

Friday

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Smart & sweet

WHO SAYS SUBSTITUTE INGREDIENTS don't lead to lip-smacking desserts? Ariana Bundy, a former pastry chef and Paris-based cook book writer has proved it otherwise. Photos and recipes courtesy: **Conran Octopus Ltd**

'Like Water for Chocolate' Sorbet

This recipe will satisfy all your chocolate cravings in one go! I use Caraïbe 66 per cent cocoa solids chocolate from Valrhona, as it has hints of dried fruits and grilled almonds. For a bolder taste, go for a 70 per cent cocoa solids chocolate instead.

If you can't get Valrhona, try Green and Black's organic chocolate. Serve sorbet with a coulis of passion fruit, mango or raspberries. You can also spoon the prepared sorbet in its soft stage into silicon moulds and let them harden.

For a sophisticated smooth finish, pour some Chocolate Sauce on top after you remove it from the freezer.

Ingredients

450 ml/2 cups filtered or mineral water
225 gms Caraïbe chocolate, chopped
175 gms/3/4 cup unrefined golden castor (superfine) sugar

Method

Heat water with chocolate and sugar until boiling. Take off the heat and let it cool completely before pouring it into the ice cream machine. If you don't have an ice cream maker, freeze mixture for a few hours until hard, then cut it up into chunks and whizz in a food processor until smooth. Then refreeze for another hour.

If you'd like to cover the sorbet with a layer of Chocolate Ganache, take it out of its mould when it's frozen and place it on a wire rack, with a plate underneath to catch the excess glaze. Make sure the sorbet is rock hard before you start, so that it doesn't melt while you are working with it. Take a small ladle and fill it up with the sauce. Starting from the top of the ice cream, pour over the chocolate sauce quickly and in one big swoop, allowing it to fall generously so that it covers the edges. Immediately tap the wire rack several times to burst any trapped air bubbles, so that you're left with a silky smooth finish.

Decorate the top with a gold or silver leaf and serve immediately. Otherwise, you can put the glazed ice cream back in the freezer and serve later.



Chocolate Chilli Cookies

I love watching people eat these cookies. First they take a bite, expecting the familiar taste of a simple chocolate cookie. Then their face changes: they stop chewing, frown, and stare at the cookie with a startled expression as if someone has been playing a trick on them. Then, just when you think they're going to put it down, they take another bite and pick up another one!

The heat of the chilli goes amazingly well with the chocolate, which is not surprising because the ancient Aztecs and Mayans used to mix 'xocoatl' (Mayan word for chocolate) with chillies before the

Spaniards took it to Europe and added sugar to it instead.

MAKES 36

Ingredients

260 gms /2 cups gluten-free flour
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda (baking soda)
1/4 tsp cayenne pepper or ancho chilli powder
45 gms/1/3 cup cocoa powder
1/2 tsp xanthan gum
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
Nutmeg, a dash
Sea salt, a pinch
225 gms /1 cup margarine or clarified butter or coconut butter, at room temperature
175 gms/1 cup muscovado or palm sugar or rapadura sugar
1 organic egg
2 tsp vanilla extract
200 gms/ 1 and 2/3 cups roughly chopped dark (bittersweet) chocolate or chocolate chips

Method

Sift together flour, bicarbonate of soda, cayenne or chilli, cocoa powder, xanthan gum, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt, and set aside.

Cream margarine or clarified butter until pale, add sugar and whisk until creamy. Blend together egg and vanilla extract and whisk into the mixture. With a wooden spoon, fold in first the dry mixture, then chocolate chips. Refrigerate mixture to firm up before baking. Meanwhile, pre-heat oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with a silicon liner, or get a non-stick baking tray ready.

Spoon out rounded table-spoons of the dough on to the prepared baking tray 6 cm/2 1/2 inches apart and bake in the preheated oven for 10 minutes. Leave to cool on the baking tray before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely. Best eaten fresh, or frozen immediately.



Ariana Bundy ...
"When I use ingredient substitutes, quite often, my desserts get very close to the original taste."



Pumpkin Spice Muffins

Every time I make these muffins it feels like Christmas. They fill up the house with the most beautiful homely aroma. I haven't used a lot of sugar in this recipe – if it's not sweet enough for you, drizzle them with a little maple syrup as they come out of the oven.

