



FLAVOURS OF MONASH

Introduction

12 TRULY AUTHENTIC RECIPES, 12 RICH STORIES...

Flavours of Monash is a more than a cookbook, it is a celebration of the ever-changing culture of food in Australia.

Every person photographed for this book invited us into their own home and kitchen, and right into their life. Each made us feel incredibly welcome in their own way. It was humbling, as though we had been given a golden ticket for a journey into the modern heart of the City.

The Australians featured in this book and their families did not arrive here empty-handed. They brought with them new expertise, new kitchenware for preparing and cooking dishes, and a tapestry of ingredients and methods. They came with spices and local breads, stews and sweet puddings. They arrived with the recipes that had been crafted in the homes and kitchens of Southern India, Sri Lanka, the Middle East, Ireland and Mauritius.

They brought the very tools that would help them retain their sense of identity in a strange land, or in some cases, simply to survive. The flavours we found in Monash were as glorious as its people. From the Eritrean staple lovingly prepared by a Saudi Arabian woman, to the esteemed chef who cooks up sweet memories of Greece for Aged Care residents every day; every recipe and photograph in this book tells a rich story of pride and place.

An ambitious entrepreneur dreams of serving her Paratha to the community she loves. An Australian from Calcutta shares the recipe that sustained her Jewish ancestors throughout exile. A simple Irish bread offers just a hint of the fruit that was so highly prized in ancient times.

Flavours of Monash is both a journey into the diverse cuisine enjoyed every day in the City of Monash and an invitation into the lives of its global citizens.

Scan the QR code on each recipe page to listen to the cooks describing the origins of their delicious recipes.



This cookbook has been created as part of Clayton Festival 2021.
Produced by Monash Council
Photography by Mia Mala MacDonald
Designed by Heapssmall



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CHEESE SAMBOUSEK

Middle Eastern
Marcia Collins, Mount Waverley

I was born in Calcutta, India. My parents were part of a once vibrant Sephardic Jewish community there. Our ancestors were traders from the Middle East who came to Calcutta in the late 18th century. Then a major centre for Sephardic Jewish culture, Calcutta was home to thousands of Jews at that time. Over the years, they developed their own wonderful cuisine which was popularised all over the world.

This recipe for delicious Cheese Sambousek (sumboosuck, sumboosek) is a great example of how the Sephardic community fused thousands of years of traditional cooking with cuisines from Persia, Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon and, of course, India. Cheese Sambousek would remain a huge part of my childhood even after my family moved to England, and I moved on to Australia. My mother would make these delightfully soft baked pastries filled with cheese every week. Sometimes she used the same pastry filled with a desiccated coconut mixture to make little logs known as Date Babas. Cheese Sambousek are best eaten on the day they are made but you can reheat them in the microwave or oven. You can also freeze them.

Equipment

Food processor (optional)
Air fryer (optional)
Large bowl
Sieve
Rolling pin

Ingredients

Cheese Filling

450g cheddar, finely grated
2 large eggs at room temperature, beaten
1 cup self-raising flour
1 heaped tbsp baking powder

Pastry

350g self-raising (SR) flour
1 tsp salt
60g cold butter, cut into small cubes
1 tsp sugar, dissolved in 3/4 cup
Lukewarm water
4 tbsp vegetable oil

Servings: Approximately 40

Preparation time: 1.5 hours

Cooking time: 12-14 minutes



Method

To make the Cheese Filling

Sprinkle cheese with the sifted flour and baking powder. Add beaten eggs and mix well. This aerates the cheese filling within the pastry as it is cooking. The mixture should be moist but not wet.

To make the Pastry

Make a dough with the pastry ingredients. If using a food processor, process the flour and salt first for 10 seconds. Add the butter and process until the texture is like breadcrumbs.

