

maxfacts

Recipes

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Part I: Some useful tools, ingredients and general tips

i) Useful tools

Nothing unusual is needed as far as kitchen gadgets are concerned: a reasonably powerful blender or food processor and a couple of fine-meshed sieves are all that is needed. Clever combined use of fridge, freezer and microwave is useful to have an appetising selection of foods (almost) ready at all times.

Serve your food in small(ish) portions on/in small(ish) dishes – much less daunting when eating is hard work. Try to eat often and in small portions. It helps if your food looks pretty and is nicely presented.

If you suffer from restricted mouth opening using cutlery, in particular big spoons, is not exactly the easiest way to eat. Little flat plastic ice cream spoons work rather well if you can manage smooth and pureed, or soft, foods. If you still prefer eating with conventional cutlery, have a look around for children's cutlery with fairly flat spoons. If metal cutlery feels uncomfortable (or seems to taste strange), replace it by plastic cutlery. If you can manage small chunks of soft foods once they have found their way into your mouth, you may want to try chop sticks, that also avoids inconvenient mouth gymnastics. For liquid food, most people find the good old mug the most versatile dish to handle (somehow). Using a paper cup and squeezing its lip into a V-shaped spout can give you a more targeted way to deliver liquids to your mouth. Alternatively, a baby cup with a spout may be convenient if you have no problems closing your lips around it. A large syringe is yet another way of delivering liquids into your mouth.

If the mechanics of swallowing is your main problem, in particular with liquids ending up in the wrong pipe, using a drinking straw can help.

ii) Useful ingredients

Again, nothing unusual is required as far as store cupboard ingredients are concerned. Corn flour and gelatin (vegetarian gelatin is also available; see Part III i)) are two familiar ingredients for getting the consistency and texture of your food exactly right for your needs and preferences. If your meals are mainly based on liquids you may find that slightly thickening the liquids can make eating easier, or your meal may feel more satisfying in that way. That needs a little bit of experimentation and corn flour or arrow root (mixed with a little bit of water, added to the gently boiling liquid food) may be the perfect thickener to adjust the thickness precisely as you want it. You need to try if this gives your liquid food a texture that is comfortable to eat at the most suitable temperature.

The role of gelatin is slightly different: with the help of gelatin you can turn all liquids or thin purees into slippery jellies (sweet as well as savoury, see Part III) which are particularly easy to eat. Sometimes a (cold) jelly can be easier to eat than the corresponding (warm) liquid,

sometimes it may be the other way round. The gelatin slippery approach works well for liquefied fruit and vegetable purees, pureed meats, broth and juices which can all be turned into jellies. Again, it is all about your personal preferences but varying the thickness and degree of 'sliperiness' of your food will give you quite a diverse range of food textures; useful to battle any onset of food boredom.

Fine oat meal and all kinds of tinned or frozen pulses (chick peas, peas, butter beans, split red and yellow lentils) are convenient versatile bases for satisfying liquid meals that keep the hunger away for a while (and are good sources of proteins too). Make sure that foods based on pulses are carefully pureed and the puree / liquid is passed through a fine-meshed sieve before serving. Use instant baby porridge as a lazy breakfast option, it is perfectly smooth and designed to be easy to swallow (and you may feel young at heart...).

When you feel tempted by soft or increasingly compact foods but it is all just too much of a hassle and too much work to get it down because of, for example, a dry mouth, sauces and other lubrication may do the trick (see Part VII). Examples of useful lubricants are rich concentrated chicken stock (particularly nice with vegetables; make a large quantity, freeze in small portions in an ice cube container and use as you go), double cream or whipped cream, good quality rapeseed or olive oil (which will also go nicely with some sweet foods; some may find a hint of acidity of olive oil irritating), other oils (walnut, pumpkin-seed or grape-seed oils are really nice but are a bit pricey), any variety of smooth rich gravy you may fancy, good quality mayonnaise (preferably homemade; easy, see Part V), mascarpone (rich Italian cream cheese) thinned with single cream, custard, melted butter. There is no need to worry about these supposedly guilty pleasures. When you are on a diet of liquid or pureed foods these are by necessity diluted. In addition you will probably eat a little less than you normally would. In these circumstances these not-so-guilty pleasures are very welcome because they add nutrition, calories and proteins, to your diet without causing extra-efforts with eating.

Your taste buds are recovering, you are getting tired of bland foods but can't handle spicy foods? Your kitchen window sill or your garden can help: grow flavoursome herbs, lots of them (basil, lovage, mint, lemon balm, chives, flat-leafed parsley, sage, coriander, tarragon, dill). If you can manage finely chopped generous amounts of fresh herbs – just add these to your food. Some people find that freshly chopped herbs are helpful with dry mouth troubles. If you can't, or don't want to, have bits of chopped herbs in your food you can add fresh herbs while cooking and simply pass your food through a sieve before serving it. Should you be in the mood for a bit of kitchen experimentation, here is a clever little trick. Get yourself a rock-bottom cheap small Italian espresso jug (the version that you heat on your stove). Stuff roughly chopped herb leaves in the filter (where normally the coffee powder would go), put a little bit of water in the bottom part as usual and heat briefly as you would normally do for making espresso. The rising steam extracts the flavour from the chopped leaves and you will have an intensely herb-flavoured infusion in the bottom part of the jug (the steam-treated leaves will look a bit sorry). Use that infusion to add flavour to your food (freeze any surplus in small portions).

A selection of spices which add flavour and variety to your food without creating unpleasant sharpness / hotness are cloves, cardamom, bay leave, fennel seeds, coriander seeds, caraway seeds, ground nutmeg, cumin, star anise. You can put the spices in a tea egg for easy removal after cooking. When spicy foods are problematic the most commonly

troublesome spices are pepper (black more so than white), hot paprika, cayenne, any kind or form of chillies, hot curry-powder mixtures, vinegars, lime or lemon juice, hot mustard, horseradish.

There are two special candidates amongst the many spices: cinnamon and vanilla, both of which are not only suitable for sweet dishes but are also delicious in savoury recipes. The two spices are special because their 'taste' to a fairly large degree we actually notice by smelling rather than tasting them. That makes them useful candidates for flavouring food when your sense of taste is somewhat compromised.

There are several surprisingly disappointing candidates as far as pureed food is concerned. Long-grain rice fails miserably, it stubbornly retains a sharp crumbly consistency. Short-grain rice when well cooked is slightly more suitable, alternatively rice can be replaced by rice flour. Pasta does not really lend itself to blending, it ends up as a rather unpalatable rubbery lump (try some of the really tiny pasta shapes instead, such as 'stellette' = little stars or alphabet pasta). Soft white bread can be troublesome because it tends to be sticky. Mashed potatoes are sticky because of the relatively large amount of starch in potatoes; that can be overcome by using lots of lubrication such as cream or butter (as an alternative use sweet potatoes which give a much less starchy mash). Minced meat in dishes such as Bolognese sauce tends to have a somewhat awkward crumbly texture. It works better if you get lean mince from a butcher and ask them to mince it twice (the traditional Italian way), then puree the Bolognese sauce after cooking (see Part V).

iii) Miscellaneous

A visit to the baby-food aisle in your local supermarket may be a worthwhile excursion: if ordinary fruit juices or fruit purees are too acidic for you, try pear or apple juice or fruit purees for babies. These products are much less acidic and may just be working for you. Generally if fruit purees are too acidic try mixing them with some Greek yogurt or whipped cream. That might be enough to remove the sharp edge (just adding loads of sugar does *not* work). In order to boost your protein intake, you can mix / smuggle baby meals (chicken, for example) into smooth vegetable soups before heating soup.

If you feel that you need a break from dairy products, try almond, soy or coconut milk as an alternative.

Naturally we all have an appetite for refreshing acidic tastes such as that of lemons or oranges. If these are far too acidic to enjoy by mouth, make use of your nose (much of our tasting experiences actually stem from the smell of foods): just clip a slice of lemon or orange on your cup or mug, that gets it close to your nose when you drink and can rather well satisfy an appetite for a refreshing lemon flavour without causing offense.

Texture is not the only aspect that can make all the difference between being able to eat something comfortably, or not. The temperature of your food also makes a huge difference. Many people find that the colder the food the easier it will be to swallow (that is the reason

why we have a section on frozen foods, Part IV). Some people find that they can happily enjoy some foods in the form of ice cream (including savoury foods) while the same food in its ordinary warm form is beyond reach or not nearly as enjoyable.

Temperature contrast can also work in your favour. For example, if you take a sip of carrot soup at 'normal' soup temperature followed by a mouthful of basil ice cream (see Part IV) and so on, the temperature contrast may well be able to contribute to a less cumbersome dining experience. There are no fixed or golden rules but a little bit of experimentation around the temperature of your food is definitely a good idea.

What works best is individually very different and changes over time but there are some general trends. One general fact certainly is that maintaining the best possible oral hygiene greatly helps to enjoy eating. For example, if you only eat very soft or liquid meals your tongue will not self-clean as it normally would by processing hard foods and this will reduce your taste acuity (unless you take appropriate oral-hygiene action).

If your main problem is soreness of mouth and throat, creamy liquid and jellied foods are easiest to handle. Avoid acidic foods and choose dairy-based meals with little seasoning. Cold or frozen food is likely to be easiest to handle. Especially if you have sores or ulcers in the mouth it is a good idea to avoid sugar; this helps to prevent oral infections.

If you are affected by mucus and find that dairy products aggravate your problem, reduce the amount of dairy component in recipes and increase the amount of stock or water accordingly. Rinsing your mouth right after eating also helps.

If you are affected by a dry mouth you may find it easiest to eat cold, or lukewarm, liquid or nearly liquid foods. Go easy with salt and sugar, both can make eating more unpleasant. Munching on junks of pineapple, or mashed pineapple, can help to make sticky saliva less viscous. Using plenty of lubrication and sauces of all kinds greatly helps with swallowing soft foods.

Our senses of taste and smell are a complicated machinery, designed to distinguish bitter, salty, sweet, sour and umami ('savoury') flavours. When this machinery is compromised this can take many different forms. You may find that the smell of food puts you off, that everything tastes like saw dust, that some foods taste 'wrong' or give you a lingering bad taste in the mouth, and so on. Most importantly, make sure that these effects do not cause an aversion to eating altogether, there are ways to manage impaired taste – and even enjoy food.

Avoid off-putting foods and look for foods that taste and smell good. These may be rather different from your normal favourite dishes and may include some apparently crazy combinations. Many find umami tastes (and smells) most appetising. You may find that cold food tastes better. Be prepared that taste confusions change over time. What is revoltingly horrible this week may well be back on the agenda two weeks on. Keep on trying what works best. Only you will know what works and if somebody else helps you with the cooking, do let them know about your current preferences.

If the smell of foods is a problem eat cold and frozen foods. At the other extreme, you may find the intense aroma of essential oils helpful to improve your appetite.

If everything tastes like saw dust, try tart foods and use strong flavours and spices. Try enhancing the flavour of your food with lemon juice or other fruit juices, or wine if you can tolerate acidity.

Many people find red meats problematic, and most can enjoy food based on dairy, eggs, fish and white meats.

What if you can only manage liquid food or jelly but have just such a craving for, say a nice piece of fried bacon? Well, it is not difficult to transfer the bacon taste to a manageable form of jelly. Here is how that works in principle. Fry several bacon pieces, remove the fried bacon from the pan (keep the frying fat to start some bacon-flavoured pea soup, for example). Heat a small amount of whole milk in a saucepan and add the fried bacon pieces, simmer gently for about 15-20 minutes, then set aside to cool, cover and leave overnight. Next day remove the bacon pieces (now reduced to some rather sad pieces of rubber) and discard them; all the bacon flavour is now in the milk. Soak and dissolve some powdered gelatin and add, while stirring, to the flavoured milk. Pour into a mould and put in the fridge to set for a few hours. And then it's time to enjoy your bacon-flavoured jelly! Infusing dairy products or mixtures of egg yolks and milk or cream works well for many meat-based and roasting aromas because all these flavours readily dissolve in the fat component of milk/cream/yolks. This is obviously a wide field for inspired and adventurous kitchen experiments!

Before we start with cooking: the good news is that there are really no restrictions as to flavours – almost everything and anything can be prepared in liquid, smooth or soft form. The only compromise is texture and that is quite straightforward to adjust according to what you feel is most comfortable and it usually does not involve a great deal of kitchen chores. Thinking a little bit outside the box and being imaginative and adventurous certainly helps.

It may seem counterintuitive to have a cookbook and recipes for times when eating is difficult. It makes sense because preparing your own food (or even better: having somebody help you with it) gives you the best options to get your food exactly right for your needs and appetite, no matter how unconventional that may be at the time.

As a rule of thumb you could expect that if you are able to swallow enough power drinks and supplements to keep going, instead you might just as well feed yourself enjoyable, proper, texture-adjusted food (and consider power drinks and supplements as a plan B rather than a staple, or just use supplements to enrich normal foods) – far more pleasure to be had from 'real food'! It may be useful to keep a food diary as this will give useful information about the calories and possibly missing nutrients in your daily food intake over a period of time.

The following collection of recipes reflects what most people can enjoy, mainly dishes based on dairy, eggs, vegetables and fish, as well as quite a number of sweet dishes. Many of the recipes are fairly high in calories, useful in these circumstances.

All recipes are written in their mildest form with a bare minimum of seasoning, acidic ingredients are generally avoided. If you find spicier foods more attractive, just freely add herbs/spices, whatever works best for you.

Part II: Liquid food

There are so many recipes for tasty soups that it is impossible to even just give some representative examples without turning this booklet into a massive door stopper. Most soups also taste good lukewarm or cold. In addition there are equally large numbers of tasty milkshakes and smoothies, sweet and savoury.

If you prefer thickening agents for instantaneous thickening of your drinks or liquid foods, these are available from pharmacies and your GP can prescribe these for you. These thickening agents are convenient to use but tend to absorb some of the flavour of your food and not everybody is convinced by the resulting textures (These thickeners are designed to help patients with neurological conditions to swallow liquids safely, rather different from the difficulties most commonly encountered by maxfac patients).

While you are on a liquid diet it may be necessary to supplement your diet with fibre.

i) **Savoury**

Pear and leek soup

Ingredients

300g leek, cleaned and chopped
1 small onion, finely diced
2 pears, peeled and cored, chopped
50g butter
200ml pear juice
500ml chicken stock
200ml cream
1 tbsp corn flour
salt and white pepper

Method

Melt butter in saucepan, add onion and sweat for a few minutes until softening. Add leeks and pear, continue to gently fry for a few more minutes, then add pear juice, cream and chicken stock. Cook over medium heat for about 20 minutes until leeks and pears are tender. Puree the mixture, season to taste, pass through sieve and return to saucepan. Heat to boiling point and adjust thickness as desired by adding corn flour (mixed with a little water) while stirring.

Variations

The pear and leek combination gives a very smooth silky soup. If you prefer a more robust flavour replace the pears by two medium sized potatoes, omit the pear juice and the corn flour.

Creamy chicken soup

Ingredients

500g chicken breast, with skin and bones
1 onion, quartered
2 bay leaves
3 cloves, a few pepper corns
1 tsp pepper corns
1 small shallot, finely chopped
a knob of butter
125ml cream
salt and white pepper

Method

In a saucepan cover chicken breast with cold water, add onion, bay leaves, cloves and pepper corns. Heat and gently boil for about 30 minutes until chicken is cooked. Remove from heat, remove chicken and strain stock, set both aside. Bone and skin chicken, chop meat, set aside. In another saucepan melt a knob of butter and sweat the shallot until softened. Add stock, cream and chicken meat. Puree mixture, pass through sieve, season to taste, adjust thickness as desired.

Fish chowder

Ingredients

1 small onion, finely diced
2 carrots, finely diced
3 medium sized potatoes, peeled and finely diced
60g butter
250ml fish stock

250ml vegetable stock
salt and white pepper
250g fish fillet, chopped
50g shrimps
125ml cream

Method

In a saucepan melt butter, add onion, carrots and potatoes, gently fry for 5 minutes. Add fish and vegetable stock, cook over medium heat until vegetables are soft, about 20 minutes. Reduce heat, add fish fillet and shrimps, simmer for 10 minutes. Puree mixture, pass through a sieve, add cream. Return to saucepan and gently reheat while stirring.

