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Vegetarian for Life

Gourmet vegan

Elevating care home cuisine



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Foreword

Creating luxury plating involves thoughtful use of tools, textures, and colours. Presentation rings, brushes, and diagonal cuts can transform a simple dish into something visually striking. Even on a budget, as demonstrated with my £3.00 satay tofu (see page 18) and strawberry cake (page 28), these techniques can elevate a meal from ordinary to extraordinary. When plating, balance bold colours, use layers for height, and combine textures to ensure every bite is interesting.

For more complex dishes, particularly those meeting IDDSI standards, attention to detail becomes even more crucial. Techniques like piping can create appealing shapes, while avoiding silicone moulds prevents reheating issues. Finger foods can also be elegant, using small, colourful vegetable slices and dips, enhanced with oils or seeds. Ultimately, luxury dining is about making every dish visually enticing and ensuring it tastes as good as it looks.

Creating a memorable dining experience isn't just about flavour, but also about presentation. Simple tools like nozzles for drizzles or ribbons made with peelers can add flair without complication. Every detail matters, from the placement of herbs to the cut of vegetables. Even with limited resources, creativity can transform everyday ingredients into something special.

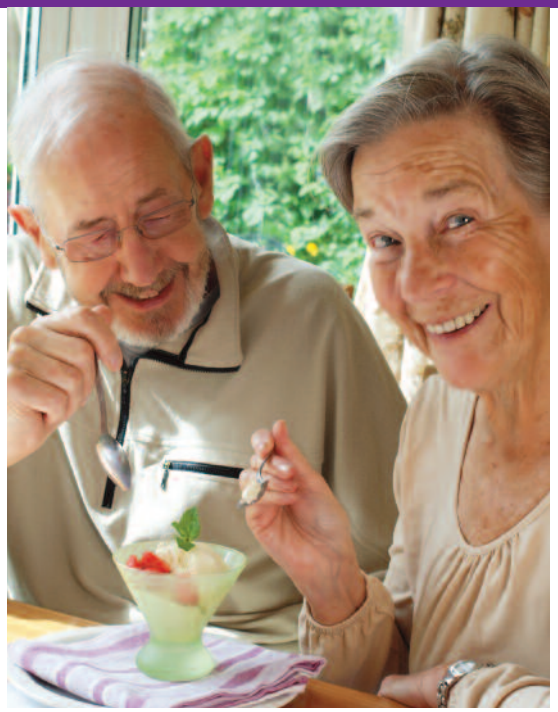


This guide will help you master techniques that make a significant difference in care home dining. The recipes provided are designed to inspire creativity and elevate meals, ensuring that each one feels special. By applying these methods, you can create an exceptional dining experience for residents, making every plate a celebration of flavour, texture, and presentation.

Justina Kesterton, Runner-Up/Winner of Highly Commended Main Meal, National Association of Care Catering 'Care Chef of the Year' 2022

Introduction

Welcome to Gourmet vegan, designed for care home chefs looking to enhance their menus. This guide offers a range of vegan recipes and techniques suited for fine dining in care settings. From flavourful plant-based entrées to indulgent desserts, you'll find practical ways to meet your residents' dietary needs and preferences. Let's work together to create compassionate, sustainable, and high-quality meals.



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Creating fine dining experiences can greatly enhance your residents' quality of life – and it can be done even on a tight budget. Here's why it matters.

Well-being: Thoughtfully prepared and presented meals can stimulate appetite, encourage better nutrition, and improve overall health. Residents may eat more and make healthier choices when meals are appealing.

Dignity and self-worth: For many residents, meals are a highlight of the day. Offering a fine dining experience shows that their preferences are valued, boosting self-esteem and mental health.

Social engagement: Mealtimes are social events. Fine dining creates a positive dining atmosphere where residents can connect, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Comfort and familiarity: Many older adults miss the routines and comforts of home, including enjoying a good meal. Fine dining can help recreate familiar experiences and make special moments, such as festivities and birthdays, more meaningful.

Mental stimulation: Visually appealing and varied meals can engage the senses, providing a positive boost to cognitive and emotional health.

Reputation: Offering fine dining on a budget can set your care home apart, showing a commitment to excellence that can lead to higher resident and family satisfaction and a stronger reputation.

Balancing creativity with cost-effectiveness allows care chefs to elevate everyday meals, bringing joy and well-being to residents while making fine dining both achievable and worthwhile.

Plating

Plating is an art form that can elevate dining experiences. Below are essential techniques that every chef should master to create visually stunning presentations:

1. **Start with the canvas: Choose the right plate**
   - Select plates that complement the dish's colours, shapes, and textures without overpowering them. Use the beauty of negative space to highlight the dish's main components.

2. **Balance and composition**
   - Distribute elements evenly across the plate for harmony.
   - Avoid overcrowding.
   - Arrange elements in odd numbers (3, 5, 7) for more visually appealing presentations.
   - Incorporate varying heights and textures for added dimension and interest.