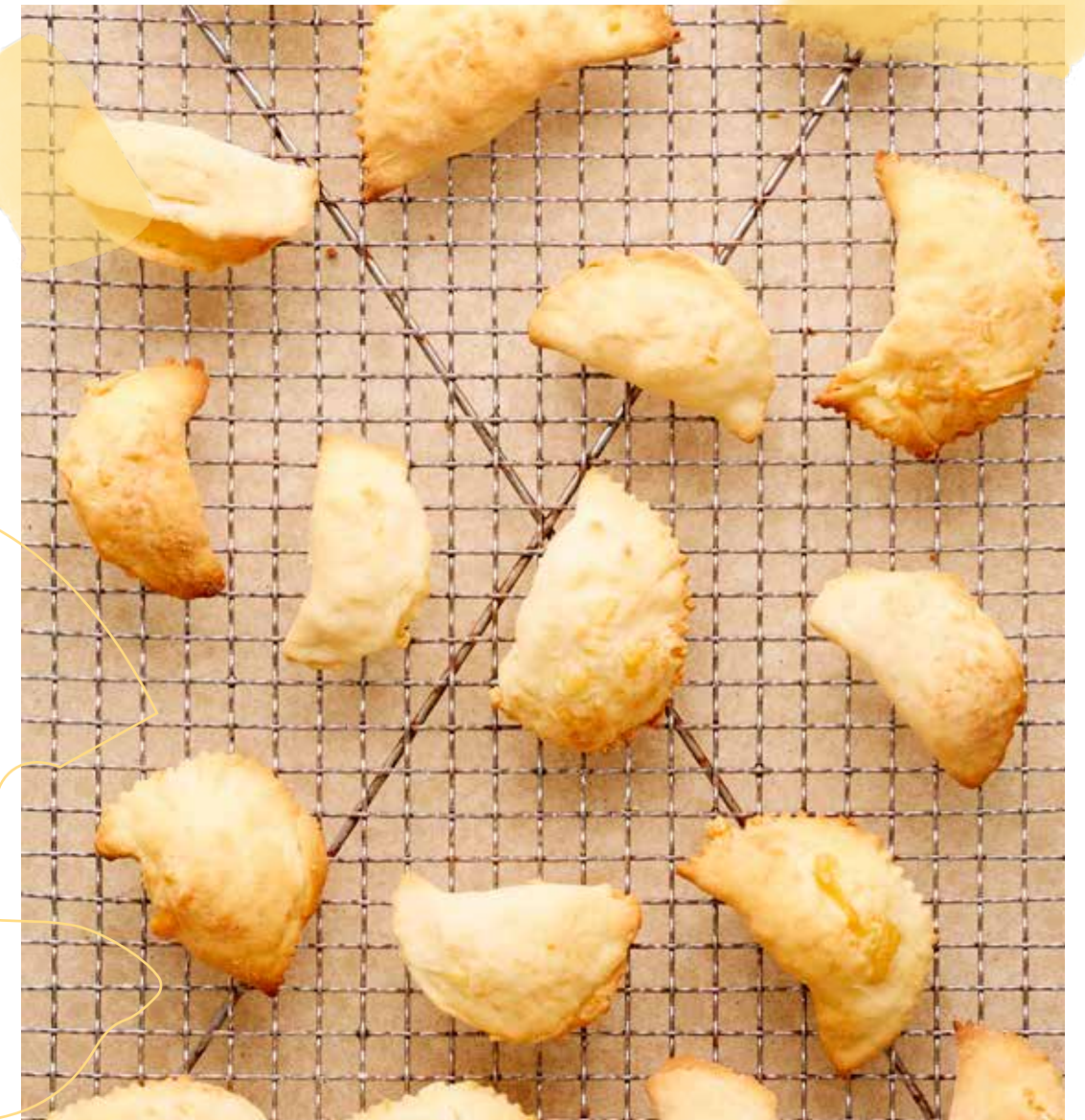
Mix water and oil together and add to the food processor while it is running until a soft dough forms. Stop the processor as soon as the dough comes together. Place in a bowl and cover, leave at room temperature on the bench for about an hour.

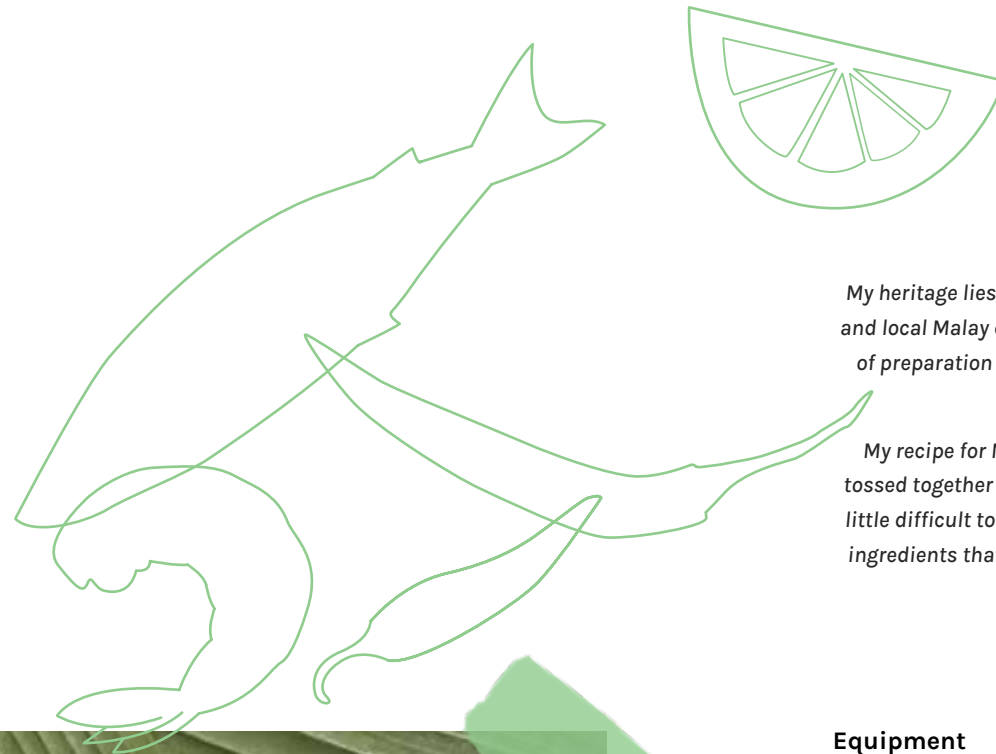
To assemble Cheese Sambousek

Oven Bake: Preheat oven to 180°C, cook for 20 minutes or until pale golden or Air Fry: Set air fryer to 18°C, cook for 12 minutes on a piece of baking paper in the air fryer basket.

