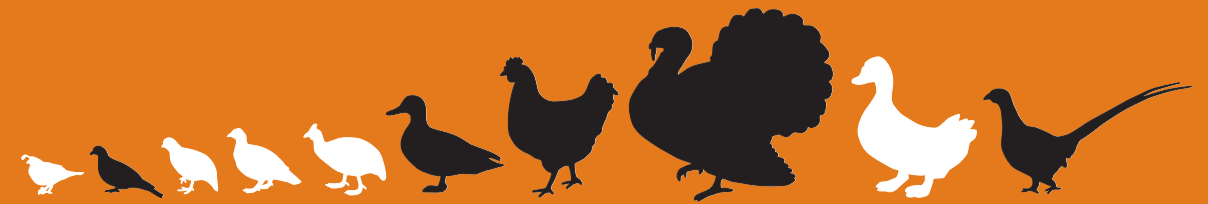


Ah, that age-old question: legs or breasts? It still divides the world, but I reckon there is always time for the breast and there is always time for the leg. The difference is quite simple – one is soft and sweet but needs time and nurturing (the leg), the other is lean and mean and quick to cook (the breast) but needs accompaniment from something else to really bring it to life, to stimulate and bring out its beauty.

Grilling a breast has become a favourite regular supper for many. The bitter exterior of the skin should be crisp and the flesh soft and moist, but it needs a worthy partner to set it up as a trophy plate. You can do what you want as a side, from the classic chips and mayo combination to more sophisticated and spicy dishes like harissa and stewed chickpeas. Fill it with garlic butter and protect its delicate flesh and boom! You've got the great chicken kiev. And when done well, it is the great kiev.

The leg – ah, now that is my true friend. Love legs, but they need time and for that the old ones are the best. Schnitzels or southern fried – either way is great by me, thanks.



## legs & breasts

## GRILLING CHICKEN

Most chicken that has been grilled has been cooked to death. It's dry and nasty and no longer tastes of the beautiful chook. Heat is the secret – not too much of it – and the skin must stay on to protect that soft, white flesh. The chicken will be cooked through properly if you just let it go slowly. Cook it too fast and the outer will be dry and the inside still raw – and what a turn-off that is.

I realise most people prefer chicken breasts, but for me the flavour of the meat and skin on the legs and thighs is far, far better. You can cook them just as easily if you buy leg and thigh joints that have been boned out. Don't try to grill them with the bones still in – the result will be tough.

Heat a griddle until hot then turn the heat down. Season the chicken with salt and just a little bit of pepper, and rub oil all over it. Gently lay the chicken skin-side down on the griddle and leave it to sizzle for 4 or 5 minutes so that it cooks nice and slowly. Turn it over and give it just a few minutes on the other side, then turn it back on to the skin side and repeat the process, adding a good knob of butter and some more salt.

The rules for barbecuing chicken breasts and legs are a bit different from those for grilling. The fat from the skin can cause flare-ups on the barbie so do not rub oil all over, just on the flesh side. Place the chicken skin-side down over the hot coals and cook for 5 minutes, then put the barbecue cover on and cook for a further 3 minutes. Turn the breast or thigh over, place some butter (or flavoured butter) on top so it melts into the skin and put the cover back over the barbecue. Leave to cook for 3 more minutes. Check to see that the barbecue isn't too hot (no flames here please) and, if necessary, take the cover off. Then leave the chicken to cook for another 5 minutes or so. Take the chicken from the heat and keep it warm, then slice and serve.



## 8 WAYS WITH CHICKEN THIGHS & BREASTS



### CHIPS & MAYO

Fry the chips in three batches so the oil reheats quickly and browns the chips nicely.

6 large potatoes, peeled and cut into 3cm chips  
5 litres corn or vegetable oil  
salt  
120ml mayonnaise  
4 lemon wedges  
4 handfuls watercress

Soak the chips in cold water for 5 minutes, then change the water and leave to soak for another 5 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the oil to 140°C in a deep-fat fryer. Drain the chips and pat them dry with paper towel.

Fry each batch of chips for 8 to 10 minutes, then drain well and leave on a tray to cool. Afterwards, heat the oil to 190°C and, still working in batches, fry the chips for 2 minutes. Give them a little shake, then cook for another 4 to 5 minutes until well-coloured. Drain the chips for a few minutes before sprinkling them with salt and serving with the chicken, mayo, lemon and watercress. SERVES 4.

