

PUMPKIN AND RICOTTA TART

Serves 2-4

Ingredients

200g roasted pumpkin, cubes
A little chopped sage
Pinch salt and pepper
1 garlic clove
1 Tbsp maple syrup
3 Tbsp walnut oil or a good quality oil

Handful fresh walnuts
150g ricotta cheese (Evansdale Cheese)
Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
100g Rocket leaves
1 tsp sherry vinegar

Shortcrust pastry

175g plain flour
1 tsp caster sugar
125g cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes

A pinch of salt
About 3 Tbsp cold water

Method & preparation

Preheat the oven to 190 C

First make the pastry. Put the flour, sugar and salt in a food processor and process briefly to mix. Add the butter and pulse until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Transfer to a bowl and stir in enough water to make a dough. Wrap in glad wrap and chill for 30 minutes.

Dice the pumpkin into bite sized pieces, toss with a little oil, salt and pepper, 1 crushed garlic clove (skin on), couple of sage sprigs (stalks included). Roast until tender (10 -15 minutes). Then remove from the oven and set aside.

Roll the pastry out to 20 cm large circle. Place onto a oven tray.

Toss the cooked pumpkin, walnuts, sage and ricotta together gently. Season with salt and pepper. Spread over the base of the pastry, sprinkle with grated parmesan and bake at 200C for 10-15minutes.

Meanwhile; mix the maple syrup, vinegar, oil and a pinch of salt and freshly ground pepper together, taste and correct if necessary. This is sweet and sour with a maple after taste!

ROAST PUMPKIN, SPINACH & RICOTTA SALAD

Serves 2

Ingredients

200g fresh baby spinach, washed and drained well
250g Pumpkin
2 red onions, sliced into thinnish wedges
½ tsp cumin seeds
1 Tbsp pumpkin seeds
1 sprig fresh rosemary
Olive oil
100g fresh ricotta cheese

Dressing: 1 Tbsp sherry vinegar (balsamic or redwine)
2 Tbsp extra virgin olive
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Method & preparation

Preheat the oven to 190C, with a roasting tray in the oven to get hot to give the pumpkin a good start.

Dice the pumpkin into bite size pieces. Place into a bowl with the onions, cumin, pumpkin and rosemary. Drizzle over a little oil and season with salt and pepper. Place all the ingredients and oil onto the hot oven tray and bake for 10-15 minutes or until caramelized and tender.

Make the dressing and put the cooked pumpkin and dressing aside.

In a large bowl, add the spinach, tip in warm pumpkin and onions. Pour over your dressing and crumble in your Ricotta, season and toss gently. Serve immediately!



Otago Farmers Market

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RICOTTA

Ricotta is an Italian sheep milk or cream-cheese cow milk whey cheese. Ricotta (literally meaning "recooked") uses the whey, a limpid, low-fat, nutritious liquid that is a by-product of cheese production. Ricotta is produced from whey, the liquid separated from the curds. Most of the milk protein (especially casein) is removed when cheese is made, but some protein remains in the whey, mostly albumin. This remaining protein can be harvested if the whey is first allowed to become more acidic by additional fermentation (by letting it sit for 12–24 hours at room temperature). Then the acidified whey is heated to near boiling. The combination of low pH and high temperature denatures the protein and causes it to precipitate out, forming a fine curd. Once cooled, the curd is separated by passing through a fine cloth.

After realizing that the whey cannot be safely dumped in large concentrations as it creates an environmental nuisance, Pecorino Romano makers discovered that when the protein-rich substance is heated, whey protein particles fuse and create a curd. This curd, after drainage, is ricotta. Because ricotta is made from whey, rather than milk, it is technically considered a whey cheese.

Ricotta is a fresh cheese (as opposed to ripened or aged), grainy and creamy white in appearance, slightly sweet in taste, and contains around 13% fat. In this form, it is somewhat similar in texture to some cottage cheese variants, though considerably lighter. Like many fresh cheeses, it is highly perishable. Ricotta comes in other forms as well.

PORK CHOP WITH GLAZED QUINCES AND SAGE

Ingredients

4 pork chops (good quality)
4 sprigs fresh sage
1 lemon
2 quinces, stewed
150 ml chicken stock
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
25 butter, diced

Serves 4

Stewed Quince

2 whole quince, washed and cut into wedges or diced (core removed)
200-300g sugar (to taste)
1 cup water
Cook the quince with the sugar, water and a couple of sage stalks over medium heat until tender.

Method & preparation

Preheat a heavy based fry pan to hot.

Drizzle a little oil over the pork chops, season well with salt and pepper, rub it into the meat on both sides.

Cook all four chops together. Keep the temperature up on high as you are wanting to get a crisp, golden caramel exterior of your chop. Turn it over after 3 – 4 minutes (depending on size). Add the sage leaves and let get fragrant and crispy. Cook for 1 minute, then add the cooked quince and a little liquid, add enough stock to loosen the sauce and to lift off any sediment (flavour) from the bottom. Remove the pork chops and keep warm. Let the sauce bubble away vigorously, taste it and adjust the seasoning - it may or may not need a little lemon juice. Remove from the heat and whisk in the cold butter. Whisk until emulsified and glossy.

Serve the pork chop on some wilted spinach, with the glazed quinces and all that delicious sauce drizzled over the chops.

QUINCE FINANCIERS

Makes 12

Ingredients

¼ cup all purpose flour
½ cup ground almonds
¾ cup icing sugar
Pinch salt
3 large egg whites, at room temperature
5 Tbsp beurre noisette butter 113grams (instructions below)
100g quince paste (membrillo or stewed quinces)
Sprinkle of ground almonds
Quince puree
1kg quinces, peeled and cored
500g sugar (approx)

Method & Preparation

Preheat the oven to 180C

Cut the quinces into chunks cover with water and place into a large sauce pan. Cook until the quince is very tender (50 minutes). Drain and add the sugar, stir to dissolve and cook until thick and pulpy. Cool and store in a clean container in the fridge.

Firstly melt 113g butter in a small pot, let it bubble away gently for 2-5 minutes. You are wanting the butter to turn a light golden brown in colour , and you will smell a nutty aroma. This is beurre noisette butter! Set aside.

In a large bowl add the flour, almonds, icing sugar and salt. Lightly whisk the egg whites together, add to the dry ingredients along with the beurre noisette butter. Mix until just combined. Spoon into greased and lightly floured Financiers tins or friand moulds, top with a little of your quince paste and a sprinkle of ground almonds. Bake for 10 minutes or until just firm to the touch.

Remove from the oven, let sit for a minute or two, remove from the tins and cool on a wire rack. Dust with icing sugar.

Visit Alison at her ever-changing blog-
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