Divide the dough into small balls about 15-20g each. With your rolling pin, roll each ball into a small circle. You want just enough pastry to enclose the filling. Put the pastry in your hand, place about 2 tsps of cheese filling in the centre and fold pastry edges together. Although the pastry is soft and delicate, it should also be quite elastic and easy to seal without water or egg, so put as much filling in without making it split. Crimp the edge with a fork if you want. Bake only until sambouseks are light golden in colour. Do not overbake.

Leftover cheese filling can be made into a stiff dough by adding more beaten egg, self raising flour and baking powder. Roll into balls and bake for about 10 minutes at 18°C.





NYONYA NASI ULAM

Malaysian
Pamela Chan, Glen Waverley

My heritage lies in the Nyonya Peranakan culture of Penang. Nyonya cuisine fuses the food brought to Malaysia by Chinese immigrants and local Malay cuisine. My mother and grandmother cook a variety of traditional Nyonya Peranakan dishes, many of which involve a lot of preparation time and unique ingredients. From a very young age I enjoyed food and herbs that had profound flavours and textures that some might find unusual.

My recipe for Nyonya Nasi Ulam uses a variety of fresh herbs, vegetables, dried prawns, salted dried fish and toasted fresh coconut, tossed together with cooked rice and Sambal Belacan (chilli sauce) and garnished with fresh mint and lime. Some ingredients can be a little difficult to obtain in Melbourne, but ask around for the right Asian grocery and you may find yourself enjoying the hunt. It is those ingredients that gives the dish its uniqueness. You won't find it in a typical Malaysian restaurant, but the Malaysians you share it with are bound to be impressed!



Equipment

- Food processor
- Fry pan
- Rice cooker
- Spice grinder
- Mixing bowl

Ingredients

Coconut Kerisik

- 300g dried prawns
- 400g dried salted fish
- 500g fresh coconut

Finely slice the following

- 10 small red shallots
- 4 long red chillies
- 3 turmeric leaves
- 10 wild betel leaves
- 30g kaffir lime leaves
- 3 torched ginger flowers
- 2 limes, juiced
- 100g Thai basil
- 100g fresh young galangal
- 100g mint leaves
- 2 turmeric roots, sliced
- 3 lemongrass stalks, sliced thinly

Servings: 6

Preparation time: 1 hour

Cooking time: 45 minutes

Method

To make the Sambal Belacan

Place red chillies, belacan (prawn paste) in a small food processor. Add lime juice and blend and add until it becomes a paste. Set aside for later use.

To make Coconut Kerisik

Wash and pat dry the dried prawns and salted fish and then dry pan fry (without cooking oil) and set aside. Dry fry the fresh coconut until a toasted colour is obtained.

In a pan, dry fry separately dried prawns, then salted fish and then fresh grated coconut. Let these ingredients cool down. Using a spice grinder or pestle and mortar, blend these ingredients into a fine powder and add a few tablespoons of brown sugar to taste. Set aside for later use. Wash and dry all herbs, Vietnamese mint, kaffir lime leaves, Thai basil, betel leaves, turmeric leaves, then slice thinly.

Slice harder herbs thinly into julienne: turmeric root, galangal, red shallots, lemongrass, torched ginger flower, and red chillies. Cook 400g of jasmine white rice in a rice cooker, or on the stovetop if you prefer. Let it cool once cooked.

In a mixing bowl add rice and 5 tbsp of the Coconut Kerisik mixture and mix well together. Then add all the herbs, Sambal Belacan and the Coconut Kerisik together into the rice and mix well together. Add salt to taste.

Garnish the Nyonya Nasi Ulam with fresh mint leaves and slices of red chillies and lime. Serve with a side of fried fish or chicken with extra Sambal Belacan to garnish.



ZIGNI

Eritrean
Manal Tahir, Chadstone

I was born in Saudi Arabia but taught myself to make this beautiful Eritrean dish, which I want to share with you. Zigni's personality and uniqueness is in its 'berbere'; a hand-picked mix of fragrant spices such as cumin, coriander, cardamom and other spices that are added to many Eritrean dishes to give it a memorable zing. The spice mix is the chef's signature.

