

WINTER RECIPES 3

What's in Store?

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It's now several days since I went to the shops as the snow is still on the ground. This staying away from the shops is encouraging me to look to the stores for meals. Below is a main course based around smoked trout and 3 desserts: Pumpkin in Syrup, Apple and Mincemeat Tart and Old English Treacle Tart.

1 SMOKED TROUT WITH RICE AND SPINACH

The smoked trout fillets in the fridge needed eating, Usually I would have some salad to serve with it or some eggs for scrambling. It would have been a small meal to be bolstered with a hearty soup. With neither salad nor eggs available I had to think again. It could be part of the main course, but the fresh vegetables that I usually have had run out. I had some pumpkin but could not imagine that with smoked fish.

There was brown rice in cupboard, frozen spinach and few pieces of cooked carrot left over from the day before, and as always there was dried fruit. The walnut oil that I used is a luxury and no longer available at Wholefood Frome – but someone who visits Waitrose gave me a bottle for Christmas.

I began to imagine the pink trout on the plate and a mound of dark green spinach. It could be finished with bright orange carrot and dark flecks of currants on the trout. I find visualising meals helps me decide what to put together on the plate.

Ingredients for 2

2 smoked rainbow trout filleted – from Mere Fish Farm stall in Frome Farmers' Market

Brown rice – about a mug full

Frozen spinach – about 12 nuggets/lozenges (bought from Wholefood Frome)

6-8 small sticks of cooked carrot

Fresh nutmeg

Walnut/rapeseed/olive oil

About a dessert spoon each of currants and raisins

Pepper and salt

The rice was cooked in water in the usual way. I have small ovenproof casserole. I put about an inch of rice into this and added water to just less than an inch above the rice. Bring to simmering point and put into a warm oven for about 40 minutes. Open the smoked trout and lay each fish on a plate to warm to room temperature. This improves the flavour, The frozen spinach is packed in lozenge shapes. Take 5/6

of these for each person, place in saucepan with a little water to start defrosting
Simmer currants and raisins in small amount of water until plump. Cook the spinach in very little water. Heat the carrot sticks.

When rice and spinach are done - Spoon the brown rice to the side of the fish.
Spoon the spinach onto the rice. To the spinach add freshly grated nutmeg, pepper salt and a little walnut oil. Scatter carrot sticks on to the spinach and scatter the plumped up currants and raisins onto the fish. Great meal.

To follow

PUMPKIN IN SYRUP

Having made pumpkin soup (see 4 soups) there was still half a pumpkin staring at me. We think of sweet pumpkin dishes as being America, eg Pumpkin Pie, but in past centuries the English also used pumpkin, carrots and parsnips in sweet dishes. Mrs Woolley (seventeenth century author of cookery books) suggested the use of parsnips when sugar is in short supply. This sweet pumpkin dish actually comes from a book of Turkish Recipes. The orange colour is stunning.

Ingredients

500 g pumpkin – washed peeled and chopped to about 2 cm squares
300g sugar
300 ml water
90 g walnuts roughly chopped

Method

Simmer sugar and water together for a few minutes stirring with a wooden spoon to prevent from burning.
Place pumpkin in shallow pan
Pour over syrup
Cook gently until the pumpkin is soft - about 20 minutes

Serve with cream/Yoghurt, and chopped walnuts.

MINCEMEAT AND APPLE TART

A tart for left over mincemeat
I did not make any mincemeat in 2009. The 2008 jars were still very good. If you have old mincemeat and it looks a bit dry - add brandy. .

Ingredients

Filling

300 g mincemeat

2 medium /large Bramley apples

For Pastry

120 g white wheat/spelt flour

120 g brown wheat/spelt flour

120 g butter/marg

Pie plate/dish - about 10 inches wide and an inch deep is ideal or 8 inches wide and 2 inches deep. Old Pyrex pie plates work very well.

To make pastry

Rub fat into flour with fingertips.

(Note - To make short crust pastry continue rubbing lightly with fingertips until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs.

If you want a slightly puffed pastry - add about 30 g extra fat – mix lightly with fingertips but do not continue to breadcrumb state. Instead leave larger pieces of fat.)

When satisfied with the mixture add cold water and mix quickly with a knife and fingers to make a stiff paste. Wrap and refrigerate for about ½ hour

To make filling

Meanwhile – core and slice apples

Cook in little water until soft

Add mincemeat.

Making the pie

Roll out pastry and line the bottom of a deep ovenproof dish leaving scraps of pastry for finishing. Fill the pastry case with the mincemeat and apple mixture.

Cut leftover pastry into strips about a third of an inch/one cm wide.

Tuck strips under the edge of pastry rim using a little water to make the 2 layers adhere. Crimp edges. This is especially important if mincemeat and apple mixture has filled the case.

Make a rough lattice with remaining strips to stop the filling from running over the top. Brush the top with a little milk and sprinkle with sugar

Cook in Moderate oven on solid shelf or near the bottom of Rayburn/ Aga.

Time about 35 minutes

Serve with custard or crème fraiche

If you do not have mincemeat but have the apple, golden syrup and breadcrumbs here is the best treacle tart I know.

OLD ENGLISH TREACLE TART

Ingredients - pastry

As above in Mincemeat and Apple Pie

Filling ingredients

2/3 tablespoons golden syrup
1 eating apple - grated
1 tablespoon sugar
2 tablespoons milk
1 cup soft breadcrumbs
Salt spoon of ground ginger
1 lemon –grated rind and juice

To Make Pastry

Follow recipe method above (Mincemeat and apple pie) and place in fridge for 30 minutes

To make filling –

Warm syrup gently in saucepan and add grated apple, milk, sugar, breadcrumbs rind and juice of lemon and ground ginger.

Making the Pie

Roll out pastry and line a deep circular pie plate, reserving strips for edges and lattice topping.

Fill the pastry lined pie dish. And use the spare strips to tuck under the edges of the pastry, making a second layer all the way round. Use a little water to bind the strip to the upper layer and crimp the edges with forefinger and thumb.

Make a rough trellis on the top. Sprinkle this with a little milk and sugar.

Cook in a moderate oven for about 30 minutes

To ensure that pies are cooked well from underneath, and not soggy, bake on a solid shelf or near the bottom of an Aga or Rayburn. Using a glass pie dish means that you can check that the underneath gets cooked. I like this to take on a light brown colour.