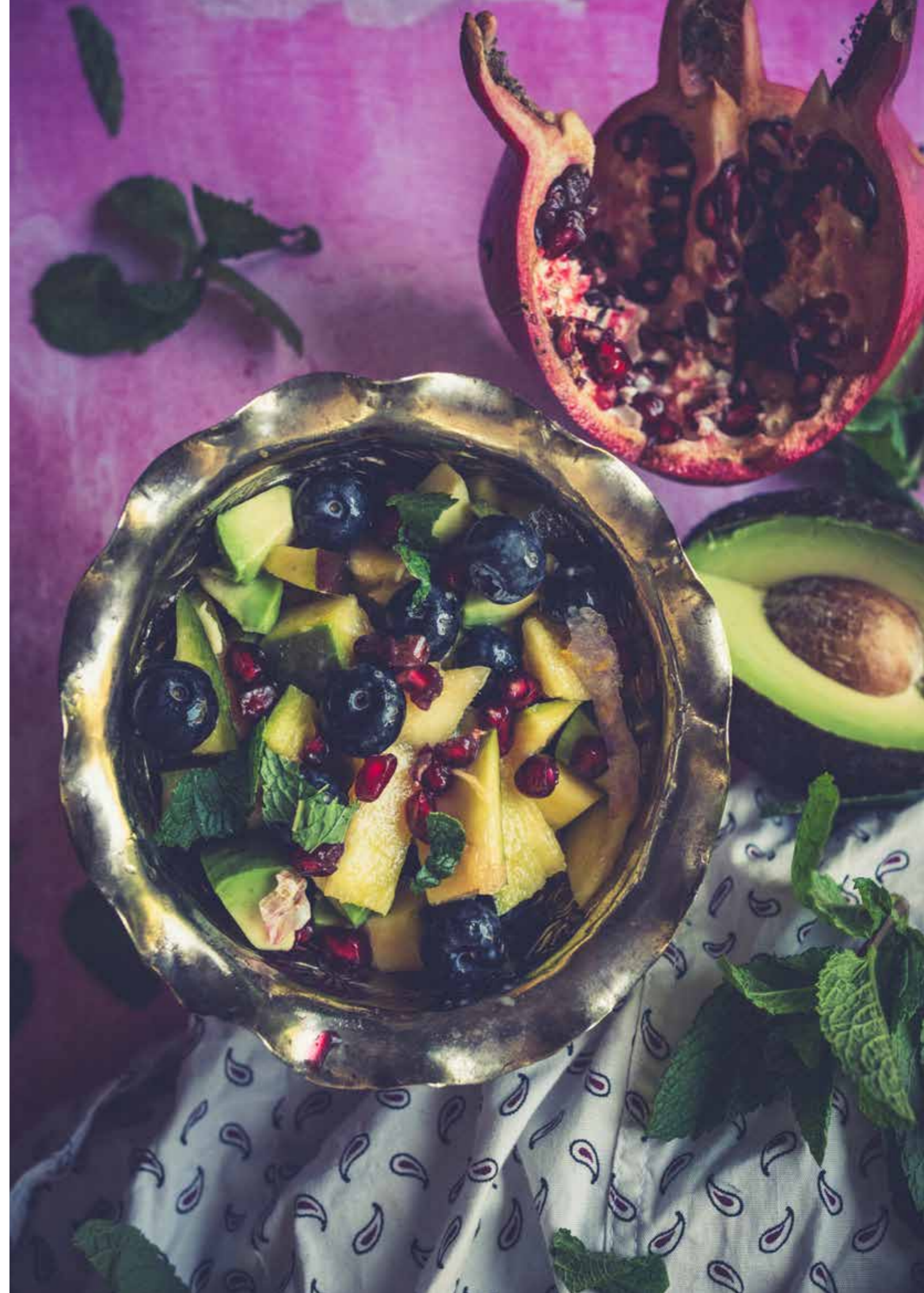
Peel and shred the mangoes using a grater.

Peel and slice the avocado.

Now mix fruits, spices, herbs and lime juice in a large bowl.

To make the toasted coriander, heat a pan to high heat, add the coriander seeds and stir. In a few minutes they will turn aromatic. Lightly sprinkle the muscovado sugar on top of the coriander seeds and keep stirring.

When the sugar starts to turn liquid and bubbles up, move the pan from the heat and let the sugar-coated coriander seeds cool, then scrape from the pan and sprinkle on the salad..



CHAPTER 8

HEART-WARMING FOODS,
PERFECT FOR SHARING
OCCASIONS

BEETROOT AND RED ONION
TART

SWEET POTATO PARCELS

PECAN-STUFFED DATES

VEGAN WELLINGTON

VEGAN LOAF AND GRAVY

CRISPY ROAST
POTATO WITH OLIVE OIL AND
ROSEMARY

ROASTED GARLICKY BRUSSELS
SPROUTS WITH PISTACHIOS

VEGAN CHOCOLATE TART

Foods that Tell Our Story

Great food to share

After my mother died, I moved from London to Berkshire and stayed on little Ham Island in the middle of the River Thames in Old Windsor for five years. I lived in a tiny granny cottage adjacent to the main house, whose back garden faced the river, and on sunny days the ducks would waddle across the grass. The landlord loved gardening and on occasions invited me to dinner made with homegrown vegetables.

In autumn the sloe plums would ripen on the trees lining the river and he used them to make sloe gin, which I sampled with pleasure. I came across many traditional British foods while living there – chocolate and beetroot cake, which I loved, was a product of the war days where the dearth of chocolate was compensated for by the inclusion of beetroot.