Beef stock with egg and Parmesan cheese ('stracciatella')

Ingredients

500ml beef stock (shop-bought or home-made, avoid stock cubes for this recipe)
1 egg
1 heaped tbsp finely grated Parmesan cheese
pinch of salt, pinch of ground nutmeg

Method

Heat beef stock to boiling point. Break egg into a small bowl, whisk and add Parmesan, salt and nutmeg. Slowly pour egg mixture into boiling beef stock while whisking. Continue for 2-3 minutes until egg turns fluffy. Serve immediately.

Cheese soup

Ingredients

1 tbsp butter
2 tbsp flour
100ml white wine
500ml beef stock
125g Gruyère cheese, finely grated (or Emmenthal)
5 tbsp cream
1 yolk
salt and white pepper

Method

In a saucepan melt butter, add flour, while whisking add wine. Keep whisking until you have a smooth thick white sauce. Add stock while whisking and boil for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Soak grated cheese in cream, season to taste. Remove saucepan from heat, add a little hot stock to cream/cheese mixture and mix well, then add to stock. Heat stock (but do not boil) and whisk in yolk, serve immediately.

Red lentil soup

Ingredients

100g red lentils, rinsed and drained
2 small shallots, finely diced
1 clove garlic, finely diced
1 tsp cumin seeds
50ml white wine
salt and white pepper
400g tinned chopped tomatoes
200ml chicken stock
olive oil
50g Greek-style yogurt
50g crème fraîche
salt

Method

Dry roast cumin seeds in saucepan until fragrant. Add olive oil, shallot and garlic, sweat until softened. Add wine and reduce liquid. Season with salt and white pepper. Add lentils, stock and chopped tomatoes. Continue to cook over medium heat for about 30 minutes. Puree mixture and pass through a sieve with the back of a spoon. Return to saucepan and adjust thickness as desired. Mix yogurt and crème fraîche, season with a little salt. Add a generous dollop of yogurt / crème fraîche mixture to each serving.

Chickpea soup

Nowadays a popular winterwarmer in the Alpine regions of Italy, chickpea soup used to be a main staple food of poor people in that part of the world.

Ingredients

400g tinned chickpeas, drained

1 shallot, finely diced
1 clove garlic, finely diced
a stalk celery, finely diced
200ml chicken stock
1 twig rosemary
salt and white pepper
olive oil

Method

In saucepan gently sweat shallot, garlic, celery and rosemary for about 15 minutes. When the shallot is soft but not browned, add chickpeas and chicken stock, simmer for about 30 minutes. Remove rosemary twig and puree mixture. Pass through sieve and return to saucepan, season to taste, adjust thickness with hot water (or stock), add some olive oil to serve.

Asparagus soup

Ingredients

300g asparagus, prepared and chopped (white or green asparagus, or mixture)
ca 500ml water with a pinch of sugar, a pinch of salt, a slice of lemon
1 tbsp butter
2 tbsp flour
a pinch of salt, a pinch of white pepper, small pinch of nutmeg
200ml cream

Method

Bring water with sugar, salt and the lemon slice to boil. Add asparagus and cook gently until tender, about 10 minutes. Strain, keep liquid and cooked asparagus, set both aside. In a saucepan melt the butter over medium heat, season, add flour and whisk until well mixed. Add cooking water in small portions, continue whisking until you have a thick white sauce. Remove from heat. Puree asparagus with remaining cooking liquid, pass through a sieve. Add to the white sauce and mix well. Heat gently and add cream to adjust thickness.

Variations

This recipe also works for cauliflower and broccoli.

White onion soup

Ingredients

200g white onions, peeled and chopped
a knob of butter
1tsp sugar
50ml white wine
400ml chicken stock
2 bay leaves
1 clove garlic, sliced
2 slices fresh ginger
300ml cream
20g soft butter
salt and ground nutmeg

Method

Melt butter in saucepan, add sugar, then chopped onion. Sweat for a few minutes. Add wine and reduce liquid. Add chicken stock, ginger and bay leaves, simmer for 30-45 minutes until onions are very soft. Remove bay leaves and ginger, add cream and soft butter, puree the mixture. Pass through a sieve, adjust thickness and season to taste.

Watercress soup

Ingredients

200g watercress, leaves only, rinsed and drained
1 shallot, finely diced
1 clove garlic, finely diced
2 tbsp butter
600ml chicken stock
200ml cream
salt and white pepper

Method

Melt butter in saucepan, sweat shallot and garlic until softened. Add chicken stock and cream, cook uncovered until liquid is reduced by about a third. Add watercress and puree mixture, pass through a sieve, season to taste.

Potato and pear soup

Ingredients

½ shallot, finely diced
a generous knob of butter
300g potatoes, peeled and diced
2-3 ripe pears, peeled, cored and diced
500ml vegetable bouillon (or chicken stock)
[optional: a shot of pear brandy (eau de vie poire)]
salt, white pepper to taste
150ml whipping cream, softly whipped

Method

Melt butter in saucepan over moderate heat. Add shallot, potatoes and pears and cook for a few minutes, stirring regularly. Add bouillon (or chicken stock), bring to a gentle boil and cook for 15-20 minutes until potato pieces are very soft. Puree mixture, pass through a sieve, season to taste, adjust thickness, add pear brandy (if used). Reheat before serving, serve topped with some softly whipped cream.

Variation

If you can manage slices / small bites of cheese such as Gruyère, Emmenthal or Gouda – nibbles of cheese go very well with this soup.

Parsnip and sweet potato soup with cardamom mascarpone

Ingredients

300g parsnips, prepared and chopped
250g sweet potato, peeled and chopped
1 onion, peeled and chopped
ca. 800ml vegetable stock
1 bay leaf
2 rosemary twigs
(olive) oil
75ml double cream
salt and white pepper to taste
pinch of ground cardamom
1-2 tbsp runny honey

100g mascarpone
a splash of orange juice
generous pinch of ground cardamom, to taste

Method

Heat oil in saucepan, add prepared vegetables and cook for 5 minutes. Add vegetable stock, bay leaf and rosemary, bring to the boil. Cook for ca. 30 minutes until vegetable cubes are very soft. Remove from heat, remove bay leaf and rosemary twigs, puree mixture and pass through a fine-meshed sieve. Add cream, honey, cardamom and seasoning to taste. Whisk mascarpone with a splash of orange juice and a generous pinch of cardamom. Serve each portion of soup with a dollop of cardamom mascarpone.

Chestnut soup

Ingredients

250g precooked chestnuts, chopped
3 medium sized cooked potatoes, peeled and chopped
1 onion, peeled and chopped
600ml vegetable (or chicken) stock
1-2 tbsp cream
1 tsp ground cinnamon
salt and white pepper to taste

Method

In a saucepan add chestnuts, potatoes and onion to the stock, add cinnamon and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 20-30 minutes. Remove from heat, puree mixture and pass through fine-meshed sieve. Add cream to adjust consistency, add salt and pepper to taste.

Pea and pear gazpacho (cold)

Ingredients

400g pea puree
300g pear puree
150g melon, chopped
300g cucumber, peeled and chopped
1 shallot, finely diced
2 garlic cloves, finely diced
750ml vegetable stock
1-2 tbsp runny honey
ca. 20ml olive (or rapeseed) oil

Method

Puree melon, cucumber, shallot and garlic with vegetable stock. Add pea and pear purees, stir well, strain, adjust thickness and season with honey to taste. Chill well before serving, drizzle with olive oil for serving.

Variations

If you like a more spicy version, add 2 tbsp white balsamico vinegar and a splash of harissa paste.

Pea and buttermilk soup (cold)

Ingredients

200g peas
1 shallot, finely diced
a knob of butter
200ml vegetable stock
500ml buttermilk
handful of lemon balm (or mint) leaves
salt, white pepper

Method

Soften shallot in butter, add peas and stock, simmer until cooked, set aside to cool. Add buttermilk and lemon balm leaves and puree mixture, strain, season to taste. Serve chilled.

Variations

If you prefer a creamier, less tart version, replace half of buttermilk by double cream.

Cucumber and garlic soup

Ingredients

1 cucumber, peeled and seeds removed, chopped
2 potatoes, peeled and chopped

1 small onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, very finely diced
knob of butter
500ml vegetable stock
salt, white pepper
100g Greek yogurt to serve

Method

Melt butter in saucepan and sweat cucumber, potatoes, onion and garlic. Add stock and simmer until vegetables are soft. Puree, strain, adjust thickness and season to taste. Serve with a dollop of yogurt on top.

Lettuce soup

Ingredients

1 shallot, finely chopped
generous knob of butter
ca. 200g lettuce (or other salad) leaves, leavy parts only, washed and roughly chopped
500ml vegetable bouillon (or chicken stock)
1 tbsp flour
100ml single cream
1 yolk
2 tbsp dry sherry or vermouth (Noilly Prat or Martini)
salt, white pepper

Method

Melt butter in saucepan over low heat, add shallots and cook until soft but not browned. Add salad leaves and cook until wilted. Add ca. 100ml stock or vegetable bouillon, puree mixture, pass through sieve, set aside.

Melt second knob of butter, add flour and cook over medium heat, add remaining stock or vegetable bouillon, keep whisking and simmer for 10-15 minutes. Add salad puree, remove from heat. Mix yolk and cream, add to hot soup (not boiling!). Season with vermouth/sherry, salt and pepper. Serve hot, lukewarm or cold.

Tip

Using yolk and cream in this way works for many pureed vegetable soups: the yolk adds protein and in addition improves the texture for ease of swallowing. After the yolk/cream mixture has been added, the soup cannot be boiled anymore, it would curdle – so only add cream/yolk to enough soup for one serving.

Cauliflower soup with poached egg

Ingredients

500g cauliflower florets
80g butter
1 shallot, finely chopped
100g potatoes, peeled and chopped
1l vegetable stock
200ml cream
200ml coconut milk
salt, white pepper, sugar
4 eggs
150ml vinegar
2l water

Method

Soup: Melt butter in saucepan, sweat shallots, add cauliflower and potato cubes, season with salt, pepper and sugar. Add vegetable stock and simmer for ca. 30 minutes until vegetables are soft. Add cream and coconut milk, then puree and strain. Adjust thickness and check seasoning.

Poached eggs: In a large saucepan bring water and vinegar to a vigorous boil. Break eggs separately into cups and slide into the boiling water for 2-3 minutes. Lift with a slotted spoon and drain on kitchen paper.

Serve soup in a deep bowl, add a poached egg to each serving.

Chicken, pear and sweet potato soup

Ingredients

1 chicken breast, skinned and deboned, diced
1 pear, cores and peeled, diced
1 sweet potato, peeled and diced
1 small courgette, diced
500ml chicken stock
salt, white pepper to taste

Method

Bring stock to boil, add chicken pieces, reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Add sweet potato and pear pieces, continue to simmer for another 10 minutes. Add courgette pieces,

continue to simmer for another 5-10 minutes. Remove from stove, puree mixture, pass through sieve, adjust thickness and season to taste.

Parsnip and bacon soup

Ingredients

1 onion, finely chopped
250g parsnips, prepared and chopped
50g bacon, very finely diced
handful of flat parsley leaves, chopped
800ml vegetable stock
50ml single cream
salt, white pepper to taste
knob of butter
a little rapeseed oil

Method

Heat butter and oil in saucepan, sweat onion and parsnip until softened but not browned. Add finely diced bacon and vegetable stock, bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for ca. 30 minutes. Remove from heat, puree mixture, pass through sieve, add single cream. Adjust thickness and season to taste.

Cucumber drink

Ingredients

200g cucumber, chopped, peeled and seeds removed
200ml buttermilk
50ml cream
2 tbsp olive oil
salt and white pepper
fresh dill, chopped

Method

Blend all ingredients, strain, adjust thickness as required, serve chilled.

Salty lassi

Ingredients

200ml water
100ml Greek yogurt (or curd, if you can find some)
a pinch of salt
1 tsp cumin seeds

Method

Fry the cumin seeds in a small dry pan until fragrant. Whisk yogurt and water, add a pinch of salt and the cumin seeds, mix well. Strain and serve chilled.

Variations

For a creamier version, replace water by milk.

Green smoothie I

The idea of green smoothies may sound a little bizarre but they are a tasty way to eat greens while on a liquid diet and they provide nutrients that would be otherwise missing from your diet.

Ingredients

a handful of baby spinach leaves, washed
a handful of watercress leaves or rocket, washed
a stalk of celery, chopped
1 ripe avocado, peeled and chopped
½ cucumber, peeled and de-seeded, chopped
1 pear, peeled and cored, chopped

Method

First puree the green leaves with a little water, then add all other ingredients and puree again. Strain and adjust thickness with cold water. Serve immediately.

Variations

Endless variations, whatever you prefer. If the taste is too tart for you, adjust thickness with whole milk instead of water.

Green smoothie II

Ingredients

a handful of baby spinach leaves or lambs lettuce, washed
a small handful of lemon balm leaves
1 small apple, peeled and cored, chopped
½ cucumber, peeled and de-seeded, chopped
1 ripe banana, peeled and chopped
coconut milk (or milk)
water

Method

First puree the green leaves with a little water. Add apple, cucumber pieces, banana and some coconut milk (or milk) and puree again. Strain and adjust thickness with cold water. Serve immediately.

Cucumber and apple smoothie

Ingredients

1 cucumber, peeled and chopped
1 apple, peeled and chopped
handful of rocket (or watercress) leaves
250ml whole milk
250ml Greek yogurt

Method

Puree all ingredients together, strain, serve immediately.

Carrot smoothie

Ingredients

300ml carrot juice
150g Greek yogurt
100ml cream
2 tbsp orange juice (or, naughty version: gin)
salt and white pepper to taste

Method

Blend together all ingredients, serve chilled.

Beetroot smoothie

Ingredients

150g Greek yogurt
150ml whole milk (or buttermilk or cream)
grated zest of ½ lemon
salt and white pepper to taste
3 tbsp cooked beetroot, chopped
3 tbsp chopped pear
handful of lambs lettuce (or handful of other chopped tender salad leaves)

Method

Combine all ingredients and puree together, strain. Serve chilled.

Tomato yogurt drink

Ingredients

300g tomatoes, deseeded and skinned, chopped
250ml Greek yogurt
1 garlic clove, pureed
250ml vegetable bouillon
handful of basil leaves, chopped
salt, white pepper to taste

Method

Mix tomato pieces, yogurt, garlic, bouillon and basil leaves, puree mixture. Pass through a sieve, chill for about an hour before serving. Season to taste before serving.

Red lentil smoothie

Ingredients

3-4 tbsp cooked red lentils (or tinned ones)
100ml water
grated zest and juice of ½ orange
200ml whole milk
1-2 tbsp runny honey
vanilla sugar to taste

Method

Combine all ingredients, puree and strain. Adjust consistency as wanted, serve chilled with a little whipped cream.

Turmeric milk

A tasty drink; turmeric is thought to have natural antibiotic properties.

Ingredients

250ml whole milk or unsweetened almond milk
1 tsp ground turmeric
1 cinnamon stick
pinch of salt
½ tsp ground cardamom (or 1 tsp crushed cardamom pods)
1 tsp ground ginger
honey (optional)

Method

Heat milk in a small saucepan, add all spices and simmer for 5 minutes. Pass through a sieve and serve hot or lukewarm. Optional: add honey to taste.

ii) Sweet

Milkshakes

Just about any smooth fruit puree (or mixture of fruit purees) is suitable for making milkshakes.

Ingredients

ca. 1 part fruit puree
ca. 4 parts whole milk

Method

Whisk fruit puree and milk together, serve chilled

Variations

Blend with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Pomegranate milk

Ingredients

200ml pomegranate juice
pinch of ground cardamom
1-2 tbsp runny honey
150ml whole milk

Method

Blend all ingredients together, serve immediately.

Cinnamon milk with prunes

Prunes are a great source of fibre.

Ingredients

500ml whole milk
100ml water
100g soft prunes, chopped
a good pinch of ground cinnamon
2-3 tbsp caster sugar, to taste

Method

Gently heat all ingredients in saucepan, puree and strain (if necessary). Tastes best lukewarm.

Mango lassi

Ingredients

1 ripe mango, peeled and cored, chopped (or ready made mango puree)
200ml water
400ml Greek-style yogurt
optional: a pinch of ground cloves, a pinch of ground cardamom

Method

Puree all ingredients together, strain, adjust thickness with cold water, serve chilled.

Smoothies

There are endless possibilities, whatever crazy or conventional combinations take your fancy, just a few examples below.

Avocado smoothie

Ingredients

1 ripe avocado, peeled and cored
3-4 tbsp sugar
3 tbsp cream
150ml milk

Method

Puree all ingredients together, strain, adjust thickness, serve immediately (chilled, with a few ice cubes).

