

Cornbread Muffin Cups

2 cups coarse cornmeal (available in New Zealand as maize flour or maize meal)

2 cups flour (use gluten-free as required)

1/4 cup caster sugar

1 1/2 tablespoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

2 eggs

2 and 3/4 cups milk

1/2 cup sour cream

1/4 cup vegetable oil

1 1/2 cups cheddar (tasty) cheese, grated

Fine diced fresh chilli to taste (optional)



Preheat oven to 200C (400F) degrees, making sure its well warmed up.

Grease a standard size muffin/cupcake tray.



Hot sauce match – Smoky Dragon Chipotle

Mix dry and wet ingredients in 2 separate bowls. Pour the dry over the wet and combine the ingredients gently taking care not to overmix, the batter should be a little lumpy.

Pour into the muffin tray compartments, filling each to $\frac{3}{4}$ full.

Bake for 10-12 minutes until firm to the touch and lightly browned.

Let muffins cool completely and using a teaspoon or a small knife cut or scoop out the middle of the muffin, making a deep well for your filling.

Add your choice of warmed filling, leftover pulled pork is perfect. Top with a poached egg, garnish with diced chilli if using and serve.

Hot sauce match Smoky Dragon Chipotle

Home Cured Pork Belly Bacon

Dry Cured Bacon



When you make home cured bacon yourself, you are in total

control over the quality of the meat and the ingredients you use to cure it! I love the thought of the chemical-free goodness of homemade bacon right in my kitchen.

There are a few considerations that need to be considered and understood when you are "Makin Bacon".

Processes and Food Safety At Home

There is one primary concern we have to consider when curing and preserving meat, and that is protecting from possible botulism. While botulism is usually related to improper canning/preserving procedures, food-borne botulism also occurs in meats that have been improperly cured. Often this is due to methods and the process used and the possibility can be easily prevented with care and attention detailed below.

To prevent this, most commercially preserved meats contain sodium nitrite, often known as pink salt, which acts both as a preservative and a colour fixer. This also gives store-bought bacon that bright red colour. I am not interested in this colour in my bacon.

Sodium nitrite is toxic in high quantities, and has been linked to migraines in many people.

For me the main concern about the use of sodium nitrite is that when it is exposed to high heat in the presence of protein (nitrite cured bacon) the proteins in the meat will bond with the sodium nitrite to produce the toxic nitrosamines. Studies have shown that certain nitrosamines have been proven to be deadly carcinogens. This can vary from country to country as far as government policy as to their position on the use of nitrates.

For myself at the end of the day, chemical free bacon is better in flavour and cooks in a different way with incredibly better results.

Frying nitrite-cured bacon presents the scenario for nitrosamines to form when the bacon is cooked and then to enter your system. This alone in my view is a good reason to home cure (with care).

The home cook can much better control the variables and handling procedures, and can get those assurances without the addition of nitrites. Purchasing from your local butcher that has pasture raised pork is the start as it will have a documented procedure and correct food handling record. Organic raised pork is the best choice in my opinion.

I would never use home-kill pork because environment and food safety procedures are not controlled. This is important as a poor hygiene environment can contaminate the meat with food-borne botulism and other possible contaminants.

Making Home Cured Pork Belly Bacon

Ingredients

2kg (4.4lb) piece of pork belly, skin/rind and bones removed
1/2 cup sea salt (not refined iodized table salt)
1/2 cup packed unrefined raw sugar or coconut sugar
1 tbsp. freshly ground black peppercorns
1 tsp nutmeg
1 tbsp toasted fennel seeds
1/2 cup bourbon, to taste (optional)
1/2 cup apple cider vinegar

Method

Cut your pork belly into a nice even square or rectangle, bacon-like block. This can be done by the butcher on request

Mix the dry ingredients in a bowl until they are well combined and the wet ingredients (if using) in a separate bowl until they are well combined.

Making sure that your hands are well washed and clean coat the

meat all over with the wet ingredients (if using) until thoroughly coated everywhere.

Place one half of the dry cure mixture in the bottom of the glass dish. Place the wet pork belly into the dish and press it into the salt/sugar mix.