The 'berbere' is simmered in tomatoes, another Eritrean staple, for a long time to let the flavours develop. Variations of this dish depends on the meat used. The most popular addition is beef, followed by other meats such as mutton (lamb), chicken and vegetables.

The food culture in Eritrea revolves around spice and rich flavours, which probably explain this dish's popularity. We serve this with Injera (bread), which is usually laid out on a large plate and is used to scoop up the gravy. Serving food this way brings my people together.

Ingredients

600g of beef shin, diced
5 tbsp of vegetable oil
3 onions, diced
1 red pepper, quartered then sliced
2 garlic cloves, sliced
1 knob of ginger, grated
2 tbsp of berbere (or make your own blend of cumin, coriander and rich spices with spice blender)
2 tbsp of tomato purée
3 plum tomatoes, chopped
500ml of beef stock
Salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper

Servings: 6

Preparation and cooking time: 1 hour
50 minutes

Method

Finely dice the onions and sauté them until golden brown, then add a tbsp of vegetable oil and season the diced beef with salt and pepper. Heat 2 tbsp of vegetable oil in a large pan and sear the beef on a high heat until evenly browned. Remove from the pan and set aside.

Turn the heat down and add peppers, ginger and garlic with the berbere spice for 5-8 minutes, or until soft. Add the tomato purée, stir well and cook out for a further minute.

Simmer on a very low heat for 1 hour, then remove the lid and simmer for a further half an hour, or until the sauce has reduced and the beef is tender.

Taste to check the seasoning and serve hot with Injera (flatbread).





POUDINE DE MAÏS

Mauritian
Rosemary Sew M Ng Hing Cheung, Clayton South

Our grandparents and parents used to prepare this polenta pudding recipe exactly as it has been passed down through generations. As kids we used to have this pudding for afternoon tea. It is relished by Mauritians regardless of how they identify their heritage, and referred to in French and Mauritian Creole as Poudine Maïs. This recipe originates from Mauritius and it's very popular among the diverse communities that form the islands, regardless of whether they have origins in India, Africa, China, France or elsewhere.

Many street hawkers earn their living by selling this famous pudding in Mauritius' bustling food stalls and markets. It is widely regarded as a cheap, healthy and well-balanced dessert. It is a quick and easy dish to cook, and so satisfying to tuck into.

Equipment

Medium pot
Rectangular tin or dish

Ingredients

250g polenta
125g sugar
100g unsalted butter
1 cup sultanas
1 1/2 cups milk
1 tsp vanilla essence
5 tbsp fine desiccated coconut

Servings: 10

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Method

In a medium size pot, melt the butter. Add milk, sugar, sultanas and bring to boil. Add polenta a little at a time and keep stirring until the mixture starts bubbling and thickens. Pour the mixture in a rectangular tin and let it cool down. Sprinkle with fine desiccated coconut and put in the fridge to set for 1 hour. Cut into 8-10 pieces.



KOLA KENDA (GREEN SMOOTHIE)

Sri Lankan
Nishitha, Wheelers Hill

Kola Kenda is a traditional Sri Lankan drink consumed at breakfast time. The herbaceous blend of rice and raw green ingredients is not just rich in vitamins and antioxidants, but also contains ginger and garlic to boost the immune system. The rice gives it its porridge-like consistency. In Sri Lanka, Kola Kenda is often served warm in glasses with a small piece of jaggery which you nibble on between sips. Instead of morning tea, I still love to have this healthy green smoothie to signify a positive start to my day.

Equipment

Blender/Nutribullet
Rice cooker or pot
Saucepan
Strainer

Ingredients

100g kale, coarsely chopped
2 garlic cloves
1/2 inch piece of ginger
1/2 cup jasmine rice
1/2 cup coconut milk
1L water
1 tsp salt

Servings: 6

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes



Method

Chop garlic and ginger. Cook the rice with garlic and ginger in a rice cooker or large pot.

While rice is cooking, add the kale and water to the blender. Blend finely. Once kale is blended, strain out the liquid into a bowl and return kale to the blender.

Once the rice is cooked and cooled, add the rice to the blender with the kale liquid and blend again.

Add mixture to a saucepan and cook the mixture for 15 minutes over medium heat. Do not overcook as the bright green colour will turn to dark green, and the vitamins are destroyed.

Serve with Kitul (Sri Lankan sugar) jaggery or coconut jaggery.



CHINESE TRADITIONAL SPRING ROLL

Chinese
Helen Wu, Chadstone

Spring rolls are one of the most famous traditional Chinese foods, as well as one of the most famous foods enjoyed around the world! Eating spring rolls in Spring is a traditional custom throughout China. Often typical ingredients purchased from local markets for spring rolls, including bamboo shoots and leeks, are at their best in Spring. Depending on what grows abundantly in their region, people will also add other favourite flavours. Coastal areas are likely to include shrimp and seafood in the fillings. Inland areas will often choose to use shredded chicken and pork.