Carrot-coconut smoothie

Ingredients

200ml carrot juice
3 tbsp coconut milk
3 tbsp Greek yogurt
sugar to taste

Method

Whisk all ingredients together, serve chilled.

Cherry smoothie

Ingredients

200g tinned cherries, strained, keep liquid
300g Greek yogurt
2 tbsp honey
milk

Method

Puree cherries, yogurt and honey. Strain, adjust thickness with cherry juice and/or milk, serve chilled.

Mango-banana smoothie

Ingredients

1 ripe mango, peeled and chopped (or ready-made puree)
1 banana, peeled and chopped
100ml orange juice
1 tbsp honey
400ml Greek yogurt
milk or water

Method

Puree all ingredients together, adjust thickness with milk or water, strain, serve chilled.

Banana smoothie

Ingredients

1 ripe banana, peeled and chopped
100ml Greek yogurt
2 tbsp honey
a pinch of ground cinnamon
milk

Method

Puree all ingredients together, strain, adjust thickness with milk, serve chilled.

Pear-avocado-orange smoothie

Ingredients

2 ripe pears, peeled and cored, chopped
1 ripe avocado, peeled and chopped
juice of 1 orange
milk or water

Method

Puree pears, avocado and orange juice. Adjust thickness with milk or water, strain, serve chilled.

Peach-raspberry smoothie

Ingredients

2 ripe peaches or nectarines, peeled and chopped (or tinned fruit)
40g raspberries
300ml milk
a scoop of vanilla ice cream

Method

Puree all ingredients together, adjust thickness, strain and serve immediately.

Melon-mango smoothie

Ingredients

½ ripe melon, peeled and cored, chopped
1 ripe mango, peeled and chopped (or ready made puree)
milk or water

Method

Puree the melon and mango, adjust thickness with milk or water, strain, serve chilled.

Squash-banana smoothie

Ingredients

350g squash, cooked and cubed
1 small banana, peeled and chopped
150ml buttermilk
ca. 250ml milk
a pinch of ground cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg
1-2 tbsp runny honey

Method

Blend squash, banana, buttermilk and spices to a smooth puree. Add milk to dilute to wanted thickness. Add honey to taste, mix well. Serve chilled.

Avocado-banana smoothie

Ingredients

2 ripe avocados, peeled and chopped
1 banana, peeled and chopped
pinch of ground cinnamon
ca. 400ml almond milk (unsweetened)

Method

Blend all ingredients to a smooth thin puree, pass through sieve and adjust thickness with almond milk according to preference. Serve chilled.

Part III Smooth food / jellied food

This section gives examples of savoury and sweet smooth food, that is: jellies. Jellies are a good (sometimes even better, more convenient) alternative (and addition) to a purely liquid-based diet. Many jellies are particularly easy to swallow because turning a liquid into a jelly alters its flow properties.

Jellies can make a much wider range of foods and flavours accessible than is possible to provide on a liquids-only diet. Any liquid or liquefied food, savoury as well as sweet, can be made into a jelly. Since jellies are essentially liquids in disguise, they are a useful alternative to keep yourself hydrated if swallowing liquids is difficult or impossible. If you find that currently your fingers are the best food-handling tool, that is no problem with a fairly firmly set jelly and that could be a part of the convenience factor.

There is a rich variety of gelling agents, thickeners and emulsifiers, many more than just ordinary supermarket gelatin. All of these ingredients give foods particular textures and properties regarding mouth feel or ease of swallowing. Between them they can provide a wide range of tailor made food textures. Hence, before delving into recipes for sweet and savoury jellies, let us have a look at some of the properties of the most common gelling agents, thickeners and emulsifiers.

The recipes in sections ii) and iii) are all based on gelatin but can usually also be prepared with other gelling or thickening agents.

i) A brief history of gelling agents, thickeners and emulsifiers

Nearly all the gelling, thickening and emulsifying ingredients are obtained from plant materials, only gelatin is made from animal collagen (pork, cattle, chicken, fish). Nearly all these agents with the ability to alter the texture of foods do so by similar mechanisms but to different degrees: in all cases very large molecules (usually made up from many interconnected sugar molecules) alter the way in which water molecules can move around. In a typical liquid, the water molecules are fairly free to move around but in the presence of these huge molecules the movement of the water molecules is more restricted and as a result the liquid can thicken, solidify or form a jelly, depending on the type and amount of gelling agent, temperature and composition of the liquid.

The most familiar gelling agents probably are gelatin, agar and carrageenan (commonly called vegetarian gelatin). In addition there are several other such ingredients with interesting properties giving slightly different food textures. In fact, here we follow the

footsteps of some high-end Michelin-starred cuisine where professional chefs often take advantage of these ingredients.

Gelatin

Made from animal collagen, gelling agent (E441) which can also be used to stabilise foams and mousses (see recipes Part V). Available in sheet and powder form.

Gelatin-based jellies melt around 35°C (ca. body temperature), so need to be set in the fridge (at temperatures below 15°C); it takes several hours to set.

Probably the most beneficial set of properties of gelatin-based jellies with regard to ease of swallowing (literally melts in the mouth and has a particularly smooth texture) but also does not distort the flavour of foods. Jellies last usually for several days in the fridge before they start leaking liquid / separating. Presence of sugar, acids (wine) or alcohol may slightly alter the firmness of set of jellies. Gelatin-based jellies cannot be frozen and thawed. Gelatin works with just about all liquids (with the exception of pineapple and papaya juice, both contain enzymes that prevent the gelatin from setting the liquid – the same mechanism that helps making sticky saliva less sticky when munching on pineapple junks), a particularly robust and forgiving gelling agent. Powdered gelatin is most convenient to precisely adjust the wanted firmness of set.

Agar

Obtained from seaweed, a gelling agent (E406). Usually sold in powder form in many supermarkets and Asian food stores (traditional ingredient in Asian cuisine).

Agar-based jellies are produced by heating it in the liquid to nearly boiling point, the jelly then sets rapidly on cooling. Agar produces firm, slightly brittle jellies that can be cut into shape at room temperature. The jellies are fairly stable at higher temperatures, so can be re-heated and served hot. Jellies cannot be frozen and thawed. Agar jellies do not keep well but start leaking water after a short while.

Carrageenan

Obtained from red algae (Irish moss), a gelling agent (E407, E407a), the usual vegetarian alternative to gelatin. Basically used for centuries in China, Ireland and Scotland (for example, according to some local Scottish traditions seaweed is boiled in milk, strained, flavouring (whisky...) added to the liquid and set aside to cool, yielding a variety of milk jelly). Different fractions of carrageenan exist (Iota – gives soft gels, requires presence of calcium ions to work, so naturally works well with dairy products; Kappa – gives firm gels but requires presence of potassium ions to work (usually already added to commercial 'vegetarian gelatin'; Lambda – acts as a thickener for dairy products, this fraction is usually not contained in 'vegetarian gelatin').

Carrageenan-based jellies cannot be heated but can be frozen and thawed. Especially jellies made with the Iota fraction have interesting mouthfeel properties: they tend to slightly liquefy when shaken, stirred or chewed (a bit like ketchup) and in this way give the impression of a silky texture in the mouth and may ease swallowing. The Kappa fraction gives a silky mouthfeel similar to that of tofu. Carrageenan jellies set rapidly on cooling.

Use of carrageenan to produce jellies is not quite as robust as the use of gelatin and the firmness of set is slightly more difficult to predict but carrageenan-based jellies broaden the range of properties beyond those based on gelatin (and, of course, may be more acceptable to vegetarians and are halal and kosher as well).

Alginates

Obtained from brown algae, a range of gelling and gum-forming agents (E400-E404). You may have come across sodium alginate as the main ingredient in some well known heart-burn remedies. Alginates are commonly used as food thickeners, as gelling agents they yield firm, brittle and heat-stable jellies. Alginates are popular in so called molecular cuisine where one can use their properties to prepare unusual foods and food textures, such as wobbly jelly spheres containing a liquid core.

Pectin

Obtained from various fruits and plants (for example apples and peel of citrus fruit), a well known household gelling agent (E440) widely used in jam making, or in the production of jelly beans. Gelling effect requires high sugar content in a (at least) slightly acidic environment, perfect for jam making. Pectin produces stable jellies that can be frozen and thawed.

Gellan gum

A by-product of sugar fermentation (E418), powerful gelling agent that is widely used in the food industry. Small concentrations of gellan gum form typically elastic jellies that are particularly good at releasing flavours. Robust whisking of these jellies produces so called liquid gels – liquids that are perfectly smooth and can be poured but still maintain most of the properties of a gel rather than a simple liquid. Gellan-based jellies are easy to cut once set and thus are particularly suitable as slippery 'finger food'.

Xanthan gum

A by-product of fermentation (E415), powerful thickener and stabiliser, works with a very wide range of hot and cold liquids. Small quantities of xanthan gum swell liquids to a jelly-like consistency (fluid gels) maintaining the viscosity even when heating. Xanthan-based gels typically have a pleasant mouth feel because xanthan gum can also act as an emulsifier.

Guar gum

Made from guar beans (E412), a stabiliser and thickener, widely used in commercial foods. Works similarly to starch in corn or potato flour (see below) but is a more powerful thickening agent that only requires small quantities to be added to liquid. Can also act as a gelling agent but only in the presence of calcium ions (such as in dairy products).

Methylcellulose

Various types, obtained from plant fibres (cellulose), often from cotton plant (E461), gelling agents and potent foam stabilisers. Depending on the particular fraction used, firm gels form at elevated temperatures (ca. 50-80°C), set rapidly and melt in the mouth. At room temperature small quantities of methylcellulose added to a liquid (together with some thickener such as xanthan gum, see above), combined with vigorous whisking of the liquid, produce stable foams ('air with taste'). Such foams can act as appetisers that do not require active swallowing but can provide access to favourite tastes of any strongly flavoured liquid.

Corn (or potato) starch, arrow root

Commonly used kitchen agents for thickening of sauces and soups. Need to be suspended in some liquid and slowly added to boiling liquids. Tend to form lumps unless vigorously

stirred but permit very good control of adjustment to wanted degree of thickness for hot liquids.

Less suitable as thickening agents when dealing with dry mouth problems.

Lecithin

A group of compounds usually extracted from egg yolks or soy beans (E322), highly effective emulsifier. Lecithin belongs to a class of compounds with so called amphiphilic properties, that is these compounds are attracted both by water and by fatty compounds (more specifically, these are all phospholipids). Because of this dual attraction of lecithin to otherwise immiscible phases, emulsifiers such as lecithin give foods a particularly silky and comfortable texture (and help paint particles to remain suspended in wall paint, or prevent commercial salad cream from splitting while sitting on the shelf, etc.). With lecithin being a natural component of egg yolks, egg yolks can easily be used as a natural emulsifying agent in home cooking (think of proper homemade custard, see Part VII; or set custards / flans, see Part V).

Lecithin powders can be used with a wide range of hot or cold liquids and purees and may also be used to stabilise foams. In order to produce an emulsion, lecithin is first dissolved in the water phase, and the fatty / oily phase is added step by step in small quantities while whisking the mixture constantly (the secret of making mayonnaise...).

The following recipes assume the use of ordinary powdered gelatin but do not specify the quantity of gelatin because different people will want different firmness of set for a range of preparations.

Typically a sachet contains 12g of gelatin powder which will give a fairly firm set of 500ml liquid (gelatins from different manufacturers will usually have slightly different setting properties). If a wobbly soft jelly (too soft to turn out) is desired, as a rough guide 6-10g gelatin per 500ml liquid should achieve that. Approximately 14-16g of gelatin per 500ml liquid will give a jelly with a set firm enough to turn it out and cut it into shapes at room temperature.

A bit of practice will help to get this right for your needs, the exact firmness of set also depends on the liquid. It takes several hours for a gelatin-based jelly to set in the fridge, so best to prepare a day in advance. Jellies prepared with ordinary supermarket gelatin can not be heated (they melt and disintegrate) but most people find it easier to eat cold food anyway. If you want to be able to eat, say warm roast-chicken jelly you have to use other gelling agents (see section i)) which are available from catering suppliers online.

ii) Savoury jellies

Vegetable jelly

Ingredients

100g prepared broccoli
150ml water
salt and white pepper
optional: a small knob of garlic, ground nutmeg
powdered gelatin

Method

Cook the broccoli pieces in slightly salted boiling water until tender. Add a small piece of garlic (if wanted) and puree. You should have a fairly thin puree, pass through a sieve if in doubt. Season to taste. Sprinkle the gelatine over a small amount of water in a small saucepan, let sit for a few minutes, then heat gently while stirring until the gelatine is completely dissolved. Slowly pour into the puree while stirring. Let cool while stirring occasionally. Pour into small moulds or some other dish and put in the fridge to set.

Variations

This works for many vegetables such as cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, fine green beans, kohlrabi, peas.

Carrot jelly

Ingredients

250 g carrots, peeled and sliced
1 small shallot, finely chopped
a knob of butter
1 tsp caster sugar
salt and white pepper
100ml carrot juice or vegetable stock
100ml cream
powdered gelatin

Method

Melt butter in saucepan, add chopped shallots and sweat for a few minutes, add sugar and carrot slices, stir for a couple of minutes. Add carrot juice (or stock) and cream and simmer until carrots are tender. Puree mixture. Dissolve gelatin and slowly add to carrot puree. Let cool while stirring occasionally, then pour into dish and put in fridge to set.

Variations

For variety of flavour, add a pinch of ground cumin, or add a slice of fresh ginger while cooking (remove before you puree the mixture), add chopped coriander or parsley leaves before you puree the mixture, then pass puree through a sieve.

Spinach jelly

Ingredients

500g spinach
1 small shallot, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
a knob of butter
50ml cream
salt and white pepper, ground nutmeg
powdered gelatin

Method

Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat, add chopped shallots and garlic and sweat for a few minutes until soft. Add washed (moist) spinach and let wilt. Add cream and simmer until very soft. Puree mixture and season to taste, pass through a sieve if in doubt. Dissolve gelatin and slowly pour into spinach puree. Pour into dish and set aside to cool, then put in fridge to set.

Red cabbage jelly

This jelly looks pretty stunning on a white plate.

Ingredients

100g ready cooked red cabbage (shop bought)
a knob of butter
1 small shallot, finely chopped
100ml apple juice
150ml water
3 cloves
2 bay leaves
salt and white pepper
powdered gelatin

Method

Melt the butter in a saucepan, add the shallots and sweat for a few minutes. Add the cabbage, apple juice, water, cloves and bay leaves. Cook for 15 minutes over medium heat. Remove cloves and bay leaves, then puree mixture (pass through a sieve if in doubt). Season to taste. Dissolve gelatin and slowly pour into cabbage puree while stirring. Set aside to cool, pour into dish and put in fridge to set.

Jellied pumpkin soup

Ingredients

125g pumpkin flesh, chopped
125g cooking apples, peeled, cored and chopped
1 small shallot, finely chopped
250ml vegetable stock
a knob of butter
30ml cream
salt and white pepper
powdered gelatin

Method

Melt butter in saucepan, add chopped shallots and sweat for a few minutes until softened. Add pumpkin and apple pieces, then vegetable stock. Bring to the boil and cook until apples have disintegrated and pumpkin pieces are soft. Add cream, then puree mixture (pass through a sieve if in doubt). Season to taste. Dissolve gelatin and slowly pour into pumpkin puree while stirring. Set aside to cool, then pour into dish and put in fridge to set.

Jellied beef stock with egg à la royale

Use homemade or shop-bought stock for this recipe, avoid stock made from cubes.

Ingredients

500ml good quality beef stock
powdered gelatin
2 eggs
130ml milk
pinch of salt, pinch of nutmeg
a knob of soft butter (for greasing the baking dish)

Method

Heat the beef stock, dissolve the gelatin in a little water, then slowly pour into the warm stock while stirring. Set aside to cool, pour into flat dish and put in fridge to set. To serve chop into small cubes.

Preheat oven to 160°C. Grease a small fairly flat oven-proof dish with butter, set aside. Break the eggs into a small bowl, stir and season with salt and nutmeg. Heat the milk and pour the hot milk over the eggs, mix well. Strain egg milk into buttered dish. Place dish in a roasting tin, add hot (not boiling) water to the roasting tin about half way up the height of the egg milk. Place on middle shelf in oven and bake until set (10-15 minutes; you may need to cover the baking dish with foil; make sure the water does not boil). When cooled keep in the fridge (covered) until needed. The egg royale should be perfectly smooth and just firm enough to chop into small pieces.