### PANZANELLA

This salad is best after a bit of rough and tumble (not you, the salad). It needs to be worked together so all the flavours blend.

100ml red or white wine vinegar  
a big bowl of leftover bread, cut into thumb-sized chunks  
6 ripe tomatoes, roughly chopped  
1 red onion, chopped  
1 large handful chopped flat-leaf parsley  
chopped olives and peppers (optional)  
50g pine nuts, toasted  
about 3 tbsp John's vinaigrette (page 101)

Mix the vinegar and 100ml water in a jug, pour over the bread and stir so the bread soaks up the flavour. Squeeze the bread to get rid of the excess liquid and set aside.

Put the tomatoes in a large bowl, giving half of them a squeeze. Add the onion and parsley, stir, then add the bread and mix well. Add the rest of the ingredients and stir again. Leave for a good 20 minutes while you cook the chicken. SERVES 6.



### GINGER CHICKPEAS & HARISSA

50ml vegetable oil  
2 tsp garam masala  
120g fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped  
1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped  
400g can chickpeas, drained  
400g can chopped tomatoes  
1 large handful coriander leaves, coarsely chopped  
4 heaped tbsp harissa  
lemon wedges or halves, to serve  
salt and pepper

Heat the oil in a saucepan until smoking. Add the garam masala and sizzle for 30 seconds, then add the ginger and chilli and stir well. Add the chickpeas, stir again to coat them in the spices, then add the tomatoes, a good pinch of salt and a good grind of pepper. Bring to the boil, then remove from the heat and stir in the coriander.

Serve with the chicken, lemon and a dollop of harissa on the side. SERVES 4.

### POMEGRANATE, SPINACH & OLIVE SALAD

The crisp, bittersweet skin of the chicken, the crunchy pomegranates and olives, and iron-rich spinach combine beautifully in this simple salad.

1 whole pomegranate  
24 large green olives, sliced  
juice of 1 lemon  
2 tbsp olive oil  
2 handfuls spinach leaves  
salt and pepper

Scoop the seeds from the pomegranate and mix them in a bowl with the sliced olives, lemon juice and olive oil and leave them to sit for 20 minutes while you cook the chicken. Shred the spinach and season it with salt and pepper.

To serve, chop or slice the cooked chicken, put it on serving plates and scatter the salad ingredients over the top. SERVES 4.

## THAI CUCUMBER SALAD

- 50g palm sugar
- 50ml fish sauce
- 200ml coconut milk
- 1/2 cucumber, halved and deseeded
- 2 small shallots (the little Thai ones, if possible), sliced very thinly
- 1/2 small red pepper, deseeded and cut into thin strips
- 2 long red chillies, deseeded and cut into thin strips
- 1 large handful coriander leaves
- 4 lime leaves, torn (optional)
- 1 handful Thai basil leaves
- 100g roasted peanuts, chopped

Combine the palm sugar, fish sauce and coconut milk in a heavy frying pan, bring to the boil, then simmer for a good 10 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Use a vegetable peeler to cut the cucumber into long, thin strips and put them in a bowl with the shallots, pepper and chillies. Pour the cooled dressing over the veg and leave to stand for 10 to 15 minutes. Stir in the herbs and sprinkle the nuts over the top. SERVES 6.

## SALSA VERDE &amp; MASH

Traditionally served with boiled meats, salsa verde (green sauce) is delicious with chicken as well as pork and fish. Make it in advance of serving if you wish – it will hold for few days in the fridge. Serve the chicken and sauce with mashed potato, following my recipe on page 157.

- 1 handful flat-leaf parsley
- 1 handful basil
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 1 boiled egg
- 1 handful fresh white breadcrumbs
- 1 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp capers, drained
- 50ml olive oil
- 1 pinch salt

Put the parsley, basil and crushed garlic in a food processor and blend to a paste. Add all the remaining ingredients and blend for 2 minutes. SERVES 4.

## SEA-SPICED AUBERGINE

- 2 medium aubergines, cut into 1cm strips
- 125ml vegetable oil
- 2.5cm ginger, peeled and cut into matchsticks
- 4 spring onions, thinly sliced at an angle
- 3 red chillies, deseeded and thinly sliced
- 4 tbsp oyster sauce
- 1 tbsp fish sauce
- 2 tbsp coriander leaves

Put the aubergine strips in a wok, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Drain the aubergine and allow it to cool, then pat it dry.