Spring rolls are a convenient combination of rich nutrition and energy. After centuries of enjoying them, they have become a very popular Chinese export, marketed globally as a well-known, delicious snack. The formula introduced below is a recipe I created myself, after years of research and adjustment. Not only does this recipe retain the traditional taste of a fresh spring roll, but its ingredients can be easily found in Monash. This recipe is also suitable for vegetarians if meat is removed from the list.

Equipment

Wok
Deep fryer or cauldron

Ingredients

30 spring roll wrappers
1kg of Chinese cabbage
200g of shredded pork
2 carrots
Dried mushrooms
Salt
Pepper
Corn starch
Light soy sauce and other seasonings
Vegetable oil

Servings: 30
Preparation time: 40 minutes
Cooking time: 10 minutes

Method

Spring roll filling

Shred Chinese cabbage and carrots, soak dried mushrooms in warm water, rinse, and cut into shreds.

Add the shredded pork, pepper, light soy sauce and corn-starch to a bowl and mix well.

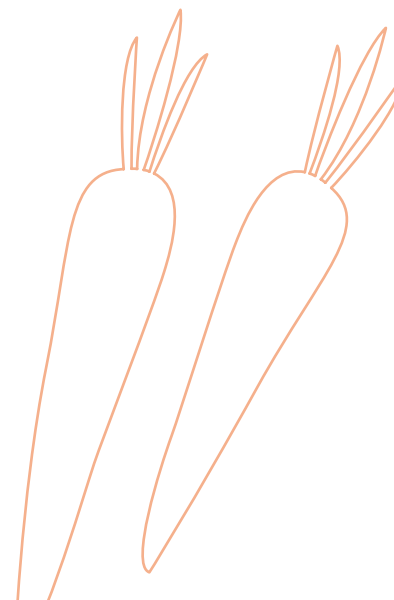
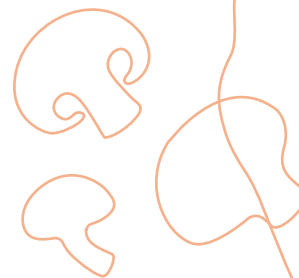
Add oil to the wok and heat over medium-high heat. Once hot, add the shredded pork and keep turning it until the shredded pork browns and then remove it.

Clean the wok and return to medium-high heat with oil. Add shredded cabbage to the wok, stir-fry the shredded carrots until soft, add shredded shiitake mushrooms, stir for a while, add seasonings, add shredded pork and stir-fry evenly. The cornstarch will thicken the water, then let the mixture cool for later use.

Assembling the spring rolls

Separate the spring roll wrappers, put the cool stuffing in the middle of each, folding down each end and then hand rolling it into separate logs. Set aside.

Pour an appropriate amount of vegetable oil into the frying pan, heat it to about 150 °C, put in the raw rolls one by one, and fry until golden brown. Remove from oil and then serve.



GALAKTOBOUREKO

Greek

Thomas Nianiakos - Fronditha Care, Clayton South

"Interacting with our elders every day, listening to their needs and trying to please them with my food, makes me feel that I am working with my family." Thomas Nianiakos still prepares his galaktoboureko recipe with love.

The experienced chef calls it an honour and a pleasure to make his famous Greek custard pie for residents of the Fronditha Care aged care home in Clayton, which caters predominantly for Greek elders. Leaving Greece for Melbourne in 2013, he has since shared his Greek recipes with the 150 elders whom he cooks for every day, reinforcing to each that they still belong and are still connected to their traditions.

Working from the aged care home's kitchen has not changed Thomas' pursuit of excellent food. Instead of imparting his mastery, he continues to refine his skills in dishes such as galaktoboureko. He says he still adapts his recipe after receiving insights from the master chefs he cooks for. His crispy galaktoboureko soaked in syrup would sweeten anyone's day.

Equipment

Pot
Bowl
Baking tin

Ingredients

1L milk
1/2 cup semolina
1/2 cup sugar
4 eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
Orange rind
1/2 cup butter
1 packet filo pastry (crust)

Syrup

2 cups sugar
1 cup water
1 cinnamon stick
1 tsp lemon juice or 1 lemon slice

Servings: 10-12

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 45 minutes

Method

Pour 700ml milk in a pot and heat it up. Mix the remaining milk, semolina, sugar, vanilla, eggs and orange rind in a bowl. Add the mixture to the heated milk.

When mixture comes together and thickens, remove from heat. Add butter. Allow to cool.

Butter the filo pastry in a pan. Add the cream and layer the remaining filo on top. Bake at 160°C for 40-45 minutes, until a warm golden colour.

Combine syrup ingredients in a pot over a medium heat. Allow mixture to cool before pouring over baked pastry.



SPRING ONION PARATHA

South India
Subha Balasubramanian, Glen Waverley

Growing up in South India with a mum who worked, I became the home cook. As a result, I experimented. I made Paratha, a South Indian flatbread, with lots of different kinds of flour, including wheat, plain and millet flour. Paratha literally means 'layers of cooked dough' and people can be found sopping up delicious curries and stews with it across India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives and Myanmar.