3. **Colour and contrast**
   - Pair contrasting colours to create visual excitement.
   - Garnish with fresh herbs and edible flowers for pops of colour.
   - Use sauces strategically to enhance contrast and add depth (also see the purée plating guide on page 6).

4. **Attention to detail**
   - Place each component with care for both aesthetics and practicality.
   - Wipe plate edges for a clean finish.
   - Add garnishes or finishing touches just before serving to preserve freshness and elevate the presentation.

5. **Personal style and creativity**
   - Experiment with different techniques to develop your unique style.
   - Let flavours and ingredients guide your plating decisions, showcasing your creativity.

Mastering these techniques requires practice. But it can transform ordinary dishes into stunning works of art that delight the senses and elevate your residents' dining experience.



Purée plating

Dots: Use a squeezy bottle to create uniform dots on the plate.

- Hold the end of the bottle close to the plate at a slight angle.
- Gently squeeze to release the purée. As soon as a small blob has been squeezed, release and pull the bottle up to create a uniform dot.
- Continue this with more dots around the plate. You can experiment with various sizes.



Round: Use a pastry ring and a squeezy bottle to form a perfect circle of purée.

- Place a round pastry ring in the centre of the plate and hold it in place.
- With your other hand, place the tip of a squeezy bottle at the top of the inner side of the ring.
- Squeeze out the purée moving the bottle tip around about 60% of the inner edge of the ring and then lift off the bottle.
- Still holding the ring in place, use a teaspoon on top of the start point of the purée and repeat the action of the squeezy bottle.



- Move the purée with the back of the spoon and lift off.



Circular spread: Press down a glass on a large dot of purée to create a smooth circular spread.

- Using a squeezy bottle make one large dot of purée in the very centre of the plate.
- Place the bottom of a small flat edge of a glass on top of the centre of the dot and apply gentle, even pressure pressing so that the purée starts to slightly shift over the edges of the glass.
- Lift off gently.



Tapered line: Use a spoon to drag purée across the plate, creating a tapered line.

- Take a large spoonful of purée.
- At one side of the top of the plate place the side of the spoon down on the plate so that the purée drops onto the plate.
- Keeping the spoon in place on its side, quickly move the spoon down and across the plate, before lifting it off.

Smear: Use the back of a teaspoon or chopstick to create clean, tapered smears.

- Using a squeezy bottle, make one dot of purée on the far left-hand side of the plate and one dot of purée on the far right-hand side, slightly lower down.



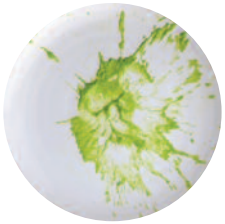
- Using the end of a teaspoon or chopstick, place in the centre of the dot.
- While holding the spoon at a 45° angle, move the spoon quickly through the dot and lift directly up to ensure a clean tapered look. Repeat with the other smear.



Palette smear: Use a palette knife to drag purée across the plate.

- From a squeezy bottle; squeeze a thick vertical line two-thirds of the way down on one side of the plate.
- Using a small palette knife or similar, place the blade flat on top of the purée and drag across the plate before lifting off.

Purée splat: Smack dollops of purée with a flat spatula for a splattered design.



- Place a few dollops of purée onto a plate using a tablespoon.
- Gently smack the dollops with a flat silicone spatula until you have an attractive design. Beware this can get messy!



HOW TO MAKE A QUENELLE: A QUICK GUIDE

A quenelle is an elegant, oval scoop of soft food that elevates presentation. Here's how to make one:

What you need:

- Soft food (e.g., ice cream, mousse, mashed potatoes, or pâté)
- Two identical spoons

Steps:

1. Ensure the food is soft but firm enough to hold shape.
2. Scoop with one spoon, then scrape onto the second spoon to form an oval.
3. Pass between spoons until smooth.
4. Place the quenelle on the plate using one spoon.

Tips:

- Adjust food temperature for easier shaping.
- Warm spoons create a smoother surface.

With practice, you'll master perfect quenelles!

Starters

Oyster mushroom scallops with seagreens pesto and mushroom purée

Serves 2

Seagreens pesto

- 1 clove garlic
- good glug of olive oil
- 30g/¼ cup walnuts or pine nuts or combination of both
- small handful of mixed kelp and sea sprigs or seaweed of your choice (if using dried rehydrate first)
- handful of fresh basil
- 1 large handful of spinach
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tbsp nutritional yeast
- a couple of pinches of salt

1 Blitz garlic with olive oil in food processor for a few seconds.
2 Add nuts and blitz for a few seconds.
3 Add remaining ingredients and blitz until combined. You may need to add some water to loosen.

Scallops

- 4 large king oyster mushrooms OR large white button mushrooms cut into a scallop shape
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- salt and pepper

1 Cut the mushroom stems into 1-inch thick slices. Cut the tops into rounds or use them for your purée.
2 Heat the oil in a non-stick pan and place the mushroom pieces cut side down. Cook on medium heat for 2–3 minutes until browned.
3 Turn scallops to the other side and cook another 2–3 minutes.
4 Season liberally with salt and pepper.
5 Remove from the heat and serve immediately.