Carefully sprinkle the rest of the mixture across the top of the meat and press it in uniformly all around, using your hands to thoroughly apply the cure mix into every nook and cranny of your pork belly.

Cover and place the dish in the refrigerator for 5-7 days, until the meat feels firm throughout. (5 days is a good average, but check to be sure. The longer you cure it, the saltier it will be.)

Turn the bacon over every day in the liquid that will accumulate in the dish. Pour off half of the liquid each day. After 5-7 days curing remove the pork belly and wash the salt/sugar mixture off of the pork belly very carefully.

Give the soon to be bacon a good pat dry all over with a clean towels. Place the bacon on a rack over a baking sheet and place in the fridge uncovered for 12-24 hours.

At this point, you can slice it for "green bacon" or you can smoke or roast the whole belly.

If roasting, preheat the oven to 80-90 C. (175-200 F.) Roast the pork belly in the oven to an internal temperature of 65 C (150 F) for about 90 minutes. The meat should be cooked a bit on the outside, but not all the way through.

If smoking, smoke over hickory, cherry or Applewood, a mix is fine at 80 C (175 F) until meat reaches an internal temperature of 65 C (150 F), for about 3 hours. The meat should be cooked a bit on the outside, but not all the way through.

Remove and let the bacon cool to room temperature on a wire rack over the baking sheet, tightly wrap in parchment (butchers) paper, then refrigerate for at least 4 hours, preferably overnight to set the flavour and texture.

Homemade bacon will keep for a week in the refrigerator and several months in the freezer.

**Cold smoking
Introduction from my
friend Nickie Sattler
at Blue Moose
Barbeque**

www.bluemoose.co.nz

www.facebook.com/bluemoosebbq



So for bacon, we either cold smoke it or hot smoke it. To cold smoke it, we use our bourbon barrel and cold smoke generator or place it in our gas BBQ grill with an A-Maze-N tube. We use either hickory and apple wood chips for flavour (although I want to try maple or pecan as well).

We cold smoke for about 8-9 hours. To hot smoke it, we use our Oklahoma Joe Highland offset and try to keep the heat down to 150-175 F. We will use apple or hickory to smoke the bacon for 2-3 hours, until bacon reaches 150 F internal.

Bourbon Bacon Jam

For my bacon jam I select bacon that has a low fat level. I love to make it with dry cured, smoked bacon. During the cooking of the bacon remove as much of the oils released from the bacon and set this aside. I treat it like duck fat, wonderful for roasted vegies.



Ingredients

600g bacon, fat trimmed off, sliced into small pieces

2 cups of shallots, finely chopped

2 cups red onion, finely chopped

4 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 teaspoon chili powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon smoked paprika

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Bourbon (125ml)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup balsamic vinegar

Cook the bacon pieces in batches to allow for it to cook properly without being too crispy. Cook over medium heat until brown. Transfer to paper towels to drain excess fat off.

Pulse your shallots and onions in the food processor or cut them by hand.

Leave about 1 to 2 tablespoons of the fat in one of the pan. Add shallot and onion to the pan, cook over medium heat until they start to caramelize. Add the garlic and cook for about one more minute.

Add the chili powder and smoked paprika, stir to combine.

Increase heat to high and add the bourbon (carefully) and honey. Bring to a boil, stir and scrape the pan so all the little bacon bits comes loose. Continue boiling for about 2 to 3 minutes.

Add vinegar and continue to boil for about another 3 minutes.

Using a sharp knife cut the bacon into small pieces. You can also tear it by hand so it looks more rustic, not too perfect.

Add the bacon into the pan, reduce heat to low and simmer for about 10 minutes, the mixture will thicken.

Turn off the heat and using a teaspoon remove any excess fat off the bacon jam.

Now you have two options, you can pop the mixture into a food processor and pulse until it breaks down more. Or you can leave it chunky, your choice.

Transfer to jars, seal and store in the fridge.

[Pea and Red Bell Pepper Salad](#)

The core recipe is very yummy and can be added to with what's in season. I serve this super fresh salad with cold cuts of roasted chicken, lamb or fried salmon fillets.



Its also you can crumble some feta cheese right before serving.

