



Gwen's Cheeseboard

Recipes from a Food Lovers Kitchen

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A BLAST OF BLACKCURRANT – A FOOD MEMORY

Posted on August 20, 2013 by gwenscheeseboard

Many years ago I recall going on a late summer day trip to Armagh with my Mum and Dad. I was about 12 at the time. Madonna was in the charts and luminous accessories were all the rage. Having had a lovely day shopping we headed for home in Meath at about 5.30 pm . My parents in their wisdom decided to stop for dinner on the way home. They chose to stop in the Nuremore Hotel in Carrickmacross and I remember in particular being struck by how lovely the setting was. Nestled in a golf course with a picturesque lake to the front. Little did I know at the time that I would spend a few wonderful years working there in the future or that it would be a place that I would make many fantastic friends.

The dining room of the hotel had a beautiful view of the lake as it still does and we were lucky enough to be given a window table that looked out over beautiful roses to the fore and onwards to the water. I have long since forgotten what I had as starter or main course but I do remember the fabulous dessert trolley – they were at that time still the height of sophistication!! On that dessert trolley was this wonderful deep red purple – a blackcurrant delice. It was gorgeous. I can still remember the zingy intense flavour of blackcurrant held within the beautiful mousse like delicacy. My Mum had the same dessert as me and requested the recipe as we had a blackcurrants growing at home which up to then my Dad use for jam.

The menu at **Gwen's Cheeseboard**

Blackcurrant Mousse Cake. I hope it brings a food memory for you.

Blackcurrant Mousse Cake

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For the sponge:

3 Eggs

3 ozs Caster Sugar

3 ozs Self Raising flour.

Please excuse the imperial measurements but I always use them for sponge and madeira mixtures as they are so much easier to remember!! Heat your oven to 180 deg cel. Fan 165. Grease and line an 21cm/8" springform tin. Put the eggs and sugar into a bowl over simmering water and whisk with a electric whisk for about 8 – 10 minutes. The mixture should be pale and creamy and at the ribbon stage. Fold in the sifted flour gently so that it maintains all the air you've captured. Pour the mixture into the prepared tin and place into the oven for about 14 minutes. My oven is very fast. the sponge should rebound when you touch it. Be careful not to overcook though as it will be very dry. Remove from the tin and peel off the lining and allow to cool completely on a cooling tray.

Blackcurrant Mousse:

500 g Blackcurrants no need to top and tail!!!

200g Caster Sugar

275 ml Double Cream

3 Egg Whites

5 leaves of Gelatin

A dash of Creme de Cassis or even Sloe Gin !

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Put the blackcurrants into a pot along with sugar and allow to heat up until the blackcurrants have broken down and the mixture is nice a syrupy. Through in the dash of booze and remove from the heat. Soak the gelatin leaves in cold water for 5 minutes. Squeeze them out and add them to the blackcurrant mixture stir well to ensure they are well dissolved. Pass the mixture through a fine sieve and allow the resulting blackcurrant syrup to become quite cool.

In the meantime whisk the double cream until soft peak stage. Whisk the egg whites in a separate bowl to stiff peaks. When the blackcurrant mixture is cool add it to the cream gradually and whisk gently together. Then very gently fold in the egg whites to ensure a nice light mousse texture.

To assemble the cake split the sponge in half horizontally. Put the bottom half back into the springform tin. Pour the mousse mixture on top of this and place the top layer of cake on top gently. Cover the cake with clingfilm and refrigerate for minimum 6 hours preferably overnight. When ready to serve run a palette knife around the edge and release the tin. Put onto a pretty plate and dust generously with icing sugar and decorate as you please. Serve with gently whipped cream.

2 Comments

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TASTY TURKEY TAGINE

Posted on [July 23, 2013](#) by [gwenscheeseboard](#)

The recent good weather has meant I have done little else but soak up the rays. This has also meant very little cooking with the BBQ in shock from overuse in comparison to the last few years. Just before the lovely weather arrived I had made this Turkey Tagine and thought it might be lovely for an inclement summer day or indeed right throughout the winter. Turkey is a great alternative to chicken and at this time of the year it's also very reasonable.