Roast chicken jelly

Ingredients

200g roast chicken meat
200ml chicken stock (or chicken gravy)
100ml cream
salt and white pepper
powdered gelatin

Method

Chop the meat, add stock and cream and puree mixture. Pass through a sieve if in doubt. Season to taste. Gently heat the chicken puree. Dissolve the gelatin in a little water and slowly pour into the chicken puree, stirring constantly. Set aside to cool, stirring occasionally. When cooled, pour into dish and put in fridge to set.

Jellied chicken with mushroom sauce

Ingredients

100g chicken breast, diced in small pieces
250ml chicken stock
75g mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
1 small onion, finely chopped
50ml white wine
ca. 150ml cream
ca. 100ml water
salt and white pepper
2 knobs of butter
powdered gelatin

Method

Chicken jelly: Melt butter in pan, season meat and gently cook until done (about 5 minutes). Heat chicken stock, add cooked chicken pieces and finely puree. Pass through a sieve. Dissolve gelatin and slowly pour into warm chicken puree while stirring. Set aside to cool, stirring occasionally. When cooled pour into dish and put in fridge to set.

Mushroom sauce: Melt butter in pan and sweat onions until soft. Add sliced mushrooms and gently fry for 5 minutes until dry. Add white wine and reduce liquid until nearly dry. Add water and simmer for about 10 minutes. Finely puree mixture, pass through a sieve, adjust thickness with cream, season to taste. Serve (lukewarm or cold) with the jellied chicken.

Roast pork jelly

Serve with red cabbage jelly (see above)

Ingredients

100g roast pork (loin, crackling removed), finely diced
250ml gravy
powdered gelatin

Method

Warm gravy, add diced pork and finely puree. Pass through a sieve (you may have to puree the mixture a second time, with a little extra gravy). Dissolve gelatin and slowly pour into warm pork puree while stirring. Set aside to cool, stirring occasionally. When cooled pour into dish and put in fridge to set.

Roast lamb jelly

Serve with green bean jelly (and apple-potato mash, see Part V)

Ingredients

100g roast lamb, finely diced
250ml gravy
powdered gelatin

Method

Warm gravy, add diced lamb and finely puree. Pass through a sieve (you may have to puree the mixture a second time, with a little extra gravy). Dissolve gelatin and slowly pour into warm lamb puree while stirring. Set aside to cool, stirring occasionally. When cooled pour into dish and put in fridge to set.

Jellied fried salmon

Serve with mayonnaise (see Part V)

Ingredients

100g salmon fillet
150ml milk
oil for frying (or a knob of butter)
salt and white pepper
powdered gelatin

Method

Heat oil (or butter) in a pan, season salmon and gently fry until just done. Crumble cooked salmon into milk and finely puree mixture, pass through a sieve with the back of a spoon. Dissolve gelatin and slowly pour into salmon puree while stirring. Pour into dish, set aside to cool then put in fridge to set.

Cucumber jelly

Wobbly soft cucumber jelly is a really good and refreshing lubricant for sticky foods.

Ingredients

2 cucumbers, peeled and chopped
gelatin

Method

Puree cucumber pieces, then strain puree through a clean tea towel, squeezing gently. Soak and dissolve gelatin, add to cucumber juice while stirring, refrigerate for several hours until set.

Variations

Add chopped fresh dill before you puree the cucumber pieces.

iii) Sweet jellies

Coffee or tea jelly

Ingredients

500ml coffee or tea (if liked, add sugar)
gelatin

Method

Soak gelatin. Prepare coffee / tea as usual, add sugar (if used). While coffee / tea is still hot, add dissolved gelatin while stirring. Set aside to cool, then refrigerate for several hours. Serve chilled, with whipped cream (if liked; Earl Grey jelly with vanilla-flavoured whipped cream is very nice).

Jellied fruit juice

Ingredients

500ml fruit juice
powdered gelatin
optional: double cream or whipped cream or custard to serve

Method

Gently warm the juice. Ladle some warm juice into another saucepan, sprinkle the gelatin powder over, allow to absorb some of the liquid, then gently heat while stirring until the gelatin is completely dissolved. Pour into the warm juice while stirring. Pour liquid into small moulds or one larger dish, set aside to cool, when cooled put in the fridge to set.

Variations

This works with all juices or mixtures of juices; pineapple and papaya juice need to be heated to boiling point for a couple of minutes before adding dissolved gelatin because otherwise these jellies will not set.

Jellied fruit puree

Ingredients

200g peach pieces (tinned fruit or poached fresh fruit)
150ml juice and/or water
powdered gelatin
optional: double cream or whipped cream or custard to serve

Method

Puree the peach pieces with the juice and/or water. Dissolve the gelatin in a little extra water, then add to the peach puree while stirring. Pour into moulds or one larger dish, put in the fridge to set.

Variations

All fruit purees from poached or raw fruit can be made into jellies, with one exception: raw pineapple does not set. Tinned fruit in juice is a convenient starting material if you like it sweet. Homemade fruit compotes (or purees made from raw fruit) are more flexible if you prefer your puree / jelly not so sweet.

Blueberry jelly with yogurt cream

Ingredients

500g blueberries
100g caster sugar
1-2 tbsp vanilla sugar
1 tbsp lemon juice
powdered gelatin
250g Greek yogurt
50g caster sugar
grated zest of 1 lemon
250ml whipped cream

Method

In a saucepan mix blueberries with sugar, vanilla sugar and lemon juice and set aside for 30 minutes, heat and cook for ca. 5 minutes, let cool a little. Puree mixture and pass puree through a fine sieve (with the back of a spoon). Add water for a total of 500ml. Soak and dissolve gelatin, add to the warm puree while stirring. Divide into glasses, half filled. Set aside to cool, then refrigerate for several hours.

Before serving, mix yogurt, caster sugar, lemon zest and whipped cream. Top jelly with yogurt cream to serve.

Gooseberry jelly with set custard

Ingredients

250g gooseberries
75ml elderflower cordial
25g caster sugar
powdered gelatin
4 yolks
50g caster sugar
300ml double cream
1 vanilla pod
powdered gelatin

Method

For the jelly: In a saucepan bring berries, cordial, sugar and ca. 30ml water to a boil, cook until berries disintegrate. Strain mixture through a fine sieve and set aside. Soak gelatin in a little water, then heat gently and dissolve. Add dissolved gelatine to strained berry liquid, mix well, refrigerate for several hours.

For the set custard: Beat yolks and sugar in a large bowl. In a saucepan heat cream and vanilla but do not boil (ca. 80°C). Whisk hot cream into yolks, return mixture to saucepan and heat over low heat, stirring constantly, until slightly thickened (do not boil). Strain (to remove any lumps), add dissolved gelatine, mix well, set aside to cool. Refrigerate for several hours.

Jellied milk

Ingredients

500ml milk
optional: 2 large strips of lemon rind (unwaxed lemon)
powdered gelatin

Method

Gently warm the milk with the lemon rind for 10-15 minutes. Dissolve the gelatin in a little water and slowly pour into the warm milk while stirring. Discard the lemon rind. Stir occasionally until cooled, then pour in small moulds or a larger dish and put in the fridge to set.

Variations

Infuse the milk with a cinnamon stick or cardamom pods. Make a jellied milkshake: before pouring the cooled milk into moulds, mix it with some smooth fruit puree (same relative amounts as for a milkshake). For a more refreshing taste, use buttermilk instead of milk.

Panna cotta ('cooked cream')

This is a classical Italian dessert traditionally served with fruit puree or fruit salad of the season, with strawberries the firm favourite south of the Alps.

Ingredients

500ml double cream
1 vanilla pod
70g caster sugar
powdered gelatin

Method

Soak the gelatin in a little bit of water. Split the vanilla pod, scrape the seeds into the cream, add the pod and the sugar and bring the mixture to a boil. Take off the heat, dissolve the gelatin and slowly pour into the hot cream, discard the vanilla pod. Set aside to cool and continue to whisk occasionally until well cooled (to avoid that the cream and gelatin separate). When mixture starts to set, pour into small moulds and put in the fridge to set.

Variations

This can be flavoured in many different ways (omitting the vanilla). Dissolve some cocoa powder in the hot mixture (before adding the gelatin) to get a slippery chocolate-flavoured panna cotta. Add 2-3 tbsp of soluble coffee powder. A naughty flavour would be to add a shot of cognac or whisky. A more unusual flavour would be to replace the vanilla pod by a sprig of rosemary.

Watermelon jelly

Ingredients

500g watermelon pieces
Pinch of ground cinnamon
50g caster sugar
1 tbsp lemon juice
powdered gelatin

Method

Soak gelatin in a little water. Puree water melon with sugar, cinnamon and lemon juice. Gently warm puree, add dissolved gelatin while stirring. Set aside to cool, refrigerate for several hours.

Variations

This refreshing jelly goes well with (sweetened) milk, (whipped) cream, yogurt or custard. It is equally good with blue cheese sauce. A softly set, wobbly watermelon jelly is a useful lubricant for other foods, similar to wobbly cucumber jelly.

Slightly naughty jellies...

Ingredients

Pimms, Campari, Port, Sherry, G & T, Guinness, wine, etc.
powdered gelatin

Method

Soak and dissolve gelatin in a little water. Prepare your favourite tippie, add dissolved gelatin while stirring. Set aside to cool, then refrigerate for several hours. When using beer, heat the beer gently to de-foam it before adding the gelatin. This preparation with gelatin does not work for concentrated spirits.

Why not serving party aperitifs in the form of jelly nibbles. Little cubes of orange juice jelly and Campari jelly on an iced plate look very 1960'ies!

Rum jelly

Serve with coconut mousse and pineapple puree; an interesting take on pina colada.

Ingredients

250ml water
120g brown sugar
150ml brown rum
12g powdered gelatin (1 sachet)

Method

Bring water and sugar to the boil, remove from heat and add rum to the syrup. Soak gelatin in a small amount of water in a small saucepan. Dissolve gelatin and add to the hot rum mixture. Pour into flat dish and set aside to cool, place in fridge for several hours to set.

Part IV: Frozen food

If you happen to be the proud owner of an ice cream maker, this can be put to good use. However, none of the following recipes require an ice cream maker; all recipes can be prepared in your freezer or the freezer compartment of your fridge. When preparing frozen foods you may need to use a bit more seasoning than you normally would because flavours are less intense in frozen food.

Some of the following ideas and suggestions may sound slightly crazy but frozen foods do work well for a variety of reasons. Ice creams tend to be less upsetting to a sore mouth and throat than warm foods. There is some evidence that the cold temperature triggers the swallowing reflex and thus can make eating easier.

Most fruit or vegetable mousses (see Part V) are suitable for chilling or freezing too.

Frozen coffee (granita)

Ingredients

500ml strong hot coffee or espresso
100g caster sugar
optional: cream to serve

Method

Dissolve the sugar in the hot coffee and set aside to cool. Pour the mixture into a shallow dish and place in the freezer. Stir the mixture with a fork when ice crystals start forming, after about 1 hour. Repeat stirring occasionally until all liquid is frozen and you have a mass of coffee ice crystals (granita). The more often you stir, the finer the crystals will be. Store the granita in a lidded plastic container in the freezer. If you prefer the taste of white coffee, serve the granita with some double cream poured over it. Serve straight from freezer.

Variations

Use strong tea instead of coffee. Fruit or vegetable juices can be turned into frozen granules in the same way. When served with cream you may find that acidity is less of a problem than with liquid juices.

Mouth & throat soothers – frozen infusions

These ice granules are a refreshing mouth soother.

Ingredients

5 tbsp of equal amounts of fresh rosemary, thyme, marjoram and sage
1 cinnamon stick
3 cloves
1l boiling water

Method

Pour the boiling water over the herb and spice mixture, cover and let infuse for about 10 minutes. Strain and put aside to cool. Pour into a shallow dish and freeze and store as above.

Variations

Use a camomile infusion and add a small amount of honey while still hot.

Cucumber granita

Either freeze as ice cubes and use to cool and flavour drinks, or freeze as granules and eat with other dishes such as jellies or mousses.

Ingredients

2 cucumbers, peeled and chopped
caster sugar

Method

Puree cucumber pieces, then strain puree through a clean tea towel, squeezing gently. Dissolve caster sugar in cucumber juice, using ca. 50g sugar for 500ml juice (or equivalent). Pour into shallow freezer-proof dish and put in freezer. Stir every 30 minutes, or so, until completely frozen (if aiming for frozen granules), otherwise freeze in ice cube container.

Variations:

Add fresh dill leaves before you puree the cucumber pieces, strain juice before freezing. If you add 1-2 tbsp gin to the cucumber puree, you will have a softer granita. Serve with a dollop of Greek yogurt.

Rich ice cream (parfait) in many flavours

This recipe will give you a rich and very smooth delicate ice cream that can be made in many different fruit flavours. It is a little bit of work but worth the effort: because of its richness it may allow you to enjoy fruit that may not be so enjoyable to eat in other forms. Only use fresh eggs for this recipe.

Ingredients

for the fruit puree:

400g blackberries

100g caster sugar

juice of ½ lemon (don't be afraid – there will be no trace of acidity in the ice cream, it only serves to break up the fruit and enhances the flavour)

2-3 tbsp water

for the ice cream base:

500ml whipping cream

a pinch of salt

3 eggs

2 yolks

100g caster sugar

Method

Line a loaf tin with cling film.

To make the blackberry puree, put all puree ingredients in a saucepan and heat, stirring occasionally, until the berries are broken up. Blend the mixture and pass the puree through a fine-meshed sieve, pressing with the back of a spoon. Set aside to cool.

Whip the cream with a pinch of salt, put in the fridge until needed. Whisk the eggs and yolks with the sugar (over a hot water bath, a 'bain marie') until you have a pale and creamy mix, thick enough to coat a spoon. Remove from the water bath and continue whisking until cooled. Then add the whipped cream and the blackberry puree, mix everything carefully.

Pour mixture into lined loaf tin, cover with cling film and freeze for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for about 30 minutes to one hour before serving.

Variations

This ice cream base mixture works for many smooth fruit purees (blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, apricots, peaches, mango, black currants). You can omit the fruit puree altogether and instead flavour the creamy egg mixture with a tsp of ground cinnamon for a delicate cinnamon parfait.

Pear Parfait

Only use fresh eggs for this recipe.

Ingredients

2 pears, peeled and cored, diced
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 tbsp pear brandy (eau de vie poire, or cognac)
2 yolks
50g caster sugar
200ml double cream, whipped (soft peaks)

Method

Line loaf tin generously with cling film, set aside. Poach diced pears with lemon juice, brandy and 1-2 tbsp water until very soft. Puree and set aside to cool. In a large bowl whisk yolks and sugar until pale and thick, coating a spoon. Add pear puree, then whipped cream, mix well. Pour mixture into lined loaf tin and freeze for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for 30 minutes to an hour before serving.

Yogurt parfait

Yogurt parfait is a very good refreshing and versatile side dish for many savoury and sweet meals. Only use fresh eggs for this recipe.

Ingredients

2 eggs, separated
pinch of salt
50g caster sugar
25g vanilla sugar
200g Greek yogurt
150ml double cream, whipped (soft peaks)

Method

Line loaf tin generously with clingfilm, set aside. Whip egg whites with salt, add sugar and vanilla sugar and continue to whip until you have a shiny meringue. Add yolks and mix, then yogurt and finally whipped cream. Mix well, pour mixture into lined loaf tin and freeze for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for 30 minutes to one hour before serving.

Cheat's lazy version of parfait in many flavours

Ingredients

100ml pumpkin puree (for the ultra-cheat version use a jar of baby puree)
2 tbsp caster (or icing) sugar
200ml whipping cream
optional: pumpkin-seed oil to serve

Method

Softly whip the cream with the sugar. Fold the pumpkin puree into the whipped cream. Freeze mixture for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for about 30 minutes to one hour before serving. Drizzle with pumpkin-seed oil for serving, if wanted.

Variations

This can be widely varied and will work with many fruit and vegetable purees; do not omit the sugar when using vegetable purees. You can also use this recipe to make chocolate parfait, just replace puree by 100g melted dark chocolate (melt chocolate gently over low heat, let cool for a few minutes and fold into whipped cream, freeze).

Tahini ice cream

A good starter, together with some vegetable puree or vegetable jelly; also goes well with vegetable soups. Less sticky than hummus made from chickpeas.

