

# Alchemy in the Kitchen

Simple Ingredients, Magical Food 



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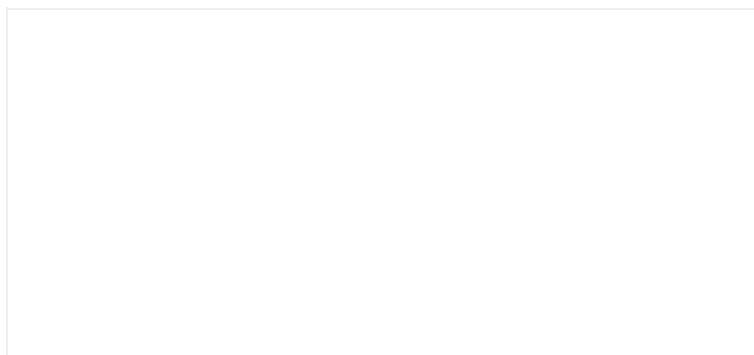
Monday, May 26, 2014

## Cumin and Thyme Hasselback Potatoes - they're no hassle !

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After 3 shows, involving 200 children, with 450 costumes to organize, and later to wash (the costumes, not the kids), my sister wasn't lying in bed whimpering, with the covers pulled over her head. She was slicing about a million spuds to make hassle-free Hasselback potatoes for a family dinner at my parent's house. "You know what, Hester? You should make these on your blog," she said.



When the Alchemists tried to change base metal into gold, they chose the wrong elements. Their efforts would have been much more fruitful (and delicious) if only they had turned their talents to transforming simple ingredients into magical food.



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TRANSLATE



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16 down, 434 to go... (Photo, laundry and recipe inspiration by [Catherine Casey](#))

My heart sinks just a tiny little bit when I hear the words “*You know what, Hester? You should make ... x,y,z ... on your blog*” helpfully suggested by friend or family. Often it comes with an implied deadline of “*very soon*”. I really, really *do* appreciate the suggestions, and please keep them coming but ... it’s not up to *me* what appears, and when, on *Alchemy*.

The problem is that I have discovered that *I* don’t actually write my blog. *Alchemy* writes *itself* and it is a TOTAL DIVA. If the moment is wrong for a particular recipe, then no amount of coaxing, cajoling, threats or bribes will make the words flow or the photos pop.

Luckily it was onboard with Hasselback potatoes - very onboard - probably clued in by my eating about five of them.

They are a very pretty (and lower fat) alternative to roast potatoes, are a lovely BBQ side, and are simplicity itself to make.

You know what? You should make them! And add extra if you are inviting me around to dinner.

#### ***For hassle-free hasselbacks, you will need...***

2 – 3 small potatoes, skin on, ***per person*** (about the size and shape of an egg is ideal)

a little melted butter or extra virgin olive oil

a little sea salt (*Maldon*, or similar, looks beautiful)

cumin, freshly ground if possible (wonderful with potatoes)

fresh or dried thyme

#### ***Method***

Wash the potatoes and remove any blemishes – no need to peel. Place each potato in turn on a wooden spoon and with a sharp knife cut almost all the way through in slices of between 3mm and 5mm thick. The wooden spoon helps prevent the knife going all the way through.

Drop into a bowl of cold water until ready to cook. The water helps remove some of the starch and helps the potatoes fan out a little better. When ready to cook, preheat the oven to 200°C while you drain the potatoes and pat dry with kitchen paper.

#### **Blog Archive**

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#### **My virtual bookshelf includes...**

- [Buttercream Blondie](#)
- [Cosmopolitan Currymania](#)
- [Fuzz Free Food](#)
- [Mad About Macarons](#)
- [Manu’s Menu](#)
- [Scarletta Bakes](#)
- [That Skinny Chick Can Bake](#)
- [The Culinary Lens](#)
- [Wise Words](#)

Brush with a little melted butter or olive oil, getting the brush between the slices (also helps them fan out a little better).



*We're brilliant at BBQs!*

Sit the potatoes into a baking dish or roasting tin, joined side down, and sprinkle with a little salt, ground cumin and thyme. This is not an exact science. How much of each is up to you.

Place in the preheated oven and bake for about 50 minutes or until golden and cooked through – they should be easily pierced with a fork.

Marvel at just how pretty a spud can be before serving to an appreciative audience.



