

# FRESH FIGS IN LITTLE BREAD BASKETS

*To make 1:*

1 fresh fig

1 rasher of back bacon

A little English mustard

1 bread roll (brown or white)

A little oil

Set oven to gas mark 6/200°C/400°F/Aga roasting oven.

Wrap the fig in the bacon rasher (like a jacket), and stand it in a lightly oiled shallow ovenproof dish.

Bake, uncovered, for 8-10 minutes or until the bacon is cooked.

Cut the top off the bread roll and scoop out the centre to form a cavity.

Place it on a greased baking tray and bake until brown and crisp (4-5 minutes).

Remove from oven and spread a little home-made mustard on the base before placing the baked fig inside.

Pour any pan juices over the fig.

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## LAZY COOK TIPS

*This is a good combination of sweet and savoury flavours.*

*Secure the bacon ends with a wooden cocktail stick (avoid piercing the fig) or, if baking several, place them close together in the dish with the loose bacon ends touching. This will prevent the bacon unwrapping during cooking.*

*When the fig is sliced into, the juices escape and flavour and moisten the bread basket.*

*Serve as a starter or light meal with a watercress garnish. Keep the unused bread and make into breadcrumbs (see p223).*

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# CROWN OF LAMB SERVED WITH A RED WINE & PESTO SAUCE

*This is another recipe I have resurrected from my very early days of cooking. Although, as the title suggests, this is quite a majestic looking dish, it is actually one of the easiest of dinner party recipes. I served this to friends before leaving London to be married. It was a memorable and noisy party, not least the entry of the Crown of Lamb.*

Serves 6

1 crown of lamb (prepared by a butcher)

1 bunch of watercress

Cutlet frills (one for each cutlet)

300 ml (10 fl oz) of red wine

1 tablespoon of pesto

1 tablespoon of redcurrant jelly

Set the oven to gas mark 6/200°C/400°F / Aga roasting oven.

Weigh the crown and allow 15 minutes per 450 g (1 lb) to serve pink, or 20 minutes per 450 g (1 lb) to serve well done. Stand the crown on a trivet in a meat tin and add about 300 ml (10 fl oz) of hot water. Place in the preheated oven and roast for around 10 minutes, then reduce the oven temperature (gas mark 4/180°C/350°F/ Aga baking oven) for the remainder of the roasting time.

Remove from the oven, place on a hot serving dish and keep warm. Spoon any excess fat from the pan juices before adding the wine and boiling for a few minutes to reduce. Whisk in the pesto and redcurrant jelly and bring to a simmer.

To serve, place a cutlet frill on each cutlet and fill the centre cavity with fresh watercress. Serve the sauce separately.

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## LAZY COOK TIPS

*I recommend 2 cutlets per person and, as such, you may find 2 crowns are needed.*

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# CELERIAC & PARSNIP MASH

Serves 4-6

450 g (1 lb) of parsnips

450 g (1 lb) of celeriac

Freshly grated nutmeg

1 tablespoon of single cream

Top and tail and scrub the parsnips before cutting into chunks. Peel the celeriac and cut into chunks.

Place both vegetables into a pan containing a little boiling water, cover and boil until softened – approximately 10 minutes. Drain off the cooking liquid (keep this for stock), season with freshly grated nutmeg and mash together. Stir in the cream and serve hot.

# POTATO GRATINÉE

Serves 4-6

900 g (2 lb) of potatoes

50 g (2 oz) of unsalted butter (melted)

Nutmeg (freshly grated)



Set oven to gas mark 6/200°C/400°F/Aga roasting oven.

Lightly oil a shallow ovenproof dish. Peel the potatoes, slice very thinly and layer into the prepared dish.

Pour melted butter over the top and season with freshly grated nutmeg. Bake in the preheated oven for 45 minutes or until the tops are browning and all the potato has softened – test by piercing a metal skewer into the centre. Serve hot from the oven.

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## LAZY COOK TIPS

*Put the potatoes into the hot oven immediately to avoid the slices discolouring. Towards the end of cooking, the oven temperature can be reduced to gas mark 3/160°C/325°F/Aga simmering oven.*

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# CARROTS ROASTED WITH DRIED OREGANO

*If making this recipe using new young carrots, keep the tail and a fraction of the green leafy tops – I call these ‘designer carrots’!*

6 large carrots  
1 tablespoon of olive oil  
1 tablespoon of dried oregano



Set oven to gas mark 6/200°C/400°F/Aga roasting oven.

Scrub and top and tail the carrots, cut each in half lengthways, then put them in a pan containing a little boiling water.

Cover, and boil for a minute or two to start the softening process. Drain off the cooking liquid (keep this for stock).

Heat the oil in a shallow baking tin or ovenproof dish, add the carrots, scatter with oregano and stir to coat in oil.

Bake for 30-40 minutes or until the carrots have softened.

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## LAZY COOK TIPS

*Oregano is a favourite herb of mine and one I grow all over the garden. Pick it as it flowers and dry in the oven on the lowest heat, including the flower heads. It has the most wonderful flavour.*

*Store in a jar and use regularly. Aga owners can dry herbs on the top surface.*

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# APPLE & SULTANA CAKE

*Moist and good.*

- 225 g (8 oz) of plain flour
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- 100 g (4 oz) of demerara (or soft brown) sugar
- 150 g (5 oz) of margarine (softened)
- 2 large eggs
- 4 tablespoons of milk
- 1 large Bramley cooking apple (peeled, cored and roughly chopped)
- 225 g (8 oz) of sultanas
- 1 teaspoon of cinnamon powder
- A little extra demerara sugar for topping

Set the oven to gas mark 4/180°C/350°F/Aga baking oven.

Drop a parchment cake liner into an 18 cm (7 inch) round cake tin with a loose base.

Process the flour, sugar and baking powder together for a few seconds. Add the margarine, eggs and milk and process until smooth.

Add the chopped apple and the sultanas and process for a few seconds to mix in.

Pack the mixture into the lined tin and scatter the top with cinnamon powder and about a tablespoon of demerara sugar.

Stand the tin on a baking tray and bake in the preheated oven for 1-1½ hours or until set (test with a skewer). Remove from oven and allow to cool for a few minutes before removing from the tin onto a wire tray. When cold, store in an airtight tin.

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## LAZY COOK TIPS

*This makes a deliciously moist cake. Use Bramley apples if available – chop them roughly and not too small; finding apple chunks in the baked cake adds to the enjoyment.*

*You may need to add a little more milk to create a smooth mixture. The cinnamon gives a good, spicy flavour and the sugar topping adds sparkle.*

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