Many years on, it's a firm favourite for my own family here in Australia. My own version, made with spring onions and plain flour, is the result of many years of experimentation and of cooking the same bread, over and over.



Equipment

Bowl
Large container
Rolling pin
Frypan

Ingredients

2 cups plain flour
1/2 tsp salt
1 cup warm water
3 tbsp oil (sesame oil or olive oil)
1 bunch spring onions

Servings: 4

Preparation time: 10-15 minutes
(then 3 hours resting time)

Cooking time: 5-10 minutes

Method

Mix all dry ingredients (except for spring onions) and add warm water slowly to make a soft dough. Knead for 5 minutes. Rest in container covered with wet cloth for 3 hours.

Divide dough into 4 equal sized balls. Cover each ball in flour. Roll the dough as thin as you can.

In a separate bowl mix 1 tsp salt, 3 tsp flour and 3 tbsp oil for four pancakes. Drizzle each pancake with extra 1 tsp oil, then sprinkle over 1 tbsp spring onions and 1/4 of the salt, flour and oil mixture. Fold the dough gently into sausage shape and leave for 1/2 hour.

Roll dough out like a thick pancake. Heat the pan and fry pancake, with a little oil on both sides to cook well.

Serve with any curry.

Expert tip

Try this paratha with a twist and use it instead of flat bread - roll as a wrap, spread with dip, lettuce and a small tin of tuna. Genius!



BARMBRACK

Ireland
Wendy Renehan, Oakleigh East

In olden times, Halloween, which coincided with the harvest, involved gathering fruit to make Christmas Cakes. Fruit was considered a great luxury, and a fluffy cake provided a way to preserve them. The eggs which were free-range and seasonal would be scarcer as the winter months rolled on, and the butter too would be getting scarce. So the Barmbrack in a sense was a taster, a treat at this time of year that carried a promise of Christmas.

Making Barmbrack (Bairín Breac, meaning 'speckled bread') continues this ancient Celtic tradition. The Druidic tradition is represented by the inclusion of charms in the bread, meant to indicate fortune. Traditional charms might be found baked in the bread. A pea indicated a person would not marry. A piece of cloth might bring poverty and bad luck, whilst a coin brought good fortune or signified richness. A ring would lure in a marriage and is often still searched for in a hearty slice.

This recipe comes from my sister-in-law in Ireland and it was handed down through her family. Not as rich as a Christmas cake, Barmbrack contains a scattering of dried fruit and spice. My tip is to laden your slice with the best Irish butter you can find.

Equipment

Bowl
Cake tin

Ingredients

300ml strong black breakfast tea
450g mixed fruit
200g dark brown sugar
1 egg
275g self-raising flour
1 tsp mixed spice
1/2 tsp ginger
Traditional symbols (optional)

Servings: 12

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour



Method

Mix sugar and fruit in a bowl and pour over cold tea. Leave in a covered bowl overnight at room temperature.

Preheat the oven to 18°C, grease and line an 8inch (a 20cm) cake tin. A ring tin can reduce the cooking time.

In a large clean bowl, whisk the flour and spices. Beat the egg and stir into the fruit mixture. Fold in the dry ingredients. Add in the traditional symbols wrapped in wax paper (optional). Spoon the wet mixture into the prepared cake tin.

Bake for 1 hour at 18°C or until an inserted skewer comes out clean.



FALAFEL

Egyptian
Emy Armanous, Oakleigh

The taste and smell of fresh falafel transports me back to Cairo and to my childhood. I can visualise walking in Cairo's streets. My mother introduced me to the dish after I asked her what I could smell. She told me all about the dish and I felt certain I wanted to try it. Since I started eating falafel I've barely stopped. It is the quickest way I can get to the city of Cairo and her streets, my Egyptian language and culture, her proud history and her countryside. Falafel is a direct road to my childhood.

I hope you enjoy this recipe as I and my family do. I hope you find it easy to make. It is everything great that vegetarian food can be, healthy and full of vitality, which is probably why it is very popular in Melbourne.

Equipment

Blender
Frypan
Strainer
Tablespoon, teaspoon, bowl

Ingredients

500g dry split fava beans
2 medium brown onions
10g dry coriander
10g dry cumin
10g garlic powder
10g of salt
1.5 bunch fresh parsley
1 tsp of bi-carb soda
Oil (sunflower, vegetable or canola)