Whilst living in Berkshire, I visited my father in India on my vacations and we would recreate some of the old memories from when my mother was alive by playing her favourite Abba songs or cooking her favourite dish. In 2010 after my father suddenly died, I felt a deep sense of restlessness. My father was a practical man, but he had a love of travel – his eyes would light up when telling stories of his travel adventures. He encouraged me to be bold and brave and think big. I had never felt brave enough to go backpacking on my own – but always wanted to do it. So now, I decided to go travelling for a couple of months across Asia on my own, visiting different countries, partly to cope with my grief but also to do something bold, just as father wanted. I think he would be proud of me. My travels opened my mind and my eyes to a completely new flavour palate, the wonderfully intoxicating smells of lemongrass, galangal, Thai basil and green peppercorns.

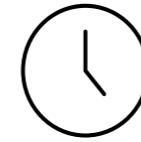
As I travelled through Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia, I learned how every region has its own distinctive food with its unique flavour profile, but the things that stood out for me in Asian cuisine were the simplicity, the freshness and the delicate harmony of flavours – sweetness, sourness, heat, spice and umami all beautifully balanced on a pin head with care, love and diligence.

I think the harmony of flavours is what I find deeply comforting about Asian cuisine, but I've come to realise that the popular national dishes of every region in the world all have something deeply comforting about them. Traditional dishes capture the flavours of each land – they tell the stories of the people, their triumphs, their struggles and their aspirations! This is my understanding of the phrase 'soul food'.

I THINK THE HARMONY OF
FLAVOURS IS WHAT I FIND
DEEPLY COMFORTING ABOUT
ASIAN CUISINE, BUT I'VE COME
TO REALISE THAT THE POPULAR
NATIONAL DISHES OF EVERY
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HAVE SOMETHING DEEPLY
COMFORTING ABOUT THEM.
TRADITIONAL DISHES CAPTURE
THE FLAVOURS OF EACH LAND.



BEETROOT AND RED ONION TART



TIME
120 MINUTES



SERVING
6 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

A vibrant starter, with warm and earthy flavours for those special celebration dinners.

INGREDIENTS

400g beetroot, cut into thin wedges
1 red onion, cut into wedges
4 tablespoons blackcurrant jelly
3 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
2 pods star anise
1 teaspoon cinnamon powder
1 teaspoon black pepper powder

flour, for rolling
500g block vegan puff pastry
1 orange, zested
rocket leaves and sweet onion chutney to serve

Heat oven to 180C. Toss the beetroot and onion in 2 tablespoons of oil in a large bowl, add the sherry vinegar, zest, spices and jelly, then mix well.

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large ovenproof non-stick pan, then arrange the vegetables so that they cover the surface of the pan. Bake in the oven for 45 minutes, or till the vegetables are tender.

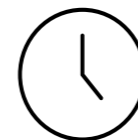
Flour the work surface, roll the pastry to a thickness of 1/2 cm and cut out a circle the same size as the frying pan. Put the pastry on top of the baked vegetables, carefully tucking it in all around the edges, then return the pan to the oven and bake for 35 minutes or till the pastry has puffed up.

Slide a palate knife around the edge of the tart, then place a plate on top of the pastry. Flip the pan over to turn the tart out onto the plate.

Serve the tart with rocket leaves and some sweet onion chutney on the side..



SWEET POTATO PARCELS



TIME

90 MINUTES



SERVING

6 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

A delightfully moreish and crunchy starter, works perfectly as an appetizer at dinner parties.

INGREDIENTS

4 sweet potatoes,
peeled and cut into
2-3cm chunks
5 tablespoons cold
pressed rapeseed oil
1 white onion, thinly
sliced
4 garlic cloves, crushed
½ teaspoon chilli flakes

1 teaspoon nutmeg
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon star anise
powder
2 tablespoons dried sweet
cranberries

1 small bunch thyme,
separate the leaves
from the stems
1 cup of cooked
chestnuts, roughly
chopped
sea salt
5 sheets vegan filo
pastry
hot sauce for serving

Heat oven to 180C. Put the potatoes on a greased baking tray, toss with 1 tablespoon of oil, add the herbs and spices and rub them in, then season and roast for 25 minutes.

While the potatoes roast, heat another tablespoon of oil in a frying pan and cook the onion and garlic over a medium heat for about 10 minutes to soften. Stir in the chestnuts, cranberries and the sweet potato cubes. Season with salt to taste. Mash the mixture down a bit with the back of a spoon.

Line a baking tin with a rectangle of baking parchment. Cut the filo in 10cm square pieces. Put a sheet of filo on a flat surface, brushing the top with a little oil, then add another piece of filo on top. Brush again with oil and repeat with another 2 sheets of filo.

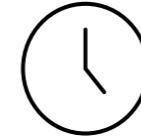
Spoon a bit of the sweet potato mixture into the middle of a filo sheet and roll the filo to form a cylindrical shape, tucking in the edges and brushing the surface with a little more of the oil at the end. Place parcel in the baking tray.

Repeat the process and make more parcels till all the sweet potato mixture is used up. Put in the oven and bake for 30 minutes.

Serve the parcels on a platter with some hot sauce on the side.



PECAN STUFFED DATES



TIME
15 MINUTES



SERVING
6 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

This is the easiest sweet treat you will ever make, but it looks super elegant and will impress your guests.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup pecans, chopped
½ cup dried sweet
cranberries, chopped
zest and juice of 1 lime

2 teaspoons lime juice
1 tablespoon maple syrup

1 tiny pinch sea salt
12 medjool dates,
pitted
½ cup dark
chocolate chips

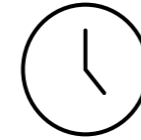
In a bowl mix the ingredients except the pitted dates and mix them well. Now using your fingers make 12 equal portions of the mixture.