Dry the wok and place it over a high heat. Add the oil, then the ginger and aubergine. Cook for 5 to 6 minutes until the aubergine is evenly browned (avoid stirring too much as this will make it mushy). Stir in the chillies and three-quarters of the spring onions. Drain off most of the oil, then return the wok to the heat. Stir in the oyster and fish sauces and cook for a final 2 minutes before adding the remaining spring onions and coriander. SERVES 4.

## HOUMOUS &amp; PAPRIKA

- 400g freshly boiled chickpeas, still in their water
- 3 tbsp tahini
- 4 garlic cloves
- juice of 4 lemons
- 100ml olive oil, plus extra for serving
- salt and white pepper
- paprika, for sprinkling

While the chickpeas are still hot, drain and reserve the cooking water. Put the chickpeas, tahini and garlic in a food processor and blend to a paste. Add half the lemon juice, half the oil and a teaspoon of salt. Blend and, as it starts to thicken, add a little of the cooking water and then some more lemon juice and olive oil.

Keep adding all three until the houmous is like a thick sauce (it will thicken as it cools). Adjust the seasoning, adding more lemon if you want a kick and more oil for a peppery flavour.

To serve, swirl the houmous over the plates, add the grilled chicken, sprinkle with paprika and drizzle with olive oil. SERVES 4.





## CHICKEN KIEV

SERVES



50g butter, softened  
1-2 fat cloves garlic, finely chopped  
2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley  
1/2 tsp finely grated lemon zest  
2 tsp lemon juice  
2 skinless chicken suprêmes (breast with wing bone left on)  
3-4 tbsp plain flour  
1 tsp paprika  
1 large egg  
100g dried breadcrumbs  
sunflower oil, for frying  
flaky sea salt and pepper

### TO SERVE

mashed potatoes (page 157)  
wilted spinach

**Who could not love chicken kiev? Soft, sweet delicious chicken crusted with crisp breadcrumbs, and herb-rich butter flowing from the centre – that, my friend, is the perfect chicken kiev and this is the perfect recipe.**

To make the filling, mix together the butter, garlic, parsley, lemon zest and juice, and some salt and pepper. Shape into two logs and chill until firm but not solid.

Heat the oven to 190°C (gas 5). Make a slit lengthwise in each chicken breast and open out like a book. Lay each flat between two pieces of cling film with the bone pointing away from you and bash with a meat mallet or rolling pin until 5 to 10mm thick. Place a log of butter on each flattened breast 2cm in from the edge then roll up the chicken and secure with cocktail sticks.

Mix the flour, paprika and some salt and pepper together in a shallow bowl. Beat the egg in another shallow bowl. Toss the stuffed chicken breasts in the flour until coated and shake off any excess. Slide the chicken into the beaten egg and turn until covered, then cover each chicken breast with flour and egg once more. Finally, dip the chicken into the breadcrumbs and turn to coat completely, again shaking off any excess.

Pour oil into a medium frying pan to a depth of about 1cm and heat thoroughly. Toss in a small cube of bread to check the temperature – it should sizzle and brown straight away. Lower the chicken breasts carefully into the pan and spoon some of the hot oil over the top for about 1 minute to seal the crumbs. Turn over to brown the other side, again spooning oil over the top until the crust is golden – this should take a further 1 or 2 minutes.

Transfer the chicken to a shallow roasting pan and bake uncovered for 12 to 14 minutes, or until the breasts feel firm when pressed. Remove and drain on paper towel. Carefully remove the cocktail sticks and serve with mashed potato and spinach.

# CHICKEN WITH TARRAGON SAUCE

SERVES



olive oil  
2 chicken breasts, skin on  
salt and pepper

TARRAGON SAUCE  
100ml brandy  
100ml crème fraîche  
1 handful chopped parsley  
1 handful torn tarragon leaves

**Although we've put this with mash in the picture, it's just as nice with champ, or chips.**

Heat a heavy frying pan over a medium heat and add a little olive oil. Season the chicken well and place it skin-side down in the pan. Cook for a good 8 minutes, then turn the breasts over and cook for the same time again. Check the chicken is cooked through, then remove it from the pan and keep warm.