Mushroom purée

- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- ½ to ⅔ tbsp olive oil
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 50g (generous 1.5oz) sliced mushrooms
- 27–40ml (about 2–3 tbsp) oat milk
- ⅓ tsp vegetable bouillon
- 10ml/2 tsp oat crème
- 2 tsp red wine or red wine vinegar or balsamic
- ½ tsp sea salt
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste

Garnish

- a few sprigs of parsley
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges
- truffle oil (optional)
- minced chives (optional)



1 Sauté shallots in the oil. Add minced garlic and mushrooms and brown.
2 Add oat milk and all other ingredients. Reduce heat and reduce liquid slightly.
3 Purée.

To serve:
1 Spread some of the purée on each plate.
2 Arrange the scallops and garnish with parsley and lemon and dots of pesto.
3 Garnish with truffle oil and minced chives (optional).



Carpaccio of beetroot, tofu aioli, olive soil and baby herb salad

Serves 6

- 3 beetroot, well scrubbed
- ½ lemon, zested and juiced
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- salt and pepper, to taste

1 Trim away the ends of the beetroot then, using a mandoline or sharp knife, slice the beetroot very thinly.
2 Add to a bowl and drizzle over the lemon juice and zest, the olive oil and the cider vinegar, then season well with salt and pepper.
3 Mix together, cover and leave for around 1 hour.

Silken tofu aioli

- 1 garlic bulb, plus 2 cloves
- 1 tbsp olive oil for drizzle
- 1 lemon, juice only
- 340g/12oz silken tofu
- 1 tsp sea salt, or to taste
- 2 tbsp olive oil

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/390°F/gas mark 6.
2 Slice the top off the head of a garlic bulb and lay the rest of the bulb on a sheet of tin foil. Drizzle with olive oil and close the foil package.
3 Roast for 45–60 minutes, until the cloves are softened and slightly browned. When the garlic has cooled, squeeze the cloves out of their skin and into a food processor.
4 While the garlic is roasting, juice the lemon and place in a small bowl. Crush and mince the remaining garlic cloves before adding to the lemon juice. Set aside to infuse.
5 Drain and discard any excess liquid from the packet of silken tofu. Add to the food processor with the roasted garlic and blend to a purée. Add the sea salt, about half of the lemon and garlic mix and a couple of tbsp of olive oil. Blend to combine.
6 Leave the mixture to rest for 5–10 minutes to allow the garlic and salt time to infuse the tofu. Taste the mixture and season to taste.

Black olive soil

- 200g/7oz pitted black olives

1 Put pitted olives on a dehydrator tray and dry for 16 hours at 65°C/149°F until mostly but not fully dried. You could alternatively place the olives on a wire rack on top of an oven tray and bake on an oven's lowest setting, checking every 12 hours.
2 Remove and let the olives sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.
3 Pulse the dried olives in a food processor until a coarse 'soil' like texture is achieved. Reserve at room temperature for serving.

Baby herb salad

- ½ lemon, zested and juiced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp maple syrup
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard
- large handful of baby herbs; rocket, pea shoots etc

1 Combine all the dressing ingredients.
2 Mix through the leaves.

Putting it together

1 Beetroot carpaccio base: Arrange the beetroot slices in a circular pattern on a large plate, slightly overlapping each slice. Use alternating colours for visual appeal.
2 Tofu aioli: Pipe small dollops of tofu aioli around and on top of the beetroot carpaccio. Be strategic with placement to create visual interest and balance.
3 Olive soil: Sprinkle the olive soil delicately around the beetroot carpaccio, allowing some to fall on the beetroot slices. This adds texture and a contrasting colour.
4 Baby herb salad: Place a small mound of the baby herb salad in the centre of the beetroot carpaccio or in strategic spots around the plate. Ensure the herbs are light and not overcrowded, maintaining the delicate appearance.
5 Final touches: Optionally, drizzle a bit of balsamic reduction around the plate for added flavour and decoration. Add a few drops of extra virgin olive oil for sheen and richness. Serve with fresh bread.

Marinated courgette ribbons with tangy salsa verde

Serves 3

Salsa verde

- 1–2 gherkins, roughly chopped
- 50g/scant 2oz green olives, pitted
- 20g/generous ½oz capers
- 5g/1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 lemon, both juice and zest
- 20g/generous ½oz parsley, chopped
- 100ml/scant 7 tbsp olive oil
- salt and black pepper to taste

1 Blend the ingredients, pulsing until still slightly chunky. Season to taste.

Courgette

- 2 courgettes, sliced lengthwise into ribbons (use a mandoline or peeler)
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste

1 Brush the courgette strips with the olive oil then season to taste. Roll them up lengthways.

Topping

- 45g/generous 1½oz flaked almonds
- Micro herbs, shoots or edible flowers (optional)

1 Heat a pan or skillet.
2 When the pan is hot, toast the almonds for a few minutes, so they are browned.

To assemble the dish
1 Place the salsa verde onto a serving plate then carefully place the rolled courgette ribbons on top.
2 Sprinkle with the toasted almonds. You could also decorate with micro herbs, shoots or edible flowers.
3 Serve.