Posted by [Hester Casey](#) at [Monday, May 26, 2014](#) 7 comments: [Links to this post](#)



Labels: [Cumin and Thyme Hasselback Potatoes](#), [Easy Potato Recipes](#), [Easy Vegetarian Recipe](#), [Potatoes](#)

Tuesday, May 13, 2014

## Almond, Orange and Apricot Buttermilk Scones - Would it be rude to eat three?





The scone, so beloved of the British Isles, is thought to be about a thousand years old. There is a town in Scotland *called* Scone. It is tempting to believe that that's where the scone got its name from but there are other contenders from as far afield as Germany and The Netherlands.

The scone *as we know it* can only date from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century with the appearance of baking powder and baking soda. These culinary equivalents of the *Wonderbra* gave what must have been quite a flat and boring mass a bit of a lift. Since then, the scone hasn't looked back and no teashop worth its salt would be without this stalwart of Afternoon Tea (or breakfast, or anytime with a cuppa really).

I'm not crazy about sultana scones and one of my young nieces shares this foible. If she gets a sultana scone, she picks out all the fruit, saving the 'good' plump sultanas for a better life (!!!) and eating the 'bad' smaller ones before demolishing the denuded quick bread.

I prefer more interesting fruit in my scones and I've gone with a buttermilk version simply because, for the first time in my life, I've run out of baking powder. The result is Almond, Orange and Apricot Buttermilk Scones. My taste tester said "Mmmmmmmmmmmmm!!! *Would it be rude to eat three?*" Of course not!

**For approximately 10 dainty (5cm) scones you'll need...**

**... to pre-heat your oven to 190°C**

250g plain flour

½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (bread soda)

- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- the zest of an orange, finely grated
- 50g butter, cold from the fridge, cut into small pieces
- 30g honey (or caster sugar if you prefer)
- 1 egg yolk
- 110mls buttermilk\* (approximately)
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- 50g ready-to-eat dried apricots, snipped into sultana-sized pieces

**Method**

In a mixing bowl, combine the flour, bicarbonate of soda, cinnamon, salt and orange zest.



Add the butter, and “rub it in” to the flour by taking large pinches of the mixture and crumbling between your fingertips until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Add the honey (I weigh it directly into the bowl).



Grate! I love orange zest!

Combine the egg yolk with the buttermilk and almond extract and add just enough of this mixture to the flour mixture so that there is no dry flour left (you may not need to add it all).

Finally mix in the apricot pieces and turn the dough onto a lightly-floured work surface. (The dough can quickly be prepared in a stand mixer too.)

Handle the dough as little as possible to keep the butter cold for a better rise. Knead very lightly then pat the dough out into a round of about 2cm high. Stamp into rounds using a lightly floured 5cm scone cutter. (Try to avoid twisting as you stamp out the rounds as this will cause them to rise unevenly, like mine... old habits die hard). Gather up any scraps, re-form into a round and continue stamping out scone shapes until you've used up the dough.

Place on a non-stick baking sheet and brush with a little beaten egg or milk to glaze. Bake in the pre-heated oven for 12-14 minutes or until well risen and golden brown.



Oven-ready in about 5 minutes flat! Tummy-ready in about 20!

Serve warm with butter and/or jam and a decent cup of tea or coffee - best served on the day of baking but can be frozen and refreshed in a hot oven. Cherry jam goes fantastically well with these.



Rude to eat three? Why, it's practically mandatory!

**Tip:**

*\* If you don't have buttermilk, use whole milk and add a generous squeeze of fresh lemon juice.*



This recipe can easily be increased. Double everything except the cooking time.



Posted by Hester Casey at Tuesday, May 13, 2014 16 comments: [Links to this post](#)

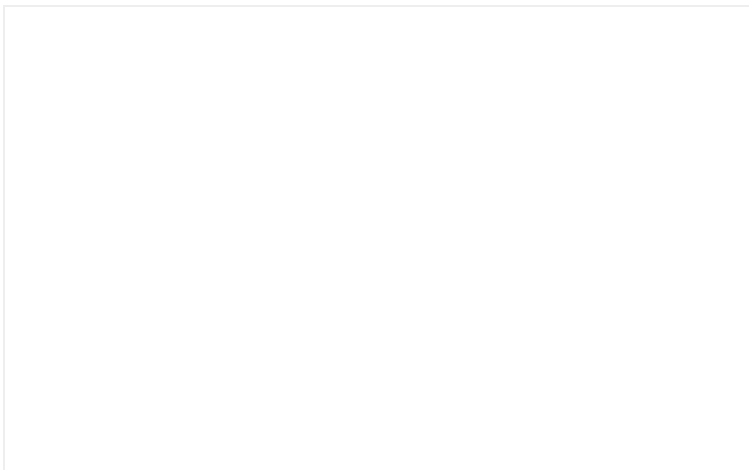


Labels: [Almond](#), [Easy Baking](#), [orange and apricot scones](#); [Scones](#), [Quick](#)