Ingredients

125g tahini paste
125g honey
500ml whole milk
250ml double cream
2 egg yolks

Method

Gently heat tahini paste and honey in saucepan until honey dissolves, whisk in milk and cream. In a separate bowl, whisk the egg yolks and add a little of the warm tahini mixture, mix well. Add back to the rest of the tahini mixture in the saucepan, then gently heat while stirring until mixture has thickened (do not overheat). Put aside to cool, then freeze in shallow dish, stirring occasionally. Move from freezer to fridge for ca. 30 minutes before serving.

Rocket parfait

Ingredients

250ml champagne, or prosecco, or dry cider
100g caster sugar
1 unwaxed lemon, washed; juice and finely grated zest
150g crème fraiche
2 egg white
30g caster sugar
handful of very finely chopped rocket

Method

In a saucepan bring champagne, sugar, lemon juice and zest to the boil. Remove from heat and set aside to cool. Add crème fraiche, mix well, put mixture in freezer for about 2 hours, stir well every 30 minutes.

Whip egg whites with remaining sugar until stiff and shiny. Fold into pre-frozen crème fraiche mixture, then add finely chopped rocket, mix well. Return mixture to freezer for at least 5-6 hours.

Remove from freezer for about 15-30 minutes before serving.

Simple banana ice cream

Ingredients

80g honey
400g bananas
juice of 1 lemon
250ml whipping cream

Method

Puree bananas, add lemon juice and honey, mix well. Softly whip the cream and fold the banana puree into the whipped cream. Freeze mixture for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for about 30 minutes to one hour before serving.

Banana and peanut butter ice cream

Ingredients

3 ripe bananas
2 tbsp smooth peanut butter
3 tbsps runny honey
3 tbsp Greek yogurt
pinch of salt

Method

Finely mash the bananas with a fork, add the peanut butter and mix well. Add salt, honey and yogurt, mix well. Freeze for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for about 30 minutes to one hour before serving.

Apple sauce ice cream

Ingredients

400g apple sauce
grated zest of 1 unwaxed lemon
4 tbsp honey
pinch of ground cinnamon
250g Greek yogurt
100ml whipping cream

Method

Mix apple sauce with honey, lemon zest, cinnamon and yogurt. Whip the cream and fold into the apple sauce mixture. Freeze in a shallow container and whisk mixture during freezing every half hour until firm. Move from freezer to fridge for about 30 minutes to one hour before serving.

Basil ice cream

Herb ice creams make pleasant and flavoursome accompaniments for many dishes. Only use fresh eggs for this recipe.

Ingredients

3 yolks
50g caster sugar
200ml whipping cream
1 large bunch of fresh basil, leaves only
ca. 2 tbsp Greek yogurt
a drop of vanilla essence

Method

Line a loaf tin with cling film. Whip the cream. Blend the basil leaves, yogurt and vanilla essence to a smooth puree. In a separate bowl whisk the yolks and sugar carefully until you have a pale creamy mixture. Add the basil puree and the whipped cream and mix gently. Pour into the lined loaf tin, cover with cling film and freeze for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for about 30 minutes to one hour before serving.

Variations

Use fresh lemon balm leaves instead (and omit the vanilla essence).

Mint ice cream

A good side dish for many savoury foods.

Ingredients

375ml crème fraiche
handful of fresh mint leaves
3 egg whites, whipped
5 tbsp caster sugar

Method

Chop the mint leaves and carefully puree with sugar and crème fraiche and mix well. Fold in whipped egg whites. Freeze in covered container for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for ca. 30 minutes before serving.

Tomato ice cream

Ingredients

300 g chopped (tinned) tomatoes
200ml whipping cream
a good pinch of sugar
pinch of salt, pinch of white pepper (if wanted)
1 tbsp chopped parsley

Method

Put chopped tomatoes and sugar in a saucepan, heat over moderate heat, add seasoning and simmer for 5-10 minutes. Add chopped parsley and set aside to cool. Blend mixture and pass through a sieve with the back of a spoon. Whip the cream and fold into the smooth tomato puree. Freeze for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for about 30 minutes to one hour before serving.

Avocado ice cream

Ingredients

3 ripe avocados
juice of 1 lemon
350ml cream of coconut

Method

Peel, stone and chop the avocados. Toss in lemon juice and finely puree. Mix with the coconut cream. Freeze for ca. 3 hours. Move from freezer to fridge for about 30 minutes to one hour before serving.

Vegetable ice cream in many flavours

Ingredients

rich ice cream base (see above)
300g smooth vegetable puree instead of fruit puree

Method

Same method as for (sweet) rich ice cream (see above)

Variations

This works well for cooked carrots, cauliflower, parsnips, pumpkin, broccoli, green peas.

Goats cheese ice cream

Only use fresh eggs for this recipe. This ice cream goes well with many vegetable purees and jellies as a side dish.

Ingredients

250ml whipping cream
200g soft goats cheese (Picandou)
200g crème fraiche
70g caster sugar
4 yolks

Method

Line a loaf tin with cling film.

Whisk the yolks and sugar over a water bath until pale and creamy, remove from water bath and continue whisking occasionally until cooled. Add cheese and crème fraiche in small portions, whisk in well before adding the next portion. Whip the cream and fold it into the cheese mixture. Pour into lined loaf tin, cover with cling film and freeze for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for about 30 minutes to one hour before serving.

Stilton ice cream

Only use fresh eggs for this recipe. This ice cream is nice with spinach or carrot puree or jelly.

Ingredients

50g Stilton cheese, rind removed
3 yolks
50g icing sugar
300ml whipping cream
3 egg whites

Method

Line a loaf tin with cling film

In a large bowl beat together the yolks and sugar, finely crumble the cheese and add to the pale yolks, beat until well mixed. In another bowl whip the cream, then add to the cheese mixture. In another clean bowl whisk the egg whites until firm, then fold into the cheese /

cream mixture. Pour into lined loaf tin, cover with cling film and freeze for several hours. Move from freezer to fridge for about 30 minutes to one hour before serving.

Variations

Use other blue cheeses: Roquefort for a strong taste, or Gorgonzola, Gorgonzola dolce, or Yorkshire blue for a milder taste.

Part V: Soft food (no chunks and bits)

This part gives a selection of soft foods, savoury and sweet, that do not need chewing. This includes traditional pureed foods as well as mousses and flans / set custards. Pureed foods and mousses may be easier to eat when combined with sauces or other lubricants (see Part VII). Set custards and flans benefit from the in-built lubricating effect of egg yolk. Mousses are usually stabilised with gelatin and thus also have some degree of in-built slipperiness. The preferred degrees of compactness of purees will be individually different and will also depend on temperature and specific foods. The easiest way to ensure that a puree is free of chunks and bits is to pass it through a fine-meshed sieve. When you prepare any of the basic purees, make a little more and freeze the surplus: basic purees are a convenient starting material for soups, mousses, ice creams and so on.

i) Savoury

Cucumber mousse

Ingredients

300g cucumber (peeled and seeds removed)
100g soured cream
salt and white pepper
2 tbsp finely chopped fresh dill
150ml whipping cream
12g powdered gelatin

Method

Roughly chop the cucumber flesh, add the soured cream, seasoning to taste and the finely chopped dill and puree the mixture, then pass through a fine sieve. Soak and dissolve the gelatin in a little water and slowly add to the cucumber puree while stirring. Whip the cream and fold into the cucumber puree. Refrigerate for several hours to set, serve straight from fridge.

Beetroot mousse

Ingredients

250g beetroot, cooked, chopped
2 apples, peeled, cored and chopped
1-2 tsp lemon juice
150ml double cream
salt and white pepper to taste
12g powdered gelatin

Method

Puree beetroot and apples with a spritz of lemon juice, pass puree through sieve. Soak and dissolve gelatine in a little water, add to puree while stirring, set aside. In a separate bowl whisk cream, then fold into beetroot puree. Season to taste and refrigerate for several hours.

Butternut squash mousse

Ingredients

350g butternut squash, peeled and chopped
2 vanilla pods
200ml double cream
12g powdered gelatin

Method

Cook squash pieces with a very small amount of water until soft, then puree. Soak gelatin in a little water. Split and scrape vanilla pods, add vanilla seeds to the squash puree. Dissolve gelatin and add to puree while stirring, mix well, set aside to cool. Whip double cream to soft peaks and fold into squash puree. Refrigerate for several hours before serving.

Tip

Keep the scraped vanilla pods to make vanilla sugar: put caster sugar in a container with a tight-fitting lid (such as a kilner jar), add chopped up pieces of vanilla pods. After about a week, the sugar will have absorbed the vanilla aroma; can be repeated several times.

Asparagus mousse

Pumpkin seed oil tastes very well with this mousse.

Ingredients

600g green asparagus, prepared and chopped
200ml whipping cream, whipped
1 egg white, whipped
12g powdered gelatin
salt, white pepper

Method

Bring salted water with a pinch of sugar to the boil, add prepared asparagus pieces and cook until very soft. Strain and blend to a puree while still hot. Soak and dissolve gelatin in a little water and add dissolved gelatin to hot asparagus puree, mix well. Set aside, when cooled fold in whipped cream and whipped egg white. Season to taste. Refrigerate for several hours before serving.

Cauliflower mousse

Ingredients

200g cooked cauliflower
100g Greek yogurt
100g crème fraîche (or soured cream)
250g whipping cream
1 sachet powdered gelatin
salt, white pepper

Method

Mix cooked cauliflower with yogurt and crème fraîche, finely puree mixture; pass through sieve and season to taste. Soak gelatin in a little water, heat gently until gelatin dissolves. Slowly pour into cauliflower puree while stirring constantly, set mixture aside. Whip cream and fold into cauliflower mixture. Refrigerate for several hours until set (overnight) before serving.

Variation

Works well served with other (cold) vegetable purees or sauces.

Roquefort mousse with pear puree

Ingredients

1 small shallot, peeled and very finely diced
knob of butter
125g Philadelphia cream cheese
150g crème fraiche
125g Roquefort
1/2 sachet powdered gelatin
2 ripe pears (conference), peeled, quartered and cored
splash of lemon juice

In a small saucepan add a splash of lemon juice to just enough water to cover the pear pieces. Gently heat and simmer until very soft. Finely puree and set aside to cool, refrigerate.

Soak gelatin in a little water in a small saucepan. In another small saucepan melt a knob of butter, add diced shallot and sweat at low heat until very soft, set aside to cool. In a bowl mix cream cheese, crème fraiche and Roquefort. Add softened shallots, blend mixture until smooth. Dissolve gelatin, then add slowly to Roquefort mixture while stirring constantly. Refrigerate overnight; serve with chilled pear puree.

Lentil 'hummus'

Ingredients

100g red lentils
250ml water
2 garlic cloves, very finely chopped
1 tbsp Tahini (sesame paste)
a splash of lemon juice
1 tbsp (olive) oil
1 tsp turmeric
salt, to taste

Method

Rinse lentils with plenty of water, then transfer to saucepan, add water and garlic. Bring to the boil, cover pan, reduce heat and simmer for about 10 minutes until liquid is soaked up. Remove from heat, puree and pass through sieve. Add remaining ingredients, mix well. Chill before serving.

Egg mayonnaise

This makes more mayonnaise than you need for one egg. You will probably be lost forever for commercial products, homemade mayonnaise beats them all by lengths. Only use fresh eggs for this recipe.

Ingredients

1 hard-boiled egg
3 yolks, at room temperature
1-2 tsp lemon juice (or white wine vinegar)
½ tsp salt, a pinch of white pepper
ca. 150-200ml sunflower oil (or a mixture of sunflower / rapeseed / olive oil)

Method

Roughly chop the hard-boiled egg and press through a fine sieve with the back of a spoon, set aside. Warm a big bowl with hot water, empty and dry the bowl. Add the yolks and whisk vigorously for a few minutes until they thicken and are pale. Add the lemon juice, salt and pepper, continue whisking all the time. Start adding the oil while whisking, initially drop by drop, and making sure that every addition is well absorbed before adding more. When about a third of the oil is used up you should have a thick sauce similar to thick cream. Now you can add the remaining oil in teaspoon portions, always whisking. Keep the mayonnaise covered in the fridge where it will keep for a few days.

Add (some) mayonnaise to the strained hard-boiled egg 'snow' and mix well.

Vegetable terrine

This is a bit of work but the reward is an impressive dish; serve with cider vinaigrette if acidity is not a problem.

Ingredients

for the red layer:

200g pre-cooked beetroot, chopped
500ml vegetable stock
1 tsp red wine vinegar
10g powdered gelatin
90g Greek yogurt
100ml whipping cream, whipped
salt and white pepper

for the white layer:

250g celeriac, peeled and chopped
1 apple, peeled, cored and chopped
500ml vegetable stock
½ tsp lemon juice
10g powdered gelatin
90g Greek yogurt
100ml whipping cream, whipped
salt and white pepper

for the cider vinaigrette (optional):

100ml dry cider
1 tbsp cider vinegar
1 small shallot, finely diced
1 small apple, peeled, cored and finely chopped
salt and white pepper
3-4 tbsp sunflower or rapeseed oil

Method

Line a loaf tin with cling film and set aside. Cook the beetroot in the vegetable stock until very soft, puree, pass through a sieve and return to saucepan. Continue to cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until you have a rather thick puree. Add the vinegar and seasoning. Dissolve gelatin in a little water and slowly pour into the beetroot puree while stirring. Set aside to cool, stirring occasionally. When cooled, add yogurt and whipped cream. Transfer to the prepared loaf tin, even the surface, refrigerate for an hour until firmed. In the meantime prepare the celeriac-apple mousse in the same way. Top the beetroot layer with the celeriac-apple mousse, cover with cling film and return to fridge for several hours. Remove from loaf tin and cut in slices to serve.

For the vinaigrette: cook cider, vinegar, onions and apple until liquid is reduced to about half and onions and apples are soft. Puree mixture, add oil and whisk until well combined.

Variations

Replace by other colourful layers, for example a green layer based on green beans or peas puree, or a yellow layer made from carrot puree.

Pea panna cotta (with mango puree)

Ingredients

300g pea puree
200ml whole milk
500ml double cream
150g caster sugar
1 vanilla pod
powdered gelatin (1 sachet)
(mango puree)

Method

Soak gelatin in a little water in a small saucepan. In another saucepan heat milk, cream, sugar and vanilla to a gentle boil, add pea puree. Remove vanilla pod. Add dissolved gelatin and set aside to cool, stirring occasionally. Refrigerate for several hours.

If liked, serve with mango puree (a surprising but very good combination of flavours).

Salmon rilette

Ingredients

200g salmon fillet without skin
80g soft butter
1 tbsp finely chopped fresh dill (or tarragon)
1 tbsp crème fraîche
1 tsp very finely chopped (or grated) shallot
1 unwaxed lemon, grated zest and juice of ½ lemon
salt and white pepper

Method

Gently fry the salmon fillet until just done, put aside to cool. Tear meat into pieces, add ca. 60g soft butter and remaining ingredients, puree mixture, pass through a sieve and season to taste. Divide mixture into small ramekins. Melt remaining butter and pour on top. Put in fridge for a few hours, serve chilled.

Smoked trout mousse

Ingredients

200g smoked trout fillet, skinned
100g full fat Philadelphia cheese
100g crème fraiche
a few tbsp milk
juice of ½ lemon
salt and white pepper
optional: add a tbsp of grated horseradish

Method

Flake the trout fillets, add to the cream cheese and crème fraiche, add about two tbsp of milk, puree mixture. Add lemon juice, mix and season to taste. Refrigerate for a few hours before serving.

Smoked mackerel mousse

Serve with thin carrot puree or any other vegetable sauce

Ingredients

ca. 350g smoked mackerel
a handful of fresh dill leaves, chopped
1 tsp lemon juice
150g crème fraiche
salt and white pepper
100ml whipping cream
10g powdered gelatin

Method

Skin and debone the mackerel, tear flesh into pieces. Add dill, lemon juice and crème fraiche, puree the mixture. Pass through a sieve, season to taste. Dissolve gelatin in a little water and slowly add to the mackerel puree while stirring. Whip the cream, then fold into mackerel mixture. Put in fridge to set.

Chicken liver mousse

Serve with port jelly (see Part III) and spinach sauce (see Part VII).

Ingredients

250g chicken livers, prepared
1 tsp dried or fresh thyme leaves
60ml Madeira or port
250ml rich chicken stock
1 tsp black pepper corn
1 bay leave
pinch of pimento
[optional: 1 tbsp Cointreau or Grand Marnier]
200ml whipping cream, of which 100ml whipped
2-3 tbsp soft butter
salt, white pepper
12g powdered gelatin

Method

The day before, mix prepared chicken livers with thyme and Madeira (or port) and marinate in the fridge overnight.