Stuff each of the dates with the fruit and nut mixture and place them on a serving plate. Now melt the chocolate chips in the microwave for 30–60 seconds or till they turn liquid, then drizzle the chocolate over the stuffed dates. Let the chocolate cool and harden.

Serve as little sweet appetizers. Also works brilliantly as an after-dinner treat with coffee..



VEGAN WELLINGTON



TIME

120 MINUTES



SERVING

6 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

HARD

This is the easiest sweet treat you will ever make, but it looks super elegant and will impress your guests.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons dried and powdered porcini mushrooms
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large white onion, finely chopped
1 cup chestnut mushrooms, finely chopped
1 medium green apple, grated
4 garlic cloves, crushed
2 large sweet potatoes, cut into 2cm chunks

1 tablespoon sage, finely chopped
1 cup breadcrumbs
2 tablespoons maple syrup
¼ cup walnuts or pecans, chopped
¼ cup dried cranberries
½ cup dates, chopped
1 teaspoon nutmeg powder
1 tablespoon rosemary, finely chopped
1 tablespoon thyme, finely chopped

2 320g sheets vegan puff pastry
plain flour, to dust
3 tablespoons plant-based milk
1 tablespoon English mustard
½ teaspoon turmeric
4 cups water, boiled
Sea salt

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan and fry the onion and chestnut mushrooms on medium heat for 10–15 minutes until the onions are soft and the mushrooms are wilted. Now add the porcini mushroom powder, garlic and chopped herbs and fry for a couple of minutes more.

Now add the sweet potatoes to the pan along with 4 cups of boiling water. Cover and cook for 20 minutes until the sweet potatoes are just softened. Add a bit more water if the liquid evaporates too quickly. Now add the cranberries, dates, maple syrup, grated apple, chopped pecans, nutmeg powder and breadcrumbs to the pan and give everything a good stir. Remove from heat and let it cool.

Once cool, unroll one of the puff pastry sheets onto a lightly floured non-stick baking tray lined with baking parchment. Whisk the milk, turmeric and mustard together with a pinch of salt and set aside.

Spoon the filling down the middle of the pastry sheet leaving a border around the edges. Use the mustard mix to brush the borders, then top with the second pastry sheet, pressing the pastry around the filling to remove any air pockets, then crimp to seal the sides and trim off any excess pastry with a knife. Now take a fork and make several holes on the top of the pastry so the steam can escape.

Now brush the top with the mustard mixture and let it chill in the fridge for a couple of hours.

Heat the oven to 180C and brush the pastry with more of the mustard mixture, then bake for 40–45 min [1]utes till golden.

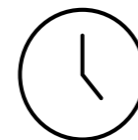
Rest for 10 minutes before serving.



Q:

A:

VEGAN LOAF AND GRAVY



TIME

120 MINUTES



SERVING

6 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

EASY

I absolutely love this recipe. The addition of coffee adds a fantastic depth to the dish. A tasty treat that will delight your guests.

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons olive oil
2 small onions, finely diced
2 carrots, finely diced
3 celery stalks, finely diced
6 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon cinnamon powder
1 teaspoon black pepper powder
¼ cup dried cranberries
1 tablespoon thyme leaves, finely chopped

3 cups chickpeas, drained from can
1 cup breadcrumb
4 tablespoons ground flaxseed
6 tablespoons nutritional yeast
4 tablespoons soy sauce
4 tablespoons vegan Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon freshly made espresso or ½ teaspoon instant coffee
½ cup tomato paste
sea salt

Sauce:
½ cup ketchup
1 tablespoon vegan Worcestershire sauce

Preheat oven to 180C and grease a 9-inch loaf pan with oil. Add the chickpeas to a large bowl and mash with a potato masher, leaving a bit of texture in the mashed chickpeas.

Sauté the onion, carrots, celery and garlic in the olive oil for 10 minutes on medium heat, till softened. Add the cinnamon, thyme, black pepper and cranberries. Take it off the heat and add the mashed chickpeas. Now add the breadcrumbs, coffee, Worcestershire sauce, flax seeds, nutritional yeast, soy sauce and tomato paste. Stir with a large wooden spoon until very well combined. Season with salt to taste.

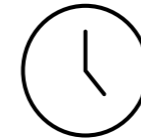
Press the loaf mixture in the prepared pan, pushing down evenly so it is compact. Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes.

In a small bowl stir together the ketchup and Worcestershire sauce for the topping. Remove the foil, spread the ketchup topping on top of the loaf and bake uncovered for another 15 minutes.

Let it rest for 30 minutes before serving..



CRISPY ROAST POTATOES WITH OLIVE OIL AND ROSEMARY



TIME
120 MINUTES



SERVING
6 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

These roast potatoes are super addictive and very satisfying!

INGREDIENTS

1½kg Maris Piper potatoes
juice and zest of 1 lemon

sea salt
3-4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil – use the best quality

1 bunch fresh rosemary, finely chopped
2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 190C. Peel the potatoes and wash them in ice-cold water, then soak for 5 minutes in a pot of ice-cold water with plenty of salt to help wash off the extra starch.

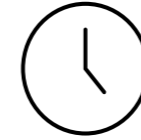
Next tip the potatoes into a pot of boiling water and let them parboil for 10 minutes, then rest for a couple of minutes before placing them in a colander and giving them a good shake to ruffle up their surface.

Now transfer the potatoes to a large tray, drizzle with olive oil, rosemary, add a squeeze of lemon, the lemon zest and black pepper and season with salt. Toss the potatoes so they are coated well in the mixture then roast for 30 minutes or till gently golden-brown.

Now lightly squash each potato with a potato masher and flatten slightly – this will make them super crispy. Add another tablespoon of olive oil and return the potatoes to the hot oven to roast for 40 minutes till crispy brown.