Raise the heat under the pan to very high. Add the brandy and carefully flame it to burn off the harsh taste of alcohol. Shake or stir to incorporate the pan juices and sticky bits from the base of the pan. Stir in the crème fraîche then taste and season. Bring the sauce to the boil and reduce by half. Add most of the parsley and tarragon leaves.

Serve the sauce with the chicken and some mash or champ, pouring the brown juices that come from the rested chicken over the dish as well. Sprinkle with the last of the chopped herbs.



# SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN

SERVES



1 whole chicken, cut into 8 pieces  
1½ tsp salt  
1.5 litres vegetable oil, for frying  
200g plain flour  
1 tsp ground white pepper  
2 tsp cayenne pepper  
2 tsp paprika  
2 tsp allspice  
2 tsp ground thyme  
2 eggs, beaten

TO SERVE  
gravy (page 156)  
lemon wedges  
mayonnaise

**Give this a whirl and you will never buy takeaway again. Well, you might, but it won't be as good as this!**

Score the skin of the chicken pieces then place them in a large bowl of cold water with a good teaspoon of salt and leave to soak for 2 hours.

Mix together all the dry ingredients, including the remaining ½ teaspoon of salt, and set to one side. Take the chicken from the water and pat it dry with paper towels. Drop the chicken into the flour mixture and toss to coat each piece well. Set aside for 10 to 15 minutes.

In a deep-fryer, heat the oil ready to cook the chicken, and please be very careful. At the same time, heat the oven to 180°C (gas 4). Sit a wire rack inside a roasting tin and put them in the oven to heat as well.

Coat the chicken pieces in the beaten egg and drop them in the seasoned flour again. When the oil has reached 220°C, put two or three pieces in the oil, cook for a good 6 to 8 minutes then remove them to a tray. Bring the oil back to the correct temperature and repeat the frying until all the pieces are cooked.

Transfer all the fried chicken to the wire rack in the hot oven and bake for a further 20 minutes until cooked through. Cut open a piece to check they are done: the chicken should not be pink near the bone. Serve hot with some gravy, wedges of lemon and mayo.

# TURKEY ESCALOPE CORDON BLEU

SERVES



4 thin slices turkey breast, about 225g each  
4 slices ham from the bone  
4 slices emmental cheese  
vegetable oil, for frying

**GARLIC HERB BUTTER**  
3-4 tbsp chopped flat-leaf parsley  
3-4 tbsp chopped chives  
1 tsp chopped tarragon  
115g unsalted butter, softened  
2 garlic cloves  
½ tsp English mustard powder  
salt and pepper

**CRUMB COATING**  
50g plain flour  
2 eggs, beaten  
175g fresh breadcrumbs

**An oldie but a goodie.**

Start with the garlic herb butter. Put the herbs and softened butter in a bowl. Crush the garlic cloves together with a little salt until you have a smooth paste then add to the butter mixture. Add the mustard and some pepper, and mix well. Divide the butter into four little logs, wrap in cling film and chill to harden.

Put each piece of turkey between two sheets of cling film and bash with a mallet or rolling pin until they are very thin and about the size of a small plate. Lay the breast fillets on a board, smooth side down, and season with pepper. Lay a slice of ham and then a slice of cheese over each. Unwrap the flavoured butter, place a piece in the middle of each turkey-ham-cheese combo and fold up like an envelope.

Line up the flour, beaten eggs and breadcrumbs in three separate shallow dishes. Dip each turkey parcel into the flour, making sure it is well coated. Continue, dipping the parcels into the eggs, then the crumbs, making sure at each stage that they are well coated. Put the parcels on a tray and chill for 30 minutes before cooking.

Heat the oven to 180°C (gas 4). When ready to cook, heat the oil in a large frying pan. Add the turkey parcels and cook for 2 minutes on each side. Transfer the parcels to the hot oven to continue cooking for about 5 minutes, or until golden. Remove the turkey parcels from the oven and drain on paper towels before serving.