Inspired by a recipe by Chantelle Nicholson, Great British Chefs: **greatbritishchefs.com**





Mains

Cauliflower steaks, purée and toasted seed crumble

Serves 2–3

- 500ml/17½fl oz vegetable stock
- 1kg/2¼lb cauliflower
- 3 tbsp olive oil (plus more for frying)
- 50g/1¾oz fresh white breadcrumbs
- 10g/⅓oz parsley, roughly chopped
- 3 tbsp pumpkin seeds, roughly chopped
- 1 tbsp freshly grated horseradish OR 1½ tbsp vegan horseradish sauce, to taste
- salt and pepper, to taste
- edible flowers or pea shoots (optional)

1 Warm 500ml of vegetable stock in a medium saucepan.
2 Trim 1kg of cauliflower and cut into steaks about 2cm thick.
3 Place the cauliflower steaks into the boiling stock. Reduce the heat to a simmer.
4 Partially cover the pan with a lid and let the cauliflower cook.

Chef's tip
Boost the protein in this dish by putting a tablespoon of neutral, unsweetened protein powder (like soy or pea) into the pureé with an extra dash of water.

Crumble
1 Make the breadcrumb mixture: While the cauliflower cooks, warm 3 tbsp of olive oil in a shallow pan.
2 Add the breadcrumbs and cook until golden, stirring constantly to ensure even colouring.
3 Add the chopped parsley, pumpkin seeds, and horseradish to the pan. Season with salt and pepper, then set aside.
4 Remove half of the cooked cauliflower from the saucepan.
5 Blend it with approximately half of the stock until smooth, seasoning to taste as you go.
6 Fry the cauliflower steaks: Heat a glug or two of olive oil in a shallow pan. Drain two of the reserved cauliflower steaks and fry until golden.
7 Carefully turn and cook the other side until lightly crisp around the edges.

To assemble the dish:
1 Divide the cauliflower purée between two plates.
2 Place the fried cauliflower steaks on top of the purée.
3 Sprinkle the prepared breadcrumbs and seeds over the cauliflower steaks. You could also add edible flowers or pea shoots for extra garnish.
4 Serve immediately.

Creamy truffle mushroom polenta

Serves 4

- 1¾ litre/generous 3½ pints vegetable broth
- 200ml/7fl oz oat milk (unsweetened)
- 200g/7oz polenta
- 50g/1¾oz vegan butter or good quality extra virgin olive oil
- 10g/⅓oz nutritional yeast or vegan Parmesan cheese, finely grated
- salt to taste

Garlic mushrooms

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 350g/generous 12oz mixed mushrooms
- ½ tsp salt
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- splash of dry white wine or white wine vinegar

Topping

- 1–2 tsp lemon zest
- black pepper
- small bunch parsley, finely chopped
- extra vegan Parmesan
- 2 tsp truffle oil

Chef's tip
Boost the protein in this dish by swapping the oat milk for soya milk. You could also top with toasted chopped nuts or seeds when serving.

Polenta

1 Combine the veggie broth and oat milk in a large saucepan and bring to the boil.
2 While whisking the liquid, slowly add in the polenta. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer for around 20 minutes. Make sure to stir continuously.
3 Stir in the vegan butter or olive oil and the nutritional yeast or vegan Parmesan. Season.

Mushrooms

1 While the polenta cooks, warm a large frying pan or skillet to a medium high heat. When the pan is warm, add the oil and the mushrooms. Try to leave them untouched for a couple of minutes to help caramelise.
2 Add the salt and minced garlic and cook for another minute or 2 before adding a splash of dry white wine or vinegar to lift the crispy bits of mushrooms off the bottom of the pan.
3 Remove from the heat and cover with a lid to keep the mushrooms warm.
4 To serve, divide the polenta between 4 bowls and top with the garlic mushrooms. Sprinkle generously with lemon zest, black pepper, parsley, Parmesan, and drizzle each bowl with truffle oil.





Justina's crispy satay tofu, coconut rice, satay sauce and pickled vegetables

Serves 3

Marinade:
- 60ml/4 tbsp low salt soy sauce
- ½ tsp Marmite
- 30g/2 tbsp smooth peanut butter
- 15g/1 tbsp golden syrup
- 30ml/2 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tbsp curry powder

1 Mix all ingredients until smooth. Set aside until needed.

Tofu
- 330g/11½oz firm tofu
- 70g/2½oz cornflour
- 160ml/generous 5fl oz vegetable oil

1 Slice the tofu block in half horizontally and press for at least 10 minutes. Slice the tofu into 1.5 cm cubes (in 6 cuts width and 7 length) and place the cubes in the marinade.
2 Just before serving toss tofu in cornflour and fry in oil until crispy. Dry on paper towels.