Ingredients

600g ($\frac{3}{4}$ lb.) snow peas

400g ($\frac{1}{2}$ lb.) mushrooms, sliced

2 small sweet red bell pepper, cut in half, de-seeded and sliced into strips

1 tbsp toasted sesame seeds

Walnut orange dressing

1 small clove of garlic, pressed

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange juice

2 tsp raw or runny honey

3 tbsp cider vinegar or white wine vinegar

2 tbsp walnut oil (or olive oil)

Pinch of salt and a few grinds of black pepper

Method

Top and string peas and then blanch peas in boiling water for 1 to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes. Drain and put into cold water to shock (stop the cooking) and dry thoroughly.

Combine dressing ingredients in a jar with a tight fitting lid and shake until well combined (or whisk together in a bowl)

Toss vegetables with dressing and sprinkle with the sesame seeds.

Serve immediately.

Optional additions

1 cup sliced cheery tomatoes

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sweet corn kernels

Easy Damson Plum Jam

Damson plums are small and the flesh is quite sharp and sour, but in my view makes the absolute best plum jam in the world. I match the jam with nice cheeses on a platter with some slightly spicy cured meats. I am in heaven.



Makes about 8 250ml jars.

Ingredients

1 1□2kg (3.3lb) whole, washed damson plums

3 cups water

5 cups sugar

Method

Combine the plums and the water and over a medium hot heat bring to a boil.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for 15 minutes, stirring constantly.

Allow to cool enough to handle – or completely, if you like and fish out the pits. It's a bit messy but well worth it.

I put them in a colander over a large pot and pass the liquid and as much of the flesh that you can through and then start picking out the stones. Return the pulp to the rest of the jam to the pot once the pits are out. Bring them back to the boil and add the sugar to the plums, stirring to dissolve.

Reduce the heat to a light, rolling simmer and cook to jam stage, about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, put the clean jars into a pre-heated oven at 140 C (300F).

Return the plums to the jam kettle, and bring them back to the boil. Add the sugar to the plums, stirring to dissolve.

Jam Stage Test

Sheet or spoon test – Dip a cool metal spoon into the boiling jelly mixture. Raise the spoon out of the steam, about 12 inches above the pan. Turn the spoon so the liquid runs off the side. The jelly is done when the syrup forms two drops that flow together and sheet or hang off the edge of the spoon.

Once the jam has reached setting point remove from the heat and stir and skim 5 minutes.

Pour into hot sterilized jars and seal with lids sterilized according to the manufacturers directions. (Generally, boiled for 5 minutes.)

Let cool, label and store when the jars have sealed.

Easy Chicken Bites

Chicken breast seasoned with sage and Italian seasoning, rolled in prosciutto, then skewered.



Makes about 30-36

Ingredients

6 boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into chunks

12 strips prosciutto or streaky bacon

120g (4oz) cream cheese, room temperature

6 basil leaves, chopped

1 tbsp fresh thyme, leaves removed from the stalk and chopped

3 parsley sprigs, chopped

1/4 tsp salt

1/2 tsp fresh ground black pepper

2 garlic cloves, minced

Method

Preheat your oven to 175C (350F)

In a medium bowl mix together your whipped cream cheese, thyme, basil, parsley, salt, pepper and garlic.

Spread the cream cheese mixture on each piece of bacon and then cut into thirds. Then wrap 1 piece of chicken with the piece of bacon. It will only wrap around one time, secure with a skewer.

Place on a flat baking tray lined with parchment paper, and bake in the oven for 30 minutes or until the bacon is crispy and the chicken is cooked through.

Whats in the Pantry Frittata

Frittatas are a great “go to” when you want an easy brunch, lunch or evening meal. There are so many things that can go in them and they are ideal for using up leftovers from the fridge and pantry.



If you are catering for a crowd you can make several in batches and heat them up later as required.

What Are Frittatas?

A frittata is an Italian twist on the humble omelet. Since there's no tricky flip to perform, they're actually easier to make. Fantastico!

Frittatas combine eggs and various combinations of vegetables,

meat, cheese and even cooked pasta. The end result looks a bit like a quiche, without the crust.

