



TheoCooks

Christmas Collection

Dear wonderful person,

I love Christmas, no matter how much I might moan about it, I do love it. I love the presents, kids going mental, family arguments and over indulging on the food.

In case you want some inspiration over Christmas I've put together a small collection of festive recipes.

I hope you enjoy and have a great Christmas!

Theo x

PS. You can find more recipes at www.TheoCooks.com or tweet your pictures to @theocooks

All day grazing...

Home Cured Salmon (Gravlax)

Light...

Pan-fried Chicken Livers flambéed in Grand Marnier

Main...

Slow Cooked Lamb Shoulder (Kleftiko)

Sweet...

Boozy Walnut Cake

Home-Cured Salmon (Gravlax)



Gravlax is a delicious, succulent and serious crowd pleasing dish that is perfect for entertaining over the festive season. Exceptionally easy to make, you need to prepare the salmon a few days in advance but once done you can plonk it on the table and leave it out for the unexpected Christmas guest, after dinner grazing or even make cute little canapés.

Ingredients – serves many!:

- Whole Salmon side (skin on)
- 1 shot of Ouzo (or vodka or gin)
- Handful of fresh dill
- 2 cups of coarse sea salt
- 1 cup white caster sugar
- 1/2 cup of brown sugar
- Broken up spices: 1 star anise, 8 cloves, 2 sticks of cinnamon, 2 bayleaves, fennel seeds, coriander seeds, black pepper.
- NB. use whatever spices you want; fundamentally, the ‘cure’ is the salt and sugar – the rest is to your preference!

Method:

1. Mix together all the spices, sugars and salt in a bowl.
2. Get a large roasting tin big enough to fit the salmon lying flat. Sprinkle enough cure to just cover the base of the roasting dish and then lay salmon skin side down on top of the salt.
3. Massage the Ouzo (or other alcohol if using) over the salmon and then cover the entire surface of the salmon with the remaining salt/sugar mix and pat down gently.
4. Rip the dill by hand and cover the entire fish.
5. Cover the salmon with clingfilm so it is airtight.
6. Place a flat plate (or small baking tray) directly on top of the wrapped salmon and add a weight on top (a few tins of beer work!) and pop the salmon into your fridge
7. Leave in the fridge for 3 days minimum 5 days max. Periodically pour away some of the liquid from the tray that will expel from the salmon.
8. After 3-5 days remove the salmon from the salt cure (try to wipe away the salt cure in the direction of the grain of the salmon so you don't ‘rough’ up the surface). Run the salmon briefly under cold running water to remove any bits of salt and pat dry.
9. Finally, garnish the salmon with finely chopped dill, place on a chopping board, and with a very sharp knife thinly slice from the tail end of the salmon and leave in place for guests to pick at!

Chicken Livers & Grand Marnier

Chicken livers lightly dusted and pan-fried to caramelise then flambéed in Grand Marnier gives this dish an air of decadence and sophistication that belies its simplicity. I think a perfect Christmas season starter or light brunch with the fragrance of orange liqueur. When cooking the chicken livers they can be served medium so a touch pink in the middle.



Ingredients – serves 2:

- 250g fresh chicken livers
- 200ml milk
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 50g plain flour
- 1 clove garlic sliced
- 100ml Grand Marnier (or Cointreau)
- 30g butter
- Splash of water (optional)
- Fresh Parsley & squeeze of lemon (1 tbl)
- Toasted soda bread or ciabatta to serve

Method:

1. Clean the chicken livers by removing any fat or sinew and then place in a bowl and cover with the milk to help rinse the livers – they can rest in the milk for up to 30 minutes.
2. Put the flour in a bowl and dust the chicken livers (shake when removing from the milk to help lose any excess milk).
3. In a hot frying pan, add the oil and once hot fry the livers for two minutes.
4. After two minutes turn them over, add the garlic and then turn the heat down and cook for another minute.
5. Now add the Grand Marnier and tilt the pan towards the flame (or light with a lighter) and flambé – standback it will be a big flame! But stay calm and let it burn out in a few seconds.
6. Turn off the heat and add the butter and squeeze of lemon. Keep shaking the pan to help the butter emulsify with the Grand Mariner. Add a splash of water if too thick.
7. Toast your bread, place the chicken livers on top, pour over the sauce, scatter the parsley and season generously (it can take a lot of salt and pepper).