ROASTED GARLICKY BRUSSEL SPROUTS WITH PISTACHIOS



TIME
120 MINUTES



SERVING
6 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

This fragrant rice and tofu dish, will tickle your tastebuds and make them sing.

INGREDIENTS

600g Brussels sprouts
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
6 garlic cloves, minced

½ tablespoon sherry vinegar
1 tablespoon maple syrup
sea salt to taste

2 sprigs fresh rosemary, finely chopped
4 teaspoons truffle oil
2 tablespoons pistachios, crushed

Mix the olive oil, rosemary, vinegar, garlic, salt, black pepper and maple syrup in a large bowl and stir well.

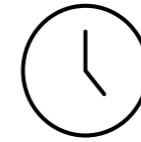
Transfer the Brussels sprouts to this bowl and toss them so they're coated in the mixture. Tip them into a baking tray.

Preheat the oven to 180C, roast the Brussels sprouts for 30–35 minutes, till nicely browned. Now drizzle the truffle oil on the sprouts and roast for another 5 minutes.

Sprinkle the crushed pistachios on top before serving.



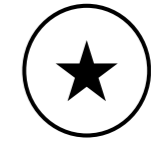
VEGAN CHOCOLATE TART



TIME
5 HOURS



SERVING
6 PERSON



DIFFUCULTY
MEDIUM

This chocolate tart does take time to prepare, but it is so satisfying and delicious.

INGREDIENTS

500ml full-fat coconut milk from can
300g vegan dark chocolate, finely chopped
1 cup raspberries
4 tablespoons maple syrup
1 teaspoon instant coffee
1 pinch sea salt

For the pastry:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup plain flour
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cocoa powder
1 tablespoon icing sugar
2 tablespoons coconut oil, melted
2 teaspoons cinnamon powder
fresh mint leaves to garnish
cold water
1 pinch salt

For the pastry, blend the flour, cocoa, icing sugar and cinnamon powder in a food processor with a pinch of salt until uniform. Pour in the melted coconut oil and pulse till it looks like rubble. Add 2–3 tablespoons of cold water and pulse till the pastry just comes together. Now knead it, then cover and chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 180C. Roll out the pastry in between two sheets of baking parchment then line a 20cm tart tin with it. Chill for 10 minutes then place a sheet of parchment over the pastry and fill with baking beans.

Bake for 15 minutes, remove the parchment and beans and bake further for 10 minutes until crisp. Trim the edges with a sharp knife.

To make the ganache heat the coconut milk in a saucepan over a low heat until just simmering, then put the finely chopped chocolate into a bowl and pour the hot coconut milk over it, stirring to melt the chocolate until it looks smooth and velvety. Add the instant coffee, maple syrup and a tiny pinch of sea salt.

Pour the ganache into the tart tin and chill for 3 hours. Serve topped with raspberries and some fresh mint leaves for decoration.

CHAPTER 9

DELICIOUS RECIPES
MADE FROM LEFTOVERS

LEFTOVER VEGETABLE AND
RICE CASSEROLE

LEFTOVER VEGETABLE AND
BEAN PATTIES

LEFTOVER VEGETABLE CHILLI

VEGAN SHEPHERD'S PIE WITH
LEFTOVER
SAUSAGES AND MASH



The Realisation

Reducing waste

In 2019 I travelled to Bali. The stillness and the beauty of the rice fields of Ubud were mesmerising. But what I found wonderful and intriguing was the connection the local people had with nature and their deep desire to live in harmony with it. I saw some of the most pristine beaches there, but sadly evidence of plastics in the sea too. The natural beauty jarred so strongly with our wasteful modern living – it truly made me reflect.

On my flight back home to London I felt a sense of restlessness – something was missing. I felt the need to live a little bit more authentically, care a little bit more about how I would enjoy contributing to the world, and care a little bit less about what people thought of me. It's as if a little switch went on in my head – ding! I decided I was going to do something I always dreamed of doing and be a bit bold, as my father wanted. I applied to participate in the TV competition MasterChef UK after I returned from Bali. Amazingly, I got through.

I still distinctly remember while I was mixing pesto and coconut milk in a dish that I prepared at MasterChef, John Torode, the show host, looked at me half in amusement and half in bewilderment. To my relief, he mentioned something about how most flavours in established cuisines didn't always originate in that country but rather were created organically with the inclusion of new and interesting ingredients thanks to the ancient trade in spices and exotic fruit and vegetables.

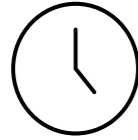
For example, it is hard to imagine that tomatoes and chillies, so synonymous with Italian and Indian food respectively, did not originate in those countries at all. Chillies, potatoes and tomatoes all originated in South America; and we have the medieval spice trade to thank for the rich tapestry of flavours we enjoy today in our modern cuisine. So in a sense, my creative efforts at fusing unlikely ingredients from different cuisines are not so different from what we have always done with food.

Being more adventurous with our food creation can also help reduce waste; it makes perfect sense to use up the leftover potato mash and vegan sausages from the Sunday lunch and upcycle it to a shepherd's pie for Monday or use up leftover scraps of vegetables to make a delicious bean stew – the opportunities are endless!

Since MasterChef, I have been inspired to share my love and passion for flavoursome and healthy plant-based cooking on various online channels and created 'The NomLab'. My own personal journey has shaped the kind of food I prepare, which is healthy and sustainable, whilst maintaining the essence of what I like to create: flavoursome fusion food.