## SCHNITZELS

SERVES



4 skinless chicken thigh fillets,  
bashed out to about the size  
of your hand  
100g plain flour  
2 eggs, beaten with a little milk  
200g fine dry breadcrumbs  
vegetable oil, for frying  
salt and pepper

**It is important that these are cooked fairly quickly so that the meat is cooked in the centre but the crumbs stay beautifully golden and crisp. (Yes they have to be crisp – no soggy schnitzels thanks). You could serve them straight up with lemon and cornichons, or in a big floury bap with lettuce, tomato or beetroot, and mayonnaise.**

Heat the oven to 150°C (gas 2). Put the flour in a bowl and season well with salt and pepper. Put the bowl of beaten egg mixture next in line, and a bowl of breadcrumbs last. Roll the chicken fillets in the flour, then dip into the egg, letting the excess drain back into the bowl as you lift them out. Next, roll the chicken in the breadcrumbs, patting them down firmly and making sure they are well coated all over. (You may find it easiest to coat all the chicken in the flour, then all in the egg, then all in the crumbs.)



Put a wide, heavy frying pan on the stove and get it hot. Add 2 tablespoons of oil and once the oil is hot, slide in two schnitzels (assuming they fit of course, I am hoping that your pan is big enough to get a couple of these things in it, if not more). They should sizzle a little. Cook for a good 4 minutes on each side until they are golden (not dark) brown: lower or increase the heat to get the desired effect.

Transfer the schnitzels to the oven to stay warm while you cook the remainder, adding more oil if the pan is a bit dry, but let it get hot before you add the schnitzels.

## DUCK BREASTS

There is a great secret to cooking the perfect duck breast with a crisp skin, moist flesh and pink centre and that secret is a cold frying pan and no oil. It's true.

Take four duck breasts; don't trim them. Lay them flesh-side down on a board and use your knife to score the skin all the way through to the flesh – but so that the blade just touches the flesh, do not cut into it. Make sure you score all the way to the edge of the breast so that as the skin shrinks during cooking it doesn't pull the flesh in and make it tough. Season the skin (only the skin side) with a generous amount of salt and ground black pepper.

Take a solid, heavy frying pan and turn the heat to three quarters on your stove to get it going. Lay the duck skin-side down in the cold pan and then put the pan over the heat and turn the heat down to about half. Now do not touch anything, do not move the pan – I said don't touch, don't even think about it. What is going to happen over the next 10 minutes is the fat under the skin will slowly melt and the skin will go brown and crispy.

When the skin starts to colour around the outside you are ready to move on. The pan should have a good 1 to 2cm of duck fat in it and all the fat from the breast should have melted. Season the flesh side now and not before, then turn the duck breasts over, cook for 2 minutes and increase the temperature to full, for just 1 more minute. Take the pan from the heat and leave the breasts in the pan for 5 minutes while you finish off your side dishes, then slice and it will be very sexy indeed.

You can keep the rendered duck fat for cooking roast potatoes simply by draining it into a heatproof glass bowl and storing it in the fridge. Four duck breasts will produce around 200ml of duck fat. If you get some brown jelly at the bottom of the bowl, don't worry – that's just concentrated duck stock and will keep fine as long as it is covered by the duck fat.



## 8 WAYS WITH DUCK BREASTS



### ROAST PUMPKIN AND PINE NUTS

2kg piece pumpkin, or 1 butternut squash, peeled and deseeded  
40ml olive oil  
a little fresh oregano  
50g pine kernels, toasted  
2 tbsp John's vinaigrette (page 101)  
lemons halves or wedges, for serving  
flaky sea salt and pepper

Heat the oven to 200°C (gas 6). Cut the pumpkin or squash into 3cm chunks and toss with the oil and seasoning in a roasting tray. Cook for 50 minutes on the top shelf of the oven, until tender.

Mix the pumpkin, oregano and pine kernels in a large bowl and spoon over the dressing. Mix well but gently and serve with the duck and lemon. SERVES 4.

### BOK CHOY AND CHILLI

2 tbsp vegetable oil  
2 garlic cloves, chopped  
6 heads bok choy, halved lengthwise  
50ml oyster sauce  
20ml light soy sauce  
1 red chilli, finely sliced

Heat the oil in a wok. Add the garlic, fry for 2 minutes, then add the bok choy and stir-fry for 2 minutes or until it wilts. Pour in the oyster and soy sauces, along with 50ml of water. Cook for a further minute then sprinkle with the chilli, toss and serve with the duck. SERVES 6.