[Bread](#), [Traditional Baking](#)

Tuesday, March 25, 2014

## Ginger Nuts - to dunk or not to dunk, that is the question ...





*An invitation to dunk...*

**Dunk** (verb) to dip (bread or other food) into a drink or soup before eating it.

*"I dunked a biscuit into the cup of scalding tea"*

*"Blasphemous"* talk about HRH - or any British royal for that matter; mobile phone use; slouching; or resting your elbows on the table are all behaviours likely to get you into trouble in a controversial Brighton tearooms.

Conversation shouldn't be more than *"two tones above the chink of a teacup"* – somewhat hard to measure as teacup-chinking and teaspoon-clinking are also frowned upon. Under NO circumstances drink from the saucer- you could be sent to the Tower.

*The Tea Cosy* has also prohibited dunking. Engaging in the *"unsavoury habit ... will result in you being asked to leave"*.

Unsavoury habit? Really? Dunking is an art that has been practiced for aeons. Would *The Tea Cosy* have evicted Proust for executing one of the most famous literary dunks in history—a *madeleine* dipped in tea?

We learn to dunk early. For centuries, children have known the pleasures of dunking toast soldiers into the molten centre of a soft-boiled egg. With the arrival of tea, coffee and hot chocolate, dunking has become much more



skilled.

According to research from the University of Bristol, dunking a biscuit releases up to ten times more flavour than a dry biscuit. A successful dunk is when the biscuit absorbs enough liquid to release all that extra flavour but not so much that the sugar melts and the structural integrity of the biscuit fails, leaving biscuit-y sludge at the bottom of your cup.

Factors that have to be taken into account are:

**Temperature**—the hotter the liquid, the faster the sugar melts.

**Angle**—this is more important with chocolate biscuits and a very shallow angle, chocolate-side-up, is advised as the chocolate provides support. For all others, a 90° angle was found to be better.

**Length of time**—*Jammie Dodgers* and *Rich Tea* have considerable staying power—able to withstand a 20-second dunk. *Digestives*, *Hobnobs* and *Ginger Nuts* will start to dissolve after just 2.92 seconds.

I don't mind the *Ginger Nut's* lack of staying power. There is an alchemy in the combination of strong, hot tea (particularly Assam) and the spicy heat released by the biscuit that makes this combination greater than the sum of its parts.

***For about 30 biscuits (cookies), you will need...***

150g caster sugar (or dark brown sugar)  
125g butter  
50g black treacle  
50g golden syrup  
1 small egg  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
10g mixed peel (or candied orange peel) very finely chopped (optional)  
10g preserved ginger in syrup, very finely chopped (optional)  
325g plain flour  
1 tablespoon ground ginger  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
3 allspice berries, crushed to a fine powder (or ¼ teaspoon of ground allspice)  
½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda  
½ teaspoon baking powder  
¼ teaspoon salt

Extra caster sugar for rolling the cookie dough in before baking



### **Method**

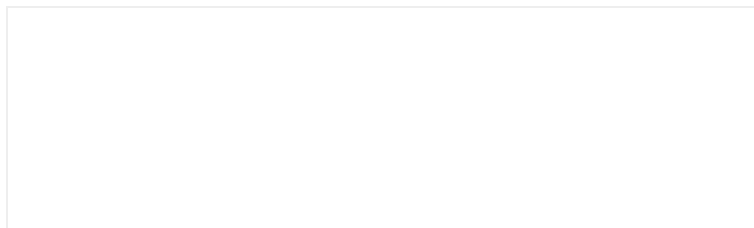
Place the sugar, butter, treacle, and golden syrup in a bowl and beat until paler in colour and lighter in texture.

