

Churston Traditional

FARM SHOP

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RECIPES MAY 2016

You may remember spring: it was that day back in March. The good news is that the warmer weather has arrived: the bad that some crops, like outdoor asparagus, will be slightly late in arriving after all the below-average temperatures.

Never mind: it will be well worth the wait as English asparagus always is. And here are a couple of recipes to make the most of its summery flavour. The one for quiche will deliver a thin, crisp crust with the most delicately-flavoured filling, while the second displays that remarkable quality about the flavour of asparagus: while it is truly delicate it is never overpowered by stronger ones – and you don't get much strong flavours than Parma ham or Parmesan.

Finally, since we are coming round to summer, picnics and barbecues, it's time to practice making your own bread. Focaccia is a great Italian classic and this is a fool-proof recipe. Just remember to weigh both the water and the oil accurately before adding them. The dough will be extremely sticky at first but do not add any extra flour: as you continue to work it the stickiness will disappear and after eight or so minutes you'll have the perfect dough.

ASPARAGUS, SHALLOT AND BROAD BEAN QUICHE

Ingredients for six to eight. One large bundle of asparagus, washed and trimmed, three banana shallots, very finely sliced, 200g frozen baby broad beans, steamed, drained and patted dry, 175g each plain flour, butter (cubed) and mature cheddar (grated), heaped teaspoon mustard powder, freshly-ground black pepper, sea salt, six eggs, 400ml double cream, tablespoon dried tarragon.

Method. Place the flour, butter, cheese, mustard powder and a good pinch of salt in the bowl of a food processor and whizz until it forms a paste. On a floured work surface roll it out and line a 12-inch quiche tin. Refrigerate for two hours. Place the asparagus in a shallow dish with a little water, cover with film and microwave for five minutes on full power. Drain and dry. Heat the oven to 190C gas mark 5. Cover the pastry case with foil and fill with baking beans or rice and bake blind for 10 minutes. Break the eggs into a bowl and whisk. Remove the foil from the pastry case brush all over with beaten egg and bake for a further two minutes. Whisk the cream into the eggs with 20 grindings of black pepper, a teaspoon of salt and the tarragon. Arrange the sliced shallots in the pastry case, place the asparagus spears radially on top with their tips at the centre, fill the gaps with the broad beans, pour the egg and cream mix over, place the tin on a baking sheet and bake for 40 minutes at 180C gas mark 4.

ASPARAGUS WITH PARMA HAM AND PARMESAN

Ingredients for four. Twelve asparagus spears, 12 slices Parma ham, 30g Parmesan shavings, olive oil.

Method. Trim the asparagus and either steam for five minutes or microwave for four in a shallow dish with a little water. Roll each spear in a sheet of Parma ham, place side by side on a foil-lined grill pan, cover with the Parmesan shavings, drizzle liberally with olive oil and grill under a medium heat for three to four minutes until the cheese starts to brown. Serve with focaccia.

FOCACCIA

Ingredients. 500g white bread flour, 10g salt, 7g dried yeast, 275g hand-hot water, 75g olive oil, 75g each chopped black olives and chopped sun-dried tomatoes, three tablespoons finely-chopped fresh rosemary, handful of rosemary sprigs, two tablespoons coarse sea salt.

Method. Place the flour in a large bowl and add the salt and yeast. Carefully weigh and add the water and oil. Add the olives, tomatoes and chopped rosemary. Using a scraper gather the dough together then turn onto a lightly-floured surface and start to knead, folding the dough over on itself to trap as much air inside as possible. Once it has become smooth and elastic flour the bowl generously, replace the dough, cover with a cloth and leave in a warm place for two hours. Lightly oil a rectangular baking sheet and set the oven to 220C, gas mark 7. Turn the dough out onto a well-floured work surface and flatten slightly, then transfer carefully to the baking sheet, gently pushing it out to the sides with the fingertips. Cover and leave for a further 30 minutes. Using a floured forefinger make 12 regular indentations in the top of the dough, drizzle generously with olive oil and scatter on the salt and rosemary sprigs. Bake for 20 minutes then reduce the heat to 200C gas mark 6 and cook for a further 10 minutes. As soon as it has cooled slightly transfer to a wire rack.

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