Satay sauce
- 90g/3oz smooth peanut butter
- 90ml/6 tbsp low salt soy sauce
- 15g/3 tsp golden syrup
- 25ml/5 tsp lime juice
- 45ml/3 tbsp water

1 Mix all the ingredients to a smooth paste. Reserve some sauce for decoration. Serve the rest of the sauce on the side.

Vegetables
- 60g/generous 2oz carrot
- 55g/scant 2oz cucumber
- 3 radishes
- 1 spring onion
- 3g/small handful fresh coriander

Pickled vegetable dressing
- 125ml/½ cup rice vinegar
- 250ml/1 cup water
- 1 tsp salt
- 2.5g/½ tsp sugar

1 Peel carrots. Use a peeler to shave 9 carrot ribbons and 9 cucumber ribbons. Discard the first shaving from the cucumber and avoid the seeds. Julienne the leftover carrot.
2 Slice the radishes. Slice spring onion diagonally. Pick and wash coriander leaves.
3 Mix all the dressing ingredients and heat until sugar and salt dissolve. Add cucumber and carrot ribbons to the marinade. Leave until needed. Drain just before plating.

Rice
- 100g/scant ⅔ cup long grain rice
- ⅔ cup water
- 350ml/1 can light coconut milk
- 4g fresh ginger
- 6g/2 tsp black onion seeds

Garnish
- 9 cashew nut halves
- Fresh coriander

1 Add the first 4 rice ingredients to the pot and simmer for 10 minutes with a lid on. Remove lid and simmer for a further 10 minutes, until all the liquid has gone.
2 Mix in black onion seeds.

To assemble the dish:
1 Dot satay sauce on the edge of the plate. Place sliced radish and tofu in a line. Add cashew halves near the dots.
2 Serve the rest of the satay sauce in a spoon. Place the pickled vegetables on top of the tofu.
3 Use a presentation ring to shape rice. Smear with satay sauce and add the rest of the tofu. Top with more vegetables and fresh coriander.

Smoked vegan aubergine

Serves 4

Aubergines

- 4 small aubergines
- 1 tbsp olive oil, plus more for coating
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tbsp ginger, minced
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1–2 tomatoes, chopped
- sea salt and pepper to taste

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/390°F/gas mark 6.
2 Coat the whole aubergines in oil and place them on a baking tray.
3 Roast in the oven for about 30 minutes, then transfer to a griddle pan to chargrill, turning regularly to ensure even cooking.
4 Allow the chargrilled aubergines to cool. Once cooled, halve the aubergines and scoop out the flesh, reserving four skins for plating and discarding the rest. Roughly chop the aubergine flesh and set aside.
5 Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. When hot, add the chopped onion and ginger and sauté until browned. Then, add the chopped garlic cooking for a further couple of minutes.
6 Stir in the spices and sauté for another few minutes. Add the chopped tomatoes and cook them down for 5 minutes or so.
7 Finally add the aubergine flesh, season to taste, and cook for a few more minutes, stirring well.

Top

- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 medium aubergine, finely diced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 sweet pointed pepper or bell pepper, finely diced (seeds removed)