How to Serve Them

Frittatas can be served in wedges for breakfast, lunch or dinner, either hot or cold. I like to fill the rest of the plate with salad. If you make frittata for dinner, you've got a lunchbox-friendly lifesaver for the next day. They work as a quick weeknight dinner, or as a main dish for brunch with friends. They are also great to take on a picnic or to a shared meal.

Invent Your Own Frittata

Once you've made one frittata, you can make them all – adjust the fillings and flavors based on what's in the fridge. Frittatas can give new life to leftovers, and they are a great way to get several food groups into a meal. If you've got company coming, go for fancier ingredients like olives, asparagus and aged cheese.

Frittata How to Cook

Frittatas are usually cooked in a fry pan on the stove first, and then finished in the oven. This means you need to use an oven-safe fry pan. Your pan might be labeled as oven safe on the bottom; if not, try looking for information on the manufacturer's website.

No guessing is allowed- either your pan is oven-safe or it is not! Just remember that the handle will be very hot when you take it out of the oven.

Frittatas can be cooked only on the stovetop, but this means they have to be flipped—not easy. Some frittatas can be cooked entirely in the oven.

Pantry Frittata

The more you make frittatas the more you will know what ingredients work together. They can be very cost effective and you can use up so many leftovers.

Ingredients



10 eggs

3 tbsp milk or cream

6 leaves of silverbeet (swiss chard) tough stems removed and chopped into small bite-sized pieces or 2 cups spinach leaves or rocket

1 cup grated cheese of choice. I use up the little pieces of cheese that seem to collect in my fridge.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sliced spring onions

2-3 small sweet potatoes, sliced thinly into rounds. Leftover are fine, they just don't need cooking

1-2 roma (Italian) tomatoes, sliced thinly into rounds

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 cup cold meat chopped, pulled or sliced depending what it is (optional)

1 tsp fresh thyme or parsley

Salt and pepper to season

Method

In a skillet, cook sweet potato slices over medium heat until they are fork tender. Remove and set aside. If you are using leftovers there is no need to cook.

Heat the oven grill (broiler) on high.

In a medium sized bowl, beat together the eggs and milk or cream and season with salt and pepper. Mix in the chopped greens, onion, cheese, meat and garlic and pour this mixture into a cast iron skillet.

Arrange potatoes and tomatoes on top and sprinkle the thyme over. Place skillet over medium-low heat on the stove and cook for a few minutes, just until the egg starts to set.

Then transfer the skillet to an oven set to grill (broil). Grill the frittata until the top is golden and starts to puff. Slice into wedges and serve by themselves or with a yummy seasonal fresh salad.

Bacon Wrapped Chicken Thighs

Ingredients



8 chicken thighs, bone out

8 tbsp grated pecorino romano cheese or a hard cheese of choice

8 slices thin streaky bacon

salt & pepper to season

3 tbsp olive oil

1 clove garlic, minced

3/4 cup low sodium chicken broth
3/4 cup dry white wine
3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh sage

Method

Pound the chicken thighs thin with a meat mallet and lightly season with salt and pepper.

Lay the chicken thighs on a tray or cutting board and divide the cheese amongst the eight cutlets, arranging it to cover, leaving a little space along the sides.

Starting at one end, tightly roll the chicken thighs up. Using a slice of the thin bacon, carefully wrap the chicken roll around and secure each with a toothpick.

In a large, heavy skillet, heat the oil over medium high heat and brown all the chicken rolls very well on all sides, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add the garlic and stir until fragrant, about 2 minutes.

Add the stock and wine and bring to a boil.

Reduce the heat to a simmer, partly cover the skillet and cook for 15 minutes.

Remove the chicken to a heated plate, and bring the wine mixture remaining in the skillet up to a boil. Add the sage, season with salt and pepper and reduce the sauce by half.