Servings: 10-12

Preparation time: 40 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes



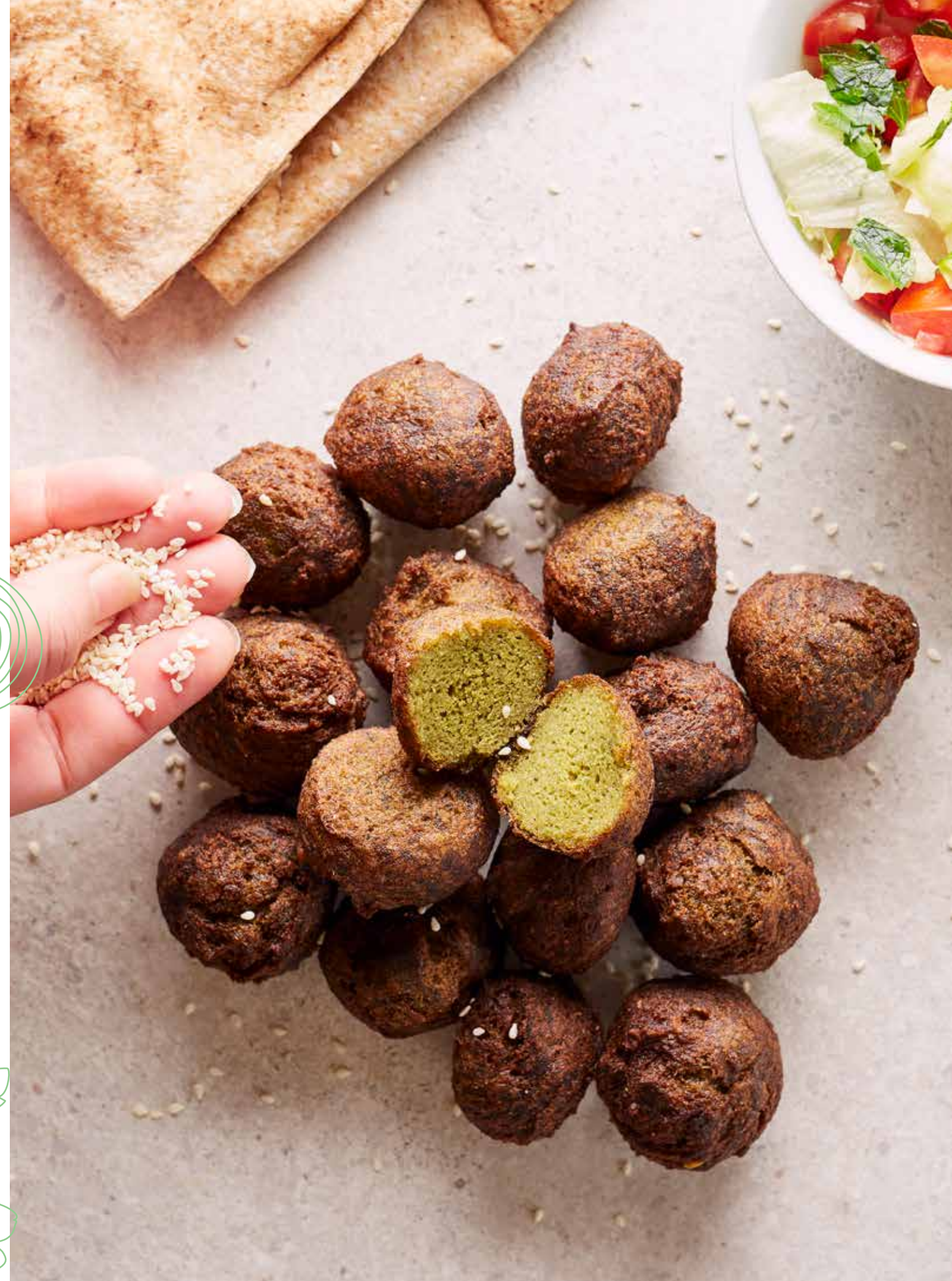
Method

Soak fava beans overnight. After the beans have soaked, strain and set aside. Wash parsley and cut, dice the onions.

Blend beans, onion, coriander, cumin, garlic, salt and parsley together in the blender until the consistency is of a smooth paste. Add 1 tsp of bi-carb soda to every 500g of the mixture.

Add oil to frypan at medium heat and deep fry. To cook the falafel, scoop a tablespoon of the mixture and add it to the pan, and repeat for each portion. Cook until browned.

Enjoy your fresh treat with salad or in a wrap.



TEHARI

Bangladeshi
Sarah Sikder, Glen Waverley

Though Tehari is a very simple dish it is huge on flavour. What you need are decent spices. My traditional Bangladeshi recipe can be cooked with rice, beef or mutton and mustard oil. The dish is very popular among Bangladeshis who flock to eat it at street-food stalls, but it can also found in big restaurants and without a doubt you'll find it served at a special event.

Whenever I eat this dish, I feel like I am sitting with my friends and enjoying its wholesomeness. Many memories from my childhood in Bangladesh suddenly flood back. The aroma and the simplicity of the dish is just amazing!

Over many years after coming to Australia, I have mastered this dish by trying a range of different spice mixes. I finally have the right blend, which is a closely guarded secret, but I am happy to share with you just this once.