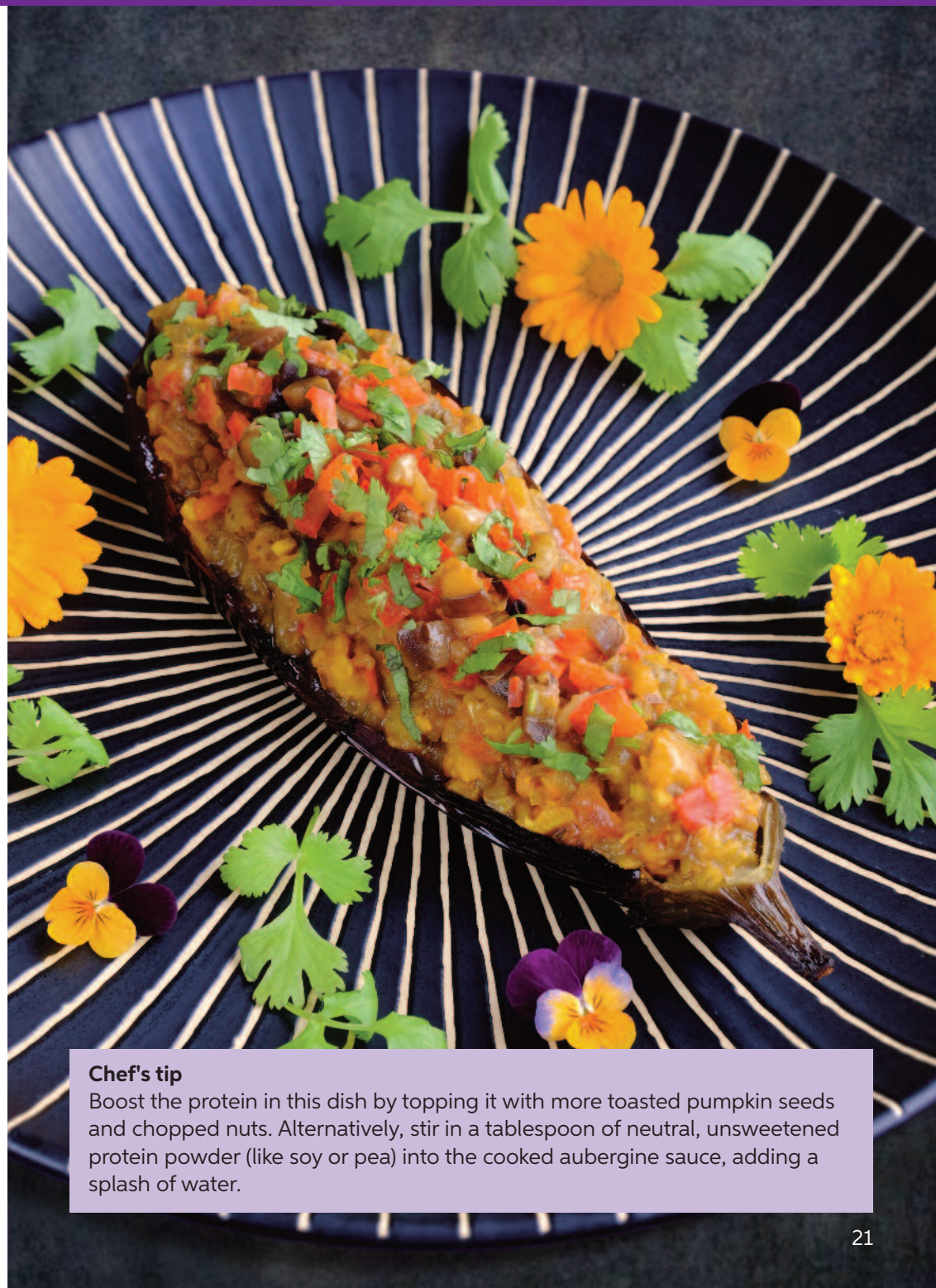
1 Gently salt the diced aubergine. Leave to sit for around 10 minutes.
2 Heat a good glug of oil in a saucepan. When hot, add the diced aubergine. Cook for a couple of minutes until beginning to soften.
3 Add the diced red pepper and cook for around a minute longer.
4 Combine the cooked aubergine and pepper. Set aside until ready to serve.

To serve

- 1–2 tsp toasted and roughly chopped pumpkin seeds
- a few colourful edible flowers like violas
- handful of chopped coriander

1 Place the empty aubergine skins each on their own each plate and spoon in the aubergine mix.
2 Top the dish with the diced aubergine/pepper topper and finally finish with the pumpkin seeds, edible flowers and fresh coriander. Serve.

Inspired by a recipe by Alfred Prasad, Great British Chefs:
greatbritishchefs.com



Chef's tip
Boost the protein in this dish by topping it with more toasted pumpkin seeds and chopped nuts. Alternatively, stir in a tablespoon of neutral, unsweetened protein powder (like soy or pea) into the cooked aubergine sauce, adding a splash of water.



Desserts

Presentation can also be a lot of fun and evoke memories. I love these vegan 'magnum' style lollies, I give them a refined, fine-dining twist by serving on a salted caramel miso smear.

Almond magnum with salted miso caramel

Serves 5

- 245g/8½oz coconut cream
- 140g/5oz raw cashew nuts. Soaked overnight or at least 8 hours
- 120ml/4¼fl oz maple syrup/rice malt syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp salt
- 30g/1oz cocoa nibs/vegan dark choc chips

Coating

- 200g/7oz vegan dark chocolate
- 2 tsp coconut oil
- 45g/generous 1½oz chopped almonds

Salted miso caramel sauce

- 215g/7½oz brown sugar
- 240g/8½oz full fat coconut milk
- 2 tbsp white miso paste

1 Add the coconut cream, soaked cashews, maple syrup, vanilla extract and salt to a blender then blend until smooth.
2 Add the choc chips/cocoa nibs and blend until broken up and combined.
3 Pour this chocolate mixture into mini silicon ice cream/magnum moulds with a stick positioned at the bottom and freeze for 3–4 hours or until completely set.
4 Gently melt the chocolate and coconut oil together in a pan. Stir the chopped almonds through.
5 Dip the set magnum bars into the melted chocolate mixture and place on a parchment paper lined tray.
6 Put them back in the freezer to set for 10–15 minutes or you are ready to serve.
7 Add all the salted miso caramel sauce ingredients to a non-stick saucepan set over high heat.
8 Once the mixture begins to boil, reduce the heat to medium and simmer for 6–10 minutes, whisking it constantly so that nothing sticks to the bottom of the pan. The caramel sauce is ready once it has noticeably thickened and sticks to the back of a spoon; it will also thicken as it cools!
9 Smear onto a plate, plating the magnum slightly next to it. Garnish with strawberries, shards of dark chocolate, and perhaps a bed of chocolate soil.

Notes
Pour the miso caramel sauce mixture into a sealable jar or container and let cool before storing. If the mixture thickens too much in the fridge, simply microwave for 10 seconds or so and stir well to loosen the sauce up.