I STILL DISTINCTLY REMEMBER
WHILE I WAS MIXING PESTO
AND COCONUT MILK IN A
DISH THAT I PREPARED AT
MASTERCHEF, JOHN TORODE,
THE SHOW HOST, LOOKED AT
ME HALF IN AMUSEMENT AND
HALF IN BEWILDERMENT

LEFTOVER VEGETABLE AND RICE CASSEROLE



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

This is such a tasty way to transform leftover cooked vegetables into something delicious and comforting.

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups vegetable stock
¾ cup full-fat coconut milk
1 teaspoon turmeric
1 tablespoon thyme leaves, finely chopped (dried mixed herbs work well too)

1 cup long-grain rice, uncooked
2 cups chickpeas from can, drained
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 teaspoon garam masala

2 cloves garlic, minced
3-4 cups cooked and chopped leftover veggies (can be roasted or steamed)
1 small bunch parsley, chopped
sea salt

Preheat the oven to 180C.

In a pan place the stock, coconut milk, onion and garlic and bring to a boil. Add the rice, chickpeas, herbs and spices, then reduce heat and let it cook for 10 minutes till the rice is parboiled. Now transfer this to a casserole dish and spread it with a spatula.

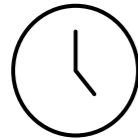
Top with the leftover chopped vegetables.

Cover the casserole dish with a layer of aluminium foil. Place in the oven and bake for 45 minutes. Take it out of the oven and, using a spatula, gently mix the rice and vegetables.

Season to taste. Top with some chopped parsley before serving.



LEFTOVER VEG AND BEAN PATTIE



TIME
60 MINUTES



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

These bean patties are so versatile, you can use up cooked grains, legumes and vegetables with this recipe. Upcycle your leftovers!

INGREDIENTS

1 medium onion, finely diced
2 garlic cloves, minced
sea salt
2 tablespoons olive oil

2 cups leftover cooked root vegetables (potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots and beets work really well)
1 cup cooked leftover grains (e.g. rice, quinoa)
1 cup leftover cooked legumes (e.g. chickpeas, black beans, black-eyed peas)

1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 teaspoon garam masala
1 teaspoon cumin powder
½ cup panko breadcrumbs

Place 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a pan and fry the onion and garlic till glossy. Add the spices and cook for a couple of minutes till fragrant.

Now add the legumes, grains and vegetables and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Transfer to a food processor and blend this mixture. Leave a little texture in, don't over-blend and turn it into a smooth paste. Add salt to taste.

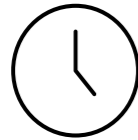
Using your fingers form 8 patties with this mixture. Roll the patties in a bowl with the panko breadcrumbs till they are evenly coated. Place the patties in a lined baking tray and let them rest in the fridge for 30 minutes to an hour till they are chilled.

Now heat a large skillet, add a tablespoon of olive oil and shallow fry the patties till nicely golden on each side.

Serve hot. It's the perfect filling for a sourdough bread sandwich.



LEFTOVER VEGETABLE CHILLI



TIME
60 MINUTES



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
EASY

Easy and delicious way to use up leftovers. Never throw away leftovers again!

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 teaspoon chilli powder
1 cup tomato paste
2 tablespoons soy sauce
4 cups vegetable stock
½ tablespoon cocoa powder
1 400g can kidney beans, drained

2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
3 cups cooked and chopped leftover vegetables (e.g. green beans, kale)
1 cup frozen sweetcorn
1 small bunch parsley, chopped
1 small bunch thyme, chopped
sea salt
2 tablespoons coconut yogurt

Heat olive oil in a pan and cook onions till glossy. Add the garlic, spices, chopped thyme and tomato paste and cook for a couple more minutes.

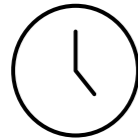
Add the beans and cook for a further couple of minutes. Add the vegetable stock, leftover vegetables, sweet potatoes, sweet corn, soy sauce and cocoa powder, then cover and cook for 20–25 minutes. The gravy should have thickened.

Now season to taste, sprinkle the chopped parsley and spoon over some of the coconut yogurt.

Serve hot with steamed rice.



VEGAN SHEPHERD'S PIE WITH LEFTOVER SAUSAGES AND MASH



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

This is pure comfort food that you can make with ease at the end of the week with leftover vegan sausages and mashed potatoes. It's 'put-your-feet-up time'.

INGREDIENTS

3-4 cups mashed potatoes
4 cooked vegan sausages, chopped up in bite-sized pieces
2 medium white onions, finely chopped
2 medium carrots, peeled and finely diced
3 cups quinoa, cooked as per packet instructions

1 celery stick, finely chopped
1 red pepper, finely diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 small bunch thyme, finely chopped
1 small bunch parsley, finely chopped
1 small bunch thyme, chopped
sea salt
2 tablespoons coconut yogurt

1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
1 cup tomato paste
1 teaspoon muscovado sugar
2 tablespoons olive oil and extra to brush
sea salt to taste

Heat oven to 200C.

In a pan heat some olive oil and fry the onion and garlic for 5 minutes till glossy. Now add the herbs and cracked black pepper and fry some more. It should smell fragrant.

At this point add all the chopped vegetables (i.e. pepper, celery and carrots) and fry for a further 5 minutes on medium heat. Add the quinoa and tomato paste and fry some more. Now cover the pan with 1½ cups of water and stir well. Let it simmer gently till the liquid is reduced. Now add the chopped up vegan sausages, mix in and let it cook for couple of minutes. Add salt to taste.

Now transfer the cooked quinoa, sausages and vegetables to a greased baking dish and spread out evenly. Create a layer of the mash and spread it out as evenly as you can on top, using a fork to make criss-cross markings on top of the mash to give the dish a rustic feel.

Brush the surface with some olive oil and grate some more black pepper on top if you like. Let it bake for 30- 40 minutes till the mash layer has nicely browned.