Kleftiko



Kleftiko roughly translates to Stolen Meat; legend has it that the outlaws in Cyprus would steal a goat and take it up to their hideaway in the mountains to cook. To avoid being caught the outlaws would dig a large fire pit during the day when the flames wouldn't be seen. The beast would be placed on top of the hot ashes and covered until the next day, by which time they would unearth their feast.

Ingredients – serves 6:

- 1 large shoulder of lamb
- 2 large ripe tomatoes cut into thick slices
- 1 onion sliced
- 3 bay leaves
- 5 cloves of garlic cracked open
- 6 sprigs of fresh rosemary
- Few heavy glugs of extra virgin olive oil
- 1 lemon
- Tablespoon of dried oregano
- Few pinches of sea salt
- Teaspoon of smoked paprika

Method:

8. Lay out a large piece of foil and create a bed of flavour for the meat to rest on. Drizzle some olive oil and place half of all the ingredients on the foil
9. Place the meat on top, drizzle some more olive oil over the top of the meat and place the rest of the ingredients on top.
10. Squeeze lemon juice all over the meat before slicing the rest into thick chunks and layering on top.
11. Wrap the foil around the meat and repeat with several more sheets of foil to fully seal.
12. Place package in a roasting tin (ideally on a rack, but not necessary) and into a pre-heated oven at 165C/330F for about 5 hours. This is very forgiving not precision cooking.
13. Once cooked, remove the package from the oven, and turn the oven up to 220C degrees and let package rest, unopened, for 20 minutes.
14. Before placing the package back into the oven, cut open the foil wrap and peel away as much as possible to reveal the meat (pour the juices into a saucepan to make some gravy).
15. Leave in the oven for 10 minutes (just long enough to colour the surface of the meat).

Boozy Walnut Cake

A wonderfully festive tasting dessert and seriously indulgent! Made with breadcrumbs which creates an uber moist and sexy eating experience. This is a Greek inspired walnut cake that is rich, dark and has a hint of spice and a ton of cognac... Make more than you think as it goes quick..



Ingredients – makes dozen:

CAKE:

- 3 eggs - whisked
- 150 ml vegetable oil
- 100 ml milk
- 250g sugar
- 4g ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 ground clove
- 150g brown breadcrumbs

- 7g baking powder
- 150g course ground walnuts
- Zest of half lemon

SYRUP

- 200g sugar
- 200 ml water
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 3 drops vanilla essence
- 50ml brandy or cognac

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 170c - use a baking tray about 12×8 inches (mixture sits about 3 inches deep).
2. In a bowl add: eggs, oil, milk, sugar and spices – mix thoroughly.
3. In a separate bowl combine the breadcrumbs, 100gms walnuts (save 50 gms), baking powder and lemon zest.
4. Combine the dry ingredients into the batter and mix thoroughly.
5. Pour the mixture into a baking dish and bake for 40 minutes or until an inserted knife comes out clean.
6. While the cake is baking make the syrup = combine all the ingredients for the syrup together in a saucepan and gently bring to the boil and then turn off the heat.
7. Remove the cake from the oven and let cool to room temperature (about 30 mins). Once cool, score the top of the cake into diamonds to help the syrup soak in.
8. Reheat the syrup and ladle over the top until fully soaked in.
9. At this point you will think you've made too much syrup, you haven't. Leave to rest for a minimum of two hours but ideally overnight.
10. Serve with clotted cream or ice cream