Magnums inspired by a recipe by Holly Dyson: **instagram.com/growthegrin**

Poached pears with maple soft cheese

Serves 4

Poached pears

- 1½ litres/generous 3 pints water
- 55g/scant 2oz caster sugar
- a few pieces of orange rind
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 6 cardamom pods, cracked
- ¼ tsp ground ginger (or 1 tsp freshly grated ginger)
- 4 smooth pears
- juice from ½ lemon

Maple soft cheese

- 240g/8½oz vegan soft cheese
- 2–3 tbsp maple syrup
- a good pinch of ground cardamom
- sliced almonds
- cinnamon powder, to dust

Pears

1 In a large saucepan, combine water, sugar, orange rind and spices. Bring the mixture to a gentle simmer, stirring to ensure the sugar fully dissolves. Allow to simmer for around 5 minutes.
2 Meanwhile, peel the pears from the top downwards, and slice a thin piece from the bottom to help them stand upright. Use a sharp knife to core the pears from the bottom, removing the seeds and any hard parts. Coating each pear with lemon juice will prevent browning.
3 Add the prepared pears to the simmering liquid. Let them cook gently, turning occasionally to ensure even cooking. The pears are done when they are tender enough to be easily pierced with a spoon or fork – neither too firm nor too soft.
4 Cooking time will vary depending on the type and ripeness of the pears; approximately 30 minutes should suffice.
5 Once cooked, turn off the heat, cover the pot with a lid, and allow the pears to cool in the liquid for 1–2 hours.
6 When ready to serve, mix cheese, maple syrup, and cardamom in a bowl. Spoon some of the mixture onto a plate, place a poached pear on top, and sprinkle with sliced almonds. Drizzle with extra poaching liquid and maple syrup, then dust with cinnamon powder.
7 Store any leftovers in an airtight container with some of the syrup to keep them from drying out.

Inspired by a recipe by Bahareh, Baking is Therapy: **bakingstherapy.com**



Chocolate beetroot cake, rhubarb gel, poached pear, micro herbs and lemon shortbread

Serves 4

In this recipe, you can reuse the poached pear from page 24. It's an easy way to incorporate a dessert that you've already made into a new one, saving time in the process.

Use the same recipe on page 24 for the pears.



Cake

- 60ml/4 tbsp strong coffee
- 60g/2oz coconut oil
- 180g/6½oz raw beetroot, weight after peeling
- 180ml/6fl oz almond or plant milk of choice, lukewarm
- 200g/7oz sugar
- 75g/2⅔oz cocoa powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ¾ tsp baking soda
- 160g/scant 6oz all-purpose white flour

1 Heat oven to 180°C/360°F/gas mark 4, or slightly lower for a fan-assisted oven. Grease and line a large rectangular cake tin with a large strip of baking paper.
2 Brew a strong coffee, measure out 60ml/4 tbsp and pour it over the coconut oil to melt it.
3 Slice beetroot thinly and place in a blender with coffee-oil mixture and lukewarm plant milk. Blend until the mixture is smooth and there are no pieces of beetroot left.
4 Transfer the beetroot mixture to a large mixing bowl.
5 Stir in the sugar.
6 Place a sieve over the bowl and sift in cocoa powder, salt, both raising agents and flour.
7 Fold dry ingredients into the wet ingredients.
8 Transfer it into the prepared baking tin and bake for about 55 minutes to 1 hour, until a toothpick comes out clean of cake crumbs.
9 Once cooled, cut into bit size squares.

Rhubarb gel

- 360ml/1½ cups water
- 1 heaped tbsp agar flakes
- 240ml/1 cup apple and rhubarb juice

Please note: This gel has quite a sharp flavour, which works well with the other elements on the plate. However you could add a tablespoon or so of sweetener such as maple or agave syrup if you would like it sweeter.

1 Pour the water into a medium saucepan and sprinkle the agar flakes on top. Bring to the boil then reduce to a simmer. Stir until the flakes are completely dissolved (about 10 minutes).
2 Remove from the heat and stir in the juice.
3 Pour into mini square jelly moulds or silicone ice cube trays and leave to set for at least 4 hours or overnight.

Shortbread

Makes 20 biscuits

- 125g/scant 4½oz gluten-free plain flour
- pinch of salt
- 75g/generous 2½oz vegan margarine, straight from the fridge
- 45g/1½oz caster sugar plus a little extra to sprinkle on top of the biscuits
- 1 lemon, zest only

1 Preheat oven to 180°C/360°F/gas mark 4.
2 Place the flour, salt and margarine into a bowl and gently rub in with your fingertips.
3 Add the sugar and lemon zest. Stir, then bring together into a ball.
4 Dust your work surface and rolling pin with a little flour and gently roll out the dough.
5 Cut the dough into biscuits and place onto a lined baking sheet. Dust the biscuits with a little extra sugar.
6 Bake for 10–15 minutes or until golden. As the biscuits cool, they will crispen.