Next day in a saucepan bring chicken stock, 100ml cream, pepper corns, bay leave and pimento (plus orange liqueur, if used) to the boil for ca. 10 minutes until liquid is reduced by half. Pass liquid through a fine meshed sieve into another saucepan and set aside.

Remove chicken livers from marinade with a slotted spoon, dry with kitchen towel and very gently fry in 1 tbsp of butter for 2-3 minutes, season, set aside. Soak and dissolve gelatin in some water, add to the chicken stock.

Finely puree cooked chicken livers with a small splash of port (or Madeira), mix puree with chicken stock. Season to taste, set aside to cool. When cooled add whipped cream, mix well and refrigerate for several hours before serving.

Potato – baked apple mash

This is a tasty way to prepare a more slippery potato mash.

Ingredients

ca. 100g potato mash,
1 cooking apple, peeled, cored and quartered
2 knobs of butter
1 tbsp sugar
1 tbsp marzipan, diced

Method

Preheat oven to 200°C. Butter a shallow ovenproof dish, add the apple quarters, the diced marzipan, sprinkle with sugar and top with butter flakes. Bake for ca. 30 minutes, heat the potato mash. Puree the baked apple mixture and mix with the potato mash.

Sweet potato mash

Sweet potatoes give a versatile mash that is less sticky (less starch) than potato mash.

Ingredients

500g sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped
1 large white onion
100ml milk
50g butter
salt and white pepper

Method

In a saucepan cover the sweet potato pieces with cold water, bring to the boil and cook over medium heat until soft, about 15-20 minutes, drain and set aside. In another saucepan cook the chopped onion in milk until tender. Add milk and onion to the sweet potato pieces, puree the mixture and adjust thickness, season to taste, pass through a sieve. Beat in the butter.

Vegetable purees, from vegetables cooked in water or stock

Ingredients

250g prepared vegetable pieces
enough stock or salted water to cover
white pepper
herbs and/or spices to taste
some butter or oil

Method

In a saucepan bring salted water or stock to the boil, add vegetable pieces and cook until tender. Strain and keep cooking liquid. Puree vegetable with enough cooking liquid to get

the wanted thickness, pass through a sieve as required, season to taste and work in a knob of butter or add a little oil.

Variations

This method works well for vegetables such as green peas, green beans, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, savoy cabbage.

Vegetable purees, from vegetables braised in butter or oven-roasted

Ingredients

250g prepared vegetable pieces
butter or oil for braising, a little stock or water
or oil for oven-roasting
salt and white pepper
herbs and/or spices to taste
stock or cream to adjust thickness

Method

If braising in butter or oil, heat fat in saucepan, add seasoning, prepared vegetable pieces and a little liquid to prevent burning. Cook over medium heat until vegetable pieces are tender. Puree with a little liquid, pass through a sieve and adjust thickness as required. For oven-roasting toss the vegetable pieces in oil in a roasting tin, add seasoning and herbs and bake in the oven (180°C) until tender. Stir a few times for even cooking. When cooked, puree with a little liquid, pass through a sieve and adjust thickness and seasoning to taste.

Variations

Oven-roasting works well for root vegetables such as parsnips, carrots, celeriac, swede, turnips, beetroot. It also works well for butternut squash, pumpkin, sweet potatoes and aubergines. Braising in butter works particularly well for carrots, fennel and courgettes (remove seeds before cooking).

Yellow lentil puree (daal saag)

Ingredients

200g yellow split lentils
2 slices fresh ginger
500ml water
2-3 tbsp sunflower oil
1 tsp black mustard seeds
½ tsp turmeric
¼ tsp ground cumin
½ tsp fennel seeds
100g spinach, rinsed
2 spring onions, finely chopped

Method

In a saucepan bring water, lentils and ginger to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for about 1 hour until lentils are very soft. Remove ginger, strain and keep cooking liquid. In a frying pan heat the oil, add spices and fry for a few minutes. Add spinach leaves and spring onion and keep frying until spinach is completely wilted and soft. Add pan contents to the lentils and puree the mixture, use cooking liquid to adjust thickness, pass through a sieve. Return to saucepan and reheat.

Pumpkin flan

Serve with spinach sauce (see Part VII).

Ingredients

200g pumpkin puree
4 eggs
salt and white pepper
60g finely grated cheese, such as mature Cheddar cheese
soft butter for greasing

Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C, grease well two dariole moulds (or two large cups). Briefly whisk the eggs, add the pumpkin puree and mix well, add grated cheese, season to taste. Divide mixture into greased moulds, put moulds into a roasting tin. Add hot water about half way up the moulds and bake for about 30 minutes until firm. Turn out and serve immediately (but also tastes good lukewarm or cold; slightly more compact after cooling than when fresh from the oven).

Variations

This works with many vegetable purees such as cauliflower, carrots, broccoli, peas, green beans. Vary the cheese, grated Parmesan cheese works very well.

Spinach flan

Serve with Gorgonzola cheese sauce (see Part VII).

Ingredients

½ quantity of basic white sauce (see Part VII) made with stock
2 eggs, separated
500g spinach, rinsed and drained
60g finely grated cheese (Parmesan or Pecorino, for example)
soft butter for greasing
30g bread crumbs
salt and white pepper, a pinch of ground nutmeg

Method

Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease an oven-proof dish with soft butter, sprinkle with bread crumbs and turn to coat, turn out excess crumbs, set dish aside. Wilt the spinach leaves in a large saucepan (no extra-water added) for 5 minutes. Drain and squeeze out as much liquid as possible. Melt a little butter in the saucepan, return spinach to saucepan, season to taste and cook over low heat for another 5-10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Puree the spinach and pass through a sieve. Add to the heated white sauce and mix well, remove from heat and let cool a little. Beat in the yolks, add the grated cheese. Stiffly whisk the egg whites and fold into the cooled spinach puree. Pour mixture into prepared dish, place dish in a roasting tin, add hot water to the roasting tin about half way up the side of the dish. Bake for 45-50 minutes.

Courgette flan

Serve with cardamom or Gorgonzola cheese sauce (see Part VII).

Ingredients

100ml single cream
1 bay leave
200g courgettes, deseeded and chopped
2 eggs, 1 yolk

salt, white pepper to taste
ca. 25g soft butter for greasing four ramekins

Method

Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease four ramekins with soft butter, set aside. Heat the cream in a saucepan, break the bay leave into pieces and add to the milk. Remove from heat, set aside and infuse for 30 minutes, pass through sieve to remove bay leave pieces.

Braise courgette pieces in very little water / butter until very soft. Remove from heat and let cool a little. Add eggs and yolk as well as infused cream. Blend to a smooth puree, season to taste, pass through a sieve. Divide mixture into four ramekins, filling each about two thirds.

Place ramekins in a roasting tin, add hot water up to about two thirds of the height of the ramekins and bake for 20-25 minutes.

Variations

Replace courgette puree by a puree made of 200g cooked green asparagus, seasoned with a pinch of sugar and a pinch of nutmeg.

Chicken and apricot puree

Ingredients

1 chicken breast, deboned and deskinnd, diced
4 soft dried apricots, finely chopped
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 cinnamon stick
some chicken stock or cream
salt, white pepper to taste

Method

Gently fry the prepared chicken breast, apricots and shallot in a little oil for a few minutes. Barely cover with water, add cinnamon stick, simmer (uncovered) for about 20 minutes until meat and apricots are very soft and the liquid has turned syrupy. Remove the cinnamon stick and blend mixture to a smooth puree. Pass through a sieve and adjust thickness with some chicken stock or cream as required, season to taste.

Variations

Replace the dried apricots by a ripe pear, peeled, cored and chopped.

Cheese soufflé

It is a total myth that it is difficult to prepare a cheese soufflé, you just need to hold your nerve and not open the oven door before the soufflé is ready to serve.

Ingredients

4 eggs, separated
150g Gruyère cheese, finely grated
4 tbsp flour
2 tbsp butter
250ml milk
salt and white pepper, a pinch of ground nutmeg
optional: if wanted, add a tbsp of green pepper corns to the mixture before baking, adds a nice zing but is not recommended if you prefer a less spicy and smooth soufflé.

Method

Butter a suitable oven-proof dish (with straight sides) and set aside. In a saucepan melt the butter, add seasoning and the flour while whisking. When combined add the milk and whisk until you get a smooth, fairly thick sauce. Remove pan from heat, add yolks one by one, beat in well. Mix in the grated cheese. Set aside to cool. Preheat the oven to 190°C. Whisk the egg whites until stiff. Fold egg whites into cooled cheese mixture, pour into buttered baking dish (size such that it is half full before baking). Bake for 25 minutes and serve immediately – it will collapse when standing (but will still taste nice lukewarm or even cold, though a bit more compacted than fresh from the oven).

Avocado soufflé

Ingredients

1 ripe avocado
1 (organic) lemon, juice and finely grated zest
80-100g quark
2 yolks
3 egg whites, whipped
salt
generous knob of soft butter for greasing four ramekins, a little flour to dust

Method

Carefully grease four ramekins with soft butter, dust with flour, set aside.
Preheat oven to 190°C.
Puree the avocado flesh with the lemon juice, lemon zest and a little salt, add the yolks and mix well. Fold the whipped egg whites into the avocado puree. Divide mixture into four

ramekins. Place ramekins in a roasting tin, add hot water to come up to about half the height of the ramekins, bake for ca. 15 minutes.

Salmon soufflé

Ingredients

30g butter
30g flour
150ml milk
100ml cream
small pinch of mild curry powder
salt, white pepper

2 yolks
30-50g mascarpone (or Philadelphia cheese)
splash of lemon juice
100g fresh salmon fillet, cubed, chilled
1 tbsp fresh dill, finely chopped
2 egg whites, whipped with a pinch of baking powder added

Method

Grease four ramekins with soft butter, set aside. Preheat oven to 180°C.
Prepare white sauce (see Part VII) from 30g butter, 30g flour, 150ml milk, 100ml cream and season with a little mild curry powder, salt and white pepper. Set aside to cool.
Blend chilled salmon cubes, yolks, mascarpone (or Philadelphia cheese) lemon juice and dill to a smooth puree. Mix well with the cooled white sauce. Fold whipped egg whites into salmon mixture. Divide into four ramekins, filling each ramekin no more than three quarters. Place ramekins in a roasting tin, add hot water to the roasting tin up to about two thirds of the height of the ramekins. Bake for 20-25 minutes.

Tuna mould

Serve with leek sauce (see Part VII) and mashed butter beans (passed through a sieve, add a little (olive) oil)

Ingredients

200g tinned tuna in water, drained
4 eggs, separated
salt and white pepper
butter for greasing

Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C and grease a cake tin, set aside. Add the tuna flakes to the yolks and puree the mixture, pass through a sieve, season to taste. Stiffly whip the egg whites and fold into the tuna puree. Pour mixture into the greased tin, place tin in a roasting tin and add hot water to the roasting tin about half way up the side of the cake tin. Bake for about 45 minutes.

Trout mould

Serve with spinach sauce or pea sauce (see part VII).

Ingredients

500g trout fillets, skinned and chopped; well chilled
1 tbsp chopped flat-leaf parsley
1 yolk
1 tsp corn flour
125ml double cream
salt and white pepper
butter for greasing

Method

Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease three dariole moulds (or large cups), set aside. Puree the chilled chopped trout fillets with cream, parsley and seasoning. Add the yolk and corn flour, mix well, pass mixture through sieve. Pour mixture into the prepared moulds (or cups). Place moulds in a roasting tin, add hot water to the roasting tin to about halfway up the side of the moulds. Bake for about 25 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes before turning out.

Salmon flan

Ingredients

350g salmon fillet, chilled, cubed
100ml cream, chilled
1 egg
1 tbsp lemon juice
soy sauce
knob of butter for greasing four ramekins

Method

Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease four ramekins with soft butter, set aside. Blend salmon cubes, cream, egg and lemon juice to a smooth puree. Season with soy sauce. Divide mixture into four ramekins, filling each to maximal three quarters. Place ramekins in a roasting tin, add hot water to the roasting tin up to ca. two thirds of the height of the ramekins. Bake for 30-40 minutes.

ii) Sweet

Raspberry mousse

Ingredients

250g raspberries
125g icing sugar
juice of ½ lemon
300ml whipping cream
12g powdered gelatin

Method

Add sugar and lemon juice to the raspberries, puree mixture, pass through a fine sieve. Dissolve gelatin in a little water, then slowly add to the puree while stirring. Whip the cream, fold into the raspberry puree. Pour into a bowl and put in the fridge to set.

Variations

This works for many fruit purees such as strawberries, black currants, peaches, apricots, blueberries, blackberries, avocado (add a little vanilla essence).

Coconut mousse

Serve with rum jelly and pineapple puree.

Ingredients

500g coconut puree
125ml lime juice
175ml cream
50g icing sugar

Method

Mix coconut puree with lime juice. Whip cream with icing sugar, then fold into coconut puree. Refrigerate for several hours before serving.

Variation

Serve with rum jelly (and some salted popcorn and lime zest sprinkled over the mousse, if that is an option) and pineapple puree.

Custard floating islands ('œufs à la neige')

A classical French dessert, much loved by just about all kids on the continent.

Ingredients

6 yolks
100g caster sugar
500ml milk
½ vanilla pod
6 egg whites
200g caster sugar

Method

To make the custard whisk the yolks with 100g sugar in a large bowl until thick and pale. In a saucepan bring the milk with the split and scraped vanilla pod to the boil, remove from heat, remove vanilla pod. While whisking slowly pour the hot milk to whisked yolks. Pour the yolk/milk mixture into a clean saucepan and gently heat (do not boil), whisking constantly until the custard is thick enough to coat a spoon. Strain into a bowl, set aside to cool, then refrigerate until needed.

Stiffly whisk the egg whites and gradually add the sugar while whisking. Heat water in a large saucepan to just under boiling point. Wet a tablespoon and take small meringue dumplings from the stiff egg white, place into the hot water. Simmer for 3-4 minutes, the turn dumplings and simmer for another 3-4 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and let dry on some kitchen towel. To serve, float the meringue dumplings on the chilled custard.

Chocolate mould

Serve with double cream or custard.

Ingredients

3-4 tbsp corn flour (3 for a soft set, 4 for a slightly firmer set)
2 tbsp caster sugar
2 tbsp dark unsweetened cocoa powder
500ml whole milk

Method

Put all ingredients in a saucepan and bring to the boil while stirring constantly to prevent burning, keep stirring for 1-2 minutes when mixture starts to thicken. Take off the heat and

pour in a bowl, set aside to cool. There will be a skin forming on the top, the skin can be easily pulled off before serving the chocolate mould.

Variations

Replace the cocoa powder by 2 tbsp of soluble coffee, or by a few tbsp of caramel sauce (add to the thickened basic mixture of milk, sugar and corn flour just before pouring it into a dish).

White chocolate mould

Ingredients

600ml whole milk
1 egg
2 tbsp corn flour
100g white chocolate, chopped

Method

In a saucepan, whisk milk, egg and corn flour. Heat while stirring to just under boiling point. Remove pan from heat. Add chopped white chocolate and stir until chocolate melts. Strain into a bowl and cover surface with cling film (to avoid formation of skin), set aside to cool. Refrigerate until serving.

White chocolate flan

Ingredients

350ml whole milk
150ml double cream
2 tbsp caster sugar
1 vanilla pod, split and scraped
200g white chocolate, broken into small pieces
4 egg yolks
2 eggs, slightly beaten

Method

Preheat oven to 160°C. In a saucepan bring milk, cream, sugar and vanilla to the boil, remove from heat. Add white chocolate while stirring until molten. Add yolks and eggs while stirring. Strain through a fine sieve and divide into small ramekins. Cover each with aluminium foil. Place ramekins in a roasting tin and add hot water to the roasting tin, about 2/3 of height of ramekins. Bake for 25-30 minutes. Serve lukewarm or cold (store in refrigerator).