### COURGETTE FRITTERS

200g plain flour  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 large pinch salt  
1 tsp paprika  
3 eggs  
100ml milk  
2 large courgettes, grated  
olive oil, for frying  
a little soured cream (optional)  
mustard, for serving  
salt and pepper

Sift the flour, baking powder, salt and paprika into a large bowl, then make a well in the centre. In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs and milk. Add the egg mixture to the dry ingredients and whisk until you have a smooth, stiff batter. Mix in the grated courgettes.

Heat a little oil in a non-stick frying pan then drop in a good ladle of batter per fritter and cook until golden brown on both sides. Sprinkle the cooked fritters with a little olive oil, some salt and black pepper, and some soured cream if you like, before serving with the duck breasts and a spoonful of mustard. SERVES 4.

### CELERIAC MASH

275g celeriac, peeled and cubed  
125ml milk  
125ml olive oil, plus extra for drizzling  
125ml water mixed with a little lemon juice  
25g parsley  
salt and pepper

Put the celeriac in a saucepan with the milk, olive oil and enough water to cover. Season then bring to the boil and cook uncovered for about 20 minutes over a low heat. Test the celeriac with a fork to make sure it is soft, then strain and reserve the cooking liquid. Roughly mash the celeriac with a fork. Mix in the parsley and a little of the cooking liquid to give a soft consistency and serve with the duck and a drizzle of olive oil. SERVES 2.

## WILD MUSHROOMS AND NEW POTATOES

500g jersey royal potatoes, or other new potatoes  
 2 tsp olive oil  
 2 garlic cloves  
 1 fennel bulb, cut into eighths  
 2 bay leaves  
 2 thyme sprigs  
 200g mixed wild mushrooms, cleaned  
 some dried morels  
 100ml white wine  
 salt and pepper

Par-boil the potatoes for 10 minutes, then drain and peel when cool.

Heat the oven to 180°C (gas 4). Heat the oil in a casserole. Add the garlic and a grind of black pepper, then the potatoes, fennel, bay leaves and thyme and stir. Cook for 4 minutes or until just starting to colour.

Add the mushrooms and dried morels and cook for 10 minutes over a high heat, stirring occasionally. Add the white wine, bring to the boil for 30 seconds, then cover and continue cooking for about 2 minutes.

Transfer the casserole to the hot oven for 15 minutes. When done, season well and serve hot with the duck. SERVES 6.

## SKORDALIA

400g potatoes, peeled and cubed  
 5 garlic cloves  
 100ml milk  
 100ml olive oil, plus extra for drizzling  
 juice of 1 lemon, plus lemon halves or wedges  
 for serving  
 salt and white pepper

Put the potatoes in a heavy saucepan with the garlic, milk, olive oil and some seasoning and place over a medium heat. Bring to the boil and cook for 15 to 20 minutes until the potatoes are soft.

Remove from the heat and strain off and reserve the cooking liquid. Blend the potatoes in a food processor with the lemon juice and half the cooking liquid, then return the skordalia to the saucepan and reheat. Serve with a drizzle of olive oil alongside the duck and with lemon halves or wedges on the side. SERVES 2.

## CRUSHED PEAS AND MINT

600g frozen peas  
 1 handful mint, stalks and leaves separated  
 3 spring onions, chopped  
 50g salted butter  
 100ml double cream  
 olive oil, for drizzling (optional)  
 lemons halves or wedges, for serving

Put the frozen peas in a medium saucepan with the mint stalks, pour over 100ml of boiling water from the kettle and place over a high heat. Add the spring onions and butter, bring to the boil and cook for 3 minutes. Add the double cream and return the peas to the boil.

Remove the pan from the heat and, using a food processor, blend the pea mixture for a minute or so. Chop the mint leaves and add them to the pea purée as you gently reheat it. Spoon a good amount onto each serving plate, top with the cooked duck and maybe a drizzle of olive oil and serve with lemon. SERVES 4.

## OLIVES AND BUTTON ONIONS

The idea of gigantic salty olives with sweet button onions, a hint of chilli and a good splash of sherry vinegar to get the digestion of that rich duck going is, for me, a real beauty.

10g butter  
 100g button onions, peeled  
 200g large purple and green olives, pips removed and flesh squashed  
 1/2 tsp dried chilli flakes  
 30ml sherry vinegar

Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan. Add the onions, turn the heat down low and cook slowly for 10 minutes – don't let them go brown. Add the olives and chilli flakes and give a good stir. Increase the heat a bit and cook for 5 minutes. Add the vinegar and turn the heat right up. Let it boil and that's it: serve with the duck. SERVES 4.