Equipment

2 pots
Cooking spoons
Large serving dish

Ingredients

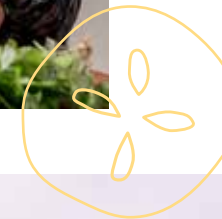
1kg/4 cups basmati or Bangladeshi
Chinigura rice (preferred)
1.5 kg beef or mutton
1 cup mustard oil
2 tbsp ginger paste
1.5 tbsp garlic paste
1/2 cup greek yoghurt

Special spice powder:

1 nutmeg, few strands of mace, 1 tsp
white peppercorn, 0.5 tsp clove, 3 dried
red chillies, 1 tbsp garam masala - grind
everything together except the
garam masala.

1 cup thinly sliced onion
15 - 20 green chillies
3 tbsp powdered milk
Kewra essence (optional)
Salt: as needed (as a guidance, use 2 tsp
when cooking meat and 1 tsp in rice)

Servings: Approximately 15
Preparation time: 1.5 hours
Cooking time: 12-14 minutes



Method

To cook the meat

First add mustard oil in a pot and fry onions until lightly golden. Add the ginger garlic paste, some water and the special spice mix and fry for a few minutes. Add 8 - 10 of the green chillies. Add meat and mix very well. Add yogurt and mix again.

Take time to cook the meat in low-medium flame. Make sure it doesn't burn and try to cook without adding water.

When meat is cooked, separate it from the oil. Try to take as much oil as you can from the meat and spices, put the oil in another pot.

To cook the Tehari

Fry the rice in the oil for 2 minutes. Add 6 cups water (1:1.5 rice to water). Add 3 tbsp of powdered milk diluted in 3/4 cup water. Add some green chillies for aroma, kewra essence (optional).

Once the water starts boiling and rice is boiled 80%, add the meat and put the lid on. Cook in low flame for about 20 minutes and mix everything together in half-way so nothing sticks to the pan.

After 20 minutes, check the rice and cook for another 10 - 30 minutes with lid on in lowest flame, until the rice is cooked to perfection.

In Bangladesh, Tehari is normally served with boiled eggs, thinly cut cucumbers and lime.

Expert tip

When cooking any similar dish with meat, marinate the meat with 1tbsp salt for about 30 mins.



KHISIRI

North East India
Chandana Basumatary, Wheelers Hill

Khisiri (Assamese) means a mix of different ingredients. This dish comes from my hometown Assam in North East India. It is a traditional dish eaten freshly prepared and hot. Due to Khisiri's reputation for providing excellent nutrition it is often one of the first solid foods that babies eat. It is said to revive the appetite after illness and is not only easy to prepare but also super tasty. I learnt to prepare it by watching my mother. Once considered a winter dish Khisiri is now enjoyed any time of the year. Modern farming allows for many vegetables to be enjoyed all year round, but it wasn't always like this. I remember eating this dish prepared from the vegetables growing in our own garden.

My tip for great Khisiri is to select vegetables that enhance the taste of the dish, many of which I have listed here. You can add your variations to the vegetables. The beauty of this dish is that you make it to the perfect consistency for you. Cook it longer for a drier dish, less for a soup-like consistency.

Equipment

Large pot

Ingredients

1 cup of rice
2 cups of red lentils (or Urad Daal in the same amount, but roasted slightly)
3 medium potatoes
1/4 pumpkin
1/2 small cabbage
1/2 cup of frozen green peas
6 green beans
2 medium size onions
2 medium carrots
1 tsp ginger
1 tsp garlic
2 tsp cumin powder
1 tsp turmeric
1 1/2 tsp salt (add more to your taste)
2 dry chillies
2 tsp garam masala
1 tsp Ghee (clarified butter)
3 tbsp oil (mustard oil or any cooking oil)
2 bay leaves
2 1/2 litres of water (add more water if you want it looser)

Servings: 5

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 40 minutes



Method

Wash 1 cup of rice and 2 cups of red lentils together. The ratio has to be 2:1 for lentils and rice. Drain and keep it aside.

Chop the pumpkin, carrot and potatoes into medium pieces. Shred the cabbage and thinly slice the beans. Slice the onions.

Add oil to the pot and heat over medium temperature. Once oil is hot, add bay leaves, dry chillies and sliced onions and keep frying until brown. Add the ginger and garlic and mix again. Add cumin powder.

Fry the mixture and add the vegetables (other than frozen peas which we will add at the end). Add salt and turmeric and cover the pot for 5 minutes so the spices infuse.

Next add the rice and lentils and mix well.

Slowly add cold water to the pot and stir to avoid sticking (a little of sticking at bottom is fine). Keep the pot covered so that the vegetables cook over medium heat.

At this stage if the Khisiri is looking dry and you see that the vegetables, rice and lentils look cooked, then add a little hot water only once and reduce temperature to low.

Add the frozen peas and stir for a couple of minutes. Then add garam masala powder and 1 tbsp of ghee on top.

Remove from heat and serve hot with pappadums.