Continue beating while you add the egg and vanilla extract (along with the mixed peel and preserved ginger if using). Beat until combined.

Mix together the flour, ground ginger, cinnamon, allspice, bicarbonate of soda, baking powder and salt and add to the mixture in the bowl, beating all the while.

Pre-heat the oven to 160°C and line 2 or 3 baking sheets (depending on how big your oven is) with non-stick baking parchment.

Rinse your hands with cold water and shake off any excess moisture. This will help stop the dough sticking too much. Pinch off walnut-sized pieces of dough and form them into balls. Dip the balls in the extra sugar (this gives them a lovely sparkle) before placing on the baking sheets, at least 5cm apart to give them room to spread out. There's no need to flatten them - the heat will do all the work.





No need to flatten them out - the heat will do all the work

Bake in the pre-heated oven for about 17 minutes. At 15 minutes they are cooked but a little chewy. I always remove one tray of the cookies at this point because I like this chewiness, but they are ginger nuts which are supposed to be crunchy so I let the rest cook to full crunchiness.



Shush! Don't tell anyone or we'll be thrown out.

To dunk or not to dunk - that is a question of personal taste. But if you don't, you won't know what you're missing.



Posted by [Hester Casey](#) at [Tuesday, March 25, 2014](#) 16 comments: [Links to this post](#)



Labels: [Biscuits](#), [Cookies](#), [Dunk](#), [Dunking](#), [Easy Baking](#), [Ginger Nuts](#)

Sunday, March 16, 2014

## Chargrilled Salmon with 'Irelandaise' - forty shades of green for Lá Fhéile Pádraig

[Pin it](#)



After the Rugby yesterday, we should be celebrating St Brian's Day, but let's talk about St Patrick. How very 'Irish' of us to have a patron saint who wasn't even, well, Irish! Maybe he was chosen because we owe him.



You see, we ... um... kinda... um... kidnapped the boy Patrick back in the 5th century from our neighbours, the Romans, next door in Wales. Legend has it, we enslaved the poor lad for seven years in miserable conditions. We didn't even have the good grace to give him back. He escaped in the end.

Perhaps suffering from Stockholm Syndrome, Patrick returned and – according to myth – spent 30 years preaching and rooting out snakes (aka pagans) – although it is entirely possible that legend has him confused with another Roman who was also wandering the island at around the same time trying to convert us heathen folk into god-fearing Christians.

Moving swiftly on, by 15 centuries or so, and things have changed quite a bit. We no longer have to kidnap people to bring them to our shores. They come quite willingly.

People come for the breath-taking scenery (Put Glendalough on your “*Things to do before I die*” list. As far as I’m concerned, on a sunny day, there is no better place.)

They come for the renowned *cead mile failte* – ‘a hundred thousand welcomes’ – it may have slipped to ‘ninety-nine thousand welcomes’ over the Celtic tiger years but you’ll still find most of the 5 million or so natives more than friendly and helpful.

People come for the culture, the music, the literature (every last one of us is a writer – it’s obligatory).

They may not come specifically for the Guinness, however (despite Diageo’s protests to the contrary) Guinness definitely tastes better in Ireland than anywhere else, and even then there are some places which can pull a better pint than others.

People come for the food – for the cold, clear seas that produce wonderful seafood; for the clean rivers that surrender salmon and trout to patient souls; for rolling countryside (available in at least forty shades of green) that yields gold ingots of outstanding butter, and superb lamb and beef.

The food traditionally associated with Patrick’s Day isn’t particularly lavish – it’s simple, filling, peasant grub which is exactly what you’ll need to shore you up if you are planning to attend a parade. If however, like me, you are planning a lazy day punctuated with bouts of reclining in front of the telly, here’s a quick and easy dish that uses butter instead of oil in a mayonnaise-style sauce - ‘Irelandaise’. This recipe makes about 8 times more sauce than you need but that’s good news as it is great on steamed

veg, baked potatoes, grilled chops etc.



***For a lazy fish dish for 2, you will need...***

***'Irelandaise'***

- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (I prefer the extra strong variety)
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- 150g butter, melted and cooled to room temperature
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

- 2 tablespoons very finely chopped fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons very finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped capers

***Grilled Salmon***

- 2 salmon steaks or fillets
- a little extra virgin olive oil
- a pinch of salt and a little freshly ground black pepper

***Method***

**[This sauce contains raw egg - the usual warnings apply]**

First make the 'Irelandaise': Place the egg yolk in a bowl and add the

mustard and salt. Whisk together until the mixture thickens slightly. An electric whisk is best for this.