CHAPTER 10

TAKE THE FIRST STEP –
STARTER RECIPES

CRISPY CAULIFLOWER WINGS

COMFORTING VEGETABLE AND
RED LENTIL DAHL

THYME-ROASTED
VEGETABLES AND TOFU

EASY NO-BAKE CHOCOLATE
AND BANANA PIE

ROAST POTATOES WITH
ZA'ATAR SPICE

BAKED PEANUT BUTTER AND
SESAME TEMPEH

CAULIFLOWER STEAK WITH
TAHINI AND
ORANGE SAUCE

TACOS WITH JACKFRUIT IN A
MEXICAN-STYLE SAUCE

CLEMENTINE AND
CINNAMON TEA

A Bold New Future

Take the first step with starter recipes

I am always fascinated by our human story and Yuval Noah Harari's book Sapiens was an eye-opener for me. The modern human, Homo sapiens, first appeared 300,000 years ago and thrived and spread across the globe. We mated with the other species such as the neanderthalensis, retaining some of their DNA till this day, and over time we pushed the other competing species to extinction by taking away their food or killing them off. Over time, through our ingenuity we humans spread across the globe, but our species success has come at an enormous cost to our planet. Global warming, rising sea levels and disaster are staring us in the face. I am often reminded of that famous Einstein quote: "Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity."

I am, however, a bit more optimistic about our future than some of the doom-mongers. For now, we can take some steps towards a more sustainable future by reducing our dependence on foods with a high carbon footprint. How we dealt with the Covid-19 crisis demonstrates plenty of examples where we failed and succeeded as humanity. There are plenty of big challenges ahead of us where we will need to work together to survive, and failure is not an option!

The Earth's population is expected to grow to 9.8 billion in 2050 and there will be a lot of mouths to feed, on top of the massive climate change challenges we will be facing. We will have to make radical changes to everything from our diets to farming; we need to rethink and redesign the way we produce, store, process and consume our food and live our lives.

I believe that merely the intellectual understanding of the benefits of adopting a plant-based diet is likely to meet with limited success. However, if we realise how exciting and enjoyable a plant-oriented diet is along with its benefits for the planet, this is likely to encourage more people to change their behaviour. If people currently consuming foods with a high carbon footprint seven days a week limited it to three or four days a week, it would benefit our planet immensely.

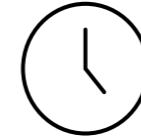
This is where the JOURNEY TO FLAVOUR comes in. With this book I hope I have shared my passion for delicious food and given you plenty of ideas to implement an active and wholesome, plant-based lifestyle.

The next section will give you some simple recipe ideas to get you started.

star anise – it was a dollop of delicious magic. The memories of those delightful tastes have formed the backdrop for my own JOURNEY TO FLAVOUR.

THE EARTH'S POPULATION IS EXPECTED TO GROW TO 9.8 BILLION IN 2050 AND THERE WILL BE A LOT OF MOUTHS TO FEED, ON TOP OF THE MASSIVE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGES WE WILL BE FACING. WE WILL HAVE TO MAKE RADICAL CHANGES TO EVERYTHING FROM OUR DIETS TO FARMING.

COMFORTING VEGETABLE AND RED LENTIL DAHL



TIME
60 MINUTES



SERVING
2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

This is soul food, especially if you are craving something wholesome and comforting after a long day.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons coconut oil
2 medium onions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 thumb ginger, grated
1 teaspoon turmeric

1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
1 small handful fresh curry leaves (optional)
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
3 tablespoons tomato paste
1 teaspoon garam masala
1 teaspoon chilli flakes

1½ cups red lentils, rinsed
1 cup coconut milk
2 cups water
Small bunch of coriander, chopped
3 cups chopped mixed vegetables of your choice (e.g. carrots, peas, broccoli and cauliflower)
sea salt

Heat a heavy-bottomed pan and add 1 tablespoon of coconut oil. When the oil is hot add the black mustard seeds, cumin seeds, curry leaves and chilli flakes and cook till the oil is fragrant. Now add the ginger, garlic and turmeric and cook for a couple of minutes.

Next add the washed lentils and tomato paste and cook for a further couple of minutes.

Now add the vegetables, coconut milk and water, then cover and cook on medium heat for 20 minutes till the lentils are soft. Add salt to taste.

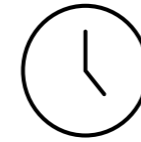
In a separate saucepan heat 1 tablespoon of coconut oil, add the chopped onions and garam masala and sweat it for 7–10 minutes till the onions are nicely browned. Then sprinkle the onions on the cooked lentils and gently stir through.

Sprinkle the chopped coriander.

Enjoy with steamed rice or sourdough bread.



THYME ROASTED VEGETABLES AND TOFU



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

This is just perfect for busy days when you want to spend minimal time cooking. It requires a bit of chopping, but after that you can let your oven take care of your dinner.

INGREDIENTS

1 medium sweet potato, peeled and cut in cubes
3 cups white onions, sliced
3 medium carrots, peeled and sliced lengthwise
2 cups chestnut mushrooms, chopped
2 large pointed red peppers, chopped

2 cups broccoli, chopped
½ cup olives, chopped (optional)
300g tofu, chopped in small cubes
3-4 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh thyme, minced

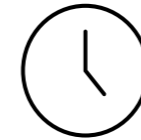
sea salt to taste
1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
1 tablespoon maple syrup
1 tablespoon dark soy sauce

Preheat oven to 200C. Combine vegetables in a large pan, then add the other ingredients and toss to coat in the maple syrup, soy sauce, olive oil and herbs

Transfer to a large greased baking pan and spread out the tofu and vegetables. Roast for 45-50 minutes or until tender, stirring occasionally.