# PIGEON WITH BACON AND SWEETCORN FRITTERS

SERVES



3 pigeons  
olive oil  
12 rashers streaky bacon  
about 100ml soured cream  
salt and pepper

## SWEETCORN FRITTERS

200g plain flour  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp paprika  
3 eggs  
100ml milk  
200g can sweetcorn, drained  
2 spring onions, sliced  
1 handful chopped coriander  
1 handful chopped parsley

To make the sweetcorn fritters, sift the flour, baking powder, paprika and a good pinch of salt into a large bowl. Make a well in the centre. In a separate bowl, combine the eggs and milk. Gradually add the egg mixture to the dry ingredients and whisk until you have a smooth, stiff batter. Add the sweetcorn, spring onions and herbs and set aside.

Heat the oven to 180°C (gas 4). Rub the pigeon with oil and season well with salt and pepper. Place a heavy frying pan over a medium heat and, when the pan is hot, add 1 or 2 tablespoons of oil. Lay the pigeons on their side in the frying pan. Let them colour well then turn to the next side and repeat, then turn and colour again. Pop them in the oven. After 3 minutes give the pan a little shuffle and cook for a few minutes more – the birds should be very pink.

Heat a little oil in a non-stick frying pan and, working two or three at a time as necessary, cook six fritters, frying them until golden brown on each side. As the fritters cook, put them on a baking tray and keep warm in the oven. At this stage I would turn the oven to very low. While the fritters are cooking, fry the bacon in a separate pan and keep it warm in the oven too.

Carve the breasts from the pigeons. To assemble the dish, place a corn fritter on each serving plate and top with two rashers of bacon and a pigeon breast. Spoon some soured cream over the top and sprinkle with a little olive oil and some salt and pepper.

# PHEASANT WITH CABBAGE ROLLS

SERVES



4 pheasant  
olive oil  
salt and black pepper

## SAUCE

25g butter  
125g shallots, chopped  
50g garlic cloves, chopped  
50g mushrooms, sliced  
100ml sherry vinegar  
200ml dry sherry  
500ml chicken or game stock  
(page 20-21), plus about  
300ml extra

## CABBAGE ROLLS

1 savoy cabbage  
100g veal or pork mince  
2 large shallots, chopped  
50g cooked white rice  
1 handful chopped parsley

Start the sauce. Melt half the butter in a small saucepan and sweat the shallots, garlic and mushrooms until soft and golden. Deglaze the pan with sherry vinegar, letting it reduce to a syrupy consistency. Add the dry sherry and when it is very hot carefully flame the pan. Keep boiling until the volume of liquid has reduced by half, then add the stock and reduce on a lower heat, skimming often. When the sauce is a light jus, season to taste then pass through a fine sieve and set aside.

Meanwhile, make the cabbage rolls. Strip away the cabbage's outer leaves until you have eight good ones. Finely slice the rest of the cabbage. Bring a pot of salted water to the boil and blanch the sliced cabbage for 1 minute. Refresh under cold water and drain well. Next blanch and refresh the big cabbage leaves and leave them to drain on a kitchen cloth. Remove the central vein if it is fibrous and thick.

Heat the oven to 180°C (gas 4). In a large mixing bowl, work the sliced cabbage, mince, shallots, rice, parsley, and some salt and pepper together with your hands until completely mixed. Place an egg-sized pile of filling on each cabbage leaf. Fold in the ends and roll into a cigar making sure no filling can escape. Put the cabbage rolls in an ovenproof dish and pour in enough stock to come three-quarters of the way up the sides of the rolls. Braise in the oven for 30 to 40 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat a large ovenproof frying pan on the stovetop. Rub the pheasants with oil and seasoning and cook, turning, until well coloured. Transfer to the oven and roast for 15 minutes. Allow them to cool slightly before carving.

Return the sauce to the pan and reduce it further. Just before serving whisk in the remaining butter. The sauce should have a delicate sweet and sour taste and be barely a coating consistency. To serve, place a breast and leg on each plate together with two of the cabbage rolls and coat with 2 or 3 tablespoons of the sauce.