Trickle about a teaspoon of melted butter into the mixture and whisk until it has completely disappeared. If you add the butter too fast the mixture will split. (See the fix at the end of this recipe to remedy this if necessary.) Repeat this trickling and whisking process until you have used about a third of the butter, allowing it to disappear into the mixture before adding the next drizzle. The mixture should start to thicken.

Slowly and steadily, trickle another third of the butter into the mixture, whisking all the time. The sauce should be thick and creamy by now. Now add the lemon juice, which will thin it out a little, and whisk until combined before whisking in the remaining butter at a slow trickle.

Stir in the herbs and capers. Cover until required. At room temperature this will remain soft, and similar in texture to mayo. In the fridge, it will harden. Either way, it goes beautifully with grilled fish, and is pretty good used for garlic bread, on baked potatoes, on steamed vegetables.

**For the grilled salmon:** lightly oil the fish and season it with salt and black pepper. Place on a medium-hot grill pan (or frying pan). Cook for about 3 minutes, skin-side down. You'll see the colour change as the fish cooks. When it has crept about half-way up the fish, gently turn it and finish cooking on the other side for a further 3 or so minutes, or until the flesh is not longer translucent. The crispy skin is delicious too.

Serve with vegetables and a swirl of 'Irelandaise'.



#### Tip

If your 'Irelandaise' splits (or curdles) simply take a fresh bowl, add a new egg yolk, and slowly add the curdled mixture, a little at a time, beating between additions until the curdled mix is incorporated.



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Labels: [Irelandaise](#), [Irish butter](#), [Salmon](#), [St Paddy's Day](#), [St Patrick's Day](#)

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

## Chorizo and Roasted Red Pepper Quiche... it's

## pronounced "Quickie" Bill!

[Pin it](#)



Ah, Quiche. It is so often the butt of jokes, an object of scorn. And yet when my sister-in-law, Rosie, brings her - admittedly, extra fabulous - quiches to a family gathering, there isn't a morsel left over. (I'm sure some people even lick the quiche dishes clean when no one is looking.)

Once, her quiches had an unfortunate accident between the oven and the table. Guests, who had already caught the scent of pie, seemed quite willing to scoop up the ruins with a spoon - slivers of glass and all. Good sense prevailed in the end, although several people eyed the bin longingly during the course of the evening.

There is that famous joke where Bill Clinton and Al Gore are out to lunch in the middle of the Lewinsky storm. Bill Clinton asks the waitress for a quiche. The waitress sternly tells him she doesn't think that's a good idea given his circumstances. Gore leans in and confides that "it is pronounced *Keesh*, Bill".

This one isn't, though, Bill. It is pronounced "*Quickie*" because it was made in such a hurry, in a WOW (War On Waste) assault on the contents of the fridge.

***For a 23cm Chorizo and Roasted Red Pepper "Quickie" with Nutmeg Pastry you will need...***

### ***Quickie Nutmeg Pastry***

180g plain flour

100g butter, from the fridge (cut into pieces)



1 egg yolk  
¼ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg  
3 – 4 tablespoons iced water

a little extra flour for your work surface

***Preheat the oven to 180°C when you put the pastry in the fridge to chill***

Place everything except the water in your food processor and pulse until combined and resembling a very fine crumb. Add 3 tablespoons of the water and pulse again. The mixture should come together in a soft ball of pastry. If it doesn't, add another tablespoon of water and pulse again. Wrap the pastry in cling film or place in a freezer bag and chill for about 10 minutes while you prepare the ingredients for the filling.



*Quickie Nutmeg Pastry*

When the pastry has chilled, turn it out onto a lightly floured work surface and roll out to a circle approximately 30cm in diameter. Use to line a quiche dish or a 23cm tart tin no less than 3cm deep. Roll your rolling pin over the top to trim off any excess pastry and, using a fork, prick the base of the pastry before lining it with aluminium foil or greaseproof paper and filling it with baking beans (ceramic, or dried beans kept for the purpose). It is well worth taking this extra step to avoid soggy pastry.

Bake for 10 minutes before removing the beans and foil. Bake for a further 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside while you continue with the filling.