Semolina mould

Ingredients

250ml milk
1/2 vanilla pod
1 cinnamon stick
2 pieces of lemon zest
a pinch of salt
25g caster sugar
25g semolina
1 yolk
6g powdered gelatin
250ml whipping cream
optional: a little shot of dark rum

Method

In a saucepan bring milk, scraped vanilla pod, cinnamon stick, lemon zest, sugar and salt to the boil. While stirring slowly add the semolina. Reduce heat and continue to cook for 5 minutes, stirring continuously. Remove the vanilla pod, cinnamon stick and lemon zest. Beat in the yolk. Dissolve gelatin in a little water and add to the semolina mass, mix well. Set aside to cool, stirring occasionally. Whip the cream and add to the semolina mass when cooled, add a shot of rum (if wanted). Mix well. Rinse moulds or ramekins with cold water before filling with the semolina mass. Refrigerate overnight. Turn out to serve.

Crème caramel

Another classic dessert of which there are many regional variations in France, Spain and Portugal.

Ingredients

70g caster sugar
1tbsp butter
500ml whole milk
80g caster sugar
1 vanilla pod
4 eggs

Method

Preheat oven to 190°C. First make the caramel: in a small pan heat 70g sugar with a tbsp of butter while stirring with a wooden spoon until the sugar melts and turns a dark-golden colour. Pour the liquid caramel into a loaf tin and set aside to cool (attention: the caramel will be very hot), it will turn solid. In a saucepan bring the milk with 80g sugar and the split and scraped vanilla pod to the boil, remove from heat. Briefly whisk the eggs in a big bowl, then pour the hot milk over the eggs while stirring, remove the vanilla pod. Strain the milk/egg mixture into the prepared loaf tin. Place loaf tin in a roasting tin, add hot water to the roasting tin to come up about half way of the loaf tin. Bake for about 50-60 minutes until it feels 'wobbly' and set when touching the top (you may have to cover the loaf tin with aluminium foil if the surface darkens too quickly). Set aside to cool, then refrigerate over night. To turn out, run a sharp knife around the edges of the tin, then put the bottom of the tin into a shallow puddle of hot water in the sink for a minute. Remove and dry tin, place a suitable dish over the top of the loaf tin and turn upside down – the set crème and the liquid caramel should easily slip out.

Plum cream

Serve with custard or cream.

Ingredients

500g ripe plums
100ml red wine
4 tbsp caster sugar
a pinch of ground cinnamon, a pinch of ground cloves
150 g Greek yogurt
150ml whipped cream

Method

Remove stones and roughly chop plums. In a saucepan bring wine, sugar, cinnamon and clove to the boil. Add plums and simmer until soft. Puree, strain and set aside to cool. Add yogurt and whipped cream and mix well. Refrigerate until served.

If the plum puree is too runny, add some dissolved powdered gelatin to the still warm puree (1/2-1 sachet) before adding yogurt and whipped cream

Peach and chocolate pudding

A moist and soft pudding that tastes best lukewarm, served with generous amounts of chilled double cream.

Ingredients

500g peach puree (from fresh or tinned fruit)
70g caster sugar (if using fresh peaches)
2 tbsp dark unsweetened cocoa powder
2 eggs, lightly beaten
100g amaretti biscuits, crushed to fine crumbs
soft butter for greasing

Method

Place amaretti biscuits in a freezer bag and crush them with a rolling pin (or a bottle) to fine crumbs. Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease an oven-proof dish generously, then sprinkle with caster sugar, turn to coat and tip out any excess. In a big bowl mix the peach puree, the beaten egg, sugar (if used), biscuit crumbs and cocoa powder. Pour mixture into prepared dish and bake for about 30 minutes.

Baked cheesecake without crust

Ingredients

500g quark
125g butter (soft)
125g sugar

3 eggs
50g plain flour
1 tbsp baking powder
finely grated zest of 1 orange or lemon

Method

Grease spingform baking tin and set aside. Preheat oven to 180°C.
Separate eggs, whisk egg white until fairly firm, set aside. Whisk yolks, sugar and butter until well combined. Add quark, flour, baking powder and grated zest, mix well. Fold in egg whites. Transfer mixture to prepared baking tin and bake for ca. 60 minutes. When cooled remove cheesecake from tin.

Part VI: Soft food (with texture: chunks and bits)

By now the journey has taken us nearly all the way to 'ordinary' food and to the inspirations from 'ordinary' cookbooks. It may still be useful to sketch a few ideas about foods that can help to make the transition away from pureed foods and getting used to soft and tender chunks in your food. It is probably easiest to rely initially on dishes with plenty of sauce or gravy. You will need to make sure that you get the mix of textures right for your needs – and that may vary widely: some may prefer small soft bits in plenty of nearly liquid sauce, while others will prefer a more uniform texture of tiny 'bits' and thick 'sauce'. Recycle some of the recipes for pureed foods and just omit the pureeing step, or gradually reduce the degree of pureeing.

There are the obvious suspects such as omelettes (plain, with cheese, or fresh herbs), cauliflower cheese, or pasta (or polenta) with any kind of sauce you enjoy. All kinds of cooked vegetables in sauce, or served cold as a salad with plenty of dressing, are suitable. Gently fried tuna or swordfish steaks are tender and go well with mayonnaise and/or vegetable sauces. Chicken and rabbit are good sources of tender meat. Starting from twice-minced meats you may start thinking about meatballs, burgers (stuffing them with feta cheese makes for a moist burger) or meatloaf and the like.

For sweet foods think about moving on to include fruit compotes, sponge puddings with custard or compotes, trifles of all kinds, sweet omelettes, soft cakes.

A few ideas are sketched below.

i) Savoury

Potatoes in parsley sauce

If you use well cooked waxy salad potatoes, chopped into very small cubes – this is a form of potatoes that is sometimes easier to eat than mashed potatoes made from floury potatoes.

Ingredients

1 quantity basic white sauce, made with stock (see Part VII)
a good handful of finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
4 medium potatoes (preferably waxy variety), cooked and chopped into bite-size or smaller cubes

Method

Heat the white sauce and add the chopped parsley, puree the sauce and return to the saucepan. Adjust thickness as required, add potato cubes and reheat.

Variations

Variations of the basic white sauce work well for many cooked and chopped vegetables, for example:

cauliflower (make white sauce with milk, add ground nutmeg and some grated cheese)

carrots (make white sauce with chicken stock, add fresh tarragon or dill and a splash of lemon juice)

broccoli (make white sauce with stock and a little white wine, add some cream)

Serve cooked chopped vegetables with some other sauce (see Part VII).

Pancakes with mushroom stuffing

Ingredients

for the pancake mix (makes 6-8 thin pancakes)

50g butter

180g flour

3 eggs

350ml milk

a pinch of salt

for the mushroom stuffing:

1 quantity of white sauce, made with milk and 60g finely grated Parmesan cheese

a knob of butter

100g mushrooms, cleaned and thinly sliced

1 tbsp finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and white pepper

a shot of brandy

soft butter for greasing

a few tbsp of Parmesan cheese and butter flakes

Method

Melt the butter. In a bowl whisk the eggs, milk, salt and flour until you have a smooth mix, add the melted butter. Set aside for 30 minutes. Whisk again before baking the pancakes. Ladle some pancake mix into a preheated non-stick pan, move pan around to cover base (no need to add fat to the pan because of the melted butter in the mix). Cook until lightly browned on the bottom side, turn and cook the other side. Set pancakes aside.

Melt a knob of butter in another frying pan, add the prepared mushrooms and parsley and cook until fairly dry. Add a shot of brandy, increase heat and reduce liquid until fairly dry. Season to taste.

Preheat oven to 200°C. Grease a shallow ovenproof dish with soft butter, set aside. Smear each pancake with a little white sauce, top with a tbsp of cooked mushrooms and roll up.

Place pancakes in one layer in the prepared dish. Pour over the remaining white sauce, sprinkle with finely grated Parmesan and a few flakes of butter, Bake for 10-15 minutes until golden and bubbling.

Variations

There are endless variations for the stuffing, for example use thick Bolognese sauce, or cooked asparagus in white sauce, or a thick paste made from cooked spinach, yolk and ricotta cheese – or whatever else you may fancy.

Chicken ragout

Ingredients

500g chicken breast, with skin and bones
1 onion, quartered
2 bay leaves
3 cloves, a few pepper corns
1 tsp pepper corns
1 quantity of white sauce, made with chicken stock and cream
salt and white pepper
1 tsp lemon juice
optional: 1 tsp of prepared mustard
a handful of cooked chopped carrots
a handful of cooked green peas

Method

In a saucepan cover chicken breast with cold water, add onion, bay leaves, cloves and pepper corns. Heat and gently boil for about 30 minutes until chicken is cooked. Remove from heat, remove chicken and strain stock, set both aside. Bone and skin chicken, chop meat, set aside. Prepare white sauce with the chicken stock and a little cream, season to taste with salt, white pepper, lemon juice and mustard (if used). Add chicken pieces, carrots and peas and reheat.

Variations

Use other cooked vegetables such as chopped cooked mushrooms or asparagus. Try a different flavour altogether and flavour the white sauce with a tsp of mild curry powder and add banana slices (just before serving) instead of vegetables.

Fish pot (or fish pie)

Ingredients

350ml milk
1 bay leave
100g smoked fish (salmon, mackerel)
300g cod fillet
100g shrimps
2 leeks, cleaned, and sliced
2 tbsp butter
2 tbsp flour
1 tsp prepared mustard
some finely grated lemon zest
salt and white pepper

Method

Heat the milk with the bay leave in a saucepan. Add the fresh and smoked fish and poach for 5-10 minutes. Remove the fish with a slotted spoon and set aside. Strain the milk and set aside. Melt the butter in a saucepan, add leek and cook for 5-10 minutes until soft. Add the flour and use the poaching milk to prepare a white sauce, stirring constantly. Season to taste with mustard, lemon zest, salt and pepper. Adjust thickness as required. Tear the poached fish into pieces, add fish and shrimps to the sauce and cook over low heat for 10 minutes.

Variation

If you can manage potato mash, make this into a fish pie. Place fish and sauce in a shallow baking dish, cover with buttery potato mash (made from 750g potatoes) and bake at 200°C for ca. 30 minutes.

Rabbit stew

Ingredients

300g rabbit meat, diced, small pieces
2 tbsp oil
salt and pepper
2 tbsp butter
150g mixed mushrooms, prepared and sliced
200ml stock
150ml cream
3 bay leaves

8 crushed juniper berries
5 pepper corns
1 clove
ca. 1 tbsp corn flour, mixed with a little water
ca. 1 tsp lemon juice

Method

Heat oil in a pan and gently fry the meat pieces for a few minutes, season, remove from pan and set aside. Add butter to the pan and fry mushrooms. When mushrooms are fairly dry, add stock and cream. Place spices in a tea egg and add to pan. Bring to the boil and cook for 10-15 minutes, uncovered. Remove spices. Adjust thickness with corn flour, add meat pieces and cook over low heat for another 5-10 minutes. Season to taste with a little lemon juice, salt and white pepper.

Variations

Use turkey or chicken meat instead, use other vegetables.

Paneer with spinach

Ingredients

350g spinach
1 onion, chopped
200g paneer, cubed
1 tsp ground cumin
thick slice of fresh ginger, peeled and very finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 tsp ground coriander
small pinch of ground cardamom
ca. 4 tbsp crème fraîche
salt, lemon juice to taste

Method

Wash the spinach leaves and wilt in a saucepan with a lid, drain well when soft, blend to a soft puree, set aside.
Heat a little (rapeseed) oil in a large pan, add onion, ginger, garlic and spices. Cook over low heat until soft. Puree the onion / spice mixture, combine with the spinach puree. Adjust thickness with crème fraîche and possibly a little water for a thick creamy sauce. Gently reheat, add paneer cubes and simmer for 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and lemon juice.

Cheesy vegetable soufflé

Ingredients

500g mixed vegetables, prepared and cut into small cubes (for example carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, spring onion, leek, white onion, green beans, courgettes, mushrooms, etc.)

50g butter

70g flour

500ml milk

200g mixed grated cheeses (such as Gruyère, Emmenthal, Cheddar)

pinch of ground nutmeg

salt, white pepper

6 yolks

6 egg whites, whipped

Method

Cook vegetables until 'al dente', with a crunch (either braising in a saucepan, or oven roasting), put aside. Grease gratin dish with soft butter, set aside. Preheat oven to 200°C. Prepare white sauce with 50g butter, 70g flour and 500ml milk, remove from heat and add mixed grated cheeses, mix well. Let cool a little, then add the yolks, mix well, season with nutmeg and salt and pepper to taste. Add precooked vegetable cubes, mix well. Fold whipped egg whites into cheese mixture. Transfer into gratin dish. Bake for 30 minutes.

Miso soup

This soup has some rather magic appetite-activating qualities, most probably because of the umami (savoury) flavour ingredients that many find attractive. It can be prepared in different degrees of thickness by varying the amount of miso paste used.

Ingredients

800ml beef (or vegetable) stock, or dashi (Japanese version of stock)

ca. 100g miso paste

5 spring onions, prepared and diced

1 carrot, prepared and finely diced

5-10 shiitake mushrooms, cleaned and diced

3-4 green asparagus spears, prepared and finely chopped

knob of fresh ginger, peeled

100g shrimps, precooked

100g tofu, cubed

1 lime

Method

Heat stock in saucepan, add ginger and prepared vegetables. Simmer for 5-10 minutes until vegetables are soft. Remove ginger, add shrimps. Remove from heat and add miso paste while stirring (do not boil anymore), add tofu and serve immediately. Float a slice of lime on each portion, serve hot or lukewarm.

Marinated fried halloumi

Serve with some fruit or vegetable jelly or mousse.

Ingredients

200g halloumi
handful of chopped mixed fresh herbs (rosemary, thyme, basil, parsley, sage)
enough rapeseed oil to cover halloumi
knob of butter

Method

Cut halloumi in slices, mix oil with chopped herbs and pour over halloumi. Marinate for several hours.

Melt a knob of butter in pan, remove halloumi from marinade, pad dry (and remove herb bits, if so inclined). Gently fry in molten butter.

Variations

Also works with feta cheese or tofu. Strain marinade and use aromatic oil for other preparations/cooking.

Chicken kebabs

Ingredients

400g chicken breast, skin and bones removed, chopped
1 egg white, slightly beaten
1 tbsp lemon juice
2 tbsp double cream
1 garlic clove, finely chopped

1 tsp mild prepared mustard
salt, white pepper

10-12 rosemary twigs
plain flour
knob of butter

150g sour cream
2 tsp runny honey
Salt

Method

Blend chicken pieces, egg white, lemon juice, cream, garlic and mustard to a thick paste, season. Divide meat into 10-12 portions and roll into small balls (on a little flour), flatten slightly. Remove needles from middle 5-6 cm section of the rosemary twigs, wrap meat around twigs. Gently fry in butter until well cooked (8-10 minutes).

Mix sour cream, honey and salt and serve as a dip with the rosemary kebabs.

Pea and quark gratin

These little gratins taste good warm and cold.

Ingredients

500g peas
450g quark
1 egg
2 spring onions, chopped
grated zest of ½ lemon
1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves
50g grated Parmesan
salt, white pepper, ground nutmeg

Method

Grease 6 ramekins with soft butter, set aside. Boil peas in salted water, strain well. Preheat oven to 170°C. Mix well all other ingredients, season to taste, add peas. Divide mixture into ramekins (or oven-proof cups) and bake for 20-30 minutes.

Trout dumplings with parsley sauce

Ingredients

Dumplings

200g boneless trout filet
150ml crème fraîche
1 egg yolk
salt, white pepper
1 tbsp lemon juice

Parsley sauce

1 bunch flat-leaf parsley
50ml Greek yogurt
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
1 tbsp shallots, finely chopped
150ml crème fraîche
salt, white pepper

Method

Puree well chilled trout filets, lemon juice, salt, pepper and half of crème fraîche, add yolk and remaining crème fraîche and puree again. With the back of a spoon, press mixture through a fine sieve.

Puree all ingredients for parsley sauce, pass through a sieve and set aside.

Heat water in a flat saucepan, add 1-2 tbsp lemon juice and keep temperature just under boiling point. Use two spoons to form little trout dumplings, drop into hot water and simmer for ca. 5 minutes. Lift cooked dumplings with a slotted spoon and drain well on kitchen towel. Serve with parsley sauce (sauce can be gently warmed, but do not boil).

Gorgonzola stuffed mushrooms

Ingredients

4 large mushrooms
1-2 tbsp runny honey
100g Gorgonzola cheese (or other blue cheese), broken into small pieces
salt and white pepper to taste
4-5 tbsp (olive) oil

Method

Preheat oven to 180°C. Brush flat ovenproof dish generously with oil (or butter). Clean mushrooms and remove stems, then place in one layer in greased dish, hollow side up. Brush with runny honey, then add small Gorgonzola pieces. Season to taste, drizzle with a little (olive) oil, bake for ca. 10 minutes until cheese is completely molten. Serve hot or lukewarm.