Turkey Tagine

Serves 4

Prep 30 minutes

Cooking time 1hr 30 mins

Ingredients:

500g Turkey breast cubed
 2 large onions cut into rings
 Can of tomatoes
 250 ml chicken stock
 150g chopped dried apricots
 150g stoned chopped dates
 1tsp cinnamon
 1tsp ground cumin
 1tsp harissa
 2 tsp Ras el Hanout



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1 tsp smoked paprika



Heat your oven to 180deg c/ 160 deg c fan. Brown the turkey breast in a little rapeseed oil and set aside. Then fry the onions until they start to soften. Add all the spices and allow them to cook for a minute but be careful not to allow them to burn. Return the turkey to the pan add the tomatoes and stock along with the dates and apricots and some salt. Bring to a simmer. Check for seasoning Put into your tagine or a casserole dish if you don't have one and place in the oven for about an hour and a half. Give it a stir after a half an hour and turn the oven down to 160/150.

Serve the tagine with some couscous or I use bulgur wheat as my kids prefer it. Top with a little Greek yoghurt and enjoy



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DIPS FOR BITS ON A SUNNY WEEKEND

Posted on [July 4, 2013](#) by [gwenscheeseboard](#)

So at last the real summer seems to be arriving. Average temperatures of 23 and 24 degrees celsius! And along with them the usual comments of "sure Ireland is the best country in the world in this kind of weather" and "God It must be time for a pint of cider" and without doubt "light the BBQ". Now if your house is like my house there is always great palaver over the BBQ. The wrong type of charcoal has been bought or you're out of lighting gel. I recently recall a friend and me trying to light charcoal with candles! It took a while, it

was a bit smoky but we got there.

Anyway I always think a few nibbles are just what you need prior to the meat feast that invariably follows. So here are three delicious dips you can serve in advance with the appropriate drinks. They can be served with crudites, crisps or flat breads. The blue cheese dip is great with buffalo wings and also a super way of introducing blue cheese to children. Have a great weekend.

Roast Spiced Carrot Dip, Beetroot Dip and Cashel Blue Dip.



Roast Carrot Dip

300 g carrots peeled and cut into equal size medium chunks.

3 cloves of garlic unpeeled

1/2 tsp cumin seeds

1/2 tsp coriander seeds

1/2 tsp caraway seeds

Tbsp of rapeseed oil

200 ml sour cream

Pomegranate molasses (optional)

Salt & Pepper to season

Heat your oven to 180 deg. celsius. Put the carrots on a baking tray. Grind the spices in a pestle and mortar lightly. Then coat the carrots with your spices and oil and season with salt. Roast for 20 mins then add the garlic cloves for another 10/15 mins until the carrots are nice and soft. Allow them to cool a little and then put them into a food processor and whizz them until quite smooth. Add the sour cream and again blitz the mixture til smooth. At this stage add a drizzle of pomegranate molasses if you wish and adjust the seasoning.

Beetroot Dip

1 Vacuum pack of beetroot

2 cloves garlic

200 ml Natural yoghurt

Zest of 1 orange

Salt and black pepper to taste

Blitz the beetroot and garlic in a food processor until quite smooth. Add the yoghurt and blitz again. Then add the orange zest and season to taste give it a quick blitz and serve.

Cashel Blue Cheese Dip

150g cashel blue cheese or another blue cheese of choice – however cambazola or wicklow blue are not ideal.

100 ml creme fraiche

100 ml mayonnaise

A squeeze of lemon juice

Blitz all together check for seasoning and serve!

1 Comment

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ELDERFLOWER & GOOSEBERRIES MADE FOR EACH OTHER

Posted on [July 1, 2013](#) by [gwenscheeseboard](#)



I really love this time of year. I live in a rural area and adore seeing the rich greens and the various hues of flowers in the vibrant hedgerows. Everything looks fresh and while everything is slightly later this year the elderflower and gooseberry season have coincided perfectly. They are quintessential summer flavours and I do my best every year to exploit these beauties. I made cordial last week and will more than likely make another batch to have in reserve over the winter months. I also realised that you can freeze elderflower heads to use later on in the year.

I bought some beautiful gooseberries the other day and have an abundance of elderflower in my garden so I decided that there was a pannacotta recipe in my future. Here it is!!