### **Quickie Filling**

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1 medium onion, halved then cut into thin slices  
150g spicy chorizo sausage, diced  
200g roasted red peppers (mine were from a jar)  
50g *Emmental* cheese, diced  
150mls Greek yoghurt  
150mls single cream  
2 eggs, beaten  
100g *Gruyere* cheese, grated

Heat the olive oil in a medium frying pan over a medium heat and gently fry the onion slices until they are translucent and beginning to take on golden edges. Remove from the heat and leave to cool.

Meanwhile, scatter the diced chorizo over the base of the pastry. Arrange the roasted red peppers on top, followed by the onions and finally the diced *Emmental* cheese.



*Quickie WOW (War On Waste) Filling*

Mix together the yoghurt, cream and eggs and 50g of the *Gruyere* cheese. Pour into the pastry shell, making sure to coat the rest of the filling ingredients with the mixture. Sprinkle evenly with the remaining *Gruyere* cheese.



*Say Cheese !*

Place on a shallow baking tray (in case of overflow, or spills while baking – especially if you are using a loose-bottomed tin).

Return the filled pastry to the oven and bake for about 25 – 30mins or until the top is golden brown and the filling just set.



*'Keesh' or 'Quickie'? Who cares as long as it's delicious!*

Leave to cool for a few minutes before serving.



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Labels: [Bill Clinton](#), [Chorizo](#), [Easy Cheese Recipes](#), [Easy Egg Recipes](#), [Easy Lunch Recipes](#), [Easy Party Recipes](#), [Easy Picnic Recipes](#), [Nutmeg Pastry](#), [Quiche](#), [War on Waste](#)

Friday, February 14, 2014

## Love is ... sharing your Baileys Chocolate Biscuit Cake

Pin It



St Valentine mightn't have been Irish to begin with, but we've certainly adopted him. His relics lie in the [Carmelite church at Whitefriar Street, Dublin](#). If you want to pop in to visit, you may have to elbow your way through the growing crush as the resting place of the *Hallmark* saint grows in popularity with loved-up couples. Although... according to that great bible of civilization, Wikipedia, there are about eleven St Valentines and it is not known which one inspired the retail frenzy.

Valentine's Day would try the patience of a saint. Ok, who doesn't like to know they are someone's someone special... But... if this commercial outpouring of love is confined to romantic love... and then to just one day of the year, well, it's a teeny bit exclusive, isn't it.

For me, love is in the every day things. It's in the whole-hearted, rib-cracking bear-hugs from my godson; in the slightly soggy, pre-licked crisps offered by my three-year-old niece when you know she really, really, really wants them herself (*"Thanks honey, but you have them, I insist! No, really – I insist"*).

I asked friends and family what love meant to them. It turns out, it isn't in the grand gestures. Love is... in having the washing up done for you; in getting a cup of tea... just the way you like it... brought to one's boudoir. Love is in chocolate; in a tiny posy of primroses; in a bunch of daffodils (preferably not ones stolen from the local park); Love is in a *'Thank you for feeding me'* lick from a four-legged friend (awwww); it's in a crayoned picture of you looking like a happy witch; in a warm hand that reaches for your cold hand; in sharing a bag of salty, vinegary chips; Love is in cupcakes, hot from the oven; in a hug, just when you need it; it seems that love happens in lots and lots of small ways, - funnily, many of them food-related.

Dear St Valentine, when it comes to love, with all your kitsch hearts and overpriced flowers you are in the ha'penny place. But, seeing as you are now adopted Irish, here is a nod in the form of my *Baileys Chocolate Biscuit*

Cake - for grown up friends and family. (If you are making these for kids, swap the cream liqueur for double cream).

***For 1 boozy Baileys Chocolate Biscuit Cake, (or many tiny bites) you will need...***

150g Marietta biscuits (or any Rich Tea type biscuit)  
150g Digestive biscuits  
100g dried sour cherries or dried cranberries (or a mixture of the two), chopped  
50g toasted almonds, chopped  
50g toasted walnuts, chopped  
150g good quality plain chocolate (70% cocoa solids)  
150g good quality milk chocolate  
150mls *Baileys* (or a similar Irish Cream Liqueur)  
100g butter, melted  
25g runny honey (something floral, but not overpowering)  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

50g each of dark chocolate and white chocolate for drizzling over the finished cake (optional). Oh, who am I kidding! Since when has extra chocolate been optional?