Bean salad with yogurt dressing

Ingredients

200g fresh French beans, cut into bite size pieces
200g borlotti beans (tinned)

Dressing

150g Greek yogurt
4 tbsp rapeseed oil
6 tbsp bean cooking water
2 shallots, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
1 tsp mild prepared mustard
salt, white pepper
optional: 100g cooked ham, very finely diced

Method

Cook French beans in salted water until tender, strain and keep some of the cooking water. Rinse beans with cold water, set aside. Strain and rinse borlotti beans, set aside. For the dressing mix all ingredients and blend mixture until smooth. Add lukewarm French beans and borlotti beans and marinate in dressing for about 30 minutes before serving. If liked, sprinkle with finely diced ham before serving.

Yellow lentil stew with sour cream ice cream

A creamy lentil stew that goes really well with ice cream. If liked, serve with oven-roasted fennel and/or carrots (also pureed – a great taste combination, regardless of texture).

Ingredients

Lentil stew

250g yellow lentils
250ml coconut milk
2-3 tbsp rapeseed oil
500ml vegetable stock
knob of fresh ginger, peeled and sliced
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 cinnamon stick
1 tsp ground cumin (or coriander, if preferred)
½ tsp mild paprika
grated zest and juice of 1-2 lemons (or limes)

Sour cream ice cream

200g soured cream
100ml whole milk (or single cream)
1 fresh chili, de-seeded (omitted if too offensive)
salt, pepper to taste
some grated lemon zest

Ice cream: Briefly boil milk and chili (if used), remove from heat and set aside to cool. Remove chili, add sour cream, seasoning and lemon zest. Mix well. Place mixture in shallow freezer-proof container, put in freezer and whisk mixture every 30 minutes until completely frozen. Remove from freezer ca. 30 minutes before serving.

Lentil stew: Sweat onion and ginger in rapeseed oil. Add lentils, vegetable stock, coconut milk, spices, zest and juice of lemon. Simmer until lentils are soft. Remove cinnamon stick and ginger slices, puree and strain before serving if a completely smooth texture is wanted.

To serve, ladle lentil stew into a deep plate, and place a scoop of ice cream in the middle.

ii) Sweet

Baked apples

Ingredients

2 cooking apples (Bramley)
1-2 tsp lemon juice
soft butter for greasing
3 tbsp caster sugar
1 tsp ground cinnamon
ca. 150-200ml double cream
optional: 2-3 tbsp sultanas, soaked in rum or brandy

Method

Mix sugar and ground cinnamon. Preheat oven to 190°C. Grease a shallow baking dish with soft butter, sprinkle with half the cinnamon sugar, turn dish to cover. Peel apples, half horizontally and remove core. Put apple halves in baking dish, cut side up. Brush with lemon juice and sprinkle with remaining cinnamon sugar. If used, divide sultanas in apple halves. Cover everything with double cream and bake for about 30 minutes until apples are soft.

Pears poached in red wine

Serve with whipped cream

Ingredients

2 ripe pears
400ml red wine
2 tbsp caster sugar
1 cinnamon stick
2 cloves
finely grated zest of 1 lemon (unwaxed)

Method

Peel and core the pears, cut into quarters. Heat all other ingredients in a saucepan, add pear quarters and simmer until soft. Remove pear pieces and place in a bowl. Turn up heat and cook wine uncovered until much reduced to almost syrup consistency (all alcohol will have evaporated by that stage...). Spoon syrup over pears and refrigerate before serving.

Soft dark chocolate biscuits

These soft biscuits are not particularly sweet and go well with custard or sweetened double cream. Can be kept in a tin for several days.

Ingredients

125g butter
3 eggs, separated
90g caster sugar
50g plain flour
100g dark chocolate (70 % cocoa), broken into pieces

Method

Preheat oven to 180°C. Melt butter and chocolate in a bowl over hot water, stirring occasionally, set aside to cool. Whisk sugar and yolks until creamy and pale. Add melted butter/chocolate to the creamed yolks, mix well, add flour and stir in. In a separate bowl stiffly whip the egg whites. Fold egg whites into chocolate mixture. Line a large baking tray with greaseproof paper and pour mixture on, spread out to about ½ cm even thickness,. Bake for 15 minutes. Cut into small squares and set aside to cool.

Sweet courgette pudding with creamy sauce

Ingredients

Pudding

50g soft butter
80g caster sugar
pinch of salt
3 egg yolks
3 egg whites, stiffly whipped
1 lemon, grated zest
150g courgettes, grated
60g ground hazelnuts (or almonds)
80g plain flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tbsp corn flour

Sauce

½ tbsp corn flour
100ml water
100ml single cream
2 tbsp caster sugar
1 lemon, grated zest
1-2 tbsp lemon juice

Method

Pudding: Grease 6 dariole moulds with soft butter, sprinkle inside with sugar, set aside. Pre-heat oven to 180°C. Beat butter with sugar and salt until soft and creamy. Add yolks and lemon zest and continue whisking. Add grated courgette and ground hazel nuts. Add flour, baking powder and corn flour, mix well. Fold in stiffly whipped egg white. Divide into prepared moulds and cover moulds with aluminium foil. Place moulds in roasting tin, add hot water to about 2/3 of height of moulds. Bake for 35-40 minutes. Let cool a little, loosen with a sharp knife and turn out.

Sauce: In a saucepan mix cornflour with a little water, add remaining water, cream, lemon zest and juice and bring to the boil while stirring constantly. Remove from heat and strain through a fine sieve, stirring occasionally until slightly cooled.

Part VII: Sauces and Lubricants

i) Sauces

Basic white sauce

A very useful and flexible basic white sauce that can be / needs to be flavoured and varied in many different ways.

Ingredients

50g butter
50g plain flour
500ml milk or stock
salt and white pepper

Method

Melt the butter in a saucepan, add the flour and whisk until combined. Increase the heat to medium and start adding liquid in portions, bring to the boil while continuously whisking until all liquid is added and the thickness of the sauce is as required. Lower heat and keep simmering for 10 minutes, stirring often.

Variations

This basic white sauce is very bland. Add any herbs and/or spices that come to mind, the basic sauce can be made from subtle to rather spicy. Replace some of the liquid by white wine, or by cream (which gives a more delicate flavour), or add a little lemon juice or a small quantity of prepared mustard. You may also use the cooking liquid of vegetables if you prepare a sauce to go with vegetable. To make a simple cheese sauce, add 60g of finely grated cheese to the cooked white sauce.

Gorgonzola cheese sauce

Ingredients

200ml cream
100-150g Gorgonzola cheese (*not* the creamy variety which is called Gorgonzola dolce)

Method

Heat the cream in a saucepan nearly to boiling point, crumble the Gorgonzola cheese, add to the cream and keep stirring until smooth, do not overheat. Serve immediately.

Variations

If you prefer a stronger blue cheese taste, use Roquefort or Stilton cheese.

Leek sauce

Ingredients

4 leeks, trimmed and sliced
25g butter
double cream
salt and white pepper

Method

Melt butter in saucepan, add 3 tbsp cream and the leek slices, simmer until leek is tender. Puree mixture, adjust thickness and pass through sieve. Season to taste.

Variations

Use any other vegetable puree, thinning with cream or stock to wanted thickness of sauce.

Pea sauce

Ingredients

300g cooked peas
50ml white wine
1-2 shallots, finely diced
75g crème fraîche
pinch of caster sugar, pinch of ground nutmeg
salt

Method

In a saucepan bring 50ml wine and 150ml water to the boil, add diced shallots and cook until liquid reduced to half. Remove from heat, add peas, puree mixture. Pass puree through a sieve, add crème fraiche, a pinch of sugar and ground nutmeg, season to taste.

Variations

Omitt the nutmeg but add a handful of fresh mint leaves before pureeing the mixture.

Spinach sauce

Ingredients

100g spinach leaves, washed
optional: 1 clove of garlic, finely diced
50ml cream
salt, a pinch of ground nutmeg

Method

Heat cream in a saucepan, add spinach and garlic (if used) and cook for a few minutes. Puree mixture, pass through a sieve and season to taste.

Variations

Try watercress or sorrel leaves, or a mixture of green leaves instead of spinach.

Carrot sauce

Ingredients

300g carrots, prepared and diced
2tbps short grain (or risotto) rice
300ml vegetable bouillon
1 tsp lemon juice
1 tsp sesame oil
30g cold butter, cubed
salt, white pepper

Method

Heat vegetable bouillon in a saucepan, add carrots and rice and cook until very soft. Puree mixture, pass through sieve and return to saucepan. Season with lemon juice, sesame oil, salt and pepper to taste, reheat and whisk in the cold butter cubes one by one (this will thicken the sauce).

Tamed Bolognese sauce

Use lean twice-minced meat. You may want to replace minced beef by minced lamb, pork, turkey or a mixture of minced meats for a variation on Bolognese sauce.

Ingredients

400g lean minced meat
100g pancetta (or bacon), finely chopped
2 tbsp butter
2 tbsp olive oil
100g onions, finely chopped
50g carrots, finely chopped
50g celery, finely chopped
a good pinch of dried oregano (or marjoram)
100ml red wine
200ml beef stock
3 tbsp tomato puree
salt and pepper

Method

In a large saucepan heat olive oil and butter. Add pancetta, the oregano and the very finely chopped vegetables, gently fry for a few minutes. Add minced meat and continue to gently fry until meat is slightly browned. Add wine, increase heat and cook until liquid is reduced. Add tomato puree and stock, lower heat and cook, covered, for about an hour (add more stock or water if necessary), season to taste. Puree the sauce before serving or using it for other recipes.

Tip

Bolognese sauce freezes well, so make a larger quantity.

Creamy anchovies and garlic sauce

Don't be afraid of the ingredients – the result is much 'kinder' than you might think; this sauce goes particularly well with vegetables.

Ingredients

200ml extra-thick double cream
4 tbsp butter
8 anchovy fillets, washed, drained and chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely diced

Method

Melt the butter in a saucepan, add anchovy and garlic and cook over low heat while stirring until garlic is soft and anchovy have disintegrated; pass mixture through a sieve and return to cleaned saucepan. Warm double cream in another saucepan and gradually whisk into the warm butter/anchovy mixture. Heat mixture while whisking but do not let boil. Serve immediately (mixture will split on standing).

Cardamom sauce

This sauce gives a gentle and mild impression of Indian flavours; it goes well with all kinds of fish, meat and vegetables.

Ingredients

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
[optional: 1 green chili, deseeded and finely chopped]
knob of butter
1 tsp ground coriander
pinch of turmeric
1/2 tsp ground cardamom
1 cinnamon stick
1 tbsp tomato puree
100ml chicken or beef stock
50g Greek yogurt
salt, white pepper to taste

Method

Melt butter in saucepan, added garlic and heat while stirring until softened, a few minutes. Add spices and tomato puree, stir well. Add stock and bring to the boil, cook until reduced to wanted thickness, remove cinnamon stick. Remove from heat, puree mixture and pass through a sieve, add yogurt, mix well, season to taste.

Fennel Sauce (cold)

Ingredients

200g fennel, prepared and chopped
1 tbsp fennel seeds
60-80ml crème fraîche
knob of butter
salt, white pepper

Method

Heat butter with a little water in a saucepan, add fennel seeds and fennel, braise until soft. Blend to a puree and pass through a sieve, set aside to cool. Add crème fraîche, mix well, season to taste.

Chestnut sauce (cold)

Ingredients

150g chestnuts, precooked
1 garlic clove, finely diced
½ shallot, finely diced
knob of butter
ca. 100ml vegetable bouillon
1 tbsp rum (or brandy)
ca. 50ml cream
salt, white pepper

Method

Melt butter in a saucepan, add garlic, shallot and chestnuts. Simmer at low heat until garlic and shallot are softened but not browned. Add vegetable bouillon and rum (if used) and cook until chestnuts are very soft. Remove from the heat, add cream and blend to a puree. Pass through a sieve, adjust thickness with bouillon or cream as required, season to taste.

Tuna sauce (cold)

This cold tuna sauce is a classic Italian sauce to accompany cooked meats, but it is equally nice with vegetables and vegetable purees or jellies.

Ingredients

200g tinned tuna in oil, drained, flaked
3 tbsp olive oil
4 anchovy fillets, rinsed and drained, chopped
2 tbsp capers, rinsed and drained, chopped
2 tbsp lemon juice
1 hard-boiled egg yolk, chopped
ca. 150ml cream
salt and white pepper

Method

Puree tuna with olive oil, anchovy, capers, lemon juice and yolk. Adjust thickness with cream and pass through a sieve, season to taste.

Tip

The sauce tastes best chilled; it lasts for a couple of days in the fridge.

Basil sauce (cold)

This cold sauce is very versatile and can be varied with many different fresh herbs.

Ingredients

a good handful of watercress leaves (or baby spinach)
a good handful of basil leaves
a good handful of flat parsley leaves
250ml buttermilk
250 ml crème fraîche
pinch of caster sugar
salt, white pepper to taste

Method

Mix all ingredients and finely puree mixture, pass through a sieve and adjust seasoning. Serve chilled.

Variation

If prepared as a fairly thin liquid this sauce alternatively also works well as a basil smoothie.

Chickpea sauce (cold)

Ingredients

125g cooked chickpeas (small tin), strained and rinsed
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
100g Greek yogurt
50ml single cream
1 tsp lemon juice
large pinch caster sugar
bunch of fresh mint leaves, finely shredded
salt, white pepper to taste

Method

Blend chickpeas, garlic, yogurt, lemon juice, cream and mint to a fine puree. Pass through a fine-meshed sieve, adjust thickness with cream (or milk). Season to taste, chill until serving.

Variations

Replace mint leaves by other fresh herbs, such as basil, flat-leaf parsley or dill.

Aromatic (slightly) sweet white sauce

This sauce is not particularly sweet but very aromatic, so will be good with savoury dishes as well as sweet ones. The flavour can be easily varied by varying proportions (and mix) of spices.

Ingredients

30g butter
20g flour
500ml milk or almond milk (unsweetened), lukewarm
1 tbsp caster sugar
1 vanilla pod
2 knobs fresh ginger
½ tsp ground cinnamon
pinch of nutmeg
6 cloves
1 star anis
pinch of ground cardamom
finely grated zest of ½ orange

Method

Melt butter in saucepan over medium heat, add flour while stirring constantly, then (almond) milk and all spices except grated orange zest. Keep stirring and while gently boiling the mixture until it has the consistency of a thick custard and coats the back of a spoon. Take off the heat, add orange zest and pass mixture through fine sieve. Serve lukewarm or cold.

Custard

A big theme – there are so many different variations of even basic custard. Obviously, custard is always made with milk, cream, yolk – but there are huge variations in the relative amounts of ingredients. In addition, there are two fractions of custard producers: those who take the purist's approach (including me) and those who use a little bit of cornflour in their custard recipe...

Custards do not have to be sweet and can be prepared in many different savoury versions (completely omitting sugar) just as well as the classical sweet custard. A classical sweet custard should be flavoured with a real vanilla pod rather than artificial vanilla flavouring, it makes a huge difference in taste.

The *preparation method* is always the same:

Split vanilla pod, scrape seeds into milk/cream, add pod. Heat milk/cream/vanilla (or other flavouring) nearly to boiling point, remove vanilla pod (or similar). In a bowl briefly whisk the yolks (plus sugar and corn flour (if used)), then slowly pour the hot milk/cream over the yolks while stirring. Pour mixture into a clean saucepan and heat over low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture starts to thicken and coats the back of a spoon. Remove from heat, pass through a sieve. Serve hot or lukewarm, or cold (will last in the fridge for a couple of days).

A few different versions of classical vanilla custard, with quite a variation of ingredients:

- 500ml cream
150ml milk
1 vanilla pod
3 yolks
100g caster sugar
- 500ml milk
100g caster sugar
6 yolks
1 vanilla pod
- 250ml milk
250ml cream
100g caster sugar
4 yolks
1 vanilla pod
- 500ml milk
50g caster sugar
2 yolks
1 vanilla pod
- 300ml milk
1 vanilla pod
1 tbsp caster sugar
1 yolk
1 tbsp corn flour

ii) Lubricants

Coming soon!

We will cover the whole range from water all the way to molten butter, as well as emulsifiers such as egg yolks.