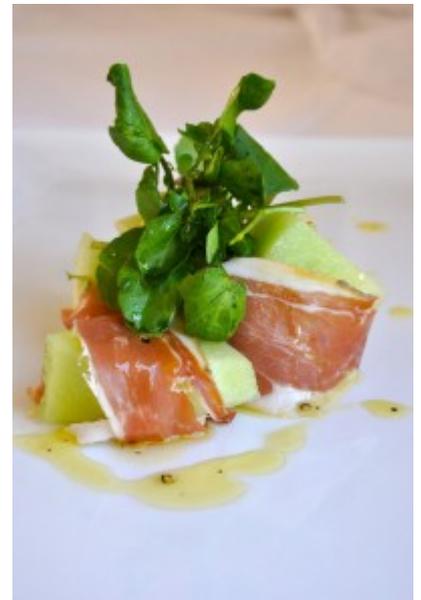
Remove the toothpicks from the rolls, and return the chicken to the skillet and turn to coat in the sauce to warm up the chicken rolls.

Place the chicken on a platter and pour the sauce on top.

Serve hot.

Prosciutto Melon Starter

Quick, fresh and a yummy balance of flavours. The watercress adds a light, peppery finish to each bite. This recipe can easily be scaled to your needs.



Ingredients

10 slices prosciutto
10 slices melon
Lemon garlic dressing
Watercress

Method

Wrap the prosciutto around the melon pieces and place on a plate together. Place desired serving numbers on individual plates then drizzle with the dressing and top each serving with watercress.

Lemon Garlic Dressing

Ingredients

4 cloves garlic, minced or finely chopped (more if you LOVE garlic)
1/2 tsp of black pepper (more if desired)

2 tsp salt
1/2 cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

Method

Mix all ingredients into a container that has a tight fitting lid. Place lid on tightly and shake vigorously until olive oil and lemon juice blend into one, after about 1 minute of shaking.

Home Cured Pork Belly Bacon

This is something that I love to do when I have the time and I can get a nice centre cut of pork belly. Curing pork belly is not hard, it just takes some care and attention and a bit of fridge time.



Making bacon is surprisingly easy and the results are in my view far better than the stuff from large commercial producers with all of the added chemicals and water that they pump into the meat.

Once you have the basic recipe down, you can vary the ingredients to make a flavour profile to suit your taste.

I have watch this done when I have been with family in Sicily. Curing meats with salt has been done for thousands of years and there is nothing new to doing this. I love taking the time to cure belly pork making my own streaky bacon.

Another benefit for me is that when I want to have thick slices of bacon to cut into cubes I can cut my own to my desired size.

Makes 2½kg (5½lb)



2½kg (5½lb) pork belly, de-boned, skin on

60g (2oz) coarse sea (rock) salt

40g (1½oz) fine, plain salt

40g (1½oz) dark muscovado

3 bay leaves

1 sprig of rosemary, leaves picked

A few sprigs of thyme, leaves picked

½ tbsp black peppercorns

Mix the salts and sugar in a bowl. In a large pestle and mortar, bash the herbs and peppercorns, then combine with the salts and sugar.

Cover the base of a non-metallic container with a little of the cure mix, then divide the remaining mix into half. Rub one half of the mixture into the flesh side of the pork belly. Make sure that you rub it in well, all over the meat and in every crevice.

Now place the pork, flesh side down, in the container and

cover, rubbing in well with the remaining mixture. Cover with a lid or clear-film and place in the fridge.

Check the pork every day for the next five days, turning it and rubbing in the cure mix every day and pouring off any excess liquid. The salt will draw out moisture and this will need to be drained off.

On the sixth day, remove the pork and discard the contents of the container. Rinse and wash the salted pork belly under cold water until all the cure mix has been washed away. Pat completely dry, then place it on a meat hook and hang it to dry in a cool place, such as a cellar, larder or a cool garage.

You can dry it as long as you like, but two days should suffice. Remove the skin, leaving as much fat as possible. The next stage is to either bake or smoke the cured pork belly. I like to smoke with apple wood. Using apple wood adds a yummy, sweet flavour. I will cover smoking in another post.

Baking is easy way to finish the process. Preheat oven to 95 C (200 F) and place the cured belly on a wire rack placed inside a roasting pan. Bake for 1.5 hours, then raise the oven temperature to 120 C (250 F) for another 30 minutes, or until the belly has reached an internal temperature of 65 C (150 F).

Slice as required and eat within 3 days or freeze in pieces for later cooking.