Elderflower Pannacotta with Gooseberry Compote and Elderflower Fritters

Serves 4

Prep time 30 minutes

Chilling time 4 hours

Ingredients:

Pannacotta:

500 ml double cream

50 g caster sugar

4 elderflower head checked for bugs!

2 leaves of gelatine

1 tsp vanilla extract

Gooseberry Compote:

400 g gooseberries

100 g caster sugar

250 ml water

Elderflower Fritters

8 elder flower heads

100 g plain flour

1 egg

175 ml tepid water

pinch salt

For the pannacotta put the cream, sugar, vanilla and elderflowers into a pot and heat gently until its shaking don't let it boil. While this is heating soak the 2 leaves of gelatine in water . Squeeze out the excess water from the gelatine after 10 minutes. Add a small amount of the hot cream to the gelatine and dissolve then pour the gelatine mixture back into the remaining cream. Remove the elderflower heads at this stage and pour the cream mixture into little jars. I use Killowen yoghurt glass jars – my favourite yoghurt from Wexford. You can use little glasses or moulds whatever you prefer. Chill the pannacotta for 4 hours. The pannacotta should be really smooth and creamy. I don't put too much gelatine in as I don't like being too jelly like.

For the gooseberry compote top and tail the gooseberries. Place all the ingredients into a pot and allow to simmer until all the fruit has burst.

For the fritters place all the ingredients in a blender and blitz until smooth. This is quite a thick batter so you need to make sure that the flour doesn't stick at the end.

Just before you are ready to serve heat some vegetable or sunflower oil in a wok. Dip the elderflower heads in the batter and place in the oil one at a time flower face down deep fry for until its lightly golden. Remove and drain on kitchen paper. While the fritters are hot dip them in caster sugar.

Serve 2 fritters with your pannacotta pots and a little ramekin of compote.



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DELICIOUS DINNER ON A BUDGET

Posted on [June 28, 2013](#) by [gwenscheeseboard](#)



Last week I notice that my freezer stock was looking pretty well depleted so I decided to take advantage of this and give the freezer a bit of a tidy up. You know the pack of sausages that have been lurking in a corner for the last year and a half, broken bits of tortilla wraps and a sprinkling of crunchy green what were formerly herb bits !!

After I had this done out with me to the shops to do a bit of a restock. I try my best to shop once a week and quite often I do my meat and fish shop once a fortnight so that I'm pretty well organised for dinners. One of things that I bought on this occasion was a pork shoulder. These beauties will feed a family for two days plus a pick and a sandwich or one shoulder will feed a crowd say of 10 – 12 people for very little. My butcher charges the large amount of €6.99 but you may be best advised to order it in advance. There is a bit of work involved as it has to be cooked very slowly.

Smoky BBQ Pulled Pork

Prep time: 20 mins plus overnight.

Cooking Time: 7 hours

Serves 10 -12.

Ingredients:

1 Pork Shoulder – Get your butcher to slash the skin and crack the joint for you as it will fit better into your roasting tin .

Marinade:

250 ml Apple Juice

4 Cloves Garlic crushed

Thumb size piece of Ginger grated

1 shot of strong coffee – I use Nespresso Ristretto

2 heaped tsp of smoked paprika

1 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp ground fennel seed

1 tsp ground cinnamon

100 ml tomato sauce

100 ml cider vinegar

A good dash of worcester sauce

2 tsp of sea salt – smoked if you have it

Mix all the marinade ingredients together in a large mixing bowl. I use my baking basin that I use for making brown bread and Christmas puddings.

Pierce the shoulder all over with a metal skewer. Then with a child's medicine syringe inject the marinade into the piercings. Then put the shoulder into the bowl and massage the marinade in as best you can. Cover and place in the fridge overnight.

You will need to plan your cooking times carefully. To eat at 6.00 o'clock : Preheat your oven at 9.30 am to 200 deg celsius. Take the meat out of the fridge. Line your roasting tin well with tin foil allowing it to come well up over the edges so that it you can wrap it over the top of the pork. Place the pork in the tin, retain the marinade and leave it until 10 am . Cover over the pork with the tin foil loosely and then put in the oven. After about 40 minutes take it out and baste it with some of the remaining marinade. Turn down the oven to 125 deg celsius. Return the meat to the oven and cook until 5 pm basting every hour to hour and a half.