Serves 12

Ingredients

200 gms/1 1/2 cups gluten-free flour
 1 1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda (baking soda)
 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
 3 1/2 tsp pumpkin spice or allspice
 1 tsp xanthan gum
 2 organic eggs
 175 gms/1/2 cup honey or maple syrup
 2 tbsp molasses (sorghum or regular)
 2 tsp fresh ginger, grated
 1 tsp cider vinegar or plain vinegar

185 gms/3/4 cup unsweetened pumpkin purée (not pumpkin pie filling)

85 ml/1/3 cup light olive oil or clarified butter or coconut butter, melted

60 gms/1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Method

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F. Place 12 paper cases in your muffin tin or grease lightly with a little oil.

Sift dry ingredients together and set aside. Whisk eggs with honey or maple syrup and molasses.

Add ginger, vinegar, pumpkin purée and oil, and whisk to a smooth consistency.

Blend in the flour mixture with walnuts and pour into the muffin cases, leaving a little space below the rim so that the muffins have room to expand.

Bake in the preheated oven for about 20 minutes or until the muffins are golden and a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean.

Konnyaku and Lime Noodle Granita

Also known as *Faloudeh*, this seems to be one of the very first iced desserts known to man. In 400 BC, Persian engineers had created the way to store ice in the middle of the summer, in the desert heat. Giant chunks of ice were carried from nearby mountains and stored in enormous underground rooms. These rooms were then connected to a series of wind-catchers, which kept them at icy levels. The ice created was then used by palace cooks to create desserts such as *Faloudeh*, an icy concoction of crunchy noodles, saffron, fruits and other flavours, only served to royalty. It is still eaten today, sometimes drizzled with sour cherry syrup or a squeeze of lime juice. A truly refreshing and unusual dessert.

Ingredients

400 gms konnyaku noodles, chopped up, or very thin rice noodles, broken into 3 cm/ 1 1/4 inch pieces
 430 gms/2 cups unrefined golden castor (superfine) sugar
 160 ml/2/3 cup filtered water
 80 ml/1/3 cup lime juice
 1 tbsp rosewater

Method

If using konnyaku noodles, blanch them quickly in boiling water, then run them under ice-cold water and strain out

the excess. If using rice noodles, boil them in water for a minute, then strain and run ice-cold water over them.

Boil sugar, water and lime juice until sugar dissolves. Let the liquid cool.

Add noodles and rosewater to the cooled sugar and water mixture, and churn in the ice cream machine. You can also pour the mixture into a tray, freeze for 30 minutes, and fluff the ice with a fork. Repeat twice more, then let the mixture freeze for a few hours or overnight. Serve with a drizzle of sour cherry syrup or extra lime wedges.



COOKING

JAPANESE GREEN TEA

Green tea has been consumed in the East for 5,000 years and is now the second-most popular beverage in the world. It is known to have many health benefits, such as lowering cholesterol, boosting the immune system, helping prevent cavities and tooth decay, as well as fighting against certain forms of cancer.

It is 200 times more potent than vitamin E in fighting free radicals; it protects the liver against damage, contains lots of antioxidants which neutralise free radicals, and is also a natural fat-burner.

There are four main types of green tea in Japan: Matcha, Gyokuro, Sencha and Bancha. Some come as tea leaves, others in powder form or tea bags. You'll need to experiment to find out which ones suit your taste buds. You can also get green tea leaves that have been naturally decaffeinated using the water method, which locks all the benefits and taste in.

Green tea sodas and soft drinks are very popular in Japan, and it is also used to flavour cakes and ice creams - even chocolates.

The best way to enjoy green tea is to use a Japanese teapot called a *kyusu*. Put the tea leaves in the pot, pour

hot water over them, put the lid on and wait a couple of minutes before pouring out into tea cups. An ordinary teapot is also fine. If you want to get to the very best flavour from green tea, you will need to adapt the temperature of the water to the type of tea you are drinking.

Sencha: Use water that has been boiled to 71°C and let the tea brew for only a minute

before drinking.

Gyokuro: Use water at 43°C/110°F and brew for about 2-3 minutes.

Macha green tea powder: Put 1 tsp into a teacup and add a cup of 71°C water to it. Stir with a bamboo spoon, not a metal one as it may alter the taste of the tea.

Bancha tea: As it is a low-grade tea, it just needs boiling water and a few seconds of steeping in the pot. ■



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