

Churston Traditional

FARM SHOP

Where you'll find the West Country's finest food and drink...

RECIPES JULY 2016

When you get a summer like this one you don't want to waste a minute indoors. The very idea of slaving over pots and pans while the sun beats down outside seems completely unacceptable. Yet people still have to be fed.

But as always, we believe that can be achieved without resorting to a commercial ready-meal, especially with more and more scientific research now being published to suggest that unrelieved diets of processed food may have had a long-term deleterious effect on thousands of people by altering the composition of their gut bacteria and thus their natural resistance.

Cooking doesn't have to be a long, complicated process. Tasty, satisfying food can be achieved in a matter of minutes as long as you know what you are doing – and have the right ingredients to hand.

So this month we are offering two examples of picnic rolls – not that you need to go on a picnic to enjoy them: they can just as easily be enjoyed at home for lunch or even a light supper.

The first demonstrates the power of Cajun seasoning, which really hit this country about 25 years ago and offers under various brands mixes of salt, sugar, several kinds of pepper, garlic and herbs, to be rubbed into meat before cooking. The flavours are, as you might imagine, robust.

Contrasting with that is pan bagnat (pronounced banya) which is an old Provençal name meaning 'bathed bread', because the bread does get soaked in the olive oil-based dressing. It's a delicious concoction which brings together all the flavours of the south of France. Indeed that was the only part of the country where you could buy it ready-made at one time but now it's on sale almost anywhere.

Ideally it's made using the loaf the French know as a *batard*, which is one gauge up from the basic baguette. If you can't find the equivalent here then the fattest baguette you can find will do.

CAJUN CHICKEN BAGUETTES

Ingredients for four people. Two baguettes, halved and sliced almost through, four chicken breasts, tablespoon or two olive oil, tablespoon Cajun seasoning, two tablespoons pickled green jalapeno chillis, shredded lettuce, two red onions, peeled, halved and finely sliced, good-quality mayonnaise, one lime.

Method. If using fresh chicken breasts place them in the freezer for an hour, which makes them easier to slice. If using frozen, start working before they have completely thawed out. Hold each chicken breast firmly on a board using the flat of your hand and with a very sharp knife cut into three or four thin slices. Transfer to a bowl, add the oil and seasoning and turn to coat. Arrange on a foil-lined grill pan and grill under a high heat for two minutes each side. Microwave the like for 20 seconds – this releases more juice – and squeeze over the slices once they are cold. Spread the mayonnaise over both cut sides of the baguettes, stuff with onion and lettuce, add the chicken slices and a few sliced jalapenos into each one. Eat hot or cold.

PAN BAGNAT

Ingredients for four. For the dressing: One clove of garlic, half a teaspoon salt, teaspoon white or brown sugar, two teaspoons French mustard, five tablespoons olive oil, two tablespoons wine vinegar, 10 grindings of black pepper. For the filling: half a lettuce, washed and dried, four tomatoes, sliced, half a Spanish onion, 20 black or green olives, two tablespoons capers, handful of cooked and cooled French beans, 12 baby new potatoes, steamed, cooled and cut into thick slices, two hard-boiled eggs, sliced, one tin tuna chunks in brine, drained and flaked, eight anchovy fillets.

Method. For the dressing: Crush the garlic to a paste with the salt on a board and transfer to a bowl. Add the vinegar, oil, mustard, pepper and sugar and whisk to emulsify. For the filling: Slice the onion very thinly, place in a bowl, cover with boiling water and allow to stand for five minutes. Drain and rinse under a cold tap and dry thoroughly. Place in a bowl with the torn-up lettuce, olives, capers, beans and potatoes, add plenty of dressing and toss well to coat. Slice the loaves through the middle and pull out some of the insides to create room for the filling. Place a layer of the filling in each one, add some tuna chunks, then top with another layer of salad. Top with the anchovies and eggs, put the top crusts on, wrap in film and then in foil and leave in the fridge under a heavy board for at least two hours.

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