Chef's tip
Can be stored in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

For plating

- liquid reserved from the poached pears
- 100ml/scant 3½fl oz full fat coconut milk
- micro herbs
- 100g/3½oz dark (70%) vegan chocolate

To assemble the dish

Using ideas and techniques outlined at the start, use a large plate and gently place all elements onto it. Try to create height and make sure to use liquid from the pears, drops of coconut milk, and intersperse with micro herbs and shards of dark chocolate created with a sharp knife or peeler.

Justina's fraisier cake

Serves 3

Sponge

- 44ml/3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 42g/1½oz vegan margarine, melted
- 133ml/generous 4½fl oz unsweetened soya milk
- 15ml/1 tbsp vinegar
- 139g/scant 5oz self-raising flour
- 130g/4½oz sugar
- 1.8g/scant ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- zest of 1 small lemon

Cream filling

- 60g/generous 2oz granulated sugar
- 22g/¾oz vegan custard powder
- 10ml/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 3g/scant 1 tsp agar agar
- 240ml/8½fl oz unsweetened almond milk
- 8g/2 tsp coconut oil
- 94ml/3⅓fl oz vegan double cream

Filling and decoration

- 200g/7oz fresh strawberries
- 5g/generous 1 tsp icing sugar

Sponge

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/360°F/gas mark 4.
2 Mix oil with melted margarine; set aside.
3 Combine soya milk and vinegar; let stand for 5 minutes.
4 Sieve flour, sugar and bicarbonate of soda into a bowl.
5 Mix plant milk mixture and the oil mixture. Add lemon zest. Pour into dry ingredients and whisk until smooth.
6 Bake for 25 minutes. Leave to cool on a rack.
7 Use serving rings to cut out sponge discs. Slice the sponges in half.
8 Prepare strawberries by selecting same size berries and slicing them thinly. Reserve 6 whole strawberries.

Cream filling

1 Prepare the cream mixing sugar, custard powder, vanilla extract and agar agar powder in a small amount of almond milk until it forms a smooth paste.
2 Boil the rest of the almond milk and add the paste. Heat while whisking constantly.
3 Once it comes to a full boil remove from the heat and add the coconut oil. Stir until smooth.
4 Transfer the hot cream to a large bowl and whisk to release the heat.
5 Continue whisking every so often until the custard is slightly cooler than body temperature.
6 Place in the fridge to cool.
7 Meanwhile, whisk the vegan cream to stiff peaks and store in the fridge.
8 When the cream base has cooled to fridge temperature gently fold in 1 cup of whipped vegan cream to incorporate.
9 Assemble using a serving ring and acetate. Place one sponge on the bottom. Arrange strawberries inside the ring. Place a whole strawberry in the middle and fill with the cream. Place another sponge on the top and gently press down. Repeat with all the desserts.
10 Refrigerate until ready to serve. Remove the ring and the acetate before serving. Dust with icing sugar and top with a strawberry cut in a half.





Alex's citrusy lemon curd sponge served with banana, chocolate & peanut butter ice-cream, nut brittle and fruit coulis

Serves 3

Ice cream
- 2 bananas
- 2 drops vanilla essence
- 30ml/2 tbsp soya cream
- 15g/1 tbsp peanut butter
- 10g/generous 2 tsp cocoa powder
- 10g/generous 2 tsp golden syrup

Lemon curd
- 2 lemons
- 5g/1 tsp cornflour
- 60g/generous 2oz brown sugar
- 30ml/2 tbsp water

Sponge
- 40g/scant 1½oz margarine
- 50g/1¾oz brown sugar
- 75ml/2½fl oz soya milk
- 5g/generous 1 tsp bicarb of soda
- 5ml/1 tsp cider vinegar
- 15g/½oz ground almonds
- 75g/2½oz self-raising flour

Coulis
- 100g/3½oz frozen berries
- 15g/generous ½oz icing sugar

Nut brittle
- 50g/1¾oz white sugar
- 20g/scant ¾oz peanuts

Garnish
- 5g/generous 1 tsp flaked almonds
- ½ tsp icing sugar
- a few leaves of fresh mint

1 Peel and slice the bananas then freeze.
2 Blend the frozen bananas with the vanilla, soya cream, peanut butter, cocoa powder and syrup.
3 Return to the freezer.
4 Place the juice and zest of 2 lemons, cornflour, sugar and 30ml/2 tbsp water into a pan and heat. Set to one side.
5 Cream the margarine and sugar.
6 Add the soya milk, bicarb, cider vinegar, ground almonds and flour.
7 Line 3 dariole moulds with a round of non-stick paper. Place a little curd in the bottom of the mounds. Top with batter mix, a little more curd, and batter.
8 Bake for 15 minutes at 180°C/360°F/gas mark 4.
9 Heat 80g of the berries with 1 tsp icing sugar and blend until smooth.
10 Heat the sugar and allow to gently bubble until it caramelises. Then add the chopped peanuts. Pour onto a greaseproofed tray and allow to cool.
11 Place the lemon sponge on a plate, add a scoop of ice-cream and shard of nut brittle. Decorate with coulis, flaked almonds, icing sugar, the remaining whole berries and mint.

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