CRISPY CAULIFLOWER WINGS



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

Crunchy and moreish vegan wings to tease your tastebuds. It's perfect as a snack or as a side.

INGREDIENTS

1 small cauliflower head with florets removed and cut in smaller pieces to create wings
½ cup flour (use gluten-free if you wish)
½ cup plant milk
½ teaspoon sea salt
1 teaspoon turmeric powder

½ teaspoon cumin powder
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
½ teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon chilli flakes
1 cup panko breadcrumbs

Sauce:
4 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons dark soy sauce
3 tablespoons peanut butter
juice of 1 lemon
1 teaspoon corn starch
½ cup coconut milk
sea salt to taste
chopped coriander for garnish
carrots, peas, broccoli and cauliflower
sea salt

Preheat oven to 220C. Line a baking tray with a baking parchment. In a small bowl mix the flour, milk, sea salt and spices to make the batter. In another bowl place the breadcrumbs.

Coat the cauliflower wings in the batter mixture then roll them in the panko crumbs and place onto the baking sheet, spreading well apart. Repeat until all wings are coated. Bake for 20–25 minutes, till the wings turn golden.

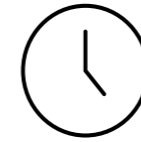
While the wings are baking, mix the sauce ingredients by whisking together in a small bowl.

Remove the wings from the oven and toss in the sauce using a spoon. Transfer back onto the baking sheet and bake for another 5 minutes.

Garnish with chopped coriander and serve hot.



EASY NO-BAKE CHOCOLATE AND BANANA PIE



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

6 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

Banana and chocolate are made for each other and come together deliciously in this no-bake pie. Perfect for the weekend!

INGREDIENTS

Pie crust:

2 cups raw almonds
2½ cups dates, pitted
and roughly chopped
¼ cup water (or as
needed)
2 tablespoons cocoa
powder
1 teaspoon cinnamon
powder
1 pinch salt

Pie filling:

6 medium bananas
½ cup cocoa powder
1 teaspoon ground
green cardamom
1 shot espresso
(optional)
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ cup vegan chocolate
chips

To prepare the pie crust, first place the almonds in a food processor and gently pulse. Do not overprocess, but rather leave some texture and chunks.

Add dates and pulse until combined with the almond mix. Pour water in, 1 tablespoon at a time, with the processor running, till the dough sticks together. Mix in cocoa powder, cinnamon and salt.

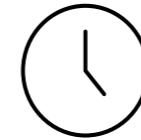
Remove almond crust from the blender and spread mixture evenly in the bottom of a greased 10-inch springform cake pan. Place in the freezer while you prepare the filling.

For the pie filling, combine bananas, cocoa powder, espresso, cardamom and salt in the food processor and mix until combined and thick.

Pour filling on top of the pie crust and sprinkle with chocolate chips. Return to the freezer for at least 2 hours or overnight before slicing and serving.



ROAST POTATOES WITH ZAATAR SPICE



TIME

90 MINUTES



SERVING

6 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

If you adore roast potatoes, you will love this twist to the dish.

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons olive oil
4 bay leaves

2 teaspoons za'atar spice
4 fresh thyme sprigs

20 crushed peppercorns
2½kg floury potatoes,
peeled and cut into
large chunks
salt

Preheat the oven to 200C. Gently heat the oil in a pan with the bay leaves, peppercorns and thyme until the oil is fragrant. Meanwhile, put the potatoes in a pan of cold salted water, bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Drain well, then place in the pan and shake vigorously, with a lid on, to fluff up the edges of the potatoes.

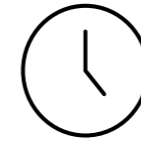
Strain the infused oil into a roasting tin, reserving the herbs and spices, then put the roasting tin in the oven for a few minutes. When hot, remove the tin from the oven, then tip in the potatoes and toss well in the oil. Roast for 50–60 minutes, turning occasionally, until golden and crisp.

Ten minutes before the end of the cooking time, add the reserved bay leaves and thyme sprigs and the za'atar spice.

Remove the roast potatoes from the oven, season with salt to taste and serve



BAKED PEANUT BUTTER AND SESAME TEMPEH



TIME

120 MINUTES



SERVING

2 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

I first came across tempeh on my trip to Bali in 2019 and have been hooked on it ever since. These fermented soybeans are protein-rich and nutrient-dense. This versatile little dish is just so moreish – perfect as a snack, a starter or accompanied by steamed rice and salad as a main.

INGREDIENTS

300g tempeh, cut into bite-sized pieces
1-2 red chillies, finely sliced
2 tablespoons sesame oil

3 tablespoons smooth peanut butter
2 tablespoons dark soy sauce

½ teaspoon Chinese 5-spice powder (optional)
2 tablespoons lime juice
3 tablespoons maple syrup

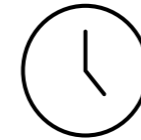
Mix all ingredients except the tempeh to make a marinade. Add the tempeh pieces to the marinade and coat well. Then refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 200C, line a baking tray with parchment paper. Arrange the tempeh on it and reserve a little marinade.

Bake for 30 minutes or until a deep golden-brown. Remove from the oven and brush with remaining marinade.



CAULIFLOWER STEAK WITH TAHINI AND ORANGE SAUCE



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

Cauliflower steaks won't fall apart if each steak has some of the stalk attached. You can get around two thick steaks out of a medium cauliflower.