Take the meat out at 5.00 and allow rest for about 15 minutes. Turn the oven back up to 200 deg celsius. Remove the pork skin and place on a separate baking tray and return to the oven to allow the crackling to go nice and crispy for about 15 mins. Then using two forks literally pull the pork it should shred very easily. Let the meat sit in the juices until you are ready to serve so that it absorbs all the juices and becomes lovely and moist.

Finally with the retained marinade add:

200 ml apple juice

1tsp smoked paprika

1 shot of coffee

4 tbsp of soft dark brown sugar

Put them all in a small saucepan and simmer until it becomes nice and syrupy.

I served the pulled pork in blaas or a soft white roll. There is a great blaa

recipe on Niamh Shield's [Eat Like a Girl](#) blog. I made a lovely summery coleslaw with the addition of finely chopped celery and grated apple to the normal cabbage, carrot and onion. and a big green salad.



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A SUMMER SHELLFISH DELIGHT

Posted on [June 19, 2013](#) by [gwenscheeseboard](#)

Its so refreshing when the weather improves and we turn to the BBQ and salads. However one of my favourite things about Summer is the rich bounty of shellfish that is available particularly lobster and the brown crab. I am blessed to be able to buy both of these at very reasonable prices at my local farmers market and it helps that the fishmonger Martin is a bit of an old charmer.

I was watching a recent episode of Great British Food Revival where Angela Hartnett was talking about the delights of both the brown crab and spider crab. She did a lovely spider crab gratin which inspired this dish.

Spiced Brown Crab Gratin

Serves 4.

4 Brown crabs cooked and picked (both brown & white meat) Retain the shells for the gratin.

2 Shallots finely diced
1 Stick lemongrass finely chopped
1 Red chilli finely chopped
1 tsp Ground cumin
1 Glass dry white wine
2 Tbsp brandy
Zest and juice of 1 lime
Dash sweet chili sauce
2tbsp rapeseed oil
Sea salt
Topping:
100g Breadcrumbs
50 g Parmesan finely grated



Heat your grill to a high heat.

Saute the shallots on a low heat until they are translucent. Add the lemongrass, chili and cumin and allow them to cook for a minute or two. Then add in all the crab meat and heat through. Add the brandy and flambe to burn off the strong alcohol taste and then add the white wine, zest and juice of the lime and the chili sauce and allow it to reduce down. Check the mixture for seasoning and adjust to taste. Spoon the mixture into the crab shells. Mix the breadcrumbs and parmesan together and sprinkle over the top of each filled shell. Place under the grill for about 3/4 minutes and serve with a wedge of lime.

If you cant get crabs you could just use white crab meat, reduce the amount of white wine and put it in small gratin dishes.

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SUMMER TIME DINNERS

Posted on [May 20, 2013](#) by [gwenscheeseboard](#)

At long last the weather is showing signs of improvement and this means its time to think of summer food. While I love the BBQ, I also love to have tasty bits in the fridge that can be pulled out for a quick lunch, a picnic or a midweek supper. Whilst shopping last Friday I saw a ham hock and thought immediately of a terrine to have in the fridge in the hope of some of this elusive warm weather. This is the result!

Ham Hock Terrine with Apricot and Hazelnut



Ingredients

- 1 Ham hock soaked overnight and then boiled.
- 454g Lean pork mince
- 150g Breadcrumbs
- 1 Large onion finely chopped
- 50 g Toasted hazelnuts roughly chopped
- 100g Dried apricot quartered
- 1 Egg
- 1 tbsp Freshly chopped sage
- Salt & Pepper to season.
- 6/8 Rindless streaky rashers

Heat your oven to 180 degrees Celsius (160 for fan).

Fry the onions until they are translucent and allow to cool. Flake the meat off the ham hock and if necessary cut into narrow long chunks. Put all the ingredients into a large bowl and bring together.

Grease a 2lb loaf tin and line with the streaky rashers with the ends hanging over the edge. Put the mixture into the tin and press in well. Then fold over the streaky rashers. Put the tin into a bain marie and put into the oven for 50 mins to an hour. If you feel it is going to brown on top cover with some tin foil. When it is cooked allow the terrine cool in tin. When it is cold wrap it tightly in clingfilm and return it to the tin. Then put something good and heavy on top of it for about 4 hours. Then refrigerate overnight and its ready to serve.

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