### ***Method***

Chop the biscuits into bits about the size of a 2c coin (or a penny) and place them in a large mixing bowl. Add the dried fruit and the nuts.

Place the chocolate in a heatproof (preferably non-metallic) bowl over a saucepan of barely simmering water (making sure the base of the bowl doesn't sit in the water). When the chocolate has melted, add the butter and stir gently together with a wooden spoon or spatula to avoid filling the chocolate with air bubbles. We're not making mousse today.

When the butter is incorporated, add the cream liqueur (or double cream if you are going for an alcohol-free version) and stir until you have a smooth, shiny lake of chocolate-y deliciousness. (It will be alarming liquid at this stage but keep the faith - it will set later in the fridge.) Finally, stir in the honey and the vanilla extract. Tip the mixture into the bowl of biscuits. Stir until every last morsel is coated with boozy chocolate lusciousness.

Transfer to a loaf tin (if you want slices), a mixing bowl or round cake tin (if you want wedges) or a shallow pie dish or similar if you want little squares or bars, before covering and placing in the fridge to set for at least 4 hours or overnight. You can line your chosen container with cling film if you wish but I find it just as easy to pop the container in a tray of hot water for a minute or so to melt the edges a little before turning out onto a serving tray.

It would be utterly decadent to drizzle this little treat with even more chocolate...



Cut into squares, wedges or bars. Share.



Posted by [Hester Casey](#) at [Friday, February 14, 2014](#) 14 comments: [Links to this post](#)



Labels: [Baileys](#), [Baileys Chocolate Biscuit Cake Recipe](#), [Baileys Irish Chocolate Biscuit Cake](#), [Easy Dessert Recipes](#), [Fridge Cake](#), [Irish Cream Liqueur Recipe](#), [Love is...](#), [No Bake Chocolate Cake](#), [St Valentine](#)

Saturday, February 1, 2014

## Gnocchi with Mushrooms and Gorgonzola - and flaming cheeks !



Upon a time, I had a favourite little restaurant. It did decent coffee and good homely Italian food at a reasonable price. It was the sort of place where you could eavesdrop on the most interesting of conversations, or chat to a complete stranger on the table next to you.

Its main attraction was its star waiter, a crazy, red-haired Roman with a big heart and an eagle eye who kept the place more or less shipshape. He was deeply and irrevocably a fan of *The Blues Brothers*. From time to time, he would get a little carried away, douse the lights and subject his alarmed (and captive) audience to a rather startling mime of *I Can't Turn You Loose*.

I once spent 8 hours there – breakfast with one friend, a chance meeting that turned into lunch with another, and then finally dinner with my beloved – although I did go for a walk in between times to make room for my favourite of their dishes - Gnocchi with Mushrooms and *Gorgonzola*.

Unfortunately I'm too embarrassed to go there anymore. The eagle-eyed Roman was off duty that evening. And I know I shouldn't have... but rather stupidly... I left my beloved unattended for a whole five minutes. (The Roman would have kept an eye on him...) When I returned, the restaurant was filled with smoke, and feathery ashes were settling on the clientele. He had managed to accidentally set his napkin on fire. He had quickly extinguished the flames, but while he was busy checking if anyone had actually noticed, *he* failed to notice the napkin had reignited and set the tablecloth ablaze.

This is my attempt to recreate the gnocchi dish - Blues Brothers soundtrack and inferno optional.



***For lunch for 2, you will need...***

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 300g ready-prepared potato gnocchi (a lazy dish, this)
- 150g fresh mushrooms, sliced
- a fat clove of garlic, crushed
- 5 tablespoons cream
- 40g *Gorgonzola* cheese
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley
- freshly ground black pepper

In a frying pan large enough to take the gnocchi in one layer, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil over a medium heat. Add the gnocchi and fry gently until a golden crust forms, turning occasionally.

Meanwhile, place the remaining olive oil in another pan over a medium heat and add the mushrooms. Cook for about 5 minutes, then add the

crushed garlic. Cook for a further minute or so before adding the cream and the Gorgonzola, stirring as the cheese melts. When the Gorgonzola has completely melted, add the parsley and the now-golden gnocchi.

Serve immediately with a little freshly ground black pepper over the top. I find it doesn't really need any salt - but maybe keep a fire extinguisher handy :)



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