INGREDIENTS

For the cauliflower steak:

1 medium head cauliflower
2-3 tablespoons olive oil
Pomegranate seeds and some chopped mint for garnish

For the orange and tahini sauce:

4 tablespoons tahini
8 tablespoons fresh orange juice
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
8-10 crushed black peppercorns
1 teaspoon dry oregano
sea salt to taste

Heat the oven to 200C. Remove the outer leaves of the cauliflower and trim a small portion of the stem to create a flat base. Cut the cauliflower in half, from rounded top to the stem. Now cut 1½-inch-thick slices from each half to create the steaks, ensuring the stem remains attached. Use the offcuts for another recipe such as a soup or stew.

Heat the olive oil in a pan. Place the cauliflower steaks into the hot oil and cook for about 5 minutes until golden-brown. Carefully flip the steaks, ensuring both sides are well browned. Season with salt.

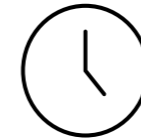
Now transfer the steaks from the pan to a roasting tray. Place in the oven and roast for 12-18 minutes until the stems are tender and can be pierced with a fork.

For the orange and tahini sauce, place the ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.

Serve the steak with the sauce on top. For an attractive presentation, sprinkle pomegranate seeds and chopped mint leaves over the top.



TACOS WITH JACKFRUIT IN A MEXICAN STYLE SAUCE



TIME

60 MINUTES



SERVING

4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

The smoky hot chilli and rich tomato sauce, along with the chewy jackfruit in crunchy taco shells, are a taste of bliss!

INGREDIENTS

5 chilli peppers, seeded and cut open in half
1 spring onion
1 tomato
2 cups vegetable stock
1 teaspoon sesame seeds
10 almonds

10 raisins
3 tablespoons tomato paste
2 tablespoons olive oil
4 tablespoons panko breadcrumbs
2 cups drained jackfruit from can

1 cup lettuce, chopped
1 tomato, chopped
½ cup coconut yogurt (optional for topping)
8 ready-made taco shells
2 limes, quartered

Toast the peppers and tomatoes in a frying pan on high heat until they brown, then place in a bowl and soak with hot water until they soften.

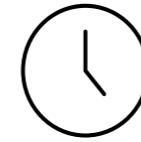
Next place the toasted peppers and tomatoes in a blender and blend along with the spring onion, sesame seeds, almonds, raisins, breadcrumbs, tomato paste and vegetable stock until smooth.

Heat the olive oil in a pan, add the jackfruit and fry for 5 minutes, smashing it down with a wooden spoon to expose the fibres, a bit like pulled pork. Now add the blended liquid and cook on a low to medium heat for about 20–30 minutes until the liquid is reduced and the sauce thickens.

Pour the jackfruit and the sauce into the taco shells and top with a bit of lettuce, tomato and a spoonful of coconut yogurt. Squeeze some lime on top.



CLEMENTINE AND CINNAMON TEA



TIME
10 MINUTES



SERVING
4 PERSON



DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

I first had this tea in Hanoi in Vietnam after a full day of sightseeing. It was incredibly delicious, soothing and relaxing.

INGREDIENTS

juice and zest of 5
clementines
juice and zest of 2
limes
1 large stick cinnamon

2 pods star anise
4 cloves
10 black peppercorns

1 small bunch fresh
mint leaves
4-5 cups water
4 tablespoons maple
syrup

Add the ingredients to a large saucepan and bring to a boil, then reduce heat and let it simmer gently for 10 minutes. Strain and serve with a slice of lime and added maple syrup if you prefer it sweeter



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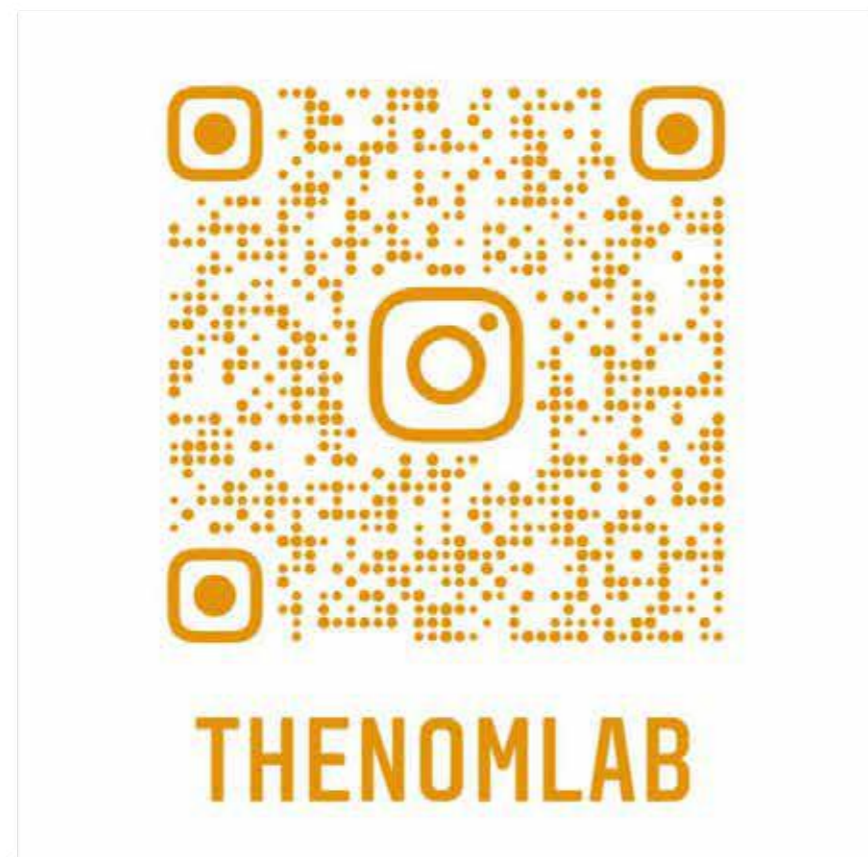
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